

Our Work During the Pandemic

March 2020 – September 2021

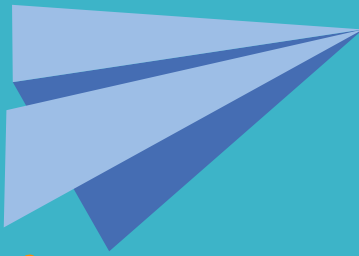


Early Years
Wales
Blynyddoedd
Cynnar Cymru



A message from our Chair - Everyone is Important

You all make up Early Years Wales; the children, their families, our member settings and individuals, staff in the sector, volunteers and our staff team and Trustee Board. It's our combined efforts that make the early years a special sector to work in.



I've been a Trustee for more than 16 years and I've seen the development of the sector and our organisation first-hand. Coming from a background in agriculture, my own pathway into early years was from my own family and from becoming a Foster-carer for children who needed our help. I then transitioned from farming to helping with settings and groups in my area before becoming a Board Member in 2003. As Chair, like all the Trustees, I am committed to helping the organisation grow and develop. We play an important role in overseeing the operational and strategic plans alongside the CEO and in ensuring safe governance of the organisation. And we also get to hear first-hand about the excellent work done by our staff team, who we thank for their tireless efforts.

Over the last two years we have missed the opportunity to be amongst you, at awards ceremonies and events, and we hope these days will come back to us all. It reminded me of other things that have been missed or harder to achieve during the pandemic. Things like children's opportunities to engage in imaginative play with peers and friends; simple things like taking a box and changing it into a car, shop, rocket etc have been harder to make possible for all.

Things like taking children outdoors to experience their environment, the world around them was interrupted in Spring 2020. These things mean so much to young children and we remain committed to the value of play as an early year's organisation.

We hope you've valued our help too. The pages that follow share some of this work. The Trustees are proud of all of it...and all the work we don't share in these summaries like the essential administration, finance and day-to-day office tasks that keeps us working as a charity.

We hope you recognise our efforts too. If you feel you want to help us add more value we are always interested in hearing from you, our members, and in receiving expressions of interest in being a Trustee. It is a role that is fascinating and one that rewards you with the sense of doing something to add value to the impact you are about to read of.

Thank you all for your inputs and outputs.

**Stay safe,
Mike**

Mike Thorne

I do know you have all been brilliant, helping children and families navigate this pandemic and providing early years childcare that is inspiring. Thank you.



A word from our Chief Executive - Dave Goodger

September
2021

Without doubt, any reflection from last year is heavily influenced by the pandemic and the impact this has had on people and organisations throughout Wales. In Early Years Wales, staff responded positively, relocating to home-based-working and committing to support the membership through the uncertainty of the pandemic from March 2020. As a new CEO, this was an unprecedented introduction to my role.

Throughout the pandemic we have worked collegiately with Welsh Government to ensure that the voice of the sector was heard by decision makers. Early Years Wales, and our Cwlwm partners worked extensively to ensure that we communicated your thoughts to Welsh Government and their policies and guidelines to you, our members.





As you will read, our impact this year has been positive and wide-reaching, our partnerships have broadened and developed, and through careful financial control and management, our member offers have extended including more training and opportunities for our members. I have personally ensured that I regularly communicated with all members during the pandemic and look to continue this into the future with email and direct contact with the member organisations. In addition, to my regular updates you will still receive the regional and project-based updates you get from my colleagues.

Finally, all staff in Early Years Wales are committed to be there to support our member organisations. We are committed to support the Welsh Government's aspiration to update the National Minimum Standards, the new curriculum for non-maintained settings, ECEC and workforce development in early years in our members' best interests. We have stepped up in words and actions to support the anti-racist Wales plan as we seek to overcome barriers and address inequalities

wherever they exist. Aspiring to do this can only see better prospects for all our children, and in turn, a better and more equitable Wales for our futures.

We wanted to share our work and outputs with you all from last year, and to recognise the impact we've made together. We do this also in recognition of your excellent and valued work providing childcare in challenging circumstances. This report captures that and more... and we continue to build and extend our member benefits in support of you all.

Thank you for being with us!





**Children develop
and thrive when
choosing their own
play opportunities,
enabling them to
build self-confidence
and creative skills.**



As the leading specialist umbrella organisation in Wales, Early Years Wales is dedicated to the development of children aged 0 to 5 years - supporting the provision of quality assured, structured creative-learning and play opportunities for children. Our aim is to ensure that every child in Wales has the best start in life.

Early Years Wales has been supporting parents and families to participate in their children's development for over 30 years. This was a founding objective of the organisation, and we continue to develop ways to ensure that families are supported from birth through their early years.

Over the past 12 to 18 months, with the help of additional funding, we have been able to support more children and families than ever before. By reaching out to communities across Wales, setting standards and inspiring others whilst promoting pride within our sector we hope that together we will see children in Wales thrive.



Just imagine the part you could play.

To find out more visit [earlyyears.wales](https://www.earlyyears.wales)
or email us on info@earlyyears.wales



Our year in numbers

In 2020 - 2021 we have supported
28,718 children in childcare in Wales

906 members

representative of Full Day Care, Playgroups, Toddler Groups, Childminders, Creche, Student, Corporate and professional individuals

65%

of Early Years Wales members receive **30 hours childcare funding**

24%

are funded by Flying Start

130

Welsh Active Early Years sessions held across **22** local authorities

22%

deliver the Foundation Phase

123

childcare, play and gymnastics practitioners trained to deliver the Active Baby and You programme

We delivered free online training sessions and webinars to over

450

practitioners and childcare professionals

Thank you

to everyone who follows us on social media, our following on Facebook has doubled to over

1400

page likes

65%

of Early Years Wales members have told us they use Welsh with the children in the settings ranging from basic to bilingual.

Across the regions...

Like many organisations, the pandemic meant that we had to (temporarily) close our office doors for the safety of our staff. Remote working however, didn't result in us providing a lesser service to our members. We continued to support in alternative ways, such as by telephone and e-communications, whilst many of our services and supporting member offers have been modified to enable us to continue to be able to offer members with a wide-range of benefits and opportunities.

Wherever you are located, Early Years Wales is there to support you. Our regional teams are made up of a regional manager, funded Development Workers in some local authorities and support staff that are funded centrally.

"Thanks so much for listening, it's great to be able to talk things through with you"

Staff supported members with grant applications totalling £88,822.00 from various sources and £132,045.00 from the Moondance Foundation = £220,867

(See: Moondance Foundation on Anglesey Beach, *smalltalk*, (winter 2020), pg 6-7)

Did you know?

- Representatives from our regional teams sit on multi-agency panels for Childcare Offer Grants and Covid Grants where they advocate for all registered childcare settings; resulting in hundreds of thousands of pounds going into the improvement of childcare premises and providing financial support enabling childcare businesses to get through the pandemic with minimal loss across all counties.
- Our teams supported settings to navigate their way through the ever-changing guidelines in the early days of the pandemic. We provided settings with an ear to listen and a shoulder to lean on and importantly practical guidance and information to support them.
- We support settings with the CIW registration process and other procedures required by the Inspectorate e.g., Self-Assessment of Service Statement (SASS) and changes to the National Minimum Standards (NMS)
- Early Years Wales understands the difficulties faced by a child who needs extra support to join in a childcare setting with other children. We help if a family is struggling to understand the child's behaviour, actions or needs and by finding a playgroup or nursery that can cater to their child's needs. Across Wales we have supported nearly 80 children and their families during lockdown.
- Members tell us that we were the go-to organisation to get up to date information and practical support.



With the ever-changing guidance from Welsh Government some of the most requested topics for support were:

Amending and reviewing Policies and Procedures

In response to this Early Years Wales produced a set of bilingual policies to assist all settings with reopening: Guidance for managing bubbles, social distancing and hand hygiene. We also designed a range of floor stickers and posters to help with hand washing and social distancing in the setting.

Risk assessments

We know that carrying out risk assessments are an ongoing part of delivering any childcare business,

however Covid-19 required a fresh approach and for more robust and thorough risk assessments to be carried out prior to opening. To assist all settings Early Years Wales produced a bilingual risk assessment guidance pack.

Furlough

As guidance was issued and updated by UK Government on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) we kept members up to date on our dedicated Covid-19 information page on our website (earlyyears.wales/news), by email and also through *smalltalk* (spring 2021)



The impact of technology

As early into the pandemic as April 2020, Microsoft's Brad Smith said two years of digital transformation had taken place in just two months.

By this point we were already progressing nicely with the development of our new-look Early Years Wales website. We knew from conversations with our members that whilst our existing site was providing them with the vital information and the updates they needed from the sector it could be doing a lot more for them.

Our social media platforms are going from strength to strength

Facebook

Page likes: 1410 increased from 731 in April 2020

Page followers: 1599 increased from 773 in April 2020

Most engaged post: 3607 people reached

Twitter

1141 followers

12,817 profile views

Most reached post: 15,000

Instagram

403 followers

LinkedIn

141 followers

We launched in June 2020 with several new functionalities that were designed to not only be more user-friendly, but also with the aim of freeing up administration time that could be better utilised for the benefit of our members:

- Brand-new membership login - allowing members to access their own data; renew membership, update contact details, amend address etc
- Member only downloads
- Self-service childcare jobs facility - enabling members to advertise job vacancies online, receive Expressions of Interest from applicants and be shared across our social media platforms
- Online booking system for all our training and events

Our Website Stats:

41,000 visitors
Over 7,000 downloads
77 job vacancies advertised
49 job seekers have enquired directly to the recruiter using our online Expression of Interest form
43 online training events held
450 participants (representing approximately 50% of members) have attended at least one of our online events

Publications & resources

Over the past 18 months we have all had to respond to changing circumstances and adapt to variations in guidance. The emphasis on finding new ways of working and being innovative in our daily practices has never been so great. Designed to bring out the best in your business and staff our publications and resources are no exception to this.

July 2020

Helo Pawb

Welsh Language Oracy Pack for parents – free download for members and non-members.

July 2020

Covid-19

additional policies and risk assessment pack - free download for members and non-members.

Sept 2020

Updated Employer Resource Pack

Exclusive to members.

March 2021

Updated Policy and Procedures Pack

Exclusive to members, and were available free of charge till the end of June 2021.

April 2021

Updated Attendance Register

discounted for members.

April 2021

Traditional Seasonal Activities Brochure

free download for members only.

April 2021

launched Childcare Quality Awareness toolkit pilot

now being rolled out to existing QfA participants.

June 2021

Toddler Group re-opening guidelines

free download for members.

July 2021

Creative Learning in the Outdoors resource pack

mailed to Foundation Phase members.

July 2021

Early Years Wales Olympic Challenge 2021 Activity Pack

free download for members.

Sept 2021

Parent & Toddler Group Guidelines

in production stage, due to be launched October 2020.

smalltalk magazine

Throughout the pandemic, *smalltalk* continued to be published quarterly. However, it was recognised part way into the planning of the summer 2020 issue that the format would have to change.

Several factors contributed to this including, we were sensitive to the number of settings that had been forced to temporarily close their doors or were operating on reduced numbers. The unknown likelihood of transmission of the virus through paper and cardboard surfaces - this has now been proven to be very low. And the logistics of printing and dispatch were also a factor due to sectors outside of our own having to furlough staff.

Instead of printing and posting the magazine we decided to allocate the budget to translation of the magazine instead. Enabling us to publish it digitally in both English and Welsh for the first time and encouraging our readership to share it amongst their networks.

Throughout the pandemic we have supported our members by producing content that is relevant, timely and applicable to their current circumstance.



Summer 2020 Childcare on the front-line case studies

Approximately 30 per cent of Early Years Wales members were open and on the front line during the initial lockdown period.

After a month in lockdown, via social media, we asked our members who were open, and caring for the children of key workers and vulnerable children if they would like to share their experiences with the sector. We wanted to publish their stories in *smalltalk*. The response was overwhelming – open, honest and emotional. Slimmed down versions of the case studies we received were published in the summer 2020 issue. The unedited accounts have been compiled and can be read here: <https://www.earlyyears.wales/en/news/childcare-front-line-smalltalk-summer-2020>

#rainbowartprojectwales

We wanted to try and give children and adults something positive to contribute towards by inviting them to take part in our cover competition. The winner to be featured on the cover of the autumn issue and receive a £100 Amazon voucher for their setting and £25 voucher for themselves.

Autumn 2020 The Leadership Issue

What wasn't to love about the cover of our autumn issue. The winning entry to our Rainbow competition came from Little Tigers Daycare in Caldicot...#smile!

Although effective, compassionate and reflective leadership subtly runs through every issue of *smalltalk*, this issue we cranked it up to the max. We believe that Early Years Wales members set the standard when it comes to improving the lives of young children in Wales and supporting their families, and we wanted to celebrate this.

Winter 2020 Embracing technology

Just because we hadn't been able to hold a 'live' Early Years Wales Awards celebration earlier on in the year, we decided to end the year on a high and hold the event virtually instead. Details were published on page 4.

Spring 2021 The importance of play

Play is central to children's physical, mental, social and emotional health and well-being and having the right to play is law in Wales. Despite the pandemic play is still a crucial part of a happy and healthy childhood.

In this issue we considered play and its importance to the children we care for and their families.

Summer 2021 Childcare on the front line... a year on

Despite the devastating impact Covid-19 has had on so many, this issue demonstrates that as a sector we are doing everything we can to ensure that "all the children see is the same happy faces and their favourite toys" (Pg 14).

We also made another important change to the format of the magazine this issue. Rather than have to struggle to choose between the quality content available to us each issue we decided to add more pages. This issue we increased from 28 to 32-pages.



Foundation Phase Development

Non-maintained Curriculum

Over the last year, Early Years Wales has supported the development of the Curriculum for Funded Non-maintained nursery settings and Enabling Pathways guidance with Welsh Government. Our Foundation Phase Development Officer has worked alongside early years practitioners, Early Years Wales member settings, advisory teachers, and experts in the field of child development and early education to co-construct sector specific guidance to enhance children's development at the beginning of the learning continuum.

Early Years Wales continues to support member settings across Wales who have taken part in trialing the framework and we will continue to support the sector to effectively transition from the Foundation Phase framework to the non-maintained curriculum framework. Our downloadable Cwlwm curriculum resources have been accessed by **202** practitioners.

Connecting with the effective practice of Foundation Phase practitioners in our Foundation Phase Talking Point *smalltalk*

We have worked with 4 Early Years Wales member settings to produce case studies illustrating how they have developed approaches to family involvement and engagement, through distanced face-to-face communications, and digital collaborative technologies to 'co-participate meaningfully' in transitions, and in play and learning in children's homes, during the restrictions that were necessary with the Covid-19 pandemic (*smalltalk*, summer 2021).

We have also worked with a school and an outdoor nursery to develop case studies that illustrate all-weather-outdoor-learning (*smalltalk*, spring 2021)



Networking with FP practitioners

180 early years practitioners, teachers and advisory teachers have joined us in our digital Foundation Phase Excellence Network events.

We have collaborated with Sophie Hadaway and Gwenfair Hughes from the Arts Council of Wales, Pavla Boulton from the University of South Wales, Stella Louis, Neil Gilbride from the University of Gloucester, and Dawn Jones and Glenda Tinney from the University of Wales Trinity St David to provide

- Creative Learning and Outdoor Play
- Digital Technology and Outdoor Learning
- Schemas and the outdoors/ Frobel and engagement with nature
- Effective Leadership & Well-being
- Physical Development in the Outdoors

Following the Foundation Phase Excellence Network events we are working with 4 settings to embed creative learning in their outdoor spaces and have collaborated with the Arts Council of Wales to produce a set of physical resources to support creative learning in the outdoors. These have been distributed to **235** Early Years Wales members and Foundation Phase providers.



42 early years leaders and practitioners have joined us at smaller events run in collaboration with the charity CYCA to support 'Resilience, Recuperation and Staff Well-being'

Practitioners said the training was a 'revelation' and that they came away from the training with many new thoughts and practical ideas on supporting staff well-being and resilience. (See also: Connecting Youth Children and Adults (CYCA) Centre of Excellence – a new way forward, *smalltalk*, (autumn 2020) pg 22 - 25)

Welsh Language Development

Early Years Wales is committed to developing a bilingual early years workforce through enhancing the Welsh Language skills of early years staff. Working in partnership with the National Centre for Learning Welsh (NCfLW) and Welsh Government, Early Years Wales supports staff working in the sector on their Welsh learning journey.

More than 1,900 remote contact point with member organisations

74 new Welsh learners commencing training

Over 80 resources shared

During 2020, in response to Covid-19, the National Centre's training courses were paused. This resulted in a change from our traditional support for learners, to a distanced support including phone, email and video-call contact with settings and staff engaged in learning Welsh or using Welsh with their children and families.

In support of the sector, Early Years Wales created a range of learning resources, including resources for home learning and signposting to partner organisation resources such as Cymraeg I Blant, Mentrau Iaith Cymru, and Book Trust Cymru. All of the resources contributed to ensuring families and children could continue to practise Welsh at home during the first lockdown. Themes included exploring fruit, playing number games, rhymes, stories and reading books; all based upon readily available resources that could be sourced in the home.

Last year more than 80 resources have been created to help ensure that there are activities and opportunities to continue to develop the Welsh Language for children and for staff working within the early years sector.

As the Camau courses re-started in the early summer of 2021, we are pleased to recognise that more than 70 staff from our member organisations have commenced the Mynediad 1 online course. This is a conversion rate of over 60% from the expressions of interest in this course. As this training is a central pillar of upskilling staff, Early Years Wales is supporting learners on this new learning pathway, creating audio and video resources to build confidence, and running informal coffee-break conversations, Caffi Clebran sessions.




The Early Years Wales Welsh Language Oracy Pack was developed during the summer of 2020 and is available to download from earlyyears.wales/welsh-language-support. Parent-led, the pack is designed to support the family and practitioners to enjoy taking opportunities to speak Welsh within the setting and their communities.

Social media engagement from first post

- 44** shares on Facebook
- 48** direct hits on the landing page
- 13** retweets
- 11** likes on Instagram

'It made you reflect on the changes and practice over the last year. Made you realise how much we have **achieved** as a team during the pandemic.'



Quality for All

As part of our ongoing commitment to recognising and promoting quality childcare provision, Early Years Wales have developed a Quality Awareness Toolkit as an alternative model to our traditional Quality for All (QfA). This provides an interim means of recognising the excellent work that continues to be carried out by childcare providers in these challenging times and to aid setting's recovery from difficulties posed by Covid-19.

In the first 9 months of use, 95 early years providers have availed of the opportunity to be amongst the first to take part in this new style of assessment.

The Toolkit involves an easy to complete reflective self-assessment tool. Accompanied by a virtual, professional discussion with an experienced assessor, the whole process allows for reflection and recognition of the scope of work carried out by competent staff. After completion, providers receive a written summary and certificate, both recognising their work.

Providers who have completed the Toolkit, tell us that it has supported their reflection on the measures they have put in place and helped them consider what next steps they might take on their setting's recovery from the hardships caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

'The whole experience with the childcare quality awareness toolkit was positive. I felt the checklist was very clear about the desired outcome, the questions at the end of each section were beneficial in helping me to prepare for the video call. During the discussion with the assessor, I felt uplifted and reassured that although these times are uncertain and constantly changing we are doing a great job. After finishing the video call, I contacted my team to tell them how well the assessment went and how pleased she was with our practice.'

'Evidence was easy to gather as it was information that we use on a daily basis'

'I was able to reflect on our practice and see what changes could be implemented. I was also made feel that I was being compliant with procedures and regulations, but also felt that someone appreciates the work we have been doing regardless of the pandemic and lockdown.'

To find out more visit
[earlyyears.wales](https://www.earlyyears.wales)
 or email us on
info@earlyyears.wales

Governance

Early Years Wales has worked closely with the Charity Commission for many years supporting voluntary managed committees to operate using the best constitution for their organisation. In many cases, being a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) offers Trustees the best safeguards against any personal liabilities. Our dedicated team work throughout Wales, trying to be proactive and helping these organisations to constitute and register with the Charity Commission, running webinars, workshops and 1:1 sessions with voluntary boards.

“I would like to highlight some of the specific work we have done in Wales over the course of last year. Our registration and customer service team have worked with Early Years Wales, and they have agreed

approved governing documents including CIO constitutions and put in place a process where the necessary approvals to transfer assets and liabilities to any new CIO are given through that umbrella body and that is an example of just making it easier for small charities to operate and something that I am very keen to continue to do”

Helen Stephenson CBE, Chief Executive of the Charity Commission

Sometimes we have to help when challenges occur supporting charities that run into difficulties.

This is one example case study.

Help for a setting to resolve employment and contractual issues and to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

Early Years Wales worked with newly appointed trustees of a setting whose staff believed they were self-employed. Early Years Wales questioned this, as previously the staff had been transferred under TUPE from a different employer and their terms and conditions as employees should still have been in place. Staff believed strongly that they were self-employed and therefore they continued to operate with self-employed status for staff and unincorporated status for the setting.


When Covid-19 forced the setting to close, the setting contacted HMRC to register for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. HMRC refused furlough due to the status of staff, directing them to the Self Employment Income Support Scheme. The staff contacted ACAS who questioned whether they were employees or self-employed.

This made for a difficult situation as concerns about personal financial liability for newly appointed Trustees came to the fore.

Early Years Wales worked hard with the new Trustees to put the correct procedures and contracts in place. The process was complex but ensured that employment status and contractual issues were resolved.

Early Years Wales worked with the Trustees throughout lockdown attending 12 virtual meetings, making 67 phone calls and sending 122 emails providing guidance and support on employment & charity law and policies and procedures. The Trustees were considering paying a barrister at a huge cost and, Early Years Wales were able to direct them to an alternative employment lawyer, who gave them the advice and support needed, saving the setting considerable expense and stress.

A complex contractual dispute was dealt with through facilitated negotiations and the setting has been able to move on, going from strength to strength. A costly legal case was avoided, and they have now registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, giving themselves and any future Trustees limited liability with significant support from Early Years Wales.

A young girl with dark hair tied back, wearing a blue dress with white polka dots, is holding a white umbrella. She is looking down and to the left. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting. Rain is falling around her, creating a bokeh effect on the umbrella and her dress. A small red wavy line is positioned above the text block.

"I had another meeting with Sue and Elaine yesterday, can I just take this opportunity to send my thanks for all of their support. Sue has been amazing at giving us the steer and advice we very much needed in terms of sorting our governance and ensuring that we are doing things correctly. And Elaine is a star, she has been such a support to me personally over the last 12 months (she has even rung me outside of office hours knowing that I work full time). They are a great team and helping xx get into a strong position for moving" (Trustee)

Newport Additional Needs Referral Scheme

The Newport Additional Needs Referral Scheme is run in partnership with Newport City Council.

During the pandemic, the nature of the additional needs work changed. All Additional Needs Referral Scheme contract payments were honoured for March and April 2020, with parents being informed that Childcare Offer payments would continue to be paid to childcare settings and local authorities who were in receipt of funding for children in their care.

The first lockdown work centered around keeping in contact with the families of the children with additional needs whilst they were at home. Emails were exchanged to provide information and activities and links to relevant websites, to keep the children and parents engaged in play and learning. Phone calls were made to provide a 'check in service' with parents especially those with known mental health issues. Discussions took place between professionals to keep up to date and abreast of situations. The Additional Needs Support Co-ordinator was available should a parent want or need someone to talk to.

When the scheme re-started funding children from September 2020 the initial response was slow and some of the difficulties encountered included:

- Parents not ready to allow children to attend childcare
- Confidence levels low
- Concerns over the physical contact necessary to support a child with ALN
- Social distancing and space made using additional adults in the sessions difficult
- New environments were difficult for children with additional needs to understand
- Big time lapse in children being at the setting difficult to manage

Our response

Once children started to return to childcare settings, Early Years Wales invested in Zoom as well as Teams

to provide a visual link with the childcare setting, Co-ordinator and parents. This has been invaluable in the case of childminders collecting children from home to maintain a safe way of meeting, exchanging information but being able to see who would be collecting the child for the parents' peace of mind.

Early Years Wales produced some guidelines for reintroducing a child back into a setting, as well as guidelines on reopening, covid policies and managing bubbles. – [earlyyears.wales/member-downloads](https://www.earlyyears.wales/member-downloads)

As our co-ordinator has been unable to make physical visits support has been given to the settings to conduct more comprehensive and meaningful observations to use as evidence to support a child's placement.

We have produced a leaflet to inform parents and professionals about the scheme, this is also available as a digital download.

There have been many calls and requests for service during this year and there are many other service users who have been involved including: Health Visitors, Childminders, Portage, Complex Needs Care Co-ordinator, ISCAN, Family Liaison Officer, Sparkle, Aneurin Bevan Perinatal Team, Hearing Impairment Service, Family Intervention Workers, GAVO, NCC Inclusion, Speech and Language

Ongoing

The Referral Scheme is back to following its normal processes and multi-agency panel meetings have resumed using Teams. The panel has widened its scope and additional professionals have been invited where possible.

Face-to-face visits have not yet resumed so we are continuing to utilise Zoom with parents and settings, PCP meetings (Person Centred Planning) are now being held using Zoom or Teams.

Case Study

Referrals for help are always considered at Panel, particularly where parents have fragile mental health.

Assistance was requested for a child who will be attending a Flying Start setting when they turn two but needs help now. Mum not only has severe mental health issues but has a visual impairment and a new baby. A number of services were providing support but help with childcare was requested. A childminder was sought, and a Zoom meeting set up to make introductions.

A placement was made, but due to a number of safeguarding issues including the child having an accident at home, a MARF was sent to the Duty and

Assessment Team. The placement was suspended pending an investigation. Once the investigation had been completed and some extra layers of support put in, a new childcare contract was started.

It has helped build a relationship of trust between parent and childminder and provides an easy way of supporting the family with a door-to-door service. The placement is working well with good communication between both parties and the childminder keeps the Co-ordinator informed of any changes or asks advice, for example when the child recently had emergency surgery in hospital. The child has settled with the childminder and the placement working very well.



Welsh Active Early Years

Early Years Wales and Welsh Gymnastics have partnered to deliver the Welsh Active Early Years programme to 0–5-year-olds across Wales, as part of the Healthy and Active Fund – a partnership between Welsh Government, Sport Wales and Public Health Wales.

Welsh Active Early Years deliver the following:

Stats:

Delivering in 22 local authorities

Total Active Together Wales groups 24

Sessions delivered 130

123 Active Baby and You practitioners trained

199 parents/carers on database & 207 children

250 activity packs produced and sent out

5 Let's go fly a kite events



"I liked the fact it was using everyday household items that you already have lying around so you don't have to go out and buy fancy toys to have a good time."

Active Together Wales

A 5-week multi skills movement and play based bilingual activity programme delivered to parents/ carers and their children at community-based venues and outdoor spaces in communities across Wales.

Key dates:

- **5th November 2020**
First online programme delivered to 20 parents and children
- **16th February 2021**
First physical programme delivered to Abacus Day Nursery, Swansea
- **6th March 2021**
It was recognised that fathers were being overlooked when it comes to support with their little ones. Working in collaboration with Dads Can Cymru, we ran our 5-week programme solely aimed at Dads. 32 parents and children took part
- **8th June 2021**
First physical programme delivered post-lockdown to Myrtle House Nursery, Llanelli

Active Baby and You

The Active Baby and You training programme aims to provide those working in the sector the skills and knowledge to enable them to cascade activities and health and well-being messages to the children in their care.

- **Adult Learners Week (22nd September 2020)** 14 attended online

“The sessions were great, one of the best courses I've done. The pace was perfect and great to be shown so many practical things to try. Ideas for helping your little one learn the next skill has been really helpful and is the only course that has covered this. It would be great if the course was a couple of sessions longer to cover walking and other skills like waving and clapping.”



Active Baby at Home

Active Baby at Home is a six-week programme aimed at supporting new parents to understand the importance of movement through play in the first 1000 days.

The programme was developed during lockdown as an identified need and added to the Welsh Active Early Years programme to reach parents with babies born during lockdown.



- **25th November 2020**
First online session delivered to 10 parents and babies
- **10th June 2021**
 - First physical session post-lockdown
 - 22 parents and babies attended.
 - Since lockdown, we are continuing our work with existing gymnastics clubs, parenting groups and Women Connect First.

Most engaged Facebook post:
7469 people reached
Active Baby at Home
post on 9 June





Early Years Wales Awards 2020

At the end of January 2020, we excitedly opened the nominations for the second Early Years Wales Awards, which were to be held in Cardiff on the 12th June.

Sadly, due to Covid-19 our 2020 celebrations had to be postponed and we instead started to plan for 2021. As 2020 went on and there didn't seem to be an end in sight to the pandemic and having borne witness to the incredible work that was being done by our members in the sector we decided to end the year on a high and hold our 2020 awards after all.

We were absolutely thrilled when on a wet and windy December evening so many settings joined us for our virtual Early Years Wales Awards celebration, hosted by Dave Goodger, CEO, Early Years Wales.

During the evening 15 awards were presented...

- ★ **Award 1 Early Years Wales Setting of the Year**
Little Inspirations Day Nursery Ltd (GROUP)
- ★ **Award 2 Early Years Wales Innovator of the Year**
KIN Nature Kindergarten, Monmouth
- ★ **Award 3 Early Years Wales Practitioner of the Year**
Margaret Powell, Golden Manor Nursery Ltd, Pembrokeshire
- ★ **Award 4 Early Years Wales Volunteer of the Year**
Pat Moreton, Gibbonsdown Children's Centre, Vale of Glamorgan
- ★ **Award 5 Early Years Wales Learner of the Year**
Sandra Strait, Little Tigers Day Care, Monmouthshire

Special Recognition awards

Acknowledging settings that had to deal with situations they wouldn't normally be in.

Rachael's Playhouse, Rhondda Cynon Taff

Awarded for their exceptional support to settings across the Early Years Wales network during the pandemic.

Little Friends, Rhondda Cynon Taff

Awarded for overcoming the devastating impact the floods in early-2020 had on their building. They demonstrated incredible resilience and community spirit in overcoming the challenges they faced as a result.

Pebbles Day Nursery, Swansea

Awarded for their innovative approach to childcare.

The Learning Tree, Cardiff

Recognised for their flexible and parent led approach to childcare.

Talitha Brown, Penmorfa Playmates, Denbighshire

Recognised for her excellent management and leadership skills.

The Trustees of Gresford Playgroup Ducks and Ducklings, Wrexham

Thank you to Janet, Jean and Kathryn for their voluntary work on behalf of the setting.

Sally Munro, Trelogan Playgroup, Flintshire

Awarded for her commitment to her role and the setting during 2020.

Carol Dove, Penguin Playgroup, Flintshire

Carol has shown incredible dedication to her role as a new trustee.

Quality for All (QfA) Outstanding Achievement

Recognising the commitment to the challenges faced by settings during these uncertain times, and to settings who have shown dedication to achieving QfA accreditation year after year.

- **Rose Garden Day Nursery, Swansea**
- **Myrtle House Nursery, Carmarthenshire**



*"You are all winners;
you are all stars, and you
are amazing"*

Dave Goodger, CEO

Nominations now open...

Join us in December for the Early Years Wales Awards 2021, nominations are now open. We've made some exciting changes to our awards categories and the nomination process, check out our awards page at: earlyyears.wales





Thank you...

Early Years Wales is a team made up of dedicated and passionate individuals who are continuously striving towards progression, which in turn delivers a better offering to our members.

Through our own journeys we encounter businesses, individuals and organisations that share our passion for the early years by ensuring that every child in Wales is given the best start in life.

There are far too many to list individually but here is snapshot of the wide range of partnerships we have continued to develop and some which we are just beginning:

- **Welsh Government**
- **Local Authority Funders** – Newport, Monmouthshire, Flintshire, Ynys Mon, Denbighshire, Swansea, Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire
- **Welsh Gymnastics**
– our Welsh Active Early Years partners
- **Mudiad Meithrin, Pacey Cymru, NDNA Cymru and Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs**
– our Cwlwm partners
- **Early Years Alliance, Early Years Scotland, Early Years (Ireland), Early Childhood Ireland**
– our 5-Nations partners
- To everyone who has delivered training and contributed to *smalltalk* to name but a few...
University of South Wales, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Arts Council of Wales, Jenny Barber, Public Health Wales, Easyfundraising, NSPCC, Booktrust Cymru, Nicci Hooper, Play Wales, Camau, Swim Wales, CYCA, Demna Consulting Ltd
- **Towergate Insurance** – for sponsoring our 2020 Early Years Wales Awards