

smalltalk

Early Years Wales members' magazine

Summer 2021 | Issue 142 | £7

Childcare on the front line...a year on

- **Research:** The importance of good quality early years services
- **Case studies:** How Covid-19 has changed the way you deliver
- **Talking Point:** Engaging and involving children and the important adults in their lives

Spotlight on the Early Years Wales Setting of the Year 2020 winner

Online safety advice from the NSPCC



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



**Early Years
Wales
Blynyddoedd
Cynnar Cymru**

inside

4. **Introducing you to the new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system in Wales**

Preparing you for the new ALN system which comes into force in September.

5. **Curriculum for Wales**

A summary of the Enabling Pathways guidance and the draft curriculum for funded non-maintained settings.

6. **Early Years Wales Setting of the Year 2020: Little Inspirations Day Nurseries**

Investing in their staff has been the key to this group of nurseries success.

10. **Cover story: Childcare on the front line...a year on**

A year ago our sector had responded to unprecedented changes and challenges without a blueprint to follow or guide us. The following three articles demonstrate how you have continued to innovate and adapt your practices.

11. **The impact of Covid-19 on Early Years: Research Evidence**

As we steadily come out of the latest lockdown it is probably a good time to step back and reflect on what research can tell us about the potential impact Covid-19 has had on **Early Childhood Education and Care** (ECEC) during the crisis.

13. **Case studies**

We catch up with three of the member settings that made up our Childcare on the front line feature last year to take a look at how their settings look now compared to then.

15. **Foundation Phase: Talking Point**

Engaging and involving children and the important adults in their lives, in unusual times.

18. **Helping children safely navigate the online world**

Keeping children safe online is just as important as their safety when crossing a road or talking to strangers. The NSPCC share some helpful advice and tips on keeping children stay safe online.

21. **Do you run a Parent and Toddler group?**

We're offering members an exciting opportunity to take part in the Welsh Active Early Years project and receive a package of support to help make your group a success.

22. **Quality for All: Introducing the Childcare Quality Awareness Toolkit**

The Early Years Wales Childcare Quality Awareness Toolkit has been developed as an alternative to the QfA accreditation and recognises the way childcare providers have responded to the changing circumstances over the past year.

24. **WeCare Wales Ambassador campaign**

Anyone who works, volunteers or has a keen interest in Early Years and Childcare or in Social Care can become a WeCare Ambassador. Two of our own share their motivations for representing the sector.

26. **Did you know your setting can get free donations from leading online retailers?**

The average online shopper could raise £30 a year for your setting. easyfundraising show you how.

28. **St David's Day on the Isle of Wight**

The pupils of St Mary's Catholic Primary School in Ryde had a thoroughly enjoyable (virtual) day out in Wales.

30. **What is a Risk Assessment and why is it needed?**

Considerations and guidance for carrying out regular risk assessments.

The Team

Editor:

Charlotte Davies
smalltalk@earlyyears.wales

Sub-editors:

Maggie Kelly
Matt Anthony

Registered Office:

Unit 1, Coopers Yard,
Curran Road,
Cardiff, CF10 5NB

T: 029 2045 1242

E: info@earlyyears.wales

Swyddfa Gofrestredig:

Uned 1, Iard y Cowper,
Ffordd Curran,
Caerdydd, CF10 5NB

Ff: 029 2045 1242

E: info@earlyyears.wales

Social Media

Follow us on Twitter

 @EarlyWales

Find us on Facebook

 EarlyYearsWales

Join us on LinkedIn

 Early Years Wales

Follow us on Instagram

 earlyyears_wales

Visit our website

earlyyears.wales

Early Years Wales 2018
Blynyddoed Cynnar Cymru 2018

Registered Charity Number: 1056381
Company limited by guarantee: 3164233
Rhif Elusen Gofrestredig: 1056381
Cwmni cyfngedig drwy warant: 3164233



“What have you done today to make you feel proud?”

Little Inspirations Day Nurseries

Early Years Wales Setting of the Year 2020

Despite not being able to enjoy the glitz and glamour of a live awards ceremony last year, we were determined to see 2020 out on a high.

On 15th December, we were delighted that so many of you joined us for our virtual awards celebration. In a year of so many firsts for us all, it seemed a fitting tribute to the incredible work achieved by Early Years Wales members over the past 12 months. Who knows what 2021 will bring, but for now let's keep celebrating the achievements of our current winners.

To be awarded **Setting of the Year 2020**, the judges were looking for a setting driven by their passion for supporting early years children and quality childcare. Where the focus is to provide a safe, clean and stimulating environment where children are encouraged to play, learn and thrive. A setting that holds their staff in the highest regard and has excellent links with parents, external partners, and the local community. The setting must have achieved or are working towards an Early Years Wales Quality for All (QfA) award, and external reports such as Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) are of high standard.

This issue we shine a light on Little Inspirations Day Nurseries, who were awarded Early Years Wales Setting of the Year 2020. Particularly focussing on the excellent relationships and high regard they hold for their employees.

Founder & Director of Little Inspirations, Jenine Gill believes that investing in their staff has been key to the company's success. All staff are empowered to take ownership to reach their full potential, resulting in an average staff retention of over ten years.

She says,
“our parents can be assured that their children will be safe, stimulated and engaged because our staff are.”

Hero Day



At Little Inspirations we live every day according to the values set out in our six Guiding Principles.



Inclusive

All needs are respected and supported.



Partnership

Collaborate and develop partnerships to remain market leader.



Environment

Everyone safe and secure in a fun, stimulating environment.



Community

At the centre and visible to the community we serve..



Creative

Creative in everything we do, push the boundaries of possibility.



Growth

Together valued and empowered to develop our skills and knowledge.



Career progression

Little Inspirations has grown from one site based in Llantrisant, employing 27 staff in 2003, to seven sites and 102 staff across South Wales.

Having multiple sites allows staff to upskill and progress as Jenine explains.

“By 2005 we had three childcare sites. Employing 50 staff and caring for 160 children per day. We were working in partnership with two local authorities and providing care for children that were cared by the authority or were identified at high risk. It was at this point we recognised that most of our staff had been with us since the beginning and having multiple sites allowed us to offer career progression. We were able to offer management opportunities to nursery nurses.”

Apprenticeships

It was at around the same time that Little Inspirations began working in partnership with Educ8 Training (<https://www.educ8training.co.uk/>). Since then, approximately 80% of staff have been on an apprenticeship scheme. This ranges from Level 2 to Level 5 CCPLD, Customer Service, and ILM Leadership and Management qualifications.

When given the support by their employer, staff who had struggled in school were able to achieve an apprenticeship. Jenine and her team quickly saw the benefit of this and a Learner Co-ordinator was appointed on every site to support all learners and to enable success.

Accolades and Awards

Little Inspirations were awarded VQ Employers of the Year 2015 and were finalists three years running in the Apprenticeship Awards Cymru, and in 2020 they were awarded the FE Week AAC National Award for Outstanding contribution to the development of apprenticeships (employer) sponsored by City & Guilds ILM, against organisations such as the UK Government and TUI.

Other awards that reflect the value they place in their staff include:

Federation of Small Business (FSB) and Worldpay UK Business Awards 2017

- Employer of the Year Winner

Business Growth 2019 Awards – South Wales

- Economic Contribution Winner
- Business of the Year Winner



Business Growth 2019 Awards Winners

The company also obtained FairPlay Employer Leadership status from Chwarae Teg in 2019 (<https://chwaraeteg.com/projects/fairplay/>)

Mental health and well-being

At Little Inspirations well-being is everybody's responsibility, from the Directors down to the staff. Conversations about mental health and well-being issues are encouraged, and seven members of staff have been fully trained as mental health first aiders to provide on-site support if required.

As a result of their commitment to staff well-being the company has been awarded a **Gold Small Workplace Health Award** from Public Health Wales on all their sites and are working towards a Corporate Health Standard Award.



time to change event

Healthy and Sustainable Pre-School Scheme

The Healthy and Sustainable Pre-School Scheme is a Welsh Government initiative, delivered through Public Health Wales. It aims to promote the health of pre-school age children by working through the childcare settings they attend. One of the ways in which the scheme has supported settings over the last few months is by providing up to date lists of training and resources around topics such as infection prevention and control, mental and emotional health and well-being, and physical activity. Every area of Wales has a co-ordinator for the Healthy and Sustainable Pre-School Scheme – please contact Healthy.Schools@wales.nhs.uk to find out how to join the scheme in your area.

We'll be looking at the Scheme in more detail next issue.

Outsourcing Human Resources

By partnering with Peninsula HR, Little Inspirations can offer staff access to an **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) & employee well-being services** including 24/7 telephone advice, face to face counselling and online resources to help them stay happy and healthy.

time to change

In 2019 Little Inspirations signed the Employer Pledge to end mental health discrimination. Sadly, the pledge has been retired but you can still access plenty of resources via <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/> to help you develop your own action plan. To watch a video of the event the nursery held to celebrate signing the pledge visit their Facebook page here: <https://fb.watch/5ztCOsQ05L/>



Jenine Gill with Rhian Manning
from 2 Wish Upon a Star



St David Award



St David Award for Business 2021 Winner

The St David Awards are the national awards of Wales recognising the extraordinary achievements of the people of Wales, as nominated by the people of Wales. In March, the First Minister of Wales Mark Drakeford awarded Little Inspirations the Business Award in recognition of the services they continued to deliver to their communities during the pandemic in supporting families and their little ones.

Director, Jenine Gill dedicated the award to her staff, saying that they were determined the doors would never be shut and that they would always be there to support the front-liners that needed to go to work. She also said that the award was about

“getting the industry [childcare sector] noticed, getting the part we played noticed.”

Congratulations!

You may also be interested in:

Spotlight on...Abacus Day Nursery and Pre-school, Swansea – Early Years Wales Setting of the Year, *smalltalk*, (winter 2019), pg 5-9

Early Years Wales Awards 2020, *smalltalk*, (spring 2021), pg 4-5

Delivering childcare qualifications in the face of Covid-19, *smalltalk*, (winter 2020), pg 17 – 19

Raising the standards in childcare for Wales, *smalltalk* (summer 2019), pg 8 - 9

Don't forget

Early Years Wales members can download back issues of *smalltalk* for free: earlyyears.wales/shop