

## Welsh Active Early Years Summary Report

### Outputs

Our initial target was to produce two outputs (one in bold type below) and Play to Learn +. Responding positively to feedback from participants and our internal evaluations, we produced a suite of training courses including:

- Active Baby at Home – parenting programme
- **Active Together Wales** – parenting programme
- Active Baby and You
- Play, Move, Thrive
- Active Baby at Home (Train the Trainer)









*Example of our Active Together Wales cards for facilitators*

These resources and training opportunities support physical development from birth to five years of age and are underpinned by research and child development principles. The suite of training and philosophy of the approach is to empower the key individuals in a child's life so they can plan and incorporate daily physical movement through play. This increases the likelihood that the opportunities for movement are embedded in daily routines, and contribute to the


recommendations made by the Chief Medical Officers for up to 180 minutes of daily physical activity for a child aged 1-5 years of age.

## Physical activity for early years (birth – 5 years)
















Active children are healthy, happy,  
school ready and sleep better

 <b>BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS &amp; SOCIAL SKILLS</b>	 <b>MAINTAINS HEALTH &amp; WEIGHT</b>	 <b>CONTRIBUTES TO BRAIN DEVELOPMENT &amp; LEARNING</b>
 <b>IMPROVES SLEEP</b>	 <b>DEVELOPS MUSCLES &amp; BONES</b>	 <b>ENCOURAGES MOVEMENT &amp; CO-ORDINATION</b>

### Every movement counts



**Aim for at least  
180  
Minutes  
per day  
for children 1-5 years**

 <b>PLAYGROUND</b>				
 <b>JUMP</b>	 <b>CLIMB</b>			
 <b>MESSY PLAY</b>	 <b>THROW/CATCH</b>	 <b>SKIP</b>		
 <b>OBJECT PLAY</b>	 <b>DANCE</b>	 <b>GAMES</b>	 <b>PLAY</b>	
 <b>TUMMY TIME</b>	 <b>SWIM</b>	 <b>WALK</b>	 <b>SCOOT</b>	 <b>BIKE</b>

**Get Strong. Move More. Break up inactivity**

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019

*UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines 2019: Physical activity for early years (birth – 5 years)*

## Key Findings

- Physical development in the early years is not universally understood well by parents and practitioners. This knowledge gap is concerning as there are multiple reasons why physical development is vitally important in a child's early years experience.
- The lack of underpinning knowledge leads to limited or poor-quality experiences for children. Physical activity can be seen as an offer, and something to fit into a weekly schedule rather than an expression of movement needs from a child that needs time, space and opportunity daily.
- Many practitioners are unaware of the holistic child development physical activity supports in the early years of childhood. This includes making a positive contribution to and impact on cognition, brain development, gross and fine motor skills, communication (including speaking and emergent reading), self-regulation, and social and emotional well-being.
- Continuous professional development in physical development addresses gaps in knowledge and supports practitioner confidence. This significantly enhances the adult's planning for movement, the range of opportunities provided to a child, and the well-being of both children and practitioners.
- Many parents also lack knowledge about the holistic positive impact physical development makes to a child's development.
- Due to the gaps in knowledge highlighted above, we maintain that there is insufficient focus and investment in systematically supporting a child's physical development journey from birth to 5 years of age. This risks leaving physical development to chance, and results in children missing key physical development milestones leading to later emotional and educational challenges.

- Due to the gaps outlined above, and the individual adults' interpretation of the importance of physical activity, many children do not and will not meet the 180 minutes of physical activity called for by the chief medical officers of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland for children aged 1-5 years.

## Our next steps



Example of our Active Baby and You cards for practitioners

- Hosting an autumn seminar promoting the importance of physical development in the early years
- Continuing the rollout of training to upskill practitioners in the importance of and how to implement best practice in physical development in the early years
- Working with wider stakeholders and policymakers to ensure that best practice in physical development is more common across Wales.
- Using parent and toddler groups to inform parents about the key stages of movement and how these promote physical development from birth to 5 years of age; and the associated holistic development of a child.
- Sourcing funding to scale up the capacity to reach a wider audience with the key messages and the tools to plan for a child's physical development journey.

**Throughout the course, you will hear discussions around the following terms...**

**Crossing the mid-line**  
The body's mid-line is an imaginary line down the centre of the body that divides the body into left and right. Crossing the mid-line is when we cross our arms or leg across the middle of our body. It is important for fine motor development and is used in many activities. For example, writing from left to right on a page will use both sides of the brain.

**Proprioception**  
Proprioception can be explained as: if you close your eyes and touch your finger to your nose, for example, you have a good sense for where your body part is. Even though you can't see it. Proprioception helps us to be able to coordinate our muscles to move in a certain way. It is important for developing fine motor skills and the ability to be aware of our body.

**The Vestibular System**  
The vestibular system helps to coordinate the movement of a baby's body and to maintain a sense of balance. It is important for developing fine motor skills and the ability to be aware of our body.

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**Let's Crawl Activity:**  
A fun game to encourage crawling confidence on all fours is to create a tunnel from a cardboard box. Place your baby on all fours by the edge of the cardboard box. Show to the other side of the box and call their name encouraging them to move through the tunnel. You can also try rolling a ball through it and encourage them to follow or pick 'sleep' pot.

**How babies learn to crawl**  
Babies need to figure out how to do arms leg crawling movements and sometimes will move backward first before crawling forward. This can be frustrating for them and will need lots of encouragement and support from you.

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Example of Active Baby at Home support cards for parents/carers

**For more information about Early Years Wales, and the physical development in the early years, please contact:**

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