

MOVING QUALITY FORWARD

Wales PPA's quality assurance scheme, Quality for All (QfA), is celebrating its fifth anniversary this winter - and in that time over 300 providers have chosen to demonstrate that they are committed to providing exceptional quality childcare.

Quality for All gives you the opportunity to say how you manage your provision, what you do and how you do it. In this and future issues of *smalltalk*, we will uncover the positive impact that QfA can have on the way you manage your provisions.

Quality for All is a quality assurance scheme that fully meets the Welsh Governments proposed framework for their expectations of a childcare quality assurance scheme in Wales. It is designed to ensure a consistent approach to demonstrating quality, regardless of your childcare provision category, the children's ages and the hours of care you provide in or out of school term time.

We begin our series of articles by talking to Cathryn Evans, Playgroup Manager of Afan Playgroup in Neath Port Talbot. Afan Playgroup opened in June 2015 and received its initial accreditation in May 2016, when it was awarded a Pass Plus.

It is important to note that whilst QfA is awarded on three levels - Pass,

Pass Plus and Highly Commended - a Pass means that you are exceeding National Minimum Standards (NMS) in some of the areas of care you provide. So no matter what the grade, our Quality Mark provides you with recognition of the exceptional care you offer the children and parents in your community.

Cathryn begins by explaining the motivation behind signing up to the Quality for All scheme:

"Shortly after opening Afan Playgroup in June 2015, we achieved our Gold Plus in the Healthy Snack Award and the Gold in the Healthy Workplace Award. We had also joined Wales PPA as members to access their support and guidance. It was then that we were introduced to QfA. As the Healthy Snack Award is more focused on the children's well-being, and the Healthy Workplace Award is more focused on the well-being of our staff, we were happy to take up this new challenge, as the QfA focuses on both, and that was the direction we wanted to go in.

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“Charlie has had a lovely time at your Playgroup, thank you so much for all the help you’ve given her. She is going to miss you loads.”

As a setting, we always look for ways to continually improve our service so that the children and parents are happy in the knowledge that they are getting the best childcare possible. During our last CSSIW inspection we excelled, and had only a few small recommendations which were put in place that same week. We wanted to approach our QfA assessment in a similar way.

The initial evaluation form...

The initial evaluation form is lengthy and detailed but it is a great way to reflect on our practice. Some parts are a recap of setting policies and a large amount of new information can also be used in our Annual Quality of Care Report, making that task easier when it arrives.

The assessment...

On the day of the assessment, Claire, our assessor, was friendly and professional and stayed for the duration of the morning session. Claire spoke to me, the staff team, the parents and the children to gain lots of feedback and she carefully examined the environment of the setting. She also read through our policies and other general paperwork in detail. It was a very comprehensive assessment.

We were delighted with our feedback as we achieved our Pass Plus on the first attempt, which indicates that we meet all of the National Minimum Standards and exceed them in many ways. We have also been given some useful advice on how to further improve our setting. Examples include putting parents' commendations on the wall in our welcome area and allowing the children to pour their own milk during snack time.

This was immediately reflected on and amendments to the routine have been made to improve children's independence.

By completing this award, we have been given great ideas on how to continually improve our service. These have been put in place for parents and children to enjoy, as well as to impress CSSIW and other childcare professionals when they visit. We are proud to have achieved QfA and have published our achievement in our newsletter as well as displaying our certificate in our welcome area."



Conclusion

It is important to remember that Wales PPA's Quality for All award is a continuing process, with re-accreditations taking place annually. This ensures that everyone moves forward and is continuously improving, giving confidence to parents, children, commissioners and regulatory bodies.

Congratulations to Afan Playgroup for achieving a Pass Plus. We wish you all the best for your re-accreditation.



Did you know?

Many local authorities (Flying Start and Estyn) financially support and encourage their settings to complete Quality for All? If you would like to know whether you could be eligible to undertake QfA through your local authority, or if you would like any other information, please email Claire Thomas, QfA Coordinator at: qfa@walesppa.org