



Welcome to the Cwlwm Autumn Term Newsletter. The Covid-19 pandemic has proved to be a difficult and challenging time for everyone, not least the early years, childcare and playwork sector. During challenging circumstances and changing guidelines over recent months, Cwlwm partners would like to congratulate and thank the sector, some for reopening their provisions and others for remaining open. This newsletter demonstrates the effort, determination, innovation and successes achieved by the sector. The sector has continued to move forward and children and families across Wales have benefited from the various support offered by Cwlwm. Cwlwm continues to be here to support you.



www.meithrin.cymru



www.clybiauplantcymru.org



earlyyears.wales



www.pacey.org.uk



www.cwlwm.org.uk



www.ndna.org.uk

Mudiad Meithrin



Meithrinfeydd Cymru Cyf: Meithrinfa Camau Bach, Garth Olwg and Medra

The closure caused by the Coronavirus was a challenging time for all involved in the world of Childcare and Play. Catching the virus, having to close settings and the business challenges faced in terms of managing the financial effects of the virus and a reduced number of families accessing the childcare services which remained open all contributed to make this a troubling period.

By now 3 of the Meithrinfeydd Cymru Cyf nurseries have reopened, and everything is running smoothly.

The preparatory period prior to reopening the nurseries was a very busy one for the management team. Many essential documents were created and distributed, including a Covid-19 Reopening Policy, risk assessments, cleaning and hygiene guidelines and various other procedures.

The documentation was shared with staff, and over 100 staff members received training sessions via zoom. This was valuable as it enabled discussion of all the changes and created opportunities to raise any concerns about returning to the workplace. It was an opportunity to quieten minds and develop trust.

Documents were also shared with parents to ensure that everybody understood our new rules and procedures, and the steps taken to safeguard their children, themselves as parents and our staff.

The response was one of support. A video clip shared on Facebook and Twitter showed the nursery under its new guise, providing reassurance to parents as they sent their children back to nursery. The number of children who returned in the opening weeks demonstrated that parents had confidence in us, and by now, three months after reopening, we are almost back to pre-lockdown capacity.



Parents have accepted the changes and the new procedures when dropping off and collecting children, as well as the need to socially distance to protect everybody. The doors of the nurseries are temporarily closed to visitors, but everybody respects the reason for this and continue to adhere to the rules. We also share pictures on Facebook of the nurseries' rooms in their new layout, revised in order to allow us to observe social distancing rules, and we share various pictures weekly of the children at play and involved in other activities. In times of uncertainty communication is vital, and parents greatly appreciate this.

To lessen risk of infection parents are not able to access the building, so staff have been holding meetings with parents via facetime and zoom. This ensures consistent and effective contact and communication, and that the close relationship between nurseries and families is maintained. Once restrictions are lifted, we will permit parents to visit the buildings once again, as they were able to do before lockdown.



Despite these changes, the children have settled back into nursery life quickly. They have accepted the changes made to the rooms, to their daily routines and activities, and this has not posed any obstacles or difficulties. Detailed guidelines mean that we've avoided some of the challenges likely to have arisen. The children play outdoors regularly, so there has been no change in this regard, and the learning opportunities and experiences offered continue to be as effective as they were previously; although there have been small changes made to the resources and equipment on offer. The latest procedure of grouping children by their rooms as opposed to 'bubbles' of 8 has greatly facilitated the running of the rooms and is far more practical for children and staff.



Staff are firmly committed to the new rules, and each one ensures that they are implemented for the safety and well-being of everybody in the nursery. The staff take

the handwashing and cleaning procedures very seriously, disinfecting and washing hands frequently throughout the day; before and after each activity, at toilet time, before and after eating or playing outside. At times it has been a challenge to staff the nurseries and ensure that we have sufficient staff as a number of staff members continue to self-isolate due to pregnancy or serious health conditions, but we have overcome this by appointing additional bank staff.

One of the most difficult challenges faced – and one which we continue to face – is that new parents are not able to visit the nurseries. This is done to manage contact between the staff and children in the nurseries. We have overcome this by having the Managers of the nurseries conduct a virtual ‘tour’ of the settings on Facebook Messenger. These sessions offer the new parents a chance to speak to staff as well as see inside the setting, and the feedback from parents has been extremely positive.

During this period, we are avoiding taking children for walks to specific locations, e.g. the park, library, shops etc., due to the risk posed by the virus. However, they have taken greater advantage of the outdoor areas and the sensory gardens within the settings, and this has facilitated outdoor activities.





Several social evenings have been postponed, e.g. open evenings and fundraising events; but we hope that we will be able to resume these in the near future.

This year's 'Graduation Ceremony' was postponed. This is our yearly celebration where parents are invited into the nursery to celebrate with the children who are leaving us to move on to primary school. We intend to hold this celebration once it is possible for us to do so.

It's good that we've seen a large number of new families starting at the nurseries, as the parents need childcare in order to return to work and their usual services have not reopened. The parents and children have settled in well, and it's heartening to hear that they intend to continue with us for the duration of their children's care.

Although a difficult period, lockdown has also pushed us to think creatively and challenge ourselves to try new things. Had somebody suggested these changes to us last year we would have argued that it would not be possible to implement them; however the pandemic has forced us to do so, and some elements have been for the better. Of course, we hope that the restrictions will lift, but this period has not stopped us from resuming nursery life in all its liveliness and excitement, despite the fact that we have to include our parents and family in nursery life from afar!

Cylch Meithrin Ffrindiau Bach yr Enfys

Along with many other childcare settings, closing our doors due to the pandemic was a period of uncertainty for our children, parents / guardians and staff.

Rebuilding confidence in returning to our setting has been challenging. To reduce concerns, parents / guardians were sent a questionnaire asking how they felt about returning their children to the setting. Staff were asked to complete a questionnaire noting their concerns in returning to work. Responses were taken into consideration and in line with the Welsh Government recommendations and Mudiad Meithrin's COVID Policy, measures were put in place to minimise risk.

Even though Ffrindiau Bach yr Enfys was closed for a short period of time, the children remained our focus. Staff stayed in touch with the parents and children during the lockdown via video messages, enabling the children to see their key workers and continue to hear the Welsh language. Some children (via the parents' phone!) even sent messages back to the staff. Activities were also suggested for the families to carry out at home.

Virtual Tours were sent to prospective parents in readiness for re-opening which allowed staff to introduce themselves to parents and the children could 'meet' the staff for the first time in order to help the settling in process and to know what to expect.

New protocols for cleaning were put in place in line with Mudiad Meithrin's COVID Policy and a thorough Risk Assessment is in place which has been shared with parents/guardians. Surfaces and toys are thoroughly cleaned at least twice a day, giving particular attention to the touchpoints.

Staggered drop off and pick up times have been introduced to minimise contact. Parents / Guardians are now greeted at the door and temperature checks are in place prior to children entering the building. Hand washing takes





place on arrival and regularly during the day, the children have even been taught a hand washing song to encourage this. Essential visitors are allowed in only by appointment and one at a time.

As we are based next door to the local primary school, we have worked with the school to ensure both our and the schools' risk assessments have been considered.

Children spend as much time as possible outdoors, the childcare rooms have been divided up into smaller areas and strict hygiene rules apply. Where possible the age groups are kept in separate spaces and outdoor playtimes are staggered. Outdoor play equipment is sanitised at the end of each session.



Only a small number of parents chose not to send their children when we reopened on the 1st of September. By now, all our children are back with us, along with many new children and all have settled into the new routines.

Welcoming the children back has been heart-warming and the staff have enjoyed seeing the children running in to the setting and are often reluctant to leave!

It's good to be back!

Messages of thanks

Some of the messages of thanks received by Mudiad Meithrin from provisions and parents over recent months:

Dear Mudiad Meithrin Staff

Thank you very much for your support, having Mudiad Meithrin behind us through this crisis has been of priceless. Thank you to you all. Keep safe.

Dwynwen, Helen and all the staff at Y Dyfodol Nursery, Cellan

Ysgol Feithrin Pontypwl is ready to re-open on Monday. We would like to take this opportunity to say a massive DIOLCH YN FAWR to all Mudiad Meithrin staff for the amazing support we have received over the last few months. We could not have survived with your help.

Thank you all in Mudiad Meithrin for working so hard to give us the most up to date information out of all the Covid Guidelines.

Cylch Meithrin Pontrobert

Good afternoon

On behalf of Cylch Meithrin Talysarn, I would like to thank you for all your support, emails and now confirmation that this year's registration fee is free. This is a huge financial help to us through this unstable time.

Thank you so much
Best wishes

Cylch Meithrin Talysarn

Dear Minister

Cylch Meithrin y Felinheli wishes to note the exceptional advice and support it has received from Mudiad Meithrin as we face this uncertain and challenging time. Mudiad Meithrin since the beginning of this pandemic, has provided clear and educational daily updates, easy access to an informed and able Regional Officer and a wealth of practical resources. This package has enabled a service to be in a strong position to adapt to the "New Normal".

We commend Mudiad Meithrin and its staff for its outstanding performance.

Yours sincerely

Anna Mihangel - Secretary of Cylch Meithrin y Felinheli

CLYBIAU PLANT CYMRU KIDS' CLUB



Cornist Park After School Club, Ffordd Yr Ysgol, Flint CH6 5ET

About Cornist Park After School Club Out of School club

Cornist Park After School Club provides after school childcare for pupils attending Cornist Park County Primary School. Cornist Park County Primary School has approximately 330 pupils on roll, aged 3 – 11 years. The after-school club is very popular; it is based in the school hall.

Support provided by Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs

Following a visit to Cornist Park after-school club, by the Childcare Development Officer, they were advised to join Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Club as members. Sandra Welsby, Childcare Business Development Officer, North Wales visited the club at the end of January, 2020. Sandra supported the club with training for the staff and also discussed a plan for the structure of the club. The plan was for the club to recruit parents and people from the local community to become a Committee to support the club going forward. A meeting with the new Committee was going to be arranged with Sandra to discuss the future Governance of the club and registration of Care Inspectorate Wales. However, in March 2020 the Covid19 pandemic lockdown came into place, and the school and after school club closed.

Benefits of support

Kate Blythin, School Business Manager

During the time of the Covid19 pandemic, I was able to keep in contact with Sandra, she has been a great help to me with advice and guidance in all things After School Club! I am new to the role as School Business Manager here at Cornist Park school, so lots of things are very different to my previous work experience and quite daunting!

Sandra has been very helpful with the guidance around getting our club registered and making any available funding, whether it be for the club itself or for the training of our staff, known to us. Sandra's guidance regarding the furlough of our club staff during the national Covid19 lockdown was especially helpful. All information and help from Sandra is always relevant, concise and she is very quick to respond to my emails!

I look forward to working with Sandra in the future.

Llanharan Community Development Project, 23a Bridgend Road, Llanharan, RCT. CF72 9RD

About Llanharan Community Development Project

Based in the heart of a thriving and ever growing community in RCT, Llanharan Community Development Project (LCDP) provides a number of services for the whole of the local community. These services include out of school clubs running from two local schools and a holiday club; open access playscheme services also run within local neighbourhoods. In addition to these services they also organise and provide adult learning classes, on site nursery, a pre-school run from a local community centre, over 50's club and a local café that can be accessed for all.



Support provided by Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs

LCDP are members of Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs and regularly access the website and emails for support and to keep up to date with guidance and any changes being made. They also have strong links with the Childcare Business Development Officer and Training Officers who live locally and whose children access and benefit from services of the setting. "Any questions that we have someone is always on the end of the phone or email and are really quick in helping us find solutions and answers."

Benefits of support

Ben Thomas: Play, Youth and Community Development Officer

Rhian Symons: Early Years and Childcare Coordinator

Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs have been extremely helpful, especially during the last 6 months with all of the risk assessment templates, regular emails and contacts, and guidance and up to date information that was regularly sent out through email, and



have also been accessible through their social media.

They have always been on the end of phone if we have needed anything or had any questions. They were also quick to get in contact with us to answer queries and to reassure us as to measures we put in place were correct, as well as confirming protective measures that are needing to be put in place. Anything that we have asked, they have got back to us and supported us to find solutions, and have offered invaluable support to us as an organisation. Even the children who attended during holiday club were asking about the workshops, and have said that they missed not having training officers coming in to deliver fun experiments and activities.

Clwb Plant Segontiwm, Ysgol Yr Hendre Ffordd Cae Phillips, Caernarfon LL55 2AT

About Clwb Plant Segontiwm Out of School Club

Clwb Plant Segontiwm opened in March 2012 and is registered with the Care Inspectorate Wales to care for a maximum of 30 children under the age of 12 years. The setting is managed by a Voluntary Management Committee which oversees all the decisions at the setting, however the day to day running of the setting is down to the setting manager Julie Edwards. The setting operates an After School Club and Holiday club from the school hall.

During their last inspection the following were noted;

- Children express their views with confidence and know that their ideas will be listened to and valued.
- Staff have a welcoming and friendly approach and are consistent and fair when managing interactions.
- The environment is safe and secure and children have opportunities to access the school yard for outdoor play.
- Leaders manage the service appropriately.
- There is sufficient space and facilities to meet the needs of children.

Support provided by Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs

Cath has been our Childcare Business Development Officer for some years now and we have developed a very good working relationship with her. We have come to know that if we need anything at all she is always there to offer us support and guidance. However, during the unprecedented times of Covid-19 I felt confident in asking Cath for help with regard to writing risk assessments and helped with staff isolation worries. Cath was able to answer all my queries and was able to send me some examples of a risk assessment and a template to follow straight away.



Benefits of support

The support I received from Cath has always been excellent and very helpful, however the support received during the Covid 19 pandemic has been superb and the benefits of the support from Cath made opening the club again really straightforward.

Twyn Out of School Club, Caerphilly

Becky Hall Childcare Business Development Officer, South East Wales

About Twyn Out of School Club

Twyn Out of School Club is a Voluntary Managed Committee run Setting that provide After School Care and Holiday Care for children. Twyn After School and Holiday Club provides low cost, fun and engaging child care for children of Twyn School and have been operating for many years. The Responsible Individual and Manager, Amanda Hewer and her team run a successful and busy Out of School Club, registered for 31 children.

Amanda has always prided the Club on their ability to provide quality Childcare for parents at a very low cost. Her passion for the Club and the children they care for is second to none and this is evident by a parent review on their Facebook page commenting:

“Fab team who genuinely care about every child”

Support from Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs

Twyn Out of School Club has been a member of Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs from when the Club first began and we supported the Club to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in 2018. Amanda reached out to Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs in June for support with opening Holiday Club given the difficulties surrounding Covid 19.

Based on reserves and cashflow forecast we discussed the possibility of opening for the summer holidays or whether to wait until September. It was decided with the need they had established and with reserves they had that Holiday Club would be possible. We had a long discussion around how to implement protective measures, creating bubbles, what activities they could still do with the children while continuing to be Covid secure. We looked at all measures for infectious control, record keeping and risk assessments. I forwarded all of the template resources that Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Club had produced including Playworking after Covid 19 which allowed the Setting to look at what they could do to ensure the children still had enriching play opportunities while maintaining high standards of infectious control and following the Protective Measures Guidance.



During the planning process Amanda kept me regularly updated on how they were progressing. In one correspondence she stated:

“With your guidance we have updated policies covering the Covid 19 pandemic and I am in the process of putting a risk assessment together covering the virus. So busy busy times.

I have looked through the activity sheet you sent me and I will be meeting with my girls to discuss activities.

Thank you for your continued support”

Even though they could only take eight children to ensure they were able to comply with the Protective Measures Guidelines, it was a great success with the children enjoying lots of outdoor fun.

Amanda emailed me when they re-opened to inform me that:

“We have lots going on including crafts and outdoor activities when we can. Thank goodness the weather has been good for us.

The parents and children have adjusted well to our new look and everyone is on board and staying positive.

Thank you for all your support.”

Holiday Club had fantastic feedback from the parents:

“Thank you for making it such a safe and fun environment for the children. Child A absolutely loved it and will hopefully come back in the October half term x”

“Thank you, ladies, Child B has had so much fun over the summer and knowing he is there safe and happy puts my mind at ease. Looking forward to Out of School Club. Thank you all x”

When the Childcare Provider Grant was announced at the end of August, Amanda attended our support webinar whereby she raised an issue with the online application provided by her Local Authority. I provided a solution for the immediate problem and reported this to the Local Authority who happily rectified the issue. We continue to support Twyn with any queries that Amanda has.

Benefits of support

“I have to say Becky in all honesty you, Clare, Janine and other Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids’ Clubs staff have gone the extra mile to support my club as I am sure you have done with others. You ladies have been my life line and always on the end of the line to help and give support when needed during this difficult time. Giving help and advice when needed.

I feel I have pushed you all to your limits nagging you for help and info when needed and every time you have come through.

We have been with Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs right from the word go. They also helped me get funding to set up our successful Holiday Club about 15 years ago and have always there to support us when needed.

I can not thank you all enough especially during this Covid 19 pandemic for your support.

Thank you for everything”

Amanda Hewer (Twyn Out of School Club)

Name and type of Club: Tywyn ASC, HC

Venue and Local Authority: Tywyn Primary School, Neath Port Talbot

Tywyn Kids' Club was set up over 10 years ago with guidance from Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs. A registered company, it provides up to 24 CIW registered places and provides The Childcare Offer at its After School Club (ASC), and Holiday Club (HC).

'Thank you, for all your help and support it means a lot to me and our club don't know where we would be without you' (Ms Diane Williams, Play Leader Tywyn Kids' Club : 11/06/2020).

Tywyn Kids' Club closed in March at the beginning of lockdown. Support during this time included guidance with furlough information for staff and trustees. After early hesitancy towards the scheme from some of the board, it was agreed that despite the additional workload for already hard-working voluntary trustees, furloughing staff by accessing the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme would be the only way the setting could remain solvent during this period.

Templates were given to aid in calculation of furlough payments and key dates were disseminated through our communication channels. It is likely that the Club would not have applied for this crucial lifeline had we not been available to support them, facilitating continued sustainability for this small local business.

By the beginning of June it became clear that the Club would not be opening for the summer holidays, and the club would therefore be unable to afford holiday pay owed to staff at the end of summer without seeking further funding. Using data collected from the Out of School Childcare Assessment (a self assessment checklist for Clubs to reflect on all aspects of their service), we were able to quickly source suitable funding



and ascertain their eligibility for the second phase of the Economic Resilience Fund (ERF). With support from us, Tywyn Kids' Club successfully accessed £10,000. We were incredibly pleased that Tywyn were able to achieve this desperately needed outcome during such economic uncertainty. These funds were used to cover wages while the setting remained closed and to support solvency whilst the club re-opens and the number of children slowly rebuilds.

Re-opening support provided by us included the development and distribution of all the editable policies and procedures including: Re-opening after Covid 19 policy; Risk Assessment; Temporary Closure Policy, guidance on groupings/bubbles and much more. The club also ordered additional cleaning supplies, PPE, and room dividers to satisfy the school that they are minimising the risk of Covid 19 transmission within the Club setting. The cost of such equipment - estimated at nearly £3,000 - presented further financial challenges for this Club. We are currently supporting Tywyn to try and source additional funds to cover these unexpected costs.

Going forward the Club is in the fortunate position of having funds to remain solvent while they rebuild capacity and they are excited to continue with their journey of providing the best out of school childcare possible for the children in their community. As a part of this process we will look to re-visit the Out of School Childcare Assessment (OSCA), and Action Plan once the club fully re-opens.

We look forward to continuing to support Tywyn Kids' Club during the remainder of the term of our National Lottery Community Fund Project and hopefully well into the future



Beech Tree Before and After School Club, Drury Primary School, Beech Road Drury, Buckley, CH7 3EG.

About Beech Tree Before and After School Club Out of School club

Beech Tree Before and After School Club provides Before and After School childcare for pupils attending Drury Primary School. They also provide wraparound care for children attending the school's nursery class. Beech Tree Before and After School Club Out of School club is registered with the Care Inspectorate Wales to care for a maximum of 61 children under the age of 12 years. The setting operates as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and the day to day running of the setting is down to the setting manager Ern Dorans. The setting operates their care from a purpose built lodge on the school grounds.

The Beech Tree Club



Support provided by Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs

During the Covid Pandemic Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Club were an invaluable source for much of the Covid documentation/new forms/new policies that we needed. The level and quality of support that Cath provided was second to none. A definite 10/10. Just being able to phone Cath and talk through the problems I was facing was a real comfort. There is nothing she doesn't know!

Benefits of support

Knowledge that Cath was always available at the end of the phone was a great source of comfort when I was unsure of how to proceed on some matters. I have been able to proceed with issues much quicker with the support of Cath. I have recommended Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs to another After School Club leader I know who has not had the same level of support that I have and is finding this a very trying time at present.



**Tina Jones, MBE - Tiny Tots Day Nursery, Prestatyn, Denbighshire
LL19 8RL**

About Tiny Tots Day Nursery

I am the owner, proprietor and registered person of Tiny Tots Day Nursery, which is a full day care nursery in Prestatyn, Denbighshire. I have been running Tiny Tots for 48 years and in 2002 I achieved my honour of an MBE for my services to early years and childcare. Tiny Tots is registered with the Care Inspectorate Wales for 86 children aged under 12 years and is open five days a week from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm.

At Tiny Tots Day Nursery, we have an Out of School Childcare Club on site incorporating Ben's Adventure Club. Tiny Tots Out of School Club and Ben's Adventure Club deliver after school, holiday care and also a Saturday morning club which has become very popular. The main focus of the Clubs is to ensure all children have the opportunity to play, have fun and enjoy many activities in the outdoors. Rain, wind or sunshine there's always happy smiling children attending. They've recently been taking part in an array of exciting and fun activities over the summer all of which help to develop the fundamental skills the children need.

We also deliver an out of school childcare club at Trelawnyd Voluntary Aided Primary School, in Flintshire. The after-school club is called Trelawnyd Fun Club which is registered for 24 children and is open Monday to Friday for breakfast club, 7.45 to 9am and afterschool club 3pm to 6pm all year round apart from bank holidays. During the school holidays the children come to the nursery at Tiny Tots to attend the holiday club.

Support from Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs

In August, 2020 I decided to renew our membership with Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs, as our Out of School Club partnering Ben's Adventure Club had expanded, I knew that Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs could provide me and my staff with up to date advice, guidance, training and support to continue to deliver a high-quality childcare and play facility at my nursery.

An opportunity arose to tender for a childcare provision within the local area, giving me the chance to expand my business. Due to my experience of many years delivering childcare and the very difficult times that the impact of the Covid19 pandemic was having on childcare settings, I decided that I would complete the tender process.

I looked at the tender questions and requirements and thought I would contact Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs to see if they could provide me with some support. As I'm based in Denbighshire, North Wales, I was really pleased that Sandra Welsby, Childcare Business Development Officer, North Wales would be able to support me.

The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic

As we were still impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic and Sandra was working from home, Sandra made the decision that a step by step process via phone calls, emails and Zoom meetings were the best source of providing me with support.

Step by step support

As the tender was on line we set up joint access on the system so we could both access the tender questions and continually review the work being completed.

Sandra gave me advice and guidance on the questions and what they were looking for. Sandra gave me tasks to complete with our Finance Officer on costs and the impact of TUPE. As well as reviewing our business plan and our quality care review. Another meeting was arranged with Sandra to look at the work I'd completed and further questions to be answered. This step by step process worked well.

One final meeting took place by phone just to check that all questions were answered and to validate the tender before pressing the submit button. I completed the tender within the timescale set and was so grateful for the support from Sandra at Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs

Going forward

I really hope we are successful with the tender. Sandra tells me she will continue to work with us at Tiny Tots Day Nursery as a member of Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs to complete an Out of School Childcare Assessment to look at any changes that I can make to enhance the quality, sustainability and robustness of our out of school clubs and address any areas of improvement.

Comment from Tina Jones, Proprietor Tiny Tots Day Nursery

"Sandra's support has been invaluable and since the tender was extremely difficult. I am eternally grateful for her expertise in this field. Hopefully, if we win this tender Sandra will be able to support us in bidding for financial support to enhance the provision to be able to deliver the high standard of childcare and education, we are renowned for."



Clwb Enfys Ltd, Out of School Club, Conwy

Support provided by Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs

During the Coronavirus Pandemic the support from Rachel Tustin, Childcare Business Development Officer, Conwy has been absolutely exceptional. We have received support via email, telephone and from useful Facebook posts. Rachel has been so supportive and helpful to us and has helped us through such a difficult time. You are always there for us and answer questions very quickly giving good information and explanations too.

We feel very lucky to have such an excellent relationship with you and would not hesitate to recommend you to anyone starting up a new after school club.

We have received support from Rachel from the word go, back in March when we had to close the clubs and only keep the Day Nursery open we received help and guidance on the Furlough process, the Emails and Facebook posts have proved very useful.

Re-assuring check in telephone calls throughout have kept us in the know of any changes to the guidance and given us an opportunity to ask any questions or check we are doing things correctly.

Rachel has also supported us with the re-opening after Covid-19 with risk assessments, policies and even producing checklists for club staff to use in partnership with the Cylch and Muidiad Meithrin.

Benefits of membership and support received from Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs

The benefits of the support, as members, from Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs and the Childcare Business Development Officer:

Regular invaluable face to face visits from Rachel the Childcare Business Development officer for Conwy, which we have missed during Covid and look forward to resuming again soon, but the telephone and email support has been of great value to us through out.

Update emails of any changes to the guidance or anything that may affect Childcare throughout the Pandemic.

The policy templates have been fantastic and have saved us a lot of time for re-opening the school based settings.

Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs membership is great value for money and I would recommend them to anyone wanting to open an After School Club.

Comments received from the staff at Clwb Enfys Ltd. following visits from Rachel Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs Childcare Business Development Officer, Conwy.

Thank you so much for your help, as always

"Nothing is too much trouble for any of you and despite me being a big pain (I know I am one!!!) you are still there to help me. Especially during these difficult times you are still there which mean a lot. I would recommend all small businesses of this nature to join Clybiau as the benefits are massive!!"

"We are very proud to be a part of a fantastic association, you are all amazing and very helpful too always offering advice that is fast and efficient"

That's great thank you so much for all your help, I'd be lost without you!

Thank you for your time and your continuing support, it means a lot.



EARLY YEARS WALES



Governance and Business Support for charities within the Early Years Childcare Sector.

Good governance in charities is fundamental to their success. How do you organise a charity to offer childcare as an Incorporated Charity? And why might you consider doing this?

Good governance can underpin everything else that a charity does – but getting governance wrong can open the door to poor decision making, regulatory inquiry and in serious cases financial or even (in the most extreme cases) criminal liability.

One of the lessons for charities to reflect on following the pandemic is the way they are constituted really does matter. Not only does a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) structure limit the liabilities that Trustees might be exposed to; it provides reassurances to funders that any financial support provided is being provided to an organisation with safeguards in place to protect the funds offered.



Within childcare there are a myriad of different organisational structures, but many charity organisations establish themselves without considering the benefits of becoming a CIO. For a number of years, Early Years Wales has committed to supporting its members through reviewing their governance structures and developing a constitution that limits the liabilities of individuals. The legal position is clear, an unincorporated charity is not a legal body and as such, the charity trustees (the management body) accept the liabilities of the charity in their own names. This could result in the trustees being held personally liable if there is a shortfall in the assets of a charity and it is unable to meet a liability.

Becoming a CIO might appear daunting. In response to this, Early Years Wales have worked closely with the Charity Commission to ensure that our organisations that have worked alongside us to establish their constitution, memorandums and articles will have a smooth journey from unincorporated, to incorporated status.

During the lockdown period, our Governance Team has:

Emailed all 200 not for profit providers to offer support; followed by working with those providers to:

- updating their old constitution and registering it with the Charity Commission
- ordering documents from the Charity Commission
- registering a new charity/CIO
- completing CIW registration (changes to inspections/medical certification)
- uploading relevant documents

Additional information shared:

- Holding Virtual member/trustee meetings, EGM and AGM's
- Virtual voting and minute taking
- Relaxing of Charity Commission requirements
- COVID-19 Charity Commission Guidance
- Extensions to accounts/TAR
- Employment Law support – ACAS & mediation
- TAR & Accounts outstanding

In recent weeks, on top of all those members that have become incorporated, 3 more unincorporated associations changed their original decision to remain unincorporated and support was given to register a new CIO, all uploads and charity registration was done via the governance officer. CIW registration is still on the go, support with this was also provided via email.

(All 3 settings felt that the current situation had highlighted how vulnerable the trustees were financially).

Helping voluntary boards to understand the legal liabilities and procedural responsibilities is an important feature of our support to the childcare sector, but our work doesn't stop there. We frequently check that the CIOs we have supported are remaining compliant with the charity commission, with staff checking filing compliance



with the Charity Commission and Companies House. This back-checking is done because in the busyness of everyday life, it is easy to miss a deadline along the way.

10 New CIO registrations were completed in full since April 2020, with the issue of new CIW certificates and s105 consent transfer certificates where needed.

3 unregistered/unincorporated associations changed their status to being school governor managed.

169 charity run settings were sent information on possible grants to support them financially with 48 settings received funding from the Moondance Foundation totalling £143,450.00. Of the 48 successful applications 15 settings were reminded to bring their accounts up to date as a matter of urgency, which just reinforces the point that getting charities to CIO status is the start and helping them to stay there is part of our ongoing relationship with our members.

“Thank you for all of your amazing support to me as it has been a very testing time and has pushed me to my limits, if it weren’t for you I really don’t know where I’d be”

“I honestly don’t know what I would have done without them. We are moving forward, slowly and a little bumpy, but getting there. New trustees coming on board, change in “officers”, removing the conflict and new CIO... I will certainly be a big advocate for your support services”

“As a headteacher who has just taken over management of a pre-school I have needed a great deal of help and Early Years Wales has been there every step of the way with same day responses. You are an amazing team and I really appreciate everything”

“We would just like to take this opportunity to pass on sincerest thanks to the governance team for their continued and incredible support in helping us through our constitutional change. They were at each stage to offer advice and support for which we were very grateful”.





Welsh Active Early Years @WelshActive · 5 Aug

Happy #PlayDay2020!

To celebrate, we have created a special activity card to match our read-a-long of the storybook #FromHeadToToe by Eric Carle.

How many animal movements can you complete as a family? 🦶🦶🦶🦶

📄: bit.ly/2C3gBQG

Activity card: bit.ly/2DDVvsE



Active Together Wales
Cymru'n Actif
Gyda'n Gilydd

From Head to Toe
A book written by Eric Carle

play day

Why not try the following movements as you read the story...

											
Can you turn your head like a penguin?	Can you bend your neck like a giraffe?	Can you raise your shoulders like a buffalo?	Can you wave your arms like a monkey?	Can you flap your hands like a seal?	Can you thump your chest like a gorilla?	Can you arch your back like a cat?	Can you wriggle your hips like a crocodile?	Can you bend your knees like a camel?	Can you kick your legs like a donkey?	Can you stomp your foot like an elephant?	Can you wiggle your toe?





Healthy and Active Project Supporting Families with Physical Activities During Lockdown

Early Years Wales' Healthy and Active Project groups started in February 2020. When Covid-19 had other plans supporting the parents and children presented a new challenge

2020 has been a year unlike any other. We are all reminded on a daily basis of the pandemic that we have been living through, but earlier in the year, local and regional flooding were also barriers to overcome in parts of Wales.

In February 2020, despite some challenges to project timelines, travel and facility availability Early Years Wales commenced working with two new groups, one in Newport and one in Deeside. These groups, recruited through social media and word-of-mouth, had agreed to join us on a journey developing physical literacy with children from 0-5 and embedding physical activity within families as part of a healthy and holistic way to support young children's development. Our relationship with over 40 parents and their children was beginning to flourish and the feedback about the shared journey was incredibly powerful.

Then, in March, everything stopped. We were no longer permitted to bring groups together in socially interactive ways and had to rethink the plans that had been established in the realisation that we could not simply ‘wave goodbye to the families’ and wait for an unknown date to meet again.

Our Healthy and Active staff, including our delivery partner organisation, Welsh Gymnastics, collaborated to consider the most effective way to continue to engage with these parents. Our realisation was that, for some families who would be shielding, the lockdown could undo all the positive progress that they had been making and see children without access to outdoor spaces becoming increasingly sedentary.

Through our Social Media channels, <https://www.facebook.com/WelshActive> and <https://twitter.com/WelshActive> colleagues continued to engage with parents. We sent weekly physical development activities out through these channels to allow parents to continue to play with their child and support their physical development using resources and ideas that could be accessed within most home environments.

It was incredibly powerful to see that a significant number of the families we had engaged with in February have remained with us, joining in online and providing feedback to us about the resources along the way. Furthermore, we have engaged families in sharing their feedback through the project data collection. This data and the lessons learnt about supporting families along the way will be invaluable over the coming months, as we become aware that we still have a long way to go until we can plan events and activities without thinking about Covid-19.

When the opportunity is there, within the guidelines we will continue to meet groups and deliver the facilitated sessions that were part of our initial Healthy and Active bid, as we did in our successful ‘re-launch’ event in Newport.

A shift to online forums to continue our conversations with members

Traditionally, Early Years Wales hosts member events throughout every region on multiple occasions during the year. Due to the pandemic, the decision was made to switch these forums online to continue the engagement with our membership. This was of added importance to the new CEO who, up to the summer, had only engaged with the members through written communications.

As a result, the member forums in June and July were planned and hosted by Early Years Wales via the Teams platform. In response to the pandemic, Early Years Wales made the decision to make the member forums open to non-members. Requests to attend the forums were received by Local Authority staff, regional consortia staff and staff from FE and HE institutions.

Our shift to online forums commenced on Wednesday June 10th, with five member groups agreeing to share their experiences of working during the lockdown providing childcare to key worker children and vulnerable children. The rationale was to share their insight with the sector and to help inform others about the steps that these setting managers had taken to modify their practice in line with the operating guidance from Welsh Government. We were delighted to be able to welcome these settings to present on the evening, with an audience of more than sixty guests on the 'call'. Settings sharing their experiences were:

- **Rachel's Playhouse – Hirwaun**
- **Coed Derw Nursery – Llanelli**
- **SNAP Playgroup – Pembrokeshire**
- **Osborne Nursery – Newport**
- **Abacus Day Nursery – Swansea**

Each setting shared insight into their experiences, positive and negative, and talked candidly about the challenges and the joys of working with children throughout the pandemic. The common themes that challenged setting staff included, how to modify the use of certain resources to maintain health and hygiene; how to enhance the cleaning regimes to ensure that resources and spaces were available for different groups; and how to operate with the consistent groupings advised at the time.

It was heart-warming and reassuring to hear from all settings about how the children had responded positively and settled straight into new routines, such as handwashing on entry. Through meeting the needs of all learners, setting staff explained there were numerous positives such as, exploring the use of digital technologies to support children with ALN which had positive outcomes; hearing and responding to the children's voice in designing the play and learning opportunities; and hearing adults respond by saying that the childcare setting 'feels like the safest space my children can go to' during the pandemic.

Following this event, Early Years Wales hosted a network discussion event on Wednesday 24th June. This was scheduled to precede the childcare sector reopening more widely, although in the end was two days after the First Minister had permitted the sector to open. As a result, there was a slightly smaller audience, but still a very useful and insightful conversation with settings sharing emerging ideas about using the outdoor areas effectively and working within groupings aligned to the guidance in a variety of different contexts.

On Thursday July 9th, Early Years Wales hosted a conversation with Greg Botrill.

Coming up...

Play in early years childcare and education

Join us in conversation with
Greg Botrill

on **Thursday 9th July (6:30 – 7:30pm)**
FREE EVENT



To find out more about Greg visit <http://www.canigoandplaynow.com/>
and his Play School TV channel <https://youtu.be/aPtXZUJ0qzo> - broadcasting daily!

Greg, is a passionate advocate for play in the early years and for creating child-centred learning and talked the audience of more than sixty guests, including members and non-member organisations, through a concept of co-play, where adults and children play together. In co-play, Greg outlined the role of adults in helping maintain the interest and engagement of children in those key moments of play without ‘taking control and decision making away from the child.’

Taking the decision to move member forums online was part of our organisational response to the constraints of the pandemic. We have learnt from these experiences, however, the benefits of flexible engagement, reduced travel and providing members from all areas of Wales with a common experience have been positive. As a result, and with the on-going challenges for us all in 2020, providing engagement across digital platforms with our membership will remain a central pillar of our member offer. The one thing that we have all shared during this pandemic is a need to learn and develop our skills to mobilise technology to replicate in the closest possible way the social interactions and network events that we all enjoy within our work. We have all been motivated to really overcome those initial barriers or fears of presenting online (and from the confines of our own homes). And, we have all had to overcome the ‘joys’ of being joined on these calls by younger family members or pets and sometimes, these most impromptu, ‘It’ll be alright on the night’ moments remind us all that smiling, humour and positivity wherever they can be found are the perfect contrast to the need to focus on unprecedented challenges.

Supporting Welsh Government Policy and Guidance: Practical interpretations to support settings in response to Government documentation

The responses to the pandemic in 2020 have seen UK Government, Welsh Government, Local Authorities and Regulatory Bodies all make rapid changes to policy and guidance in the interests of keeping everyone safe in all our communities. As none of us has a living experience of coping with a pandemic, many of the rules, principles and practices have been established as we have all collectively understood more about the possibilities and risks of living alongside the virus.

Inevitably, from the perspective of a setting manager, there have been times during this period where the 'wealth' of information has been somewhat daunting to read, interpret and convert into actions within the settings. Furthermore, it is worth noting that during the earlier days in the pandemic, there were many and frequent emotive conversations, as people were genuinely concerned that they would be able to do the right thing in keeping children and staff as safe as possible during their time in the settings.

In response to requests from setting managers to help them through the thinking processes about operating their settings, Early Years Wales' managers collaborated to produce two simple, user-friendly resources supporting and signposting managers to the key information and policies that they needed to re-open their setting, or expand beyond offering provision for key workers and vulnerable children following the permission from the First Minister on Monday 22nd June 2020.

The first document produced was a 'pre re-opening checklist'. The purpose of this document was to 'walk' a setting manager through the key documents and policies that were required to be reviewed, amended, or added to in order to ensure that all the required paperwork was in place. In addition, of course, to ensure that the policies were shared with key stakeholders including parents and known by all staff.

The second document was a reliable, measured, but comprehensive Risk Assessment template with guidance outlining the additional considerations that setting managers needed to make in light of the updated guidance from Welsh Government.

Whilst to those of us in policy and with the time to read and reflect on the many different documents released from April through to September (the time of writing this case study), the messages have been clear; setting managers and staff, with time challenges and trying to implement policy have expressed that they have found the amount of information and frequency of updates more challenging to keep on top of. In creating the two documents outlined above, Early Years Wales aimed to ensure that the most recent Welsh Government information was signposted to, and that outdated links and advice were replaced. At the same time, each document

aimed to ensure that our member organisations were reassured that they had all the anticipated modifications and changes to practice in place. Our intention throughout was to support Welsh Government in ensuring that key policy decisions and operating guidelines were established in practice throughout Wales.

Both policies were positively received by our member organisations. As with all Cwlwm partners, our commitment to supporting Welsh Government policy is an ongoing and essential part of our membership offer. It is through the knowledge, experience and expertise of our staff teams that we can interpret the information from policy makers and share this with our member organisations to provide clarity and consistency in practice.

As one setting manager remarked:

We are a setting based in a church hall and one of the conditions, from our denomination, of us reopening in September was that we had to complete a Risk Assessment for the Elders Board. I have to admit that when I first heard this I was filled with anxiety as to where I would start but thanks to the pre-reopening checklist and Risk Assessment templates from Early Years Wales this job was made a lot easier.

We used the pre-opening checklist to highlight issues that needed addressing and then filled in the Risk Assessment. We sent a completed copy of the risk assessment to our development officer and she read it over for us and suggested some amendments. Thankfully, the elders were happy with the Risk Assessment and the setting was allowed to open.

I can honestly say that if it wasn't for the template that Early Years Wales provided, I wouldn't have known where to start. As a setting we continue to fill in the Risk Assessment and refer to it on a daily basis.

Within Early Years Wales' strategic plan is our commitment to work with Welsh Government to ensure that policies related to the early years sector are widely advocated and the details are shared and understood within our sector. It was obviously pleasing to receive such a positive response to the approach to sharing and synthesising the key policies that needed attention during the recent challenges. The ability to do this effectively, demonstrates the value of our ongoing partnership with Welsh Government in support of the childcare sector in Wales.



PACEY Cymru



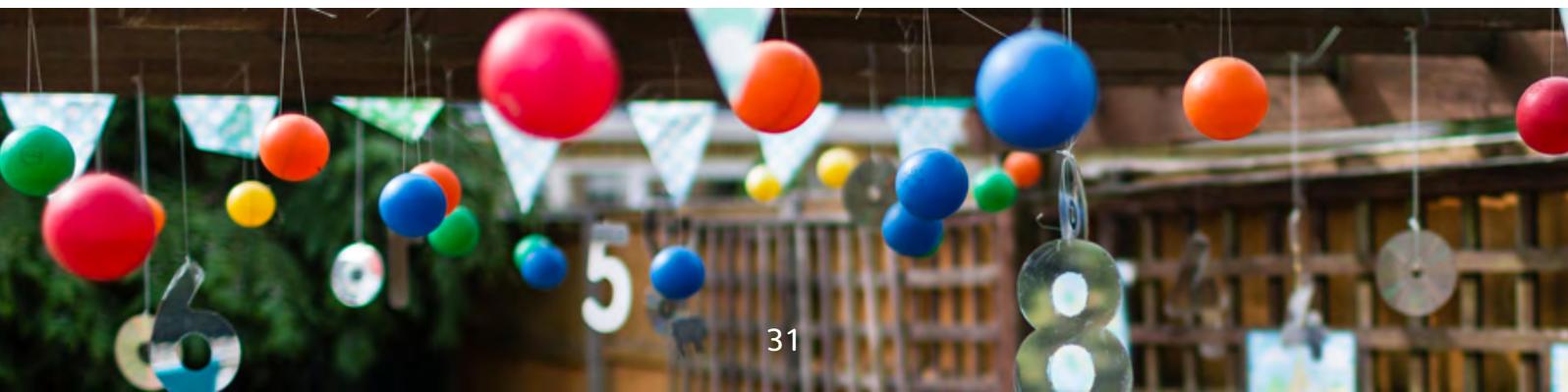
During this challenging period PACEY Cymru have worked tirelessly to ensure information for the sector is reliable, accurate, accessible and regularly updated.

This included the development of Wales specific pages in the [PACEY Spotlight on Coronavirus](#) and ensuring generic England and Wales pages have information relevant to the needs of childcare and early years professionals in Wales.

We have worked closely with Welsh Government, Cwlwm partners, Local Authorities and other key stakeholders to ensure consistency of approach and joined up working. We have lobbied, challenged and raised queries, as needed, on all issues affecting the sector during this time. This included supporting the production of the [Protective measures in childcare settings](#). This has resulted in an informed sector who are confident in their own decision making processes whilst also seeking support as needed.

Financial issues including contract discussions and queries were high on the agenda and these were challenging times for both providers and parents. The [Competition and Markets Authority \(CMA\) launched their investigation](#) into the early years sector at the end of April, PACEY worked closely with CMA alongside sector colleagues the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) and the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) to provide evidence and information about the complex financial issues in the early years sector.

The CMA took time to listen and understand the immense pressure providers were under and recognised this in the context of consumer law. PACEY issued advice during lockdown (when all settings were forced to close to all but vulnerable children



and those of key workers) that made clear what was reasonable and fair to expect in terms of support from parents and what was not and know the vast majority of our members followed this advice. It was good to see that the CMA decided to issue supportive advice to the sector rather than take enforcement action.

Alongside Cwlwm partners PACEY have highlighted the financial support needs of the sector and lobbied for financial support for those who were not eligible for UK based schemes. This resulted in a number of childcare providers being able to access new business grant scheme and also a childcare provider grant. Both schemes are specific to Wales and ensure that the vast majority of settings have been able to access some form of financial support during the period. The more current issue in relation to financial support that is arising is around support needed by settings during periods of enforced closures. This could be due to outbreaks of infection or, more specifically for childminders, them needing to close due to an asymptomatic household member being identified as a contact of someone who has tested positive. This will be ongoing during the winter period and is an area of great uncertainty and concern for the sector.

We were in a fortunate position having launched our new pre-registration training for home-based childcare providers in Autumn 2019 and with this having online options for learning. This meant that we were quickly able to adapt our processes to ensure that access to training was not a barrier for those looking to become a registered childminder or approved nanny. With CIW having launched CIW online and also taking an innovative approach to virtual visits and inspections this, alongside our work, has ensured we have continued to see new home-based providers become registered or approved in recent months. We have many who have contacted us to say they were using the enforced lockdown period to move forward in their plans for registration or approval as many found they had more time on their hands or a change in personal circumstances. During the period April-June 2020 there were 12 new childminder registrations and 12 new approvals on the voluntary approval scheme. Compared to the previous quarter this is a drop however it is positive to still see new provision coming through in these challenging times.

We have raised concerns in recent years around the decrease in childminder numbers and have continued to see a decline in recent months. There were 56 de-registrations between April and June compared to 14 in the previous quarter. We know from a recent small survey that COVID-19 and the position that many childminders found themselves in at the start of the crisis impacted for some on their decision to de-register. We will continue to highlight with Welsh Government the concerning trend in decline of childminding in Wales and look at ways to address this going forward.

It is encouraging to see that around 85% of all childcare and play settings, and around 90% of childminding settings in Wales, have now re-opened and are able to provide

childcare and play services. PACEY supported settings as they made re-opening decisions and are aware that these services are likely to look and feel different than they did in March however providers appear to be growing in confidence and demonstrating professionalism in these challenging times. It must be remembered that using the statistics around settings who have re-opened does not give the full picture and should not be used in isolation. Most settings are not working at full capacity and many are struggling with ongoing sustainability issues.

Claire, registered childminder



Claire has been a registered childminder from Cardiff since 2006, with her own children now young adults living at home. Claire is also an active Welsh learner, accessing the free CAMAU training for childcare providers from the National Centre for Learning Welsh.

Re-opening

Claire closed from March until June as she was not caring for keyworkers and did not want to take on any new families during this time. For re-opening on 22 June, she had to make some difficult decisions to reduce the number of children she is providing care for and minimise the number of children attending from different families. She is currently now caring for only four sibling groups. Although this has had a financial impact on her service, it is the level with which she feels comfortable with and able to manage safely, commenting that she needed to take a 'business approach rather than one from my heart'.

Keeping up to date and working with parents

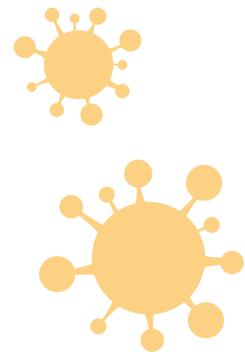
Keeping parents updated has been an important part of her re-opening process, using PACEY's Re-opening Toolkit and FAQs for information and support. Finding it difficult not knowing what to do, and understanding all the measures that needed to be taken, she found the clear information available from PACEY gave her the confidence to do the right thing. Policies and risk assessments have been updated, and a newsletter shared with parents so that they are all clear about the changes she has made to the setting and the arrangements in place to care for their children. PACEY's digital contracts have been especially useful, and Claire has renewed all the contracts with her parents. With the new digital format, all were agreed and signed off straight away by the parents, and are stored and easy to access on PACEY's digital portal.

Back to school

Since the schools have returned in September, Claire was concerned how she would manage staggered drop-offs and pick-ups from two separate schools. However the schools have been very accommodating after childminders who pick up children from the school got in touch. The school has arranged specific drop off time slots for each childminder to drop off and pick up all the children at once, avoiding any long waits.

Managing illness

One challenge currently being faced is the return of coughs and colds, and how to know whether it is the symptoms of COVID-19 or not, and keeping up to date with the testing and self-isolation requirements. Claire has shared her updated Exclusion due to illness policy with parents, with whom she has a good and supportive relationship. Claire is reassured that if a child shows any symptoms that the parents will keep her updated, or come and collect their child immediately if symptoms develop whilst at her setting.



Self-isolation

Claire explained how concerned she is about the potential need to self-isolate and not knowing how often she may need to do this. There are so many different scenarios with either her childminded children and families or her own family having Covid symptoms or being identified as a contact or in a bubble with a positive case. Claire says *"If I knew it was just going to be for 2 weeks I could recover financially, however the concern is if I need to self-isolate time after time"*. Claire adds that this wouldn't just impact financially on her service, but cause potential stress to her parents around the availability of her service and upheaval for the children and how unsettling this could be for them. It will also impact on everyone in her family at home. She knows it will be important to have clear guidance to follow and share this with families, and thanked PACEY for the information they provide which gives her the confidence to do this.

Welsh learning journey

One thing that Claire has found positive through this year has been her journey in learning Welsh. As she cares for children from Welsh speaking families who attend Welsh medium school, Claire has taken the time through closure to continue to learn Welsh through the CAMAU scheme, continuing to access PACEY Cymru's Welsh language support webinars which she looks forward to and have fitted in perfectly for her. The topics are all things she can use on a day to day basis, she has resources to print off which also support her planning.

Vikki and Ashwyn, registered childminders



Vikki has been a registered childminder for 15 years and her husband Ashwyn for 11 years at their home in Swansea. They have written about their experiences of reopening their setting earlier in the year, and have updated PACEY Cymru on their experiences following the re-opening of schools.

Risk assessments

When they first re-opened, Vikki and Ashwyn made some key changes to their setting in order to minimise the risk of infection in the areas where the children play in line with current guidance to protect and provide confidence to children, parents and themselves. This included reviewing their cleaning schedule, ensuring adequate stock of PPE and health and hygiene within the setting. They also reduced the types of toys and equipment, removing soft toys that harbour germs and included toys

that were easy to clean. They have a pickup and drop off plan for the parents and children to ensure social distancing.

They are also maximising outdoor play in the setting. Vikki says *“We feel quite confident with the care we provide, we are missing our usual outings with the children however this doesn’t seem to be impacting them as we have lots of outdoor time in the garden. One of the main selling points of being childminders is the exciting outings and experiences we provide for the children. Parents are understanding that this is not always possible to the extent as it was before COVID-19.”*

Communication with parents

Good ongoing communication has been key, reinforcing the importance of openness and honesty both ways with their families. They have shared updated policies and procedures with families but have found that they have also needed to take the time to talk through any changes and answer any questions parents had. As parents can no longer enter her setting she has made use of the telephone and WhatsApp. They recognise that all families have a unique set of circumstances that they need to take into account and any outbreaks and closure of their setting could have a huge ripple effect and impact on their families and their service. Vikki says *“We are lucky to have wonderful families that we provide care for, however that doesn’t take away the stress of having to let down parents, some who desperately rely on us to continue to work”*.

Reopening of schools

Soon after the schools reopened, Vikki explained that their daughter had a cough and therefore she had to be tested for Covid 19. This meant the setting was closed for two days until the test came back negative. This was an especially difficult time as some children were only just settling into the setting and this disruption was not ideal, however it was unavoidable. Vikki felt that the experience helped them be prepared for any future outbreaks, and were able to demonstrate to families that they were working within the government guidelines and their own policies.

Vikki and Ashwyn have also found staggered pickup and drop off times for schools difficult to manage as childminders, however they appreciate that schools have their own set of challenges and they have tried to work with the schools whilst managing the safety of the children in their care.

Mental wellbeing of children

The long-term mental health and emotional wellbeing of the children they care for is a concern. Childminding is very much a family environment and the younger children have not had a chance to say goodbye to some of the older children who have started attending school. Vikki describes this most powerfully as a kind of 'grieving' process for these children which is proving challenging.

One child in particular has noticed the new cleaning regime asking '*why do you keep wiping everything?*' This led Vikki to consider ways of managing extra cleaning while remaining sensitive to the children and their feelings. She did not want the children worrying unnecessarily about spreading germs.

PACEY support

Vikki and Ashwyn have accessed PACEY support throughout the pandemic in particular seeking advice around isolation due to a family's holiday abroad. They feel that PACEY always signpost to relevant guidance and can be trusted to 'fight for childminders rights'. The recent lockdown has provided opportunities to access relevant training and CPD via PACEY in particular the EY smart short courses.

Financial impact

Vikki and Ashwyn acknowledge that there are concerns with every aspect of childminding right now. Financially, the concern is how they will cope with another lockdown or if they have to close again due to themselves or any of their families showing symptoms. In addition, as they took a break from some of their household bills during the first closure, they are still playing catch up from those months, and need to manage outgoings carefully.

Looking to the future

Childminding is their family business and passion, and Vikki says she cannot imagine herself working anywhere else. Looking to the future they believe it will continue to be challenging. Although Vikki says to herself that after getting through all the challenges up until now they have the confidence to face anything that comes their way, they are not sure their business would survive another full lockdown and not being able to care for children. This causes great stress, and Vikki says "*being childminders is the most wonderful job, the thought of not being able to do a job we love is frightening!*"

Seedlings Childminding



Kelly has been a registered childminder in Bridgend since 2017 and has previously shared her [experiences](#) with PACEY on how she has managed her latest new starters in her setting and how this has impacted her business.

Over the summer months as Welsh Government restrictions eased Kelly was able to provide settling in sessions in her garden. She invited new and existing children on separate occasions to come and have a short play session outdoors so that they became familiar with the setting once again. Kelly was concerned that the children had been away for such a long time and she felt that all would benefit from a gentler approach to reopening in September.

Kelly also took the opportunity to make improvements to her outdoor space and has provided a mud kitchen and a shelter for the children.

September reopening

Unfortunately after only one and a half weeks of opening in September, Kelly was asked to isolate and close her childminding service due to a pupil testing positive for Covid-19 who was in her son's year group bubble at school. She described feeling 'anxious and devastated' at having to close after being open for only a few days.

Kelly rang PACEY Cymru as soon as the school contacted her as she wanted to confirm she was taking the correct measures. Kelly was advised to ring Public Health Wales and to follow their advice. Kelly appreciated the kind reassurance provided by PACEY staff and the regular Welsh Government updates. She stated that it was 'nice to have someone at end of the phone that can see things from our perspective'.

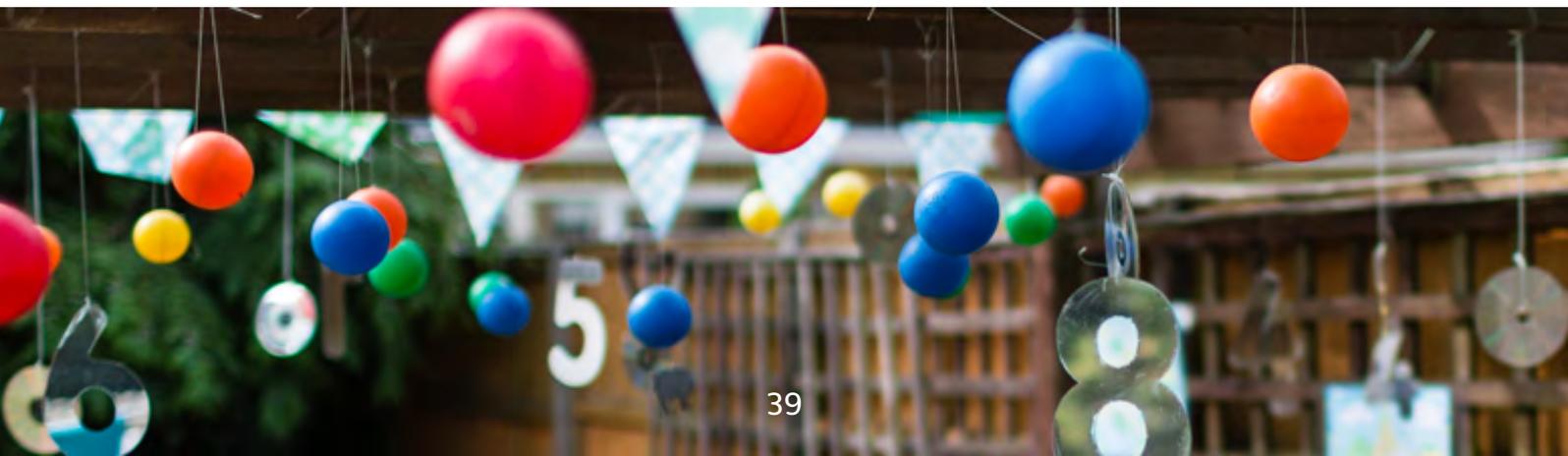
PACEY Cymru support

Following Kelly contacting the team at PACEY Cymru and providing details of how she was asked to close her service, PACEY Cymru contacted Welsh Government asking for further clarity and guidance for childminders in this position. Following this, guidance was published in PACEY's [FAQs for Wales](#) confirming that childminders should contact Public Health Wales to discuss their individual situation with them. This updated information was shared directly with Kelly and the LA childcare team, as well as through our newsletters and social media platforms.

Looking to the future

Although Kelly had considered procedures if herself or a member of her family needed to isolate due to Covid-19, she had not taken into consideration the impact of other school children testing positive on her business. Kelly will be amending and updating her policies, risk assessments and parent information in this regard in readiness for possible future occurrences.

The biggest concern for Kelly is having to close again to self-isolate, and the impact that this could have on her families. Although they were supportive the first time, some had to take unpaid leave to care for their child. If she has to close again, she is worried that parents will look to a more reliable source of childcare. She is considering ways in which she can reduce costs in her service and will discuss this with her families. Kelly feels that to keep childminders operating they would benefit from sustainability income to support them in times of closure. Kelly says *"I registered 3 years ago, and it has taken me a long time to build up my business, I don't want to have to start again. I love this job, but it is difficult and now a lot of extra work with cleaning and the additional commitment from her own family"*.



NDNA Cymru



In March as the country went into lockdown many nurseries felt that they had been “thrown in at the deep end”. Initial concerns were about whether to stay open or not, who was classed as a key worker and concerns about insurance claims. NDNA Cymru offered support throughout this challenging time through regular telephone calls and email updates.

Information from the Welsh Government, Care Inspectorate Wales, and Estyn was passed on to the sector via regular updates and on the NDNA Cymru social media pages. Information about grants and funding, that were available to the sector, were highlighted quickly enabling nurseries to make careful decisions about their businesses.



As nurseries began to reopen in the summer, they faced problems around infection control and social distancing. It was necessary to find new ways to provide support and guidance and NDNA introduced webinars on staff induction, infection control, indoor and outdoor play, settling new children, supporting staff well-being and handling traumatic situations. In spite of being a new way of working for the sector, these were very well attended. Regular network meetings were moved online and provided a crucial link to many nurseries, enabling them to share the problems and issues they were facing.

New ways of continuing with essential training were found and NDNA Cymru has developed training on Live Virtual Classrooms [LVC](#), which enables an interactive form of online training.

This has also enabled the important work on the Childcare Works Project to continue, supporting the workforce needs of the sector as it moves beyond the pandemic.

NDNA Cymru produced factsheets to support nurseries as they got used to a different way of working. They produced factsheets on Health and Hygiene, support for managers and for practitioners and [Top Tips](#) for adapting continuous provision in the foundation phase. All policies and procedures were updated in both English and Welsh and an [Addendum](#) was published demonstrating all the Covid 19 related changes.



This practical support has been welcomed by the sector and has enabled childcare providers to operate safely while still putting the welfare of their staff and the care and developmental needs of the children first. Many nursery owners and managers have expressed their gratitude during phone calls and emails with NDNA Cymru staff.



“NDNA Cymru staff have been very positive and supportive.” Chuckles day Nursery.

“Thank you to the NDNA for your constant support.” – Little Lambs Nursery.

Impact on Staff

Nursery Staff have been crucial to Wales’ response to the Coronavirus crisis and managing staff and keeping them safe has been a major priority for Nurseries. One large Nursery in Flintshire has recognised that ensuring the safety and well-being of their staff would have a huge positive impact on the children in their care.

They started by making sure that all members of staff were included in discussions about how the nursery was going to move forward in the crisis. Everyone who worked at the Nursery felt like they had ‘been thrown in at the deep end’ in March, but even before guidance was issued from Welsh Government they were using their risk assessment to look at every aspect of the service and care they offered to families to see how they could ensure that everyone stayed safe. The individual staff knew their rooms and the children they cared for and by using that knowledge, they could ensure that the necessary protective measures would impact as little as possible on the children. The staff have continued to use that knowledge to constantly review and update the risk assessment.

Although there was a necessity to keep staff numbers low both to conform with social distancing rules and to help with the future sustainability of the nursery, it

was quickly recognised that a minimum of two staff members were required in each room. This would enable them to cover each other's breaks and deal with minor emergencies without another member of staff having to mix in the same 'bubble'. Most importantly, it ensured that every staff member had constant support both professionally and emotionally throughout the day.

The Nursery Managers recognised that the changes to the usual routine were often difficult for staff, many of whom were dealing with their own concerns and worries around lockdown. In particular, 'drop off time' could be traumatic for the children and for their parents (who could not benefit from usual settling in procedures) and this was exhausting for those members of staff that had to deal with a constant flow of distressed families. They ensured that staff had space to take socially distanced breaks by making use of an unused room as an extra staff room.

Ultimately, the priority of the Nursery was to keep the children in its care and their families safe. By deploying staff carefully, they were able to minimise the risks and reassure the families.



They altered the mealtime routines so that only the cook was allowed in the kitchen and the children ate their meals in their rooms with their small consistent group of friends. Staff staggered their breaks and some even went so far as to eat their lunch in their cars to avoid unnecessary contact with others. Where possible staff did not use public transport and they were no longer car sharing on their way to and from work. Members of staff were willing to make these changes because they had been involved in the decision making process and understood the importance of keeping the children safe.



This Nursery quickly recognised the importance of their skilled and experienced workforce in supporting children and their families to cope with the necessary changes in routine. By keeping the staff involved and placing an emphasis on staff safety and welfare they have been able to support the children to settle to the new way of doing things and continue to develop in a safe and happy environment.

Well Being of Children

A large and busy nursery in Newport has remained open for children of key workers and is now welcoming back other children to the nursery family. However, whether they are new to the setting or not the physical and emotional well-being of the children has always been a prime consideration.

The Nursery quickly recognised that the changes that were going on around the children and to their families' could have a serious impact on the security and emotional development of the children. Many of the children attending the nursery had parents who were working in a local hospital; some parents had even moved out of the family home to ensure the safety of their loved ones. These changes to their lives were very difficult for the children to understand.

The Nursery was fortunate in that it was spacious with lots of rooms; this meant that the children could be divided into small consistent groups or 'bubbles'. These small groups, each in their own self-contained room, were supported by the same members of staff wherever possible; this not only assisted with social distancing measures but also provided consistency and stability for the children. The necessary physical changes to the environment such as extra hand washing stations, removal of some of the resources and changes to the way the communal areas such as toilets were used were explained to the children in a calm and reassuring way and the small groups allowed them to be safely explored.

Children were encouraged to be outside as much as possible and the Nursery made changes to its outside area to assist with this. They put in extra covered areas for playing outside in all weathers and provided extra seating outside. They planned activities to encourage learning and development, based on the children's interests but the emphasis now was on the emotional well-being of the children. They gave the children opportunities to explore the changes that were going on around them through role-play, dressing up, stories and other activities. They also allowed time for talking and group discussions that could be led by the children. The skilled staff listened to the children and answered their questions about the virus.

As lockdown was eased and other children started to return to the Nursery, they used a number of strategies to support children and their families. Photographs of staff wearing PPE and of changes to the setting were sent out to families before they returned or started at the Nursery. The existing children were very good at explaining the changes to their new friends and the Nursery supported this.

The skill and professionalism of the staff and management ensured the children's well-being and emotional development were supported during a time of national crisis.

Family Ties!

One nursery in North Wales has always prided itself on its close links with the families that access its services. They were already using technologies such as a family app to keep parents and carers informed about what their children were up to while at the setting. However, when Covid 19 struck maintaining close links with parents became even more important. As a result of surrounding nurseries closing, the nursery opened its doors to many new children of key workers and quickly discovered that stressed parents and carers needed the reassurance and support of knowing that their child was well cared for.

As a result of pandemic it was necessary for the nursery to introduce new measures and routines that would have been unacceptable in more normal times. No visitors were allowed into the setting and this included parents who had to wait at the front door on arrival and collection. Usual settling in procedures that allowed child, parents and staff to all get to know each other in a relaxed environment had to be stopped. As well as this, parents needed to be kept informed about the nurseries new procedures regarding symptoms and illness.

There were 179 families connected to the nursery, not all were key workers. Parents and carers who were following advice to keep their children at home also needed continued support and it was important that the children retained strong links to the nursery during such a worrying time. The nursery sent Home Learning Packs out to all families, which included photos of the setting and staff and activities for all the family, even siblings who do not attend the setting were included.

They used social media to regularly update parents to any changes, suggest ideas for home activities and to send positive posts to families. Once a week the social media pages would go 'live' showing families the changes that were going on at the nursery and allowing families to send in a 'shout out!' and comment. This allowed children and their families to feel they were still a part of the nursery even though they could not attend.

They continued to use the Family App to allow parents to keep in touch on a daily basis and to check in with the nursery to see how their child was doing each day. Where families needed more support, they would contact them directly via text or



phone call to offer advice on toilet training, behavioural support or sometimes just to provide a shoulder to cry on. As lockdown has eased, they have worked with families to provide settling in sessions for children returning to the nursery to help ease them back into nursery life and reassure parents.

The close links with families has really created a supportive atmosphere at the nursery. Families have really valued the support of the nursery during this very challenging time and the nursery has been inundated with cards and gifts to say thank you for the support they have given to their children, parents, families and the local community as a whole.

Being Covid Secure

Introducing protective measures into a nursery setting and making sure that children and staff are safe has been a huge challenge for the sector. One nursery in Pembrokeshire has risen to this challenge to ensure that their setting is as safe as possible while still maintaining its commitment to high quality childcare.

The nursery looked at every part of its provision to create a detailed risk assessment. This risk assessment is a constantly changing document and takes into account the changing advice from the government, the number and differing needs of the children in their care and even the ever-changing weather! Having done the paperwork it became clear that there would need to be changes to the way the setting was running.

They started with increased hygiene measures, not only ensuring that the children were washing their hands regularly but that hand sanitizer was readily available in every room. Communal areas had to be cleaned and sanitised in between each group of children using them and cleaning stations were set up in all the rooms to allow for quick cleaning of the resources. Resources also had to be stored differently; the setting used sealed containers to ensure that only the children from each group could access them. Some resources had to be removed completely, such as soft toys and furnishings as it would be impractical to wash or sanitize them often and wall displays that could harbour the virus were removed. Toy boxes were made smaller to discourage the children from sharing the contents with each other.

It is impossible for young children to socially distance from each other or from the adults that care for them and it was a huge relief for the sector when this was recognised by the Welsh Government. However, the nursery still put in place policies and procedures that would keep the children as safe as possible. The children were put into small consistent groups that remained the same and had the same staff members every day. These groups did not mix or use the same resources but did allow the children to build friendship groups and continue to learn the social skills that are crucial to their development.

All of this was made possible by the professionalism, dedication and hard work of the staff at the nursery. Staff were required to carry out regular cleaning of the setting and resources as well as providing close supervision of the children while handwashing and in communal areas. All this while maintaining social distancing restrictions from each other and, of course, providing a secure and happy environment for the children.

When Wales first went into lockdown in March it seemed impossible that the childcare sector could continue to care for children and do everything required to limit the transmission of the virus. This nursery has shown that with careful planning and the hard work of staff it is possible to provide the highest quality childcare while keeping children, their families and staff safe.





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