

CWLWM NEWSLETTER – AUTUMN TERM 2024



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Welcome to the Autumn Term Newsletter! In this edition, we focus on the importance of supporting **Additional Learning Needs (ALN)** in early years, childcare and playwork settings. This is a crucial period for children's development, and ensuring that every child, regardless of their learning needs, has the opportunity to thrive is essential for building inclusive and supportive learning environments. Alongside this, you'll find a wealth of other useful information relevant to the early years, childcare, and playwork sector.

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# 1. 10 Ways to Support Inclusivity with your early years, childcare and playwork setting

All children who attend childcare and playwork settings have a right to play, relax and enjoy activities in a safe and stimulating environment [Article 31, UNCRC].

Childcare and playwork settings provide care and play opportunities: children who attend the provision may or may not need additional support to help them interact with their peers and have positive play experiences, regardless of any Additional Learning Needs within a school environment.



Below are ten ways you can support inclusivity for all children within your setting

- 1. Put policy into practice** – It is important that your childcare and playwork setting can demonstrate its commitment to supporting children with additional needs, or a disability that attend your setting, and outlines how and what you intend to do to be an inclusive provision. This must be clearly demonstrated in your Additional Learning Needs Policy and your Equal Opportunities Policy. Cwlwm umbrella organisations have templates/ guidance available to support members with this.
- 2. Knowledge** – Some practitioners may feel at times that they are not ‘trained’ to cater for a child with additional needs and this can lead to the child’s needs failing to be met. Many organisations, including Cwlwm, offer training and support in this area or can signpost to relevant training opportunities. Commit to attending awareness courses and encourage all staff to do the same. Familiarise yourselves with the [Additional Learning Needs Code](#) and what it means to both your setting and the child. Knowledge is empowering and can give you the confidence to know you can support a child with additional needs. Understanding what you as a setting can do to be inclusive can make a big difference to your staff, children and their families.
- 3. Communicate** – A child with additional needs may have many adults and professionals in their life who play an important role in supporting their well-being. As the child’s childcare or Playwork professional you will also be involved and so it is important to communicate with each other as much as possible. Before a child starts attending your setting, speak to the child’s parents or carers and find out all that you need to know to support their child. Talk to the child, introduce yourself and find out a little about them. Keep up this communication on a regular basis by speaking to the person who drops the child off to your setting – this may be a member of school staff or a parent or carer and find out if there is any useful or helpful information you may need to know. Similarly, ensure you share any useful or relevant information to whomever collects the child from your setting. Don’t forget to communicate with the child too! Parents/Carers and other professionals working with your child will know which communication methods are most appropriate. It is worth remembering that a child’s behaviour is also a form of communication, ensure your settings behaviour policy reflects this. It is important to pay attention to the way the child behaves to identify if changes in practice or support are necessary to better meet their needs.

Dyma fi!

**4. This is Me!** - It is possible that children with additional needs will have a One Page Profile, that you may find useful, but you may want to adopt a similar tool for all children attending your setting. Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Club '[This is Me](#)' template can be used/adapted for all children and of all ages to help you find out more about the children attending your setting. Contact your Cwlwm umbrella organisation to ask whether they have a similar template that you can use. Remember that these are working documents. Preferences change and your One Page Profiles should reflect those changes and updates shared with other children, families and professionals on a regular basis.



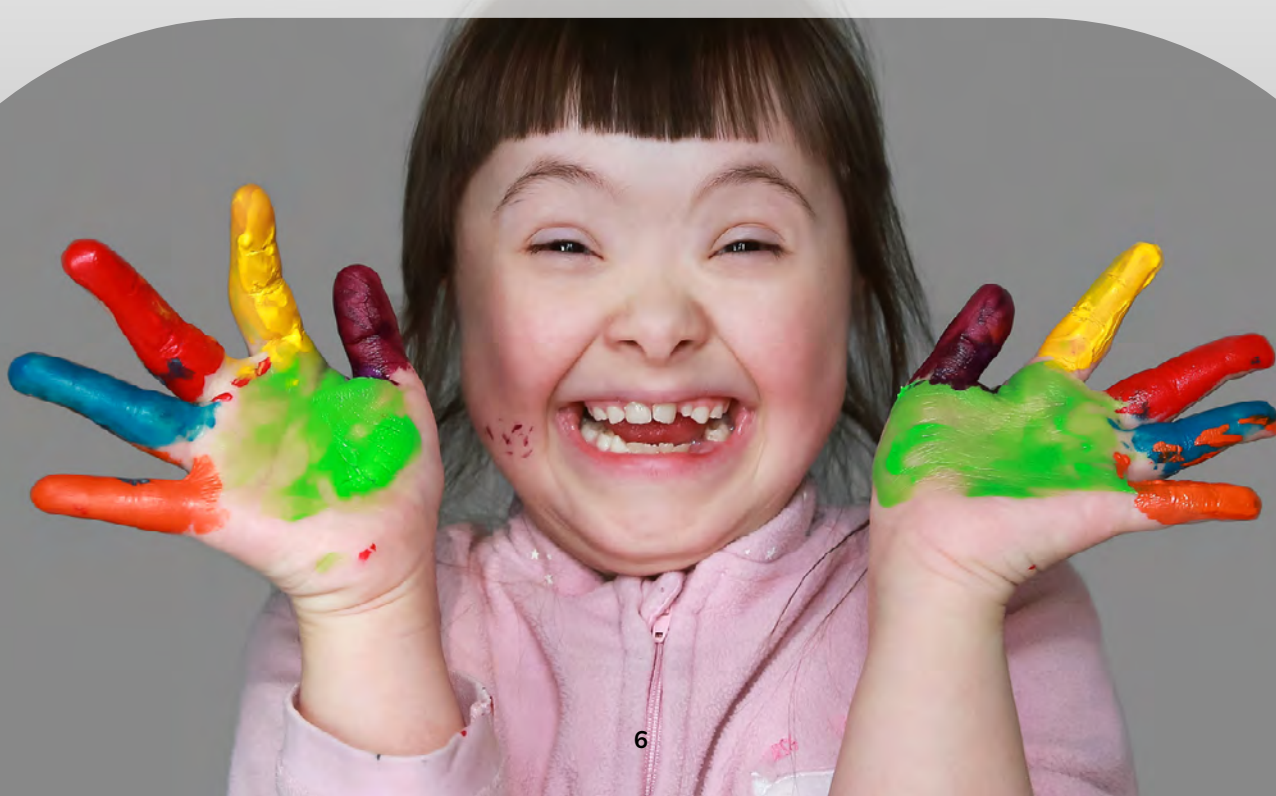
**5. Take a child centred approach** – This will help your setting to always ensure the child's needs come first and are considered in every decision you make that may affect them. You should involve children in any decision making where possible. It can be easy to forget to ask the child how they may feel about any support or changes you put in place, but it is important that you include them and ensure they are happy.

**6. Child Focus** - Understanding what support a child needs is vital to providing them with the best care and play experience possible. It can be easy to feel that your setting is not equipped or experienced enough to cater for a child with additional needs or a disability, but this does not have to be the case. We often rely on 'labels' to help us understand what an additional need may look like and whilst they are important, it can sometimes prevent us from looking at the child for who they are. By putting the child first, this puts focus on the child as an individual rather than their ability.

**7. Key workers are key** – Children attending your setting may need a 1-1 staff member to enable them to have the best experience, but where this isn't necessary (or financially possible), allocate a member of staff to be the child's key worker who will oversee that the child's needs are always

being met. This should ideally be a regular member of staff who works the same days the child attends, but all staff should have an awareness and understanding of what each individual children's needs are. Some local authorities may offer financial assistance to enable you to employ a 1-1 staff member, so it is worth checking to find out what is available via the Childcare Team. Funding may also be available for children with additional support needs who are eligible for the Childcare Offer.

- 8. Consider the environment** - For some children with additional needs, environmental factors can affect how they feel and behave. Loud noises, distractions, crowds, large spaces, small spaces, doors slamming, hand dryers and lights are just some of the external factors that children can be sensitive to. Through communication with the child and the adults who care for them, you should be able to find out this information in advance and implement any adaptations required to your setting. For example, many children can be sensitive to the noise hand dryers make, so you could use paper towels instead. Or you may care for a child who benefits from a quiet space and some time away from the other children so create a space or den for when children need a safe quiet place. You can't always control external factors in a busy environment so identifying coping strategies should a child feel distressed as a team can help you be prepared and act quickly.





**9. Equipment** – You may find that some of your equipment or activities need to be adapted to cater for a new child attending. Again, communication will help you understand whether what you currently offer is sufficient. Sometimes this can feel costly to adapt, so ask the child’s parents/carers if they have anything they can send in and perhaps keep at club, or if you are on a school site, ask for permission to use any equipment, toys or books the child may be fond of. Seek funding that will enable you to purchase items, or please do contact us, or your local authority to see if they have any means to help. Specialist and sensory play equipment can often be expensive but there are many DIY ways of recreating items, and you could even get the children involved in this, a quiet sensory space for children can easily be created from simple card or blanket structure filled with battery operated fairy lights

**10. Review** – As with all children, hobbies, interests, health, challenges, and behaviours change over time. For children with additional needs, it is especially vital that their needs are continuously being evaluated, reflected upon, reviewed and met. Consistent and regular communication through appropriate methods will ensure your child’s needs are met and it is crucial that all staff at your setting are reviewing what’s on offer. Is it meeting the child’s need and if not, what must be changed? If you’re not sure if you are meeting your children’s needs, or if you feel there are adaptations which could be made but you are not sure how to go about them then please don’t hesitate to get in touch with your friendly team at your Cwlwm umbrella organisation who can support you with every aspect of your business.



## 2. Creating Inclusive Learning Environments: Insights from Professionals



### In conversation with Frances Rees, National Neurodivergence Development Officer

Frances Rees, National Neurodivergence Development Officer provides some insight into the work of the National Neurodivergence Team and some of the resources that they have available.

#### Tell us about yourself

I am one of the Neurodivergence Development Officers with the National Neurodivergence Team (formerly Autism Wales). I joined the organisation in 2017 and assisted with establishing the Integrated Autism Service in south-west Wales. Before this I worked for over a decade for Carmarthenshire County Council in the education and children's services department.

I am passionate about anything related to neurodiversity (ND), including education and inclusion. I lead on training for the National Neurodivergence Team, designing, commissioning and delivering ND training sessions to a range of stakeholders in Wales.





### Tell us about the National Neurodivergence Team

The National Neurodivergence Team, is funded by Welsh Government and hosted by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and works in partnership with Public Health Wales (PHW). The team works closely with the Welsh Government, local authority Autism Leads and health boards, key stakeholders and advisory groups focussing on “Improving the lives of neurodivergent people, their families and carers in Wales”.

### What resources are available for practitioners and settings?

The National Neurodivergence Team has created have a series of resources aimed at increasing the knowledge, skills, and understanding of autism and ND conditions for those working in an early years setting, as well as education resources for older children.



Teifi and Friends is a whole setting approach to neuro-inclusivity incorporating a range of learning resources including a training film for early years staff. The film highlights some of the daily challenges faced by neurodivergent children, and is designed to develop awareness, and stimulate discussion about the steps we can take to improve their experience and engagement levels. For children there’s [‘Teifi and Friends’](#), an animated film showing how children in early years settings can be kind and accepting towards peers with additional needs. A range of free support resources also accompany the programme.

For a step-by-step video guide on gaining the Learning About Autism Early Years Setting Award, please follow the link [‘How to’ Early Years Video](#).

### **Is there training available for practitioners and settings?**

Yes, a series of eLearning modules which focus Autism and ADHD are available at [eLearning - National Neurodivergence Team](#). These modules have been co-produced with, and include video contributions from, people within the neurodivergent community.



### **What key message would you like to share with practitioners and settings?**

Raising awareness of neurodivergence has the power to change lives: the lives of neurodivergent children, and the lives of those around them. It encourages understanding, tolerance and respect, so that together we can all reach our full potential.

To learn more about neurodivergent conditions and for FREE bilingual resources please see the [National Neurodivergence Team](#) website, including resources grouped by the different [stages of education](#) and a section for those that [work in an early years setting](#). Please make use of the training and resources available and share these with other practitioners and parents to raise awareness and increase understanding of neurodivergence.

## In conversation with Liz Hodges, Caitlin McKie and Emma Phylip- Thomas from Sense

### Moving forwards into life

Liz Hodges, Caitlin McKie and Emma Phylip-Thomas work in children's services for [Sense](#), a national charity which supports children with complex disabilities, especially sensory disabilities, helping them, their families and the settings which support them, to make the most of their abilities and to ensure that no-one is left out of life.

Movement is key to development, and for some children it does not develop easily. Children with physical or medical needs, who have learning difficulties, and/or sensory impairments may develop movement more slowly.



# sense

cysylltu golwg, sain a bywyd  
connecting sight, sound and life

Cymru



The ability to move or direct movement allows children to develop independence, to interact more effectively with the world, to develop their communication skills and to be more involved with their families and with other children.



Emyr came to playgroup very withdrawn and did not join any activities. With advice from Sense staff, he was gradually made familiar with outside play equipment when no other children were present. He learnt to use the slide by crawling up and staff highlighted steps and edges to facilitate safety. Having learnt this, he could join other children in outside play more independently.

Using the principles of Universal Design for Learning<sup>1</sup>, young children with a variety of different needs can be included in activities which promote their movement and mobility.

The first principle is **Engagement**; ensuring children are willing and able to join in. For Carwyn this meant giving a reason to roll from her back to her side; Sense staff showed how placing a bright, shiny toy on her right-hand side enabled this. They encouraged another child to play in this space too, so that when Carwyn turned over, she could join them and their toys. Junaid learnt to chase his favourite train across the carpet.

For Anwen, a child with limited vision, Sense staff advised finding motivation in linking sound to movement. With bells on her ankles, she is motivated to move her legs. Anwen enjoys the ‘cause and effect’ aspect of this - when she kicks, she hears the bells ringing.

Farida though needed a quiet environment to try new activities like spinning in a hoop. Yellow lines in the playground outline a space where children do not run around and knock others over. A key, consistent supporter can allow a child to feel safe when moving around, that they will not fall, or bang into things.

The second principle is **Action and Expression** – ensuring that all children can join in using different ways of accessing movement. At Sense play events lots of different balls are used. Tomas needs a ball which makes a noise, and Alys a bright orange ball. Mina uses a ball with ‘filaments’ like a koosh ball, easy to catch even though her fingers don’t close easily, and she can’t catch a regular ball. Phylip used a balloon instead of a ball, because it requires only a very light touch.



Some children walk with support, but others direct someone else in moving them or may scoot for example on a skateboard. At a Sense play day Seren starts the running races by pushing a target which sets off a bell, and Hamid joins in the race by reeling in a car on a string, because he can't run himself.

Suzanne likes to copy an adult in a movement activity, sometimes putting her hands on an adult's hands. She is learning to copy a child in partner work. Sense training showed staff how to carefully and gently guide a child in 'hand under hand'<sup>2</sup> interactions (not pushing the child's body but showing how the adult's body moves with the child's body matching it). Aleksander started an obstacle course by holding onto a shared stick with an adult, then followed a rope guide at hand height, and then a line on the ground. Many games can be played differently, for example suggesting children try alternative ways of interacting with playground equipment, not just walking up the slide steps, but perhaps crawling under them!

Finally, **Representation**. Children need to learn the words which control movement, especially if they depend on others to move safely. While walking gives independence to Charles, a typically developing child, for Amber, for whom movement is difficult, even the slightest independence boosts her self-esteem. Amber was dependent on someone putting things on her tray until someone taught her to reach and then she was able to make her own choices for snacks.

Spoken words, signs, or symbols for movement words, start/stop, fast/slow, up/down, forwards/backwards, left and right help children understand movement

and stillness, give them control and keep them safe. Matthew uses a direction board with pictures and arrows to tell others how to move his wheelchair, but first he learnt the meaning of movement. It's really important to reinforce movement development with photographs/pictures and words, so children and parents can share their learning.

For Emyr, Anwen and Matthew movement might look different, but all movement is valuable, and supports development across the board, in communication, interaction, cognitive skills and independence.

For more resources for education and early professionals looking at providing the best possible start for children with sensory impairments or disabilities visit: [sense.org.uk/information-and-advice/for-professionals/resources-for-education-and-early-years-professional](https://www.sense.org.uk/information-and-advice/for-professionals/resources-for-education-and-early-years-professional)

## References:

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl>

## <sup>2</sup> What is the hand-under-hand approach?

Ref: <https://www.sense.org.uk/information-and-advice/ways-of-communicating/hand-under-hand-signing/>





## **In conversation Charlotte Davies, founder of Fit2Learn**

### **Can you tell us a little about you, Fit2Learn, and your background in working with children with learning challenges?**

Fit 2 Learn is a small social enterprise that prizes itself on being at the cutting edge of very practical approaches to supporting all aspects of good human development for people of all ages.

Key to our work is understanding the development that should happen in the first 7 or 8 years of life. That is:

- The basic motor skills development should be in place including: postural control; bi-lateral integration of motor skills; mid-line crossing skills; and eventually fine motor skills.
- Good sound processing skills so that a child can make sense of all sounds in the normal human range and replicate those sounds. How a child speaks and sings is a good indication of how well they are processing sounds.
- Binocular vision and visual processing skills i.e. both eyes are sending equal messages to the brain and the brain is doing the seeing.
- Integrating all senses and motor skills so that they work together coherently when the child undertakes a task.

## Fit-2-Learn

I got into this work because my son was blinded by being eye-patched for a lazy eye. I knew that he could see at 3 years old and by 6 years old it became obvious that he could not visually recognise his friends.

I was a senior teacher and I had to learn from first principles how humans develop to learn and behave calmly and efficiently.

I was very lucky that I quickly found Daleen Smith, now a co-Director of Fit 2 Learn who knew how to reopen pathways between the eyes and the brain and how to get the motor skills working properly.

We completely sorted out my son's problems and he left school a year early with 6 A levels at high grades and is currently finishing off his PhD studies.

Once I knew and understood how children needed to develop to learn I could not stop seeing the scale of the problems in UK schools. Eventually I just could not continue and left teaching to set-up Fit 2 Learn in 2012. I then did various training courses including going to France to train in Tomatis sound therapy. Dr Alfred Tomatis was the leading thinker in how living humans process sound, he developed technology and methodologies to address problems with areas such as developmental language delay.

**Since Covid, many services are reporting they are finding children's behaviour and needs to be increasing demanding, is this something you recognise with the children and families you work with?**

Absolutely, and it was obvious even during Covid lockdowns that things were getting worse rapidly so I started posting free videos on-line to support parents to support their children's development. <https://www.fit-2-learn.com/video-index/>

Covid though was not the main driving force behind these changes it accelerated existing trends.



- Gavin Sandercock at Essex University had already spent years warning about the decline of UK children’s physical fitness.
- Daniel Lieberman at Harvard University has been mapping the flattening of the human face due to softer food stuffs and noting the impact on: teeth crowding; jaw formation; palates; nasal pathways; mouth breathing and so on.
- The British Journal of Ophthalmology has reported various studies that show a doubling of myopia rates in school children
- The OECD reported that UK retirees have higher skill levels than young people entering the workforce.

The alarm bells were already ringing.

**Speech and language issues are very common in children. In your experience, what can lead to a child having speech and language difficulties, even if parents are doing all they can to provide a language rich environment with lots of talk to babies and young children?**

Human sound processing is our first myelinated sense i.e. the brain is starting to make sense of sounds from about the 24<sup>th</sup> week in vitro.



The foetus in the womb is listening to the mother's body rhythm, the heartbeat etc and also the speech and the noises in the mother's environment. It is all filtered through the amniotic fluid to protect the foetus' delicate auditory system.

So, by the time the baby is born it has already done 3.5 months of listening and tuning to the mother's world. If it is a twin, it will have had to share space and that might have compromised full development.

BUT human babies are very delicate they are still developing outside the womb particularly in those first 7 years.

Birth is a particularly challenging event. We now have many new technologies to help infants survive birth, but that means we have far more vulnerable babies surviving and really no plan to proactively support their global development. There are some quite interesting things that are being done in Europe with sound therapy and premature babies to stimulate better development.

Post birth the infants needs to develop their face and posture in order to help drain fluid from the tubes around the inner ear and nasal passages.

According to the US National Institute of Health 80% of under 3 year olds will experience at least one round of inner ear infection.

Inner ear infections can weaken the muscles in the inner ear and cause long-term problems with sound processing if not addressed.

Some children are born with congenital defects that impact on their ability to drain the passages in their airways e.g. Downes syndrome babies.

For ALL infants we need to proactively ensure that they can breathe through their noses as far as possible. Every human should aim to breathe slowly and deeply through their nose in and out.



Things that promote good development of pathways in the head and clear airways are:

- A good diet during pregnancy plenty of fruit and vegetables, fish, milk, meat etc that build strong teeth and bones. Avoid sugars and ultra-processed foods as much as possible.
- Breast feeding
- Minimising use of dummies
- Lots of games using the mouth area like pulling faces, sticking out tongues, and making silly sounds
- Games that involve breathing through the nose, if adults model behaviour infants will want to copy it.

When the children are 3 years plus then it will become easier to help the children clear their own airways by holding their breath and swaying from side to side until they cannot hold their breath any longer.

For some children they are shy or can even be selectively mute i.e. will only speak to certain people. This condition is commonly caused by the voice box being too high in the trachea. When we are born our voice box is high in the trachea and should descend as we develop our motor skills. This does not always happen for modern children and needs to be proactively supported to ensure that all children are comfortable with speaking. Moro reflex exercise:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iA7ExcwS-M0&t=443s>



If there is a concern that children are not processing sound well then it is possible to use various forms of sound therapy to stimulate the tiny muscles in the inner ear and the brain to make better sense of sound.

**What information therefore, would you encourage settings and practitioners to enquire about to understand the potential challenges the young children might encounter due to birth and/or ENT health in early childhood?**

Ask about the birth and early years infections. Parents often notice when speech development drops off after infections.

Also ask about breathing during the night as well as the day.

But I would also encourage Early Childhood setting to set-up parent self-help groups in order to build community skills and knowledge. The sort of areas I would think about are:

- Diet cooking and growing food
- Sleep
- Physical movement
- Breathing
- Sound processing
- Vision development

Develop community solutions to maximise child development – it takes a village to raise a child. It is a complex job, and we all need to work together to master it.

**As we know the human brain is highly plastic and responds positively to activities and experiences that address sensory issues. What would you recommend as actions or activities that all practitioners can undertake with all children to support their development and help address some of the common challenges that young children encounter?**

- Activities to self-regulate and co-regulate. The calmer the adults the calmer are the children. Especially early years children synchronise their body rhythms with the adults around them, so the first step is to teach all the adults to be calm.
- Rhythm is very important to all aspects of development. It is very good for children to learn to clap, recite and move to a beat of 54bpm, see Interactive Metronome for their research. 54bpm is the speed at which children can maintain their current skills and learn new skills.

- Conversely try and avoid games and TV programmes with fast addictive rhythms. They unsettle children.
- Daylight and outdoors is very good for developing children. The more time they spend outside the better their vision is likely to develop. So let's get outside and stay outside. Whilst out there, practice changing focus by looking for things near and far. Also, remember that outside the children do not need to deal with sound bouncing off walls and reverberating, so they are going to be able to make better sense of sound outside.
- Infants need to be as free as possible to move and develop. Their natural place is the floor NOT on bouncers or on chairs or propped up on cushions. The more time children spend on the floor the better. They need to stay there, fight gravity and develop conscious control of their motor skills and learn to move towards interesting things to play with. It is long hard work, and they need lots of encouragement and reassurance.
- A very large number of modern infants do not gain full conscious control of their motor skills. This impacts on their ability to develop higher level skills. It is therefore important that we have an early years physical education programme that ensures that ALL children 4 to 7 years old: integrate primitive reflex movements (automatic muscle movements made by infants in their early years); develop good postural control; develop a good walking gait; develop the ability to coordinate the left and right sides of their bodies and cross their mid-line
- The Arts really are good for children's development. So, build opportunities for singing, drama, role-play, painting and drawing, working with clay and so on. It is not pointless it is developing the children's basic skills. Whilst the children are playing please watch them and think whether a child is developing rounded skills or are they struggling to keep up with their peers.
- Obstacle courses are a really good activity. Children can make and design them and then navigate around them. Whilst they are doing that, they can describe what they are doing, invent a story about why they have to work around the course, they can pick up "treasure" and place items in different places. Whilst they are doing all of this it is possible to promote understanding of space and their position in space using vocabulary such



as up, down, in, out, in front, behind, under, over, through, between and so on. Again, if a child struggles, then make a note and think about how motor skills, sound processing or vision need to be developed to build good all round skills.

**What key messages would you leave us with to understand children better and support their early developmental needs, potentially addressing some behaviours and challenges that have been categorised as ALN when they are developmental or experiential gaps in the child’s early childhood experiences?**

Children desperately want to please the adults around them. Desperately. So, if children are distressed then they are frustrated or frightened. They need calm reassurance.

Most things are resolved by a cuddle from a trusted adult or a sleep or just coming home for tea.

For some children the distress goes on longer than the moment and the pitch of the cry does not seem like that of a tired child. At that stage parents and other adults around the child need to think critically about how the child is developing.

Beware of descending into blame about parenting, try to think and stay calm.

Remember my son was blind at 6yo before I noticed that his hospital prescribed therapy had left terrible visual damage. I thought that he really liked me and was a bit bossy; not that he was clinging onto me in fear.

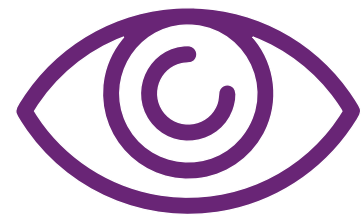
It really does take a village to spot what the issue is precisely.

Do basic checks such as:

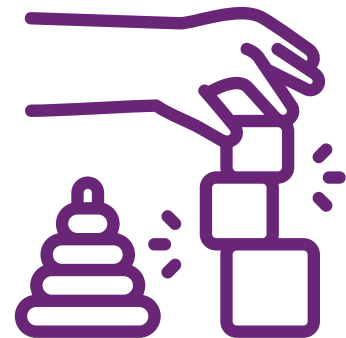
**Check sound processing** by observing how well they follow instructions and how well they learn new songs and can sing in tune. If the child has slurred speech or fails to develop speech that is a good sign that there are sound processing problems.



**Check visual processing** by watching eye movements when the child keeps their head still but follows a favourite toys. Play games such as putting lines on and off a line and see how well the child works with hand eye coordination with both hands.



**Check motor skills development** by watching how confidently a child moves when moving around a local playground. Remember that rushing is not always a good sign children tend to rush to cover up gaps in their processing.



Consider factors such as infections that might put pressure on nerves in the head. It is often quite hard to tell what is making a child distressed particularly inner ear infection is not always obvious externally. Just gently pulling the outer ear and watching the child's reaction is a useful check. If the child does have inner ear infection, they will pull away very quickly.

When motor skills and sense do not develop properly children will unconsciously do their best to cover up any gaps. But as school and society demand more of them the strain tends to come out in behaviour. Not all children are the same some are very noisy and angry others work really hard to hide.

Children develop slowly. It is not a race. If something goes wrong, it does not matter as long as the problem is addressed. People of all ages can sort out their development of sound, vision and motor skills. It is exciting to address problems as a family. Children take change for granted, but parents get quite excited and fascinated when their skills develop.

## 3. Supporting Every Child with Additional Learning Needs: Case Studies

### A childminder's support for children with ALN Llinos Bowen, Childminder from Pembrokeshire

PACEY Cymru spoke to Llinos Bowen a childminder from Pembrokeshire about her work, the support childminders can offer to children with ALN and the wider benefits of caring for children with ALN in Wales.

#### Tell us a bit about yourself and your childminding service

I have been a childminder for 19 years. I work with assistants and an apprentice. We are a Welsh medium setting but do use English and sign along as well. I have experience caring for children with ALN both as a childminder and in previous work in the sector. I feel strongly that parents should be able to access the childcare they choose, and we should change and adapt to meet every child's needs.





### **What has helped you most to support children with ALN?**

Being able to access support from professionals to provide us with strategies, interventions and training specific to the needs of the children we care for. Examples include TACPAC (Touch and Communication PAC), Objects of reference (a way of using objects as a means of communicating), Neurodivergence, Visual impairment and Positive looking (understanding of visual skills). We never stop learning as each child is different and so are their needs.

### **What have been the benefits of working with other professionals?**

It is the first time many of them have been in a childminding setting and they love the home from home feel. If we need extra guidance I only have to ask. They visit the child in the setting, and we have regular visits from the outreach service who have helped with advice and resources. We attend Individual Development Plan (IDP) meetings as we have a good insight into the child's needs and progress and it is useful to hear what parents and professionals have to say.

### **How do you work in partnership with parents?**

Occasionally we are the first to spot that a child may have ALN. It is important when having a discussion with parents that we are led by them as not every parent is ready to accept this, however we can plant the seed and put early intervention in place to support the child in the setting. A positive approach is essential when talking to parents as they may have already experienced negativity from others about their child's development. It is key to share those little magical moments and the small steps that the child has achieved. There are many, even on the most challenging of days.

One parent said *“Being the parent to three children with ALN can be extremely challenging but also rewarding. The hardest part for me is trusting someone to care for my children [but] the setting goes above and beyond what is expected to care and support my children and us as a family.”*

### **Have you seen any benefits to the other children in your setting?**

Other children just accept that the child has different needs, they know what toys they like, where they like to sit and they are as excited as us when they make progress, however small. A child sat next to a child and signed and said 'more' before giving them more crackers. Another went to get a flannel as an

object of reference and then took them to wash their hands before snack time. It is little moments like this that make me proud of how they support at their level, giving all children a sense of belonging.

### **What top tips would you give to another childminder looking to support children with ALN?**

If you are asked to care for a child with ALN, I would say 'go for it'. I have learnt so much, it has benefited all the children in my care. As a childminder we are used to adapting to meeting the needs and developmental stages of different age groups. Most children with ALN only require us to make a few adaptations to the environment or the way we work.

There are challenging days, on those days we remain calm, and support them using strategies that work for them. We sometimes need to do a little detective work to find out what needs to change for them, for example is the environment becoming too noisy? Are they in pain? Are they not sleeping well at night? Is there a new smell in the environment? Is it an item of clothing? These can then be adapted to support the child to become happy again.

### **Any final thoughts on caring for children with ALN?**

- Some children with ALN have different ways of communicating but all have plenty to 'say' and can express themselves.
- Those small steps of progress really are big moments for children.
- They are individuals. Children with the same diagnosis can have very different needs.
- They have the same basic needs as any other child, they just need us to take down the barriers and they will thrive.

I couldn't do the job I do without the support of parents, professionals and staff. When we work together, we can ensure the best outcome for the child. We are lucky to be a part of every child's journey, and every journey has been different.

[See PACEY's Spotlight on Additional Learning Needs \(ALN\) Wales for further information.](#)

## Support provided by Cylch Meithrin y Gyrnos for children with ALN needs

**Myfanwy Harman, Leader Cylch Meithrin y Gyrnos**

Email [cylchmeithrinygyrnos@outlook.com](mailto:cylchmeithrinygyrnos@outlook.com)

In Cylch Meithrin y Gyrnos we do our best to give each child an equitable start, and we feel passionately that every child has the right to belong in a Welsh-medium childcare setting.

We would like to share an example with you of how we welcomed a boy of 2 1/2 years old who has global developmental delay and craniosynostosis. He and his family receive weekly professional help, and the child is awaiting surgery on his skull.

He is a happy, curious boy who adores singing. He can remember and copy song patterns, showing strengths in terms of audial learning and memory.

When he joined the cylch, he experienced difficulty moving from one environment to another, and transferring between experiences was difficult and confusing for him. He preferred one to one interactions rather than being in a group.

He could not communicate his needs verbally, and it was a challenge for us as we attempted to encourage him to socialise and take part in activities with other children.

The child's mother expressed concerns that introducing the Welsh language in the cylch would confuse her son, given his communication difficulties; she was concerned that introducing a language could further complicate his development rather than help him.

After observing the child in the cylch, practitioners notice his keen interest in filling and emptying things, and that he showed signs of the transportation schema.



We used several strategies to facilitate the transition between routines and experiences:

- Staff introduced visual aids to improve the child’s ability to communicate and understand his environment, improving the process of transitioning from one room to another. Pictures of the rooms were placed on the doors so that the child could identify where he was going next.
- A visual timetable was created, showing activities throughout the day, for example the ‘*Nawr a nesaf*’ table.
- For specific routines, such as snack time, visual guidelines were introduced showing every step of the day. For example, a guide showed a picture of a child washing their hands, sitting down, and then eating their snack. This helped the child to understand the session’s routines.
- We began singing short songs before snack time and before home time. Over time, the child began associating the song with those activities.

The intervention strategies were successful in several ways:

- The use of visual aids supported the child in expressing his voice and his decisions more effectively, lessening his frustration and improving his ability to transfer between activities.
- The staff responded to the transportation schema shown by the child by providing water, receptacles and other free parts in different areas around the setting, giving him more opportunity to develop his schematic

interests. Over time, as other children began showing interest in joining in with these experiences, staff notice that the child was coping far better in group situations than he had done previously.

- Integrating songs into the daily timetable was a positive way of supporting the child’s linguistic development. He began to mimic the words of the songs and his vocabulary gradually expanded.
- Introducing Welsh songs not only supported the child’s linguistic development but also answered the mother’s concerns. He would sing the songs at home, and the mother could see that introducing the Welsh language had facilitated his learning in a way that was enjoyable to him.
- Better communication equipment and a predictable routine supported the child’s general emotional well-being. His anxiety levels decreased, and he began showing more interest in exploring new experiences and environments.

This study draws attention to the importance of child-centred practice. There were positive outcomes for the child and his family as a result of the cylch’s intervention.



## Support provided by Bryn Coch Club for children with ALN needs

Clare Murphy - Bryn Coch Club Manager

Email: [Bryncochclub@bryncoch.wales](mailto:Bryncochclub@bryncoch.wales)

When a child joins a setting, who requires a little more support, perhaps with either social skills, speech, communication and language development, behaviour, or is simply struggling to settle into a new environment away from their carers, it is not only the responsibility but also the desire of the childcare provider to adapt to the child's needs, seeing them as an individual and provide support where and if required.



An example of this, is when we had a child join our setting at the age of 2 years and 3 months.

When entering the setting and being parted from their carer the child became very upset, displaying this by screaming, hitting staff, choosing to keep both his outdoor coat and backpack on throughout the duration on their stay. Staff continued to comfort and support the child by reassuring them and mirroring play with known liked toy's activities, information requested prior to joining. This practice is implemented with all children who require more support with the transition to joining our setting for the first time.

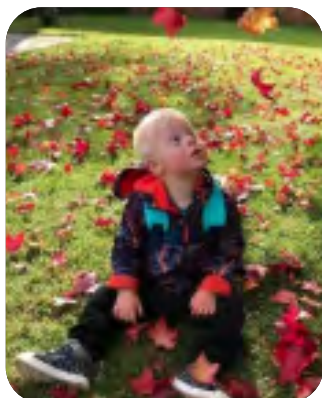
After a period of time the child become more settled however, it was apparent that their communication/social skills and the ability to interact with their peers was limited. The child displayed their frustration by repeatedly hurting their peers as they were unable to read emotions of others and express vocally their thoughts/feelings. From previous experience of supporting children with additional needs we believed that not only would the child benefit from the support of a 1:1 carer, but all the children who attended our setting, as equally their well-being is also paramount. After a request for the child to be observed by the Pre-development team, the accessor supported our findings and the funding for 1:1 support was granted. The aim being to support the child with

speech, language and communication and when interacting with their peers modelling positive play at the same time continuously giving positive praise for choosing to make the right choices. We do not believe in reward charts in our setting, labelling of a child in any form is not welcomed. We have a “starry sky” for instant “wow” moments.

The support of a 1:1 carer is invaluable with regards supporting a child who may require a little extra support with the transition into a childcare setting. However, it is important also for Practitioners to be aware of each child’s progression and if required to remove this support allowing the child to enhance their skills independently strengthening relationships with both staff and their peers. This was a strategy that we implemented in our setting, as we had witnessed the improvement on the areas of support originally required and we were conscious that the child was choosing to interact with the 1:1 support more than their peers. Therefore, after chatting with the child’s parents, and with their consent we “took away the band aid” reducing the sessions of support over an agreed period of time. As result we are very proud to say that the child embraced their independence, and it was so special for all staff to witness the child’s confidence grow whilst at the same time forming beautiful friendships with children who they had originally struggled to engage with. I believe this highlights the need, if required, to support a child from as early age as possible. If strategies are implemented sooner rather than later, our findings are that the child has the skills required when starting their next chapter in mainstream school.

We have continuously supported all the children in our care, seeing each child as an individual and meeting their needs, and as a result we are proud to state that the care we have provided was recognised by Flintshire’s childcare offer team and our setting was filmed for the use of training purposes for other settings, which can also be [viewed online](#). Allowing a child to shine in their own time, perhaps with a little extra support is a valuable tool to enhance the skills required with the day to day challenges of life.





## Support provided by Little Stars Nursery, Pontypool support children with ALN

**Emma Matthews and Marie Ellis-Jones, Owners of Little Stars Nursery**

Hayley Edwards, NDNA Cymru's Early Years Education Officer interviewed Emma and Marie with a focus on supporting children with Additional Learning Needs in the non-maintained sector. Although the setting has a wealth of experience in supporting children and their families with additional needs over the years, they experienced a setting first for them, whereby a child started in the baby room at 9 months old with a diagnosis of Down Syndrome. This case study focuses in on this example and explores the journey the nursery took with the child and their family, from transitioning into the setting at 9 months old to leaving to attend school and the impact the support had on the child's learning and development. [Read more about their journey here.](#)



## 4. Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare?

The Welsh Parliament's Committee for Children, Young People, and Education recently published a report showing that disabled children and young people in Wales face serious challenges in accessing equal education and childcare. The report, based on a year-long inquiry and extensive feedback from families and organisations such as Cwlwm, highlights that:

- **Barriers to Inclusion:** Disabled children frequently encounter limited access to suitable resources and support, forcing many families to fight for the education and care their children are entitled to.
- **Inconsistency Across Wales:** Support varies widely, and some families are even forced to move their children between schools to find adequate assistance.
- **Welsh-Medium Gaps:** There is a shortage of inclusive Welsh-language education options for disabled children, which restricts language access for families wanting bilingual education.



The committee issued **32 recommendations** urging the Welsh Government to:

- Ensure proactive support, rather than waiting until children experience difficulties,
- Improve training for educators and childcare providers on supporting children with additional needs,
- Collect better data on accessibility gaps and ensure guidance is clear and consistent across all of Wales.

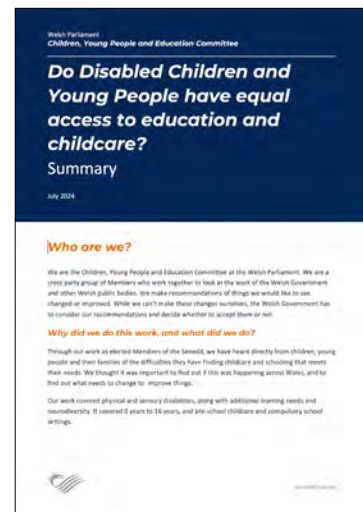
Read below the Welsh Parliament’s Committee for Children, Young People, and Education report, which is available in various formats:



[On 16 July the Committee published its written report.](#)



[An Easy Read Version is available](#)



[Summary Report is also available in Microsoft Word format.](#)

Welsh Government’s response to ‘Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare?’ can be viewed [here](#).

Click on the below links to view Cwlwm partners’ individual responses:

[AEC 40 PACEY Cymru](#)

[AEC 43 Clybiau Plant Cymru Kid’s Clubs](#)

[AEC 51 Mudiad Meithrin](#)

[AEC 53 Early Years Wales](#)

[AEC 54 National Day Nurseries Association \(NDNA\)](#)

# 5. Additional Learning Needs Resources, Training and Useful Links

## Resources:

### Learning difficulties or disabilities:

[Repository – Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#): Professional learning online module to increase understanding around the following conditions: Visual impairment, Deafness, Autism, Down’s Syndrome, Moderate learning needs, Dyslexia, Social and emotional difficulties, Supporting learners with motor impairment, Developmental Coordination Disorder.



### Autism:

You will find useful information, resources and training to help you support autistic children on Neurodivergence Wales’ website (formerly Autism Wales) pages for early years settings: [I work in an early years setting – Neurodivergence Wales](#).

Neurodivergence Wales offer [Guidance for early years settings](#) and [Information for parents: Autistic spectrum disorders and related conditions](#).



[www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk](http://www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk)

Fact sheet created by Edinburgh University which could be useful for parents/carers with an Autistic child considering Welsh medium child care and education [‘Autism and bilingualism: Is bilingualism harmful for children with autism?’](#).

### Speech, Language and Communication:

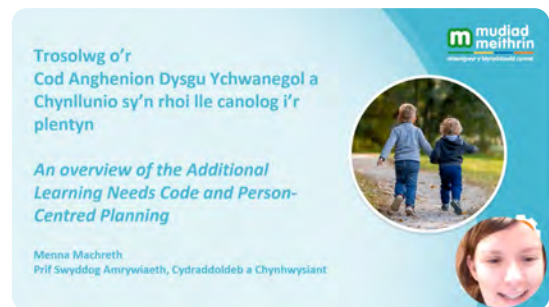
Speech, language, and communication skills make a genuine difference to children’s futures. Without them, children may face lifelong challenges and inequalities. Some children need more support. [‘Talk with Me’](#) is a campaign and



achievement scheme by the Welsh Government offering a host of resources to help [practitioners](#) and [parents](#) in supporting the development of their children’s speech, language, and communication skills.

### The ALN system in Wales:

Video presentation ‘An overview of the Additional Learning Needs Code and Person-Centred Practice’ by Menna Machreth (1 hour): [Cyflwyniad i'r System ADY ac Ymarfer Person Ganolog Gwanwyn 2024 ENGLISH on Vimeo](#)



### [Additional Learning Needs \(ALN\) Act and Code | Cwlwm](#)

### Other:

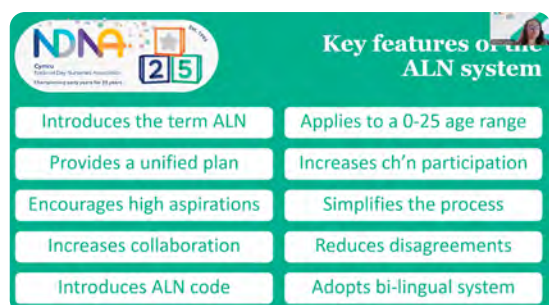
[Cylch i Bawb Resource](#) - What does being an inclusive setting mean, and how do we operate as one?



### Training:

[Webinar](#) recording by NDNA Cymru exploring;

- the ALN Act and code
- what it means for settings
- and how to embed effective practice



## NDNA Autism Awareness – Live Virtual Classroom

This introductory course will provide a range of strategies to support ASD. The training will develop knowledge and awareness of ASD, to improve the experiences of children in your setting. Practitioners will learn how to create ‘Autism friendly’ environments and practical strategies to support children with ASD. [Communication and interaction: Strategies for children with SEND/ASN/ALN](#)



## NDNA Speech and language skills – online course

This online NDNA childcare course looks at how children develop speech and language skills in the early years. It covers how to spot difficulties and what you can do to help. This course has been developed in partnership with specialist children’s therapists, EQUIP. [NDNA Speech and language skills](#)



## PACEY Cymru sessions on Understanding Neurodivergence

Session 1 Effective Environments, Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> November 6.30-8pm

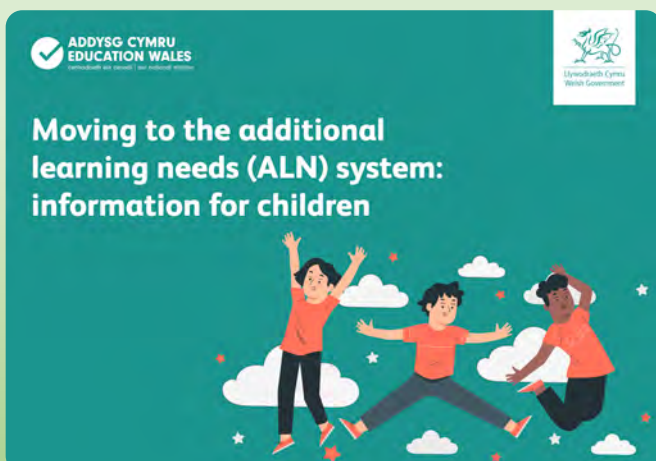
Session 2 Enabling adult relationships and experiences, Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> January 6.30-8pm

Find out more at [Understanding neurodivergence \(Wales\)](#)



## Useful links:

- [Welsh Government – Additional Learning Needs](#)
- The benefit of nature and being outside for children with ALN: [article](#) and [activities ideas for nature based activities.](#)
- [Talk With Me \(Welsh Government\)](#)
- [SNAP Cymru](#)
- [Learning Disability Wales](#)
- [Down’s Syndrome Association](#)
- [National Autistic Society](#)
- [National Deaf Children’s Society](#)
- [All Wales Forum of Parents and Carers](#)
- [Family Fund](#)
- [Child Commissioner for Wales](#)
- [Mencap Cymru](#)



## 6. The Childcare Offer for Wales – Additional Support Grant (ASG)



The [Childcare Offer for Wales](#) provides up to 30 hours of government funded early education and childcare (for eligible parents) for three and four-year-old children for up to 48 weeks per year.

To ensure inclusivity for children needing additional support, the Childcare Offer for Wales [Additional Support Grant \(ASG\)](#) is available. This separate funding stream allows local authorities to support eligible children with additional needs, ensuring they can access the childcare element of the Offer just like other eligible children.

Parents can apply for this additional support during the Childcare Offer for Wales application process by contacting their local authority through the Childcare Offer helpline at **03000 628 628**.



## 7. Small Business Rates Relief

Cwlwm partners were invited to provide evidence on behalf of their members about the impact of the enhanced rates relief scheme. [Review of business rates relief for registered childcare properties, 2024](#)

After lobbying efforts by Cwlwm partners, we're thrilled to announce that the Welsh Government has officially made [small business rates relief](#) permanent for the childcare sector. This decision, announced on 12th November 2024, marks a significant win for childcare providers across Wales, supporting sustainability and growth in this vital sector.





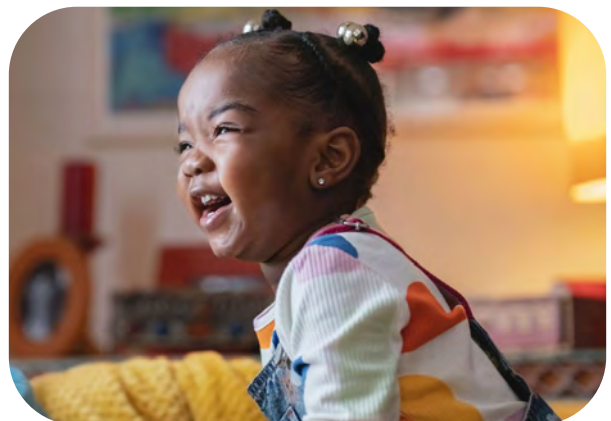
## 8. WeCare Wales

**Gofalwn** | **WeCare**  
**.cymru** | **.wales**

**WeCare Wales is supporting the next generation of our childcare workforce. By dispelling myths and showcasing career progression routes, we hope to attract more people with the right skills and values to work in care in Wales.**

### WeCare Wales offer webinar

We have a webinar coming up aimed at employers and partners wanting to learn more about the WeCare Wales offer. Join us on 5 December 1:00pm - 2:30pm and we will guide you through: who we are and what we do, our website and stakeholder toolkit, our training and volunteering programme, how to register for the jobs portal and guaranteed interview scheme and much more! Book your place [here](#).



### Supporting employers

Do you have vacancies to fill? If so, why not advertise them for **free** on the WeCare Wales employer dashboard. It's easy to use and you can publish, manage and monitor your job vacancies in one place. To sign up or log in visit the [Dashboard](#).

### Free training

We are offering free training for people interested in working in childcare. The one-day online programme is available for anyone living in Wales. The training covers the essentials needed to start working with children such as communication, safeguarding and working practices. For further information, visit [Introduction to childcare | WeCare Wales](#)

### Childcare Stories

Real stories from real people. Find out what it's like working in care by watching some of our childcare video stories, visit: [Stories | WeCare Wales](#)





[www.cwlwm.org.uk](http://www.cwlwm.org.uk)

The Cwlwm partnership consists of the following organisations:



**CLYBIAU PLANT CYMRU KIDS' CLUBS**

Bridge House, Station Road, Llanishen, Cardiff CF14 5UW  
Tel: 029 2074 1000 E-mail: [info@clybiauplantcymru.org](mailto:info@clybiauplantcymru.org)



**EARLY YEARS WALES**

Unit 1, Coopers Yard, Curran Road, Cardiff, CF10 5NB  
Tel: 029 2045 1242 E-mail: [info@earlyyears.wales](mailto:info@earlyyears.wales)



**MUDIAD MEITHRIN**

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**NDNA CYMRU**

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