



Welsh Parliament: Equality and Social Justice Committee

Childcare – a follow up inquiry into childcare and parental employment

Written evidence on behalf of the CWLWM partnership.

The CWLWM partnership brings together the five leading childcare and play organisations in Wales to deliver a bilingual integrated Service that will ensure the best possible outcomes for children and families across Wales.

The organisations are: Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids’ Clubs, Early Years Wales, Mudiad Meithrin, NDNA Cymru and Pacey Cymru.

What progress have you observed being made with implementation of the Committee’s 2022 recommendations?

<p>Recommendation 1.</p> <p>We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out in its response how it intends to work with local authorities and health boards to improve awareness and understanding of the childcare support available to new parents.</p>	<p>We find that the challenges around parental understanding of the support available to parents continues. The widening of access to those in education is a positive step forwards in widening access and supporting more children and families.</p> <p>This is evidenced by over £16m of capacity for the Childcare Offer being redistributed into the emergency budget in summer 2023. Assuming the Welsh Government’s forecasts for capacity in this budget are accurate there is a substantial difference in availability of funding and parental uptake; some of this will be accounted for in parental choice but we would suggest that this stems from a lack of awareness and understanding of the multi-layered system.</p> <p>Potential solutions include simplifying the funding for childcare from a parental perspective, increasing continuity of funding and continuity of service provider (subject to satisfactory CIW / Estyn / quality provision) for the child’s benefit. Not all families can access all these funded systems at present. Not all families qualify for all elements.</p> <p>Since the original report was published in 2022, the journey for parents is more complex and can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory maternity / paternity pay up to 12 months of age (dependant on family circumstances), • 2-year-old-access to Flying Start (targeted, funded),
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer to the Childcare Offer (with or without early education funding depending on family circumstances. The education element can be provided be in school or in a non-maintained setting with the childcare element provided by non-maintained settings), • Full-time education provision (term-time) from term following 3rd birthday (can be in school or in a non-maintained setting).
<p>Recommendation 2. We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out in its response its plans for addressing the gap in childcare between the end of maternity leave and eligibility for the Childcare Offer. This should include indicative timescales, and an evaluation of the financial and practical factors that would need to be taken into account in addressing this gap.</p>	<p>The phased approach of this implementation to funded access for 2-year-olds is pragmatic but will still leave families without funded access for a few years to come. The expansion to childcare for two-year-olds has been achieved through an expansion to Flying Start. This has created system challenges in all 22 local authority areas.</p> <p>This must be noted as the recommendation included acknowledging this commitment in the cooperation agreement. To our knowledge, little progress has been made on the gap between maternity support and the childcare offer in areas where there is not a Flying Start expansion in place. There has been no detailed discussion on any funded support for working families (beyond the Tax-free childcare offer) between maternity pay and 2-years of age.</p> <p>The timeline for a funded childcare provision (even if means tested as in Scotland) would be a positive step in support of children from low-income households and would be an investment into the future health, academic progress and lifelong outcomes of the future generations in Wales.</p> <p>If sustaining the Flying Start model, continued increasing access to service providers and simplifying the process of assessment at local authority level would be useful.</p> <p>Assessing whether this access can be extended towards the end of maternity would be helpful in maximising the impact of support to the child and to working families. Any assessment should include the measures, funding, and capacity needed to implement this structure in Wales and include all providers of childcare with equity.</p>

<p>Recommendation 3.</p> <p>We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out in its response how it intends to address the eligibility criteria in the Childcare Offer to make it easier for parents employed in atypical hours, such as insecure work, shift work or on zero-hours contracts, to access provision</p>	<p>As previously noted in our response to recommendation 2, since the original report was published in 2022, expanding the eligibility criteria to include access to families undertaking continued study is a welcome step.</p> <p>The availability of childcare at atypical times and for shift work is still limited across the sector. The current funding model and rate of payment is inhibitory to changing this. Understandably, staffing atypical hours from a childcare providers perspective comes at increased costs for staffing (anti-social hours) and availability of the workforce willing to work in these hours (a workforce still strongly tied to parents with children in school and seeking work around their own caring responsibilities), as well as the need to ensure that minimum staffing ratios are met and additional facilities provided to meet the different needs, particularly if children are to be cared for overnight.</p> <p>We also raise the point that the sectors that require staff to work atypical hours, rotating shift cycles and hold zero-hour contracts are often some of the lowest-paid roles within the workforce. Do we need employers to make a financial contribution to facilitate expanding the government funded offer?</p> <p>Simply making the Childcare Offer universal will not make the capacity for provision accessible or available across Wales.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4.</p> <p>We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out in its response its plans to strengthen guidance and legislation to deliver greater and more consistent provision of community-focused schools across Wales.</p>	<p>Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids’ Clubs has supported Welsh Government to update the Community Focused Schools (CFS) guidance to ensure the benefits of Out of School childcare clubs within school settings are highlighted, this will include a case study to demonstrate benefits of collaboration.</p> <p>One issue that needs to be addresses is the cost-recovery that schools use in terms of rent and utility usage. CWLWM presented a paper on Community-based venues and how the effects of high rents within school buildings are affecting the sustainability of the childcare and Playwork sectors to Welsh Government officials in May 2022, following a request for additional information from the Deputy Minister for Social Services.</p> <p>With some school-based non-maintained settings coming to the end of multi-year agreements are concerned about the new agreements they are being given,</p>

seeing big increases in their costs following challenges to school budgets and increased utility charges.

Could Welsh Government issue clear guidance about the community benefit and focus that should be considered by school estates. It must be understood that full cost recovery methods are not always affordable to providers and that schools should be mindful of the benefit that good quality affordable childcare brings to their pupils and their families. They could suggest that a consideration for an x% discount should to be adopted to the full cost recovery method, especially where those non-maintained and Out of School Childcare settings provide parents with a ‘one-stop’ centre for childcare and education across different providers on one integrated site.

There is also a concern about the long-term stability of non-maintained settings who provide their service from school buildings. Often, the settings are encouraged to make use of the ‘empty’ classroom space within the school if / when the school is below capacity, but once the school intake numbers increase, the settings can find themselves needing to find suitable alternative accommodation at short notice.

- 63% of all Out of School Childcare Clubs are based on school sites (CPCCKC)
- 82% Welsh medium Out of School Childcare Clubs are based on school sites (CPCCKC)
- 306 EYW member settings have a school address. This includes sessional, full day care and / or after school clubs registered with EYW.
- Of those 306, there are 105 EYW registered sessional groups who have a school address.
- In 2022 – 23, 196 Cylch Meithrin were operating within a Welsh-medium school site.

Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids’ Clubs has presented to the CFS co-ordinators meeting, pan Wales, to promote the advantages of Out of School Childcare Clubs on school sites and how they can support schools to develop a club.

	<p>Working with economies of scale, having community focussed schools that have provision for childcare, wraparound and can meet the language choices made by parents is worthy of support.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5. We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out in its response its plans to place more Welsh-medium childcare on school sites, given that progression from Welsh-medium childcare to Welsh-medium primary education is higher when this occurs.</p>	<p>Please see our previous response to Recommendation 4.</p> <p>Mudiad Meithrin notes that it’s <i>Sefydlu a Symud</i> scheme works with Local Authorities to recognise gaps in the existing provision, targeting areas which need to expand the childcare options available to parents.</p> <p>Planning to establish a Cylch Meithrin or Welsh-medium after school club on a school site provides more options and certainty for parents.</p> <p>Where schools are actively transitioning from English-medium provision towards Welsh-medium provision, establishing a Cylch Meithrin on the school site would provide an earlier entry point to Welsh-medium education for families in the wider community of the school.</p> <p>The number of Welsh Medium Out of School Childcare Clubs on School sites has increased from 138 (Sept 21) to 146 (Dec 23). Funding through the CYMell project in its first year has meant that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 Out of School Childcare Clubs were supported and awarded grant funding to become CIW registered. • 7 Cylchoedd Meithrin supported and awarded grant funding to expand to offer Out of School Childcare for children up to the age of 12. • 2 settings supported to change their operational language to Welsh and apply for grant funding. <p>A case study showing the importance of a partnership approach between Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids’ Clubs, Mudiad Meithrin and a Welsh-medium primary school can be found here: Case-Study-Groes-Wen.pdf (clybiauplantcymru.org)</p>
<p>Recommendation 6. We recommend that the Welsh Government publishes a Children’s</p>	<p>We can find no published CRIA or EIA for the childcare offer since 2020.</p> <p>The phased approach to expanding Flying Start is pragmatic (noted above in response to Recommendation 2) as it allows capacity building and staff training to occur, however, there are ‘winners and losers’ from children and family</p>

<p>Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) and an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for the new, expanded childcare offer.</p>	<p>perspectives and this is perhaps not within the working definitions of the rights of the child.</p> <p>Universal 2-year-old access can be seen to be within the rights, whilst the Childcare Offer is still available to some and not all our children.</p> <p>Updated CRIA and EIA assessments are required to resolve the issues.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7. We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out in its response its plans to work with local authorities to ensure that Family Information Services provide resources in community languages other than, and in addition to, English and Welsh.</p>	<p>Lack of knowledge about the Childcare offer and Childcare, play and foundation learning is a problem across Wales, so ensuring information is accessible and made available in the languages spoken in communities in Wales is crucial.</p> <p>Mudiad Meithrin produced a multilingual leaflet available in 7 languages in 2019, which has been warmly received due to the lack of information currently available through the medium of languages spoken in communities in Wales. Although widely distributed, we are aware that a single leaflet will not share the message and information about Welsh medium Childcare effectively, and we would like to see multilingual digital marketing which would be a great resource to share about services available in various languages.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8. We recommend that in order to address widespread concerns around the lack of ethnic diversity in the sector, the Welsh Government sets out in its response its plans for:</p>	<p>CWLWM partners have partnered with DARPL (Diversity and Anti-Racist Professional Learning) and developed/delivered the Senior Leaders and Practitioners’ Series of workshops for the Early Years, Childcare and Playwork sector.</p> <p>During the 2023/24 academic year CLWWM partners will be delivering online training, blogs and a conference to promote anti-racism and boost diversity within the sector.</p> <p>Policy staff in Welsh Government have shown a commitment to the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and have contributed to leading this work across the sector.</p> <p>Data is being compiled by CWLWM partners on existing workforce demographics and work is ongoing to increase diversity in the sector including appointing</p>

	<p>community mentors to support staff from global majority backgrounds with their routes into the sector.</p> <p>Until we have robust data on the workforce it is difficult to understand the extent to which progress is being made, and whether this is acceptable, or needs further resources and increased drive.</p> <p>To ensure that the workforce is representative of the wider population, and the communities surrounding our settings, we need to work with Welsh Government to develop targeted, supported recruitment, once we have collated the robust workforce data previously mentioned.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9. We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out in its response a plan which requires all childcare providers to undertake cultural and diversity awareness training, such as that being developed by CWLWM, and to ensure that it becomes part of continuous professional development within the sector...</p>	<p>Positive action has occurred against this recommendation including increased strategic focus between CWLWM and Welsh Government through a regular overview meeting with working parties addressing specific outcome issues. A working partnership between DARPL and CWLWM has been established to share access to training, resources, and promote anti-racist actions in the sector.</p> <p>Further work has been driven by each CWLWM partner with their own members. This training is not mandatory but is now recommended by all stakeholders and consistently promoted.</p> <p>For Early Years Wales (EYW), this has led to a 10-month coaching programme with a cohort of setting leaders and managers, a suite of training materials to support leaders in their sector, and numerous articles sourced and published in our smalltalk magazine.</p> <p>Anti-racism through literature was also a keynote speech in the EYW June 2023 conference from Laura Henry-Allain MBE.</p> <p>CPCKC carried out a survey in December 2023. Out of 302 responses, clubs reported that a minimum of 524 staff members have undertaken anti-racist training and 660 intend to.</p> <p>Mudiad Meithrin has commissioned and delivered a range of training opportunities for practitioners and nation staff as part of its on-going training offering, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unconscious Bias training

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness training: Gypsy, Roma and Travelling Communities • Disability Equality training • Cylch i Bawb – A Cylch for All • Anti-racism training • Gender identity in the early years • LGBTQ+
<p>Recommendation 10.</p> <p>We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out in its response its plans to develop and strengthen the childcare provision for children with additional learning needs, including increasing the amount of funding available through the Childcare Offer for Wales Additional Support Grant to improve provision for children with disabilities and/or additional or complex needs.</p>	<p>This Recommendation was the subject of a recent Scrutiny Panel in October 2023. The issues relating to funding and access continue across the sector.</p> <p>Staffing shortages, short-term funding, Welsh language challenges, lack of specialist knowledge all raise concerns as there is not sufficient resources to meet an increased demand in terms of ALN and children requiring additional support.</p> <p>This is not just a direct staff cost issue, because supporting children with ALN can include additional planning, targeted work, different resources, specific training, attending PCP meetings, planned transitions, and additional support needed for parents.</p> <p>From a setting’s perspective, the main reason for understaffing is that funding is not available from the Local Authority, or that it is deemed necessary to wait and see if funding will be available. According to the principles of the Additional Learning Needs Act, it is necessary to put the child at the centre and plan according to their needs, and therefore funding for extra pairs of hands will not be required in every case as everyone is different. Nevertheless, it appears from the responses that waiting for assurances of funding excludes the children who currently need it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Waiting to find out after the CDT meeting also waiting on outreach funding.’ • ‘We are awaiting funding to be allocated for a 1:1 support, so that there is an adult to support our daughter by carrying her portable oxygen cylinder.’

- ‘Waiting on a CDT meeting; my child was 2 in July but we don’t have a start date for Cylch because they want to check the support will be in place for him.’

Waiting to hear if funding is available affects disabled or neurodivergent children's right to childcare and education. The uncertainty will also affect the parents/carers' ability to plan their lives and ensure that their children benefit from opportunities to play and partake in early years education.

In the response to the questionnaire for parents and carers, the issue of funding during holidays was raised as one specific thing that prevented disabled and neurodivergent children from equitable access to childcare and education. In the words of one parent, the holiday periods are a 'very difficult time' and that funding for childcare for her daughter with intensive needs was cut earlier in 2023. This meant that, as a single mother, she faced weeks without respite from caring for her daughter, and that it adversely affected her mental health.

According to one parent, help to access respite care would be one of the biggest things that can be done to support them as a family during the holidays, but they have to fund and organise this themselves:

- 'We're not eligible for [respite] either, and we have to pay a family friend to do this for us. The holidays are a nightmare. We need more help and support. It's costing us a lot of money. Our son's costs are so much more expensive than other children so we must continue to work on very little sleep and very little respite in order to fund the extra needs. It's lonely and we're exhausted.'

There is real concern among parents and carers that services and support available during school holidays will be curtailed further.

CPCCKC notes that there is currently a lack of consistent funding across all LA's for Extra Hands to support children with additional needs to attend Out of School Clubs (OSC). Some examples are below as submitted to the committee in Autumn 2023

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In our response to the committee only 41% (14) responding Out of School Childcare Clubs have accessed funding in order to support a child's attendance • Out of School Childcare Clubs responding to the same survey had received enquiries from parents of 234 children with additional needs regardless of formal statement with requests to access Out of School Childcare. • Of those 234 enquiries had been received since September 2022, it was unfortunate that 69 (29%) were unable to access Out of School Childcare, with 26% citing the lack of funding being the barrier. • A local authority who does not fund school aged children, this lack of continuation funding and support, (past the early years) has caused a parent, who is a newly qualified teacher with a post starting in September 23, to consider giving up her employment as the child cannot access Extra Hands support for childcare. • A local authority will only fund 1:1 support either during education or childcare for a child • Funding for 1:1 support in many counties often ends in line with The Childcare Offer when children reach the school age (5) thereby impacting their ability to access Out of School Childcare Clubs. <p>Of the 302 of Out of School Clubs who responded to CPCKC’s National Club survey in December 2023, 66% had children with support/well-being needs in their setting. Many had a wide range of needs including increasing levels of neurodiversity, harmful behaviours e.g. conforming to gender norms or racist behaviours, difficulty managing emotions, poor independence, Speech and language challenges, low self-confidence/esteem, anxiety or low mood, difficulty making new friends/other social skills, poor physical fitness.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11. We recommend that the Welsh Government</p>	<p>The challenges are wider than the Flying Start expansion and are factored into the staffing shortages, the limited resources to fund provision and the increased</p>

<p>sets out in its response how it will ensure sufficient funding is available in the expansion of the childcare offer under the Co-operation Agreement to allow two year olds with additional or complex needs to fully access provision.</p>	<p>demand on these services as children are entering childcare with more needs being reported than prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>As a result, a more systematic focus on the importance of the child’s early years is needed across all sectors and departments within Welsh Government.</p> <p>The same science that demonstrates the impact of ACEs on children, long past the occurrence of the trauma, provides the evidence that early investment into a child’s positive start has long lasting impact, contributing to better health, education and lifelong opportunities.</p> <p>This early investment is even more beneficial when in support of a child with ALN.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12. We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out in its response its plans to ensure the long-term capacity plan for the Welsh-medium sector, which the Welsh Government will explore as part of the Co-operation Agreement, is undertaken alongside work for the English-medium sector. This should reflect the impact that staff shortages are having on both the English-medium and Welsh-medium sector.</p>	<p>Recruitment and retention challenges within the childcare and playwork workforce are not new to the sector. The demands of programmes and schemes from funders including Local Authorities and the Welsh Government place increasing pressure on the workforce.</p> <p>We know from experience that the value of the childcare and playwork workforce to the economy in general needs to be balanced with the lack of recognition and respect towards the sector. Currently, you must have a level 3 qualification to lead a Cylch Meithrin / Playgroup (and level 5 for a Flying Start setting). We must also recognize that low pay for practitioners in the childcare and early years sector contributes to the challenges of recruiting and retaining the workforce, and as a result contributes to the challenge of ensuring adequate provision of childcare.</p> <p>The expansion of Flying Start childcare has a focus on the increase of Welsh language access built-in to the provision.</p> <p>Further capacity-building work has been ongoing in partnership with the National Centre for Learning Welsh and access to the Camau language scheme which is crucial to the development of an early years workforce who are confident in their Welsh.</p> <p>But, the importance of securing training and qualification opportunities through the medium of Welsh for those who want to start a career in the field must also be</p>

noted. The Welsh Government has already recognised this, and we are working together to expand the training program for early years practitioners by increasing apprenticeship opportunities and Welsh-medium initial training and expanding the Croesi'r Bont program which immerses new practitioners in the Welsh language.

There is still an issue, but this is heavily interlinked into the funding the sector receives, the availability of well-paid and sustainable jobs, and the demand being exacerbated in Welsh language provision.

CPCKC's CYMell project aims to:

- support unregistered Welsh medium and bilingual Out of School Childcare settings to become CIW registered.
- provide a grant funding to support settings who show a commitment to registration, allowing them to cover the costs of staff attending training and the hours involved in working towards submitting an application to register
- train Welsh speaking individuals in Playwork, removing the qualification barrier to the clubs becoming registered with CIW.
- provide a bursary to support settings to cover the cost of staff members attending Playwork qualifications outside their working hours or to pay for staff to cover that member of staff if within work hours.
- provide grant funding to sustain existing good quality CIW registered Welsh Out of School Childcare provision.

The CWLWM Welsh Promise scheme, endorsed by The Welsh Language Commissioner, supports settings to increase the amount of Welsh they use with children and parents, through bronze, silver and gold levels / certificates.

Encouraging settings to work in manageable bite-sized sections, achieving one before moving on to the next.

Since the scheme was launched, the data for April to December 2023 shows that:

- **198** settings are interested in bronze award
- **117** settings embarked on the bronze award

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41 settings completed the bronze award • 48 settings are interested in silver award • 29 settings embarked on the silver award • 3 settings completed the silver award • 19 settings are interested in gold award • 13 settings embarked on the gold award • 1 settings completed the gold award
<p>Recommendation 13. We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out in its response its plans for a review of the promotion of careers in the Welsh-medium childcare and early years sector, and how further education and work-based learning can be used to ensure that it has sufficient staff.</p>	<p>Despite the emphasis on the importance of workplace planning in the area of language policy over a number of years, the lack of a Welsh- medium early years workforce remains a serious challenge. We estimate that we will need 1500 more individuals to qualify during any given Senedd term.</p> <p>Learners with ‘Cam wrth Gam’, Mudiad Meithrin’s National CCPLD Training Scheme span a number of demographic groups (in terms of age and location). A majority (71%) of those undertaking a L5 qualification are over 26 years of age and a majority of those undertaking a L3 qualification are over 18 years of age.</p> <p>According to recent statistics published by Stats Wales, only a small percentage (less than 1%) receive training through the medium of Welsh within the FE / apprenticeship sector. ‘Cam wrth Gam’ has seen 4,340 individuals qualify (including those about to qualify) since its inception in 2004.</p> <p>Mudiad Meithrin’s ‘Set Up and Succeed programme’ is creating demand (as evidenced by the dramatic increase in the number of weekly hours Cylchoedd Meithrin offer): up from 6180 hours (in 2016) to 8554 hours (in 2023) which creates an additional (but welcome) challenge in terms of finding practitioners.</p> <p>As evidenced in 2022, in order to meet these challenges and aims, we need to qualify up to 300 new staff each year (which through Mudiad Meithrin’s various programmes with ‘Cam wrth Gam’ at its core is close to being realized).</p> <p>Investment in the area of workforce training and qualifying needs to be continued, and this should include supporting Mudiad Meithrin to be able to directly train its own workforce through ‘Cam wrth Gam’ – which also has a Direct Claims Status with WJEC and City and Guilds reflecting their trust in our delivery of the course.</p>

	<p>Our Cam wrth Gam Schools Programme is also an important project delivered by Mudiad Meithrin and is anchored by the main infrastructure of the ‘Cam wrth Gam National Training Scheme’.</p> <p>The existence of this scheme has always been indicative of the exceptional importance which was, and is still, placed on the direct supply of Welsh-medium staff needed by the sector (and which also helps the statutory education sector given that the L3 qualification is also recognised there).</p> <p>Simply put, too few people are choosing to work in the Welsh-medium Childcare sector. This reflects the challenges facing the Childcare and Play Sector as a whole, but the call for qualified Welsh-speaking staff in a number of areas makes the challenge in the Welsh-medium Childcare sector more acute.</p> <p>Funding from CPCKC’s CYMell project has allowed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for 50 learners to achieve a playwork qualification through the medium of Welsh with another 73 still in learning. • for 83 bursaries to be awarded to support settings with the additional costs of staff attending training.
<p>Recommendation 14. We recommend that Welsh Government sets out in its response its plan to deliver a sufficient increase in the hourly payment to providers under the Childcare Offer to enable an increase in staff pay, and a timeframe by which all childcare workers will be paid the Real Living Wage, learning from</p>	<p>There has been no change to the rate paid for the Offer since the 2022 report. Our current data demonstrates that the pressures on the sector have increased since 2022 with current concerns high that the rate is insufficient to meet the service provision, let alone consider any uplift to staff pay.</p> <p>This needs prioritising ahead of the full rate review scheduled in 2025. Failure to do so risks the viability of large numbers of providers across the sector, and in addition, requires providers to absorb losses in 2024/25 to off-set funded places. This model is therefore unsustainable for the sector. There are providers who are considering reducing their reliance on funded places to facilitate the capacity to increase revenue through other places off-setting their running costs. Relying on private paying families to effectively subsidise funded places adds to the financial pressure on paying families.</p> <p>Between November 2023 and December 2023, EYW carried out a data inquiry with their members. In this period 159 providers responded to the survey. The key</p>

<p>the Scottish Government’s incorporation of this into their childcare expansion plans.</p>	<p>headline data is provided below based on projections required to meet the uplift to minimum wages in April 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 84% of EYW members disagree that the uplift in minimum wages is affordable based on the current funding models and other cost pressures. • 91% of EYW members are considering or will increase parental fees. • 94% of EYW members do not think the funded rate covers the costs of providing childcare places. • Almost all providers think the rate should be reviewed annually or moved in-line with inflation through some mechanism such as index-linked or in-line with minimum wage increases. • 72% of EYW members have confidence they can sustain the current model for 1 year, 20.2% for 2 years, and only 8.8% for the next five years. • Most providers indicate funding rates of between £6-£8 (the range is from £5/hr - £10/hr) are more appropriate than the current £5/hour. <p>NDNA’s state of the sector survey for Wales from February 2023 noted that the vast majority of nurseries (88%) either expected to make a loss or break even, with a quarter of nurseries expecting a loss. This was because 90% said their funding rate for the Childcare Offer for Wales of £5 per hour per child was just not enough to cover their delivery costs. The shortfall per child on just 20 hours of the Childcare Offer was recorded in February 2023 as £2,500 per year.</p> <p>With providers suffering such financial strain, the Welsh Government’s commitment to review their funding rates at least every three years is just not going to support the early years sector.</p> <p>If nurseries cannot generate any surplus they are unable to invest in their quality of provision including staff training and resources. They want to give their children the best possible learning experiences but cannot do this if they are struggling just to survive.</p> <p>A brief summary of the NDNA 2023 survey shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average increase in staffing costs for nurseries: 14.7%
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average increase in parent fees: 7.4% • 88% of nurseries expect to make a loss or only breakeven. • 25% of nurseries say they expect to operate at a loss. • 63% only expect to breakeven. • 5% expect to be able to generate a surplus. • 90% of respondents now say that funding rates do not cover delivery costs (29% in September 2021). • estimated funding shortfall for 3 & 4 year-old places is £2.60 per hour (£1.46 in 2021). • 39% of hours are Government funded and 61% parent-paid (in 2021 it was 36% to 64%). • Funding shortfall for the average child on Childcare Offer for Wales (20 hours of childcare element) is £2,496 per year. <p>With providers having to go another year without an increase in the funding rate we are expecting to see very concerning results from the NDNA 2024 state of the sector survey.</p>
<p>Recommendation 15. We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out in its response its plan to ensure their upcoming workforce plan is developed with social partners, and includes a focus on improving working conditions in the sector as well as developing the workforce.</p>	<p>Anecdotally, there is still a perception that childcare is underpaid, and undervalued compared to careers within the maintained education sector. The qualitative statements from the EYW survey indicate clearly how people perceive their workload, the training and statutory compliance they need to work with is not recognised in their pay. This includes reference to longer hours than Teaching Assistants, more wide-ranging accountabilities and duties, and worse working conditions in terms of structural support. There is a wide-spread feeling that the level of accountability and demand far-exceeds jobs with comparable earnings and that (particularly for those with extensive experience and higher-level qualifications) they are being expected to accept this ‘value’ for their work.</p> <p>If public sector funding cannot provide a business-model where the sector can pay people a fair wage, the only other workable solution is to re-position childcare funding as ‘subsidised’ and allow providers to charge additional fees to parents. The inherent risk here is that the families who are also feeling the pressure of costs feel unable to meet the payments and children miss out on high-quality</p>

	<p>childcare. This could result in increasingly inequitable access and pushing more families into poverty.</p> <p>We need more intensive investment to train and qualify the workforce, noting the excellence of the new post-2019 qualifications in terms of standards and quality, but also accepting that different models are required to appeal to different types of learners. We also need to acknowledge the specific challenges of planning a Welsh-medium workforce and address these with a scheme or schemes in place for a blended economy.</p> <p>Consideration must be given to identify which financial support is needed by high schools which are a part of the ‘Cam wrth Gam’ scheme, in order to attract new schools and retain those presently offering vocational qualifications in the field of Childcare and Playwork.</p> <p>Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids’ Clubs are currently exploring a pilot with DWP, WeCare Wales, Local Authority Childcare Teams and other employability partners to recruit new Playworkers. We are also focusing on the benefits of Playwork as a career, we have engaged with Teaching Assistants (TAs) networks and presented to them to promote training opportunities for professional learning.</p> <p>A case study from Newport on the benefits of playwork for TA’s can be accessed here: https://www.clybiauplantcymru.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Aros-a-Chwarae.pdf</p>
<p>Recommendation 16. We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out in its response its plan to ensure that the upcoming childcare recruitment campaign by Social Care Wales reaches and attracts groups such as ethnic</p>	<p>It is true to say that in planning for a Welsh-medium Childcare and Play workforce, there are no easy answers. Despite this, it is pertinent for the Welsh Government, and everybody interested in Welsh language policy, to pay attention to this area. Without a Childcare workforce we have no hope of fulfilling our important and ambitious plans to create new future Welsh-speakers nor to expand Flying Start nor to address the intractable problems facing the Welsh economy.</p> <p>SCW have been running their Introduction to Childcare course since September 2022. It’s been a great success so far, with 203 course completers.</p>

<p>minorities and Welsh speakers who are underrepresented in the childcare workforce</p>	<p>The online course gives an overview of working in early years and childcare. It introduces core areas, offers an insight into career options and explains what qualities workers need.</p> <p>Each course has guest speakers who bring to life the reality of working in early years and childcare.</p> <p>Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids’ Clubs have collaborated with a primary school, an Out of School Childcare Club, and 6th form students to offer Playwork training during the school holiday running alongside the holiday club, allowing the learners to put theory into practice with the children in the club. Supervised by the Club leader and assessed by the Training Officers, this is an innovative way to achieve a Level 2 qualification and encourage the next generation of Playworkers, providing potential staff for the next holiday period and employment in both afterschool and during the holiday for the young people.</p>
<p>Recommendation 17. We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out in its response its plan to deliver universal wrap-around care, including after-school clubs that can accommodate all those who want to benefit from them.</p>	<p>This recommendation should be considered alongside Recommendation 18, as the Exceptions Order, and its impact of exceptions order and SHEP/Playwork holiday programme, on registered provision is an important consideration here.</p> <p>Wrap around care is delivered by the majority of registered childminders in Wales in some form. As noted in the later part of this response and as PACEY Cymru has previously reported, CIW had stated that the number of child minders in Wales had fallen by nearly 18% between 2014 and March 2020. More recent information from CIW reports shows a further decline of 22% between March 2020 and March 2023 from 2025 registered childminders to 1589. The decline has continued to be evidenced during 23-24. This decline will impact on the availability of wrap around care nationally.</p> <p>Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids’ Clubs received funding from the Moondance Foundation which supported collaboration between Out of School Childcare Clubs, Schools, and social workers to provide a funded places grant scheme. It gave families and children, (not normally able to afford provision), access to play-rich experiences with their friends, supporting social engagement and wellbeing.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to the use of both SHEP and Holiday Playwork funding to sustain Holiday settings by utilising this type of grant scheme that is</p>

	<p>proven to work and to make an impact, meeting the purpose of both programmes.</p> <p>The full report can be found here: Moondance-Annual-report.pdf (clybiauplantcymru.org)</p> <p>Clybiau Plant Cymru kids’ Clubs has since September 2021, seen an overall decrease in Holiday clubs, with numbers of English medium and bilingual Holiday clubs decreasing, but an increase in Welsh, this is due to work done through CYMell funding to support the sustaining of provision, in the Welsh Medium sector.</p> <p>The Baseline All Wales figures for OSC as of April 1st 2023 are:</p> <p>847 Settings, 1526 Clubs - Total 45,745 places</p> <p>1308 Clubs CIW Registered (652 settings), 218 Clubs Unregistered (195 settings)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh clubs registered 179 (73%) Unregistered 76 (27%) • Bilingual 146 registered (85%) Unregistered 25 (15%) <p>All Wales figures as of December 31st 2023:</p> <p>850 Settings, 1535 Clubs Total 46,513 places</p> <p>1349 Clubs are CIW Registered (676 Settings) 176 Clubs are unregistered (169 Settings) 10 Clubs are unregistrable (5 settings)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh clubs registered 198 (76%) Unregistered 61 (24%) • Bilingual 151 reg (89%) Unregistered 19 (11%) <p>Changes Year To Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3% increase in Welsh Clubs that are registered v unregistered (19 Clubs) • 4% increase in bilingual Clubs that are registered v unregistered (5 Clubs) • 11% increase in the number Welsh Registered clubs (19 clubs) • 3% increase in the number of Bilingual Registered clubs (9 clubs)
<p>Recommendation 18. We recommend that</p>	<p>This has not been undertaken and evaluated fully to date and is only recently gaining momentum.</p>

<p>the Welsh Government sets out in its response its plans to undertake the full consultation on the Exceptions Order that it committed to in 2019 in order to address concerns around the negative impact it has had on registered providers and on the safeguarding of children</p>	<p>Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids’ Clubs have previously submitted a paper to Welsh Government officials that outlines the concerns around the exceptions order. Meetings are in place, following the recommendation for the Ministerial review of Play to explore options around the exceptions order.</p> <p>Information gathering sessions with both registered and unregistered settings are being arranged in spring 2024 to gather the views of the sector on the impacts of the Exceptions order.</p>
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What, if anything, has changed since your submission to the previous inquiry?

Flying Start expansion has provided funded childcare to more families in eligible areas (this is generally positive but has had some unintended consequences such as displacement of children from one service provider to another as families take advantage of the funded provision). Some LA’s are widening access to funded programmes such as Flying Start and Early Education allowing providers to increase their offers to families and reduce transitions from setting to setting for the child.

Substantial numbers of practitioners across the CWLWM partnership have completed Welsh language courses through Camau, and the Welsh Promise follows this into setting wide practice enabling providers to evidence their language progression. Through the direct payment of CCO, better clarity of data should be available to WG on the uptake / unused capacity within the scheme as the payments are delivered centrally across Wales.

Between September 2021 and December 2023, CPCKC notes that 129 OOS clubs at 106 settings, offering 3,535 Out of School Childcare places have closed their doors.

Whilst new OOS clubs have opened, the focus needs to be on supporting and sustaining those that are already open to remain open. The accumulated increase of 28.4% in the National Minimum Wage between 2021 and 2024, is continuing to have a massive impact on sustainability across the sector.

In the year to date, CPCKC has seen:

- 3% increase in Welsh Clubs that are registered v unregistered (19 Clubs)
- 4% increase in bilingual Clubs that are registered v unregistered (5 Clubs)
- 11% increase in the number Welsh Registered clubs (19 clubs)
- 3% increase in the number of Bilingual Registered clubs (9 clubs).

CPCKC notes that despite there being an increase in the number of school run Out of School Settings they are increasingly likely to be unregistered with CIW.

CPCKC Setting numbers Dec 23	September 2021	CIW registered	December 2023	CIW registered
Total Clubs	853		850	
Voluntary Management Committee	307 (36%)	73%	306 (36%)	75%
Private Company	427 (50%)	88%	419 (49%)	90%
School run	88 (10%)	51%	92 (11%)	49%
Other	31 (4%)	71%	33 (4%)	76%

Written evidence on behalf of the **CWLWM** partnership.

Out of 302 clubs who responded to CPCKC's Out of School Childcare survey in December 2023, 27% of term time clubs were not certain they were financially sustainable, 26% were uncertain during school holiday periods.

Mudiad Meithrin has recorded a shift from traditional sessional, morning-only provision within its Cylchoedd Meithrin to full daycare provision. 8 new Cylch Meithrin were established between 2021 and 2023, with an additional 223 weekly care hours available for families across Wales.

PACEY Cymru notes that in line with concerns raised by CWLWM with the Committee in 2021/22, registered childminder numbers in Wales have continued to significantly decline. This has an impact on childcare choice, availability, and accessibility in line with the wider recommendations of the work.

The long waited Independent Review of Childminding in Wales¹ was published by Welsh Government in June 2023, and its findings link to many of the 18 Recommendations noted above. The aim of this independent review was to understand the reasons for the decline in the number of childminders in Wales, and to produce some recommendations aimed at attracting more childminders into the industry and to encourage more of those already registered as childminders to stay in the industry. The Independent Review included a number of key conclusions and 23 recommendations in relation to key areas or themes.

The review of available data confirmed the rapid decline in registered childminders. The data outlines that the number of childminders who can deliver Welsh language provision has declined at a particularly sharp rate in recent years.

Following this in Autumn 2023 A Childminding Recommendations Review Group (CRRG) overview panel and Working Groups were established by Welsh Government to ensure key partners and stakeholders can work together to consider the recommendations identified in the Review. This involves consideration of the findings and recommendations from the review and exploring, scoping and identifying potential actions and timescales to take forward. Work on this is ongoing with further information and advice to the Minister due to be submitted in the Spring.

As PACEY Cymru has previously reported, CIW had stated that the number of child minders in Wales had fallen by nearly 18% between 2014 and March 2020. More recent information from CIW reports shows a further decline of 22% between March 2020 and March 2023 from 2025 registered childminders to 1589. The decline has continued to be evidenced during 23-24.

¹ [Independent review of childminding | GOV.WALES](https://gov.wales/independent-review-of-childminding)

Written evidence on behalf of the **CWLWM** partnership.

The Independent Review of Childminding (noted above) is looking to address issues related to this however it is clear that trends noted will not be reversed without significant, universal, long-term financial commitment for the sector.

Are you aware of innovative or pioneering practices in maximising access to high-quality childcare that could help to address issues within the childcare sector? If so, please could you provide details and share any ideas on how they can be shared more widely.

CPCCK notes that the CYMell funding through CWLWM has provided for the following innovations:

- Welsh Medium Playwork training, including for 16-18 year old to encourage the next generation to the Workforce, also for Teaching Assistants to upskill and support the OSC in their schools to have qualified staff and become registered and also to increase their own earning potential.
- bursaries for clubs to pay their staff to attend the Playwork training or to cover the costs of replacement staff if training is within working hours.
- Grants for unregistered clubs to support the costs of staff time to complete paperwork and policies to achieve CIW registration.
- Dedicated Welsh medium Childcare Business Development Officer staff time to support to settings with the registration process.
- Grants for Cylchoedd Meithrin to extend their provision to include OSC, covering staff costs to prepare paperwork and policies to change CIW registration to full day care.
- Grants to support settings to change their language of operation to Welsh.
- Grants to sustain good quality, CIW registered Welsh provision.
- Dedicated Welsh medium Childcare Business Development Officer staff time to support to settings to undertake the Welsh Promise to increase the use of Welsh in English and bilingual clubs.

Specific collaboration with Mudiad Meithrin, Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs and a new Welsh Medium school to ensure that provision for parents included a Cylch Meithrin and OSC from the outset².

Collaboration with a school to train TAs in Playwork to support registration of after school club³:

The NMS Review and the change to the requirement for a supernumerary member of staff for larger settings has supported sustainability, enabling them to increase their numbers without having to employ an additional staff

² <https://www.clybiauplantcymru.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Case-Study-Groes-Wen.pdf>

³ <https://www.clybiauplantcymru.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Aros-a-Chwarae.pdf>

Written evidence on behalf of the **CWLWM** partnership.

member to staff an Out of School Childcare Club, which in turn supports settings to expand their provision from OSC to Wraparound care and vice versa.

Other developments include:

- SCW and WeCare Wales impending inclusion of Playworkers to their remit, and the inclusion of Playwork within Introduction to Childcare,
- Directing SHEP/School Holiday Programme funds to CIW HCs/affordability support for older children,
- Funding within two local authority areas to offer Extra hands funding facilitating inclusion within OSC.
- Childcare & school builds, considering childcare at early stages of planning, although needs to be considered that floor space is optimised to increase registration capacity.
- Exception Order Review,
- Promotion and explanation of Tax Free Childcare / Universal Credit childcare element, although more work is needed in this space.
- Requirement to focus on play and the wellbeing benefits of childcare rather than childcare fee saving WFH and Welsh Government targets.

Working in partnership across organisations and with schools to develop ‘one-site-for-all’, with families accessing all early years childcare and education, primary education and before / after school care on one site from 2 years onwards.

The Training and Support Programme (TSP) replaced PfS funding from 1 April 2023, and is planned to run until March 2025. Its aim is to support the childcare and playwork sector to upskill through qualifications, training and development.

The delay in allocating the funding at the beginning of the programme means that it is currently difficult to tell whether or not it is having a significant impact on training and developing the all aspects of the workforce. This is particularly evident with regards to training new childminders for the workforce, and PACEY Cymru note that a long term, universal commitment to supporting potential Childminders during the pre-registration phase that is easy to promote is essential to build sustainability within the sector.

The element of this funding that relates to Playwork training is supporting the sector, some of whom already have Early Years Qualifications, to achieve Playwork qualifications allowing the Out of School Childcare sector to meet NMS and support registration requirements. Building on the already successful PfS funding, which saw 616 learners achieve Level 2 and Level 3 Playwork qualifications, this funding is already making a difference to the employment prospects of Childcare workers, Teaching Assistants and Youth workers, by allowing them to

Childcare – a follow up inquiry into childcare and parental employment



Written evidence on behalf of the **CWLWM** partnership.

become portfolio workers, working in EY settings or schools and the Out of School Childcare and Playwork sector.

