

CHOOSING CHILDCARE

A guide to finding the right childcare for you,
your child and your family in Wales.

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INTRODUCTION

Whatever your reason for wanting childcare, there are several options to meet your needs. Choosing the right childcare is important but can be difficult. There are so many things to consider!

This booklet will tell you about the benefits and different types of childcare available, where to find childcare and what financial support is available to help you with childcare costs.

WHY CHOOSE CHILDCARE AND WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

For your child: Good-quality childcare can have a positive influence on your child's social, emotional, and intellectual development. It will allow your child to benefit from play, care, life and learning experiences with other children.

For you: Childcare allows you to work or take advantage of training opportunities. It enhances work-life balance and contributes to increasing family income. You can take on employment or work longer hours, creating wider benefits for family life. You can also use childcare for respite purposes.

For you and your child: It is important, when choosing your childcare, that we tell you the difference between registered and unregistered settings. For further information please visit: [Why should I choose a registered childcare setting?](#)

DID YOU KNOW THAT YOUR CHILD HAS A RIGHT TO PLAY?

In accordance with the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) your child has the right to play. Play is essential to your child's health and wellbeing, resilience, confidence, social skills, cognitive skills, motor skills and development.

CARE INSPECTORATE WALES (CIW) - WHO ARE THEY AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

[CIW](#) is the independent regulator of childcare (and social care) in Wales. This means that child minding and day care services are regulated by CIW. CIW register and inspect settings and take action to improve the quality and safety of services, ensuring that you and your child will have the best experiences and opportunities.

If a childcare setting runs for more than 2 hours per day for children up to the age of 12 years, or for more than 5 days each year, it must, by law, be registered with CIW. CIW ensures that care services meet the [National Minimum Standards](#) and support children's rights.



WHY SHOULD I CHOOSE A REGISTERED CHILDCARE SETTING?

CIW registered childcare settings:

- provide assurance that your child is cared for in a safe, secure and appropriate environment,
- are more affordable as they offer various schemes to help with childcare costs,
- have practitioners (another word for staff or childminder) who are suitably checked, qualified, and trained to support your child to thrive,
- have strict adult to child ratios (i.e. adequate numbers of practitioners to care for groups of children),
- have detailed policies, procedures and insurance in place to ensure that practitioners and children are cared for and are safe,
- offer flexibility to meet your needs and your child's needs,
- are inclusive and safe play spaces,
- are inspected by CIW [inspectors](#) (Inspection Reports and more information about choosing care for your child can be found online [Care Inspectorate Wales](#)).

You can also ask your chosen childcare provider for a copy of their Inspection Report.

WHAT IF MY CHOSEN CHILDCARE SETTING IS NOT REGISTERED?

Childcare and play settings that are not registered with CIW may also offer quality childcare. There may be valid reasons for not registering, for example, they may run for less than 2 hours a day, or for less than 5 days a year or because of physical constraints such as if they run from an older community building, such as a church hall, which does not meet the regulations required for registration. You have a right to ask why a setting is not registered. If you choose a setting that is not registered for your childcare needs, it will limit your access to support with your childcare costs, as childcare and play settings **must** be registered with CIW to access funded support.

Let's move on and discuss the different types of childcare available to you!



TYPES OF CHILDCARE

Listed below are the different types of childcare. You can find out more about the type of setting from the given website link.

You may also want to make direct contact with a setting to find out whether they provide a Welsh, English, or bilingual service.

CHILDMINDERS

A childminder offers home-from-home childcare, offering a variety of play and learning experiences. They care for small numbers of children within a childminder's home, working closely with you to meet your child's needs. Although registered to care for children under the age of 12, childminders may also care for older children and can provide continuity of care for children from birth.

A childminder can be flexible, offering part-time and full-time care, before and after school, wrap around (where they can drop off or collect your child from school), school holidays and may include evenings, weekends or overnight.

[Choosing great childcare | PACEY](#)

DAY NURSERIES

Day Nurseries provide full day care for up to ten hours a day and take children from birth onwards. Many day nurseries operate in premises that are used solely for the care of babies and children and will usually provide freshly prepared meals and snacks. All facilities and activities provided stimulate and help children to develop.

Day Nurseries provide a friendly environment for babies and young children to be cared for and provide plenty of play and learning opportunities. Different rooms cater for children at different ages or stages of their development, allowing children to grow and progress in a familiar setting.

Some Day Nurseries also offer Out of School childcare to school aged children, in the form of Breakfast, After school and Holiday clubs.

[Parents of nursery-aged children - NDNA](#)

CYLCHOEDD MEITHRIN

Cylchoedd Meithrin provide Welsh-Medium childcare for children usually aged 2 years to school age. Cylchoedd Meithrin offer a range of childcare services from full day care, sessional care (for 2-4 hour sessions a day) or wraparound care with the local school.

All the childcare in a Cylch Meithrin is through the medium of Welsh and children absorb the language naturally. Most parents who send their child to Cylch Meithrin don't speak Welsh themselves and they can take advantage of learning Welsh with their children if they so choose.

[For Parents - Meithrin](#)

PLAYGROUP OR PRESCHOOL

Playgroup, sometimes known as Preschool is childcare where children usually aged 2 years to school age are cared for, rather than care being provided for babies or toddlers.

Typically, playgroups operate from community centres, school sites or church buildings during school term-time only, however, some do operate all year round. Opening times can vary from short daily sessions of 2-4 hours or half-days to all day*. Many offer a wraparound session (where they can drop off or collect your child from school) for children who are part-time in a local primary school.

*When playgroups open all day, they do not usually offer the full range of services like a day nursery does, nor do they cater for the same age range. For example, they don't provide childcare for babies from birth onwards or provide 3 meals a day.

[Parents page | Early Years Wales](#)

OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDCARE

Out of School Childcare offers care outside of the child's full time school day, running before school, after school and during the school holidays for children aged 3-11+ years.

Out of School Childcare provides experiences that are rich in play and led by the child, facilitated by qualified Playworkers. Playworkers give children opportunities to play freely in a safe space, boosting their self-esteem and wellbeing and helping them develop a range of life skills.

[About Us | Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs](#)

OTHER OPTIONS

NANNIES

A nanny works in your home, providing childcare for your family. They can provide flexible care to fit around your family's circumstances or needs. You can have a live-in nanny or a nanny who comes to you daily. A nanny can look after children from two different families at the home of one of the families.

Unlike childminders, nannies are not registered and inspected by CIW, although many choose to join [The Approval of Home Childcare Providers \(Wales\) Scheme 2021 | Care Inspectorate Wales](#) which includes a range of checks, including [FAQ](#) for parents / carers. This is a voluntary scheme, but there are benefits for parents from using approved nannies, for example approved nannies will have undertaken appropriate First Aid training and parents can benefit from Government support with childcare costs.

[Nannies | PACEY](#)

CRÈCHES

Crèches provide a service to parents by offering childcare to children from as young as six weeks and upwards.

Crèches are different to day care as they can offer temporary childcare solutions for parents to attend specific events such as training, learning or even exercise classes e.g in a crèche, children are cared for while their parents or carers do something else on the same premises. If a crèche operates for more than 5 days a year and for 2 hours or more a day, then they must register with CIW. Crèches can be run by local authorities or local communities, or they can be privately run. They offer a safe environment to support children's play, learning and development.

OPEN ACCESS PLAYWORK SETTINGS

Open Access Play work settings are staffed by trained practitioners and may be operated by local authorities or community groups. They can be permanent or seasonal and take place in a variety of locations including adventure playgrounds, parks, community open spaces and buildings.

The role of the setting is to support children to choose how and when they want to play and playworkers supervise the children when they are on site. Parents/carers need to ensure that children can get to and from the setting safely. Children who have the capability to get to and from the setting on their own are generally allowed to do so.

Whilst the term 'Open Access' applies to registered settings for children under 12 years, it often caters for a wide age range, including teenagers.

[Play Wales](#)

Have you thought about introducing your child to social circles before using childcare?

Many parents choose to attend parent and toddler sessions before choosing childcare such as:

CYLCH TI A FI (WELSH LANGUAGE PARENT AND TODDLER GROUPS)

The Cylch Ti a Fi welcomes babies, toddlers, and their parents/carers to stay and play and socialise. The Cylch Ti a Fi has fun play activities giving families who don't speak Welsh a great opportunity to use Welsh for the first time with their children.

[For Parents - Meithrin](#)

PARENT AND TODDLER GROUPS

A parent and toddler group is an informal session where parents, carers, childminders, and their children can go to have fun and meet new people. Parents/carers stay with, and are responsible for their children throughout the session.

[Parents page | Early Years Wales](#)

Now that you have a better understanding of the different types of childcare available to you, this next section will tackle some of those other questions you may have!

CHOOSING A CHILDCARE SERVICE

Handing over the responsibility of your child's care to someone else can be an emotional and daunting task! Here are our top tips on choosing a childcare service:

- Leave enough time to research your options, sometimes there can be waiting lists for places.
- Research your options by looking on-line and on social media or contact your local Family Information Service.
- Speak to other families, friends, and colleagues in your community as they'll have a wealth of information and experience they'll be able to share with you.
- Think about your child's age and if the service caters for your child.
- Shop around and aim to visit 2 or 3 places so you can compare what's on offer.
- Don't rule out combining childcare i.e. using two different settings.

Once you've done your homework and your decision is made, contact your preferred childcare setting for further information. Give them a call and ask to visit the setting and meet the practitioners. They'll be happy to hear from you and answer any queries you have. Many childcare settings will offer settling-in sessions, which will allow you to see how your child gets on within their new and exciting surroundings.

My visit is booked, what should I look for in the childcare setting?

1. Effective Environment

- Are the premises clean?
- Is it welcoming and friendly?
- Is there a positive atmosphere?
- Is it secure and safe?

2. Enabling Adults

- Did the practitioners make you and your child feel welcome?
- Are the practitioners passionate and enthusiastic?
- Can you see strong bonds between the children and the practitioners?

3. Engaging Experiences

- Are there a variety of play experiences and choices for all the children?
- Is the play creative?
- Are children able to go outside to play safely as part of their day?

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK? REMEMBER THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A SILLY QUESTION!

- ✓ Ask them to tell you about the setting and what services they offer.
- ✓ What does the usual day or session look like?
- ✓ What is the main language used in the setting?
- ✓ Is the setting registered with CIW? Ask to see a copy of their latest CIW inspection and/or Quality of Care report.
- ✓ Do they have places available for your child, or is there a waiting list?
- ✓ Are the hours available, suitable for you and your child's needs?
- ✓ Do they offer a settling-in period and how will they help my child settle in?
- ✓ What's the cost? Are healthy meals, snacks, and any extras included, or discounts offered?
- ✓ Will you be able to receive support with your childcare costs? See help with **childcare costs section**.
- ✓ How will they keep me updated about the care of my child?
- ✓ My child has additional learning needs, what support will they receive?
- ✓ How do they encourage children to learn or explore different cultures?
- ✓ Do they deliver early years education?

- ✓ Perhaps thinking ahead to schooling, do they provide a wrap-around service with or without transport?
- ✓ How do they work with schools to help my child with their next steps?

Finally, and to ensure that all children aged 0 to 5 years have the best possible start in life, the Welsh Government places children's well-being and development at the heart of Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales. Resources and guidance have been developed for practitioners, which will ensure that they understand what is important for your child's development and how they can best support your child through their various stages of development. For further information please see [Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales \(ECPLC\)](#).

HELP WITH CHILDCARE COSTS

Childcare may seem expensive, but you may be able to receive help with childcare costs if you use [CIW registered](#) or approved childcare, such as nannies approved under [CIW's Homes Childcare Providers Approval Scheme](#).

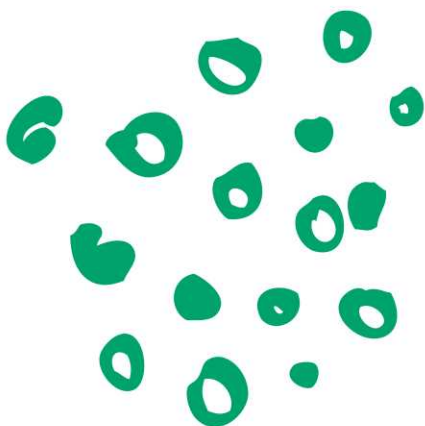
UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Working parents can get help towards the cost of living, including childcare. Find out if you are eligible for [Universal Credit](#).

TAX-FREE CHILDCARE SCHEME

This provides working parents with help with the cost of childcare. If you get Tax-Free Childcare, you'll set up an online childcare account for your child.

For every £8 you pay into this account, the UK Government will pay in £2 to use to pay your provider. Find out if you are eligible for [Tax Free Childcare](#).



THE CHILDCARE OFFER FOR WALES FOR 3 AND 4 YEAR-OLDS

The Childcare Offer for Wales provides up to 30 hours of funded childcare and early education for working parents or parents who are training/in education and have children aged 3 or 4. You can find out more [here](#).

FLYING START

Flying Start is the Welsh Government targeted Early Years programme for families with children under 4 years of age in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Wales. The core elements of the programme are drawn from a range of options that have been shown to influence positive outcomes for children and their families. These include:

- free quality, part-time childcare for 2-3 year olds;
- an enhanced health visiting service;
- parenting support; and
- support for speech, language and communication development.

Flying Start childcare is gradually being expanded to include more 2 year olds across Wales. Please contact your Family Information Service (FIS) to inquire about the availability in your area.

You can find our more [here](#).

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Undergraduate students could get a childcare grant. Visit [Student Finance Wales website](#).

LOCAL ASSISTED PLACES AND HELPING HANDS SCHEMES

These schemes offer support to children with additional learning needs in the setting and can offer various support including assistance with childcare fees. You will need to contact your local Family Information Service to find out what support is available in your local area.

[Family Information Service](#)

We hope that the information included in this booklet will allow you to choose the right type of childcare for you and your child, and that you'll be confident, comfortable, and happy with your decision!

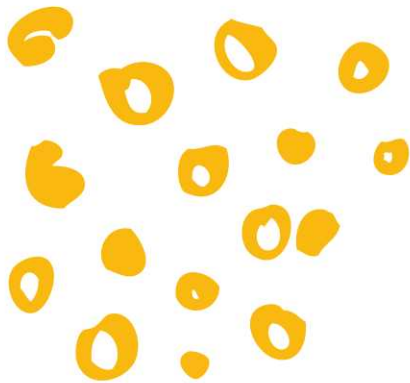
USEFUL LINKS

FAMILY INFORMATION SERVICES (FIS)

The Family Information Service (FIS) is a free, impartial information and guidance service for parents/carers of children and young people, and professionals who work with them. The FIS is provided by your local authority and they offer information, assistance, and advice to help you find:

- Childcare, including help with the costs of childcare
- Children and young people's activities
- Family Support Organisations

The FIS is your ideal starting point if you have any questions regarding support for your family. Your local FIS will be able to provide you with information tailored to your individual needs. Please contact them for further information.



HOW TO CONTACT YOUR FIS?

There is an FIS in every local authority area, and you can contact them on 0300 123 7777 or by visiting [Family Information Service](#).

The FIS work closely with childcare providers in your area to provide you with accurate and up to date information about what they offer.

[Find your local Family Information Service](#)

CWLWM

Cwlwm supports Welsh Government to ensure that families across Wales can access affordable, quality childcare providing innovative solutions to create flexible childcare and play opportunities to meet the needs of parents and their families.

Cwlwm brings together the five leading childcare organisations in Wales to deliver a bilingual integrated service that will ensure the best possible outcomes for children and families across Wales. Cwlwm is made up of five organisations with Mudiad Meithrin as the lead organisation.

Cwlwm organisations are Early Years Wales, Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs, Mudiad Meithrin, National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA Cymru) and PACEY Cymru.

Cwlwm partners support childcare settings with guidance and membership, encouraging quality and sustainable settings.

HOW TO CONTACT CWLWM PARTNERS?

You can contact any of the Cwlwm partners by visiting their individual websites, where you will find the necessary contact information.

[Clybiau Plant Cymru
Kids' Clubs](#)

[Mudiad Meithrin](#)

[NDNA](#)

[PACEY](#)

[Cwlwm](#)

[Early Years Wales](#)

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

- [Choosing care for children](#)
- [Finding childcare](#)
- [Help paying for childcare](#)
- [Parent Information Resources | Every Child](#)
- [The Childcare Offer for Wales: Help with childcare costs for working parents of 3 to 4 year olds](#)
- [Children and young people - Dewis Wales](#)
- [Care Inspectorate Wales](#)
- [Play Wales](#)
- [Playful Childhoods](#)
- [Parenting. Give it time](#)

CHOOSING CHILDCARE