

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and
Education Committee
Y 1,000 diwrnod cyntaf| First 1,000 Days

FTD 04

Ymateb gan: Cymdeithas Broffesiynol ar gyfer Gofal Plant a'r Blynyddoedd
Cynnar Cymru
Response from: Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years Cymru
(PACEY Cymru)

Background

This is PACEY Cymru's response to the Children, Young People and Education Committee consultation to consider the extent to which Welsh Government policies and programmes support the early parent role, before birth and during the first 2 years of a child's life, and crucially how effective these are in supporting children's emotional and social capabilities and development.

PACEY Cymru are grateful for the opportunity to put forward information for consideration under this consultation. This response is provided in relation to our area of expertise, which is from the perspective of the childcare and early years sector.

1. Childcare regulations and standards

PACEY Cymru believes that the Childminding and Daycare Regulations, and the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare play an important role in ensuring that childcare settings support children's emotional and social capabilities and development. The National Minimum Standards sets the minimum requirements for childcare practitioners to ensure that children feel secure, happy and comfortable with their carers and in their environment, and their rights are respected. This recognises in particular the needs of babies and young children to develop an attachment to consistent carers. PACEY Cymru welcome the recent release of a guide to support implementation of the new inspection framework, which provides

good practice guidance with a strong emphasis on supporting children's well-being. The introduction of ratings should also encourage childcare providers to raise standards of care in this respect.

2. Childcare for vulnerable children, children with disabilities, and poverty initiatives

PACEY Cymru understands that there are a number of different funding programmes, initiatives and circumstances in Wales which currently include funded childcare. The administrative arrangements for these can vary in different local authority areas, and fall under a number of funding streams or programmes involving a variety of staff teams. In some programmes such as Flying Start there is an element of childcare expertise within the staff teams, however for others this can fall within the remit of a variety of professionals where childcare is not their area of expertise. PACEY Cymru would advocate a number of important considerations for any professionals seeking to arrange childcare.

The quality of childcare setting is important, therefore registered childcare should be considered as a minimum requirement, however PACEY Cymru would advocate steps are taken to ensure that the childcare provider exceeds the minimum standards when caring for vulnerable children. There are a number of quality improvement schemes such as the PACEY Cymru Quality Comes Home Award which can demonstrate quality standards in a childcare setting, and in time CSSIW Inspection ratings will support this. Those unaccustomed to the childcare sector could seek guidance from the local authority family information services or childcare team, or from a relevant organisation such as PACEY Cymru.

PACEY Cymru advocates parental choice, there is a wide range of different childcare providers and services available and it is important to work with families to identify which service is best suited to meeting the needs of their child. PACEY Cymru are concerned to note that some procurement processes can exclude certain types of childcare setting as they are weighted in favour of the number of children a setting can care for and so smaller settings, including childminders, can miss out on opportunities. This can impact on continuity of care as children who are settled have to move to childcare that is funded. For more vulnerable children and children with

additional needs this does not appear to support their well-being. PACEY Cymru would always advocate that quality of care, not quantity of children, should be the priority consideration in any process involving the arrangement of funded childcare and commissioning. PACEY Cymru would like to ensure that choice of childcare available for parents under such circumstances would include registered childminders. A quality childminder providing care with a small number of children within a home-based environment can offer a nurturing environment for vulnerable children and a flexible service to meet the needs of parents.

As noted transitions is an important consideration when planning childcare which is sensitive to the emotional needs of babies and young children. As there are a number of programmes and initiatives administered separately there is a risk that vulnerable children can pass through a number of transitions between different childcare providers in their early years. PACEY Cymru would again advocate parental choice here and the importance of enabling children to access funded childcare and early education where they are already settled, provided the setting is registered and able to meet the relevant quality requirements.

To summarise, PACEY Cymru feels strongly that the child should be central to the planning of any arrangements for the provision of childcare, accounting for consistency of care, parental choice, and quality of provision.

3. Guidance, resources, and training for childcare and early years professionals

The Early support resources developed a number of years ago, were recognised as an important source of information, guidance and support to aid childcare providers, other professionals, and parents in meeting the needs of young children with specific needs. These resources aided those working with the youngest, and possibly most vulnerable children with access to information, and guidance to support them and to signpost parents to appropriate sources of support. PACEY Cymru would welcome such resources being brought up to date, and made available for promotion across Wales.

PACEY Cymru welcomes plans for consistency across Wales with regards to the assessment of development of babies and young children, which would also aid the identification of early support needs (if applicable). PACEY Cymru actively promotes the Foundation Phase Profile as the first assessment tool released under the Early Years Development and Assessment Framework (EYDAF), and is keen to support the development of further tools which would provide similar consistency in the assessment of babies and younger children across Wales.

Welsh Government's 'Building a Brighter Future' and 'Early Years and Childcare Workforce Plan' includes a welcomed focus on high quality education and childcare. As an association PACEY Cymru has long understood and promoted the importance and benefits of quality education and childcare provision, especially for those children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. High-quality childcare and early education have been shown to play a crucial role in supporting children's development – and in narrowing the gap between the most and least disadvantaged children. At the heart of quality early years childcare is a qualified and supported workforce. PACEY Cymru therefore advocates access to quality affordable training, qualifications and continuous professional development opportunities, for all childcare and early years professionals in Wales to support this aim.

About PACEY Cymru

PACEY is the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years. Formed in 1977, we are a charity dedicated to supporting childcare professionals to deliver high quality care and early learning for children. We provide expert support, training and resources to childcare professionals across England and Wales and offer advice and peer support through our nationwide network of PACEY local groups. We represent the views and experiences of practitioners to government, regulators and decision makers and champion their vital role in helping children get the best start in life.

PACEY Cymru supports members and people working in childcare in Wales to provide the best possible standards of care for children. We work with the Welsh Government, local authorities and agencies to ensure families across Wales have access to affordable, quality childcare.

PACEY Cymru is supported by funding by the Welsh Government's Children and Families Delivery Grant (CFDG). We're one of five leading childcare organisations working together through the Welsh Government-funded consortium Cwlwm (Childcare Wales Learning and Working Mutually).