



CHOOSING CHILDCARE

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



cwlwrm



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Lywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Government

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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. Play is essential to your child's health and wellbeing, resilience, confidence, social skills, cognitive skills, motor skills and development. **Did you know that your child has a right to play?** Find out more [here](#).

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?](#)





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 these 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 assess how well these services meet the [National Minimum Standards for regulated childcare](#) and support children's rights.



Arolygiaeth Gofal
Cymru
Care Inspectorate
Wales

WHY SHOULD I CHOOSE A REGISTERED CHILDCARE SETTING?

When a setting is registered with CIW, it plays a key role in ensuring the quality and safety of services, through inspection, providing professional advice and taking appropriate action, where necessary, to secure improvement. This helps to ensure that your child is cared for in a safe, secure and appropriate environment.

CIW will check that registered settings:

- 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 inclusive and safe play spaces,
- have arrangements in place to safeguard children from abuse, neglect or harm, including procedures to be followed in the event of any allegations or safeguarding concerns raised,
- 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).

Registered settings can be more affordable as they may offer various schemes to help with childcare costs.

WHAT IF MY CHOSEN CHILDCARE SETTING IS NOT REGISTERED?

Childcare and play settings that are not registered with CIW may also offer quality childcare. Some, but not all, will have similar arrangements and benefits to registered settings. Certain settings are not able to register with CIW under specific circumstances, such as when they operate for less than 2 hours a day or for less than 5 days a year. When a setting is not registered with CIW, CIW do not have a role in ensuring quality and safety. You have the right to ask a setting why it is not registered and what safeguarding, safety and care arrangements they have in place for the children in their care. With registered or approved settings families can access funding such as tax-free childcare to support with costs which is not always available for settings that are not registered with CIW.

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

(PLAYGROUPS WHERE CHILDREN LEARN WELSH THROUGH PLAY)

Most communities have a Cylch Meithrin providing childcare in Welsh for children usually aged 2 and above. A Cylch Meithrin offers so many different options - full day care, sessional care (for 2-4 hour sessions a day) or wraparound care with your local school. All the childcare in a Cylch Meithrin is in Welsh. This is where lots of children start learning Welsh. Most parents with children in a Cylch Meithrin don't speak Welsh themselves and they can start learning with their children if they wish.

[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 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 might not offer the full range of services like a day nursery does, or 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 their children and are responsible for them 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?
- Do they have a safeguarding policy in place, with access to appropriate information, training and support for practitioners?

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.
- ✓ Is the setting registered with CIW? Ask to see a copy of their latest CIW inspection and/or Quality of Care report.
- ✓ What does the usual day or session look like?
- ✓ What is the main language used in the setting?
- ✓ 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 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?



IF A SETTING IS UNREGISTERED, YOU MAY WANT TO CONSIDER ASKING SOME ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS WHICH YOU CONSIDER IMPORTANT FOR YOUR CHILD:

- ✓ Is there a child protection/safeguarding policy in place? Ask to see it.
- ✓ Have employment checks been carried out to make sure that practitioners can safely work with children? Have practitioners and/or volunteers had all training, appropriate to their role?
- ✓ Who can you talk to if you're worried about something or about someone who is attending or providing the childcare?
- ✓ What happens if there is an accident or medical emergency? Is there a first aider?
- ✓ What are the supervision and collection arrangements?

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 [The Approval of Home Childcare Providers \(Wales\) Scheme 2021](#)

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.

The childcare element of Flying Start 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 out more [here](#).



SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Undergraduate students may be eligible for a childcare grant of up to 85% of childcare costs through the [Student Finance Wales website](#). You should apply after submitting your main student finance application by completing a form to estimate your childcare costs. If you're a parent of a child between 3 and 4 years old, you may be eligible for further childcare support from the Welsh Government under the [Childcare Offer](#) which has recently been expanded to include students who are parents.

WELSH GOVERNMENT AND UK GOVERNMENT CHILDCARE FUNDING SCHEMES

[Help paying for childcare | GOV.WALES](#) provides information about the help available for you to pay for childcare costs.

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, prospective parents and carers, young people, childcare providers, employers stakeholder organisations/programmes and professionals working with parents and families. 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 and services
- Family and Parenting Support Programmes and 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.



Gwasanaeth Gwybodaeth i Deuluoedd
Family Information Service

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR FIS?

There is an FIS in every local authority area, and you can contact them 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.

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

- [Parenting. Give it time](#) - Provides positive parenting information, advice and support to parents with children and young people up to the age of 18 years of age.
- [Teulu Cymru](#) – Support for families in Wales.
- [Choosing care for children](#) – CIW inspectors give tips on what to look for when choosing childcare.
- [Finding childcare](#) – For services in your local area, contact your Family Information Service.
- [Staying safe when enjoying activities and using services](#) – Questions to ask before taking part in an activity or using a service to ensure it is safe.
- [Help paying for childcare](#)
- [Parent Information Resources | Every Child \(everychildwales.co.uk\)](#) – Provides information on various resources to help parents/carers make informed decisions about health.
- [The Childcare Offer for Wales: Help with childcare costs for eligible parents of 3 to 4 year olds](#)
- [Children and young people - Dewis Wales](#) – Provides information relating to services for children and young people.
- [National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare](#) - Explains which services need to be registered and the standards they must adhere to when operating.
- [Care Inspectorate Wales \(CIW\)](#) – An inspectorate who registers, inspects and takes action to improve the quality and safety of services for the well-being of the people of Wales.
- [Play Wales](#) - The national charity for children's play in Wales.
- [Playful Childhoods](#) – A Play Wales campaign promoting the importance of play in children's development.



CHOOSING CHILDCARE

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