



Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**
Social Care **Wales**



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Early years and childcare Resource for teachers



Contents

- 2** Introduction to early years and childcare
- 3** The value of a career in early years and childcare
- 4** Useful information about the early years and childcare sector
- 7** Benefits of pursuing a career in childcare
- 10** Early years and childcare qualification career pathways in Wales
- 14** Linking the GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare to the Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development Level 2 Core qualifications
- 24** Further regional information and support
- 25** Young person's introduction to childcare
- 26** Share your feedback and stay up-to-date



Introduction to early years and childcare as a profession



This resource aims to support teachers to guide and inspire young people through their careers in early years and childcare in Wales.

It includes information about the professional role of early years and childcare practitioners and highlights the importance of these roles in child development.

Through this resource, teachers can help students recognise the high level of professionalism, knowledge, and responsibility required in early years and childcare, as well as the unique opportunities a career in the sector offers.

The value of a career in early years and childcare

One of the best things an early years practitioner can do is nurture a child's early experiences. Research shows that quality early years care sets children on a path toward lifelong learning, healthy well-being and success.

Early years professionals can make a real difference every day, by supporting children's first friendships, sparking their curiosity and nurturing their unique strengths.

As Wales has diverse communities, languages and cultures, early years practitioners also help to raise awareness of this diversity. As the early years and childcare sector grows, so does the demand for dedicated professionals who want the highest standards of quality care. The need for skilled practitioners provides meaningful career opportunities and long-term stability for those passionate about child development and quality childcare.

There are clear progression paths from the Health and Social Care, and Childcare GCSEs to the Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development Core and Practice qualifications outlined in the Social Care Wales qualification framework. Young people can also advance through their professional childcare journey into leadership and management roles, or into a specialised role.

Useful information about the early years and childcare sector

Here's some background information and links to information about organisations and public bodies working within the early years and childcare sector in Wales.

- Welsh Government leads on policy for the early years sector. [The Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care \(ECPLC\) policy and strategy](#) explains what Welsh Government will do to develop play, learning and care for all children between 0 to five years old.
- [Care Inspectorate Wales \(CIW\)](#) is the independent regulator for childcare and play services in Wales. CIW registers and inspects services using the regulations and National Minimum Standards set by the Welsh Government. CIW also approve nannies, under the Welsh Government's approval scheme.
- [Social Care Wales](#) is responsible for maintaining and overseeing the early years and childcare sector's qualifications and development requirements.



Useful information about the early years and childcare sector

- Local authorities must make sure there's sufficient childcare in their area and put plans in place if there are any gaps. Each local authority's Family Information Service offers information and guidance on the full range of services available to children and young people. Contact your local authority if you want to know more about the support available in your area.
- Early Years Wales offers support for early years (0 to five years old) providers in Wales.
- Mudiad Meithrin provides guidance and advice about Welsh-medium early years, care and education.
- National Day Nurseries Association Cymru support nursery providers
- The Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years – PACEY Cymru support childminders, nannies or any other role.
- Play Wales provides advice, support and guidance about children's play and for the required qualifications for regulated playwork settings.
- WeCare Wales supports attraction and recruitment into the early years and childcare sector
- National Minimum Standards make sure the standards and requirements of staff and settings are fit for purpose.

Useful information about the early years and childcare sector

- Welsh Government: the Childcare, play and early years workforce plan provides a draft plan for the childcare, play and early years sector setting out its proposed 10-year strategic ambition for the workforce.
- Cwlwm brings together the five leading childcare organisations in Wales to deliver a bilingual integrated service. It provides innovative solutions to create flexible childcare and play opportunities to meet the needs of parents and their families, so they can access affordable, quality childcare.
- 'Cwlwm' organisations are:
 - Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs
 - Early Years Wales
 - Mudiad Meithrin (the lead organisation)
 - National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA Cymru)
 - PACEY Cymru.
- DARPL (Diversity and Anti-Racist Professional Learning) is a Welsh Government-funded initiative that provides anti-racist training and resources for education professionals. For early years, they support leaders and practitioners in embedding anti-racist practices, fostering inclusive environments, and promoting diversity in childcare and playwork settings.

Benefits of pursuing a career in childcare

A career in childcare can be incredibly rewarding and practitioners can make a real difference to children's lives. Here are some of the main benefits of working in childcare.

Professional skills and personal growth

Practitioners develop valuable skills, including strong communication, empathy, and problem-solving. These skills are essential within childcare and are also transferable to other areas, offering versatility and opportunity within and beyond the care sector.

Positive impact

Early years practitioners have a lasting, positive impact on children, families, and communities. Their roles strengthen family bonds, support communities, and contribute to the well-being of society.

Recognition and reward

Early years professionals are highly respected and have opportunities for career progression within the Social Care Wales framework. Practitioners may advance into management or specialised roles, experiencing both personal fulfilment and professional recognition.

Benefits of pursuing a career in childcare

Work-life balance and flexibility

A career in childcare often offers flexible working patterns, including part-time roles, term-time schedules, and opportunities to work closer to home. This flexibility makes it an attractive choice for anyone who wants to balance their professional goals with personal commitments.

Ongoing learning and development

Childcare careers provide continual opportunities for learning and development through training, qualifications, and mentoring. Practitioners can expand their knowledge and skills, keeping their work engaging so they stay at the forefront of best practices in early years care.

Some people think that working with children is just playing with toys all day, babysitting, or an easy option if you're 'good with children.' But that couldn't be further from the truth.

Benefits of pursuing a career in childcare

Working with children means building strong emotional connections, understanding and supporting their developmental needs, and keeping them safe and well. It involves a deep knowledge of child development, safeguarding, health and safety, and even understanding the impact of trauma or additional needs on a child's growth and development.

This is a highly professional role that needs specialist training, patience, creativity, and excellent communication skills to work effectively with children and their families. Early years practitioners are shaping young lives, providing the foundation for lifelong learning, and helping children reach their full potential. It's a rewarding job that has a lasting impact on society.



Early years and childcare qualification career pathways in Wales

This pathway chart below provides a clear, structured view of the qualifications and roles within the childcare sector in Wales, taken from Social Care Wales's Qualification Framework.

It shows the educational and professional development opportunities available to anyone pursuing a career in early years and childcare, broken down by age and qualification levels.

The sections include:

1. Education pathway (School, further education and higher education)
 - The qualifications available for different age groups, starting with GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare for those under-16, advancing to GCE and Level 2 and 3 CCPLD qualifications for ages 16 and above.
 - Progression options, leading up to an early years university degree with practitioner status.
2. Opportunities for employment and professional development
 - Programmes supporting professional development, such as Jobs Growth Wales+, safeguarding courses, paediatric first aid, Welsh courses, infection prevention, and food hygiene.
 - Specific training courses like the City & Guilds Unit 326 for home-based childcare.

Early years and childcare qualification career pathways in Wales

3. Employment and work-based learning (Apprenticeships)

- Apprenticeship opportunities with pathways from Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development Level 2 Core and Practice right through to Level 5 Management Practice.

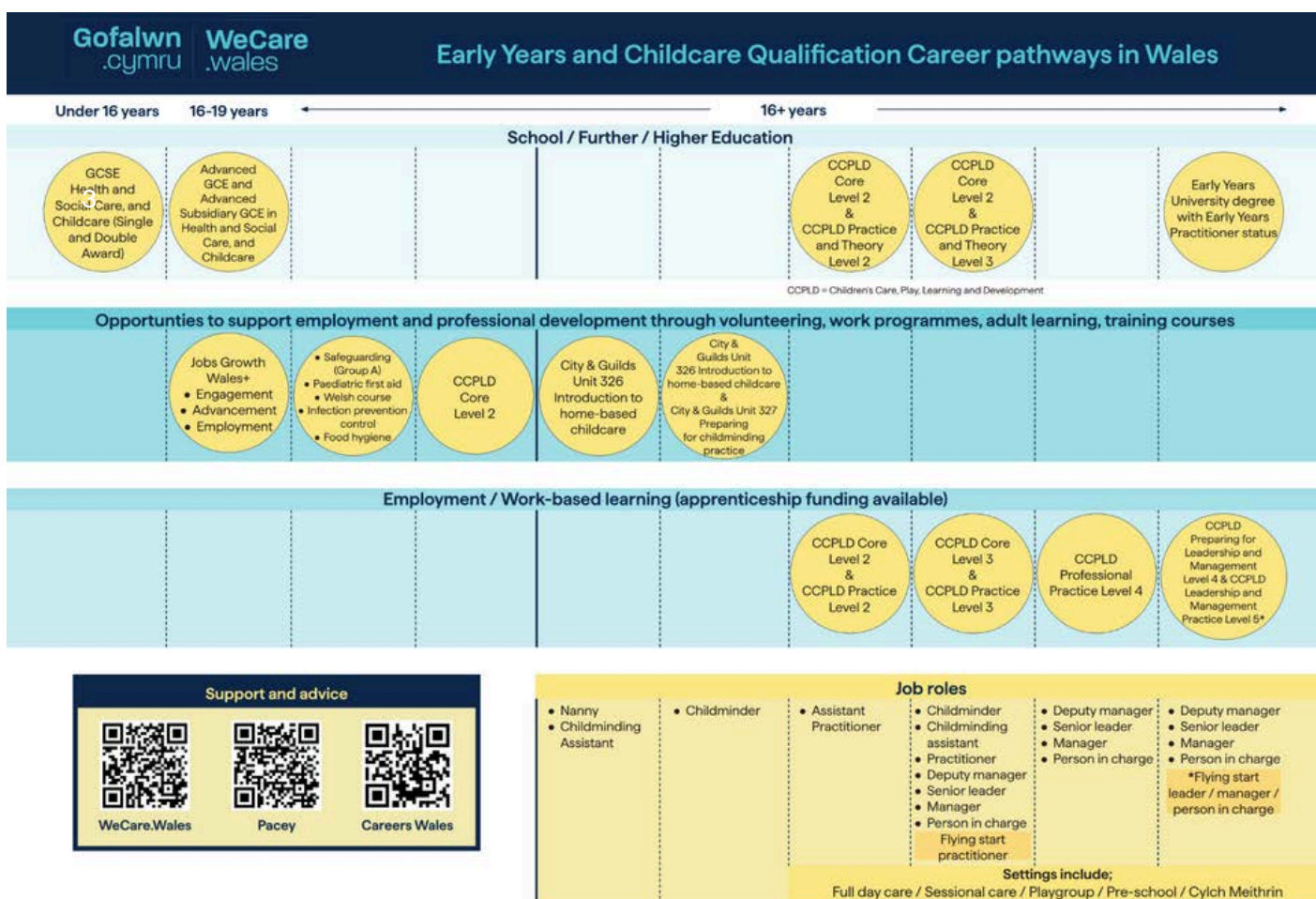
4. Job roles and settings

- A range of job roles people can do after following the qualifications noted, such as nanny, childminder, assistant practitioner, deputy manager, manager, and senior leader.
- Work settings, including full-day care, playgroups, pre-schools, and Cylch Meithrin (Welsh-medium early years settings).

5. Support and advice

- QR codes provide links to resources from WeCare Wales, Pacey, and Careers Wales, offering guidance about early years and childcare careers.

Early years and childcare qualification career pathways in Wales



Early years and childcare qualification career pathways in Wales

Useful information across the childcare and early years sector:

- [WeCare Wales: Career cards](#)
- [WeCare Wales Career Stories](#)
- [Social Care Wales: Qualification framework](#): The list of accepted qualifications to work in early years and childcare in Wales

You can find out more about careers in early years and childcare on the WeCare Wales website:

- [WeCare Wales: career cards](#)
- [WeCare Wales career stories](#)

There's a list of accepted qualifications to work in early years and childcare in Wales on the Social Care Wales website:

- [Social Care Wales: qualification framework](#)



Linking the GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare to the Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development Level 2 Core qualifications

The Level 2 Children's Care, Play, Learning, and Development: Core qualification is designed for post-16 learners in Wales who are working, or want to work, in the early years and childcare sector. This qualification is as a natural progression from the GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare qualification.

We have identified common themes between the GCSE and the Level 2 Children's Care, Play, Learning, and Development (CCPLD): Core qualifications. By comparing these themes, we're recognising the similarities. The GCSE coursework reinforces important topics such as child-centred approaches, safeguarding, and well-being. It also promotes professional standards in equality, diversity, and ethics. Teachers can access these links to facilitate discussions with learners.

To further enhance their learning journey, learners can begin to explore resources from Social Care Wales, including the [All Wales Induction Framework \(AWIF\) for early years and childcare practitioners \(AWIF\)](#). This framework provides essential guidance and support for people entering the sector, offering practical insights into areas such as safeguarding, professional conduct, and person-centred approaches.

Linking the GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare to the Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development Level 2 Core qualifications

Encouraging learners to engage with AWIF materials not only builds their knowledge but also bridges the gap between education and practical application, giving them a broader understanding of the principles and standards that underpin high-quality care and childcare practices in Wales.

Human growth and development

The GCSE and the Level 2 Core qualifications both cover stages of development across the human lifespan, from infancy to later adulthood. They discuss the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual milestones specific to each stage and what influences these, for example, attachment, resilience, adverse childhood experiences and neurodiversity.

Linking the GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare to the Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development Level 2 Core qualifications

Here are some links to support the teaching and learning for this topic:

- [Stages of development – Welsh Government](#)
- [Health, Well-Being, Learning and Development – Health and Care Learning, Wales](#)
- [Adverse Childhood Experiences – Early Action Together](#)
- [Attachment and child development – NSPCC Learning](#)
- [Curriculum for Wales – Welsh Government](#)
- [How can we support children's resilience? – Early years alliance](#)
- [Health & Wellbeing: Understanding resilience – nursery world](#)
- [Observing children – Welsh Government](#)
- [A curriculum for Wales, a curriculum for life – Welsh language](#)
- [Welsh in Education](#)
- [Neurodivergence Wales](#)
- [Building resilience - the importance of playing](#)
- [Play deprivation](#)
- [Play and early years](#)
- [National Literacy Trust](#)
- [Exploring language](#)
- [Playing outdoors in early years settings – playwales](#)

Linking the GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare to the Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development Level 2 Core qualifications

Health and well-being

The GCSE and the Level 2 Core qualifications both emphasise promoting health and well-being, covering physical and mental health's interdependence. The GCSE qualification includes information about the impact of health promotion and public health initiatives, while the CCPLD Core qualification covers child nutrition, hydration, and hygiene and the importance of these for children's overall health.

Here are some links to support the teaching and learning for this topic:

- [Youngminds](#)
- [Food and nutrition guidance for childcare providers](#)
- [Infection Prevention and Control Guidance \(2019\) for Childcare Settings \(0-5 years\) in Wales](#)
- [The Eatwell Guide](#)
- [Healthy Child Wales Programme](#)
- [Kids and Sleep](#)
- [Health and Safety Executive](#)
- [Infection prevention and control](#)

Linking the GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare to the Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development Level 2 Core qualifications

Equality, diversity, and inclusion

The GCSE and the Level 2 Core qualifications both emphasise the importance of equality, diversity, and inclusion. The CCPLD Core includes strategies for promoting these principles, such as child-centred approaches, the Welsh language offer, the anti-racist action plan for Wales and respecting cultural backgrounds. This aligns with the GCSE's focus on ethical care and respect for diverse backgrounds

Here are some links to support the teaching and learning for this topic:

- [Helping young children to think about race in the early years - Anna Freud](#)
- [A guide to neurodiversity in the early years - Anna Freud](#)
- [Creating an anti-racist culture in settings - Practical Support Pack for those working in early years, childcare and play in Wales - DARPL](#)
- [Foundation learning resources - Hwb](#)
- [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan](#)
- [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan – young people version](#)
- [Learning Disability Wales](#)
- [Welsh language resources for early years and childcare](#)

Linking the GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare to the Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development Level 2 Core qualifications

Rights-based and child-centred approaches

The GCSE and the Level 2 Core qualifications both advocate for child-centred approaches. The CCPLD Core covers principles around supporting children's rights, choice, and agency, while the GCSE highlights how ethical practices in health and social care support individual rights, and includes approaches that consider Welsh perspectives and language.

Here are some links to support the teaching and learning for this topic:

Social Care Wales e-learning modules:

- [Starting with strengths: what matters in care and support planning](#)
- [Strengths-based practice: using case recording to show what really matters](#)
- [Legislation that supports a rights-based approach](#)

[Children's Commissioner for Wales:](#)

- [Children's Rights](#)
- [Video explaining children's rights](#)
- [A Children's Rights Approach](#)
- [Resources for professionals](#)

Linking the GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare to the Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development Level 2 Core qualifications

- [UNICEF: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- [UK Government: Children's rights](#)
- [NSPCC: Children and the law](#)
- [Human Rights: Citizens advice](#)

Multi-agency collaboration and safeguarding

The GCSE and the Level 2 Core qualifications both recognise the importance of multi-agency collaboration and safeguarding children. The GCSE covers working with various health and social care sectors, while the CCPLD Core focuses on specific safeguarding practices for children's settings .

Here are some links to support the teaching and learning for this topic:

- [NSPCC - The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children](#)
- [All Wales safeguarding procedures](#)
- [Safeguarding app](#)
- [Safeguarding guidance](#)
- [Disclosure & Barring Service](#)
- [Flying Start outreach](#)
- [The main principles underpinning the Act: voice and control, prevention and early intervention, well-being, co-production and multi agency](#)
- [Shaping the Future of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements in Wales](#)

Linking the GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare to the Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development Level 2 Core qualifications

Social Care Wales resources: e-learning modules

Social Care Wales e-learning modules:

- Principles and values early years and childcare part 1
- Principles and values early years and childcare part 2
- Health and well-being early years and childcare part 1
- Health and well-being early years and childcare part 2
- Professional practice early years and childcare
- Safeguarding early years and childcare
- Health and safety early years and childcare
- Group A safeguarding
- Understanding ADHD

Linking the GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare to the Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development Level 2 Core qualifications

Social Care Wales resources: web pages

- [Main Social Care Wales early years and childcare web page](#)
- [Early years and childcare training programme and events](#)
- [Qualifications and the All Wales induction framework for early years and childcare](#)
- [Safeguarding](#)
- [Induction framework for early years and childcare](#)
- [Infection prevention and control](#)
- [Welsh language resources for early years and childcare](#)
- [Early years and childcare resources](#)
- [Care worker card](#)
- [Well-being information for early years and childcare workers](#)
- [Rights and strengths-based practice](#)
- Information and guidance for employers and workers:
- [Work placement guide](#)
- [Apprenticeships](#)

Linking the GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare to the Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development Level 2 Core qualifications

Other resources

- [Autism modules](#)
- [Minded: mental health / young people self-directed online training](#)
- [Open University: open learn free courses](#)
- [Parenting. Give it time. Your new baby](#)
- [How to reduce the risk of SIDS for your baby - The Lullaby Trust](#)
- [First steps nutrition trust](#)
- [Free first aid posters - St John Ambulance](#)
- [Your Pregnancy and Birth](#)
- [Every Child Newborn to age 2](#)
- [DARPL Professional Learning: Childcare, Play and Early Years \(CPEY\)](#)
- [Hwb: Curriculum for Wales](#)
- [Curriculum and assessment arrangements for funded non-maintained nursery settings](#)
- [Hwb: Resources](#)
- [ACE Hub Wales: Adverse Childhood Experiences Wales website: resources](#)
- [SNAP Cymru: The Additional Learning Needs System](#)
- [Speech, language and communication: guidance](#)
- [Talk with me: all Wales Speech, Language and Communication \(SLC\) training pathway tool](#)
- [Trauma-Informed Wales: Framework and resources](#)
- [Neurodivergence Wales: Resources and e-learning](#)
- [Play Wales: Resources library](#)

Further regional information and support

Here are the regional contacts for the following areas. They can help with early years and childcare careers advice.

North Wales

Lynn McKinlay:

lynn.mckinlay@denbighshire.gov.uk

Cardiff and Vale

Joseph Brookes:

jbrookes@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Powys

Emily Rippin:

emily.rippin@powys.gov.uk

Gwent

Chris Hooper:

chris.hooper@torfaen.gov.uk /

Hanna Ross

Hanna.Ross@torfaen.gov.uk

(placements)

West Wales

Leanne McFarland:

lamcfarland@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Cwm Taf Morgannwg

Gwawr Williams:

gwawr.williams@rctcbc.gov.uk

West Glamorgan

Currently vacant



Young person's introduction to childcare

Did you know, we provide exciting opportunities for young people to explore a career in childcare?

We offer engaging, free information sessions to introduce young people to the rewarding world of early years and childcare. These sessions are perfect for groups of young people who may be interested in this area of work.

Choose from two inspiring presentations:

Presentation 1: Exploring the Welsh World of Childcare – your Journey begins here

Discover the importance of childcare, the skills needed, potential career options, and the educational pathways available to help you get started.

Presentation 2: Stepping stones – unlocking your dream career in early years and childcare.

Gain an insight into how the GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare can lead to a fulfilling career. Learn about the vital role childcare professionals play in child development and the positive impact they can have on young lives.

Each presentation lasts an hour and can be delivered online.

If you'd like to book a session for the young people you work with, please email us at: introductiontochildcare@socialcare.wales



Share your feedback and stay up-to-date

We hope you found this resource helpful!

We'd love to hear your thoughts, please share your feedback with us using this link: [Resource for teachers feedback form](#).

Connect with us for our latest news and resources

Website: socialcare.wales

Email: introductiontochildcare@socialcare.wales

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