

# First Year as a Manager: Practice Guidance

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# Introduction

The “First Year as a Manager in Early Years’ Services Practice Guidance” is a complementary resource to those already available to the early years’ sector. It aims to contribute to the professionalisation of the early years workforce by developing and enhancing the knowledge and skills of newly appointed managers.

This guidance is a source of information and reference to support new Early Years Manager or a person in charge in their managerial role. It is divided into two sections:

## Section 1: Managing People

## Section 2: Managing the Business



The Child-minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations 2010 and the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Child Care (NMS) are key reference points throughout this guidance. Although not all settings are registered, the NMS are recognised as standards of good practice within the sector.

The Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations 2010:  
[www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2010/2574/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2010/2574/contents/made)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC):  
[www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/healthandwellbeing/b0074766/uncrc](http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/healthandwellbeing/b0074766/uncrc)  
National minimum standards for regulated child care - March 2012:  
[wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/regulatedchildcare/?lang=en](http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/regulatedchildcare/?lang=en)

# Section 1 - Managing people

## Developing yourself

**Continuous learning and development is a planned, ongoing development of knowledge and skills throughout one's working life to motivate and develop good practice and quality services.**

Good management practice:

- Ensure you keep your knowledge and skills up to date;
- Use your learning to improve your service;
- Use your supervision and appraisal to reflect and improve your practice;
- Make particular effort to develop your knowledge and skills as a manager

## Developing teams

Early years practitioners are key to the delivery of high quality childcare. As a manager you are accountable for managing, leading and supporting your staff and team. Developing your staff and keeping them motivated is an essential part of your role and contributes to ensuring the quality of your provision.

**Good management practice:**

- Use induction as a tool to audit skills, knowledge and experience of new staff and to help identify development needs e.g. Welsh language
- Promote an open and fair learning culture in the workplace
- Motivate staff at work and celebrate individual and team achievements by acknowledging and rewarding good work
- Encourage staff to reflect on their own practice.
- Encourage peer support and the benefit of constructive feedback to encourage good practice
- Ensure you allocate sufficient time to prepare and undertake supervision and appraisal.
- Make sure your staff have support and are able to discuss any issues e.g. health and wellbeing and to reflect on their practice.
- Identify ongoing development needs of your staff to meet any gaps in knowledge, skills and understanding e.g. observing practice
- Agree a personal and professional development plan that suits their learning needs. This may include training, shadowing, mentoring
- Use supervision and performance development reviews to identify areas of learning and development for staff to develop their skills. This may include delegation and mentoring

**Prompts for consideration:**

- You are accountable for ensuring your own practice is child centred and leading and promoting this approach in the staff you manage
- Carry out mock inspections to provide feedback to staff on quality issues and encourage consistent good practice
- Use the Social Care Wales Continuous Professional Development (CPD) toolkit for Social Care, Early Years and Child Care Managers and Workers

# Managing a team

As a manager an integral part of your role is to manage your team A good manager understands how teams operate and has a range of skills that support good team management

## Good management practice:

- Make sure your staff have clear actions, job descriptions, roles and responsibilities so you can manage them appropriately
- Ensure that your staff are aware of, and work to, the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare and other available reports from other agencies eg ESTYN and Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW)
- Provide a structured start for all practitioners through induction, whether full or part-time, including people returning from career breaks, long-term absence, maternity/paternity leave or trainees and apprentices
- Make sure your provision is meeting requirements for staff ratios and staff have the right qualifications.
- Carry out a structured performance management process, which incorporates supervision and appraisal
- Monitor and check work practice and performance regularly This may include probationary reviews, informal one to one reviews, observation at work, supervision and appraisal
- Be proactive - intervene early to address any issues
- Delegate tasks - you can't do everything and you won't be able to cope on your own Where appropriate include your team in delegating decisions
- Be aware of employment law and some of the basics such as health and safety, sickness absence, discipline and grievance, minimum wage, national insurance, contracts of employment and terms and conditions, rights in respect to dismissal and redundancy
- Know where to get support and where to get access to specialist help and assistance for matters of employment law e g ACAS, management committee, councils for voluntary service or umbrella organisations

### Managers' top tip:

Undertake a self-assessment in relation to your skills to manage your team effectively, identify any development needs and take appropriate action:

- Understanding team dynamics and encourage good relationships
- Recruiting and developing people
- Delegating effectively
- Managing discipline and dealing with conflict.
- Motivating people
- Communicating
- Planning, making decisions and problem solving
- Encouraging and supporting self reflective practice.
- Developing and supporting a learning culture

**Prompts for consideration:**

- Don't do your old job!
- Create an environment where others have the opportunity to share good practice, contribute ideas, be creative and innovative and engage in decision making as part of a team

## Communicating with the team

Effective communication is essential for working with staff and other colleagues and is a key skill required of a manager. You will be required to effectively communicate through a variety of means e.g. verbally, producing records and reports, reporting and information sharing practices.

**Good management practice:**

- Support your staff to develop and use effective communications skills
- Develop common goals with your team
- Demonstrate that you actively listen to your staff. Review, develop and propose improvements in communication systems and practices
- Maintain effective communication with each team member
- Maintain professional boundaries with the team
- Ensure that your staff understand their responsibility to respect confidentiality and when they may be required to share information
- Be open and transparent about acceptable use of communication e.g. social media
- Communication in team meetings:
  - Develop skills in conducting staff meetings e.g. creating and keeping to agenda, leading the meeting and having "smart" (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) actions
  - Decide if you need someone to help you by taking notes
  - Be sure that everyone is listened to and included in the meeting
  - Be mindful of allocated times for each item; start and finish on time and structure the meeting accordingly
  - Make a note of agreed actions throughout the meeting and note who is responsible for completing them and by when. Summarise the main points and agreed actions and circulate minutes

**Prompts for consideration:**

- Hold regular staff meetings
- Establish clear staff guidelines about professional boundaries.
- Support your staff to develop effective communications skills
- Facilitate open and effective communication between your staff to promote safe and competent child centred service delivery
- Make sure staff are fully aware of their responsibilities in relation to confidentiality and the use of social media, e-mail and internet sites
- Take account of the language preference and needs of your staff

# Performance management

## Preparation

As a manager you will need to manage staff performance. High quality performance management is one of the most important elements in ensuring positive outcomes for children and their carers who use early years quality services. It also has a crucial role to play in the development, retention and motivation of the early years and childcare workforce.

## Good management practice:

- Use clear and user friendly processes to communicate procedures and policies to your staff
- Know where to get support for handling disciplinary and grievance issues e.g. ACAS
- If there is conflict between team members address as soon as possible giving opportunity for both parties to discuss the issues
- Listen, consider and take action to resolve any concerns or complaints raised by parents and following your settings procedures and policies
- Keep clear, accurate and accessible records of any communications and actions regarding performance management of staff and/or complaints raised by parents
- Challenge poor practice
- Deal with minor issues quickly
- Ensure you maintain confidentiality.

## Prompts for consideration:

- Be fair and non discriminatory
- Don't ignore unacceptable behaviour or practice. Address situations quickly and effectively to ensure the quality of the setting is maintained and that overall team morale is not affected
- If the issue is in relation to a practitioner's practice give support and clearly outline procedures
- Seek support from relevant others when you need expert advice and guidance
- Each situation is unique but learn from all situations and apply your knowledge and experience
- Analyse concerns and complaint records to identify any patterns and take appropriate actions

### Managers' top tip:

- Circulate dates for staff meetings
- Produce and circulate minutes in a timely manner to enable staff to complete their actions
- Ensure you have a social media policy



# Section 2 - Managing the business

## Understanding and implementing National Frameworks

As a manager you must be able to ensure the implementation of Statutory Frameworks which underpin service provision.

### Good management practice:

- The “registered person” or responsible individual is ultimately responsible for ensuring compliance with the Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations (2010) and the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Day Care
- Make sure you are familiar with inspection requirements relevant to your setting
- Make sure you are up to date with national policy frameworks and regulatory requirements that underpin the work with children
- Know what support is available to implement the Foundation Phase Framework

### Prompts for consideration:

- Identify and work with other early years professionals to support the delivery of National Frameworks

### Manager’s top tip:

- Ensure that you and the staff team understand the responsibility to provide evidence of how the setting is complying with the National Frameworks

## Supporting policies, procedures and practice

As a manager you should be able to implement policies and procedures and support practice to meet legal and regulatory requirements

### Good management practice:

- Review the settings policies to ensure they are up to date with current legislation e.g National Child Minder and Day Care Regulations, equality, safeguarding, health and safety, Welsh language
- Ensure your staff adhere to the legal requirements that affect their day to day practice and that they work to the setting’s policies and procedures
- Where appropriate use feedback from children, families, colleagues, other agencies and

professionals to review the effectiveness of policies and procedures and where necessary make improvements

- Identify key roles within the setting e.g. equalities, Welsh language, safeguarding and health and safety
- Ensure staff and parents know where to access policies and procedures and who to contact if they require further information and/or support

### Managers' top tip:

- Ensure your policy/statement set out your commitment to promote equality and diversity in all aspects of service provision including support for children with special educational needs or disabilities, recruitment, training, management, equality of access/ admission to your service and access to resources, activities and facilities available
- Evidence your commitment to promoting equality and diversity and anti-discriminatory practice in all aspects of provision
- Ensure you and your staff confident and supported to raise and address safeguarding issue
- Check that you have policies and procedures in practice to support safe working practice? e.g. mobile phone, social networking, use of internet etc
- Do you know what action to take when you identify non compliance in the setting
- Ensure that Children's Rights are promoted and upheld in every aspect of your provision

The Welsh government assembly has adopted the UN Convention on the Right of the Child as the basis of all policy making for children and young people and articulated this through the seven core aims. At all times when managing the day to day of your provision protect and promote children's rights. Think about or discuss with your team/staff what rights are covered in your everyday work with children [www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf)

### Prompts for consideration:

- Familiarise yourself and comply with relevant legislation and guidance including the Equality Act, Human Rights Act, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Know and review your arrangements to ensure they meet legal requirements in terms of recruitment, management of allegations, disciplinary and reporting arrangements to ensure suitability of staff and volunteers. Remember the "registered person" is primarily responsible for ensuring that there are suitable people working in the setting

# Planning and organising

Planning and organising your service is a key skill required of a manager. As a manager you should be able to plan and organise your provision to support learning and development and provide a high quality child centred provision.

## Good management practice:

- Check and review your operational plan(s), with your staff if applicable, take appropriate actions to meet NMS (in particular what relates to conduct and management of service) and regulatory requirements
- Delegate areas of responsibility to members of staff and allocate appropriate resources so objectives of your operational plans can be met
- Organise physical and human resources to ensure it supports curriculum requirements and meets the needs of all children, including additional support for children with additional needs
- Have in place procedures to manage financial arrangements.
- Plan and collect evidence for inspections and undertake self assessment in relation to "Quality of Leadership and Management" in consultation and involvement of staff, families, children and other stakeholder
- Review previous inspection reports and plan and organise the service to ensure actions and requirements are dealt with
- Review policies and procedures. There is a range of policies, procedures (above those required to meet legal and regulatory requirements) that if in place will help you organise and manage provision. Consider, review and develop procedures above those required by regulatory requirements which in place could help you manage your business
- Work towards Quality standards- Quality assurance schemes enable childcare providers to raise standards above those standards which are set nationally by CSSIW. They demonstrate that the childcare provider has, and continues to, meet high standards regarding the management of the setting and the services and facilities it provides
- Reflect on what you do well and build on this.

## Quality standards:

Day nurseries – National Day Nursery Association 'E-Quality Counts'

Childminders/home childcarers not part of a network – National Childminding Association (NCMA) 'Quality First'

Network childminders – 'NCMA quality standards and the Children Come First standards'

Playgroups – Wales Pre-School Providers Association 'Quality Assured'

# Business planning

Every registered setting should have either a responsible individual or registered person who will work with the manager to produce an overall strategic business plan to ensure financial sustainability. A business plan helps you manage your business. Business planning is not just about the finances, it is about what you want to achieve and how you are going to get there. A business plan is a written document that describes the business, vision, objectives, strategies, your market and your financial forecasts. A business plan can help you obtain additional finance for your setting/ organisation. It also helps you accomplish long term goals and measuring the success of your business.

## Good management practice:

- Reflect regularly and ask yourself: Where is the setting now? Where do I want the setting to be? How am I going to get the setting there? What may get in the way?
- Review the business plan and adjust it if necessary
- Involve your staff in developing, reviewing and adjusting your business plan
- Produce a cashflow forecast for at least 12 months in advance to ensure that your business is going to remain sustainable
- Identify potential sources of funding to support the development of your provision (e.g. Grants)



# Financial management

Financial planning and management is required to ensure a setting is financially viable. As a manager you will need to have a good understanding of finance and how to manage a budget.

## Good management practice:

- Be aware of the financial and accounting duties and responsibilities which apply to your business
- Make sure procedures to manage financial arrangements and to maintain an audit trail are in place
- Prepare an annual budget and monitor what you spend against it
- Have a contingency fund in place to cover emergency expenses such as repairs
- Each year look at any contracts you have for services or goods to reassess whether they still provide the best value
- Ensure you or someone in the setting develop and are supported in budgeting and financial processes. These are skills that help you managing your provision.
- Make sure you know where and how to get financial guidance.
- Review and update (if required) the charging structure, pricing and payment policies
- Inform parents about childcare payment support
- Identify (and work with management committees to identify) funding streams to support the development of your provision

### Managers' top tip:

- Have a current Business Plan
- Revisit your Business Plan on a regular basis
- Regularly produce a cash flow forecast.

### Prompts for consideration:

- Ensure that debts eg late payments, are quickly identified and addressed consistently and in a timely manner

# Marketing

Marketing the business is an integral aspect of a successful setting. Consider with others effective and innovative ways to promote your service.

## **A good overall marketing strategy for a business needs to explore three areas:**

- Your market – who are your customers and who do you want to attract in future?
- Your messages - what information do you need to get across and what impression are you trying to create?
- Your methods – what activities will ensure that the right message reaches your target market?  
Consider a bilingual message

## **Good management practice:**

- Get a clear understanding of the setting's unique selling point by discussing with staff/committee members and parents/carers what makes your service special
- Discuss marketing at team meetings to get ideas and suggestions from staff
- Develop a simple marketing plan
- Set a budget for marketing
- Be innovative and proactive in your marketing
- If your setting uses a website for marketing purposes, ensure it is up to date and consider if appropriate the use of social media to promote your business and recruitment
- Make sure your contact details are up to date with your local Family Information Service
- Formally and informally speak with parents on a regular basis

### **Managers' top tip:**

- What financial monitoring systems are in place?
- Ensure you/the management team analyse financial information.
- Put procedures in place to monitor the budget
- Know how much it costs to run your business on a weekly basis
- Review the fee structures
- Know to obtain additional finance for the setting/organisation.
- Have a policy in place in relation to late fees and bad debts

# List of useful organisations:

## **Family Information Service**

[wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/parenting/help/familyinformationservices/?lang=en](http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/parenting/help/familyinformationservices/?lang=en)

## **Children in Wales**

[www.childreninwales.org.uk/index.htm](http://www.childreninwales.org.uk/index.htm)

## **Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Club**

[www.clybiauplantcymru.org](http://www.clybiauplantcymru.org)

## **Mudiad Meithrin**

[www.mym.co.uk/index.cfm?alias=home](http://www.mym.co.uk/index.cfm?alias=home)

## **NDNA Cymru**

[www.ndna.org.uk/about-us/ndna-cymru](http://www.ndna.org.uk/about-us/ndna-cymru)

## **NCMA**

[www.ndna.org.uk/Default.aspx?gclid=CPTJiL-O\\_LQCFQzKtAodkSwAmQ](http://www.ndna.org.uk/Default.aspx?gclid=CPTJiL-O_LQCFQzKtAodkSwAmQ)

## **Wales PPA**

[www.walesppa.org](http://www.walesppa.org)

## **Play Wales**

[www.playwales.org.uk/eng](http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng)

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