

CWLWM NEWSLETTER – SUMMER TERM 2025



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Welcome to the Summer Term Newsletter! As summer approaches, the sun shines brighter and the days grow longer, it's a perfect time for children to play, thrive and have fun outdoors! In this edition, we focus on outdoor play, celebrating its benefits and sharing ideas to help make the most of the summer, while keeping children active, engaged and safe. Alongside this, you'll find a wealth of other useful information relevant to the early years, childcare, and playwork sector.

Contents:

1. The Power of Outdoor Play	3
2. Outdoor Play Ideas	4
3. Inclusive Play Spotlight	10
4. Celebrating Play: Real Stories from the Sector	11
5. Expert Insights	15
6. Risk- Benefit Assessments in the Outdoors	17
7. Top Tips: Safety in the Sun	19
8. Resources and Links	21
9. Upcoming Events	23
10. Welsh Government - Early Years Progress Update: What's Been Done, What's Next	24
11. The Child Minding and Day Care Exceptions (Wales) Order 2010	25
12. WeCare Wales	26

1. The Power of Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is more than just fresh air and exercise, it's a powerful tool for learning and development in the early years. Whether it's building dens, exploring nature, or simply running free, outdoor experiences help children grow in confidence, build social skills, and help them to develop physically and emotionally. In the early years, childcare and playwork sector, we know that the outdoors offers endless opportunities for curiosity, creativity, and discovery. It's a space where children can be active, work together, and develop important skills through real-life experiences.





2. Outdoor Play Ideas

Cwlwm has gathered a range of simple, creative outdoor play ideas to help children make the most of their time outside. Nature activities encourage children to explore, experiment, and engage with the world around them, supporting all areas of their development while making the outdoors a fun and stimulating place to be.

10 Ways to Include Nature in Your Setting:

- **Organise an Outdoor Scavenger Hunt**
 - Create a checklist of nature items to help children explore the environment.
- **Create Nature Portraits**
 - Use natural items to create self-portraits or characters.
- **Play Nature Games**
 - Play nature-themed games like outdoor noughts and crosses or tracking adventures.



- **Plant Something**
 - Encourage children to plant herbs, flowers, or vegetables.
- **Build a Bird Feeder**
 - Use pine cones and string to create simple feeders.





- **Set Up the Indoors Outside**
– Set up painting, drawing, or reading stations outside.
- **Build a Den or Fort**
– Let children construct their own spaces using loose parts and imagination.
- **Enjoy a Snack Outdoors**
– Move snack time outside for a simple change of scenery.
- **Create Nature Art**
– Make collages or sculptures using natural materials like bark, stones, and leaves.

- **Play Flashlight Tag**
– A fun, energetic game where the child who is 'on' tags others using a flashlight beam.



Den Building:

Children love to build dens; the experience excites them and feeds their imagination and creativity. The actual process of building dens promotes many developmental benefits including logical thinking, problem-solving skills and literacy and numeracy skills. Children explore and experience different situations, such as darkness, how it feels to be in closed spaces and a range of feelings and emotions. Children will build dens anywhere and use absolutely anything to create them, including a wide range of resources and props. Let them be creative and use their imaginations: they may want their den to be a dungeon or a cave, or a hot air balloon or spaceship. Their imaginations run wild when they are engrossed in play. We are there to support them by ensuring that the area is safe and hazard free; to fetch and carry resources, hold things for them and tie rope etc.

Resource Ideas for Outdoor Den Building:

- Wood
- Material/sheets/parachutes/ cardboard boxes
- Rope
- Pegs/tent pegs
- Bamboo sticks/poles
- Carpet squares, rugs, blankets
- Netting
- Hammer & Nails

Decorations & Extras

- Paint
- Crates
- Torches
- Foliage
- String
- Twigs
- Battery operated string lights



Tip: Do not take over children's play. Let them experiment. They need to make decisions for themselves and engage in first hand experiences for them to develop their social, physical, emotional and life skills.



Loose Parts in Nature

Loose parts are materials that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, and taken apart and put back together in multiple ways.

When children are playing within their natural environment, they have access to a vast range of natural loose parts – it is one of the great benefits of playing outside, promoting children's imagination, creativeness and problem-solving skills.

One of the best and most exciting aspects of natural loose parts is that they can differ from season to season. For example, in winter children would have access to ice, berries, pine cones and in summer, freshly cut grass, flowers etc. This supports children in developing an understanding of their own environment and the differences between seasons. Accessing a range of different environments, such as woodlands, the beaches, fields and parks also encourages a larger range of natural loose parts for children to play with.

Examples of Natural Loose Parts

- Feathers
- Stones
- Shells
- Pine cones
- Leaves
- Moss
- Conkers
- Seeds
- Flowers
- Icicles
- Sand
- Twigs





For further play ideas visit:

[Play Ideas and Inspiration](#) – Get inspired by exploring the ideas of others, which can spark creativity and support the development of your own provision.

[The Benefits of Nature Play](#) - This resource is designed for young learners and highlights the benefits of connecting with nature as a key part of healthy childhood development. It offers a range of outdoor experiences that align with the Curriculum for Wales, providing opportunities for children to learn and develop a variety of skills through nature-based play and exploration.



[Easy outdoor activities for families](#) – Discover the benefits of getting outdoors and explore fun, simple activities for families to enjoy together



[10 Top Tips for Developing Your Use of the Outdoors on a Budget - Wales factsheet - NDNA](#) - 10 top tips for developing your use of the outdoors on a budget.

[Engaging experiences: Gardening project - Wales factsheet - NDNA](#) Young children are very curious to learn about the environment that surrounds them and being in the garden provides them with the opportunity to explore different smells, senses and tastes. Use this activity factsheet to explore gardening with your children.

[Engaging experiences: Investigating wind and flight - Wales factsheet - NDNA](#)

- Air, wind and flying are common interests of young children. Jumping off things, spreading arms wide and allowing coats and jackets to billow in the wind is a picture all childcare practitioners can imagine. Use this activity factsheet to investigate wind with your children.

[Q&A on the Outdoors - Wales factsheet - NDNA](#) - Read a shared experience from an early years practitioner on developing the outdoors at their setting.





Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs' newsletter

Spring 2024: Nature. Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs' members are also able to access a range of outdoor and nature based play ideas on the resource area of the website such as Grow Your Own Feast, Nature Zone, Den Building Resource Guide, Playing Out with the Elements Resource Cards: [Playing Outdoors and Exploring Nature Resources - Clybiau Plant Cymru \(EN\)](#).

Let's get wet and messy - Explore fun, simple water play ideas that engage children year-round, rain or shine, using everyday household items.

Seasonal Idea Sheets –

Are you looking for new seasonal experiences that you can share with the children? Why not download the following idea sheets:

- [Winter](#)
- [Spring](#)
- [Summer](#)
- [Autumn Part 1 /](#)
- [Autumn Part 2](#)



3. Inclusive Play Spotlight

Outdoor play is vital for all children, including those with additional learning needs, as it offers rich opportunities for sensory exploration, physical development, and social interaction. Being outdoors supports a variety of learning styles and can help reduce anxiety, build confidence, and promote independence. It's essential that children with additional needs are fully included in outdoor activities, with thoughtful planning and adaptable resources ensuring everyone can participate and benefit. Inclusive outdoor play not only supports individual development but also fosters a sense of belonging and equality within the group.

Further reading:

- Cwlwm Newsletter – [Autumn Term 2024](#)
– Supporting ALN in early years, childcare and playwork settings
- [Blog: Additional Learning Needs \(ALN\) Act and Code](#)



4. Celebrating Play: Real Stories from the Sector

These stories highlight how being outside can help children build confidence, develop physical skills, and connect with the world around them. Outdoor play also offers opportunities for creativity, problem-solving, and social interaction. By sharing these stories, we celebrate the value of outdoor play within the early years, childcare and playwork sector.

Discovering the Magic of Outdoor Play at Ffrindiau'r Goedwig

During the Easter holidays, two of Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs' Training Officers Jacqui John and Bethan Jones were lucky enough to take part in an inspiring Continuing Professional Development (CPD) day at Ffrindiau'r Goedwig – a newly Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) registered, bilingual outdoor setting nestled in the heart of nature, where the wild is not just welcomed, but celebrated.

Set among trees, open skies, with laughter echoing through the woods, Ffrindiau'r Goedwig (which translates to "Friends of the Forest") is a place where children's imaginations are nurtured, their social skills are sparked, and their love for nature is sown deeply into their play. The setting is built on a simple, yet powerful principle: play without limits. Or as Maria, the passionate owner of the setting, beautifully put it:



“

The children have freedom with no limits that stop imagination or play. There's socialisation, taking risks, connections with people, other children and nature. Without that, it can lead to problems with friendships and forming social groups.

”



That sense of freedom was echoed in every muddy footprint, every tree climbed, and every heartfelt quote from the children. When asked what their favourite part of the day was, they eagerly replied:

“ Making new friends. ”



“ Having the freedom to do what we want. ”

“ Using the microscope! ”



“ Playing hide and seek. ”



These simple moments speak volumes about what play truly means to children – exploration, connection, curiosity, and joy.

So, what does play mean to us at Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs?

Play is the child's way of making sense of the world. It's their language, their experiment, their adventure. It helps them build relationships, confidence, and resilience. It allows them to take risks in a safe, supportive environment, especially in natural, outdoor spaces where boundaries are defined not by walls, but by trees and imagination.

Why Outdoors?

Because nature provides a richer, more unpredictable and sensory-filled experience than any indoor space ever could. Outdoor play encourages physical development, problem-solving, emotional regulation, and a deeper connection to the world around us. It also gives children the space to be themselves, to take risks, and to grow, in every sense of the word.

As professionals, spending the day at Ffrindiau'r Goedwig was not just a chance to see best practice in action, it was a reminder of why we do what we do. It recharged our spirits, sparked fresh ideas, and renewed our commitment to championing child-led play across Wales.



We left with muddy boots, full hearts, and a renewed sense of purpose. Diolch o galon to the team at Ffrindiau'r Goedwig for welcoming us so warmly and for showing us what's possible when children are given the freedom to flourish.



Helen Greenwood of Ysgol Feithrin Pontypŵl shares how they have developed their indoor and outdoor spaces: [Ysgol Feithrin Pontypŵl Case study](#)



Emma Healy of Gogerddan Nursery discusses the gardening area at: [Gogerddan Nursery, Penrynhycoch, Aberystwyth Case Study](#)



Kayleigh Bickford, a member of Mudiad Meithrin staff, shares her experience of completing the new [Bod Tu Allan](#) qualification, a specialised course focussing on outdoor play and learning.



This [blog](#) from newly registered childminder followed a series of training on Numeracy in Early Years facilitated by PACEY Cymru. One the sessions focused specifically on outdoor play, and in this blog the childminder shares some examples including using Go kart tyres, old steering wheels and exploration trays. "My outdoor area is perfect for using the children's love of nature and the outdoors to ignite their imagination and allow opportunities for learning and consolidating all of the skills covered in the sessions."



5. Expert Insights

Elizabeth Jarman, Learning Environments Expert shares her experience of working in partnership with parents and carers to engage them in supporting children's tactile sensory experiences. Read more [here](#).

Leo Holmes, Head of Policy and Advocacy at Early Years Wales, discusses the importance of the [Welsh Government's active travel policies](#) in promoting safer communities for children and families. The [blog](#) delves into why it is important to consider the needs of children's health and wellbeing in wider policy making, creating a future rooted in equal access to healthy development opportunities.

In 2021 Early Years Wales published a 2-part series on the importance of risky play and schema development in *smalltalk* magazine. **Written by Dr Amanda Thomas and Pavla Boulton, University of South Wales, Newport** the articles are intended to support and inspire Early Childhood Educators and Early Childhood Student practitioners in the field of early years and early childhood education, to develop knowledge and understanding of how to support children's schematic development using loose parts and risky play, by accessing the outdoor natural environment.

We are delighted to share with you updated versions of these two articles, now featuring the following special foreword from the authors.

Early childhood experiences play such a critical role in developing a child and the three strands of natural outdoor spaces, risky play and loose parts and schematic development, are golden threads in early childhood practice that can be perceived by some to disrupt the traditional discourse of teaching, but they have the power to bring a holistic way of thinking about your practice that supports young children to develop and learn, where they are at, and in ways that mean something to them.

The articles intend to generate an alternative lens for practitioners to take children into natural environments where they can take risks through their play, percolate their learning at their pace, where they can connect with outdoor spaces; and through that connection, nurture their schemas. A summary of different dynamic schemas are provided in the second article and these



explanations are important to support your understanding. However, further links are provided within the articles, to resources that will give you more in-depth detail on how to identify schemas, practical ideas for nurturing them and the theory to help justify your choices, liberating teaching and learning. The links can be found in the free online resources listed below. As part of these resources, practitioners are encouraged to reflect on their practice and adopt new ways of thinking, that prioritise the *process* of learning not the outcome.

We hope that as you read the articles, you find moments of inspiration and that you are prompted to reflect on your practice and perhaps try something that challenges the traditional approach. Over time as you explore and extend your own practice, we hope that you develop a conviction to work at the pace of the child and allow them the time to percolate, soaking up the moments of learning in outdoor spaces, where they can connect with nature, helping their schemas to develop, and where they make sense of the world, developing 'Cynefin', and a sense of place within it.

To download the articles please visit: <https://www.earlyyears.wales/en/foundation-learning> or use the QR code



6. Risk-Benefit Assessments in the Outdoors

As we are now in the peak of the summer months, children will be most certainly making the most of their time in the outdoors, so we wanted to take this opportunity to remind you about the importance of completing risk-benefit assessments for outdoor play areas to help keep children safe.

Risks can be associated with many areas found in the outdoor environment, including raised planters, water troughs, mud kitchens and sand pits, plus many more.

Whilst risk is an essential, natural and valuable part of children's play, the purpose of completing risk assessments is to identify any potential hazards, evaluate the likelihood and severity of any harm they could cause and to implement control measures to minimise or eliminate such risks. Being proactive in your approach can help to prevent any accidents and incidents, which ultimately creates a safer environment for everyone.



The Play Safety Forum (PSF), formed in 1993, exists to consider and promote the well-being of children and young people through ensuring a balance between safety, risk and challenge in respect of play and leisure provision.

Play Wales are the national play charity for children's play in Wales and champion every child's need and right to play. They recognise that playing is one of the most important aspects of children's lives and children value time, freedom and quality spaces to play. They also recognise that children naturally seek risk and uncertainty in their play.

The [Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) and the Play Safety Forum have published a joint high-level statement to promote a balanced approach to managing risk in children's play – [Children's Play and Leisure – promoting a balanced approach](#). The statement emphasises 'Play is great for children's well-being and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool'.

Play spaces need a regular programme of maintenance and inspection. The frequency of inspections will vary based on the size of the space, the amount of equipment, and the location and resources available. Inspections can involve:

- **Maintenance checks** – daily or weekly visual checks along with the removal of litter and debris.
- **Routine operational inspections** – about every three months to test working parts and equipment.
- **Annual technical inspections** – recommended by both the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

[Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide](#) shows how play providers can develop an approach to risk management that takes into account the benefits to children and young people of challenging play experiences, as well as the risks. It starts from the position that, while outside expertise and advice are valuable, the ultimate responsibility for making decisions rests with the childcare provider.



The Play Safety Forum (PSF) and Play Wales offer a range of resources which raise awareness about the importance of play for children and offer good practice guidelines on a variety of topics about providing opportunities to play whilst also managing risks. Please see more information here: [Play Wales - Play and Risk](#).



You may also wish to visit the Play Wales resources library which has some useful toolkits and resources that can help to support you in managing risks. The resources library can be found here: [Play Wales - Resources Library](#).

RoSPA's Play Safety department also provides advice and information on playground management and the safety of indoor and outdoor play areas and for a range of equipment from ball pools to sand play and wooden play equipment: [RoSPA Advice and Information](#).

7. Top Tips: Safety in the Sun



Sunlight is important for the body to receive vitamin D. We need vitamin D to help the body absorb calcium and phosphate from our diet.

These minerals are important for healthy bones, teeth and muscles. Young children's skin is more sensitive than adults and severe sunburn in childhood can lead to the development of malignant melanoma (the most dangerous type of skin cancer) in later life.

Therefore, it is important that you take steps to provide sun safety measures to protect all babies and children when enjoying activities in the sunny weather.

- Ensure children always wear a sun hat whilst outside in sunny weather. The hat should preferably be of legionnaires design (i.e. with an extended back and side to shield children's neck and ears from the sun) to provide additional protection
- Keep babies out of direct sunlight – their skin is too thin and sensitive before the age of six months to be exposed to direct sunlight, so keep them in the shade. Don't sit babies directly on the ground in case this is too hot
- Work with parents to ensure an appropriate sun cream is provided, label individual sun cream bottles. Do regular checks to monitor levels and expiry dates
- Ensure all children wear/apply sun cream before playing outdoors in the sun
- Create a 'sun station' with children's sun cream so parents can add sun cream on arrival, if they haven't put it on at home. Older children can use the sun station to top up their sun cream during the day



- Provide shade in your outdoor spaces, using old sheets pinned to walls or fences
- Provide lots of cool drinking water for children to access. Monitor drinking levels and remind busy children to drink more frequently
- Encourage parents to supply light-weight cotton clothing for their children suitable for the sun, with long sleeves and long legs
- Avoid taking children out in the direct sunlight between 11.00am and 3.00pm from March to September, as advised by the NHS in their [‘Sunscreen and Sun Safety’](#) information
- Pushchairs, toys and resources outside can get very hot in the sun, so keep them in the shade and, where possible, do regular checks that equipment isn’t too hot for children to use. Hot metal slides are particularly likely to cause burns
- Try to keep your nursery indoors as cool as possible, using ventilation, fans and drawing the curtains or blinds against the strong sun if possible
- Be aware of the signs of heat stroke. If any of your children are behaving differently to normal, become floppy or unusually tired, then cool them down with wet flannels, cold water, drinks and fans. If you have any concerns, contact a health professional.



8. Resources and Links

There is a wealth of training and information on the importance of play, here are some useful links:

The 11.6.2025, marked the second International Day of Play with the theme “Choose play – every day”. The [Welsh Government](#) reaffirmed its commitment to children’s rights by publishing [child-friendly versions of the Ministerial Review of Play Progress Report](#) and an [informative animation](#), and continues to work with local authorities on improving inclusive play opportunities, supported by £5m capital funding.

[Inspiring Environments](#) - developed in partnership with Elizabeth Jarman, this toolkit will be of interest to anyone working in childcare who is keen to develop environments that support children’s well-being, learning and development. Dig in for a collection of ideas, inspiration and tools to help new and existing childcare practitioners.



[Ignite children’s curiosity through the use of light](#) - Discover how to spark children’s curiosity and support their development through playful exploration of light and shadow in early learning environments.



[The Power of Play](#) - A digital learning resource led by Kym Scott, FREE to early years care and education settings.

[Nature play and family fun](#) – Simple activity ideas, tips and tricks to help keep children engaged and build their connection to nature.

[Outdoor Activity Pack](#)
- Supporting Welsh language development in your setting



[Play Wales](#) - Lots of useful information on various topics, including a [short film](#) which shows children playing in Wales and Japan, to celebrate the universal joy of play.

[Cwlwm](#) has published various newsletters over the years discussing the importance of play. For further reading, please visit [Newsletters | cwlwm](#) and take a look at:

- Cwlwm Newsletter – Summer Term 2020
- Cwlwm Newsletter – Summer Term 2021
- Cwlwm Newsletter – Summer Term 2022



9. Upcoming Events

Playday 2025

Playday is the national day for play, celebrated each year across the UK on the first Wednesday in August. Playday 2025 will be celebrated on **Wednesday 6 August**.

The theme for this year's Playday is ... Spaces for Play,

highlighting the vital importance of accessible, inclusive spaces where children and young people have opportunities to play freely, spending time, and connecting with friends – and feel valued as part of their community. For the latest updates on this year's campaign follow [Facebook](#) and [X](#) and get involved using the hashtags #Playday2025 and #SpacesForPlay.



This Playday, call for spaces for play that:

- Are inclusive and welcoming for children and young people of all ages and abilities.
- Provide accessible, safe, and playful spaces where children can play freely in their local community.
- Maximise opportunities for play in schools, childcare, and youth settings.
- Are shaped by the voices, needs, and experiences of children and young people themselves.
- Support play that promotes fun, friendship, being active, enjoying nature, and building a strong sense of belonging.
- Encourage families, carers, and communities to come together through play across generations.

10. Welsh Government – Early Years Progress Update: What's Been Done, What's Next

On 30th June Welsh Government published an Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care Plan [annual infographic](#), setting out:

- what Welsh Government will continue to do,
- what Welsh Government have done since the publication of the plan in March 2024 and,
- what else Welsh Government will be doing to the end of this Senedd term (May 2026).

Welsh Government have previously said, they cannot achieve their vision alone and want to take this opportunity to thank everyone working in the childcare, playwork and nursery education sectors for playing their part in what has been achieved so far and what can be achieved by the end of this Senedd term.

Please feel free to disseminate the infographic to your colleagues and wider networks.





11. The Child Minding and Day Care Exceptions (Wales) Order 2010

The Welsh Government have reviewed their guidance document that explains The Child Minding and Day Care Exceptions (Wales) Order 2010.

As we move towards the summer holidays, refresh your understanding of the Exceptions Order and identify whether your planned summer provision is exempt or required to register with Care Inspectorate Wales. [Registering as a childcare provider: exceptions | GOV.WALES](#)

12. WeCare Wales

WeCare Wales is passionate about supporting employers in childcare, play and early years.

At WeCare Wales, you can:

- add your care vacancies to our [jobs portal](#)
- download [marketing materials and resources](#)
- support an employee to become a [WeCare Ambassador](#)
- [share your story](#) and help us transform the future of care.



Gofalwn
.cymru

WeCare
.wales

Find out more about how WeCare Wales can support you at wecare.wales or email us at contact@wecare.wales and we'll be in touch to arrange a chat.





www.cwlwm.org.uk

The Cwlwm partnership consists of the following organisations:



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