

# Prioritise Out of School Childcare as vital to children's rights

## - a Manifesto for the 2026 Senedd Election

In preparation for the Senedd elections 2026, Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs urges the Welsh Government to prioritise Out of School Childcare as vital to children's rights, wellbeing, family support, and economic growth. Investment in this sector is essential for Wales' future prosperity.



**Our Vision: A Wales where children play and communities prosper.**

### Sector Impact:



- Supports 45,000+ children to play, enabling their parents/carers to work and train and improve family circumstances.
- Employs up to 5,000 Playworkers.



## 3 Key Priorities



### Wellbeing: Enhance children's mental health, wellbeing, and development through quality, inclusive play.

- Children's right to play and overall wellbeing must be upheld through adequate funding and public education about the importance of play.
- Out of School Childcare Clubs offer safe, child-led play that supports physical, emotional, and cognitive development. Special attention should be given to children with additional needs, ensuring they have equal access to these services.



### Workforce: Build a qualified, valued, and sustainable workforce.

- Playworkers play a vital role in providing quality care and meeting the needs of children and families. However, recruitment and retention challenges persist due to low pay and inadequate funding.
- The sector needs long-term funding for Playwork qualifications/training and initiatives to sustain the workforce and improve pay and conditions.



### Funding & Support

- The sustainability of Out of School Childcare Clubs is threatened by rising costs (rent, wages) and financial pressures on families, leading to closures or reduced services.
- Long-term, accessible funding is required to ensure that Clubs remain viable and continue to support children and families.

# Call to Actions

## Wellbeing



- Support children's rights by ensuring that decisions made by the Welsh Government consider their play needs, ensuring inclusion for children with additional needs.
- Promote the role of Playworkers, highlighting their contribution to children's mental health and social development and keeping family poverty at bay.
- Utilise Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) registered Clubs to deliver enrichment/wellbeing/holiday hunger initiatives.

## Workforce



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## Funding & Support



- Allocate specific funding, ringfenced within the Children and Communities Grant for the Out of School Childcare sector.
- Ensure that community-based venues have affordable, flexible rent, and increase support for childcare businesses to help them remain sustainable.



In preparation for the Senedd election by May 2026, and informed by the Out of School Childcare sector, Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs is setting out what the Welsh Government should do help improve the lives of children and families and the Welsh economy.

Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs' vision is a Wales where children play and communities prosper. As the voice of Out of School Childcare Clubs in Wales, we support children's right to play and quality childcare that is sustainable, affordable and meets the needs of children, their families and communities. Out of School Childcare Clubs are a key part of Wales's foundational economy, enabling parents and carers of over 45,000 children to work, train and improve their families' circumstances, and providing up to 5,000 Playworker jobs.

We support over 1,500 English, Welsh and bilingual Out of School Childcare Clubs, which run either side of the school day and during school holidays, supporting children's rights and providing quality, freely chosen play opportunities. These play opportunities are particularly important as they are being eroded by modern life and can help stem the rise in children's wellbeing and support needs.

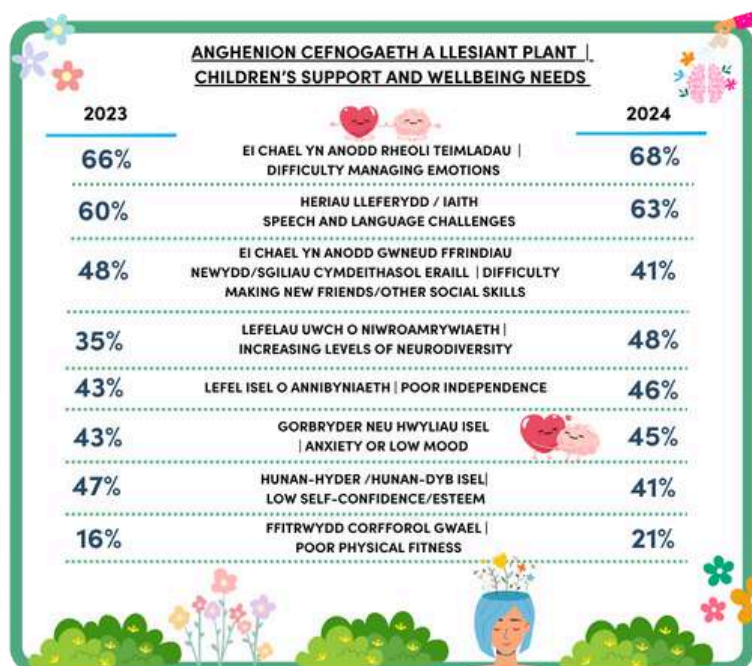
This manifesto, informed directly by the sector, highlights the essential role of the Out of School Childcare sector and calls on the next Welsh Government to prioritise the following actions under:

- Wellbeing
- Workforce
- Funding and Support



**Uphold Children's Rights and support wellbeing through continued recognition of Playworkers' value and the quality play services they provide in Clubs to underpin this.**

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) registered Out of School Childcare Clubs offer quality, safe, play-rich and child-led spaces facilitated by qualified Playworkers. They support children's rights (UNCRC, notably Articles 31, 19, 24, 23, 12, 15 and 13; and General Comment 17) and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. Clubs provide valuable play and socialisation opportunities, including for an increasing number of children with additional needs (1,470 children in a survey with a 36% sector response rate: extrapolated this could be estimated at 4,083 children) and a variety of wellbeing and support needs[1]. There needs to be sufficient support for Clubs to provide for children with additional needs and a greater recognition of how Clubs support all children's play and wellbeing.







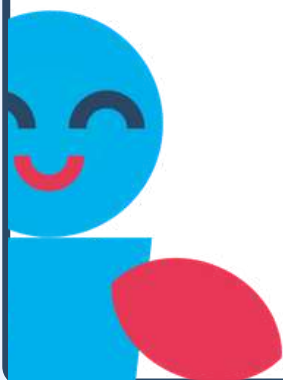
*"It's amazing to see children escape from the world of technology, get back to basics and PLAY!! Friendships are made, wellbeing is promoted, and children*

*are at their happiest when they are stripped back to nature and have to think and use their imagination. I wish the world can see the benefits of giving children play opportunities!"*

*"Play is an essential part of every child's life and is vital for the enjoyment of childhood and social, physical, intellectual, creative, and emotional development. Children also gain flexibility, freedom and have fun" [2]*

### Call for action:

- Continue supporting children's rights by ensuring they are able to take part in decision making processes, and that funding meets their rights and wellbeing needs.
- Ongoing work to educate and inform communities, schools and decision makers about children's right to play and its positive impact.
- Sufficient funding, training and other support mechanisms to ensure children with additional needs and their families have the same access to CIW registered Out of School Childcare Clubs and the opportunities they provide as their peers and that this does not depend on where they live.
- High quality, CIW registered Out of School Childcare places, facilitated by qualified and experienced Playworkers and utilised for current and emerging school enrichment, wellbeing, holiday hunger initiatives without stigma. [2]
- Consistently and publicly promoting the role of Playworkers and CIW registered, regulated Out of School Childcare, in supporting children's mental health and wellbeing and their psychological, social and cognitive development; and enabling parents and carers to improve their family circumstances and keep poverty at bay.





## **Fair pay and funding to support staff recruitment and retention. Promote the value of the sector and Playworkers.**

Qualified and experienced Playworkers are critical to providing quality play and care and in supporting children's right to play and their increasing wellbeing and support needs, whilst allowing parents/carers to work, train and provide for their families.

Recruitment and retention remain a key challenge, diminishing the sector's sustainability, ability to register with Care Inspectorate Wales, expand and meet the needs of children and families. Many Playworkers are on low/National Minimum Wage, which does not meet their own financial needs or reflect responsibilities, especially as expectations and demands on the sector increase. Playworkers are leaving the sector[1]. Pay rates are limited by the sector's ability to charge more and the sector is struggling with increases in employment, rent and all other costs. The value and responsibility of the role must be fully recognised and reflected in pay and conditions.



*"Impact of the National Minimum Wage means more senior management roles can't always get the same increase."*

## **Call for action:**

- Long term funding for Playwork qualifications, training and initiatives, to sustain recruitment and retention, support Care Inspectorate Wales registration and help meet the needs of families, including a targeted approach for the Welsh medium sector.
- Promote the value of Playworkers and the Out of School Childcare sector and their positive contribution to childhoods and the Welsh economy. This should be apparent in all government communications and policy decisions.
- A holistic approach within Early Childhood Play Learning and Care [ECPLC] that recognises the equal value play and the Playworker role has for children as they grow older.
- Continued support for the accessibility and sustainability of registered play and care provision through initiatives that support both affordability and fair remuneration for Playworkers (e.g. Tax-Free Childcare, the Childcare Offer). Extension of initiatives to support families of older school aged children.





### Continued long term funding to support the sustainability of the sector

Sustainability continues to challenge Clubs impacted by increased costs, and families reducing the amount of childcare utilised due to their own rising cost of living. Clubs are being forced to close and considering increasing fees, closing elements of the service, reducing opening times and deregistration. Yet, they are part of the foundational economy, key to Wales's economic resilience, employing local people and enabling parents/carers to work and train.



*"The rent will go up in April and also the staff wages will go up, this is crippling for small businesses and will affect clubs everywhere."*

*"Even though the amount of children attending is the same, possibly more, the overheads have increased. We may be considered to be sustainable but the outgoings are a lot more."*

### Call for action:

- Accessible long-term funding, including for revenue, specifically designated within the Children and Communities Grant for the Out of School Childcare sector.
- Collaboration to improve access to community based venues, with affordable, flexible rent and arrangements. The Small Business Rate Relief Scheme extended to schools/community buildings used in part by childcare.
- Funding for tailored and specific Out of School Childcare business support to ensure well managed, quality and sustainable childcare provision prevails.
- Promote the benefits of CIW registration enabling parents/carers to make informed choices for holiday care in particular, which competes with a range of services that are not required to register or meet minimum standards to support quality and safeguarding.





[Find out more about the Out of School Childcare sector:](#)



[National Club Survey Report 2024](#)



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May 2025

