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Continuing Professional Development Principles for the early years and childcare workforce in Wales

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Introduction

In *Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan*[1] the Welsh Government committed to consult on the right approach for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales in respect of minimum qualification levels, graduate leadership, continuing professional development (CPD) and career pathways.

The Welsh Government wants to see an early education, childcare and play workforce that is highly skilled and:

- is highly regarded (a career of choice);
- understands how children learn and develop;
- structures activities and time to support all children to develop to their full potential;
- are proactive learners in their own right; and
- is bilingual.

Welsh Government aim is to raise skills and standards among early years and childcare practitioners to improve outcomes for children through access to high-quality early education and care.

Welsh Government want to support the existing workforce to gain the skills they need to progress in their careers and access more employment opportunities. In return, they will expect those working in early years, childcare and play to be proactive learners in their own right and to be able to demonstrate that they have been undertaking a programme of learning, be motivated to take responsibility for their professional development from the start of their career throughout their working lives.

Working in childcare is about so much more than just supervising children: while practitioners may work with children and families in a way that seems effortless, in order to do this well they need to be trained professionals with a high level of skills, knowledge and behaviours.[2]

1 Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan
2 Welsh Government - Draft 10-year plan for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales

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What is Continuing Professional Development (CPD)D)?

Continuing professional development (CPD) is a planned, ongoing development of knowledge and skills throughout one's working life to motivate and develop good practice and quality services. It contributes to work based and personal development as an outcome of personal and professional reflection, enabling practitioners to fulfil their potential.

CPD involves intentionally developing the knowledge, skills and personal qualities you need to perform your professional responsibilities and duties. It is a holistic approach to learning which recognises every day experiences as learning opportunities. The essence of CPD is about achieving professionalism in everything you do, it is a personal commitment to continuously updating knowledge and skills.

The CPD process helps you manage your own development on an ongoing basis. Its function is to help you record, review and reflect on what you learn. It's not a tick-box document recording the training you have completed. It's broader than that. Please see a list of examples of learning activities in Appendix 1.

CPD values the whole spectrum of learning experiences which may include on the job development, formal training and qualifications as well as informal and experiential learning.

CPD is a shared responsibility:

- all practitioners whether working independently, within or outside an organisation need to take responsibility for their learning and to continue to develop their skills and knowledge;
- employers need to actively provide appropriate learning opportunities on an on-going basis.

The key areas of development are likely to be:

- **knowledge –** getting and updating knowledge in practice and organisation specific developments
- **skills –** show demonstrable application of knowledge and the use of skills in workplace situations
- **behaviours –** awareness and show demonstrable use of appropriate values, conduct and relationship skills in workplace situations
- **self assessment and reflective practice –** continually reviewing and reflecting using feedback on learning and development activities, this could be done during the supervision and appraisal process. For further guidance on the supervision process please refer to the Social Care Wales's A guide to supervising and appraising well **socialcare.wales/supervising-and-appraising-well**

Why is CPD important?

Continuing professional development is important because it ensures you continue to be competent in your profession. Aside from learning about something new, there are many reasons to undertake CPD.

CPD can give you new knowledge that may help you to deal with new or complex situations; it can help you achieve your career goals by focusing on learning and development, will give you confidence in your role and demonstrates your commitment to developing your skills and knowledge. CPD will also keep you motivated and up-to-date with best practice.

The CPD of practitioners beyond their induction and initial training/qualifications is an area of crucial importance for organisations, their staff, for children, young people and their families for the following reasons:

- enable staff to keep knowledge of the sector up-to-date
- develop a qualified and bilingual workforce
- continue to improve standards
- value practitioners by furthering and sustaining their competence and skills
- improve recruitment and retention of practitioners
- ensure the sector meet relevant requirements
- increase knowledge, experience, understanding, improve performance and contribute to lifelong learning

The needs of children and young people are central to the principles of CPD and reflect the Welsh Government's seven core aims for children and young people in Wales:

Core Aim 1 - **have a flying start in life**

Core Aim 2 - **have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities**

Core Aim 3 - **enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation**

Core Aim 4 - **have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities**

Core Aim 5 - **are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognized**

Core Aim 6 - **have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing**

Core Aim 7 - **are not disadvantaged by poverty**

Benefits of CPD

For the learner:

- Allows you to develop and address any skill gaps
- Increase skills and knowledge
- Builds confidence and credibility to stand out from the crowd
- Helps to achieve your career goals
- Helps you to deal positively with changes when you regularly update your knowledge and skills
- Improves your outcomes.

For the manager and setting:

Early years practitioners are key to the delivery of high quality childcare. Developing your staff and keeping them motivated ensures that specific competencies needed for organisational needs are met e.g. proposals for increased first aid qualifications for practitioners which contributes to the quality of your provision.

Developing a learning culture requires a shared vision, enabling processes and structures, empowering managers to develop a motivated workforce, to encourage and sustain learning.

CPD can:

- **enhance customer (parents and families) confidence and loyalty**
- **increase employee competency, resulting in greater efficiency in the workplace**
- **boost morale and motivation in the workplace**
- **improve outcomes and delivery of sector leading practice**

The principles of CPD in early years and childcare

The CPD of people in the early years and childcare's workforce needs to be aligned to the needs of employers and practitioners alike. In order for CPD to be successful the sector needs to have a shared vision that promotes and supports an ethos for learning.

All settings should ensure that their staffs' development needs are identified and considered regularly, planned, translated into learning objectives, resourced and supported. CPD principles need to:

- **be based on reflective practice**
- **be ongoing**
- **encourage and support development and use of Welsh language skills**
- **reflect current Welsh Government initiatives**
- **enable equality of access to both Welsh and English medium training**
- **increase transferability of skills and expertise across the sector**
- **enable practitioners to develop, specialise and/or maintain skills within current and future job roles**
- **be meaningful to employers and practitioners**
- **identify and encompass an individual's learning style**

The CPD Process

Before the learning:

To be effective, it is important to plan your CPD and to ask yourself the following questions:
Where am I starting from - what are your existing knowledge, skills and experience?

- **How do I learn best – what is my learning style?**
- **What knowledge and skills do I need to develop?**
- **What do I need to achieve and what difference will it make?**
- **What methods can I use?**
- **What support will I need?**
- **What are my target dates?**
- **How will I know that I have achieved the outcomes that I want/need?**

These questions are core to good CPD, the answers provide you with a starting point in keeping up-to-date with current practice and professional standards.

It's important to learn in ways that suit you - then you are more likely to enjoy the experience and pick things up quickly.

Think about what you want to achieve and record these goals. Focus on specific competences relevant to your current job and future aspirations. Allocate time in your diary and undertake your CPD activities.

Think about your practice (reflective practice)

1. **What personal and professional development could you take part in to support your interactions with children?**

2. **How do you interact with members of staff, outside agencies, and other professionals?**

After the learning

Keep a record of your CPD activities and after each activity, reflect on what you have gained; the knowledge you have absorbed, the skills you have developed and how it has influenced your attitude and approach. Talking to your manager or mentor can help with this as the questions they ask will prompt you to see your learning objectively, this could be done during supervision where a record of the discussion would be recorded and actions agreed.

People who reflect on their learning retain more information and are more efficient at applying it to improve their performance. Reflection is especially important if you want to get the best results from planned development activities.

Some questions to consider:

- **What were the key points that you remember and were relevant to you?**
- **Did the activity go as planned - and if not, why not?**
- **How could you have done it differently or better?**
- **How will you change what you do or how you behave as a result of this activity?**
- **Did it meet your needs?**
- **How did the activity fit with your learning style - was it right for you or should you try something different next time?**
- **Do you feel you have learned enough, or is there more you want to find out?**
- **What follow-up actions do you need to take?**
- **How will you implement what you learnt into your work?**

Sharing reflections with others who have experienced the same or a similar activity can also provide valuable insights into how different perspectives affect our learning.

It is important that your CPD is recorded as you go along, this will help you get the maximum benefit from any learning undertaken and provide the opportunity to reflect on a regular basis.

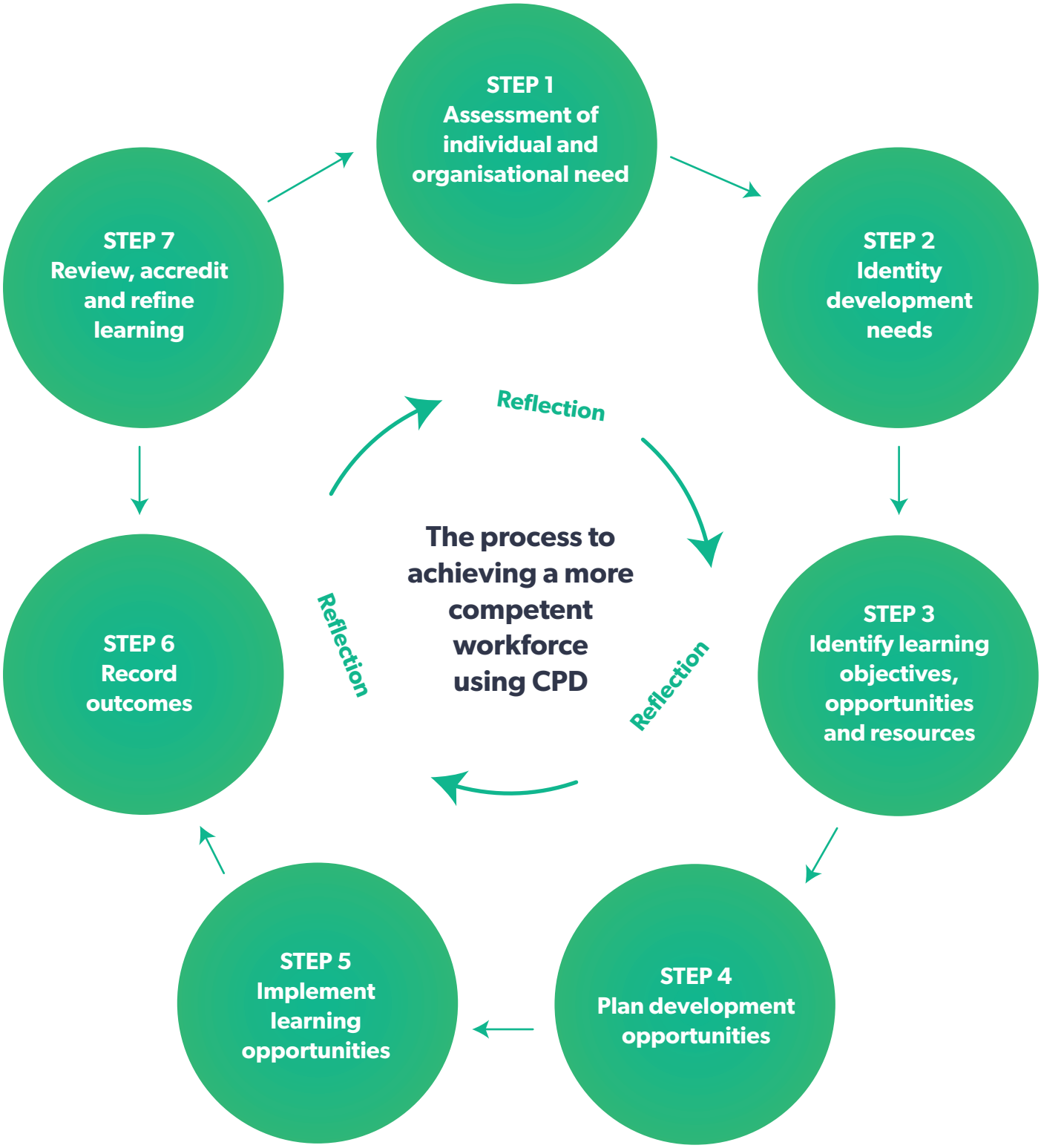
An example of how you can keep a record of your learning can be seen in the case study of a level 3 practitioner's CPD journey in Appendix 2.

Reviewing your CPD has many benefits, including:

- **Refreshing your memory – reviewing your CPD activities will help you to remember key points, consolidate your learning, and to consider how much you have used in your work;**
- **Keeping on track against your plans – ensuring that you are meeting your goals and haven't forgotten anything;**
- **Making sure your plan is effective – that the plan is still appropriate and relevant to your needs, and that you are moving towards your long-term goals;**
- **Learning about how you learn – reviewing your activities can reveal insights about your preferred learning styles**
- **It's important to review your CPD regularly, but you may also find that you want to review your plans on an ad-hoc basis, perhaps to take advantage of an unexpected opportunity.**

The seven steps of CPD

Figure 1: The diagram below identifies the seven steps within the process of CPD.



The seven steps of CPD

The table below identifies appropriate tools and activities for each of the seven steps of the process from planning to implementation:

Figure 2

CPD process	CPD methods	Examples of CPD activities
Step 1 Assessment of individual and organisational need	Assessment of development needs against the person profile	Review learning needs against competences to develop a personal CPD profile
Step 2 Identify development needs	Assessment of development needs against the person profile.	Can be done in supervision and appraisal or larger organisations can make use of: • diagnostics, e.g. 360° feedback • skills benchmarking.
Step 3 Identify learning objectives, opportunities and resources	Identify learning objectives.	Identify types of learning to meet objectives: work related learning, action learning, networking, mentoring, secondments, e-learning, attending events, external learning, formal study, and networking
Step 4 Plan development opportunities	Identify targets.	Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that might help or hinder these goals such as lack of basic skills or access to resources
Step 5 Implement learning opportunities	Experience different types of learning - both planned and ad hoc.	Have a learning log or reflective diary for practitioners, which they can complete. It could be an on-line recording system
Step 6 Record outcomes	Reflect upon and record development.	Record of achievement or record of learning outcomes in practice, summarised in CPD portfolio.
Step 7 Review, accredit and refine learning	Review person profile and include any additional responsibilities or roles. • Evaluate learning • Back to stage 1	• Use supervision to review learning outcomes in practice. • Review learning against updated • Competences and update CPD profile. • Accredit CPD through regulatory and professional bodies. • Review and refine learning in teams.

Appendix 1

Examples of learning activities

Don't forget CPD is not just about doing training courses or qualifications!

It could involve doing some work-shadowing, reading some information in a book or on a website, or talking to colleagues about how they handled a difficult situation. The key thing is to reflect on your learning and think about how it will impact your job or role in the future. There is no one size fits all, however, no matter where you are in your career or learning, CPD is yours and should reflect your learning needs, see some example activities you could do below:

- **Analyse and evaluate -** look at your own or others' practice analytically and evaluate how it could be improved or undertaken differently and why
- **Secondments -** an excellent way to explore different career possibilities without leaving your current job
- **Hands-on experience -** learn from doing the job and have the experience through contact rather than theory
- **Induction -** good induction can be used to assess your knowledge and experience and help identify your development needs
- **Observing and listening -** gather information by observing and listening to others, this is the foundation for all communication skills
- **E-learning -** online learning is cost effective and can be accessed anywhere 24/7
- **Shadowing -** by spending time with a colleague observing how they carry out a certain task e.g. assessing a risk in relation to moving and handling

There are many more examples listed below:

- Briefings, demonstrations, presentations
- Coaching and mentoring
- Questioning
- Reading
- Reflective learning
- Contributing to consultation and feedback
- Research
- Role modelling
- Delegation
- Supervision
- Dialogue and discussion
- Team meetings
- Group interaction
- Video feedback
- Open and distance learning
- Workshops and conferences
- Individual and group tutorials
- Visits
- IT based learning
- Volunteering
- Peer review
- Welsh language developments
- Practical application of learning
- Work based assignments

Appendix 2

Templates - planning and recording your learning

The following case study is an example of Jodie's (a level 3 nursery practitioner) CPD journey and record of the planning and outcomes of her learning .

The nursery Jodie is working in is keen to improve and develop the Foundation Phase curriculum and particularly the usage of Welsh within the nursery.

Jodie has been asked to take responsibility of leading during improving Welsh language across all the Foundation Phase curriculum areas. Jodie spent time with her supervisor within supervision to look at any areas of knowledge she may need to develop.

They complete a plan for her learning and development and at her next supervision revisit this.

Case study

Planning your learning

What knowledge and skills do I need to develop?
Knowledge about foundation phase areas of learning specifically Welsh Language.
What do I want / need to achieve – what difference will it make?
Better understanding and knowledge and increased confidence.
What methods could I use?
Attend a training course. Visit another setting. Have a mentor and advisory teacher. Practise.
What support will I need?
Time off to attend training. Funding for training. Access to a mentor / Advisory Teacher.
What are my target dates?
One month. Ongoing.
How will I know that I have achieved the outcomes that I want / need?
A better understanding of Welsh language and culture, this will make me more confident in my work and hopefully a much greater increase of Welsh language.

What did I do?
Attended a two day Welsh language skills workshop run by National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA). Met with my mentor and talked through issues, concerns and ideas. Met with Local Authority Foundation Phase advisory teacher. Visited another setting.
When did I do it?
December / January. January start – this is ongoing within supervision. January ongoing every two months. December.
What did I learn?
How to use Welsh throughout the day with colleagues, parents and the children. The benefits and value of using Welsh. More confident in using Welsh. How to implement Welsh language throughout the curriculum areas. How to plan for Welsh language throughout the curriculum. How to assess children's learning. What resources I needed. How to thread Welsh language through all activities and routines.
How have I put this into practice?
Welsh. I have ensured that the planning incorporates Welsh throughout. I have followed guidance given by the advisory teacher. By visiting another setting I have been able to reflect on how I can improve and adapt what we currently practice.
What difference has it made?
I feel more confident, the curriculum planning reflects Welsh language throughout all activities. The child assessments have indicated that children's usage, knowledge and confidence has also increased.
Do I need any further learning in this area?
I need more practice and confidence at using Welsh language throughout the curriculum and the opportunity to talk through with both my advisory teacher and my mentor. This will help me reflect on what went well and what I would like to improve. The Foundation Phase Advisory teacher will continue to support me and implement changes.

Appendix 3

Template for learners

Planning your learning

What knowledge and skills do I need to develop?
What do I want / need to achieve – what difference will it make?
What methods could I use?
What support will I need?
What are my target dates?
How will I know that I have achieved the outcomes that I want / need?

Template for learners

Recording your learning

What did I do?
When did I do it?
What did I learn?
How have I put this into practice?
What difference has it made?
Do I need any further learning in this area?

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Supervision	Supervision is a planned, accountable, two-way process in the form of a meeting which should support, motivate and ensure all practitioners develop good practice.
Coaching	When a person supports a learner in achieving a specific goal.
Mentoring	When a more experienced person helps to guide a less experienced and knowledgeable person.
Analyse	Examine something in detail to understand and discover its meaning.
Evaluation	When a person identifies what went well and what could be improved.
Learning styles	Processing and learning new information in different ways from peers.
Self-assessment	Evaluating your own performance.
Reflection	Looking back on something you have done and thinking about it in more detail.

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