

ECEY6011 Leadership and management for systems of quality

Group Script

Wednesday 26th March 2025 at 18:30pm

Sheridan: As a Flying Start setting, we are seen as providing best practice for day care with the core FS childcare offer being that we provide quality childcare for eligible children and their families (Welsh Government, 2024). As you all know, we are due to have our Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Inspection as the last time this occurred was approximately 4 years ago. In 2024 CIW increased their maximum inspection time to 5 years for settings without concerns (CIW, N.D.). Following our quality meeting whereby we updated CIW on the areas of improvement that they identified on the last inspection and the plans and changes due prior to the next inspection, this meeting is to ensure we are all on the same page with regard to the inspection and are fully aware of the ongoing improvements to the quality of our care. We all contribute to SASS (Self-Assessment of Service Statement) to ensure the information that we provide is accurate and up to date and this form is typically available to complete online via the CIW portal between January and March.

Hayley: I have the date for the SASS due date Sheridan, and it needs to be completed by the 14th of March. The details of our quality of care are being individually collected to prepare for this (Care Inspectorate Wales, n.d.).

Sheridan: The Quality-of-Care Review supports the setting to meet legal obligations that are set out within regulation 16 of the child minding and day care (Wales) regulations 2010 (CSSIW, No Date).

Bianca: As the family liaison manager, I have been collecting information from recent questionnaires in order to inform our self-evaluation to support our SASS. This is due to our up-and-coming inspection from Care Inspectorate Wales and will help us ensure we are providing the highest quality childcare (Care Inspectorate Wales, 2025).

The feedback I received from parents has been generally extremely positive, however there were several issues raised which you have already been made aware of and of which we are here to discuss today. Issues raised included communication with parents, unfamiliarity with the IDP process, the postcode lottery on childcare places, transitioning to school as well as staff ratios, wellbeing and first aid. So, we'll discuss each point to ensure we all have an understanding of how we can collaboratively resolve these issues prior to inspection. Studies have shown that resolving issues by acting on feedback helps to strengthen relationships with parents and increase engagement (Hourri, Thayer and Cook, 2019).

Before we start, I would like to explain that I sent out the same questionnaire on paper and in digital format to our five members of staff and thirty families to collect this valuable feedback. Questionnaires are one of the most widely used methods of data collection and information gathering (Taherdoost, 2016) and are useful because responses are anonymous. This encourages respondents to be truthful according to Patten (2016). In order to obtain the highest quality feedback, I ensured the questions were not ambiguous and were easy to understand to help the respondents give the best information they possibly could (Brace, 2018). However, the validity of the survey depends on the response rate and in an ideal world a pilot study would have been carried out first to enable the design of a high calibre questionnaire (Misro *et al.*, 2014). I received a better response rate via the digital method and as research has found that the digital questionnaires provide a faster response, have a higher quality of data and are less expensive than the paper method (Meirte *et al.*, 2020), I will only use this method in future. To facilitate this and ensure all of our families are included in this method, in future, we will need to offer support for enhancing digital knowledge and make sure devices and networks are supplied. In this way, we will be adhering to the digital strategy for Wales policy which states how we need to help equip people with the skills to engage in an increasingly digital world (Welsh Government, 2021). Additionally, it means we will be promoting equality of opportunity as stated in the National Minimum Standards for regulated childcare (Welsh Government, 2023). I will ensure I remind families they are also able to speak to Caerphilly Early Years Hub for information, advice and support for gaining access to resources.

Ellin: However, considering this it is important to acknowledge that the location is situated within a disadvantaged area (Blaenau Gwent CBC, No DateA) indicating that there is an increased risk of non-parent engagement with services and professionals (Hackworth *et al.*, 2018). Supporting standard 6 in the NMS, the setting should ensure that staff and parents work together to meet the individual needs of the child. As Bianca stated through providing digital methods for feedback and support where necessary, this will encourage engagement. As a setting I believe we should continue to gather parental feedback throughout the year. This will enable us to continuously evaluate the quality of practice when working with parents to ensure changes are made prior to breakdowns in relationships (Education Foundation, 2023).

Hayley: As the room leader of Enfys I have managed to look through the last CIW inspection we had, it was suggested that there was a need to increase the number of staff to improve the quality of care and safety in the setting. Under section 15 in the National minimum standards (NMS) it states that children benefit from the accurate ratio of adults to children in supporting best practice (Welsh Government, 2023a). Our workforce has since increased, and we now ensure compliance with the following minimum ratios for 2 to 3 years old: 1 adult to 4 children (Care Inspectorate Wales, 2018).

We currently have 15 children aged 2- 3 in both morning and afternoon sessions. Our current workforce amounts to 5 responsible adults supporting the care and learning environment in Enfys. Staff have varied levels of qualification and experience. In our workforce between us we proudly possess Level 3 Diploma's in Early Years Education and Childcare, bachelor's degree in Early Years Education and Care and Postgraduate Certificates in Special Educational Needs (Social Care Wales (n.d.). Flying start encourages early years settings to prioritise the recruitment of employing highly skilled practitioners (Welsh Government, 2023a).

In providing high-quality care in our setting, we must comply with the NMS first aid training requirements which the team has recently updated. As a result, 4 out of 5 members in the Enfys room now hold a Paediatric First Aid (PFA) qualification. This

training was provided by Flying Start Training and Development Team which we all applied for through the local authority online booking system (Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, n.d). I have recorded the dates we attended; we will need this to be renewed every 3 years. The certificates are now in the reception area visible to all staff, visitors and parents (Blossom Educational, 2025). Elin, has any more progressed with relation to other policies?

Elin: Yes, This is reflected in the settings First Aid Policy, as settings must meet the first aid requirements that are set in standard 10 of the NMS. The policy considers the settings layout and the number of children that attend the provision, enabling fast responses during emergencies (UK Government, 2022 and Welsh Government, 2023). This is a legal requirement for the setting that supports the Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 legislation, where employers are required to ensure that immediate first aid attention is provided where necessary (Health and Safety Executive (No Date)). The policies have been reviewed and are provided for parents on the settings website, this supports standard 6 of the NMS. As all policies and procedures should be available for parents and caregivers. Following a head injury earlier in the year, the policy was reviewed and amended. Now a phone call is made home to the caregiver where they will need to attend the setting to check over the child and will sign to acknowledge they have received the suggested treatment following an injury (BeyondAutism, 2023).

Sheridan: As a Flying Start setting, our policies and procedures are set for us by the Local Authority who review them on an annual basis as per CIW guidelines. My role as a Childcare Officer and as a part of the Childcare Advisory team for the local authority is to ensure that any updates to policies and procedures are disseminated to the setting leader and in turn to the rest of the staff. I also support Hayley to report on any incidents which may warrant an amendment to said policies or procedures as Elin just mentioned. Further to this and as a part of CIW regulations and The Childcare Act 2006 (Local Authority Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2016, I also support in the recording of the childcare sufficiency assessment to inform the report that the LA are required to submit every five years.

Jess: Ensuring staff ratios is correct can also help us to provide access to the curriculum to a higher standard. Following the new curriculum provided by Welsh Government (2022) settings should provide children with access to an enabling adult as they explore the environment. This simply means that an adult is available to support, intervene or further develop the play they observe. Welsh Government (2023) note that the role of the adult is necessary during this stage of learning. By providing an enabling adult to the learning environment practitioners can become more responsive to the children, their learning and the environment as well as use reflective methods towards their planning by using what is observed (ESTYN, 2024). If we provide consistency, developmentally appropriate emotional support coupled with an environment that is healthy and safe, we can create a positive effect on children and their families (Earls et al, 2017). In order to provide high quality provision for all children attending our setting ensuring the ratio of children to staff is correct will allow the practitioners to focus on supporting the learning and development. A practitioner should not need to worry about choosing between supporting a child and maintain statutory ratios (National Education Union, 2024).

Hayley : Thanks Jess. If we can, let's move onto some changes. In Enfys room since the last inspection, we have enhanced the quality in our early years education by supporting Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Wellbeing (SSTEWE) outlined in the Flying Start guidance (Welsh Government, 2023b). Brodie (n.d.) highlights the principles of SSTEWE in five scales that are: Building trust, confidence and independence, Social and emotional well-being, supporting and extending language and communication, supporting learning and critical thinking and lastly assessing learning and language.

With these principles in mind Bianca and I have worked on improving parental involvement by looking at alternative methods of communication. This is something that is strongly encouraged in the Flying Start guidance around involving the parents with the children's learning. According to the Welsh Government (2017), building strong relationships between children and practitioners is essential for achieving positive outcomes. It also emphasises the importance of engaging with parents and carers and

seeing them as key partners in supporting their child's growth and well-being. This collaborative approach ensures children receive consistent and well-rounded support both at home and in their learning environment.

Bianca: Yes thanks Hayley, so I would like to explain how I am going to improve our communication methods with parents as this is something that came up a few times in the questionnaire and always seems to cause issues. Having good relationships with our families is key to the long-term success of our children (Department for Education, 2021) (GOV.WALES, 2025) and I'd like to look at our setting to home communication more as a form of partnership, as suggested by Ma *et al.* (2015). We need to ensure that we understand any issues our families face with communication in order to adapt the way we work as this will ensure everyone is included and when done in the right way can transform children's life chances (Birth to 5 Matters, 2021). I have noticed recently there has not been a lot of activity on Tapestry – our online learning journal. I would like to suggest that we regularly update it with photos and information as it is important that we get our families involved with their children's learning and development (Gamble, 2024). Research suggests that high quality interaction between parent and child in the years before school, benefits a child's cognitive, language and social development in the long and short term (Eadie *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, we need to ensure we are having regular chats with parents on the door, so they don't feel like they are missing out on their child's day. Personal feedback which is tailored to the child's needs helps give confidence and trust to families that we are providing high quality care (Wales, n.d.). These methods of communication sit in line with the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 which states that collaboration can help meet well-being objectives (Welsh Government, 2015). Communication such as this also supports the best interests of the child which should be at the heart of decision making as stated in article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child (UNICEF, 1989).

Hayley: That's great and in addition in the Enfys room we have put on out of hours open days and we have offered workshops for the families to take part in whilst providing some take-home activities that can help parents work with us together on the SSTEWS

principles. The parents' feedback on leaving these events has been positive and as a result we have been approached to organise more. I believe this is something that Bianca can tailor more when working on gathering further data as we move forward. NSPCC Learning (2021) suggests that meaningful interactions and play with parents and carers help promote healthy brain development in children. There have been positive changes in parents sharing appropriate developments with the children more routinely on nursery drop off and pick-ups. This has allowed the team to be more empathetic and proactive in responding to presenting behaviours or attachment needs. Jess, would you like to explain more?

Jess: In line with the NMS, specifically standard 3, we encourage parents to visit the setting with their children before they begin attending to assess the environment. This gives parents the opportunity to look around and ensuring that our setting is the right place for their child. Supporting and comforting a child in the early stages of the settling in period can be difficult for all, the child, parents and the practitioners (Brace, 2022). Parents are asked to complete an 'All About Me' form prior to their child attending the setting. These forms help our practitioners get to know each child which can help the settling in process for the child making the setting an enjoyable place that sparks their interests (Waltham Forest, 2017). These are actions the parents are heavily involved with and get to have a clear insight on what experiences their child will receive while in our environment. However, beyond this point parents may not feel they are included in the next stages of the journey their child has at our setting with regards to learning and the curriculum they follow to develop their learning. This is something I would like to change by involving parents with various stages of their child's learning and development we can increase parent engagement which in turn has a positive impact on the child. Kurtulmus (2016) states parental involvement in the early years can increase success in later stages of education.

Elin: Additionally, through use of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological systems theory (1979) we as a setting can understand the needs of the child and family individually. Bronfenbrenner suggests that direct environmental factors such as home environments can impact a child's development (Perron, 2017). When we understand the child's

environmental factors, we can identify quality support for the child and family individually supporting more positive communications and supporting conflict reduction (Family Voices, 2025). This is supported by the Social Services and well-being (Wales) act 2014 and Article 12 within the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989) ensuring the child is placed in the centre considering their views, wishes and feelings (Social Care Wales, No Date).

Yes, it all links together.

However, how we provide access to the curriculum for the children in our setting is one of the issues raised in the questionnaire parents completed. The curriculum for non-maintained settings was published in 2022 therefore we did not use this document while planning our environments or activities during our last inspection (Welsh Government, 2022b). By providing high quality care to the children, we are ensuring to meet standard 8 of the NMS by providing a nurturing environment for children to feel safe and secure and practitioners are aware of the well-being of the children in our care. The early relationships children create with their caregivers can have a long-lasting impact on their development later in life (Parent Infant Foundation, 2021).

One of the effective ways to include parents in the curriculum activities is to invite parents to join in with play, giving the children the opportunity to show their learning environment to their parents sparking conversations between parent and child (Education Endowment Foundation, no date). Department of Education (2021) believe that parental involvement in learning can be an important factor to enabling children to succeed no matter the background they are from. I suggest we do termly 'Come Play with Me' events, where we open the doors to the parents at the end of the session. The children can take their parents around the room and outdoor area sharing the experiences they are given through the environment. Something we can offer on a termly basis. By doing this, we are ensuring that we are meeting standard 6 of the NMS. We will be including parents in the learning of their children keeping them informed about the activities and experiences the children receive while in our care. So that we ensure we can continue to provide high quality learning for the children within our environment, parents will be asked to provide feedback after attending a 'Come Play

with Me' session with their child. In addition to this, holding monthly feedback meetings with the staff to discuss the curriculum. Looking at the positive aspects we provide and addressing any issues that may have risen regarding the delivery of the curriculum. Doing this can strengthen the quality of the working relationships between staff and provides opportunity for professional development for our practitioners (University of Sussex, no date). This is in regulation with The Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations 2010.

Hayley: Following the previous inspection we did receive a recommendation to be more in touch with the importance of well-being in early years and encourage the accessibility and freedom of expression. In our last report it stated there were limited amounts of accessible resources available at any one time that allowed children freedom of choice, which was observed by the inspectors as impacting on children's involvement and wellbeing. An enabling environment is a diverse and dynamic space designed to support exploration and learning while ensuring risks are carefully assessed and effectively managed (Early Years Alliance, n.d.). Article 13 of UNCRC, states that every child has the right to freely express their thoughts and opinions (UNICEF, 1989).

As a team we ensure we are actively listening to the children paying close attention to what children say both verbally and non-verbally acknowledging their feelings and being able to respond to their expressions positively (Carter and Grimmer 2025). Featherbe (2020) makes suggestions on ways to improve settings and as a result we now offer a wide range of resources and activities that encourage emotional literacy, such as games and books around understanding and expressing feelings.

In addition, the team have actively attended a training course provided by Thrive in supporting us to create safe and nurturing environments to ensure children are emotionally secure and supported (Thrive Approach, 2024). This ensures that there is a high quality of emotional support for our children, perfectly aligned with the care we provide daily.

Ellin: Thanks Hayley, Thrive will support all children with their social and emotional development, allowing them to develop at their age not stage (Thrive, 2025 and Welsh Government, 2015g).

As we are aware there have been several changes in legislations since the last CIW inspection, that have brought new challenges for the setting to overcome such as the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018. This legal framework supports children and young people from the ages 0-25 with additional learning needs (ALN) (Neath Port Talbot Council, No Date). This will replace the previous Special Educational Needs statement enabling better quality for children to receive earlier support where necessary (Welsh Government, 2022c).

This is highlighted in the standard 4 in the NMS ensuring that settings meet the individual needs of each child. Ensuring that appropriate action is taken if ALN has been identified, supporting parents with appropriate support where needed (Welsh Government, 2023a). Furthermore, the setting is responsible for ensuring that the environment is accessible to the learner (Department for Education, 2015). This supports settings to promote equality for all under the Equality Act 2010 ensuring quality provision for all learners. This led to necessary modifications to the settings policy that were implemented when ALN was identified following the law changes and can be accessed on the website.

Feedback following the questionnaires that were sent to parents to support the SASS identified that parents felt the Individual Development Plan (IDP) process was unfamiliar. As the Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer, quality provision is offered through coordinating with the local authority's activities for children under the age of attending maintained settings. Working collaboratively with health professionals, educational psychologists, Child Looked After Teams, inclusion services and early years settings to support parents and early years partners to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the ALN system (Blaenau Gwent Council, NoDateB). There are e-learning courses available for both practitioners and parents, and this could be shared with parents and practitioners to support a better understanding of the new

IDP process (Welsh Government, 2021). There is also free training on the early help website, which gives 4 sessions giving an overview of the Person Centred Practice, Inclusion for all, working together and ALN process within early years (Cardiff Early Help, No Date). These can be provided to the practitioners in the setting over the next few weeks, this is supported by standard 14 within the NMS.

Sheridan: To pick up on what Elin just mentioned about working with others, as a setting we ensure that we work collaboratively with our professional partners to provide children with what is needed in order for them to thrive. To ensure this is ongoing and to support our families, all of our staff will be attending the collaborative communications training (Social Care Wales, N.D.) as part of the local authorities current training matrix. This will allow us and other flying start settings to work holistically using a strengths-based approach in a consistent manner. This will also set the stage for our reflective practice sessions whereby we can come together as a whole team to discuss any concerns as well as brainstorm ideas of activities to support holistic development, for example to ensure an ongoing quality service for all of our stakeholders (Tyrrell, *et.al.*, 2019).

Ellin: Within the ALN Code for Wales it states that a setting's ALN Lead Officer should have expertise in supporting children under compulsory school age with ALN. As well as their families; planning and coordinating services designed to meet a child's ALN needs in various settings; and experience in early education and child development (Welsh Government, 2021d). The ALN Lead Officer supports children below the age of 5, supporting with transitions to maintained settings (Swansea Council, 2023). The above qualities support settings to provide quality provision around ALN. Supporting health professionals to continue to support the child offering strategies and support to the setting that can be implemented in their IDP (Pembrokeshire County Council, 2023).

However, communication and information sharing can be a barrier when providing quality support. Furthermore, health professional's abilities to engage with education settings may differ following their ability impacting communications and vice versa (Welsh Government, 2023e). This will continue to be an identified barrier when providing a quality understanding of the IDP process, as we are navigating through the

early stages of the legislation being implemented across Wales. Through the Gibbs reflective cycle (1988) we will continue to evaluate our practice within meetings identifying positives and negatives to our ALN provision (The university of Edinburgh, 2024).

Sheridan: According to the Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education Project (EPPSE) report, children attending a quality pre-school (before aged 3) have better prospects, having long term positive effects on their attainment and social development (Taggart *et al.*, 2015). This is not new thinking with Sylva *et al.*, (2014) discussing the findings of the EPPE report which stemmed between 1997 and 2004. These reports, along-side reports from Schweinhart *et. al.* (1993) and Love *et. al.* (2005), supported in the development of Flying Start and Early Years provisions. Childcare eligible families were initially decided via a postcode lottery with Flying Start designed to address the most disadvantaged children to give them a good start in life as supported by Ellin previously. This came with inconsistencies whereby not all children or families who require additional support live in these preconceived deprived areas. Therefore, there were gaps in the provision and who it reached. In more recent times and in line with the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, Welsh Government have set out their Child and Young Peoples Plan (2022). In 2024 and following extensive longitudinal research the Process Evaluation of the Phased Expansion of Flying Start report was published. In 2023 and as part of phase two, the plan for expansion of flying start childcare was discussed. This is to ensure that children who most need support are provided with the best start in life alongside their peers ensuring equity over equality as well as expansion of Welsh Language provision.

Ongoing expansion of childcare spaces does have some difficulties and for our setting, for example, the space we have in the room to accommodate children is set according to section 22.7 of the National Minimum Standards (Welsh Government, 2016). Our Early Years Manager is looking at if we can expand into the room next door as this is used for interventions such as with the Early Language team who are also able to access other spaces to provide their support. If successful in the funding bids, we

should be able to offer a further five sessional spaces. This all takes time however and will also come with additional concerns around staffing. To be able to comply with Welsh Governments one million Welsh Speakers by 2050, we would need to look at employing 1st language staff and ongoing training for our current Welsh learners. As Hayley has mentioned, we also need to ensure that we are within staff to child ratio as per section 15.12 of the National Minimum Standards, which states the ratio for our setting is one adult to every four children at aged 2 (Welsh Government, 2016).

Hayley: I have looked into this Sheridan and The Welsh Government funds NDNA Cymru and Childcare Wales Learning and Working Mutually (CWLWM) to support the early years workforce with the Welsh language (National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) 2024). This could be something we, as a setting, work towards as part of our continuous development objectives?

Bianca: Yes, definitely and I will liaise with you both Hayley and Jess to explore more opportunities for parents and carers to engage with us in learning some incidental Welsh so they can support their children at home too. This is especially important at this time as Gamble (2024) states that CIW will check on whether we are promoting the Welsh language and culture significantly during inspection and are working towards the active offer – when a service is provided in Welsh without having to ask. We have a responsibility to meet these needs and ensure we are following the Welsh Governments “more than just words” strategic framework to promote Welsh language. In turn this will help raise the quality of care and outcomes for the children in our setting (Care Inspectorate Wales, 2016).

Jess: Great and more than just words will be included in our curriculum, promoting the Welsh language in our everyday routines. There are many organizations we can look at for support on how we can do this. There is the use of superhero characters ‘Sbarc a Seren’ to encourage the promotion and use of the language that were created by the Welsh Government (n.d). There are often grants available to support us while delivering and encouraging use of the language (Qualifications Wales, 2025).

Another concern for many of the parents is the transition their children will face as they move on to school in September. As this is a big move and change for a child, parents want to ensure they're supporting the children in the most effective way. Children can become vulnerable during the period of change and transition (Birth To 5 Matters, no date). As practitioners, we can play a role in ensuring the transition is a smooth process with little disruption and a positive experience for the child (Devon County Council, 2022). Having a positive transition helps to support the development of a child's emotional well-being. In turn this enables the child to feel safe to play and learn (Surrey County Council, 2024).

Most of the children in our setting will be attending the primary school that is located down the road from our setting. Only 3 children will be attending schools that are not as local to us. By working closely with the schools, we can share key information on the children to ensure all their needs can be met from the beginning (Forbes, 2018). As many of our previous children have attended our setting have gone on to the local primary school, we have already established a positive relationship with this school. We've arranged for the class teacher to come and spend some time in our setting with the children. This creates opportunities to give a full account of the needs of all the children in our setting, recognising that each learner is different and may need to be supported in different ways (Welsh Government, 2022c).

Ellin: Great thanks Jess. Within the cohort moving up to the maintained setting there are a couple of children that have been identified as requiring an IDP, and an require an enhanced transition plan (BirthTo5Matters, No Date). Gradually introducing new key adults support children to develop relationships with key adults within new settings (Care Learning, 2024). During the children's Person-Centred Planning meeting this year the school attended to strengthen their understanding of the children's individual needs (Vale of Glamorgan Council, No Date). Supporting standard 24 within the NMS the children are both on risk assessments to support their safety whilst attending the setting (Welsh Government, 2023a). The school are informed, and the information has been shared with the school that is in guidance of the General Data Protection Regulation Act 2018.

Sheridan: I'd like to thank you all for the information and updates that you have provided and the time you have taken to attend today's meeting. Also, to thank you all for your cooperation and ongoing commitment to ensuring a quality setting for our families.

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