

ECEY6012:

Leadership skills in entrepreneurship

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I acknowledge the use of Grammarly (<https://www.grammarly.com/>) on 28 February 2026 to check my work using the following prompt:

1. Please check the following text for readability and grammar.

I confirm that I have not presented any AI-generated text as my work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts and notes before the use of AI tools.

I acknowledge the use of Chat GPT (<https://chat.openai.com/>) on 20 February 2026 to create an image using the following prompt:

1. Create me a logo for my business idea ChildLink Cymru.

I confirm that I have not presented any AI-generated text as my work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts and notes before the use of AI tools.

1. Business Plan:



ChildLink Cymru Business Plan

Welcome to ChildLink Cymru

ChildLink Cymru is a digital platform created to support the development, safety, and well-being of looked-after children and those on the Child Protection Register in Wales. It gives professionals a secure, central place to access and update important information. The platform also includes a digital life story archive, where children can record milestones and creative work to help build their identity and emotional resilience (Hooley, Stokes and Combes, 2016; Whitters, 2020; Bishal et al., 2010).

On 31 March 2024, there were 7,198 children in care in Wales, and 8.6% had moved placements three or more times (Welsh Government, 2025). This kind of instability can disrupt relationships, routines, and access to personal records, which may lead to emotional and behavioural difficulties (Bishal et al., 2010; Whitters, 2020). Inspections by HIW, CIW, and Estyn between 2019 and 2024 also found that fragmented IT systems and slow communication make it harder to provide timely support (Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, 2024). ChildLink Cymru brings these systems together into a single, secure platform to help solve these problems.

Access to personal records remains a long-standing issue. Around 400,000 adults in Britain with care experience report missing memories or difficulty accessing their files (UCL, 2020; The Conversation, 2019). Although records must be kept for 75 years, many lack the child's perspective. ChildLink Cymru enables children to contribute directly to their life story, ensuring their voices are preserved.

From a business point of view, the platform demonstrates leadership in early years practice by encouraging digital collaboration, improving record-keeping, and supporting children's development (Burns, 2016; Echavarria, 2016). Local authorities can use the system through a subscription, and there are options for grant-funded pilots. ChildLink Cymru is evidence-based and aligns with Welsh policy, offering a child-focused solution that improves safeguarding and professional practice.



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The Business Idea:

ChildLink Cymru is a secure digital platform that brings together participatory life story work and statutory safeguarding systems for looked-after children in Wales. While statutory records are available, they often miss the child's perspective and can be incomplete or hard to access. This makes it difficult to understand a child's development and maintain their story's consistency (Afa Fostering, 2019). When a child's life story is interrupted by trauma, it can also make it harder for them to form their identity and feel emotionally secure (Kouvelis and Kangas, 2021).



Research on narrative identity and trauma shows that having a clear, consistent life story helps children build resilience, remain emotionally stable, and develop important skills such as confidence, independence, and social skills (Fivush, 2019).



What makes ChildLink Cymru unique is that it includes a life story archive where children can participate, all within a secure system used by different agencies. Approved professionals in health, education, and social care can work together in real time, and children and carers can add their own stories and experiences. This helps connect therapeutic narrative work with official safeguarding processes.

The platform follows the rights-based approach set out in the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, which brings the UNCRC into Welsh law. From a business point of view, it helps fix system inefficiencies by offering technology that makes safeguarding more collaborative and supports children's development.



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Market Analysis:

The number of looked-after children in Wales has grown from 5,600 in 2015 to 7,198 in 2024. This steady increase puts more pressure on social care and shows why strong multi-agency systems are needed for safeguarding support (Welsh Government, 2024).

ChildLink Cymru addresses this need by bringing together official safeguarding records and a life story archive. This lets children add to their own stories, while professionals can access up-to-date information. The MIRRA project found that many care leavers struggle with incomplete or hard-to-find records, which can leave gaps in their sense of identity and history (Hoyle, 2018). By including child-participatory narrative work, the platform helps fill these gaps and supports children's personal, social, and emotional growth, following Early Years Foundation Stage principles (Fivush, 2019; Department for Education, 2025).

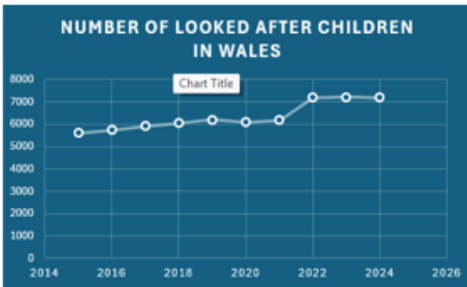
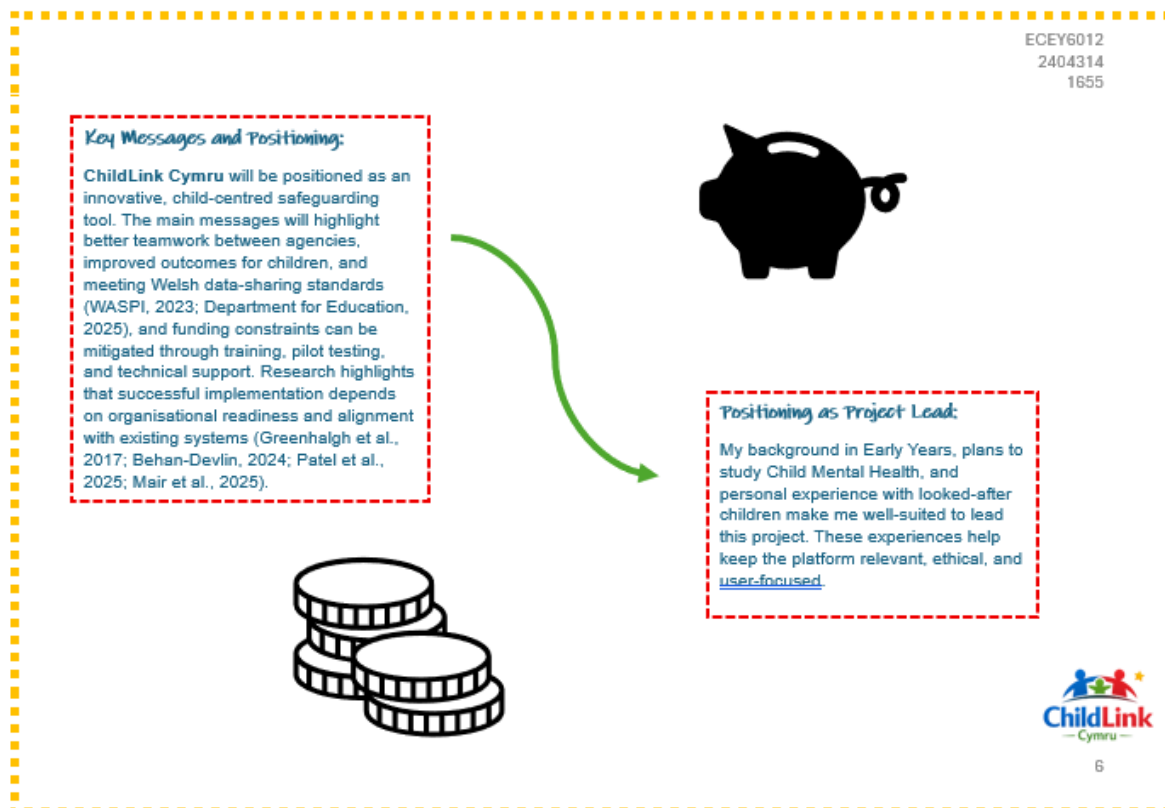
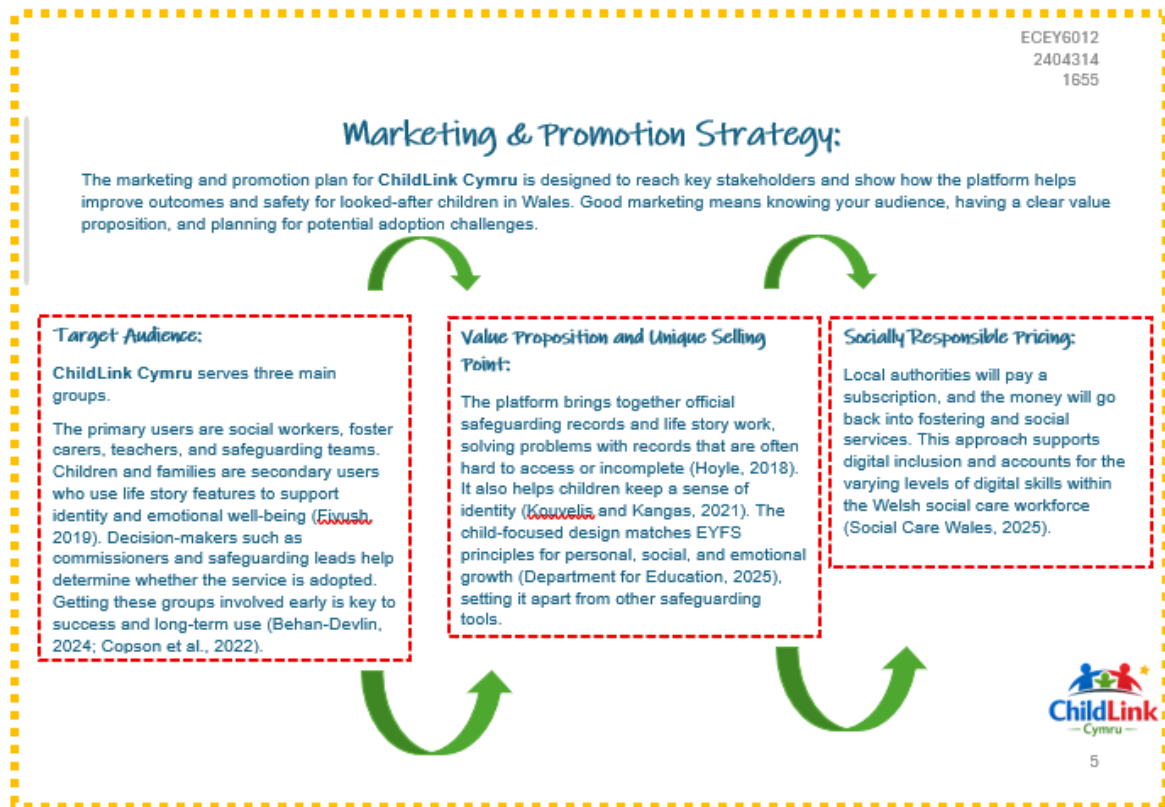


Figure X: Looked after Children in Wales (2015-2024)

The platform helps children keep a sense of identity, build resilience, and improve emotional well-being, while also making it easier for agencies to work together. To address challenges like digital skills, secure access, and data privacy, the system uses encrypted authentication and follows Welsh data-sharing standards (WASPI, 2023). Local authorities, social care professionals, foster carers, and children will all use the platform. With my background in early years practice and safeguarding, I am ready to deliver a solution that matches evidence-based practice with both developmental and operational needs.





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Operational and Financial Plan & Risk Analysis:

Operational Plan

ChildLink Cymru is a secure, cloud-based platform that helps different agencies work together for looked-after children in Wales. It brings together life-story work and safeguarding processes, so social workers, foster carers, health professionals, and educators can exchange updates quickly. Children can also add to their own records. The platform will follow UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, using encrypted storage and strong access controls to keep sensitive information safe (Information Commissioner's Office, no date; Welsh Government, 2024).

The first step will be pilot programs in selected local authorities, working with current early help frameworks. We will work closely with regional partners, such as Swansea Council and early-years service providers, to ensure the platform aligns with local child protection needs and the Early Help Model, which focuses on early, multi-agency support to prevent problems from worsening (Swansea Council, 2022). We will also provide technical support, maintain the platform, and offer professional development to help everyone use the system effectively and improve safeguarding.



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Financial Sustainability

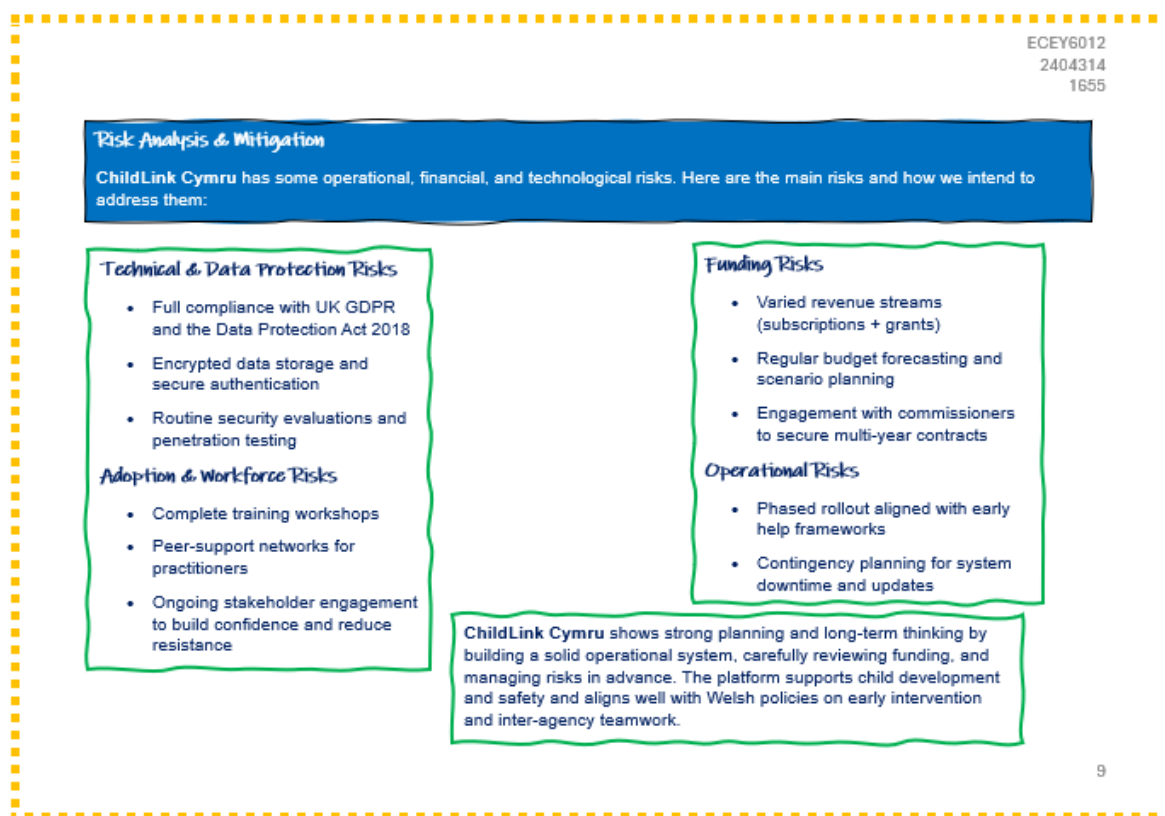
ChildLink Cymru will use a mix of subscription income and targeted grants to fund its work. Subscription fees will be based on the size and needs of each local authority, helping to keep the service affordable for families who need it most. Grants from programs like the Digital Inclusion Wales Grant, the Big Ideas Wales Young Person's Start-Up Grant, and Unltd Social Enterprise Awards will help with early development, pilot testing, and new ideas (Welsh Government, 2026; Big Ideas Wales, no date; Unltd, no date). Still, grants are usually short-term, competitive, and linked to specific goals, so they cannot support the project long-term on their own (Business Wales, 2026).



Some of the subscription income will go back into social services and fostering resources. This helps ChildLink Cymru support improvements across the system and promote fairness in early years services. By doing this, we build financial stability and stay focused on our mission to help looked-after children through better teamwork between sectors.



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2. Critical Analysis:

Critical Analysis of the Potential Impact of ChildLink Cymru on the Development of Looked-After Children in Wales.

The development, safety, and identity of looked-after children in Wales are ongoing concerns for public policy and practice. As of 31 March 2024, 7,198 children were in care, showing a steady rise over the past decade (Welsh Government, 2025). Placement instability remains an issue, with 8.6% of children experiencing three or more moves in a year. This instability is linked to problems with continuity, belonging, and long-term outcomes. Research by Mendis *et al.* (2011) shows that instability can weaken a child's sense of permanence, and studies on adoption disruption also connect relational breaks to emotional and behavioural challenges (Wijedasa and Selwyn, 2017). Inspections by Healthcare Inspectorate Wales and Care Inspectorate Wales point to fragmented IT systems and slow multi-agency communication as key barriers to effective safeguarding (Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, 2024; Care Inspectorate Wales, 2023). In response, ChildLink Cymru is a secure digital platform that brings together statutory safeguarding records and participatory life story work. This analysis looks at the platform's developmental potential, linking it to early years theory, Welsh policy, and current research.

Narrative identity and life story work are important for children's social and emotional development, especially for those who have experienced disrupted care. Research on autobiographical memory and narrative development shows that building and revisiting personal stories helps children understand their emotions, create coherence, and support well-being (Fivush, 2019; McLean *et al.*, 2007; Reese, 2025). This is particularly important for looked-after children, whose histories may be scattered across different placements and professionals. Including participatory life story work in safeguarding systems can help maintain a sense of identity during transitions. Early years practitioners, such as nursery and reception staff, can support narrative development through guided conversations, story-based play, and digital storytelling tailored to young children. These activities are especially effective in the early years, when children are learning to communicate and make sense of their experiences through play and storytelling. Research also shows that technology can help children express themselves and reflect, provided it is used in supportive relationships (Livingstone and Blum-Ross, 2020).

Attachment theory offers another way to assess ChildLink Cymru. Bowlby's research shows that secure attachments are key for social, emotional, and cognitive development (Bowlby, 1969). Studies on attachment disorders reveal that early disruptions in relationships can lead to emotional and behavioural problems (Zeanah and Gleason, 2015). Looked-after children are especially vulnerable to these issues, particularly when they experience frequent placement changes (Mendis *et al.*, 2011; Wijedasa and Selwyn, 2017). ChildLink Cymru can help by giving consistent access to personal histories and making it easier for foster carers, social workers, and educators to communicate. For young children, having practitioners who can access accurate, up-to-date information may lower anxiety and facilitate smoother transitions. Still, technology cannot replace caring, responsive relationships. Early years practitioners need to use digital narrative tools as part of a relationship-based approach to support secure attachments and healthy development (Fivush, 2019; McLean *et al.*, 2007).

The ecological systems perspective also supports the use of a platform like ChildLink Cymru. Bronfenbrenner's model explains that child development happens through interactions across different systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1996). For looked-after children, problems in these systems, like fragmented IT, poor information sharing, and slow communication, can make it hard to provide coordinated support (Care Inspectorate Wales, 2023; Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, 2024). ChildLink Cymru helps by centralising information and allowing real-time updates across health, education, and social care. For early years practitioners, especially those in Flying Start or similar programmes, this means they can offer timely, preventive support that aligns with Welsh policy goals (Welsh Government, 2024; Social Care Wales, 2025). Stewart, MacDonald, and Waters-Davies (2024) note that early years services in Wales often struggle to put policy into practice due to limited resources, workforce challenges, and differences across settings. A platform that improves communication and reduces paperwork may help practitioners focus more on building relationships and supporting development.

Legislative and policy alignment further underscores the platform's potential. The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure, and Related Legislation and policy, also highlight the platform's potential. The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 brings the UNCRC into Welsh law and stresses children's right to participate in decisions about their lives (Welsh Government, 2024). ChildLink Cymru puts these ideas into practice by letting children add to their own life stories, which supports their agency and self-expression. Social Care Wales' digital and workforce plans focus on working together and promoting wellbeing, showing the value of digital tools for multi-agency work (Social Care Wales, 2025). For early years practitioners, this fits with child-centred approaches that respect children's voices and experiences. Stewart *et al.* (2024) point out that, while Welsh early years policy values children's rights and holistic development, it can be hard for practitioners to apply these principles consistently. ChildLink Cymru could help by making children's perspectives a regular part of professional systems. The Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care Plan emphasise wellbeing, belonging, and the development of personal and social capabilities (Welsh Government, 2024). Narrative work directly supports these aims by fostering self-awareness, social understanding, and emotional regulation (Fivush, 2019; Reese, 2025; McLean *et al.*, 2007). Early years staff can use ChildLink Cymru to scaffold children's expression, facilitate reflective conversations, and track developmental milestones. Careful implementation ensures digital participation remains age-appropriate, complements relational and play-based learning, and avoids over-reliance on technology (Livingstone and Blum-Ross, 2020; Social Care Wales, 2025). Stewart *et al.* (2024) argue that early years practitioners often navigate tensions between curriculum expectations and the realities of practice; a tool that supports a holistic understanding of children's experiences may help practitioners meet curriculum aims more effectively.

ChildLink Cymru also addresses systemic challenges identified in research on record-keeping. ChildLink Cymru also addresses issues identified in research on record-keeping and identity. Studies show that children and care leavers often have trouble getting complete and clear personal records, which can leave gaps in their sense of identity and understanding (Mendis *et al.*, 2011). By adding child-created content to official records, the platform makes documentation more personal and helps maintain continuity across placements. There are still ethical issues to consider, such as consent, how long data is kept, and the changing nature of children's stories. Following UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 is crucial, but it is also important to have child-focused consent processes and participatory governance to protect autonomy and sensitive information (Livingstone and Blum-Ross, 2020; Social Care Wales, 2025). Early years practitioners need training to handle digital contributions carefully, ensuring children's voices are included without risking their safety or wellbeing, and social care demonstrates that co-design, training, and organisational alignment are critical to successful adoption (Greenhalgh *et al.*, 2017). Variability in digital literacy across the Welsh early years and social care workforce represents a potential barrier (Social Care Wales, 2025). ChildLink Cymru's phased rollout, pilot programmes, and professional development workshops

reflect best practice in implementation, while ongoing evaluation is necessary to ensure both practitioner adoption and developmental benefits for children. Financial sustainability is linked to evidence of improved placement stability, enhanced practitioner communication, and measurable well-being outcomes, highlighting the interplay between operational and developmental success.

Considering scale and future potential, ChildLink Cymru aligns with strategic Welsh objectives for digital innovation, workforce development, and early intervention (Social Care Wales, 2025; Welsh Government, 2024). While initially designed for small-scale implementation, looking at scale and future potential, ChildLink Cymru fits with Welsh goals for digital innovation, workforce development, and early intervention (Social Care Wales, 2025; Welsh Government, 2024). Although it started as a small-scale project in selected local authorities, the platform could be used across Wales if it proves to improve attachment, emotional resilience, and early learning outcomes. Future research should use long-term, mixed-method studies to measure its impact on development, especially in early years learning, social skills, and identity. This research will help determine whether the platform can be expanded and incorporated into broader Welsh early childhood and safeguarding systems. The rationale underpinning the platform, and alignment with Welsh legislation and policy strengthens its credibility (Bowlby, 2005; Fivush, 2019; Social Care Wales, 2025). The platform has clear potential to support early years practice by promoting identity formation, emotional regulation, and multi-agency collaboration. Its impact, however, depends on trauma-informed implementation, professional development, ethical data governance, and sustained funding. With careful evaluation and strategic rollout, ChildLink Cymru offers an evidence-informed, child-centred approach that can enhance outcomes for looked-after children across Wales.

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