

ECEY6011- Leadership and Management for systems of quality

I have not used AI within this portfolio.

Contents

1. Section 1 –Assignment
2. References

Quality in Early Years education and childcare settings.

A child's brain grows approximately ninety percent before the age of five. This is the most fundamental stage of a child's life where they grow and develop, it is during this period of time that early year's children need to be provided with high quality care and opportunities to experience stimulating environments (Department for Education, 2023).

Senedd Wales (2019) state that the high quality of service childcare and educational settings provide through care experience is shown through their outcomes especially for those children who are considered to be disadvantaged. Providing children and their families with high quality childcare, education and play goes beyond providing them with basic requirements, high quality care allows children to attend effective engaging environments which promotes holistic development (Welsh Government, 2025). For a early years childcare and education setting to provide a high level of quality care to the children they support they need to be evaluating and improving their environment, provision and practice continuously (Birth to 5 matters, no date).

The term quality in childhood education is a complex term to define and is multilayered (Eadie et al., 2022). However, according to Campbell and Lesson (2016) when referring to quality there are a variety of factors which shape a practitioner's understanding of what quality is. According to Featherbe (2020) when analysing quality in educational settings it does not only refer to the physical resources that children have access to while in the provision. According to Eadie et al. (2022) when envisioning quality for children's education it is a constructed of three concepts which are made up of structural, process and system. Slot (2018) suggests for structural quality to be reflected in educational environments this is governed through statutory legislations. Structural quality also allows the opportunity for the design of the curriculum to be analysed while ensuring the environment meets statutory health and safety requirements (Senedd, 2019). In education settings process quality will be observed through the experience's children have access to, this concept of quality promotes learning while supporting developmental benefits (Edwards, 2021). Eadie et al. (2022) states that system quality is incorporated of regulatory legislations and guidance while analysing how the overall system is operated from leadership to investments. The term quality has a layer of

self-reflection which allows practitioners and stakeholders to continuously evaluate their practice to ensure they are able to enhance the level of support they provide to the children and families (Reed and Canning, p9-10, 2012). However, according to Senedd Wales (2019) childcare and education settings providing children with poor quality provisions especially below National Minimum Standards will cause a negative impact on their overall development.

There are significant challenges that childcare and education settings face daily when trying to provide a high quality of care to the children and families they support. Ofsted (2024) published that challenges childcare and education settings are facing are lack of professional development and poor working conditions. Practitioners and stakeholders using tools to assess and scale the quality of their environment and practice provides an opportunity for self-reflection and to develop their practice and provisions to ensure they are promoting a child's overall development and provide a higher quality of care (Welsh Government, 2025). Childcare and education settings using the audit tools and assessments that are available to them will support to reduce the significant challenges that they are facing and enhance the overall level of quality care they are providing to the children and families they support.

Sustained shared thinking emotional wellbeing (SSTEWS) scale.

The Sustained shared thinking emotional wellbeing scale has been implemented by a number of local authorities to support with auditing and to ensure educational environments are enhancing the overall outcomes for children (Sefton Council, 2024). The sustained shared thinking emotional wellbeing SSTEWS scale is targeted for early years children between two and five years old (Nursery World, 2015).

Sustained shared thinking and emotional wellbeing (SSTEWS) scale is an environmental scale, the sustained shared thinking emotional wellbeing scale allows research to be carried out to identify a child's development cognitively and their social and emotional development (Siraj, Kingston and Melhuish, 2015). The sustained shared thinking and emotional wellbeing (SSTEWS) is formed of five areas which include: trust, confidence and independence, social and emotional wellbeing, language and communication, assessing learning and language, supporting learning and critical thinking. Practitioners conducting the sustained shared thinking and emotional wellbeing scale provides them with seven layers from inadequate to

excellent (Brodie, no date). This is key for practitioners to be able to self-evaluate on their practice and to enhance the quality of provision and care they are providing to children and their families. The main outcome for the sustained shared thinking emotional and wellbeing scales is to place a focus on the interactions practitioners have with the children they support while analysing the quality of them (Nursery World, 2015). Pauline Hoare for Tower Hamlets published research that suggested by practitioners carrying out the sustained shared thinking emotional wellbeing scale (SSREW) it not only allows practitioners to reflect on their own practice but also deeply analyse how the provisions that are accessible to the children are supporting them not only cognitively but also socially and emotionally. (Hoare, no date). The sustained shared thinking interconnects with Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which recognises the outcomes for children who are receive support from a knowledgeable adult will be to a higher standard (Brodie, 2019). Due to the sustained shared thinking emotional wellbeing (SSREW) scale focusing on the adults' interactions with the child it allows an opportunity for reflection and to make relevant changes. When practitioners are aware of where a child development is currently sitting and the has a clear understanding of the curriculum, they are able to provide a higher quality of interaction to support the child developing to their full potential (United Kingdom Government, 2023). Practitioners using scaffolding to provide children with high quality interactions promotes not only what a child learns academically but can enhance positive outcomes on a child's overall wellbeing and their mental health (Education Endowment Foundation, 2025).

As stated, when discussing the sustained shared thinking emotional and wellbeing (SSTEW) scale, there are a number of benefits to analyse and enhance overall outcomes for a child's cognitive and social and emotional development. However, there are limitations that occur with this the SSTEW scale. In depth research that has been carried out and published by Gardiner and Melhuish (2021) suggest that the Early Childhood Environment Rating scale also known as ECER-S scale is a higher quality rating scale so is considered to be overall more successful. Dissecting the sustained shared thinking emotional and wellbeing scale to only analyse the importance of children receiving opportunities of sustained shared thinking can have significant benefits. According to Brodie (2019) children who receive sustained

shared thinking that is delivered through a higher quality show enhanced outcomes cognitively, socially and emotionally and have a high level of language skills.

Early Years Wales Quality for All Assessment.

Early Years Wales (no date) suggest that by educational and childcare settings meeting regulatory requirements and following statutory legislations it not only enhances the quality of provision and the care that is being provided to children, but it is key to ensuring that the children attending the setting are receiving a high-quality experience. The quality for all assessment allows educational and childcare settings to be signposted to other agencies for support. However, Early Years Wales (no date) suggest that the completion time for this assessment will take them six to eight months. The benefits of settings carrying out the quality for all assessment allows practitioners and all stakeholders involved to prepare for inspections for example with Estyn or Care Inspector Wales while continually planning for improvements (Early Years Wales, no date). However, while it is a lengthy process for the Quality for All assessment to be completed (Early Years Wales, no date) state that practitioners have shared that they did not find the assessment a burden or did it add any pressure to their workload.

The Quality for all assessments allows settings to receive accreditation for the quality for service they provide, however, a limitation to the Quality for All assessment is the financial aspect. According to Early Years Wales (2019) for settings to initially complete the assessment it costs approximately £285 plus VAT and then for settings to be able to maintain the accreditation these costs approximately total to £160 plus VAT. A benefit of early years and childcare and play settings completing the quality for all assessments shows parents and any investors that the setting provides a higher quality of care that elevates beyond the National Minimum Standards, this can support the relationship between practitioners with the children's parents and families as it allows them to feel more confident in the experiences and care their child is receiving while attending the setting (Early Years Wales, no date). Having the opportunity to develop and strength the relationships between practitioners in the childcare or educational setting and the child's family allows for development of process quality (Senedd Wales, 2019). The quality for all assessment requires professionals to submit relevant evidence when working through the checklist to an

experience assessor who supports the changes that to occur to enhance the quality of care and experiences being delivered (Early Years Wales, no date).

Settings carrying out assessments for the quality and care they provide to the children, and their families can enhance the overall development for a child. Due to assessment tools and scales having a variety of different benefits it can be useful for settings to carry out more than one assessment or use a variety of scales as they all also come with limitations. By carrying out more than one assessment or using more than one scale it ensures a more enhanced level of results which can promote practice and self-reflection. Overall, this promotes a child's development and to ensure childcare and early years settings are delivering a high quality of care than goes beyond the National Minimum Standards to children are reaching their full potential. Evidence published supports the importance of the higher level of quality care and experiences a child is provided with while attending education and childcare settings can significantly enhance cognitive and social development (Senedd, 2024). As discussed through assignment high quality care and provisions provided to children relate back to providing professionals with the opportunity to reflect on their own practice and care they provide while supporting children. Early Years Wales (no date) state the importance of practitioners who work in childcare and education settings having the opportunity to reflect on practice as they are able to gain a deeper understanding of the areas that need to be improved while celebrating what is working well. This promotes not only a child's quality of care but also the environment and provisions they learn in.

References.

Birth to five matters (no date) *Quality improvement and leadership*. Available at: [Quality improvement and leadership – Birth To 5 Matters](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

Brodie, K. (2019). *Sustained Shared Thinking: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide for Early Years Practitioners*. Available at: [Sustained Shared Thinking: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide for Early Years Practitioners](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

Brodie, K. (no date) *The new SSTEWS Scale*. Available at: [The New SSTEWS Scale | Kathy Brodie: Free CPD for Early Years Professionals](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

Campbell-Barr, V. and Leeson, C. (2016) *Quality and Leadership in the Early Years: Research, Theory and Practice*. 1st ed. London: SAGE Publications, Limited.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473972414>. (Accessed: 03 April 2026)

Department for Education (2023). *Development Matters*. Available at: [Development Matters - GOV.UK](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026)

Eadie, P. *et al.* (2022) 'Domains of quality in early childhood education and care: A scoping review of the extent and consistency of the literature', *Educational Review*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2022.2077704>

Early Years Wales (2019). *Quality for all (QfA)*. Available at: [qfa-terms-and-conditions-2019.pdf](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

Early Years Wales (no date) *BLOG: Introducing the Childcare Quality Awareness Toolkit*. Available at: [BLOG: Introducing the Childcare Quality Awareness Toolkit | Early Years Wales](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

Early Years Wales (no date) *Quality for all*. Available at: [Quality for All | Early Years Wales](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

Early Years Wales (no date) *Reflective practice*. Available at: [Reflective Practice and Responsive Planning](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

Early Years Wales (no date). *Early Years Wales*. Available at: [Early Years Wales | cwlwm](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

Education Endowment Foundation (2025) *Improving early education through high-quality interactions*. Available at: [Strategies to support everyday practice | EEF](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

Edwards, S. (2021) 'Process quality, curriculum and pedagogy in early childhood education and care', *OECD Education Working Papers No. 247*. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/process-quality-curriculum-and-pedagogy-in-early-childhood-education-and-care_eba0711e-en.html (Accessed: 29 January 2025).

Featherbe, A. (2020) *Wellbeing for all in Early Years*. Available at: [Microsoft PowerPoint - Alison Featherbe - The Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Wellbeing Scales](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

Gardiner, J. and Melhuish, E. (2021). *Study of Early Education and Development (SEED): Developing alternative quality scales for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) using exploratory analysis*. Available at: [Study of Early Education and Development \(SEED\): Developing alternative quality scales for Early Childhood Education and Care \(ECEC\) using exploratory analysis](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

Hoare, P. (no date) *Sustained shared thinking and emotional well-being scales*. Available at: [PowerPoint Presentation](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

Michael Reed and Natalie Canning (2012) *Implementing Quality Improvement & Change in the Early Years*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. Available at: <https://research-ebsco-com.uwtsd.idm.oclc.org/linkprocessor/plink?id=3f96bfbf-5950-3ef5-a5f7-b28fa81ed653> (Accessed: 3 April 2026).

Nursery World (2015) *Learning & Development: Assessment - Quality time*. Available at: [Nursery World - Learning & Development: Assessment - Quality time](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

References

Sefton Council (2024) *Sefton Sustained Shared Thinking & Emotional Wellbeing Project*. Available at: [SSTEWS Project](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026)

Senedd Wales (2019) *Early Childhood Education and Care: Quality matters Research Briefing*. Available at: [19-47-web-eng.pdf](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

Senedd Wales (2024) *Their future: our priority? Childcare in Wales*. Available at: [Their future: our priority? Childcare in Wales](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

Siraj, I, Kingston, D, & Melhuish, E 2015, Assessing Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care : Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Well-Being (SSTEWE) Scale for 2-5-year-olds Provision, Institute of Education Press (IOE Press), London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [3 April 2026].

Slot, P. (2018), "Structural characteristics and process quality in early childhood education and care: A literature review", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 176, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/edaf3793-en>. (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

United Kingdom Government (2023) *A strong foundation in the early years is crucial to children's success*. Available at: [A strong foundation in the early years is crucial to children's success - GOV.UK](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

United Kingdom Government (2024) *Maintaining quality early years provision in the face of workforce challenges*. Available at: [Maintaining quality early years provision in the face of workforce challenges – Ofsted: early years](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).

Welsh Government (2025) *NMS introduction chapters: What do we mean by High Quality Provision*. Available at: [NMS introduction chapters: What do we mean by High Quality Provision \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#) (Accessed: 03 April 2026).