Name and Student Number: Jo McDonough - 2408631

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Assignment: Leadership and Management for Systems of Quality.

Part 1: Group oral presentation – From Self Assessment to Evidence: Critically Preparing the Setting for CIW Inspection.

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AI Statement:

Throughout the duration of this assignment I acknowledge the use of the following

- https://copilot.microsoft.com/chats/uWfmGxnT1d6Cv1bTnZhjv using the following prompts:
    - To check my own text for grammatical and syntactical mistakes and for suggestions to rephrase my own work.
    - Find and summarise data in relation to Inspection frameworks and guidance, The National Minimum Standards and Welsh policy.

Group Oral Presentation

From Self-Assessment to Evidence: Critically Preparing the Setting for CIW Inspection (Flying Start setting for 2-3 years olds - 20 spaces).

Amy – As a Flying Start setting for 20 children aged 2 - 3, and in line with our responsibilities under the Welsh regulatory framework (Care Inspectorate Wales [hereafter CIW], 2023a) we have already completed our Self-Assessment of Service Statement (hereafter SASS). Section 17, the Quality-of-Care Review, enables us to evaluate our practice, consider how well we meet statutory requirements, and identify areas for development. Our duties are shaped by the *Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016*, and the *National Minimum Standards* (hereafter NMS) (Welsh Government [hereafter WG], 2023a), which emphasise children's wellbeing, rights, voice, and a safe, responsive environment that supports independence.

Jo - With the SASS complete, our next step is to interpret the findings, prioritise them, and develop evidence-rich narratives aligned with CIW expectations, the *Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016*, and the NMS (2023a). The SASS acts as a diagnostic tool, highlighting strengths, developing systems and areas requiring targeted action to maintain high-quality provision.

We will organise our findings into three priority areas:

- **Immediate actions** – compliance-critical (CIW, 2025)
- **Short-term improvements** – to strengthen before inspection (CIW, 2023b)
- **Longer-term development** – strategic quality improvement

This ensures our next steps remain focused, proportionate and aligned with our statutory duties to promote children's wellbeing, rights and safety.

Kirstie - Emerging priorities include reviewing staffing ratios to ensure continued compliance with NMS Standard 15.1 (DC) (WG, 2023a) and to plan effectively for next term's intake, supporting both children's needs and staff development time. We also need to consider parent and child interest in developing a bike shed, ensuring decisions reflect safety, accessibility and children's voice. Firstly however, we will address last week's incident involving the broken lock and GDPR, ensuring corrective action and strengthened data security processes (ICO, n.d: CIW, 2025).

Amy - During a routine end of session check, staff identified that the lock on the staff filing cabinet containing personal staff files, contracts, supervision notes, emergency contacts and DBS numbers was broken. Although the cabinet is in the office, which is usually locked, the door was open due to ongoing admin work. The issue was reported immediately to a senior member of staff and discussed in the staff meeting the following day.

Jo - Aligning with Flying Start and CIW's expectations for a safe, well organised environment and reflecting ICO principles of integrity and confidentiality (Flying Start, 2025: CIW, 2025: ICO, n.d.), immediate action was taken. Management were informed, the incident documented, including date, time and who discovered it, and immediate steps were taken to minimise risk:

1. The room was secured with restricted, authorised access only.
2. All staff files were transferred to a temporary, lockable cabinet accessible to only the leadership team.
3. Digital records were checked to ensure they were accurate, securely backed up and protected.

Prompt reporting demonstrates a strong culture of clear communication, accountability and reflective practice.

Kirstie - This aligns with NMS 14.1 (WG, 2023a) on effective communication systems and leadership oversight, and NMS 5.6 and 22.11 (WG, 2023a) on protection from unauthorised access, secure record keeping, confidentiality and *Information Sharing Guidance* (WG, 2019a) all of which contribute to robust leadership and management.

Dom – Safeguarding our families is paramount in delivering quality provision. Their personal information should be held in confidence, treated with sensitivity and the security for it to be stored effectively. Department of Education (2021) suggests the most effective form of storing information is to be electronic Welsh Government, 2025 (b).

Amy - An urgent maintenance request has been submitted for the lock repair. If this cannot be completed within 48 hours, a new lockable cabinet will be purchased to ensure continued secure storage of confidential records in line with NMS 5 and NMS

22.11 (DC), as well as Flying Start and WG expectations for safe information governance (WG, 2019a: WG, 2023a: Flying Start, 2025).

Moving forward, cabinet locks will be included in daily audits, and the incident has been added to the risk register under data security, strengthening accountability and contributing to a safer environment consistent with NMS 5.6 (WG, 2023a).

Dom – Clear labelling and placement of records are appropriately distributed for Child Protection records to remain separate from generalised documentation (NSPCC, 2022). In the event documents are required to transfer to a new cabinet Section 5 (1) (f) and 32 of the GDPR will need to be followed to avoid data breach (Information Commissioners Office, no date).

Jo - The incident was shared with staff at the team meeting the following day, prompting wider reflection on the handling, storage and appropriate use of personal data. Recent supervision and appraisal's themes also revealed gaps in practitioner knowledge around confidentiality, GDPR and secure record keeping. Addressing these gaps supports staff wellbeing, builds confidence and reduces uncertainty while aligning with NMS 2.4, 5 and 20 (WG, 2023a) to ensure staff receive clear, accurate information an understand their responsibilities.

Team meetings, supervision and appraisals provide valuable but different forms of data to inform quality improvements.

- Team meetings capture real time operational data, helping identify themes, gaps and risks, while supporting communication and collaboration. However, data can be anecdotal or influenced by dominant voices if not recorded systemically (Skills for Care, 2026).
- Supervision offers detailed, reflective data on individual practice, wellbeing and training needs; however, quality depends on the supervisor's skills and available time (Social Care Wales, 2025: HCPC, n,d,).
- Appraisals provide structured, annual performance data that supports compliance and long-term planning, though their infrequency may mean emerging issues are missed (Skills for Care, n.d: CIPD, 2026).

Kirstie - Used together, these processes create a balanced evidence base, however they must be used and applied consistently and recorded clearly to meet CIW expectations for quality and well organised governance (CIW, 2025).

Jo- To meet NMS 2.1 - 2.4 (WG, 2023a): Information, we will strengthen the clarity and consistency of communication, by doing so ensures all staff receive the same information and expectations which enhances safety, consistency, confidence and compliance, ultimately improving quality across all four CIW areas (CIW, 2025).

Policies, routines and data handling procedures will be embedded more systemically across the setting to support consistent practice. A weekly written and verbal briefing will be introduced to ensure all practitioners receive identical updates and reminders, supporting wellbeing and contributing to effective leadership and management (WG, 2023a).

In line with NMS 18.1-18.3 (WG, 2023a): Quality Assurance and WG's *Quality Framework for the Early Years*, which emphasise strong governance, reflective leadership and systemic monitoring, we will schedule protected monthly admin time for leadership to complete GDPR checks, update records and review compliance.

Amy - This ensures data security responsibilities are prioritised and evidenced, strengthening governance and contributing to well organised environments. Ensuring all staff are up to date and consistent directly enhances quality by supporting safe, reliable and aligned practice (WG, 2023a; WG, 2023c).

Dom - Department for Education (2024), outlines that to achieve this all staff are required by law to undertake relevant safeguarding training. I have identified that several of our staff will need to complete the refresher course by the end of the summer term to comply with this (Early Years Careers 2018 and Public Health Wales, 2017).

Kirstie - We have also reviewed the storage of children's One Page Profiles. In line with ALNET (Wales) ACT (2018), *Information Sharing Guidance* and Flying Start requirements, OPPs will no longer be displayed on walls or in open areas. They are now securely stored in individual child files and accessed only by staff who need the information (Powys, 2026; WG, 2019a).

This ensures sensitive information is handled lawfully and proportionality, protecting children's dignity and privacy in line with NMS 5.6.

Importantly this decision also reflects direct feedback from parents who shared that they felt uncomfortable with personal details being on display. Parent views have

directly informed this improvement, reinforcing our commitment to respectful, rights-based practice and partnerships with families (ICO, 2023).

These actions also align with key UNCRC Articles: Article 3: best interests, Article 16: right to privacy, Article 19: protection from harm, Article 12: child's voice and Article 29: safe well organised environments that support development. Removing OPP's from display, strengthening secure storage and ensuring staff understand their responsibilities directly protects children's personal information and dignity contributing to a safe environment that establishes high quality care and development.

Jo - A rights-based approach is reinforced by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory which emphasises the need for reliable, safe systems surrounding the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Edmondson's Psychological Safety theory (1999) shows staff are more effective and emotionally available when they feel secure in their roles. Contemporary research, including OECD (2017) and Bonetti (2018) demonstrates that emotionally supported staff provide higher quality interactions. Social Care Wales (2019) and the Harvard Centre on the Developing Child (2026) further demonstrate that staff wellbeing and psychological safety directly influence the consistency and responsiveness of adult child relationships, strengthening overall quality.

Reflectively, this incident exposes limitations within the *Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020,* which strengthens duties but provides limited practical guidance, increasing workload without additional capacity or consideration of workforce wellbeing. Information governance is similarly left to setting interpretation as noted in WG's evaluability assessment (WG, 2023b).

The Quality-of-Care Review (Part 17) emphasises honesty, transparency and continuous improvement (Care Quality Commission, 2025). Acknowledging and addressing these gaps demonstrates our commitment to strengthening internal systems, so staff feel supported and confident. This directly enhances leadership and management quality, and keeps our practice robust, transparent and improvement focused (WG, 2023b).

Amy - As a result of this incident, we will incorporate targeted refresher training on data protection and confidentiality, building on what is already embedded in our

induction programme. This will ensure all practitioners feel confident in their own responsibilities and that our systems remain robust, compliant and aligned with NMS, WG information governance expectations and ICO expectations.

Jo – To support CIW's four areas of quality

- For Wellbeing: clear communication, weekly briefings and protected admin time reduce anxiety and ensure staff feel confident in their GDPR duties, aligning with NMS 13.1-13.3 (WG, 2023a) and CIW'S emphasis on respectful handling of information.
- **Dom** – For Care and Development: Consistent processes and secure storage allowing staff to focus on high quality practice. GDPR training embedded into induction and CPD aligning with NMS 13 (DC) and WG guidance (WG, 2019: WG, 2023a).
- **Amy –** for Environment: Strengthened routines for storing records, securing cabinets and removing OPPs from display ensure information is stored safely. Protected time for GDPR checks supports a safe, well organised environment in line with NMS 5.6 (WG, 2023a).
- **Kirstie –** for Leadership and Management: Clear responsibilities, systemic monitoring and strengthened communication demonstrating strong governance, aligning with NMS 13.1-13.3,14.3-14.4 and 18.1-18.3 (WG, 2023a), as required by CIW (2025) guidance.

Dom – In reference to safeguarding training, I will compile a live working document to maintain up to date records of our staff and provide alerts when training is needed to be renewed. Early Years Alliance (2003 – 2019), lists as one of the main priorities to include within an early years settings safeguarding policy in relation to supporting the upskilling of staff.
Chapter 1, Section 18 of the Working Together to Safeguard Children document, explains the importance of supporting children with their needs to support any additional needs they may have that impacts their ability to engage within the setting. All records held will comply with rules and regulations of the Data Protection Act (2018) and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016.

Kirstie - Moving on to our next priority

As a Flying Start setting, we work closely with a wide range of partner services who share relevant and appropriate information that helps us build a comprehensive understanding of the children and families we support. This multi-agency approach is central to Flying Start delivery, where key stakeholders such as Health Visitors, Social Workers, Speech and language therapist (SALT), and the Early years inclusion team (Hereafter EYIT) collaborate to provide early, targeted interventions, offering professional guidance that strengthens our ability to meet children's individual needs and deliver high-quality family support (WG, 2017; WG, 2024; Macdonald, n.d.).

Amy - Research consistently highlights that strong multi-agency collaboration improves outcomes for children, particularly in the early years. Effective information sharing supports early identification of needs, reduces delays in accessing support, and enhances the overall quality of provision (WG, 2020; Munro, 2019; Early Intervention Foundation, 2021). Maintaining open communication with partner agencies helps ensure practice remains child-centred, responsive and aligned with best-practice guidance.

Information from outside agencies is usually received through multi-agency meetings, direct professional communication and written assessments or reports. Each method has strengths and limitations:

Multi-agency meetings allow professionals to share different perspectives, strengthening the quality of decision-making, avoiding duplication and ensuring consistent messages across agencies. They also enhance safeguarding by enabling coordinated information sharing about children and families (Sidebotham & Appleton, 2022; Atkinson et al., 2020). However, challenges exist. Meetings can be time-consuming, difficult to coordinate and sometimes affected by power imbalances where certain professionals dominate discussions (SCIE, n,d) Additionally, the amount of information shared can make it harder to prioritise actions effectively (Hood, 2018).

Jo- Direct communication such as phone calls or secure emails can be quick and responsive, supporting faster decision-making and immediate clarification. It also helps build professional relationships and allows flexible, without lengthy

documentation (Laming, 2019). However, verbal communication can lead to misunderstandings if not recorded accurately, and informal exchanges may reduce written records (Hood, 2018). There is also potential GDPR risk, especially when contacting a professional for the first time or when secure systems are not used correctly (ICO, 2021).

Written reports from professionals such as SALT, EYIT, or Health Visitors provide detailed, evidence-based information that supports tailored interventions and tracks progress over time. They promote consistency across agencies and ensure decisions are grounded in professional assessment (Snow & Powell, 2020). However, report writing is time-consuming, delays can slow the support process, and specialist terminology may be difficult for some practitioners to interpret. Reports may also fail to capture day-to-day changes in a child's presentation (Broadhurst & Mason, 2020).

Dom – Including a child centred approach is beneficial to include our young learners' views to gain a holistic understanding of how our young children feel towards the people that care for them (Children and Families (Wales) Measure, 2010, Section 12). Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (no date), hints that pupil voice to be pivotal in supporting learning and development. This alongside feedback from parents in terms of who they feel can best support their children in communicating their needs, has played a significant part in how we work collaboratively with external agencies, which Article 5 and 18 of the UNCRC (1989), depicts.

For children with ALN this can be difficult to measure and interpret when assessing the quality of care we provide. Children that display non-verbal methods of communication are at a much higher risk of their views being misinterpreted (Welsh Government, 2021).

Leadership and management of assessment tools to be integrated into the provision will be carefully selected to ensure that all our service users have the means to communicate their wishes, along with implementing the appropriate care and developmental strategies to improve out practice as implied through Welsh Government (2022).

Kirstie - I recently received a courtesy call from EYIT outlining the needs and likely level of support required for a number of children starting next term, with formal documents, including IDPs and One-Page Profiles, will follow. This early notification enables us to plan proactively rather than reactively, helping us maintain high-quality, inclusive provision for all children (WG, 2020). It also allows us to assess whether the statutory Flying Start ratio of 1:4 is sufficient or whether additional staffing is needed for one-to-one or small-group support. Early information sharing supports smoother transitions and reflects the principles of early intervention and multi-agency collaboration set out in the ALNET Act (2018) and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

As a Flying Start setting registered for up to twenty children, staffing responsibilities become increasingly complex when a growing number of children present with emerging or identified Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Although the statutory ratio of 1:4 for this age group, as set out in Standard 15.1 (DC) of NMS, is currently being met, the increasing complexity of children's needs raises concerns about whether minimum ratios alone are sufficient to maintain safe, high-quality provision.

The *Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations 2010* require providers to ensure that children's welfare, safety, and developmental needs are met at all times. This means ratios must be responsive to the needs of the cohort, not simply compliant with the minimum legal requirement. With recommendations from the EYIT we will be looking to recruit another member of staff to ensure safe supervision across the environment and compliance with CIW expectations around safeguarding and care quality (CIW, 2022)

Dom - When undertaking the recruitment process, a rigorous routine will be conducted. All applicants will need to demonstrate a good level of understanding and experience within the care or education sector (CIW, 2016 and Welsh Government, 2017). **Y**oung children have the right to explore education within a safe and nurturing environment. Potential staff will need to maintain this level of care to provide authentic learning experiences, that are child led and tailored to their age and stage.

An Enhanced Child Workforce DBS will be required, in line with DBS Services (2026) and Gov.uk (2026), requirements and guidelines. Supporting safeguarding our

children from potential risk and harm will be paramount when selecting the appropriate candidates acknowledged through the *Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act,* (2014).

This will also consist of positive management of movement through the setting, when candidates visit. They will be required to sign in and out in line with Childcare Act (2006), the fire safety responsibilities, under Section 156 of the *Building Safety Act (2022) and Health and Safety at Work Act 1974*. If successful with their application, full training and fluid transitioning will take place to become familiar with all policies and procedures in place. In addition to this, the applicants will be required to read all documents relating to the children before fully integrating within the setting, to allow the children opportunity to build inclusive relationships with new members of staff, and completion of signing all policies and procedures (NSPCC,2024, Section 20 NMS ,2023).

PACEY (2025), promotes effective training towards safeguarding through CACHE qualifications, stressing the significance in maintaining current knowledge of the quality of care needing to be upheld.

Amy - Space is another significant concern. The NMS 22.1 (DC) require 2.8m² of usable play space per child, meaning a full cohort of twenty children requires at least fifty six square metres. However, children with ALN often require additional adjustments, such as quiet spaces, low-stimulus areas, or designated zones for one-to-one support (Early Intervention Foundation, 2021; Snow and Powell, 2020). When several children require these adaptations simultaneously, the effective usable space is reduced, limiting safe movement, free-flow play, and developmentally appropriate learning opportunities. CIW 2023 emphasises that environments must meet the needs of all children, and in this context, the current space becomes increasingly restrictive as ALN needs rise.

One practical solution to these spatial demands is to repurpose under-used areas within the setting. Converting an unused storage room into a small sensory space can provide a low-stimulus, calming environment that supports regulation and focused one-to-one work. Research highlights that adapted, low-arousal spaces are essential for children with sensory or communication needs (Snow & Powell, 2020; WG, 2021). Additionally, developing an undercover outdoor area allows for

year-round outdoor learning, freeing up valuable indoor space while offering a quieter, more spacious environment that benefits children with ALN (Glanville, 2023).

Jo – A concern was raised during staff appraisals about maintaining ratios while supporting staff qualifications and access to training. Staff queried whether meaningful professional development could continue without compromising staffing levels required to deliver safe, high-quality care, under the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014*.

While NMS 13.10 (DC) requires that at least 60% of the team hold a Level 2/3 qualification and 20% to be working towards it, as a setting we consistently meet or exceed this, releasing staff for training can place additional pressure on ratios and continuity of care. These challenges can be reduced through a staggered training rota, while still maintaining high-quality, ensuring only one practitioner attends external training at a time. Peer-mentoring enables experienced staff to share skills in practice, reducing the need for staff release. In-house training from senior staff or external specialists supports on site learning and optional twilight sessions Further support CPD without affecting core staffing. These approaches maintain safe ratios and align with the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014* and CIW expectations for competent, well-trained staff (WG, 2023a; Early Intervention Foundation, 2021).

Kirstie - These concerns around staff to child ratios directly relate to the four areas of the Quality Care Review. Children's well-being is affected if staff are unable consistently meet emotional needs and provide co-regulatory essential for early brain development (Martin and Ochsner, 2016: WG, 2015). When practitioners are stretched, they have less capacity to offer responsive interactions which can impact children's sense of security and belonging. The care and development domain is compromised when staff cannot deliver high-quality, individualised interactions due to ratio pressures. This limits opportunities for targeted learning, early intervention and additional support needed for children with emerging or identified ALN (OECD,2020: WG, 2023a).

The environment becomes less effective when space is insufficient to meet diverse needs. A pressured environment can reduce the quality of play, increase noise and

overstimulation, and make it more difficult to maintain inclusive, developmentally appropriate provision. Finally, leadership and management are challenged by the difficulty of ensuring compliance, supporting staff development and maintaining high standards under increasing operational strain. Leaders must balance legal responsibilities, workforce wellbeing, and the rising complexity of children's needs, all of which become more difficult to manage when ratios are stretched to their limits. These pressures are recognised within the *Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC)* guidance, which emphasises the need for well-designed environments, reflective leadership, and a supported workforce to ensure high-quality, child-centred provision (WG, 2026a).

Dom - Ratios will significantly impact our ability to deliver quality care. National Education Union (2024) suggest following strict ratios to ensure quality practice, as highlighted.

Uniting the team in preparation for the staff we have joining us promotes adhering to Wales Safeguarding Procedures, 2026, for reporting any concerns of harmful practice towards any child or adult within the setting.

Alongside this, Joint Assessment Family Framework (JAFF) will be implemented to identify those requiring additional support and reviewed as our numbers alter (Welsh Government. 2024).

As space has been raised as an area of concern, Use of the Infant/ Toddler Environmental Rating Scale, will monitor the space and categorised to highlight concerns. This may be a matter of emergency and safety measures may need to be revised for our setting to meet NMS (2023) regarding children/adult aids. Any training for usage of equipment and safe use of any resources we may need, will all need to be factored into our policy.

Frequent supervisions with staff and leadership team will take place to assess the quality of care, competence and wellbeing of staff. It also offers the opportunity to highlight, as a team, where further Continuous Professional Development could be completed, to extend the skills of those working closely with our young children.

This including immediate reporting of concerns could be detrimental to health and wellbeing which will need urgent attention. Early identification supports effective

safeguarding procedures to follow and to minimise long lasting effects in the future (Public Health Wales, 2015).

Amy - Finally, our last for priority for today is the outdoor environment.

Understanding stakeholder perspectives is fundamental for shaping an environment that meets the needs of children and families (Cottle and Alexander, 2014). To achieve this, a range of data collection methods were used to gather insights from children, parents and carers.

The child's voice provided direct, experiential feedback, which is central to the Welsh Government's rights-based approach and to the UNCRC (1989), particularly Article 12. This is reinforced by the Children's Rights Approach (WG, 2017) and the *Children and Families (Wales) Measure (2010)*, both requiring children's participation in decision-making. This aligns with NMS 8.1 and 8.3, which focus on listening to children and promoting their rights. Children clearly expressed the need for a safe place to store bikes and scooters, reflecting independence, routine, and ownership over transitions (WG, 2023a). This links to NMS 22.1 - 22.3 (WG,2023a), which supports children's independence and choice, and is further endorsed by the *Active Travel (Wales) Act (2013)* and *Active Travel Guidance (*WG, 2026b). However, children's voices depend on their willingness and ability to express their views, which may exclude younger or less verbal children and allow more confident children to influence the findings (NSPCC, 2024).

Jo - The suggestion box captured spontaneous, honest feedback from parents and carers, highlighting concerns about theft and a desire to encourage active travel. This aligns with NMS 18.2 and 6.1-6.3, which requires providers to seek and respond to parents' views (WG, 2023a), and with the *Quality Framework for Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales (WG, 2023).* However, parental engagement is often uneven, with more confident or better-resourced families participating more actively than those facing barriers such as lower confidence or reduced trust in services. As a result, feedback may not represent all families, particularly those less comfortable engaging (OECD, 2021).

Kirstie - The questionnaires provided structured, measurable data showing that many families would use a bike shed. This supports NMS 18.1 and 18.2, which expects leaders to monitor, review, and improve the service and 18.4, which

emphasises the use of a range of quality assurance methods (WG, 2023a). It also aligns with *Flying Start Guidance*, which highlights the importance of evidence-informed, reflective improvement within Flying Start settings (WG, 2021a). However, questionnaires may not fully capture all parents' views. Their structured format can limit depth, thereby overlooking more nuanced perspectives (Braun, Clarke and Gray, 2017).

Dom – After assessing our feedback from parent and community questionnaires, it has been brought to our attention that we have some opportunity to recruit parent/ community helpers. This would improve the quality of engagement, resulting in higher levels of value and respect (Department for Education,2015). It may in opposition pose challenges in terms of attaining the correct level of Health and Safety regulations. This will need to be assessed by the local authority, and a clear, in-depth policy will need to be created. I will devise the policy closely with the licence holder and an extensive meeting with all stakeholders will take place (Open Nursery, no date), in line with Welsh Government (2016), Schedule 7 of the Minimum Family Information Service (FIS) Quality Standards for Wales advice when working in partnership with parents and safeguarding young children.

Amy - The recent data collected through the child's voice, the suggestion box, and the parent questionnaires provides a comprehensive, triangulated understanding of stakeholder needs. Each method offered different insights that reinforce one another, demonstrating meaningful engagement with children and families. This aligns with CIW's (2023) expectations under the Wellbeing and Leadership and Management domains and with the NMS's emphasis on consultation, participation and continuous quality improvement, particularly Standards 18.2, 3.1 and 7.3, where environmental changes are being considered (WG, 2023a). This reflective, evidence-informed approach mirrors findings from the *EPPE study*, which demonstrated that high-quality early years' settings draw on multiple sources of evidence to inform continuous improvement. This quality link is important because *EPPE* showed that the most effective settings systemically use children's perspectives, parental feedback and observational data to guide reflective practice and improvement (Sylva *et al.,* 2002).

From a Health and Safety perspective, introducing a bike shed requires careful planning in line with the *Keeping Learners Safe* guidance (WG, 2022) and *Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations 2010,* which sets out the legal requirements for safe, suitable premises and effective supervision. We need to determine whether the shed is located inside or just outside the setting's boundary, and ensure that children can access it safely, with clear visibility and appropriate supervision. Depending on the location, additional lighting or CCTV may be needed. We also need to assess potential trip hazards, maintain emergency access routes and ensure the shed is built to withstand regular use and weather conditions. Introducing a no-phone zone at drop-off could further reduce distractions and strengthen safeguarding practices, thereby supporting CIW's expectations for consistent, safe routines (CIW, 2023).

Jo - These considerations reflect WG's focus on proactive risk management and regular monitoring, including daily hazard checks, maintaining a tidy area, and recording any concerns (WG, 2021b). The bike shed will be added to our environmental checklist and reviewed as part of our ongoing Health and Safety cycle. This approach aligns with CIW's four areas: Wellbeing, Care and Development, Environment, and Leadership and Management and supports the *CIW Quality Framework's* emphasis on safe, accessible and well-maintained environments within Flying Start settings (CIW, 2023).

Dom – As a matter of safety, constructing the shed would be preferable within the grounds to maintain the continuous assessment of the condition and fit for purpose status. As we are a Flying Start setting, we are unfortunately within a disadvantaged area. Frequent bouts of anti-social misconduct take place, raising concerns from the community along with our beneficiaries, we are forced to take extra care to ensure safe access to the shed. Daily checks of the surrounding area will be closely investigated prior to our gates opening. All users must follow strict safety procedure to ensure locking the gates after use, stressing the importance of working towards providing quality care to children outlined by data from Department of Work and Pensions and HM Revenue and Customs, highlighted in Welsh Government (2023,a) Flying Start Programme Guidance, for higher quality of safety to our families and show them that their opinions are valued.

In contrast this will be a welcome change for our environment, providing interactions between a diverse cohort of our community, promoting acceptance, and compromise Welsh Government (2022), implies a positive strategy to acknowledge deprivation.

Kirstie- From an ALN perspective, the request for a bike shed offers clear benefits that align with the ALN Code (WG, 2021a) and the wider commitment to inclusive, accessible environments. Many children with ALN rely on predictable routines and reduced sensory overload to feel regulated and ready to learn and with the current entrance, it can feel busy and cluttered, which may heighten anxiety and dysregulation (National Autistic Society, 2022). Creating a designated bike shed would create a more organised arrival space, reduce unpredictability and support smoother transitions. It also promotes independence, a key principle of the *ALN Code and the ALNET Act 2018.* Further reflecting the UNCRC's (1989) focus on children's rights to safety, accessibility, and participation, particularly Articles 3 and 23, which recognise the rights of disabled children to environments that promote dignity and independence. The NMS reinforce this through Standard 22.1 and 22.2, which requires safe and responsive environments, and Standard 3.1, supported by 4.3 and 4.6, which emphasises appropriate supervision and tailored support (WG, 2023a).

Amy - For children with mobility or coordination difficulties, a clear entrance reduces physical risk and improves accessibility, directly supporting CIW's Environment and Wellbeing areas (CIW, 2023). Encouraging active travel also contributes to physical development and emotional regulation, both essential foundations for learning, as highlighted in the Welsh Government's *Healthy and Active guidance* (WG, 2019b). This aligns with CIW's Care and Development expectations, which focus on promoting children's health, independence, and confidence (CIW, 2023).

The rationale is further supported by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which recognises that children's development is shaped by the environments in which they interact daily (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Improving the physical environment, reducing clutter, and supporting independence strengthen the child's microsystem and directly enhance their ability to engage, learn, and regulate. This also reflects CIW's Leadership and Management expectations for proactive planning, risk assessment and continuous quality improvement (CIW, 2023).

Jo- From a staff training and practice perspective, introducing a bike shed requires clear procedures and consistent expectations. This aligns with *Quality Frameworks for Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales* (WG, 2023c) and NMS 13 and 24, which emphasise well-trained staff who understand how the environment supports children's wellbeing and safety. Staff must follow routines for safe access, supervision and supporting children's independence use of the shed, in line with NMS 4.3, 4.6 appropriate supervision and 22.1- 22.2, safe, suitable environments (WG, 2023a). CIW expect practitioners to demonstrate how daily routines and the physical environment promote children's rights, safety and development (CIW, 2023). Training will therefore ensure practitioners can explain the shed's purpose, how it supports safe practice and how it contributes to children's independence and wellbeing.

Kirstie - This includes embedding shared language and consistent expectations aligned with the WG's rights-based approach and the UNCRC (1989), particularly Articles 2 and 12. Incorporating this into induction, refresher training, and supervision ensures that staff can demonstrate high-quality, consistent practice during inspections and in daily interactions with families.

Clear communication with parents and carers will also be prioritised so families understand how the shed should be used, what boundaries are in place and how it contributes to safety and organisation. This supports the WG's emphasis on transparent, rights-based partnerships with families (WG, 2021a).

Amy - The installation will take place during the holidays to minimise disruption and maintain continuity of care, aligning with NMS 6.3, which highlights the importance of communication and predictable routines (WG, 2023a). Before installation, we will confirm the location through risk assessment and ensure compliance with local authority and Flying Start requirements (2025).

Jo - After installation, families will receive clear guidance on expectations. Monitoring will be embedded into quality processes, in line with NMS 18.1 (WG, 2023a). Staff will observe how the shed is used, identify issues and gather children's voices to ensure the space meets all needs and supports high-quality practice. Furthermore, by embedding ongoing monitoring ensures the shed continues to meet children's

needs and supports a culture of continuous quality improvement, a core expectation of CIW and Flying Start provision (CIW, 2023; WG, 2021b).

Dom - Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) (2003) notes that children who attend high quality care are more likely to become well rounded individuals, when learning through experiences. UNCRC (1989) place emphasis on the importance of our Flying Start setting providing quality care whilst maintaining the child welfare. CIW decisions of the inspection framework, governed by our SASS, imply that we all take responsibility to improve our areas for development and work collaboratively as a whole team to maintain our high quality of care whilst maintaining a solid, clear foundation of all policy and procedures to be followed (NSPCC, 2024).

Thorpe, et al (2020), explains that maintaining and supporting the health and wellbeing of staff, in turn, ensures that the quality of care provided to children and their families Smith (2021), agrees, spotlighting the safety of children begins with the safeguarding of staff in charge.as our environment is only as safe as our employees.

Consistently referring to the 4 core elements of the Care Quality Review (CQR) (Welsh Government 2026) maintains a clear, succinct pathway to follow when evaluating our services and reviewing progress towards high quality care, signposting users to the “publication of judgement,” once it has been released by CIW (CIW, 2023).

Amy - In conclusion, completing the SASS has given us a focussed understanding of how well our provision aligns with the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 and the NMS (WG, 2023a), both of which define quality as rights based, child centred and grounded in children's wellbeing, voice and safety. By organising our findings into immediate actions, short term improvements and longer-term development, we can strengthen the quality of our provision in a structured, proportionate way. Our current priorities, reviewing staffing ratios (NMS 15), responding to parent and child led interest in a bike shed and addressing last week's GDPR related lock incident will guide our next steps as we continue to uphold and enhance high quality practice.

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