



Source: Dough-Dough Mini World logo (OpenAI ChatGPT, 2026).

I acknowledge the use of ChatGPT (2026). Available at: <https://chatgpt.com/>? on 21 February 2026 to generate images supporting my business presentation pitch and Part 2A (brochure format) of this assessment.

I used the prompt(s):

1. Create a flyer for 'Dough-Dough Mini World', which is a stay-and-play playdough session for children. The cost is £4 per child; adults/families attend free of charge. It is the launch for the first week of September 2026 at a community venue in Townhill, Swansea, Wales, with sessions on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday afternoon, Saturday and Sunday at 9:30–11:00 and 12:30–14:00, except Friday, which is 12:30–14:00 only.
2. Create a realistic, wide-angle photograph of a simple community hall set up for 'Dough-Dough Mini World', using only folding tables and plastic chairs. One front table shows ingredients and bowls for making playdough, and four other tables are labelled 'Café', 'Feelings', 'Shop' and 'Beauty', each with playdough trays and tools. Include a Dough-Dough Mini World banner and some bunting on the wall.
3. Create a bright, playful logo for a community early years venture called Dough-Dough Mini World. The logo should look child-friendly and colourful, with rounded lettering and a fun design. Include a rolling pin/playdough motif, colourful shapes, and the tagline 'Playdough Stay & Play for 2–5 Year Olds!' on a white background."

I have also used generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in this work, Grammarly (2026) to assist grammatically, and Google Translate (2026) to support this work as an English as a Second Language.

I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before and after the use of AI tools, which I may be asked to provide as evidence.

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Part 2. A

Business Plan Project: Brochure

What is Dough-Dough Mini World?

Dough-Dough Mini World is a community-based stay-and-play venture for children aged two to five and their parents or carers, based in Swansea, Wales. The core idea is to provide playdough-focused sessions in local community halls, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods where families may face financial and practical barriers to accessing paid early years activities (NSPCC, 2024).

- Age range: 2–5 years
- Session length: 1.5 hours
- Group size: Up to 8 children
- Price: £4 per child (parents and carers attend free)

This age range has been chosen because, from around two years of age, children can participate in small-group tabletop activities, follow simple routines and begin to share tools with others (Piaget, 1952, cited in Sanghvi, 2020). Playdough activities at this stage can support developing fine-motor strength and coordination, which underpin later mark-making and early writing skills (NAEYC, 2019).

Each session follows a repeated make–play–song routine:

- Make – children and adults make the dough together.
- Play – they explore themed playdough areas (for example, a café, a small shop, a beauty corner, or a feelings table).
- Song – everyone comes together for a short closing song using the dough they have created.

This structure is designed to be predictable, inclusive and easy to replicate across different venues.



Source: Dough-Dough Mini World community hall set-up (OpenAI ChatGPT, 2026).

Why is innovative?

Messy and sensory play sessions are increasingly common in the early years sector, with many providers offering themed, multi-sensory experiences for babies and young children in community venues (Messy Play Swansea, 2026; Rubba Bubba Swansea, 2026; Mess Around Swansea, 2026). Such provision typically emphasises exploratory and creative activity, as well as the practical advantage for parents and carers of engaging in messy play outside the home environment.

Dough-Dough Mini World builds on this wider context but introduces a distinct and more focused model:

- First, it centres on playdough as the primary medium, rather than using a wide variety of messy materials such as paint or water. The NAEYC (2019) and the Early Years Alliance (2024) highlight that playdough is not only a popular tactile resource but also offers rich opportunities for fine-motor development, hand-eye coordination, creativity and early mathematical thinking through actions such as rolling, cutting, counting and comparing quantities.
- Second, the venture embeds a consistent make–play–song routine across all sessions. For children, this predictable sequence is intended to support emotional security and self-regulation by helping them anticipate what will happen next (Selman and Dilworth-Bart, 2024). For parents and carers, a clear and consistent structure is intended to foster active participation by signalling how they can be involved in the session (Campaign for Learning, 2024).
- Finally, the model is explicitly mobile and place based. Rather than expecting families to travel to a fixed location, the resources are designed to be portable, enabling sessions to be delivered directly in community halls in different neighbourhoods. This design aligns with evidence that flexible, community-based early years services are better able to reach families in poverty, who frequently face barriers such as transport costs, time constraints, and a lack of confidence when accessing early childhood provision (Little Lives UK, 2018; NSPCC, 2024).

Benefits and social value

Within social entrepreneurship, social value is commonly understood as the intentional benefits a venture creates for people and communities, rather than solely the generation of profit (Findikli, 2021; Schwartz, 2024). For Dough-Dough Mini World, this social value is articulated through three principal benefit areas:

- Early learning and development – structured, playdough-based experiences that underpin fine-motor competence, language, creativity and early mathematical thinking (Gascoyne, 2018).
- Parent–child relationships – shared making and playing with the dough, which can strengthen communication, emotional responsiveness and relational wellbeing (Dobson and Melrose, 2020).
- Equity and community – low-cost, mobile provision targeted at disadvantaged neighbourhoods, consistent with policy commitments to address child poverty and improve early years outcomes (Welsh Government, 2023).

Consistent with social entrepreneurial orientations towards creating value for others (Ruskin, Seymour and Webster, 2016), the venture positions this social mandate as the primary organising principle for decisions about pricing, venue allocation and future growth, particularly in relation to families most at risk of exclusion from high-quality early learning opportunities.

Potential challenges

From a financial perspective, the model combines deliberately low participation fees with the fixed and often substantial costs associated with hiring community venues. Evidence on room hire as an income stream for community businesses (Power to Change, 2017) indicates that premises and room-hire charges constitute a major element of expenditure for small ventures and represent essential income for many community venues. Even when fees are deliberately kept low, families experiencing poverty may nevertheless find it difficult to attend regularly, particularly when paying for multiple children and managing wider financial pressures (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2019). NSPCC (2024) similarly reports that even relatively small charges can function as a barrier to engagement with early childhood services, alongside broader financial and practical constraints.

A further challenge is securing active engagement from parents and carers. Although Dough-Dough Mini World is designed for joint adult-child participation, some parents may feel unsure of expectations or see sessions mainly as informal childcare (Wilson, 2025). This can leave the practitioner managing most of the children alone, increasing workload and reducing the intended focus on parent-child relationships (Dickerson, Fenech and Stratigos, 2024).

Who will be involved?

The primary stakeholders are the children who attend the sessions and their families, whose experiences and outcomes form the central focus of the venture.

Community centre managers also have a direct interest, as they provide the venues and may benefit from increased use of their facilities and greater community engagement. Schools, nurseries and Flying Start settings form another key audience, since they may refer families to the sessions as part of a wider network of early years support and partnership working.

Local authority teams and family support services may view the project as contributing to local early childhood and community-development priorities, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods. In addition, potential funders and grant-making bodies are important for the longer-term sustainability of the venture, as they may be interested in supporting a project that explicitly targets social value for children and families in disadvantaged communities (Ruskin, Seymour and Webster, 2016).

My experience and expertise

I am well placed to develop this venture as it arises directly from my professional role and ongoing academic study. I currently hold the position of teaching assistant in a Reception class in Swansea, Wales, in a school serving a socio-economically disadvantaged community, where I regularly use playdough and other sensory activities to support children's fine motor, language and social development.

Alongside this role, I am completing a Level 6 degree in Early Years Education and Care at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, which involves critical engagement with contemporary research, policy and theory, including the Curriculum for Wales.

This combination of sustained classroom practice and higher-level study provides a strong foundation for designing and piloting Dough-Dough Mini World as an affordable, evidence-informed provision for young children and their families in local communities.

Part 2. B

Business Plan Project: Research

Introduction

According to Mariotti and Glackin (2016), entrepreneurship can be understood as a dynamic process of starting and operating a small venture that involves recognising opportunities, developing new ideas and making ongoing decisions in contexts of uncertainty, rather than simply maintaining existing arrangements. Prince, Chapman and Cassey (2021) similarly describe entrepreneurship as a purposeful activity in which individuals identify and assess potential opportunities, organise and coordinate resources, and choose a course of action even when the outcomes cannot be fully predicted. In the early years sector, these entrepreneurial processes are evident in the role of leaders who are required to adjust and extend provision in response to local demand, policy directives and market conditions, rather than simply maintain existing routines (O'Sullivan, 2015).

Building on these wider understandings of entrepreneurship, the social entrepreneurship literature emphasises ventures that use entrepreneurial processes to create social value rather than prioritise profit, with social value understood as responding to social needs and contributing to social welfare (Yilmaz and Yilmaz, 2019). Ruskin, Seymour and Webster (2016) argue that social entrepreneurs focus on initiatives that aim to create value for others and address specific forms of social disadvantage, while also remaining financially sustainable. Gerlach (2021) similarly highlights that social entrepreneurship combines business tools with a clear social mission, positioning ventures at the intersection of economic viability and social value creation.

Within this frame, Dough-Dough Mini World can be viewed as a small-scale, community-focused social enterprise concept in early childhood education and care, seeking to offer low-cost, playdough-based stay-and-play sessions for families in deprived neighbourhoods. The following discussion will consider how this model could support early years development, provide a critical analysis of the barriers and

challenges it may face, and examine its relationship to current practice, policy and legislation, before outlining possibilities for future development.

Potential contributions to early years development

Dough-Dough Mini World is designed to support multiple, interconnected aspects of early years development through its make–play–song structure. During the initial make phase, children and adults work together to measure, mix and knead ingredients, an activity that involves repeated hand and finger movements and graded pressure. These fine-motor actions are closely associated with the development of fine-motor control, hand–eye coordination and finger strength, all of which underpin later skills such as writing, using tools and managing self-care tasks (NAEYC, 2019).

Engaging with playdough can also stimulate young children's imagination, while affording opportunities to investigate early mathematical ideas, including size, shape, volume and spatial relationships, through the purposeful manipulation of the material (Wijaya *et al.*, 2024). In addition, research by Gascoyne (2017) suggests that sensory materials such as playdough may function as an indirect channel for processing difficult experiences and communicating emotions, thereby contributing to children's capacity to cope and feel more secure in early years settings.

During the themed play phase, in which children and adults move through areas such as a café, a shop or a feelings table, the central emphasis is on joint parent–child participation. The design of Dough-Dough Mini World encourages parents and carers to enter children's play, follow their lead and respond sensitively, rather than remaining as peripheral observers. Drawing on attachment theory, which proposes that consistent, responsive caregiving fosters secure attachment and provides a base from which children can explore and develop social and emotional competence (Bowlby, 1969, cited in Whitters, 2020), this approach is intended to promote children's confidence and emotional well-being during the sessions. Similarly, Dobson and Melrose (2020) emphasise the importance of practitioners creating contexts in which parents are able to engage positively with their children, thereby supporting family relationships and promoting children's well-being. Empirical research on parent engagement in early care and education settings further

indicates that higher levels of parental engagement are associated with more positive outcomes for children, and that centre practices which actively invite and support parental participation play a crucial role in shaping this engagement (Cutshaw *et al.*, 2022).

In addition to the make and play elements, the closing goodbye dough song operates as a consistent routine marking the end of the session and supporting a smooth, orderly transition for children and accompanying adults. Selman and Dilworth-Bart (2024) report that children who experience clear and regular routines across home and educational settings tend to show stronger self-management skills and more positive socio-emotional outcomes, as predictable sequences help them to anticipate events and adjust their behaviour. Gibson (2025) further suggests that recognisable, repeated cues can support young children to feel secure and handle transitions more calmly in group environments. Within Dough-Dough Mini World, the goodbye dough song is therefore used as a practical application of this evidence, providing a familiar cue that is intended to ease children's movement from the group session back into their everyday routines, together with their parents or carers.

Early years practice, policy and research

Dough-Dough Mini World can be aligned with the current early years policy in Wales, particularly the Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC) approach (Welsh Government, 2024). ECPLC sets out an integrated vision for 0–5 provision that emphasises high-quality play, children's well-being and close, respectful relationships with families through accessible and inclusive services. A mobile, playdough-focused stay-and-play session that offers rich, hands-on play and promotes active parent–child interaction in community venues represents one practical way of enacting these principles at the neighbourhood level. However, ECPLC (Welsh Government, 2024) operates as a strategic framework and does not ensure that such provision is available consistently in every locality. Recent Welsh Government statistics indicate that around 31% of children in Wales were living in relative income poverty between 2022 and 2024, underlining the scale of disadvantage that can restrict families' access to early years support (Welsh Government, 2025). Evidence on child poverty and unequal access to early childhood services suggests that families in more deprived communities do not

always experience the aspirations of national policy in practice (Little Lives UK, 2018; NSPCC, 2024). Within this context, small-scale community ventures such as Dough-Dough Mini World are best understood as complementing statutory early years provision by widening access to play-based, family-focused experiences, rather than replacing the state's responsibility to address structural inequalities.

Beyond national policy, the existing early years and third sector landscape in Wales also helps to situate the venture. Programmes such as Flying Start (Welsh Government, 2025a), statutory and voluntary initiatives provide play opportunities, parenting support and early intervention in communities experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. At the same time, local market research on messy and sensory play in Swansea (Messy Play Swansea, 2026; Rubba Bubba Swansea, 2026; Mess Around Swansea, 2026) suggests that much current provision operates on a commercial basis, with fee-paying sessions in community venues that are more easily accessed by families who have the financial and practical capacity to attend regularly. Within this configuration of targeted public services and market-led activities, Dough-Dough Mini World is conceived as a socially oriented micro-venture that reworks familiar stay-and-play and sensory-play formats into a low-cost, playdough-focused, mobile model directed towards families in lower-income neighbourhoods. In doing so, it reflects research and policy reports that highlight the role of community and third sector provision in widening access to early years support, while recognising that such initiatives can only mitigate, rather than resolve, the broader constraints associated with poverty (NSPCC, 2024; Welsh Government, 2025).

From a regulatory perspective, any community-based venture working directly with young children must comply with basic safeguarding and health and safety expectations (Welsh Government, 2021). Accordingly, the entrepreneur leading the venture would be responsible for maintaining appropriate arrangements, including an up-to-date enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (2026) check, adequate public liability insurance, safe and regularly inspected playdough tools and resources that comply with relevant product safety legislation such as the *Toys (Safety) Regulations 2011*, clear hygiene and allergy procedures, and systematic risk–benefit assessments of activities and venues (UK Youth, 2020), alongside reflective

evaluation drawing on parent feedback to improve the quality and safety of the sessions over time.

Funding and parental engagement barriers

From a funding perspective, Dough-Dough Mini World is intentionally priced at a low level in order to remain accessible to families in socio-economically disadvantaged communities. However, evidence on access to early childhood services indicates that, for families living in poverty, even modest session fees and associated costs such as transport and payments for multiple children can restrict participation (Children's Commission for Wales, 2019; NSPCC, 2024; Action for Children, 2025).

For a women-led micro-venture such as Dough-Dough Mini World, evidence from Liñares-Zegarra and Wilson (2024) indicates that smaller social enterprises in the United Kingdom, especially those with limited assets and irregular income, often struggle to obtain loan finance on sufficiently flexible and affordable terms, which means that borrowing is rarely a viable option for this type of organisation. Rose (2019) similarly highlights that women-led enterprises are less likely to draw on formal external finance and are more inclined to depend on their own or informal funds, which suggests that existing funding practices and expectations within the financial system continue to place women entrepreneurs at a disadvantage.

Ladge, Eddleston and Sugiyama (2019) further suggest that internal factors, including self-doubt, confidence and entrepreneurial identity, influence whether individuals feel able to initiate and sustain new ventures. This perspective indicates that responses to funding barriers are shaped not only by the external finance environment but also by their self-confidence, sense of entrepreneurial identity and readiness to take on the responsibilities of running a venture (Mariotti and Glackin, 2016). In this context, effective leadership in an early years social enterprise involves building a diversified income base that combines low-cost fees, targeted grants and in-kind support, while keeping affordability, equity and access for families in deprived neighbourhoods central to decision-making and balancing financial sustainability with the creation of social value for children and families (O'Sullivan, 2015; Yilmaz and Yilmaz, 2019).

A further barrier relates to the level of parental engagement on which the model depends. Dough-Dough Mini World assumes that parents and carers will attend sessions consistently and participate alongside their children in order to strengthen relationships and support individual learning. However, Calderon-Villarreal *et al.* (2025) highlight that many families experience persistent difficulties, including demanding work patterns, time pressures, competing responsibilities and uncertainty about how educational professionals expect them to be involved. Daniel (2015) extends this analysis by demonstrating that patterns of parental engagement are also shaped by families' cultural values, prior experiences of education and socio-economic background, and that some parents conceptualise their role in supporting learning primarily within the home rather than through visible participation in organised activities. These factors can significantly limit attendance and participation in organised provision, particularly in contexts of socio-economic disadvantage, where settings already report lower levels of parental engagement with children's learning (Bond, Moore and Hawkins, 2025).

Gonzalez-Gomez *et al.* (2025) show that parents experiencing financial strain and limited material resources are less likely to participate in everyday activities that promote early learning than more advantaged families, partly because of restricted access to opportunities and the cumulative pressures associated with poverty. Lingwood *et al.* (2020) further observe that some parents feel uncomfortable in group settings and worry about being judged for their parenting or for their children's behaviour. These perceptions can reduce regular attendance and inhibit active participation in family-oriented programmes, even when opportunities for shared activities are available.

In the context of community-based group sessions, these findings suggest a risk that some parents may remain on the periphery while the practitioner assumes increasing responsibility for leading play with several children. Research by Dickerson, Fenech and Stratigos (2024) indicates that sustained relational engagement with families can be emotionally demanding and may exert considerable pressure on educators' well-being. Similarly, Levine Brown *et al.* (2022) report that the emotional labour involved in managing interactions with children and parents is intensive and shapes practitioners' professional experiences. Taken

together, this evidence suggests that, within a sole-practitioner model, such relational and emotional demands are likely to heighten workload and may, over time, undermine the project's core aim of promoting parent–child interaction, rather than practitioner–child relationships, as the primary mechanism for social value.

The success of the project, therefore, depends not only on financial viability but also on the development of realistic strategies to reduce barriers to parental participation and to support adults to engage confidently in playdough-based activities with their children, reflecting the view that effective work with children and families is underpinned by relationship-focused engagement (Dobson and Melrose, 2020).

Conclusion

At present, Dough-Dough Mini World is conceptualised as a small-scale, neighbourhood-based venture led by a sole practitioner. A central question for future development is whether the model could be transferred more widely across the early years field, either by extending provision to additional communities in Swansea, Wales or by embedding the approach within existing services such as Flying Start settings, family centres or school-based family learning programmes. In these contexts, the make–play–song structure could operate as a standardised module that practitioners incorporate into their wider offer to families, rather than remaining an independent, stand-alone project.

To inform such decisions, a small-scale mixed-methods evaluation would be appropriate, combining simple quantitative indicators with qualitative feedback, in line with the view that research designs in education should be proportionate to context, purpose, and scale (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). This could involve piloting the model in a limited number of community venues or Flying Start and family centre sites, using brief observation checklists to record children's engagement and responses to transitions, short questionnaires to gather parents' views on accessibility and perceived benefits, and a practitioner reflective log to capture workload and implementation issues. Findings from this evaluation would provide an evidence base for judging whether Dough-Dough Mini World is best

maintained as a local community initiative, developed as a simple franchise-style package, or integrated more broadly into multi-agency early years provision.

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