

Leadership and Management for Systems of Quality

Lois- Good morning, everyone, and thank you for joining today's meeting. As we prepare for our upcoming inspection, these monthly sessions are vital for maintaining high-quality care and strong teamwork. They give us the opportunity to share updates, reflect on practice, and ensure consistency across the nursery. This supports staff development, strengthens safeguarding, and demonstrates continuous improvement in line with the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Quality Framework (2023) and the Curriculum for Non-Maintained Nursery Settings (Welsh Government, 2024), which emphasise reflective, collaborative, and child-centred practice. It's also a chance to hear how things are progressing in your areas and to raise any updates or concerns. Kate, could you please update us on quality assurance?

Kate- Thanks Lois, quality assurance within our non-maintained early years provision here in Wales is framed principally by the Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations (2010) and the accompanying National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare for Children up to the Age of 12 Years (p. 10/11, standards 8-12) (Welsh Government, 2023; Legislation. Gov. UK, 2010). Regulation 16 requires us as providers to undertake a formal review of the quality of care provided and to produce a written report identifying areas for improvement. In parallel, we as providers must submit an annual Self-Assessment of Service Statement (SASS) to Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), detailing service provision, staffing and quality assurance processes (CIW, 2026). CIW inspections evaluate four domains: well-being; care and development; environment; and leadership and management (CIW, 2024). While these mechanisms are procedurally clear, they do not prescribe a singular definition of quality. This regulatory openness creates a productive tension: quality assurance may risk becoming technocratic compliance within an audit culture (Power, 2024; Ball, 2015), yet it simultaneously provides interpretive space for settings to embed broader ethical commitments, including linking the nursery environment to environmental sustainability, in addition to all policy and practice.

Lois- Thank you, Kate, now moving on we have sent out a survey on the overall quality of our nursery. Alanis can you go into more depth regarding parents being one of our key stakeholders and collecting feedback?

Alanis - Parents are key stakeholders within early years settings because they hold valuable knowledge about their child's interests, routines and developmental needs. Research indicates that positive parental engagement significantly contributes to improved learning outcomes and emotional well-being for young children (Goodall and Montgomery, 2014). Evidence from the Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) project also highlights that strong partnerships between

practitioners and parents support higher quality interactions and more effective learning experiences for children (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002 and Rizvi, n.d). Although these findings are dated, they are very specific and demonstrate how collaborative relationships between practitioners and families can enhance children's learning and development while also strengthening the quality of provision within early years settings. In relation to the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) framework, this contributes particularly to the quality areas of care and development and well-being, as children benefit from consistent support between home and nursery environments (Bromer, 2017). It also supports leadership and management, as practitioners must implement effective communication strategies and reflective practice to maintain strong partnerships with families. Developing respectful and consistent communication with families, therefore, directly improves the quality of care and development provided within the nursery (Britto *et al*, 2017).

Alanis - Collecting feedback from parents is an important element of preparation for inspection. Our Feedback is gathered through surveys, discussions, and parents' evenings. This allows the leadership team to evaluate the effectiveness of communication strategies and identify areas for improvement. Reflective practice based on stakeholder feedback is a key indicator of high-quality early childhood provision (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2016) and supports continuous improvement across all four CIW quality areas.

Kate- Thank you, Alanis. Children are central stakeholders in non-maintained early years settings, as they are the primary recipients of provision and most directly affected by pedagogical practices, environments and organisational decisions. Contemporary scholarship recognises children as active participants in their learning, aligning with a rights-based approach, particularly Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which affirms their right to express views on matters affecting them (Ward and Lundy, 2024; Holla Sivertsen and Bjørgen, 2025; Moloney and McCloskey, 2025).

Within the Welsh context, this is reflected in Curriculum for Wales and Flying Start, which emphasise child-centred, responsive pedagogy and wellbeing (Welsh Government, 2024). Regulatory frameworks, including the National Minimum Standards and inspections by Care Inspectorate Wales, further require that children's experiences, interests and wellbeing inform practice (Care Inspectorate Wales, 2024). Research shows that incorporating children's perspectives through observation, dialogue and participatory approaches enables more responsive environments and enhances provision quality (Barblett *et al.*, 2024).

In response, our transition from predominantly plastic, prescriptive resources to natural, open-ended materials was informed by CIW inspection feedback highlighting the need to improve independence

and sustained engagement. While the National Minimum Standards require resources to promote development and choice (Welsh Government, 2023), they do not prescribe material composition. However, research indicates that open-ended materials better support creativity, cognitive flexibility and sustained shared thinking (Rüdisüli *et al.*, 2026; Parkin *et al.*, 2026; Hyndman and Cruickshank, 2025).

From a sustainability perspective, early years settings are key contexts for ecological identity formation (Ärlemalm-Hagsér and Elliott, 2017; Barrable, 2019). Embedding an environmental audit within the Quality-of-Care Review would enable the setting to evidence reduced plastic use, increased engagement duration and enhanced child-initiated inquiry, aligning sustainability with inspection frameworks and supporting continuous quality enhancement.

Lois - Thank you, everyone. We'll now move on to safeguarding. Safeguarding is the foundation of everything we do in early years, ensuring children are safe, secure, and able to thrive. The Department for Education (2019) states that safeguarding underpins all excellent early year's practice, which is reflected in our setting. It links directly to the Curriculum for Funded Non-Maintained Nursery Settings (Welsh Government, 2024), where children's wellbeing and safety are central, and is a key focus for Care Inspectorate Wales across wellbeing, care, environment, and leadership. The National Minimum Standards (Welsh Government, 2016) further require safe environments, clear procedures, and well-trained staff. Safeguarding is not just a policy but part of our daily practice and culture, ensuring we meet our legal responsibilities and that every child feels safe, valued, and ready to learn.

Ella – I agree Lois, every aspect of early childhood education revolves around safeguarding, which is essential for maintaining high-quality childcare practices. This assurance of safety prioritises children's wellness and enables them to play and learn with confidence (Lindon and Webb, 2016; Olsen, 2023). Practitioners must recognise and disclose issues to guarantee that safeguarding is incorporated into daily practice (Gov.uk, 2004). By ensuring that children's safety directly improves learning results, this strategy clearly supports the CIW quality areas of well-being and care and development.

Lois – thank you Ella, I'd also like to highlight the importance of managing mobile device use in the nursery. Staff should avoid using personal phones during working hours to maintain professionalism, stay focused, and safeguard children's wellbeing. The Department for Education (2019) notes that personal devices can reduce attentiveness and impact the quality of supervision and care. There are also risks to confidentiality and data protection, as personal devices increase the chance of sharing sensitive information (Usercentrics, 2025). Restricting their use aligns with the Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR, and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. This approach supports the National Minimum Standards (Welsh Government, 2016) by promoting a safe, secure, and

professional environment, helping to maintain high-quality practice and keep children's safety at the centre.

Ella – In order to ensure these policies are followed correctly, effective leadership is necessary to maintain high standards through supervision, peer observations, and ongoing professional development (Lightfoot and Frost, 2015). Encouraging employees to assess their work guarantees that safeguarding continues to be sensitive to the needs of children (Meggitt, Manning-Morton, and Bruce, 2016). High-quality service is maintained by training, monitoring, and reflective practice, according to the Self-Assessment of Service Statement (Care Inspectorate Wales, 2025). This includes ALN training, which guarantees children receive the right care, encourages inclusive practice, and supports early identification. Overall, research indicates that while safeguarding regulations are important, children's experiences and inspection results are primarily influenced by staff consistency, confidence, and careful practice. Expanding upon Lois's observation regarding daily oversight, reflective leadership guarantees that enhancements are applied uniformly in every nursery room.

Alanis - I agree that limiting personal phone use is important for maintaining confidentiality and safeguarding in a nursery setting. In Wales, this is supported by the National Minimum Standards (Welsh Government, 2016), which emphasise providing a safe and secure environment. It also helps settings comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR by reducing the risk of sharing sensitive information (ICO, 2023). This also improves the overall quality of the nursery by ensuring staff remain focused, professional, and fully engaged with the children.

Lois – Thank you girls, due to funding from the Early Years Pupil Development Plan (Welsh Government, 2024), we've introduced iPads across all nursery rooms to enhance our provision. These support staff in recording children's learning and improve communication within the team. Using the Famly app, practitioners can share real-time updates with parents, keeping them informed about their child's experiences and progress. This strengthens home–nursery partnerships, builds trust, and supports children's outcomes and wellbeing. It also reduces administrative tasks, allowing more time for meaningful interactions and high-quality teaching. Overall, this improves efficiency and the quality of care and education we provide. Alanis, would you be happy to expand on the importance of communication with parents, including the use of iPads?

Alanis - Yes, of course, thanks, Lois.

As the additional learning Needs (ALN) Coordinator in our non-maintained nursery, my role in this discussion is to consider how we communicate effectively with parents as key stakeholders and how this contributes to inclusive practice and supports inspection preparation. Partnerships with parents

are widely recognised as essential for supporting children's learning, wellbeing, and development, with strong collaboration leading to higher quality provision and better developmental outcomes (Siraj-Blatchford *et al*, 2016).

When preparing for inspection, communication strategies must align with the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) framework, which evaluates provision across well-being, care and development, environment, leadership, and management (CIW,2022). Effective communication particularly strengthens well-being and leadership, ensuring children feel secure and services are responsive to families, thereby enhancing overall quality (Newland, 2015; Sanders, 2019).

Our nursery uses a family app, where practitioners upload observations, photographs, and short updates on children's daily activities. This Flexible approach keeps parents connected and supports a collaborative approach to meeting individual needs, enhancing the quality of provision (Stratigo,2024; Chen,2023). Goodall (2016) highlights that digital communication makes information more accessible, supporting leadership and management by building trust and demonstrating reflective practice.

However, digital communication must complement, not replace face to face interaction, as not all families have equal access to technology (O'Toole and Hayes,2019). Practitioners, therefore, continue informal daily communication during drop-off and collection times, ensuring inclusivity and maintaining high-quality provision.

Lois- While digital communication offers clear advantages, it's important to consider any potential challenges, such as its impact on areas like outdoor learning, and any barriers that may arise when communicating with families does anyone have any concerns?

Alanis - Yes Lois, another challenge practitioners may face is engaging with parents who appear reluctant to communicate with the setting. This may be due to previous negative experiences with education, cultural differences or lack of confidence (Ozmen, 2016). Francis *et al* (2016) suggest that building trust through informal interactions can reduce these barriers. Within our nursery, practitioners prioritise friendly conversations during daily routines to create a welcoming environment for families.

Alanis - Language barriers may also affect communication with some families (Lawal, 2021). To address this, our setting adopts inclusive strategies such as providing translated written information, using visual communication methods, and accessing interpretation services when needed. These approaches reflect the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which encourages services to promote equality, inclusion and long-term wellbeing for communities.

Kate - Oh yes, thank you, Alanis. If I could just add to that regarding the use of iPads or tablets outdoors and the challenges this presents for quality enhancement. While digital technologies can support documentation and learning, their use in outdoor environments may inadvertently undermine key pedagogical aims. Outdoor play is widely recognised as essential for promoting physical activity, exploratory learning and social interaction, all central to children's holistic development (Harper *et al.*, 2025; Byrne, 2025). The introduction of screen-based devices may reduce engagement with natural materials and limit experiential learning opportunities.

Additionally, prolonged use of touchscreen devices has been associated with reduced physical activity and fewer opportunities to develop self-regulation (Sanders *et al.*, 2024; Vasconcellos *et al.*, 2025; Kar *et al.*, 2025), which may conflict with sector priorities emphasising active, play-based learning and wellbeing. Practical concerns also arise, including safeguarding, device durability outdoors, and the potential for distraction from adult-child interactions that are critical to high-quality pedagogy.

From a quality assurance perspective, overreliance on digital tools outdoors risks shifting practitioner focus away from sustained shared thinking and rich environmental engagement—both key indicators of high-quality early years provision. Consequently, technology must be used thoughtfully to ensure it complements, rather than detracts from, meaningful outdoor learning experiences.

Lois- Thank you, Alanis and Kate, for your input. Research (Eliasson, Peterson & Lantz-Andersson, 2022) shows that digital approaches improve efficiency, accuracy, and transparency in recording children's progress, allowing more time for meaningful interactions and personalised learning. The introduction of iPads supports high-quality provision and aligns with the Curriculum for Non-Maintained Nursery Settings and the National Minimum Standards, while meeting key legislation including the Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR, the Children Act 1989 and 2004, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. By reducing administrative workload and improving observations, this enhances overall nursery quality. It enables better planning, more responsive teaching, stronger communication with families, and robust safeguarding, supporting a consistent, inclusive environment where every child is valued. Is there maybe another form of communication we could be using with the parents to allow parents to contribute to all discussions regarding their children?

Alanis -Another strategy used in our setting is the organisation of parents' evenings, where practitioners and families discuss children's development and share observational assessments in relation to developmental milestones (Orjiro, 2021). These meetings also allow parents to contribute insights about their child's behaviour and learning at home. Nutbrown (2011) and Kambouri (2022)

highlight that collaborative dialogue between practitioners and parents creates continuity between home and nursery, strengthening children's quality of learning.

This collaborative approach reflects the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), particularly Article 3, which prioritises the best interests of the child, and Article 12, emphasising the importance of listening to children and their families (UNCRC, 1989).

However, relying solely on parents' evenings can present challenges due to work commitments and childcare responsibilities (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Without flexible communication strategies, parental participation may be limited, reducing the effectiveness of partnership working, potentially affecting the nursery's quality (Wildmon, 2024). By also using our family app we involve parents in discussions about children's development and well-being, promoting children's rights and supporting CIW quality areas of well-being, care and development (Grey, 2022).

Kate - Thank you, Alanis. From an environmental perspective, outdoor play and Forest School-orientated practice are widely recognised as central to children's physical health, emotional wellbeing and holistic development, particularly in non-maintained settings transitioning from plastic, closed-ended resources to natural, open-ended environments informed by Reggio Emilia and Montessori pedagogies (Edwards *et al.*, 2012; Malaguzzi, 1998; Montessori, 1967).

Natural loose parts such as wood, stones, water and plants provide flexible materials that support climbing, balancing, construction and collaborative exploration, thereby enhancing gross motor development, coordination, creativity and problem-solving (Speldewinde *et al.*, 2025; Bilton and Waters 2017; Hepworth and Edmonds, 2025). Nicholson's (1971) Loose Parts Theory highlights how material diversity increases play richness and cognitive engagement, while Montessori (1967) emphasises the importance of prepared environments in fostering independence and sensory learning. Forest School approaches further promote autonomy, resilience and risk competence through supported engagement with manageable challenges (Knight, 2017; Rekers and Waters-Davies, 2021; Heslop and Friedman, 2025).

Engagement with natural environments is also associated with improved attention, reduced stress and enhanced emotional regulation, supporting wellbeing and readiness for learning (Kuo *et al.*, 2019; Chawla, 2020). These outcomes align with the Curriculum for Wales, which prioritises healthy, confident individuals through experiential, play-based learning (Welsh Government, 2024), and are reinforced by regulatory frameworks. The National Minimum Standards (standards 8–12) and inspection bodies emphasise the importance of safe, stimulating outdoor environments in promoting learning and wellbeing (Welsh Government, 2016; Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), 2024; Estyn, 2024-

25). Embedding Forest School and loose-parts provision also supports quality enhancement through ongoing reflection and adaptation (Dahlberg *et al.*, 2024; Department for Education, 2019).

Additionally, natural environments provide a foundation for early environmental awareness and sustainability education, fostering connection to nature and pro-environmental behaviours (Elliott and Davis, 2020; Otto and Pensini, 2017). Concerns about reduced outdoor engagement have been framed as “nature-deficit disorder,” highlighting potential developmental implications (Louv, 2020). From a rights-based perspective, outdoor play also supports the United Nations UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, recognising children’s entitlement to play and recreation (United Nations, 1989; White, 2013).

Overall, integrating natural loose parts, Forest School practice and outdoor play enables non-maintained settings to create high-quality, developmentally appropriate environments that enhance wellbeing, creativity and environmental responsibility, while meeting pedagogical and regulatory expectations in Wales (Floriani, 2024; Edwards *et al.*, 2012; Welsh Government, 2023; Care Inspectorate Wales, 2024).

To facilitate this, I would be happy to explore the CPD required to train a Forest School leader.

Lois- Yes Kate that can be arranged, Our CPD approach aligns with key frameworks, including the Curriculum for Non-Maintained Nursery Settings (Welsh Government, 2024), which highlights the role of enabling adults. Guidance such as *Guiding the Young Ones* (2025) reinforces the importance of our role in supporting children’s development during early years. Ongoing CPD ensures staff remain knowledgeable, confident, and reflective, strengthening teamwork, consistency, and communication. This leads to more intentional interactions and improves the quality of care, teaching, and safeguarding. A strong CPD culture supports continuous improvement and high standards, enabling staff to effectively support children’s learning and wellbeing while maintaining a safe, stimulating, and high-quality nursery environment.

Ella - Policies alone cannot provide effective safeguarding, strong leadership is needed to ensure consistent implementation (Pite, 2025). Leaders uphold high standards that immediately improve service quality through peer observation, supervision, and professional growth (Lightfoot and Frost, 2015). The Self-Assessment of Service Statement (Care Inspectorate Wales, 2025), shows a strong culture of leadership and quality assurance as ongoing monitoring, staff development and reflective practice ensures that improvements are continuous, evidence based and directly enhance the experiences and outcomes of children.

It's also important that staff feel confident supporting children with additional learning needs. Early identification and inclusive practice are made possible by training, guaranteeing that children receive the right kind of care in accordance with the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (Welsh Government, 2018). By guaranteeing that every child has access to education and can attain favourable results, this improves the quality and inclusivity of the provision as early detection and specialised assistance allow children to access education at a suitable level, encouraging equality, involvement, and constructive developmental advancement for all children. Recent training, for instance, improved engagement and learning results by enabling staff to adapt activities to suit a child with sensory processing difficulties.

Could you also talk about how our setting encourages communication with families, Alanis?

Alanis - As ALN coordinator, a key aspect of my role involves supporting children with additional learning needs and maintaining close communication with their families. This work is guided by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET), which introduced significant changes to the way additional learning needs are identified and supported in Wales. The legislation emphasises early identification, collaboration between professionals and families, and a more inclusive approach to supporting children's needs. Resulting in higher-quality care for all children in our nursery.

Alanis - ALNET introduced Individual Development Plans (IDPs), replacing individual education plans and requiring collaboration between practitioners, parents, and external agencies. Our policies now ensure parents are involved in developing, reviewing, and evaluating support strategies, promoting high-quality care for their children (Welsh Government, 2021; Welsh Government, 2018).

The nursery environment supports children with additional learning needs through quiet areas, structured routines, and accessible resources, helping them feel secure, independent, and engaged (Dunn, 2017). These adaptations address the Care Inspectorate Wales quality areas of care and development and environment, enabling children to participate fully and safely.

This approach aligns with ALNETS emphasis on personalised support and early intervention. Regular policy reviews ensure the environment continues to meet each child's needs, demonstrating inclusive, high-quality provision recognised in CIW inspections.

Ella - I agree as individualised, inclusive support is essential to high-quality care and inclusive provision since it guarantees that all children may access education and achieve positive developmental

outcomes (Child Commissioner for Wales, 2024). Would further ALN training improve the general standard of inclusive practice and strengthen family partnerships?

Alanis - Ongoing ALN training equips staff to recognise additional needs, adapt activities, and work collaboratively with families, strengthening inclusion through personalised strategies and equitable learning opportunities (Welsh Government, 2020). This training supports the CIW quality areas of leadership and management and care and development, as staff improve outcomes, demonstrate reflective practice, and ensure provision meets inspection standards.

Aligned with ALNET, training enables practitioners to collaborate effectively with parents and professionals on individual development plans (IDPs), ensuring support strategies are personalised and consistent. Active parental involvement promotes continuity between home and nursery environments, enhancing children's development (Martin, 2018).

These practices also reflect the curriculum for Wales, which emphasises developing children as ambitious, capable learners and healthy individuals. Understanding children's interests and experiences beyond the setting allows learning opportunities to be more meaningful and responsive, resulting in better quality teaching (Welsh Government, 2022).

Lois- Can we now discuss how finance contributes to the standard of care and education in our nursery. Ella, could you describe how the larger learning environment and ALN offering are affected by our present and future financial allocations?

Ella -

From a leadership perspective, funding is essential for improving learning settings, assisting with staff development, and generating chances that promote children's overall growth (Queen Margaret University, 2023). Resources, educational opportunities, and children's social, emotional, and developmental well-being are all enhanced by strategic investment. Grants can enhance outdoor areas, enhance ALN services, and support sustainability initiatives, all of which strengthen overall quality, as improved resources, environments, and staff capability directly influence children's engagement, learning opportunities and developmental outcomes. This also emphasises that the quality of outcomes for children is ultimately determined by the efficient use of resources in routine practice; cash alone does not ensure high-quality service. By working with staff and reflecting on previous funding outcomes, leadership ensures that resources are allocated correctly to meet the actual needs of children.

The Self-Assessment of Service Statement documents the financial decisions that support the quality areas of Care Inspectorate Wales (2025). By connecting strategic planning, staff practice, and

stakeholder feedback to quantifiable gains in wellbeing, care, learning environments, and overall service quality, this guarantees that leadership decisions are grounded in evidence. In line with the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and UNCRC objectives, funding for ALN services offers specialised resources, extra personnel, and sensory equipment, fostering inclusive, high-quality outcomes (Welsh Government, 2018; UNICEF, No date).

Leadership may assess whether inclusive policies actually promote children's engagement and success by continuously reflecting on training outcomes, which highlights opportunities for continued development and quality improvement. Additionally, quantifiable data from staff surveys and feedback sessions can be used to direct continued pedagogical and resource allocation improvements.

Lois- I fully agree. This emphasises how crucial employee participation is for setting resource allocation priorities. The areas where financing could have the biggest impact have already been determined by our team discussions and recent polls. Additionally, getting feedback from parents and the larger community enables us to consider their viewpoints and expectations, ensuring that our enhancements consider the priorities of the family and the interests of the children. The REPEY advice, which promotes evidence-informed practice to improve early years outcomes, is in line with these procedures (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002).

Ella - To make that finance is evidence-based and strategically focused, we work with staff, parents, and the community. The Curriculum for Funded Non-Maintained Nursery Settings (Welsh Government, 2024) is cross-referenced with the suggested enhancements to guarantee that play-based and outdoor experiences actively foster holistic development, creativity, problem-solving, and social-emotional skills. Financial decisions enhance educational outcomes and quality, as demonstrated by the connection between budgetary planning and the curriculum.

Lois - What financing opportunities are now available to support our aims before the next term?

Ella - ALN provision, sensory materials, and outdoor education are supported by numerous local and national funding (Gov. Wales, no date). Prior to inspection, early applications increase provision and guarantee that the learning environment satisfies best-practice criteria. A key component of high-quality early childhood care and CIW inspections is continuous improvement, which is demonstrated by proactive investment (Care Inspectorate Wales, no date).

Lois - Improving outdoor learning areas undoubtedly promotes play-based education by giving children secure chances to experiment, take chances, and grow in self-reliance, self-assurance, and

general wellbeing. Additionally, it shows that our management and leadership choices are child-centred, purposeful, and in line with policy, which inspectors will acknowledge.

Kate - Thanks Lois, the potential development of Forest School provision further illuminates quality enhancement. Forest School is characterised by long-term woodland engagement, emergent learning and supported risk (Heslop, and Friedman, 2025; Rekers, and Waters-Davies, 2021; Orr, and Dorfberger, 2023). I would ask for funding to facilitate this.

Ella - Thank you Kate, we can definitely look into this.

I suggest conducting a staff survey to determine which materials have the greatest impact. Reflective planning backed by data (Hayes *et al.*, 2025) guarantees financial efficacy, conforms to SASS, and exhibits collaborative leadership, which is acknowledged as a best practice in early years management (Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007).

Lois - We need to make sure that parents and the community are aware of these upcoming changes. In addition to exhibiting good leadership and responsibility, transparency about financing decisions and results also complies with UNCRC Article 12, guaranteeing that children's opinions are considered in situations that impact them (UNICEF 1989). Sharing our plans with families helps promote cooperation, trust, and involvement.

Ella - Exactly. By recording decisions, keeping track of results, and reacting to feedback, we make sure funding results in quantifiable gains. This enables us to assess the effect on children's learning, engagement, and wellbeing which are all important markers of quality in early years provision. Play-based learning, social skills, and physical development are all improved by outdoor equipment, but only if staff members include it into regular practice (Hallet, 2013). Overall, resources, skilled employees, and thoughtful leadership work together to produce high-quality service rather than just money or regulations. High standards and long-lasting quality improvements are ensured by ongoing review in every Care Inspectorate region. This reflective method also shows inspectors that leadership decisions are evidence-based and related to continual quality improvement.

Lois - This plan demonstrates a thorough, fact-based leadership approach. It guarantees that financial choices are made with the intention of enhancing children's care, development, wellbeing, and learning environment rather than being made arbitrarily. We can demonstrate to inspectors that our practice is both strategic and responsive by connecting our funding, SASS documentation, and stakeholder feedback to laws and policy drivers like the Well-being of Future Generations Act, ALNET, REPEY, and the Curriculum for Wales (*Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations continuous learning and improvement plan for 2023 to 2025* GOV.WALES, 2023).

Ella - Buying resources is not enough; enhancements need to be incorporated into routine operations. The nursery ensures that every child has access to inclusive, stimulating, and high-quality learning experiences that promote their development ensuring children build the skills, confidence, and resilience needed for long-term learning and well-being, which reflects on high-quality provision (Paige-Smith & Craft, 2007). By incorporating these techniques into regular procedures, the nursery ensures long-term and demonstrable quality gains.

Lois- To conclude, everything we are implementing reflects our shared commitment to maintaining high standards of quality, safety, and inclusion. By working collaboratively, using technology responsibly, and continuing to develop our practice, we are strengthening a nursery environment that is reflective, engaging, and child centred. This not only enhances children's experiences but also ensures we are fully prepared for inspection, with clear evidence of effective planning, assessment, and safeguarding. Our consistent teamwork and focus on best practice underpin a high-quality provision across the whole nursery, ensuring every child feels safe, supported, and inspired to learn.

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