

Curriculum for Wales – Cynefin

The Welsh word 'Cynefin' is often translated into English as 'habitat', but it can encompass so much more than that. The Welsh word has been included as a core concept within the New Curriculum for Wales, and children across Wales will have the opportunity to learn by exploring their own areas. Therefore, it is integral that practitioners have a solid understanding of the concept of 'Cynefin.'

This factsheet aims to support your understanding of what 'Cynefin' means within the new curriculum.

What does 'Cynefin' mean?

'Cynefin' is the place where we feel we belong, where the people and the landscape around us are familiar and the sights and sounds are reassuringly recognisable. 'Cynefin' is not just a place in a physical or geographical sense. It is a historic, cultural and social place which has shaped and continues to shape the community which inhabits it.

Wales is a country that offers a wealth of opportunities for practitioners to support learners in exploring 'Cynefin.' many of them are specific to our special country. Developing an authentic sense of 'Cynefin,' builds knowledge of different cultures and histories.

Curriculum for Wales: Designing your Curriculum (Welsh Government, 2020)

What does Cynefin mean for your learners?

Consider these questions about the community around your setting-

- Who are the people who make up your community? E.g. ages, cultures, religious beliefs, businesses/workplaces, lifestyle etc.
- What is your community known for and proud of? E.g. farming, mechanical production, nature etc.
- Who are some of the key figures in the community? E.g. celebrities, historic figures, popular townspeople, local lollipop person, librarian etc.
- What local groups, clubs and societies are there? E.g. sports clubs, brownies/cubs, dance academies, anglers, hikers etc.
- What are the issues or problems facing the community in general? E.g. litter in the park, poor bus timetable, lots of traffic, local fundraising work - community centre needs a new roof etc.

What if I don't know the answers to the above questions?

If you are not from the area where your setting is, you may want to find out more about the local community.

You could:

- Walk around the local area so that you see the community from the perspective of the children, maybe take them along and see what they notice
- Visit local groups, clubs and societies and invite them to visit the setting
- Discuss with families what they are involved with or have experience in and invite them into the setting
- Introduce yourself to some of the key figures in the community.

How do I include Cynefin within the children's learning?

Consider these reflective questions.

- How do you make use of the local community to engage children
- What examples are there of when you have brought people from the local community into your setting
- Why did you choose to bring people in from the community
- How did the people you brought in support children's authentic learning
- What local community visits have you taken children on
- What are the children's levels of engagement on community visits
- What experiences or activities engage them the most? Why do you think this is
- What positive impact has any setting contributions made to the local community?

What are the next steps?

Once you feel you have a better understanding of 'Cynefin' within your area, start to think about how you are going to include it within your planning. Remember to take the interests of the children as your starting point and what aspects of 'Cynefin' are important to them. It is also important to ensure that anything you plan to do, you review the impact it has had on the children's learning and development before deciding upon your next steps. In Curriculum for Wales, it is clear that children should feel a belonging and ownership within their learning. 'Cynefin' is the perfect concept for children to feel a connection to what there are learning about and their community.

Further information on Curriculum for Wales

- Curriculum for Wales – Hwb <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/>
- Curriculum for Wales – NDNA <https://bit.ly/3zReBpZ>

Curriculum for Wales – Cynefin V.01 - April 2022