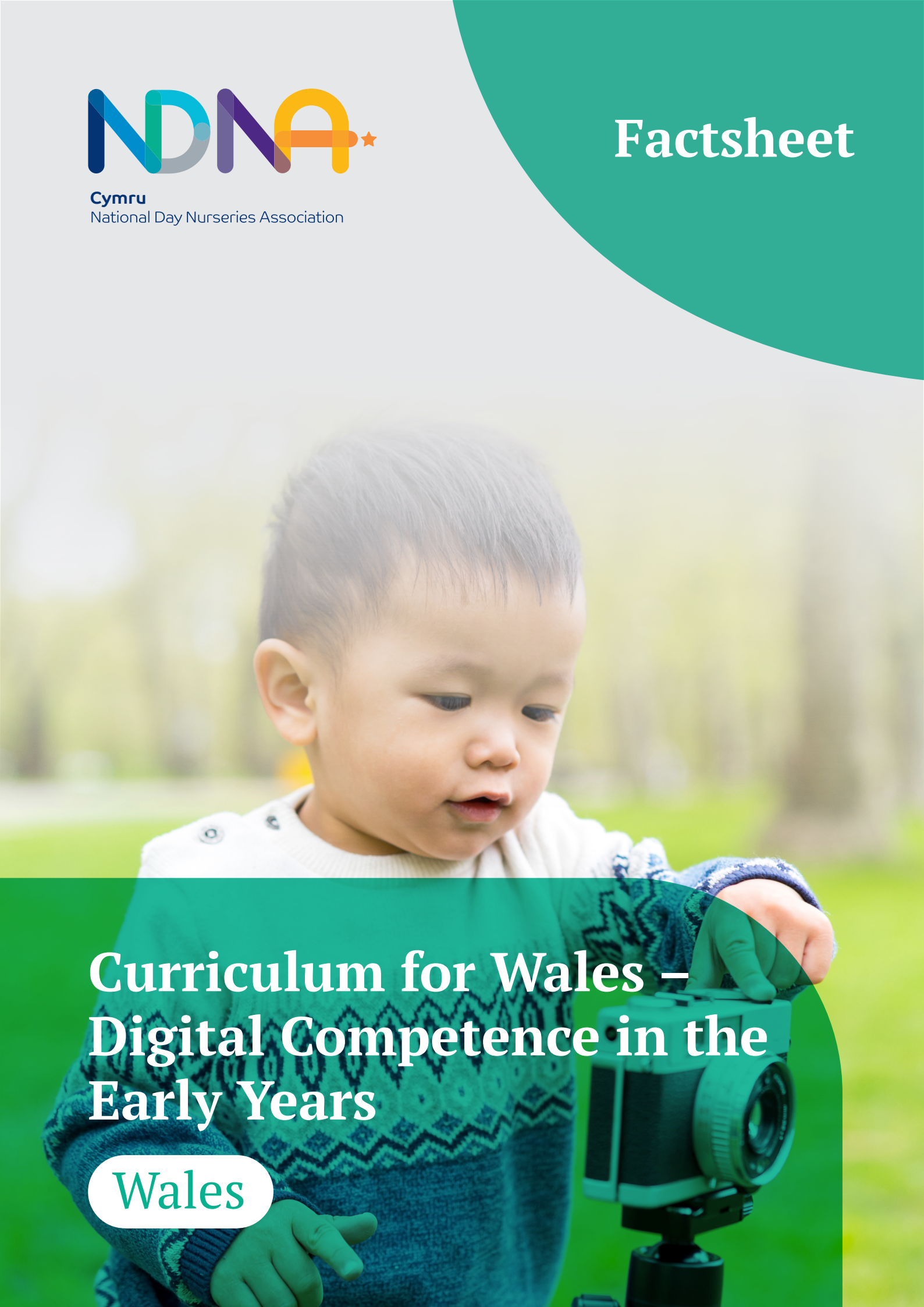
Cymru
National Day Nurseries Association

Factsheet



Curriculum for Wales – Digital Competence in the Early Years

Wales

Curriculum for Wales – Digital Competence in the Early Years

Digital competence focuses on developing digital skills which can be applied to a wide range of subjects and scenarios that are transferrable to future learning and education and ultimately the world of work.

This factsheet aims to give you a better understanding of digital competence within the early years.

What is digital competence?

Digital competence refers to the development of skills and knowledge in the use of modern technology and systems. It's more necessary for today's young learners to be confident and aware of the digital world. Digital competence should not be confused with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) or Computer Science, however, they are highly interrelated, particularly in the early years.

Digital Competence Framework (DCF)

The need for a comprehensive DCF was a key recommendation of Professor Graham Donaldson's report, 'Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales' (2015). The panel's report to Welsh Government noted that digital competence is as important in the twenty-first century as literacy and numeracy.

The Digital Competence Framework (DCF) was originally introduced in 2016. It has been updated and is an integral part of the new Curriculum for Wales 2022. Digital competence is one of three mandatory cross-curricular responsibilities, alongside literacy and numeracy. The DCF aims to support the teaching of the knowledge, attitude and skills children need to be able to use technology and systems confidently, creatively and critically.

With the DCF, settings and schools are required to offer opportunities to develop and apply the skills across the curriculum. These developed skills will be essential and transferable to the children's future as well as their work life.

Embedding digital competence across the curriculum

The DCF brings together the skills that will help children thrive in an increasingly digital world, for example how to stay safe online and also understanding the importance of balancing game and screen time with other parts of their lives. The DCF has been developed to complement the curriculum, ensuring that learners develop the basic skills that will be built on as they progress through their education.

During the co-construction of the non-maintained curriculum, work on embedding the skills within the DCF across the five developmental pathways was completed. This means, that if you focus on developing your learners through the ways described in the pathways in a holistic manner, then

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you will cover the skills required in the DCF for children ages 3 to 4 years and will not need to access the DCF as an individual document.

Digital competency resources

In this increasingly digital world, it is essential that children have the opportunity to explore and develop their digital knowledge and skills. Digital devices and media can be used to enhance children's play and should be part of the provision on offer. Additions to learning environments and planned learning experiences should not include digital media as a token addition. Planning for learning needs to involve children being immersed in authentic and purposeful experiences incorporating digital skills and competencies in their everyday lives.

It is extremely important to note that digital media goes beyond tablets and laptops to include such things as; Metal detectors, tills, electronic weighing scales, remote control toys, programmable toys, torches, recording devices, home corner resources – microwave, hoover, telephones etc, cameras, light boxes, projectors, walkie talkies, illuminated mark making boards and many more!

Digital competency development in practice

Children are often confident in their use of some digital media, particularly in the home corner and are able to engage in role-play scenarios, involving the media in their play with others. The media can inspire communication and language, sharing, development of fine motor skills, imaginative play and reliving and recreating past experiences.

Some use of media resources may require the presence of an adult to model. E.g. to fully access an interactive screen, children may look to the adult to facilitate engagement and learning. The role of the adult is to model the use, enabling children to take control and explore the media through a discovery approach.

Adults play a vital role in introducing children to digital media, facilitating opportunities through planning, modelling and reacting to interests. This should be embedded within the pedagogy and culture of the setting. Supporting practitioners to embrace this approach with learners, will empower children to become confident learners in a digital world. It will set them up to be able to adapt and thrive in the modern world, being capable of learning and adapting to new skills throughout their lives.

Professional development

It is important to consider the knowledge of the adults in the setting. If the role of the adult is to facilitate, enable and discover with the children- are they confident technology users? When expecting practitioners to engage confidently in tech-based learning, it's important to consider learning and experience in order to offer support and training if necessary. This doesn't have to be costly, sometimes it can be achieved through supervision and peer observation. What is important is that all adults are on board, embracing the power of tech and its role in the lives of children.

Reflective questions:

- How do you allow children time and space to play, explore and develop their digital skills
- How do you facilitate experiences through planning and responding to children's interests
- How do you provide a range of digital based experiences in a variety of contexts?
- Do you endeavor to enable understanding of technologies and the context in which they are used? Including both in and out of the setting? E.g. supermarket tills, traffic lights, CCTV, automatic doors, digital screens etc.
- How do you ensure a balance between use of digital media and play? Ensuring that media is used as a tool for learning and not as a distraction from it.

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

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Brighter thinking for early years

Factsheet

Our factsheets are written by early years experts for the early years workforce. Most NDNA factsheets are free to our members.

NDNA is the national charity and membership association representing children's nurseries across the UK. We are a charity that believes in quality and sustainability, so we put our members' businesses at the very heart of ours.

We are the voice of the 21,000-strong nursery sector, an integral part of the lives of more than a million young children and their families. We provide information, training and advice to support nurseries and the 250,000 people who work in them to deliver world-class early learning and childcare.

See the full range of NDNA factsheets at www.ndna.org.uk/factsheets

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