Brighter Minds Childcare Ltd, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent. Trying to remain sustainable.

Brighter Minds Childcare Ltd is a Nurturing Environment for your Children to Flourish.

We currently have 3 settings. All our nurseries are an environment where children feel safe, secure, happy, loved and are able to explore their surroundings and take appropriate risks.

Gwendoline Road Nursery. Brighter Minds Daycare Nursery is situated opposite Risca Primary School. We are registered to accommodate 50 places each day for children aged 3 months old to up to 8 years. We have 2 large buildings that have been designed to meet the children's ages and abilities. Each room has been decorated to create a cosy homely feel with calm colours and plenty of natural light with natural elements and fairy lights to create a sense of magic. The equipment for the children to play with is based on open ended resources, natural materials, loose parts, all without the need of plastic toys but instead using authentic resources.

Brighter Minds Ty Isaf Nursery. We are located on an Infant School site behind the Nursery building. We are registered to accommodate 20 places per day. We have a large, bright, and spacious room which is designed for the children to access independently. There is a designated kitchen area for staff and children to prepare snacks and cooking activities. Children can access the toilets independently and we have a nappy changing station. We are an inclusive provision and can support children with any emerging needs or significant needs.

The staff follow the new Curriculum for Wales for non-maintained provision, which focus on children's interests and offer engaging activities using loose parts and natural resources and real food to support them in developing their imagination, social skills and communication needs. We are able to use the nursery garden which has been designed with exciting outdoor equipment to encourage the children to take age-appropriate risks.

Brighter Minds Swffryd Flying Start Hub. Our latest location is at the brand new Flying Start Hub in Blaenau Gwent. The Flying Start Hub is adjacent to the Primary School, Soffryd Road, Crumlin. We are offering high quality childcare sessions. We offer:

- Playgroup sessions (Flying Start funding or fee paying)
- Wraparound sessions (Childcare Offer funding or fee paying)
- Holiday Club sessions

Business performance and concerns

We will be operating at a loss this financial year; we just broke even last year. However, this did not factor in the heavy credit card bill of £10,000. The last quarter of 2023 was especially worrying and due to the nature of the intake of children we can only work on a term by term projection.

This year we are faced with the massive hike increase to National Minimum Wage (NMW), Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) and employer National Insurance contributions will have a major impact on the future of the business. In addition to the ongoing food, energy costs, insurances, other contracts (such as nappy waste, refuge) and the additional cost to recycling bins that we have had to factor in.

To invest in and retain staff they must be recognised for their qualifications and experience. We have a robust staffing structure in place to ensure we offer high quality. The NMW increase will effectively make an unqualified and youngest staff member on the same hourly rate as what a senior room leader is currently on. With this huge increase for the lowest qualified staff member, I must then increase all staff wages accordingly, but with no additional funding to support this.

Since May 2024 I have lost 4 staff that have left the business to take up a new position with another provider, which was opening with the incentive of more money. The 5th member of staff I was lucky enough to save and provide her with job progression within the nursery. However, this new business has had a huge impact on us, as in order to retain staff I have had to put in an incremental scale in place with a higher rate of pay again to ensure I don't suffer any more staff resignations as I am unable to recruit staff with the level of skill and expertise to back fill and remain able to offer the childcare places.

We currently have 23 children accessing the childcare offer, which is 98% of our 3-4 year olds. The full day rate increased on 1st March to £60.00, which equates to £10 per hour. We do not charge for pick ups or drop off, as we are situated across the road from the school, so staff walk to collect and drop off the children. All parents accessing the childcare offer bring in a packed lunch which we state must be enough for their session. Therefore, we only receive the allocated funding, where other providers can use food and transport to top up fees.

To help with the oncosts we had to increase fees from 1st March. The reason we had to increase the fees, was due to nursery outgoings, overall increase to staff costs and support children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). I calculate the yearly forecast which shows the prediction of income against the increases of the outgoings and how much deficit we will be in. To cover this we have to then plan how we can cover any shortfall. There is no way other than to increase the fees that parents pay, however there is always the risk of losing parents to another nursery and potentially having less income.

Grants

We have applied for all grants through Caerphilly Early Years which have been advertised. The Small Capital Grant has allowed us to enhance our provision by creating more space and re designing areas. We have been able to now expand our registered numbers.

During Covid we were able to access the Reignite Grant which could be used on staff retention and training. It allowed us to keep the business operating, and able to deal with sharp rise of inflation and related costs. This was a huge support to our business.

Other grants would be beneficial to our business such as a sustainability grant that could close the gap on the funding shortfalls. The small capital grants have been very welcomed but there is only so much equipment or improvements to the building that is needed. Funding is best used to support childcare providers to be able to maintain the service they are providing by offering a sustainability grant and cover any outstanding debts that have been accrued over the year to try and stay above water.

Current running costs and impact

This is a breakdown of our cost for the 3 – 4 year olds. Staffing costs x 3 staff (1 leader, 2 qualified practitioners which includes employers NI, pension and tax contributions))

- April 2023 = £5,581.33 (per month)
- Jan – March 2024 = £6,089.53 (per month)
- April 2024 = £6,539.88

25% of mortgage costs = £350 per month

Management costs
Resources
Training cost
Food
Additional support for ALN
Miscellaneous

We have noticed the increase of staff costs over the last 12 months. April 2023 to April 2024 with an increase of £958.24 per month. This increase only reflects the staffing costs for the 3 – 4 year old room.

As we are a curiosity approach setting following the new curriculum, staff follow the child's interests. The cost of resources has increased by 20% just to be able to offer the basics. However, we are not able to spend any money to enhance the children's continuous provision such as improving areas

with new equipment. We are constantly reviewing staffing levels; however, we are working on bare staffing numbers to meet child ratios, but this leaves no flexibility in reacting to staff sickness or supporting children who need some extra support / intensive interaction.

There is an impact of providing places for children with suspected or confirmed ALN. We will support the child with strategies in the current ratio, but if a child requires additional support from an adult to help them access the environment, we are not able to meet that child's needs due to lack of staff available to offer the support.

We have noticed that a number of parents have cut some additional hours they pay for, as we only have a small number of parents using additional hours to top up their childcare requirements. Many parents were paying full fees before they were able to access the childcare offer funding and then once they are eligible, they are finding other ways to collect their child from school and no longer require any fee-paying services.

Therefore this has affected our future sustainability. We have to build these children into future numbers and rely on them continuing with some fee paying services.

Additional support to remain sustainable

I feel that the Welsh Government should increase funding streams in line with inflation and the costs of NMW. The shortfall has grown wider each year, childcare providers should not be expected to prop up government funded childcare, especially with the huge rise of children coming into the childcare setting with ALN. If preventative measures had been put in place (even from last year's rise in NMW etc), we would not be now at crisis point.

Childcare providers should be viewed as a priority as we are a fundamental service that invests in the wellbeing of children at the most important developmental stage. However, we are not likely to be sustainable without grants or significant increase to funded places.

In April 2018 the NMW for over 25year old was £7.38 and the funding per child per hour was £4.50. Now in April 2024 it increases to £11.44 with the rate of childcare funding increased by 50 pence to £5 per hour. These figures are enough evidence to show that providers are not able to sustain this, however we are all committed to providing such a high quality and much needed resource for parents that we have been trying to get by. However, the gap is much wider than it was in previous years and now there is no money to invest into the business for it to remain sustainable.

Case study: Brighter Minds Childcare Ltd, Trying to remain sustainable – September, 2024

Brighter Minds Childcare Ltd, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent. Ceisio aros yn gynaliadwy.

Mae Brighter Minds Childcare Ltd yn darparu amgylchedd meithringar, lle gall eich plan ffynnu. Ar hyn o bryd mae gennym 3 lleoliad, pob un yn cynnig gofal ble mae plant yn teimlo'n ddiogel, yn hapus ac yn cael eu caru. Mae ein meithrinfeydd yn annog plant i archwilio a chefnogi plant i gymryd risgiau priodol.

Meithrinfa Gwendoline Road. Mae Meithrinfa Gofal Ddydd Brighter Minds wedi ei leoli gyferbyn ag Ysgol Gynradd Rhisga. Rydym wedi cofrestru i dderbyn hyd at 50 plentyn bob dydd, yn amrywio o 3 mis i 8 oed. Mae pob ystafell wedi'i haddurno â lliwiau tawel, digon o olau naturiol, ac elfennau naturiol, sy'n creu awyrgylch clyd a chartrefol. Mae goleuadau tylwyth teg yn ychwanegu ymdeimlad o hud a lledrith. Mae offer chwarae'r plant yn seiliedig ar adnoddau penagored, deunyddiau naturiol, a rhannau rhydd, gan osgoi teganau plastig o blaid dewisiadau amgen dilys.

Brighter Minds Meithrinfa Tŷ Isaf. Rydym wedi ein lleoli ar safle Ysgol Fabanod y tu ôl i'r adeilad Meithrin. Rydym wedi cofrestru i dderbyn hyd at 20 plentyn y dydd. Mae gennym ystafell fawr, ddisglair ag eang wedi'i chynllunio i'r plant gael mynediad annibynnol. Mae yna gegin benodol i staff a phlant baratoi byrbrydau a gweithgareddau coginio. Gall plant gael mynediad i'r toiledau yn annibynnol ac mae gennym orsaf newid cewyn. Rydym yn ddarpariaeth gynhwysol a gallwn gefnogi plant ag unrhyw anghenion, boed yn anghenion amlwg neu anghenion sylweddol.

Mae'r staff yn dilyn Cwricwlwm newydd Cymru ar gyfer darpariaeth nas cynhelir, gan ganolbwyntio ar ddiddordebau plant ac yn cynnig gweithgareddau difyr sy'n defnyddio rhannau rhydd, adnoddau naturiol, a bwyd go iawn. Mae'r gweithgareddau hyn yn cefnogi datblygiad dychymyg, sgiliau cymdeithasol ac anghenion cyfathrebu. Gallwn ddefnyddio'r ardd feithrin sydd wedi'i dylunio gydag offer awyr agored cyffrous i annog y plant i gymryd risgiau sy'n briodol i'w hoedran.

Brighter Minds Swffryd, Hwb Dechrau'n Deg. Mae ein lleoliad diweddaraf yn Hwb Dechrau'n Deg newydd sbon ym Mlaenau Gwent. Mae'r Hwb Dechrau'n Deg ger yr Ysgol Gynradd, Ffordd Soffryd, Crumlin. Rydym yn cynnig sesiynau gofal plant o ansawdd uchel. Rydym yn cynnig:

- Sesiynau grŵp chwarae (cyllid Dechrau'n Deg neu talu ffioedd)
- Sesiynau cofleidio (Cynnig Gofal Plant neu talu ffioedd)
- Sesiynau Clwb Gwyliau

Perfformiad a phryderon busnes

Byddwn yn gweithredu ar golled y flwyddyn ariannol hon; ar ôl torri'n hafal llynedd. Nid oedd hyn yn ffactora'r bil cerdyn credyd sylweddol o £10,000. Roedd chwarter olaf 2023 yn arbennig o bryderus, ac oherwydd natur nifer y plant a dderbynnir, dim ond fesul tymor y gallwn daflunio ein sefyllfa ariannol.

Er mwyn buddsoddi a chadw staff, rhaid eu cydnabod am eu cymwysterau a'u profiad. Mae gennym strwythur staffio cadarn ar waith i sicrhau ein bod yn cynnig ansawdd uchel. Bydd y cynnydd yn yr Isafswm Cyflog Cenedlaethol i bob pwrpas, yn golygu bydd aelod staff, heb gymwysterau neu'n iau yn ennill yr un gyfradd yr awr ag uwch arweinydd ystafell. Bydd y codiad cyflog sylweddol hwn ar gyfer y staff lleiaf cymwys, yn golygu bydd angen codi cyflog pob aelod o staff, ond nid oes gennym gyllid ychwanegol i gefnogi hyn.

Ers mis Mai 2024, rwyf wedi colli 4 aelod o staff i swyddi newydd gyda darparwyr eraill, wedi iddynt gael eu denu gan gyflogau uwch. Roeddwn yn ddigon ffodus i gadw'r pumed aelod o staff drwy gynnig dilyniant i'w swydd yn y feithrinfa. Er hyn, mae'r golled hon wedi cael effaith sylweddol arnom. Er mwyn cadw staff ac atal ymddiswyddiadau pellach, bu'n rhaid i mi weithredu graddfa gyflog gynyddrannol gyda chyfraddau uwch. Yn anffodus, bu hyn yn angenrheidiol oherwydd ein bod yn ei chael hi'n anodd recriwtio staff sydd â'r sgiliau a'r arbenigedd angenrheidiol i lenwi'r rolau hyn a pharhau i gynnig gwasanaethau gofal plant.

Ar hyn o bryd mae gennym 23 o blant yn manteisio ar y cynnig gofal plant, sef 98% o'n plant 3-4 oed. Cynyddodd y gyfradd diwrnod llawn ar Fawrth y 1af i £60.00, sy'n cyfateb i £10 yr awr. Nid ydym yn codi tâl am gasglu neu ollwng plant gan ein bod wedi ein lleoli ar draws y ffordd o'r ysgol, felly mae staff yn cerdded i gasglu a gollwng y plant. Mae'r holl rieni sy'n defnyddio'r cynnig gofal plant yn dod â phecyn bwyd i mewn, ac mae'n rhaid dweud ei fod yn ddigon ar gyfer eu sesiwn. Felly, rydym ond yn derbyn y cyllid a ddyrannwyd, lle gall darparwyr eraill ddefnyddio bwyd a thrafnidiaeth i ychwanegu at ffioedd.

Er mwyn helpu gyda'r argostau, bu'n rhaid i ni gynyddu ffioedd o Fawrth y 1af. Y rheswm y bu'n rhaid i ni gynyddu'r ffioedd, oedd oherwydd costau meithrin, cynnydd cyffredinol i gostau staff a chostau i gefnogi plant ag Anghenion Dysgu Ychwanegol (ADY). Rwy'n cyfrifo'r rhagolwg blynyddol i ddangos ein hincwm yn erbyn cynnydd gwariant, a'r diffyg sy'n deillio o hynny. Er mwyn ymdrin â hyn, mae'n rhaid i ni wedyn gynllunio sut y gallwn ymdrin ag unrhyw ddiffyg. Nid oes unrhyw ffordd heblaw cynyddu'r ffioedd y mae rhieni'n eu talu, ond mae risg bob amser o golli rhieni i feithrinfa arall, ac o bosib a all arwain at llai o incwm.

National Day Nurseries Association Cymru
3 Connaught House, Riverside Business Park, Benarth Road, Conwy, LL32 8UB
Email: wales@ndna.org.uk Tel: 01824 707823 www.ndna.org.uk/ndna-cymru/

Grantiau

Rydym wedi gwneud cais am yr holl grantiau a hysbysebir gan adran Blynyddoedd Cynnar Awdurdod Lleol Caerffili. Mae'r Grant Cyfalaf Bach wedi ein galluogi i wella ein darpariaeth trwy greu mwy o le ac ailgynllunio ardaloedd. O ganlyniad, rydym wedi gallu ehangu ein rhifau cofrestredig.

Yn ystod Covid roeddem yn gallu cael mynediad at y Grant Reignite, a oedd yn medru cael ei ddefnyddio i gadw a hyfforddi staff. Roedd y grant hwn yn caniatáu inni gadw'r busnes i weithredu a rheoli'r cynnydd sydyn mewn chwyddiant a chostau cysylltiedig. Mae wedi bod yn gefnogaeth enfawr i'n busnes.

Byddai grantiau ychwanegol, fel grant cynaliadwyedd o fudd mawr i'n busnes oherwydd y byddai'n medru ein helpu i gau'r bwlch ar ddiffygion cyllido. Er ein bod wedi gwerthfawrogi grantiau cyfalaf bach, dim ond hyn a hyn o offer neu wella adeiladau sydd eu hangen.

Mae cyllid yn fwyaf effeithiol pan gaiff ei ddefnyddio i helpu darparwyr gofal plant i gynnal eu gwasanaethau drwy gynnig grantiau cynaliadwyedd sy'n talu am ddyledion a gronnwyd dros y flwyddyn, gan sicrhau eu bod yn sefydlog yn ariannol.

Costau rhedeg ac effaith

Dyma ddadansoddiad o'n costau i blant 3 – 4 oed. Costau staffio x 3 aelod o staff (1 arweinydd, 2 ymarferydd cymwysedig sy'n cynnwys yswiriant gwladol, cyfraniadau pensiwn a threth)

- Ebrill 2023 = £5,581.33 (y mis)
- Ionawr – Mawrth 2024 = £6,089.53 (y mis)
- Ebrill 2024 = £6,539.88

25% o gostau morgais = £350 y mis
Costau rheoli
Adnoddau
Cost hyfforddi
Bwyd
Cefnogaeth ychwanegol i ADY
Amrywiol

Rydym wedi sylwi ar y cynnydd mewn costau staff dros y 12 mis diwethaf. Ebrill 2023 i Ebrill 2024 gyda chynnydd o £958.24 y mis. Mae'r cynnydd hwn ond yn adlewyrchu costau staffio'r ystafell 3 - 4 oed.

Fel lleoliad Ymagwedd Chwilfrydedd (*Curiosity Approach setting*) yn dilyn y cwricwlwm newydd, mae ein staff yn blaenoriaethu diddordebau'r plentyn. Er hyn, mae cost adnoddau wedi cynyddu 20%, a hyn ond i gynnal y pethau sylfaenol. Oherwydd hyn, nid ydym wedi gallu buddsoddi mewn gwelliannau ar gyfer darpariaeth barhaus y plant, megis gwella meysydd ag offer newydd. Rydym yn adolygu lefelau staffio'n rheolaidd, ond rydym yn gweithredu gyda'r niferoedd lleiaf o staff sydd eu hangen i fodloni cymarebau plant. Nid yw hyn yn gadael unrhyw hyblygrwydd i drin salwch staff nac i ddarparu cymorth ychwanegol a rhyngweithio dwys i blant sydd ei angen.

Mae yna effaith ar ddarparu lleoedd i blant ag ADY tybiedig neu a gadarnhawyd. Gallwn ddefnyddio strategaethau i gefnogi'r plentyn yn y gymhareb bresennol, ond os oes angen cymorth ychwanegol ar y plentyn gan oedolyn, i gael mynediad i'r amgylchedd, ni allwn ddiwallu'r anghenion hynny oherwydd diffyg staff sydd ar gael.

Rydym wedi sylwi bod nifer o rieni wedi lleihau'r oriau ychwanegol y maent yn talu amdanynt, gan mai dim ond ychydig o rieni sy'n defnyddio oriau ychwanegol i ychwanegu at eu hanghenion gofal plant. Roedd llawer o rieni yn talu ffioedd llawn cyn eu bod yn gymwys i gael y cyllid cynnig gofal plant. Ar ôl iddynt ddod yn gymwys, dechreuon nhw ddod o hyd i ffyrdd eraill o gasglu eu plant o'r ysgol, ac nid oes angen gwasanaethau talu ffioedd mwyach.

Mae hyn wedi effeithio ar ein cynaliadwyedd ar gyfer y dyfodol. Mae'n rhaid i ni adeiladu'r plant hyn yn niferoedd y dyfodol a dibynnu arnynt yn parhau gyda rhai gwasanaethau sy'n talu ffioedd.

Cymorth ychwanegol i barhau'n gynaliadwy

Rwy'n credu y dylai Llywodraeth Cymru gynyddu'r cyllid yn unol â chwyddiant a chostau'r Isafswm Cyflog Cenedlaethol. Mae'r diffyg cyllid wedi tyfu bob blwyddyn, ac ni ddylid disgwyl i ddarparwyr gofal plant gwmpasu'r bwlch mewn gofal plant a ariennir gan y llywodraeth, yn enwedig o ystyried y cynnydd sylweddol mewn plant ag ADY sy'n mynychu'r lleoliad. Pe bai mesurau ataliol wedi ei rhoi mewn lle, (fel addasiadau ar gyfer cynnydd yr Isafswm Cyflog Cenedlaethol y llynedd), efallai na fyddwn yn wynebu argyfwng nawr.

Dylid ystyried darparwyr gofal plant fel blaenoriaeth gan ein bod yn wasanaeth sylfaenol sy'n buddsoddi mewn lles plant ar y cam datblygu pwysicaf. Er hyn, nid ydym yn debygol o fod yn gynaliadwy heb grantiau neu gynnydd sylweddol i leoedd a ariennir.

Ym mis Ebrill 2018, yr Isafswm Cyflog Cenedlaethol ar gyfer y rhai dros 25 oed oedd £7.38 yr awr, tra bod y gyfradd ariannu fesul plentyn yn £4.50. Erbyn Ebrill 2024, mae'r Isafswm Cyflog Cenedlaethol wedi cynyddu i £11.44, ond mae'r gyfradd cyllido gofal plant wedi derbyn codiad o 50 ceiniog i £5 yr awr. Mae'r ffigurau hyn yn ddigon o dystiolaeth i ddangos nad yw darparwyr yn gallu cynnal hyn. Er

gwaethaf ein hymrwymiad i ddarparu gwasanaethau hanfodol o ansawdd uchel i rieni, mae'r bwlch cyllido wedi ehangu'n sylweddol o gymharu â blynyddoedd blaenorol ac o ganlyniad, nid oes gennym bellach yr adnoddau ariannol i fuddsoddi yn y busnes a sicrhau ei gynaliadwyedd hirdymor.

Astudiaeth achos: Brighter Minds Childcare Ltd, Ceisio aros yn gynaliadwy – Medi, 2024

National Day Nurseries Association Cymru
3 Connaught House, Riverside Business Park, Benarth Road, Conwy, LL32 8UB
Email: wales@ndna.org.uk Tel: 01824 707823 www.ndna.org.uk/ndna-cymru/