

# NURSERY NEWS

Your membership magazine

[www.ndna.org.uk](http://www.ndna.org.uk)

## *It's a balancing act*

Nothing says summer more to us than seeing children enjoying the outdoors under a bright blue sky. Thanks to Bethan McLatchie, Deputy Manager at Johnston Nursery Kirkcudbright, for sharing her photo taken at their two-acre outdoor nursery. Setting the scene, Bethan said: "Learning opportunities outdoors are endless and give the children freedom to be creative in their play. It was lovely to observe the children design, build and play with this seesaw that they made from loose parts."

This image is a wonderful example of the huge benefits that come with outdoor play. The warmer weather and longer days provide even more opportunities for children

to learn new physical skills, develop independence, be creative, problem solve and deal with risk management.

Spending time outdoors benefits children's mental health, lowering stress and promoting a general sense of well-being.

Hollie Mitchell, Nursery Manager, added: "The outdoor setting has been open for two years and it has been extremely rewarding to see children who have struggled at an indoor setting thrive in this environment. Our ethos of learning through our community and outdoors continues to grow as we realise the successful impact these opportunities have on our children."

Enjoy the summer!



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SENSORY STROLL



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underfunded childcare  
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## Additional actions to support members:

- ✓ Shared letters from some of our networks to their local authorities with our members
- ✓ Continued to support a parliamentary petition to exempt nurseries from NICs increases
- ✓ Surveyed nurseries to find out how different LAs are dealing with the updated guidance
- ✓ Supported NDNA members and networks with specific LA issues
- ✓ Surveyed members about recruitment and capacity challenges now that NIC changes have taken effect
- ✓ Wrote to all English councils about the impact of the new guidance and asked them not to add new terms to the model agreement
- ✓ Gathered case studies of members impacted by new school-based nurseries and shared these with DfE.

## Free online training bundle for members

Save money and improve practice with your new member benefit – free online training bundle containing 200 licenses!

NDNA is delighted to support members in these times of rising costs and insufficient government funding by massively reducing the price to upskill your nursery staff team.

This 200 free course CPD bundle contains 35 course topics designed to help improve practitioner skills in their day-to-day work with children.

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- Maths
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Plus, you have free access to more topics covering child development, the EYFS (Scottish and Welsh equivalent), leadership and management.

Don't forget, you can save even more money with our core training bundles. These contain essential and mandatory training which is heavily discounted for NDNA members.

We will also be saving members money with our range of free Wednesday webinars, ideal for your practitioners. Keep an eye out for announcements of dates and topics.

## Scan to find out more!



[ndna.org.uk/FreeBundle](http://ndna.org.uk/FreeBundle)



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We have signed the NICs nursery petition, have you?  
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## Webinars on demand

To respond to immediate challenges in the sector, we are moving away from holding fixed NDNA Talk member events in spring and autumn.

Instead, we will offer members webinars and some face to face events throughout the year to react to policy decisions and external events on topics that are relevant to you. Some of these will be for all three nations, others nation specific. If you would like to suggest any topics for discussion, please email [events@ndna.org.uk](mailto:events@ndna.org.uk)

## Lift off to summer

We're delighted to be bringing you the latest edition of Nursery News. We know it has been a busy time for everyone in our sector as you grapple with recent changes to NICs, rising wages and other challenges.

At NDNA, we have been busy promoting and defending you - from national representations with governments and detailed evidence to the Spending Review, to supporting members and networks standing up to local authority decisions.

With the Royal Foundation playing a key role in advancing the importance of early education, we attended an education and skills garden party at Buckingham Palace with the King and Queen to represent early years.

This spring we travelled to Edinburgh

to celebrate NDNA Scotland's 20th anniversary and our first Children's Rights Award winner, Wise Owls. We also met members at the Wales NDNA Talk event in Newport.

In England we have followed up a number of serious case studies where schools have directly threatened, or have planned to remove, existing PVI provision to make way for their own nurseries. We are highlighting these in the national media and holding the Government to account for the potential damage caused.

The Scottish Government has promised continued investment in 1140 hours and a 'sustainable rates' review. Our team in Scotland will monitor how this is conducted as well as checking that promised uplifts are passed on by councils.

In Wales the Flying Start expansion

continues, causing issues in a number of areas where councils aren't supporting PVI settings.

At NDNA we are always looking to support early years professionals. As you know, we have invested in the Institute of Early Years Education to boost the professional status of the workforce. We are now making membership of the Institute free to everyone in the sector. We hope you and your team are able to benefit from this offer. You can join here – [instituteofearlyyearseducation.org.uk](http://instituteofearlyyearseducation.org.uk)

For now, we look forward to seeing many of you at our annual conference and awards in Liverpool, where we will hear from an impressive array of speakers and then celebrate our amazing sector in style in the evening. We are also excited that practitioners can join our remote practice stream throughout our conference week.

*Purnima Tanuku*

PURNIMA TANUKU CBE,  
EXECUTIVE CHAIR

*T. Mclachlan*

TIM MCLACHLAN,  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE



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# Sustainability and Gardening: Propagation & Plant Care

Propagation remains a valuable skill for both environmental and economic sustainability, offering opportunities to teach children about nature and sustainability while nurturing a love for gardening.

## Understanding Propagation

Propagation involves replicating plants through various methods, such as:

- **Cuttings:** Growing a new plant from a section of a parent plant, which matures faster and flowers sooner than plants grown from seeds.
- **Grafting and budding:** Joining parts of two plants to grow as one.
- **Air layering and division:** Encouraging roots to grow from stems or dividing root systems to create new plants.
- **Tissue culturing:** Using small plant sections to grow new plants in controlled environments.

In nature, propagation relies on pollinators like bees, butterflies, and birds, illustrating the interconnectedness of ecosystems. Teaching children about these natural processes helps them appreciate the importance of biodiversity.

## Indoor Propagation and Gardening

If you're short on outdoor space, it doesn't mean gardening isn't possible. There are still opportunities to propagate and grow plants, even indoors. Create recycled greenhouses using plastic bottles, allowing children to grow plants indoors and learn about upcycling materials.

## Plant Care and Education

Propagation in nurseries introduces children to plant care, fostering responsibility and hands-on learning. Children can participate in:

- **Watering and pruning:** Basic maintenance to keep plants healthy.
- **Re-potting:** Observing root systems and understanding plant growth.
- **Observation and tracking:** Watching plants develop from cuttings or seeds.

This practical experience connects children to nature and teaches valuable life skills, including patience, responsibility, and the impact of nurturing living things.

## Environmental and Economic Benefits

Propagation supports sustainability by reducing the need to buy new plants. By propagating nursery plants, you can multiply your collection and expand gardens with minimal cost.

Why not start a "mini-tycoon" propagation project?

1. Introduce easy-to-propagate plants (e.g. succulents or spider plants).
  2. Teach children how to grow new plants from cuttings.
  3. Once the plants are established, organise a plant sale for parents.
  4. Use the proceeds to purchase more plants, tools, or eco-friendly gardening supplies.
- This project promotes environmental responsibility, entrepreneurship, and teamwork.

## Benefits of Plants in the Nursery

Plants not only enhance learning spaces but also offer health benefits:

- **Improved air quality:** Plants purify the air, removing airborne particles.
- **Boosted well-being:** Studies show plants reduce stress and improve psychological health.
- **Physical activity:** Gardening engages children in hands-on, active tasks.

By embracing gardening and propagation, nurseries can create sustainable, enriching experiences for children, creating opportunities for growth and discovery.

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Kindly Written for Hope  
by Nick Corlett  
Sustainability Manager  
at London Early Years  
Foundation (LEYF)



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# Gifting you the Institute of Early Years Education

As a UK-wide charity supporting the early years sector, we at NDNA recognise the multiple pressures that providers and professionals currently face. We want to enable and support the sector in any practical way possible, based on our membership values.

We know about the financial difficulties you are trying to navigate currently and the additional cost of providing CPD to your practitioners. NDNA is keen to help where we can and has now made the Institute of Early Years Education free to all practitioners within the sector. This includes all research-backed content and the CPD functionality, a reflective tool that enables practitioners to consider what they have implemented as a result of training and the impact this has had for children within your settings.

Those who want to will still be able to access the health and well-being offer that the Institute provides. With benefits including GP services, nutritional advice, a digital gym and retail discounts, this will now cost just £10 discounted from £50.

**NDNA's Executive Chair Tim McLachlan said:** "We are dedicated to the aims of the Institute as a recognised professional body for the early education and care workforce, focusing on best practice and the well-being of the profession. It's vital that this can be used by all those who need it.

"So we made the decision to offer the main platform - which gives access to evidence-based resources, career direction and continuing professional development (CPD) tracking - free of charge. We hope this will support the sector and lead to more people taking advantage of the great resources the Institute offers."

There are now three ways to access the Institute of Early Years Education:

- Universal open access to the content of the Institute platform - **FREE**
- Access to the CPD functionality - **FREE via a log in**
- Access to the CPD functionality PLUS paid for access to the well-being benefits. The Institute is offering the well-being benefits for just £10 per member per year, a reduction from £50.

Find out more  
by visiting:

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- Module 1 on 11 Aug; Module 2 on 14 Aug; Module 3 on 18 Aug; Module 4 on 21 Aug

### Autism Awareness £58/£78, two modules

- Module 1 on 09 July; Module 2 on 16 July

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- Module 1 on 16 June; Module 2 on 19 June; Module 3 on 23 June; Module 4 on 26 June
- Module 1 on 08 July; Module 2 on 11 July; Module 3 on 15 July; Module 4 on 18 July
- Module 1 on 11 Aug; Module 2 on 14 Aug; Module 3 on 18 Aug; Module 4 on 21 Aug

### Brilliant Babies £89.50/£121, four modules

- Module 1 on 24 June; Module 2 on 27 June; Module 3 on 01 July; Module 4 on 04 July
- Module 1 on 07 July; Module 2 on 10 July; Module 3 on 14 July; Module 4 on 17 July

### Building Your Curriculum £29.50/£40, one module

- Module 1 on 11 June

### Developing Confidence with Your Ofsted Inspection £89.50/£121, four modules

- Module 1 on 07 July; Module 2 on 10 July; Module 3 on 14 July; Module 4 on 17 July

### Developing Outstanding Practice £89.50/£121, four modules

- Module 1 on 10 June; Module 2 on 13 June; Module 3 on 17 June; Module 4 on 20 June

### Effective Team Leadership £89.50/£121, four modules

- Module 1 on 16 June; Module 2 on 19 June; Module 3 on 23 June; Module 4 on 26 June
- Module 1 on 12 Aug; Module 2 on 15 Aug; Module 3 on 19 Aug; Module 4 on 22 Aug

### Positive Behaviour in Early Years £89.50/£121, four modules

- Module 1 on 08 July; Module 2 on 11 July; Module 3 on 15 July; Module 4 on 18 July

### Toddler Room Leader £89.50/£121, four modules

- Module 1 on 04 Aug; Module 2 on 07 Aug; Module 3 on 11 Aug; Module 4 on 14 Aug

Find out more about LVCs on our website at  
[www.ndna.org.uk/LVCs](https://www.ndna.org.uk/LVCs)



# The F word: Is there a solution to the funded childcare problem?

Funded childcare aka free childcare – DOES NOT ALWAYS WORK for providers, parents, children or local authorities (LAs).

The funding system is based on the principle of one size fits all – but the range of nurseries and the services they offer are vastly different.

When NDNA asks UK nurseries for their funding shortfall, we receive a huge range. This shows how diverse business models are and explains why some nurseries can make funding work and others cannot.

No nation is currently offering a fair funding rate for three and four-year-olds or even two-year-olds.

## Making up the shortfall...

LAs across the UK have interpreted the guidance and regulations around funded childcare in very different ways. Some have supported providers, but many have made things harder.

In Wales providers can charge parents £10.80 per day for meals. Our survey about the new £6.40 Childcare offer rate showed that 79% would make a loss and the success of the Flying Start offer depends on LAs, with different rates and requirements.



Nurseries in Scotland can only charge for limited extras because the sustainable rate should cover all costs. Meals and snacks are included in either a separate payment or included in the sustainable rate. We know from our research this does not happen everywhere.

Since April, any charges to parents for meals and consumables from nurseries in England have to be "voluntary". Some councils are changing their agreements with providers despite the DfE insisting nothing has changed.

At the same time, our FOI into council underspends for 2023-24 showed £65m of early years money unspent. Tax-Free Childcare has been underspent by billions since its 2017 launch. This childcare support system is not efficient and doesn't make sure resources support children and families.

## Parents vs Providers

We have seen the Government trying to pit parents against providers, talking about "rip-off" fees and "cheaper childcare". All nations' governments MUST adequately fund any offer they make to parents then support all types of providers to deliver this.

PM nurseries offer the most flexible choice for parents and in England deliver three quarters of funded places. They must not be pitted against parents, LAs or the government. But this offer won't work until it is either fully funded or acknowledged for what it is, a subsidy.

## English councils - "your business is no longer your own"

The issue of packed lunches continues to be a thorny one. The DfE says nurseries should have a packed lunch policy, but it's unclear whether this could include refusing food from home. NDNA has developed a list of what to consider when creating a packed lunch policy.

The biggest change for providers is that most LAs are saying they have to offer

all places free. NDNA has written to all councils to explain how this is impacting nurseries. We have held events to support members and joined in countless network meetings. Around 55% of respondents to our council survey said they have signed a new agreement and that these had material changes.

One NDNA member was told by her council that they couldn't believe she "considered her business to still be her own".

NDNA is supporting networks in Essex, Cheshire West and Chester, Lancashire and Leeds as well as members in Havering in tackling specific issues these new agreements have thrown up. These include allowing children to join in additional activities when parents refuse to pay for them; insisting nurseries sign an impossible agreement and making them agree to unfeasible insurance clauses. One member nursery was told they would have to revert to children playing with "sticks and mud" to make ends meet.

But some councils like Staffordshire, Wirral and Surrey have been helpful and supportive, offering additional funding or deferring new agreements.



Britain's nursery problem: Parents still face 'childcare deserts'

Nurseries warn of rising fees ahead of childcare expansion

Why childcare providers will be forced to limit funded places and increase prices

'Why do I get less free childcare for my two-year-old than in England?'

New free childcare rules have 'potentially fatal risks'

## Scotland victories and fears

Across Scotland where council budgets are being squeezed, they are responding in several ways which could threaten PM nurseries.

Edinburgh Council is refusing to pay for cross-border children. One member has already been forced to close for this reason. NDNA continues to raise this with Scottish Government, it goes against the principle of parental choice.

In Falkirk the council wanted to move 150 funded children to council-run nurseries which would eventually put the 13 remaining PM nurseries out of business. A high profile publicity campaign supported by NDNA and a deputation from the NDNA Falkirk network resulted in a U-turn from councillors. Public opinion is a force to be reckoned with and can be used for positive gain.

Some councils are also deciding to "mothball" half empty nurseries. NDNA's West Lothian network gave evidence to the council about how PM nurseries were better value for money than council-run settings. The PM providers will continue to be funded but the council will close some of their own settings, with Borders Council considering similar plans.

Every year NDNA looks at the sustainable rates from each local authority – this year they must increase them by at least 3.75% to keep track with the Real Living Wage.

## Wales - the good and the bad

In Anglesey private day nurseries (off school sites) are currently unable to deliver funded childcare. This has left some forced to diversify their businesses e.g. with shops to make ends meet as the council persists with opening duplicate wraparound provision. This has led to an exodus of staff and children from their nurseries and a fall in wraparound business further threatens their future.

Are parents in Wales facing a childcare premium?

underfunded childcare

As in England, some councils in Wales have been adding requirements that need not be there, including Flying Start settings complying with multiple quality assurance schemes.

Conversely, a number of councils like Swansea and Flintshire have been supporting providers to remain sustainable with their positive approach to the expansion of Flying Start; while Pembrokeshire and Conwy have backed NDNA's Childcare Works projects.



## What is the solution?

With Wales and Scotland gearing up for 2026 elections, we have an opportunity to encourage their governments to take a fresh look at how they deliver funded childcare. The Westminster Government is about to announce its Comprehensive Spending Review allocations. This will directly impact English nurseries, with a knock-on effect on devolved nations. With tough budget constraints, governments must think about achieving more with fewer resources.

For years, NDNA has been calling for a new funding system which is fairer for all stakeholders. It would also save time and money.

A "Childcare Passport" would be an online account for each child – the system is already set up for Tax-Free Childcare – holding all government funding streams.

Here are the benefits:

- Reduce administration for LAs and providers
- Funding genuinely follows the child
- Early years funding would only be used for early years
- Less confusing for parents and easy to use
- Parents could pay the entirety of a child's bill or use the money as a contribution towards the bill depending on their choice of setting
- Nurseries are free to charge their own fees depending on the services they provide.

Nursery businesses could continue to make their own decisions and run according to their own model.

Until this happens, here are other ideas to consider to support your business:

- In England consider using EYPP to pay for disadvantaged children's lunches so they benefit from a hot meal and the learning opportunities from sitting together for meals
- In Wales the interventions you could implement that could be supported by the Early Years Pupil Development Grant (EYPDG) [bit.ly/EYPDG](https://bit.ly/EYPDG)
- Use your local network to challenge your LA. If there's not one set up in your area, contact [NDNAMembership@ndna.org.uk](mailto:NDNAMembership@ndna.org.uk) to see if we can put you in touch with other local providers or even set up a network in your area
- Contact your local Schools Forum representative – these meet regularly and make decisions on distribution of the Designated Schools Grant
- In Wales contact your Local Authority Early Years team to find out more about the EYPDG or your Family Information Service to find about other grants that may be available.

NDNA ran a tackling local authority challenges webinar earlier in May. You can watch a recording of the event if you weren't able to attend.  
[ndna.org.uk/NDNATalkOnDemand](https://ndna.org.uk/NDNATalkOnDemand)





# The question isn't just, are children ready for school, are schools ready for children?

*"... the difference between the kind of nurseries and education that we provide in our nurseries compared to the private providers: they excel at childcare, but they don't educate."*

This is what an education union representative had to say in a recent council meeting in Scotland when talking about the difference between council run nurseries and other providers.

As those working in the early years sector know, the learning and development that happens in the crucial years from birth to five cannot be compartmentalised like this, everything a child is doing is a learning opportunity.

This is recognised by The Welsh Government in their Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care plan (ECPLC), which brings together the work being taken forward by the Welsh Government and partners in the childcare, playwork and nursery education sectors which comes under the umbrella of Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care.

Despite this cross-sector approach we still see issues in Wales where local authorities fund new provision which competes with, and damages, existing high-quality providers.

The importance, expertise and capacity of other early education and care providers was also missing in the Department for Education release about school-based nursery funding. The release talked about school-based settings being more inclusive, ignoring that the majority of SEND children attend PVI settings. It also championed transitions, undermining the excellent work happening across the country to get children ready for the next step in their educational journeys.



**In response our Executive Chair, Purnima Tanuku CBE commented:**

"Nurseries across the country have already started to work with schools and families of children making the important transition into school. It is wrong to suggest that school nurseries are better for children transitioning into Reception."

There is work to be done to improve understanding of children's development, how individual a process it is and what's meant when that often unhelpful term 'school readiness' is used.

The latest Kindred Squared report found that teachers and parents have very different views on the meaning of 'school readiness'. The report revealed that while nine of out ten parents thought their child was ready for school, in contrast only one in three children were ready for school according to teachers.

That is why it is important that we look again at the problematic oversimplification of 'school readiness'. Parents are the first teachers a child has, and the home environment is the first place a child learns about the world around them. At the same time, we have all heard examples of schools which are so rigid, they cannot find ways to work with children's individual needs.

The toolkits which Ofsted recently consulted on sets out measures for judging transitions in the early years section but does not set out what is expected of schools to facilitate effective transitions which support children's individual needs.

We all want the best start in life for children, so the question of whether schools are 'children ready' should be as prominent as the other side of that coin.

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# 50 years and counting...

Meet Pamela Edwards who has been running Formby Day Nursery since 1975...



## What prompted you to open a nursery more than 50 years ago?

In 1962 I lived in Essex and when my daughter was two years old, she needed a playgroup but there wasn't one in the area. After some thought I approached a church hall and came to an agreement to open a playgroup. At the time we just had a few qualified staff and a small number of children who attended.

My husband came home one day and told me his job was moving to Liverpool so that's how we ended up moving to Formby in 1965. Again, I couldn't find a playgroup, so I hired the British Legion Hall and took on several qualified staff to open one. It filled up so quickly and seemed to be something of a demand in the area, so I had to expand and open another playgroup in another two church halls in Formby.

I then opened a playgroup in Ainsdale, four playgroups in Maghull, one in Lydiate and two in Billinge. Following on from these, I opened my first day nursery in a church hall in Southport, so parents could leave children for longer periods of time throughout the day. As this was a success, we opened another day nursery in Fazackerley and Garston.

In October 1974, I was driving past Cullen House and I saw an estate agents' board being erected. I knew the house had planning permission for children, so I went ahead and bought the house in January 1975. We then opened Formby Day Nursery and we are still here 50 years later!

## Were there any regulations in place at the time?

At the time of opening the first playgroup, Ofsted wasn't a governing body and it was all done under social services. We still had inspections and had regulations to follow but didn't have an early years curriculum like we do today.

## You have seen many changes over the decades, what has been the most significant difference between now and then?

Again, the most significant change would be Ofsted and the requirements needed on a day-to-day basis with paperwork. There's also a lot more emphasis on a child's education.

## What things have remained the same or similar?

The love and care for the children has stayed the same and demand for childcare within the community. I have had several generations of a family go through the nursery and the family ethos we follow has always been the same.

My own grandchildren attend the nursery and of course call me "Grandma" so over the years and many grandchildren later, my name is just simply "Grandma" to all our children within the nursery.

## What for you is the most rewarding part of the job?

It's the most rewarding life watching the children develop and flourish. I have absolutely no intention of retiring anytime soon! I may not be as hands-on as I used to be as I work from my desk these days, but I'm still very much a part of the day-to-day running of the nursery. It was the best decision I made all those years ago.

## What advice would you give to owners worried about current challenges of funding and recruitment?

The recruitment crisis is a real worry even for us as we have been looking to employ a qualified practitioner for some time now and haven't been able to find anyone.

The pressure of the job is hard, so putting staff first is always a must because without a solid staff team you would have no team at all and therefore no business. Understanding the staff you have and working with them to promote a work life balance and ensuring good emotional health and well-being throughout your nursery will help keep the staff you have.

Within our nursery, we like to think of ourselves as one big family and I truly believe the staff feel the same. Making workdays more fun and less stressful.

The current challenges of funding have obviously been something new for everyone in the early years sector, but like everything new I think within time it will just be the new normal.



Welcome to this special four page myNDNA guide for practitioners. myNDNA is free - sign up for your weekly tip and activity! Go to [www.ndna.org.uk/myNDNA](http://www.ndna.org.uk/myNDNA)

# Messy fun and why it matters

We've all witnessed the focus and joy young children display when they're squishing mud through their fingers, chasing ice-cream dribbles with their tongues or splashing water with their feet. To an ordinary observer, it might simply look like messy fun, but in truth, children's senses are hard at work fuelling their overall development.

Psychologist Jean Piaget noted that: '**The senses are the gateway to intelligence**', reminding us that children build their brains by exploring the world through touch, sight, sound, smell and taste – and let's not forget movement. In addition to what we might think of as primary senses, children also develop other essential senses such as proprioception. This relies on sensory receptors in the muscles, joints and tendons to signal to the brain where the body is in space, which is vital for coordination and control. Equally important is the vestibular sense, which helps children maintain balance and develop spatial orientation; this is crucial for children to be able to move confidently and securely in their environment.

When young children actively use their senses and move their bodies, they literally strengthen the architecture of their brains – as neurophysiologist Dr. Carla Hannaford writes: '**The more children use their senses and move their bodies, the stronger the neural connections become.**' Every barefoot walk, twirl of the body or smell of a strawberry build these neural pathways, supporting language development, motor skills and cognitive growth.

The following practice pages are filled with sensory-rich ideas. For example, a tray filled with natural materials such as stones, flowers, herbs and fruit will excite the senses and enhance language development as children describe textures, shapes and smells. Our rainbow ribbons activity encourages children to explore movement as they chase and mimic the colourful, fluttering, wind whipped ribbons.

Children are also tasked with bubble play to develop coordination, focus and language skills. The fruity frozen yoghurt recipe is guaranteed to tantalise everyone's taste buds.

Sensory exploration may get a little messy, but remember, it's a powerful tool for building skills, igniting curiosity and supporting children's growing bodies and minds. So, roll up your sleeves, dive in and let's get messy!

## You will need:

- A shallow tray with water
- Ice cubes in assorted sizes, shapes and colours
- Different sized scoops, spoons, bowls, funnels, sieves, brushes
- Natural resources e.g. shells, pebbles, sticks
- Scented herbs e.g. mint or lavender
- Toy sea creatures e.g. fish, starfish, crabs etc.
- Different textured sponges.

## Seaside discover and splash

This open-ended play activity encourages sensory exploration, fine motor development, early scientific discovery and learning new words.

Set up the activity by filling a shallow tray with a small amount of water, then adding ice, shells, pebbles and other items. Place scoops, sieves and cups nearby so children can choose what to use for their exploration.

Encourage children to feel the cool water, smooth pebbles and textured shells. Draw their attention to how the ice melts in the water, making it slippery - sparking curiosity, inviting sensory play and descriptive language. Follow the children's lead as they explore. They may choose to:

- Scoop and collect: Use sieves or spoons to scoop up shells and pebbles
- Pour and splash: Fill and pour water using small cups
- Hide and seek: Search for hidden sea creatures beneath the water
- Squeeze and soak: Strengthen hand muscles by squeezing sponges and watching them absorb water.

For older children... sing seaside songs like "A Sailor Went to Sea" or "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." Or use damp sand instead of water for a different sensory play experience (dry sand has the same properties as water, so using damp sand will support their discoveries).







## Rainbow ribbons

This activity will encourage movement, coordination and sensory exploration.

Invite children to select a variety of ribbons, exploring their different textures and colours. Assist them in attaching the ribbons to a stick or ring, making their very own 'Rainbow Ribbons'. Talk about how the ribbons dance and swirl as they move, whether by using their hands or the breeze.

Encourage children to engage in free play, using their ribbons to run, twirl and wave in creative ways – a great way for developing gross motor skills. Observe and comment on how the ribbons respond to different speeds: "What happens when you move your ribbon slowly? How about really quickly?"

Encourage a variety of movements:

- **Up and down:** Lift the ribbons high and swoop them low
- **Swirl and spin:** Create circles and loops in the air
- **Jump and wave:** Jump while waving the ribbons
- **Follow the leader:** Copy movements led by an adult or another child.

Enhance the experience by playing music and encouraging children to move their ribbons to the rhythm. Encourage them to experiment with fast and slow movements, responding to the beat. To wind down, invite children to lie on the grass, moving their ribbons slowly like gentle waves.

**For babies you could...** attach ribbons to low-hanging branches, where babies can lie underneath and watch the colourful strands sway and dance in the breeze, creating a visually engaging experience.

### You will need:

- Coloured ribbons
- Sticks to attach the ribbons
- Large open outdoor space
- Ideally windy weather.



### Tip one

## Supporting sensory play

Offer different options so children can explore at their comfort level. Provide tools like scoops, spoons or brushes for children who may not want to touch textures directly. Use activities such as water play, collaborative art or storytelling to encourage participation in a way that feels safe and enjoyable for everyone.



### Tip two

## Water safety

Summer is the perfect time to cool down and have fun with a range of water activities in and outside of the setting. Share water safety tips with parents, e.g. holding their child's hand when walking next to water and emptying away water once supervised play ends.



## Bubble magic

Bubbles are a fantastic way to engage young children in joyful, magical play while helping them develop coordination, focus and language skills.

Provide families with some bubble mixture or share this simple bubble recipe to encourage playful bonding at home.

Bubble play ideas:

- **Chase and pop** – blow bubbles and encourage your child to run, jump and pop them using their hands, feet, or even a gentle clap
- **Catch a bubble** – encourage your child to catch a bubble on their hand without popping it
- **Big and small bubbles** – experiment with different wands to find out what different sized bubbles they can make
- **Bubble dancing** – play music and move with the floating bubbles, adding an extra element of fun and coordination.

While playing, use describing words like big, small, high, low to expand your child's vocabulary. Repeat simple words such as pop, blow, more, again to help reinforce the language.

Happy bubbling!

### You will need:

- Four egg cups of water
- ½ egg cup of washing up liquid
- One teaspoon glycerine or sugar.



Did you know that all myNDNA members get free access to the Institute of Early Years Education? Browse your free resources or sign up for free to log your CPD!



## The magic of calm: How we created our nursery sensory room

South and City College Birmingham Nursery are extremely proud of their new sensory room – a calm, stimulating space designed to support the development, well-being and learning of all children in their care. By creating this dedicated space, the nursery has strengthened its inclusive approach by offering tailored sensory experiences that support all children, particularly those with additional needs. The sensory room plays a key role in helping children manage their emotions, providing a calm, soothing environment where they can reset and regain focus. Far more than just an added feature, the sensory room has become a vital and valued part of the children's nursery experience.

The room provides a safe environment where children can explore a range of sensory experiences, helping them to develop fundamental movement skills, emotional regulation and independence. Features such as bubble tubes, interactive panels and textured toys encourage children to touch, see, hear and move in ways that support both cognitive and physical development.

"We are committed to continually reflecting on and improving our nursery so that every child can flourish and reach their full potential. Creating a sensory room has been part of our long-term vision and we've worked hard to make it a reality. By spreading out purchases over the year, we were able to manage costs effectively while selecting high-quality resources to enhance the space."

Staff have received training to lead sensory-based activities that are tailored to the individual needs of each child. Whether a child needs to calm down, refocus or engage with the world in a different way, the sensory room offers a flexible space to support them. For children with additional needs, such as autism or sensory processing difficulties, it has proven to be a particularly valuable resource.

The impact has been immediate. Children are visibly engaged and curious, confidently exploring the sensory materials. As one staff member observed, "The children have been super engaged. It has been wonderful to see."



### Tip three

## Keeping cool on hot days

Keeping cool on hot days can be a fun and multi-sensory experience:

- Relax in a den with soft fabrics, calming music and a breeze
- Enjoy a foot spa by filling a tray with water and flowers for a soothing sensory experience
- Fill spray mist bottles with water and 'mist' the children regularly.



## Scent detectives

Step outside - either to your outdoor space, the park, or an area of nature - and invite the children to become scent detectives. Encourage them to explore plants, trees, flowers and any other natural elements such as the air – ask them to draw in the air through their nose and describe what they can detect.

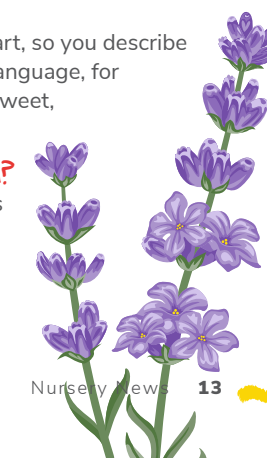
Gather a selection of leaves, flowers, tree bark etc and place them in breathable cloth bags for children to use now and later back at the setting. You could also make up bags of fresh herbs such as lavender, rosemary or mint.

As you explore, invite the children to close their eyes and smell each item. Ask questions such as "What does this smell like?", "Does it remind you of something?", "Do you like the smell or not?", "Why do you like/dislike the smell?"

It may require some modelling on your part, so you describe what you can smell and use descriptive language, for example, "This smells fresh and earthy (sweet, spicy, woody, minty, peppery, lemony...)."

### Why not create a scent sorting station?

Set up a tray with different scented items – herbs, flowers, citrus peel etc. Provide matching scent bags and match the loose items with the bags.





Activities with children must always be risk assessed. Children must have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.



#### Tip four

### Sound explorers

Gather sticks together and invite children to explore sounds by tapping them on various outdoor surfaces. Model and encourage experimenting with different textures, tempos and volumes – using words like loud, soft, fast and slow – to help children discover and enjoy a wide range of sounds through playful exploration.

### Frozen yoghurt lollies

This easy recipe is packed with opportunities for learning. Strengthening fine motor skills as children scoop and stir, boosting their vocabulary as they describe the experience, enhancing their understanding of concepts as they measure and count and a bit of science as the liquid turns to a solid in the freezer. They can feel proud of their efforts as they cool down, tucking into their healthy, sweet snack.

Wash the berries (if using fresh) with the children. Invite them to describe what they see, feel and smell. Model the language by describing what you see, feel and smell.

1. In a large bowl, mix the yoghurt with the berries. If you mash the berries slightly, it encourages them to release their sweet juices
2. If using, add the honey and mix
3. Using the teaspoon transfer the mixture into the moulds
4. Put them in the freezer.

Older children could make themselves a yoghurt mocktail by blending their favourite fruit with yoghurt.



#### You will need:

- Two cups of natural or greek yoghurt
- One cup of mixed berries (fresh or frozen)
- One to two tablespoons of honey (optional)
- Ice lolly moulds
- Bowl
- Wooden spoon
- Teaspoons.



### Sensory stroll

Walking barefoot supports sensory and physical development, helping children with their balance, posture, coordination and spatial awareness. The base of a foot has thousands of nerves that connect to the brain through the vestibular and proprioceptive systems. Walking barefoot activates these nerves in a way that walking with shoes doesn't.

Collect a range of resources for your walk, such as tree trunk slices, real and artificial grass, wet and dry sand and mud, water, bark, straw or smooth pebbles.

Lay out the different surfaces (use plastic floor covers if access to outdoors is restricted) to create a continuous walking surface. Invite children to take off their footwear and walk through the range of surfaces, give children lots of time to squish and squeeze their feet on each surface. Introduce vocabulary to describe the textures and invite children to talk about the differences between the surfaces and how they feel underfoot.



## Prioritising Health & Safety in early years settings: five key areas to focus on

Health & Safety in the early years industry isn't just about ticking boxes – it's about creating a secure and nurturing environment for children, staff and families. Taking proactive measures keep everyone safe while you keep up the high quality of care – so our Corporate Partner Citation are here to take a look at five key areas that form the foundation of robust Health & Safety in early years.



### 1. Comprehensive staff training

Well-trained staff are critical to maintaining high safety standards. Training should cover essential topics like safe handling, infection control, first aid and fire safety. For example, staff knowing the right techniques for lifting or supporting children reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injuries for staff while making sure children are kept safe.

Since early years settings involve a few different roles like room leaders, kitchen teams and maintenance, the training needs to reflect their responsibilities. Kitchen teams will need food hygiene training, while educators need manual handling knowledge. Don't forget regular refresher courses and think about simulations and scenario-based workshops to keep the learning engaging.



### 2. Infection control measures

Illnesses like colds, flu and stomach bugs can spread easily in busy spaces like nurseries. Tight infection control is essential to keep everyone healthy – and high-touch surfaces like toys, tables and doorknobs need regular cleaning with safe disinfectants suitable for early years settings – and think about a structured cleaning plan to make sure nothing is overlooked.



### 3. Risk assessments

Risk assessments are vital in keeping everyone safe and complying with regulations. They help identify potential hazards and put solutions in place to reduce risks – and it's vital to train staff to follow a "spot it, sort it" mindset, where they act quickly to address hazards. Encourage everyone to regularly think about risks in play areas and even during outdoor activities. And remember, risk assessments aren't a one-off task – keep them under review to stay relevant as the environment evolves.



### 4. Supporting mental health

Working with young children is demanding, both emotionally and physically, which makes mental health support non-negotiable. Stress can affect decision making, focus and communication – all of which compromise safety. Actively managing stress through regular assessments, open communication and well-being initiatives contributes to a healthier workplace.

Providing managers with training to spot signs of stress, from mood changes to absenteeism is invaluable. Plus, workplace adjustments such as flexible scheduling, access to counselling services or well-being resources can reduce burnout and improve morale.



### 5. Promoting healthy practices

Physical activities are a huge part of working in early years settings, from lifting toddlers to setting up play equipment. Promoting healthy practices reduces the risk of injury for everyone involved. Provide training on safe lifting techniques and encourage teamwork. Look at your overall working environment – can you provide comfortable, adjustable chairs or workstation layouts that promote efficiency? When your team feels looked after, they're better able to support the children in their care.



### Build a culture of safety with Citation

These five areas form the foundation of a supportive and safe environment – but Health & Safety provision in your early years setting can be even more complex. To see how Citation can help you do just that, get in touch on 0345 844 1111 or scan the QR code for a free no obligation quote and remember to quote 'NDNA' when enquiring to access preferential rates.





## Ask the experts...

Mike Ferrand is the Managing Director of Cool Milk. Promoting the importance of nursery and school milk for boosting educational outcomes and providing essential nutrients is "both a passion and vocation".



Mike Ferrand

### Q Why Should I use Cool Milk?

We place orders for milk with the closest suppliers and pay them directly, handling all supplier logistics. We also make direct payment to suppliers so that nurseries are not left out of pocket when awaiting payment from the government scheme.

We know environmental, social and governance (ESG) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) is also important for the sector and it's important to us too. Cool Milk is a network partnership and supports the local community by pairing settings with independent suppliers as local as possible, supporting not only the local community but also the local dairy industry across England and Wales.

### Q Who is Cool Milk?

Family owned and founded by the son of a dairy farmer, Cool Milk's vision is to ensure all eligible children have easy access to the free milk scheme. Our mission is to provide this milk by supporting local independent farmers/dairies/suppliers.

We have been in operation for 26+ years with a partnership network of 400+ local independent suppliers and work alongside 200+ local authorities.

Cool Milk exclusively serves the education sector, so our knowledge and expertise are comprehensive on key issues. We often assist our settings with charitable events, working alongside key organisations such as the NSPCC and local authority oral health teams.

Visit [www.coolmilk.com/early-years](http://www.coolmilk.com/early-years) and submit a sign-up request or call us on 0800 056 2146 to join the Cool Milk family.



### Q Can people go directly to their local authorities, or should they leave everything to Cool Milk themselves?

Settings based in England and Wales have the option to access free milk for under 5s via the government's Nursery Milk Scheme. Cool Milk supports you fully by managing the scheme on your behalf. From completing your registration, supporting with claims and administration, purchasing the milk, through to sourcing a local dairy - we handle everything from order to delivery. By Cool Milk paying your local supplier, our nurseries are never left out of pocket when awaiting reimbursement from the government scheme.

### Q For children who don't drink dairy, what's the alternative?

Unfortunately, Government funding isn't currently available for non-dairy alternatives under the Nursery Milk Scheme. However, Cool Milk can assist with creating a chargeable private account with your local milk supplier where you can order non-dairy alternatives separately.

### Q How do I claim this funding?

Simply register, order and let your children enjoy their free milk, whilst you enjoy a hassle-free milk scheme at no cost to your setting. Once per month you simply verify how many children you wish to claim for and Cool Milk do the rest.

Cool Milk makes this easy by assisting with time consuming administration. We pride ourselves on choosing a local supplier without compromising quality or reliability. Meeting your needs whilst supporting local business, with sustainability at the heart of our scheme.

### Q Why is it good for children to drink milk?

Milk is a vital component in a child's diet. It's a natural source of essential nutrients for growth and development, providing high quality:

- Protein for tissue repair, growth and immune function
- Calcium to build strong bones and teeth
- Vitamin D to help the body absorb calcium
- Vitamin A for vision and healthy skin.

The healthy fats in milk help children stay energised, making milk a wholesome power house of natural goodness!

### Q What is the government funded free milk scheme?

The Nursery Milk Scheme consisting of free milk for children under 5 is available to all settings based in England and Wales. Scottish settings should contact their local authority for more information on the Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme.

A free 189ml (third of a pint) portion of milk is available to all children based in England and Wales under the age of 5 who attend a registered childcare setting for two hours or more per day. This is funded by the Department of Health & Social Care.



National Day Nurseries Association

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# Aren't babies brilliant!



**O**ur face-to-face training course Brilliant Babies has been a consistent favourite with our members since it was developed. With the expansion of childcare to younger ages across the UK, it's more popular than ever.

Nursery News spoke with Fiona Bland, NDNA's Lead Early Years Adviser, about the course and why practitioners love working with babies.

## Why is Brilliant Babies so popular?

The EYFS states that at least half of all staff working with babies must have received training that specifically addresses the care of babies so many practitioners are upskilling to work effectively in baby rooms. There's much to satisfy all levels of interest, from entry level upwards. We talk a lot about bringing awe and wonder into babies' lives. It's a job with huge responsibility, but also joy.

Practitioners are privileged to introduce new and exciting experiences to babies every day, laying the foundations they need to grow and develop.

We look at key areas for development, including characteristics of effective learning, brain development, attachment, social and emotional language development and the importance of care routines, safe eating and sleeping. All are critical for baby's development and for supporting secure attachments.

Looking at best practice and empowering environments, practitioners understand how they help babies make sense of their new world.

## What's so special about working with babies?

Your role is vital in supporting their rapid healthy brain development which comes from secure attachments, positive relationships and stimulating environments. Think of babies as unique beings and how you can meet their individual needs.

Every action, gesture and expression you make directly impact them, building their brains and laying foundations. That's what makes working with babies so exciting. Giving them sensory experiences fires up their neurones as they explore.

Because of their rapid growth, we can really see a difference with babies quickly. It's very rewarding seeing their growth and development and the steps they are taking from laying on the floor, then sitting, then standing.

There's lots of lovely one to one time with them and who doesn't want to cuddle a baby?

## What are the challenges?

Although hugely rewarding, caring for babies can be challenging. It's not always easy to match the slower pace of babies, they need a calm and relaxing space. It's also sometimes tricky to identify what babies are communicating to you. An experienced practitioner who knows the baby well can pick up on clues and signals including crying, gestures, looking and waving.

It's vital you develop partnerships with parents when you're entrusted with their most precious thing. Building respected trusting relationships with parents is critical, creating opportunities to talk to parents about their baby and implementing those measures into your practice. You will need more communication with parents than at other times and this includes more settling-in sessions and flexibility. Parents will tend to linger when picking up their babies and this relationship is really important to get them off to a good start.

## Find out more...

[ndna.org.uk/BBF2F](https://ndna.org.uk/BBF2F)



## Test your knowledge!



Try a couple of questions from our Brilliant Babies quiz – how did you do?

"The objects of a treasure basket should appeal to a child's \_\_\_\_\_."

- a. Smell
- b. Senses
- c. Touch

Which of the following can have an effect on a baby's development?

- a. Physical health and well-being
- b. Experiences
- c. Emotional health and well-being
- d. All of the above

Here's the full quiz: [ndna.org.uk/BBQuiz](https://ndna.org.uk/BBQuiz)

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**NDNA**

Scotland  
National Day Nurseries Association

Supporting you for 20 years

## Hello from Jane

I want to say a huge thank you to everyone who came along to our NDNATalk event in March to help us celebrate not only 20 years of NDNA Scotland but also the inaugural NDNA Scotland Children's Rights Award winner, Wise Owls Nursery. Huge congratulations to them, and also to our runners-up, First Adventures Nursery and Great Western Nursery. There can only be one winner but the rights-based practice in all three settings was fantastic and you all should be proud of being shortlisted.

This is the time of year when we all look forward to long summer days full of fun, but our work at NDNA Scotland supporting you continues. In this edition I share with you some of the working groups that we attend on your behalf to ensure that your voice is heard strongly.

*Jane*

Jane Malcolm  
Policy Manager,  
NDNA Scotland



When Ms Don-Innes announced the winners, Wise Owls Nursery, there was a wonderfully audible gasp from the nursery staff who were very surprised they had won; it was a brilliant reaction from our first ever winners.

Catherine Jackson, owner and manager of Wise Owls Nursery and Out of School Club, expressed pride and gratitude in receiving this recognition.

"All staff have worked hard to ensure that the children's well-being is prioritised throughout, and winning the award is a reflection of the quality and passion of the staff," she said. "Wise Owls Nursery focuses on fostering a nurturing, rights-respecting environment where children are supported to have a voice, make choices and feel valued."

NDNA's Executive Chair Purnima Tanuku CBE said: "Congratulations to Wise Owls in Moffat who have impressed us so much with their work to support children's rights in their setting. They were a very worthy winner although it was a very high standard with many entrants. The project was designed to strengthen the already wonderful work that nurseries in Scotland do for children.

"Our UNCRC toolkit was developed to support nurseries to incorporate CRWIAs into their work and ensure babies and infants voices were included. We hope these awards will inspire others who work with young children."

We were delighted that the Minister was able to attend the event. She said: "It was a pleasure to present the award to Wise Owls Nursery, who have shown that children's rights are a genuine priority and embedded throughout their culture and to meet so many inspiring ELC professionals at the event. Nurseries play a vital role in delivering for children and NDNA's UNCRC toolkit is ensuring that children's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled from the earliest years."

Congratulations to Wise Owls Nursery and to our runners up First Adventures Nursery and Great Western Nursery. We will share case studies of all of their good practice very soon.



Winners Wise Owls Nursery accept their award.

## NDNA Scotland's Children's Rights Award Winners 2025

This new award, announced by Minister for Children, Young People and the Promise Natalie Don-Innes, marks a culmination of the extensive UNCRC support NDNA Scotland has been developing for the ELC sector since the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill first made its way through parliament.



## NDNA Scotland – representing you

NDNA Scotland representatives attend on average around 25 different working groups led by Scottish Government, Care Inspectorate, Scottish Social Services Council and other key stakeholders.

We attend the Childcare Sector Working Group with Scottish Government, other key stakeholders and representative bodies. This group is an opportunity for all involved to speak about the main sector issues directly with Scottish Government. Many of the other groups give us the chance to share your views on more specific things such as the support for additional support needs, sustainable rates, inspections and practice guidance.

This is our opportunity to speak to the people that matter on your behalf, so please make sure you share issues with us or go to your local network and share your concerns with like-minded people. We have recently started up two new network in South and South West Scotland and East Coast of Scotland. For more information about your local network, please contact [Keith.Brotherston@ndna.org.uk](mailto:Keith.Brotherston@ndna.org.uk)







*Hello gan Sarah*



Roedd yn gam positif i'r cyfeiriad cywir pan wnaeth Llywodraeth Cymru gynyddu cyfradd ariannu'r Cynnig Gofal Plant i £6.40. Fodd bynnag, nid fydd yn ddigon i nifer o leoliadau sy'n parhau i brofi diffyg ariannol.

Diolch i'r rhai ohonoch wnaeth ymateb i'n arolwg, mae'r wybodaeth yma yn allweddol i'n cynorthwyo i lobio ar eich rhan ac i sicrhau bod Llywodraeth Cymru yn deall nad yw'r agwedd 'yr un maint i bawb' yn aml ddim yn gweithio i feithrinfeydd preifat sy'n wynebu costau uwch yn gynyddol.

**Sarah**  
Sarah Coates,  
Rheolwraig Partneriaethau Polisi a Strategol,  
NDNA Cymru

*Hello from Sarah*

It was a positive step in the right direction that the Welsh Government further increased funding rates for the Childcare Offer to £6.40. However, it is still not enough for a number of settings which continue to face a shortfall.

Thank you to those who responded to our survey, this information is key in helping us to continue to lobby on your behalf and to ensure the Welsh Government understands that a "one size fits all" approach does not often work for private day nurseries facing increased overheads.

**Sarah**  
Sarah Coates,  
Policy and Strategic Partnerships Manager,  
NDNA Cymru

## Ymestyn Dechrau'n Deg

Mae awdurdodau lleol wrthi'n cynllunio ar gyfer y cyfnod nesaf o ymestyn y rhaglen Dechrau'n Deg. Mae'r rhaglen yma yn estyniad o'r rhaglen ymyrraeth wreiddiol ac mae'n darparu 12.5 awr o ofal plant wedi'i ariannu pob wythnos (fel arfer 2.5 awr y dydd) am 39 wythnos gyda darpariaeth gwyliau hefyd ar gyfer plant dwy oed sy'n gymwys.

Bwriad Llywodraeth Cymru yw i wneud hwn yn hawliad cyffredinol i bob plentyn dwy oed felly mae'n bwysig bod lleoliadau yn edrych ar gynllun eu hawdurdod lleol ac ystyried sut bydd yn effeithio ar eu darpariaeth. Mae Canllawiau yn tanlinellu pwysigrwydd gofal plant o safon gyda staff wedi cymhwyso hyd at lefel 5. Fodd bynnag, mae llawer o ardaloedd yn fodlon gweithio gyda lleoliadau er mwyn eu galluogi i gyrraedd y safon gofynnol.

Bydd pob awdurdod lleol yn gweithredu ychydig yn wahanol, ac yn gweithio gyda'r sector yn wahanol. Mae rhai yn cysylltu gyda lleoliadau yn uniongyrchol i ofyn a ydyn nhw eisiau cymryd rhan, eraill yn gofyn i leoliadau fynd drwy broses tendro. Er I hyn allu ymddangos yn lawer o waith, mae llawer o gefnogaeth ar gael gan gyrff ymbarél a Busnes Cymru. Mae'n bwysig i wybod beth sy'n mynd ymlaen yn eich ardal a sut gallwch gymryd rhan. Am wybodaeth bellach cysylltwch â [sarah.warburton@NDNA.org.uk](mailto:sarah.warburton@NDNA.org.uk)

**Gwybodaeth bellach:**  
[bit.ly/FlyingStartWelsh](http://bit.ly/FlyingStartWelsh)  
[bit.ly/PhasedExpansionWelsh](http://bit.ly/PhasedExpansionWelsh)



## Flying Start Expansion

Local authorities are putting in place their plans for the next phase of the expansion of Flying Start. This programme is an extension of the original intervention programme and provides 12.5 hours of funded childcare per week (usually 2.5 hours a day) for 39 weeks, with holiday provision as well for eligible two-year-olds.

Welsh Government aims to make this a universal entitlement for all two-year-olds, so it is important that settings look at their local authority plans and how this will impact their provision. Guidance highlights the importance of high-quality childcare with staff qualified to level five. However, many areas are willing to work with settings to bring them up to the required standard.

Each local authority operates slightly differently, working with the sector in different ways. Some contact settings directly asking if they wish to be involved, others ask that settings go through a tendering process. While this may seem daunting there is plenty of support available from umbrella organisations and Business Wales. It is important to know what is going on in your area and how you can be involved. For further information please contact [sarah.warburton@NDNA.org.uk](mailto:sarah.warburton@NDNA.org.uk)

**Further information:**  
[bit.ly/FlyingStartGuidance](http://bit.ly/FlyingStartGuidance)  
[bit.ly/PhasedExpansion](http://bit.ly/PhasedExpansion)



Photographs above courtesy of Mighty Oaks Blackwood Ltd, Caerphilly who entered our last front cover competition.

## Cyfradd Ariannu Cynnig Gofal Plant

Yn dilyn y cyhoeddiad am y cynnydd mewn cyllid o £6 i £6.40, fe wnaethom lansio arolwg pellach fel y gallai aelodau leisio barn ar sut y byddai'r gyfradd uwch yn effeithio ar eu cynaliadwyedd.

Er ei bod yn gadarnhaol gweld bod y 40c ychwanegol yr awr wedi arwain at I nifer o leoliadau allu talu eu costau, mae'n dal i ddangos bod 73% o'r ymatebwyr yn wynebu diffyg.

Gyda'r costau cyflogaeth ychwanegol a gyflwynwyd ym mis Ebrill, nid yw'r cynnydd mewn cyfraddau ariannu yn ddigon i gefnogi cynaliadwyedd llawer o leoliadau.

Mae darparwyr gofal plant wedi gorfod cynyddu eu ffioedd i aros yn gynaliadwy. Fodd bynnag, mae methu â throsglwyddo'r costau cynyddol hyn i rieni sy'n defnyddio'r Cynnig Gofal Plant yn golygu y bydd lleoliadau'n darparu'r gwasanaeth ar golled.

Dangosodd yr ymateb i'r arolwg hefyd y bydd nifer cynyddol o leoliadau (79%) yn gwneud colled ar y sesiynau y maent yn eu cynnal fel rhan o'u gwasanaeth gofal dydd llawn.

Dywedodd Purnima Tanuku CBE, Cadeirydd Gweithredol NDNA Cymru: "Gofynnem i ddarparwyr yng Nghymru ddweud wrthym beth oedd eu diffyg ond roedd amrywiaeth mor fawr. Y pwynt pwysig yw y bydd diffyg o hyd yn y rhan fwyaf o feithrinfeydd fesul awr fesul plentyn.

"Er gwaethaf y cynnydd mewn cyllid gan Lywodraeth Cymru, maent yn dal i ddisgwyl i ddarparwyr godi llai am ofal plant oherwydd bod y llywodraeth yn talu amdano. Mae'n rhwystredig ac yn bryderus iawn nad yw darparwyr gofal dydd preifat sydd â chostau rhedeg uwch yn gallu codi gwir gost darparu'r gwasanaeth y maent yn ei ddarparu. Ni allant godi ffioedd ychwanegol ar rieni felly mae'n rhaid i'r feithrinfa amsugno'r colledion hyn rywsut.

"Effaith hyn yw y bydd yn rhaid i feithrinfeydd godi eu ffioedd ar gyfer plant dan ddwy oed a'r rhai dwy oed hynny nad ydynt eto'n gymwys ar gyfer cyllid Dechrau'n Deg. Mae rhieni sydd newydd gael cyfnod o absenoldeb rhiant ar eu lleiaf abl i fforddio ffioedd uchel a gallai hyn arwain at lai o rieni yn dychwelyd i'r gwaith, fydd yn y pendraw yn effeithio ar yr economi."



## Childcare Offer Funding rate

Following the announcement of the funding increase from £6 to £6.40, we launched a further survey so members could voice how the increased rate would impact upon their sustainability.

Whilst it was positive to see the additional 40p per hour has resulted in several settings' delivery costs being met, it still shows that 73% of respondents are facing a shortfall.

With the additional employment costs that were introduced in April, the increase in funding rates is not enough to support the sustainability of many settings.

Childcare providers have had to increase their fees to remain sustainable. However, being unable to pass these increased costs onto parents accessing the Childcare Offer means that settings are going to be delivering the service at a loss.

The survey response also showed that an increased number of settings (79%) are going to be running a loss on the sessions that they run as part of their full day care service.

Purnima Tanuku CBE, Executive Chair of NDNA Cymru said: "We asked providers in Wales to tell us what their shortfall was but there was such a big range. The important point is that in most nurseries there is still going to be a shortfall per hour per child.

"Despite the increase in funding from the Welsh Government, they still expect providers to charge less for childcare because the government is paying for it. It is very frustrating and worrying that private daycare providers who have increased running costs are unable to charge the true cost of delivery for the service that they provide. They cannot charge parents top-up fees, so the nursery has to somehow absorb these losses.

"The knock-on effect is that nurseries will have to put up their fees for under twos and those two-year-olds who are not yet eligible for the Flying Start funding. Following parental leave, this is when parents can least afford to pay the highest fees and could result in fewer parents returning to work, which will also impact the economy."





## Ofsted “report card” consultation – next steps

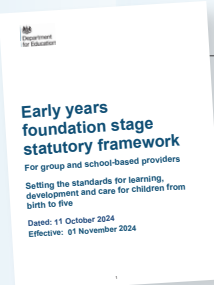


Thank you for your feedback on the Ofsted “report card” consultation. NDNA wrote a submission to the consultation based on this feedback, views of our advisory board and early years experts. You told us:

- 85% believed report cards would give parents a better understanding than single-word judgements
- 96.3% believed report cards would be fairer to their setting
- 81% ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with a five-point scale replacing the current four gradings
- Most concerns related to the use of ‘Exemplary’ on the scale
- Some areas of the early years toolkit could go beyond the scope of the EYFS – e.g. attendance
- You have concerns about the approach and consistency of individual inspectors and ongoing disparity between school-based settings and stand-alone PVI settings
- The consultation did not address non-inspection activity such as regulatory phone calls.

Jonathan Broadbery, NDNA’s Director of Policy and Communications, said: “It is important that Ofsted listens to the views of the sector in this consultation and uses this to make further improvements to its plans for the future of inspections.”

NDNA’s submission called for consistency, a fair complaints process, a careful approach towards “exemplary practice” and a parity with school inspections. We expect the new system to be in place during the next academic year.



## Sign up for June Maths Champions places

Would you like to embed early maths skills within your setting? There are places for 161 new Maths Champions on our fully funded courses starting in June.

Our early intervention maths programme supports children’s development and boosts staff confidence. Maths Champions is a tried and tested model of learning that has been proven to boost children’s maths attainment by an average of three months – likely up to six months for those from deprived backgrounds – and is completely free for your nursery.

The online programme can be fitted around your working day. It includes tailored one to one support and access to up to 700 resources. Maths Champions is funded by the DfE and Education Endowment Foundation (EEF).

Sign up here: [bit.ly/EEFNDNA](https://bit.ly/EEFNDNA)



## How you use your space

We hope you can respond to another government consultation, this one on space requirements. The prime focus will be how you can use the safe and effective free-flow between indoors and outdoors to increase your capacity. There is the opportunity to give your own suggestions. NDNA will be gathering your views and responding ahead of the 11 July deadline.

NDNA’s Executive Chair, Purnima Tanuku CBE, told the press: “There is also a need to review the indoor space requirements because no-one knows how they were defined and have not been reviewed in living memory. Providers are still telling us that they need more staff to be able to meet local demand for places. We need to see a fully costed workforce strategy from the Government.”

[bit.ly/SpaceConsultation](https://bit.ly/SpaceConsultation)

## Spending review

With the Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review out in June, NDNA has been working behind the scenes to pressure the Government into setting the right budget for DfE for the next three years.

With members, network chairs and other stakeholders we have modelled the financial impact of National Insurance Contributions (NICs) and other cost rises on different types of setting. We are also analysing our survey to show the staffing pressures that exist and how NICs are impacting recruitment. We are lobbying MPs, Ministers and the Education Committee ahead of the announcement on 11 June.



## New EYFS due shortly

We expect the new EYFS to be published imminently but at the time of going to press this still had not happened. Our team of experts will be looking at the changes which will include the new safeguarding measures, including safer eating and sleeping. We will have printed, bound copies for you to buy in our shop as well as hard copies of the new nutritional guidance that supports the safer eating changes.



# STRUGGLING TO KNOW WHICH WAY TO TURN?

As the leading brokers in the Childcare and Education sector, one of our specialist team would be delighted to help you to decide the best direction for you!

That could be expanding, planning your exit strategy or even just discussing the market and sharing experiences from other operators about how they are dealing with day to day challenges.

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