

Embedding children's rights into everyday practice

Deborah Ivins and her team from Cwtch Pentrebaen, a Mudiad Meithrin Cylch Meithrin, share their views on exploring children's rights. Cwtch Pentrebaen recently participated in a trial of the early years children's rights activity pack created by the office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales.



“ From the moment they are born, each child has specific rights. These rights are part of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and they outline what children need to grow up happy, healthy and safe. Teaching children about these rights helps them to understand how they should be treated by the adults around them, and empowers them to act if they feel that they are being treated unfairly. There are many creative ways we can help our youngest children to enjoy learning more about their rights, and to become familiar with the wider concepts behind those rights. I want every child in Wales to be fluent in the language of their rights, and it is never too early for them to begin learning about them. ”

Sally Holland

Former Children's
Commissioner for Wales

When children arrive at the beginning of a session at Cwtch Pentrebaen they are greeted by a member of staff who asks them how they are or how they are feeling. We have a nursery song that asks children how they are feeling, and mood stones with faces and emotions for children to look at, discuss or choose which one best suits their mood. If a member of staff recognises that a child is feeling sad, excited, scared or very happy,





they will address the child appropriately, depending on their emotion and talk about why they are feeling that way, if the child is happy and comfortable to do so.

We are a diverse setting based in Cardiff. We celebrate diversity by acknowledging that all our children are different, they come from a wide range of backgrounds and homes, and we encourage children and their families to share their experiences and cultures with others.

Parents and professionals from our local area have visited the setting to share their knowledge, experience, and culture. This has included a parent from a Sikh background talking to children about traditional dress, food, and festivals. We celebrate traditional Welsh culture daily through the Welsh language, Welsh songs, celebrating our locality and taking part in the local Eisteddfod and St David's Day celebrations.

All our staff and stakeholders are aware that children have rights, and staff understand the importance of the children knowing they have rights. Many of the children are unaware of what their rights are, and some are unaware that they have rights at all. Staff work hard to ensure that all children are happy and safe at our setting and that their health needs are taken care of as best as possible while they are with us.





Since participating in the trial of the early years children's rights activities, we have been much more aware of our children's rights.

One of the activities our children enjoy is when one child lays on the floor on a large piece of lining paper and the other children draw around them. We do this activity outside so that the children have the space to move around and work together with big felt tip pens, crayons, and chalk. When the child's outline is complete, we ask the children to consider what that child needs to be safe, happy and healthy.

The children then run around finding objects such as fruit and vegetables that are healthy to eat. They collect small dolls' houses or firefighter and police characters

that represent people and places that keep them safe. Photographs of their friends and families and story books that make them happy are also placed into the child's outline on the paper.

All of these items are discussed, and the children express what it feels like to them when they are happy, healthy and safe.

We use mind maps in the Cylch, which we develop and explore with the children, encouraging them to share their knowledge, and any ideas and questions they have. The children's observations and questions feed directly into planning activities in our setting.

Staff hold team meetings where the children's interests and fascinations are discussed. These meetings allow staff to



reflect on their practice and plan next steps with the children's needs and interests placed firmly at the centre of those discussions. Children are often given opportunities to reflect on their learning through talking about what they have done, looking at photos or watching videos.



Our children always have a wide range of activities to choose from. If they do not want to participate, they are encouraged to choose something else, watch others take part, or they can choose to go to one of our quiet areas. The child's decision is always respected.

We feel that introducing our children to their right to be happy, safe and healthy in Cwtch Pentrebaen, at home and in their community is a very good foundation for their future. We believe that we are well on our way to supporting our children to develop as "healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society".

