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National Network Conversation: **Delivering a curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings: Practice and Provision**

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Delivering a curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings: Practice and Provision

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Table of contents

Highlights	2
Curriculum progress	2
Staff Development and Training	2
Environment	3
Observations	4
Parental Engagement.....	5
Sector Specific Networks	5
Next Steps	6

Highlights

Curriculum progress

- Settings were at various stages with their curriculum implementation journey, partly based on whether they were involved in the initial curriculum co-construction or had previous experience of implementing a child-led approach to learning.

Staff Development and Training

- Settings were mindful of the need to manage the pace of change when implementing 'A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings'¹ to be able to provide staff with sufficient support to embed relevant practices over time, particularly given the pressures on Early Years staff in non-maintained settings and ongoing concerns around staff wellbeing and retention.
- Settings were trialling different methods of providing support and development to staff members based on their individual needs, accommodating different learning styles, digital capability and prior knowledge or experience.
- Settings welcomed the [professional learning resources](#) that were made available to support the implementation of the Curriculum for non-maintained settings including training sessions provided by Local Authorities and the non-maintained settings focussed resources available via Hwb. The Curriculum for non-maintained settings document itself was found to be valuable and accessible to practitioners regardless of their experience level.
- Whilst most settings were aware of the resources available through Hwb, some settings were either unaware of the

¹ [Curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

resources available or unaware that the resources were readily available without the need to log in.

- The resources available through Hwb were useful for supporting staff with different elements of the curriculum.
- Some settings felt there was some inconsistency in the level of support and training provided by different local authorities in Wales.
- Additionally, some settings felt that they would benefit from further training on Schemas and Observations.
- The flexibility of resources available via Hwb were welcomed. Some settings also felt they had benefitted greatly from attending in person training sessions where they were able to better engage with the subject matter. However, it was noted that there are additional challenges with attending in person training given the constraints of staffing capacity and the need to maintain statutory ratios.

Environment

- A number of settings had highlighted changes they had made to their environment to facilitate curriculum implementation including making areas more flexible so children could play in a freer and less structured way, whereas previously settings may have had designated areas for particular types of learning or topic areas.
- Settings also mentioned that staff were now more engaged in making these changes. They have the freedom to move around different learning areas and are empowered to suggest changes to the environment based on what they have observed has and has not worked well.
- In addition, settings had taken further steps to enhance their outdoor areas to make them more welcoming and engaging for children and to facilitate a greater variety of outdoor learning.
- Some settings did not have access to outdoor areas or facilities where children could play and they had to think more creatively

around facilitating outdoor learning through building local partnerships with schools, sports clubs and other community facilities.

- These activities would need to be planned ahead of time and would often take place over the space of a whole afternoon, to make the most of the facilities as and when the children access them.

Observations

- Settings highlighted the challenges that some staff had with a more flexible approach to carrying out observation.
- A few settings raised concerns that the curriculum is less prescriptive than previous curriculum/ assessment tools (this is possibly a perception). This had led to some staff carrying out fewer observations.
- However, this experience was not shared by all settings with some settings suggesting they were doing more observations now that any member of staff could conduct observations (not just the child's key worker) and that this led to a more holistic appreciation of where each individual child was at.
- It was also welcomed that they are no longer having to 'observe for observation's sake.'
- The curriculum notes that settings should carry out and record observations in a concise and manageable way that works well for their setting.
- Some settings felt that there was some staff confusion as the assessment arrangements were not released at the same time as the curriculum and it slowed their implementation of the curriculum down
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- Settings wanted to see new assessment arrangements and guidance introduced as a matter of priority to improve

curriculum implementation, support staff development and to reassure schools around transitions.

- A few settings noted that there was downward pressure from schools for Early Years settings to align their curriculum approach with the school curriculum to facilitate transition.

Parental Engagement

- Settings were aware of the need to bring parents with them on their curriculum implementation journey. Parental concerns with the curriculum highlighted included the need for reassurance around their child's progress.
- Some settings addressed parental concerns around children getting messy during outdoor learning and providing wet weather clothing. Some settings were concerned that requiring children to get changed to engage in outdoor learning may reduce the spontaneity and flow of play.
- Settings were able to highlight the various means through which they had been able to engage parents in the transition to the curriculum including through resources sent home, conversations at parents' evening and inviting parents along for site visits and engaging parents in activities.
- Despite this, some settings still felt they could be doing more to engage with parents.

Sector Specific Networks

- Settings welcomed the ability to link with other settings via networks in the non maintained sector. They felt that these networks provided a valuable resource to draw upon to share ideas of what had worked, what hadn't worked and to reassure settings that may be on different stages of the curriculum journey that they are approaching implementation in the 'right' way without being too prescriptive.

- In terms of networks, settings appreciated a mix of virtual and in person networks, which were able to facilitate connections between local and more geographically remote settings in Wales.

Next Steps

- In terms of next steps, settings were clear about the need for further support for staff training and development to ensure successful implementation of the curriculum including addressing the following issues:
 - Greater support for staff capacity to release staff to attend training.
 - Further training needed on observations and schemas.
 - Guidance on new approaches to assessment which align with the wider curriculum and help facilitate school transitions.
 - Ensuring all existing training delivered is up to date to reflect Curriculum for Wales (including college courses).
 - Greater consistency in training and support delivered across local authorities.
 - Greater promotion of the resources available through Hwb.
 - Ensuring resources available through Hwb use accessible language which can be understood by all staff regardless of experience or qualification level.
 - Support for sector specific networks to enable sharing of best practice and challenges.
- Whilst the need to support staff training and development was emphasised, settings also cautioned that the pace of change with regard to the curriculum would need to be managed in such a way to ensure staff wellbeing and retention, in light of long-standing recruitment and retention issues in the sector.
- Some settings also felt there needed to be ongoing work to recognise and champion the work non maintained settings are

doing to promote learning on equal footing with maintained settings and schools and to reassure schools about transition.