

# Playwork Education and Training Council Wales (Playwork Wales)

Annual report 2025-2026

## Introduction

Playwork Education and Training Council Wales (PETC Wales – Playwork Wales) provides strategic leadership and expert guidance in playwork education and training. This report reflects activity, key developments and discussions from June 2025 to March 2026, drawing on council meetings and the emerging forward plan which now frames priorities for the sector.

**Note:** during this year, PETC Wales agreed to add the sub-title 'Playwork Wales' to its name to mirror changes in other parts of the UK and to more effectively articulate its purpose in supporting the playwork sector in Wales. For this reason, reference is now to PETC Wales (Playwork Wales).

## Key achievements

A central achievement during the year has been significant progress in the review of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for playwork. Draft standards across different workforce levels have been developed and refined with strong engagement from advisory and writing groups, alongside sector consultation through webinars and wider discussion. The streamlining of standards and alignment with apprenticeships represents a major milestone for the sector. The final NOS will be translated and published during the summer of 2026.

*Chwarae o Safon*, Play Wales' playwork quality mark, has progressed from development to launch and early implementation.

Pilot activity has demonstrated strong interest across playwork and non-playwork settings, with the framework supporting both quality improvement and external recognition. Issues relating to sustainability, cost and scalability have been explored, with ongoing work to develop appropriate delivery and partnership models.

Training delivery and workforce development activity has continued to grow, supported by established and emerging partnerships across Wales and beyond. Significant numbers of learners have engaged with playwork training and qualifications, and infrastructure continues to expand, including the development of approved centres and widening pathways into the workforce.

## Developing the strategic direction

A major development this year has been the creation and agreement of a forward plan to guide the work of PETC Wales (Playwork Wales). This has evolved through discussions across multiple meetings and provides a clear framework for future priorities.

Key areas identified include the development of a Playwork Induction Framework to support new recruits and improve consistency across the workforce. Early discussions highlighted both the potential value of such a framework and the importance of flexibility, particularly in relation to seasonal provision and workforce realities.

Improving progression routes through qualifications, particularly to level 3, has been a significant focus, with recognition of emerging risks linked to funding, delivery models and National Minimum Standards (NMS) requirements.

The forward plan also highlights the importance of:

- reviewing qualification pathways
- updating guidance and flowcharts for managers
- supporting alignment with youth work
- considering the role of the wider workforce and allied professionals.

These priorities reflect both immediate sector needs and longer-term strategic challenges.

## Key areas of discussion and emerging issues

Throughout the year, PETC Wales (Playwork Wales) has considered a range of issues affecting the playwork workforce. Discussions have highlighted ongoing concerns regarding funding sustainability, workforce sufficiency, and barriers to accessing training and progression opportunities.

### Key areas of discussion

- **National Occupational Standards (NOS) for playwork review**

Continued progress across the year, moving from draft development through to consultation. The review has streamlined the standards and strengthened alignment with apprenticeships, with positive feedback received from across the sector.

- **Playwork apprenticeship framework**

Ongoing development with improving momentum and engagement from partners. Discussions highlighted both positive progress and the need for clearer strategic direction, alongside considerations relating to safeguarding, delivery expectations and qualification alignment.

- **Funding, workforce sustainability and progression**

Continued concern regarding funding beyond current programmes, the ability to recruit and retain learners, and barriers to progressing to level 3 qualifications. Members highlighted the need for clearer progression routes and sustainable workforce planning.

- **Qualification landscape and quality assurance**

Ongoing scrutiny of the wider qualifications landscape, including concerns about external qualifications being introduced without sector consultation. PETC Wales (Playwork Wales) continues to advocate for quality, coherence and appropriate involvement in qualification development and designation processes.

- **National Minimum Standards (NMS) and regulatory developments**

Active engagement with Welsh Government consultations, including Exceptions to childcare registration and the proposal for a Voluntary Approval Scheme and National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Regulated Childcare: proposed changes 2025. Discussions focused on implications for open access provision, workforce requirements, and the need to ensure playwork-specific perspectives are reflected in policy.

- **Playwork Induction Framework**

Early exploration of a potential induction framework for the playwork workforce, recognising the need for consistent onboarding while maintaining flexibility for diverse and seasonal provision. This has since been incorporated into the forward plan.

- **Qualification pathways and guidance for managers**

Recognition of the increasing complexity in qualification requirements, particularly in relation to NMS expectations. Members identified the need for updated flowcharts, guidance and practical tools to support employers and managers.

- **Alignment with youth work and wider workforce**

Ongoing discussion regarding alignment with youth work pathways and the potential contribution of playwork approaches across allied professions. This includes consideration of the role of PETC Wales (Playwork Wales) in relation to a wider workforce.

- **Profile and promotion of playwork**

Exploration of initiatives such as a UK Playwork Week to raise profile, support recruitment and promote sector identity, alongside wider communication and engagement activity.

## Policy and sector context

PETC Wales (Playwork Wales) has remained actively engaged with wider policy developments, including contributing to Welsh Government consultations on the National Minimum Standards (NMS) and the Exceptions Order. These processes have significant implications for workforce requirements, qualification expectations and the structure of provision, particularly in relation to open access playwork.

Discussions have highlighted both opportunities and risks within these developments, including the potential for more pragmatic approaches, as well as concerns regarding implementation and the impact on providers. The importance of ensuring that playwork perspectives are represented within policy development has been consistently emphasised.

Engagement with wider policy and sector activity has also included collaboration with Social Care Wales, the Welsh Government and other partners, supporting alignment across childcare, early years and youth work.

## Collaboration and delivery

Strong partnership working continues to underpin the work of PETC Wales (Playwork Wales). Collaboration across training providers, local authorities, national organisations and government partners has supported both strategic development and delivery of activity on the ground.

Examples of this include the continued expansion of training provision, development of new pathways into playwork, and joint working on research, training and workforce development initiatives. Activity across regions highlights both innovation and ongoing challenges, including capacity constraints and funding pressures.

## Council member highlights

- **Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)**  
Engagement around the Self Assessment of Service Statement (SASS) process to make it more proportionate for open access playwork settings. Ongoing dialogue has highlighted the importance of strengthening awareness and accessibility of playwork qualifications within regulated and unregulated provision.
- **Social Care Wales**  
Continued collaboration on workforce development and alignment across early years, childcare and playwork. Key developments include the completion of the Early Years Workforce Survey, highlighting recruitment and retention challenges, and promotion of training opportunities in safeguarding, wellbeing and mental health accessible to the playwork workforce.
- **Welsh Government**  
Ongoing engagement in national policy development, including consultations on the National Minimum Standards and Exceptions Order, and the forthcoming publication of the Ministerial Review of Play progress report. Cross-government training and growing engagement in play sufficiency work have strengthened the profile of play within wider policy areas.
- **Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs**  
Continued large-scale delivery of training and support programmes, with significant numbers of learners progressing through level 2 and apprenticeship pathways. Development of a structured Pathway to Playwork model is supporting new recruits into the workforce, alongside ongoing work to maximise available funding and expand access to training.
- **Playwork Foundation**  
Ongoing support for sector development through governance activity, professional engagement and continued involvement in four-nations work, including support for the NMS review. Additional activity includes hosting sector events and facilitating reflective learning opportunities.

- **Wrexham County Borough Council**  
Continued delivery of training and workforce development activity, alongside local initiatives such as support for Play Friendly Schools and community engagement projects. Activity reflects both strong delivery and ongoing challenges linked to funding and workforce capacity.
- **Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council**  
Significant service integration bringing together play, youth and childcare within a single structure, alongside commissioning of open access provision and multi-year funding to support sustainability and workforce stability.
- **Conwy County Borough Council/north Wales region**  
Increasing integration of play within regional wellbeing planning and public service board structures, strengthening the strategic position of play. Ongoing work highlights both innovation and capacity pressures, particularly in relation to training availability and workforce development.
- **Agored Cymru centres and delivery partners**  
Expansion of the approved centre model, with growing partnerships across further and higher education, local authorities and the third sector. Delivery continues to diversify, including blended learning approaches and wider geographical reach.

## Looking ahead

Looking ahead, PETC Wales (Playwork Wales) will focus on:

- finalising and implementing the NOS for playwork
- progressing the forward plan priorities
- continuing to support the review and development of qualifications and apprenticeships.

Ongoing attention will be required in relation to funding, workforce sustainability and the clarity of qualification pathways, alongside supporting providers to respond to policy changes and the updated NMS.

PETC Wales (Playwork Wales) will also continue to strengthen its communication, transparency and sector leadership role, including the use of annual reporting and engagement activity to support a shared understanding of progress and priorities.

This annual report has been generated with the assistance of AI.

Prepared by Play Wales on behalf of PETC Wales (Playwork Wales).



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