

Focus on play

Updated National Minimum Standards for open access playwork settings

A note on terminology: the Welsh Government regulations refer to open access play, but for clarity and consistency with wording used by the sector in Wales, we refer throughout to open access playwork.

On 18 June 2026, the Welsh Government published updated **National Minimum Standards (NMS) for regulated childcare for children up to the age of twelve**. This included the publication of a new set of standalone **NMS for open access playwork**.

The NMS statutory guidance for regulated open access playwork is intended to allow a flexible approach, allowing providers to develop quality provision tailored to the needs of children, parents and local communities. The standalone NMS are intended to reflect the needs of children from five to twelve years old and to be proportional in the way in which they are applied.

What has happened?

Changes have been made to the way that open access playwork settings are regulated and inspected by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). The new *National Minimum Standards for Regulated Day Care – Open Access Play for children aged 5 years to 12 years: statutory guidance* set out 19 minimum standards that settings should comply with. Registered persons generally should work towards ensuring that the standards are exceeded.

The new open access NMS are provided as an online HTML document and apply specifically to open access playwork settings. Previously, there was a single set of standards that applied to all regulated childcare with a number of specific exclusions for open access playwork settings. The new standards are intended to better reflect the way that open access playwork settings operate.

How was this consulted upon?

The Welsh Government's consultation on the proposed changes to the NMS took place from September to December 2025. This followed extensive involvement from national organisations in the development of the draft NMS. During the consultation period, Play Wales facilitated engagement with the sector through its Open Access Play Network.



What has changed in the NMS for open access playwork?

There are a number of differences within the updated NMS:

Structure and layout – the NMS are now an online HTML document so you can navigate through the various sections. Each standard now starts with the child's voice and wellbeing outcome, followed by the standards, links to the relevant regulations and links for further guidance and support.

What we mean by high quality provision – within the introduction there is now a section on quality relating to the Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC) quality framework. This section also directly references the Playwork Principles and the *Chwarae o Safon* playwork quality mark.

Definition of open access playwork – this has been updated to better reflect the nature of open access playwork settings in Wales.

Standards themselves – each of the 19 standards for open access playwork have been re-contextualised to ensure they still meet the regulations but also reflect more closely the way open access playwork settings tend to operate.

First aid requirements – these have been amended to better reflect the operation of open access playwork settings. Specifically, Standard 7.19 states that at least one person present at all times must hold a first aid qualification (full paediatric first aid). Contingencies must also be in place for more first aid trained staff, based on a risk assessment which reflects the circumstances of the setting and types of activities undertaken, location and number of children attending.

Suitable person – the qualification requirements within Standard 10 have been amended to make them more proportionate for open access playwork settings. The updated requirement is that the person in charge holds a level 3 playwork qualification while 50% of all other staff need to hold a level 2 qualification. For full details check the standard alongside the [List of Required Qualifications to work within the Playwork Sector in Wales](#).

Medication – guidance for administering liquid paracetamol has been updated to provide clearer standards.

How does this link with the Ministerial Review of Play?

The [Ministerial Review of Play](#) took place between 2019 and 2022 to help the Welsh Government shape how it develops and progresses the play agenda. A key theme discussed by the review was playwork provision and regulation. Under this theme, the Ministerial Review of Play Steering Group considered both the current context and a range of historical issues regarding the regulation and registration of staffed playwork provision.

The review highlighted several challenges in the way that open access playwork settings are currently inspected and regulated. Key recommendation 11 of the steering group's report specifically called for the Welsh Government to review childminding and day care regulations and orders relating to playwork. A suggested milestone under this recommendation called for the development of standalone NMS for open access playwork settings.

Does this mean that open access playwork is not as strictly regulated as other daycare and childminding?

The regulations haven't changed so open access playwork settings still have to comply with them. How the NMS are put into practice may vary given the nature of the setting itself but the registered person in an open access setting is still responsible for ensuring they meet the regulations and have due regard for the open access playwork NMS.

What about registration for open access providers working in multiple locations?

Following recommendations from the Ministerial Review of Play, the Welsh Government has considered potential changes to support a proportionate approach to registration and inspection of peripatetic open access playwork settings, with open access playwork providers being able to register once with a risk-benefit approach to adding additional locations. As a result, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) is working towards reviewing the changes required to the registration and inspection processes to enable peripatetic open access playwork providers to complete one registration application, which will include all the locations in which they will deliver the service within a defined geographical area.

Do all open access playwork settings have to register with Care Inspectorate Wales?

Alongside the NMS review, the Welsh Government also reviewed the [Childminding and Day Care Exceptions \(Wales\) Order 2010](#). These changes will come into effect from April 2027. Open access playwork settings currently, and under the new amendments, are not required to register if:

- the service operates for five days or less in any calendar year
- the service operates for two hours or less per day.



The exceptions are wide reaching and settings should check the Regulated Day care – Open Access Play section of the NMS for the up-to-date list of exceptions.

If you have any questions about the changes to the NMS, please contact us at workforce@play.wales

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