

# An introduction to Creative learning in the early years

Arts Council of Wales | Early Years Wales



# What is Creative learning?



Informed by the Creative Habits of Mind developed from the work of Guy Claxton, Bill Lucas and Ellen Spencer of the Centre of Real World Learning at Winchester University (2013)

Creative learning is learning which nurtures and develops the creative habits of mind in children and young people. Creativity is a way of thinking and approaching the world which exists within each and every one of us. It is the ability to wonder and question, to explore and investigate, to play with possibilities and use our imaginations.

Early Years children have a naturally inquisitive nature and sense of wonder which, when given creative learning opportunities, environments and engagement, can stimulate children's development and natural curiosity to learn and explore.

# Collaboration



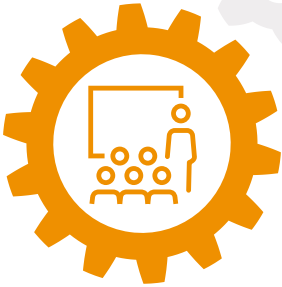
## Early years practitioner

The early years practitioner co-plans and works with the creative practitioner and children. They are expert in their knowledge of the early years curriculum and the developmental stages of the children and are open to exploring new approaches to the learning within their settings.



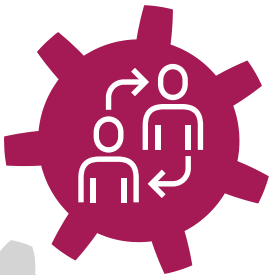
## Creative agent

The creative agent works with the early years setting and practitioners to explore which areas will be focused on and also help with recruiting suitable creative practitioners to work in the setting alongside the early years' practitioner. The creative agent is also there to offer support and advice throughout the partnership.



## Creative practitioner

The creative practitioner co-plans and works with the early years' practitioner and children. They are used to exploring creative ways of working and trying new approaches.



## Children

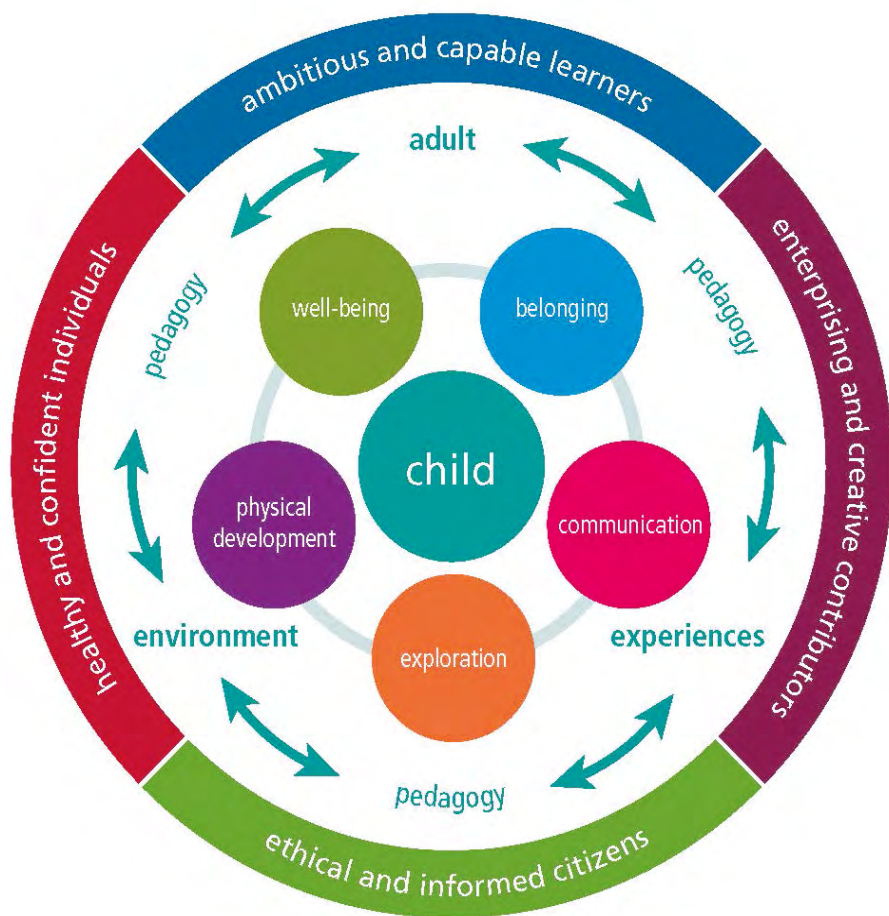
It is important that children are part of the discussion and planning process of what will be explored creatively within the early years setting. Their interests, imagination and curiosities should be noticed and act as a prompt for the direction of exploration within the settings.



## Parents

Parents and carers are their child's first educators and play a key role in their children's learning. By working together, both parents and practitioners can enhance children's learning and development and can help develop children's creative habits of mind and love of learning.

The five developmental pathways place children at the heart of their learning. There is a focus on developing an awareness of the needs, interests and curiosity of three – and four-year-olds. At this age children are learning to express themselves, gaining in independence and becoming more aware of the world around them. The developmental pathways focus on what is important for the child and what we can do to support development and encourage curiosity and exploration.



Source: A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings (Education Wales | WG)



# Creative learning in the early years



This collaborative initiative has at its core a focus on the following principles:

- **Developing the language and many means of expression of young children** – Children have many languages of expression and these should be recognised and valued. These languages, including spoken language, originate and develop through experience.
- **Play and playful learning** – Play and playful learning are an integral part of being human. Through play children relate their inner worlds of ideas, feelings and experience, taking them to new levels of thinking, feeling, imagining and expression.
- **Engaging with nature and outdoor learning** – The natural world provides an environment rich in potential to nurture a child's physical, emotional, and cognitive growth and well-being. The natural curiosity and sensory stimulation provided by engagement with nature and the outdoor world enables a growing connection and relationship with our natural surroundings.

- **Physical development and confidence in exploration** – Exploration stimulates physical development and encourages children to use their senses. It also helps a child to become more active naturally.
- **Creativity and symbolic representation** – Creativity provides children with the opportunity to explore and communicate their ideas, thoughts, and experiences in their own way. Young children use multiple forms of symbolic representation before literal forms take a more dominant role.
- **Noticing and supporting children as autonomous learners** – Each child is unique in their developing experience of the world, their interests, curiosities, abilities and potential. Children learn best by doing things for themselves. In this way they become problem solvers, decision-makers and confident, exploring learners.



# Examples of Creative learning with young children



Year 1 pupils and Early Years practitioners worked with two outdoor creative practitioners to explore the theme of 'Wild Things'. The emphasis was on hands on outdoor learning and every week there was a 'Messy Monday!' which became a springboard for the rest of the week's activity. Over the course of the project pupils and practitioners used the outdoor areas, including developing new play sheds, creating minibeast environments, building dens, creating steppingstones and finalising the project with a parade with giant puppets, drums, a haka and a performance to parents and teachers of "Where the Wild Things Are".

The Early Years practitioner commented during evaluation: "We will definitely continue teaching like this!"

- Inquisitive – Exploring and Investigating
- Imaginative – Playing with possibilities
- Collaborative – Sharing the 'product'

A group of six year old learners used their local beach to develop their Welsh language oracy skills. Each week, a fictional character called Wil the Fisherman came to visit the learners retelling tales from the seaside town's past, engrossing the pupils in their imagination and problem solving skills as they would work together to help Wil find his famous treasure box and to build him a fisherman boat out of natural resources found on the beach. They also composed a song based on what they had discovered from exploring the outdoors.

- Inquisitive – Wondering and Questioning
- Imaginative – Making Connections
- Collaboration – Cooperation Appropriately



## Further information

The Arts Council of Wales have a database of Creative Agents and Creative Practitioners with experience of working with Early Years practitioners in early years settings. The Creative learning in the early years initiative is currently a three-year initiative and the aim is for the learning and experience to be shared widely beyond the initiative.

If you would like further information, please get in touch with our team: [creative.learning@arts.wales](mailto:creative.learning@arts.wales)

## Resources

Arts Council of Wales, Creative learning through the arts:  
[www.creativelearning.arts.wales](http://www.creativelearning.arts.wales)

Here are some external resources you may find useful:

A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings:  
[www.hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings](http://www.hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings)

Learning through play:  
[www.learningthroughplay.com](http://www.learningthroughplay.com)

Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University Play Archives:  
[www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu)

---

## Accessibility

Arts Council of Wales is committed to making information available in large print, easy read, braille, audio and British Sign Language and will endeavour to provide information in languages other than Welsh or English on request.