



TOGETHER FOR FAMILIES: SHARING RELIABLE RESOURCES FOR EVERY CHILD'S BEST START





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Getting to know our members: Bronwen Lloyd

We are getting to know our members and would like to help our members to get to know each other. This month we're meeting **Bronwen Lloyd, Business Support Officer, Public Health Wales.**

Please tell us a bit about yourself and your current work

I have worked as a Business Support Officer for the Wider Determinates of Health Unit for 4 years. I'm currently supporting a range of operational and project related tasks. That includes coordinating meetings, maintaining and improving action logs, managing stakeholder distribution lists and keeping on top of several new and upcoming projects. A big part of my role is making sure everything runs smoothly in the background so the team has what they need to move forward.

What motivated you to join this network?

I joined the network because as a Business Support Officer, I need to stay on top of new information and developments so I can feed back to my team. Being part of the Network helps me keep my knowledge up to date and it's also a great way to connect with others, share learning and build relationships across the organisation.

What are the benefits for you in being a member of this network?

As I mentioned above, joining the Network really benefits me because it helps me stay up to date with new information and developments. The regular webinars and the monthly e-bulletin provide useful updates that I can feed back to my team, and they really support my learning in the role.

What is one thing you would like to share with other members of the network?

I like sharing ideas and learning with others in the network so we can all benefit from it.

Are you happy for your email address to be shared on the e-bulletin?

Yes – Bronwen.lloyd@wales.nhs.uk

If you would like to feature in a future edition, please email us at publichealth.network@wales.nhs.uk



Practice

Health Information for Parents: Strengthening Health Literacy to Give Every Child the Best Start in Life

Laura Rich,

Principal Public Health Practitioner, Public Health Wales

Health Information for Parents is a key programme within Health Improvement, designed to provide high-quality, trusted, and accessible health and wellbeing information for expectant and first-time parents in Wales. By improving the quality of information available and how it is accessed, the programme aims to strengthen both individual and system-level health literacy — a vital foundation for improving health outcomes across Wales.

Health literacy is widely recognised as a critical determinant of health. Lower

levels of health literacy are consistently linked to poorer health behaviours, reduced engagement with services, and worse health outcomes (1). It is more than the ability to read leaflets or navigate websites; health literacy is the ability to access, understand, evaluate, and use health information to make informed decisions that support health and wellbeing (2). It involves asking questions, expressing personal needs, and participating in shared decision-making. Encouragingly, it is also modifiable — meaning it can be improved through high-quality, accessible information and supportive

systems (3), (4).

Today, parents face an overwhelming volume of health information from professionals, peers, social media, and influencers. Not all of it is accurate or trustworthy. This can create confusion, anxiety, and missed opportunities for prevention, treatment, and early support. It also affects parental confidence and influences decisions that shape a child's early development and long-term outcomes. With many of Wales' leading causes of morbidity and mortality being preventable or linked to modifiable behaviours,

supporting families with clear, credible information is essential.

Parents and carers have told us they want health and wellbeing information that feels realistic, supportive, and relevant throughout their parenting journey – and they want it from the NHS. They value consistency, reliability, and the ability to link seamlessly to trusted sources.

In response, Health Information for Parents has been developed as a universal offer for expectant and new parents in Wales. Health Improvement leads the development, maintenance, and dissemination of these resources, which support families from pregnancy through to age seven. The resources are grounded in evidence, shaped by expert input, and written in clear, accessible language. They provide simple, practical guidance parents can trust to help give their child the best start in life.

The resources are delivered as part of routine contact points within the Healthy Child Wales Schedule (5) through supportive conversations with maternity and health visiting teams. Parents can access them in both hardcopy and digital formats, making them flexible and inclusive for diverse families and varying literacy needs.

A universal approach is crucial. It aligns with Welsh policy priorities around

prevention, early years, child rights, and reducing inequalities. The “Once for Wales” model ensures consistency, quality, and equity, supported through multidisciplinary oversight and embedded within key system touchpoints such as the Maternity Standards.

We all have a role to play in ensuring that information is accessible, understandable, and actionable. By using universal, evidence-based, high-quality resources, we can make it easier for parents to navigate their parenting journey confidently and well-informed.

Health literacy isn't a luxury – it's a public health necessity. Together, we can ensure trusted information becomes the norm, not the exception through the consistent provision of the universal health information offer for parents here in Wales.

For more information on Health Information for Parents visit: phw.nhs.wales/topics/every-child-health-information-for-parents/

Watch the webinar: publichealthnetwork.cymru/event/new-parent-health-information-resources-published-by-public-health-wales-supporting-families-across-wales/

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Policy

The power of play in the early years: resources from Play Wales

Marianne Mannello,

Assistant Director: Policy, Support and Advocacy, Play Wales

A range of public health policies and programmes, such as *Best Start in Life: An Early Years Framework for Action*, place an emphasis on the earliest years of a child's life. It is well established that the environment surrounding a young child has a crucial role to play in their early development. Early interactions, experiences and environments can lay the foundation for children to make the most of their opportunities to play as they grow and develop.

Play Wales has a range of resources designed to support practitioners working

with babies, toddlers, young children and their parents and caregivers. The *Play in the first 1000 days* information sheet explores the importance of play in the period during pregnancy and up to the child's second birthday. The first 1000 days offers great potential for positive and lasting impact. Play is the foundation for development during this time.

As well as providing instant enjoyment for babies, toddlers and young children, playing is a fundamental aspect of a child's development. Through play, children learn, explore and make sense of the world around them.

Endorsed by Early Years Wales, *Play in the first 1000 days* features information about:

the importance of play for immediate and long-term health and wellbeing
the power of play for babies, toddlers and young children
the role of adults
support for caregivers
play and the sensory systems
the role of professionals in promoting play.

It also features a section with information for parents all about play in the first 1000 days, including ideas for playing with babies and

toddlers at different ages. This information sheet is aimed at those working with babies, toddlers, young children and their parents and caregivers. It will also be useful to anyone with an interest in, or responsibility for, children's play and early years.

You can access the Information sheet at: <https://play.wales/resources-library/info-sheet/play-in-the-first-1000-days/>

The *Playing outdoors in early years settings* toolkit is aimed at practitioners and agencies working in early years settings, and organisations that seek to engage families. It was developed in collaboration with researchers from the University of Exeter and University of Stirling – Professor Helen Dodd, Dr. Lily FitzGibbon and Gill Hearnshaw. Play Wales received funding from Cardiff and Vale Local Public Health Team, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board to pilot and publish the toolkit.

It highlights the importance of play for children of all ages and of creating a rich play environment. The toolkit is designed to:
provide clear and concise information for early years settings and practitioners to increase opportunities for children in their care to play and spend more time outdoors
provide practical, step-by-step tools and templates to support

the facilitation of outdoor play provide a framework for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for practitioners.

The toolkit is available at: <https://play.wales/publications/category/playing-outdoors-in-early-years-settings-a-toolkit/>



Practice

Supporting families to introduce solid foods: developing an enhanced programme within health visiting services

Sophie Owen,

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Jodie Jones,

Nutritional Lead for Health Visiting, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Introducing solid foods is a key stage in infant development and an important opportunity to establish healthy eating habits early in life (4). The foods and flavours infants are exposed to during this period can influence dietary preferences and eating patterns into childhood and beyond, with early feeding practices recognised as an important factor in obesity prevention. However, many parents report feeling unsure about when to begin complementary feeding, which foods are safe to offer, and how

to introduce a variety of foods between six and twelve months of age. Health visiting teams also observed that families were increasingly relying on commercial baby foods, which often lack nutritional quality and limit opportunities for infants to experience a range of textures and flavours from family foods.

In response, the health visiting nutritional lead within Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board collaborated with Public Health Dietitians to develop an enhanced introducing

solid foods programme to be delivered by health visitors in the community.

The introduction of solid foods, often referred to as complementary feeding, is a key stage in infant development and an important opportunity to establish healthy eating behaviours. UK guidance recommends introducing solid foods at around six months of age alongside continued breast milk or infant formula (3). During this stage, infants benefit from exposure

to a variety of tastes and textures to support normal growth, development and the establishment of healthy eating patterns.

However, families can often feel uncertain about how and when to introduce solids, what foods to offer and how to progress textures appropriately. Research indicates that commercial baby foods are commonly used during the complementary feeding period, with studies suggesting that around one third of infants consume these products more than seven times per week (1). While convenient, studies have raised concerns about the nutritional quality of many commercial baby foods, with some products containing relatively high levels of sugars and being predominantly fruit-based purées (1). Regular reliance on these products may also reduce opportunities for infants to experience a variety of textures and savoury flavours from family foods, which are important for the development of feeding skills and food preferences.

Supporting families during this stage aligns with Welsh Government policy priorities to promote healthy weight from the earliest stages of life. Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales, the national strategy to prevent and reduce obesity, highlights the importance of supporting healthy behaviours during the early

years, while wider prevention and early years initiatives emphasise the value of early intervention to improve long-term health outcomes (2). A complementary feeding programme was developed, combining evidence-based education on introducing solids with a practical cooking session designed to build parents' knowledge, skills and confidence in preparing simple, nutritious foods for their babies.

The programme has helped provide parents with structured and consistent support during the complementary feeding stage. Feedback from participants indicated that parents valued the opportunity to receive practical guidance and ask questions in a supportive environment. The cooking session was particularly well received, helping parents feel more confident preparing simple foods for their babies rather than relying on commercial products.

"I have found the course really beneficial. My biggest fear is choking and this course definitely made me feel more confident in what I can give my now 9 month old. I think this course should be available to every parent" – Parent.

Health visitors also reported that the programme strengthened consistent messaging around complementary feeding and

increased their confidence when discussing infant nutrition with families.

"The course has changed mindsets as I've seen some positive changes in the home"
– Health Visitor

Overall, the project demonstrated that combining practical skills with evidence-based education can enhance early feeding support within existing health visiting services.

Complementary feeding represents an important window for shaping lifelong dietary habits and supporting healthy growth. Parents often want to provide healthy foods for their babies but may lack confidence or practical skills when introducing solids. Providing early, practical and consistent support can help address this gap. Health visiting teams are well placed to deliver this type of intervention due to their trusted relationships with families and regular contact during the first year of life. Integrating practical complementary feeding support and including cooking skills within early years services, may help families establish healthy feeding habits earlier and reduce reliance on commercial baby foods. The collaboration between Health Visiting and Public health dietetics is planned to continue, with programmes under

development to promote healthy mealtimes in the family and reduce the risk of faddy eating. Collaborative approaches between dietitians and health visiting teams can play an important role in strengthening early years nutrition support and contributing to wider healthy weight ambitions in Wales.

References

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Grapevine



Horizon Scanning (Future Trends Report)

Bec Marshall,

Senior Future Trends Manager, Welsh
Government

The Welsh Government would love for you to help inform the 2026 Future Trends Report, please follow the link below to share your views on Health Trends.

[Sganio gorwelion
\(Tueddiadau'r Dyfodol
Adroddiad\) Horizon Scanning
\(Future Trends Report\) – Fill
in form](#)

If you have any questions or if you would like to be involved in a different way please get in touch with Bec.Marshall@gov.wales

Research

Loneliness, social isolation and social connection in Wales: A public health perspective

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Loneliness and social isolation are increasingly recognised as significant public health challenges, with wide-ranging negative impacts on the health and well-being of individuals, communities and wider societies. In contrast, strong social connections are key to good physical and mental health, well-being and resilience (1). In the wake of the WHO Commission on Social Connection, as well as societal changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise in digital technology, a valuable opportunity was presented to reflect on social connection in Wales and how global insights can strengthen this.

We developed a report with the aim of presenting loneliness, social isolation and social connection in Wales from a public health perspective. The report was informed by collation and synthesis of current national and international evidence, discussion with stakeholders from the area of social connection in Wales, and

primary data collection on the prevalence of social isolation and connection through the Time to Talk Public Health (2) survey.

The report includes data and evidence on the prevalence of loneliness, social isolation and social connection in Wales and the population groups most affected; factors that increase the risk; impacts on health and well-being; evidence on solutions; examples of good practice in Wales; and key areas for future action. Key findings demonstrated that 13% of people feel lonely, 13% are socially isolated, and 71% feel fairly or very connected to others. Certain demographic groups (i.e. those in poor health, those who are unmarried, and those living in areas of higher deprivation) are particularly at risk of experiencing poor social connection, and impacts of this span from individual (higher mortality and physical and mental health conditions) to community (resilience) and societal (economic costs) effects. Wales has many

positive examples of good practice in this area, including a national strategy with the goal of strengthening social connections.

This report demonstrates not only the substantial risks of loneliness and social isolation to individuals, communities and societies, but also that there is significant ongoing work in Wales to reduce these risks, and that stakeholders across sectors are engaged and motivated to consider social connection in their work.

Based on the findings of this report, we recommend that data is routinely collected on social isolation in Wales (complementing data already collected on loneliness) to generate further understanding of the issues and inform interventions. Further research should be conducted on how loneliness and social isolation impact across sectors, and the roles that each sector can play in solutions. Interventions should target at-risk populations, and action should

be routinely evaluated. Social connection should also be considered in the development of other policies, such as those for older people, as such policies have indirect, but substantial, effects on social connection.

Finally, opportunities for cross-sector working and partnerships should be created to further encourage stronger social connections.

Read the report here:

[Loneliness, social isolation and social connection in Wales: A public health perspective - World Health Organization Collaborating Centre On Investment for Health and Well-being](#)

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New Parent Health Information Resources published by Public Health Wales – Supporting Families Across Wales

This webinar highlighted how embedding these resources into your programmes and services and offering them to our families, help to create a consistent, trusted parenting offer across Wales.

[Watch](#)



Introducing the ‘Evidence Pie’ with Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) Rhondda Cynon Taf

Join us for this webinar with Zoe Lancelott and Rhianydd Davies from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC), Rhondda Cynon Taf.

[Watch](#)



Launch of Teg I Bawb / Fair for All: A Strategic Action Plan to address health inequalities through Primary Care

This webinar launches a Fairer Primary Care – Fair for All, Teg I Bawb, action plan that has been developed by reviewing the evidence, data and iterative rounds of face to face and online workshops, and extensive engagement and collaboration with patients, health professionals, senior leaders, community groups, and experts by experience across the Primary Care system in Wales.

[Watch](#)

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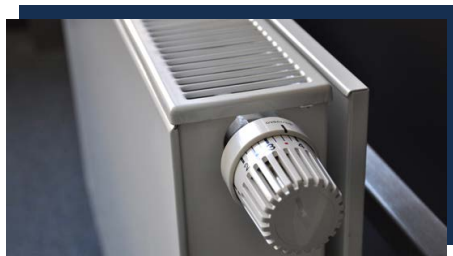
News & Resources





[Additional funding for mental health and wellbeing support for every school](#)

27-03-2026



[Wrapped up but still cold at home](#)

24-03-2026



[Voices of children and families in poverty show importance of creating a healthier future for housing in Wales](#)

11-02-2026

All News

[Loneliness, social isolation and social connection in Wales: A public health perspective](#)

Public Health Wales

[Trade, Trade Agreements and Tariffs and the Impact on Health, Wellbeing and Equity in Wales](#)

Public Health Wales

All Resources

Next Issue

COLLABORATION IN PARTNERSHIPS



Public Health Wales recently published a report on behalf of the Building a Healthier Wales Coordination Group, called *Better Join Up, Better Outcomes for Child Poverty*. This will be followed by a webinar which will share the findings and recommendations from the report and present a self-assessment tool that anyone can use to strengthen collaboration on any topic.

We would like to invite members to share any practical approaches, tools or resources that support effective partnership working. This could include examples from national, regional or local initiatives. We're keen to learn from your experiences and highlight them with our members to help strengthen collaboration across Wales.

Our [article submission](#) form will provide you with further information on word count, layout of your article and guidance for images.

Please send articles to publichealth.network@wales.nhs.uk by 16 April 2026.

Contribute