

PLANT YNG NGHYMURU  
CHILDREN IN WALES

# State of Parenting and Family Support Sector 2024



Information gathered February 2024 during a National Parenting and Family Support Strategic Leads Network meeting, views and input from 17 Local Authorities across Wales.

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The overall picture in Wales has not changed much from 2023 with many issues intensifying.

Currently across Wales referrals are at a high level and often in **crisis response**, moving away from the **early Intervention and prevention approach** that the service is funded to deliver.

## Reason for referrals

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Referrals are widespread and varied but there are some specific areas of need:

- Behaviour
- School refusal
- Speech Language and Communication and Developmental delay
- Parent and child anxiety
- Parental conflict and relationship support
- Mental health
- Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Neurodevelopmental waiting lists
- Antenatal support
- Parenting teenagers
- Trauma and ACEs
- Lack of general parenting capacity – routine, boundaries etc.

# Areas of concern

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Many services including statutory are **overwhelmed and overstretched** and it is often parenting and family support sector that end up **filling the gaps** leaving the service **firefighting**. The focus of work is sometimes being forced to **move away from early intervention and prevention** and universal support to meet demands of higher-level needs. Alternatively, staff and resources are being stretched as they try to meet all needs and demands.

Strategizing is hard when everyone is trying to do the best with what they have got, innovation and creativity can get lost when in fight or flight mode.

**One size does not fit all**, and the parenting support services provided across Wales are having to reflect this, learning from what works, using a strength based approach and listening and responding to parent's needs. This includes:

- Online and Face to Face delivery
- Group delivery and one to one support
- Dealing with underlying issues

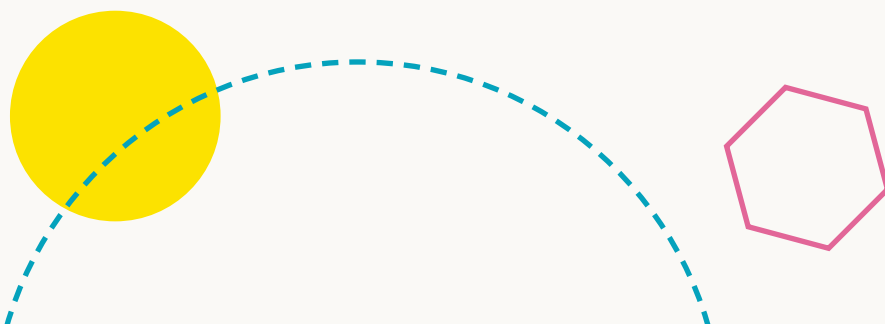
Some areas offer a hybrid approach, whereas some are all face to face, the uptake, demand and retention varies. Evening/twilight programmes are having success in some areas.

Group delivery can work well, and some informal groups are oversubscribed, and retention is high, whereas other areas struggle to engage parents and are moving more towards one-to-one support.

More time supporting parents to recognise and help support themselves before they can focus on their children and the help they need.

There continues to be huge concern for the **well-being of staff** and the pressure they are facing. They are taking on a lot more, often over and above their specific remit and expertise; meaning a huge amount of pressure and responsibility. Staff are feeling unqualified and inadequate in their roles, leading to a lack of confidence, satisfaction, and low morale and then concerns around retention.

**Funding and ring-fenced funding** is affecting a wide variety of areas, waiting lists/times are high especially for ND, leading to more pressure on parenting and family support services. Funding cuts affect venue hire for activities, current programme delivery and staff cuts. Overall difficult decisions are having to be made and this is impacting both staff and families.





# Response to Issues

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LA's are already looking at ways to address some of the issues arising and are working hard to support families in their local areas:

Running **universal and informal groups** meeting the lower-level need, while providing key messages and support. These informal groups often a space for parents to gain professional and peer support and allow further needs to be identified and supported where appropriate.

Working with parents in the **Antenatal** to offer that early intervention approach and build relationships with families allow parenting support to be part of the process.

LA's **working regionally** and **collaboratively** to more effectively use time and resources to meet an increased and varying demand.

Ultimately, the **service is unable to meet the demand** and complexity of what it is receiving and have concerns in the ability to deliver the early intervention and prevention service they are funded to do so.

A clear overarching guidance and direction from Welsh Government is required to ensure that all services are working collaboratively to meet the ever-increasing needs and demands of families and ensure that babies, children and young people are having the best start in life.

