

Case Study – Children’s rights – Amanda Calloway, Registered Childminder

Overview of the work

This case study has been produced by PACEY Cymru as part of a wider the children’s rights in the early years training pack by the Office of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales.

About the setting

Amanda Calloway has been working as a registered childminder in Flintshire for fifteen years and currently cares for young children from eight months to three years of age.

Embedding children’s rights

‘Children’s rights should be at the core of planning and service delivery.’ The Right Way, Children’s Commissioner for Wales: 2017.

Amanda attended a *Children in Wales*, participation and children’s rights course at University Glyndwr in 2011, which inspired her practice in relation to children’s rights and informed the development of a children’s rights policy that has been in place for ten years. Amanda explains: *“Children’s rights and participation are weaved through everything I do. I have robust policies and procedures in place that are working documents and not just paying lip service to promoting children’s rights.”*

Equality and non-discrimination

‘Equality involves treating all children fairly, and providing them with opportunities and resources according to their needs, equal with others, ensuring that they are able to develop to their fullest potential.’ The Right Way, Children’s Commissioner for Wales: 2017.

“My aim is to allow all my little ones to participate in everything we do if they so choose”
Amanda Calloway, registered childminder.

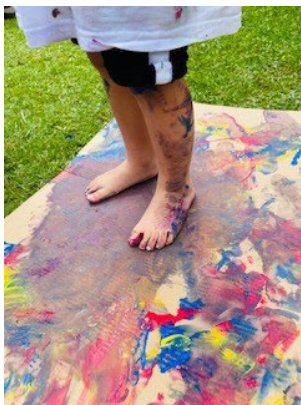
Amanda identifies barriers to participation and seeks to address these, for example there are a wide range of messy play opportunities on offer which require appropriate clothing. *“Barriers can be far reaching, but something as simple as me providing outdoor waterproofs means that every child is able to access all the resources without worry that parents may not be able to afford the items, or they may forget to bring them, or that clothes will be ruined and parents not able to replace. It’s all about being creative and having measures in place to work around barriers that may present.”*



Participation

'For me I think the overarching principle is that the child is at the centre of everything I do'
Amanda Calloway, registered childminder.

Due to the ages of the children that Amanda works with, it is important to be skilled in reading non-verbal cues to support their participation. Amanda explains that it is important to build a good relationship with the children and to be attentive to their communication cues in order for the children to have a sense of agency, to make choices and influence the service, and to initiate their own learning. Amanda strives to work as a team with the children to shape all aspects of their day. This approach requires an in depth awareness of and attention to individual children, their preferences, interests and subtle communication cues.



When it comes to learning and development Amanda advocates for the child's right to play and take an active role in shaping their learning. Rather than setting rigid tasks and activities, a more open-ended exploratory approach is taken.

'I believe that learning is an active process controlled by the learner, motivated by curiosity. My role is not to put my ideas of predetermined outcomes, but instead to provide an enabling environment full of rich resources that allows a child agency over their own play.' Amanda Calloway, registered childminder.

'Relationships are so important to a children's rights approach. I work hard to build positive reciprocal relationships with parents where we can both be honest and transparent. Empowering children to be confident to make decisions is grounded on a good relationship between home and the setting.' To support new children settling into the setting, care mirrors their preferences and individual home experiences. Although capturing sufficient information from a family before a child starts may seem basic, the depth of this information is an important start to understanding their preferences and communication. *'I totally believe that the reason a new 18 month old child settled in so well recently is because her Mum had told me in-depth what she likes to do at home and I was able to replicate that to aid her transition into the setting. Her Mum thought she was a little silly telling me that the child absolutely loved listening to a certain Abba song, but actually that tiny bit of very relevant information meant I knew what she was asking for and was able to play the song (many times) throughout the session. I would never have worked out what she was asking me for from her verbal requests without the detailed input and conversations I had had with mum.'* This positive start not only gave the child a real sense of belonging and familiarity through her first session but showed that she can make choices and influence the service.

Children are offered choices across all aspects of the service, for example access to select from a range of open-ended resources. At meal and snack times, children choose own plates as well as the food that they eat from a healthy selection laid out on the table, which involves them in decision making on both what and how much they eat. Children also enjoy choosing where to go on days out, younger children love selecting from photos of regular places visited to participate in these decisions.



Further information

For further information please contact PACEY Cymru by emailing paceycymru@pacey.org.uk.

Further information in relation to children's rights in relation to childcare and early years is available on our website www.pacey.org.uk