

# Family Information Service

Spring Newsletter for Families and Professionals in Blaenau Gwent



Edition 5: September 2025

**Welcome to the Blaenau Gwent FIS Newsletter!** Here you will find loads of information on local events and groups; what our teams have been up too recently; helpful information and advice; some activities you can do with your little ones and lots more!

## Breastfeeding

Our Breastfeeding Welcome scheme has been growing again! Thank you to the incredible Brynmawr Market Hall Cinema and The Rustic Stag Brynmawr for supporting our breast feeding campaign!

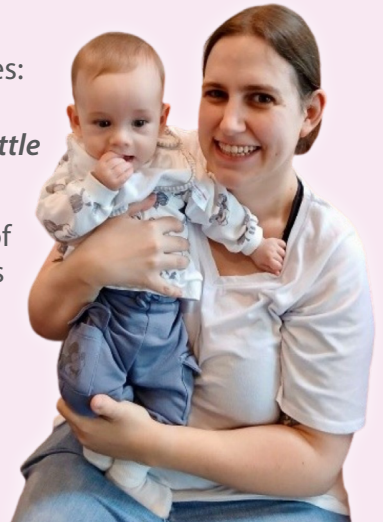
### **Meet some Breastfeeding mams:**

See what some of our Breastfeeding mam's had to say about their experiences:

**Meet Steph! She's a mam from Blaenau Gwent who has been breastfeeding her little one Milo.**

'My breastfeeding journey has had its ups and downs and without the support of the responsive feeding team and the mums I've met through the feeding groups I'm not sure I'd still be doing it. They've helped me get through the times where I've felt overwhelmed or when Milo was struggling to feed and wasn't gaining weight.

Having that bond with my little one through breastfeeding is something I will always cherish. I'm glad I persevered through the difficult times. It was definitely all worth it.'



.....

**This is Teddy and him mam Mia.**

Mia decided to give Teddy breast milk when he was born 6 weeks early and needed to spend time in NICU. Mia told us that the thing she loved most about breastfeeding is the amazing bond she has with Teddy who is now 18 months and continues to be breastfed.

Mia also likes not having to wash bottles and make up feeds, allowing her to spend more time with Teddy and that she has saved an absolute fortune not having to buy formula.

**Well done Mia on your fantastic breastfeeding journey - and still going too!**



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## Breastfeeding Week 2025

World Breastfeeding week ran from the 1st August to 7th August 2025. This year's theme was 'Empowering Parents and Enabling Breastfeeding'. Our incredible Flying Start team was out and about all week promoting breastfeeding and supporting mams in the community!

The highlight of the week for many was the 'Buggy Walk and Picnic' in Bedwellty Park. Despite a bit of a rainy day, our team was joined by a selection of parents who were keen to stay active and promote breast feeding in Blaenau Gwent! Thank you everyone who attended, and braved the rain, you made this event extra special.



## Antenatal Event

Our incredible Flying Start Team will be holding a FREE Antenatal Baby Shower event for pregnant people and their support networks.

Join them on the 14th October for a presentation from the midwife; Q&A; information and advice from a range of professionals; and lots of freebies and a FREE raffle! We can't wait to see you there! Hope Church, Ebbw Vale

**Tuesday 14th October 2025**  
**4pm – 6pm**



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## Childcare Spotlight

Starting this term, each of our newsletters will spotlight one childcare setting and one childminder. For Autumn 2025, we're thrilled to feature a setting that recently received an outstanding CIW inspection report, along with a newly registered childminder who's made a fantastic start!

### Little Stars

So without further ado... meet our featured childcare setting for Autumn 2025 – Little Stars! Read what they had to say below.



'Little Stars Nursery Ebbw Fawr has been providing services to families for the past 11 years. We are excited to soon be celebrating our 12th Birthday in October! We are extremely proud of our achievements since our recent CIW Inspection which took place in July where we achieved a scoring of "Four Excellent's" in the core areas.

### *What makes us special here at Little Stars Nursery Ebbw Fawr?*

At our nursery, we believe that every child deserves a joyful, nurturing start to life. Providing a service for children who range from the ages of 6 weeks to 12 years old. What sets us apart is our deep commitment to creating a home-from-home environment where children all feel safe, valued, and inspired every single day, & parents feel welcomed, respected & that their opinions & wishes are valued



- We focus on the children's personal growth adapting our approaches to meet the individual children's needs, interests & personalities.
- The staff here at Little Stars are made up of passionate, creative & highly trained qualities to be able to provide the children within our care the best possible experiences & opportunities to flourish & grow
- In each of our rooms spaces have been created to be stimulating, inclusive & full of wonderful resources to promote children's curiosity and encouraging exploration through play.
- We promote a strong sense of communication & partnerships with our families & extended community ensuring open communication and shared goals for each child's journey, also providing the children with real life experiences.

We don't just care for our Little Stars, we champion their potential, celebrate their milestones, allow them to explore their own challenges and help them build the foundations for a bright and happy future. Following our recent inspection, I'm absolutely delighted to share that our nursery received fantastic feedback and I couldn't be prouder of our team. Every day, our staff nurture curiosity, build confidence, and create safe spaces where children can thrive and develop their unique journey. This result is a celebration of our shared values that we've built together.'



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## See what the staff have to say:

*'I adore my job as I get to watch the children grow & support them to hit their milestones & goals. We are like one big family at Little Stars Nursery Ebbw Fawr' - Madison Morgan,*



*'I love my job, not only because of my fellow staff members are supportive & always there for me if I need it but also because I love being a part of a safe & caring environment that children love to attend. Coming in, in the mornings to a cuddle off the children is my favourite thing' - Alisha Marie Sutton*

*'I have worked at little stars for 9 years. Working in a nursery is a heart-warming and rewarding experience that brings joy and purpose to each day. It's a place where laughter echoes, learning blossoms, and your efforts help shape futures.' - Shannon Willis*



## Jollies Childminding

Our featured childminder this term is Kirsty at Jollies Childminding. Kirsty has recently opened her childminding business in Brynmawr and has hit the grown running. Check out what she had to say below!



*'I've always had a passion for working with children, from being a teenager babysitting for local families to my previous roles working in schools and nurseries as well as a short time as a foster carer. I've always loved the way the children view the world and how we can support them to become wonderful individuals who love to explore play and learn.*

*I took a break from childcare as I wanted to grow my own family. A little over 3 years ago I was fortunate to have my youngest child and that gave me the drive to fulfil my dream of having my own childminding business where I could play a pivotal role in caring for children on a full time basis and put into practice all the skills I had learnt over the years.*

*That is when I contacted the BG FIS to start the ball rolling. I spent a year getting more childcare qualifications relating specifically to childminding and running a business and also setting my home up to be an inviting space to welcome all the new little jollies too.*

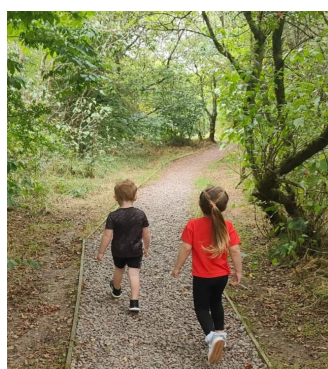
*Looking ahead I am excited to be able to welcome more children and their families to our Jollies family and I can't wait to watch the children learn and grow. It's such an honour to be able to support, nurture and teach the future generations of our local area, while providing a valuable service to families where they know their most precious family members are cared for and protected the way they should be and in the way that I would want my own children to be looked after.*



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*My plans for the future is to spend many years helping to shape little minds in a setting where children of all abilities thrive and become strong resilient and confident young adults. I am always striving to ensure that I provide a fun safe secure setting where we value and encourage children to become their true selves. We promote individuality and inclusion and value all identities.*

*While at Jollies children experience a multitude of activities and have lots of opportunities to get outside and explore our local area and become a part of our wider community. Whether that's through learning through play or days out exploring nature and expanding their knowledge, learning about the world around them.*



*The children who join us are able to understand that their voices matter and that they have a right to say what happens to them and that they have a say in how they learn which enables children to become confident learners who can take on any of life's challenges and succeed as they feel valued and respected.*

*After all, to me childminding isn't just a job it's a way of life. It is an honour and absolute pleasure to be trusted to care for the children for some of their most formative years and become a small part of their wonderful lives.'*



## Summer of Play

### Play Day

On August 6th, 2025, our incredible Play Team working in partnership with ALT welcomed over 1,300 visitors to Bedwellty House and Park to celebrate National Play Day — our biggest turnout ever!

The team delivered a fantastic day filled with fun and creativity, featuring messy play, a slip and slide, arts and crafts, Wild Tots, and so much more. We were also joined by a range of brilliant local services who took the opportunity to connect with the community and showcase what they offer.

A huge thank you to everyone who came along and made the day so special. These events thrive because of your support — we couldn't do it without you!

Check out these photos to see some of the fun we had!



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## Open Access Play

Throughout the summer, our team (including 8 of our 20 play volunteers), delivered a 5-week summer holiday play programme offering an amazing 33 sessions across 7 different locations, including a new site in Cwmtillery! This year we saw over 1000 children joining our sessions with plenty of playful activities on offer including; themed sessions with games; arts & crafts; sand and water play; messy play; the imagination playground; and a range of sports. The play team were also able to provide a range of snacks at each session, including: sandwiches, fresh fruit, cereal bars and bottled water.

All in all, another successful summer of Open Access Play!

The Play team would also like to thank Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council for funding sessions at Central Park in Cwmcelyn Blaina.

## Play Grant

This year the Play team was incredibly fortunate to be able to offer a Play Grant to local community groups; childcare and play settings; and parent and toddler groups. The grant was designed to provide financial support for initiatives that created enriching and engaging play experiences for children and gave groups/settings a fantastic opportunity to bring innovative ideas to life!

We were able to award a total of **£2,715** in funding this year. See some of the incredible success stories below:



## Ebenezer Baptist Church

Ebenezer Baptist Church used their funding to run a summer play day! The team at Ebenezer worked hard to create a safe space for families to enjoy a free play session with their children. The team provided free food for the children and refreshments for the parents. The event was a huge success with over 100 people attending! Families were even treated to a gift bag to take home, with more fun activities for the family to do together! Da iawn to the incredible team at Ebenezer Baptist Church!

## Childminder

One of our childminders used the funding to purchase some resources including a fire pit, den building and a bug house. 'The children have really enjoyed playing with the camping equipment, telling stories around the fire pit and building the bug house. They have spent hours collecting leaves and sticks to add the bug house, then sat waiting to see if they have any bugs living in it'



## Big Thank you

A big thank you from all of the team to every single person who turned up to our play events. Without the support of communities our play sessions wouldn't be such a success! Finally, we would like to say a massive thank you to our amazing play volunteers. We wouldn't be able to run so many amazing sessions across the summer without these incredible people giving up their own time! – Thank you!

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## Rainy Day Ideas

As the winter comes closer, we know the Welsh weather will be bringing us some rainy days. Keeping the family active during these days can be a challenge but really important to support their health and well-being. Here are some ideas to help you keep your family active during these days:

### Indoor activities for you and your family:

- Have a family dance party – You can find lots of Just Dance video on Youtube to follow
- Play hide and seek
- Try out some indoor sports with the family
- Come up with an indoor competition with your children
- Stretch with your family – there are lots of online tutorials you can follow

### Outdoor activities for you and your family:

- Find those muddy puddles and create 'delicious' mud pies together
- Build a den with your little ones and hide from the rain
- Go on an Autumn scavenger hunt – look for different coloured leaves; pinecones; acorns or puddles
- Put on your wellies and waterproofs and jump in those puddles!



## Autumn Recipe - Chilli Con Carne

Warm up this winter with a healthy chilli con carne—packed with protein, fibre, and bold spices. It's a comforting, nutritious dish that's perfect for cold nights and easy to batch cook for busy weeks.

### What you will need:

- > 300g of extra-lean minced beef
- > 1 large onion, chopped finely
- > 2 garlic cloves, chopped finely
- > 400g of tinned chopped tomatoes
- > 2 tablespoons of tomato purée
- > 2 teaspoons of chilli powder (you can add more or less, depending how spicy you want it!)
- > 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- > 1 red pepper, diced
- > 2 handfuls of sliced cup or button mushrooms
- > 410g of red kidney beans, drained (tinned beans are the easiest to use!)
- > 150ml of reduced-salt vegetable or chicken stock
- > 300g of white or brown rice
- > 1 pinch ground black pepper (add to taste)

### Method:

1. Heat a large saucepan or frying pan and add the minced beef, a handful at a time, cooking it until browned. Then, add the onion and garlic and cook for another 2 to 3 minutes.
2. To the pan, add the chopped tomatoes, tomato purée, spices, red pepper, mushrooms, kidney beans and stock.
3. Stir well and bring to the boil. After that, lower the heat and simmer gently for 15 to 20 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, cook the rice according to instructions on the packet.
5. Season the chilli with pepper to your own taste and serve with the boiled rice

You can substitute the beef for turkey mince, vegetarian mince or even extra beans! If you like things extra hot, you can add spices like Cayenne Pepper, Paprika or even Chilli Flakes! Chilli Con Carne is also really versatile, you can serve it with baked potatoes, homemade fries or pasta!

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## Online Safety

Let's talk video games! There are lots of conversations about video games and the pros and cons surrounding them. In this section we are going to explore some of the dangers of three of the most popular games for children and take a look at what you can do to help keep your child as safe as possible when playing these!

### Minecraft

- Minecraft can be a scary game for young players. While the characters have a cartoon like appearance, the eerie music and combat can be scary for young players. To avoid the inclusion of 'enemies', you can select the creative or peaceful mode of the game. This gives children the opportunity to build and explore aspects of the game without any combat or the threat of their work being damaged.
- Minecraft has the function to join public servers and interact with strangers. This can obviously come with risks. It can also lead to other people 'griefing'; whereby someone intentionally destroys another player's builds. To avoid this, players can host their own private server, where they can control who is able to enter and can ban anyone who shouldn't be there. This does, however, cost a monthly fee.

### Roblox

- Roblox offers a wide range of parental controls to help support you when keeping your little one safe. To help you manage their online experience, you can set age ranges for the people who are able to contact the account. You can also close public chat boxes and make profiles private. This can help reduce the possibility of strangers contacting your child online. It can also be beneficial to teach your child how to block and report other players, this will help them to have a happier experience.
- While Roblox offers a range of parental controls, there is still a range of inappropriate content on the game. You can set parent controls to reduce the risk of your child seeing this, but it is important to be aware of all of the smaller games that contain 18+ content. With younger children, it may be beneficial to play the game together.

### Zepeto

Zepeto is a little bit different to the other two games. It is a fast-growing app that blends social networking with a game platform. Players can explore a virtual world, play games and interact with strangers.

- Zepeto is aimed at children aged 14+ however, there is no age verification and no parental controls on the app. There is also a wide range of user-generated content that may contain themes unsuitable for children. When you download the app, the default setting also allows anyone on the app to message the account. To combat some of the concerns, you can change the privacy settings to limit who can message the account but there are no controls to limit the content. You should encourage your children to be open with the content they are seeing on the app and monitor what they might be exposed to.
- Another concern with Zepeto is the addictiveness of the app and the ability to spend real money! On both Android and Apple, you can set restrictions for daily screen time on apps. This can help children manage their time on the app. You can also add a purchase approval system to ensure your little ones are not spending any money they shouldn't be on the apps.

For more in-depth advice, follow 'Wake up Wednesday' on Facebook, Instagram or X.



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## Pathways

Launched in April this year, Pathways programme is already making a meaningful impact. The team has recently expanded with two new staff members, allowing them to support even more participants. Many individuals are embarking on volunteer placements, gaining valuable hands-on experience. Participants are supported every step of the way, with access to fully funded training including Safeguarding, Manual Handling, and First Aid. This initiative is designed to help people build confidence, develop new skills, and ultimately move learners into paid employment.

The program offers four tailored pathways to suit different interests and career goals: Steps into Childcare, Food & Nutrition Skills, Introduction to Health & Social Care and Employability. Whether you're looking to start a new career, gain practical experience, or simply explore your options, this is a fantastic opportunity to get involved. All of the courses are free and here to support you and your individual needs

Exciting new courses are now underway this September – don't miss out, get in touch to discover what's available near you! For more information, drop the team an email at: [FIS@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:FIS@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) with your name and number!

A flyer for the Pathways Llwybrau program. It features a green header with funding information, a central image of a child making a heart shape with their hands, and a list of courses for adults and children. The footer contains contact information.

Funded by  
UK Government

Wedi ei ariannu gan  
Llywodraeth y DU

**Pathways  
Llwybrau**

Courses aimed at  
parents and  
carers of 0-4  
year olds

Courses for adults:  
**Cooking | Introduction to Health & Social Care  
Child Development | Making Confidence Count**

Other accredited courses:  
**Speak to a member of staff for details**

Call 01495 369610 or email: [pathways.info@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:pathways.info@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

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## School admissions & Welsh Education

School admission dates for 2026 have been announced! Find all the relevant dates here:

### *Have you considered Welsh medium education for your child?*

Welsh-medium education offers a unique opportunity for children to become bilingual, opening doors to more career options, cultural experiences, and cognitive benefits.

### *Why Choose Welsh-Medium Education?*

- Children become fluent in both Welsh and English
- No need to speak Welsh at home — children learn naturally in school!
- Bilingualism boosts brain development and learning skills
- Welsh-medium schools follow the same curriculum as English-medium schools
- It's a gateway to Welsh culture, heritage, and identity

Admissions for Welsh-medium nursery places open on 8th September and close on 17th October. Don't miss the chance to give your child a bilingual start in life! However, it's not too late to consider Welsh medium education if your child is already in nursery or primary school!

Learn about Welsh medium education in Blaenau Gwent here: <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/schools-learning/becoming-bilingual-1/>

Give our children the gift of bilingualism and a strong start in life!



**Important Dates**  
Key dates for School Admissions 2026

Date	What Happens
<b>Nursery</b>	
8th September 2025	Nursery Admission Round Commences
17th October 2025 (5pm)	Closing Date for Nursery Applications
24th November 2025	Offer Date for Nursery Places
<b>Reception</b>	
13th November 2025	Reception Admission Round Commences
15th January 2026 (5pm)	Closing Date for Reception Applications
16th April 2026	Offer Date for Reception Places
<b>Secondary</b>	
19th September 2025	Secondary Admission Round Commences
31st October 2025 (5pm)	Closing Date for Secondary Applications
2nd March 2026	Offer Date for Secondary Places

For more information please contact the Admissions Team on:  
Tel: 01495 369502 / 369524 or E-mail: [schooladmissions@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:schooladmissions@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)




You can apply for a school place online. To complete an online application please visit the following website: [https://citizenportal.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/CitizenPortal\\_LIVE/en](https://citizenportal.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/CitizenPortal_LIVE/en)

## Blaenau Gwent Family Information Service Website

Have you had a chance to check out our new website yet? You can now find an up to date list of parent and toddler groups in the area; a list of all childcare providers in the area; advice on schemes to help you pay for childcare; frequently asked questions; and a list of upcoming events!

Visit us at: <https://bgfis.org.uk/>

### Follow us on social media:

-  Blaenau Gwent Family Information Service
-  Blaenau\_Gwent\_fis
-  FIS\_BG