

The **Gwent** Best Start in Life: Community of Practice Quarterly Newsletter

Giving **EVERY** baby and child the best start in life

Winter Edition 2025/26

Welcome to Our First Edition



Happy New Year & welcome to the first edition of the Gwent Best Start in Life Community of Practice e-newsletter! We're excited to kick off 2026 with a space where Early Years Professionals across Gwent can connect, share learning, celebrate successes, and champion our shared ambition: giving **EVERY** baby and child the best start in life.

Across the region, practitioners are already making a real difference by improving early childhood outcomes, reducing inequalities and supporting families. This Community of Practice brings that work together, helping us share ideas, showcase achievements, and strengthen collaboration across the early years system.

This is your community: shaped by your experience, expertise and commitment to improving the lives of babies, children and families in Gwent. Central to this is our commitment to ensuring that the voices of those with lived experience inform our priorities, content and future learning.

Get Involved: **Gwent Child Developmental Event**

Would you like to get involved in shaping how we support children's development across Gwent?

As an Early Years Professional, you are invited to join the **Gwent Child Development Event** - a collaborative session to share your experiences, learn from colleagues and explore how parents, carers, early years settings, programmes and schools can work together to achieve the best outcomes for children.

The session will also focus on preparing children and families for the transition into reception and identifying the support and resources that would most benefit those experiencing poverty or from under-served groups.

Save the date: Thursday 12 February 2026

[CLICK HERE](#)

or scan the QR code to find out more and reserve your place!



Meet the Leadership Group

The Best Start in Life Leadership Group brings together senior partners from across Gwent and sits under the Gwent Public Services Board (PSB). As one of the PSB's four priority Areas of Focus, the Group provides strategic leadership to support a coordinated, evidence-informed, whole-system approach to improving early childhood outcomes across the region.

The Group sets the strategic direction for Best Start in Life through **11 Ambitions for Action**, which guide how partners work together to improve outcomes, reduce inequities and strengthen early intervention. Its approach is underpinned by children's rights, proportionate universalism and a strong focus on collaboration, data and evidence.

Find out more about the Gwent PSB and its Four Areas of Focus on their website.

[CLICK HERE](#)



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Kavitha Pasunuru,
Divisional Director for
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Stay Connected

Follow the links below to explore upcoming webinars, conferences and training across the region!

Nicotine Discovery Report Webinar

The **Nicotine Discovery Report** explores why people across Gwent choose to use or avoid nicotine products. A forthcoming webinar, scheduled for the **9th February 2026**, will share key findings, with a particular focus on concerns around children and young people's use of nicotine. It will also explore behaviours that enable nicotine use, the challenges linked to quitting and what the evidence means for prevention and education.



[CLICK HERE](#)



Building Positive, Supportive Schools

Join us on **Wednesday 25 February 2026** at Islwyn Indoor Bowling Centre, Pontllanfraith for the **Embedding Restorative Approaches in Schools Conference**.

See practical techniques in action, hear from schools leading the way and learn how to strengthen relationships and wellbeing across your school. This is your chance to be part of a safer, more positive school community.

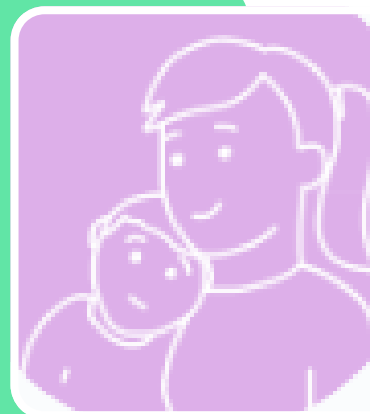
[CLICK HERE](#)

Living Life to the Full - Training to Support Families

Are you passionate about supporting mental wellbeing during pregnancy and early parenthood? Join this **online session on 17th March 2026, 12:45-1:45pm**, led by Professor Chris Williams, developer of the Living Life to the Full (LLTTF).

This virtual session will explore LLTTF pre and postnatal mental health **resources and courses** which are available free via the **Melo Cymru** website. You'll gain practical skills using these resources to enhance your toolkit and empower the families you work with.

Email **Admin_ABGPHT@wales.nhs.uk** to reserve your spot!



The Catherine Thomas Award 2026

Do you know someone who has made a real difference to children or young people affected by domestic abuse? Or someone whose work empowers young people to feel safe, rebuild confidence and thrive?

The **Catherine Thomas Memorial Award** recognises outstanding individuals across Wales who provide support, advocacy, leadership, and positive change for young people impacted by domestic abuse.

If you know someone making a real difference, please submit a nomination by **1pm on 14 February 2026**.

[CLICK HERE](#)

The Big Gwent Vaccination Conversation: What the Report Means for the Early Years



Vaccines are one of the greatest achievements in public health – they protect our communities from serious illness and, in many cases, save lives. Yet, in recent years we have seen a decline in vaccination uptake in Gwent – and we wanted to understand **why**.

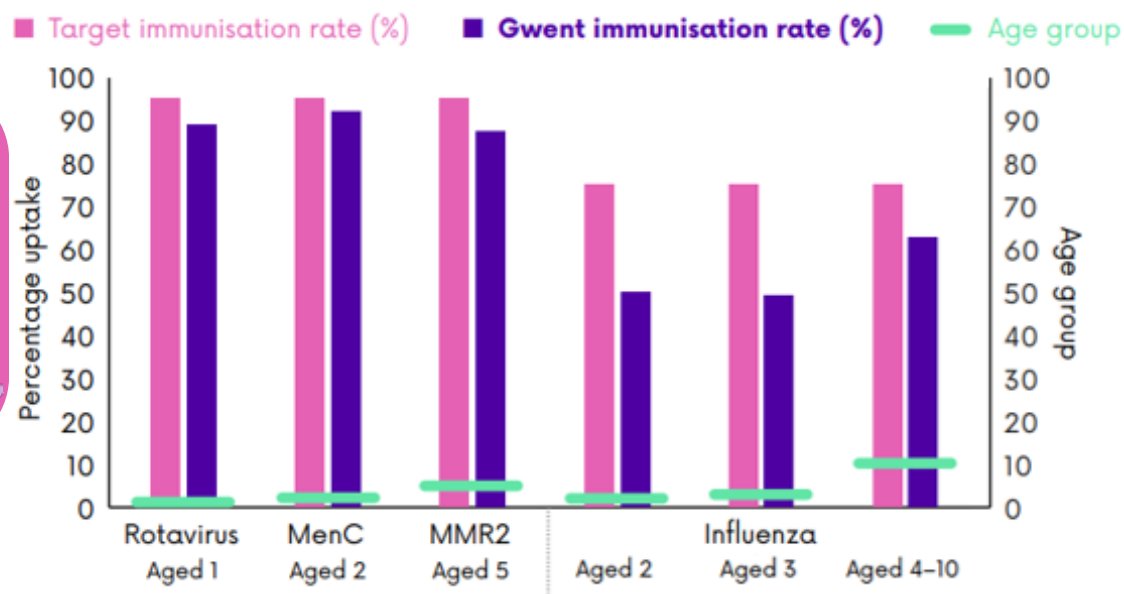
As a result, **The Big Gwent Vaccination Conversation** report was born. The report explores data on vaccination uptake, is grounded in conversations with the people of Gwent, and captures the remarkable **journey of vaccines**, from scientific breakthroughs and determination, to becoming a **cornerstone of modern public health**. Here is a quick look at some of what we found.

[CLICK HERE](#)

to read the full report!

Uptake Matters!

Across Gwent, uptake varies among those who are aged 0-7; some vaccines are reaching great levels of protection, while others still need more work.



Listening to the Voices of our Community

People want straightforward, culturally sensitive, evidence-based information: clear explanations of risks vs. benefits, real historical data, and personalised guidance from trusted Healthcare Professionals or helplines/ chatbots.

The Health of Our Children is EVERYTHING

Children wanted vaccination to feel like a celebration, not a worry. How you can help us create the next generation of vaccine superheroes:

- **Parents and carers:** power up the positivity — talk about vaccines, celebrate bravery and share stories of protection and pride.
- **Schools:** weave the science of vaccines into learning, showing that being vaccinated is one of the greatest acts of teamwork there is.
- **The NHS:** keep creating child-friendly spaces filled with warmth, reassurance, and reward — places that show every child they are strong, safe, and supported.

Want More Information on Vaccinations?

'Vaccination Brief Advice' webinars coming soon!

Downloadable Resources to Support You When Having Vaccination Conversations:



- [Vaccines in Action poster](#)
- [Vaccination Schedule poster](#)
- [A History of Vaccinations poster](#)

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Your Voice. Your Ideas. Your Community

Become a Member

Join the Gwent Best Start in Life Community of Practice by completing our [membership form](#). Members will receive quarterly newsletters and e-bulletins featuring good practice, family insights, tools & data, programme updates and information on upcoming training opportunities and events.

Members will also be invited to bi-monthly webinars led by expert speakers, offering practical insight, discussion and shared learning on a range of Best Start in Life topics across the early years system. All webinars will be recorded and made available via the Community of Practice webpage.

Any Early Years Professional, working with babies, children or families in Gwent, is welcome to join and contribute.

Our First Community of Practice Webinar

We're delighted to announce our first bi-monthly webinar: "[Understanding the Impact of Trauma & Adversity on Child Development](#)", delivered by [Blackpool Better Start](#) taking place on **4 February 2026 at 10:00am**.

This session will explore:

- how trauma and adversity impact child development,
- how services can work together to mitigate these impacts,
- examples of trauma-informed early years practice in Blackpool,
- how triage panels and relationship-based approaches ensure families receive the right support.



[**CLICK HERE**](#) to register your spot!

We Want to Hear From You!

To submit updates, showcase your work, or share resources, complete our [online form](#). The deadline for submissions for the Spring 2026 edition is **1 March 2026**. You can also get in touch at ABB.BSiL.CoPewales.nhs.uk.

Please share this newsletter with colleagues to help us build a growing, vibrant network of Early Years Professionals across Gwent.

Together, we can ensure
EVERY baby and child has the best start in life.

