

# Play in Wales timeline 2026

In 1997, at an event in Cardiff held as part of Wales' national Playday, a group of Play Wales trustees lobbied Win Griffiths, MP and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales. The trustees were asking for greater political support for the creation of a play organisation that would champion children's right to play throughout Wales.

Play Wales had existed for several years but was struggling to survive. Play had been scrubbed from the political agenda and the 1980s and 1990s had seen widespread cuts and closures of play provision. Win Griffiths' promise to fund a Welsh national charity for play was the start of a new era for play and playing in Wales.

1998

Play Wales/Chwarae Cymru is established as a registered charity. The UK Government's Welsh Office provides limited funding – enough to employ four part-time members of staff.

---

1999

The new National Assembly for Wales is established. The First Minister, Alun Michael, speaks at Play Wales/Chwarae Cymru's first conference.

---

2000

Play Wales secures funding to work with experienced playworkers and playwork trainers across Wales to develop a quality assurance framework for playwork.

The National Assembly for Wales provides £1m to improve open access play facilities for children. Known as the Play 2000 Grant Scheme, funding is distributed and managed through local authority partnerships (the Children and Youth Partnerships).

The *State of Play 2000*, a report on how the Play Grant has been used, calls for a national play policy and strategy.

---

2001

Wales is the first UK country to appoint a Children's Commissioner. The Commissioner endorses the quality assurance framework that was developed in 2000.

*The First Claim ... a framework for playwork quality assessment* is launched by the Children's Minister. This is the first playwork quality assurance framework internationally to focus solely on meeting children's play needs.

Play Wales organises and delivers the first Spirit of Adventure Play conference.

Funding for play is continued (and is also managed in a similar way the following financial year).

2002

The Welsh Government creates the *Play Policy*, becoming the first country in the world to adopt a national play policy.

Funding to local authorities for play is doubled and becomes known as the Play Grant.

The Play Safety Forum publishes the *Managing Risk in Play Provision* position statement.

*The First Claim – desirable processes* is published. This is the sequel to *The First Claim ...*

---

2003

Play Wales secures funding to employ two development officers – one to support play development and the other to support workforce development. A network of local authority and voluntary sector play officers is established.

The new Integrated Children's Centre initiative gives each local authority the funding to set up staffed open access playwork provision. This is based on the adventure playground approach.

The Minister for Children establishes a Play Policy Implementation Group. Children in Wales and Play Wales are contracted to research and present the recommendations of the group to the National Assembly for Wales.

---

2004

Play Wales leads a UK review and consultation on the Assumptions and Values for Playwork. This results in the Playwork Principles, statements that set out what play is and what playworkers do to support it. The Playwork Principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork.

A consultation is held looking at how BIG Lottery project funding should be spent in Wales. There is an overwhelming response from play providers calling for financial support for children's play.

A consultation on the recommendations of the Welsh Government Play Policy Implementation Group is undertaken.

The Welsh Government introduces the Cymorth Fund to provide a network of targeted support for children. The Play Grant is combined with other funding for Framework Partnerships and becomes known as the Play Theme.



2005

The BIG Lottery Fund announces the Child's Play programme – £13m of funding. This is part of a strategic approach aiming to fund the building of a play infrastructure in Wales (regional play associations) and developing play projects.

Play Wales begins work on the development and piloting of a new playwork qualification based on the Playwork Principles and *The First Claim ...* quality assessment frameworks. This is made possible by support from the Welsh Government and European funding.

2006

The Welsh Government *Play Policy Implementation Plan* is launched.

Play Wales is contracted to support the BIG Lottery Fund Child's Play programme. Play Wales is able to employ more development officers and support staff to extend its work.

Play Wales produces its playwork training film *Pushing Eddie in the Nettles with Connor*.

2007

The Welsh Government announces funding for Playwork Wales, a National Centre for Education and Training in Wales to be administered by Play Wales.

BIG (the new name for the BIG Lottery Fund) allocates funding to play infrastructure projects. This leads to the establishment of a regional play association in each area of Wales.

The Welsh Government provides extra funding for disabled children to access play opportunities.

2008

Play Wales wins a bid to host an international play conference in Wales on behalf of the International Play Association (IPA) in 2011.

Playwork: Principles into Practice (P<sup>3</sup>) becomes a recognised qualification and is accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

2009

*Creating an Active Wales*, the national physical activity action plan is produced. This identifies as a priority the provision of access to opportunities for high quality, physically active play.

2010

The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 receives Royal Assent, making it a legal requirement for local authorities in Wales to assess and secure enough opportunities for children to play in their area.

Work begins internationally to prepare a General Comment on Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

BIG invests in regional staffed play projects across Wales in areas that regional audits have identified as lacking staffed play provision.



**2011**

Play Wales hosts the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary International Play Association (IPA) conference in Cardiff. More than 500 delegates from 37 countries gather to discuss and celebrate children's play.

The First Minister for Wales, Carwyn Jones, receives the IPA Right to Play Award on behalf of Wales when he opens the IPA conference.

The Children and Young People Committee of the National Assembly for Wales publishes its report on the provision of safe places to play and hang out. This follows an 11-month inquiry into the opportunities for and barriers to play for children and young people in Wales.

The Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy for Wales is launched, recognising the right to play and the contribution of play to children's development and resilience.

---

**2012**

Consultation is undertaken on the draft statutory guidance for local authorities on assessing and ensuring that their area provides children with enough opportunities to play.

The Welsh Government Play Sufficiency Duty is commenced. The first part makes it a legal requirement for every local authority in Wales assess that their area provides children with enough opportunities to play. Wales is the first country in the world to protect in law children's right to play.

The Play Safety Forum and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) publish a joint high-level statement to promote a balanced approach to the management of risk in children's play.

The Cymorth funding is replaced by the Families First Fund for local authority work. This represents a step towards more targeted services to address child poverty.

The Welsh Government awards funding to local authorities to conduct Play Sufficiency Assessments.

---

**2013**

The Welsh Government's Increasing Play Opportunities for Children Grant 2013 to 2014 is allocated to local authorities to support their preparations for ensuring their area provides children with enough opportunities to play.

---

**2014**

Through its Children and Families Delivery Grant, the Welsh Government funds Groundwork Wales to deliver a three-year, community-based, sustainable play project.

The second part of the Play Sufficiency Duty, which makes it a legal requirement for every local authority in Wales to secure enough opportunities for children to play in their area, is commenced.

After losing its funding, Play Wales establishes the Support Play Wales campaign to try and continue its work. The Welsh Government funds Play Wales to carry out some areas of its work – information service, workforce development and advocacy.

To support play, the Welsh Government awards funding to local authorities through the Securing Sufficient Play Opportunities Grant 2014 to 2015.

The Welsh Government funds YMCA College and Play Wales to develop the Aged Cymru Managing a Holiday Playscheme Award (MAHPS) qualification.



**2016**

The Welsh Government creates the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant 2016 to 2017 for local authorities to progress play sufficiency actions.

The Welsh Government funds YMCA College and Play Wales to develop the Agored Cymru Level 2 Award in Playwork Practice (L2APP) qualification.

---

**2017**

The Welsh Government creates the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant 2017 to 2018 for local authorities to progress play sufficiency actions.

The Welsh Government publishes its *Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan* covering the next 10 years.

Play Wales publishes *A play friendly workforce for Wales*, a workforce development plan for the play and playwork workforces.

---

**2018**

The Welsh Government allocates funding to local authorities to conduct the 2019 Play Sufficiency Assessments.

The Welsh Government creates the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant 2018 to 2019 for local authorities to progress play sufficiency actions.

Play Wales launches its *Playful Childhoods* website which aims to help parents, caregivers and community groups give children time, space and support to play.

Play Wales begins work with Agored Cymru to review and update the Playwork: Principles into Practice (P<sup>3</sup>) qualifications.

Play Wales hosts the bi-annual UK Four Nations Play Symposium: A Matter of policy and practice.

2019

The Welsh Government provides funding for and undertakes a Holiday Hunger Playworks Pilot. This aims to test the feasibility of tackling holiday hunger through play and community-based settings.

The Welsh Government creates the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant 2019 to 2020 for local authorities to progress play sufficiency actions.

The Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services takes forward a Ministerial Review of Play. The Review establishes a steering group to assess the Welsh Government's work on play policy and inform how the play agenda is developed and progressed.

Play Wales commenced the four-year Play Ambassadors project which takes place across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. It includes working with local people to establish Neighbourhood Play Forums to identify ways of encouraging regular opportunities for children to play and it supports young people aged 14 to 19 in becoming volunteer Community Play Ambassadors.

---

2020

Following its successful pilot, the Welsh Government allocates £1m to roll out the Playworks Holiday Hunger Project across Wales. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this project funding is repurposed and diverted. It is used to support provision for vulnerable children during the school summer holidays, with an emphasis on play.

The Covid-19 Reconstruction – Challenges and Priorities funding package includes £3,000,000 of capital funding for local authorities to improve outdoor playing opportunities for children. It also includes £500,000 of revenue funding for projects linked to staffed playwork provision.

---

2021

The Welsh Government provides further COVID-19 funding – two programmes designed to support children and young people as they recover from the pandemic:

- Summer of Fun – £5,000,000 of revenue funding
  - Winter of Wellbeing – £6,000,000 of revenue funding and £5,000,000 of capital funding.
- 

2022

The Welsh Government provides funding for a Summer of Fun programme.

---

2023

International Play Association (IPA) Cymru Wales is launched.

The Ministerial Review of Play Steering Group report and background paper are published. Play Wales is tasked with coordinating the writing the report and background paper on behalf of the steering group. The Welsh Government also commissions Play Wales to produce the children and young people's version of the report.

*This is why play is so important*, Play Wales' short feature film is launched.

Play Wales shared and promoted examples of work, research and projects during workshops and panel sessions at the triennial International Play Association (IPA) Conference. The new feature film is shown during a plenary session.

2024

Play Wales convened the UK Playwork NOS Consortium, and commenced a self-funded review of the National Occupational Standards for Playwork. Play Wales provides secretariat to the consortium.

*Chware o Safon* – Play Wales’ new playwork quality mark – is piloted.

Let’s talk about play – Play Wales’ endorsed course – is launched. The course is an introduction to play and playwork. The course is a legacy from the Healthy Active Fund Play Ambassadors Project.

*Playing and being well*, the literature review, is published. Commissioned by Play Wales, it is review of recent research into children’s play, social policy and practice, with a focus on Wales.

The first ever United Nations International Day of Play is held in June.

---

2025

Play Wales collaborated with IPA Cymru Wales and IPA Japan to call on schools to protect playtime in schools on International Day of Play.

The Welsh Government provides an extra £5,000,000 to local authorities to purchase items to improve the quality of play spaces, refurbish playgrounds and support the creation of inclusive and accessible play spaces.

*Shared ground*, Play Wales’ research report exploring the alignment of playwork and youth work practice, is published.

The Play Wales *What children say about play in Wales: 2025* research report is published. Almost 8,000 children and teenagers from across Wales tell us about satisfied they are with their opportunities to play in their local area.

In a Senedd Plenary, Members of the Senedd debated children’s access to play. All major political parties spoke in favour of children’s play.

---

2026

Play Wales’ *State of Play 2025* report is published. This is an analysis of the local authority Play Sufficiency Assessments (PSAs) and Play Action Plans submitted to the Welsh Government in June 2025.

Play Wales launched *Championing children’s play: a manifesto for Wales* and *‘The Wales I want to grow up and play in’* – a play manifesto from the children of Wales. Both manifestos are published prior to the Senedd election in May.