

Playwork National Occupational Standards Functional Map

In March 2024, the UK Playwork NOS Consortium was approved by the UK Standards and Frameworks Panel to take forward a self-funded review of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for playwork between 2024 and 2026. The UK Playwork NOS Consortium comprises Play Wales, Play Scotland, PlayBoard Northern Ireland, Play England and the Playwork Foundation.

The consortium has been meeting since October 2021 and was established to plan strategically across the four nations for the future of workforce development and sector skills initiatives, including a future review of the NOS.

There are strong links between the consortium and the four Playwork Education and Training Councils (PETCs) whose role is to discuss issues of strategic importance on all aspects of playwork education, training and qualifications in their respective nation. The formal process of reviewing the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for playwork began at the beginning of 2025. The process of developing the NOS themselves took place throughout 2025 and concluded in June 2026.

From research, a scoping exercise and conversations with playworkers and playwork organisations there are some key themes that informed the development of the standards:

- Focus on playwork as an approach – playworking
- Playwork can occur in a wide range of places and spaces
- NOS need to be streamlined
- The Playwork Principles, or any future version of them, is intrinsic to the standards.

During April and May 2026 the consortium consulted on the draft NOS and the report is available on request by emailing nosreview@play.wales

During the consultation phase, the NOS were categorised by the job titles of support worker, playworker and playwork manager. The consultation strongly demonstrated that these titles do not reflect sector job descriptions. In some instances, terms like assistant, junior or senior are used. In other cases, staff are simply called playworkers with differences in function accounted for by length of service or level of responsibility. For this reason, reference to job titles has been removed. For the purpose of developing training, qualifications, job descriptions and appraisal systems, the most appropriate NOS should be chosen that best reflects the functions of the chosen role.

The NOS Writing Group was made up of committed sector experts who undertook the work of writing the new NOS for playwork.

Membership of the writing group:

Name	Location
Caroline Kerr	Northern Ireland
Dianne Larrington	England
Karen Crawford (technical expert)	Qualifications Scotland
Karen Sharp (Chair)	Scotland
Kay Maxwell	Scotland
Martin King-Sheard	Wales
Meynell Walter	England
Mike Wragg	England
Sarah Bird	Wales

Playwork: NOS Functional Map

Key purpose: Playwork is a unique approach to working with children of all ages in a range of settings. The key purpose of the playworker is to support and facilitate play as described by the Playwork Principles.

* Equity, equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded across all NOS

Code	NOS title
PWNC201	Support and facilitate play using a playwork approach
PWNC202	Contribute to the development of relationships using a playwork approach
PWNC203	Reflect on playwork practice
PWNC204	Contribute to building relationships with adults to develop and improve playwork practice
PWNC205	Contribute to preparing for and undertaking travel outside of the playwork setting
PWNC206	Contribute to a playwork approach for children with additional support needs
HSCCLD24	Support the safeguarding of individuals and others
PWNC301	Prepare for, plan, support and facilitate play using a playwork approach
PWNC302	Develop relationships with children that support their play, health and wellbeing using a playwork approach
PWNC303	Build relationships with adults to develop play and playwork practice
PWNC304	Engage in reflective practice to inform and improve practice
PWNC305	Provide food and drink in a playwork setting
PWNC306	Prepare for and undertake travel outside of the playwork setting
PWNC307	Support and facilitate the creation of playwork constructions
PWNC308	Implement a playwork approach for children with additional support needs
PWNC309	Preparing for leadership and management in playwork
HSCCLD34	Promote the safeguarding of individuals and others

Code	NOS title
PWNC401	Lead and support staff using a playwork approach
PWNC402	Lead and manage the playwork setting
PWNC403	Promote reflective practice and professional development in playwork
PWNC404	Manage and enhance internal and external relationships specific to playwork
PWNC405	Investigate and implement contemporary frameworks within a playwork context
PWNC406	Use a playwork approach to community development and engagement
PWNC407	Make decisions in playwork based on information and analysis
PWNC408	Lead and manage a playwork approach for children with additional support needs
PWNC409	Manage compliance with external playwork quality assurance frameworks
PWNC410	Manage financial resources in a playwork setting
PWNC411	Provide values-based leadership in playwork
PWNC412	Recruit and select people for working in playwork
HSCCLD44	Lead the safeguarding of individuals and others

