



# A play friendly workforce for Wales

Play Wales' workforce development plan 2020

# Contents

<b>1. Background</b>	<b>3</b>
Development of this plan	3
Action plan and life cycle of <i>A play friendly workforce for Wales</i>	3
The impact of Covid-19 on workforce development	4
<b>2. Definitions</b>	<b>5</b>
Playwork workforce	5
Play workforce	5
Continuing Professional Development	6
<b>3. The playwork workforce</b>	<b>7</b>
Playwork provision for registration purposes	7
Unregistered provision	7
Types of playwork settings	7
<b>3.1 Challenges to address for the playwork workforce</b>	<b>8</b>
Playwork roles	8
Holiday play schemes	8
Funding for qualifications	9
Changes to qualifications in the UK	9
Quality concerns	10
Playwork qualification developments in Wales	11
Playwork Quality Assurance	11
<b>3.2 Priorities for the playwork workforce</b>	<b>12</b>
Strategic priorities	12
Operational priorities	13
<b>4. The play workforce</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>4.1 Challenges to address for the play workforce</b>	<b>15</b>
Funding for Continuing Professional Development	15
Competing priorities	15
Reduction in the size of the overall workforce	15
<b>4.2. Priorities for the play workforce</b>	<b>16</b>
Strategic priorities	16
Operational priorities	16
<b>5. Implementing the workforce development plan</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>17</b>

# 1. Background

Play Wales has developed this workforce development plan to respond to a wide range of priorities for the play and playwork workforces. The Welsh Government Statutory Guidance on assessing and securing sufficient play opportunities, *Wales – a Play Friendly Country* recognises within Matter G: Securing and Developing the Play Workforce, the importance of an appropriately skilled workforce both for those working face-to-face with children and those whose work impacts on wherever children may play.

## Development of this plan

Priorities within this workforce development plan have been established through consultation with the sector and as a response to priorities identified through:

- Play Wales’ review of the 22 Play Sufficiency Assessments 2019
- The All Wales Strategic Play Network
- The Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales (PETC Wales)

- Individual discussions with stakeholders ([Appendix 1](#))
- Play Sufficiency Network
- The Qualifications Wales 2016 review of Health and Social Care, Childcare and Playwork Qualifications in Wales.

In addition, Play Wales has worked with Welsh Government officials to highlight workforce priorities across policy areas including in the implementation of its 10 year plan for the early years, childcare and playwork workforce.

## Action plan and life cycle of *A play friendly workforce for Wales*

This plan does not have an expiry date, however it will be revisited annually as part of the annual action plan. This second version has been reviewed to reflect national priorities from the Play Sufficiency Assessment Review 2019.

Play Wales will develop an annual action plan based on the priority areas within this plan.



## The impact of Covid-19 on workforce development

The coronavirus pandemic, which began in early 2020, has had a significant impact on the delivery of training, qualifications and professional development opportunities. Whilst the priorities within this plan are broad to tackle the needs of the play and playwork workforce, there are some general underpinning themes that need to be taken into consideration alongside this plan as we plan ahead for life after the pandemic:

- The sector has grown more accustomed to accessing training, and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities in particular, remotely as in many cases face-to-face training has ceased.
- There is a need to refocus on future CPD and training opportunities in light of Covid-19. Planning ahead for workforce development should take increasing account of opportunities for blended learning – mixing classroom and online approaches.
- As organisations, professionals and settings refocus their work, there may be limited capacity for people to attend training and CPD.
- Advocacy and networking opportunities with the wider play workforce have changed as the opportunities for informal meet ups and chance encounters have reduced.
- It remains the view of Play Wales that a complete online course is not suitable for the delivery of qualifications and that every

attempt should be made to bring groups of learners together to share practice and learn from each other. A blended learning approach may incorporate actual classroom time, virtual tutorials or small group work, observation of practice and varied assessment methods including online assessment.

- Despite the move towards more online delivery and assessment, some learners will still prefer to learn face-to-face and complete assessment in hard copy. Consideration needs to be given to making learning and assessment accessible to all.
- The way that services are delivered for children going forwards may mean that the sector has to develop new skills or refine certain aspects of their delivery in light of Covid-19. Training and professional development should be flexible to cover new skills needed to help manage the virus within an evolving context.
- With the focus on containing the spread of Covid-19 it is also important to ensure that the learning outcomes of play and playwork training are not compromised.
- The regulatory context in Wales for childcare and playwork may change. Training and qualifications will need to change to reflect this.
- The Welsh Government has not yet asked for Play Sufficiency Action Plan Progress Reports (2019-20) or Action Plans 2020-21. There is a possibility that local authorities without clear playwork and play workforce plans or strategies will struggle to address workforce needs.

## 2. Definitions

Key to establishing a shared language with Welsh Government, local authorities and other strategic stakeholders are the definitions of the play and playwork workforces as defined in Welsh Government's *Wales – a Play Friendly Country*. To be clear about the workforces we are referring to within this workforce development plan, Play Wales uses the following agreed definitions and urges all stakeholders to do the same.

### Playwork workforce

Playwork is a highly skilled profession that enriches and enhances children's play. It takes place where adults support children's play but it is not driven by prescribed education or care outcomes. This may include (although not exclusively) those working in open access playwork provision, childcare or youth provision.

### Play workforce

Encompasses anyone employed whose role has an impact on children playing – those who may either directly facilitate their play, design for playing, or those with the power to give permission for children to play, or not. This includes those working in: local and national government, town and country planning, highways, health and social care, education, community development and youth work as well as those elected to positions in Welsh Government, local authorities and town and community councils.

The needs of these two groups are specifically different:

### Playwork workforce

By definition, the playwork workforce will be working directly with children to support their play and are likely to require qualifications for regulatory or legislative purposes. These qualifications are defined in the SkillsActive *List of required qualifications to work within the Playwork Sector in Wales*. The playwork workforce also requires opportunities for CPD which can include attending workshops, conferences and events, reading briefing papers, participating in peer networks as well as the use of digital media such as websites, podcasts and videos.

### Play workforce

In contrast, the play workforce is a highly diverse group, many of whom do not require qualifications in play to undertake their roles. However, what they do require is knowledge of what play is, of its critical importance to children and a shared understanding of how their role can impact on the vision for children's play articulated in *Wales – a Play Friendly Country*. This may include attending workshops, conferences and events, reading briefing papers, participating in peer networks as well as the use of media such as websites, podcasts, videos, and access to CPD.

## Continuing Professional Development

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a process through which individuals improve their performance in practice by undertaking learning in a broad range of activities that maintain, develop, and enhance their skills and knowledge.

CPD can be achieved in a number of ways. A programme can include:

- Attendance at key meetings, seminars and conferences
- Undertaking short courses or larger qualifications
- Private study and reading
- Observation, mentoring and feedback on working practice.

CPD programmes are likely to involve reflective activity – where workers and managers think about areas of work where an individual may be able to improve or where they need more knowledge or skills. CPD is a process of supporting individual needs and improving professional practice, encouraging individuals to manage their own learning, growth and development.

The focus of CPD is on the results or benefits that professional development can bring. Perhaps the most important message is that an individual's learning programme is personal to them – one size does not fit all.



### 3. The playwork workforce

Playworkers operate in a range of diverse settings and because of this the needs of the workforce in relation to training, qualifications and CPD are equally diverse. As this section will demonstrate, playworkers need a range of skills that are in addition to their ability to work directly with children.

#### Playwork provision for registration purposes

Playwork provision should be registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), which defines playwork provision as follows:

*‘Open access playwork provision is defined as “provision for children up to the age of 12 where children are not restricted in their movements, other than where related to safety matters and they are not prevented from coming and going as they wish.”*

National Minimum Standards, April 2016

Out of school childcare refers to childcare outside of the child’s school day. Whilst out of school childcare may have a range of objectives for children, including freely chosen play, its primary purpose is to provide care for children in the absence of their parents. The qualifications required for those working with children in out of school childcare settings is a playwork qualification from the [List of required qualifications to work within the Playwork Sector in Wales](#).

#### Unregistered provision

If settings run for less than two hours in a day or for fewer than five days a year, they are currently not required to be registered with CIW. For a variety of reasons, a significant proportion of Open Access playwork providers operate unregulated provision. However, these types of settings would also benefit from staff being able to access training and qualifications to improve their practice and support the CPD of staff and volunteers.

Play Wales does not wish to see provision being reduced to running for under two hours if this is not in the best interests of children and communities. We are committed to identifying ways to address the challenges of ensuring staff are appropriately qualified so that they can be registered.

#### Types of playwork settings

Within the types outlined above, playwork provision may occur in a broad range of settings, including:

- Staffed adventure playgrounds
- Out of school clubs
- Doorstep and neighbourhood play projects (such as play streets)
- Integrated Children’s Centres
- Schools
- Peripatetic playwork (such as playbuses and play ranger services)
- Holiday play schemes
- Play centres
- Hospital play rooms or areas
- Prisons.

## 3.1 Challenges to address for the playwork workforce

### Playwork roles

The role of the playworker is highly diverse and involves more than working face-to-face with children. Unfortunately, not all playwork training and qualifications reflect this diversity as effectively as might be expected. Playworkers need to be able to access opportunities for training and CPD that enable them to build skills in:

- **Working with the community** – playworkers address barriers to playing in the community generally and this will involve engaging with all those with an interest or impact on the places where children play.
- **Working with parents** – in some cases playworkers will be supporting the wider family as well as children if there are other issues within the family. Also, where children require additional support to be included within play sessions (such as disabled children), work is required with families to meet children's requirements.
- **Working with other professionals** – because of the range of issues that playworkers encounter, playworkers may need to engage with other professionals including: family support, family information services, health professionals and social workers.
- **Working with schools** – many playworkers continue their playwork by working in schools to support playtimes, train staff and provide play resources.
- **Gathering resources** – playworkers will spend time visiting local businesses and building relationships with them to ensure a good supply of loose parts for children to play with.

- **Reflective practice** – playwork is a profession that relies on reflective practice to improve and adapt practice and as a form of CPD. Playworkers should be spending part of their working hours engaged in reflective practice either individually or with the team.
- **Writing funding bids** – due to the lack of a single source of funding for playwork, year-round provision tends to gain funding from a number of smaller funding pots.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** – multiple funders also require multiple monitoring and evaluation reports on an, at least, quarterly basis – even non-managers may be involved in gathering evidence for these.
- **Attending training** – most year-round playworkers are, and should be, undertaking some form of training CPD.

### Holiday play schemes

With a reduction in public funding throughout Wales for many services, including playwork, there has been a move towards provision which runs only during school holidays. This may be managed by the local authority or by voluntary organisations including small, community-based play associations. The needs of this part of the workforce are diverse and include the following challenges:

- **Hard to reach** – holiday play scheme staff are often studying or working in different roles to playwork and may not see themselves as playworkers. This makes it challenging for them to complete larger qualifications.
- **Difficult to survey their needs** – because the workforce is hard to reach, it also means that they are often missing from



surveys which gather information about the needs of the workforce.

- **Capacity issues** – financial and time constraints mean that getting playworkers to complete diploma level qualifications is often not possible. A diploma level 2 playwork qualification usually takes 12 months to complete and a level 3 up to 18 months. This is disproportionate for staff who may only be working in the role for two to six weeks of the year.
- **Experienced** – where holiday play schemes have run in the same location for a number of years, especially community-based provision, there is a high level of playwork experience but for the reasons highlighted they are often not qualified in playwork or do not have the appropriate level of qualification.
- **Well qualified in other sectors** – because playwork is often an add-on to other employment or study, those working in holiday play schemes may hold a range of related qualifications but not necessarily playwork.

## Funding for qualifications

The significant majority of potential funding that has been made available for people to undertake playwork qualifications in Wales is through apprenticeships.

Unfortunately, because of the seasonal and part-time nature of those working in playwork this is not an effective route for learners to take and is not fit for the playwork sector's purpose. Funding for playwork training and qualifications needs to enable learners to choose to undertake appropriate qualifications and training that meets their needs, at a time and place that accommodates the complexity of their lives where they may often be juggling three or more jobs.

There should also be opportunities for playworkers to upskill horizontally – staying at the same level of qualification but gaining additional skills, as well as vertically – progressing from level 2 to 3 and so on.

## Changes to qualifications in the UK

Deregulation of playwork in England has had a longer-term impact on the landscape for qualifications in the rest of the UK. Awarding bodies are businesses and have to consider the commercial viability of all their qualifications.

This is an evolving situation and to date awarding bodies have extended their playwork qualifications. However, to remain in step with developments in Wales these qualifications will need to be updated to remain suitable for the playwork workforce.





## Quality concerns

There are a range of concerns expressed by both employers and learners about the quality of delivery of playwork qualifications. These have been highlighted in the Qualifications Wales 2016 Review of Health, and Social Care Qualifications in Wales including childcare and playwork:

- Concern over the competence of assessors and their sector specific knowledge.
- The impact of essential skills testing on learners. In particular, Play Wales is concerned about the impact of this on learners who have not succeeded in the school system.
- The unsuitability of apprenticeships as a progression route for those in part-time and seasonal playwork roles.
- Apprenticeship learners undertaking qualifications in isolation from other learners, often with the only contact in relation to the qualification being with their assessor.
- Heavy assessment burden on learners with an over reliance on the whole range of assessment criteria rather than holistic assessment.
- Playwork has not historically been a part of childcare qualifications. Whilst there is a plan to amend this with the Children's Care Learning Development and Play Qualification from September 2019, there is still a need for those currently holding childcare qualifications to understand how to support children's freely chosen play.
- Qualifications that are either using outdated terminology and theory or are written to the old National Occupational Standards (these were reviewed in 2016).

## Playwork qualification developments in Wales

To meet the play needs of all children in Wales and all those who work where children play, Play Wales has developed a suite of qualifications known as [Playwork: Principles into Practice](#) or P<sup>3</sup>.

These consist of a Level 2 Certificate and a Level 3 Diploma qualification. P<sup>3</sup> can be delivered in English or in Welsh.

Our new suite of playwork qualifications meet the qualification requirements for registered playwork settings in Wales.

The qualifications have been designed to provide a proportionate, effective and coherent progression route for playworkers.

1. The [Agored Cymru Level 2 Award in Playwork Practice \(L2APP\)](#) provides a broad introduction to playwork and is the entry requirement to progress on to the other qualifications in the suite.
2. The [Agored Cymru Level 2 Certificate Playwork: Principles into Practice](#) has been designed to meet the requirements of face-to-face playworkers based on sector feedback.
3. The [Agored Cymru Level 3 Diploma Playwork: Principles into Practice](#) is the progression from the Level 2 Certificate and is aimed at playwork managers and supervisors. It includes content on community development, risk management, legislation and working with families.

In addition, Play Wales has developed the [Level 3 Award in Managing a Holiday Play Scheme \(MAHPS\)](#), with funding from Welsh Government. This qualification acts as a transitional award for those with related level 3 qualifications to act as registered person or person-in-charge of a holiday play scheme.

## Playwork Quality Assurance

The *First Claim ... a framework for playwork quality assessment* has been in circulation since 2001. The publication serves as an excellent introduction to playwork and includes a basic and intermediate framework which was intended to be used to self-assess the quality of playwork practice. In 2002 Play Wales also published *The First Claim – Desirable Processes*, which includes an advanced framework.

With the current review of the National Minimum Standards (NMS) and the ongoing Ministerial Play Review, quality assurance is being discussed more and more. Furthermore, the need for a fit for purpose quality assurance framework for playwork settings in Wales has been highlighted in the last three reviews of local authority Play Sufficiency Assessments undertaken by Play Wales. We therefore consider it timely to develop something specifically for the playwork sector that looks beyond playwork practice and also includes management and setting specific quality indicators.

The proposed Playwork Quality Assurance Framework is intended for use by registered and unregistered playwork settings and also be applicable to those undertaking playwork in non-dedicated playwork settings. The Playwork Quality Assurance Framework will have the Playwork Principles and children's rights at its heart.

Furthermore, there should be links between the Playwork Quality Assurance Framework and other frameworks currently in development. Playwork settings delivering a wider offer for children and young people may also be undertaking the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Quality Framework or the Youth Work Quality Mark.

## 3.2 Priorities for the playwork workforce

### Strategic priorities

Play Wales will work with Welsh Government and other strategic stakeholders to seek to address the following priorities:

<b>PWS1</b>	Funding for playwork qualifications that reduces the burden on learners and employers and allows for increased uptake and accreditation of playwork learners.
<b>PWS2</b>	Identifying funding for the sustainability and development of playwork qualifications from level 1 to 5 that most effectively meet the needs of the sector.
<b>PWS3</b>	Ensure that the effect of changes to playwork qualifications driven by UK wide factors are incorporated in plans for Wales to work towards a clear sustainable qualification path for those wishing to progress in playwork.
<b>PWS4</b>	Increase the delivery infrastructure for playwork qualifications in Wales especially in relation to the numbers and levels of competence of tutors and assessors.
<b>PWS5</b>	Work with key stakeholders to ensure that progression routes for playwork are streamlined, sustainable and achievable for the needs of the workforce.
<b>PWS6</b>	Continue to work with the Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales (PETC Wales) to steer the strategic direction of the quality and status of playwork qualifications in Wales and the UK.
<b>PWS7</b>	Work with Qualifications Wales and PETC Wales on the quality assurance and designation of playwork qualifications eligible for public funding in Wales.

## Operational priorities

Play Wales will work with other partners to address the following priorities:

<b>PWO1</b>	Work with Agored Cymru and Addysg Oedolion Cymru   Adult Learning Wales on the sustainability of quality training delivery for playwork, in particular <a href="#">Playwork: Principles into Practice (P<sup>3</sup>)</a> , the <a href="#">Level 2 Award in Playwork Practice (L2APP)</a> , the <a href="#">Level 3 Award in Managing a Holiday Play Scheme (MAHPS)</a> and the <a href="#">Level 3 Award in Delivering Dynamic Playwork Training (ADDaPT)</a> .
<b>PWO2</b>	Support the development of CPD and qualification options that allow playworkers to upskill whilst remaining at the same level.
<b>PWO3</b>	Work with playwork employers and playworkers to identify opportunities and mechanisms to promote CPD.
<b>PWO4</b>	Work with Higher Education institutions to embed competence based playwork qualifications into relevant degree courses.
<b>PWO5</b>	Explore options to increase staffing capacity within Play Wales for workforce development.
<b>PWO6</b>	Work with international partners in Europe and the rest of the world to share playwork knowledge, training and qualifications. This contributes to Play Wales' work as an international centre of excellence.
<b>PWO7</b>	Work with stakeholders in Wales and the rest of the UK to review the <a href="#">Level 3 Award in Transition from Early Years to Playwork</a> and explore the feasibility of a transition from playwork to early years.
<b>PWO8</b>	Development of a new quality assurance framework for the playwork sector that meets the needs of registered and unregistered playwork settings. Work with CIW and Welsh Government to ensure that the resulting framework links with the expectations of inspectors and with the ECEC Quality Framework.

## 4. The play workforce

The nature of the play workforce is extremely diverse and often training needs will be bespoke to both the sector, and the region of Wales, they work in.

The range of stakeholders encompassed by the definition 'play workforce' (see section 2), includes those whose role impacts directly or indirectly on the various Matters defined within *Wales – a Play Friendly Country*. This includes those working in: planning, education, early years and childcare, health, travel, highways, community development, youth services, leisure and sport across statutory services and a range of third sector organisations but may also include other stakeholders.

There is strong evidence from the 2013 and 2016 Play Sufficiency Assessments that where play development teams exist, whether as part of the local authority or through the third sector, that the training and professional development needs of the play workforce are being identified and attempts made to provide for their needs.

However, funding that is available for upskilling tends to be for formal qualifications rather than training and CPD and therefore, there is a need to be creative to allocate sufficient resources to upskill the play workforce.

There are a range of ways in which the play workforce can be upskilled and these include:

- Conferences and seminars
- Workshops
- Training
- Briefing papers
- One-to-one meetings
- Digital media (such as blogs, forums, videos, websites and podcasts).

Whilst qualifications focused on play within the various sectors outlined above is aspirational, there is a need to be realistic. This may not be an appropriate route for sectors that have pre-defined qualifications and where funding may be even more difficult to access.



## 4.1 Challenges to address for the play workforce

### Funding for Continuing Professional Development

Funding for CPD tends to rely on departmental or organisational budgets and it can be a challenge for other sectors to prioritise funding for play training when sectoral training and CPD is also required. Whilst *Wales – a Play Friendly Country* recognises the need to upskill the wider play workforce, this is not reflected in policy level planning. Some local authorities have used ad-hoc funding to enable the undertaking of training, conferences and events aimed at the play workforce but this is not sustainable or strategic.

### Competing priorities

There is no statutory requirement on professionals to undertake play training or qualifications and much of the play workforce may not understand the impact that their role has on children's play. Where play training has been offered there is a greater awareness amongst the play workforce of how their role links to the local authority Play Sufficiency Assessment and action plan.

### No recognised or approved pathway for CPD or qualifications relating to the play workforce

There is much good work being undertaken by local authorities, third sector organisations and Play Wales to develop a range of options to upskill the play workforce. However, these have not been formalised so there is no standard pathway for the play workforce to follow. A framework that identifies the types of options available for CPD, training and qualifications by order of hierarchy may

help those members of the play workforce who wish to progress their knowledge and understanding.

### Reduction in the size of the overall workforce

A reduction in overall funding to local authorities and third sector organisations has led, in many cases, to less staff on the ground and remaining staff taking on additional roles and responsibilities. This may mean that 'play' may be part of a much broader remit.

Added to this, in some local authorities, Play Sufficiency Assessments are being undertaken by people with no experience of play and playwork. A programme of CPD that includes skills and knowledge associated with completing Play Sufficiency Assessments, consulting with children and parents, research and prioritising actions would support those with this responsibility.



## 4.2. Priorities for the play workforce

### Strategic priorities

Play Wales will work with Welsh Government and other strategic stakeholders to address the following priorities:

<b>PS1</b>	Work with Welsh Government to ensure that training and CPD for the play workforce are given priority alongside initiatives to upskill and qualify the early years, childcare and playwork workforce.
<b>PS2</b>	Work with Welsh Government to develop a better understanding of the needs of the play workforce, how to assess their needs and practical ways of supporting upskilling and CPD.
<b>PS3</b>	Support local authorities and third sector play organisations to upskill the play workforce.

### Operational priorities

<b>PO1</b>	Supporting practitioners in the wider play workforce to understand their role in play sufficiency through identifying and developing play qualifications, training, seminars, workshops, conferences, briefing papers and digital media potentially including videos, blogs, websites, smart phone apps and podcasts.
<b>PO2</b>	Explore funding routes and delivery options for a programme of CPD for stakeholders in play sufficiency.
<b>PO3</b>	Develop a programme of CPD for Play Sufficiency Assessment leads.
<b>PO4</b>	Develop and deliver a range of workshops aimed at the play workforce.
<b>PO5</b>	Engage with Further Education and Higher Education institutions to ensure that any qualifications and programmes aimed at the play workforce dovetail and respond to priorities within this workforce development plan.



## 5. Implementing the workforce development plan

Play Wales will develop an annual action plan referenced to the priorities within this workforce development plan. Work on strategic priorities will be shared with Welsh Government as part of monitoring of funding received.

The workforce development plan priorities will be reviewed in 2022 as part of the review of the next round of Play Sufficiency Assessments.

Play Wales will feed back to PETC Wales on progress against the annual action plan.

## Appendix 1

### Key stakeholders

Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales  
Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs  
CWLWM partnership  
Education and Training Standards (ETS)  
Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales (PETC Wales)  
Qualifications Wales  
Social Care Wales  
Welsh Government

## Bibliography

SkillsActive (2019) *List of required qualifications to work within the Playwork Sector in Wales*. London: SkillsActive.

Qualifications Wales (2016) *Sector Review of Qualifications and the Qualification System in Health and Social Care including child care and play work*. Newport: Qualifications Wales.

Welsh Government (2014) *Wales – a Play Friendly Country*. Cardiff: Crown copyright.

Welsh Government (2016) *National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare for children up to the age of 12 years*. Cardiff: Crown copyright.



November 2020

[www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk)

Play Wales is the national organisation for children's play, an independent charity supported by the Welsh Government to uphold children's right to play and to provide advice and guidance on play-related matters.

Registered charity no. 1068926