



Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy



October
2002



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Foreword

Welsh Assembly Government's Play Policy



Jane Hutt

I am delighted to publish the Welsh Assembly's Play Policy.

The decision to adopt a play policy is an explicit demonstration of the importance that the Welsh Assembly Government places on the value of play in childhood and the importance of children in our society. It makes clear the commitment of the Welsh Assembly Government to ensure that children and their needs are central to policy making and that provision is made to meet those needs.

The policy is a broad statement of principles, rather than a detailed prescription of how play provision should be implemented. The Assembly Government will, over the coming year, be working up a more detailed strategy in partnership with practitioners.

This is the beginning of an exciting new phase in the Assembly Government's services for children and young people. I look forward to working with colleagues in both the voluntary and statutory sector in developing our support for play opportunities.

Jane Hutt:
Minister for Health and Social Services

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT PLAY POLICY

This policy statement has been produced to reflect the value that the Welsh Assembly Government places on play and the importance of children in our society. It reflects our commitment to ensure that children and their needs are central to policy making and that provision is made to meet those needs.

The statement is founded on the principle that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK Government in December 1991, recognises the importance of play for the child.

The Welsh Assembly Government, in seeking to ensure the full implementation of Article 31 of the Convention, intends that this statement should contribute to creating an environment that fosters children's play and underpins a national strategy for providing for children's play needs.

The Welsh Assembly Government believes that:

- play is the elemental learning process by which humankind has developed. Children exhibit a behavioural imperative and instinctive desire to play. It has contributed significantly to the evolutionary and developmental survival of our species. Children use play in the natural environment to learn of the world they inhabit with others. It is the very process of learning and growth, and as such all that is learnt through it is of benefit to the child.
- play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development - not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live.
- play is so critically important to all children in the development of their physical, social, mental, emotional and creative skills that society should seek every opportunity to support it and create an environment that fosters it. Decision making at all levels of government should include a consideration of the impact of those decisions, on children's opportunities to play.

- play is first and foremost the process of a child's own, self-directed learning and as such is a process that has a validity for all ages of children. It is such a vital component of a child's life that the child's capacity for positive development will be inhibited or constrained if denied free access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.
- It is the very freedom and child centredness of play that makes it such an effective and comprehensive learning process.

This policy statement is predicated upon the principles that:

- every child is entitled to respect for their own unique combination of qualities and capabilities;
- the perceptions of the child, their views and opinions should always be respected for each child is connected to, and a bearer of, a wider culture;
- the child's free choice of their own play is a critical factor in enriching their learning and contributing to their well being and development.

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises the significance and the value of play in children's development and that children have an innate desire to seek out opportunities to take increasing risks. This is an essential part of their play and learning. It requires us to respond positively by extending the range of environments and opportunities available for children's play while continuing to have due regard for their physical and psychological well being.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to ensuring that all children have access to rich stimulating environments, free from inappropriate risk, and full of challenge, thereby offering them the opportunity to explore through freely chosen play both themselves and the world.

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that the impact of modern society on children's lives has significantly restricted their opportunity to play freely and has resulted in a poverty of play opportunities in the general environment. It is therefore committed to encouraging the creation of high quality 'compensatory' play provision that is appropriate, local, stimulating and challenging for all children in Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government commits itself to the development in partnership of a strategy that will set out the way in which the principles in this statement can be implemented.