

# Play for Wales

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Play news and briefing from  
the national charity for play



Celebrating the right to play



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## Thank you

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed to this magazine – we couldn't do it without you.

This issue of *Play for Wales*, as well as previous issues, is available to download at [www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk)

## Editorial

### General Comment 17 – five years on. What difference has it made in Wales?

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) secures the child's right to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts but had long been considered 'the forgotten article' of the Convention.

On 1 February 2013, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted General Comment 17 (GC) in support of Article 31. This statement emphasises the importance and clarifies the meaning of Article 31 and explains what governments should do.

It puts the right to play in the spotlight and helps policy makers, communities, parents, children and teenagers to make the case about the benefits and value of play.

The UN Committee strongly encourages governments to consider introducing legislation to ensure Article 31 rights for every child and that all children should be given sufficient time and space to exercise these

rights. Governments should also give consideration to cross departmental collaboration nationally and locally.

For the purposes of the UNCRC and government policy the GC provides a much-needed description of play. It states that: the key characteristics of play are fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity; it is a fundamental and vital dimension of the pleasure of childhood; it is an essential component of physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development. It also describes the difference between play, leisure and recreation.

The GC description of play fits with the Welsh Government *Play Policy* (2002), and in 2010, Wales was the first country in the world to legislate for children's play in its Children and Families (Wales) Measure. At the time this decision to develop legislation and accompanying statutory guidance, underpinned by the right to play, was seen by some as idealistic. However, the GC has endorsed this approach and eight years on we are beginning to see the positive impact of the legislation.

The legislation requires local authorities to make a three yearly in-depth assessment,

cutting across different public service agendas. The process of producing assessments and 'securing sufficient play opportunities' requires the involvement of everyone whose job affects children's play, such as planning, transport and education.

There is a growing recognition that children's play goes beyond the provision of playgrounds and playschemes. It's more about the importance of children having the time, space and the support of adults to help them play in their neighbourhoods. This evolving change in hearts and minds, to make every child's right to play a reality, has undoubtedly been helped and informed by the GC.

So, five years on, just what difference has the GC made in Wales? Most importantly, it has endorsed the approach being taken by the Welsh Government, the *Play Policy* and the legislation that embodies the principle of play sufficiency. There is still a long way to go but much has been put in place to set the scene. Our challenge now is to maintain this momentum to make the freedom to play a reality for all children in Wales.

**Mike Greenaway,**  
Director, Play Wales



## News

# Success for Play Wales

Play Wales has proudly received the PQASSO Level 1 Quality Mark. This followed an intense and rigorous process by the staff team and the Board of Trustees to self-review, improve and finally pass an external assessment.



PQASSO is a quality assurance scheme for voluntary organisations. To help organisations to be run more effectively and efficiently it measures performance in a range of quality areas including

governance, leadership and management, and results.

**By achieving the PQASSO Level 1 Quality Mark we have successfully demonstrated qualities such as:**

- Effective and responsible governance
- Robust financial control
- Building good relationships with other organisations
- Recognising and valuing our community – we focus on better outcomes to best represent their interests.

### The PQASSO assessor said:

*'Play Wales has demonstrated an impressive level of achievement across all PQASSO quality areas. The director and staff showed absolute commitment to the mission, values and aims of the organisation and were seen to be a highly motivated, highly experienced and competent team.'*

*Governance is excellent – it is a real strength of the organisation in all its aspects. Play Wales also ranks highly for providing a friendly, warm welcome ensuring this site visit was one of the more memorable for the Assessor for all the right reasons. I wish them every success for the future.'*

### Mike Shooter, Play Wales' Chair said:

*'You know instinctively when you are working for an organisation that is skilled, dedicated and compassionate, but it is good to have proof. And here it is.'*

# Parental views in Wales

In 2017-18, the National Survey for Wales included questions on parental satisfaction with places for children and young people to play or meet up, as well as satisfaction with clubs and organised activities.

### Key findings include:

- 52 percent of parents of children aged 1 to 10 were satisfied with clubs and organised activities.
- 34 percent of parents of children aged 11 to 15 were satisfied with places in the local area for their child to meet and get together with friends, and 38 percent were satisfied with organised clubs and activities for 11 to 15 year olds.
- For both age ranges, parents in urban areas were more satisfied with play and recreation provision than those in rural areas.

- Parents' concern about the safety of the local area as a reason for dissatisfaction with play areas increased between 2014-15 and 2017-18.

The National Survey for Wales is carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on behalf of the Welsh Government. It involves over 11,000 people and runs all year round, across Wales.

### Find out more at:

<https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2018/181016-national-survey-wales-2017-18-play-en.pdf>

# Cardiff Council opens streets for play



Cardiff is the first Welsh council to work towards global recognition as part of the Unicef Child Friendly City programme.

As part of this, the Council is bringing partners together to develop a Street Play pilot project. The project aims to streamline the road closure application process to allow residents across five communities to close their street for short times to enable children to safely play close to their homes.

The Council and Play Wales are working with residents to make streets and communities play friendlier places for children and teenagers. Using the Playing Out model – street play sessions led by neighbours for neighbours – residents across the city close their streets to traffic for two hours a month for street play sessions.

**Lee Patterson, the council's strategic lead for the Child Friendly City initiative said:**

*'Children, young people and their families have highlighted ... the need for more opportunities to play in their communities and for families to spend more time together. Children have also highlighted the need to reduce car use in the city to enhance the environment and make Cardiff a safer city to move around when walking, cycling or scooting.'*

As part of the project, Play Wales has worked with Playing Out to translate some of its resources for residents into Welsh ([www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk)). The project has also informed the development of a toolkit for councils which

provides guidance and tools to support the development of policies and procedures to enable resident-led street play projects in their areas.

**Cardiff resident and mother of two, Toni Morgan, said:**

*'I wanted to kick start the project in my street as I was aware of the many families living in the street, however had never actually encountered any children at any time playing outside in the three years of living here. I wanted my own children to have more of an "organic" child-led play experience growing up and all the benefits it brings ... this was the closest, safest option, without it being too contrived and ruined by adults! Plus, the words "play date" give me the shivers!'*

**Marianne Mannello, Play Wales' Assistant Director said:**

*'Giving children permission to play out close to their home and those of their friends helps them gain an understanding of the world they live in, as they learn to deal with situations outside the home, without being too far away from adults. This is an important step to gaining self-reliance and greater independence for going to the park, the local shop or walking to school.'*

## Legal advice for children and teenagers

Article 17 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) stresses that children are entitled to easy to understand and reliable information from a variety of sources.

The Children's Legal Centre Wales provides information and access to legal advice for children and teenagers.

**It aims to:**

- Provide legal advice and information services to children and teenagers
- Provide training and education on the law as it affects children and teenagers

- Carry out research, data analysis and evaluative studies to change and improve law, policy and practice in relation to children and teenagers.

The Centre has developed a website which includes a section to help children know about their rights and how the law affects them. **This section features information about play:** <https://childrenslegalcentre.wales/how-the-law-affects-me/play/>

# Active Healthy Kids Wales 2018 report card

The Active Healthy Kids-Wales (AHK-Wales) 2018 report card brings together research related to physical activity among children and young people in Wales. It aims to raise the awareness of children and young people's engagement in physical activity and advocate for children's right to be active and healthy.

The report card was produced by an expert group made up of 24 academics, postgraduate researchers, professionals and practitioners. It includes eleven indicators which summarise the country's progress and position on children's health related physical activity.

Play Wales contributed to the Active Play indicator. The AHK-Wales Research Expert Group used data from Play Sufficiency Assessment Child Surveys 2016 and the Health Behaviour of School-aged Children (HBSC) survey 2017/18 to give the Active Play indicator a C-grade.

Despite 21 national policies that aim to promote physical activity in children and young people in Wales, the proportion of children meeting the guidelines for physical activity remains low and sedentary behaviours remain high.

The report card makes the following recommendations to improve the grade in the future:

- **Safer roads:** the adoption of a 20mph speed limit in all residential areas will have wide-reaching and positive effect. Local authorities should engage with local communities and facilitate resident-led street play projects across Wales.
- **Making the most of community assets – school grounds for play:** schools, as a central resource for the local community, should be encouraged to consider the options to make their school grounds available for free play after school and at weekends.
- **School play time:** schools should consider the value to pupil wellbeing when making decisions on the planning and length of the school day including play times, lunchtimes and homework scheduling. Schools should provide adequate facilities, equipment and supervision during lunchtimes. School landscape design and playground design which support play should feature in new school design from the outset.

## Children's participation in decision making

An Eurochild conference held in Croatia in October 2018 considered positive examples of how public decision-makers at local, national and European levels are respecting the right of children to participate in decisions affecting them.



**Eurochild**  
Putting children at  
the heart of Europe

A background paper – *Children's participation in public decision-making – a review of practice in Europe* – prepared for the conference gives an overview of current practice on children's participation in public decision making. Using results from a survey of Eurochild members and a review of academic literature focused on Europe, it provides examples of children's participation activities that are inclusive of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, which have successfully influenced public decision making.

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that children have the right to express their views on all matters that affect them. However, the UN Committee on the Rights of

the Child's General Comment No. 12 makes clear, obligations under Article 12 go beyond creating opportunities for children to voice their opinions. Governments also have a responsibility to ensure that children's views are heard and taken seriously by those making the decisions.

The *Wales: Developing the Right to Safe Places to Play* case study included in the background paper highlights the impact that children's views had in influencing a National Assembly for Wales committee and inquiry.

Read the background paper at:  
<http://bit.ly/EurochildBackgroundPaper>

# Promoting the right to play in Wales



Throughout Wales, progress is being made by local authorities and their partners to respond to Welsh Government's Play Sufficiency duties.

Play Wales has gathered case studies that present innovative solutions to secure sufficient play opportunities in line with the Matters identified in *Wales – a Play Friendly Country* statutory guidance.

#### The case studies:

- build on existing practice, partnerships or approaches
- are underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and General Comment 17 on Article 31
- work to the principles of partnership working and collaboration
- maximise resources
- have been developed and implemented in consultation, participation and engagement.

#### Thinking about signs

As part of Conwy's Play Sufficiency Assessment play development workers spent time talking with children and young people about their opportunities for play and the barriers to play that they experienced. In these conversations, and in consultation with Conwy's Youth Council, the negative message given out by No Ball Games signs was highlighted as an issue.

To address the perception that No Ball Games signs give the message that children aren't welcome to play in their community the Conwy Play Development Team worked with the local authority and housing associations to create a plan to take down the signs.

The Play Development Team worked with a local film youth club to create a video promoting the importance of play and the removing of No Ball Games signs. This video was circulated via social media and a process for

children and adults to challenge signs in their area is now in place across the county.

**To view the video visit:** <http://cvsc.org.uk/en/cvscplaydevelopment/no-ball-games-signs/>

Signs, such as No Balls Games ones, can deter children and parents using a space. Although legally enforcing the signs is challenging, they stop children playing, prevents parents from allowing children to play out, and gives power to others who don't think children should be playing in their community. However, there are examples of positive signs that encourage play. In Acton, Wrexham, the community council received complaints about children riding their bikes and scooters on the community centre car park. People were concerned that it wasn't safe, that children might get hurt or the cars scratched.

*'We considered putting up signs to deter children from playing there but in a community council meeting, it was pointed out that as the car park is flat, fairly large and only used for parking at certain times, it's quite a good place for children to play. In fact, it's probably safer than them riding on the pavements or roads, especially for younger children who often have their parents with them anyway.'*

*'We decided the space could have more than one use and that as long as people were careful it could be shared. To support this, we installed signs informing drivers to expect children to be playing on the car park. Drivers now tend to park at the top, leaving the bottom of the car park free. It's nice to see children playing outside the community centre.'*

**Community councillor**

## Thinking about open space

In 2016, following consultation, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council produced its Open Space Strategy which aims to identify areas that require further investment of time, resources and management to improve the quantity of, and accessibility to, certain types of open space.

The vision for the local authority is to ensure that play is recognised within key strategies and policies within the authority. There is a strategic desire to increase coordination and working in partnership with others to improve children's play opportunities across the county.

One of the priority areas identified in the 2016 consultation was Sandy Park, in Penydarren Ward. The local ward members, local authority officers, and third sector and community organisations, were all keen to work together to improve the area, ensuring compliance with the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015.

The consultation found that the space needed to be welcoming, have good access, clear signage, better equipment and address the issue of dog fouling. The play area was extended to include other forms of more natural play, such as willow tunnels. It was agreed to create a more playful environment through the introduction of a more varied landscape structure.

## Parent involvement

When funding for play sessions came to an end on a housing estate in Pembrokeshire, several local parents were interested in receiving training and forming a parent play team to offer staffed play opportunities for local children. The parents undertook a playwork qualification and had the opportunity to put their newly taught theory into practice at a series of play sessions supported by Pembrokeshire's Play Team.

Together, as the Mount Estate Play and Participation Team (MEPPT), the parents now provide free weekly play sessions for families at a local community centre.

The Play Sufficiency Officer and the local authority's Housing Officer developed a partnership to offer play training for parents. The team's achievements have been recognised nationally in the 2018 TPAS Cymru Awards, where they won third place in the Community Action category.

## Combatting holiday hunger

Both food and play are vitally important to the health, growth and wellbeing of children. Healthy children who are well fed and nourished have the resources to respond with enthusiasm and engagement to play opportunities and new and enriching experiences. In partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Clwyd Alyn Housing Association and Travis Perkins Managed Service, Flintshire County Council delivered hot meals to children attending community based playschemes over the summer school holidays.

There are similar commitments by play teams and their partners across Wales to make food available to children attending holiday playschemes. Most of the playschemes are free at the point of entry, take place close to where children live and appeal to families as there is no formal referral system.

We know that every aspect of children's lives is influenced by their urge to play, and that the kind of self-directed, self-determined playing offered by quality holiday play provision increases children's opportunities to build their own resilience. Play is central to a healthy child's life, and we are confident that the provision of food in holiday playschemes is one of the best ways to support children and families during the school summer holidays.

# Joint statement on children's play

Play Wales has worked with Public Health Wales on a joint statement for children's outdoor play. The joint statement advocates for outdoor play in a society that is becoming increasingly risk averse, leading to children having fewer opportunities to play outside. This is having a harmful effect on the health of children and young people in the short term and over their life course.



**GIG**  
CYMRU  
**NHS**  
WALES

**Iechyd Cyhoeddus**  
Cymru  
**Public Health**  
Wales

## Background

During summer 2017, Play Wales worked in partnership with Public Health Wales on its *Every Child Wales* programme. It brings together information and advice to support parents in giving children a happy and healthy start in life. Public Health Wales identified ten evidence based steps to help children in the early years in Wales to maintain a healthy weight which it is promoting through *Every Child Wales*. Step six focuses on outdoor play, with the ambition that every child will be given the chance to play outdoors every day.

Children who play outdoors are more active and are more likely to meet the UK Chief Medical Officers' recommended three hours of movement per day. The programme launch was followed with a joint symposium focusing on play, health and risk. Here, the need to develop a joint statement was discussed and established. It was agreed that there is a need to balance risks and benefits across different health and wellbeing outcomes and to understand more about the barriers and facilitators that influence children's access to play opportunities.

The statement is informed by a background paper which focuses on the importance of play, the barriers faced by children in accessing play and the possible solutions.

The paper takes its definition of play from General Comment 17 (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013) which says:

- Play is initiated, controlled and structured by children
- Play is non-compulsory, driven by intrinsic motivation, not a means to an end
- Play has the key characteristics of fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity.

## The background paper:

- presents a public health perspective of play
- details the evidence on the health benefits of outdoor play
- identifies a range of barriers
- discusses possible solutions
- provides international perspectives
- explores the range of supporting policy and legislation
- explains playing at different ages and stages of childhood.

The joint statement explores how we can establish the conditions to support outdoor play, identifies barriers to outdoor play and recommends the actions required to address them. It states clearly what Play Wales and Public Health Wales would like to see happen to address barriers.



The statement is organised by groups to allow readers to identify quickly how they can make a difference. It highlights issues for:

## Play and childcare settings and parks and open space managers

*Confusion and concerns over health and safety regulations are preventing many children from taking part in active outdoor play activities and this must be addressed.*

## Local authorities

*Parents and children often report traffic as a limiting factor to play in neighbourhoods. The volume of traffic has increased over the years and that is likely to continue. Some areas have addressed this by reclaiming streets for play through resident-led street play projects where streets are closed off for short times to allow children to play.*

## Schools

*Having enough time to play is a recurring issue for children: homework, exams and revision limit free time for play. Children report that school is the main chance they have to play with their friends but playtimes and lunch times are being shortened.*

## Parents and carers

*There is concern that playing outdoors is not seen as safe and this risk aversion is damaging the long-term health of children and young people in Wales over their life course. Parents report a range of barriers preventing children playing out, including traffic, difficulty in accessing spaces to play, time pressures and safety fears.*

## Inspection services

*Confusion and concerns over health and safety regulations are preventing many children from taking part in active outdoor play, this must be addressed. The demands on schools to achieve academic targets must not be put above the duty to protect the health and wellbeing of the children in their care. Time allocated to play is associated with pupil wellbeing and should therefore be considered as a positive element of school life.*

## Society as a whole

*Many adults have positive memories of playing out and recognise the value of play but a strong sense of responsibility to keep children safe creates a challenge for modern day society and is eroding opportunities for play. Society must recognise and act on this to redress the balance.*

### Dr. Julie Bishop, Director of Health Improvement for Public Health Wales, said:

*'This joint statement advocates for outdoor play in a society that is becoming increasingly risk averse, leading to less outdoor play. This is having a harmful effect on the health of children and young people in the short term and over their life course. Play is a basic right for all children, and is worthwhile for the enjoyment it brings to children and their families in the moment. However, play also has the benefit of having a positive impact on multiple important health outcomes including increased physical activity; reducing childhood obesity, improving wellbeing in children and young people and helping to develop resilience.'*

### Play Wales said:

*'The joint statement makes the case for creating conditions which allow children to direct and determine their play. When children personally direct their play, they decide the rules and roles they take within their play and create worlds they can master. Unscheduled free time for children should not be seen as non-essential.*

*Play is a key mechanism for meeting and exceeding physical activity guidelines, developing resilience and dealing with stress and anxiety. It provides effective strategies for dealing with uncertainty and contributes to good physical and mental health. More than that, every aspect of children's lives*

*is influenced by their urge to play, and that self-directed, self-determined playing offered by quality play opportunities increases children's opportunities to build their own resilience and support their own health and wellbeing.'*

The statement recognises that action is needed to promote more positive attitudes to outdoor play and to normalise it in informal community spaces. This action needs to be in a supportive social context, and so simultaneous action is needed to remove or minimise time, economic, social or physical constraints to outdoor play.

**The joint statement will be available at:**  
**[www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk)**

# 'A world without play would be very grey, dull and boring'

We asked class Afan HR6 at Charles Williams Primary School in Newport to review the *Fun in the dungeon* storybook. Here's what they had to say:

The people who wrote this story have a wild imagination. The characters are brilliant and the Mum is the best character by far as she is kind and welcoming and understands how children feel about play. The Queen is also a very interesting character who seems intimidating and scary at first – she doesn't just have dogs ... she has **wolves!**

When children pick up this book the first thing they will love will be the illustrations because they are just so eye-catching and wacky! It is easy to understand and lots of children of different ages and abilities will be able to read it aloud. Children usually like books that have a happy ending, so they will be really pleased that play wins in the end. As well as this, it was a brilliant idea to put a fun game at the end of the book where you have to spot the Queen.

When adults read the book they will feel like they have learned something really important but easy to understand. They will want to do all they can to let their children play and have fun. Adults will enjoy the comedy elements of the story like the fact the Queen gives up her kingdom and responsibilities to constantly play. It's so enjoyable and uplifting to read that it will make even the grumpiest of people (adults) full of joyfulness and happiness.



The book highlights to adults how important play is. It really showed the importance of play in children's lives. It will definitely help children explain to grown ups that if play can happen in a dark and dismal dungeon then it can happen anywhere. Also, children who read this book will understand the importance of play, and then, when they are older, they will tell their own children to play whenever they want and so will be great parents themselves.

The message behind this story is very clear. It tells the reader that play can happen anywhere and no one can stop you from playing if you put your mind to it. You don't even need all the toys or play equipment that some people think you need. You mainly just need to think up a game and ask some friends to play it with you.

In the story, the Queen learned that play is not something silly and a waste of time, but something that makes you concentrate and use your imagination. All adults must try to remember that.

The overall message is that play can never be a bad thing and that a world without play would be very grey, dull and boring.

Over the summer Play Wales distributed 3500 copies of *Fun in the dungeon* to children and their families, libraries, health centres and partner organisations across Wales. We are currently fundraising to print more copies of the storybook.

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

# Playful Childhoods

Children tell us they want more time and space to play at home and out in the community with their friends. As adults it's our responsibility to make this happen. Play Wales' latest projects aim to support every child's right to play.

## Playful Childhoods

### Right to Play roadshow

To raise awareness about every child's right to play and spread the word about our new *Playful Childhoods* campaign, Play Wales hit the road and visited a series of events over the summer.

Our Right to Play roadshow visited Conwy's Playday event, the Royal Welsh Show in Builth Wells, the National Eisteddfod in Cardiff, and family days in Llanelli, Bridgend, Caerphilly, and Merthyr Tydfil.

Our over-sized 31 numbers proved popular with children and adults and got more and more colourful as the roadshow travelled across Wales. Children and families wrote messages and created colourful drawings about their right to play and their favourite play memories.

The numbers represented Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 31 says that every child has the right to play.



At the events we also shared 1000 goodie bags with children and their families. The Playful Childhoods bags included right to play posters, a playful parenting booklet, *Fun in the dungeon* storybook, chalk, a wristband and balloon.

As we reported in the last issue, the Right to Play roadshow was part of Play Wales' partnership work with Public Health Wales' *Every Child Wales* programme.

### Playful Childhoods website

Our newly launched *Playful Childhoods* website aims to help parents, carers, grandparents and community groups give children plenty of good opportunities to play. The website has been developed to support:

- Parents to give their children opportunities to play
- Parents so they feel confident about letting their children play outside in the community
- The development of playful communities for children across Wales
- A shared understanding of the importance of play for children and teenagers by all adults across Wales.

The website will also be useful for professionals to support their work with children and families. These sections of the website may be particularly useful to share with parents and carers:

- Top tips for playful parenting – including managing children's screen time and supporting teenager's play
- 'How to play' guides – including how to deal with messy play and play fighting
- Ideas for play – simple and free things to do.

**The website is full of practical information and guidance for making childhoods and communities across Wales more playful:**  
[www.playfulchildhoods.wales](http://www.playfulchildhoods.wales)

# UK Children's Commissioners support children's right to play

As part of this year's Playday celebrations, the four Children's Commissioners from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales stood together to support the importance of children's play as an essential aspect of childhood.

In a joint written statement, Sally Holland, Children's Commissioner for Wales, Koulla Yiasouma, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, Bruce Adamson, Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland, and Anne Longfield OBE, Children's Commissioner for England urge everyone to play their part in ensuring the creation of the best possible opportunities for all children and young people to embrace their right to play.

The four Commissioners said: *'Throughout time, play has sometimes taken a back seat to other aspects of life and this is still the case in modern lives in the UK with competing demands on time, resources and the influence of technology. As Commissioners we are asking all adults to help make sure this doesn't happen'.*

## With this in mind, the Commissioners call for:

- All adults to consider how they can help children and young people across the UK have time, space, permission and support to play, both in their family life and in their community.

- Organisations to think about whether they are doing all they can to empower and involve children and young people to have a say in ideas and decisions that affect their rights – including their right to play.
- Governments and statutory agencies to actively promote and protect children's right to play through the provision of adequate resources.

Play Wales welcomes the Children's Commissioners recognition and support of the importance of play as an essential part of childhood and the contribution it makes to realising some of their other rights. Playing is important to children and it makes a significant positive impact on their health, wellbeing and happiness. As a society – adults, organisations and governments – we need to continue working together to ensure everyone values the child's right to play and that it's provided for by making certain that every child in Wales has enough time, space and permission to play every day of the year.

To read the Children's Commissioners' statement visit: [www.playwales.org.uk/eng/playday](http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/playday)



Playday is an annual UK celebration of children's play. On 1 August 2018 thousands of children and families across Wales and the rest of the UK went out to play at organised community celebrations.

In its 31<sup>st</sup> year, Playday 2018 celebrated 'Children's Right to Play' as set out in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which recognises the right of every child to play, rest, leisure, enjoy recreational activities and free and full participation in cultural and artistic life.



Date for your diary

**Playday 2019 will take place on Wednesday 7 August**

Playday is co-ordinated by the four national play organisations: PlayBoard Northern Ireland, Play Scotland, Play England and Play Wales.

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

# Children's Commissioner spotlight on Article 31



As Children's Commissioner for Wales I want all children in Wales to have equal opportunities to be the best they can be and to realise their rights.

In March 2018, I published a 'Spotlight Report' sharing over 450 young people's experiences of accessing their rights under Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This project explored all aspects of Article 31, so play, rest and leisure, as well as cultural life and the arts.

Fieldwork was carried out in the Urdd Eisteddfod, with Voices from Care and in our Community Ambassador groups – young people who have volunteered to engage with our office as a member of their local community group or special interest group.

## The project found that:

- Children and young people want to feel safe when they play in their communities, and having opportunities to engage with friends or other children and young people are an important part of this.
- Children and young people sometimes don't feel confident enough to embrace the opportunities available to them to access their rights under Article 31. However, many see the adults in their lives as important sources of support for accessing opportunities. All adults have a responsibility

to help empower children to realise their rights and help them be the best they can be – nurturing confidence is a key part of this.

- The children we spoke to wanted organisations to listen to their views, particularly to make sure that the current opportunities they valued were not taken away. This was particularly the case in respect of youth centres and outdoor spaces.
- Children and young people are not only willing and able to describe the barriers they face, but also to offer solutions. Through effective participation organisations can harness and benefit from children and young people's solutions and creativity.

## Involving children

Children have the right to be involved in planning and decision-making about public provision of facilities and activities, and by doing so organisations will be able to better tailor their provision to meet the needs of children in their area.

I urge all organisations, including those who have responsibility for delivering play, leisure, sport, art, culture and heritage opportunities, to consider if they are providing enough arrangements to engage with children and young people to enable them to inform and plan their services.

Providing such opportunities has real value not only for children and young people but organisations themselves.

With conflicting priorities and the backdrop of austerity I will continue to highlight that play is not a 'nice to have'. Children and young people continue to tell us that it is important to them, and research shows that it is critical to children's development. To achieve the best results, it's important that local authorities and other organisations work with children and their families to build the environments that give our children the opportunities to enjoy play and free time.

Enabling children and young people to participate is one of five principles within *The Right Way: A Children's Rights Approach*. This is a framework and resource, developed by my office, that is grounded in the UNCRC, to help organisations put children's rights at the heart of their work. I hope that by using this framework, public bodies across Wales will work with children to shape and deliver services that really work.

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



# Responding to the Committee on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international agreement that protects the human rights of all children under the age of 18. It was approved by the UN General Assembly in 1989. In 1991 the United Kingdom formally agreed to ensure that every child in the UK has all the rights listed in the Convention. The Welsh Government adopted the Convention as the basis for policy making for children and young people in Wales in 2004.



The Committee on the Rights of the Child is made up of 18 independent experts that monitor implementation of the Convention by the countries (state parties) that have signed up to it. Every five years all countries are obliged to submit reports to the Committee on how the rights are being implemented. The Committee examines each report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the country in the form of concluding observations.

The concluding observations highlight the main areas the reviewed country should address and provide concrete recommendations to implement to improve children's rights.

The Committee examined the UK's implementation of the Convention to improve children's rights in July 2016 and made a range of concluding observations. Here, we consider the progress that Wales is making in addressing the concerns and recommendations of the Committee.

## Concerns

Whilst the Committee welcomed the initiative of the government of Wales to adopt a play policy and integrate children's right to play systematically in relevant legislation and other relevant policies, it expressed concern about:

- (a) The withdrawal of a play and leisure policy in England and the underfunding of play and leisure policies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- (b) Insufficient places and facilities for play and leisure for children, in particular those accessible for children with disabilities and children in marginalized and disadvantaged situations, and public space for adolescents to socialize.

## Recommendations

With reference to its general comment No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts, the Committee recommends that the State party, including the governments of the devolved administrations:

- (a) Strengthen its efforts to guarantee the right of the child to rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child, including by adopting and implementing play and leisure policies with sufficient and sustainable resources;
- (b) Provide children, including those with disabilities and children in marginalized and disadvantaged situations, with safe, accessible, inclusive and smoking-free spaces for play and socialization and public transport to access such spaces;
- (c) Fully involve children in planning, designing and monitoring the implementation of play policies and activities relevant to play and leisure, at the community, local and national levels.

## Resourcing the right to play

Despite the right to play being law in Wales and the growing recognition of its importance, play services for children remain vulnerable to budget cuts, with children's organisations reporting that access to suitable funding has reduced significantly. When finance is tight, there can be a tendency for funders to seek evidence of deferred outcomes gained through playing, such as a reduction of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) or childhood obesity. Whilst the motivation behind such programmes is well placed, there is also a need to recognise the intrinsic value of play for the immediate benefits it brings children, such as enjoyment and pleasure, as defined by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child through General Comment 17.

The Welsh Government has provided about £6.5 million grant funding since 2012 to support local authorities to progress actions identified through play sufficiency assessments and action plans, though it continues to stress that a number of measures can be adopted using a cost neutral approach. When this funding has been available, steps taken by various local authorities include the purchasing of better equipment to support accessible and inclusive play.

## Smokefree playgrounds

All local authorities in Wales have implemented voluntary smoking bans in their local playgrounds and

all now have smoke free playgrounds. In many areas, the introduction of smoke free playgrounds arose from campaigns by local children and teenagers. Most playground signs were designed by local school children and it is often local children that spread the message about the impact that smoking in public spaces where they play has on them.

The Public Health (Wales) Act, passed by the Welsh Government in July 2017, includes a measure to ban smoking in public playgrounds in Wales. It will be against the law to smoke in any area designed or adapted for the use, by children, of one or more items of playground equipment. Following a recent consultation about putting the measures in the Act into practice, the full implementation is likely to be in 2019 or 2020.

## Consulting with children

*Wales – a Play Friendly Country*, the Welsh Government statutory guidance to local authorities on assessing for and securing sufficient play opportunities, stresses the need to seek the views of children. It also expects future action plans to be informed by an analysis of the results of consulting with and involving children.

### Across Wales, all local authorities undertake surveys with children asking them about:

- play provision in their areas
- how they would like their neighbourhood to be organised to provide play opportunities
- what barriers stop them from playing.

Over the years, the analysis has developed to focus on actions which address barriers, with many local authorities finding ways to work at neighbourhood level to engage with children.

Although opportunities for children to engage with policy at national level are limited, it must be noted that the support for children's play nationally gained momentum in 2009 when a National Assembly for Wales' Children and Young People's Committee survey with children across Wales found that safe places to play and hang out was their top concern. The national inquiry that followed resulted in a range of recommendations which are reflected in the play sufficiency statutory guidance.

## Next steps

The next report is due from the UK Government by January 2022. Play Wales as a member of the Wales UNCRC Monitoring Group will be gathering evidence to inform its next report.

# 'Make it easier for me to play'

## Children and teenagers in Wales call for more opportunities and safer environments to play

Researchers Charlotte Todd, Michaela James and Professor Sinead Brophy from Swansea University Medical School tell us about their research findings, which show the importance that both children and teenagers attach to play and unstructured activity.



**Swansea University**  
**Prifysgol Abertawe**

These findings have shown that from primary to secondary school, pupils of all ages expressed the need to be able to play in safer, local areas that are inexpensive to access. Listening to and addressing their suggestions would contribute positively to the current health and wellbeing agenda and influence policy and practice. Work carried out through HAPPEN (Health and Attainment of Pupils in a Primary Education Network) and ACTIVE (Active Children Through Individual Vouchers Evaluation), puts children at the centre of the process, to improve their health and wellbeing. Here are some of the findings:

### HAPPEN

HAPPEN is a primary school network with the aim of improving child health, wellbeing and educational outcomes ([www.happen-wales.co.uk](http://www.happen-wales.co.uk)). Through HAPPEN, pupils complete a health behaviour questionnaire, the Child Health and Activity Tool (CHAT), developed and designed by children themselves. As part of this questionnaire, children aged between 9 and 11 years old and living in South Wales are asked 'What they would change in their area to make them healthier and happier?'. Based on the responses from 2000 children, a shared theme running through is that children would like more safe places to play. The most common suggestions advocated by children are:

#### **Improve local parks or create more parks/spaces to play**

Children mentioned improving parks, upgrading equipment in parks and creating new parks in their area.

They also suggested availability of more green space in which they could play:

*'Make a park because kids in my street run round the car park and road every day.'*

*'Add a park as there is nowhere to really see other kids.'*

*'New park because it's [w]recked.'*

Parks clearly act as a key venue at which children can play and have fun together. Without their presence in the community, or general upkeep, a key opportunity for children to socialise and develop many life skills will be lost.

#### **Clean up the area, make us feel safe and make the roads safer:**

Children regularly commented on the need to pick up litter and dog mess in the area, for them to feel safer and able to play. Suggestions were also made to improving lighting in certain areas such as parks.

*'Make it safer for me to play.'*

*'Clean the streets, parks and school.'*

*'To stop my neighbours leaving drugs and drinking bottles out in the street.'*

*'It would be better if there wasn't litter and poo everywhere.'*

Many children also called for safer roads including lower speed limits, places to cross and generally fewer cars on the road:

*'A speed limit in my estate, an area where children can play and they are not near the road.'*

*'Loads of sporting areas and play sets where there is not many cars.'*





## Create more local facilities/sport clubs where children can be active:

Children advocated for more facilities closer to their homes where they can be active, alongside active facilities tailored for their age group. Specific sports clubs such as football and tennis were mentioned, but children also wanted facilities such as skateparks, trampoline parks and cycle paths in their area to participate in more unstructured forms of sports and activities.

*'Do a gym for kids.'*

*'Add a skate park add a trampoline park.'*

Whilst many large facilities may be available, these are often at a distance from where children live. There is a need to move the focus to facilities children can access in their neighbourhood. This was also echoed by teenagers in ACTIVE.

## ACTIVE

ACTIVE was a mixed-method randomised control trial carried out in seven secondary schools in Swansea. Following conversations with young people, the project aimed to overcome the barrier of accessibility (for example cost and location of activities) which teenagers expressed as the main reason they are not being as active as they should.

The media regularly discusses that young people are not active enough, but teenagers are frustrated with what is currently on offer for them. When given an opportunity to speak about activity provision, teenagers highlighted six key recommendations that they would make to activity provision. Two of which directly compliment what younger children mentioned too: improving local access and improving the standards of existing facilities. The other four recommendations were:

### Lower/remove the cost of activities without lowering the quality:

One boy explained that *'...there's an indoor pitch which costs a lot to play in, or they've got outdoor pitches which are, like, really cheap to play but it's, like, really cold. They don't put, like, any lights on...'* therefore, teenagers would like a reduction of cost to improve accessibility and sustainability but without sacrificing the quality of provision on offer.

They often feel like they are treated unfairly with activity provision, which leaves them frustrated. Also, they feel that these second-class facilities are unsafe.

### Give teenagers a choice and variety of activities they can access:

One girl said that *'there's like clubs on, it's the exact same every single time you go'* and another girl requested that activity provision should be varied *'rather*

*than doing the same thing, like football, hockey...'*

It was clear that teenagers wanted more opportunities to have a say in what they can do and for this to branch away from traditional 'sports' such as football and netball. They feel that this boxes them in to a competitive environment and want the opportunity to explore more unstructured and informal activity options.

### Provide activities that are specific to teenagers:

The teenagers were concerned that the local council has tailored a lot of activity provision to very young children or adults. They wanted more 'encouragement' or to clearly be included and invited. They are aware society has identified them as an age of concern and feel like they get a bad reputation for being lazy but feel as if nothing helps them specifically. This is particularly frustrating for them.

### Provide activities that teenagers will enjoy:

It was important for girls that the purpose of the activity was not to 'be active' – they preferred the emphasis to be on having fun. These sorts of activities would also allow time to be social in an informal but safe environment.

Four schools received the ACTIVE intervention which gave all pupils in year 9, £20 of vouchers per month for a year to spend on activities. This empowered them to make their own choices about physical activity. Voucher use reflected the teen's recommendations and they spent the vouchers on fun, social and informal activities such as trampolining, laser tag and the waterpark (slides and surfing). The message from ACTIVE is that providing more local opportunities for teenagers to 'play' in fun, unstructured and social activities promotes participation and changes attitudes towards activity.

## Next steps...

HAPPEN and ACTIVE provide a unique opportunity for young people to have their voices heard and their recommendations aired to those who could make a real difference in their local communities. The bottom-up approach that has underpinned our research has allowed us to tailor our work to benefit young people in ways that they have suggested. In the same way, stakeholders should acknowledge young people's perceptions, as the contribution that improved opportunities to play can have on health and wellbeing cannot be overstated.

Future work by the project team will aim to disseminate this message wider. If real, sustainable changes are to be made that can have an impact on the health and wellbeing of today's children, it is important for play to move higher up the agenda of both policy makers and practitioners.

# Children and young people's right to play in public space

Associate Professor Simon Hoffman, from Swansea University's College of Law and Criminology, who specialises in children's rights, shares his views about the adult intolerance towards children and young people playing and spending their free time in public space.

In 2008 I was researching government's obsession with control of public space, and its impact on young people. Although children's rights were peripheral to my work, I was invited to a conference on the right to play. Insights from the conference led me to work on children's rights, and a decade of professional challenge and reward.

In 2008 the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child identified a climate of intolerance towards children in the UK. The infamous ASBO, which had a disproportionate negative impact on older children, was partly inspired by the media's demonisation of youth. This led the Committee to conclude that children's use of public space was seen as antisocial. Continuing attempts to control normal but challenging behaviours of older children by excluding them from public space is an infringement of the right to play.

While the word 'play' is awkward when applied to older children (the Children's Commissioner's recent *Spotlight Report* suggests older children prefer the term 'free-time'), it is nonetheless vital to recognise that they engage in and have the right to play. The Committee's commentary on Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) summarises play to include activity involving the exercise of independence initiated and structured by children, which is sometimes challenging. This encapsulates many free-time activities of older children which are, as the Committee observes, crucial for adolescent development, identity and sense of belonging.

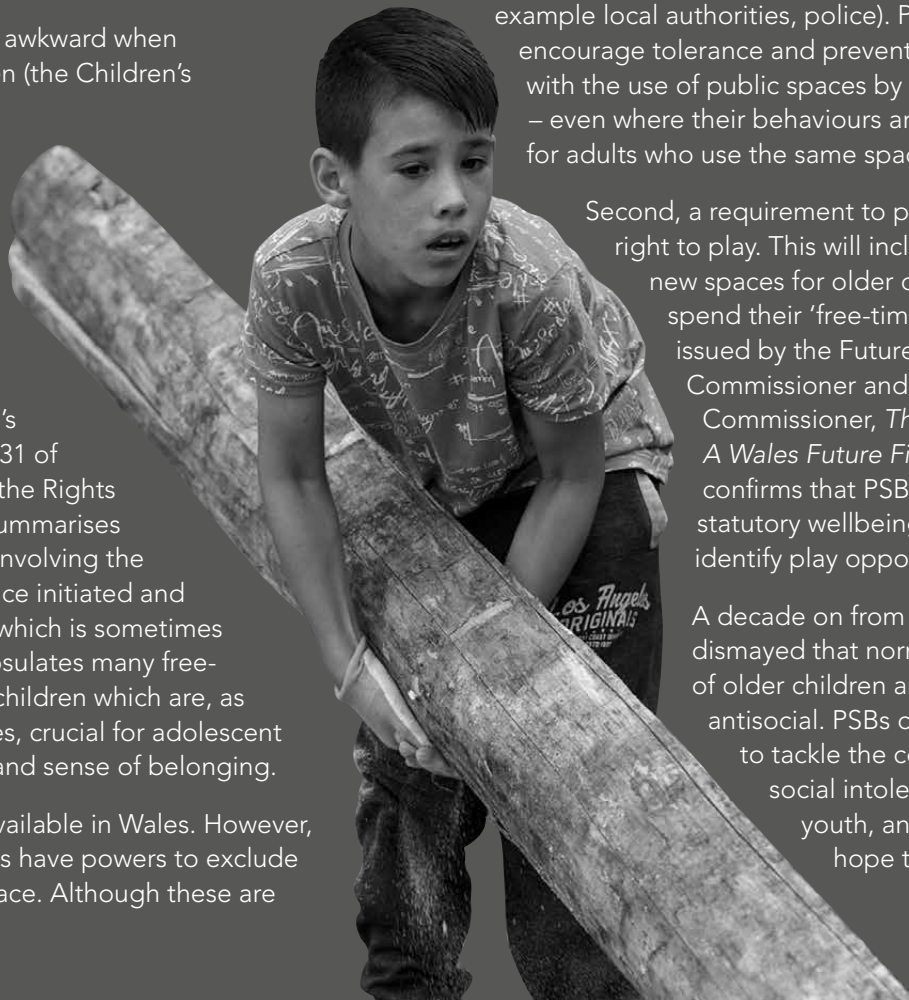
ASBOs are no longer available in Wales. However, a range of public bodies have powers to exclude children from public space. Although these are

rarely used in Wales, older children continue to suffer the consequences of adult indifference and intolerance. The Children's Commissioner for Wales' *Spotlight Report* notes that older children have limited public space they can use and are often 'moved-on' from parks. In Wales this should not happen. Local authorities have a duty to secure sufficient play opportunities for children of all ages. When viewed through the rights-lens of Article 31 and older children, this has two significant aspects.

First, a requirement to protect the right to play by ensuring that older children are not excluded from public space. Local Public Services Boards (PSBs) established by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 are key in this regard, as they include organisations exercising control over public space (for example local authorities, police). PSBs need to encourage tolerance and prevent interference with the use of public spaces by older children – even where their behaviours are challenging for adults who use the same space.

Second, a requirement to promote the right to play. This will include providing new spaces for older children to spend their 'free-time'. Guidance issued by the Future Generations Commissioner and the Children's Commissioner, *The Right Way: A Wales Future Fit for Children*, confirms that PSBs should use statutory wellbeing plans to identify play opportunities.

A decade on from 2008 I am dismayed that normal behaviours of older children are still seen as antisocial. PSBs can take action to tackle the continuing social intolerance of youth, and I sincerely hope they do.



# Power, Rights and Play

## Piloting Play Wales' schools toolkit

**The Use of school grounds for playing out of teaching hours toolkit assists school communities and their partners to assess the possibility of making school grounds available for children's play, out of teaching hours.**

Funding from the Millennium Stadium Charitable Trust enabled Play Wales to establish a partnership with Cardiff School of Education at Cardiff Metropolitan University (Education and Early Childhood Studies team) and Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences to research a project – 'Open All Hours'.

Using the toolkit, the project researched the use of school grounds as a community asset for play in three schools in south Wales. The project involved pre and post pilot interviews with key partners. The piloting of the toolkit within the schools was staffed by three student volunteers (one at each school) and a university academic.

The first of the research papers, 'Power, Rights and Play: Control of Play in School Grounds, an Action Research Project from Wales', which evaluates the data from the project, has recently been published in *Education 3-13 International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education*.

### In its play sufficiency statutory guidance, Welsh Government notes:

*'Schools provide an important opportunity for children to play for periods before and after classes. They can also provide valuable play space at weekends and during holiday periods if the school is organised to allow for this. The Welsh Government recommends that Local Authorities advise schools to give full consideration to opening this provision during out of teaching hours.'*

Despite this guidance and evidence that play has positive outcomes for children, evidence suggests that school grounds are under-used. Findings indicate that power and control are factors affecting accessibility and use of outdoor spaces, particularly in relation to who was allowed access to play spaces, where children were allowed, as well as when and what types of play were acceptable.

The three schools were identified and recruited on the basis that each was located in different types of localities and varied in terms of communities' existing accessibility to the school grounds. The schools were either not located near a public play area or park, or, in the case of one school, parents reported unease with local play facilities.

Findings from the pre- and post-project interviews indicated that partners supported the opening of school grounds after school hours, before and after the project had been undertaken. There were, however, a number of ways in which schools maintained control over who was using their space. There were four distinct ways in which adults influenced power and/or control over the play within the school grounds after school hours – in particular in relation to who was allowed access to play spaces, where they were allowed, when and what types of play were acceptable.

During the planning phase and pre-project interviews, school staff expressed a range of concerns about the project. There was a tension about who was responsible for managing the school grounds once they were opened up and mitigating the negative perceptions, such as a fear of litigation, damage, vandalism and the possible impact of older children causing problems. During the project, these attitudes changed and it was noted in post-project interviews that many of initial fears had not been realised. School communities were able to see the immediate benefits, not only for children but for communities and families, as well.

*'I'm more encouraged, more enthusiastic ... I don't think my fears were realised at all. It opened our school to the community, albeit to a select few; it was a start for us because we did have very good community links within school hours, we don't have so much afterwards and that was, for me ... the best thing, seeing the parents sitting there doing their little picnic, their kids playing on the field.'*

**School deputy head teacher**

Findings from the qualitative data, via post-project interviews, indicate that increasing accessibility and use of these outdoor spaces:

- addressed school staff's concerns about safety and risk
- facilitated community engagement
- created spaces and time for unregulated play in a permissive environment.

The paper concludes by suggesting that given that the pre-project concerns were not realised during the opening of the school grounds, this is a beneficial and worthwhile undertaking for children's play, which is recommended for including in strategic planning.

**To download the toolkit visit:**  
[www.playwales.org.uk/eng/schoolstoolkit](http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/schoolstoolkit)

## Workforce development

# Playwork: Principles into Practice update

Over the summer Play Wales worked with Agored Cymru, Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales, Ali Wood and Tanny Stobart to re-draft the Playwork: Principles into Practice (P<sup>3</sup>) qualifications at Level 2 and 3.

The draft qualification units have been developed based on consultation with current tutors and learners, PETC Wales and awarding bodies. Feedback has shown that the current P<sup>3</sup> qualifications are overly burdensome in terms of the assessment, the level of teaching and the time they take to complete.

As a result, we are streamlining the qualifications to ensure that the qualifications assess the minimum competence that playworkers need to display to do their job. The qualifications are based on the assumption that playworkers will go on to continually learn through reflective practice and will therefore also be assessed on their ability to identify other opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD).

To support ongoing playwork learning a small number of optional CPD units will be developed to allow learners to gain accredited CPD. This includes an unit on play and spatial justice representing emerging thinking in playwork and community development work developed by Wendy

Russell and her late colleague Stuart Lester from the University of Gloucestershire. CPD units will be at Levels 2 to 4 and are standalone so can be completed by anyone who is interested.

The progression route through the qualifications is linear so learners must complete the units at Level 2 before moving onto the Level 3. Feedback shows that learners progressing onto Level 3 without the underpinning knowledge struggle to complete the assessment.



Learners must complete the existing Level 2 Award in Playwork Practice (L2APP) to progress to P<sup>3</sup> at Level 2.

Learners who have completed the SQA Playwork: Principles into Practice (P<sup>3</sup>) Award and Certificate qualifications within the last two years will be able to apply to have their prior learning mapped to the new qualification and complete any additional assessment.

The new units were consulted on during Autumn 2018 and a testing phase of some of the teaching and assessment materials will take place in early 2019. The new qualifications will be delivered from September 2019.

**To register your interest in completing the new P<sup>3</sup> qualifications please email [workforce@playwales.org.uk](mailto:workforce@playwales.org.uk)**



# Spotlight on... Playing Out Co-ordinator

In each issue we will be talking to professionals in the world of play and playwork to provide an insight into the diversity of the job roles that make up the workforce.



In this issue we speak to Jade Tomlinson from Community and Voluntary Support Conwy (CVSC).

## Can you tell us a bit about yourself and how you got in to playwork?

*I am currently studying Psychology at Bangor University and have worked in playwork for five years. After leaving school I was undecided on where I wanted my career to go. I applied for a playwork role for a local summer playscheme in Flintshire and instantly found a passion.*

## What is your job title and what does your role involve?

*Throughout the summer I was employed as the Playing Out Co-ordinator for Conwy Play Out*

*Provision. My main role was to co-ordinate a team of playworkers to deliver open access play sessions to children aged 5 to 14 across various locations in Conwy.*

## What's the best bit about your job?

*Playwork is a job in which I can give back to communities and support a child's access to play opportunities. At times it can be a challenging role but overall it is a job that I love – seeing that our team has a positive impact on a child's life is the best part of my job!*

## Is there anything you find challenging about your job?

*Play is something that is often*

*forgotten about and regarded as a frivolous activity. Therefore, gaining support and understanding for the need of play services in communities can be a great challenge.*

*As we only run play sessions for a maximum of five weeks I find it challenging to convey the importance that play has on the lives of children. Despite this, from speaking with [people in] the community and adults who attend the sessions, they can see how providing children with play opportunities, even through a short-term scheme, has a positive impact on their lives.*

# Tools and structure building training

Over the summer, Play Wales worked with Flintshire County Council's play team and Playful Futures to support the county-wide Quayplay holiday scheme.



As part of the project, Playful Futures' Simon Bazley facilitated training for all playworkers to increase their confidence in building using tools, pallets and off-cuts of wood. The training also included the safe use of hammers and saws and how to ensure that structures were strong enough to support children's weight.

As well as all the features expected at a holiday playscheme, Quayplay included a fenced off area where children could build their own playground, which evolved over the two weeks of the scheme. After each play session, the playworkers checked the site using dynamic risk-benefit assessment to modify

or strengthen any structures and to remove any unnecessarily dangerous features.

This innovative approach taken by Flintshire County Council mirrors the way that staffed adventure playgrounds have been operating for the last 40 years. Playworkers reported increased confidence in working with tools and supporting children to build with wood and pallets. One playworker stated that the children played more co-operatively in the self-build space and there were fewer disagreements than when supervising other activities in the playscheme.

*'The training and experience gained working in Quayplay has built my confidence in using tools. I was nervous at first but seeing the children using the tools has really helped me to realise how competent they can be.'*

**Playworker**

Whilst tool use and structure building have always been part of playworkers' skillset it has never been written into general playwork qualifications. Play Wales will be using learning from the project in Flintshire to inform practical units within the new Playwork: Principles into Practice (P<sup>3</sup>) qualifications.

# Playful communities

## School open for Saturday playtime

School playgrounds often offer the biggest outdoor space in a community and are ideal for providing opportunities for children to play out of teaching hours. Vale of Glamorgan's Senior Healthy Living Officer (Play), Joanne Jones tells us about opening a school's grounds at the weekend for all local children to play.

Many of us enjoyed the beautiful weather over the summer and particularly spending time outdoors in parks playing on the swings, slides and roundabouts and whilst many of us take this for granted there are a number of children and families who are unable to access playgrounds.

For many parents who have a child with a disability finding a park that has suitable access, accessible play equipment and appropriate changing facilities is difficult. After discussions with parents whose children attend a purpose-built special school in Penarth, Vale of Glamorgan, it was decided to open Ysgol Y Deri's playground on Saturday afternoons as a pilot project.

Ysgol Y Deri has a large tarmaced playground with a range of shelters, an area of astro turf as well as an area with play equipment and tunnels. The outside area is fully wheelchair accessible and has a secure fence surrounding the entire area. Families also have access to appropriate changing facilities which includes the use of a changing bed and hoist.

Opening up the playground to families on the weekend has had an immensely positive impact on not only the children but their families as well. Siblings can play together and the playground is familiar to those children who become anxious in unfamiliar surroundings.

### **Sarah Maynard shares her experience about the difference the Saturday play sessions made to her family:**

*'It's amazing having an accessible play area we can use on the weekends. My twelve-year-old son Ieuan enjoys having free run of his school grounds and driving his wheelchair straight onto the roundabout and through the tunnels. It's made the world of difference having somewhere where I can take all of my children to play at once, not just one child at a time. Ieuan enjoys being able to play with his siblings at the school. It would be great to have the school available for playing for more of the time; otherwise I have to take Ieuan to one playground to access a wheelchair swing and another playground for a slide.'*



The pilot scheme was a resounding success and it is definitely something we will be continuing in the future – once building work is completed at the school.

By simply opening the gates and giving access to the playground space, play equipment and changing facilities it has enabled families caring for a child with a disability to enjoy being outdoors in a safe environment whilst enjoying the opportunities that come with a visit to the park.

Across Wales organisations and groups run play projects or make sure children have opportunities to play in their communities. In each issue, we will be sharing an example of a project that's helping to make a community more playful.

### **The examples may:**

- Be close to where you live so you can visit them
- Inspire you with ideas about things you could do in your community
- Help you make the case for play in your local area.

**For more examples of playful communities examples in Wales visit: [www.playfulchildhoods.wales/about-playful-communities](http://www.playfulchildhoods.wales/about-playful-communities)**