

Play for Wales

Play news and briefing from
the national charity for play

Issue 56 Autumn 2020



Making play sufficiency happen



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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

Editorial

In recent times, much of our effort in promoting a greater understanding of play, well-being and resilience has focused on the role that playing has in enabling children to create attachments with peers, places and neighbourhoods.

Children playing outside in their local communities brings opportunities for added social relationships for both children and adults. Children who experience everyday life outside in their own community have a greater sense of connection and belonging, and this in turn increases neighbourliness for the whole community.

In 2010, Wales was the first country in the world to legislate for children's play, with what has become known as the Play Sufficiency Duty. In the supporting statutory guidance, the Welsh Government commits to an aim to make communities more play

friendly by valuing and increasing quality opportunities for play throughout them, therefore, making play a matter of spatial justice.

All four research studies on the Play Sufficiency Duty, commissioned by Play Wales, have explored spatial justice: a fair organisation of public space that supports children's right to play. Our friend and colleague Stuart Lester, one of the early researchers in play sufficiency, described spatial justice as communities '*rubbing together*' – people of different ages and backgrounds co-existing in space in a just way, with equitable resources and mutual understanding. The fourth, and most recent, research study, discussed later in this issue, also highlights the importance of aligning play sufficiency with well-being policy.

Information provided by children as part of Play Sufficiency Assessments in 2019 shows that the outdoors continues to be

the favourite place for children to play. However, the place they are most likely to be allowed to play outdoors is actually their back garden or a friend's back garden. We must ask ourselves: is this sufficient? Is it really good enough?

Playing is the most natural and enjoyable way for children to keep well and be happy. The experiences we have from lockdown and the slow and halting transition as we navigate our way through a time of considerable change offer an opportunity for meaningful change. We do not have to revert to past practice just because that's what we used to do – we can improve on it.

There is an urgent need to focus on community interventions that enable more children to be outside, to be visible, playing out in their community. As the Ministerial Play Review considers actions for the future, it is all of our responsibility to ensure that legislation and policy are reflected in future practice to make a real difference for our children. We owe it to them.

**Mike Greenaway,
Director, Play Wales**



News

Good news – funding for play

The Welsh Government has allocated £8.8m to support the childcare and play sector to recover from the impact of Covid-19 and ongoing sustainability. The funding will be used to help ensure that children have access to quality childcare and play provision and that families are supported with their childcare needs.

The funding will help settings undertake adaptations to ensure premises can operate in a Covid-secure manner, and provide additional investment in play facilities to support access to play opportunities for children adversely impacted by the pandemic.

Welsh Government will distribute £3m to local authorities to increase access to outdoor play facilities in line with their Play Sufficiency Assessments.

£500,000 has been allocated to support play opportunities during the school holidays.

CWLWM and Play Wales have also been allocated funding for childcare and play activities undertaken during the immediate response to the pandemic and ongoing recovery phase.

www.gov.wales

Ministerial Review of Play

An update from Welsh Government



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

We are pleased to announce that the Ministerial Review of Play is being re-started following its temporary pause during our initial response to COVID-19.

Whilst we have lost some time on the review due to the pandemic, we are keen to re-start and report on the review by the end of March 2021. We will need to re-plan and re-focus the review, especially as some other related projects are no longer taking place this year. However, we can build on the valuable work we have already done to bring together a fully assessed, evidence based set of recommendations for the future of play policy in Wales.

Before the project was paused the group agreed a vision for play which describes what we will see if we get play policy right. This builds on and develops the Welsh Government Play Policy.

The vision describes a Wales where play is seen by all as:

- A fundamental right for every child
- Owned by the child
- Important in its own right
- Everyone's responsibility.

It describes how children, parents, communities and key partners will behave under the new vision and the opportunities, spaces, environments that we will see.

This vision will be achieved by looking across the following five themes and setting out options and recommendations for the future:

1. Settings registration, regulation and exceptions
2. Play Sufficiency Duty and funding
3. The workforce and qualifications
4. Working across policy areas
5. Spatial justice and societal involvement.

We have already done much of the work on the options analysis and implications across these options. The Playwork, Education and Training Council Wales (PETC-Wales) will be undertaking some additional work on the workforce and qualifications theme over the next months.

The Steering Group will get together virtually in November 2020 to review, refresh and further develop our options and recommendations on the five themes before reporting to the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services and the public in March 2021.

www.gov.wales

Supporting children's rights in Wales

In the *Coronavirus and Us* report, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Sally Holland details how she and her team have supported children's rights during the pandemic.



The Commissioner was keen that children had access to clear and reliable information, had a chance to express their views, were listened to, as well as making sure the government heard about and responded to children's experiences.

How the Commissioner supported children's right to play:

- Made videos for children and parents with free play ideas for the home and garden, using items found around the home

- Wrote to the First Minister, Mark Drakeford to express concern that play areas in parks were not being opened as quickly as services for adults
- Asked questions about children's play experiences in the *Coronavirus and Me* survey.

For more information about the survey findings see [page 7](#).

www.childcomwales.org.uk

Covid-19 and children's play

The benefits of children playing outdoors during the coronavirus pandemic outweigh the risks according to a research report published by the Play Safety Forum in June 2020.

Written by Professor David Ball, Tim Gill and Andy Yates, *Covid 19 and Children's Play* provides factual information to help decision makers with responsibility for play provision. The authors emphasise that information about the impact of coronavirus on children's physical, mental and social health due to reduced opportunities to play outdoors is growing as research continues.

In response to the latest available findings, researchers Professor David Ball, Tim Gill and Laurence Ball updated

the research report in September 2020. The update includes detail about the evidence on the risks posed by play deprivation and how restrictions are affecting children in differing degrees, depending on their personal circumstances.

The research report is also supported by the UK Children's Play Policy Forum.

www.playsafetyforum.org.uk

Play in Lockdown – international study

A new International Play Association (IPA) report presents the findings of a global study about how measures relating to Covid-19 have impacted on children's play and mobility.



Play in Lockdown: An international study of government and civil society responses to Covid-19 and their impact on children's play and mobility provides baseline information to make comparisons between countries. It also gathers good practice on how the measures related to the pandemic can be eased.

Written by independent researcher Tim Gill and IPA President, Robyn Monro Miller, the report includes a discussion of the emerging evidence and arguments about the damage to children as a result of lockdown measures.

www.ipaworld.org

Fun in the garden a review

In the last issue of *Play for Wales*, we reported on the launch of our second storybook for primary school children and parents, supporting children to access their right to play and for parents to advocate for local play.

We asked Year 6 at Tonysguboriau Primary School in Rhondda Cynon Taf to review the *Fun in the garden* storybook. Here's what they had to say.

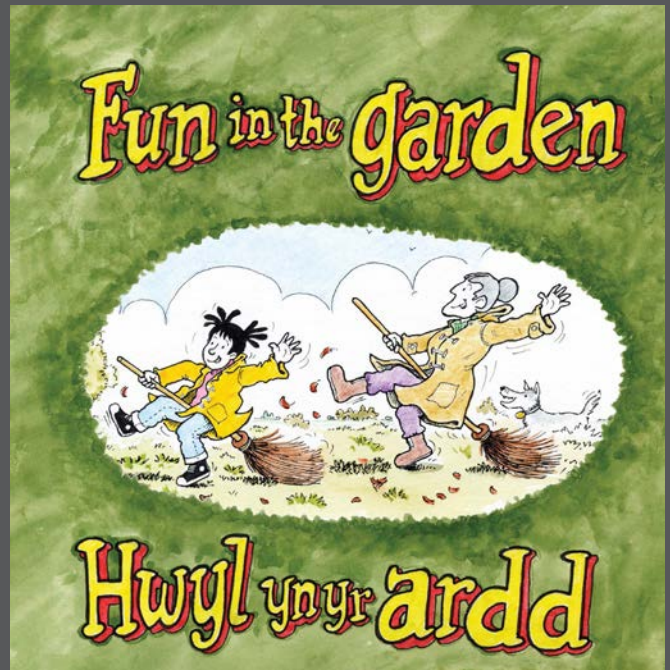
'The story was so well thought of. The writers of this story definitely have an amazing imagination. The entire story was about playing and having fun, the authors must have played when they were younger.'

The majority of children in the class loved this book and its characters. They especially liked the illustrations in the book as they helped bring the story to life and really showed how the characters were feeling through their expressions.

'I think the pictures are creative, fun and joyful. I like the bright colours and emotion in it. I also think it is a great book for children to read and enjoy.'

The class loved the Grandma character and felt that she was fun and cool, but they were shocked to learn about her background and who she had been previously. The class also tried to understand why Miss Grizzle hated play and they were glad that she changed her mind about stopping play by the end of the story.

'The illustrations are great; the pictures are bright and colourful. I really like the bit at the back where you have to find Miss Grizzle.'



The class all agreed that the moral of the story, that children have a right to play, was really important for both children and adults to know as well as that play is important for everyone and helps with making friends, mental health, making you smile and is FUN.

'The story was right, everyone has the right to play, everyone should have fun, the story was great.'

'I liked the story because it taught children that they do have a right to play and that they can't get stopped even if some people take all your things, you can still play tag and other games that don't need any equipment.'

As part of our support during the coronavirus pandemic, Play Wales gifted over 6000 copies of *Fun in the garden* to children and families across Wales, with the support of colleagues in play, children's and family services.

Whose space is it anyway?

Children and teenagers need and are entitled to quality places and time for play as part of their everyday life within their own community. Making better use of outdoor community spaces will support children, parents and communities feel more confident about playing out, and therefore, better connected.

Playing, particularly outdoors, is the most natural and enjoyable way for children to be active, keep well and be happy.

When children can access good outdoor space, it:

- is free and available to all
- provides children with opportunities to meet and exceed physical activity guidelines
- provides opportunities to socialise and meet up with their friends and other people
- provides a way to cope with uncertainty and change.

Although the national lockdown was a time of uncertainty and worry, it also presented some opportunities. There was a focus in government and public health advice for people to go outside once a day for their health and well-being and this helped to normalise people being out and about. Travel restrictions meant that traffic levels were reduced significantly, enabling more children to play near and around their houses safely. Neighbours enjoyed the cleaner air and the sense of community and connection.

But, children's access to outdoor space for play, exercise and enjoyment differs greatly across Wales. Some children live in homes with outdoor gardens, ample outdoor community space and supportive carers with time to support play, whilst others don't. These inequalities were heightened and emphasised during the recent lockdown situation.

Now, as some restrictions are lifted, Play Wales renews its call for better use of community spaces – such as school grounds and streets – to enable more children to be visible and to play out in their community.

Attention should be given to developing extended use of school grounds when the teaching day ends and during weekends. School grounds often represent the largest single outdoor space in many communities. This is particularly the case for children with little or no access to private gardens or safe play areas.



Attention should also be given to secure safer streets. Parents and children often report traffic as a limiting factor to playing out in neighbourhoods. We welcome the recent Senedd Cymru decision to initially back plans to make 20mph speed limits the default in residential areas in Wales. We would like to see support for street play projects which encourage attitudinal shifts for road users. Street play projects are often resident-led but can also be school-led or supported by community development organisations. Our work with councils demonstrates that through street play, children are learning road awareness and cycle/scooting skills; parents report greater confidence in children's capabilities around traffic and drivers report a greater awareness of the presence of children and others in and around roads.

There is an urgent need to ensure that more children can access outdoor play on a daily basis. The potential benefits in terms of the positive effects on children's health and happiness, community engagement and well-being and enhancement of the local sense of community are overwhelming.

Coronavirus

what children say about play

Coronavirus was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020. It will be months, maybe years, before we uncover all of the impacts on children. But, some early surveys provide a glimpse as to how important play was to children in Wales in the early months of the pandemic.

These views from children across Wales offer an insight for play providers and decision makers tasked with the immediate management of the Covid-19 crisis and delivering any recovery plans. Prioritising play should be high on the agenda for children of all ages – their survey responses demonstrate that they still valued, needed and wanted to play in the early days of the pandemic.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales, Sally Holland conducted an online survey to find out about the experiences of children and teenagers in Wales. The 'Coronavirus and Me' survey gathered information from over 23,700 children and teenagers between the ages of 3 and 18 and ran for two-weeks when restrictions to keep communities in Wales safe had been in place for two months.

The findings, published in the Commissioner's *Coronavirus and Me* report, show that children and teenagers across Wales have had mixed experiences. Some have faced bereavement, distress and worry. Many missed their friends, their families and feel they missed out on their education. At the same time, many children report that they have valued a chance to play and relax more:

- Around half of children report playing more than usual (53 percent) with a wide range of play described, including outdoor play, imaginary play, playing with toys or games, sports, and creative play.
- Both the survey for children aged 7 to 11 and for those aged 12 to 18 show that more children and teenagers relaxed and played during this period.
- Children aged 7 to 11 were also asked an open-ended question about what they had been enjoying most when playing. Some of the responses included playing with family, engaging with friends online through games or chat, exercising, playing outside and playing with games or toys. Many children also mentioned the positives around having more time to play such as having fun, having a chance to forget about coronavirus and enjoying more freedom.



www.childcomwales.org.uk/coronavirus-and-me-results/

The Health and Attainment of Pupils in Primary Education Network (HAPPEN) also ran a survey to find out how children were coping with social distancing, school closures and the challenges caused by Covid-19. Early findings from over 1,000 children show that children were being more active and felt safer in their local areas during lockdown. But, living in an area classed as deprived matters.

- Children in these areas report fewer places to play – 57 percent of children in deprived areas and 72 percent in non-deprived areas said that they had a place to play.
- Boys who felt their areas were not safe had higher screen time.
- More children were active for five days or more a week.

www.happen-wales.co.uk

Play in lockdown

Children have been greatly affected by the physical and social changes that restricted their lives in an unprecedented way during the time Wales was in lockdown. Here, Sumaya aged 10 from Cardiff and Jake, Jed and Elliot, all aged 14 and Ianto, aged 12 from Swansea share their experiences of playing during lockdown.

Bishopston Skatepark Project is a child-led project in Swansea which has been working for over two years to create a space to meet, socialise, and have fun in a free-to-use environment.

For Jake, keeping active by skateboarding and biking in his local community was important. He told us:

'This has helped me loads with my well-being. When the Caswell Bay Carpark was closed there were loads of kids and adults skateboarding there every day, it was like a community park. This just proved to me that a skate, bike and scooter facility is needed.'

Elliott told us that staying healthy has been a vital part of lockdown for him:

'As soon as I knew the five-mile rule had been lifted, I cycled to Morriston and back! I feel that in a post-lockdown world, we will need to do whatever we can to rebuild and reconnect as a community. Public spaces, especially outdoors, will come in handy so much in coming months when it comes to building those vital social connections again.'



Jed agreed that being out and about mountain biking and skateboarding helped his mental health and well-being:

'During lockdown I have found it a struggle to find somewhere to skate around the village and nearby. I know this has been the case for many others.'

Ianto missed going to the skatepark in town when it closed. He decided to raise some interest to support a local skatepark by doing a 1000 OLLIE Foundation challenge.

'I used the empty car parks to practice and I completed it in two and a half hours, I raised over £500! Having a pump track near my house would be amazing. I could meet up with friends, practice tricks and I could cycle or skate there by myself.'

When lockdown started, Sumaya was happy at first because there was no school! Here's what Sumaya had to say about her play experiences:



'So, I asked my mum if we could have fun, like going to soft play, ice skating or playing in the park but she said lockdown means we can't go out at all unless it's very important! Then I said, can we just go back to school then? And she said no!

My mum said we could go for walks, but I kept seeing policemen and I was scared they would say go home so I didn't like leaving the house.

One of the nicest things during lockdown was playing on Roblox, which is a game you can play online. I normally played for a bit after school but suddenly I saw nearly my whole class on there! So, we made a group and played together every day. I asked my mum if I could speak to some friends on the phone. So, we would speak to each other as we played and that got so noisy that my mum would end up taking the phone away!

My mum made sure that I had time to play in the garden, I have a trampoline and sometimes I would call my upstairs friends down to play with me, but they weren't allowed because of the virus. The virus kept ruining our fun! I had no one to play with so I started practising skipping and I got really good at it and my mum taught me games she used to play when she was a child, like kerbs.

Kerbs is normally played on a street and you throw a ball on the opposite kerb, but we played in my garden and we used the step into the house as the kerb. So, if the ball bounced off the kerb, I got ten points and if I missed, I lost a turn to my mum. If I managed to catch the ball at the same time, I got an extra five points. It's a bit tricky to aim right but once you get the hang of it, it's a lot of fun!

These contributions from children and teenagers remind us how important playing is to their well-being and happiness. They value having supportive and playful adults around them who can make sure there are plenty of good opportunities to play.

As we continue to navigate the coronavirus pandemic and various restrictions, children and teenagers still need and want to play. Children and families are being asked to self-isolate and spend more time at home. Practitioners are working in different ways to support children's play during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We all want to continue to support children during this challenging time. To help practitioners and parents make sure children have plenty of time, space and freedom to play, we have published a range of practical and supportive resources on the **CoronaPlay** section of our website.

Information for those working with children:
www.playwales.org.uk/eng/workingwithchildren

Information about playing at home: www.playwales.org.uk/eng/playingathome

On our Playful Childhoods website, we have created an 'indoor play' section to inspire parents and carers when children may need some play ideas. The section includes fun, easy, playful ideas for children to enjoy in and around the home as well as practical and supportive tips for parents and carers.

www.playfulchildhoods.wales

Playing out and about

The coronavirus pandemic brought unexpected and unprecedented restrictions and uncertainties, but the need and desire to support children's play was as important as ever.



From playful outside ideas to staffed outdoor provision, play teams and organisations across Wales have made it a priority to ensure that children have a playful presence and opportunities to play in their neighbourhoods.

Making a mark

During the early phases of the national lockdown, **Conwy's Play Development Team** felt it was important for children 'to leave their mark' when out on their daily outdoor activity. Using social media pages to share ideas, the marks escalated with posts about challenges being left out for children – written in chalk or posted on lamp posts. In one village in Conwy clues and treasure hunts were organised for families to get involved. The team felt that it was a great opportunity for people to be out and about in their neighbourhoods and learn about the children and teenagers in them. The team hoped that

being able to physically see children's presence, the places they go and the routes they take, could act as a gentle reminder that communities are shared by adults and children. Many adults left messages about how the simple marks from children had helped them find joy and hope in their community.

The team received glowing feedback. One parent said:

'My children found it reassuring that other children were still around and it gave them hope as well as lots of cues for their play when we were out and about. It helped them feel connected to their peers. For a few days we had a "sticker trail war" with another family in the woods; we never saw them but most days the children were excited to go and find where the stickers had got to that day.'

Themed walks

In the early stages of the national lockdown households were, other than for essential trips, only allowed out once a day for exercise. **Wrexham's Play and Youth Support Team** quickly realised that this daily exercise would be the only opportunity for children to leave their house each day.

Acknowledging the restrictions placed on children's space to play at the time, it was important to the team that when allowed out, children could experience and encounter opportunities for playfulness.

The team developed a series of themed walks and released one a week, for families to inject some playfulness into their daily exercise and provide a playful focus to their day. Each walk had a theme such as space, dinosaurs or bear hunt, and included a range of playful suggestions across three areas – before leaving the house, during the walk, and returning home. For example:

- Make a space helmet from junk materials (before)
- Travel at lightspeed (during)
- Draw a map of all the planets you visited (after).

Providing playful ideas before and after the walk gave children the opportunity to create a wider narrative around their daily exercise. Feedback from families has been overwhelmingly positive:

'The walks have provided me and my children with loads of ideas and made tedious walks more enjoyable'.

Summer fun

Despite the uncertainties and restrictions, **Menter Caerdydd and Menter Bro Morgannwg** were able to offer their Bwrlwm scheme – Welsh language play sessions in parks throughout Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan during the school summer holidays. The organisations offered play sessions for eight days at seven different locations, with six sessions each day accommodating 30 children.

At each location the children were encouraged to socialise in Welsh while enjoying playing outside. A variety of creative and physical activities were prepared, and the children also had the freedom to play as they wished in a safe environment. Whilst following Welsh Government guidelines, the service provided was vital for children and parents in Cardiff and the Vale.

Wonderful feedback was received for the summer scheme:

'Absolutely fantastic service, my daughter had the chance to meet with friends while actively encouraged to use her Welsh language.'

Menter Caerdydd and Menter Bro Morgannwg said:

'We can't wait for the October half term so that we can provide this service once again! Thanks must go to the invaluable financial and practical support provided by both Cardiff Council and the Vale of Glamorgan Council staff as well as guidance from Play Wales'.

Flintshire County Council has a strong and proud tradition of offering a county-wide summer playscheme programme and as coronavirus restrictions started to be relaxed, there was a desire to provide playschemes during summer 2020. Town and Community Councils were invited to participate and support provision for all children aged 5 to 12 in Flintshire, for the last two weeks of the summer holiday.

Clear information was provided for parents and partners about the safe delivery of summer playschemes in compliance with regulations relating to Covid-19. To comply with public health guidance, all 55 schemes operated outdoors in open spaces.

The intensity of the communication necessary for 2020 means that the Play Development Team engaged with families on an unprecedented scale, resulting in 1,865 children being registered to the scheme. The provision has made a remarkable impact on children and families:

'Thank you to your team and your staff who enabled my child, aged seven, to take part in activities during the worldwide pandemic. Whilst the pandemic has been a traumatic impact on our lives, it has enabled me to work in different ways, including from home. My son has found it tough as a keyworker child being in the Hub School and then being patient whilst I work at home. Having the playscheme enabled him to have fun, have time for him, meet new people and expel some of his energy. The setup was brilliant and I felt safe leaving my child with the team. His confidence has returned, and he was so excited to go each day. The sessions are therapeutic, they enable growth and a child to develop!'

Collaborating locally for health and well-being

Children who play outdoors are more active according to research and are more likely to meet the UK Chief Medical Officers' physical activity recommendations. A key finding from evidence is that children's play supports the development of resilience, so it makes a significant contribution to children's well-being. Here, we report on our current collaborations to support the delivery of neighbourhood-based play provision.



Play Ambassadors Project

The Play Ambassadors Project, funded through the Healthy Active Fund (HAF), aims to prepare young people aged 14 to 19 to become Play Ambassadors through training, qualifications and placements in playwork settings.

The project will enable Play Ambassadors to facilitate neighbourhood-based interventions in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. Here, Mali, aged 17 tells us about becoming a Play Ambassador.

As the second of four children, growing up I was always called on to entertain my younger brothers and participate in their games. Recently, when reminiscing about our favourite games as children, I wondered how these play experiences have continued to make an impact on us now that we're teenagers. This was brought to the forefront of my mind when I read an article on the effects of play on the learning brain. So, when Paula from Play Wales and Gwenno from Menter Caerdydd came to school to talk about the project I was instantly drawn in because I thought it would be great fun and a fantastic opportunity to learn about play – something that I hadn't really given much thought to before.

The course was eye-opening to say the least. Before playwork training I hadn't given much thought to play – it was just something I enjoyed as a child. But this course gave me an insight into a variety of subjects, ranging from the benefits and potential risks and barriers of play, to the effects of a child's environment and play space on their play experience. Overall, it was extremely fascinating and challenged me to think deeply about things that were entirely new to me.



We only had a few sessions in the play centre before they came to a stop due to Covid-19 along with schools closing and everything else. I was disappointed at first because I thought completing the course online wouldn't compare to the face to face lessons which I had looked forward to every Monday afternoon. But, after the initial apprehensiveness regarding online learning, and also the ongoing

disappointment of missing out on the promised campfire marshmallows (scheduled for what should have been our next session), I really enjoyed completing the course online. All the online learning resources were very informative, and the tutor was extremely helpful. I always felt I could pick up the phone or send an email whenever I had any queries regarding the work.

I had hoped to get some work experience with Menter Caerdydd over the summer but unfortunately Covid-19 put paid to that. However, I am hoping to get involved in play provision during future school half term holidays – fingers crossed! Whether I go on to do something directly play related or not, this course will no doubt have been very useful to me, due to the insight it has given me on the impact play has on the learning and development of people and their perceptions of the world around them.

Outdoor play across Cwm Taf Morgannwg

Play Wales has developed, implemented and evaluated projects that consider best use of community spaces, in particular, street play initiatives and the use of school grounds for playing.

These action research projects have influenced the publication of three toolkits:

- ***Use of school grounds for playing out of teaching hours***
- ***Opening streets for play – A toolkit for local authorities and partners in Wales***
- ***How to organise playing out sessions on your street – a manual for residents***

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board has asked Play Wales to pilot similar initiatives in its region. Play Wales will work with colleagues in Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf, using local Play Sufficiency Assessments as a guide, to support community interventions across Cwm Taf Morgannwg by:

- increasing opportunities for free, unstructured play, for example using streets as play spaces
- exploring the opening of schools grounds before and after the school day for play and physical activity opportunities.

Public Health Wales identified ten evidence-based steps to help children in the early years, aged 0 to 5 years, to maintain a healthy weight which it is promoting under its Every Child brand. Step six is focused on outdoor play, with the ambition that every child will be given the chance to play outdoors every day.

Claire Beynon, Consultant in Public Health, explains why Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board is particularly interested in supporting more children to play:

'The benefits of playing outdoors to a child's emotional and physical development are huge. An increase in children's play opportunities is likely to positively impact population health objectives too, including:

- *Improved mental well-being and reduced isolation*
- *Increasing levels of physical activity in children*
- *Reducing levels of childhood obesity.*

The literature suggests that changing the attitudes and social norms of society is key to increasing opportunities for children to play outdoors. Action is needed to promote more positive attitudes to outdoor play and normalise outdoor play in informal community spaces. This action needs to be in a supportive social context, and so we asked Play Wales to work with local authorities and their partners across our region to help to remove barriers to outdoor play for our children.'

Sufficient playtimes in schools

During lockdown and the subsequent easing of national restrictions, there were calls for schools to prioritise play as part of recovery and transition back to formal education. Children's rights advocates urged the focus to be on play and mental health, rather than 'curriculum catch-up'. Play Wales has produced a range of resources to support schools to be as playful as they can.

Guidance for schools

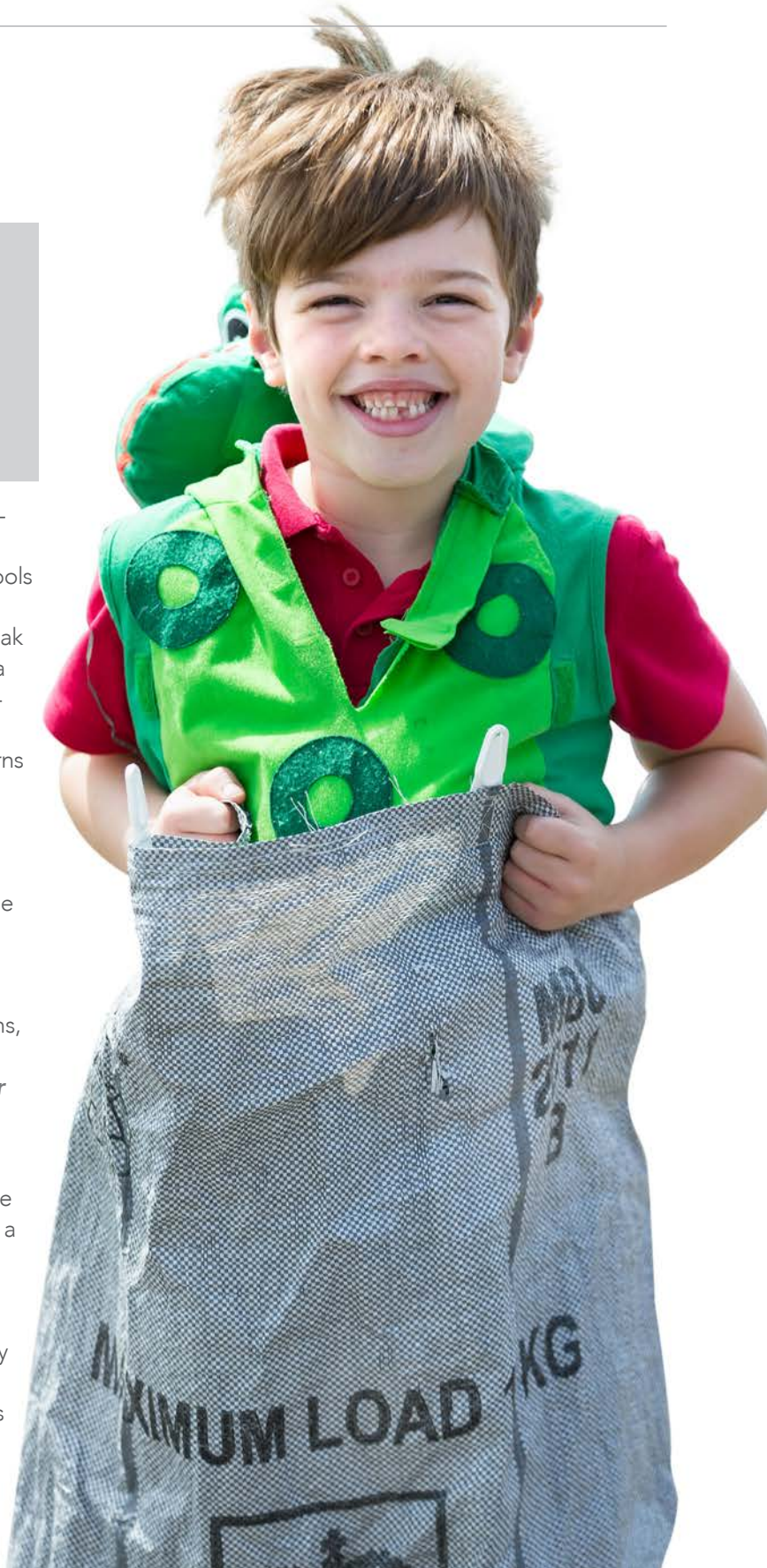
Children's opportunities for playing in all settings are dependent on a wide range of issues, which are arranged across three themes:

- **Permission:** fear, expectations, tolerance, and the way adults view childhood and play
- **Space:** the amount, design and management of space
- **Time:** how time is structured and the obligations children have on their time.

In summer 2019, Estyn published *Healthy and happy – school impact on pupils' health and wellbeing* report which evaluated how well primary and secondary schools in Wales support the health and well-being of their pupils. It noted the importance of school play and break times. The report highlighted that schools that apply a whole school approach to supporting health and well-being provide an environment, facilities and space to play, socialise and relax at break times. It raises concerns that when a school can't or doesn't provide these – pupils are less physically active and can find it hard to relax during playtimes, which affects their well-being.

At about the same time, Play Wales noted an increase in parents getting in touch with concerns about the shortening of school days which resulted in reduced playtime, and also, the withdrawal of it as part of behaviour management policy. Due to these concerns, increased queries and to respond to Estyn's report, we published *A play friendly school – Guidance for a whole school approach* so that children can enjoy sufficient playtimes as part of their school day.

The Play Wales guidance provides policy and practice related information to help school communities take a whole school approach to support children's right to play, addressing the three conditions of permission, space and time for play. Designed to enhance the good work already being done to provide better play opportunities in schools, it aims to make everyone's time at school happier and healthier. The guidance is summarised in 15 steps to a play friendly school and provides tools to implement them.



Some key recommendations include:

- Developing a School Play Policy that endorses play and articulates the actions the school is taking to protect the children's right to play
- Identifying a play champion – someone in a leadership position who supports both the strategic and operational practices to support play
- Providing training, ideas, suggestions and tips for playtime staff to help them support play
- Taking a balanced approach to managing risk in children's play
- Providing loose parts play materials during playtime to allow for plenty of stuff for lots of children to play with
- Developing guidelines for playtime during inclement weather
- Providing at least 60 minutes of outdoor playtime every day by recognising and protecting morning, lunchtime and afternoon playtimes
- Avoiding the withdrawal of playtime as punishment for misbehaving or to complete unfinished work – think of other ways to support children to manage behaviour.

Thinking about loose parts in school information sheet

Loose parts are natural and manufactured materials that can be manipulated, moved and adapted, built and demolished. Loose parts create richer environments for children to play, giving them the resources they need to extend their play. Environments which can be manipulated, where things move and can be moved, open worlds of possibility for children to play and explore.

Playing with loose parts generally develops more skill and competence than most modern plastic toys as children need to use creativity and imagination to create their own worlds. They engage, support and enrich all types of learners and learning intelligences. Open ended learning, experimentation, problem solving, and critical thinking are all developed through the use of loose parts. These are all important skills to develop in a rapidly changing world.

Written in partnership with Ludicology, Mount Stuart Primary School and Cardiff Metropolitan University School of Education and Social Policy, this **information sheet** explores the use of loose parts play materials during playtime and in the classroom. It presents a range of research that discusses loose parts playtime interventions and reports on findings from a specific



lunchtime study. It offers examples and tips on how using and providing loose parts supports child-led learning in a school setting. It also features a useful appendix which sets out research about how play supports learning and development, physical activity, and health and well-being.

Right to play workshop

To raise children's awareness of their right to play, Play Wales has developed a workshop plan, materials and resources to support the local promotion, participation and advocacy of the right to play.

The workshop is designed for playworkers, participation workers, youth workers and school staff to facilitate in schools and other structured settings.

The workshop focuses on the right to play in general, rather than specifically at school. However, involvement in the workshop might result in children wishing to focus on play in their school – across the curriculum, the play space and opportunities during playtime and what happens after school.

An important part of the workshop is children's active involvement and the sharing of information with other children, teachers and the wider school community. The Right to play workshop links to many aspects of Professor Graham Donaldson's 12 Pedagogical Principles, as cited in his *Successful Futures* review:

- Encourage learners to take responsibility for their own learning
- Support social and emotional development and positive relationships
- Encourage collaboration
- Promote creative and critical thinking and problem solving
- Build on previous knowledge and experience to engage interest.

All three resources are available at:
www.playwales.org.uk/eng/schools

Making it possible to do Play Sufficiency

Dr Wendy Russell tells us about new research that explores the conditions that support local authorities to secure sufficient opportunities for children in Wales to play.

The *Making in Possible to do Play Sufficiency* research was carried out by Mike Barclay, Ben Tawil, Charlotte Derry and myself. It builds on three previous studies, focusing on the conditions that support local authorities to take actions in support of children's opportunities to play.

These conditions are affected by a range of factors and circumstances – people, knowledge, experience, relationships, policies and their interpretations, funding, organisational culture, research, physical landscapes and so on. The research highlights the connections and opportunities within these factors and circumstances, and provides examples and recommendations for Welsh Government, Play Wales, local authorities and the children's workforce. The study comprised:

- desk-based research identifying international examples of policy and practice in support of children's play
- focus groups with three local authorities (Cardiff, Conwy and Monmouthshire) to explore examples of actions taken and the conditions that supported these actions
- working with a panel of expert witnesses.

The focus groups included people working at strategic and frontline delivery levels across three interrelated professional domains:

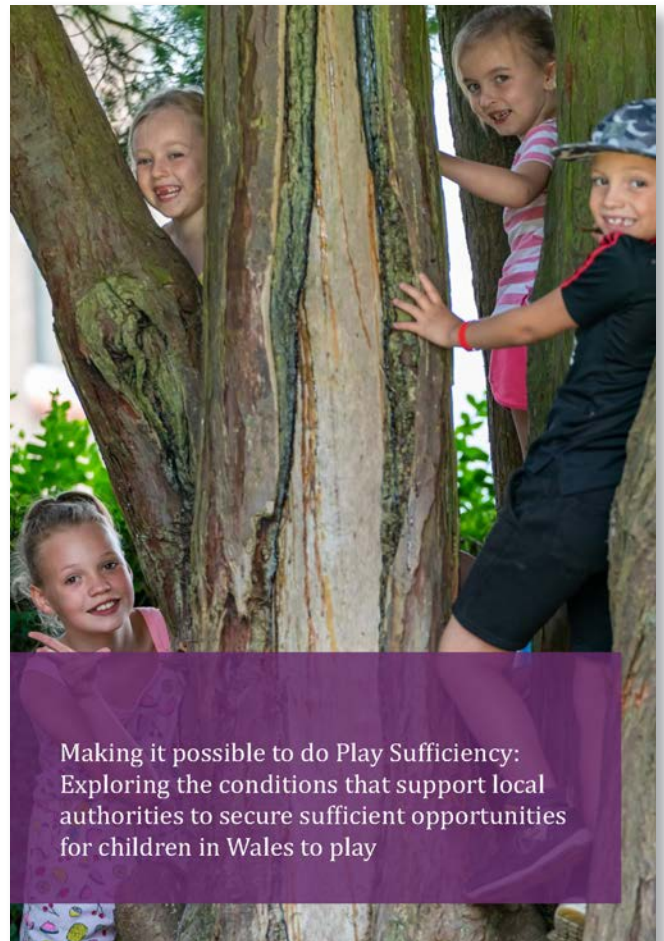
- policy, strategic partnerships and advocacy (including research and knowledge exchange)
- the built and natural environment
- children's and community services.

The report includes 26 report cards giving examples of actions taken to support children's play and the conditions that supported these actions.

Key messages from the research

Our findings point to five headline conditions that can support local authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities for children:

- policy alignment with, and promotion nationally and locally of, the Play Sufficiency Duty



Making it possible to do Play Sufficiency: Exploring the conditions that support local authorities to secure sufficient opportunities for children in Wales to play

- the right people in the right place at the right time with sufficient authority, capacity, capability and consistency
- a consistent and dedicated source of funding for Play Sufficiency
- existing and new information, including research and ways to share information
- openness to possibilities (organisational cultures with the flexibility to respond to opportunities that arise).

These headline conditions underpin 13 recommendations.

Policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange

The research found there is a need for more alignment of policies through explicit links to the Play Sufficiency Duty in other Acts, Measures and policy instruments.

Given the strength of evidence of play's contribution to physical and mental health and well-being, the Play Sufficiency Duty's capacity to contribute to these agendas should be acknowledged. Developing specific local policies aligned with the Play Sufficiency Duty can help practitioners to work in ways that support children's play.

There is also a need to promote the Play Sufficiency Duty itself at local and national levels.

The statutory requirement to work in partnership across professional domains is a powerful enabler. Successful examples involved committed individuals who had the motivation, passion, experience, knowledge and authority to instigate, inspire and maintain partnership working. This suggests that effective investment in Play Sufficiency means giving Play Sufficiency Leads the *time* (both hours allocated and the length of time for development work to show results), *position* (conferring the remit, authority and ability to make decisions and influence decision makers) and *permission* (an organisational culture of being open to experimentation) to do this.

The research highlights the importance of the work of national and local third sector advocacy and infrastructure organisations. The pivotal role of Play Wales in helping create and maintain conditions for local authorities to deliver Play Sufficiency cannot be stressed enough. This is embodied in the experience, expertise and commitment of the staff and the willingness of Welsh Government to work with them.

Opportunities for cross-professional training, qualifications and other forms of knowledge exchange have been significant enablers of effective partnership work.

In each of our three case study authorities, research with children led to actions to support children's play. This included using creative methods with children exploring their relationship with their everyday spaces, for example, map-making, photographing significant spaces, walkabouts, focusing on the micro-detail of very specific neighbourhoods. There is ample evidence of the generic issues that support or constrain children's play – these methods help adults to pay attention to the specifics of *this* space at *this* time for *these* children, enabling specific responses.

The built and natural environment

Children's ability to play out is a matter of spatial justice: a just organisation of public space supports children's right to play. There is a growing body of research and practice supporting child-friendly cities, housing design and streets that shows the value of creating access to safe, nearby spaces and limiting moving and stationary traffic.

Research on children's freedom to roam shows a decline over decades. Nevertheless, if conditions are right, children's preference is for playing out. Many initiatives that support children's freedom of movement are closely linked to those supporting active travel.

Designated playgrounds and parks are a significant part of children's play lives. We found several examples of more creative approaches to designing for children's play, supported by a growing number of resources, including Play Wales' ***Developing and managing play spaces*** toolkit.

On average, roughly a third of the Welsh population live in rural areas (settlements with a population under 10,000), with that figure much higher in some areas. There is less attention paid to rural childhoods than to urban ones.

Children's and community services

The influence of playwork on and the contribution of playworkers to the development and enactment of the Play Sufficiency Duty nationally and locally cannot be overstated. Those with playwork backgrounds or remits have repeatedly been instigators or enablers of actions, pulling people together, developing collective wisdom, facilitating and developing responses to research with children, promoting the value of Play Sufficiency both nationally and locally.

Health and well-being are at the forefront of Welsh Government policy for schools, offering clear synergies with the Play Sufficiency Duty. There are several examples of improving play times in schools, but less success with attempts to open up school grounds out of school hours.

There is potential for youth workers to contribute to securing sufficient opportunities for older children to 'play' (even though they may not call it that). The intention in the Youth Work Strategy for Wales to map youth work provision, including transitional provision (pre-11 years old) offers clear links with Play Sufficiency Assessments and action plans.

Finally, there is a growing interest within the cultural sector to understand and support children's play within museum and gallery institutions and in heritage sites.

Recommendations

The report makes 13 recommendations for actions that can support local authorities to deliver on the Play Sufficiency Duty. Many of these will feed into the work of the Ministerial Play Review. For reasons of space these are not reproduced here, but they all fall within the headline conditions listed at the beginning of this article.

The *Making it Possible to do Play Sufficiency* summary report is available at:

www.playwales.org.uk/eng/research and the full report is available on request by email: info@playwales.org.uk

Play sufficiency and the role of playworkers

Exploring the role of the playwork profession in helping to secure sufficient opportunities for children's play.

The Welsh Government defines playwork as a *'highly skilled profession that enriches and enhances children's play. It takes place where adults support children's play but is not driven by prescribed education or care outcomes'*.

Wales became the first country in the world to legislate in support of children's right to play when the Welsh Government introduced the Play Sufficiency Duty in 2012. The overarching aim of the Duty is *'creating a play friendly Wales and to provide excellent opportunities for our children to play'*.

The Play Sufficiency Duty is not just about playwork or even play provision. It is concerned with cultivating more favourable conditions for play throughout all aspects of children's lives – which is ultimately what playwork is also concerned with.

The role of adults

The Play Sufficiency Duty requires adults to pay more attention to the issues that impact on children's lives and consider how the ways we do things could be changed to better support their right to play. In doing so it raises questions about the ways we, as a society, think about children and their childhoods, how we plan for and design our neighbourhoods, educate and care for our children, the approach taken to adult-child relations, what we expect of parents and how we provide for play.

Ultimately, adults have responsibility for making it easier for children to find time and space for playing. This includes helping other adults to feel confident in allowing and encouraging children to play. However, this is likely to need a significant shift in culture both within neighbourhoods, improving people's sense of community and security, and within the organisations that adults work for, enabling them to adopt a more supportive and considerate approach to children's play.

Making and sustaining these changes will require the involvement of many people beyond playwork, who directly and indirectly impact on children's opportunities for play. This includes parents and carers, other adult residents, politicians, policy makers, and those involved in professions such as planning, housing, transport, community safety, education, and childcare. But, it is often playworkers who provide the dedicated and driving force also required to bring about these changes and who are at the centre of a growing network of people working to improve conditions for play.

How playworkers support play sufficiency

There are a number of ways playwork can contribute at a local government level, working across policy areas, and operationally within local communities to cultivate more favourable conditions for play.

These two aspects of playwork are described as 'indirect' and 'direct', for example:



The Welsh Play Sufficiency Duty and the roles of playworkers

Indirect working

(action taken 'behind the scenes', often within organisations, indirectly benefiting children's play by improving the ways in which adults support it)

- Leading on the completion of play sufficiency assessments and the implementation of action plans
- Improving risk management policies and procedures so that they support rather than constrain play
- Securing funding for play provision, evidencing the impact of play interventions against other funding outcomes
- Identifying and building relationships with adults who can make a difference in local communities, encouraging them to take action in support of play
- Developing partnerships with people in other departments/organisations whose work impacts on children's play
- Providing professional development opportunities to improve adult responses and support for play

- Advocating for children's right to play at a strategic level
- Facilitating research with children to gather their views on their opportunities for play
- Identifying groups of children or communities experiencing a lack of play sufficiency and taking action to address this
- Sharing the findings of research involving children with politicians and policy makers
- Organising large scale play events and developing publicity campaigns to promote children's right to play
- Putting up signs and symbols that promote and encourage rather than restrict play.
- Keeping an eye on children, thereby reassuring and reducing stress on parents
- Normalising playing out and ensuring it is part of people's everyday routines
- Being a consistent presence, a friendly face, in local communities
- Getting to know and be known by children, parents and other residents
- Talking to adult residents about the importance of play and encouraging them to re-think any fears or concern they may have for or about children
- Advocating for children's right to play at a local level
- Enabling children to participate in local decision-making processes that impact on their opportunities for play, for example housing developments
- Identifying and providing additional support to individual children who are experiencing extraordinary barriers to accessing their right to play
- Working with children to create interesting and exciting places in which they can play
- Taking over a residential street for a short time, allowing children's play to take precedence over the movement of motor vehicles
- Leaving evidence of children having played (like a bit of chalk), helping to further increase the visibility of children and remind people to be mindful of their existence.

This is far from a complete list of duties performed by playworkers, nor does it describe the highly skilled practices playworkers engage in when working directly with playing children, but it begins to illustrate the breadth of work undertaken within the playwork profession. Individual playworkers or teams of staff may be responsible for both these indirect and direct roles or may be employed to focus on one more than the other.

Direct

(action taken with children, parents, carers and other residents to co-create opportunities for play in local communities)

- Facilitating regular staffed play sessions close to people's homes, encouraging children to play out together

Conclusion

In the context of the Play Sufficiency Duty, the role of playwork might best be understood as a play centred approach to community development where more playing, and all its associated benefits, is the primary outcome. Playworkers operate within communities, third sector organisations and across local government, working with children, carers, practitioners, policy makers and politicians to improve and protect conditions for playing. In doing so, playworkers support the development of positive attitudes towards children, identifying opportunities to develop and/or reclaim time and space for play, advocate for a more playful approach to working with and on behalf of children and have been found to make members of the community feel safer in allowing children to play out.

Playworkers are acting as advocates for children, mediating between adult and child led agendas

to encourage a more equal distribution of community resources. At times this may mean defending children's rights, representing their views and reminding adults that children must also have access to time and space within the public realm. Where playworkers adopt this type of community development approach they help to cultivate a culture of play where adult views of play are more closely aligned with those of children and as a result there is a greater support for children's play throughout and across communities.

Article based on our *The Welsh Play Sufficiency Duty and the roles of playworkers* information sheet written by Ben Tawil and Mike Barclay, which is available at: www.playwales.org.uk/eng/publications/information sheets

Workforce development

Playwork training and qualifications online learning

As things ground to a halt across the country in March 2020 as a result of the nationwide lockdown, those of us involved in delivering qualifications began to think about how to move playwork learning online.

Play Wales has always avoided online delivery for playwork training, opting for the classroom and outdoor environments as our preferred option. The reasoning is simple – playworkers operate face to face with children so training should be face to face. In person delivery means that learners learn from each other and skilled playwork tutors can help to explore areas of ambiguity that arise when discussing a playwork approach – such as how to support children to take risks without them coming to unnecessary harm, how much to intervene (or not) and how practice differs across different types of settings.

However, lockdown meant that if learners already undertaking qualifications were to complete we needed to work with our delivery partners to explore new options for delivering courses. Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales has worked hard with our growing team of playwork tutors to look at how online meeting platforms can be used to deliver courses whilst maintaining the playful and participative approach that is a hallmark of our qualifications. Scavenger hunts, physical games, and interactive technology (like shared

whiteboards) are our new training tools, while kitchen tables and living rooms become classrooms. We are still at the tip of the iceberg in terms of what is possible but are committed to ensuring that learners still get a dynamic experience and aren't simply subjected to online powerpoint presentations.

We asked Jane Hawkshaw, Curriculum Delivery Officer for Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales for her perspective on the potential benefits of blended learning:

'We've seen learners having more opportunities to reflect because of the time they have to think about practice within, and in between the online sessions, and especially because people haven't been able to sit and catch up with their teams during lockdown. The smaller group sizes also mean people have more time with the tutor. I'm also excited to see how much learners value the time together to really focus and share practice when they do actually get together.'

Playwork courses will now be taught using a 'blended learning' approach. This involves shorter sessions of two to three hours each being delivered online with learners being expected to do some more self-directed learning, reading relevant texts, watching videos and interacting with online chats. Learners will be supported to engage online in discussion and debate just as they would in the classroom facilitated by our expert tutors. Also, in line with guidance on current restrictions, we are exploring bringing learners together physically to engage in learning together. This could be outside and, later in the academic year, even in classrooms whilst following physical distancing requirements.

Like many things arising from our experiences of lockdown, this is proving to be a positive adaptation and whilst there is still a huge benefit to learners physically coming together, there are a range of benefits to the blended learning approach. We are excited to continue to explore this in the new academic year with our delivery partners Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales and Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs.

www.playwales.org.uk/eng/qualifications

Spotlight on ...

Playwork Tutor delivering online and blended learning

In each issue we talk to a professional in the world of play and playwork to provide an insight into the diversity of the workforce and the job roles available. For this issue we spoke to Matthew Jenkins, a playwork tutor with Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales.

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

I've had a few job changes over the years, starting off as an adventurous activities instructor (which I still do sometimes). I was working in a special educational needs (SEN) school when the local authority advertised for playworkers and I applied for a summer job. I arrived late and flustered to the interview having ran there at the end of school day but must have said enough of the right things to get started in playwork!

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

I am a tutor where I deliver playwork courses and autism awareness courses in community settings. Usually, I would travel to the area where courses are booked, to teach.

How has your role changed as a result of Covid-19?

Like a lot of industries, work got cancelled or postponed. When we were able to teach, I had to adjust to using an online group call to deliver lectures. A lot of the methods were the same as in class, just with a lot more cats popping into view!

I had to work out some new techniques though, and get a lot more familiar with computers and online tools – and deal with the panic when my laptop crashed five minutes before a session started one time!

What do you think is unique or exciting about using online and blended learning?

I pre-recorded some lectures, which meant I had to learn new filming techniques, and spent a lot of time learning to edit and include video clips, music and messages which I enjoyed.

What's the best bit about your job?

The problem solving. You never know how a group will respond to a topic and I like having to draw on experiences and stories that make the topic fit the group. There are logistical problems as well when visiting new community venues.

Making use of a squash court when the venue lost the booking was a classic, with the music pounding from the dance-fit class next door!

Is there anything you find challenging about your job?

People book onto Adult Learning in their own time, even when the employer requires it. This means that busy lives get in the way and it can be a challenge to keep everyone engaged. Fortunately, playwork attracts people who are enthusiastic and fun anyway, and this helps keep courses engaging while the tutor team keeps challenging themselves to try new and exciting ways of delivering the qualifications.

Agored Cymru Level 2 Certificate in Playwork: Principles into Practice

Lockdown has delayed the roll out of our new **Playwork: Principles into Practice (P³) qualifications**, but we are now excited to be offering the first Level 2 Certificate P³ course in Wrexham for a cohort of learners who have already completed the **Level 2 Award in Playwork Practice (L2APP)**.

In line with the new blended learning approach, learners will complete the course using a mixture of online and face to face teaching. We are particularly excited about the new practical playwork unit which will give learners practical

skills in rope work, simple structures and using fire with an underpinning focus on dynamic risk-benefit assessment. This unit lends itself well to delivery outdoors so, as long as restrictions allow, this will be a valuable opportunity for the learners to come together, meet and share experiences and receive practical support from their tutor.

The P³ qualifications are supported by updated learning resources which provide a thorough overview of playwork theoretical approaches to back up what is learned in taught

sessions. There are also new 'holistic assessment' units from Agored Cymru which are more suited to the assessment of practical learning and P³ is one of the first courses to be offered using this new approach.

Learners who have successfully completed the L2APP and the Level 2 Certificate P³ will be able to progress onto the Level 3 Diploma P³ which is aimed at senior playworkers and managers.

www.playwales.org.uk/eng/p3



Make a noise for play – Playday 2020

Playday – the national day for play – took place on 5 August. Even though it wasn't possible to hold any large-scale community events this year, play teams and organisations across Wales supported children, families and communities to celebrate the right to play. Organisations engaged with audiences in social media campaigns, ran a full day of online activity, held socially distanced parades, closed streets for play, distributed play resource packs and generally made a great big noise for play!



'I love my box, thank you. I really miss playscheme this summer and miss all the workers.' Lexi, aged 8

'I had fun making a big noise for play at playscheme. Playing is important because it keeps us busy and calm.' Jake, aged 8



'This looks lots of fun, thank you, we have run out of paper and paint at home.' Holly aged 10

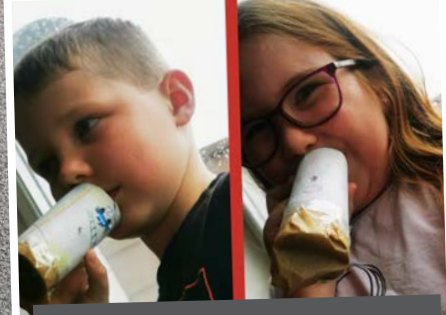
'It was fun being out with friends and going on the go kart.' Olivia
'It was nice for everyone to be out on the street because they aren't normally.' Olivia's mum



'I can hang out with other children and play with everybody. We could do lots more on the street.' Geraint



Aled, aged 10 said: 'It was fun to make the films and being in them, I liked watching the other films too.'
Catrin, aged 7 said: 'I liked doing all the fun stuff and being a youtuber!'



'We had a great time shouting, screaming with our musical instruments we made – we love playing!' Daniel, aged 4 and Lucy, aged 10

For more examples of playful communities in Wales visit: www.playfulchildhoods.wales/about-playful-communities