

Play for Wales

Issue 10 Summer 2003



PLAY NEWS & BRIEFING FROM THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR PLAY

DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH...

The National Play Review chaired by Frank Dobson MP and led by Tim Gill (Director of the Children's Play Council, the national organisation for children's play in England) ended in March. The Review was undertaken to inform the allocation of £200 million made available (probably from 2005) through the New Opportunities Fund to create and improve play opportunities for children and young people (0-16 years) across the UK.

According to London Play News (Summer 2003) an interim report (prior to consideration of the final consultation and subject to ministerial approval) showed that most of the people in England who took part prioritised the funding of staffed play provision. There was also a strong emphasis on setting up strategic approaches and local planning of long-term funding for play.

However, this does not necessarily mean that this is where the funding will be spent. The final report is still being tweaked and although it was supposed to land on doormats in the late spring, our sources suggest that Halloween time will be a better bet.

In the meantime we are still waiting for the Welsh Assembly Government's response to the review findings in our own country, and information on the allocation of the NOF grant in Wales.

Go to www.playwales.org.uk/factsheets for a definition of open access staffed play provision as written by Play Wales and adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government.

From a Vision to a Reality?

At a recent meeting between Jane Hutt AM and Play Wales, the Minister for Children announced the first meeting of the Play Policy Implementation Group, which will take place in September 2003. As yet we do not know who will be invited to take part, but we do know that the group will be expected to complete its work in producing recommendations by April 2004.



The Next First Claim

Play Wales is delighted to announce the publication of *The First Claim ... Desirable Processes*, the advanced framework that completes the First Claim framework for playwork quality assessment, which was launched by Jane Hutt at Play Wales' Celebrating the Spirit of Adventure Play conference in May.

As a parent, a playworker, a teacher or anyone working with children, we owe it to them to read and digest these books. Even for the most seasoned and experienced among us, developing and producing *The First Claim* has made a huge difference to our understanding of children's behaviour. It has encouraged us to question how we relate to children, and the play opportunities we provide for them. Ultimately we hope it will be part of their growing to be healthier and happier human beings.

The First Claim is beginning to change the way playworkers run play provision across the UK. Here is a review by Helen

Elton, adventure playground development worker, a playworker and parent, who works for PlayRight in Swansea:

The First Claim – desirable processes is the second volume of this important Play Wales series. Volume one was "a framework for quality assessment". It was aimed at basic and intermediate levels. Play-workers who have used the first volume now have an assessment framework for advanced playwork. The addition of *desirable processes* to the title seems to be offered as an antidote/corrective to education's emphasis on desirable outcomes.

Cont. pg9 >

EDITORIAL

Playday takes place on Wednesday 6th August and the theme is get out and play. Evidence that children play out is a sign of a vibrant community. So are fears related to children 'playing out' genuine, or are they really an excuse for removing what some perceive as a "nuisance" from our streets? There is no evidence that children's play behaviour is more of a nuisance now than it was in decades past. Children need to play freely wherever it is safe for them to play, it is vital for their social and physical development, and traditionally playing out has provided them with a range of opportunities and benefits not provided by playing in confined areas.

Children are biologically driven to play, and the play process involves noise and mess, but in our overly health and safety conscious and sanitised "designer" society this is often not welcomed by adults. We appreciate that in some communities there is real danger from, for instance, joy riders or the influence of drug dealers, but generally there is a real need to differentiate between the kind of risks children need to learn to deal with, and something that is truly life threatening or damaging.

Children have the right to play - and to be part of their community not apart from their community.

Marianne Mannello
Development Officer



WHAT'S INSIDE

• Editorial	P 2
• Backchat&childcomwales.org	P 2
• CSIW News and Play Pack	P 3
• Jobs on Website	P 3
• Play Stories	P 3
• Play Area Inspection for Wales	P 3
• Play Resource Centres	P 4
• Contact Numbers	P 4
• Ebbw Vale Launch	P 4
• Challenging Racism through Play	P 5
• Wheels for Play	P 6
• Spirit	P 7
• Ludostrategin	P 7
• Adventure Playgrounds	P 7
• Play Deprivation Sheet	P 8
• Desirable Processes Review	P 9
• Evolutionary Playwork Review	P 9
• Events/Funding/Training	P 10

Backchat about Playing Out



We wanted to find out more about children's experience of playing out, so we are working together with Children's Commissioner's Office who have posted questions about playing out in their new children's chat room - Backchat.

- Have you got good/bad stories to tell us about playing outside?
- Have you been encouraged to play outside?
- Have you been told off or been stopped from playing outside?

Here are some of the children's responses:

Some times we go down the little field by my house and there is fences all around and if we make goals up against one of these fences then the lady threatens to call the polease other wise i like playing out side

Matthew

I live in a very small village and we can play outside quite safely except sometimes we have drivers going to fast through the village. I have always been encouraged to play outside because my dad is a farmer and we have lots of fields that we can play in and we build lots of dens.

Nia

Hi i really dont go out coz all the things that happens around here is we get the blame for.

Benjie

We're aloud to play outside but the school is covered with mud and if you get caught with mud on you're shoes (very likely) You have to stay in and clean it off the floor and walls etc because of the new headmistress

Hannah

When I was younger I used to play outside alot with kids down my street, but now I'm older school work and watching t.v. take up most of my time!

I live down a cul-de-sac and at the bottom of the road there's a bit of waste ground which leads on to a little forest then some fields. So when I was younger we used to go down there and make 'dens'. Once I can remember taking a rucksack with a packed lunch in it and we stayed out there most of the day pretending we were on some sort of a mission!

I can remember getting most of the children on the street outside and we played this rollerblading game of who could rollerblade around our block the quickest, we were separated into two teams (Swansea and Llanelli I think), I was the ref!

Angharad

Play for Wales

is published by Play Wales. All correspondence and enquiries should be addressed to the Editor at:

Play Wales, Baltic House, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FH

Telephone: 029 2048 6050 Fax: 029 2048 9359 E-mail: mail@playwales.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 1068926

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Play Wales. We reserve the right to edit for publication.

Designed and printed by Carrick Business Services Ltd. Tel: 029 2074 1150. E-mail: sales@carrickbusiness.co.uk

Cartoon illustrations by Les Evans

Sharing Stories and Telling Tales

A new website gives playworkers the chance to share stories about the joy of children's play.

Asked to contribute to the Celebrating the Spirit of Adventure Play Conference in May, Penny Wilson of Kidsactive told a beautiful and beguiling story about children she has worked with and the positive outcomes that can be achieved through providing inclusive play opportunities for disabled children. She has since set up a website so that playworkers can share such stories.

In a world where we are constantly asked to justify the importance of something so ephemeral, this is a chance to share the moments that fill your heart and make your scalp tingle – the small things that make providing play opportunities worthwhile.

You can add your own story about children's play as a web page or contribute to those of other playworkers. There are

comprehensive instructions as to how to proceed – please remember not to reveal names or places in your story.

www.theinternationale.net/playstories

"You can add anything or take anything away. It is a collaborative working space. It is designed to let us work together, share our stories and build our profession. We're not worried about great prose or spelling or grammar, it's the story that matters."

Kidsactive (soon to merge with KIDS) is a charity that promotes and supports inclusive play for disabled children. Based in London, it operates adventure playgrounds, an information service, and a training and consultancy network. They have set up a one-day introduction to inclusive play aimed at playworkers who wish to gain confidence in working with disabled children.

Contact Kidsactive on 0207 731 1435

Play Area Inspections for Wales

Successful playground inspection balances the need for safety with the child's need for an environment that contains the potential to take risks and develop skills to deal with them as well as providing play value.

Play Wales is increasing its capacity to provide a comprehensive play area inspection and inspector training service for all types of play provision.

"We want to provide a really first class service that is specifically aimed to meet the needs of children and play providers in Wales," said Tony Chilton, Play Wales' Senior Development Officer and playground safety specialist, "It was clear to us that, as a small team, we simply did not have the capacity to meet the demand for inspections and inspector training, so we have made an agreement with Andy Wilson-Chalon who will work for us on a consultancy basis."

Andy is a Play Space Safety Consultant who has many years experience of developing and inspecting play areas, as well as having worked in community development and park and playing field management. He has wide and successful experience of public consultation, and he was responsible for a large part of the development of the National Playing Fields Association "Six Acre Standard".

Our extended Wales-wide service includes:

- Annual, pre and post installation inspections for out door and indoor play areas and adventure playgrounds;
- Playground audits and reviews;
- Inspection reports in hard copy as well as on disc;
- Bilingual inspection reports as requested;
- Training on regular and operational playground inspections;
- Training on compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 – and necessary alterations for fair access to outdoor play areas and adventure playgrounds;
- Training on management procedures and risk assessment of outdoor play areas and adventure playgrounds;
- Training on assessing the "play value" of play provision;
- An expert witness service for litigation on play provision related accidents, as well as cases relating to the Disability Discrimination Act.

If you are interested in any of these services or wish to discuss your needs in greater depth please contact Tony at our North Wales office on 01745 851816 or e-mail northoffice@playwales.org.uk

Please see page 10 for playground inspector training.

CSIW Registration

The Childcare Inspectorate for Wales; registration and inspection procedure has been a head ache for people providing play schemes since its introduction, and it has been revised recently in response to feedback from the playwork field.

HOWEVER, Play Wales recognises that despite the changes, the registration procedure continues to hamper play providers and that it is unnecessarily lengthy and onerous. For instance, do we really need to know whether a room is wall papered or painted when we judge it to be safe for children to play? We are continuing to push for realistic and relevant standards that reflect the true nature of staffed play provision in Wales, and for the deployment

Update

of inspectors who have an understanding of children's play needs.

In the last issue of Play for Wales we announced that we were working with a group of play development officers to produce a practical pack for people setting up staffed play provision that would encompass advice on the CSIW registration procedure. We have made the decision to put this project on hold pending further discussion with the Welsh Assembly Government and the Inspectorate.

Welsh Play Jobs on the Web

Spread the word! The new Play Wales website has a free job advertising page for play-related posts in Wales.

We have always received enquiries from people looking for play posts, and from people wanting to advertise in Play for Wales, so we are delighted that we are now in a position to offer support – particularly to organisations struggling with a small budget.

You can add a vacant post at no charge by contacting our national office in Cardiff – please e-mail the text to Kathy or Claire at mail@playwales.org.uk making sure to

include all relevant information, your contact details, and a closing date. All adverts are checked before being posted, and will be published the Monday after they are received and removed the Monday after the closing date specified. Unfortunately we don't have the resources to act as a clearing-house for applications.

So next time you are recruiting staff or looking for a job in the play field, remember to look us up.

www.playwales.org.uk

www.chwaraecymru.org.uk

Hooray for Waste!

PlayRight's recent success in winning a major environmental award and the launch of (at least) two new scrapstores has prompted us to print a celebration of Wales's play resource centres.

Visit any play resource centre or scrapstore and you will be greeted by an inspirational treasure trove of re-usable waste. There will be bins overflowing with fabric, packaging, ribbon, bobbins, boxes, thread and scraps of leather, as well as shelves of paper and card off-cuts, tiles, files and paint. You may even find the odd strange bit of shop window display or a kitchen door. The wonderful thing is that you never know what you will find, the staff always want to help and that the supplies are always cheap.

The longest running scrapstore in Wales resides in an old brick warehouse, nestled between an automobile accident repair centre and a carpet showroom. Cardiff's Re-Create has been through some sticky times of late, but is bouncing back with renewed enthusiasm and unvanquished vigour. Re-Create is the trading arm of the Cardiff and Vale Play Services Association and as such is one of Wales' play resource centres that has grown from a play background. They estimate that they now serve around 100,000 children in Cardiff and surrounding areas.

Likewise three year old PlayRight (Chwarae lawn) who are based in an industrial unit next to a bakery in Swansea. They have managed to hang on by the tips of their fingernails through a funding crisis that saw the distribution of redundancy notices. When I popped my head round the door they were short-listing candidates for new posts created through their successful

Community Fund bid, and wanted me to express thanks to everyone who supported them through their darkest hour.

Other scrapstores, such as the one in Brecon, are run by dedicated volunteers and who open a few hours a week to offer art and craft materials and workshops.

The newest scrapstore in Wales is Re-Play Ebbw Vale, housed on a bleak and windswept industrial estate. This enterprise has grown out of an environmental initiative for the re-use of waste and has to be self-sufficient within three years. Another new enterprise with environmental roots that has recently opened is Trash and Carry, run by Crest Co-operative in Kinmel Bay, Conwy, who were part of the Shell Better Britain Campaign. Their funding has come from the European Social Fund and the Probation Service, but they too have to make their service pay for itself within the next few years.

Scrapstores give undoubted value in terms of the re-use of waste that would otherwise be dumped in landfill sites (I believe that Welsh Local Authorities landfill over 90% of the waste we all produce and that they are struggling to meet objectives on recycling). A knock on benefit of scrapstore work is the engagement of children in a process that raises awareness of environmental sustainability.

Not only that, but the very nature of the materials supplied by scrapstores encourages children to use their

imagination and to be resourceful. Ask any artist about the process of making art and the word play always crops up. The creative process involves playing freely with materials, images and ideas. Scrapstore materials (unlike art and craft catalogue supplies) tend to be sold so cheaply that they can be used liberally and children can really go to town and explore their creative potential.

But most play resource centres and scrapstores do much more than supply re-usable industrial waste to schools and playschemes – they also perform a valuable function within their local community. Some of them offer play training, and provide outreach work and art and craft workshops. Some offer a library or low cost equipment hire, and they may hire out meeting rooms to other organisations. Most of them provide opportunities for people to return to work through volunteering or opportunities for young people to start out on their working life.

No-one will deny that setting up a play resource centre is hard work, and that keeping it running can often be a very tricky business, but the benefits to children and communities are enormous. Congratulations to all Wales' play resource centres and scrapstores, to their faithful workers, volunteers and board members for hanging in there. Good luck to the Gwent scrapstore that opens on Play Day. Let's hope we see more play resource centres launched in Wales over the next few years, and here's to the new scrapstores – may you save waste and prosper!

Play Resource Centres and

- | | | | |
|--------------|--|-----------|--|
| • Brecon | Brecon Scrapstore,
Old Post Office, Lower Chapel, Brecon LD3 9RE | • Newtown | Newtown Resource Centre Ty Cymuned,
11 Severn St, Newtown, Powys SY16 2AQ
01686 629487 |
| • Cardiff | Re-Create,
Ely Bridge Industrial Estate, Wroughton Road,
Ely, Cardiff CF5 4AB
029 20 578100 | • Rhymney | (opening on 6 August 2003)
01685 846830 |
| • Ebbw Vale | Re-Play,
Unit 4 Rassau Industrial Estate,
Ebbw Vale, NP23 5S
01495 301234 | • Swansea | Play Right, Block H,
Unit 22 Upper Forest Way,
Ashmount Business Park,
Swansea, SA6 8QR
01792 794884 |
| • Kinmel Bay | Trash and Carry,
Unit 38, Tir Llywd Industrial
Estate, Kinmel Bay, LL18 5LA
01745 369216 | • Wrexham | Wrexham Play Association
Resource Centre, Prince Charles Road,
Wrexham LL13 8TH
01978 822217 |

Challenging Racism through Play

Nandini Mane, Training and Development Worker for the Working Group Against Racism in Children's Resources, ran workshops at Play Wales' recent Spirit of Adventure Play Conference. Here she outlines the reason why it is so important to be aware of racial issues when providing play services to children. Her contribution is practically pertinent in the light of recent riots in Wrexham.

Children from a very young age pick up messages from everything and everybody around them – the language they hear, the toys they play with, the visual images they see in books, shop windows and on TV. The impressions that children form of each other and themselves are influenced by the nature of these messages – whether positive or negative.

Children need resources that reflect the diversity of the society in which they live. This is particularly true for children who live in predominantly white areas. In the absence of a positive reflection of racial and cultural diversity, "white" European culture will continue to be regarded as the "norm" while other racial and cultural groups will continue to be marginalised and stereotyped.

Play is the primary way in which children learn about themselves and about the world around them. Toys and games can be regarded as building blocks of racial awareness. Play materials that reflect the beauty and diversity of a wide range of racial

and cultural groups will enable children to genuinely understand and respect the diversity around them and benefit from it. But when children always see toys representing white people being promoted in the media, in toy shops, nurseries, schools and play provision on a regular basis, while toys with black representation are either absent or in the background, then there is a danger that children will internalise the message that white people are somehow more important in society.

The way in which workers regard such toys is crucial to developing positive attitudes. Since children often take their cues from adults, it is important to give toys, games, posters, films and stories with black representation the same attention and value as those with white representation.

Few black children can articulate how racism affects them. It can often be seen in changing behaviour patterns or reluctance to acknowledge their own skin colour. In order to develop positive racial awareness black children need access to toys that represent images they can identify with. This will encourage black children to explore their ideas and emotions fully through play.

All children need to play with a wide variety of dolls that represent a range of skin tones, authentic facial features and hair textures (a black doll with European features gives a clear message that European features are

preferable). They should have access to paints, crayons and pencils in a range of skin tones, and to read and talk about stories and games involving black heroes and heroines.

It is important to encourage children to voice thoughts that might be influenced by racist stereotyping, so that we can enable them to challenge these ideas through stories and discussions. By not talking about skin colour or culture, and by admonishing children for asking questions, we could be strengthening misconceptions and stereotypes.

When we stop to think about it, it is obvious that assumptions should not be made about somebody's personality, potential or lifestyle on the basis of physical features, hair texture, skin colour etc, yet we rarely stop to analyse the messages that we are bombarded with every day. All children need to see themselves reflected positively in the world around them, it is our job to meet this need.

The Working Group Against Racism in Children's Resources publishes guidance on selecting appropriate resources for children. We also provide training, disseminate information and produce lists to identify appropriate toys, books and other resources.

Telephone 0207 501 9992 or e-mail wgarc.r@virgin.net

Scrapstores in Wales



LEFT:
Tony Hart draws cartoons to raise money at the Re-Play Ebbw Vale launch party



RIGHT:
Children from Rhos-y-Fedwen Primary School enjoy a junk percussion workshop at the Re-Play Ebbw Vale launch party

"All we want is somewhere we can skate without hassle."

Skateboarding is an established element of youth culture and social life. It is a largely self-taught activity, with peer groups demonstrating and practising skills together – co-operating to improve their performance with little or no adult intervention. It gives young people scope to develop their imagination, inventing new routines and tricks, and to manage and take risks as well as to gain physical prowess. As such the skateboarders, (and BMXers and in-line skaters) of Wales reach awe inspiring levels of expertise that we feel should be recognised and applauded.

Unfortunately there is a lack of dedicated space for skateboarders and this forces them onto the streets, which can lead to conflict. There are clear health and safety issues when skateboarding takes place in inappropriate places. Meanwhile, if it is hard enough to find somewhere to skate in cities, it is even more difficult in rural areas. In small towns and villages, councils may lack the funds to maintain traditional play areas, let alone provide a wheeled play area.

Many adult members of the public can feel intimidated by groups of young people, and often oppose plans for wheeled play areas because they imagine that they will become a focus for vandalism and so-called anti-social behaviour. In reality there is proof that providing dedicated facilities for skateboarders reduces the incidence of such behaviour – particularly in instances where the young people have been included in developing and running the facility

themselves. Well-organised and comprehensive community consultation goes a long way towards erasing some of the prejudices young people and adults have against each other. In one instance following a consultation exercise, an older member of the community asked for a bench to be installed next to a skate park so that she could sit and watch the skaters.

Young people themselves are crying out for dedicated wheeled play areas. They are fed up of being moved on and treated as a nuisance. Frustration and boredom can lead to behaviour that the rest of the community finds hard to accept. Rather than seeing their behaviour as a problem, perhaps we should

understand that it is part of their growth and development; it simply manifests itself as "anti-social" in an inappropriate space. Young people seek challenge and stimulation, and the provision of a wheeled play area can make a very positive contribution to their life within a community that is just as much theirs as ours.

This feature includes extracts from an article, *Half-Pipe Dreams* by Rosie Niven, featured in *Young People Now* 25 June 2003.

Find out more about Young People Now magazine by visiting www.yppmagazine.com or ring 020 8606 7500

Recent funding initiatives in Wales, and better recognition of young people's needs and wishes, mean that we are likely to see more wheeled play areas installed around the country. Here are some good practice guidelines we can use when planning a wheeled play area:

- form a group, and contact the Local Authority, this gives credibility when applying for grants and approaching other bodies that might give support;
- identify the need for the facility and a suitable site;
- find out what skaters, BMXers and inline skaters want to have included in the design;
- visit successful skate parks so as to get a better idea of what equipment might be available;
- consult with the local community – this can quell conflict and promote cohesion;
- talk to the police, local councillors and play associations, and local groups in the community, they are valuable sources of support;
- consult with experienced skaters – they know what works and what doesn't;
- use a specialist contractor/supplier;
- research costings thoroughly – a basic concrete ramp can cost around £10,000 – but there are alternative materials;
- make provision for continued maintenance;
- cost in insurance – which can be difficult to find and expensive.

WHEELS FOR PLAY

A huge increase in demand for BMX and skatepark facilities means that wheeled play areas are springing up all over Wales, so Play Wales decided to hold a seminar to address the many surrounding issues and to inspire and support people who are considering developing such provision.

The sun was shining on the promenade for the "WHEELS FOR PLAY" conference held at the Llandudno Conference Centre on Friday 21st March. Presentations and workshops covered a range of subjects such as, how to meet young people's needs, and the benefits of providing informal recreational facilities in the community, as well as finding funding and health and safety issues.

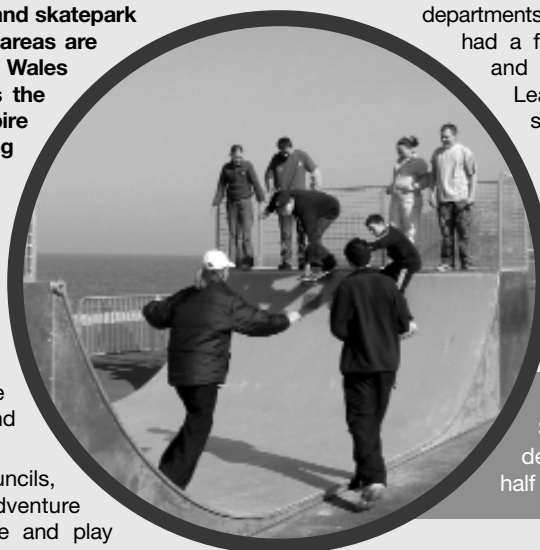
Delegates representing community councils, community and youth groups, adventure playgrounds, town councils, plus leisure and play

departments in local authorities, had a fantastic, informative and stimulating day.

Leading manufacturers of skateboarding and BMX equipment exhibited in the main hall and one company erected a half pipe on the promenade for the delegates to have a go!

There are plans afoot to run a similar seminar in South Wales next spring. If you are interested please contact Kathy at our national office 029 2048 6050 or e-mail kathy@playwales.org.uk

A group of young people from Holywell School, North Flintshire, had great fun demonstrating their self-taught prowess on a half pipe installed on Llandudno promenade.



Celebrating the Spirit

Another year, another successful conference for those involved in adventurous play and adventure playgrounds ... stimulating debate, promoting children's play needs and attempting to inspire playworkers to take their practice to another level.

A range of speakers and workshop leaders, from academic theorists to practical playworkers, volunteered their services in the spirit of skill and knowledge sharing, and "experts" joined "novices" to learn together and

of Adventure Play

14TH & 15TH MAY 2003

to address some of the current issues in play and playwork together.

The Spirit will live on next year, and as usual we invite anyone and everyone involved in adventure play and adventurous playwork to help us organise or to make a proposal for a presentation or a workshop.

In the meantime we will be inviting some of this year's speakers to write

pieces for Play for Wales and share their thoughts and experiences with a wider audience. The first of these is Nandini Mane, whose article appears on page five.

Thank you to all those involved, speakers, leaders and delegates alike.

An Introduction to Adventure Playgrounds

7th & 8th October 2003

Recent developments and directives from the Welsh Assembly Government place a high priority on the development of play opportunities which put children's play needs first. It is their view that the development of Adventure Playgrounds will enable us to respond positively to children's need for play by extending the range of environments and opportunities available.

An Adventure Playground is a staffed open access facility where children can mould their surroundings to their own purposes in a challenging environment facilitated by playworkers. Traditionally they have been developed to compensate for the absence of natural open space where children would have played in the past.

Communities First Co-ordinators, and others who may be in a position to develop Adventure Playgrounds, have been invited to attend a Play Wales seminar in July to view, explore and learn about this fantastic resource for children. It is a two-day event, which will include visits to several adventure playgrounds to examine good practice in established settings and how they work within the community. They will also take part in presentations and workshops from leading playwork practitioners, to examine the key role of Adventure Playgrounds and how they might be further developed in Wales.

Ludostrategin?

What on Earth...?

A vision without a task is but a dream.

A task without a vision is drudgery.

A vision with a task is the hope of the world.

Church inscription, Sussex, England 1730

Play Wales has been charged with the task of developing a support network for key Play Development Workers in Wales. Ludostrategin was a two day residential course aimed at helping both voluntary and public sector Play Development Workers make the most of the unique opportunities available for improving children's play development in Wales: specifically political and financial support for staffed play provision from the Welsh Assembly Government; the national Play Policy; and the publication of The First Claim.

An upbeat approach to the event enabled participants to focus on solutions rather than problems, and encouraged us to be analytical and reflective, gaining confidence to 'talk up' play where it counts. One of the most important outcomes of the event was the recognition that Play Development Staff would benefit from a support network. It was clear that we are part of a movement that will put Wales further in the vanguard of children's play.

One day Wales will be a country where children's play needs are recognised and fully provided for.

FIGHTING FOR PLAY

We have all seen or heard of shocking scenes that still occur in Eastern Europe - orphans strapped into their bed and deprived of stimulation, who sit and rock, stunted in every way. Some of us may also know of research into the extreme behaviour of mass murderers in the USA, which has been linked to a lack of social play in childhood. While these are very bleak examples, anyone working with children in our own country can tell tales of individuals who have had no opportunity to play freely.

There is some argument as to whether play deprivation exists. However, there is an increasing body of research that suggests that a lack of the kind of sensory stimulation and free interaction with the world around them that naturally happens when children have access to quality play opportunities, can have a detrimental impact on a child's healthy development. It is also clear that this deficit can occur regardless of a child's economic, cultural or social background, level of physical or mental ability, or the area in which they live.

Studies in Switzerland* refer to "battery children" (those who are deprived of play opportunities because of fears of traffic or stranger danger) who are "often aggressive and whine a lot. By the age of five they are emotionally and socially repressed, find it difficult to mix, fall behind with school work and are at

much greater risk of obesity".

At the same time those of us who facilitate play are constantly asked to justify the existence or expansion of our service. Some designated areas of social deprivation have access to a range of possible funding for play development. While other areas have to fight for every penny they can get, despite significant local factors that deprive children of a healthy range of play opportunities. In other areas people with more popular agendas (such as fighting under age crime, or pushing education initiatives) seem to have hijacked children's play provision for their own purposes.

The Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy is a huge step in the right direction in promoting healthy play opportunities for all Wales' children, however, it seems that some play providers need more down-to-earth and accessible evidence to promote

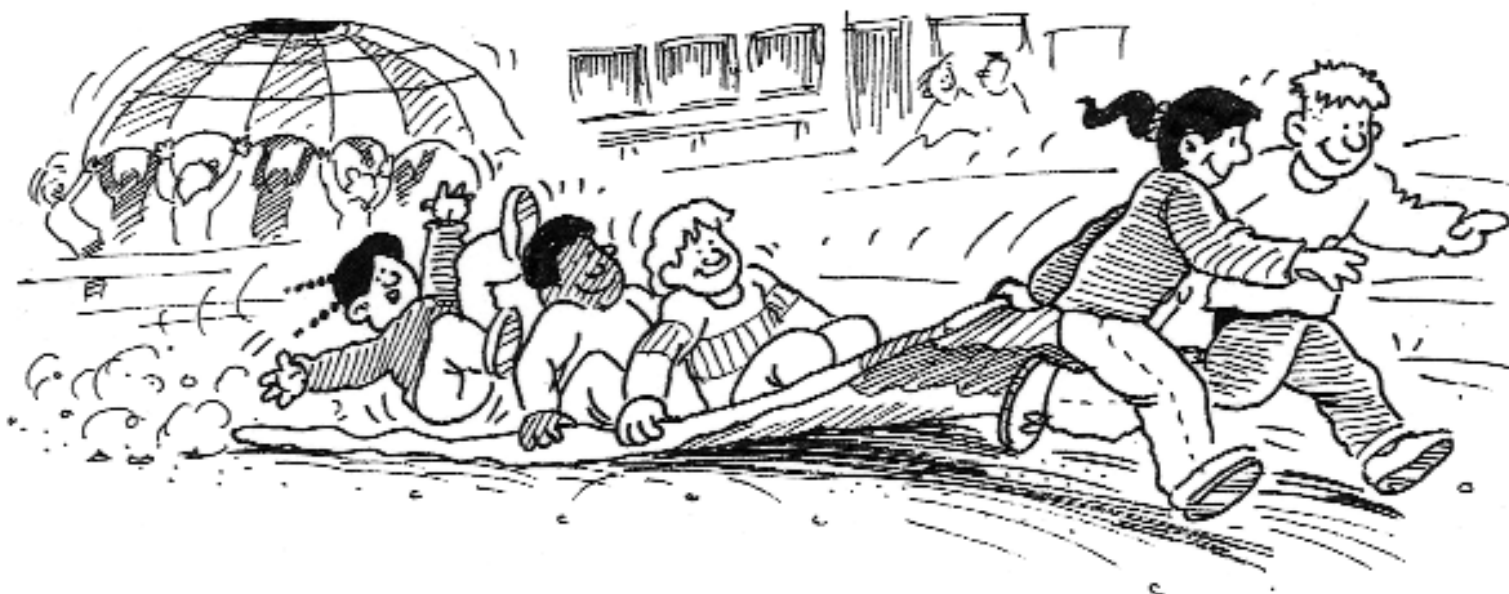
their cause.

Play Wales has commissioned Bob Hughes, author of 'The First Claim...' and 'The First Claim - Desirable Processes' as well other highly acclaimed books on play and playwork, (see the book review on page 9) to research and write a briefing sheet on play deprivation for Play Wales, which we hope to publish in the early Autumn.

We hope it will support you in making the case for well-funded high quality children's play provision.

The rationale behind the Play Policy for Wales which contains helpful arguments for providing quality play opportunities is published on our website: www.playwales.org.uk/playpolicy

**Huttenmoser and Degan-Zimmerman (1995) *Lebenstraume fur Kinder*: Zurich Swiss Science Foundation*



The next First Claim (Continued from pg1)

Education is target driven. For the sake of its quality assurance systems it needs to count and measure, and to some extent outcomes are measurable. So education tests children. Processes on the other hand aren't measurable – and play, as a process, isn't measurable. This poses a difficulty for the writers of *The First Claim*. How do you develop a quality assurance system for a process? Do you test playing children? Do you give them a score for the amount of fun they have? *The First Claim* tackles this head on by suggesting that the key to ensuring quality in playwork is to concentrate on the playworker. The method should be reflective practice - we should assess ourselves! *The First Claim* provides a framework around which to develop our self-assessment. But before we can begin to assess what we do, we need a language to describe it.

David is half way up a tree, struggling, with a stick that is just too short, to dislodge a conker case. There are lots of shorter sticks on the ground but nothing longer. So he delves into his pockets for inspiration and finds some pieces of string. Minutes later he has combined sticks and string to make a wonderful, state-of-the-art, David designed, conker case dislodger!

How did it happen? After all he's only playing. ONLY playing! As a playworker you know that activities dismissed in that way are actually vitally important. But how do you explain it, how do you even talk about it? What you've actually watched is David practising *combinatorial flexibility* and that's a shorthand way of describing David's creative activities. He has combined separate items in a novel and useful way. This is an advanced mental ability and one of the things that makes humans unique.

This supposedly technical language frightens people, playworkers included. But, as playworkers we do ourselves a great disservice if we don't try to develop a common language for discussing what we see and work with every day.

Both volumes of *The First Claim* try to give us that common language. They introduce us to shorthand technical terms our profession needs, so that we can have productive discussions with each other without resorting to long winded examples like the one above.

A draw back of this is that at first sight the documents may appear intimidating. The language seems new and difficult and the temptation is to put off reading or using



them 'till tomorrow'... and in a busy playwork setting it's hard to find the time - what with encouraging children's combinatorial flexibility and everything! But do try to build some time into the working day. After all, there is increasing pressure to prove the quality of your provision.

These books do not replace existing quality assurance measures, the frameworks within them can be used independently or alongside other quality packages. The big difference is that they concentrate on the **child's** needs, not those of an inspector who might have no understanding of the vital importance of

children's play, and who might be more obsessed with the state of your toilets. Are you satisfied with simply being assessed by an external body, or someone who thinks playwork is about working with children who are 'only playing'? Or would you like to satisfy yourself that you are providing the best play opportunities you possibly can?

The First Claim ... a framework for playwork quality assessment, is now available from www.amazon.co.uk or you can order either publication from the Play Wales national office.

BOOK REVIEW

Evolutionary Playwork and Reflective Analytic Practice

by Bob Hughes

What shines through in this book is a wealth of life-long learning, continual professional development and dedication to improving the quality and standing of playwork. There are examples of experiences, and research, from someone who thinks deeply and analyses the impact of the work they do.

This book seeks to support all workers with the necessary tools to practice quality playwork, and assists with training and development at all levels. It outlines the key principles and

work areas of open access play services, and as such it will be used by playworkers throughout Torfaen on a regular basis. Priorities may shift in the future in an environment of constant change, but at present the sector will benefit from this book.

This is a must for your tool kit.

Idris Bevan, Play Development Officer, Torfaen Youth Community & Play Service

'*Evolutionary Playwork ...*' is published by Routledge and can be ordered through bookshops or from Amazon ISBN 0-415-25166-4

EVENTS • EVENTS

Play Day – Get Out and Play

Wednesday 6 August 2003 - a day for celebrating playing out and for raising the profile of children's play.

Visit www.playday.org.uk or contact The Children's Play Council 020 7843 6016

Home Zones and the Sustainable Communities Initiative

10 September 2003, Birmingham - Covers design and community involvement as well as the experiences of setting up Home Zones and discussion.

Contact Helen Mallinson on 0121 359 3611 ext 4385 or e-mail H.Mallinson@aston.ac.uk

National Association of Toy Libraries, National Conference

Thursday 9 October 2003, Cardiff - Speakers include Peter Clarke (Children's Commissioner for Wales) and Jane Hutt (Welsh Assembly Minister for Children).

Contact Janet Matthews on 01874 622097

Professionals in Play - National Conference

15 October 2003, London - Organised by the Playwork Unit in SkillsActive (the new Sector Skills Council replacing SPRITO) the conference will look at how new challenges in training and qualifications for play and childcare workers can be met.

Contact 020 7388 7755 ext. 206 or e-mail paul@sprito.org.uk

National Playbus Conference

7 November 2003, Bristol - A one-day conference on the theme of inclusive play.

Contact The National Playbus Association 0117 9166580

Home Zone Design

12 November 2003, Leicester - Exhibition and presentations.

More details available at www.sraltd.co.uk

CYWU Playwork Conference

18 November 2003, London - Chance to examine the latest policy developments affecting playwork, as well as the professional and trade union issues currently facing the playwork profession.

Contact the CYWU National Office, 302 The Argent Centre, 60 Frederick St, Birmingham, B1 3HS, or e-mail terry@cywu.org.uk

FUNDING

Community Fund/NOF merger

The latest on Community Fund/NOF merger proposals can be read at <http://www.community-fund.org.uk/about-us/news/uk/200503-new-lottery-distributor-must-deliver-f.html>

NOF has published the latest edition of Working in Wales - a briefing document with info on current and future programmes.

Contact 029 2067 8200 or visit www.nof.org.uk

Coalfields Regeneration Trust - Regenerate Initiative

A MORI survey revealed high levels of youth disadvantage in former coal mining areas - the CRT has therefore made £20m available for projects improving youth provision in these areas. Among the initiatives to be funded will be provision of "designated youth spaces".

Contact 01443 404455 or visit www.coalfields-regen.org.uk

Children and Family Organisations Grant

The Welsh Assembly Government has invited applications for core funding to all-Wales voluntary sector organisations. The deadline is 11 August 2003.

Contact the Child and Family Programmes Team on 029 2082 6802 or e-mail neil.hayes@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Get Printed!

If you have an event or news you wish to share with play providers across Wales, please contact the Editor at our national office - we would really like to hear from you. We always welcome contributions, but we reserve the right to decline publication or to edit.

Our copy deadline for the Autumn issue of Play for Wales is 17 October 2003 when among other news, we will feature articles on play in rural areas.

We Got It Wrong Again

As a small fry compared with the big fish in the media world, we look to others for example - so it seems that Play for Wales is copying The Guardian in the printing error stakes . . .

Apologies to the National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries Wales office in Brecon - if you ring the number printed in our last issue you will get through to their fax machine. However if you ring 01874 622097 you will be able to speak to one of their staff.

... and Again

The Millennium Stadium Charitable Trust can be contacted on 029 2049 4963.

Play Area Regular Inspection Training

for Community, Town and County Councils and Voluntary Organisations

National Government advice, European Standards and the Healthy and Safety Act all recommend that every play area be inspected regularly (on a daily or weekly basis) for damage, vandalism and wear and tear. The Register of Playground Inspectors Limited (RPII) qualification is considered essential for anyone who is responsible for the management, inspection and maintenance of play areas.

Play Wales is offering a two-day course (including written and practical RPII examination) in Autumn 2003. For further information please contact Play Wales' North Office on 01745 851816 or e-mail northoffice@playwales.org.uk