

Play for Wales

Issue 13 SUMMER 2004



PLAY NEWS & BRIEFING FROM THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR PLAY

Children Bill Links Wellbeing with Play

Another piece of the jigsaw that will ensure that children have a legal right to quality play provision was put in place in the House of Lords on 17 June 2004. For the first time the Government have accepted that play is essential for children's wellbeing.

Children's organisations from across the UK, including Children in Wales and Play Wales, have been fighting to have the word "play" included in the Children Bill that is working its way through parliament. They found friends in Lord Pendry and Baroness Finlay of Llandaf who put forward a amendments to the Bill in the House of Lords.

At Play Wales we often take enquiries on whether there is a legal requirement for Local Authorities to provide for children's play. The position has not been clear. Although we can quote the Welsh Assembly Government's Play Policy, the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the 1944 Education Act there has not been a law that states unequivocally that Authorities must do so.

The Bill is the next step after the Government's consultation paper Every Child Matters that followed the enquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié. If it is passed and

becomes law (i.e. The Children Act) it will place a legal responsibility on Local Authorities to provide for children's wellbeing. For some time it looked as if the Government would not back down on including the word "recreation" rather than "play". They have now stated that recreation includes play.

Baroness Andrew spoke for the Government¹:

We accept these amendments, which will cover England and Wales. We are completely at one in the importance that we attach to play as a developmental aspect of children's lives in terms of learning and enjoyment. It is extremely important that there are opportunities for informal as well as formal play ... We recognise that recreation embraces play. That captures well-being and the important element of enjoyment that might otherwise be missing. Play will be a major element of recreation. We hope to ensure that that is understood ... In Committee we made clear that key parts of play are encompassed within the education and social elements of children's well-being. I hope that noble Lords are happy with that outcome.

and in terms of the Welsh Assembly

Government's power to change legislation for Wales:

... the Assembly will be free to include play in secondary legislation.

On the face of it this might not appear significant – it happened far away in the House of Lords (where adults play at dressing up) – and some have questioned why so much debating time was devoted to what they see as a trivial matter. However, the implications are of tremendous importance to us in Wales given the Assembly's Play Policy and the work of the Play Policy Implementation Group. If the Bill becomes an Act of Parliament the knock on effect will make a huge difference to campaigns to preserve or improve play provision in our country, and not least to the lives of children in Wales.

¹ Quoted in Hansard 17 June 2004

No Play Strategy Verdict Yet

The Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy Implementation Group is awaiting a verdict on their proposals that were submitted in March. Minister for Children, Jane Hutt will be meeting with the Group's Chair Margaret Jervis in the near future.

Hang a Play Wales Cartoon on your Wall



Over the years loads of people have asked us about the fantastic cartoons we use in all our printed material.

They are produced by our friend Les Evans, who lives and scribbles in Swansea, and who financially supports the Felinfoel brewery (on an informal basis). He is a huge fan of the Beano and quotes the Bash Street Kids as his inspiration.

We recently commissioned a special poster. It is a 2004 version of the famous painting 'Children's Games' by Brueghel and celebrates children's play in all its forms. It is a must for all play provision – every new viewing shows something different.

You will see the whole poster on our website (www.playwales.org.uk/publications) and all the illustrations in this newsletter come from the poster.

To order a copy please contact Phillipa at our national office (029 20486050 or e-mail phil@playwales.org.uk). Each poster costs £4 plus £1 packing and postage.

Win a Poster

The first three readers who ring Phillipa with the full name and title of the original artist will win a poster.

PLAYWORK VALUES REVIEW AT www.playwales.org.uk

EDITORIAL

We welcome the amendment to the Children Bill to include play. If it becomes law, it will be the first legal recognition that play is essential to the well being of children.

This will have far-reaching implications for Local Authorities. When the Bill is passed the Welsh Assembly Government intends to use it to place a duty for statutory partners of Children and Young People's Frameworks to co-operate to improve the wellbeing of children – which is now recognised to include play. We will be exploring how we can work with the Framework Partnerships, to make sure that any resulting play provision will provide quality play opportunities for children within their local community.

Press and media attention has recently focussed on Pembrokeshire County Council's intentions regarding play areas. Our Senior Development Officer Tony Chilton took part in a BBC Wales Politics Show on the subject.

It seems that in Pembrokeshire the Local Authority has given local community councils and community groups responsibility for children's play areas. After some debate they have provided some match funding (£500 per annum) and they have agreed to cover the cost of insurance. But they expect local communities to raise the rest of the money to cover maintenance, improvements and inspections. We believe that this is not the only Local Authority in Wales taking a similar course of action, although others have

not received the same public scrutiny.

Here at Play Wales we would welcome the principle of local communities sharing responsibility for their local play areas. In this way we can provide for local children's needs much more sensitively and develop individual spaces that reflect our own communities. Children's play needs can often be met very simply if we think creatively.

BUT - and it is a very BIG BUT - local communities cannot provide quality play opportunities if they do not have adequate funds and access to expert advice and support. Raising money for play areas independently of a Local Authority is notoriously difficult, and play area maintenance, safety and improvement suffers - sometimes to the point where the meagre provision that already exists is forced to shut. This is in no-one's interest, least of all the children whose wellbeing we are seeking to safeguard.

Significantly, the impending legislation will help ensure that such developments are not undertaken as cost limitation measures, but in a manner that cultivates children-friendly communities.

Mike Greenaway
Director

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Play Wales meets the Inspectors

As part of our ongoing work with the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (CSIW) Play Wales' Development Officers, Tony Chilton and Marianne Mannello spent a June day in Llandrindod Wells with Senior Inspectors from across Wales. They gave a presentation that focused on play and playwork in staffed play provision, and emphasised the importance of "freely chosen and self-directed" play behaviour.

A number of mutual concerns were discussed with regard to issues such as playing with the elements (particularly fire) and

risk assessment issues, and very young children being allowed to come and go when attending open access play provision.

It was generally agreed that open access and other staffed play provision needed a more consistent responsive inspection approach taking into account the characteristics of local schemes.

Jackie Evans from the CSIW national office in Nantgarw, said "After lunch, the group spent time having an open and frank discussion on areas of joint interest, and everyone felt that it had been of benefit to both sides to have spent the time together."

Play for Wales

is published by Play Wales three times a year. All correspondence and enquiries should be addressed to the Editor at :
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Registered Charity No. 1068926

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

Cartoon illustrations by Les Evans

Children's Curfew near Caerphilly

On 18 June Gwent Police put into effect one of the first dispersal notices under the Antisocial Behaviour Act in Wales – it will last for two months. In Rhymney they will be able to disperse groups of more than two unsupervised people under the age of sixteen between the hours of 9pm and 6am, and force them to go home. Their stated aim is to reduce anti-social behaviour. We know that Councillors in Presteigne, Powys, have been considering taking similar steps in their area. Unfortunately this measure confirms the worst fears of many children's and young people's organisations who lobbied against the Antisocial Behaviour Bill.

Police are using Section 30 of the Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003 and have the support of some Caerphilly County Borough Councillors. One of whom has conducted a survey of adults who identified the "anti-social" behaviour of gangs as a cause for concern. Apart from this we know of no official community consultation or one that included children and young people.

However, we do know of consultation work within Pontllynn Family Centre, where young people made a video that was used in an HTV "On the Edge" programme on Anti Social Behaviour Orders. They saw ASBOs as age-discrimination because adult behaviour can be even more "anti-social" than that of young people, particularly when fuelled by alcohol. They thought all young people were being tarred with the same brush; that there was a possibility that any "anti-social" behaviour would simply happen earlier in the day; and that "curfews" would severely curtail children and young people's time and space to play. According to Leah Savory who works at the Centre, the general consensus among the children and young people is that ASBOs are "mad".

Part of the problem in Rhymney appears to arise from a misunderstanding due to lack of communication. The only information about the dispersal notice offered to many local people has been in newspaper reports, which have sensationalised the issue. In fact

the notice applies to groups of people under the age of 16 who take part in persistent "anti-social" behaviour, or who "intimidate, harass, alarm or distress" members of the public because of their behaviour or presence. The dispersal notice covers discrete areas of the town. But the immediate effect has been to drive all children and young people off the streets

The South Wales Echo of Monday 21 June reports Rhymney's streets as being deserted after 9pm, and quotes local people who question the necessity for this. One woman said: "The police know who the trouble-makers are, but all the other children have to suffer by being kept indoors on summer nights." Another member of the public said, "The problems that we have had are very localised, and it's odd that the solution is to shut down the whole town. There have been complaints from some residents, but most people have not had any trouble."

One glimmer of good news in England is that a teenager in East Sussex has given the civil rights group Liberty permission to seek an injunction against the police, on the grounds that ASBOs contravene the European Convention on Human Rights. Liberty is prepared to take the case to the European Court. The Northern Ireland Children's Commissioner has also taken up the cause.



OBITUARY

It is with great sadness that we record the death of our friend, Miskey Sandison. Miskey was the inspiration for many projects involving children, families and communities, most recently in Caerphilly.

Her no-nonsense approach, coupled with baskets of cake and cookies, ensured that she broke through the barriers of even the most bureaucratic of meetings. She was a tireless campaigner for children and for their right to play. She recognised fully the importance of play supporting learning and was eagerly anticipating the arrival of the Foundation Phase in Welsh education.

There are many of us who will miss Miskey and her enthusiasm, commitment and drive. She was an absolute inspiration to work with and know, and her legacy lives on in the many projects she established and supported.

Michelle Jones
Caerphilly Creative
Play Project

Marianne Mannello
Play Wales

A Jump Forward for Playwork Training in Wales

In the future all playworkers, even those working on temporary playschemes, will have to qualify to at least Level Two of the National Occupational Standards for Playwork.

Although this stipulation is yet to be put in place, this training will mean that playscheme providers can meet The Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales standards for play provision, and is meant to ensure quality playwork across Wales.

Temporary playworkers will have to complete Level Two Induction training that qualifies them for a year (they can renew for a few years running). This will help solve the problem of recruiting qualified staff for playschemes to meet the CSIW Standards, and is aimed at people who will only practise playwork for a few years e.g. students.

Until recently there was no Level Two Induction specific to Wales that took into account the implications of the Welsh Assembly Play Policy and the Play Wales quality assurance tool, THE FIRST CLAIM. However, Dynamix, the training co-operative from Swansea, have created a course that was endorsed in May, that is based on everything that makes playwork in Wales unique.

Contact Dynamix on 01792 466231 or visit www.dynamix.ltd.uk

Trustees for Play Wales

If you would like an opportunity to contribute to our work, Play Wales has recently amended its constitution and is now seeking to appoint additional Trustees. If you are interested, and feel you can offer expertise and commitment to this voluntary post (for which expenses are paid) please contact us for an application pack.

Here is a huge public thank you to Doug Cole, Play Development Officer at Cardiff County Council, who has resigned from the Board of Play Wales. He, and other Board members, saw Play Wales safely through some nail-biting times, and he has helped us set up a range of innovative and exciting projects. His knowledge, experience, and commitment to children's play have been invaluable to us.

Principles for Playworkers

In the last issue of Play for Wales we reported on the UK-wide review of the 'values and assumptions' on which playwork and its training is based. Play Wales was given additional short term funding to undertake the work. At the time we anticipated that the review would be completed by May (to fit in with funding deadlines) but it soon became clear that playworkers wanted longer consultation time, and that this highly important work could not be rushed.

The project began with a growing awareness that the current playwork 'values and assumptions', on which we base our practice, are being outgrown. The national training body SPRITO (now SkillsActive), proposed a review some time ago, but it was felt that playworkers themselves, rather than the national training organisation, should create their own set of values or principles. At this time it was suggested by some playworkers that Play Wales could lead on the process because of our work on playwork practice and our FIRST CLAIM publications.

In Autumn 2003 Play Wales had the opportunity to bid for additional funding to undertake a review. We consulted with all the other major organisations that had an interest, who agreed to contribute to the review process.

Initially Bob Hughes (author of A Playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types, THE FIRST CLAIM, Evolutionary Playwork ... and other titles) was employed by Play Wales to review the existing Values and Assumptions and to produce a starting point for consultation. He asked two other consultants to join him. The group produced a set of thought-provoking documents mapping a history of playwork in Britain, and putting forward a rationale for a set of principles that describe play, and the purpose of playwork, in the 21st Century. This work prioritises children's freely chosen self-directed play, making the management of play provision and recognition of adult social agendas a more secondary function of playwork. It is posted on the Play Wales website on the Values Phase One pages.

During the process it was decided that the title 'Principles' gave a better sense of being a first base from which playworkers could work.

Earlier this year, playworkers were invited to respond to the first draft of the new principles in Phase One of the UK consultation. Over seventy people, including groups and organisations, responded either through Play Wales' website, or in hard copy. The majority of respondents asked for more accessible language and agreed that children's play should be at the centre of playwork. There was also a plea for longer consultation time.

A Scrutiny Group of practising playworkers, playwork trainers and play development officers representing UK-wide playwork, was recruited to consider the responses to



the consultation. Their role is to make professional judgments on consultation responses and ensure that the process is as transparent as possible. They met in Cardiff in May, and made some significant amendments to the first draft.

Phase Two of the consultation has now begun and will run until 10 September 2004. Please take the opportunity to get involved by commenting on the latest draft published below. Comments can be made by visiting the Play Wales website or

contacting us for a hard copy of the consultation documents.

For further information or to take part in the consultation, please visit www.playwales.org.uk or www.chwaraecymru.org.uk or ring Gill Evans at Play Wales 029 2048 6050

Play Wales, and the Scrutiny Group who are taking the review of Playwork Principles forward, would like to thank all those who have taken part in the consultation process so far.

Draft Two of the Playwork Principles

Play is one of the fundamental processes which sustains life, and therefore should be a right. All children need to play.

Play is a biological and psychological necessity for the healthy development of the individual and so the survival of our species.

Play is the expression of a behaviour that is freely chosen, personally directed and internally motivated. That is, children determine and control the content and the intent of their play.

The play process is paramount and has overriding importance over adult, social and other agendas.

The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process.

The role of the playworker is to support children in the creation of a setting in which they can explore and nurture their own emotions, identity and their environment, as well as their common past and future.

The playworker's response to children playing is based on a sound knowledge and understanding of play.

Any playworker intervention in play is to enable children to extend the types of play they engage in, and to avoid immediate and serious harm to themselves and others.

These are over-arching principles that inform the development of any play policy, playwork training and play provision.

It is official - play is the best form of exercise for children.

Professor Roger Mackett of the Centre for Transport Studies at University College London, has recently published 'Making Children's Lives More Active' a study of the way school aged children use energy in their every day life. It confirms that although children use the most energy in sports and PE lessons, they get the most prolonged and valuable physical exercise when playing outdoors.

There has been a huge rise in the numbers of overweight and unfit children within our borders. According to recent research by the World Health Organisation - in Wales 23% of boys and 17% of girls are obese. But we don't need University research to tell us what we can see with our own eyes. Mr Gerwyn Williams, Head Teacher at Ysgol Gwaelod y Garth in the Taff Valley, has witnessed a fall in fitness levels among his pupils over a number of years. He says, "Children used to be far fitter when they spent more time playing out".

It has been suggested that we have reached a "tipping point", where a whole range of trends have culminated in large numbers of children becoming unfit to the state where their lives are likely to be cut short through illness. The list is all too familiar and includes: increased car use; a heightened (although largely unfounded) fear of "stranger danger" causing parents prevent their children from playing out; greater use of computers and electronic games; and a decrease in adequate play space.

In 2002 the Children's Play Council (the national organisation for children's play in England) conducted an analysis of children and young people's responses to over a hundred consultations on free-time and out-of-school provision. The overwhelming request was for more opportunities for physical activity and outdoor play. Yet statistics suggest that only 60% of children have regular opportunities to play out.

"Letting children go out to play is one of the best things that parents can do for their children's health," says Professor Mackett.

We welcome Professor Mackett's

Healthy Children Play



research because it adds weight to the recommendations of the Assembly's Play Policy Implementation Group, and supports the case for greater investment in play provision. This could include: streets with restricted car use (Home Zones); improved public play areas: the protection of pockets of land where children play: more opportunities for outdoor play at after-school clubs; every child having access to play-friendly school grounds; and public awareness campaigns encouraging parents to support children to play out after school.

The Commons Select Committee on Health has called for more organised physical activity to take place in schools, but the new study suggests that providing more time for freely chosen, self-directed play might be equally effective. Certainly school playtimes and breaks are now proven to have a great value in terms of child health. It brings into question the withdrawal of children's break time as a punishment, it supports the case for encouraging children to play out whatever the weather, and for providing a range of opportunities for physical play within school grounds.

It is often a challenge to make the case for investment in play provision when we are so often required to prove tangible outcomes. The results of this research will be a valuable aid.

The conclusions of Professor Mackett's research are as follows:

- Walking and playing provide children with more physical activity than most other activities.
- Encouraging children to be out of the house will increase their physical activity.
- Walking to and from school can be better for children than two hours a week of PE and games lessons.
- Reducing the length of school break times will reduce children's quantity of physical activity.
- Children who walk to activities are more active when they arrive than those who go by car.
- The shift from unstructured to structured out-of-school activities encourages car use.
- The main reason children travel by car is to accompany their parents on trips.

For a copy of the research please send us a stamped addressed envelope or e-mail info@playwales.org.uk and for further information about this research please contact Professor Roger Mackett, Centre for Transport Studies, University College London. Telephone 020 7679 1554 or e-mail rlm@transport.ucl.ac.uk

The Children's Play Council has produced a briefing sheet "Children's Exercise and Play", that includes information from Professor Mackett's study. Contact the Children's Play Council on 020 7843 6304

Adventure in Nuremburg

Inge Trepte and Kerstin Laue from Nuremburg came to the Spirit of Adventure Play Conference to give a German perspective of working on adventure playgrounds – known as Bauspielplätze or Baui. This account of their work is taken from their presentation and workshop.

“With us children can find a place where they can be children, where their dignity is respected, where nature can be experienced, and where they can find people who will accompany them on their way through life and foster their development.”

Urban Nuremburg (population 494,000 – twice the size of Swansea) has seven adventure playgrounds that have been established for over thirty years. These are owned and staffed by the City Council, but each is run by a local committee in order to meet local needs. They are open to all children aged from six to fourteen, who can access the facility free of charge outside of school hours (the school day usually finishes at lunchtime). Each playground has two full time permanent playwork staff, as well as a student on placement, volunteers and a caretaker.

“If there weren’t any adventure playgrounds one would have to invent them! Where else can children have such play, nature, social life and learning experiences in the city? ... one can climb trees, be silly, chat or simply do nothing.”

The main goal is to give children room to grow and participate. There is a clear sense that time spent at the Bauspielplatz is the child’s own leisure time, and the workers have a nurturing role rather than imposing their own ideas. There is always a pot of coffee on the stove for parents and carers who drop by for informal support or to lend a hand – this is very much a community and family focussed initiative.

Each playground is a fenced area of 3,000 square metres where children can play, and there is access to timber, firewood, water, bricks etc. There is a “game house” with a kitchen, an office, a workshop, a “rough-house,” and snuggle rooms. Children “co-design” the play area and use tools and different materials to make their own dens and structures. There is space to plant crops and rear animals. So the children gain the satisfaction of food production at first hand.

The vegetables and chickens at the playground where Inge works provide ingredients for the meals the workers and children prepare and eat together. This is all part of the social experience that some children often miss in their everyday life. It is clear that the children really value this time. Many have no access to a cultivated garden and are fed on processed food that bears no relation to its origin – so tending plants and animals and cooking with the results is a new experience. When a hen grows old and stops laying, a local butcher (who spent his childhood at the Bauspielplatz) comes to the playground to kill it. The children can watch and join in with plucking the bird and preparing it for



Everyone eats together

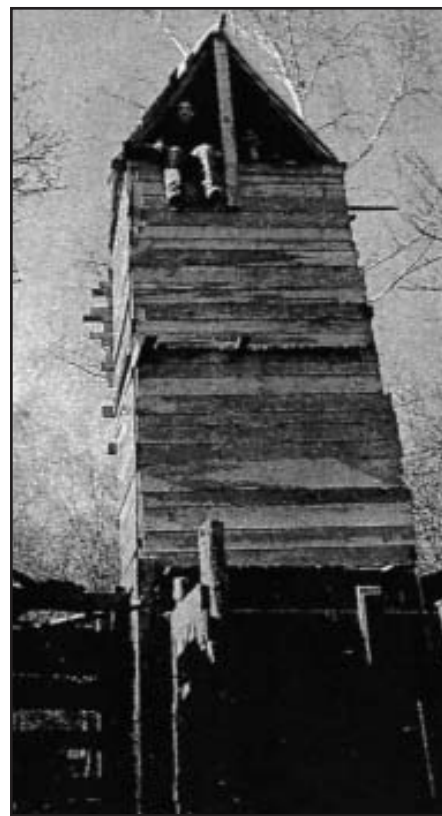


Cooking bread twists over the fire

the pot if they wish. Some of them choose not to eat the chicken soup!

The thorny issue of health and safety regarding children and fires rarely arises. Any fire always has a bucket of water or sand next to it so that it can be put out quickly. Accidents are very few and far between because the children are soon familiar with the risks involved – no child wishes to be burnt. The prevailing attitude from both parents and officials is that when accidents happen, it is simply part of learning and growing up. Free access to fire, water, tools and materials is the norm, and in Kerstin’s video of an evening at the Bauspielplatz a group of boys was playing football near an unsupervised fire. It was clear that they were very aware of their position and carefully avoided kicking the ball in the wrong direction. They were respected for their own risk assessment capabilities.

There is almost no official interference in the way that playgrounds are run (no registration or inspection regime) because in Germany playworkers qualify to degree level before they can practice. As part of their training they complete a 12-month placement in some kind of play provision, and so come to the job with long term practical experience. They are respected as well-qualified experts in children’s experiential learning – few would question their judgment. Their work is supported by legislation that says that “young people should



On the lookout

be fostered in their individual and social development, and that a positive quality of life, as well as a child and family-friendly environment, should be sustained or created”.

Every year there is a great Baui festival where all the adventure playgrounds in the city join together to celebrate their work. The children can choose to contribute in a range of arts activities – creative writing, music, theatre, set building and painting – that culminate in a public performance in one of Nuremburg’s parks.

Another aspect of their work is the development of links with social workers and other child welfare professionals so as to ensure the wellbeing of some of the children who attend. However, the playworkers’ relationship with children and their families – the trust they have built between them – is paramount, and they work very discretely and sensitively with other agencies so as not to betray this.

Over thirty years the adventure playgrounds in Nuremburg have gradually gained a great deal of respect from official organisations, and from the community, for the work they accomplish with children and young people. Let’s hope that the adventure playgrounds currently being developed in Wales will share the same esteem within their own communities.

Inge and Kerstin are keen to make links with adventure playgrounds in Wales. You can e-mail them at team@bau-online.de

Families and Play

The Children's Society and the Children's Play Council (the national organisation for children's play in England) co-ordinate a UK-wide day of Play Day events on the first Wednesday in August every year. The theme for this year's Play Day is Families at Play, and it takes place on 4 August. If you would like to organise a play day event please visit www.playday.org.uk for further information.

In the meantime Play Wales is working together with Fforum Magu Plant (the Welsh umbrella body for parenting organisations) and the National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries in Wales, to provide guidance for parents on how best to support their children's play. We are also sending press releases to Welsh newspapers and TV stations.

It seems the latest craze in television programmes (following the paint-your-shed-purple, and turn-your-bedroom-into-Austin-Powers'-boudoir crazes) is to film parents struggling with their children's behaviour. Sometimes it is really hard not to bounce up and down on the sofa remonstrating "Just let them play!" Children/parent relationships are obviously in the public gaze at the moment, and we hope that pointers towards play friendly parenting will help to improve family life and the health and happiness of children in Wales.

As experienced playworkers and parents (we have eighteen children and eleven grand-children between us) we at Play Wales hope that this will help to spread the word about healthy play opportunities. Please feel free to pass it on.

Play Power for Parents Children play by instinct.

If they have opportunities to play from a very early age they are likely to be happier, healthier and more fulfilled. Through play, we as parents and carers can create a stronger bond with our children; we can help them get ready to cope with the society we live in; and we can help them learn about themselves and the world around them.

To help a healthy child to grow we need to:

- o give access to indoor or outdoor space where our children can explore their own ideas. Children love to be outdoors, and outdoor play helps them keep fit.
- o give our children time to play. Organised activities and electronic games have their benefits, but our children will be healthier if they have plenty of time for play.
- o allow our children to take on physical challenges like walking along and jumping off walls, and climbing trees.
- o encourage them to wear clothes that they can move around in easily, and can get damaged or dirty as they play.
- o think twice about mess. What is more important, our children's healthy development, or the way our house/garden looks while they are playing?
- o provide raw materials so our children can adapt them as they wish. Old sheets, string, water, sand, gravel, sticks, cushions, paper, sticky tape, crayons, paint, or cardboard boxes are examples of items that provide great play value because children can use their imagination to turn them into anything they want.
- o wait to be invited to join in, and let the children decide how, what and why they play. If we haven't been invited, we need to take an interest in what they are doing by asking questions and giving positive comments later.
- o show our children how to deal with traffic, weigh up strangers, and develop strategies to cope with dangerous situations, so that when they reach an age when they could play out, they are able to do so confidently.
- o remember what we liked doing when we were children. Our childhood play experiences are valuable – think of ways to share them.

PROBABLY THE LARGEST EVER CHILDREN'S PLAY SURVEY

Play Wales, alongside North Wales Play & Playing Fields Association and the County Councils of Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham, Gwynedd and Conwy, is conducting what may be the largest children's play survey ever carried out in the U.K. If it works well in North Wales, it is hoped to extend the survey to the rest of the country.

The aim is to gather the views of children and identify their play habits when they are not in school. Detailed surveys for both children and parents will be sent to schools throughout the region, providing an opportunity for them to express their views about local play provision. The survey will help in identifying where children play most regularly and what their views are in relation to future provision. The results of the study, once collated, will assist each County Council in determining future strategies concerning children's play opportunities in their area.

Tony Chilton, our Senior Development Officer, who initiated the exercise, says:

"This is a really exciting and interesting study which should prove of enormous benefit to all those who have a responsibility for planning and managing community play provision. An exercise of such depth will hopefully provide authoritative evidence of children's play behaviour in the areas where they live. In addition it should influence our approach to the way we deliver out-of-school services to children and young people."

It is anticipated that the survey will involve over 10, 000 children of school age throughout North Wales. Each county will be able to establish a profile for their own area in addition to creating a regional perspective which could lead to other areas throughout Wales following suit.

The Welsh Assembly Government was the first administration in Europe with a discrete policy for children's play - it follows that each Local Authority should adopt a local strategy. He states,

"I am aware that a number of authorities in North Wales are taking a very active and positive approach to play provision. Some,

such as Flintshire, Denbighshire, Wrexham and Conwy, are establishing a strategic view of play in relation to other initiatives such as the Community Strategy. This is to be wholeheartedly welcomed but much more needs to be done. Hopefully, this survey will assist greatly in informing future policies."

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Matt Hayes - 01745 583792

Gwynedd County Council
Bethan Ffloyd-Jukes - 01248 679452

EVENTS

Wild and Away - National Environmental Playwork Conference

23 - 25 July 2004, Gloucestershire

An under-canvas conference with keynote speakers Robin Moore (the importance of playing with nature for healthy child development) and Julian Richter (creating imaginative outdoor spaces for children's play). Contact Rebecca Dobson at the University of Gloucester 01242 532 949 or visit www.playwork.co.uk/wildaboutplay

National Playday

4 August 2004

Visit www.playday.org.uk for further information

The Beauty of Play

10 - 12 September 2004, Staffordshire

Another under-canvas conference on play and playwork including activities and story-telling.

Telephone Perry Else 0114 255 2432 or e-mail info.ludemos@virgin.net

Child in the City

20 - 22 October 2004, London

A European conference on improving life for urban children
Contact the Child in the City Foundation at svanbeek@europoint-bv.com
or visit www.europoint-bv.com

Apologies to Marc Armitage of Play People, who wrote an article about play in Sweden for our last issue. We published the wrong e-mail address. You can contact him at marc.armitage@playpeople.karoo.co.uk

Play People provide a play consultancy and research service.

FREE JOB Advertising Service

Don't miss out on the opportunity to spread the word about your vacancies at no charge. We advertise play jobs in Wales free on our website. The service aims to help organisations with little or no advertising budget, but it is open to any play provider.

"We found our out-reach worker by advertising through Play Wales, which is ironic since we had just spent a lot of money on advertising in a national newspaper," Janet Matthews Director of the National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries.

Don't forget to look for jobs at www.playwales.org.uk/jobs

Funding

Abbey's Charitable Trust

Abbey's Charitable Trust is offering donations of £500 - £2,500 to organisations that are committed to supporting disadvantaged people in local communities. Visit www.abbeynational.com

The Walter Guinness Charitable Trust

Among the Trust's priorities are children, communities/community, culture, disability, ecology, research and youth. Grants are usually in the region of £1,000 to £5,000. For further details telephone 01582 399505

Big Lottery Fund

The Big Lottery Fund is the body that is being created from the merger of the New Opportunities Fund and the Community Fund to distribute lottery money to good causes. The Wales consultation on how it should operate took place in early July.

The WCVA has produced a briefing paper covering the background to the Fund, the work, funding programmes, consultation events and key issues for the voluntary sector. Copies of the briefing are available from the Helpdesk on 0870 607 1666, email help@wcva.org.uk or can be downloaded from the WCVA website at www.wcva.org.uk/content/policy

Community Fund

Applications to the Community Fund in Wales are at their lowest level ever. Welsh voluntary organisations are being encouraged to apply. For further details telephone 01686 611700

Claiming Your Share - A Guide to External Funding for Parks and Green Space Community Groups

This publication gives advice on making applications and a list of funding and grant-giving bodies. It is a valuable one-stop resource for people wishing to improve/establish local parks and community outdoor space. Telephone 0118 946 9060 e-mail info@green-space.org.uk or visit www.green-space.org.uk

Publications

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act explained

A new Local Government Association publication provides a clear overview of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act. Get in on the Act: The Anti-Social Behaviour Act explained provides information about what the Act will mean and outlines the main implementation issues with key dates. It also provides details of other useful publications and websites. Copies can be purchased online at www.lga.gov.uk (publications section) or call LG Connect on 020 7664 3131

Can Play Will Play - disabled children and access to outdoor playgrounds

The National Playing Fields Association has recently published a report on the first part of its project to investigate the play needs of disabled children on unsupervised public playgrounds. Research was conducted by Alison John, who spoke on disability issues at Play Wales' Spirit of Adventure Play conference, and Rob Wheway.

The report discusses disabled children's freedom to play and their use of fixed play equipment. It also makes recommendations for making playgrounds more accessible. For further information please contact Don Earley on 024 7652 1122 or download the document by visiting www.playing-fields.com/content/playforchildren