

## A Historic Step for Play in Wales

**T**here was a buzz of excitement at the launch of the consultation on the recommendations of the Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy Implementation Group in the House of the Future at the Museum of Welsh Life in November 2004.

The leaves fell and a group of children played in the garden, as Jane Hutt, Minister for Children, members of the Play Policy Implementation Group, Play Development Officers from around Wales and members of the Play Wales team, celebrated the start of the consultation.

Jane Hutt said "The Assembly has long recognised that play is a vital element in children's development ... Now we must move on from principles to implementation."

She has committed her department to publish findings of the consultation in April 2005. These will contribute to a national play strategy for Wales – the first in the UK. Assembly Members discussed the recommendations in a plenary session on the same day. The reaction was positive, with Members commending the document as being an accessible and common sense contribution towards Wales becoming a more child friendly country. The consultation was greeted with goodwill, and it looks as if the recommendations may have all party support.

Catherine Thomas AM said, "I believe that it is crucial that more children have real opportunities to play and are encouraged to do so, and that their voices are heard on how they want to play. For me, this is a social justice issue."

Jeff Cuthbert AM said, "We must tackle the 'no ball games' ethos with sympathy and determination ... The Implementation Group has made exciting recommendations, which will undoubtedly help to change the landscape of play opportunities for children in Wales."

Jocelyn Davies AM said "(These recommendations) must not remain theoretical, but deserve to be translated into reality to demonstrate that children and their needs are respected in our society."



### One day Wales will be a country where we recognise and provide for every child's play needs.

The recommendations of the Play Policy Implementation Group are based on the Assembly's Play Policy (published in 2002), which makes a positive commitment to honour children's play needs in every aspect of their lives. The aim of the Group was to set a clear vision on the way forward and to look at practical ways in which to provide the best opportunities for children and young people. They took a holistic approach and worked together with all the Assembly departments whose work might have an impact on children and young people's play. Indeed one of the recommendations asks that children and young people's play needs be considered in the Assembly Policy Integration Tool.

Play Wales and Children in Wales have been closely involved in the work that has lead up to this consultation, and together put forward the recommendations of the Group to the Assembly. Mike Greenaway, Director of Play Wales, is proud and optimistic: "This is fantastic. Its historical significance cannot be underestimated. It is difficult to envisage anyone disagreeing with the recommendations, which are a triumph for good common sense."

**The consultation deadline is 5 January 2005, and you can access the document at <http://www.wales.gov.uk/subchildren/toc-e.htm#>**

### Recommendations

The key recommendation calls on the Welsh Assembly Government to place a statutory duty on all local authorities to provide for children's play needs to meet national minimum standards, which will make play provision an issue of entitlement rather than discretion. This recommendation links to the new Children Act, which makes provision for the Assembly to develop new statutory guidance on partnership working to improve the wellbeing of children.

#### Other recommendations cover:

- The improvement of school grounds to provide rich play environments for children;
- Training for school staff, both teaching and non-teaching, to enable them to recognise and facilitate children's play needs;
- The development of action research to inform the issue of play deprivation and its consequences;
- The development of concise guidance that will enable the development of community build play areas;
- The preservation from development of pockets of land and areas of open space, wasteland and woodland where children and young people play.

# EDITORIAL

**This was a real sense of achievement at the launch of the consultation on a national play strategy for our country, and like many of my colleagues I am pleased and proud to have been part of the work that has brought us to this point.**

On the day after the launch, everyone who reads the Western Mail will have seen for the first time the entire front page of a national newspaper devoted to positive news on children's play and play provision, as well as an inside page and the Comment section given over to issues raised by the recommendations. We should not underestimate the historical significance of the events we are witnessing and the opportunity we are being given on behalf of the children and young people of Wales.

We are extraordinarily lucky to have an Assembly that is prepared to break new ground to provide for the play needs of children and young people. Colleagues in other UK countries are working hard to catch up to our position, but this is no time to become complacent. We all need to give this opportunity its due, and respond to the consultation constructively. People involved in play provision aren't often consulted on their own area of expertise, so we must make every word count on behalf of the children we provide for.

It is not only our professions who are being consulted, the Police Service, Primary and Secondary Schools, Planning Departments and many more have also been sent the recommendations for consultation. A play centred and child centred response

from the play sector is crucial.

As Chair of the Play Policy Implementation Group I can vouch that we tried hard to cover every aspect of all children and young people's needs for improved or preserved access to play opportunities, but there may be some aspects that have been overlooked – please point out the gaps if this is the case. Also, the recommendations have been praised as being accessible and common sense, however, there may be practical issues that will affect their implementation, for instance, work force or funding. Likewise, it is our duty to support the aspirational aspects of the recommendations and to give our views on the ways in which they can become a reality. The ball is in our court, let's not knock it backwards into the crowd.

At Play Wales we hope that all our responses to the consultation will help the Assembly to action plan for the future. It was impossible to invite every child, young person, playworker or play provider in the country to sit on the Play Policy Implementation Group – this is the opportunity for all of us to get involved and have our say.

## **Margaret Jervis, MBE DL**

Chair, Play Wales Board of Trustees, and Chair of the Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy Implementation Group.

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## BIG LOTTERY CONSULTATION - what kinds of projects should the Big Lottery fund in Wales?

**One of the key issues in implementing the recommendations of the Play Policy Implementation Group will be funding.**

It is lucky that at the same time as the Welsh Assembly Government is consulting on extending and improving provision for children and young people's play, the Big Lottery is starting phase two of the consultation on its key priorities and outcomes for its first set of funding

programmes in Wales.

The part of the consultation where we feel play providers can have the most influence is Question Two, "How can we design programmes that cut across several outcomes and priorities ..." If we look at the document more closely, provision for children and young people's play needs clearly cuts across many of them, and this is an opportunity to develop a unique a coherent programme designed to meet the

play needs of the children of Wales.

We have already had a preliminary conversation with the Big Lottery, and as part of the response process, have been invited to draw together a meeting of representatives of children's play providers and playworkers with Big Lottery representatives.

We will shortly publish our own response to the consultation. If you would like a copy please contact Gill Evans at our national office or visit the Play Wales website news page.

**Deadline Friday 18 March 2005**

**[www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/consultation/wales](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/consultation/wales) Big Advice Line 0845 410 2030**

## Play for Wales

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*Cartoon illustrations by Les Evans*

# An Evening with the Prime Minister

**T**wo Play Wales trustees, our Director, and Senior Development Officer were invited to meet Tony Blair at 10 Downing Street earlier this Autumn.

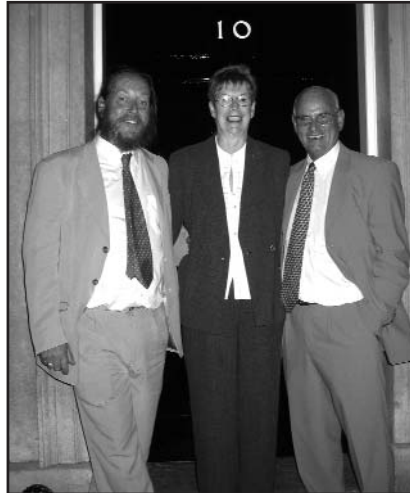
Margaret Jervis, Catriona Williams, Mike Greenaway and Tony Chilton attended a reception to celebrate the work of those delivering childcare services.

The reception took place on the eve of the launch of the Government's extended schools initiative. This promotes the use of schools as out-of-school childcare centres, and shares some similarities with the Welsh Assembly Government plans for Community Schools. The Government hopes to provide a "flexible, personalised childcare package" for parents who are part of the workforce, and contribute to a more stable work/life balance.

## A Work/Life Balance for Children

When the opportunity arose to speak to the Prime Minister our intrepid officers quizzed him on the kinds of activities that he enjoyed in his free time as a boy. Apparently he spent time with his friends, made rope swings, built dens, made fires, played in streams, and spent very little free time under the supervision of adults. It was only later that he moved on to the challenges of playing in a band.

Mike and Tony asked him to think about his own experience in terms of a work/life balance for today's children. They pointed out that if children spend a potential fifty hours a week on school premises they are extremely unlikely to be able to experience, and benefit from, the same kind of healthy independent play that he did. Apparently he had never considered this, and asked Mike to write him a letter outlining our concerns.



*Mike Greenaway, Margaret Greenaway, & Tony Chilton at No.10*

The free time that children spend once formal education has finished for the day is vital to them. It is their time. They must have access to quality play opportunities (rather than adult led activities) either through playing out independently or by having access to play provision that gives them a huge range of choices based on their own developmental play needs, and puts their right to relaxation, challenge and freedom first. Where children's free time is spent within the school premises there is the likelihood that the adult dominated educational agenda seeps in simply because of the atmosphere and surroundings in which it takes place.

## The Elusive £200 Million

**I**n 2001 the Labour party made an election promise to earmark £200 million for children's play for the next round of the New Opportunities Fund, and in 2002, under the chairmanship of Frank Dobson, the DCMS conducted a UK-wide review of children's play provision.

They then reported their findings in their publication *Getting Serious About Play*. Many people were very hopeful about this initiative, which appeared to show that the UK Government was at last paying attention to children's play needs.

Over recent months it has come to light that £200m is no longer set aside for play, but will come from the "general pot" of the Big Lottery Fund. Apparently the DCMS expect that the money will still be spent on play over time, but they have given no indication as to how it will be guaranteed or monitored.

Estelle Morris, Minister for the Arts, has said "We are reforming the Lottery to make it more responsive ... and ... flexible ... there will no longer be pots of money ring-fenced by Government for particular activities but it will consider applications against high level outcomes." She gave an assurance that there will be a Government response to *Getting Serious About Play* in due course.

In Wales the situation is slightly different, the Welsh Assembly Government have already made a commitment to children's play and play provision in their national Play Policy and are working towards a play strategy. They have also put forward their own priorities for Big Lottery funding.

**If you wish to find out more please contact the Wales office of the Big Lottery Fund on:**

Telephone: 01686 611700

Minicom: 01686 610205

Email: [enquiries.wales@biglotteryfund.org.uk](mailto:enquiries.wales@biglotteryfund.org.uk)



## Sticking At It

**C**hildren in the Trowbridge area of Cardiff recently made funders think twice when they staged a protest against their play provision being closed.

The Pod, a converted shipping container placed on a piece of public ground in the middle of a large estate east of the city, has proved a huge success with local children and families. There are few examples of this kind of local play provision in Wales, and The Pod has had many visitors who were impressed at how easy it is to provide quality staffed play opportunities within a restricted budget.

The Pod is run by playworkers from Cardiff Children's Play Services two evenings a week during term time and every week day during the holidays, and it is funded through a local Healthy Living Project. Children aged four to eleven take part in all kinds of play facilitated by the playworkers and based around the container – from making fires and cooking on them, to water play and building dens. Almost all of the play takes place outside, and the Pod provides wet weather gear so that rain never puts a dampener on the day.

A local Mum told the South Wales Echo, "There are so many children who enjoy it. There are about fifty who go down there and there is nothing else for them around here."

The children took radical action when trial funds ran out and removal men appeared to take away the container. They stuck themselves to the roof of the Pod using sticky tape, and refused to budge. The Healthy Living Project was obliged to revise its budget and keep the play provision open, and the removal men went away empty handed.

The Councillor for Trowbridge and St Mellons said, "What the children did is fantastic – I just wish I had been there to see it."

**Contact Cardiff Children's Play Services on 029 2087 3944**

# Play Wales' Response to the

## The Recommendations of the Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy Implementation

**If you have not received a copy, and would like to take part in the consultation please visit [www.wales.gov.uk/subchildren/toc-e.htm#C](http://www.wales.gov.uk/subchildren/toc-e.htm#C) or contact Elinor Jones in the Children and Families Division on 029 2080 1119.**

Play Wales was closely involved with the work of the Play Policy Implementation Group, and in the development of the Recommendations. However, since the work was completed there has been time to take account of issues that have been inadvertently overlooked, as well as the development of new initiatives that have a bearing on the Recommendations. So we have set out below the issues that you might wish to consider in your own response. Where a recommendation has been omitted it is because we have no further information to add other than to encourage you to make a very positive reply.

We strongly recommend that you read the text that accompanies the recommendations in the consultation document (which is accessible, informative and sets the Recommendations in context) before making your own response.

### **Recommendation 1 -**

**the Welsh Assembly Government place a statutory duty upon local authorities to provide for children's play needs to meet national minimum standards.**

Provision for children's play needs should be direct and indirect. This recommendation should explicitly identify the complementary role of communities and the voluntary sector in the delivery of play provision and the potential role of the local authority in enabling this.

We recommend that the Assembly convene a "task and finish" group to consider recommendations on minimum standards across all aspects of play provision.

The Children Bill requirements with respect to children's wellbeing should be reinforced by the Assembly and incorporated in the Assembly Play Strategy.

Sustainability is a critical issue for both staffed and unstaffed play provision, and to the indirect provision that contributes to capacity building and maintenance of direct provision. Increased access to longterm sustainable funding is fundamental to the success of these recommendations.

### **Recommendation 2 -**

**the Welsh Assembly Government commit itself to supporting the transformation of those areas of school grounds not dedicated to sports activities, by landscaping and planting, to create compensatory natural spaces that provide children with a rich play environment.**

Children should have free access to these areas during their break times within the school day. Also specific guidance should be developed to address the issues arising from the use of school



*The Minister turns rope at the consultation launch*

grounds for child-led play opportunities (which can be playwork supported) during out of school hours.

Well-considered and planned outside space can contribute to and enhance the overall opportunity to learn.

### **Recommendation 3 -**

**the Welsh Assembly Government support the development of training for school staff, teaching and non-teaching, to better enable them to recognise and understand the value of play as children's self directed learning, and how they as adults might better facilitate that play in school play time.**

This should incorporate content that addresses the distinct difference between learning through play and teaching through play. Play within school settings should be included within Estyn's inspection remit. It follows that Estyn's inspectors would be appropriately trained and knowledgeable with respect to children's play and play provision.

### **Recommendation 4 -**

**the Welsh Assembly Government ensures that all teacher training courses for new teachers and nursery staff in Wales, include content that addresses the most recent developments in the understanding of children's play as children's self-directed learning and how playwork facilitates that process.**

This should incorporate content that addresses the distinct difference between learning through play and teaching through play.

### **Recommendation 5 -**

**the Welsh Assembly Government ensures that in future it will direct resources and initiatives, to take account of the fundamental significance of play in children's and young people's healthy development and lifestyle.**

The National Service Framework recognises that play opportunities promote positive mental health and psychological well being. Current initiatives should recognise the contribution of play towards their respective objectives,

particularly in light of emerging knowledge of play, and the principle statements regarding children's play as highlighted in Welsh Assembly Governments' play policy

### **Recommendation 6 -**

**the Welsh Assembly Government, remain cognisant of features of play deprivation when considering the distribution of new lottery funds including the Young People's Fund.**

In light of the decision by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport not to dedicate £200 million UK New Opportunities Funding directly to play, the Assembly should provide a clear commitment to allocating BIG lottery funding specifically for children's play.

The time is right for BIG lottery transformational funding to be dedicated to children's play provision, to 'kick start' changes in children's play environments in Wales, provide substance to the Assembly Play Strategy, and reflect the Assembly's commitment to the Play Policy becoming a reality for the children of Wales.

### **Recommendation 7 -**

**the Welsh Assembly Government support the development of action research to inform the issue of play deprivation and its consequences upon the individual child and society in general.**

Multi-deprivation indices should include play deprivation, and any research conducted should establish mechanisms to measure the phenomenon.

### **Recommendation 8 -**

**the Welsh Assembly Government includes consideration of children and young people and their play needs in the Assembly Government Policy Integration Tool.**

The Assembly might provide guidance to local authorities regarding the development and use of a similar protocol at local level.

### **Recommendation 9 -**

**the Welsh Assembly Government require all Local Authorities and Framework Partnerships to take a lead role in the development of Local Play Policies and Strategies for policy implementation when considering the development of Community Strategy.**

As a component of the review of existing policies and structures, local authorities might be encouraged to consider the strategic benefits of placing the responsibility for fixed play provision, informal play space and staffed play provision under the direct responsibility of one lead department in order to facilitate the most effective strategic use of resources and expertise. Staff in this department should have officer responsibility at an appropriate level of seniority.

### **Recommendation 10 -**

**the Welsh Assembly Government clarify aspects of 'Extending Entitlement' so as to ensure that this initiative makes the**

# Assembly Play Consultation

Group have been circulated to hundreds of organisations as part of a consultation exercise.

**maximum possible contribution to meeting children's play needs.**

When Estyn inspects youth support services that include play provision, the inspection of the play element should be set against standards that reflect the discreet and distinct philosophy and processes of playwork rather than, as at present, those of education and youth work.

## **Recommendation 12 –**

that the Welsh Assembly Government ensures the development of Higher Education training and qualifications appropriate to the needs of those whose role combines playwork, early years work, community development and youth work.

This should include the development of a PGCE in Playwork

## **Recommendation 13 -**

the Welsh Assembly Government, in recognition of the increased parity of role, support the integration of Playwork pay and conditions into the Joint National Committee conditions of service and pay scales for Youth Work and Community Work.

This would mean that playworkers would be entitled to higher rates of pay in recognition of their level of expertise and importance in children's development.

## **Recommendation 14 -**

the Welsh Assembly Government supports this development to produce a new range of playwork training materials and courses to meet the needs of the playworker in the twenty first century.

NEWS - The national childcare organizations as a group (Cwllwm) have been successful in bidding for EQUAL European funding. The Play Wales element is for the production of playwork training materials.

## **Recommendation 15 -**

the Welsh Assembly Government develop concise guidance that will enable the development of a community build play area programme throughout Wales.

This proposal could form a very significant component of a transformational BIG lottery scheme.

## **Recommendation 16 -**

the Welsh Assembly Government ensure that Community Land Trusts (and others) have first refusal on any suitable public land

that becomes available for sale, in order that pockets and areas of open space, wasteland and woodland, particularly within urban areas, where children and young people already play, can be protected.

When such land is offered for sale, it should be offered at a cost that reflects the limited resources of such organisations, rather than at the 'market rate'.



*In the den at the launch - Olivia, Mali, Gwilym & Fern*

## **Recommendation 19 -**

the Welsh Assembly Government, pursue all avenues to ensure the development of an environment in which the balance between children's play needs and their need to experience risks, is not compromised by inappropriate use of litigation.

The Assembly should work with the UK Government to address the negative effects of the 'no win – no fee' compensation system on opportunities for children's play.

## **Recommendation 20 –**

that the Welsh Assembly Government revise The Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations to ensure that the Regulations do not militate against provision being made to meet children's developmental needs to learn how to manage risk.

The play policy would be better served if the Regulations referred to the responsibility of settings to provide opportunities for children to experience developmentally appropriate, beneficial risk taking. Also the minimum standards regarding outdoor space available for children's play should be reviewed and amended as a particular issue of importance.

## **Recommendation 22 –**

that the Welsh Assembly Government promote the use of traffic calming and Home Zones within existing and new developments to increase the use of residential roads for children's play

The 'Safer Routes to School' initiative should be expanded to include safer routes to areas where children can play, and 'safer areas near and around our houses'.

## **Recommendation 23 -**

the Welsh Assembly Government continue to stress the importance of local authorities working in partnership with voluntary organisations, and through them children within local communities.

The Assembly should take action to ensure that practice on the ground reflects Assembly guidance, particularly where there is an expectation that play interests be represented on a partnership. Such representation should be undertaken by personnel operating at a sufficient level of seniority to ensure that it is not tokenistic.

Furthermore, it would be helpful if the Assembly shared partnership plans so that they can be scrutinised to ensure most effective development. This will support the initiatives linked to play and play provision within the National Service Framework and other strategies.

## **Recommendation 24 -**

the Welsh Assembly Government publish a programme for implementation of the recommendations, identifying key milestones and a time frame against which they may be measured.

With respect to 'Play and children's rights', children in institutional settings including hospitals, young offenders institutions, children's homes, residential schools (state and private), and refuges, and children who are carers, should have the same access to play provision as all other children.

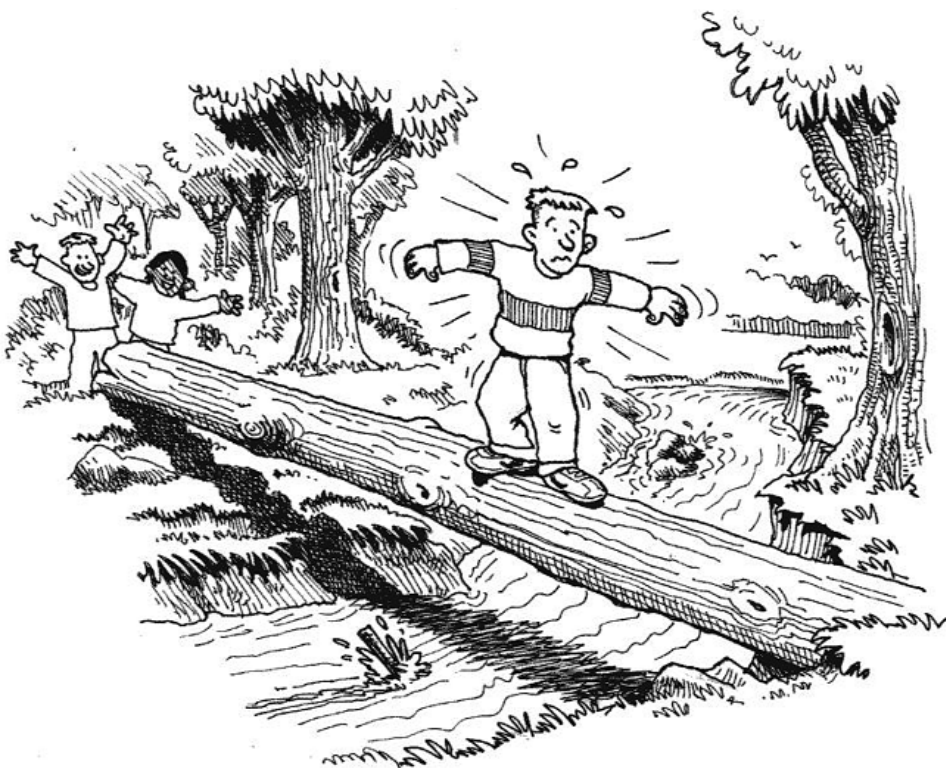
**In conclusion, Play Wales looks forward to the opportunity to work with the Assembly to develop a programme for implementation of the recommendations.**

**The Children's Commissioner's Office is consulting children through their e-mail consultation tool "backchat" in order to inform the Commissioner's response to the recommendations. Find more about how children can join backchat at [www.childcom.org.uk/english/backchat.html](http://www.childcom.org.uk/english/backchat.html) or contact [backchat@childcomwales.org.uk](mailto:backchat@childcomwales.org.uk)**

**This is a busy season, but please make some time to offer your own considered response - the issues raised are of huge importance to the children and young people of Wales.**

# Living Dangerously

**W**hen I wasn't winning the F.A. cup, or bowling out the Australians for 27 in the fields with my friends, I was in the woods. The woods belonged to the kids – adults almost never entered our territory.



Although I lived in a densely-populated suburb, at the back of my childhood home were a massive playing field and a half-mile square of woodland – a recreation ground owned by a factory for the benefit of their employees, but whose fences kept nobody out. Between the ages of about 7 and 12, I spent most of my weekends and school holidays amongst various members of a gang of maybe fifteen boys "playing out" there. There were other gangs, other kids, aged up to their mid-teens, some we knew and some we didn't – and girls, though not so many.

All of our play was completely unsupervised, not because our parents were negligent, but because what we were doing was in their judgement, and in ours, normal and safe. Child molesters were known to exist, and all us kids were aware of "funny men" and what you were supposed to do: if you saw any adult at all in the woods you ran like hell, and they didn't get near you. No-one worried about them, or let their shadow block out our light. Mind you, I think the few adults we saw in the woods were not molesters but factory employees vainly seeking to impose order over the undergrowth, like men in pith helmets trying to tame the jungle.

While it's true that football and cricket weren't dangerous (unless you were tackled from behind by Gareth) I couldn't say the same for everything we did in the

woods. We built "camps", and played chasing, hiding, and war games, and derived enormous pleasure using sticks to lay waste to acres of stinging nettles. In the autumn we gathered blackberries from the limitless bushes on the far side of the woods. We built dams in the little streams which ran through (just drainage ditches really, but streams to us – we even drank the water!) and executed major civil engineering projects by diverting them. And we threw stones at things. So far, so much harmless fun. But we also climbed trees, played on rope swings, and messed around with fire.

Tree-climbing is familiar enough to most of us to seem safe, but imagine if you will "extreme tree-climbing". I was too scared to go much more than 15 or 20 feet up any tree, but some of my friends would just keep going up. I remember Gary and Keith, two brothers, at the top of an elm tree which must have been 70 or 80 feet high. At much more than 20 feet, any mistake would be fatal, and even at my measly height there'd be broken limbs. But in all those years no-one ever fell, not because we had the climbing skills of squirrels, but because we knew our limitations. We made good judgements about risk, and our judgements were enhanced by our exposure to it.

Maybe the rope swings were a bit tame by comparison, though they were the mothers of all rope swings. Proper two-

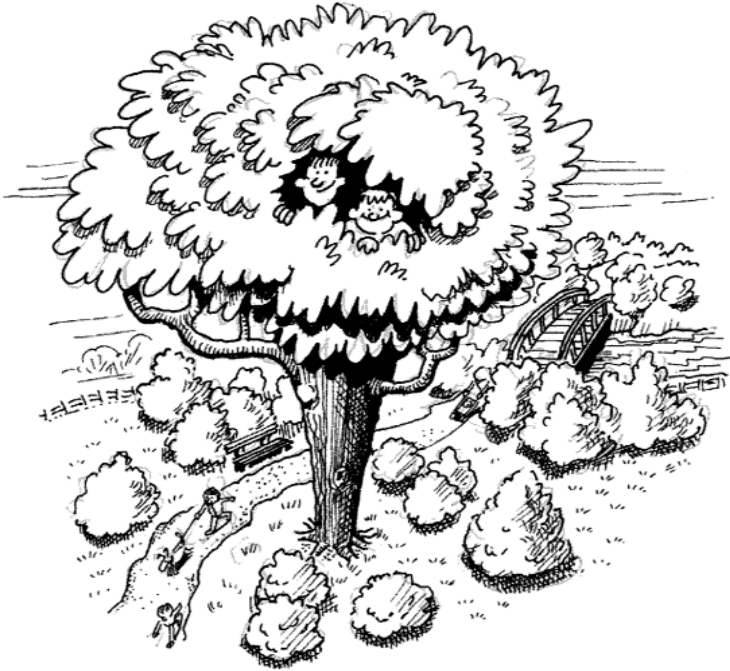
inch hemp rope, dangling 40 feet from overhanging limbs, mounted with a leap of faith from a plank wedged up a tree, giving a high-speed white-knuckle ride as we described a parabola across a large clearing and attempted to re-board the plank on the return ... or let the next person jump on too! I did once see someone who'd broken both arms (so how did he manage a pee?) falling off a rope swing, but that was in the Yorkshire village where my cousins lived. People fell off in our woods, suffered nasty scrapes and bruises, but we never really injured ourselves. By rights we should have done, but again I put it down to judgement.

Like most children we were fascinated by fire, and there was a bonfire culture. We often built small camp fires, and played with burning sticks. Best of all was plastic sheeting wrapped round a stick and ignited, then flicked outwards so that a tiny goblet of burning plastic, trailing black smoke, would fly through the air at some target with the most intensely satisfying "zip" sound. This sounds hair-raisingly dangerous, but again none of us ever suffered more than a scorching. There were unwritten rules with fire, so that although we pretended to menace each other with our brands, it was forbidden even to come close to burning someone, or flick plastic near them. We learned from an early age how to handle a fire, how to start one and put one out, and how to avoid getting burnt.

So what does all this tell us? I think it tells me that children aren't stupid, and although you might think what they are doing is dangerous, it's probably not that bad. That if they are fully in charge of the situation they can – will – exercise control of risk. They will learn a great deal about the world – elements of practical science, engineering and construction, the natural environment, teamwork, society, and knowledge of their personal limits. And they'll get plenty of good exercise to boot.

I've lost touch with all these friends, but I'm pretty sure this "Lord of the Flies" existence didn't go bad and turn them into arsonists and cat burglars. What did it do for me? Well, I've been a Health and Safety Executive Inspector for sixteen years, so I'm clearly not a thrill-seeking danger junkie, and I think I can tell what's dangerous and what isn't. I can see the point of soft surfaces below climbing frames, but I think kids would learn more if it was just gravel ... and I never wear goggles when I'm playing conkers.

**Matthew McNeal, aged 40 ¾**



## Fit for Play?

**T**he theme for Playday Wednesday 3 August 2005 is 'Fit for Play?' For some people Playday is a chance to organise a local event promoting their play service and providing a special day for the children who use it, for others it is an opportunity to highlight play issues in the media.

Outdoor play for children is essential, not just for their physical fitness, but for their overall health, well-being and happiness ... but is their environment fit for play? Playday 2005 will highlight these connected themes: -

1. The fundamental importance of free play in providing physical activity for all ages of children, as well as promoting their healthy social and emotional development.
2. The problems that children and young people face in finding somewhere suitable to play - and what needs to be done.

"Fit for Play?" best encompasses all of the themes suggested for this year's Play Day, including: fit for play; reclaiming the streets and public spaces; and playing with the elements (earth, air, fire and water). It gives plenty of scope for stressing the importance of play throughout the year, whilst providing meaningful play opportunities for children and young people.

For more information please visit [www.playday.org.uk](http://www.playday.org.uk)

# NATIONAL PLAYING FIELDS ASSOCIATION

## NPFA CYMRU

**T**he National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) is the only national organisation which has specific responsibility for protecting and improving recreational space. It is a registered charity, number 306070. NPFA Cymru is responsible for its work in Wales. It is campaigning to ensure that everyone in Wales has access to high quality recreational land near to their homes. It is essential that all communities have areas to play, exercise, participate in sport, take a gentle stroll or just to relax.

To help achieve its aim, NPFA Cymru protects 148 sites in Wales through ownership, deeds of dedication and legal covenants and is eager to increase this number. It is the sole trustee of all King George's Fields and has recently started the Owain Glyndwr Fields initiative. This initiative acts as a memorial to the Welsh Statesman by protecting recreational land in perpetuity. NPFA Cymru is aiming to establish at least one Owain Glyndwr Field in every unitary authority in Wales.

NPFA Cymru is also pushing for greater protection of school playing fields in Wales. In England, all school playing field disposals are referred to the Secretary of State for consideration with official records being published. Recent reports in the media were of new measures being introduced to this process to make it even more difficult to dispose of school fields in England.

Unfortunately there is no similar process in Wales with all planning applications being dealt with by the local planning authority and no information being made available. Despite this lack of information, the National Assembly's Education Minister, Jane Davidson, recently stated that the sale of school playing fields in Wales is not a significant issue at the present time!

**Rhodri Edwards, NPFA Cymru, Sophia House, 28 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9LJ**

**Tel: 02920 636110 Fax: 02920 636131 email: [cymru@npfa.co.uk](mailto:cymru@npfa.co.uk)**

## Consulting Children about Play

The Children's Play Information Service at the National Children's Bureau in London has produced a new fact sheet – Consulting Children About Play – that sets out current thinking on consultation with children and young people, and adds a play-centred perspective.

**Contact CPIS or visit the CPIS website to get your own copy. Tel: 020 7843 6303**

**Email: [cpis@ncb.org.uk](mailto:cpis@ncb.org.uk) [www.ncb.org.uk/library/cpis](http://www.ncb.org.uk/library/cpis)**

## Commissioner Backs Improved Children's Play Provision

**T**he Children's Commissioner's Annual Report for 2003/4 highlights the need for attention to be paid to "play, public space and planning":

There is increasing public and political interest in the whole issue of public space and how children and young people access it, along with other more structured forms of leisure and recreational activities. What is very clear is that young people in Wales and throughout the UK in comparison with their peers in many other parts of Europe, engage in less physical activity and sport, are allowed less freedom of mobility and physical independence, spend more time watching TV and are less evident in the public domain.

Engaging with children and young people to find creative solutions to this situation is made more difficult when the public space agenda

is dominated by the perceived need to safeguard our communities from some young people's behaviour, via curfews and dispersal orders ...

Welsh Assembly Government has an opportunity to lead by example in this area by finding ways to systematically assess the impact of their planning policies and decisions upon children and young people, and then publicly evidencing it. There is a valuable opportunity here for play in all its diverse forms to be given a core place in the lives of our children and young people in Wales both in urban and rural areas, and make meaningful our commitment to Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Visit <http://www.childcom.org.uk/english/get.html> for the full report.**

# New Principles for Playwork

**A**lmost a year ago Play Wales secured funding from the Welsh Assembly Government to revise the Playwork Assumptions and Values that were written a decade or so ago. Almost twelve months later, after two rounds of consultation, the Scrutiny Group that has been overseeing the development of the new proposal is ready to reveal the results.

Early on in the process it was decided to differentiate the existing Assumptions and Values from the new proposal by calling the new one the Playwork Principles. Both are designed to inform the practice of playwork as a set of professional ethics, and are mostly used in playwork training. Many playworkers and playwork trainers had begun to agree that the Assumptions and Values were beginning to look a little out of kilter with current thinking.

In Phase Two of the consultation a hundred and one responses landed on our desk, some of them from organisations representing large groups of playworkers and playwork trainers. The response to the Phase Two proposal was on the whole

positive, and highlighted the areas that still needed some work. So the Scrutiny Group met in Cardiff and Bristol to tweak and evaluate a final version. Having completed this task, the Group feels that they have almost fulfilled their duty, and the final consultation is not about the content of the Principles, but asks questions such as:

1. Are the Playwork Principles a step forward from the Playwork Assumptions and Values?
2. Are the Playwork Principles fit for purpose?
3. Have we done justice by playworkers?

The Group has asked for a meeting with SkillsActive, the playwork sector skills council, once the final consultation is over, and they hope that all the major playwork organisations and trainers will accept their invitation to sign up to the Playwork Principles.

**Have your say at [www.playwales.org.uk/principles](http://www.playwales.org.uk/principles) or call Phil at our national office for a hard copy version. If you have a website you might like to provide a link to the principles consultation pages, if so, please contact Gill Evans at our national office (029 2048 6050)**



## Playwork Principles

**These principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork.**

They describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people.

They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

1. All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological and psychological necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well being of individuals and communities.
2. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
3. The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
4. For playworkers, the play process takes precedence over socialisation, education and other adult agendas. Playworkers must act as advocates for play when engaging with adult agendas.
5. The role of the playworker is to support children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
6. The playworker's response to children and young people playing must be based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
7. Playworkers must recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
8. The playworker must choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.



# New Playwork Training

**Play Wales has secured EQUAL funding to develop state of the art playwork training in Wales.**

A review of courses previously developed by Play Wales, and of other playwork training currently available, showed that the content and method of delivery was very often inadequate for the needs of playworkers and the children they work with. Play Wales is committed to developing training based on up to date play and playwork theory, that really puts the facilitation of children's play at the centre of the playworker's role. The intention is to produce a bilingual multi-media package that can be used to train playworkers anywhere in Wales.

The EQUAL funding is for "activities based on reducing the



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gender gap in employment and pay, and desegregating the childcare sector". Play Wales, together with Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, Clybiau Plant Cymru, Communities that Care Wales, Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association and the Welsh Development Agency (collectively known as Cwlwm) have made a successful bid for almost £2.5m backing from the European Social Fund.

Play Wales will be responsible for developing a training and qualification package for playworkers, while other members of the group will take on research and development projects related to business and entrepreneurship,

encouraging men into the childcare sector, and enlarging Welsh language and minority language childcare provision.

The work plan shows that the training package will start to be piloted in the second half of 2005.

## Our Man in Hong Kong

**Whilst on holiday visiting his son's family in Hong Kong, Tony Chilton took time out to visit PLAY INFINITY, an organisation established to promote play development in the region.**

Founded in 1999 by Bonita Kwok and Winnie Wong, both of whom attended last years' Spirit of Adventure Play Conference in Cardiff, Play Infinity aims to develop a greater awareness and understanding of the importance of play in the life of a child (sound familiar?!). With a main operational base in Mong Kok, one of the older areas of Kowloon in Hong Kong, Play Infinity recently opened a branch in Macau, an area across the Pearl River mouth and China Sea to the west of Hong Kong Special

Administrative Region.

Play Infinity has recognised the need to "educate" adult society with regard to the value of play and seeks to work with social study students, trainee teachers, schools, parents, the Hong Kong Government Council, community groups and charities and to establish a network of play associations and to generate a greater sense of responsibility for the provision of play opportunities.

Much of their work focuses on interactive events and activities, although they are involved in conducting some basic research exercises to demonstrate the need to improve the quality of play provision. It is ten years since Tony last worked in Hong Kong, and although massive changes have taken place in both the physical and political environments, little seems to have

changed by way of improving and increasing play provision. Play Infinity have a very tough time ahead of them, for there is little evidence culturally and traditionally, that play is seen as an essential part of the child's development in this part of the world. Bonita and Winnie are energetic, enthusiastic and committed and thoroughly enjoyed their time with us at the Conference earlier this year. They are very keen to maintain and develop links with Wales because of what they see as positive developments taking place here which could be adopted in Hong Kong. We are trying to arrange for them to deliver a presentation and workshops at the next Spirit which should prove interesting to us all but in particular perhaps the Chinese community here. So watch this space!

## Trustees for Play Wales

**There could not be a more exciting and challenging time to get involved in the work of the national organisation for children's play.**

If you would like an opportunity to contribute to our work, and feel you can offer your experience, expertise and commitment to this voluntary post (for which expenses are paid) please contact us for an application pack.

# EVENTS

## Training and Events Bulletin

It is impossible to include all the play-related conferences, training and events that take place over the year in this four-monthly newsletter, so we have started to compile a bi-lingual e-mail bulletin of all the Welsh and UK events and training that we feel would be of interest to play providers and playworkers in Wales.

The first issue was circulated in November, but we need you to advertise your events (however local) and to sign up for this free service.

To be included in the mailing list, or to tell us what you're up to, please contact Phil at our National Office (029 2048 6050 or e-mail phil@playwales.org.uk).

The bulletin will also be available on our website soon.

We will continue to highlight major events in Play for Wales.

### 1 and 2 March 2005 -

#### PlayEd - Ely, Cambridgeshire

The 17th Play and Human Development Meeting  
e-mail played2005@playededucation.com

### 11 and 12 May 2005 -

#### The Spirit of Adventure Play - Cardiff

Play Wales' Spirit Conference takes place in Cardiff next May. Booking will start in the New Year, please contact Phil at our National Office (029 2048 6050 or e-mail phil@playwales.org.uk) if you wish to be added to the mailing list.

## New Publications

KIDS has recently published three books on including disabled children in mainstream services for children aged five to 16 years:

### All of Us - Inclusion Checklist for Settings -

which outlines good practice for playworkers, childminders and other childcare staff;

### All of Us - Inclusion Framework for Local Authorities -

which offers ways for local authorities to move policy into practice in including disabled children. The pack is available free of charge, please telephone 020 7359 3073; and

### Pick & Mix - a selection of inclusive games and activities -

practical ideas, games and activities for all children to enjoy, thus helping to promote the inclusion of disabled children in any play or early years setting. This book costs £10.00 to voluntary organisations and £20.00 to statutory bodies. It is available from York Publishing Services Ltd: tel. 01904 431 213

# Funding

**If you are a voluntary organisation looking for funding WCVA can carry out a funding search for its members on Grantfinder. Contact the Helpdesk on 0870 607 1666, or e-mail help@wcva.org.uk**

**Yapp Charitable Trust** awards grants of about £3,000 to charitable organisations with a turnover of under £75,000 for work with children and young people, people with disabilities or mental health problems, and education and learning. Deadline 31 January. Visit [www.yappcharitabletrust.org.uk](http://www.yappcharitabletrust.org.uk) or contact 01484 683403.

**First Light** provides financial support for film-making where young people (aged 5-18 yrs) take a lead role in all aspects of the production process. The type of projects supported includes live action, creative documentaries and animated films. The next deadline is 18 January 2005 and application forms are available from 22 November. Details from [www.firstlightmovies.com/funding.php](http://www.firstlightmovies.com/funding.php)

**BBC Children in Need** Beneficiaries must be disadvantaged by: any kind of disability; behavioural or psychological problems; living in poverty or situations of deprivation, illness, distress, abuse or neglect. Closing date 30 March 2005. Email: [Pudsey@bbc.co.uk](mailto:Pudsey@bbc.co.uk) tel. 020 8576 7788

### Enfys Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities Project

is now in its fourth year of assisting communities throughout Wales to develop and sustain all kinds of interesting green space projects. The funding is provided by The Big Lottery Fund of the National Lottery and distributed by the Enfys partnership. To date the Enfys programme has successfully allocated around £5.4m supporting 284 projects in Wales.

With a further £1.1m to allocate, Enfys will be running for just over one more year and projects would need to complete by 31 December 2005. There are a further three application rounds expected. If you are a community group or voluntary organisation, with interesting ideas on offer, to develop an environmental project in your community and your project could use up to £25,000 before the end of 2005, please call: 0845 0000 122 for an application pack, or contact the WCVA Helpdesk on 0870 607 1666 or the Enfys team on 01492 539808 email: [kburgess@wcva.org.uk](mailto:kburgess@wcva.org.uk)

**Wavemakers' innovation awards** - a new small grants programme to develop innovative children's services. As well as celebrating the achievements of children and young people, it has five categories that recognise professional services. The first stage of judging will involve workshops throughout the UK where young people will rank nominations. In the second stage, they will sit on a panel alongside senior members of the children's sector. Nominations can be made via [www.wavemakers.org.uk](http://www.wavemakers.org.uk).