

Play for Wales

Play news & briefing from the national organisation for play

Spring 2006

Play in Wales

“A new and exciting phase for play”

The Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy Implementation Plan ‘Play in Wales’ was recently launched in the garden of the House of the Future at the Museum of Welsh Life.

The launch of this implementation plan was probably unlike any other Assembly event. Jane Davidson, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, and Margaret Jervis (Chair of the Play Policy Implementation Group) addressed a gathering of representatives of the play sector and Assembly officials, while a group of boys and girls of different cultures, ages and abilities played around the garden. Older children climbed the tree that overlooked the speakers and others happily took turns to be trundled around in a wheelbarrow. Some of the little children rolled around in a cardboard tube.

“The publication of this plan takes us into a new and exciting phase for play in Wales ... (it) sets out how the principles in the play

policy will be implemented. It draws together our existing support for play; sets out our future direction; (and) sets out a number of key actions with a timetable for delivery,” said Jane Davidson, “This plan takes its place within the rights-based agenda of the Assembly Government ... it takes forward the core aim that all children should have the right to engage in leisure, play and recreational activities.”

The Minister had a serious yet celebratory message, and the children reinforced it by exploring the many and various possibilities of their environment and all the interesting things within it, testing out and extending their capabilities, thinking up new ideas and acting upon them in their own way at their own pace – in other words they played.

Sometimes the noise of playing drowned out the speeches, yet none of the assembled adults batted an eyelid because although the majority of children

present were unaware of the significance of the event, the grown-ups seemed to recognise the huge potential this strategy has to support quality and innovation in provision for the children of Wales – and these few children playing were representatives of the many who may benefit.

The Implementation Timetable is published in this issue on page 4 and 5. Please visit the Welsh Assembly Government website to download the entire Play in Wales document (which includes the Play Policy) : <http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/pdfs/play-policy-implementation-plan-e.pdf>

If you wish to obtain printed copies please contact play@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Continued > p13





Editorial

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

Contents

	page
Editorial	2
Big Lottery News	3
MP's For Play	3
Membership	3
New Member	3
Implementation Timetable	4
Glossary – What is Play?	6
Perspectives on the Implementation Plan	7
What's in a Name?	12
What a Play Strategy means for Playworkers	13
Events & Funding	14

Play For Wales is published by Play Wales three times a year.

Contact the Editor at:
Play Wales, Baltic House, Mount
Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FH
Telephone: 029 2048 6050
E-mail: mail@playwales.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 1068926

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Play Wales. We reserve the right to edit for publication. We do not endorse any of the products or events advertised in or with this publication.

Designed and printed by Carrick Business Services Ltd.

Tel: 029 2074 1150.

E-mail: sales@carrickdesignprint.co.uk

This is Play Wales' vision. We use it in our publicity, in our presentations at conferences and seminars, and we can also use it to test our work and how far we have come in helping to make it real on an every day, every place level for children and young people in Wales. It isn't just a fancy marketing slogan to us – we use it as a benchmark of our effectiveness. The Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy Implementation Plan recently brought us a significant step nearer to achieving our vision, and when we read it and reflected on what it contained, there was great delight and excitement among the Play Wales team.

There is no doubt about it, the Welsh Assembly Government must be congratulated for leading the way when it comes to government policy making on children and young people's play – this is a fantastic and most welcome step forward. But if anyone thinks that Play Wales will be hanging up its campaigning hat and putting its feet up they are very much mistaken. While we wholeheartedly welcome every aspect of the Play Policy Implementation Plan and see it as the fruit of years of labour, not only for us but for politicians and officials within the Assembly, there is still a great deal of work for us to do supporting the play sector at both national and local level to make this vision a reality.

You may have noticed, that the first recommendation of the Play Policy Implementation Group was 'that the Welsh Assembly Government place a statutory duty upon local authorities to provide for children's play needs . . .', yet the first action identified in the Play Policy Implementation Plan is that of 'including in Children Act Planning Guidance a duty to co-operate in addressing the play needs of local children and young people'.

This was probably the most significant of all the Recommendations, and the play sector both within and outside our borders felt it was the most important and held out most hope for. And whilst the Action placing a 'duty to co-

operate', forms a considerable step forward, we would encourage the Assembly to use the facility it will gain from the Government of Wales Bill, to go the 'extra mile' towards placing a duty on local authorities to secure adequate play provision, in much the same way as the proposed Childcare Bill will place a duty on local authorities to secure adequate childcare.

In this special issue we have gathered together comments on the Play Policy Implementation Plan from representative people and organisations around Wales and those who are watching from across borders and over seas. It was impossible to ask everyone, and some people were pressed for time, but thank you to those who responded. Our next issue will be the usual mix of news and articles showing good practice in play provision around Wales with an international article from New Zealand.

The dialogue around the role and name of playworkers and childcare workers continues on our training pages with comments from playwork graduates and from the sector skills council SkillsActive. The endorsement of the Playwork Principles by the Assembly Government may add to the debate. We always welcome contributions to this magazine, and this is the kind of dialogue we would like to encourage, so please send us your thoughts on this or any other play related matter.

If we are to build a strong sector then we need to share our thoughts and beliefs and come to a clear understanding so that can consistently deliver quality play opportunities for all the children of Wales no matter what setting or provision they happen to find themselves in. And when we say all we mean what the dictionary says – every individual one – no matter what impairment, culture, gender, language, background, behaviour or need a child or young person might come with. As the Children's Commissioners' Office says, this is an issue of entitlement, not discretion.

Margaret Jervis
 Chair, Play Wales Board of Trustees



Big Lottery news

The Big Lottery Fund's latest investment initiative, children's play and active and healthy families will provide £20million over 4 years.

Big Lottery Fund's commitment to invest in the healthy development of children across Wales and they are organising an invitation only conference in conjunction with Children in Wales in late April.

In terms of other BIG funding that might support play provision, the Big Lottery team has suggested the following:

- That the Awards For All programme is suitable for applications for doorstep play projects. Visit: www.awardsforall.org.uk/cymraeg/wales
- They expect applications to the People and Places programme for capital projects such as play resource centres. Visit: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/programmes/people_places/index.htm

- The Young People's Fund is the most appropriate place to apply for funding for staffed adventure playgrounds. Visit: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/programmes/ypf/index.htm
- Parks for People Grants range from £250,000 to £5 million for both capital and revenue costs, from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund. Local authorities or other not-for-profit organisations that own public parks are eligible to apply for projects which regenerate and create new opportunities for communities to learn about and enjoy their local environment. Applications are accepted twice a year. Further details are available from <http://tinyurl.com/df3eq>.

At a UK level – MPs For Play

The first meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Children's Play took place in December, with a number of Welsh MPs taking part.

There will be many who see no reason for parliamentary time to be devoted to something that might appear trivial in comparison with great affairs of state, but as Adrian Voce, the Director of England's Children's Play Council put it recently:

"Most people of the generation involved in policy making grew up in a time and a culture when it could still be taken for granted that children played out, of their own accord, without the need for adult services, let alone government policy."

It can no longer be taken for granted that children will have the time, space or opportunity to play that most us adults enjoyed when we were younger.

A recent survey by the Home Office* reveals that as many as 25% of 8 – 10 year olds have never played out without adult supervision.

MPs representing Welsh constituencies who are members of the Group are:

Chris Bryant, Rhondda (Labour), Martin Caton, Gower (Labour), Lembit Opik, Montgomeryshire (Lib Dem), Chris Ruane, Vale of Clwyd (Labour), Elfyn Llwyd, Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Plaid Cymru), Mark Williams, Ceredigion (Lib dem), and from the House of Lords, Baroness Finlay of Llandaff.

*Home Office/DfES Citizenship Survey, Home Office 2005

Membership

Play Wales has become a membership organisation – with a year's membership costing only £25 per organisation (and this will be reviewed for 2007). The benefits of joining were outlined in the last issue of Play for Wales, and our team is in negotiation over other initiatives that will make membership profitable for play providers large and small across the board in Wales.

Following last issue's announcement a small number of people who receive Play for Wales have raised anxieties that our team will only support members in future. This is not the case. As an organisation we are committed to working at an appropriate level with all those who provide for children's play in our country, but we are a small team and have limited capacity so we try to use our skills and services as strategically as possible.

Please note, we do not intend that Play Wales membership should replace or duplicate any other membership of local or regional play organisations, but it is intended to serve a distinct function and better help us represent children's play at a national level and more effectively respond to the needs of our very broad constituency.

Play Wales is a registered charity and our area of charitable benefit is restricted to Wales, therefore some of the member's benefits (for instance discounts on conference places) are only available to members working within Wales.

For membership tel: 029 2048 6050 or email: kathy@playforwales.org.uk

New team member



Ben Tawil is the newest member of the Play Wales team. He is working alongside our Senior Development Officer, Tony Chilton, until Tony retires this Autumn, when Ben will take full responsibility for our development work in North Wales.

Ben says: "I am extremely excited to be working for Play Wales and feel I am in a privileged position to be able to affect change for children's play in North Wales and to facilitate the strategic development of playwork nationally.

"I have worked with children for most of my life, whether that be formally or informally, in settings from childminding through to being the Assistant Manager at the Venture in Wrexham. I have a passion for play and children's right to play, and feel strongly that it is not something that you do in your spare time but that play is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of the human species and of intrinsic benefit to society as a whole. I look forward to working with and on behalf of all those involved in providing play opportunities for children and young people in North Wales."



Implementation Timetable

ACTION	TIMETABLE	ACTION	TIMETABLE
<p>Action: The Assembly Government will include in Children Act planning guidance a duty to co-operate in addressing the play needs of local children and young people. This will include the need for staffed adventure play that provides children with a rich play environment to compensate for the loss of natural open space. It will also point out the need for play to be inclusive of all children; none should be excluded because of issues such as different levels of ability, language, race or gender.</p>	<p>March 2007</p>	<p>Action: The Assembly Government will support the development of training resources on play for teaching and non-teaching staff in schools, and bring them to the attention of all schools.</p>	<p>September 2007</p>
<p>Action: The Assembly Government will produce guidance on what constitutes quality play opportunities.</p>	<p>March 2007</p>	<p>Action: The Assembly Government will highlight the opportunity for new play facilities provided by Community Focussed Schools, and will provide guidance as to how these might be developed effectively.</p>	<p>September 2006</p>
<p>Action: The Big Lottery Fund will work with the Welsh Assembly Government and key stakeholders working on play and healthy lifestyles to ensure that the programme meets local and national priorities and has a clear strategic impact.</p>	<p>Details to be announced Spring 2006</p>	<p>Action: The Assembly Government will consult widely, including with children and young people in reviewing the Planning Technical Advice Notes which relates to open space, play and recreation.</p>	<p>Consultation to begin Spring 2007</p>
<p>Action: The Assembly Government will work with practitioners, communities and children to develop standards for a wide variety of play provision, that will be mandatory for play funded by specific grant and will give a lead to other provision. The standards will build on the existing National Minimum Standards for Open Access Play. They will encourage children and young people to be included in planning and designing local play facilities.</p>	<p>Begin: February 2006 Complete: March 2008</p>	<p>Action: The Assembly Government will encourage those involved locally with transport and play to co-operate in taking forward the Home Zone policies of the Road Safety Strategy for Wales.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Action: The Assembly Government will support the development of new guidance for Local Authorities on appropriate community play provision. This will complement the Technical Advice Notes and include the issues of staffing and ensuring that responsibility is not delegated to community councils without appropriate expertise.</p>			<p>March 2007</p>



ACTION	TIMETABLE	ACTION	TIMETABLE
Action: The Assembly Government will continue to work with Play Wales and other partners to seek to ensure that there are appropriate training opportunities at all levels for play workers.	Ongoing	Action: Through new standards for play provision, the Assembly Government will define a public benchmark of balancing risk against benefit in play.	March 2008
Action: The Assembly Government will work with the UK Government on the development of the children's workforce, including a single qualifications framework and the development of a common core of skills and knowledge.	Ongoing	Action: The Assembly Government will incorporate encouragement of play at all ages in the Assembly Government's parent support programmes.	Ongoing
Action: As part of both this Action plan and the Childcare Action Plan, the Assembly Government will seek ways of addressing recruitment and retention issues, in conjunction with the Sector Skills Council SkillsActive.	Guidance issued by March 2006	Action: The Assembly Government will produce a handbook for parents on what constitutes quality play and how they can help facilitate it.	September 2006
Action: The Assembly Government will request central Government to review the impact of "no-win no-fee" arrangements on children's activities.	March 2006	Action: The Assembly Government will continue to ensure that play is recognised as a means of providing enjoyable psychological and physical activity for all children and will commission research in Wales on the psychological benefits of freely chosen play.	Commission research : September 2006 Report: September 2007
Action: The Assembly Government will revise the Regulations for Childminding and Daycare to require risk assessment that balances risk against the benefits of the play opportunity, rather than an avoidance of all unnecessary risk.	September 2006	Action: The Assembly Government will proof its policies for their impact on children's play through its Policy Gateway.	March 2006



Glossary

What is Play?

Here is a brief list of key terms and their definition as it relates to the intentions of the Play Policy Implementation Plan.

Play: A process encompassing children's behaviour that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated.

"Freely chosen" means that the children choose when and which play activity to undertake. As such, it is not part of a set programme and does not have any steps that need to be completed.

"Personally directed" means that the children themselves agree the roles or rules of the activity; they decide the desired outcomes if there are to be any.

"Intrinsically motivated" means that it is done for its own sake and not for any externally provided reward, certificate, or status.

Playwork: The profession made up of individuals whose main purpose is to facilitate children's play opportunities. As such, it is crucial they are in possession of a range of skills and characteristics; including knowledge of the developmental importance of children's play, an understanding of the value and role of risk-taking in children's play and how to enrich children's experiences in terms of attitude, design and resources.

Provision for children's play: Spaces and settings provided for children to experience a broad range of opportunities and experiences as outlined below. These may include adventure playgrounds, play centres, out of school play schemes, mobile play provision, early years provision, open-spaces, woodland fixed play areas.



Rich play environments: Play provision should endeavour to provide a broad range of opportunities such as:

- Play with the natural elements.
- A varied, inspirational and interesting physical environment.
- Playing with identity, including taking on different levels of responsibility.
- Experiencing a range of emotions.
- Stimulation of the five senses.
- Challenges in the physical environment that enable children to test their limits and capabilities.
- Movement (such as running, jumping, rolling, climbing, balancing).
- Manipulating a range of natural and fabricated materials.
- Experiencing a change in natural and built environment
- Social interactions, including, for example, being able to choose whether and when to play alone or with others.

This list was first published by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2004 as part of the consultation document that informed the Play Policy Implementation Plan.

Play Contact List

Mid Wales

Brecknock Play Network	01874 622446
Powys Children & Families Forum	01654 700352

North Wales

Conwy CBC	01492 575559
Denbighshire County Council	01745 345234
Flintshire County Council	01352 702469
Gwynedd County Council	01286 679452
North Wales Play & Playing Fields Assoc	07814 721459

South Wales

Blaenau Gwent CBC	01495 294035
Bridgend CBC	01656 642725
Caerphilly Creative Play Project	01443 822644
Carmarthenshire CBC	01267 224212
Carmarthen Youth and Children's Assoc.	01554 757599
Children's Play Services, Cardiff County Council	029 2087 3911
City and County of Swansea	01792 635154
Interlink, Rhondda Cynon Taff	01443 485337
Interplay, Swansea	01792 475938
Merthyr Tydfil Play Forum	01685 353960
Monmouthshire County Council	01633 644540
Neath Port Talbot CBC	01639 765194
Newport CBC	01633 232752
Playright, Swansea	01792 794884
Re-create, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan	029 2057 8100
Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC	01443 424417
Torfaen CBC	01495 740924
Vale of Glamorgan CBC	01446 704809
Valley Kids, Rhondda Cynon Taff	01443 420870

Play Wales

Tony Chilton/Ben Tawil North Wales Office	01745 851816
Marianne Mannello South Wales/National Office	029 2048 6050



Perspectives on the Implementation Plan



The Children's Commissioner's Office:

Children's right to play is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child but even so is sometimes considered to be a luxury rather than an entitlement.

Through all aspects of our work, and particularly through our direct work with children and young people, we know that the provision that of quality places, spaces and time for play is one of their key priorities. In fact, following our work to give young people a say in how we work and what we do, it came out as one of the top two issues that Wales'

children and young people thought the Commissioner should look into in the coming year.

While the drive to play is manifested in every part of children's lives – at school, at home, in the community – there are many instances where local planners, policy makers and service providers fail to appreciate that play must be taken seriously and provision made.

This WAG document appears to have taken the importance of play into account. We welcome the promise to make sure that children and young people are involved in the planning and design of their play places and other environments, not only because they have a right to participate, but because children are experts on this issue.

Clearly the most important thing is what happens next, and this document is only a first step. On behalf of the children and young people of Wales, we will be looking out to see that action is forthcoming at both Assembly and local levels. And by looking into this issue as a Commissioner's project we'll be collecting some hard evidence from the people who are best placed to tell us whether it is really making a difference – children and young people themselves.

Children in Wales:



Catriona Williams, Chief Executive, Children in Wales, the national children's umbrella organisation.

We are pleased this is not-keeping-children-wrapped-in-cotton-wool approach is recognised. Taking action to boost the playwork profession is also vitally important.

Making the Plan work won't be straightforward however, it's likely there will be issues of implementation along the way and there is likely to be a lot of resistance. If the Welsh Assembly Government really wants to achieve everything in the Plan, it may have to introduce stronger measures in future.



Sustrans:

Dafydd Thomas, Active Travel Programme Manager, Wales

Sustrans Cymru are pleased that the Assembly's Play Policy Implementation Plan recognises the negative impact that traffic and the design of the built environment can have on a child's ability to play and lead an active life. We echo their concerns that children need to have safe opportunities to get

out and explore their locality more widely. We also welcome the Assembly's commitments to develop Home Zones, 20 mph areas and ensure the integration of other policies at a national and local level. Unfortunately time is not on our side – increasing traffic levels, climate change and what we see as the lack of opportunity for individuals to play or be otherwise physically active, mean that changes are needed sooner, rather than later.

Sustrans Cymru believe that young people and children need 'Safe Routes' to local schools, shops, cinemas, friends' houses and areas where they want to interact, play and feel secure. We also feel that traffic needs to be slowed down and controlled, so that it's safer for people of all ages to go about their lives wherever they may live.

Richard Parry:

Richard Parry, Strategic Director for Education, Swansea City Council.

The Play Implementation Plan provides an excellent framework within which local authorities can develop and develop strategies to raise the profile of the importance of play as a way to learn and make sense of the immediate environment as well as helping developing social skills and as a means for recreation. Whilst the Plan sets a challenging agenda, especially for schools, it is one that fits well within the concept of community focussed schools.



Integrated Children's Centre:

Sarah Mutch, Integrated Children's Centre Manager, New Tredegar.

This Play Strategy brings a joining up and strengthening of current strategies and initiatives with play at the heart of them. The Foundation Phase and Flying Start consultation documents highlight the inclusion of ICCs and the development of children and families through high quality services including childcare. It has long been thought that high quality childcare should offer rich opportunities and experiences, allowing the children to freely choose and develop their play. Various studies have shown that offering quality experiential play opportunities dramatically improves motivation and the holistic development of individual children. The whole drive for quality play opportunities within these documents makes it our duty when we work with children and young people to offer these quality experiences for all our children from the very youngest upwards (and it shouldn't stop being fun for us as adults!)



At New Tredegar Integrated Children's Centre we offer the four core elements Early Years Education, Childcare, Open Access Play and Family Support/Training. We are always looking towards the future and how we can best meet the needs of our local community. We believe children learn best through play, and play is at the heart of all our activities. We try to engage with all our children and young people offering them lots of opportunities to develop their own play. We feel very lucky to have a wonderful environment full of rich experiences so they feel safe, and able to explore their own potential while having a great time!

**'Space to dream,
Space to explore,
Space to discover'**



Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs:

As a member of the group that worked on putting together the strategy, We at Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs support the new Play Strategy which is the first in the UK. and look forward to its implementation.

Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs supports good quality childcare, with opportunity for freely chosen play by delivering appropriate practical training, alongside resources and information to maintain good quality policy and practice in out of school clubs.

Menter Iaith Abertawe:

Siwian Thomas, Chief Officer:

One of our main aims is to ensure that the children and young people of Swansea who are Welsh speaking or are learning Welsh are able to socialise in their chosen language in a friendly, safe and accessible way. We have worked hard to provide new and creative opportunities for children and young people to spend their time out of school hours, as well as ensuring that activities

are of a high standard by training young people – all through the medium of Welsh. This in turn has developed vital communication, management and language skills in the young people who run our clubs and play schemes.

The Play Policy Implementation Plan has raised some very important points regarding children and young people's right to play (which Menter Iaith Abertawe fully supports). However, there are some issues regarding Welsh language provision that need further consideration.

Children and young people who attend

Welsh medium education often have to travel outside their community to attend school. This instantly makes it a challenge to socialise as school friends don't live nearby. Children who have chosen their play activities to be held through the medium of Welsh are at a disadvantage because they have to travel outside their own communities to get the type of provision Menter Iaith Abertawe offers. We need more localised Welsh medium play schemes, more Welsh speaking youth/play workers and more training on running activities bilingually.

Play Officers Wales:

Play Officers Wales welcomes the Play Policy Implementation Plan, particularly its broad scope of actions. The plan clearly sets out what the Government is going to do to inform a strategic response at a local level across Wales.

Play Officers Wales is concerned about the challenges of translating this document at

local level. If Welsh Assembly Government wants this to be embraced at Framework Partnership level, it needs to provide coherent guidance with regards to partnership membership. For most of these actions to make sense and make a difference to children at local level, they will need to be understood by both the Children's and the Young People's Partnerships, as well as other agencies and local authority departments. Currently, play sector representation on partnerships is sketchy in most areas. We are concerned

that some of those tasked with representing play may not have appropriate experience and knowledge to respond to the Assembly's commitment and ethos towards play. This needs to be redressed to make the policy and plan a reality to all children living in Wales.

Members of Play Officers Wales welcome and applaud the Government's on-going commitment to play in Wales and look forward to being instrumental in the Assembly's long term vision for children and young people growing up in Wales.



CARMARTHENSHIRE YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S ASSOCIATION
CYMDEITHAS PLANT A PHOBL IFANC SIR GŶR

CYCA:

Let's put **PLAY** right up where it belongs!

And doesn't the *WAG Play Policy Implementation Plan* do the trick?

Carmarthen Youth and Children's Association has operated play clubs and activities for 25 years, providing

meaningful play opportunities to meet children's needs in Llanelli and Carmarthenshire- now we have the use of a document which will validate that work and give everyone some direction. Play will now be officially recognized as a vital part of a child's development and this document will help organizations such as CYCA to continue its work and further develop ideas that will significantly improve children's lives.

Play in the community is always a real concern for parents that we engage with,

"Should we let them out to play....."

CYCA will implement the *WAG* document as a guide to what can be achieved, by supporting and encouraging opportunities for children to play in our communities.

This will include engaging with partner organizations to keep our streets and parks open for play!

Maria Austin
CYCA Play Officer



The Venture Adventure Playworker:

In response to the *WAG* commitment to do what it can about the litigation culture:

"The playworker's priority should be the play experiences of the child and not the fear of litigation. It is a relief to see that the Assembly recognises this."

Mel Kearsley.

Joe (11), Rhondda Cynon Taff:

When I was invited to attend the launch of the *Play Policy Implementation Plan* at The Museum of Welsh Life I was really excited because I was pretty sure I would have a good time there and it meant a morning off school! If I knew *Play Wales* was going to ask me to write something about this, I might have paid more attention to the talking that day, but I was too busy climbing a tree!

I started to look at the Plan, but I had a bit of trouble reading all of it so I decided to pay attention to the things I understood. I think the bit about encouraging more play provision is really important. For my friends and me, playing is probably the most important thing we do. Sometimes we get into trouble because we end up playing when we should be doing something else, like wet play in school. It's kind of like we can't help it, and it seems that whatever we enjoy is wrong.

Anyway I think the bit about having after school clubs is good; it's good to have clubs so that Mums and Dads can work, but not if kids are stuck in or doing stuff organised by adults. It's good to have adults to help you with something or treat you if you are hurt, but not to tell you what to do because out of school is our own spare time.



The bit about schools will be really important. Right now I don't think all the adults at school understand it. There are places we could play at my school like on the grass and in a garden, but we are not allowed to. My

school is building on the grass but they still don't let us in the garden at all. That would be a really simple thing to change. I have talked about this in student council meetings but our Head always talks about 'health and safety!' He says it so much even us kids say it! We have a community school near our village and the caretaker there has told us we can go and play football there when it is closed, even though all of us go to a different school, and I think it is kind because our Head and caretaker would say "NO!"

When I was reading about play in the community, I thought about where I play. I play in a lane that is good for riding bikes and making dens. We can use the cricket field and the man in charge of the field lets us play there. One of the most important things about where I live that helps us to play is that we do not live on a fast road, so I am glad that the Assembly is going to try to do something to make it easier for kids who do live on busy roads.

One of the best things we ever did down the

lane was to build a leaf pile at the bottom of a tree. We got a ladder from one of the bigger boy's house and used it to climb because there were no low branches. Then we jumped into the huge pile. A lady walking past told us it was dangerous. It probably looked like it was, but my brother and me were careful at first because we didn't know what would happen. We followed the older boys and once we did it a few times, we got used to it, and it was really fun.

I don't often go anywhere where there is a play worker, but I do think it's good to have them around. When we were at The Museum of Welsh Life at the launch, there were some playworkers there who watched us and played with us when we asked them. They gave us the tubes and net. My sister fell out the wheelbarrow there, but she was okay. In my school, teachers and dinner ladies make such a big deal out of a tiny scratch it's unbelievable! I don't think we should rely on playworkers to do everything for us and to get everything all the time, but it's good to have them around because they can carry heavy things for us and understand how we feel and if we're upset they would try and help us.

I have written about the things in the plan that mean something to me. Some of it is stuff for adults to do and I think that most kids would like to be involved when it is something they understand and can get involved in.



**children's
play council**

Children's Play Council:

Issy Cole-Hamilton, Principal Policy and Research Officer for England's Children's Play Council.

So it's Wales 60: England 15 then. But this isn't the rugby – it's infinitely more important than that. The Welsh Assembly Government has put real flesh on the bones of its Play Policy – a very welcome development that can only be good for the children of Wales.

In England we are moving forward, slowly – and we think surely – towards a more strategic approach to play provision at both local and national level. Children's Play Council, with support from Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) are developing national performance indicators for play opportunities; DCMS are preparing a publication describing the Government 'vision for play' and how this should be taken forward and every local authority should be developing a play strategy in order to access their share of the BIG Lottery Fund Children's Play Programme.

This is all positive and exciting but how much more confident would we feel if the government in England followed the lead of Wales and published a play policy with an implementation plan making such strong commitments to children and young people.

We're playing catch-up at the moment but we will learn from Wales and maybe, just maybe, children and young people in England will, in the future, have the same encouragement and protection for their play and free time as those in Wales. Congratulations.



Play Scotland:

When it comes to the importance of play in the community, Scotland has a long way to go to catch up with the Welsh Assembly's Play Policy Implementation Plan.

Play Wales has managed to overcome the triviality factor in children's play and ensure that Play Services become a statutory



Marguerite Hunter-Blair, Director

requirement rather than languishing at the discretionary soft end of Public Policy. We offer our congratulations to Wales on this historic step forward and thank them for making our journey that wee bit easier.



International Play Association:

Valerie Fronczek, Communications Officer, IPA, The International Play Association: Promoting the Child's Right to Play.

What a refreshing experience to read the words "play is the elemental learning process by which humankind has developed", not as an introduction to an esoteric offering from an ivory tower, but as part of a national government policy! The precise definition of play that follows is equally refreshing given the incredible stumbling block this concept so often presents for would-be play champions around the world.

Then, as I review the complete Play in Wales document, I am so very impressed with its breadth and its built-in funding and evaluation strategies. There is no question that play provision cuts across jurisdictions, ministries, departments, and professional disciplines, and that this fact hampers play provision progress throughout the world. This policy really does seem to have been envisioned through the eyes of a child. Children are not divided into compartments.

I applaud the promotion of co-operation between agencies; the attention to children with disabilities, and to children of different cultures; the use of schools as a community resource – and the training of school staff in the importance of play; the involvement of the community in play provision; the

promotion of playwork as a respected profession; and perhaps most of all the emphasis on the inclusion of children in planning.

IPA is concerned about the low priority given to play by signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – concerned that the right to play is rarely mentioned in the regular reports made by the nations of the world. One of the greatest strengths of the UN Convention is that all articles are inter-related and indivisible. While article 31 specifically addresses the child's right to play, there are many others that are also relevant such as those concerned with development, the child's right to be heard, and the child's best interests.

Wales has therefore given a fine example of the important role of play provision in implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. I trust that this internationally unprecedented achievement (as far as I am aware) will be more than a footnote in UK's next report to the UN and that it will in turn strengthen the determination of play advocates around the world to raise the bar on what can be achieved on behalf of children.

Valerie's work in Canada has been largely in the areas of child advocacy and social planning. She is currently (in retirement) President of the International Institute or Child Rights and Development (University of Victoria) and Communications Officer for IPA. She estimates that she is approximately three-fifths Welsh – an estimate that grew slightly after reading the Wales Play Policy Implementation Plan!

For more information about the International Play Association please visit www.ipaworld.org



Rospa:

David Yearley, Playground Safety Advisor, Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.



It is refreshing to see children being made central to society through the policies and objectives of government. The creation of

a healthy environment for all children in Wales in which they can express their right to play will surely have benefits for their development as well as that of the communities in which they live and society as a whole.

The recognition that risk taking is an essential element of play is important; children should be able to play and learn in an environment that gives them appropriate exposure to risk, without the inappropriate risks.

The emphasis on encouraging children and young people to become involved with the planning and design of play environments is to be applauded and the unprecedented focus on adventure playgrounds will show what children's imaginations can achieve.

It is hoped that the policy will lead children to become more involved with their local environment by engaging with play space that takes account of the balance between risk and play.



Flintshire County Council:

Mike Hornby, Leisure Services Manager, Flintshire County Council.

Overall there are no two ways about it, this Implementation Plan is beneficial to children's play and children's play providers. We are head and shoulders above other UK countries and it is good that the Welsh Assembly Government confirms a clear strong commitment. However, I am disappointed that it has not gone further – the recommendations of the Play Policy Implementation Group were much stronger, and I am concerned about two points:

1. The omission of a statutory duty for local authorities to provide for children's play. If we were to make this work, we would need guaranteed resources, similar to education, highways etc. In the meantime the way we work in Flintshire is to make service provision recognised as essential in terms of quality of life. Councils are always looking to enhance services and, at the same time, to achieve savings. If we make sure that there are sufficient positive outcomes from our work within children's play, then we can have some confidence about safeguarding resources.
2. Where it comes to children and young people's use of school playing fields outside of school hours, the Assembly "actively encourages" schools to open up their grounds as play resources. If schools had been directed, rather than "encouraged" it would have made a significant difference to public held open space for children, who after all, spend most of their lives outside of school – think of the summer holidays. As a service provider and manager this would have been very welcome.



Heledd Wyn Hardy:

Heledd Wyn Hardy, mother of Trystan (9) and Alys (7).

Proud to be a Mother in Wales

It was a great pleasure to read the Welsh Assembly Government's Play Policy Implementation Plan. I'm glad to live in a country that recognises that play is a "critically important" activity. As a mother of two children, I appreciate the Assembly's contribution towards their future. Not only will it improve the quality of life to all who live in Wales today, but the document also emphasises the Assembly's core aim that all children and young persons should have an opportunity to benefit from a variety of activities, including play.

I welcome the initiative to provide guidance for parents. It is high time for our children to step out into the open air and take part in experiences beyond the television set or computer screen. Their imagination should be fostered in a variety of ways, but most important of all we need to give them space to discover things for themselves. I believe that this document is extremely important, not only for our children's health but also in learning and developing interaction to ensure a society that respects all its members.

In the document the Assembly Government says that the emphasis should be on "practical steps rather than statements of principle". My hope is that the Assembly will keep its promise to nurture opportunities to create a better quality of life for children and their families in all parts of Wales.

Thank you:

Thank you to Austin, Caitlin, Fern, Gwilym, Ieuan, Isaac, Joe, John, Mali, Maria, Millie, Morgan, Patrick, Robert, Steve and Zoe for providing fantastic photo opportunities at the WAGPIIP launch, and thank you to Debra Jones and Paul Rowley for taking the photographs.



What's in a Name? The dialogue continues ...

In the last issue of Play for Wales Jan Oliver, Clybiau Plant Cymru Training Officer, explored some of the confusions that exist around roles and titles in childcare and playwork. Two readers felt moved to respond:

Like Jan, I am one of many people who have worked for years in the play sector, and have gained experience of early years settings, after school clubs, summer play schemes, adventure play and other provision that offers opportunities to play, and feel that even though we may not all agree with all the changes that we have lived through, it can only be positive that playwork is now firmly on the Welsh Assembly Government's agenda.

The Play Policy Implementation Plan clearly states that "if practitioners throughout Wales are to share and implement the Assembly Government's vision of the importance of quality play experiences, there is a need to develop a common idea of what good play facilities look like." It is clear that when the Assembly refers to play facilities it is intended to include all types of childcare. In my opinion this should be reflected in the terminology used in relation to staffing.

I disagree with Jan when she opts for the hybrid title Playcarer. The dictionary defines a hybrid as something that is sterile. Jan refers to confusion amongst workers in clubs as to whether they are childcare workers or playworkers. I feel that the setting should not define the profession; children need to play in their own free time and therefore every worker within childcare should be a playworker practicing within an ethos that puts children's play first – the Playwork Principles.

The career pathway offered to people who wish to pursue playwork as a profession clearly encourages students to undertake Cache Level II and Level III Diploma in Playwork, therefore, why any organisation would endorse the use of a non-existent title leaves me somewhat bewildered. It is only via a structured mechanism that provides clear definitions and professional boundaries that we can develop the credibility of the playwork profession. Hybridising and therefore diluting names will not help us to be a cohesive workforce with its own identity or induce respect between workers whether they are employed within childcare or open access settings.

Barbara Howe,
BA (Hons) Community Studies (Playwork)

Cwlwm Project Update – New Playwork Materials

As I'm sure many of you are aware, Play Wales is currently developing new training materials for playworkers at induction, level 2 and 3, and training for playwork trainers. The project is part of the CWLWM development partnership funded by the European Social Fund as part of the EQUAL programme.

The project will offer a radical alternative to existing qualifications by considering play from both a biological and social perspective. It will offer a range of techniques and methods including experiential learning that enable playworkers to consider the complexity of what is happening when children play and to examine external 'adult' agendas that conflict with that drive to play.

Four months into the project and we are making rapid progress in a number of areas. Aided by web-based communication, smaller groups are tackling the various components that make up a successful course including learning materials, infrastructure, accreditation, support and delivery.

What many people may be less aware of is that we are also in the process of tendering for the production of a DVD and film about children's play. The film will show a variety of children in locations across Wales from a school playground to the street, and from a beach to a local park.

Our aim is to encourage debate and inform play workers and others whose work has an impact on children's play in Wales, about good practice in facilitating children's play – from day to day working, to the way public space can be reclaimed by children.

As an observational documentary, we hope it will be inspiring, enlightening and not a little controversial – but the very opposite of existing reality television programmes that often demonize children.

As well as supporting student's learning on the new courses, the footage will be cut into a multi-part series for a more mainstream audience on broadcast television. We have had interest from major television producers including BBC Wales and S4C, and are hoping for a release by the end of the year.

Richard Trew
Cwlwm Project Manager

To find out more about the Cwlwm partnership please visit www.cwlwm.org.uk





What a Play Strategy means for Playworkers

So at last there is a government in the UK that is forward thinking enough to give the UK its first ever national play strategy (or policy implementation plan). And it's no surprise that it's Wales either because it is part of the Assembly Government's ongoing commitment to children and young people.

But the introduction of the Play Strategy is also fantastic for playworkers; for the first time there is a clear acknowledgement of the need for trained and qualified playworkers and staffed adventure play provision. The Assembly Government is acknowledging playwork as a distinctive profession and 'wishes to see play provision staffed by workers trained to understand how to promote inclusive freely chosen play'. There is a clear understanding of the need to support flexible qualifications to attract and retain recruits to childcare, youth work and play whilst ensuring the quality of children's play is not compromised. There is an acknowledgement that different professions will need to understand each other's language and value the contributions they bring.

The strategy explains that it will be working with the UK Government and the Care Council for Wales in developing an integrated children's workforce, including a qualifications framework that incorporates playwork and a common core of skills and knowledge. A network will be created representing those working with children and young people, which will include SkillsActive, to facilitate consultation on proposals for developing the workforce, including qualifications and training.

The Implementation Timetable outline in the strategy for the playwork profession includes actions that will ensure:

- that there are appropriate training opportunities at all levels for playworkers.
- that the Assembly Government will work with the UK Government on the development of a children's workforce, including a single qualifications framework and the development of a common core of skills and knowledge.
- that the Assembly Government will seek ways of addressing recruitment and retention issue in conjunction with the Sector Skills Council SkillsActive.

In addition there is also a commitment to spread the word about the importance of play in children's lives overall, and the Assembly Government will produce guidance on what constitutes quality play opportunities and states that "out of school care

should provide children with opportunities for freely chosen play".

The timetable for these actions is immediate with deadlines between now and 2008. This timing is perfect because it coincides with the first UK Strategy for Playwork Education, Training and Qualifications which is just about to be published with an Implementation Plan for Wales.

Following extensive consultation with the playwork sector SkillsActive has worked with colleagues in Wales to produce this comprehensive plan that will provide opportunities for playwork education and training over the next five years. The Plan highlights the ambition to build a professional playwork workforce with links and transitions with other sectors and establishing strong partnerships. It acknowledges that over the last few years there has been a major increase in the numbers of people working with children needing to be qualified. It anticipates that the expansion of this qualified workforce will continue and will require a variety of learning pathways, more opportunities and a broader range of skills to meet the needs of existing and new learners. It recognises there will need to be new qualifications developed with a range of delivery mechanisms, e.g. on the job training and e-learning and a variety of assessment methods including assessed practice. The development of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales will become the coherent route for learners and will be the major driver of increased workforce qualification targets. Qualifications will be linked to roles identified within the National Occupational Standards and be matched to the Framework to reflect the different levels of expertise required and the wide range of roles undertaken within the profession.

The Welsh Playwork Education and Training Implementation Plan will be published later this year as part of SkillsActive's Sector Skills Agreement and will help to make the actions 'Play in Wales' a reality.

We know that children benefit from quality staffed provision

but the reality is that Wales is the only government providing the framework for local action and the acknowledgement that playworkers can make a real contribution to children's play.

Tanny Stobart, SkillsActive

Play in Wales (cont.)

Continued <p1

The History

In October 2002 the Welsh Assembly broke new ground when Jane Hutt, now Minister for Children, announced the world's first play policy.

In 2004 the Assembly gathered a group of representatives from interested organisations and officials from a range of departments to explore how the policy might be implemented across Wales. Play

Wales and Children in Wales drew up a set of recommendations from the group and these were put forward for consultation ending early in 2005. The consultation had all party support, and one of the largest numbers of responses to any consultation that officials had witnessed to date.

Although the Play Policy provided inspiration to many play providers there were those who were sceptical about how it could be implemented effectively, and there remain those who are challenged by the concepts within it. The Wales play sector (and interested international

onlookers) waited in anticipation of a strategy that they hoped would support their work on the ground, and of real targets and the financial support to make the vision a reality. In the meantime the responsibility for play moved into the Assembly's Education and Lifelong Learning division, where the Minister and officials were very clear that while there was pressure to complete the process begun in 2002, they wanted to take time to get the job right. The Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy Implementation Plan was launched on 15 February 2006.



Events

17 and 18 May

The Spirit of Adventure Play, Cardiff.

A Play Wales conference for playworkers who use, or hope to use the adventure playground approach.

Contact our national office 029 2048 6050 or phil@playwales.org.uk

Keynote speakers include Roger Hart and Jane Davidson AM.

18 – 21 May 2006

CYWU Conference, Llandudno.

The playworkers' union conference – non-members are also welcome.

Visit www.cywu.org.uk

15 June 2006

Ensuring Play Value RoSPA International Play Safety Conference, Loughborough

RoSPA International Play Safety Conference aims to help play providers towards the provision of exciting but safe areas for children to play.

Contact RoSPA Events on 0870 777 2120 or email events@rospa.com

5 – 7 July 2006

Planning and Designing Healthy Public Outdoor Spaces for Young People in the 21st Century, Bristol.

Outdoor play and the role of inclusive design of outdoor spaces as a way of promoting play. Papers and presentations are invited.

Please contact the Faculty of the Built Environment University of the West of England, 0117 965 6261

21 – 23 July 2006

Wild and Away Conference, Gloucestershire

The conference will draw together, celebrate and promote the growing enthusiasm for environmental playwork in the UK.

<http://www.playwork.co.uk/wildaboutplay/index.htm>

What's New..

...in our Information Resource

The Play Wales Information Resource based in Cardiff Bay with a branch in our North Office in Prestatyn provides a wide range of regularly updated written and visual material relating to children and young people's play and all types of play provision. For enquiries, or to make an appointment to visit, please contact our Information Officer Gill Evans on 029 2048 6050 or email info@playwales.org.uk.

...Neighbourhood Play Toolkit –

a Children's Play Council and National Children's Bureau resource for local groups and play services working to increase access to good neighbourhood play opportunities. ISBN 1 904787

We will provide this CD-rom for a local group willing to review it in our next issue. Please contact Gill Evans if you would like to volunteer.

...Playing on the Wildside –

a resource for people wishing to enable opportunities for children to play freely in and around natural environments, produced as part of the Wild About Play project of Playwork Partnerships, University of Gloucester.

Contact 01242 532 949 or team@playwork.co.uk

...Inclusion of disabled children in primary school playgrounds,

Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Woolley, Armitage, Bishop, Curtis and Ginsborg. Based on research, this book reveals how disabled children are included in play and identifies organisational, social and physical barriers and good practice.

Find out more at www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/0016.asp

URGENT – because we don't know how much longer it will last.

Buy 2 copies of the FIRST CLAIM through Amazon and save £10.00.

We don't know how much longer they can keep this up because we are the only source and have been selling the FIRST CLAIM to everyone at the same price £14.50 inc. pp. It seems almost too good to be true!