

Play for Wales

Issue 53 Summer 2019

Play news and briefing from
the national charity for play



Child-friendly communities



Contents

- | | | | |
|---|---|----|---------------------------------------|
| 2 | Editorial | 10 | Right to play in situations of crisis |
| 3 | Making the case for school playtime | 12 | Project Play |
| 4 | Children's Right to Play in Wales | 14 | Playday 2019 |
| 6 | Time, space and freedom to play | 14 | What happened to our 31? |
| 8 | A call for a child friendly approach to planning and urban design | 15 | An update from the Minister |
| | | 16 | Playful communities |

Thank you

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed to this magazine – we couldn't do it without you.

This issue of *Play for Wales*, as well as previous issues, is available to download at www.playwales.org.uk

Guest Editorial

Children's play brings life to communities and supports, happy, healthy, rights-respecting childhoods.

It's therefore sad to see that children's rights in public space are still being curtailed – whether that be complaints about children chalking on pavements, or scandalous segregation of play opportunities between children of different socio-economic backgrounds. However, the drive and enthusiasm with which the play sector – including children themselves – are pushing against these trends is both inspiring and hopeful.

This issue of *Play for Wales* draws on articles that reflect Play Wales' recent Spirit conference and symposium on child-friendly communities. It draws out current and best practice, as well as featuring fascinating insights from research.

Dr Wendy Russell tells us about the power of viewing children's play as a matter of spatial justice. Dinah Bornat reflects on her work mapping neighbourhoods and communities with and for children. Dr Sudeshna Chaterjee

explores the challenging and yet emotionally-moving results of the International Play Association's (IPA) research on children's play in crisis situations. Professor Sinead Brophy's insights about modern childhoods in Wales through analysis of the Growing Up in Wales project were published in the Autumn 2018 issue of this magazine.

These examples emphasise just how important advocating for play in communities is, and gives us some of the most up to date evidence on how much time and space children currently have to play.

As a speaker of the symposium and attendee of the conference, I found it fundamentally encouraging to see increasing interest in the child-friendly agenda from planners and designers in Wales. For my own part, I spoke about how children's participation in planning needs to be looked at through a lens of both process and outcome. However, planners and planning policy tend to centre the planning process above all else, and this rarely leads to robust, child-friendly outcomes.

However, and encouragingly, new national planning policy in Wales is now oriented towards the well-being of future generations. This makes it unique amongst its UK counterparts where economic growth remains the key target. Indeed, the Play Sufficiency Duty has increased attention to place-based approaches to play in Wales.

Writing this from my office in Edinburgh, I am delighted to see that the Scottish Government is following in the path of Welsh Government by integrating play sufficiency assessments into upcoming planning reforms.

There is space to grow this agenda within planning and design in Wales, but the frameworks now open up new and exciting pathways to do so. I look forward to seeing the rise of child-friendly communities in Wales and beyond in the coming years.

Dr Jenny Wood

Research Associate at the Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE), Heriot-Watt University.

Jenny is also a co-founder and Chair of the Board at A Place in Childhood (APiC) and her research areas are homelessness, poverty and child-friendly urban planning.



Making the case for school playtime

Children say that playtimes are the most important part of the school day to them. They have the right to time and space to play as part of their school day. School playtime is vital to children for their fun and relaxation as well as for their health, well-being and development.

Given all the benefits of school playtime, the British Psychological Society says it should not be taken away from children as punishment. In its position paper, *Children's right to play*, the Society's Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) says:

- Educational psychologists have a key role in championing opportunities for child-led play for all children both in and outside school, for example through:
 - o Challenging practice that restricts or reduces access to play.
 - o Advocating for access to play within casework.
 - o Supporting whole-school initiatives to promote play.
- Withdrawing break time opportunities for play in school should never be used as a punishment (for example for misbehaviour or completing unfinished work), nor the threat of withdrawal be used to control children's behaviour.
- All children and young people should have access to free, high quality, local opportunities for play.
 - o This is particularly important for children who may currently experience exclusion from play for example disabled children, children living in poverty or children from minority communities.

www.bps.org.uk

Outdoor Classroom Day's worldwide research also makes the case for playtime being a key part of the school day. It shows that outdoor play at school helps develop healthy, curious and active children. Key findings from the *Playtime matters* report include:

- 40 percent of primary school teachers worldwide reported that children in their primary school class have less than 30 minutes of outdoor playtime on a normal school day.
- In the UK, just over half (51 percent) of primary classes surveyed have the recommended 60 minutes or more of outdoor playtime every day. A worrying 1 in 6 (16 percent) have less than 30 minutes.

www.outdoorclassroomday.org.uk

Estyn's *Healthy and happy – school impact on pupils' health and wellbeing* report highlights that schools that apply a whole school approach to supporting health and well-being provide an environment, facilities and space to play, socialise and relax at break times. It notes that:

- Access to outdoor play space across many schools is often compromised during inclement weather.
- Some schools have limited outdoor space and have to restrict access to some groups of pupils.

The report also raises concerns that pupils in these schools are less physically active and can find it hard to relax during playtimes which affects their well-being.

www.estyn.gov.wales

Play Wales says:

'Playtimes and break times at school are seen as very important by both children and their parents. Many children say that school is the main chance they have to play with their friends and most parents believe that it is important to allocate time for play during school hours.'

'Play Wales urges governing bodies and school leaders to consider the value to pupil well-being when making decisions on the planning and length of the school day including playtimes, lunchtimes and homework scheduling. We hope that the upcoming new curriculum for Wales will place greater emphasis on the need to provide sufficient time for play. We advise that Estyn makes the provision of adequate breaks for play mandatory and inspect them as part of its statutory inspections.'

Due to concerns and increased queries from parents about playtimes being cut in schools, Play Wales will be working with colleagues to find solutions so that all children can enjoy sufficient playtimes as part of their school day.

www.playwales.org.uk/eng/schools

Children's Right to Play in Wales: Six years of stories and change since the commencement of the Play Sufficiency Duty

In 2013 and 2014, Stuart Lester and Wendy Russell carried out two research projects into local authorities' (LAs) responses to the (then new) Play Sufficiency Duty¹.

Now, six years later, Wendy, together with Mike Barclay and Ben Tawil from Ludicology and Charlotte Derry from Playful Places, have completed a follow-up study, which looked at what people felt had changed since the Duty was introduced. They did this through:

- Analysing LA Play Sufficiency Assessments (PSAs) and other documents
- Talking to key officers in LAs, Play Wales, Welsh Government and the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales
- Talking to professionals, children and families in three case study LAs.

This article sums up what's worked well, what the challenges have been, and what the lessons for the future might be, to make sufficiency sustainable and even more successful.

The good stuff

- **Enthusiasm:** There is still great enthusiasm for the Play Sufficiency Duty.
- **Partnership working:** One of the biggest strengths and achievements of the Duty is the recognition that play is the responsibility of all adults and the requirement for LAs to work across different professional sectors is highly valued. Although dedicated play provision is important, attention is broadening to the conditions that can support playing out in neighbourhoods.

- **Children's own knowledge about play sufficiency:** All LAs are required to consult with children, and several are developing creative ways of gathering children's knowledge about their own neighbourhoods, adding to collective wisdom to deepen understandings of Play Sufficiency. This research shows that children do still play out.
- **Innovation:** The low cost/no cost basis for introducing the duty to secure sufficient opportunities for play has required LAs to think differently. Examples included: shipping containers with loose parts placed in communities; a planning department putting lots of stuff about play in their Residential Design Guide; a town centre manager chalking hopscotch on the pavement; local volunteers doing training to run play sessions; playworkers running sessions in a homeless hostel; a supplier donating scooters for a Scoot to School project; and social services drawing up a policy enabling foster carers to support risk-taking in play.



- **Workforce development:** Innovative ways to engage non-play professionals in appreciating their role in Play Sufficiency, has included the 'Life' conferences (School Life, Park Life, Home Life, Street Life); a professional development programme for LAs; and the development of an e-module on play for non-play specialist professionals.

In terms of playwork workforce development, the current revision of qualifications recognises the increasing diversification of playwork roles. Shorter, top-up qualifications at Level 2 and Level 3, developed by Play Wales, has made it easier for holiday playschemes to meet regulatory requirements.

- **Play Wales:** The work of Play Wales in supporting LAs and their partnership with Welsh Government was greatly valued. This has included regional Play Sufficiency meetings; research; national reviews of PSAs; training, qualifications and professional development work; information sheets and toolkits; and personal officer support.

The challenges

- **Cuts to services:** Unsurprisingly, the austerity measures imposed by the UK Government featured highly. There have been unprecedented cuts in play and playwork services, and the loss of the regional play associations has been particularly keenly felt. Cuts to youth services have affected both their users and younger children: anti-social behaviour came up frequently when talking to families and children about playing out. Some maintenance budgets have reduced to as little as £20 per play area per year.
- **Loss of capacity:** Alongside service cuts, staff cuts have meant many officers leading on Play Sufficiency now have extended remits, meaning less time and fewer resources for Play Sufficiency work. Staff cuts in other departments, alongside restructuring, hamper cross-departmental relationships.
- **Funding for play:** Funding streams have either been reduced or reframed in ways that make them difficult to access for play services. Whilst LAs value highly the £9.4 million made available through the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant (AWPOG) since 2013, and these have been used to fund good work, the unpredictable and last-minute nature of the funding militates against effective long-term strategic planning.
- **Support for Play Sufficiency from Welsh Government:** Welsh Government plays a key role in keeping the processes of Play Sufficiency in good repair to support conditions for LAs to deliver on Play Sufficiency. Several LA interviewees felt that

their hard work on PSAs could be acknowledged and used more, that links with other Welsh Government initiatives could be stronger, and that the unpredictable and last-minute nature of AWPOG funding was problematic. In interviews with Welsh Government officers, these concerns were acknowledged, as were other difficulties faced by LAs. They will be addressed in the forthcoming Welsh Government Play Review.

¹ For more information please visit: www.playwales.org.uk/eng/research

What next

Change takes time and it is still early days for Play Sufficiency in Wales. The Duty has been introduced at one of the most challenging times in the history of devolved and local governments and public services, yet much has been achieved in terms of partnership working, raising awareness of children's right to play, and reconfiguring services and spaces to create opportunities for playing. These concluding observations offer suggestions for sustaining and developing further Wales' capacity to be a play-friendly country:

- The concept of 'sufficiency' is a **process not a product**: there is no end state of 'sufficient', it involves ongoing collaborative engagement and experimentation at national and local levels.
- Play is valued for its role in **children's well-being in the here and now** as well as future-focused instrumental benefits.
- Children's right to play is a matter of **spatial justice**. Play Sufficiency is about holding **spatial habits and routines up to critical scrutiny** to see how they might include or exclude children's ability to find time and space to play.
- At national level, the forthcoming Play Review is an opportunity to use Play Sufficiency Assessment information to support best practice across LAs and to inform cross-departmental work within so that children's right to play is **acknowledged and embedded in national policies, practices and funding streams**.
- At **local level** both assessing and securing sufficient play opportunities requires identifying, developing and maintaining **the conditions that support playing**. This involves paying attention, through creative research and dialogue, to how space works and therefore how open it can be for children's play.

The full report will be available at: www.playwales.org.uk/eng/sufficiency

Time, space and freedom to play the views of children

Seeking children's views on their right to play is an important component of gauging how the right to play is being respected, protected and fulfilled.



Play Wales is working with Dr David Dallimore of Bangor University to analyse surveys completed by nearly 6,000 children across thirteen local authority areas in Wales as part of their Play Sufficiency Assessments in 2019.

Data was collated with the considerable assistance of Mike Welsby, a statistical officer through the Analytical Volunteer Programme, a government scheme to support voluntary organisations.

Through the survey, children tell us what's good about the play opportunities in their local area and tell us how satisfied they are about when, how and where they can play.

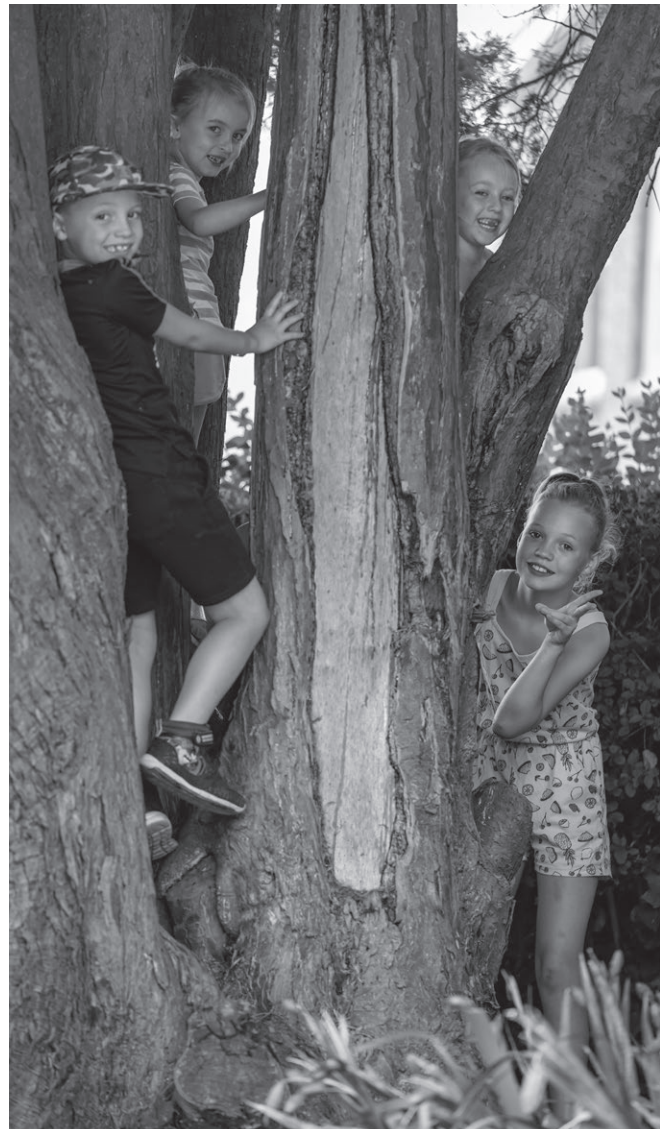
In support of Playday 2019, Play Wales published highlights from the new research that reports on what children say about play in Wales. A full report will be published in Winter 2019.

Predicting play satisfaction

Using a statistical method called 'regression' we were able to see which factors are most likely to predict children's satisfaction with their play opportunities, and therefore identify the most important barriers that children face. From the data, the following factors were found to be important in predicting children's overall satisfaction:

1. Being 'allowed out' to play
2. Feeling safe when out playing
3. Having enough time to play
4. Not having a disability
5. Being in a place where most adults are great and happy with children playing out
6. Being under the age of 11.

Other factors including the quality of play spaces, where children play, how children travel to play spaces and being a boy or a girl, were not found to be strong predictors of play satisfaction.



Conclusions

While not a complete picture of children's thoughts and feelings about the play opportunities they have in their area, the large number of participants in this survey means that there is a strong likelihood that the findings would be similar had all children in Wales taken part.

Given the benefits to children and teenagers from play – and playing out in particular – the findings highlight some important messages.



Time to play

- While most children in Wales go out to play most days, or at least a few days a week, a quarter of children might be seen as experiencing 'play poverty' in that they *never, or hardly ever* play out.
- More than one in five children said that they did not have enough time or would like more time to play. Many children clearly have less time to devote to play, with other evidence suggesting that their free-time is taken up by structured, educational or technology-based activities.

Space to play

- While children told us that on average they play or hang out in about five different places, the most common places they played were each other's houses or gardens. While most children regularly 'play out' around a quarter of children rarely do so, and mainly 'play-in' with potential consequences for their well-being.
- Children are not always able to play in spaces they want to. Girls feel more restricted than boys. However, children are generally satisfied with the places they are able to play in.

Freedom to play

- How safe children feel in the spaces they play is an important factor in whether they play out. There are links between their own feelings of safety, and the restrictions placed on them by parents (rules), and how independently mobile children are.

- The attitude towards children's play by adults within communities has an effect on their freedom to play, but mainly for older children who are more likely to feel that adults have negative attitudes towards them playing or hanging out.

Overall, the picture presented by children across Wales is that when they are allowed out, and able to play in the places they want to. Most children are happy with the choice of good quality spaces, and overall are satisfied with their play opportunities.

There are however, many children that because of parental restrictions – often with well-meaning concerns for safety – are not able to play out and therefore gain the greatest health, social and emotional benefits on offer.

What children told us

'I think it's good playing with my friends because it's fun and it makes me happy.'

'What's good about my area is there are lots of places to jump and move, that helps me with my ADHD.'

'The green near my street now has a sign up saying "no football, skateboarding and cycling in this area" and me and my friends used to play out there a lot.'

'There are houses by the places where I play so if I was in trouble or hurt, I could get them.'

'We always make-up our own games.'

'It is very fun and exciting with my friends.'

'There are lots of places to explore.'

'My friends play with me.'

A call for a child friendly approach to planning and urban design

Architect and urban designer, Dinah Bornat tells us about how her work, and meaningful consultation with children in particular, is helping to ensure planners and developers take a more child and play friendly approach.



It was a pleasure to be invited to speak at Spirit 2019 earlier this year. Although I've spent many holidays in Wales, this was my first visit to Cardiff, so on the morning of the conference I decided to explore and took a walk through Bute Park. It was a beautiful day and as I stood at the edge of the river Taff I thought again about my presentation.

I am an architect, urban designer and university lecturer. In our practice we have been focusing on child friendly cities since 2012, when I first started running a Play Street on our road in Hackney, London using the model developed by Playing Out in Bristol.

When I watched my children and their friends run around on the tarmac and car strewn road outside their front doors I realised that the urban environment need not be designed in this way. If we built new pieces of city, we had the opportunity to open it up to children, so that they could play safely and explore the city for themselves.

Child friendly cities are a UNICEF response to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), enshrined in UK law – this includes 'the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities'. In planning policy terms this should mean both the social and physical elements of play are upheld – by definition freely chosen, self-directed and intrinsically motivated. In practice they are not.

Since 2012 we have built up an evidence base, using observational methods, mapping techniques and research and have published a number of documents. This now means we are able to effectively influence policy and new development. Throughout this time I have been inspired and encouraged by a rich resource of playwork theory and practice. It has provided me with an understanding of how children use space to play and how we can do better to provide for this when we design cities.

Now when I give talks to planners, developers and architects, I borrow from Wendy Russell - asking delegates to recall their favourite memory from childhood. For the majority it will be outside, with other children (no adults) and with an element of risk. Suddenly built environment professionals are remembering how important their freedoms were and start thinking like children. This opens up a new way of conceiving the city and helps better articulate the needs of children and young people in new developments.

To go with this way of thinking, we have developed mapping systems that measure the potential use of external spaces, allowing us to challenge commonly held assumptions and some urban design theories. We find that spaces that are well overlooked, directly accessible from homes and *en route* to other spaces tend to be well used by children as well as other age groups. This is valuable information for developers and local authorities who are seeking to make the most of their investments.

We test our findings in focus groups with children and young people who provide us with their lived experiences, often influenced by the physical aspects of their surroundings. We know that the needs and aspirations of young people arise out of their everyday activities. We also know that the layout of neighbourhoods can have a huge impact on children's ability to play out safely and to meet friends.

In my presentation at Spirit I had intended to run through the work that we have been doing and to update the delegates on recent policy changes in London, in Hackney, which is working towards becoming a child friendly borough, and in other local authorities. I wanted to weave in the methods we had been developing from Ben Tawil and Mike Barclay's Play Sufficiency work. But at that moment I realised I had a unique audience who were potential allies – experts about play, the very people able to disrupt the design and planning process on behalf of children and young people.

The planning process gives local people the chance to input into policy and proposals in their area, but it is not geared towards children who do not vote, own cars or property. Yet local neighbourhoods matter to them and unless they are actively engaged through consultation, they are unlikely to have any impact at all on future development. This is compounded by consultation that tends to be poorly directed, often asking children what they want (a hard question to answer or know what to do with), or there is an over emphasis on playgrounds. Neither of these approaches serve children well, which is why in our office we are developing more meaningful engagement that seeks to bridge the gap between lived experience and the briefing and design process.



The opportunity the Spirit conference presented was for a call-to-arms. I decided to ask playworkers to help with the child friendly city approach by actively engaging with new proposals. They know that play is rarely an activity that occurs in playgrounds under the watchful eye of parents and carers, but rather a continuum of negotiation, risk, freedoms, exploration and invention and that children will play anywhere if they are given the space, time and permission to do so.

As local residents themselves, playworkers have specific expertise and insight that new developments need and can explain to developers and local authorities how important play is and how homes and streets can be arranged to allow as much play as possible.

Play needs to occur inside the home, on the doorstep, down the street and into the park and countryside beyond. I asked the delegates to act like good citizens and to advocate for play whenever they can, to amplify children's voices, to use real stories and lived experiences and to help change the way in which we plan villages, towns and cities in the future. I'm glad I came to the Spirit conference this year and had a chance to see a little of Cardiff. I hope that new Welsh legislation and with the support of playworkers, Wales can support a more child friendly approach to planning and urban design.

For more information about Dinah's work visit:
www.zcdarchitects.co.uk

Right to play in situations of crisis

To understand the right to play and play needs of children living in situations of crisis the International Play Association (IPA) undertook an international research project on Access to Play in Crisis in 2016-17.

Conducted in six countries: India, Japan, Lebanon, Nepal, Thailand and Turkey, the project was led by Sudeshna Chatterjee, currently IPA's Development Officer, under the guidance of an international expert review panel. Here, Sudeshna tells us more about what they found out.



The locations represented a diversity of crisis situations:

- everyday crises in an illegal squatter settlement in Kolkata, India, and in substandard housing in Burmese and Cambodian migrant settlements in Thailand
- the humanitarian crisis of the continued exclusion and discrimination against the Roma people in racially mixed neighbourhoods in Istanbul, Turkey and in the informal tented settlements housing Syrian refugees across Lebanon
- the crisis triggered by the enormous triple disaster following the Great East Japan earthquake in 2011, and the ongoing crisis in the aftermath of the Gorkha earthquake in 2015 in Nepal.

Key findings

Across the situations of crisis in the six countries, children played. The nature of play was to a large extent shaped by: the age, gender and ability of the child; the nature of the space where they had access to play; the cultural and social context of the community; the time available for play and the level of parental permission for playing in certain places and at certain times.

Age, gender and ability

The youngest children and girls in some cultures (for example in India, Thailand and Nepal) played close to

home even when the play space had high risks, such as the railway track that forced its way through the heart of the squatter settlement in Kolkata. From the age of eight onwards boys sought out spaces away from parents' or known gazes to engage in deep and risky play such as in abandoned buildings, in a deserted dock area or on the river.

In many cultures, such as in Lebanon, Nepal and India, adolescent girls had no time or permission to play. The girls themselves refrained from playing, believing that they were too old to play. However, they did play imaginatively while working, using the materials at hand (such as cooking utensils or clothes for washing) or played on their mobile phones at home in the gaps between household work.

In this research, the reporting on disabled children accessing play was minimal. Except, in Nepal it was reported that disabled children were tied up in safe open spaces to keep them from harm while rebuilding activities went on around them.

Nature of space and nature of play

The nature of the space typically shaped the nature and type of play. For example, while playing on the railway track, the children made wheeled toys to race on the tracks and when playing near the river they were preoccupied with making things that could float.

When children had parental permission to seek out safe open spaces in the devastated post-earthquake

landscapes in Nepal while parents were busy rebuilding their houses, what did the children play? They mimicked what they saw around them, and built homes with any available material just like their parents. Across the sites, it was found that the greater the risks in the local environment, the riskier the children's play.

Permission

In all the situations of crisis parents restricted play in at least some places and at certain times, if not in all outdoor places and at all times. Among the countries, the children of Japan after the earthquake and tsunami had the least permission to play. First while staying in the evacuation centres for up to six months after the disaster, and later while staying in temporary housing, when children were told by adults not to play outside.

While staying in the evacuation centres, some children tried to seek out secret places such as under a bridge, where they could have contact with nature. Across the sites, children adopted different strategies to cope with the lack of permission for free play. This included turning to technology such as watching television, becoming absorbed in smart phones or playing video games on their own devices or at a gaming shop. Coping also took the form of playing with language as was most commonly seen in the children's centres in Turkey which did not allow free play outdoors.

Time

Even though educational pressure was one of the biggest reasons why children didn't have free time to play – this was certainly true in Japan and in Turkey – most children outside of Japan and Nepal didn't regularly attend formal schools or age appropriate classes. This didn't mean they had time to play, as paid and unpaid work, and lack of safe spaces prevented play across the sites in Thailand, India, Lebanon and Turkey.

Attempts to promote the right to play in situations of crisis

Across the countries, attempts to promote the right to play by different organisations can most notably be seen in Japan, Thailand and Lebanon and to a lesser degree in Turkey and Nepal. In India, where much free play was witnessed in the most hazardous conditions, securing the right to play depended very much on individual creativity and resilience of children living in squatter settlements.

Globally, humanitarian crisis and disaster conditions are on the rise as recent data from the United Nations suggest. Promoting the right to play in these situations is crucial to restoring normality in children's lives as well as building their resilience as

recommended by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in General Comment 17*.

The many forms of play that were witnessed in the different situations of crisis show children's capacity to 'overcome adversity, survive stress and rise above disadvantage' (the very definition of resilient children by Rutter**) while partaking in the pleasure of childhood. Playing prepared children to bounce forward from the crisis.

However, a word of caution is necessary when we talk about play as a resilience building tool. Even as the children in this research who played freely and creatively in the most challenging of environments emerge as resilient beings, children simply cannot sustain resilience adaptation over time if they are left to their own means to continually face severe assaults from the external environment.

Risk reduction and management in situations of crisis cannot be the sole responsibility of individuals and communities, the state has a significant role to play in this, a concept rightfully underscored in the General Comment 17 on the right to play.

For more information about the research project and a report of the findings, written by Sudeshna visit: www.ipaworld.org/what-we-do/access-to-play-in-crisis/apc-research-project/

Access to Play for Children in Situations of Crisis: A Toolkit for Staff, Managers and Policy Makers

Developed by the IPA and written by Play Wales' Martin King-Sheard and Marianne Mannello, this toolkit supports people working in crisis situations so that they are better able to understand and support children's play.

Download the toolkit at: www.ipaworld.org/resources

* UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2013) *General Comment No 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (art. 31)*. Geneva, Committee on the Rights of the Child

** Rutter, M. (1979) Protective factors in children's responses to stress and disadvantage. In *Primary Prevention of Psychopathology, Vol. 3: Social Competence in Children*, Kent, M. W. and Rolf, J. E. (eds). Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England

Project Play

Come out to play hide & seek, skipping and hopscotch as part of Playful Childhoods' new campaign.

Playful Childhoods

Project Play aims to get families across Wales away from screens and revisiting the simplicity and enjoyment of playing outdoors and playing games of the past. Whether it's on a beach, in a park, in a garden or on a safe street outside the house.

Through Project Play, Playful Childhoods wants to inject the fun and spirit back into simple, imaginative, free play – just like adults of today remember fondly from their childhoods.

A survey* to inform the development of the Project Play campaign revealed that 66 percent of adults believe children in Wales today have fewer of the same play experiences as when they were young. The results varied slightly across Wales – from 62 percent in mid Wales, to 63 percent in the south, to 69 percent in the north and to 72 percent in west Wales.

The most common reason is due to concerns that technology is negatively impacting childhood, with 59 percent of adults saying that 'technology gets in the way' of play.





According to the research the most missed games from the past are hide and seek, double dutch (skipping rope) and hopscotch. Playful Childhoods wants to bring back these games to remind adults how easy it is to play outdoors with friends and family, with no cost.

The survey also explored the benefits of having more free and spontaneous play. Most respondents reported how playing as a child kept them active and healthy which has resulted in them staying more active as an adult. Others said it helped them develop a good imagination and social skills:

'We learnt how to have fun and how to interact with others of different age groups and from different backgrounds'

'As a child, a sense of exploration, as an adult, an inventive ability'

www.playfulchildhoods.wales

For the latest updates follow Playful Childhoods on Facebook and Instagram

* Research results – the online survey was completed by 1,027 respondents across Wales in May 2019. Answers were collected from respondents in north (23 percent), south east (46 percent), mid (7 percent) and west Wales (24 percent). Of the respondents, 67 percent were parents or legal guardians.

The Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services, Julie Morgan, said:

'Play is essential to children's enjoyment and contributes so much to their overall well-being. I'm pleased that the Welsh Government have been able to provide funding to Play Wales to support the Playful Childhoods campaign. The initiative will help highlight the importance of play and the role families and communities have in creating opportunities for children to play.'

Children's Commissioner for Wales, Sally Holland said:

'Playing is so important to children's development that they actually have a human right to play, and this has been enshrined in the law here in Wales. It's vital that we, the adults around them, do all that we can to give children every opportunity to enjoy this right. It can be easy to forget how beneficial playing simple games can be – it's a fantastic way of letting off steam, boosting mood, getting exercise, and bonding with others.'

'Reminding families of the value of enjoying these games together is really important. Like many adults, some of my happiest memories of childhood are from playing outdoors with friends and family. I'm delighted that Play Wales is encouraging everyone to get involved in #projectplay this summer.'

Playful Childhoods – a Play Wales initiative – aims to remind parents and carers how important it is to make sure children have the space, time and company of others to play every day. Every child has the right to play wherever they are – at home, in childcare and at school, as well as out in their communities.

Playday 2019



To celebrate Playday on 7 August thousands of children and their families across Wales and the rest of the UK went out to play at local and regional events.

Playday – the national day for play – celebrates children’s right to play and highlights the importance of play in children’s everyday lives.

Having plenty of opportunities to explore and play outdoors is essential for children’s physical and mental health, as well as their happiness, learning and development. Having the freedom to play out with friends helps children to get to know and feel safe in their neighbourhood and to become confident and resilient individuals.

The Playday 2019 theme – **Play Builds Children** – highlighted the many ways play is good for children:

- **Play Builds Friendships** – playing allows children to

interact with others, develop relationships, deal with conflict, and learn respect and tolerance.

- **Play Builds Resilience** – playing boosts children’s confidence, creativity, problem-solving skills and perseverance, enabling them to cope with stress and challenges throughout life.
- **Play Builds Health and Well-being** – being active through play helps children physically and emotionally, contributing to their health and happiness.
- **Play Builds Communities** – playing allows children to learn about the world around them, make connections, and develop a sense of identity and belonging.

Local community events, such as Playday celebrations, provide an ideal opportunity to bring together children, families and the wider community. The biggest difference we can all make in our communities is to improve the environment and conditions to make it easier for children to access outdoor play opportunities.

At Play Wales we see Playday as an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of children’s play and the need for quality play provision **every day** of the year in all areas of Wales. To mark Playday 2019 we released highlights from our new research that reports on what 6000 children say about play in Wales. For more information about the research see article on pages 6-7.

Playday is coordinated by Play England, Play Scotland, PlayBoard Northern Ireland and Play Wales.

www.playday.org

What happened to our 31?

As we have previously reported, last summer we took our giant 31 numbers to events across Wales to celebrate children’s right to play as outlined in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. But what’s happened to the 31 since?

Well, it’s had a slight make over and is now appearing at the ‘PLAY-WORK – exploring the art of working with playing children’ exhibition taking place at Tŷ Pawb in Wrexham.

The purpose of the exhibition is to promote children’s right to play as well as to highlight and celebrate the history and ongoing significance of playwork in Wrexham, in particular the town’s adventure playgrounds and the important part they play in the lives of local people.

The exhibition also advocates for the ongoing resourcing of playwork provision and explores the creative processes of making, taking apart, and remaking that children undertake on adventure playgrounds.

At the core of the exhibition is a playscape, designed and built collaboratively between Ludicology, Tŷ Pawb, artists and staff from the local authority’s Play & Youth Support Team and Wrexham’s adventure playgrounds. Within the



playscape is a photographic archive of playwork in Wrexham since the 1970s alongside a new commission by Morag Colquhoun, who has created textiles specifically for use as ‘loose parts’. Additionally, ‘The Voice of Children’, a film by Turner Prize winning collective Assemble, is being shown.

The PLAY-WORK exhibition will be at Tŷ Pawb until 27 October 2019.

'It is critical we make sure children have the time and space to be children – to create, imagine, and to play'

An update from the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services, Julie Morgan AM

Thirty years ago the United Nations recognised the importance of play, setting out a child's right to play at Article 31 of the Convention on Children's Rights. Wales is rightly proud that it is the first country in the world to have enshrined that right into law, and as we mark that anniversary in November it is important that we all continue to work together to make sure children can realise those rights.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

The Welsh Government places great value on play and its importance in the lives of children in our society. We believe that children have a fundamental right to be able to play, and that play is central to their enjoyment of life and contributes to their well-being. Play is essential for the growth in children's cognitive, physical, social and emotional development.

But it is also important to recognise the role play has in supporting wider families, and communities. Many of you will be aware of the concerns being raised about the way austerity has impacted on families over the past few years. Increasingly we are hearing reports about families struggling to feed children over the long summer holidays in particular. This is tragic, but working with the play sector we have been piloting a new initiative to address some of these concerns.

Backed by £100,000 of Welsh Government funding, the Holiday Hunger Playworks Pilot provided existing community and playwork settings across Wales with funding to add, improve or extend their provision of food in areas with high levels of deprivation, where the risk of 'holiday hunger' is greatest.

The main aims of the pilot project were to decrease holiday hunger and improve nutrition as well as increase rich play opportunities and the benefits that brings. The funding was distributed in such a way as to allow us to test different approaches to tackling holiday hunger, through existing play provision within the community and out of school clubs.

The pilot is complementary to the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGGA)-led School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP), a schools-based initiative that provides healthy meals, nutrition education, physical activity and enrichment sessions to children in areas of social deprivation during the school holidays.

As this is a small-scale pilot, run within short timescales, we worked with Play Wales and Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs to identify suitable settings to be included

in the pilot. A review will be carried out looking at the cost and impact of the pilot which we will report on in the Autumn. Subject to the outcome of that review I hope this is something we can roll out more widely, helping families and supporting children with their right to play.

I am also very pleased to announce that this autumn I will be launching a Ministerial Play Review. In light of the upcoming anniversary, this seems like the right time to take stock and make sure our vision and aims are as clear as they could be. There have been a number of key legislative changes since we last reviewed the play policy in 2014 with the publication of *Wales – a Play Friendly Country*. It is also important to make sure that we are all striving towards that vision and that we have the systems in place to support us as we deliver services.

The aim of the review is to assess where we are now with respect to play policy and to inform how we develop and progress the play agenda in future years. The review will consider the progress made in achieving our vision for play and whether our vision remains relevant. It will also set out the steps that need to be taken to progress the play agenda to achieve the vision.

The review will be carried out collaboratively with the play sector and across departments that have an influence on play (for example Education, Health, Public Health, Transport, Housing, Planning, Recreation and Leisure). We will also consult with children and young people on the review. Our plan is to report with key recommendations in December 2020, and I very much hope you will all take the time to share your views with my team.

The importance of play to children cannot be underestimated, and while the pace of life continues to increase, it is critical we make sure children have the time and space to be children – to create, imagine, and to play.

Playful communities

Child Friendly Cardiff Pop Up Park

Children across Cardiff are claiming their right to play! Additional play opportunities are being provided across the capital as part of the Child Friendly City programme (CFC).

Members of the Children and Young People's Advisory Board worked with Council Officers to apply for a grant from Welsh Government to purchase equipment for a Pop Up Park.

The park consists of a variety of games and play equipment as well as deck chairs, beanbags and 100 square metres of artificial grass.

Advisory Board Chair, Rose Melhuish (17) said:

'We understand how important play is and we wanted to encourage more children to play and spend time with their family and friends. Not everyone has green spaces in their community and some families cannot afford to go to an indoor play centre so the Pop Up Park was our solution.'

The Child Friendly City programme brings Unicef UK together with Cardiff Council and partners to help make the city a place where all children, including the most vulnerable, feel safe, heard and nurtured.

Cardiff is one of six cities in the UK to be active in the global Unicef programme.

The Pop Up Park has been used throughout the summer including at community events, the Homeless Football World Cup and to celebrate Playday. During the winter months there are plans



Cardiff Child Friendly City Programme Coordinator, Lee Patterson said:

'During our consultation phase children told us that they wanted more opportunity to play and also to spend time with their families. The park is really popular when used across the city. Services and organisations are able to hire the park to provide extra play opportunities, engage with residents and promote children's rights more broadly.'

to use the equipment indoors in community centres and school halls.

In addition to the Pop Up Park, the Child Friendly City programme has brought partners together to enable local residents to apply to close their streets for two hours a

month to enable children to play out. Five streets took part in a pilot and this is now being rolled out to more streets across the capital.

For more information on the Child Friendly City programme or to hire the Pop Up Park email ChildFriendlyCardiff@cardiff.gov.uk

Across Wales organisations and groups run play projects or make sure children have opportunities to play in their communities. In each issue, we will be sharing an example of a project that's helping to make a community more playful.

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