

# Play for Wales

Issue 9 Spring 2003



PLAY NEWS & BRIEFING FROM THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR PLAY

## HAVE A SAY ON PLAY IN WALES

In our last issue we reported on the Department of Culture Media and Sport Play Review taking place across the UK. The DCMS is making £200 million available (probably from 2005) through the New Opportunities Fund to create and improve play opportunities for children and young people (0-16 years) across the UK. This review will provide direction as to how the money is spent.

Soon after Play for Wales went to print, the Welsh Assembly Government decided that in the light of its new Play Policy and the State of Play review that took place in Wales in 2000, it would conduct its own consultation that would feed into the DCMS Review. The Assembly will have influence over the way the money is distributed in Wales, and will also use the consultation to inform its forthcoming Play Strategy.

Play professionals across Wales now have an opportunity to influence the way play is funded in the country and to prioritise hitherto neglected areas. So please get out your pen and make your views known. The response to the consultation has to be returned by 31 March, and the results of the Review will be published later this Spring.

In the meantime, here is a brief version of Play Wales' response to the consultation as guidance for others and food for thought;

**This funding programme should contribute to the delivery of a national strategy to ensure the Assembly Government Play Policy moves from being an aspiration to a reality.**

### A Definition of Play and Play Provision:

The Welsh Assembly Government has adopted a play policy whose definition of play differs from the definition used by the DCMS. Play Wales would like to see the Welsh Assembly Government restate its commitment to its own definition.

Play provision is any space or facility, staffed or un-staffed, that provides children with play opportunities. It should also provide them with the freedom of opportunity to play by themselves or with others. When using play provision, children should be free to decide for themselves what they want to do, why they are doing it and how they go about it.



Quality play provision offers children a rich stimulating environment, free from inappropriate risk, and full of challenge, providing them with the opportunity to explore themselves and the world through freely chosen play. Play provision can include shared public spaces: streets; parks;

pedestrian areas; doorstep play areas; community playhouses; fixed equipment play areas; adventure playgrounds; holiday play schemes; play centres and mobile facilities - both public and voluntary sector funded.

### Prioritising Projects

The types of project that should be prioritised under the scheme are unsupervised outdoor play/leisure facilities and supervised "open access" play provision (see definition page 4). While improving play opportunities in pre-school education, schools and childcare settings is extremely important, these projects already have access to their own lottery funding stream, or funding from other sources. It is hoped that the findings of the review will go some way in developing awareness raising, professional development and training on play for staff in these settings.

### Allocating Funding

£200 million for play appears at first glance to be a huge investment, however, it will have to be spread thinly to cover play projects throughout the UK. Including schools, early years settings, fixed equipment playgrounds etc in the remit means an even thinner spread. **Continued on page 8 & 9.**

## Play Review Consultation Event

**Over 90 delegates from across Wales braved an early start to contribute to an event held in Llandrindod Wells on 3rd March.**

Marianne Mannello, Play Wales' South Wales Development Officer reports:

The event aimed to gather views from across sectors and geographical areas to contribute to the UK wide Play Review. Using the questions featured in the consultation questionnaire, dynamix (the Swansea training co-operative) facilitated lively and creative activities to gather information, and participants referred to the Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy in discussing issues raised.

A feature of the programme here in Wales is the proposal for Children and Young People Framework Partnerships to distribute the funding. An interesting workshop described the pros and cons of this suggestion with very honest input. It is clear that there is still discrepancy across Wales regarding the funding of open access play opportunities - which is

cause for concern. This is due to a general lack of understanding amongst partners as to a true definition of open access play [see page 4 for a definition of open access] and the reality that few partnerships are able to boast a play development worker amongst its membership.



The half-hearted approach to consulting children and young people in Wales was also a hot issue. Welsh children are able to register their views on a BBC website [http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/uk/newsid\\_2797000/2797449.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/uk/newsid_2797000/2797449.stm). Delegates felt that better guidance for consultation with children could have been

circulated to playworkers and other community workers working with children and families.

It was clear that delegates wish to see the emergence of a universal programme to meet the play needs of all children and young people. There is a growing awareness of the benefits that open access play opportunities can bring to children and communities. This event went some way in promoting that awareness.

# EDITORIAL

**I**t is facile and time-wasting to indulge nostalgia, but the truth is that child fitness was much less of an issue in decades gone by when children had a wider range of play opportunities, more freedom to roam and more free time.

Research confirms that young human beings are born with the urge to play – it is a biological imperative. This is the natural way of developing and maintaining a child's healthy body and mind. The solution is to increase children's opportunity to play. So why are we dreaming up and recommending such things as video and gym-based fitness and exercise regimes? A cynic might argue that it has more to do with fashion, the trend towards conspicuous consumption, and the needs of adults for a convenient and quiet

life, than the needs of children.

Here are some alternative, but less comfortable and convenient, suggestions to include exercise in a child's daily life:

- Allow children to play out. In reality the danger of them being abducted or molested by malicious adults is extremely slim.
- Support home zone initiatives (see page 6). Cars now dominate areas that used to be available for informal sport and street games that keep children fit.
- Children are not fashion accessories, nor are they frail and fragile. Allow them to climb, scramble, leap from heights, and lift and drag heavy or unwieldy objects. Sometimes they may wreck their clothes,

get dirty or get hurt as a consequence, but this is all part of learning and growing up.

- Allow children time to play. Out of school activities and sports coaching are all very well in moderation, and some of them contribute to child fitness, but we only get one childhood - lets not fill it up with adult priorities and pre-occupations.

It isn't rocket science - it's fundamental childrearing tested and practised over millennia. It doesn't cost a lot of money or take a great deal of effort, but it is imperative that we all start to prioritise children and their play needs. If we don't, we put the long-term survival of our race in jeopardy. Alternatively we could just ferry our children to another session at the gym, or stay in our cocoon, slot in a fitness video, and press the button.

**Gill Evans, Information Officer**

## TONY'S SOAPBOX



**T**he Welsh Assembly Government wishes to see Integrated Children's Centres (providing open access play, childcare, early years education, and training and community development) established in every County. Although I welcome this initiative and the accompanying New Opportunities Fund funding scheme, I am deeply concerned at the absence of planning for the allocation of such funds - particularly if the goal is to provide access

to quality open-access play opportunities. [See a feature on open access play later in this newsletter.]

The inclusion of open access play looks to be something that should be whole-heartedly embraced, and I certainly welcome it. There are, however, a significant number of aspects that need careful and sensitive consideration, all of which contain too many implications to cover fully in these short notes. I strongly suggest that the following questions need to be fully considered alongside other issues:

- Would the four core elements be represented equally in the management of the Centres?
- Is there a full understanding of freely chosen play and open access play provision? The NOF guide notes are not helpful, and might cause confusion at the least.
- Is there a conflict of interest in the delivery of open access play alongside childcare? Would compromise affect the quality of services to children?

- Is there a full appreciation of the long term funding implications of open access play provision, taking account of the cost of employing playworkers after school, at weekends and during school holidays?
- Do the Children and Youth Partnership Panels, the body charged with establishing Children's Integrated Centres, include people who have an understanding of, and experience in, open access play and playwork?

The recent increase in the level of political and financial support for children's play is to be very warmly welcomed, but play development workers with a knowledge of open access play and playwork must be represented in the decision making process. Playwork should be given every opportunity and encouragement to strengthen its position within Local Authorities.

**Tony Chilton, Senior Development Officer, Play Wales**

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## Funky Dragon

**T**he Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales was launched in November 2002. Funky Dragon is intended to provide information on the main issues, policy proposals and plans of the Assembly, local government and health services in Wales, and to ensure that the needs and voices of children across Wales are taken into account across the range of policy making.

Funky Dragon has published a free set of good practice guidelines for children's participation called Breathing Fire into Participation, which can be ordered from the address below.

**Funky Dragon, 35 Heathfield, Mount Pleasant, Swansea, SA1 6EJ**

**Telephone 01792 450000, or visit [www.funkydragon.org](http://www.funkydragon.org)**

### Play for Wales

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

*The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Play Wales.  
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*Designed and printed by Carrick Business Services Ltd. Tel: 029 2074 1150. E-mail: [sales@carrickbusiness.co.uk](mailto:sales@carrickbusiness.co.uk)  
Cartoon illustrations by Les Evans*



# TOY LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION IN WALES

**T**hanks to three year funding from the Wales Assembly Government, the National Association of Toy & Leisure Libraries has opened a contact centre in Brecon. This is the first time this national charity has had a base in Wales.

Development Worker, Janet Matthews, is looking forward to meeting toy library practitioners and Sure Start Co-ordinators in each of the 22 local authorities in Wales. She hopes to see toy libraries included in plans for children's services in all 22 local authorities.

"It is vitally important to develop an appropriate national profile for NATLL given

the Assembly's "Framework for Partnership" and other strategic initiatives for children's services in Wales".

NATLL also helps with the training of childcare staff and volunteers on the criteria for selecting the very best toys, and how you can attract families to join their local toy library by emphasising the importance of play in child development. It also runs a member's helpline.

**Contact Janet Matthews on 01874 623268 or natllwales@tiscali.co.uk**

**NATLL Wales Office, Steeple House, Steeple Lane, Brecon, Powys LD3 7DJ**



## Play and Sports SUCCESS for Gurnos, Galon Uchaf and Penydarren.

The 3G's Development Trust is community owned and community led. We work across the communities of Gurnos, Galon Uchaf and Penydarren in the Merthyr Tydfil area, to improve the quality of life for local people. We are the lead organisation for the delivery of the Communities First Programme for the area, and our board of directors is made up of representatives of the local Tenants and Residents Board, individual members of the community and key officers from our partner organisations.

Over 18 months ago members of the community got together to form a Sports Association and submitted a successful application to the Sports Council for Wales Sports Lot Programme. The application for Sports Lot grant aid will total over £760,000 and will provide two all weather sports areas sited in the community, along with a substantial development programme at Pen-y-Dre High School campus. Both these developments will open up facilities, meet local needs, identify new sports, and develop existing sports and coaching opportunities.

Another element of the Play and Sports Strategy is a plan for the development of Safe Space Play Areas to be located on green spaces across the communities of Gurnos, Galon Uchaf and Penydarren. The decision to include Play Areas came from the response to a tremendous amount of community consultation. So as part of the Play and Sports Strategy we are tying in safe children's play areas with the multi sport areas that are being funded by Sports Lot. The play and sport areas are to be sited out in the community and will bridge the gap between toddlers and teenagers.

## Play Information Resource

**T**he Play Information Resource at Play Wales' national office is growing apace. You will soon be able to access the database through our website at [www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk) Simply click on the Library button and then follow instructions. You will be able to search for books and other materials by author, title and subject, and to request photocopies by phone or e-mail.

Visitors who are studying for playwork qualifications are bowled over by the range of books we have as compared to college libraries.

You are welcome to visit and there is space to study. Unfortunately we don't have the capacity to lend books.

We are also in the process of building a reference collection at our North Wales office in Prestatyn. You can visit either library by prior arrangement.

**Gill Evans, Information Officer  
info@playwales.org.uk**

**National Office 029 2048 6050**

**North Wales Office 01745 851 816**

## Play Right Bags Environment

# AWARD

**T**ucked away in a corner of the Enterprise zone in Swansea is the children's charity Play Right . . .

The Play Resource Centre team at Play Right recently bagged The Wales Environment Community Award. We were delighted, and were not in the least perturbed by local press coverage that headlined 'Charity Waste Bag Collectors Facing The Sack!' Unfortunately the article focused on the funding crisis the Project has been facing, rather than our recent unexpected success. Nevertheless, the very same local paper's business section has adopted the Play Resource Centre as their charity for 2003, so they are forgiven! (Lets just hope we are open long enough to give them the stories!!)

Play Right exists to support the play, recreational and educational needs of children and young people across what was formerly known as West Glamorgan (Swansea and Neath and Port Talbot) although members travel from much further afield to access Play Resource Centre (PRC) goodies.

But the main reason we won our award was our Scrap Store. In our scrap store we make available non-toxic waste materials donated by local business and industry that can be reused by children for arts and crafts instead of going to landfill. We have a huge selection of materials available - plastics, twines, paper, card, trays, in fact all manner of things - we even have doors, DIY goods and yes, the classic kitchen sink!

Play Resource Centres and Scrap Stores have a huge role to play in the community. Not only do we provide low or no cost play and creative resources but we also have a positive impact on the environment. Last year alone we potentially diverted 5,600 black bags worth of waste away from landfill (not including what we hold in the store) because it went out of the building with members.

Using scrap materials gives an opportunity to educate people of all ages about just how much waste is produced in the manufacture and packaging of everyday goods, and to promote resourcefulness in our throw-away society. In fact we have been called a 'Surreal Supermarket' where people walk our aisles with their trolleys buying packaging instead of food. Manufacturers and scrap suppliers win by reducing their waste costs and supporting their community and the environment wins by not having perfectly good, reusable waste stuffed into the ground or incinerated!! Makes sense to us.

**Jacki Rees Thomas, Caretaker Coordinator,  
Play Right, Swansea 01792 794884**

As well as running Play Schemes and a fantastic mobile Pirate Ship and Bouncy Castle project during the summer, Play Right offers:

- A low cost art and craft shop;
- An equipment lending service;
- A well stocked library;
- In-house training on issues such as Child Protection, Multi Cultural Awareness, Creative Play, Play in Nature and many more.
- We also hire out our training room at low cost.



A really innovative approach to finding out people's views and opinions was organised as the launch of our Communities First Programme. Our Big Bus Consultation Event was a huge success and it was an excellent opportunity for local people to tell us what they would like in the community to make it a better place to live. We designed a Wishing Wizard with his magic wand, and gave all the young people who came onto the bus a magic star - with that star they could make one wish for their community. The wishing wizard went down a treat and was a very successful approach to consultation. This was complemented by community mapping and a graffiti wall. Alongside the Big Bus we ran a poetry and drawing competition involving all the local schools and youth groups. The competition theme was the young people's aspirations for the future and we received an excellent response.

"Communities First is a really exciting programme and we are all working hard listening to local people and acting (where we can) on their wishes. Local people have been asking for Safe Areas for their children to play and we are enthusiastic that through effective partnership working we will be able to deliver good quality sustainable recreation, sport and play facilities".

Chris Davies, Community Development Worker, 3G's Development Trust.

Contact on: Telephone 01685 350888



# PLAY DEVELOPMENT

## Open access Play

*Is it sport?  
Is it a fixed equipment play  
area?  
Does it involve zips and Velcro?  
Is it like trying to keep live eels  
in your handbag?*

**T**he recent New Opportunities Fund scheme for Integrated Centres gave the provision of open access play as one of the criteria for a successful bid. Unfortunately, those who have a grasp of the concept seem to be few and far between, and some Children and Young People's Partnerships have found it difficult to incorporate in their bid. More importantly, by leaving open access play out of their plans, they are denying children access to a very rich and rewarding experience.

The 1989 Children Act divided play provision into day care and open access, depending on the level of care provided. The Welsh Assembly Government has recently reviewed the Child Minding and Day Care Regulations and Standards, including those applying to open access provision. Here is an attempt to clarify confusion, to encompass the description within the new Standards, and to celebrate open access play.

- Open access is staffed. Confusion around the terms play and childcare means the term open access is often used for provision that is not staffed e.g. fixed equipment play areas. Strictly speaking the term applies to a staffed setting where the process of play is facilitated by playworkers.
- It is recommended that it is free of charge. Children's access to provision should not be determined by their ability to pay.
- There is no contract with a parent or carer to provide care.
- It is for all children, including under-eights.
- There are no entry conditions other than those pertaining to safety and welfare.
- It may be permanent or short-term (e.g. school holiday).
- It can take place in a variety of settings, with or without premises, including play centres, adventure playgrounds\* and play schemes.
- It provides play opportunities for children to learn and develop in a safe environment, in their own way, and in the absence of their carers.
- Children are not prevented from coming and going as they wish. In reality children rarely roam - they have come because they want to, and stay because they are stimulated and engaged within the environment.
- Children have a freedom to choose what play opportunities they wish to take up, and with whom they play, in a rich and stimulating environment. Children are free to play on their own as well as with others.



**Open access play provision is for children to fulfil their play needs. It is not:**

- A childminding service for their carers.
- An opportunity to squeeze extra formal education into the day, or to catch up with homework (unless a child independently chooses to use their time in this way)..
- A means to reduce crime.
- A sports scheme.
- A fixed equipment play area.
- Containment and entertainment.

All play provision, whether it is childcare or open access, should facilitate children to play freely. Children should be free to exercise the right to dictate the type and level of play behaviour they wish to pursue within parameters that they determine.

**\*An adventure playground is not simply a play area with fixed wooden play equipment. It is a staffed open access facility where children have the opportunity to design and build their own play equipment, to mould their own environment to their own purposes, and to be involved in a whole range of activity including playing with earth, air, fire and water. They can confront and learn to manage risk in a supervised environment facilitated by playworkers. Generally adventure playgrounds have been developed in urban areas to compensate for the absence of natural open space with trees, fields, streams etc where children would have played in the past.**

Any definition of open access play provision goes hand in hand with a definition of play itself. Play Wales adheres to the playwork profession's definition of play, as developed by PlayEducation.

## What is play?

The experience of play is something shared by the vast majority of humans around the world, and other mammals as well. We are born with the urge to play - it is an animal's way of learning about itself and the world (both physically and emotionally) as it grows into an adult. If we are deprived of opportunities to play freely and to experience the whole range of play behaviour we become emotionally, neurologically, and physically stunted.

The child's urge to play is often modified by adults to satisfy their own agenda; educators, carers and sports coaches can harness it or inhibit it in a range of ways to suit the purposes of adults.

**In reality play is behaviour that is:**

- Freely chosen - a child independently chooses what it wants to do;
- Personally directed - a child independently chooses how it wants to do it;
- Intrinsically motivated - a child chooses why they do it, and it is not performed for any external goal or reward.

However, in terms of the child development it is absolutely invaluable, the rewards are incalculable and last a lifetime.

For more information about play, and the types of play children need to experience to fully develop physically, neurologically and emotionally, please see The First Claim, published by Play Wales in 2001 (£12.50 plus packing and postage, from our national office). The Welsh Assembly Government's Play Policy for Wales is available from their website, [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk) and the rationale behind it (i.e. evidence of the vital importance of children's play to our society) is available from the Play Wales website [www.playwales.org.uk/policy](http://www.playwales.org.uk/policy)



# PLAY DEVELOPMENT



**The Venture, a successful open access adventure playground and community project in Wrexham, has been chosen by the Welsh Assembly Government as a model for Integrated Children's Centres.**

The Venture has recently secured funding to conduct a research project which will consider the value of play in an open access adventure playground, and will endeavour to substantiate and promote that practice in relation to current thinking and legislation. Ben Tawil, The Venture's Assistant Manager and Research Project Organiser, reports:

The project will be conducted in partnership with children, young people, staff, professional visitors and past Venture users. We aim to compile an archive and analyse 25 years of play provision, and outline the underpinning philosophy and practice that has contributed to a successful holistic neighbourhood play project - as well as outlining some of the pitfalls and challenges!

The project will almost certainly focus on the necessity for a multi-disciplinary approach to play service provision for children and young people within communities. In its final form, the research project will include a booklet, research report, and video.

## A Model Venture

We're not trying to produce a "how to do it" manual, or to say we got it all right. But if we can look at what we have done and say which bits were good or bad, speak with children, and capture some of their inspiration, creativity, confidence and wisdom - which truly abounds within the adventure playground environment - then hopefully it will be of use to anybody wishing to, or already travelling, the same journey as we are.

The Venture will also be running a series of open days and training events to address the underpinning philosophy and values of the Integrated Children's Centre initiative proposed within the Cymorth and NOF funding streams. The training will be closely linked to meeting the targets and outcomes required for these funding streams. Training and visits are welcomed from any interested parties concerned with providing out of school open access adventure playgrounds.

**Contact BenTawil at The Venture 01978 355761 or e-mail [theventure@talk21.com](mailto:theventure@talk21.com)**

**Children from Wrexham speak about open access adventure play at the Venture:**

- It's always here, you just come down and there's always something to do.
- You get to say how things are run and what happens even talk to new staff before they come for interview.
- The staff and the fire, even winter is good here.
- No one talks to us like you do.
- Its shady 'cos you don't have snooker tables like the youth club, but its not like it is here at the youth club.
- You can build stuff, anything you want.
- It's safe 'cos it's got staff, but they're not always in your face - you don't have to see them if you don't want.
- We like bonfire night, and the Christmas float, and camp, and summer
- Trips are good, but so is just being with every one else round the fire at the end of the night and having a laugh.
- Every time the Venture's open I'm here.
- The staff 'cos they're proper good. They do anything for you. No matter what it is you can tell 'em, and they look after you.
- Just getting the tools out, and all working on stuff for like a week every day until its finished. That's dead good. Like the tree house in summer or the staircase.
- Making dens.
- Having water fights in summer and the water slide.
- Its good here 'cos you can be with everybody or get away from it all if you want.
- Its good in the winter when its dark and you can play commando and that.
- Everyone should have a Venture.

## Providing Play

**Children missed the opportunity to play last year when people aiming to set up play provision in Wales were so daunted by Care Standards Inspectorate (CSIW) registration requirements and new Criminal Records Bureau procedures that some schemes failed to run. Completing reams of paperwork is a huge stumbling block when all you wish to do is provide fun for children in the school holidays or after school. In the meantime there does not appear to be an easily accessible, comprehensive, up-to-date guide for setting up play provision in Wales.**

Play Wales is working together with a group of play development officers to publish a low cost pack that guides play leaders and community groups through the tangled and thorny maze of setting up play provision, whether it be a holiday play scheme, an out-of-school scheme or open access provision. The aim is to inform and enrich the quality of your work, and ease your administrative burden. Using the principles explored in The First Claim, we aim to enhance your understanding of children's play needs so that you can provide them with the best possible play opportunities.

We are looking for volunteers to give us feedback on the introductory booklet - particularly representatives of voluntary organisations and organisers of local play schemes (both new and experienced). We also need people to try out the practical pack that will accompany it. Since we know you are all busy people, we will be distributing the

drafts and gathering feedback using post and e-mail, and leaving the joy of sitting through meetings to the steering group. Please get in touch with Gill Evans at our national office if you would like to be involved.

**The First Claim . . . a framework for playwork quality assessment is available from Play Wales national office (£12.50 plus packing and postage).**

## JUMPING FOR JOY

**Rhyl Adventure Playground is an open access scheme in one of the most deprived areas in Wales. Jonathon Bentley, Manager and Senior Playworker, reports on a fantastic success over the February half-term holiday.**

The introduction of ropes to the general play session at Rhyl Adventure Playground has promoted a frenzy of activity, and has also highlighted a number of interesting physical and social elements in the behaviour of children and young people.

I gently introduced some basic skipping skills and games at the beginning of half-term. Initially, a small number of children responded. By the end of the week, not only were there unheard of attendances at the playground with 170 recorded on one day, but dozens and dozens of children, boys and girls alike, aged from 5-16 years, were queuing up to participate in skipping rope games and activities.

It was very noticeable that the older young people, boys in particular, were tentative, sceptical and feigned a lack of interest in the beginning, but their enthusiasm at the end of the week was quite remarkable. What was also noticeable was the absence of physical co-ordination, strength and stamina amongst many of the kids. However, they loved skipping, and continuous participation brought marked improvements to all these areas.

The complexity of skipping games increased throughout the week and this encouraged participation in other traditional games and activities culminating in a session on Scottish dancing one Saturday! Recent average attendances have been in the region of 80 children per day - attributable to the efforts of Rhyl playworkers in promoting traditional and large group games without the use of expensive equipment or modern technology.

**JUMP TO IT!**

**Contact Jonathon Bentley on 01745 344751**

# playing out

## Home zones

### What's the Score in Wales? One Winkelerf and one Woonerf!

**A** couple of years ago there was a blaze of publicity about Home Zones, but here in Wales the idea appears to have spluttered and fizzled out. In the year 2000 eleven UK pilot projects included one in Magor, but until recently we had not heard of any further development west of Offa's Dyke.

In England the pilots proved a great success. The Government has recently supported the Home Zone Challenge with £30m to build sixty-one more, and some local authorities are also building home zones as part of their own planning initiative. But is there any life in Home Zones in Wales? So far the Welsh Assembly Government Transport Policy Department has taken a wait and see approach, wishing to produce a "holistic" response to what is generally seen as a road safety issue. Sue Essex, Assembly Minister for the Environment, has "taken an interest" and home zones are likely to "take more profile" in the future.

The Assembly's new Road Safety Strategy for Wales, published in January, focuses on the decline in walking and cycling, and recognises the need to support children to walk and cycle safely to school, shops, playgrounds, parks and leisure centres. The strategy is well-intentioned and seeks to tackle some very pertinent issues, however, there appears to be no mention of Home Zones, or the value of streets as communal space or space for play. The car continues to rule.

Play Wales supports Home Zones - streets are invaluable places where children can play and develop their own culture. In some places streets are the only public places where they can play within easy reach of their own home, as part of their own community. The new Play Policy for Wales states that: "play is so critically important to all children that society should seek every opportunity to support it and create an environment that fosters it." The environment where children spend the majority of their everyday life is the one around their home. Play Wales would like to see the Assembly honouring the play policy by urging changes to the way new residential streets are planned both in terms of housing and transport to take account of the views and needs of children.

In Holland Home Zones are considered to be of such value to local communities that the current policy is to make 50% of residential streets into Home Zones or very low speed zones within the next couple of years.

In the meantime architects and urban designers who wish to help communities to develop Home Zone schemes are hampered by a number of factors:

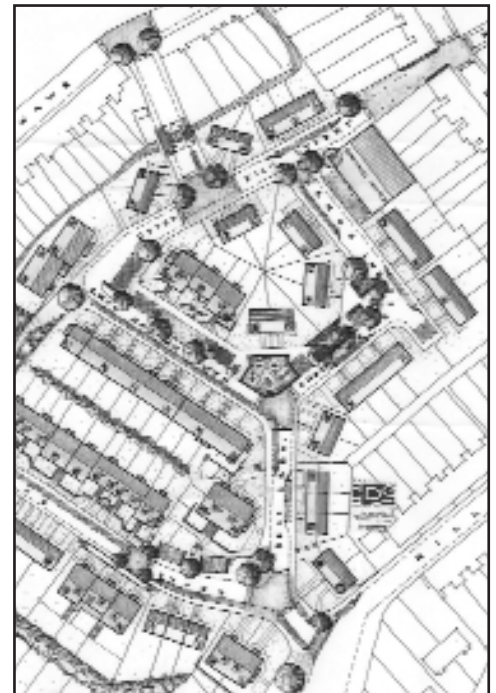
- pressure on space - the Government expects twelve houses per acre (increased from ten per acre) and social housing landlords are under pressure to house as many tenants as possible, which leaves little room for play areas on new build schemes;
- local authority highways departments, whose rules prioritise traffic over pedestrians;
- inflexible play equipment health and safety regulations, which specify a certain amount of space around play equipment, and between play equipment and roads;
- petty planning regulations;
- lack of funds - in Wales there is no specific home zone funding scheme.

#### Our One and Only Woonerf

If you want to see the only true Home Zone in Wales go to Rhos Nathan Wyn in Aberaman, where despite all the obstacles, Newydd Housing Association and Community Design Service (Architects and Urban Designers) have included a small home zone with children's play equipment as part of an estate regeneration strategy.

Community consultation included open days in one of the local flats as well as large meetings, and included children as well as adults. Tenants were asked how their lives could be improved by changes in their immediate area, and the changes they wanted were private gardens as well as public play areas for toddlers, and areas where families could socialise outside.

Andrew Chapman, the Community Development Officer at Newydd, submitted a bid to the National Assembly Housing Department for a special grant for innovation, and received £50K from People in Communities to cover the cost of the Home Zone. Newydd also invested its own money in the scheme. Jonathon Bevan, of



Community Design Service, drew up plans to adapt the existing open space and parking area, and included a small play space with a play house, a springy see-saw and a witches hat, as well as a slide built into a natural bank along the side of a well-used path. He also installed a picnic table for communal use because some of the residents like to barbecue in the street in the summer months.

**The site is still under construction and Sue Essex will attend the official launch later in the Spring.**

#### A definition

Home Zones originated in Holland, and are referred to as Woonerf or Winkelerf.

**A Woonerf is a residential street designed, or redesigned, in consultation with residents (that's children too!) giving local people and their needs priority over traffic. Streets are changed with severe traffic calming measures (usually including a 5mph speed limit), people-friendly parking, planting, street furniture and play equipment. Pavements and road surfaces are integrated so that pushchairs, bikes, trikes and wheelchairs have easy access to the whole street area. Since children use the street to play, their needs are considered first, then the adult community and lastly the needs of car drivers. Vehicles are seen as guests.**

**A Winkelerf is a similar scheme in a shopping area - such as the one that now exists in Magor.**

**Retrofit home zones are adaptations of existing residential streets, whereas new build home zones are incorporated in new housing schemes.**

**For contact details, a reading list and useful websites please contact Gill Evans at Play Wales national office.**

# playing out

## PLAYDAY

Wednesday 6 August, 2003

### 'Get out and Play'

**As always, this year's National Playday theme aims to highlight contemporary issues which impact on children's play opportunities.**

There is growing concern about children's place in public space. Children in most communities are in a vicious cycle, where the outdoors is perceived too dangerous for them, so parents and other adults restrict their freedom. On the other hand, in some communities, letting children play out is seen as a sign of bad parenting, and children and young people playing outside have been known to be greeted with suspicion and antagonism. Playday 2003 and events to highlight this issue will help to

redress the balance and may even 'bruise' the cycle.'

Recent consultations with children have indicated that children want to get out more, and many still do play outdoors. The adults in their lives are becoming increasingly aware of a loss of freedom and mobility for children. There is a growing public awareness that children are losing out on something vital in terms of their development. This awareness needs to be harnessed, but more importantly, strategic measures need to be adopted to ensure a sensitive, positive effect for children. Playday campaigns can kick start positive action.

On a national level, the Children's Play Council and Children's Society propose to undertake a children's survey asking children about restrictions to playing outside near their homes. The questionnaire will be available online, and for further information please contact Pennie Hedge at the Children's Play Council [phedge@ncb.org.uk](mailto:phedge@ncb.org.uk)

Here in Wales, we would like to hear stories from people of all ages about children being encouraged or prevented from playing outside near their home, and on a more positive note, we would like to hear about projects that have successfully championed this issue in their community. We hope to publish these in our Summer issue, deadline 30 May 2003.

**For more information on this year's Playday visit [www.playday.org.uk](http://www.playday.org.uk)**

**Please see Events for details of London Play's National Conference on organising a Playday.**

**For more information about planning specific events in your area, please contact Marianne Mannello at Play Wales.**

## *I Can't Believe* You Made It

**This feature recently appeared in the Times, contributed by a reader from Bath, who gave us permission to print. The piece is pure nostalgia for those who grew up in the 1950's, 60's and 70's, but it makes a very important point . . .**

### **Here is an edited version:**

*We would spend hours building our go-carts out of scraps and then rode down the hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes. After running into the bushes a few times we learned to solve the problem.*

*We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back when the streetlights came on. No one was able to reach us all day. No cell phones. Unthinkable. We played ball and sometimes the ball would really hurt. We got cut and broke bones and broke teeth, and there were no lawsuits from these accidents. They were accidents. No one was to blame but us. Remember accidents?*

*We had fights and punched each other and got black and blue and learned to get over it.*

*We ate cupcakes, bread and butter, and drank sugar soda but we were never overweight - we were always outside playing. We shared one grape soda with four friends, from one bottle, and no one died from this. We drank water from*

*the garden hose and not from a bottle. Horrors.*

*We did not have Play Stations, Nintendo 64, X-Boxes, video games, 99 channels on cable, video tape movies, surround sound, personal cell phones, Personal Computers, Internet chat rooms ... we had friends. We went outside and found them. We rode bikes or walked to a friend's home and knocked on the door, or rung the bell or just walked in and talked to them.*

*Imagine such a thing. Without asking a parent! By ourselves! Out there in the cold cruel world! Without a guardian. How did we do it?*

*We made up games with sticks and tennis balls and ate worms, and although we were told it would happen, we did not put out very many eyes, nor did the worms live inside us forever.*

*Our actions were our own. Consequences were expected. No one to hide behind. The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke a law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law, imagine that!*

*This generation has produced some of the best risk-takers and problem solvers and inventors, ever. The past 50 years has been an explosion of innovation and new ideas. We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned how to deal with it all.*



# HAVE A SAY ON

## > CONTINUED FROM Page1

There is a risk that this programme will be used to refurbish existing ill maintained fixed equipment playgrounds, which should already be funded and maintained as a matter of course by those that provide them. Applicants should demonstrate how their project uses other funding streams for play, and that there is no alternative funding available.

Regardless of the nature of project there should be a clear statement that neither children nor their carers will have to pay to access play provision.

## The Role of the Children and Young People's Framework Partnerships

The proposal to distribute NOF funding and deliver services through Children and Young Peoples Framework Partnerships, is understandable, as it is an existing system, but this may further disenfranchise voluntary groups with an interest in play and playwork. The voluntary sector and the playwork profession are not yet sufficiently represented on the Partnerships, whose membership tends to be skewed towards other professions that have different priorities and political agendas. A scheme with a notional allocation to each Local Authority area, and applications demonstrating a relationship with the respective Partnerships (to ensure a strategic approach and to promote sustainability) would provide the most flexible, equitable and transparent method of distribution.

## Prioritising Funding

Play Wales supports the proposal to focus on those children with poor access to good play opportunities and not to set overall priorities for age. It also supports the proposal for weighted allocations to favour projects located in areas of social and economic disadvantage. However, these areas already receive additional financial support, and particular consideration should be given to communities that fall just outside the scope of targeted funding. Play deprivation is not restricted to children from economically deprived communities – it crosses all social and cultural categories and the range of living environments and economic circumstances.

Local neighbourhood play projects should be prioritised - play provision should offer a progression of opportunity for children's play, accommodating the range of movement and travel distances of children of different ages. Provision to which the child is taken by car will not significantly contribute to meeting the child's need for local accessible play provision.



The programme offers the opportunity to "kick start" projects with necessary capital funding, and revenue funding for staffed provision. However, in order that staffed play provision becomes embedded within a community it needs to develop over a period of time, and a minimum of 10 years funding should be available. There is a clear tension between the desire for a "short term fix" and the practical realities of playwork in the context of long-term community development. On the ground at a local level, a strong argument can be made for the development of partnership working to support community involvement and ownership of play provision.

## Partnership Working

There are two complementary themes that might be developed to promote partnership working and long-term sustainability:

1. Rural communities might use the funding to develop self-build play equipment

2. Communities in urban areas might use the funding to establish staffed play provision - adventure playgrounds for example (see our definition of an adventure playground on page 4).

The process of self-build, as well as the process of setting up an adventure playground fosters community development as well as ownership of provision, and adds to the range of play opportunities for children.

## Commercial Sponsorship

The play needs and urges of children should not be subsumed or harnessed for any commercial purpose. However, in some areas it is not unusual for local businesses to support community projects, which has to be welcomed. No child should be required to pay to use any form of staffed play provision and there should be no other entry conditions other than these with respect to the safety and welfare of the child.

The NOF programme itself should not be related to any form of sponsorship.



# PLAY IN WALES

## Good Practice in Community Involvement

The nature and location of projects should reflect the demography and needs of children in the community and should be located so as to allow easy access by all children of the age range for whom they are designed.

The principles of self-build play provision contribute, not only to children's play needs but also provide a community development function. They provide a focus for communities that draws members together in common purpose in addition to meeting the play needs of children.

Staffed play provision offers adults within the community the opportunity to contribute to both the management and delivery of provision - perhaps starting as volunteers and moving on to become paid staff. This playwork model has long been recognised as providing a non-threatening entry or re-entry into paid work, with many of the skills required of a play worker being eminently transferable.

## Benchmarks, Standards, Quality Assurance Tools, and Evaluation

In terms of facilitating play, "THE FIRST CLAIM" (Play Wales, 2001) is the most appropriate quality appraisal model for staffed play provision, and it should be used to evaluate projects supported by the programme. For care-related issues pertaining to play provision "Quality In Play" (London Play, 1999) is the most playwork sensitive quality model. "Best Play" (Children's Play Council, NPFA, PlayLink, 2000) also provides useful guidance.

Standards applied to play areas should be flexible and take account of the local characteristics of a given area. The NPFA "Six Acre Standard" is therefore of limited use. It may be applicable to new residential development, but it contains no criteria relating to local demography and even in this context can be too proscriptive. There are at present no alternative playing space standards for established urban areas or rural communities, and Play Wales recommends that a new standard (encompassing staffed play provision such as adventure playgrounds) be developed to meet the needs of children in Wales.

The European Standards EN1176, for fixed equipment play provision should be considered in conjunction with the practice of risk assessment that reflects children's behavioural need for challenge and excitement.

## Support for Planning and Delivering Projects

All applications should demonstrate appropriate levels of community involvement ranging from consultation with children to community ownership and management of play provision. This applies particularly to projects that propose to use the funding to develop self-build play equipment.

The funding might also be used to contribute to the development of a support network providing play providers with an opportunity for the sharing of skills and expertise related to the local development of play provision.

## Appropriate Skills and Competencies

Where supported projects employ staff they should be qualified in accordance with the qualification framework. In the event that such qualified playworkers are unavailable there should be an explicit commitment/requirement that unqualified staff receive appropriate playwork training as a component of their employment. Playwork training is the most appropriate for playwork settings.

## Innovation

There should be a strong emphasis on funding innovative projects. This would provide an opportunity to consider the full range of children's play needs and to develop ground-breaking projects to meet those needs. However, what may be

considered as innovative in one geographical area, might already be established play provision in another, so there ought to be acknowledgment of innovation in a particular part of the country.

This programme provides the opportunity to fund locally determined, staffed demonstration projects that are exemplars of best practice, that address a broader range of children's play needs than might be met by un-staffed fixed equipment playgrounds.

Rather than continue to provide a limited range of fixed equipment, installed by specialist contractors, as has been the pattern of the past, smaller communities might build and own their own play provision, and in larger communities the development of staffed play provision will extend the range of play opportunities for children and provide an environment that compensates for the paucity of play opportunities, particularly for children in urban areas.

**If you require further information or want to discuss any of the issues in this response, please contact Play Wales.**

**You will soon be able to access our full response via our website at [www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk).**

**Copies of the consultation document can be downloaded from the Assembly's website at [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk) or contact Elinor Jones in the Children and Families Division 029 20801119 or [elinor.jones@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:elinor.jones@wales.gsi.gov.uk)**

## Voluntary Sector Play Development WORKERS IN WALES

In our last issue we listed the contact numbers for Local Authority Play Development Officers in Wales. Here are the details of Voluntary Sector Play Development Officers, if you are aware of any glaring omissions please contact us so that we can publish them in our summer issue.

<b>Caerphilly</b>	Caerphilly Creative Play Project	Michelle Jones	01443 822644
<b>Powys</b>	Brecknockshire	Marion Guthrie	01874 622446
	Montgomeryshire	Diane Jones	01686 640380
	Radnorshire	Kerry Berroyer	01874 623720
<b>Rhondda Cynon Taff</b>	Interlink	Beth Davies	01443 485337
<b>Merthyr</b>	Merthyr Play Forum	Paula Wood	01685 353963

The telephone number we provided for Steven Roberts of Ynys Mon in Play for Wales (issue 8) was incorrect. You can contact him on 01248 724944.

# www.playwales.org.uk

Visit the new revamped Play Wales website and find the following:

- play news updated as it arrives
- information sheets on play and playgrounds to download
- background information on the Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy
- details of our information resource, with an accessible database coming on line within the next few months
- details of Play Wales events and services
- details of Play Wales' publications and forms from the First Claim to download
- you will soon be able to advertise Wales-based play-related jobs at little or no cost

Check it out and add it to your favourites!

## EVENTS

### Celebrating the Spirit of Adventure Play -

a national conference for adventure playground workers 14 and 15 May, Cardiff.

Contact Play Wales for further information.

### Make the Most of Playday -

a national conference organised by London Play on Monday 19 May 2003, at County Hall, London. Workshops and presentations on running a successful playday event and on using Playday as a campaigning tool.

Contact Glenys at London Play 020 7272 6759

### Play Day 2003 Wednesday 6 August -

the theme is Get out and Play, start planning now - visit [www.playday.org.uk](http://www.playday.org.uk) for further information.

## TRAINING

### Inspecting Children's Playgrounds

25 March 2003, Chorley, Lancs - contact ILAM Events 0870 845 8475

### Play Strategies

1 April 2003, Midlands, an opportunity to explore the issues involved in developing your own strategy, contact ILAM Events as above

### An Introduction to Play Types

1 April 2003, Birmingham, speaker Bob Hughes Bob will outline Play Types in a stimulating and informative forum ideally suited to playwork trainers - contact the Conference Administrator at CACHE on 01727 738339.

### Fundraising for Beginners

1 May 2003 (closing date 20 March) South Wales - contact WCVA 029 2043 1723 [training@wcva.org.uk](mailto:training@wcva.org.uk)

## FUNDING

### Youth Groups

The Community Foundation in Wales has announced a new grant scheme for North Wales called Cynhyrfu. Youth groups can apply for up to £500 cash to support any one-off activity or for minor capital expenditure that will benefit young people from Anglesey to Wrexham. Any voluntary young peoples' group wishing to apply for a grant must do so before 24 March. Application packs can be received by telephoning 02920 520250 or by emailing [cynhyrfu@cfiw.org.uk](mailto:cynhyrfu@cfiw.org.uk).

### Volunteers

Wales Cares is a Business in the Community project supported by the Welsh Assembly Government, which challenges businesses and their employees to use their time, skills and resources to make a positive impact on community regeneration. They may be able to help your project.

Contact Cardiff (029 2048 3348), Wrexham (01745 817 332) or Swansea (01792 323 689), or visit [www.walescares.co.uk](http://www.walescares.co.uk)

### Refugee Community Development Fund grants

are available to organisations working closely with refugees in the UK. Visit [www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk) or ring 020 8760 8418

### Millennium Stadium Charitable Trust grants

of £2,000 to £20,000 for sport, arts, cultural and environmental activities are available to voluntary organisations, not-for-profit organisations and local authorities for non-core activities under the Activate! scheme. Priority is given to organisations providing for people disadvantaged by age, gender, disability, ethnicity and social/economic circumstance. Contact Louise Edwards on 029 204963 or visit [MSCT@fusionuk.org.uk](mailto:MSCT@fusionuk.org.uk)

## BOOKS and Periodicals

### For Every Child

#### *the rights of the child in words and pictures*

While ploughing through a Cardiff bookstore on a Christmas shopping trek, I discovered a beautifully written and illustrated children's paperback produced by UNICEF. Each article of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is encapsulated by a different children's illustrator from around the world, and the text is clear and moving. As the title suggests, every child should have one, but failing that, every child should have access to one. Don't wait till next Christmas!

Published by Random House, price £5.99 (all royalties to UNICEF) ISBN 0-09-940865-1

### Play Words

We are pleased to say that Play Words magazine is now back in print. A mixture of news, practical and theoretical articles, Play Words is a must for people who are serious about play. Subscriptions cost £30, contact [playwords@commonthreads.co.uk](mailto:playwords@commonthreads.co.uk) or 07000 785 215

### Playwork Theory and Practice

"This is a book that will challenge the way you look at yourself and at your working practice." Jackie James, Senior Playworker at Kitchener Road After School Club in Cardiff, and student on the BA (Hons) Community Studies (Playwork) course at Caerleon, reviews the latest playwork text book.

This is an exciting new book for playworkers at all levels, with contributions from twelve different writers from various play backgrounds. Each chapter gives the reader more knowledge and ideas, as well as access to a wealth of experience and expertise in the playwork field.

A vast amount is covered in what is quite a small book, from the opening section looking at the roots of play and playwork, to deeper discussions on the theories of playwork, and on to the final part about reflecting on practice. As each author shed light on a particular subject, the book seemed to flow from chapter to chapter, and I found it easy to read and comprehend. It gave me food for thought, for instance, the chapter on establishing play made me think about the future of the playwork profession, and the reflective diaries from an orphanage in Romania showed the wretched effects of play deprivation, and how play can be used therapeutically.

In my every day work with children I have learnt that memories and experiences have no expiry date - the ones recorded in this book are apt lessons for playworkers now, just as they were then. I have enjoyed this book, and I know it will be one that I turn to again and again both for study purposes and for examples of good practice.

Playwork Theory and Practice, Fraser Brown (Editor), Open University Press ISBN 0-335-20944-0