

Play for Wales

Spring 2018

Issue

50

Play news and briefing
from the national
charity for play



Playful childhoods



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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

Editorial

We are 20 years old. Who would have known, when we registered Play Wales as a charity in 1998, what a journey lay ahead.

Our world has changed so much since then, for example who could have anticipated the impact of smartphones and other technological advances on our lives.

Twenty years ago we recognised the unintended consequences of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 in creating what was becoming an increasing risk averse environment. Most of us can now see that the tide has turned and there is wide recognition of the need for children to experience opportunities to take risks – for every risk there is a benefit. It is how they learn and become resilient.

We now have a Welsh Government that also demonstrates a capacity to take risks, early on adopting the world's first national play policy and latterly and arguably more significantly the Assembly responded to our calls and

passed legislation to support children's play opportunities. This is explicit recognition of the importance of play and what might be done to create an environment where children have as many opportunities to play as their grandparents did. This is an approach that has since been advocated by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

And for the future. The evidence of the impact of our increasingly sedentary environment and love affair with sugar has been obvious for decades, it is now becoming increasingly apparent. People say we can't return to the world of our grandparents, but we say that when it comes to childhood, in some aspects, we have to. For our continued wellbeing children need to grow up in an environment that is free from food manufacturers pushing sugar, and in an environment where children are actually free to play outside – where the balance of importance and priority moves from the car driver to the pedestrian. Like it or not this will require government legislation to lead these changes.

The Welsh Government – Ministers, Assembly Members and officials have all contributed to making the changes so far. We should thank them, but they have only just started. There is still a considerable job to be done, to undo the damage and constraints that have impacted on children's opportunities to play in public space. On a more local level we can all contribute to change by protecting children's opportunities to play and wherever possible promoting play.

Finally, how can we not mention the snow in March that turned every road, village, town and city into a truly democratic space. It's not adding the snow that did this it's the taking traffic out – not necessarily all traffic but traffic moving faster than walking pace.

The evidence is there of how to change the world for our children it just requires commitment.

**Mike Greenaway,
Director, Play Wales**



News

Playday 2018

This year's Playday will take place on Wednesday 1 August.



To celebrate 31 years of Playday this year's theme is **children's right to play**.

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) says that every child has the right to play.

The Playday 2018 theme aims to:

- Support communities to come together to celebrate children's right to play
- Raise awareness about children's right to play
- Promote the importance of playing for children's happiness as well as physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Playday is an annual celebration of children's play with thousands of children and families playing out at events across the UK. It is an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of children's play and the need for quality play opportunities every day of the year.

Playday is co-ordinated by PlayBoard Northern Ireland, Play Scotland, Play England and Play Wales.

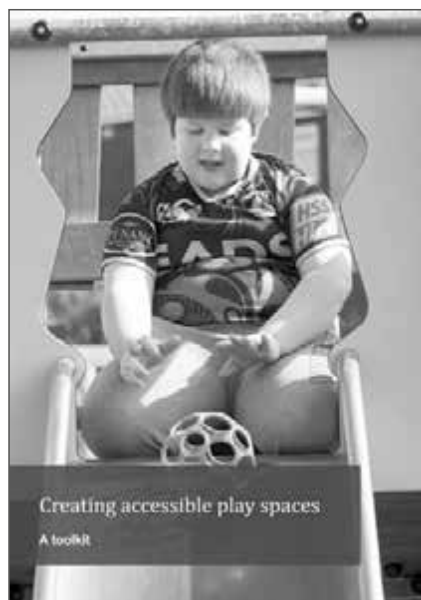
www.playday.org.uk

Creating play spaces for all children

The *Creating accessible play spaces* toolkit is designed to provide clear and concise information that helps to create play spaces that enable all children to play in, along with friends and family.

The toolkit contains information intended to help understand and address issues of concern and it provides practical, step-by-step tools and templates for undertaking work linked with removing the barriers to accessing play space faced by disabled children and their families.

The toolkit focuses on spaces that have been designed specifically for play, such as playgrounds and play areas. However, it can be applied to many spaces throughout our communities and public space whether they have been specifically allocated for children's play or not.



This toolkit is intended to support local authorities, town and community councils, politicians at all levels, open space planners, housing associations and parks and playground managers when developing and upgrading accessible play spaces. It will also be useful for playground manufacturers, parents and community members to understand the opportunities and challenges.

The toolkit is available to download for free at:
www.playwales.org.uk/eng/publications/creatingaccessibleplayspaces

Children's play debated in the Senedd



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

In a Senedd debate in February 2018 the Assembly Member for Cynon Valley, Vikki Howells proposed an Inclusive Play Bill. The Bill would place a duty on all local authorities to provide play equipment and areas that meet the needs of children with disabilities.

Vikki Howells proposed the Bill after concerns were raised by residents about problems disabled children and their families are experiencing in her constituency. She said that the Bill: '... would build on the [Children and Families (Wales)] 2010 Measure ... My proposal would strengthen and amend this, prioritising the provision of inclusive play equipment.'

As part of the debate the Minister for Children and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

'There are clear requirements already in place, but neither we, nor others in the field, such as Play Wales ... feel that placing an additional duty on local authorities is the best way to achieving inclusive play opportunities. The play sufficiency assessments reveal that local authorities have indeed been making concerted efforts to provide accessible play opportunities. The progress reports have shown that funding has been used throughout Wales to address accessibility issues with regard to outdoor play spaces and it is wider play spaces, not simply playgrounds.'

The full transcript of the debate is available at:
www.assembly.wales

At Play Wales, we are delighted that children's play has been debated by Assembly Members in the Senedd and it's receiving continued support from the Welsh Government.

Social Media



www.facebook.com/PlayWales



www.twitter.com/PlayWales

Playwork Awards 2018

The annual Playwork Awards celebrate the playwork sector by recognising people who have made a noticeable contribution and difference to the lives of those they work with. They are designed to praise the hard work that the playworkers nominated have contributed over the past year.

This year it has been great to see a good representation from playwork organisations in Wales shortlisted for awards.

Congratulations to Simon Bazley, Playful Futures on winning the Training Award.

We are also delighted that our late colleague and friend Stuart Lester won the Paul Bonel Memorial Award.

Congratulations to all those who were nominated, shortlisted and won a Playwork Award.

www.playworkawards.org.uk

Analysing children's views

The Analytical Volunteer Programme is a scheme that matches voluntary sector organisations requiring support with government analysts, for placements.

In 2017, through the Analytical Volunteer Programme, Play Wales was matched with analysts from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Welsh Government, to support us to represent the views of Welsh children in terms of their access to play in their communities.

To comply with Play Sufficiency duties, each local authority in Wales has submitted Play Sufficiency Assessments to Welsh Government in March 2013 and 2016. As part of the assessment process, many local authorities undertook surveys with children and

several used similar questions based on a template questionnaire.

The analysts reviewed the data gathered from local authorities, identified commonalities in the responses, and worked with us to analyse the data so that we can draw together children's views pan-Wales.

For more information about the findings see article on pages 12 - 13.

One of the conclusions of this exercise is that there is a need for a better approach to gathering data and we applied to be part of the Analytical Volunteer Programme in 2018. We are pleased to have been matched with a volunteer who will help us and colleagues with survey and question design, and support the collection of data so that we take a more coherent approach in future survey work.

Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

The Welsh Government has published its *Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan* for the next 10 years. It sets out Welsh Government's ambition to develop a highly skilled childcare, play and early years workforce which is recognised as a highly regarded profession and career of choice.

The Welsh Government recognises that a highly skilled early years workforce plays a vital role in helping to develop children's learning and development, encouraging them to be able to develop the skills they need to reach their full potential in life.

Minister for Children and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

'We want to attract the right people into the early years and childcare sector with the skills and behaviours to provide high-quality care, education and play opportunities for children ... We need training which supports the workforce to fully understand how children learn and develop, and we want to support the existing workforce to gain the skills they need to progress in their careers and access more employment opportunities.'

Play Wales is pleased the *Workforce Plan* has been published and will continue to work with Welsh Government through the Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales (PETC Wales) to address pressing issues for the playwork sector – as outlined in the key actions of the *Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan*.

www.gov.wales

Keep in touch

If you would like to receive our regular updates about children's play and playwork including monthly e-bulletins and information about new publications and events please sign up to our mailing list.

www.playwales.org.uk/eng/signup

20 years of Play Wales

Since Play Wales was established as a charity in 1998 over 30 staff members have worked for the organisation – too many to name – but all have made a valued and worthwhile contribution.

To celebrate Play Wales' 20th birthday we have asked a small number of staff, trustees and friends of the organisation – some of which have been around from the beginning – to share their highlights of the last twenty years.

Marianne Mannello

Assistant Director, Play Wales

My journey with Play Wales started in 1997, when I was asked to represent the All Wales Play Forum on the Play Wales management committee, before the organisation was a charity. We were a small group of dedicated people who managed to get a very small grant from the then Welsh Office to establish a national charity for children's play.

We established our charity, with new members of staff, behind the cupboards at Children in Wales' office. Our 'office' was borrowed space, and all we could afford at the time. While our financial state wasn't good, there was a sense of vision and potential and loads of scope for development.

Soon the organisation moved to more spacious settings in Cardiff Bay, which at the same time was becoming home to Welsh devolution. A devolved government brought exciting opportunities and we helped draft the world's first play policy,



Make a Noise for Play in Bute Park (2011)

strategy and ultimately, worked to influence play legislation. It's hard to choose a highlight, but working closely with our late colleague Gill Evans to plan and pull off an International Play Association (IPA) World Conference in 2011, certainly ranks high. It was a tremendous milestone for us all.

Keith Towler

Play Wales Trustee and former Children's Commissioner for Wales

What can you say about Play Wales and its achievements? It's an organisation that has promoted

play, children's rights, and the development of playworkers for 20 years. It's an organisation that has made an impact on communities in Wales, at a national level, across the UK and internationally.

How so? Well at a community level by training playworkers to deliver for children across Wales. At a national level by positively influencing the Welsh Government to legislate in favour of play. Across the UK by supporting and advocating for the play sector. Internationally by being a driving force at the IPA and in supporting the development of a General Comment on Article 31 of the UN

Joe Rowley interviewing former First Minister of Wales, the late Rhodri Morgan (2008)





Margaret Jervis MBE DL

Operational Director, Valleys Kids and former Chair of Play Wales

It was a privilege to be the first Chair of Play Wales and to be part of an organisation that set out on a mission to ensure that all children in Wales had quality play opportunities and experiences.

Play Wales convinced the Welsh Government to develop policy to support play. The team has worked with the government throughout the years including supporting the development of the national Play Policy. Play Wales will continue to ensure our children have the right to play and I wish them well for the next 20 years.

Highlights? Well, all of it I suppose, but one thing in particular. The way a succession of Welsh Government Ministers and civil servants have blessed our work. And Happy Anniversaries Play Wales. Thanks for that invitation Mike.

Catriona Williams OBE Chief Executive, Children in Wales and Play Wales Board of Trustees Observer

Play Wales is an organisation of which we in Wales can be extremely proud. Mike Greenaway and his team, as well the previous and current Chairs (Margaret Jervis and Mike Shooter) are knowledgeable, determined and passionate about the importance of children's play. Their enthusiasm has ensured that the organisation has stayed true to its original mission which it conveys in all its activities for the benefit of children.

It has been a pleasure to watch Play Wales develop from its early days located in our office, to the influential organisation it is today. It has led the way in ensuring that the value of children's play is never forgotten, not only in Wales but also globally.

Dr Mike Shooter CBE

Chair of Play Wales

When Mike Greenaway first invited me to become a Trustee and then Chair of Play Wales, my heart sank. I had been trying to give up all my third-sector commitments and the last thing I needed, so I thought, was yet another. But Mike is persuasive and how glad I am that he is!

For nothing has delighted me more than being part of

the organisation. Campaigning for children's right to play, working alongside a superb, skilled and dedicated staff group, chairing the most perceptive of Boards, and supporting Mike, whose leadership is rightly lauded at home and abroad.

Kathy Muse

Office Manager, Play Wales

Our annual conference remains the highlight of the year for me. Over the last 20 years I have organised and welcomed delegates and speakers from all over the world to our Spirit conference – watching play gurus share their ideas and participants banging drums, making fires and attending workshops on championing children's right to play. 'Make a Noise for Play' in Cardiff's Bute Park in 2011 (part of the IPA conference) was also a highlight. It was wonderful to see hundreds of children having a fantastic time with the playworkers, having water fights, dressing up, climbing and building dens.



Marianne Mannello at the playful Play Policy Implementation Plan launch (2006)

Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

It's an overachiever certainly but one that has kept its focus on improving children's lives through the wonder that is play. Well done Play Wales! Our world would be all the poorer without you.

Playful Childhoods across Wales

For 20 years Play Wales has worked with the play and playwork sector to raise awareness about the importance of children's play in Wales. Our website and resources are mainly aimed at supporting professionals in the play and playwork sectors as well as those who work in the health, education, planning sectors for example. We identified a gap in our work which has led to the development of our Playful Childhoods campaign.

Next steps

Playful Childhoods aims to help parents, carers and grandparents provide time, space and permission for children to play – at home and in their local community. Children tell us they want more opportunities to play out with their friends. Playing is a crucial part of a healthy and happy childhood. As adults it's our responsibility to make sure this happens.

Playful Childhoods aims to:

- Support parents to provide play opportunities for their children and to feel confident to let their children play out in their communities
- Support the growth and development of playful communities for children across Wales

- Support community cohesion by improving some adults' attitudes to children and young people playing and socialising in their communities.

Central to Playful Childhoods is a new website, which will include:

- Information about children's play including its physical, mental and emotional benefits
- Practical ideas for parents – things to do, where to go
- Top tips and myth busting – including overcoming worries
- Information and resources that parents can use to campaign for play in their community
- A regular blog with guest bloggers
- Examples of playful communities across Wales.

The website will also be useful for local groups and town and community councils to provide play friendly neighbourhoods in their areas.

The new website will be available soon at:
www.playfulchildhoods.wales



Partnership with Public Health Wales

Over the summer in 2017 Play Wales worked in partnership with Public Health Wales on its Every Child Wales programme. It brings together information and advice to support parents in giving children a happy and healthy start in life. Every Child Wales advises that children should play outdoors every day.



Public Health Wales identified ten evidence based steps to help children in the early years, to maintain a healthy weight which it is promoting under its Every Child Wales programme. Step six is focused on outdoor play, with the ambition that every child will be given the opportunity to play outdoors every day. Children who play outdoors are more active, and are more likely to meet the UK Chief Medical Officers' recommended three hours of movement per day.

Public Health Wales recognises that action is needed to promote more positive attitudes to outdoor play, especially play involving risk, and to normalise outdoor play in informal

community spaces, for instance, street play. This action needs to be in a supportive social context, and so simultaneous action is needed to remove or minimise time, economic, social or physical constraints.

Following successful partnership work with Play Wales to help launch the Every Child Wales programme, and to deliver a joint symposium around play and risk, Public Health Wales identified a number of opportunities to harness the expertise of Play Wales to deliver action. This work will bring together work already being delivered by both Play Wales and Public Health Wales, giving a greater specific focus to outdoor play in the early years.

Over the coming months, Play Wales will work on a range of objectives for Public Health Wales:

- Increase local action to protect and increase the availability and accessibility of outdoor play spaces in communities in Wales
- Influence public perceptions to increase the acceptability of outdoor play in public spaces
- Reduce the limits adults place on outdoor play by promoting positive attitudes to play involving risk
- Increase awareness of the value of play for health among both professionals and parents.

Street play in Wales

Play Wales has received funding from the Millennium Stadium Charitable Trust to allow us to continue our joint work with Playing Out to promote and facilitate resident led street play projects.

The funding will help us to support local residents to facilitate street play in their neighbourhoods. We will support local street play sessions led by neighbours for neighbours by:

- providing a training workshop for interested local residents
- establishing and maintaining a support network of residents
- translating existing support materials currently available via Playing Out into Welsh
- providing kits (including hi-vis jackets, road closed signs and traffic cones) for local street closures
- providing practical support at local events.

Stopping through traffic in residential streets opens them up

for play by creating a safe space for children to play out. Children have the opportunity to play out freely and safely on their own street and it builds the conditions needed for street play to be normal again. Street play projects can result in safer streets, more connected communities and they make a meaningful contribution to children's physical activity levels. It creates stronger communities, a sense of belonging and inspires residents to do more within their local communities.

The funding follows a successful pilot project in Cardiff (see our Autumn 2017 magazine) by Play Wales during the summer of 2017. Evidence from this pilot shows that support from local residents increases the likelihood



that children living in those communities have increased access to good places to play with their friends. The pilot street play sessions were highlighted as a case study within *Moving forwards: Healthy travel for all in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan*, the 2017 annual report of the Director of Public Health for Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

The funding will allow us to offer sustainable and realistic support that will contribute to a significant legacy for communities. It will provide practical support and tools to enable communities to support community based play opportunities in a way that suits the local environment and community.

<http://playingout.net>

Fun in the dungeon - a storybook

Play Wales has worked with a storyteller, cartoonist, children, parents and grandparents at Mount Stuart Primary School in Cardiff to write a book about the child's right to play.

Funding from the National Lottery Awards for All programme enabled Play Wales to engage Petra Publishing, an established community-based publisher, to help us to develop and publish a storybook about children's play. The bilingual book is aimed at primary school aged children, setting out children's right to play as recognised in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).



children of all ages. Left with only bed sheets, sticks and stones, the children become resourceful and sounds of joyful playing emerge from the dungeons. This prompts the queen to disguise herself and investigate what is happening in the dungeons. She soon has a change in mind and heart about play and vows to make it easier for children to play in her kingdom.

We are currently developing a campaign - Playful Childhoods - that spreads awareness amongst the general public about the benefits of children's play and how adults support it. The book forms part of this campaign, complementing a range of resources being developed.

The book is for children and parents, empowering children to be advocates as right bearers and parents to advocate for local play. Written by a group including parents and grandparents, the tone of the book is appropriate to parental audiences, appeals to professionals working with children and was a hit with our child story writers when the finished story was read to them.

We worked with Mike Church, a professional storyteller who supported a group of children and parents through a series of workshops, identifying issues and celebrations regarding play. Through the workshops, words and images were created to tell the story, with children providing inspiring drawings of playful images which helped our cartoonist to bring the story to life.

The shared experience of the group of children and parents created a powerful story, which tells of a spiteful queen who punished children and families for playing. Soon, her large dungeons were full of



One of the parent participants, reflecting on her experience, said:

'I really enjoyed all of the story sessions. What surprised me the most was the fab ideas the children came up with and it shocked me that they came up with traditional suggestions about play. They really used their imagination and drew amazing drawings. The group was so loud and excited at the start I didn't expect to have a story book at the end to be honest! Having seen the book it's definitely caught the essence of what we were doing in the story sessions.'



Marianne Mannello, our Assistant Director, attended all of the story writing sessions at Mount Stuart Primary School. She had this to say about the story: *'Fun in the Dungeon demonstrates beautifully how children can find and create moments of playing everywhere they find themselves. It reminds us that all adults in children's lives can either support or hinder the right for play.'*

Thank you to our children and parent story writers for reminding us that when the conditions are right for play, it will emerge.'

The children were excited to be shown a draft of the book and were pleased that the cartoonist had included their ideas. This is what they had to say:

'I really really liked doing the drawings'

'I liked Mike telling the story'

'There's my drawing of the guard capturing the boys'

'The shadow puppets was my idea!'

'The queen looks happy now that she is playing with the children'

Helen Borley, Head Teacher at Mount Stuart Primary School, said:

'These young children have gained much from the project, they jumped with excitement when it was storytelling project day. This unique experience will stay with them as a fond memory of what learning can be like and the book will be a wonderful reminder that they will treasure and hopefully share with their own children.'

***Fun in the dungeon* will be distributed to children in Wales over the coming months – look out for it in your local library or health centre.**

Playing in Wales

- capturing the views of children

In 2017, Play Wales was partnered with two analysts through a government scheme to support voluntary organisations. They analysed and reported on data from surveys completed by children and young people undertaken by 13 local authorities in Wales as part of their 2016 Play Sufficiency Assessments. The analysts reviewed the questions asked in each local authority to identify comparable questions. They considered the findings of 5,478 children aged five to 17, who were asked questions about play.

When collating the data, questions with similar wording or interpretation were grouped together maximising the response for each question assuming that there will be minimal impact caused by differing words.

The following questions and statements were analysed:

- Where is your favourite place to play or hang out when you are not in school?
- How often do you go out to play or hang out with friends?
- What stops you playing out?
- When you go out to play and hang out, what do you like doing?
- When I am playing or hanging out in my neighbourhood locations are... (great / okay / not good / rubbish)
- When I go out to play, I can go out on my own or with ...
- Playing and hanging out makes me feel ...
- Do you have enough time to play out?
- Can you play out on your own?
- Are there enough opportunities to play out?
- How safe do you feel when you play out?

When asked about their play opportunities, having time, space and permission to play was important to the children.

Policy and legislative framework

Children have a right to play, as recognised in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In 2013, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted a General Comment that clarifies for governments worldwide the meaning and importance of Article 31 of the UNCRC.

In Wales, a policy framework for play has been in place since 2002 with the publication of a national play policy, followed by a national strategy in 2006. Section 11 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 places a duty on all local authorities to assess and secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas.

Wales - a Play Friendly Country, statutory guidance to local authorities on assessing for and securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas states, 'for play opportunities to meet the requirements of children it is essential that they are consulted on what they want from play'.

Seeking the views of children is a way that we can identify how we are providing, protecting and promoting the right to play. Given that play is so important to all children, we need to ensure that any participation they have in decision-making is meaningful, not tokenistic and does not unnecessarily curtail their time and freedom to play.





Time for play

Overall, the data indicates that children are positive about the amount of time they have to play, with 40 percent reporting that they play out with friends most days and 34 percent indicating that this occurs a few days each week. However, the level reporting hardly ever (15 percent) and never (nine percent) playing out with friends deserves further exploration in future surveys.

In terms of the time children have for playing, almost half feel they have just about enough, with 31 percent reporting loads of time.

Five thousand children were asked what stops them from playing out. Dark nights and being too busy with homework rank high in the reasons reported. These factors are linked to time – children don't have time to play out on our shortest days and free time appears to be spent on homework over playing.

Places for play

Children were asked about their favourite place to play when they are not in school. The number of responses indicate that children were able to choose more than one place from a list provided. Outdoor places rank high, with the three favourite places to play reported as field or local grassy area, park, garden or friends garden.

When they are playing in their neighbourhood, 45 percent of children report that they can do some of

the things they like, whilst 43 percent say that the play opportunities available enable them to do all of the things they like.

Permission to play

Overwhelmingly, 83 percent of those surveyed returned a positive response when asked if they can play out on their own, with 91 percent reporting that they either usually or always feel safe when they play out.

For our purposes of drawing conclusions, we are assuming, based on our experience, that when children talk about feeling safe, they are generally not talking about the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and whether the environment they wish to play in at that time has a regulated sense of safeness. Nor are they talking about wanting or needing adults controlling their opportunities to challenge and stretch themselves. They are talking about a sense of social safety where they are in control and feel welcome and free from threat of violence or aggression.

When asked about freedom to play in all the places they would like, 88 percent of children report being able to play in all or some places. Further exploration is needed to identify what conditions are present to allow this to happen.

Conclusion

Whilst it is pleasing that most children surveyed feel they have enough time, space and permission to play, it is also evident there is further scope to investigate what conditions are in place that results in good levels of satisfaction. The lack of information about the situations in which surveys took place and the lack of further exploration means that it is difficult to reach clear conclusions.

A minority of children report that they are unable to play with their friends in their neighbourhoods. This may suggest they are not participating in their communities and to an extent may feel disconnected from them.

Despite many positive responses, a range of barriers are also identified by children, which need to be addressed. These include not being allowed to play outside of parental fears of traffic, too much homework, dark nights and being busy with other activities. Policy on planning, traffic, housing, open space, schools and childcare have a direct impact on opportunities to play in neighborhoods.

The right to play is critical to a happy and healthy childhood and it is clear that a range of decision-makers are responsible for ensuring that this right is protected, provided for and actively promoted.

Playing through childhood

Playing is fun and beneficial to a child's learning and healthy development at all ages. Having good play experiences helps children to develop skills they can draw on as they become young adults and make their own way in the world.

In the early years of children's lives parents are encouraged to play with their children. Early play helps to create attachment between parents and their children and helps children to develop language and social skills. As children get older they will seek greater independence and will want to play with friends further away from their parents.

Play from birth

In these early days, parents can support babies through activities which stimulate sight, hearing, touch and movement. Facial games, songs, gentle movement and having things to hold and grab help babies and parents to bond. It also lets babies know that parents are fun and playful.

Babies playing

From the age of six to twelve months, facial games, like peek a boo continue to be favourites of babies – it is a fun and easy way to introduce uncertainty in a gentle way. Babies are becoming more mobile and need to crawl, roll and move around. They are using their whole bodies and their senses (such as sight, hearing and taste) to learn about themselves, familiar adults and the world around them.

Toddlers playing

This is the time when children are learning to talk and learn new words. Toddlers are naturally curious and distracted by new and different things.

It is important to play with natural materials – many toddlers are attracted to sticks, stones, leaves, earth, grass, mud and water. They find joy in splashing, paddling and generally getting dirty. They continue to find out more about their senses – tastes, smell and textures to help them find out about their world.

Their movement is improving and they look for chances to balance, climb, and hide under things (like tables and

chairs). It can be tempting to stop these things or help, but allowing this activity helps toddlers to learn about their bodies and what they can (and can't yet) do.

Early years (three to five years old)

Young children continue to enjoy being outside – they are drawn to bushes, trees and long grass to explore in. They are starting to enjoy playing with the elements – playing in the rain is fun, so is digging in sand, running in the wind and watching a fire.

They are starting to try to make things with building blocks, pieces of fabric and cardboard boxes. This helps co-ordination and learning about size and shapes. Part of the fun is being able to take things apart again. Doing something is much more important than the end product at this age – when children knock something down, they don't see it as 'ruining it', so we shouldn't either.

Children aged five to eight

Children of this age are starting to take part in more structured activities and clubs, and whilst they enjoy these, they should still have plenty of time to choose how, when and with whom they play.

Children are starting to be more imaginative in their play. This is also a time where children may enjoy rough and tumble play with their friends. This isn't always easy to watch, because it can look too much like fighting. But allowing this type of play helps children to learn about their own bodies, their strength, and how to respond to other children they are playing with. It also helps children to develop the skills and confidence to understand their own bodies and how to look after them.

Playing outdoors remains enjoyable and at this age, children are starting to want to be more independent. This is a good time to help children get to know their neighbourhood and neighbours. If adults are less



reliant on travelling by car in their local communities, children will get to know their local streets. Walking to and from local facilities such as the shops, school and the park can help parents identify solutions together with children to keep themselves safe when the time comes for them to be out and about more independently.

Children aged eight to twelve

Children continue to be very creative at this stage – making up songs, dances and wanting to use tools to build.

Children are engaging in challenging activities to test themselves, and in the process they are learning how to keep themselves safe. Sometimes, it appears that they are playing too dangerously, but it is important to remember that most children don't want to hurt themselves and playing this way helps them to work out what they are capable of, or not.

Children of this age like to be out and about with their friends and they are starting to want and be able to go further away from home.

Teenagers

Friends and friendship groups are important to children of this age and they will want to gather and socialise in parks and other public places. This may sometimes cause tension, because, although they may look too old to be playing in traditional play areas, teenagers still need to play.

This is a time when children are playing with their identity – they may experiment with fashion and hair styles and explore different types of music.

Online relationships are integral to the development of teenage children. Social media helps children to stay in touch with friends, make plans with them, and feel connected. Encouraging appropriate behaviours that apply in both the offline and online worlds is essential. Asking teenagers about what they are doing online is totally acceptable and it helps parents understand the content and situation.

A childhood full of play

Children will play wherever and whenever they can – regardless of their age. We have asked parents of children of varying ages to share their reflections and observations on their children’s play. This is what they had to say when we asked what surprises them about how their children play.

Between the first six months to a year Eira’s play became very physical and drifted from what many might perceive as play towards movement and physical skills. I was surprised by this change from baby to little person who, walked and explored the world in a very physical way. Yes, she used objects to play with and carried around lots of things (the bigger the better) but her focus in playing was very much driven by a desire to move around a space as well as moving objects around a space.

Jacky – Mum to one year old Eira

I have been fascinated with how deliberate and focused Eira’s play is. Due to generosity of relatives and friends she has an unnecessarily extensive collection of toys. Despite this she persistently chooses from a small selection. After a period of days, or weeks, she seems to exhaust her interest in a toy and ignore it completely, regardless of its previous popularity, and rarely revisit it. I can’t decide whether she is driven by a desire for novelty or just outgrows them. Either way she is far more consistent in her preferences than I would have expected at her age.

Owen – Dad to one year old Eira

Welsh is our language at home. But, I’ve realised that Efan sometimes plays through the medium of English. Of course, he has communicated in English – be it with a relative, friends at school or a shop worker. But on these occasions he lacks confidence and his vocabulary is poor and his sentences bitty. But when he plays, he speaks with ease and his sentences are logical and correct. I can but think that his love of English television



Playful one year old Eira

programmes is the reason why he plays in English. But whatever the reason, I’m pleased that his second language is flourishing whilst he has great enjoyment in playing.

Manon – Mum to one year old Enlli and four year old Efan

The thing that has surprised me most is the amount of knowledge a child can pick up through playing especially in such a short amount of time. People say that children are like sponges but to experience it first hand is remarkable. From being able to recall the players for each football team in the Premier League to creating secret tunnels and understanding the mechanics of Minecraft is incredible at the age of six!

Ruth – Mum to six year old Lucas



Lucas playing on the playground at his school



Elliott and his friend enjoying the snow

I love how they talk aloud to themselves when playing with figures – I guess only half of the epic tale they are playing out in their heads actually comes out verbally. You just have random words like ‘watch out...’ or ‘yeah, I did it’ or the odd sound effect.

Alex – Mum to five year old Elliott and seven year old Bella

Our Llew has to play around our work schedule, along with his busy sporting one. As a nine-year-old, much of his playtime is with his brothers, mostly I’m ashamed to say on a PC, mobile or console. We restrict the times they play these games in the week. He will readily play in the garden or local park, but invariably wants a competitive game, not just a kick around. Our home takes a battering for being his playground, but it keeps him happy! The biggest surprise is Llew’s love of playing family board or card games – the more players the better!

Ian – Dad to nine year old Llew

My initial thought about Martha’s play was a shocking one. Does my 11 year old even actually ‘play’ anymore? It’s okay, she does but her idea of play is associated with being outdoors at school or when a friend visits. At her age, this involves a good deal of dancing and the inevitable screen time which she definitely considers playing. I’m not sure I share her viewpoint. Worryingly, Martha shows a real reticence to spread her wings in terms of independent outdoor play/adventures. Unlike her older siblings when they were her age, she seems scared to venture out. We even call her our Little Miss Health and Safety. A sign of the times?

Vicky – Mum to eleven year old Martha

My daughter is now 12 and has been increasingly playing out and about in our community over the last two or three years. I knew I would have to be brave when it came to her wanting to play out with her friends and when the time came, I had my heart in my throat, but it has been a revelation for both of us. As her independence and that of her friends has grown, they spend more time together at the park, the shops, the beach or just generally hanging out – and I know they all look out for each other. There are the inevitable phone calls to my mobile when something has shaken her but all in all it has been a shared journey towards her growing freedom and independence and my learning curve in trusting in her resilience to play out.

Martin – Dad to twelve year old Molly

Playing out and about

Jane Hawkshaw and her teenage children Isobelle and Ben tell us about what playing is like in their community in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Jane is a Curriculum Delivery Officer at Adult Learning Wales | Addysg Oedolion Cymru and volunteers at her local playscheme.

As a parent and a Youth and Community Worker I have always valued the importance of children and young people having a space to play in their local community. However, it was only when I had the opportunity to work with Play Wales from 2007 to 2010 where I really learnt the importance of play and the impact it has on a child's health, wellbeing and their ownership for their community.

Having two young children of my own I learnt through my children about what play meant to them. They both love being outdoors, playing in the mud, playing in puddles, climbing trees, taking risks and having adventures.

My children are now aged 12 and 14, here is what they think:

'When we are outside we can climb and feel free.'

Ben, aged 12

'When we play outside we experience new things and learn new stuff, we have more courage to talk to people, and outside we make our own fun.'

Isobelle, aged 14

In our local community we are lucky to have a playscheme run by Llanharan Community Development Project (LCDP) which encourages free play and offers an open access play setting for children aged five to fourteen. Ben and Isobelle volunteer at the playscheme during the school holidays.

'Being outside is a perfect place for children to be children with the freedom to run, hop and skip. By children going outdoors it's supporting their play, which can help them to develop many skills.'

Isobelle



There are some barriers to playing in our community such as busy roads and fast-moving traffic to get to the playscheme. Many parents want the children to stay clean and tidy and tell the playworkers they are not allowed to go down the woods! This prevents children from experiencing the best the outdoors can offer.

My children are used to playing outdoors and enjoy building dens and building tree swings across the small river in our local woodland. As parents, it has taken my husband and I time to give permission and feel we are making the right decision to let them go further and further from the house without adult supervision. I have noticed some of their friends' families have been reluctant to let go and allow time and space for their children to explore the world alone. It's important to enable them to have this confidence and build their resilience and ability to explore the world we live in.

When my children were younger I would book them into holiday club and some settings were dreadful. My children said they didn't want to attend as, in their words, *'I hate it, we don't play outside'*. I am lucky in my job that I have the opportunity to be involved in play settings and so the children have grown up attending various settings with me and they know where they feel happiest and that is outside!

Enabling Play:

Assistive Technology and Learning Through Play symposium

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Assistive Technology (APPGAT) aims to share knowledge, generate debate and facilitate engagement on assistive technology amongst Members of both Houses of Parliament. It advocates that assistive technology (AT) can unlock the world of play for disabled children.

Assistive technology facilitated play can allow parents, play professionals, and teachers to gain insight into a child's development. The Group has scoped the potential of using assistive technology to support children to gain access to play opportunities.

The three main technologies considered were switches, eye gaze and communication aids. Accessible switches, used by people with limited movement or motor control, can be linked to toys or games. Using these switches in play is a good way for children to learn about cause and effect, and learn the skill of activating the switch.

Eye gaze is a method for controlling a computer by looking at sections of the screen – there are games that allow children to develop the skills of using eye gaze. Communication aids are used by people who don't speak at all or whose speech is limited. The user selects items from a board in front of them which produces synthetic speech. For children who need them, communication aids are used in much of their play.

In November 2017, Play Wales' Assistant Director, Marianne Mannello joined a panel of speakers at an APPGAT symposium on assistive technology and play for disabled children.

The panellists discussed the value of assistive technology for play, the barriers to accessing the technology in early years, and how we can shape policy to give all children the opportunity to play. A key theme was the power of assistive technology to enable play for learning and development.

The speakers emphasised the essential value of play, as an expression of independence and choice, a chance to take up a challenge, and communicate with peers. Yet discussion showed that many children lack the opportunity to use assistive technology before they start school. It was highlighted that children and parents need support to find technology that suits their needs and its provision must be embedded within the child's network of support.

The group heard powerful recommendations to remove barriers to play. These included adopting the model of play sufficiency legislation in Wales for England, creating a dedicated budget for assistive technology within early years settings, supporting the networking amongst home visiting services to share awareness of assistive



technology, and working with schools and libraries to provide assistive technology in play settings.

Also at the symposium was Lisa Rees-Renshaw, an Assistive Technology Advisory Teacher at Ysgol Y Deri in Penarth, Vale of Glamorgan – a purpose-built school for pupils aged three to 19 who have a wide range of physical, learning, medical and communication difficulties.

Lisa described how Ysgol Y Deri supports children experience a range of assistive technology:

'The school is proud of a dedicated and successful multi-disciplinary team [which] helps to provide the pupils with the most efficient access to technology. We have a very close relationship with parents and work hard to ensure we share information and include the parents in the process of assessing and providing equipment to support their child so equipment can be taken home and parents can feel confident that they can provide efficient support to their child.'

A key area of our current work is facilitating play with assistive technology. This involves setting up play activities in the most physically accessible manner to the child and using technology to encourage interactive play and communication. The play sessions are proving successful and children are continually demonstrating their abilities to control their environment, communicate their ideas and have fun.'

An interview with the Minister for Children

Huw Irranca-Davies, the Assembly Member for Ogmore has been appointed as the Minister for Children and Social Care – which includes responsibility for children’s play. We recently chatted to him about his own play memories and what he hopes to achieve for children’s play opportunities in Wales.

What are your favourite play memories?

There’s a couple of contrasting examples that really stand out. As a kid growing up in the 60s I can vividly remember my brother and I playing the very old fashioned game of cowboys, running round the garden dressed up to the nines and running up to the woods behind the house, dodging in and out of bushes taking imaginary pot shots at each other. I can even remember the weight of the little toy gun in my hand and the frills on the holster.

We lived on the edge of a wood in Gowerton and my brother and I used to love climbing and our parents would let us do this. They were happy to let us out of the house, to get us out from under their feet, and we would climb trees. One day I didn’t get up to the top but my brother did – he must have been about 13 and I was about 10. It must have been a good 60 feet tall and he attached the flag to the top. Of course, our parents were quite understandably very annoyed when they found out what we did! They were great times.

Because we had a large family – we had aunts and uncles and grandparents all over the village – our parents would encourage us to go out and play with our friends, explore the village, up in the woods and out in the fields and pop in to our relatives as long as we didn’t get into big trouble. There was a real encouragement to go and be adventurous and enjoy.

I remember vividly, there were never any restrictions short of keep out of trouble. It was go out, explore, enjoy, come back with dirty knees, the odd scrape and



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

bruise but nothing too serious. Looking back I can see how important that is. We grew up without fear and willing to try things and have those bumps and scrapes and recognise it’s a part of growing up.

Play Wales is celebrating its 20th birthday this year – a time for reflecting on changes in children’s play opportunities. Looking at your own experience, where do children play in your community today? How does this differ to when you grew up?

I think it is different. The perception of danger and risk seems to be very different nowadays – parental attitudes to children being allowed out to play has changed. You can sort of understand why. Our televisions are full of the dangers of parenthood and there’s certainly changes around our built environment in terms of traffic. Actually, sometimes those perceptions are far greater than the real risk – that really inhibits children and parents’ willingness to allow their children to get out and explore and have adventures.

'We all want to see Wales be a country where children and young people have a diverse range of challenging, interesting play opportunities.'

Community attitudes have changed as well. We need to get more savvy on designing communities that are much more children friendly – that includes the design of our built environment and street architecture but also leaving places that are unfinished. I'm a great supporter of unfinished spaces and play that is free-form rather than regimented and squeezed into tiny spaces. We need those unfinished places in our communities, not just the manicured parks and built play provision. We need those places that are the rough edges of communities where you have your adventures where you can muck around with your friends and do it within earshot of your parents, friends, relatives and neighbours.

The other significant change that does impinge on children nowadays is the wider attraction of technology – tv is the one I grew up with – now it's mobiles, tablets and laptops. Somehow as parents and as a community we need to get back to that idea of encouraging children to have those adventures in real life through play and get out to experience what's out there, similar to when I was growing up. Have that confidence to take the odd scrape, the odd few tears and then pick yourself up and get on with it as part of growing up. If we don't have that we're missing something very important in our young life.

Congratulations on your appointment as the new Minister for Children and Social Care. What do you hope to achieve in your portfolio with responsibility for children's play?

Thank you. This is a wonderful portfolio to have. I have a long history with play. In a previous career I was a professional working in the leisure industry. Play was one of the areas that I worked in as a practitioner and a lecturer before I became a politician. Play Wales has been a significant organisation in my understanding of play over the last few decades.

I want to congratulate Play Wales on reaching its 20th anniversary – I've seen it grow up and develop over the last few years. Keep on doing what you're doing to try and develop us into a play friendly Wales. And that's why, it's great to confirm the continuation of funding for Play Wales.

My vision for Wales is that we should keep on developing as a play friendly nation and understand the importance of play and then put in place the measures that will allow diverse opportunities for a diverse range of children and young people to play as they grow.

We're building on that track record as we were, proudly, the first country to legislate for play. The Children and Families Measure in 2010 was a significant landmark, introducing play sufficiency requirements. The statutory guidance, *Wales - a Play Friendly Country*, flowed from that, directing local authorities to look at the diverse needs of all children and young people, including those with disabilities.

My vision, and certainly as a Minister, is that we work together to recognise, understand and deliver on the importance of play in children's lives – providing opportunities to play at home, with friends, and out in the community. To have community leaders and others working and volunteering in the community to provide play opportunities as well. Their roles can contribute to supporting play and making neighbourhoods and local streets more play friendly. There's quite a big mission here, even though we've built such a strong foundation in Wales.

And the reason we need to do this? It's because we know that it's play that helps children develop resilience as they grow, and resourcefulness when they hit difficult situations as they get older. It's opportunities to play that help them develop as resilient, resourceful adults.

We all want to see Wales be a country where children and young people have a diverse range of challenging, interesting play opportunities and where they can enjoy their leisure time and they can grow safely and in confidence throughout their childhood years.

One of my roles as Minister is working right across Government with colleagues in all the departments, with local government, housing, education and others, local authorities, the third sector and a wide range of partners to ensure everybody understands the benefits of play and work together to improve children's play opportunities right across Wales.

'As a community we need to get back to that idea of encouraging children to have adventures in real life through play.'

Workforce development

20 years of playwork training and qualifications in Wales

Since our establishment as a charity in 1998, Play Wales has sought to support the play and playwork sectors with training and qualifications that are inspiring, interactive and engaging. Whilst it hasn't always been easy, the last 20 years has seen the landscape for playwork training and qualifications in Wales steadily improve and we continue to be committed to ensuring that opportunities for training and professional development meet the changing needs of the workforce.

1998 – 2004

Play Wales began its work around workforce development by engaging with the playwork unit of the Sports, Recreation and Allied Occupations (SPRITO) training organisation. The work of SPRITO would later become part of the work of SkillsActive, the sector skills council for playwork.

In 2001, *The First Claim... a framework for playwork quality assessment* was published and was followed a year later by the advanced framework, *The First Claim – desirable processes*. Both publications provide a good overview of playwork and how to self-assess playwork practice. Since 2002, Play Wales has employed a dedicated staff member to lead on workforce development.

In 2004, Play Wales secured funding from the Welsh Government to review the values and assumptions of playwork on behalf of the UK playwork sector. This work resulted in the production of the Playwork Principles which have shaped the approach of the sector towards playwork training ever since.

2005 – 2007

Following the production of the Playwork Principles, it became clear that new training would be beneficial to explore how to put the ethos of *The First Claim...* and the Playwork Principles into practice. The intention was to develop training that would blend the knowledge, practice and reflection that are essential for the successful facilitation of children's play and build on other training opportunities we had developed such as 'Mud and Sparks'. A successful bid to the European Structural Fund (ESF) by the CWLWM partnership enabled Play Wales to work with sector experts and the other childcare organisations in Wales to develop a comprehensive suite of playwork qualifications – this would become Playwork: Principles into Practice (P³).

In 2007, Play Wales secured further funding to establish Playwork Wales – the national centre for playwork education and training. Crucial work achieved by Playwork Wales included the completion of the level 2 teaching and learning resources for P³, making P³ available as a recognised qualification and undertaking the largest survey of the playwork workforce in Wales ever. Unfortunately, funding would mean that the national training centre would not be able to sustain itself beyond 2010.

This period also marked the very first Playworkers Forum in 2007 which was, and continues to be, a valuable professional development opportunity for frontline playworkers, providing opportunities for learning, reflection and peer support in a two-day outdoor training event.

2008 – 2014

The BIG Lottery Fund Child's Play programme meant that across Wales, playwork projects were on the increase and a new injection of playworkers into the workforce would be able to take advantage of the training and qualifications on offer. During this time, Play Wales continued to develop and deliver the level 2 and 3 P³ qualifications and build the infrastructure of playwork trainers and assessors. As these playwork projects came to an end, many areas in Wales found themselves reducing the level of year-round provision in favour of maintaining a service of holiday play provision.

2015 onwards

As a result of reduced capacity within Play Wales, we embarked on a positive partnership with YMCA Wales Community College (now Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales) to continue delivering P³. This arrangement opened up new funding possibilities

and also enabled us to benefit from their robust quality assurance arrangements.

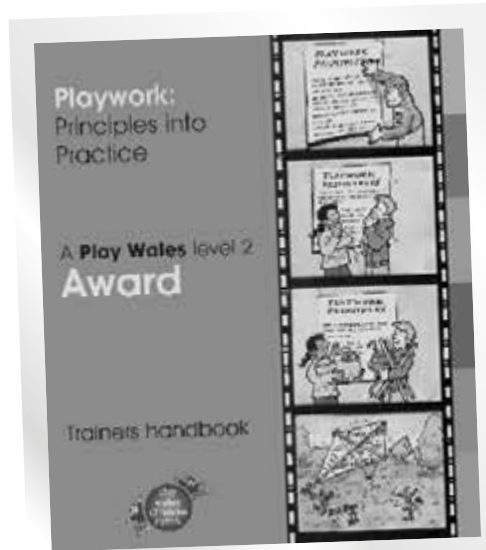
In 2015, following changes to the regulation of childcare to include provision for children up to the age of 12, Welsh Government funded Play Wales to develop the Managing a Holiday Play Scheme Award (MAHPS). This award is intended for those managing short term holiday playschemes who hold other related level 3 qualifications but who require the knowledge and understanding specific to playwork. We were pleased to be able to work on this development with Agored Cymru, Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs, SkillsActive and YMCA Wales Community College.
www.playwales.org.uk/eng/mahps

The following year, we received further funding to develop the Level 2 Award in Playwork Practice (L2APP) which has received a fantastic response from those in the playwork sector as well as learners working in a range of settings from sports to youth work.
www.playwales.org.uk/eng/l2app

Looking to the future...

We are currently piloting the Level 3 Award in Delivering Dynamic Playwork Training (ADDaPT) (accredited by Agored Cymru) which seeks to ensure that playwork trainers have additional skills, alongside their teaching qualification, to make playwork training truly transformative for learners. www.playwales.org.uk/eng/addapt

Our partnership with Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales continues to grow and is ensuring that funding is made available for the delivery of these qualifications. Arguably, this partnership is continuing the work of the national



centre for playwork education and training. This year we are also working together to make online assessment and additional learning resources available through the use of the educational platform, Moodle.

A review of P³

Play Wales has identified funding to revise the level 2 and 3 Playwork: Principles into Practice (P³) qualifications. The new qualifications will be developed with Agored Cymru, the awarding body for Wales, rather than as previously, with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

The new qualifications will incorporate the two smaller awards that we have already developed with Agored Cymru – L2APP and MAHPS as units. This means that learners that have achieved these awards will have already completed part of the new P³.

The new P³ will be different for learners based on feedback from tutors, learners and assessors but will still make use of the comprehensive teaching and learning resources that we developed with the European funding. The new qualifications will be available for delivery from September 2019.

And finally

It is difficult to know what the future holds for playwork, but we continue to remain positive that the developments that we are currently involved in will respond to the changing needs of the sector and ensure that quality playwork training and qualifications remain a reality for the playworkers of Wales (and beyond).

Wales – A Play Friendly Place

Sian Lile-Pastore from National Museum Wales tells us about how the 'Yr Iard' play area has been creatively replaced at St Fagans National Museum of History in Cardiff to bring together play, history and art.

st fagans
national
museum
of history
sain fagans
amgueddfa
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As I write this, it's February half term, and the new play area is full of children – they are playing on the swings, climbing the ropes on the climbing frame and playing in the sand. But what I have loved seeing most of all, is that they are also just using it as a space to be – hanging out on the large rocks, or eating lunch on the seating and the storytelling area under a large tree.

The play area opened at the end of 2017 after two years of researching, designing and building. It was designed by artist Nils Norman with support from Wales-based artists Imogen Higgins and Fern Thomas.



Nils Norman designed the play area during his time as artist in residence in the museum. His brief was to design a bespoke play area that created links with the museum along with fostering creative play and being as sustainable and environmentally friendly as possible. We were really pleased to work with Nils, who works across the disciplines of public art, architecture and urban planning and is also interested in play and play areas along with public space.

With help from Imogen and Fern, Nils spent time at the museum observing and taking photographs, spending time in the archives, and talking to museum staff. Fern and Imogen also spent a lot of time looking through the archives for interesting items to share with Nils and also ran workshops with groups from two local schools – Woodland High School and Hywel Dda Primary School – to find out what they would like in a new play area.

Thanks to the residency programme, time could be spent getting to know the space and gaining a deeper understanding of the museum as a whole. We also talked a lot about how children already played around the site – those patches of worn grass where they have walked time and again, and have been discussing ways in which we can encourage more unstructured play in the museum.

The finished play area is of course mainly for children to play and enjoy. It incorporates traditional play structures such as swings and the climbing frame, as well as areas which encourage more creative play – the fallen log to clamber over and the large rocks to sit on or jump off. The play area enables children and families to make subtle links between the play structures and the historic buildings as they swing amongst the eaves of a building, or slide down the roof of another.

What makes it different to other play areas is that it is also a sculptural art work – the structures are beautiful to look at and it feels very much embedded in the museum. This unique intermingling of play, history and art, especially during this busy half term, has brought a new and vital energy to St Fagans, one belonging and being spread by the children who come here and can claim their own space.

Wales – A Play Friendly Place is a Play Wales campaign to help build a network of support for play across Wales. Share what's happening locally which is either protecting or prohibiting children's right to play on the Facebook page: on.fb.me/playfriendlyplace