

Play for Wales

Play news and briefing from the national charity for play

Spring 2011



The right to play



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Contact the Editor at:
Play Wales, Baltic House,
Mount Stuart Square,
Cardiff CF10 5FH
Telephone: 029 2048 6050
E-mail: info@playwales.org.uk
Registered Charity No. 1068926

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 Tel: 01443 843 520
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Editorial

It's National Assembly election time again - it seems no time since last year's parliamentary election but even in the last 12 months the climate in which we are working has changed.

We are lucky in Wales - our National Assembly has recognised the importance of children's play and provision for playing children. But we can't be complacent. Nothing is ever simple. While there is a clear policy commitment from the Assembly, right now what is actually happening on the ground does not reflect national priorities.

Despite the forthcoming publication of regulations and guidance on the implementation of the play sufficiency element of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure (which places a duty on Local Authorities to provide sufficiently for playing children) we have evidence that some play services are being disproportionately affected by Local Authority cuts. Some councillors and local authority officials are clearly not aware of the legal duty to provide sufficiently for children's play and still see play services as a soft target when money is tight. In cutting play services they will not only let down children but also let the Local Authority down when it comes to audits of play provision under the Measure.

This is important; while we do not yet know how Welsh Assembly Government will determine what constitutes sufficiency of play

provision, we do know that it is best not to make a costly mistake – both in terms of money, goodwill and children and their community's confidence.

Ready for the election, we've published our Agenda for Children's Play which we will be using at election hustings and continuing to use into the future. It was developed in consultation with our members. The agenda identifies what we believe are the priorities for the next five years. You are welcome to use it in the interests of play provision for children. (Available in this issue of Play for Wales, online at www.playwales.org.uk and in leaflet form).

We are contacting colleagues and Play Wales members across the country to research the real implications of the cuts so as to be able to lobby and campaign at national level and to reflect back to politicians and other decision makers.

Let no-one in Wales forget, providing for children's play is a legal duty, the election will not change the law, the detail might not have been drawn in yet but the picture is clear.

Children from North Wales have given us their comments about their right to play and we have printed them alongside features and articles – thank you to all those who contributed.

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 from our website news section at www.playwales.org.uk

Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure



The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure has received royal approval, so Wales has become the first country in the UK to make the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) part of its domestic law.

The Measure contains a number of provisions that will strengthen and build on the existing rights-based approach of the Welsh Assembly Government towards policy for children and young people aged 0-25, and also strengthen children and young person's position in Welsh society.

Deputy Minister for Children, Huw Lewis said:

'This is a ground breaking Measure ... Once again this shows our ongoing commitment to children and young people.'

The Measure has also been welcomed by Keith Towler, the Children's Commissioner for Wales:

'We should be very proud that Wales and its Government are leading the way yet again in securing children and young people's rightful place as full citizens of our nation. We must now

ensure this legislation makes a practical, positive difference to children and young people's lives.'

Andrew Chalinder, head of Save the Children in Wales and Chair of the Wales UNCRC Monitoring Group added:

'We will continue our important role in monitoring government to comply with the rights and obligations of the UNCRC and in supporting the implementation of this important legislation.'

For more information visit:
www.assemblywales.org

New Children's Rights website

Save the Children has launched a new Children's Rights in Wales website designed to help practitioners, policy makers, managers and strategists develop their understanding of children's rights and how to adopt a children's rights perspective to their work.



The web resource is produced by Save the Children with part funding from the Welsh Assembly Government. Many partners, in particular the Wales United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Monitoring Group, are involved in the continued development of the website.

Rhian Croke, Children's rights and policy officer for Save the Children Wales said:

'It is great to be launching a dynamic online resource that will help professionals across Wales who work with children and young people have a better understanding of children's human rights and how to translate them into practice. The website will also help to support the implementation of the landmark piece of (children's rights) legislation ... that means that Ministers must have due regard to the rights and obligations of the UNCRC.'

www.childrensrighswales.org.uk

Children's games research

New research by the Institute of Education, the University of East London and the University of Sheffield has found that although traditional playground games such as tag remain popular 'games consoles, pop music and television actually enrich children's pretend play; adding topical themes to fantasy scenarios as youngsters incorporate their favourite characters, reality TV stars, pop songs and dance moves into their make-believe worlds'.

The research project is based on observations of two primary school playgrounds in Sheffield and London over a two year period.

Professor Jackie Marsh of University of Sheffield said: 'The project has shown how childhood is changing in a new media age ... The playground provides an important space for children to engage with how their culture is changing in a digital age.'

Children's playground games and songs in the new media age project report is available at:
<http://tinyurl.com/6cssrat>

The project is led by Professor David Burn who will be presenting a paper 'Playground Games in the Age of New Media: connecting children's playground cultures and media cultures' at the IPA 2011 conference in Cardiff in July.

Also as part of the project Grethe Mitchell has produced a 50 minute documentary, *Ipi-dipi-dation*, which 'offers a fascinating insight into the world of the playground as seen by the children themselves'. Grethe will be showing the documentary at the IPA 2011 conference.

Alongside the report the British Library has launched a new website – *Playtimes: a century of children's games and rhymes* - that will build an ongoing archive of children's games: www.bl.uk/playtimes

CRB price increase

The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) has announced that the cost of an enhanced CRB check for paid employees has increased to £44 from 6 April 2011.

CRB checks for volunteers will continue to be free of charge.

Did you know you can access free CRB checks for staff working in regulated provision through your Play Wales membership?

For more information about Play Wales membership please visit:
www.playwales.org.uk

Children as Researchers Resource Launch

Funky Dragon and the Partnership Support Unit (PSU) recently launched a new publication, *Children as Researchers - Resource Pack* which contains tried and tested participative methods that Funky Dragon has used over the past four years whilst working with children aged from 5 to 11 to enable them to research and lead their own projects.



This resource pack includes information on how to run a research project, examples of where the process has been used before, research methods and suggestions of how these can be used.

The *Children as Researchers - Resource Pack* is available to download from the Funky Dragon Junior website, along with copies of the presentations made at the launch.

www.funkydragonjunior.co.uk

Accepted qualifications for playworkers in Wales

SkillsActive, the sector skills council for active leisure, learning and well-being, has produced an updated list of accepted qualifications for the playwork workforce in Wales (2011 – 2012) for playworkers, playwork employers, the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW), the Welsh Assembly Government and national organisations.

Play Wales' Playwork: Principles into Practice (P³) qualification is on the list.

The list is available to download on the Play Wales website: www.playwales.org.uk

Health and Safety – good for everyone

Last year we reported on the UK Government's review of health and safety practice, and Lord Young's recommendations to the Prime Minister (*Common Sense, Common Safety* October 2010).

Since then, the Play Safety Forum has met with representatives of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to discuss the implications of the report in terms of provision for children's play.

On 21 March 2011 David Cameron announced an immediate independent review of health and safety regulation (called *Good Health and Safety, Good for Everyone*) to be chaired by Professor Ragnar Löfsted of Kings College London. The aim is to simplify regulation and reduce 'red tape'. The review panel has been asked to make recommendations by October 2011 and the Government will then decide how to proceed. The Play Safety Forum has approached the review panel so as to raise health and safety issues related to children's play provision.

What is the Play Safety Forum?

The Play Safety Forum (PSF) is an independent group of national organisations with an active interest in

good practice in play provision, particularly issues of risk and health and safety. Play Wales has been an active member since the Forum's inception.

The Forum has published key documents that are relevant to all those who manage or staff play provision: *Managing Risk in Play Provision* and *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide* available at www.playengland.org.uk

Pipes and safety

A Community Councillor in mid Wales contacted us after our last issue. He was very concerned at the picture on the front cover - one child in a concrete pipe being rolled by another child. Living in an agricultural area (I am) well aware of the hazards presented by heavy concrete pipes; they are extremely difficult to control once in motion - especially by a child - (it) represents a significant safety hazard.'

Thankfully we were able to reassure him: the pipe in question was a cardboard tube and the children were playing with it at a play scheme with trained playworkers on hand to ensure that the children remained free from significant harm while still being able to have fun and challenge themselves.

To which he replied: *Cardboard tubes*



can be tremendous fun - and obviously if there is supervision, then there is no problem at all. However, it was not apparent from the picture that cardboard tubes **only** should be used - together with supervision.

Moveable concrete pipes may not appear to children to be a safety hazard and therefore they may not be able to risk/benefit assess their use as play objects for themselves. Cardboard tubes have a hundred and one uses for playing children, the majority of which will not lead to significant harm. As play providers it is our role to make an ongoing, informed risk/benefit assessment and to prevent playing children from coming to significant harm.

Please see Professor Tanya Byron on page 13.

Please go to the Risk pages of the Play section at www.playwales.org.uk

Keith, Huw and progress on 'sufficiency'



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

The Children's Commissioner for Wales' Annual Report (2009-2010) highlights key issues affecting children and young people. On the subject of opportunity to play Keith Towler says:

'The benefits of self directed freely chosen play are clear. Children learn how to socialise, assess risk and acquire negotiation skills while they play. Childhood is such a precious time and play is vital to a healthy and happy childhood. And yet I still come across examples where children are not allowed to play in our public spaces, where parents who let their children play in the streets are chastised and where others are so fearful that their children will be harmed they would not even consider letting their children play without constant adult supervision.

'I can't help but feel we have lost something. People of my generation enjoyed much more freedom as children. I call upon all adults to think about how our public spaces can be opened up for children to play and to reconsider their attitude when they see children playing in our streets, in our parks, in our countryside and in our villages, towns and cities.'

On behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government, Huw Lewis the Deputy Minister for Children responded as follows:

'We are currently drafting regulations, standards and guidance for Local Authorities on fulfilling their duty to assess for and secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas. This will include guidance on creating safe but challenging play opportunities as well as raising awareness of the importance of play in a child's life.'

Mary Nicholls, Senior Manager in the Child and Family Programmes Team of the Children and Young People's Strategy Division of Welsh Assembly Government gives us an update on progress on the regulations and guidance that will accompany the duty to secure sufficient play opportunities.

In February 2010 the Children and Families (Wales) Measure received Royal Assent. Section 11 of the Measure covers Play Opportunities and provides for Welsh



'We can't play in the street because it's a busy road . . . there isn't enough space for us to play'

(Young carers group – aged 9-11)

Ministers to place a duty on Local Authorities in Wales to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities for children in their areas. With regard to that assessment and so far as is reasonably practicable, the duty would require the Local Authority to secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their area. The duty would be commenced by way of regulations and accompanied by associated guidance.

'I won't allow my child to play independently till they're 10'

(Parent, Bryn Cadno)

During the last year, the Welsh Assembly Government has commissioned and conducted research with children, young people and parents as to their views on play and what they consider to be sufficient play opportunities in their communities. The Assembly has engaged with a wide range of stakeholders including children's and play organisations and training providers; and has worked across departments on policy issues relating to children's play opportunities, such as health; planning and traffic, to develop the standards and guidance for play.

The work of the Children and Young People's Committee in their Inquiry into the Provision of Safe Places for Children and Young People to Play and Hang Out, and the Report's recommendations to the Welsh Assembly, has contributed to this process.

It is anticipated that this work will be taken forward during 2011.

For more information on the Children's Commissioner's annual report please visit: www.childcom.org.uk

Surviving and Thriving

Playing helps build resilience – the capacity for children to thrive despite adversity and stress in their lives.

Quality play provision makes an environment in which children can play in a way that is spontaneous, flexible, unpredictable, imaginative and directed by themselves – the very environment contributes to their resilience.

In the current economic climate and with funding changes afoot, play provision in many areas in Wales is feeling the pinch. Here we have drawn together articles about children's right to play and how play provision effectively responds to new Government initiatives, we have also drawn up an agenda that we hope will raise the profile of provision for children's play.

Make a Noise for Play

On 6 July as part of the IPA's 50th anniversary celebrations at the Cardiff conference, we are organising a play event in Cardiff. The idea is to showcase Welsh playwork-supported play provision and to 'make a noise' about children's right to freedom, time and space to play – and entitlement to provision for their play. If you are interested in taking part please contact Marianne Mannello at Play Wales.

Make your own noise for play

Everyone can make some kind of noise. In these difficult times when many play services are under threat, making a noise and getting children involved in raising public awareness of how much they value provision for them to play can be part of a survival plan.

We would like to encourage others to organise their own Make a Noise playday events this summer – at school, on the village green, in the park, in a field or a car park – anywhere that children can get together with adults and make a noise to attract media and decision makers' attention. Whether this takes place on Playday (3 August) or at another time (when it is more strategically appropriate) is up to you.

We will gather together guidance and campaigning tips (many of which are already included in factsheets in the information section at www.playwales.org.uk or on the Playday website at www.playday.org.uk) and make up a pack, and it is up to you just exactly how you choose to make a noise!

Ideas for noise makers include: hooters, klaxons, plastic-bottle-and-dried-pea shakers, choirs, steel bands, football rattles, rappers, party blowers ... and ear plugs.

Play and New Developments



The International Play Association works to raise the profile of Article 31 of the UNCRC (on children's

right to play). IPA has provided evidence to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (see below) that has persuaded them there is need to clarify Article 31 – this clarification is made through the publication of a General Comment. As host of the 2011 IPA world conference, Play Wales has a place on the IPA Executive Board and since 2008 has supported this work on behalf of children in Wales.

Article 31 is often referred to as the most neglected or forgotten right, and adults and children alike interpret the word play in many different ways. A General Comment is an official statement that elaborates on the meaning of an aspect of the Convention that seems to require further interpretation or emphasis. The aim of the General Comment is to raise the importance of an Article and increase accountability among countries that have signed up to the Convention.

Article 31 of the UN Convention

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has significantly influenced policy-making in Wales. It is the first treaty to take a holistic approach to the well-being of children. Article 31 says:

1. States Parties recognise the right of the child to **rest and leisure**, to engage **in play and recreational activities** appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely **in cultural life and the arts**.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.'

What will the General Comment do?

The General Comment will *provide guidance* to the governments of the 192 countries (States Parties) that are signatories, on the provisions of the Convention in relation to play and recreation, rest and leisure, cultural life and the arts. It will raise awareness of the importance of these in the everyday lives of children worldwide.

IPA hopes to position article 31 more centrally within the fuller context of the UN Convention, illustrating the indivisibility of

Children's Rights



Convention articles (for instance the right to play is crucially linked with the rights to be included and to be healthy) and also to put some emphasis on the role of children's opportunity to play in their own way, which is facing increasing challenges.

The General Comment on article 31 will be a useful tool in harnessing worldwide energy to promote the children's right to play worldwide. Governments and authorities can play a key role in helping to ensure that children grow up in conditions where they can exercise their right to play.

Next Steps

IPA will be closely involved in the development of this paper. It is likely there will be a broadly represented 'expert advisory panel' and a core group which will work closely with a UN Committee focal group. Professor Lothar Krappmann, until recently a member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, is a speaker at the IPA world conference in Cardiff this July. It seems he is likely to continue to work with the Committee on the General Comment, and one of his aims in coming to the Wales conference is to talk to the 'play experts' who will be gathered there.

The time-frame for the development of the General Comment through to its final approval by the UN Committee is approximately two years.

Providing Evidence

IPA has undertaken a number of strategies to heighten awareness of the importance of play worldwide and to prove the need for a General Comment:

- In 2010 there was a series of consultations on children's access to their right to play in – Bangkok, Beirut, Johannesburg, Mexico City, Mumbai, Nairobi, Sofia and Tokyo. The findings make interesting reading – <http://article31.ipaworld.org/> Some of the facilitators will be speaking at the IPA world conference in Cardiff this summer.
- Another was to commission a concept paper, undertaken by Stuart Lester and Wendy Russell from the University of Gloucestershire. The Bernard Van Leer Foundation provided funding and has published the paper under the title *Children's Right to Play, an examination of the importance of play in the lives of children worldwide*. The authors are speakers at the IPA world conference – presenting this paper.

The concept paper examines how play is related to each of the three categories under which articles of the Convention are often grouped - protection, participation and provision. Here are some examples:

Protection 'Children's play can be seen as a self-protecting process that offers the possibility to enhance adaptive capabilities and resilience. Play acts across several adaptive systems to contribute to health, well-being and resilience.'

Participation 'Children's play represents a primary form of participation, being interwoven into everyday life. The quality of children's environments influences their ability to play (and therefore participate).'

Provision 'Provision implies much more than providing play facilities. It requires wider consideration of children's rights to ensure that the social and physical environment can support children's ability to play.'

This document is available in Play Wales' library in Cardiff Bay and in our North Wales collection of resources at Glyndwr University library. It is also available to download: <http://ipaworld.org/category/play-resources/>

'Older people misunderstand us and phone the police when we're out on the street . . .

It's like they've forgotten what it's like to be kids'

(Young person, age 14, Wales)

'In the community I live in, we have been told off for playing in our street so many times by one of the neighbours that the younger kids have learnt not to bother playing out at all . . .'

(Young Person, age 15, Wales)

Agenda for children's play in Wales

With the upcoming National Assembly elections in mind, Play Wales has published objectives for policy in the new Government – to help remind decision-makers of the importance of play and play provision to children and their families. This publication is free for others to use – download it from our website or request a printed version.



When we value children's play we value children ...

Play Wales calls for the next Government in Wales to continue to prioritise provision for play. We are asking all political parties to recognise that having time, freedom and good places for playing are of paramount importance to children and their families.

The Welsh Assembly Government upholds children's right to play in its unique and groundbreaking Play Policy. Playing contributes to the wellbeing and resilience of human beings - we need to work hard to foster environments that support children's play.

Some children are prevented from gaining the optimum benefit from playing due to environmental and cultural barriers - particularly those who are disabled or marginalised. With a joined up approach we can break down these barriers. This means:

- working to change attitudes
- making special provision for children's play that reassures them, and their carers that they are safe from bullying, traffic and predatory adults.

Addressing the barriers to playing is a task for all of us, and especially government. Policy on planning, traffic, housing and open space, schools and childcare have a direct effect on opportunities to play.

Provision for play contributes positively to the following agendas:

- eradication of child poverty
- promotion of health and well-being and prevention of disease
- promotion of community safety
- enhancement and extension of learning
- children's and community participation
- economic development
- workforce development

Children tell us:

'We like to play outdoors with our friends.'

This needs to happen:

- cross-sector training for those who plan, design, build and manage our communities to understand the importance of children's play and their role in creating child-friendly public spaces.
- all residential areas have a 20mph maximum speed limit and initiatives that make streets child, family and play friendly.
- public space designed and managed to offer genuinely inclusive play opportunities.
- Government endorses and ensures a common sense approach to health and safety policy, practice and legislation.

Children tell us:

'We need time and space to have fun in and out of school.'

'We need adults to understand how important playing is to us.'

This needs to happen:

- All parents receive clear information about the importance of playing, and how they can support it.
- Schools provide sufficient time and space for freely chosen, self-determined play during the school day and offer play opportunities after school.
- National and local policies recognise and respond to the important role of playing in children's lives and healthy development.
- Provision for the play, social and mobility needs of all children and particularly disabled and/or marginalised children is extended and protected.

Children tell us:

'We sometimes need adults around to help us if we need them.'

'We need to learn about ourselves and others without being over-protected.'

This needs to happen:

- Children have access to staffed play provision.
- All staffed play provision and childcare settings have access to good outdoor play space and quality playwork training.
- The national minimum standards for all childcare settings include quality standards for play, as well as safety and well-being.

Freely chosen play is critically important to all children and young people as part of their every day lives and within their own communities. We can all be part of making Wales a place where children can benefit from playing as part of their everyday lives.



Playing into the Future – surviving and thriving



IPA 50th Anniversary Conference, Cardiff 4 – 7 July 2011

Wales is hosting the International Play Association triennial conference in Cardiff City Hall this summer.

Who'll be there?

We are working hard on the programme and it is packed with a wide range of contributions from: playworkers, playground designers and builders, children's rights workers, urban designers, play therapists, educators, researchers and many more. There will be opportunities to network and build relationships with professional people across sectors and disciplines, all of whom have an interest in improving children's access to their right to play.

We had over 250 delegate bookings as of March 2011, and presentations planned from:

Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, England, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Iran, Iraq, Irish Republic, Japan, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, USA, and last but not least, Wales.

Why you should be there

This has the potential to be the biggest and best play and playwork conference the country has ever seen. It is an opportunity to compare and contrast with provision for children's right to play in other countries, to pick-up knowledge, ideas and experience that will make a difference to the children we work with and for.

For many people, this is a 'once in a career' opportunity. Getting to an international conference abroad is a challenge for many people working in the play sector here. This is one of the reasons we wanted to bring the conference to Wales.

Attending a diverse and learning-rich event such as this is part of continual professional development.

Helping delegates to make professional links with others is high on our list of priorities. This is an opportunity for some

organisations to extend the geographical range where they can sell products and services.

Please go to www.ipa2011.org/programme to find out more about what's going on at IPA 2011.

Coincidence, or something spooky?

We started planning the IPA 2011 Cardiff conference in 2008. Somewhere at the same time in an alternative universe (up the road at Cardiff University) another group of people was planning an IPA conference for Cardiff in 2011. Only this time it was the 6th International Conference in Interpretive Policy Analysis. We have been in contact with the organisers and shared good wishes for two successful IPA conferences.

Play and 'Making poverty less damaging for children'

Recent changes in policy and funding arrangements impact on provision for children's play in Wales. Here we explore some of the background, and examine how play provision meets new priorities.

The Welsh Assembly Government has published a new *Child Poverty Strategy for Wales* which says:

The right to play and its contribution to children's development and resilience

The Welsh Assembly Government sees play as being a vital element in children's development and something that can provide a strong protective factor in children's lives. It can, to an extent, shield children from the negative aspects of poverty and allow them to develop their inner resources and build resilience to difficulties and uncertainties in their home and other part of their lives. Play contributes towards children's personal and social development, their physical and mental health, and their ability to learn and engage with education.

To support this understanding, the Welsh Assembly Government has placed Play Opportunities in Part 1: Child Poverty, Play and Participation, of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010. This will place a duty on local authorities to assess and secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas as far as reasonably practicable. The regulations, standards and guidance to local authorities in complying with this duty will be issued during 2011.

Families First is the Welsh Assembly Government's key programme for designing better integrated support for families living in poverty. Its principal focus is on supporting families through interventions at the preventative and protective stages. The programme aims to drive improvements to family support design and delivery. In October 2010 the Welsh Assembly Government issued a statement informing all Children and Young People's Partnerships across Wales that 2011/12 will be a transition year with a clear mandate for all Cymorth profiles to be aligned to the Families First Principles.

Children have a right to play, and whilst this is increasingly recognised, there is still a need to highlight how playing and staffed play provision can positively impact on children and families who are experiencing poverty.

Here, we explore how provision for playing responds to the Families First Principles:

Family Focused

- Play provision is often available when families need it most (afterschool, during school holidays, evenings and weekends) filling in gaps when other services are unavailable.

- Play provision gives an opportunity for both children and adults to extend their social and peer networks – which is proven to increase resilience.
- Many of the problems that parents say they find a challenge (for instance managing aspects of children's behaviour) can be addressed by improving children's access to play opportunities that meet their needs and quality space for playing.
- Play provision offers informal respite for both parents and children – particularly during school holidays.
- Parents working at or attending staffed play projects have an opportunity to observe their children's play, and to speak with playworkers who can make sense of play behaviour – parents feel more confident and better able to manage their children's play needs away from the staffed provision.
- Playing together is important for family bonding – the example provided within play services can help parents relax enough to play with their children and to get ideas for low cost or no cost play opportunities.
- Many parents are concerned about letting their child play out; playwork-supported provision provides parents with the opportunity to allow their children to play freely away from the home in an environment overseen by trained adults.

Bespoke

- Quality play provision takes place in diverse settings - projects start by researching the characteristics and needs of the local community and the spaces where children and young people are most likely to want to gather, and provide an environment that is tailored to the needs of local children and young people.
- Successful play projects operate to the Playwork Principles, with an emphasis on freely chosen, self-directed play and children's self-determination ... a bespoke service different from most of those traditionally offered to children and young people.
- Research has strongly suggested that older children value the important and on-going roles that play providers play in their lives; a 'play philosophy' which values individual choice, expression and development in a supportive setting.

Integrated

- Quality play provision relies on strong partnership working between services and also with community members who can contribute.
- Quality staffed play provision gives a neighbourhood a 'melting pot' where children who might not normally meet and socialise can mix in a safe enough environment; this provides experience of other people and more opportunities for wide social networks that contribute to children's resilience.

- Volunteers, trustees and staff are very often recruited from within the local community.
- There is growing recognition from policy partners who value play for a mix of intrinsic and instrumental reasons. They are aware of the difference that play provision makes to their work in terms of, for example, community safety and combating anti-social behaviour.

Pro Active

- Community based play provision appeals to families who most benefit from early preventative services, as there is no formal referral system.
- Most staffed open access play provision is offered free of charge.
- There are external environmental and/or personal biological factors that impede some children from playing. Such children are supported to play in an environment where there are trained playworkers who know how to intervene where necessary to facilitate playing. This extends the advantages of playing to children who might not ordinarily benefit.
- Playing has an impact on how children's genetic make up is expressed, and on the physical and chemical development of the brain. This in turn positively influences the child's ability to survive and thrive. *Children who have developed a playful innovative response to their environments ... may adapt to these in flexible ways, displaying resilience.*
- Regular active physical play helps prevent disease and relieves depression and anxiety.
- Playing is strongly linked to creativity – it involves lateral thinking, imagination and problem solving.

Intensive

- The 'team around the family' approach promoted within the Families First strategy concentrates on priority cases – the team (social workers etc) should understand the benefits of playing in developing resilience. Working in partnership with play providers, families could be signposted and supported to access play provision.
- Good play provision has traditionally provided a space in which children can develop for themselves to meet their needs and wishes and where the space can grow with children; space that reflects children's journey and space that they grow attached to.
- Where children are traumatised by events in their lives the playwork approach supports the playing out and re-creation of difficult experiences in a sensitive and non-judgmental way.

Local

- Play provision works best when local people are involved in it, providing spaces 'close to home' which children can access safely and independently when they are able to.
- Quality staffed play provision can create a hub for a community, in much the same way as schools do during term time or chapels and churches used to, they offer non-threatening opportunities for adults and young people to volunteer and become involved.
- Quality play provision is developed locally and contributes to community cohesion, peer and place attachments and social inclusion because it is specific to the community.

Play and resilience

There is no doubt about it, playing contributes to all children's ability to survive and thrive - and it's particularly valuable to disadvantaged children. The evidence is clearly catalogued in recent literature (see *Play for a Change* – details below).

Growing up in poverty and deprivation can potentially have a huge impact on both the physical and mental development of individual children. Interventionist programmes can be useful in minimising some of the damaging impact of poverty, however, they must be complemented by a focus on supporting children to be active participants in building their own resilience. We know that every aspect of children's lives is influenced by their urge to play, and that the kind of self-directed, self-determined playing offered by quality play provision increases children's opportunities to build their own resilience.

Staffed play provision increases children's ability to support their own well being and aids parents in understanding and coping with their children's development.

Play is central to a healthy child's life, and provision for play should be central to any framework that informs programmes on how best to support children and families.

The New Child Poverty Strategy for Wales is available to download on the Welsh Assembly Government website:
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/poverty/newcpstrategy/?lang=en>

This article is informed by:

Play Wales' consultation with the All Wales Strategic Play Network

The Playwork Principles

People Make Play, commissioned by Play England from Demos, which shows how staffed play services, often run by the voluntary sector, are an increasingly vital element in the multi-agency approach to improving outcomes for children, families and communities and are also thought to be more cost-effective than established statutory services.
www.playengland.org.uk/resources/people-make-play

Play for a Change: Play, Policy and Practice: A review of contemporary perspectives, by Stuart Lester and Wendy Russell of the University of Gloucestershire. This is a comprehensive review of the evidence underpinning current thinking on play, to support contemporary understanding of the importance of play, and how this relates to social policy and practice.

The Venture Book: A Case Study of an Adventure Playground, by Fraser Brown, based on conversations with Malcolm King and Ben Tawil. This booklet provides a glimpse of The Venture, an adventure playground in North Wales that has survived and provided services to children for over thirty years.

'We can't play in the street because it's a busy road . . . there isn't enough space for us to play'

(Young carers group – aged 9-11)

What's happening around Wales?

Here is a brief round-up of some of the play provision and development news around the country.

Fair Share for Play on Ynys Môn

As part of the Fair Share Programme, Ynys Môn has prioritised funding for play and play spaces. Since its launch in 2003, the programme has funded a range of initiatives including training and play space development.

Play Wales has been advising the Ynys Môn Fair Share panel since 2007 and developed a business plan to maximise the impact of the project in its final years. A key recommendation was to fund a Play Officer post to develop and implement the Play Strategy Action Plan and help realise the Fair Share programme aims. Siwan Owens, the newly appointed Play Officer, will be working alongside the BIG Lottery Child's Play programme funded Play Rangers Project to ensure community ownership and sustainability.

Play Wales will be developing a Community Toolkit as part of the Fair Share Programme, to support town and community councils and local play associations in managing their play areas. This work will include pointers to quality play space design, risk management, maintenance and inspection advice and as part of the Toolkit development, an exploration of the feasibility of a single 'badged' insurance scheme for community groups.

For further information about Play Wales' work with the Fair Share Programme on Ynys Môn please contact Martin King-Sheard: martin@playwales.org.uk

Conwy Play Strategy Launch and North Wales Stakeholder Event

Conwy Voluntary Services Council, in partnership with Conwy Children and Young People's Partnership, recently hosted the formal launch of Conwy's Play Strategy at the Interchange, Old Colwyn.

Delegates heard about the Strategic Action Plan for the coming year, as well as news of the Play Ranger Project, 'what playwork does for communities' (giving a Welsh perspective on the *People Make Play* report by Play England) and the new DIY Play Guides series for community groups funded through Conwy Flying Start.

Also, Mary Nicholls and Inga Bevan from the Welsh Assembly Government Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) reported and consulted on the regulations, standards and guidance for the Children and Families (Wales) Measure.

The event was well attended with a wide range of organisations and individuals represented – with over 60 delegates from across six counties it made a good case for holding further events in North Wales.

For information about Conwy's Play Strategy please contact Martin King-Sheard, Principal Play Officer: martinkingsheard@cvsc.org.uk

Three Counties Community Play Project

A play provision audit by the Three Counties Community Play Project in Torfaen, Newport and Monmouthshire identified the need to create more opportunities and spaces where children and young people can play freely in safe environments within the community. It has also been acknowledged that children need to experience a wide range of play opportunities – where the adults involved understand the nature and importance of all aspects of children's play and work to support it.

The project aims to work with local communities across the three counties to raise awareness of the importance of play provision and the significance play has in the lives of children and young people. The project aims to achieve a shift in attitudes towards playing children: to ensure that communities support children and young people's play in play provision, play spaces or open spaces within the community.



The project will provide training opportunities, including playwork courses, soft skills and accredited qualifications, and up-skilling and equipping volunteers with the skills needed to sustain the provision and ensure it is community led.

Three Counties Community Play Project aims to increase the play opportunities available by gaining access to community buildings, open spaces, parks and wooded areas.

For more information please contact Alexa Hinnem: alexa@tvawales.org.uk

Heads of the Valley Playable Spaces

The Heads of the Valley Playable Spaces project is hosted by the by Tri-County Play Association and developed in partnership with Chwarae Plant and the Three Counties Play Association. The three play associations seek to establish new innovatively designed playable spaces within the Heads of the Valley region in Rhondda Cynon Taff, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau-Gwent and Torfaen. Play Wales is co-ordinating the project across the region, in conjunction with PLAYLINK.

Currently, the project is securing written permission from appropriate landowners before exciting playable spaces are designed and constructed. Five sites across the region have been identified for potential development, one in each

county. These spaces will provide a wide range of play experiences that are accessible to disabled and non-disabled children, whilst providing for the needs of the local community.

The project will provide examples of a breadth of creatively designed areas that suit children and young people's play needs. It will demonstrate models of good practice that are realistic, sustainable and will encourage further development of such playable spaces, not only within the Heads of the Valley region, but across Wales.

The project will develop some very different spaces - from a derelict school playground that will be used by both the school and the wider community, to a country park being developed with local community engagement, to the rethinking of more traditional playgrounds nearing the end of their life, or that have

been removed and not replaced.

The project will support each local authority area involved to better provide sufficient play facilities under the Children and Families (Wales) Measure.

For more information please contact Sarah Southern, Play Wales' Project Officer: sarah@playwales.org.uk

Penlan Adventure Playground Swansea

It is with great sadness that the adventure playground in Penlan has held its last open access play session. There were tears from the children, young people and staff.

Funding for the adventure playground has been withdrawn in the latest round of financial cuts; the adventure playground has been decommissioned and returned to waste land.

The playground had many adventures itself both positive and negative but there was always a core of children and young people who visited, had fun and learnt valuable life skills that will stand them in good stead as they grow up.

The area is still being used to build tree houses so the legacy of play will live on and one day hopefully funding will be found to develop a similar area within Penlan.

For more information please contact Patricia Cutler, Play Right Director: patricia@playright.org.uk

'People tell us off for playing on their land as we have nowhere else to go'

(Young Person – age 13)

What teenagers really need

This article by Professor Tanya Byron was originally published in The Times Weekend supplement (5 March 2011)

Young people's brains are geared towards maturation at puberty and they need to take risks

Sadly, we live in the era of children raised in captivity. The radius of play and experience for children and young people has diminished so substantially that most kids and young teenagers are rarely allowed out from the confinement of their homes.

Of course we all understand the principle of protecting young children who are unable to evaluate risk critically and so need supervision and support.

The development of the prefrontal cortex is critical to the development of risk assessment and management, which requires a complex processing of environmental information, an evaluation of that information against past experience or learnt behavioural codes (for example, don't take sweets from a stranger), decision-making and behavioural self-management.

However, in our profoundly risk-averse culture, we treat all children and young people as if they were at constant risk and must therefore be sheltered and mollycoddled.

A crucial element of child development is taking risks and we see this at two key developmental stages: the toddler and the teen years.

For both age groups the prefrontal cortex plays a role — but for different reasons — and for the teenager, puberty heralds a change in brain function that enables biological, psychological and social maturation towards independence via experimenting and risk-taking.

However, in a culture that is perversely obsessed with health and safety and so has slowly closed down the possibilities for



freedom and risk-taking, teens are increasingly naive and vulnerable, as we deny them opportunities to learn important life lessons and develop the key skills of independent living.

We need to reverse this if we want to stem the increasing trend towards anxiety disorders in young people. What, therefore, do we need to do to develop a generation of risk-aware, emotionally resilient and courageous young people?

First we must challenge our disproportionate fear of real-world risks; anxieties that children are at risk lead us to inflate prevalence and so design a world for all children based on the experiences of the most at risk.

Then ask yourself why you took the bus to school at an age when your child doesn't. Think about whether a highly structured and supervised teen schedule allows enough space for them to just 'be'. Finally, let's all be grown-ups and manage our own anxieties, stop projecting them on to our kids and allow them to 'be'.

Melyn Review

The Welsh Assembly Government commissioned a 'Review of Capacity and Delivery of Play Training in Wales', undertaken by Melyn Consulting, who delivered the review in March 2010. The Assembly published the Review almost a year later in January 2011. The full version is available at <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/playtraining/>

Here we look at some of the Review recommendations and the visionary introduction:

'The Children and Families Measure places a statutory duty upon local authorities within Wales to sufficiently provide for children's play. This Measure will lead to a groundbreaking legal framework for children's play never seen before across the world, placing Wales at the cutting edge of thinking around childhood; and children and young people's future place in society; and contributing significantly to the Welsh Government's response to the challenge of Article 31 of the UNCRC.'

'This Measure should contribute to a future for children and young people where all public spaces are seen as playable spaces, where children and young people are seen and heard in our society playing freely. To succeed with such an ambitious vision the communities of Wales will need to see a significant shift in society's views and attitudes towards making children and young people's right to play happen.'

'It will be the role of the children and young people's workforce to turn that thinking into reality for children; with a critically important position for the playwork sector whose understanding of the provision of environments for play and the facilitation of "playing" has to be the lynch pin for the vision of the Welsh Assembly Government.'

The recommendations of the Review include:

Play Policy

'The development of the National Centre for Playwork Training and Education is a key part in developing a play training infrastructure to support the (Play Policy) Implementation Plan, the Children and Families Measure and the BIG Lottery Child's Play programme.'

Play Provision

'Guidance on the new duty within the Children and Families Measure needs to present an unambiguous definition of play sufficiency and stress the importance not only of play being appropriately recognised and supported within local authorities, but the role that local authorities must take in supporting the play workforce – across the public, private and voluntary sectors.'

Availability and accessibility of Play Training and Qualifications

'The Assembly Government should continue to support the National Centre for Playwork Education and Training during this critical period of change and expansion to address these issues. The National Centre also has a role in over-seeing the re-connection between the supply and demand for playwork training across Wales – taking a coordinating role ...'

Current and future needs of the workforce

The inconsistency of funding for playwork should be addressed strategically by Government. This is needed on two levels; firstly funding to enable access to existing training for practitioners; and secondly, funding to enable the development of new qualifications and training that are needed to meet the challenges of community and cross-sector learning that will be created by the Measure.

The capacity of the sector to fund training is very limited with most employers having no funding for workforce development. Given the new duty set out in the Children and Families Measure, there is a strong case for core funding for workforce development. The availability of ring-fenced funding to the playwork sector would significantly enhance its ability to take control of workforce development, training and qualification programmes.

Current models of Play Training

The diversity of the play workforce requires a range of training routes and qualifications. On-going support from WAG is needed to develop qualifications and training that is going to meet the needs of an expanding sector. This should include support for the further development of P³ – in particular the development of training infrastructure (vocationally competent trainers). This may require short-term input of resources until the qualifications are mainstreamed and delivered through colleges and by work-based learning providers.

Play Wales' Comment

The Melyn Review is an excellent well-researched, comprehensive analysis of the playwork sector's workforce development needs. In commissioning this research, the Assembly has made a significant financial commitment and we are delighted now the Review is finally published giving us (and them) evidence so needed.

We are very disappointed that the Assembly's response to the recommendations reflects the past rather than actions for the future and that it signals continued lack of investment. We had hoped that the identification of workforce development as a strategic priority in the recently launched WAG Policy Statement – 'Nurturing Children, Supporting Families: our policy priorities for childcare' was indicative of a recognition of the importance of investment in workforce development.

Play Wales will use the recommendations to direct the focus of our work in supporting workforce development.

Find 'Nurturing Children, Supporting Families: our policy priorities for childcare' on the Welsh Assembly Government website.

Playwork Wales update

Welsh Assembly Government funding for Playwork Wales, the national centre for playwork education and training, came to an end on 31 December 2010.

To date Play Wales has been unsuccessful in securing further funding. Every indication we have received (including the Melyn Review detailed on the opposite page) suggests that the work of the Centre was needed and valued and it is with enormous regret that we have been obliged to close it.

We are exploring opportunities that will enable the work of the National Centre to continue; to support the expansion of the playwork sector as part of the wider Children's Services Workforce in Wales; to continue to contribute to the delivery of key actions set out in the Sector Skills Agreement. This Agreement, developed by SkillsActive with the Welsh Assembly Government, articulates a vision of quality provision for children by delivering a high quality workforce.

We have also reluctantly closed the Playwork Wales website. All relevant and current content from the website has been transferred to the Play Wales website: www.playwales.org.uk

P³ News March 2011

Play Wales' bid for European Convergence funding to support the delivery of Level 2 Playwork: Principles into Practice (P³) has been delayed, so in the meantime we have redesigned the way we deliver P³ to ensure that all our costs are covered:

We offer a variety of options for delivering the Level 2 (P³) qualifications, from employers supplying trainers and assessors and Play Wales acting as the SQA Centre, through to Play Wales covering all aspects of the delivery of the qualification. For further information please contact Play Wales.

In a strategic development, SkillsActive (the sector skills council for playwork) has submitted a proposal to the Department of Children Education Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) under the Sector Priority Fund Programme to support the development of Level 3 P³ Units and the writing of draft learning materials for the Award. We very much hope this bid is successful and that we will see the Level 3 Award available for delivery in 2012.

We are also working on options for the delivery the new EDI Level 3 Playwork qualifications suite and we are continuing to explore how we can draw down mainstream DCELLS funding to support the delivery of playwork qualifications.

Staff Updates

Jane Hawkshaw, our National Centre Manager moved on after Christmas following the closure of Playwork Wales (due to WAG funding being discontinued). Jane has just started work at the YMCA Wales Community College where she will support the delivery of youth work qualifications across Caerphilly, Bridgend, Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Merthyr Tydfil. So some of you may come across her in her new role. If we know Jane, she will be advocating that youth workers undertake playwork qualifications ... and she will be sharing biscuits far and wide.

Richard Trew, our Qualifications Development Officer is still working as an associate of Play Wales, delivering P³ and continuing to run our Awarding Body Centres. When he's not working at



Play Wales he can probably be found at home reading playwork books, working on his computer or composing music.

Maria Worley, our Qualifications Co-ordinator, worked with us on secondment from the Welsh Assembly Government. She has returned there for a period of time, but will be moving on this June. She has undertaken training qualifications and plans to take more. She would like to find work relating to children and young people, and who knows, perhaps we will see her back at Play Wales sometime in the future. Lets hope so!

Paul Bonel – a sad goodbye

Paul died of cancer on 23 January 2011 at his home in London. He was a friend and colleague for many years, and he will be sadly missed by us, and many folk across the playwork sector.

Paul spent most of his working life as a playworker and youth worker. Most recently he was the head of the Playwork Unit at SkillsActive, the sector skills council for Active Leisure, Learning and Wellbeing. He supported Play Wales from its

inception, contributing to our strong working partnership with SkillsActive and collaborating with us in seeking to achieve the aspirations of the playwork workforce in Wales - and was for some time a trustee on Play Wales' Board.



Events

Street Play Finale – London Play

2 July 2011

Coram Fields, London

www.londonplay.org.uk

IPA 2011 – 50th Anniversary Playing into the Future – Surviving and Thriving

4 – 7 July 2011

www.ipa2011.org

Love Parks Week

23 – 31 July 2011

Nationwide

www.loveparkweek.org/

Playday

3 August 2011

Nationwide

www.playday.org.uk

The Beauty of Play – The Dark Side of Play

9 – 11 September 2011

Stone, Staffordshire

www.ludemos.co.uk/BOP.htm

Membership

Join and add your voice

There is still time to join Play Wales and add your voice for 2011.

Your support helps to inform our policy positions and influence discussions and work with government and other agencies; highlight issues of concern and influence policy with local and national policy makers; share mutual support, best practice and information with other members.

What we can do for you. Benefits include: keeping you informed of recent policy developments; receiving regular ebulletins with news and funding information; reduced rates on Play Wales publications; access to free Criminal Records Bureau checks for staff working in regulated play provision.

For more information and to download a Membership Registration Form please visit our website:
www.playwales.org.uk

Good luck!

Kate Barron, our Admin Assistant, worked with Play Wales for four years.



Following a recent period working as the Communities First Training Administrator for the Wales Council for Voluntary Action, Kate has returned home to Porthcawl for the summer where she is intending to surf and prepare for a three month trip to Asia and Australia – we all wish her well on her travels.



Play Wales' Development Team – what now?

Marianne Mannello is now our Assistant Director for Policy, Support and Advocacy.

Sarah Southern is currently working with Play Wales as a project officer, co-ordinating the Playable Spaces Project (a contract with Tri-county Play Association).

Michelle Jones is currently working as a Learning Support Assistant in Caerphilly, no doubt making sure the children are getting the most from their school playtime. Michelle is also working as a project officer for Play Wales, (she recently undertook an evaluation on behalf of Play Right, the voluntary sector play association for Swansea and Neath Port Talbot).

Martin King-Sheard is currently seconded three days a week to Conwy Voluntary Service Council as the Principal Play Officer for Conwy, where he has recently developed and launched a play strategy. He is also working for Play Wales, supporting the Fair Share panel in delivering the Fair Share programme on Ynys Môn.