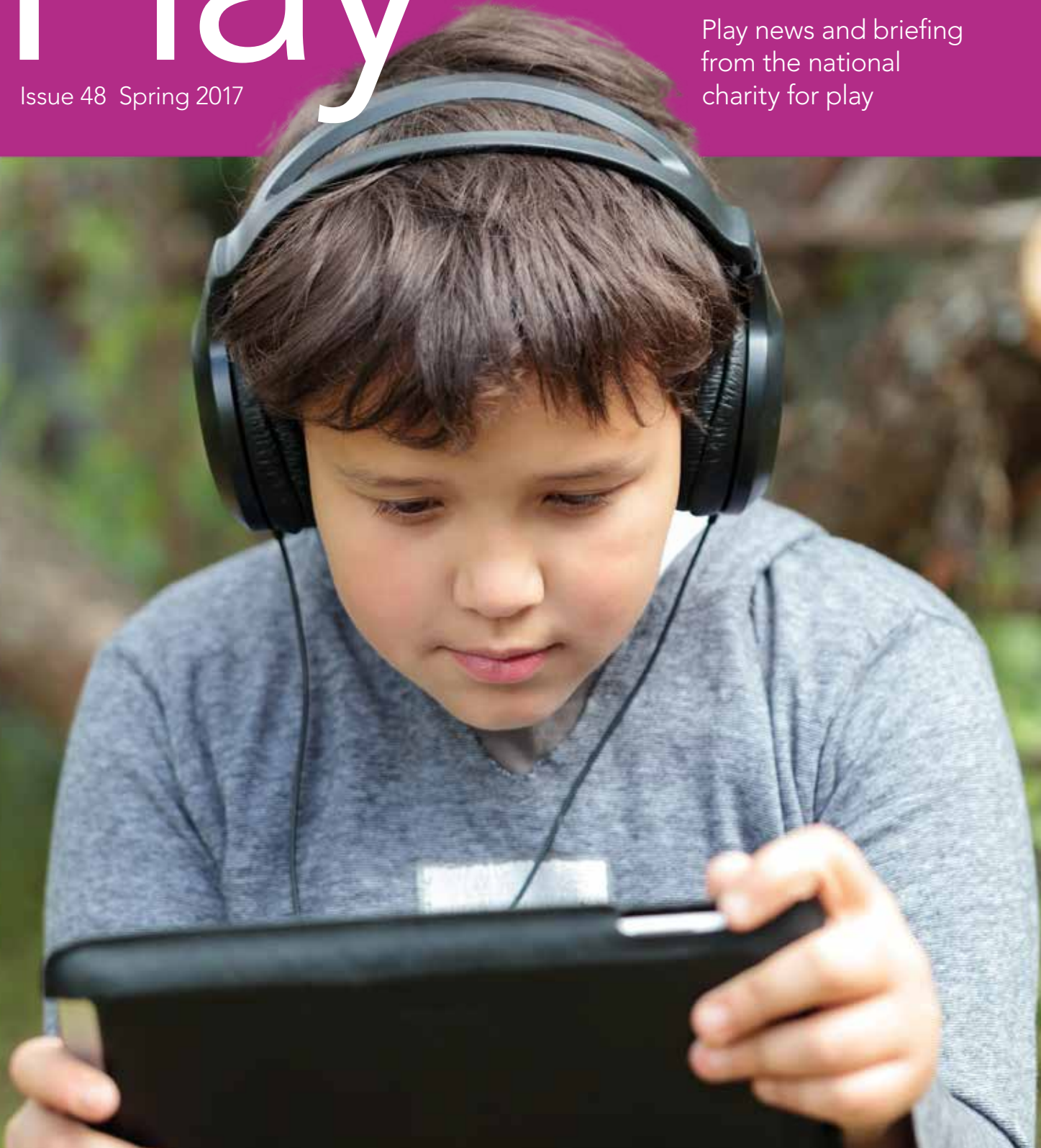


# Play for Wales

Issue 48 Spring 2017

Play news and briefing  
from the national  
charity for play



**Play and digital  
technology**



# Contents

|    |  |    |   |
|----|--|----|---|
| 2  | Editorial                                      | 12 | Play and mobile technology                  |
| 3  | News   | 13 | How technology is impacting on young people |
| 5  | Top tips - digital play                        | 14 | Screen time: who's really to blame?         |
| 6  | Play and the plug                              | 16 | Interview with Carl Sargeant                |
| 8  | Myth busting digital play                      | 18 | Workforce development                       |
| 10 | Un updated UNCRC                               | 20 | Wales - A Play Friendly Place               |
| 11 | Screen based lifestyle harms children's health |    |   |

## 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](http://www.playwales.org.uk)

## Editorial

Since the first time we featured it as a topic in our *Play for Wales* magazine in 2009 children and young people's access to digital technology, and the range of resources available, has increased significantly.

Digital technology is used in a range of ways – social networking, gaming, texting, listening to and creating music, and creating and sharing images and videos. However, despite the popularity of digital technologies and the availability of these resources in play settings, schools and at home, the increasing use of them by children continues to be a concern.

Today, we all encounter and interact with a range of technology in every aspect of our daily lives. As noted by Professor Graham Donaldson in his review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales – from foundation phase to GCSE level – this will only increase. Donaldson found that digital competence is becoming fundamental to learning and life and a framework to support it has been developed as part of Welsh Government's curriculum reform.

The United Nations General Comment No. 17 on Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) also notes the growing role of digital technology in children's daily lives, with *'children in all regions of the world spending increasing periods of time engaged in play, recreational, cultural and artistic activities, both as consumers and creators, via various digital platforms and media.'*

Whilst the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child acknowledges the concerns and challenges of digital platforms, it also encourages all countries signed up to the UNCRC to take measures to ensure equality of opportunity for all children growing up in the globalised environment to experience the benefits of access to the internet and social media.

Play Wales has long promoted the concept that playing children are competent and capable to make their own decisions and that they benefit from supportive adults who can contribute to an environment that extends their play.

While the technological environment may be changing, our message hasn't; we believe that children should be afforded time, space and

permission to freely choose their own play. Sometimes they choose to play on or with smartphones or other devices. What is needed is balance.

Wales' youngest researchers, as part of the *Little Voices Shouting Out* project, recommend that adults should limit the time spent playing on games consoles. Their research (for a report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child) found that although there is an increase in younger children saying that they prefer to play on electronic devices, they are still asking for more opportunities to play outdoors where they live.

This issue of *Play for Wales* about children's use of digital technology, doesn't attempt to take sides or offer definitive answers to the ongoing discussion. Rather, it features a range of articles intended to inform our thinking so that we are better equipped to offer and provide the support necessary to ensure that children have the widest range of opportunities available for them to realise their right to play as they continue to navigate their way between offline and online environments.

**Mike Greenaway,**  
Director, Play Wales



## News

# New green space guidance

Fields in Trust Cymru has published new guidelines for the design of spaces for outdoor play and sport. *Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play: Beyond the Six Acre Standard* is a free tool for local planning authorities, developers, planners, urban designers and landscape architects in the design of outdoor sport, play and informal open space.



This guidance has been produced to reflect a new planning policy landscape. Separate versions of the guidance are available for Scotland and England.

[www.fieldsintrust.org/guidance](http://www.fieldsintrust.org/guidance)

### Writing in the foreword of the guidance Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson said:

*'When I was growing up, playing in the local park was just part of what my family did, but it was a very important part ... There are many things that are changing. The positive thing is that we are starting to recognise the importance of the longer-term physical and mental health and wellbeing. But we also have to remember what role parks, playing fields and other green spaces have and how important they are for our communities.'*

## Food and Fun holiday programme



CLILC • WLGA

During the school holidays, when free breakfast in primary schools and free school meals are not available, some families struggle to afford or access food that provides a healthy diet.

Some children also experience social isolation and a lack of opportunities to play and meet with friends in their communities.

The Welsh Government is working with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to distribute £500,000 towards lunch and fun clubs in some primary schools during the school summer holidays. The Welsh Government's funding will help provide quality meals and activities to support pupils from some of Wales' most deprived communities.

Based on the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) model, 'Food and Fun' is a multi agency programme, developed by Food Cardiff. In 2016 the WLGA piloted this model nationally in 10 schools, working with five local authorities and three local health boards and Cardiff University has evaluated the model.

[www.wlga.gov.uk/food-and-fun](http://www.wlga.gov.uk/food-and-fun)

## Children's Commissioner to prioritise Article 31 rights

An update from the Children's Commissioner for Wales,  
Sally Holland



When I consulted with children and young people across Wales children aged three to seven asked me to prioritise play in my work. Altogether, children and young people have expressed great concern to me about equality of access to provision for children living in poverty, and access to play and leisure for all.

Following informal discussions with a number of organisations in the arts, museums and sport sectors I am aware that there is some innovative and effective work already being undertaken to engage children and young people from a range of backgrounds. Yet, all have articulated a desire to do this better, and recognise the need for strategic thinking at a national level on this issue.

In May, I will be hosting a roundtable discussion, which will involve young people, to discuss how we can share current practices in engaging with children and young people; identify challenges and barriers as well as consider a collective vision for children and young people's access and participation in, the arts, culture, heritage and sport; and encourage organisations to frame their work with children within a children's rights approach. [www.childcomwales.org.uk](http://www.childcomwales.org.uk)

# Spirit: A healthy childhood

26 October 2017 – Cardiff

More info and book your place: [www.playwales.org.uk/eng/spirit2017](http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/spirit2017)



## Playday 2017

**Wednesday 2 August**

To celebrate 30 years of Playday this year's theme is Celebrate Play.

Playday is an annual celebration of children's right to 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.

[www.playday.org.uk](http://www.playday.org.uk)

## Social Media



[www.facebook.com/PlayWales](http://www.facebook.com/PlayWales)



[twitter.com/PlayWales](http://twitter.com/PlayWales)

## Analytical Volunteer Programme

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

Play Wales has been matched with analysts from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Welsh Government, to support us to present 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 Ministers in

March 2013 and 2016. As part of the assessment process, many local authorities undertook surveys with children and many will have used similar questions based on a template questionnaire. The analysts will review the data gathered from local authorities, identify commonalities in terms of responses, and work with us to analyse the data so that we can produce a pan-Wales report.

## Wales' first Child Friendly City

Cardiff Council and Unicef UK are embarking on a three year partnership to work towards making Cardiff the first child friendly city in Wales.



The Council will work with Unicef UK to deliver a Child Rights Partners Programme in Cardiff which will embed children's rights throughout the authority and across the city. The Council will undertake a number of steps to make Cardiff a child-friendly city including: giving young people and children the opportunity to take part in shaping developments (for example the physical design of public spaces); and consider the rights of children when developing and delivering services.

Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children and Families, Councillor Sue Lent, said:

*'We want to make Cardiff a child-friendly city because what can be more important than our children and their futures. We don't want our children's rights to be ignored. We want children to feel safe, to feel that they have a voice and that they will be listened to. It's probably fair to say that in the past the rights and the views of children have been disregarded in some instances.'*

Unicef's global Child Friendly Cities initiative supports cities to put children's needs at their heart and operates in more than 20 countries around the world.

[www.cardiffnewsroom.co.uk](http://www.cardiffnewsroom.co.uk)



# Top tips: screen time and digital play

Many of us struggle with finding a solution to the challenges around screen time and how to support children and young people to access and interact with it in a way that is beneficial and balanced. As adults we have an important role to play in supporting children in a digitalised world.

## The rules have not changed

The same approaches to parenting and working with children apply to children's offline and online environments. As always, children need adults to support their play – by playing with them and preparing them with competence so that they can extend their own play. They expect us to set limits and help them manage their time. Knowing our children's friends and where they are going with them applies when they are offline or online.

## Online is an 'environment'

Children do the same things they have always done, only virtually. Like any environment, digital technology can have positive and negative effects and children need our support to learn about these.

## Engage with children

Our participation – as parents or practitioners – with digital technology helps social interaction and learning. Playing computer games together with older children or watching younger children engaging with electronic toys and devices helps us to understand what they are doing.

## Talking is good

Neuroscience research shows that very young children learn best via two-way communication. Language development is dependent on time spent talking and playing between children and caregivers. Passive screen time should be avoided for our infants and young toddlers, as they do not generally lead to language learning.

## Playing is important

Children get wide-ranging exercise as well as significant mental health benefits from freely chosen play. Each day should have some digital technology free time and space. Play settings should offer a wide range of opportunities for play and our homes should have some places and times where technology is not used – such as mealtimes or bedtimes.



## Providing choices

When children have a range of things to do and places to play, they are better able to self manage their use of digital technology and devices.

## Think about our use of technology

We can limit our own screen use, and model good and moderate online and device use, especially when children are nearby.

## Supervision helps

Look to organisations for support and up-to-date information. The NSPCC provides useful tools to help parents keep children safe online ([www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety)). Others, like Common Sense Media ([www.commonsensemedia.org/app-reviews](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/app-reviews)) reviews age-appropriate apps, games and programmes.

## Being online is okay for older children

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

## Making mistakes

Children, just like adults, will make mistakes using digital technology, just like they do in other situations. When supported and handled with understanding, these can help children to learn and problem solve. Concerns about things such as posting certain images on social media platforms or texting inappropriately, may indicate a need to check for other risk-taking behaviors young people may be engaging in offline.

# Play and the plug

## A playwork approach to screen time in children's play

Increasingly the general advice to parents is that children need screen time limiting with a dominant viewpoint that the dangers of screen time outweigh potential benefits. We spoke to children and playworkers to gather their views; are they **for** or **against** screen time?

The responses suggested that it is difficult to give concrete advice and that a balance must be struck dependent on a range of factors including: children's ages, their access to play with their friends both outdoors and indoors and their use of, or reliance on, technology.

When we talk about 'digital technology' it is used as a broad term to refer to smart phones, tablets, computer games consoles, social media and television.

## The FOR argument technology is a key part of children's lives



Children are proficient at making use of digital technology to establish and maintain friendships.

*'Online and offline game practices enable children and young people to establish strong peer communities. Playing computer games can become the basis for face to face discussion and play. Children who cannot participate in this may be excluded through not being able to contribute to the cultural references established in children's everyday talk.'*

**Schott and Hodgetts, 2006 cited in Play for a Change (Lester, S. and Russell, W., 2008)**

It's clear that technology is here to stay and for children to navigate their way in the world, they use their 'media literacy' to maintain relationships with friends when the opportunity to be with them in person isn't available or to add value to their play when they are out. Games from the playground can be continued at the end of the day and arrangements made for meeting up to play out in the community.

Many children seamlessly integrate technology into their everyday lives. Whilst extended screen time may be

### #DigitalPlay



*'Tech helps me because I can contact my friends to get them to go out and I would always choose hanging out and playing out with my friends over the computer or whatever. I use Snapchat and text messages to stay in contact with my friends.'*

**Oscar, 13 years old from Prestatyn**

a reality at some points, just as it has been since television and computers were invented, some children are very skilled at using technology to enrich their lives.

*'I think technology offers children some amazing experiences so long as there is a balance. If children have other options to play with their friends they are more likely to achieve this balance. The problem comes when tech is the only option.'*

**Kirsty – Children's Scrapstore Bristol**



## The AGAINST argument

### technology needs to be carefully managed

not running around in public is cited as a particular concern by health professionals. Public Health Wales guidance: 'Ten Steps to a Healthy Weight' emphasises the fact that babies and toddlers are more likely to be a healthy weight if screen time is limited.

*'My parents don't limit my screen time but I don't think I'm that bad ... I think children under five should have less time on screens than when you're a bit older.'*

**Mali – 11 years old  
from North Wales**

For older children concerns range from cyber bullying to the impact on their development:

*'Virtual play on screens and interaction with others via screens has some real benefits. It doesn't though provide "real" emotional, relational affect in the same way as playing with peers does. As such a bias towards screen based play reduces the opportunity for real play, reducing children's opportunity to generate and be exposed to real affect in emotional relational play. This has*

*potential to negatively impact children's social and emotional development and in turn the lived experiences of childhood.'*

**Ben, Ludicology**

Furthermore, within playwork provision, playworkers are managing new challenges with the ever increasing use and accessibility of social media and mobile technology:

*'We have problems with Facebook Live being used on the playground and almost at every point of the day. There are children who can't be filmed and put on social media such as those in foster care and from refugee families. There is also an issue with older kids coming onto the playground with inappropriate content on their phones and this being seen by younger ones.'*

**Leanne, Gwenfro Valley ICC  
Adventure Playground,  
Wrexham**



For younger children, there is a concern that playing with technology switches off their natural curiosity to explore the world around them. The situation where screens are regularly used to keep children quiet in buggies or shopping trolleys so they are

## Conclusion – a playwork approach



As playworkers, we lean towards a view that children are capable and competent to manage a range of situations with minimal adult intervention, only requiring adults to intervene when potential risks outweigh the benefits.

If we take a risk-benefit assessment approach to children's use of technology it can help us to think about whether or not adult intervention, such as restricting its use, is necessary. Clearly there are benefits to using technology to establish and maintain friendships, to learn about the world, to have

fun and as an enabler of playing out with friends. We also need to be mindful that in many cases children's ability to make use of and understand technology may be ahead of ours as adults.

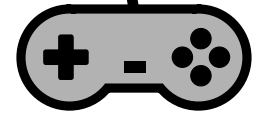
There are also questions to ask ourselves about the risks of technology use: Are children missing out on normal social interactions because of screen time? Is use of digital technology increasing sedentary behaviour? Is children's use of digital technology putting themselves or others at risk of harm?

By balancing risks with benefits we can come up with ways of managing children's use of digital technology that doesn't require us to make blanket statements about how much screen time is okay or the dangers of screen time but instead focuses on individual children's inherent competence and takes account of their specific situation.

**As Playwork Principle 8 states:**

*'All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and wellbeing of children.'*

# Myth busting digital play



The term 'digital play' refers to an activity that involves the use of digital technology. This might include activities related to video and computer games, internet sites, electronic toys, mobile phones, tablets, and the creation of digital media.

At the same time that the revenue of the games industry is booming<sup>1</sup>, there are many who feel that the use of technology is detrimental to children and to society. Concerns about digital technology in children's lives tend to focus on specific areas of potential negative impact: health and wellbeing, creativity and social development. Here we take some of the common perceptions and claims and look at them in a little more depth.

## Active video games boost physical activity levels

It is well accepted that children who play lots of video games, rather than playing out or getting involved in sporting activities, may not be as active as those who do. Games manufacturers and some parents try to address this by providing 'active' games.

In a study<sup>2</sup> to determine whether active video games make children less inactive, researchers found that children given 'active' video games were no more physically active than children who were given inactive games.

Researchers gave 78 children aged between nine and 12 Nintendo® Wii game consoles and monitored them for 12 weeks. The children were divided into groups in which they received either two 'active' video games or two inactive games.

Throughout the study, children kept a journal of their play times and were given an accelerometer – a device they wore on their belts to measure acceleration and exertion. Researchers found there was no increase in physical activity even when they first received the video game, and no difference in physical activity throughout the entire study.

Although playing active games is likely to increase calorie burning slightly more than an inactive game might, it probably won't contribute to children aged five to fifteen getting their recommended 60 minutes of physical activity a day<sup>3</sup>.

## Technology inhibits a sense of wellbeing

Although the time children and young people spend using digital technology has sparked widespread concerns that their use might be negatively associated with mental wellbeing, these potential harmful impacts have not been widely researched. Much of what is known regarding the possible influence of screen time comes from the study of sedentary and non sedentary activity in young people and concentrates on physical health, looking at issues such as body mass index (BMI), the amount of moderate or vigorous exercise or the use of energy.

However, a recent study<sup>4</sup> investigating the relationship between digital screen use and the mental wellbeing of young people has suggested that moderate use of devices may be beneficial in boosting a sense of wellbeing.

Participants in the research were asked four questions regarding their engagement in different types of digital activities during their free time:

- watching films and other media (television programmes)
- playing games (on computers and consoles)
- using computers (internet, email)
- using smartphones (social networking, chatting online)

Engagement in digital activities was very popular in the sample, as 99.9% of the participants reported allocating time to at least one form of digital technology on a daily basis. Girls reported spending more time using smartphones and computers, and watching videos, while the boys devoted more time to playing computer and console games.

Overall, the evidence indicated that moderate use of digital technology is not harmful and has advantages in today's connected world.





© New Model Army Photography

## Technology has a negative effect on social skills

There is concern that digital technology may be isolating and hindering social development and social skills. However, digital competence – being able to convey ideas and opinions using text and social media – is a new skill identified by Welsh Government and others worldwide that children need to learn for work and pleasure<sup>i</sup>.

Research<sup>ii</sup> is suggesting video games, social media and mobile phones have an important role in how young people meet and interact. For example, although many people may think of gaming as isolating, research indicates that online gaming ‘handles’ are one of the first pieces of information boys share when they meet someone with whom they would like to be friends. Similarly, a majority of young people say that social media makes them feel more connected to their friends, and a large number

report that they have received social support using digital technology in tough or challenging times.

## Play with digital technology limits creativity

Digital technology has been criticised for restricting creativity and creative activity; however, it has been argued<sup>iii</sup> that digital technologies can be used to support creative play and expression. This may be through selective and supported use of computer games, and through the use of digital cameras, toys that can be programmed or the use of walkie-talkies for play. Children use things such as electronic pets and mobile phones to support their play in a way that is different from the more traditional computer game. When children engage with digital technology at home, it often involves creative or imaginative use. For instance, families produce digital scrapbooks and children download images of characters and places that often influence story making and acting out.

<sup>i</sup> U.S. Monthly video game industry revenue 2017 / statistic (2016) Available at: [www.statista.com/statistics/201093/revenue-of-the-us-video-game-industry](http://www.statista.com/statistics/201093/revenue-of-the-us-video-game-industry)

<sup>ii</sup> Baranowski, T., Abdelsamad, D., Baranowski, J., O'Connor, T. M., Thompson, D., Barnett, A., Cerin, E. and Chen, T. (2012) 'Impact of an active video game on healthy children's physical activity', *PEDIATRICS*, 129(3), pp. e636–e642

<sup>iii</sup> Department of Health (2011) *Start Active*,

*Stay Active: A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers (Crown Copyright)*

<sup>iv</sup> Przybylski, A.K. and Weinstein, N. (2017) 'A large-scale test of the Goldilocks hypothesis', *Psychological Science*

<sup>v</sup> Donaldson, G. (2015) *Successful Futures Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales (Crown Copyright)*

<sup>vi</sup> Lenhart, A., Smith, A., Anderson, M., Duggan, M., Perrin, A., 'Teens, Technology and Friendships'. Pew Research Center, August, 2015 [www.pewinternet.org/2015/08/06/teens-technology-and-friendships](http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/08/06/teens-technology-and-friendships)

<sup>vii</sup> Bolstad, R. (2004) *The role and potential of ICT in early childhood education: A review of New Zealand and international literature*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research

# An updated UNCRC for the digital age

Children's rights academic Professor Sonia Livingstone has 'edited' the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to reflect the digital world in which we live in today.

**The Convention was adopted in 1989, and since then the internet has become an integral part of children's lives in ways which Sonia argues should be reflected in today's interpretation and implementation of the UNCRC.**

The UNCRC is a truly inspiring document which sets out what society expects and demands for its children. But it was adopted well before today's digital environment could be anticipated. Since rights apply online as well as offline, it's now time to rethink how society can support – and not infringe – children's rights in today's fast-changing digital environment.

An estimated one third of internet users worldwide are under the age of 18. The part that the internet plays in children's lives continues to grow: among three to four year olds in the UK, time online increased<sup>i</sup> in the last year from six hours 48 minutes to 8 hours 18 minutes a week, and 12-15 year olds now spend over 20 hours a week online.

In this spirit, an 'edited' Convention was published in January 2017 as part of the *Growing Up Digital*<sup>ii</sup> report. The report concluded that children and parents need better support to navigate the digital world.

The rights outlined in the UNCRC are not just about how children should be protected from harm, but about how they can be empowered, and the same principle applies to the digital world.

## A digital convention

It's not that the UNCRC is out of date, I should stress, nor that we need to start reinventing new rights in relation to digital media. My intention in 'editing' a child-friendly version of the UNCRC was as a provocation to thinking – and as an urgent reminder to those dragging their heels when it comes to recognising that children's rights online matter, and need our collective attention.

## What next?

A General Comment (an official statement that elaborates on the meaning of an aspect of the UNCRC) on children's rights in the digital age could really help to make clear how children have the right to fair access to the fabulous opportunities of the internet without significant risk of harm or infringement of their rights to privacy, communication, information, play and safety.

This could develop the work of the recently published General Comment on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence – which makes 18 references to the distinct challenges of the digital environment for children's rights<sup>iii</sup>.

*Adapted from the London School of Economics and Political Science Media Policy Project blog originally posted at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mediapolicyproject>*

## The Digital Convention includes:

### Article 4

Governments must do all they can to protect children's rights *both online and offline.*

### Article 12

Every child has the right to express him or herself and to receive all kinds of information and ideas. *Children should be empowered to do both online.*

### Article 15

Every child has the right to meet people and to be outside in a group *or be part of online networks.*

### Article 16

The law must protect every child's right to privacy *so data should not be collected about them without their permission.*

### Article 23

Disabled children have the right to a full life, and to be part of the community *and so they should have equal opportunities to participate online.*

### Article 28

Every child has the right to education *of which digital literacy from a young age should be a part.*

### Article 31

Every child has the right to rest, play and to do things they enjoy. *They should therefore be allowed to explore and enjoy the internet.*

### Article 42

Governments must tell everyone about all the rights in the Convention. *Children must be taught that their rights apply online and offline.*

<sup>i</sup> Livingstone, S., Carr, J. and Byrne, J. (2016) One in Three: Internet Governance and Children's Rights. *Innocenti Discussion Paper No.2016-01*. UNICEF Office of Research, Florence

<sup>ii</sup> Ofcom (2016) Online overtakes TV as kids' top pastime. Available at:

[www.ofcom.gov.uk/about-ofcom/latest/features-and-news/childrens-media-use](http://www.ofcom.gov.uk/about-ofcom/latest/features-and-news/childrens-media-use)

<sup>iii</sup> Children's Commissioner for England (2017) *Growing Up Digital: A report of the Growing Up Digital Taskforce*

<sup>iv</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2016) *General comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence*. Geneva: Committee on the Rights of the Child

# 'Screen-based lifestyle harms children's health'

#DigitalPlay

Literacy specialist and childhood campaigner Sue Palmer tells us about the response – or lack of – to a letter to the Editor in a newspaper about the harmful effects of too much screen time.

## Times change. And attitudes to childhood change with it.

In 2006, psychologist Dr Richard House and I organised a press letter about modern childhood. It was signed by over a hundred professionals concerned with children's health and wellbeing, and it caused quite a splash. For several days Richard and I became the centre of an international media storm and have ever since been categorised as 'childhood campaigners'.

Over the intervening decade, it's been clear to us that people who work with children continue to be deeply concerned about lifestyle changes such as *'the decline of outdoor play, increasingly screen-based lifestyles, a hyper-competitive schooling system and the unremitting commercialisation of childhood'*.

So in late 2016 we decided, along with psychotherapist Dr Sharie Coombes, to organise a tenth anniversary letter.

Since newspapers are no longer impressed by long lists of signatories, we limited ourselves to forty. We collected signatures from as many high-profile figures as we could, including former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, educationists Professor Robin Alexander and Sir Tim Brighouse, and writers Penelope Leach, Philip Pullman and Steve Biddulph. Theresa Casey, President of the International Play Association (IPA), signed as a representative of the play sector.

The letter described UK policy-makers' reaction to the concerns noted in 2006 as 'half-hearted, short-termist and disjointedly ineffective', and continued:

*'The above-listed factors continue to affect children adversely, with "school and cool" displacing active, self-directed play at an ever-earlier age. Physical health problems like obesity continue to escalate, and mental health problems among children and young people are approaching crisis levels. As well as the intense distress caused to families, there are obviously longer-term social and economic consequences for society as a whole.*

*'If children are to develop the self-regulation and emotional resilience required to thrive in modern technological culture, they need unhurried engagement with caring adults and plenty of self-directed outdoor play, especially during their early years (0-7).'*

*'We therefore urge the [UK] government to take immediate action, including:*

- *the development of a coherent, well-funded approach to care and education from pre-birth to age seven, including a kindergarten stage for 3-7 year-olds emphasising social and emotional development and outdoor play*
- *national guidelines on screen-based technology for 0-12 year-olds, produced by recognised authorities in child health/development.'*

However, this time there was no media storm. Indeed there was absolutely no media reaction whatsoever. Perhaps this was because *The Guardian* chose to publish it on Boxing Day or perhaps because there's currently so much 'news' buzzing around editorial offices. But I think it was because the 'above-listed factors' are no longer newsworthy.

## They're normal.

It's now normal to keep children cooped up indoors under constant surveillance. It's normal for them to spend most of their leisure time on screen-based activities (an average of four hours a day for pre-schoolers and five to six hours for the over-fives<sup>1</sup>). It's normal for little children to pursue literacy and numeracy targets from nursery onwards, in preparation for high-stakes testing in primary school. And, despite three high-profile UK government reviews of the commercialisation of childhood over the last ten years, it's more normal than ever for marketers to bombard children with competitive consumerist messages from the moment they're born.

It's also becoming normal for young people to develop mental health problems. Child and Mental Health Services (CAMHS) across the UK are struggling to cope with the rising tide of referrals. We'd suggested in 2006 that this would be the long-term consequence of the lifestyle changes we described, and perhaps if we'd said 'We told you so' in 2016, policy-makers might have made the connection ... but I don't think so.

Yep, times have changed. Attitudes have changed. Childhood has changed.

And this childhood campaigner is feeling close to despair ...

*Sue's latest book is [Upstart: the case for raising the school starting age and providing what the under-sevens really need](#) (Floris, 2016).*

[www.suepalmer.co.uk](http://www.suepalmer.co.uk)

<sup>1</sup> Palmer, S. et al (2016) Screen-based lifestyle harms children's health. *The Guardian*. Available online at: [www.theguardian.com/education/2016/dec/25/screen-based-lifestyle-harms-health-of-children](http://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/dec/25/screen-based-lifestyle-harms-health-of-children)

<sup>2</sup> Ofcom (2016) Online overtakes TV as kids' top pastime. Available at: [www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/features-and-news/childrens-media-use](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/features-and-news/childrens-media-use)



# Play and mobile technology

#DigitalPlay

Written by playworker, writer and play activist Chris Martin

**We live in a society increasingly engaged with mobile digital technology (MDT), and it would be strange if children did not mirror this. If we are to support children in reaping the benefits and navigating the risks, understanding how they use mobile technology in their play is vital.**

It is however an emotive area, often with 'villainous' technology destroying 'real' or 'natural' play. Some people propose a balance, but this still portrays technology and play as opposites. Since digital technology is so interwoven throughout contemporary life, a more useful and holistic view may be to look at technology and play as being intertwined. This reflects how children actually use technology; they blur the boundaries between online and offline and do not see them as opposites<sup>i</sup>.

Children make their own choices, and sometimes they choose to play on or with mobile technologies, as do adults. If children prefer this to more physical or outdoor play, it's worth examining why. It might be that the outdoor space is boring, that none of their friends are there or it's difficult to access, or they may just prefer their phones at that particular moment. Children also use mobile phones if they don't want to be where they are<sup>ii</sup>, literally as a form of protest.

Outdoor play is still incredibly popular – climbing trees, building dens and lighting fires. This is outside the everyday for many, especially in urban areas, so as adults we may need to be even more creative in making 'the broadest range of environments and play opportunities'<sup>iii</sup> attractive and accessible.

Different physical play types are mirrored in online worlds and to children they are real play<sup>iv</sup>. Virtual 'rough and tumble' play, for example obviously doesn't have the same effect as the physical version and is no substitute, however it does, like all children's play, deserve to be treated with respect. Moving beyond the idea that playing with digital technology is 'second-best' also helps us understand what is really going on for children, and they often welcome adults who show real interest in their worlds.

We typically regard children using their devices to play games as a solitary activity. This is often far from the



truth as the communicative aspects are extremely important. One of the reasons children congregate indoors to use phones is wifi access to facilitate communication, since most have very limited data allowances. Perhaps increasing children's data packages – or making public free to access wifi more widely available – would encourage them to (physically) roam more?

Children are generally good at assessing and navigating risks when they are aware of them, but they often don't understand the reach of the internet. This includes the ability of predators and bullies to access them through their phones, as well as realising images they post never

actually disappear. Parents and play providers are right to take this seriously and develop safeguards. While it's important not to underestimate risks or hazards, widespread use of digital technology means that banning devices is a fruitless task. Children are generally open about having restricted access if this is negotiated with them and they understand why.

This article merely scratches the surface. More research is needed and there are many questions to be posed. The issues are complex but as this article suggests, different perspectives have an important role in understanding the issues, as do looking at how children actually use phones and other devices. Play Wales is currently developing an information sheet which examines the issue in more detail.

**Chris is currently researching children's interactions with mobile digital technology in their outdoor play for his PhD.**

<sup>i</sup> Third, A., Bellerose, D., Dawkins, U., Keltie, E., and Pihl, K. (2014) *Children's Rights in the Digital Age: A Download from Children Around the World*

<sup>ii</sup> Haddon, L. (2013) Mobile media and children. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 1(1), 89-95

<sup>iii</sup> Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group (2005) *The Playwork Principles*. Cardiff: Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group

<sup>iv</sup> Marsh, J. (2010) Young children's play in online virtual worlds. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 8 (1), 23-39.



# How technology is impacting on young people

Young Wales Board member, Joshua Chohan shares his views and personal experiences of how technology is impacting on young people's lives.

Technology is ever changing the lives of young people. All over the world most young people either have a phone or some sort of smart device available to them. Speaking from experience as the eldest of nine children, I can see the generational gap between children, young people and adults all the more clearly. It is fascinating to watch my siblings use their respective electronic devices on a regular basis. The level of understanding the younger children have of technology is incredible considering how young they are, the youngest being just a few months old. My mother has asked me to be clear the youngest doesn't have an iPad!

## So how does this impact on their lives in an ever changing world?

Speaking from experience I can see the amazing potential that technology and the platforms we use on our devices can have on our lives. At the same time we can't deny some of the negative impacts that technology can have on a young person's development. We should abide by the age-old rule 'everything in moderation'!

We need increased education for children and young people so that they can fully understand the adverse effects of spending too much time on technology. But also we should be grateful for the amazing possibilities that technology can have educationally and culturally.

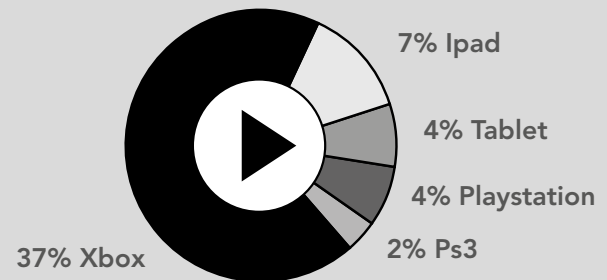
Let's look specifically at the educational effect on young people and some of the positives it can offer. The possibilities are endless for young people – whether it's exploring a historic period through playing a historically set game or doing a Maths and English course online.

As a young person I can't deny the positive effect that technology has on my life educationally. While I understand that this form of education may not work for everyone it is certainly something to consider for future education systems and how we can bring education and technology together to positively effect young people's lives.

Culturally, technology has changed everything. From the way we share memories and stories to how we apply for a job. It's everywhere and no one is more plugged into this cultural change than young people.

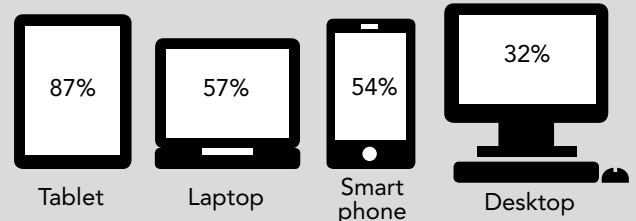
## Digital technology: what children in Wales say

When asked what you like to play with at home 61% said they preferred to play with electronics:



0% responded with 'electronic devices' or 'technology' when asked what they like to play with in school

When asked how could adults encourage children to play children recommended a time ban on use of electronics



Little Voices Shouting Out project – results of research conducted with 724 children aged seven to eleven across Wales.  
[www.lleisiaubach.org](http://www.lleisiaubach.org)

## But how can technology have a positive impact on a young person's life culturally?

For starters in Wales we are blessed with a thriving heritage, and technology can pay tribute to that. Using technology young people can easily explore historic monuments online without even being there, which in Wales can be handy with our wonderful weather system ... rain in July anyone?!

Technology is truly affecting the way we live our lives as young people and in some cases that's awesome but we also need to be aware of the drawbacks. Technology is only going to improve and who knows maybe one day we will all get our own flying skateboards!



Joshua is a member of the Young Wales Initiative and is working with the Future Generations Commission to share young people's views to inform the work of the Commissioner. He is also working with the Welsh Government to feedback young people's views on the UK's departure from the European Union.

[www.youngwales.wales](http://www.youngwales.wales)

#DigitalPlay

**THE  
WILD  
NETWORK**

# Screen time: who's really to blame?

Mark Sears, Chief Wild Officer at The Wild Network is calling for us to work together and take collective action to overcome the barriers that are preventing children from playing outside.

It is nearly five years since the Natural Childhood Report was published. It became the catalyst for our film Project Wild Thing, which has been seen by over one million people and led to our formation as The Wild Network. Since then, we have continued to develop and now our network has grown to include nearly 30,000 organisations and individuals.

During this time we have worked hard with our network to better understand the complex, interwoven and very real barriers that were outlined in the report, each preventing children and their families, communities and schools from spending enough time outdoors.

## The barriers to outdoor play

The barriers that prevent children from playing freely outside (Wild Time) are widespread in our society. They also vary greatly by location, by demographics and by numerous subtle complexities right across the UK.

Through conversations with our network, we subsequently identified 11 barriers to Wild Time that today's children are at the mercy of. Grouped into four they are easily identified as:

**Fear** – stranger danger, risk-averse culture, increasing traffic problems

**Time** – time poor parents and over-scheduled children, nature-starved curriculum

**Space** – vanishing green spaces, privatisation of play facilities

**Technology** – rise of screen time, increasing reliance on technology for everyday living.

## How do we overcome the barriers?

Our role is to create the conditions to overcome these barriers and the impact they have. Over the last couple of years we have realised that the willingness to participate amongst the network and the collective intelligence offered as a result is staggering. Truly, all of us together can offer considerably more wisdom than any one of us acting alone.



© The Wild Network

We want to support and enable communities to create innovative solutions that work for them. Then through our network we want to act as the champion of the solutions, inspiring people to learn from the approaches that work (and don't work!). Whether we tackle one barrier at a time, or several at once we can start with little steps, wherever we live, in our families, in our wider communities and in our schools.

## But what about the BIG one – screen time?

The one barrier that consistently seems to concern our network more than any other is 'the rise of screen time'. As parents we're regularly bombarded with the latest figures of screen time amongst our children. There are calls for guidelines, better advice and more. Shocking headlines increasingly abound but there is very little depth to this narrative, very little understanding of the complexity of addiction that technology brings, or indeed even the benefits. Amongst the headlines there is lots of blame.

The headlines that preschool children spend more than four hours a day in front of screens is even more

startling when you discover that the figure increases to five-and-a-half hours for children aged five to 15.

The implicit message is that children prefer tablets and screens to playing outside. The sub-text is familiar territory, too: today's parents are bad, lazy – or even neglectful. The on-going narrative implies that parents are unable to curb the screen obsession and that children are out of control somehow. The truth is that research shows that many children want to play outside yet are prevented from doing so by their schedules, their busy parents and by other social pressures. Screens (and staying indoors without screens) is frequently the symptom, not the cause.

We believe that parents are the wrong target to kick. We need a collective effort to change things and we need a network to do that. We need to meet parents and children where they are – in real life, at school playgrounds and in the supermarket – and help them break down those barriers in their home and perhaps their community.

## Cultivating a balance

It is clear that cultivating a balance between screen time and Wild Time is increasingly hard; we hear that loud and clear from most of our network. There is also lots of confusion about what an optimal balance might look like, let alone how to enforce it. And they know better than anyone that getting children outdoors isn't that simple. Why? Because the opportunities just aren't available to many of today's children. There are plenty of reports condemning the current situation and calling for changes and new policies.

## Let's stop asking for change and start being it

No amount of screen time guidelines and no 'safe usage' scheme will change anything unless we actually start to tackle the root causes of the issue.

If we see screens as the single enemy of this issue, then it's easy to conclude that if we reduce four hours a day to two hours on screens, then naturally it will result in more Wild Time. The issues are far more complicated than that.

So to start chipping away at the root causes of the barriers means acting not just as individual parents but rather as communities and citizens in the broadest possible sense. We believe that there are things that we can do at a micro level to effect change. We've seen evidence of this from within our network that has sparked change:

- The mum who let her children walk home from primary school and now there's five of them who regularly walk to and from school together.
- The school that made a nature corner with old wooden blocks to hunt for minibeasts that sparked a weekend wild club.

## Filmmaker and 'Marketing Director for Nature' David Bond reflecting on life after the release of the successful Project Wild Thing film:

*'Making the film back in 2012 was a real eye opener as to the realities of families and why kids today struggle to get their Wild Time. Since then, The Wild Network has been working to help communities find ways to make playing out easier. It's been great to be part of that and to help understand what the barriers are in different communities and how we can help break them down.'*

*'At home, it's been a wild five years. My daughter is now nine and my son eight and they spend more time outside because I think we're more aware now. Awareness is definitely the first hurdle for parents, but even knowing isn't enough on its own, you need to work at actively doing it otherwise the pressures of life take over again.'*

- The new wave of young nature bloggers who are flooding the internet with their images and videos (and will probably go on to present Springwatch one day!)

Without screens, blogs, and social media to share stories, much of the good work out there would go unnoticed. Screens alone aren't the problem. So yes, let's be mindful of how we use our screens, but at the same time let us devise solutions that reclaim our green spaces and reunite communities. Let us design our towns and cities around walkers, cyclists and importantly around children and their neighbours.

Let's make those seemingly individual and small acts, because each of the examples above truly demonstrate the power of starting small, making a change. Even if change isn't immediate, just making it can spark other ideas later.

We are determined to work with communities on those ideas, those real life solutions for their children. Bespoke solutions, relevant to the places where they are. We'll keep looking for new outcomes, tapping into the extraordinary talent and ideas out there and the deep desire for change.

Perhaps if we could do this we might help create the conditions where screen time isn't the default 'time filler'. Maybe there is a future for our children outside that is brighter and shinier and more fun without the need for screens. More reality, less virtual. **Let's just start, shall we?**

## Want to get started?

A screening of the film Project Wild Thing is a great way to kick-start a movement, or ideas for Wild Time and outdoor play in your community. To see the trailer: [www.thewildnetwork.com](http://www.thewildnetwork.com)

# An interview

## with the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children, **Carl Sargeant AM**

### **What are your favourite play memories?**

Building dens.

### **Nowadays, where do children play in your community? How does this differ to when you grew up?**

In my area children play on the cricket fields. We used to roam further afield.

### **What do you hope to achieve in your portfolio with responsibility for children's play?**

Listening and working with young people, I want Wales to be a country where all children and young people have a wide range of challenging and interesting opportunities to play and to enjoy their leisure time. I will continue to work with Ministerial colleagues across all Welsh Government policy areas to make our vision a reality.

'We will continue to work with the local authorities and with a wide range of partners, including Play Wales, to ensure everyone understands the benefits that play brings, and work together to improve play opportunities for children across Wales'.

### **It is widely recognised by mental health experts that playing can make a significant contribution to mitigating the impact of adverse childhood experiences. How do you anticipate your department engaging with the play sector to work towards breaking the cycle of damaging childhood experiences?**

Play is central to children's mental health and wellbeing. It helps children to develop a feeling of control over their lives and build their confidence, independence and resilience. When looking at how to help children and families where there have been damaging childhood experiences, we will be looking at all the evidence and identifying examples of good practice to overcome and mitigate the impact of these experiences.

### **Children tell us that they value time, space and permission to play outside with their friends. What do you think we, as members of the community, could do to make it easier for children to play outside?**

It is important that everyone understands the importance of

'Communities in general can make their neighbourhoods more play friendly by respecting children's right to play and welcoming children playing outside and enjoying themselves'.

play in children's lives. Parents should allow their children plenty of opportunities to play at home, with friends and in the community. Community leaders and others working and volunteering in the community should consider how their roles can contribute to supporting play. Communities in general can make their neighbourhoods more play friendly by respecting children's right to play and welcoming children playing outside and enjoying themselves.

### **In times of financial constraints and budget cuts how can we ensure that the poverty of experience – for instance deprivation of rich play opportunities – receives the same attention and focus as economic poverty?**

It is essential that the importance of play in mitigating the negative effects of poverty on children and young people's lives is recognised,





Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children, Carl Sargeant

which is why local authority play sufficiency assessments must include a consideration of child poverty. Play can help children develop resilience and resourcefulness in difficult situations. Providing opportunities for all children and young people to play in their communities can be a means of reducing inequalities between children living in families who can afford costly recreational provision, and those who cannot, so reducing poverty of experience for all children.

**Often when we talk about encouraging children to be more active the traditional response has been to promote their engagement in sport. However, there is increasing evidence that children are actually more active when playing outside. How do you think we can change**

**'I want Wales to be a country where all children and young people have a wide range of challenging and interesting opportunities to play'.**

### **this view and ensure that opportunities for children to play are seen as valuable as structured sport?**

I am committed to the role of active play as a contributing factor in children's health and wellbeing. Local authority Play Sufficiency Assessments must recognise the importance of freely chosen play and recreational activities in contributing to both children's and their family's physical, mental and social health. Play Action Plans must demonstrate how they enhance children's opportunities for active play. There is cross-cabinet support for this agenda.

My colleague, Lesley Griffiths, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, has recently launched the Welsh edition of the Fields in Trust guidance for outdoor sport and play. This provides guidance on increasing and enhancing space and provision for both sport and play.

### **The 'play sufficiency duty' as part of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 is ground-breaking legislation. What do you think is the most significant difference it has made for children in Wales?**

We have seen progress in how local authorities comply with the

Play Sufficiency duty since 2010. They are working more closely with their partner organisations and across their policy areas to increase play opportunities for all children in their areas. Most local authorities have also included consideration of play in their Well-being of Future Generations Assessments. Through greater opportunities to play, therefore, we can expect to see increasing benefits to children's wellbeing which will be sustained into adulthood.

### **There is continued international interest and respect towards the work that Welsh Government is doing with regards to children's play. How does it feel to have the eyes of the world watching?**

It is good that Wales is recognised as a world leader in this respect; but I don't want to confine the benefits of play to children in Wales. We are working with the other UK nations, and countries further afield, to raise the understanding of the importance of play and share our knowledge and experiences. Wales, therefore, continues to be at the forefront of improving the lives of children across the world through play.



## Workforce development

# Level 2 Award in Playwork Practice – the pilot

In the last issue we reported on the development of a new Level 2 Award in Playwork Practice (L2APP) that meets requirements for registration for those working in holiday play schemes in non-supervisory roles.

This Agored Cymru qualification is also suitable when held alongside a level 2 childcare qualification to meet the new requirements for those working with eight to 12 year olds. It is also recognised as valuable accredited professional development for those working in a range of related roles including: teaching assistants, midday supervisors, youth workers and sports development.

The first L2APP course was for a cohort of learners in Cardiff and was held over three Tuesdays in February by Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales. There were learners from across the target audience including: holiday play schemes, after school clubs, youth clubs, sports development and schools. Sonia Wearne from Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs supported Play Wales' Martin King-Sheard in the course delivery.

*'Highlights of the course include listening to other people's experiences and reflecting on my own playwork practice ... the course is brilliant, accessible and very easy to access.'*

**Sue, play scheme organiser**

Welsh Government's Deputy Director for Childcare, Play and Early Years, Owain Lloyd joined learners at the first day of the course and sampled the curriculum, including the importance of play, social barriers to playing and an understanding of the Playwork Principles. Of his experience of the day, Owain said:

*'It was fantastic to be able to join the first session of the new L2APP course. As a boring civil servant and the only non-playwork professional on the course, the opportunity to better understand the playwork approach alongside a wide range of committed and passionate practitioners was invaluable. The course was informative, challenging at times but also fun, and it was good to see how funding from Welsh Government and joint working between partners has enabled the development of this new award.'*

As well as the taught part of the course, learners need to complete practical assessment tasks and undertake 20 hours of playwork practice to evidence their ability to apply their knowledge in practice. At the final session, learners were already discussing how the course had changed the way they think about play and how they will work with children in future.

*'This course has taught me the underpinning knowledge around playwork and the reason why children play. It has also taught me about intervention and how adults tend to intervene too much ... throughout this course I have developed my knowledge and taken a backwards step and now allow children to play more freely.'*

**Ben, volunteer playworker**

*'As a playworker I found it really hard that I needed to prove myself all the time and that I needed to always be involved in children's play... by doing this course I have been able to stand back, observe the play and provide resources that extend their play.'*

**Helen, midday supervisor and playworker**

Play Wales is working closely with Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales to deliver L2APP more widely and a second pilot course was delivered in Wrexham in March.

[www.playwales.org.uk/eng/L2APP](http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/L2APP)



# Workforce development

## Professional Development Programme

Following a successful BIG Lottery Awards for All programme application by Play Wales a Professional Development Programme has recently been delivered in Merthyr Tydfil. The Professional Development Programme is intended to bring together a range of local authority and third sector stakeholders to consider how their areas of work respond to priorities within the Play Sufficiency Action Plan and contribute to the statutory duty on local authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities (*Wales – a Play Friendly Country, 2014*).

It is a bespoke programme tailored to meet the requirements of the local authority and has previously been delivered successfully in Wrexham. Working with Stuart Lester and Wendy Russell from the University of Gloucestershire, a series of five workshops explored a range of themes including:

- Thinking about play and space
- Thinking about mapping and how to use it to analyse space for playing
- Developing a 'collective wisdom' relating to securing sufficiency
- Negotiating conditions for playing

- Building networks, alliances and partnerships.

There is recognition that each local authority has a unique approach to supporting children's play that is dependent on local factors including history, relationships, resources, priorities, economics and local politics, and that the programme should take account of these factors.

Stakeholders attending included representatives from: early years and childcare, parks, planning, youth and Families First projects. Chris Hole, Early Years and Youth Manager at Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council said:

*'The exploration of play in terms of children's daily interaction with the world around them has enabled individuals to re-examine their understanding of play. The programme has created a stronger link between how local authority departments and partner organisations can impact on creating environments for play to be recognised, promoted, supported and encouraged by the community.'*

The Professional Development Programme is proving to be a successful way of engaging wider stakeholders in play sufficiency and responds effectively to 'securing and developing the play workforce': upskill the wider play workforce, defined as all those employed whose role has an impact on children playing (Matter G of what needs to be taken into account when assessing play sufficiency).

**If you are interested in a similar programme in your area please contact [workforce@playwales.org.uk](mailto:workforce@playwales.org.uk)**

## Childcare qualifications update

Following an extensive consultation in the summer of 2016 Qualifications Wales is currently commissioning the development of a new suite of Health and Social Care and Childcare qualifications to meet the needs of learners in Wales from the age of 14 upwards. The new qualifications, which will be ready for delivery in September 2019, also address issues raised in Qualifications Wales' sector review.



The new childcare qualifications, at levels 2 to 5, will be called Children's Care Learning, Development and Play (CCLDP). Whilst not a playwork qualification in its own right, it will include content on facilitating children's freely chosen play and a general understanding of the Playwork Principles. This was identified in the review as a shortfall in current childcare qualifications.

Social Care Wales (formerly known as Care Council for Wales) is drafting the CCLDP content to share with

the successful awarding body and has engaged with Play Wales and the Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales (PETC Wales) to ensure the play content is fit for purpose and prepares those wishing to move into playwork for commencing playwork qualifications.

The playwork sector responded unanimously to the consultation against including playwork within the restricted qualification citing concerns that playwork, as a distinct profession, could be marginalised

or the Playwork Principles diluted by inclusion within a larger qualification. Also, playwork qualifications currently need to be smaller and 'bite-sized' to meet the needs of a largely part-time or seasonal workforce. This will ensure that other playwork qualifications that are on the Qualifications in Wales database (QiW) will be eligible for funding and delivery in the future.

**Qualifications Wales' sector review is available at: [www.qualificationswales.org](http://www.qualificationswales.org)**

# Wales – A Play Friendly Place

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](https://on.fb.me/playfriendlyplace)

## Students create imaginative outdoor play and learning space

A group of Cardiff Metropolitan University students has recently re-energised a tired un-used outdoor concrete space on the university campus and transformed it into a colourful outdoor play, learning and teaching space. The project called for the creative design of storage of loose parts to support children's play. It was officially opened on Global School Play Day (1 February 2017) with children from three local primary schools attending a lunchtime play and story telling session.

The team of students from Cardiff School of Art and Design (CSAD) volunteered their time to carry out the project and transform the space. The space will provide significant benefits for students studying Early Childhood Studies (ECS) and Primary Education Studies as it offers an additional space to host workshops with students, teachers, school pupils and the local community.

For inspiration and an opportunity to extend the learning and experience of the students involved, students from the CSAD and ECS programme visited a play resource centre for loose parts, as well as primary schools and adventure playgrounds across Wales to observe loose parts play in practice.

The space was entirely re-designed by the students on a modest budget; a truly collaborative project with CSE, CSAD, the university's estates department, campus services, three local primary schools and Play Wales working together. All items included in the space, such as the story making cabinets and loose parts play boxes were designed and hand-made.

Senior Lecturer Chantelle Haughton commented on the success of the new colourful space: 'Our aim with Outdoor Play and Learning is to offer the ideal environment to maximise learning; to explore issues, such as the value and challenges of play and learning; to nurture new skills and ultimately for all of this to be



*done through working with lively innovative practice maximising the use of the outdoors. This space allows us to showcase that playing can be supported even in the most barren of spaces. We are pleased to be able to provide opportunities to showcase good practice for making the most of small, concrete, "unusable" spaces to create magical play environments.'*



Cardiff  
Metropolitan  
University

Prifysgol  
Metropolitan  
Caerdydd

**Cardiff School of Art and Design student, Alice Croot, who coordinated the design element of the project and installation added:**

*'Being involved in the first collaboration with CSAD and CSE was very exciting. In the team of seven there was a maker, product designer, ceramicists and illustrators. Having a diverse mix of practitioners meant we could learn from each other and it led to diverse creative decisions. Personally, the project was a big turning point for me and how I work. Since the completion of the project, I have been to visit the patch when it's being used by students as well as primary school children. The concrete patch has been re-energised to create a fun creative outdoor learning area that encourages creativity for all ages.'*