

Play for Wales

Play news and briefing from
the national charity for play

Issue 54 Winter 2019



Our right to play



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Thank you

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

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

Guest Editorial



My favourite playing memories from my childhood involve being outside and unsupervised. From about the age of five or six local children gathered to play in an area known as 'The Burn', in which a burn (stream) ran through an overgrown couple of acres of a former market garden. Amid the nettles there were wild fruit trees to feast on, a stream to paddle in and adventures to be had. Apart from the lack of cars, I think the biggest contrast to today is the lack of adults.

I have spent thousands of happy hours playing with my own children but I have no memories of playing with adults at all. There are gains and losses with each scenario, but all children need unstructured and child-led playtime. Play, after all, is a child's right – not an adult's, as I often delight in explaining to children.

It is, I think, a very relevant reflection to open this largely child-led issue.

And it does a sterling job of capturing play's magic – from the freedom of playing in the street, to the therapy of hospital play, and how the games we enjoy and the connections we make can help us in even the most challenging times.

This issue also coincides with the recent celebrations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child's (UNCRC) 30th anniversary. My office chose this day to publish a new rights resource for Foundation Phase children, and a brand new song that we hope will fill school halls in every corner of the country. In keeping with the child-led theme, it was written with schoolchildren, so perhaps it's unsurprising that an explicit mention of play made the final lyrics, indeed, the chorus – *'We have the right to be free and play'*, and that it was so closely linked with freedom.

It is also a time to recognise the step taken in legislation here in Wales to help realise children's right to play, but there are still plenty of barriers. From the very

political issues of austerity and child poverty, to smartphone use and the increasing busyness of adults' working lives.

But we can all do our bit. As our patron saint said, *'Do the little things'*. Whether that's making time to play with our children every day, or encouraging them to get outdoors to lead their own fun with friends.

In terms of commitments from Government and councils, I would love to see far more staffed adventure playgrounds across Wales, as well as opportunities for unstructured child-led play built into all spaces where children live, learn and travel to. Children of all ages and needs should be considered and involved in shaping those opportunities.

As for The Burn, it was built on decades ago, but on visiting my old home recently, I spotted some children building dens up the hill where we used to play. Children will always find places to play. We just need to give them the freedom, space and time to do so.

**Sally Holland,
Children's Commissioner
for Wales**



News

Community Play Ambassadors project

Play Wales is delighted to be one of seventeen projects across Wales to have been awarded funding through the new Healthy and Active Fund (HAF). The successful projects aim to improve mental and physical health by supporting healthy and active lifestyles.



Cronfa Iach ac Egniol
Healthy & Active Fund

The funding is enabling us to implement a new and exciting Community Play Ambassadors project across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. We hope the lessons learned from the project will help us to develop it in other areas in the future.

To implement the project, Play Wales is working in partnership with:

- Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales
- Cardiff Council's Children's Play Services
- Cardiff and Vale University Health Board/Public Health Wales Local Public Health team
- Re-create

- Vale of Glamorgan Council Sport and Play Development team.

The project will include working with local people to establish Play Action Groups to identify ways to sustain regular play opportunities. The project has been designed to make the best use of existing community assets such as open spaces, streets and school grounds. These groups will enable neighbourhoods to be more play friendly.

The project will also support young people aged 14-19 to become volunteer Community Play Ambassadors through training, qualifications and placements in playwork settings, enabling them to facilitate neighbourhood-based play opportunities.

Using existing Play Wales resources and qualifications, we will deliver playwork training and ongoing mentoring to the Ambassadors during the first two years of the project. The Ambassadors will be connected with community members who will support the creation of rich and varied play opportunities locally. By doing this the project will engage with over 500 children.

The Ambassadors will have a unique opportunity to act as advocates for play and, by working with supportive adults, will have a tangible impact on the opportunities to play in the project communities.

Project Play Autumn

Playful Childhoods

We had so much fun with Playful Childhoods' Project Play over the summer, we did it again during the autumn! To get children playing outside and away from screens during the colder months we, through our Playful Childhoods campaign, wanted to show that it's the perfect time to go outside and explore.

There's so much fun to be had during the winter months – playing conkers, splashing in puddles, building a den or going on a scavenger hunt. We have also created a handy 'How to play conkers' video and a short 'Five play ideas' video to inspire families to play outdoors!

Playful Childhoods aims to help parents, carers and community groups give children plenty of good opportunities to play at any time of year. We can all do more at home, in the community and in schools to encourage more free, outdoor play and continually improve the minds and imaginations of the next generation.

Coming soon to the website:

- A new section for people working with parents and families. This will sign post to further information on the website to help those working with families to support a range of often mentioned parental concerns, such as worries about their child getting messy or dirty when they play, spending too much time on screens, and is it safe to let their child play outdoors.
- Lots of simple and practical play ideas – from rainy day play, to making dens at home, to introducing children to fire.

www.playfulchildhoods.wales

Welcome

Welcome to our new team members, Paula Harris and Lowri Jenkins and Board of Trustees members, Dr Rhian Barrance and Owain Lloyd.

Paula is the Project Officer for our new Community Play Ambassadors project with responsibility for the co-ordination of training and development activity. Prior to working at Play Wales, she has worked as a Play Development Officer, Play Association Project Co-ordinator and Regional Executive Officer.

As the Digital Communications Assistant Lowri assists the information service which includes updating websites and co-

ordinating social media activity. Before joining us, she gained experience as a Special Educational



Needs and Disability teaching assistant and interning for a PR and communications company.

Rhian is a Research Associate at the Wales Institute for Social and Economic Research Data and Methods (WISERD), part of the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University. Since joining Cardiff University, she has completed two projects for the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Rhian completed her PhD at the Centre for Children's Rights at Queen's University Belfast.

Owain joined S4C in August 2019 as the channel's new Secretary to the Board. He is responsible for advising the Board to ensure appropriate and effective governance across all of S4C's work. Previously, Owain was a civil servant in the Welsh Government for over 20 years, having worked in a variety of different roles including the early years, childcare and play team.

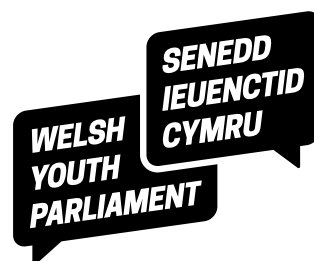
A need for change says Welsh Youth Parliament

The Welsh Youth Parliament's first ever report – *Life Skills, Skills for Life* – calls for life skills, such as diversity and the value of money, to be taught in schools.

Authored by the Welsh Youth Parliament Life Skills in the Curriculum Committee, the report is calling for changes to be made to the current school curriculum to enable pupils to gain the 'skills that young people need to develop into responsible, global citizens'.

It concludes with 13 recommendations, including:

'Estyn and Government should consider different approaches to the way schools are inspected – focus shouldn't be too heavily on exam results, and should



focus more on schools' wellbeing and support strategies and the developing of young people as individuals.'

In 2018, sixty young people from across the country were elected to the first ever Welsh Youth Parliament. Following a debate and a vote held at the Senedd in early 2019, the Parliament

Members will focus on three issues during their two-year term. These are: emotional and mental health support, littering and plastic waste, and life skills in the curriculum.

www.youthparliament.wales

Holiday Hunger Playworks Pilot



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Feeding children over the school holidays, when breakfast clubs and free school meals are not available is a challenge for some families. Over the Summer and October half term holidays in 2019 the Welsh Government allocated £100,000 to a pilot project to test the feasibility of tackling holiday hunger through play and community-based settings.

During the pilot the funding was distributed to test different models of provision. In some cases, food was added to existing provision, in others food was improved. Some settings ordered in food, others purchased equipment and prepared their own. Out of school clubs provided additional spaces to children who would not otherwise have been able to attend.

Initial evaluation of the pilot is positive and £1,000,000 has been allocated in 2020-21 for this purpose. Information provided during the evaluation of the pilot will be used to determine how to select settings, allocate and distribute funding, ensure healthy provision and carry out evaluation. The full evaluation report will be published in February 2020.

www.gov.wales

Example feedback from child who attended a summer playscheme which provided food:

'I love going down the beach to the playscheme to play with my friends ... I like playing on my friend's bike and with the hula hoops and like having a fire to sit near. I think it's good to have food at the playscheme. Children need fruit, vegetables and vitamins to keep us healthy. If they don't have food that is good for them, they will get cavities in their teeth, be poorly, feel sick. If they don't eat healthy they wouldn't be able to run about and play.'



Playday 2020 will take place on Wednesday 5 August

Playday is an annual celebration of children's right to play with thousands of children and families playing out at events across the UK.

www.playday.org.uk

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

Play Wales membership 2020

Why join Play Wales? The more voices that call together with us to uphold children's right to play, the louder we will be.

Become a member of Play Wales, for as little as £10, and add your voice to strengthen the call.

We have membership options for organisations and individuals living and working in Wales – as well as international membership for individuals and organisations further afield.

Support us to make Wales a better place for playing for every child by joining us today at: www.playwales.org.uk/eng/membership

'I learn new things and climb trees'

What children say about play in Wales

In support of the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), we published a report where children tell us about what's good about the play opportunities in their local area and how satisfied they are about when, how and where they can play.

In the summer edition of this magazine, we reported on the highlights of these findings, taken from an analysis of surveys completed by children as part of local authority 2019 Play Sufficiency Assessments. Here, we spotlight some of the many comments we received from nearly 6,000 children.

Time to play

Over three quarters of children in Wales said that they had loads, or just enough time to play. Nonetheless, more than one in five children said that they did not have enough time or would like more time to play. From the comments made by children, the time they have away from adults for unstructured play is highly prized, and in talking about the positive aspects of play in their local areas, being with friends is critically important.

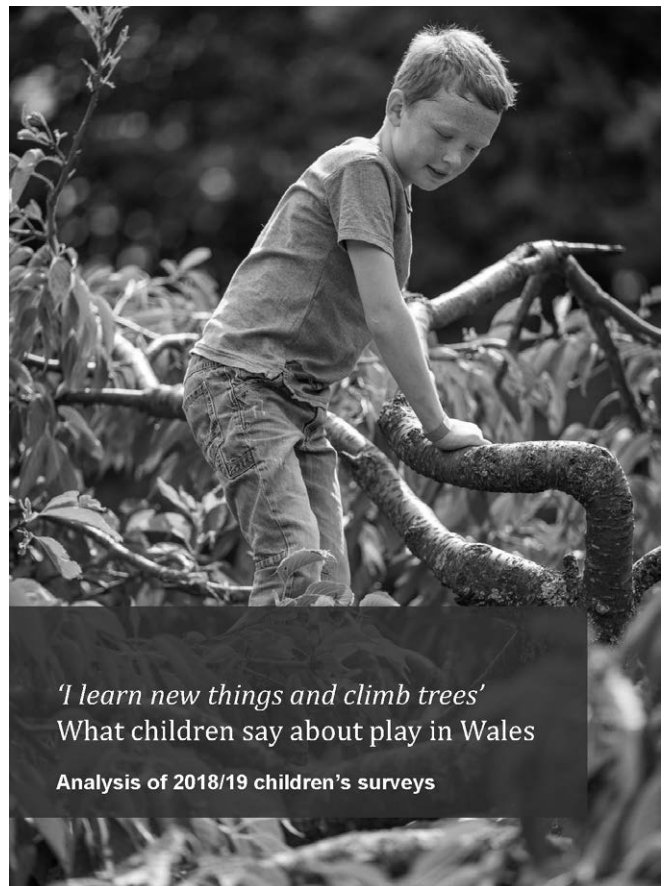
'I get to hang around with friends and get to have time alone without adults.'

'I like going to the park. I like spending time with my friends in our local area.'

The comments also support our data, and other research highlighting the pressures that children have on the amount of time they have to play and hang-out.

'I don't have enough time [to play or hang out] because of homework.'

'I don't play out as I train in a gymnastics club up to 22 hours and five times a week. I also live 3.5 miles from friends and school.'



'I learn new things and climb trees'
What children say about play in Wales

Analysis of 2018/19 children's surveys

Space to play

When asked whether they were able to play and hang out in all the places they would like to children talked a lot about parks and playing fields as focal points within their communities.

'I love the parks with climbing frames as I like to hang upside down and do gymnastics. We like bug hunting too in the park. I love playing with my friends on the skate ramps at the park.'

Children also talked about using a wide range of spaces away from designated areas, ranging from pavements outside their houses, to nearby hills.

'I play on my bike in our street with my friends.'

'Making dens in trees and playing with my friends.'

Nonetheless, some children have difficulties in accessing play spaces.

'In my village and the neighbouring village we have no park or playing area. It's really sad. We used to be able to play in the school grounds but now they are locked up. We only have our garden to play in otherwise my parents have to take me in a car to go somewhere.'

'Near school and my friends there are green spaces to play on which won't last as it's now being demolished to make more houses or sold up to make a bigger school ... There will be no green spaces left for us to play. We will have to stay in on our computers and play online with our friends instead.'

How good are play spaces?

We found little difference in how girls and boys perceived the quality of play spaces, but by age-group we observed that older children tended to be more critical. Over 25 percent of over 14 year olds said that the spaces they used to play or hang out were not good, or rubbish. A large number of children were very critical of the state of parks and dedicated children's play areas.

'There is nothing good, all the parks are ruined and always covered in glass or they are full of drug users.'

'Some play parks are a bit run down and the one near me needs work and is full of older kids hanging around on toddler things.'

'Too many dogs and poo.'

Freedom to play

Many older children clearly feel that adults don't like them playing or hanging out. This has been observed in other studies with negative attitudes found to come from a lack of understanding of what children's play is, and differing views on what should be considered as being acceptable behaviour. Adults often have different views of children and can associate older children congregating together as anti-social behaviour.

'Sometimes, I feel judged by adults when going out in a large group of friends, as I think they feel uncomfortable around a lot of us, perhaps intimidated.'

'Me and my little brother are the only ones allowed to play outside on our own. All my friends need an adult to go with them, there is no-one playing outside on the streets.'

Lots of additional comments from children highlighted the issue of traffic in their freedom to choose where and when they play.

'I live near [the] park but I'm too young to go to the park on my own without an adult because there are too many main roads.'

Related, is how children get to the places where they play. More than half said that they are able to walk or ride on their own, or with friends. However, two in five children rely on an adult to either walk or drive them to where they play.

'There is no park or safe place that I can go without my parents or that doesn't need me to go in the car. The roads are too busy and there are no safe spaces for me to play ball by my house.'

Overall, the picture presented by children across Wales is that when they are allowed out, and able to play in the places they want to, most children are happy with the choice of good quality spaces, and are satisfied with their play opportunities. Nonetheless, a number of factors are important in restricting children's rights and may be causes of harm.

Some children are time-poor with evidence from other sources suggesting that this is related to academic pressures and the 'over-scheduling' of children's lives. While some children excel from this, over-scheduling children's time has also been linked to stress and depression, amongst other mental health issues. Disabled children encounter further barriers that prevent them from spending their free time playing.

It is clear even from this limited evidence, that play is the default position for children, and they will intuitively seek out spaces to play. Play sufficiency is therefore an issue of spatial justice with children having a reasonable right to use their surroundings and not just be corralled into low-quality designated spaces or be subjected to negative adult attitudes.

'I learn new things and climb trees' – What children say about play in Wales is available at: www.playwales.org.uk/eng/news/1222-new-research-what-children-say-about-play-in-wales



Play streets are awesome!

The Cardiff Child Friendly City initiative has brought partners together to develop a Street Play programme. This programme enables residents to apply to close their street, to allow children to safely play, for a few hours a day, once a month.

Jack, aged nine, lives in Plasnewydd, Cardiff and thinks that play streets are a great idea:

There's lots of reasons why I think play streets are awesome. There are fewer cars coming through which means the kids own the street. Then, we can play lots of different games, swap things to play with and have fun with our friends.

The adults in our street wanted to have a play street because they wanted to help kids have fun playing. We are lucky because not many roads have this fantastic event. To help make things work, there are a few rules:

- When the whistle is blown you must get your stuff and go onto the pavement because it means, either a car is coming or it's the end of play street
- Respect adults
- No bullying or fighting
- No going past the road closed signs.

I have played football and tag rugby with my friends. Sometimes I go on my scooter or bike. I don't have a very big garden so playing on the road means I have much more space. We held a special event at Christmas with games, mince pies and a snow machine. Lots of neighbours came and enjoyed the fun games.

I have made new friends that I never knew and who I now know. They like some of my favourite things. Even better – the parents are playing with us too, so we are being supervised and having fun with the parents. My two younger sisters have had fun playing with their friends too. Also, my sister has become more confident riding her bike because of play street. In addition, my sister has gained lots of friends from the play street and she's only two!

This idea helps people get more fresh air but having fun with your mates at the same time!

It also helps keep you off electronics, such as Xbox, PS4 and phones. It encourages children to learn new games and helps to make new friends. Play streets help children and adults to socialise and get to know each other.

My neighbour Reuben, who is four, agrees with me. He said, 'I really like play street because I get to see my friends. Some of the mums and dads do guarding at the ends of the street and I talk to them. The best thing is racing up and down on our bikes and scooters. Because there are no cars driving it means no-one will hurt themselves. We like to play outside in the fresh air and run around where it is safe. I love play street'.

Child Friendly Cities is a UNICEF initiative:
www.childfriendlycities.org

Give us time to socialise and chill in high school

Jasper is 15 years old, from Cwmbran, and is a year 11 student studying for GCSE's. He tells us why school playtime is important to him and his friends.

When I first started high school five years ago, it was a shock to my system compared to primary school in not only the learning, but the size of the school and the amount of pupils in one place. In primary school we had two breaks a day – morning and lunch time. This was called playtime. Not only did this give us the opportunity to have a snack in the morning and lunch in the middle of the day, but we also had the opportunity to run around, explore and be ourselves with our friends, and play football. We also had playworkers on our yard offering games and support and a friendly face if we wanted it.

When I started high school, the break times were 20 minutes in the morning and 45 minutes in the middle of the day which is when we would have our lunch. These times were no longer called playtimes, sadly.

Morning break was more about how you got across the school to your next lesson in time and the environment was totally different, the opportunities were not the same. Running around or even kicking a ball seemed to have gone over night. Lunch break was different again. This was about running as quick as you could from your lesson to get in the queue for your food before they ran out of your preferred choice, then finding somewhere to sit and eat it. The opportunity to chill with your friends was there if you were quick enough eating your lunch. Me and my friends would have liked the opportunity to play football but whenever we tried we would get pushed away because there was not enough space for all the year groups to be in one area.

Two years ago, the school changed the way the day runs because of their belief that young people's

behaviour is better with shorter break times. The morning break stayed the same, but our lunch break decreased to 30 minutes. The majority of our lunch break is spent queuing for food and eating it as quick as we possibly can before the bell rings. It doesn't even give us a chance to catch up with friends.

My friends and I feel that the longer breaks benefitted us by giving us the opportunity to socialise, chill and recharge our batteries before continuing our lessons. We now finish school 15 minutes earlier every day because of the time changes to our lunch break.

I feel that giving young people time and opportunities to relax, be themselves and socialise in a good environment is important to young people. Being a sporty person, I feel that having the opportunity to do physical activity during the day would benefit a lot of young people within the school.

Torfaen's Play and Short Breaks Services' Moving on Up Project

Torfaen's Play and Short Breaks Services' Moving on Up Project works in partnership with schools and the Counselling Service to deliver a transition service through play. The aim is to support year six pupils through the transition from primary to secondary school. Pupils from feeder schools are identified to partake in the project which focuses on increasing confidence and reduce any anxiety or fears linked to going to a new school.

For more information about this project see issue 52 (Spring 2019) of *Play for Wales*.

Older children play too – an information sheet exploring the play of older children, particularly those around the ages of 11 to 16. It looks at where older children play and why, play behaviours of older children and their benefits and understanding the adolescent brain.

The magazine and information sheet are available at:
www.playwales.org.uk/eng/publications

Play in hospital

Playing is vital to a child's happiness, well-being and development. When children undergo medical and surgical procedures, ensuring access to play is maintained carries even greater significance. The well-being of children who are patients in hospital or community settings such as children's hospices, can be supported by the provision of play.



Rufus and his mother Rosie share their experience of the difference the play team made during lengthy stays and regular treatments at the paediatric Angharad Ward at Bronglais General Hospital in Aberystwyth.

When Rufus was diagnosed with Leukaemia, as parents we were filled with dread at the prospect of our lively three year old son being confined to a hospital bed for days on end, surrounded by a blank clinical environment, and that this would be his life for three and a half years. It didn't seem possible that he would cope with having to stay in hospital so regularly and not have his freedom to do the things he enjoyed, and still have to deal with the painful procedures and medical intervention.

We never realised that behind the scenes of a children's hospital ward there are teams dedicated to uplifting the spirits of sick children, purely focused on their mental well-being and representing a safe haven of escape for the confused and anxious children being treated. It was only after being thrown into the world of a children's hospital ward that we experienced the help of these amazing people. From day one there were moments that even as mum and dad we couldn't distract Rufus enough – the play team were the only ones who could do so!

'When people come to play with me, it stops me from being bored when I'm in hospital for a really long time, and it helps me have a click and sharpies. Everyone's really kind and nice and it stops me being sad.'*

The therapy of play is so beneficial to sick children and it is remarkable to have seen such a change in Rufus' mood and mental health after having group-led and one-to-one sessions with members of the play team.

So many of our hospital memories are of times the play specialists made Rufus smile or invited him along to craft sessions. Even on a chemo drip he was welcome to join in – if not it was brought to his bed side. The play team made him realise he can enjoy himself even in hospital, despite the horrible procedures he needs to get through. So now when it is time to go for treatment, the first thing Rufus mentions is the play room!

The weekly blood checks used to be stressful and upsetting for everyone involved – Rufus would need to be pinned down, arms restrained to keep him still enough for the nurses to be able to prick the finger and he would be beside himself. The Play Specialist, Paul, has helped bring him to the stage where he now sits calmly, without even noticing the blood being taken. Paul will simply sit with him and create things on Minecraft on his iPad. Rufus actually looks forward to his finger prick now because he gets to see Paul.

It can sometimes feel like it's impossible to give enough thanks to the play teams who have all contributed to keeping Rufus's frame of mind well whilst in hospital and helped him to overcome anxieties and frightening situations.

* Hospital Play Specialist, Paul Harries explained: *'The "sharpies" are the blood tests done with a needle and "clicks" are the finger-prick blood tests. Part of the play team's approach to de-mystifying and reducing anxiety about procedures is to use more child-friendly language.'*

Improving our school playground

A Lleisiau Bach Little Voices project



Lleisiau Bach Little Voices is a Wales Observatory on Human Rights of Children and Young People programme to empower children as researchers and as advocates, to help embed human rights in children's everyday places and to enable age-inclusive co-production of change.

The Wales Observatory is a National Lottery Community Funded project based at Swansea and Bangor Universities, working with a range of partners and disciplines to help ensure that the human rights of children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled.

Children from Townhill Community Primary School in Swansea are working with Lleisiau Bach Little Voices on a local participatory research project. Here's what the children have to say about the work they are undertaking.

We are Year 5 pupils from Townhill. We have thought about what children need and what is important to us:

- Parents
- Technology
- Knowledge
- Taking part in sports
- Children's sports makes you healthy and fit
- Physical education
- Trying new things
- Keeping healthy
- Books
- School to be smart

- Learning to swim
- Clothes
- Doctors
- Friends
- Food and drink
- Energy in your body
- A home
- Hospitals
- Hobbies
- Imagination and **PLAY!**

For our Lleisiau Bach Little Voices project, we have chosen to improve our school playground. We decided to do this so that we can have more and better play and this is what we would like to see happen in our school.

- Improve playground with colour
- More equipment on the yard, such as a chalkboard and things to play on
- Buy monkey bars and boards
- Build more benches, a roundhouse and tables
- More outdoor facilities
- Plant more in the garden greenhouse, add wildlife to the garden, build a bug hotel
- More play



- Lessons outside and an outdoor classroom
- Playground markings – more colour
- Obstacle course or a ninja course
- Each child to paint a brick with colour.

Our community is also important to us and we would like to improve it by:

- Using the field more
- Planting more trees
- Improving Townhill park
- Having a community garden to grow food and for the wildlife.

We are asking other pupils in our school to give us their opinions on our ideas. Lleisiau Bach Little Voices and Swansea University are helping us make our school playground better so that we can play and learn outdoors more.

For more information about Lleisiau Bach Little Voices visit:
www.lleisiaubach.org

What is a childhood?

In June 2019 Save the Children Cymru held an event in the Senedd to mark its centenary. The event included an exhibition of artwork specially produced by students of Pen Y Dre High School, in Merthyr Tydfil. Fifteen year old Izabela reports on the project.

The project allowed students at our school to answer the question 'What is a childhood?'. It involved students painting cardboard cut-outs of themselves and writing what they thought made a childhood on jigsaw puzzle pieces. We found that most of the students involved identified playing and socialising as some of the most important parts of a childhood.

This is reflected in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). So, why is it important?

For some kids, hanging out with their friends is a way to take a break from issues at home. For others, it's relaxing to go out and have fun with their friends. In my opinion, playing and socialising are important to our development because there is a lot of pressure on kids to be mature and grown up as soon as they go to high school. Being able to act like kids with your friends is very important and going out to watch a movie or going out to wander around a field for fun is a nice break from school work. I also think it's important to socialise because having good friends in and out of school gives

you people to rely on, even when you're at your worst. It's something that everyone needs, whether it's a small or large group.

There's also the issue of making friends online. If you only make friends online, it's quite impersonal because you only know the person that they choose to be on the internet rather than the real 'version' of them. It puts people in a difficult situation, as it's much easier to lose friends online than it is in real life. What if you lose your account? What if you forgot your password, or lost your email address? If you only have friends online, it puts you at risk of losing your support system, which is why I think that making friends at school or at clubs should be encouraged!

Why art? Why go through the trouble of making cardboard people, painting them and making jigsaw puzzle pieces so that they can go on display a couple of times? Simple. Impact. Yes, we could have had kids write out what a childhood was to them, but what about the kids who aren't very good at spelling? The students who have dyslexia and find it hard to read and write? What





about the kids who love to paint or draw but will find any excuse to not write? Art is universal. It's a pure, raw form of displaying your thoughts and feelings for the world to see. It's vulnerable.

Now, answer me this... Which do you find more interesting: a handwritten note about what makes a childhood, or would you rather look at a sea of painted Pen Y Dre students all clutching jigsaw pieces with little notes about their childhoods? Which one makes more of an impact? Which one piques your curiosity? I know which one I'd choose. I know which one I'd prefer to do, and let me tell you, one of these options is much more fun than the other.

These paintings of us – that we made – are physical. They're not something you can brush off like a lengthy letter or a scrawled paragraph on a blank sheet of paper. They're real. Our art, in all its forms, tells a story, and it tells you what we want. We want time to be kids, and to socialise, and we want to feel safe and loved.

Self-expression through art and play is our message. What's yours?

Community support and play sessions

United Welsh Housing Association provides temporary accommodation for people facing homelessness in Adams Court in Cardiff. A lot of the residents are children and families, many of which are refugees and asylum seekers.

Cardiff Council's Children's Play Services Team has been working in the hostel, often attending a coffee morning for parents to talk about the importance of play and to let parents know about after school play sessions. The sessions have recently moved to a community building – prior to this the team facilitated the play opportunities in a vacant flat on the ground floor, which opens onto the only green space within the hostel grounds.

Ellie-May, Sabrin and Lisa talked about the play sessions and what they like best about them.

'If I didn't have the play session to come to, I would be stuck in my room with my brother. We are not allowed to play in the corridors and if we do, our parents get told off.'

'I like coming here because I am not allowed to go to the park because it's on a busy road. Plus, lots of the stuff there is broken and sometimes we get called names when we go there. We have been to the park with the play team and we had a picnic. I saw my friend from school there, so I got to play him, which was good. I hope we can use the outside space near the tree again when the spring comes.'

'The reason I like coming is because it keeps me busy. We can see our friends, but also talk to other people and the playworkers. It's nice just to talk and see other people.'

'It's good to come here because the playworker can speak lots of different languages so can talk to the parents of some of the other kids and let them know when the play session is open.'

Ministerial Review of Play

Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services, Julie Morgan AM

The Welsh Government places great value on play and its importance in the lives of children in our society. Children have a fundamental right to be able to play as set out in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and play is central to a child’s enjoyment of life and contributes to their well-being.



We are all aware how the pace of life is increasing for children as well as adults. Pressures around education and formal activities mean children are busier than ever. The draw of digital recreation is high with the availability of laptops, tablets and smart phones. It is therefore more important than ever that we make sure children have the time and space to be children – to create, imagine, and to play.

Whilst we are proud of what we have achieved in Wales so far for play, it is now time to take stock and check our vision, values, progress and future direction. In the last issue of this magazine I announced the launch of my Ministerial Review of Play. Three months later, I’m pleased to report that we are making good progress.

Key organisations from across the playwork sector came together with policy officials from across Welsh Government in October 2019 to start setting out the issues relating to play. We have started by checking our vision for play, which describes what we will see if we get things right. I intend to consult on this vision as part of a formal consultation in 2020 and would hope you all respond, sharing your thoughts, views and ideas.

We have also identified the following areas we need to address so that our vision can be achieved.

Settings registration, regulation and exceptions

We need to look at the registration and regulation of playwork settings including the exceptions. Which settings should be regulated? How can we make regulation work for playwork settings ensuring safety and quality? We’ll look at models from across the UK and further afield to see what we can learn.

Play Sufficiency Duty, funding and cross policy working

The 2019 local authority Play Sufficiency Assessments show good progress



is being made despite funding and staff capacity issues. There continues to be partnership working and collaboration across departments and policy areas. But there is more to do at a local and central level. That is why we have representatives from health, planning, education, transport, housing, sports and recreation involved in this work.

At the moment there is no single, dedicated funding stream for play opportunities. This can cause issues with regards to late notification of funding, as we are not always clear on the timing or amount of support we can make available. I have agreed to look again at funding arrangements as a part of this review, though given the wider financial position, I am not able to make commitments or promises ahead of the review’s findings.

The workforce

With time for impromptu play decreasing, staffed play provision is becoming even more important. We need to support this valuable workforce to meet its full potential. We will look at options around training and qualifications as well as professionalising the workforce.

Spatial justice and societal involvement

We need to make sure our environment and our society encourages and welcomes play. We need to look at how we can build on the wonderful play campaigns already running in Wales, like Playful Childhoods, to make sure all adults understand and value the importance of play.

‘The right to play is the child’s first claim on the community. Play is nature’s training for life. No community can infringe that right without doing enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens.’

David Lloyd George

I plan to consult on changes to play policy in mid 2020 and report on the review with an action plan by the end of that year.

Children's views on playing out captured in national study

In the summer issue of *Play for Wales*, we reported on research that explores the perceptions of what has changed for children's play opportunities since the Welsh Government's Play Sufficiency Duty was commenced in 2012.

The *Right to Play in Wales: Six years of stories and change since the commencement of the Welsh Play Sufficiency Duty* report presents findings from a small-scale research project carried out by Dr Wendy Russell (University of Gloucestershire), Mike Barclay and Ben Tawil (Ludicology), and Charlotte Derry (Playful Places).

As well as interviews with local authority officers and Welsh Government officials, the research also gathered views from children and families in three case study local authorities. Children's views on playing out in their neighbourhoods were discussed in family focus groups facilitated by the research team. Here is a selection of these views:

'I don't play out much because there are some people in my area I just don't like ... I don't feel I can share why ... they take drugs and they walk out in the road in front of cars, opposite the main road, kids are always hanging about. If we felt safe we would go out more.'

'Sometimes I go out with my mates but there's not really anything there. There's a park but I don't want to invade young children and be too daunting and I'm just not interested if the older ones are there. A lot of my friends' parents aren't really comfortable with their child playing out and if they do it's probably for about an hour, not all day.'

Girl (aged 12): *'I think that parents need to let go a little bit more.'*

Mum: *'That's a bit harsh!'*

Girl: *'No true! Give me a bit of freedom! Like I'll suggest something and it'll be like NO straightaway. You just need to give it a couple of seconds to think, think about the person who wants to be free and how they're feeling.'*

As part of the Play Sufficiency Assessment 2019 process many local authorities also held focus groups to hear what children had to say about play. In doing this, this research provides insights into children's lived experiences. It tells us what's actually happening in communities. This helps adults responsible for play sufficiency work together to develop actions to respond to barriers to play identified by children. In addition, it allows us to put in place measures to protect good opportunities for playing when those are also identified.

The following insights, gathered from focus groups in Flintshire, serve as examples of the range of their contributions and can help adults to think about what play is from a child's perspective.

What play is: play is standing up on a see saw, play is hide and seek, play is bull dog, play is stuck in the mud, playing games, playing tag, being energetic, play is makeup. Play is enjoying time with friends, play is free will, play is having a laugh, being with friends and hanging out, play is having your choice, play is golden time, play is banter and taking the mick out of your mates, play is communication and entertainment, play is going to the cinema with friends, play is going to the shops with your friends, play is enjoying other people's company, messing about, getting exciting, having fun, not being alone.

What play is not: work is not play, play is not when you are told what to do, play is not binge watching tv, play is not sport, play is not facetime nor social media, play is not playing on a gaming console whilst sitting down, play is not going on your phone, play is not school, play is not when you can't hang out with your friends, play is not boring, play is not sitting alone at home, play is not being alone, play is not being bullied or bullying, play is not chilling on your own, play is not being serious, play is not being silent.

www.playwales.org.uk/eng/research

Workforce development

Spotlight on... Community Playscheme Playworker

In each issue we talk to a professional in the world of play and playwork to provide an insight into the diversity of the workforce and the job roles available. For this young people's edition we spoke to 16 year old, Isobelle Hawkshaw about her experiences of playwork and the impact of completing the Level 2 Award in Playwork Practice (L2APP) qualification.

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

I have been volunteering at Llanharan Community Playscheme since the age of 14 and when I turned 16 I started getting paid by the organisation. I am currently studying Health and Social Care Level 3 in college and am enjoying it.

Why did you undertake L2APP?

I undertook L2APP as it would give me more knowledge and skills of working with children and young people and build my confidence.

How has L2APP helped you in your role as a playworker?

I have been able to arrange new activities with the children and have been able to use the knowledge and skills I have developed from the L2APP training. As well, I have more confidence in myself and what I am capable of in a playscheme setting, as well as more information about the importance of play in the community.

What did you enjoy most about the L2APP training?

The range of activities we did as we were not stuck watching a [powerpoint] screen the entire time. The information was simple to follow and understand.

Can you give us an example from your playwork practice of what you enjoy most about being a playworker?

Giving children and young people experiences in life which helps their physical, intellectual, emotional and social development and play opportunities.

What would you say to other young people considering volunteering or working in playwork?

That if you are a people's person and would like to work with children and young people and make a difference, playwork is definitely a must. The experience gives you the knowledge, confidence, creative skills and effective communication to be a playworker.

Playwork: Principles into Practice update

The new Agored Cymru Level 2 Certificate in Playwork: Principles into Practice and Level 3 Diploma in Playwork: Principles into Practice have taken another significant step forwards. Both qualifications have now been approved by Qualifications Wales and feature in the *SkillsActive List of Required Qualifications to work in the Playwork Sector in Wales*. This means that they are suitable for those working in registered playwork settings either as managers or face-to-face playworkers.

Through Play Wales' partnership with Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales we will be offering two Level 2 Certificate courses early in 2020 – one in the north and one in the south.

As previously reported, the Level 2 Award in Playwork Practice (L2APP) is an entry requirement qualification

but if learners have previously completed the old SQA Playwork: Principles into Practice (P³) qualifications there is the opportunity for recognition of prior learning.

If you are interested in progressing onto Playwork: Principles into Practice please contact workforce@playwales.org.uk

ADDaPT hits England!

In 2017, Play Wales developed a new Award with Agored Cymru aimed at upskilling playwork trainers. The Award in Delivering Dynamic Playwork Training (ADDaPT) provides experienced trainers with a range of knowledge and skills to be able to deliver playwork qualifications in a playful, participative way.

Here's a brief overview of ADDaPT and how a new group of trainers are benefitting from this course in England.

A bit of background

We know from experience, that the best way to deliver playwork training is to use a range of methods to meet the diversity of learning needs and preferences of our workforce. We also know from brain sciences evidence that when we make learning fun and participative that knowledge is embedded more fully than from a purely didactic approach. This has been a fundamental principle of the delivery of Play Wales' qualifications over the last 12 years.

The ADDaPT forms part of our quality assurance for playwork qualifications and only those who can demonstrate occupational competence in playwork are allowed to undertake it. We want to use ADDaPT to ensure that playwork learners receive the best possible learning experience delivered by trainers who truly understand the uniqueness of a playwork approach.

Any organisations or individuals who want to deliver the Level 2 Award in Playwork Practice (L2APP) or the new suite of Playwork: Principles into Practice (P³) qualifications need to provide evidence that tutors are occupationally competent, have recent experience of practising playwork and also that they have completed, and passed, ADDaPT.

ADDaPT has now been delivered to over 30 experienced playwork trainers in Wales over the last two years. This has supported the growth of the infrastructure of trainers who are delivering bilingual playwork training on behalf of Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales, Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs and other training organisations.

The qualification

As part of the qualification, participants complete three taught days which includes a focus on developing a community of practice and sharing knowledge.

The learning outcomes are:

- Understand the importance of meeting a range of learning needs and preferences
- Understand a range of playful and participative methods for teaching playwork
- Be able to design a programme of learning for playwork
- Be able to reflect on own practice.

Participants are assessed in an ongoing way throughout the course and even have to co-deliver elements of it for their assessment. Learners then complete a further reflective workbook to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

Taking Play Wales' qualifications further afield...

Agored Cymru has recently made arrangements to ensure that L2APP, Managing a Holiday Play Scheme (MAHPS) and P³ can be offered to playworkers in England. So, to support trainers to meet our quality assurance criteria Play Wales has been liaising with The Playwork Foundation to offer a course at the University of Gloucestershire during November and December 2019.

The course has been well received:

'Brilliant useful stuff! Been trying out lots of the ideas, feeling really invigorated and energised.'

Learner, ADDaPT England

Twelve learners, from all over England, have undertaken the course and we will work with the organisations represented to begin to support the delivery of the Welsh playwork qualifications. This ensures that the good practice in playwork qualification delivery we have developed in Wales can be shared to support the growth of the sector in other parts of the UK.

If you are an experienced playworker who wants to deliver playwork training please contact workforce@playwales.org.uk to discuss entry requirements for ADDaPT. We are working towards offering further courses in the next academic year.

Playful communities

Tŷ Pawb Play-Work Exhibition

Tŷ Pawb, in Wrexham, is a cultural community resource, bringing together arts and markets in the same place. As we reported in the last issue of *Play for Wales*, from August to October 2019, Tŷ Pawb hosted a Play-Work exhibition which saw the gallery transformed into an interactive playscape.

The exhibition took a closer look at how Wrexham's adventure playgrounds have made a difference to the lives of local children and their families. It incorporated a live loose parts adventure playground designed by Wrexham playworkers in partnership with Ludicology and artist Morag Colquhoun, functional push cart artworks by Gareth Griffith and an extensive documentary archive.

Five-year-old Archie, who attended the exhibition on many occasions, tells us what it was like.

I've been playing at the Tŷ Pawb Exhibition. It's the best exhibition I've ever been to! I think it was really good and there were lots of great things to do there.

I liked jumping on the crash mat, going in the go-karts and pushing my brother in one too. It was a go-kart made from junk materials. When I was pushing it, it went really fast and I let it go and it crashed into one of the walls!

We got to make stuff when we were there. I liked making cardboard houses. We could go inside them because we cut doors in them, but mine was really dark inside so I had to cut out a couple of windows, too.

There was a wooden climbing frame with a little hidden den and it had some musical tubes and when I tried to make music out of them they didn't work. But I found a little stick hiding in the sand and I hit them and they went 'bom-bom-bom-bom'.

There was loads of sand on the floor. Yeah, loads! I made sandcastles and holes going under it. And there were parts that were higher up off the ground. Really high up off it! There were wooden things, pallets, they are called. They stacked them really big and they made a wooden ramp and they attached a wooden thing into it and they went 'bump-bump-bump' to the top. And then, when we were walking on the bit where we walk, it went higher and higher but you didn't notice. So, when I was ready to jump the first time I went 'Wow! I want to do this!' and then I jumped off and I think I did a summersault and landed on my feet. I don't know if I actually did but I had fun trying!

I wish another one will come again. Another exhibition like it but not all the same, with different climbing frames and hiding spots and dens.

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

The examples may:

- Be close to where you live so you can visit them
- Inspire you with ideas about things you could do in your community
- Help you make the case for play in your local area.

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

