



Ministerial Review of Play Steering Group Report

A Play Wales summary

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This summary gives an overview of the *Ministerial Review of Play Steering Group Report*.

The full report is available on the Play Wales website and is supported by a detailed background paper: www.play.wales/ministerial-review-of-play

Play is important

Having plenty of opportunities to play every day contributes to children's happiness and health.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) recognises that every child has the right to play. Playing is a right for children wherever they are – at home, in childcare, in their local neighbourhood and at school. Children have other rights that relate to play. These include:

- the right to have a say and be listened to
- the right to meet up with friends and join groups and clubs.

In 2010, Wales became the first country in the world to legislate for children's play through its Play Sufficiency Duty.

About the Ministerial Review of Play

The Welsh Government understands that play is important for all children and is committed to making sure that Wales is a play friendly country. In 2023, the Welsh Government completed the Ministerial Review of Play, which looked at how well Wales is meeting its commitment to play.

As part of the review, the Welsh Government set up a Ministerial Review of Play Steering Group, bringing together adults from different professions who care about children and their play. This group identified and talked about six main themes.

The Welsh Government asked Children in Wales, through its Young Wales project, to talk with children to get their views. These views have played an important part in this review.

The review highlighted things that get in the way of play, for example:

- traffic and busy neighbourhoods
- parents' fears
- lack of time for play
- adults' attitudes.

The steering group came up with a set of recommendations about what the Welsh Government could do to make it easier for all children in Wales to play. Play Wales put together the report on behalf of the Ministerial Review of Play Steering Group.



Theme 1: Key legislation

This theme covers the laws and policies that relate to the right to play. Aligning them would help more children play more often.

About this theme

In 2004, the Welsh Government decided that it would take the UNCRC into account whenever it was developing policies that affect children.

The review wants to make sure that all policies make it easy for children to play. In Wales, there are other pieces of legislation which link to the policies and programmes relating to children's play. This includes laws about:

- children, families and poverty
- children's rights
- the wellbeing of future generations.

What children and young people involved in the review said

- Transport issues mean that some of them have trouble getting to clubs, playschemes and other spaces where they can play.
- Adults need to understand that play is good for all children, including older children.

Recommendations from the steering group

Recommendation 1: Take a strategic approach to play sufficiency across all Welsh Government policy areas.

This will ensure that policies in a range of government departments – including planning, highways, active travel, education, childcare and play – recognise all the strategic links to play sufficiency.

Recommendation 2: Ensure that Welsh Government policy instruments include measures to support children's ability to make the most of opportunities to play.

This will ensure that guidance documents relating to children, families and communities recognise the importance of children's play as a cross-cutting theme. It would include guidance about implementing and monitoring any programmes aimed at children, families and communities.

Theme 2: Play Sufficiency Duty and funding

This theme covers the importance of working together to plan and provide for play, including setting aside money for play.

About this theme

The Welsh Government wants Wales to be a play friendly country that provides plenty of opportunities for children to play every day. To help this happen, it has created the Play Sufficiency Duty, a law that means councils need to:

- complete a Play Sufficiency Assessment, every three years, that looks at all the opportunities to play in their area
- work with other councils and organisations to make it easier for children to play.

When it can, the Welsh Government has also given money to councils and other organisations to help them provide opportunities to play.

What children and young people involved in the review said

- They want to be involved in the planning of play services.

Recommendations from the steering group

Recommendation 3: Ensure that any plans for recovery from the pandemic and cost of living crisis consider children's right to play.

This will help strengthen the important impact that play has on children's physical and emotional wellbeing.

Recommendation 4: Ensure that the implementation of the full breadth of the statutory Play Sufficiency Duty is adequately resourced and funded.

This will help identify funding across the range of policy areas that impact on play sufficiency.

Recommendation 5: Support the delivery of a public information programme about the right to play.

This will help emphasise the importance of play to everyone in Wales, including parents, carers and communities.

Recommendation 6: Apply the Play Sufficiency Duty more widely to include a range of other bodies.

This will reinforce the importance of play for public bodies across a range of sectors, including: health, education, national parks, and town and community planning.



Theme 3: Spatial justice

This theme covers why and how we need to make our neighbourhoods and other public spaces more welcoming for children to play in.

About this theme

Spatial justice means ensuring that neighbourhoods and other public places are suitable for play and that they are welcoming for children of all ages.

Play sometimes takes place in playgrounds or in playschemes. But spatial justice is about children being able to play and meet up with friends in their local neighbourhoods. This is important for all children, particularly for older children and teenagers.

What children and young people involved in the review said

- Their favourite place to play is outside and they want to be able to play outside more and have more places to do so.
- Some marginalised groups of children find it harder to get to places to play in their neighbourhoods.
- Some adults are negative about older children and teenagers playing and meeting up outside. This needs to change.
- They would like to talk about and be part of developments that relate to their play.

Recommendations from the steering group

Recommendation 7: Ensure the right to play is sufficiently incorporated in strategic policy instruments and decisions.

This will support better links between the Play Sufficiency Duty and children's rights legislation.

Recommendation 8: Ensure that the principle of play as a matter of spatial justice is recognised and understood throughout *Planning Policy Wales*.

This will ensure that guidance about planning neighbourhoods and towns takes account of the way children move around their communities for play.



Recommendation 9: Ensure that the views and experiences of children inform the ways in which neighbourhoods are planned and managed.

This could be achieved through more research with children in their communities (sometimes called hyperlocal research).

Theme 4: Playwork provision and regulation

This theme covers the places where children play that are staffed by playworkers. It also covers the laws that relate to this type of play provision, which includes:

- summer playschemes
- after school clubs
- adventure playgrounds.

About the theme

The review wants to ensure that these places are safe for children to attend. Care Inspectorate Wales checks playwork provision on behalf of the Welsh Government, looking at:

- when and where playwork provision is running
- whether children are kept safe
- whether playworkers are suitable to do their jobs and have had proper training
- that children and young people have good opportunities to play.

At the moment, though, provision doesn't have to be checked if it is:

- running for less than two hours
- a one-off event
- focused on arts, sport, religion or school study.

What children and young people involved in the review said

- They want places to go that make them feel happy and safe.
- They think all provision should be checked to make sure it is good enough.



Recommendations from the steering group

Recommendation 10: Ensure there are adequate safeguarding arrangements in playwork settings.

This will focus on considering how best to support playwork settings so that they understand how to meet safeguarding requirements.

Recommendation 11: Review child minding and day care regulations and orders relating to playwork.

This will look at which settings are regulated by Care Inspectorate Wales. The aim will be to make improvements in all relevant settings.

Theme 5: Workforce and qualifications

This theme is about the people whose work involves supporting children's play. This includes playworkers but also other people who can help children get the most from their play.

About the theme

This review wants to make sure these people have the right play training. Play training should help them understand how important play is and what they can do to create more opportunities for children to play.

There are some challenges. These include:

- the cost and availability of training
- time to attend training, when some people have more than one job or only work during the holidays
- the skills and understanding of the tutors who teach about play and playwork.

What children and young people involved in the review said

- Playworkers should be registered so that children and young people know they are properly trained and it's okay for them to work with children.
- Playworkers should be trained to do their jobs.
- Training should be given to older children so they can help with play services for younger children.

Recommendations from the steering group

Recommendation 12: Develop a strategic infrastructure for playwork workforce development.

This will support the development of careers, training and qualifications for the playworkers who make up the playwork workforce.

Recommendation 13: Ensure sufficient funding is available for play and playwork workforce development.

This will support the delivery of training for everyone whose work has an impact on children's play, ranging from face-to-face workers to strategic decision makers.

Theme 6: Play and education

This theme is about play in schools and is important because children spend a lot of time at school. Sometimes it is the main place where children can play with their friends.

About the theme

Schools are important places for play. Play and break times provide children with time to relax, run around, play and be with their friends. Playtime is so important that it should not be taken away as a punishment.

Play also has an important role in children's ability to learn. Playing in school is important because it helps to keep children healthy and happy.

What children and young people involved in the review said

- Schools are important places for children to play and meet up with their friends.
- Play is important for all ages, not just for children at primary school.
- Schools should allocate more time for play.

Recommendations from the steering group

Recommendation 14: Promote the importance of play and the use of school grounds as a community asset for play through community focused school policy.

This will help ensure that schools recognise their role in promoting play in their local communities.

Recommendation 15: Increase and improve play and break times in schools.

This will help make children's experience of school break times more playful. It will also involve encouraging schools to protect the time they give children for play.





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Play Wales is the national organisation for children's play, an independent charity supported by the Welsh Government to uphold children's right to play and to provide advice and guidance on play-related matters.