

Play for Wales

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Play news and briefing from the national charity for play



Planning for play – involving children

Chwarae Cymru
Play Wales

www.play.wales

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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.play.wales

Editorial

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the most widely signed-up to human rights agreement in the world. The convention is universal – its rights, including the right to play, apply to every child.

It also explains how adults, decision makers and those working directly with children must work together to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights.

Working to the UNCRC requires promoting and protecting a range of rights based around four key principles. One of the principles is 'respect for the views of the child'. This means when adults make decisions about children, they must listen to their views according to the child's level of maturity. The United Nations' General Comment no. 17 highlights that participation with children in play 'provides adults with unique insights and understanding into the child's perspectives. It builds respect between generations, contributes to effective understanding and communication between children and adults'.

This issue of *Play for Wales* explores examples from across Wales of how local authorities and other agencies are embracing and acknowledging children's competence when it comes to their play. Encouraging children to participate, to make decisions about their play environment, and collaborating with children of all ages to meet their play needs is of great benefit to everyone involved.

“ Play is children's priority. We collaborate with them – we offer ideas, we support their ideas, we have a common goal. ”

We are grateful for the reflections of Morgan Peters who shared information with us after visiting playwork provision in their area. Morgan is a Welsh Youth Parliament member for Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST) and a member of the Children's Commissioner for Wales' Young People's Advisory Panel.

Morgan told us, 'When I was speaking to the young people they were constantly mentioning Article 31 ... so I'm happy to say lots of young people who attended the setting get told about their rights!' When Morgan asked one young person what play means to them she said, 'Play is important because it makes people happy and come together ... Playing gives me joy'.

We welcome the Welsh Government's announcement that it will make funding available to local authorities to improve play spaces and opportunities for children.

Having plenty of opportunities to play is a form of participation in everyday life, offering immediate value to the children in terms of the joy and enjoyment playing brings. While play is a natural activity for children, the role of adults in actively involving children in expressing their views and experiences cannot be overstated.

It is important that these improvements are informed by children's experience and ideas. This development provides an excellent opportunity to listen to children and act on their experiences and advice.

Play is children's priority. We collaborate with them – we offer ideas, we support their ideas, we have a common goal.

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£5 million for playgrounds and play facilities in Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

The Welsh Government has allocated £5 million to improve playgrounds and play facilities for children, in 2025-2026.

The funding will give local authorities the flexibility to purchase large scale items to improve the quality of play spaces and refurbish playgrounds. It will also support the creation

of accessible play spaces and opportunities for children.

At Play Wales, we welcome the commitment that the Welsh Government continues to make to children's play, recognising the important contribution it makes to a healthy and happy childhood. Having access to well designed and welcoming spaces has positive effects on children health and happiness, community engagement

and wellbeing, and enhancement of the local sense of community.

This funding provides a unique opportunity to invest in innovative and sustainable design of spaces to play for children of all ages. We look forward to working with local authorities across Wales and their partners to identify and promote ways that we can all support children to play.

More information available at:
www.wales.gov

Professional registration of the childcare and playwork workforce – next steps



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

In February 2025, the Minister for Children and Social Care, Dawn Bowden MS announced that work on the professional registration of the childcare and playwork workforce will be paused.

The decision follows a consultation undertaken between November 2023 and March 2024 which found less than half of respondents welcomed the principle of a workforce register.

In addition, the Minister said that two policy reviews being undertaken at the time of writing – National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare and the Childminding and Day Care Exceptions (Wales) Order 2010 – could have implications for the future of the childcare and play sector. The Minister said that the situation would be reviewed following the outcome of wider policy work. During the pause, the Welsh Government will continue to work closely with the sector to explore how to improve

sustainability while promoting a suitably qualified workforce.

Play Wales is supportive of the principle of a process of professional registration. However, for various reasons, including cost, timing and requirements around dual registration, a cautious approach is needed. For this reason, we support the decision to pause plans until the implications of the wider policy work has been completed.

For more information visit:
www.wales.gov

Welcome

We are delighted to welcome Joanne Williams to the Play Wales team.

Jo joined us in November 2024 as our Administration and Events Assistant. She is responsible for

administrative support across the organisation. She is also supporting our training programme and ensuring the smooth running of events. Following graduation, Jo worked as a primary school teacher for 22 years and she has recently trained as a reflexologist.

To find out more about our team visit: **www.play.wales/about-us/our-team**



Letters from 1st Wick and St Brides Brownies

Brownies attending the 1st Wick and St. Brides unit in the Vale of Glamorgan have been learning all about their rights, including their right to play.

Play Wales was delighted to receive wonderful notes from the Brownies thanking us for the work we do to promote and protect the right to play.

The Play Wales team was impressed that the Brownies took the time to learn about their rights, and in particular the right to play. We enjoyed reading about how much the children enjoy playing and it was clear that they understand how important play is.

With our thank you letter to the Brownies, we sent a right to play poster for the unit to help them learn more about their right to play and encouraged them to celebrate United Nations International Day of Play.

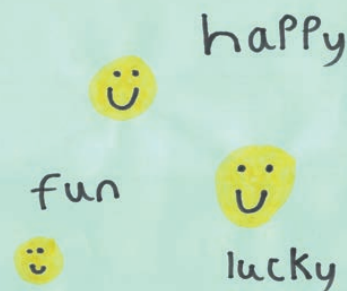
Dear Mike,
Thank you for defending my right
to playing with my friends.
This helps me to be happy.
Best wishes from Mully.



Dear Mike, Thank you
for making sure
Children in Wales
can play. from catrin B.



Dear Mike
thank you for defending
my right to play.
in the future it will help
me to have fun
from catrin.



Dates for your diary...



**INTERNATIONAL
DAY OF PLAY**

International Day of Play

The 2025 global day for play will happen on
Wednesday 11 June.

www.internationaldayofplay.org



Playday

This year the national day for play in the UK will
take place on Wednesday 6 August.

www.playday.org.uk

Two great occasions to celebrate children's right to play in Wales, the rest of the UK and across the world in 2025. Both awareness days give us all the opportunity to promote and raise awareness about the importance of

play in children's lives – and to give children more time, space and freedom to play every day of the year.

What will you be doing to celebrate?

Annual Playwork Awards

Congratulations to both Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs for winning the Professional Development Award and Seren in the Community for taking home the Frontline Playwork Award, at the 2025 Annual Playwork Awards.

A special mention too, to Mel Kearsley from Wrexham County Borough Council's Play and Youth Support Team for being short listed for the Professional Development Award.

The awards celebrate the playwork sector in the UK and are designed to recognise and praise the hard work of

playworkers and organisations across the four nations. Play Wales proudly sponsored the Frontline Playwork Award again this year.

Well done to all the nominees and winners at this year's awards. www.playworkawards.org.uk

Swansea's Play Sufficiency Awards

Swansea Council's inaugural Play Sufficiency Awards celebrated individuals and organisations that contribute to making Swansea a place that values play. The awards specifically recognise those who supported play sufficiency between 2022 and 2025.

In the Advocating Play category, Clwyd Community Primary School took the award, and the Embedding Play Award went to Ruth Ibarra. Bonymaen Kids Play Initiative won the Play in the Community Award and Buddies (Local Aid) won the Quentin Hawkins Award for Accessible Play. Sue Bradshaw and Mike Greenaway (Bishopston Play Association) and Jackie Dorrian won the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Big congratulations to all the winners and well done to all those who were nominated. It is hoped the awards can be held every Play Sufficiency Assessment cycle.

Out of School Childcare Awards 2025

As part of its 4th annual Out of School Childcare Conference and Awards Ceremony in March 2025, Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs awarded ten awards to individuals and clubs across Wales.

The winner of the Play Champion Award was Clwb Gogerddan in Ceredigion. The Playworker of the Year Award was awarded to Leanne Stephens from the Two Tribes After School Club in Monmouthshire.

For the second year running, Play Wales proudly sponsored the Playworker of the Year Award. Huge congratulations to the ten winners and all those who were nominated for this year's awards.

Find out more about the awards at: www.clybiauplantcymru.org

Play Wales national conference 2025

Save the date – this year's Play Wales national conference will take place at The Hilton hotel in Cardiff city centre on 16 October.

More information about speakers and workshops will follow soon. Keep an eye on our website for more details and to book your space: www.play.wales/events

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Section 11 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 places a statutory duty on local authorities to assess and secure sufficiency of opportunities to play. As part of this work, the Welsh Government expects local authorities to consult with children about their opportunities to play.

In measuring play sufficiency, it is important to appreciate children and teenagers' perspectives on what is good and what is not so good about their experience of play in their communities. Most local authorities do this by talking to children in person and by undertaking surveys. The information gathered can be used to understand the barriers to creating a play friendly environment. The results have an important role in providing the evidence needed for local authorities to identify gaps in provision and support the development of action plans to address these gaps.

To provide support to local authorities in undertaking their Play Sufficiency Assessments, the Welsh Government has prepared a toolkit. The *Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit* includes a standard Play Satisfaction Survey to gather the views of children and teenagers about the opportunities to play in their local area.

Play sufficiency: children's experiences



The toolkit also signposts to the Play Wales information sheet, *The Play Satisfaction Survey: A guide to using it locally*. Written by Dr David Dallimore, it is aimed at local authority officers carrying out surveys of children's play satisfaction. It includes survey questions for local and national analysis. This tool supports local authorities when consulting with children as part of their Play Sufficiency Assessments. It provides good practice for planning, preparing and using the survey, as well as guidance on collecting, processing and carrying out basic analysis of the data.

The survey focuses on 'experiences' rather than 'things', particularly the more obvious and superficially exciting elements of provision. As part of consultation or engagement activity, children may be asked to envisage their ideal play area or play setting. However, their limited experience – limited both by their age and the existing poverty of provision – may prompt them to want what they already know.

Having a standardised survey that is now being used by most local authorities means that we can reliably record children and teenagers' voices from across the country.

Coming soon: What children say about play in Wales 2025

The next Play Sufficiency Assessments are currently being undertaken by local authorities and will be submitted to the Welsh Government by 30 June 2025.

Play Wales has asked each local authority in Wales to share the results from their Play Satisfaction Surveys.

We will work with Dr. David Dallimore to collate and analyse the play sufficiency survey data from local authorities. This will allow Play Wales

to investigate children and teenagers' varying experiences of play across the country. By doing this regularly, we are able to show how those experiences are evolving over time and in response to changing circumstances. We can use this information to better understand and explain to others the barriers to creating a play friendly environment which provides time, space and permission for children and teenagers to play in Wales.

The *What children say about play in Wales 2025* report will be published during the summer.

For more information about play sufficiency, take a look at:

Welsh Government (2024) *Play Sufficiency Assessment toolkit*, Cardiff: Welsh Government: www.gov.wales/play-sufficiency-assessment-toolkit-html-0

Dallimore, D. (2022) *The Play Satisfaction Survey: A guide to using it locally*, Cardiff: Play Wales: www.play.wales/publications_category/the-play-satisfaction-survey-a-guide-to-using-it-locally

Play Space Engagement Tool

Supported by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), Isle of Anglesey County Council has commissioned Play Disrupt to develop a toolkit for engaging children and teenagers in creating play spaces.

The toolkit – *Play Space Engagement Tool* – for community groups and organisations, is informed by children's views. Due to be published in May 2025, it focuses on tools for engaging with children of all ages for planning play areas.

To develop the toolkit, interactive engagement sessions, run by Woodland Tribe, were held with over 100 children of different ages in a pilot community. The sessions informed the toolkit for engaging children and teenagers in decision making when designing outdoor play and activity areas on Anglesey. The aim of the toolkit is to ensure that children and teenagers lead on the design and implementation of any play spaces in Anglesey and have a clear voice in the initial process and on-going running and use of the space.

The purpose of the resources in the toolkit is to provide a good grounding for engagement with children and teenagers, taking into consideration the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The toolkit works to the *Children and young people's participation standards: good practice guide* produced by the Welsh Government.

The toolkit reinforces that the experiences and perspectives of children and teenagers are both valuable and essential when considering the location, function and design of both formal and informal outdoor play areas. Local planning authorities should seek to involve them from the outset in the planning of any new development, or when updating or improving existing provision.

Another aim of the toolkit is to influence policy and local planning development. It is hoped that engagement with children will inform how future Section 106 agreements can ensure adequate funding is made available to support well made inclusive play areas.



It points out that there are several reasons that motivate meaningful engagement work with children. Participatory processes have been shown to improve people's connection to, and pride of place. The conversations we have with children build relationships that will make the experience and outcomes richer and more likely to have lasting impact.

“ I went into youth club, and then they got us into a room, and then we got a bunch of ideas and one of the ideas was like, maybe you could sit with your friends and talk. We gave them ideas. And then everything that we said just came to life ... It's really cool to see. ”

“ We made this brilliant park! ”

“ I want to be spun really fast, so fast that I actually feel sick! ”

“ You can see a lot of things from up high spaces. ”

“ I want tunnels – so you can jump, run under the ground. ”

Planning Pioneers: embedding children's voices in urban development



Local residents interact with a new chalkboard in their play lane in Grangetown

Child Friendly Cardiff's Liaison Officer, Tom Pughsley and the team tell us about how children's expertise is crucial to shaping play policies and developments in our capital city.

The way our cities and towns are planned shapes the lives of children and teenagers in fundamental ways. Play spaces, safe streets and accessible green areas are all vital to their wellbeing. Yet, too often, children's voices are missing from the conversation. In Cardiff, we are working to change that through our Planning Pioneers and a child rights approach to policy and practice.

How it started: children and the Local Development Plan

Planning Pioneers emerged during the first phase of consultation for Cardiff's Local Development Plan (LDP). We wanted to ensure that

children had a say in shaping their city's future. Through workshops and interactive activities, children were invited to:

- map their favourite places in the city
- rate the city for play and active travel
- identify where investment was needed to improve their environment.

This process provided crucial insights into how children experience Cardiff and where change was needed. It also established a new approach – one that recognised children as experts in their own right when it comes to their lived experiences of the built environment.

Evolving the concept: Planning Pioneers in action

Since that first phase of engagement, we have coined the term Planning Pioneers whenever we engage with children on projects and policies that influence the built environment. These initiatives ensure that children's perspectives shape Cardiff's urban landscape.

Collaborating with Cardiff University

Our partnership with Cardiff University's School of Geography and Planning and School of Architecture has been instrumental in deepening children's engagement in urban planning. By combining academic expertise with participatory design methodologies, we have:

- developed the Grangetown Young Persons' Place Plan – young people mapped out a vision for two, five and ten years with a focus on a green, clean, safe, and inclusive neighbourhood.
- organised Llanishen mapping activities – in collaboration with the Council Curriculum Team, we led a day-long activity where hundreds of pupils mapped their community for play opportunities, safety, and more using both an online mapping platform and physical maps.

- commissioned research on girls and parks – investigating how girls interact with parks and public spaces, identifying barriers to their use and shaping policy recommendations.

This partnership ensures that children's insights are backed by rigorous academic research and expertise, making their contributions more impactful in shaping city planning and policy decisions.

Community-led design and innovation

Here are some examples of our innovative community-led projects from across the city:

Mackenzie Park, Cathays

Using Minecraft for Education, children explored and designed potential improvements for the park, helping influence its final layout. We worked with Technocamps to build a realistic template within which children could add their designs. Entries were grouped into aspects such as tree coverage and play equipment, ensuring that key elements were considered in the final design.

Grangetown Gated Lanes

Children took part in participatory design workshops to reimagine the alleys behind their homes as intergenerational spaces for play and relaxation. A PhD researcher used moss as the conduit for participatory design, enabling children to understand the importance of how living things are shaped by their environment. A non-profit organisation gave children the opportunity to create their own play equipment using recycled plastics and natural materials for insect homes and planters. A Play Lanes toolkit was subsequently developed for others to use.

Skateboarding strategy for Cardiff

We worked with the skate community to develop a city-

wide strategy for skateboarding amenities, ensuring facilities are designed with and for skaters.

City centre park and public space investment

Cross-disciplinary input is shaping the design of a new city centre park and public space development, ensuring that the best interests of children are at its heart.

Embedding play in city planning

Through cross-disciplinary advocacy, we successfully campaigned for a Play Policy in the latest draft of the LDP, ensuring children's right to play is considered in planning decisions for the next 10 to 15 years. Looking ahead, Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) will be developed to support this policy, bringing together local, national and global best practices to guide planning applications. This guidance will ensure that play-friendly design principles are embedded into future developments, helping planners and developers create inclusive, child-friendly spaces across Cardiff.

To measure the impact of these changes, we are committed to ongoing monitoring and evaluation. We aim to track play accessibility, child engagement in planning processes and the long-term effects of play-friendly policies. By gathering and analysing data, we can continue to refine our approach and advocate for stronger, more inclusive policies that prioritise play and child-friendly environments.

Additionally, we have recently been given the go-ahead to create a Vision for Play to sit alongside Cardiff's Play Sufficiency Action Plan. The Vision for Play is our story and celebration of play – highlighting opportunities across schools, parks, housing, communities and more. This is being developed by a cross-sector working group, ensuring a coordinated approach to embedding play into all aspects of city life.

Celebrating Cardiff's global leadership in children's rights and play

Cardiff's commitment to children's rights and play has been recognised nationally and internationally. Child Friendly City Coordinator, Lee Patterson visited China in 2024 to showcase Cardiff's progress at a UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Conference and the Sino-Foreign Forum on Children. Additionally, Cabinet Member for Education and Child Rights Champion, Sarah Merry recently travelled to a Child Friendly Cities conference in Tokyo to share insights on how Cardiff is creating better opportunities for play. Cardiff's work was also highlighted at a policy workshop hosted by the Cambridge University Centre for Science and Policy, where the Child Friendly City team contributed to discussions on creating child-friendly planning policies incorporating play and the voice of the child.

Why this matters

When children and teenagers are given opportunities to participate in planning, the results go beyond better-designed spaces – they foster a sense of ownership, belonging and empowerment. Our Planning Pioneers are crucial for ensuring that play, safety and active travel are embedded in Cardiff's future, with children's voices shaping policies and developments that affect them most.

Through this work, Cardiff is leading the way in showing how meaningful engagement with children can transform urban planning. By continuing to listen and act on their insights, we can build a city that truly works for all generations.

For more information, visit:
www.childfriendlycardiff.co.uk

Listening to children: building play sufficiency in Carmarthenshire and Wrexham



In Summer 2023, Ludicology, funded through the University of Gloucestershire, invited two areas in Wales to participate in a research study to pilot and evaluate a mentoring package to support local authorities develop a neighbourhood level response to the Play Sufficiency Duty.

Carmarthenshire County Council's Early Years Integration and Play team and Wrexham County Borough Council's Play and Youth Support team engaged with children to find out more about play at neighbourhood level. Here, they share findings and conclusions from the hyperlocal research they undertook with children and adults in their areas as part of the study.

The concept of hyperlocal play sufficiency emphasises the importance of ensuring that children have access to appropriate opportunities to play within their immediate environment. By listening to children's voices we can have a better understanding of the realities of living within a particular neighbourhood.

In both local authorities the projects focused on a specific neighbourhood, and on children's freedom of movement and the diversity of opportunities for playing. First, Lauren Cole from Carmarthenshire's Early Years Integration and Play team reports on their experience:

Carmarthenshire

The study focused on a small community characterised by high levels of deprivation. To capture the children's perspectives, researchers employed quantitative and qualitative methods, gathering data through surveys, observations, focus groups and workshops. This multifaceted approach ensured that children's voices were not just heard but authentically reflected in the research findings.

The research process began by asking children aged nine to eleven (primary) and twelve to fourteen (secondary), from two local schools to complete an online, multiple-choice questionnaire about their satisfaction with their opportunities for play. The data highlighted significant contrasts in the play habits and freedom between children living in and outside the research area.

A stark difference emerged in outdoor play frequency, with most nine to eleven-year-olds in the research area 'hardly ever or not' playing outside, compared to those

living beyond the research area. This trend continued at the secondary level, with more children in the research area reporting limited outdoor play, compared to outside. Constraints on children's freedom are particularly evident within the research area. A high proportion of nine to eleven-year-olds who live in the area are not allowed to play out unaccompanied. Furthermore, primary school children in the research area express lower satisfaction with their available play spaces, with very few reporting being able to play in all the places they want, suggesting limited access to diverse play environments.

From the rich discussions in focus groups, three distinct groups of children were identified in respect of their play patterns:

- **Primary children not playing out:** these children are largely restricted to playing at home or in supervised locations like designated play areas and commercial venues. They have limited freedom of movement and a limited understanding of their local community.
- **Primary children playing out:** this group enjoys more freedom, playing in their streets, parks and local shops, although their exploration is largely confined to their immediate neighbourhood. Playtime is mostly on weekends and in the summer.
- **Secondary children playing out:** these older children have the most freedom of movement, able to roam across their local area and further, visiting various locations and playing at different times of the day.

Discussion with primary and secondary school children revealed that their freedom to play outdoors is significantly inhibited by concerns about community safety. Key factors contributing to this fear included fear of anti-social behaviour from adults, presence of drug abuse, violence, and environmental hazards like litter, broken glass and drug remnants in public spaces. Parents' intense fears about crime, violence and other threats have led to significant restrictions on children's freedom to play outside, particularly among primary-aged children, who are rarely allowed to play outside unsupervised.

Recommendations for change

Despite these challenges, the study also highlighted the resilience and creativity of children in finding ways to play and the community's shared desire to improve the situation. When considering priorities for improving public space for play, parents and children emphasized the need for cleaner, better maintained and more adventurous playable spaces but also an improved sense of community safety. The children's preferences suggested that they value the appearance of the overall environment and feelings of security before specifically focusing on play equipment.

Based on these findings, three transformative recommendations emerged to address these challenges and foster a more playful and cohesive neighbourhood:

- **Cultivate a culture of permissiveness by establishing a consistent community presence.** A trusted individual or team embedded in the neighbourhood who can work to reduce fears, build trust and promote play as a valued part of daily life.
- **Facilitate a neighbourhood beautification project.** Cleaning up litter, planting greenery, and integrating creative elements like public art to improve the appearance and atmosphere of public spaces.
- **Develop a network of playable spaces.** This vision includes creating low-cost, low-maintenance playable spaces throughout the neighbourhood. Enhancing the area with adventurous, age-appropriate equipment and spreading play opportunities across the community.

To ensure these recommendations are effectively implemented, a group of local stakeholders will oversee progress, address challenges and foster collaboration to transform the neighbourhood into a more child-friendly and vibrant community. A smaller task and finish group will meet regularly to discuss development plans before these will be shared with residents, including children. It is important that we continue working together with children, valuing their opinions as crucial elements in shaping and refining development plans.

Gathering children's voices has played a crucial role in the success of the neighbourhood play sufficiency research. This approach has highlighted that children in the research area are experiencing restricted outdoor play opportunities and diminished freedom compared to their counterparts outside the area. This emphasises the need for local-level interventions to address these disparities.

This research highlights the importance of amplifying children's voices in shaping their environments. By prioritising children's perspectives, adults and policymakers gain a clearer understanding of the play experiences children value most, ultimately leading to more effective local interventions. The journey toward play sufficiency in Carmarthenshire is a significant step towards a community that acknowledges children's rights and aspirations.

The Play and Youth Support Team in Wrexham took a similar approach in their research with children and other members of the community. Gareth Stacey tells us more about his team's efforts:

Wrexham

The community chosen for the project was Penley, a village in the south of Wrexham. It was vital for the project that a small geographical area was chosen so that we can identify local factors that impact children's affordances for play and seek ways to address and improve conditions.

The project took a mixed methods approach seeking to generate quantitative and qualitative data regarding children's and adult's experiences and perceptions of opportunities for play and sociability within Penley.

The data collection methods included:

- **Online play satisfaction surveys** – children and adults completed an online, multiple-choice questionnaire regarding their satisfaction with their/their children's opportunities for play.
- **Detailed spatial audits** – a qualitative spatial audit of the neighbourhood. This enabled insights to the design and layout of the built and natural environment which serves to support or constrain children's access to opportunities.
- **Workshops with children** – two, two hour workshops (ages nine to eleven and twelve to sixteen) which explored children's ability to roam in the community, their available affordances as well as identifying features and characteristics important to them in respect of improving their opportunities for play.
- **Focus groups with adult residents** – a face-to-face focus group with residents, involving parents, carers and adult community stakeholders.

How we used the information

We analysed the data, comparing and contrasting the findings with what had come before to build a more complete picture of people's experiences and perceptions of opportunities for play and sociability. Based on the research, several themes emerged which cut across the three groups we worked with:

- **Understandings of play:** it was evident across all three groups that there is an understanding of what play is, what play is not and the importance of play in its contribution towards being well – physically and mentally.
- **Recognition of the value of existing spaces to play:** the spatial audit conducted by the research team identified a number of spaces that children play in, or have the potential for children to play in. This was reinforced by children and adults during the research who were aware that there are a number of spaces which have play value and/or have the potential to open up more opportunities for play and sociability.
- **Constraints on access to spaces to play:** children reported they no longer have permissible access to the school field. The implications of this is a large reduction in spaces because within the entire school field site several separate places for play were identified through the spatial audit and in focus groups. Adults highlighted that there are ongoing land disputes with a private developer in relation to the ownership of spaces. Several of the informal spaces within the village are still not owned by the community or the local authority, preventing development and maintenance.
- **Contested nature of spaces to play:** the limited permissible spaces available for children means there is competition for usage of spaces across groups of children. There was also a consensus within the adult focus group that more spaces need to be made available.

- **Value of privacy and shelter:** during the older children focus group it was apparent they placed a high value on privacy and shelter whilst out in the community.
- **Gender:** a difference in freedom between boys (having more) and girls (having less) was reported within the younger children focus group. We need to pay attention to these findings within future planning and strive to address this difference across genders of younger children.
- **Community activation:** community action amongst adults is already taking place. Community litter picks, community events and their engagement in the process, to name a few.

Based on the identified themes we held a community master planning workshop inviting local stakeholders to contribute. The aim was to co-produce a concept master plan with the community, identifying potential improvements across the neighbourhood based on a design brief rooted in our data collection. A community steering group was also established.

The resulting concept plan enables all community members to understand and accommodate for the necessary changes that could potentially be made to address the issue of insufficiencies of play in the community. The specific actions within the concept plan can be categorised into two key strands of work: Community Action, and Permission and Access, with several streams of progress identified as part of each. Each strand includes focused actions across the short, medium and long term.

Conclusions and implementation

The master plan and subsequent recommendations developed through this research seek to address insufficiency whilst also improving opportunities for wider community sociability. It is important to recognise that neither the local authority nor the community has the resources to realise these plans alone. However, there is potential for further developing and implementing these plans through a partnership approach with a willingness of all parties to engage in a process of co-production. We recommend the community steering group, with relevant support, seeks to negotiate and maintain reasonable access arrangements to existing spaces and facilities, including local school grounds and developer land to create better access and playful modifications. Finally, the community can activate spaces and cultivate a more permissive atmosphere by facilitating playful activities and events, encouraging people of different ages to spend time together in public space.

It is evident from the research in Wrexham and Carmarthenshire that children's voices are crucial for a successful neighbourhood level response to the Play Sufficiency Duty. Collaboration and engagement with children is key to making sufficient opportunities to play in our communities a reality.

Let's talk about play

A new Play Wales training course

As we have reported in previous issues, the Play Wales Play Ambassadors Project supported young people in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan to become community play ambassadors. One lasting impact of the project was the creation of a training programme, endorsed by Play Wales.



Let's talk about play offers an introduction to play and playwork. It is a customisable course which supports learners to have a better understanding of children's play and what they can do to support children to make the most of their play.

One recent course delivered by Play Wales for the after school club at Ysgol Y Felinheli in Gwynedd included young volunteers who praised the learning gained on the Let's talk about play course:

“ It was well presented, very animated and thoroughly explained. ”

“ I learned to let children take over sometimes and not to interfere all the time. ”

“ Very good – I learned a lot about how children play and the importance of play. ”

Let's talk about play raises awareness of how people can make a difference to children's play in their communities. We know that adults can have an influence on children's opportunities to play, often without being aware of the impact that decisions they make have on the

child's time, space and opportunity to play. Statutory Play Sufficiency Assessments, undertaken by every local authority in Wales, rely on the active involvement of a range of partners, working together to ensure the best possible outcome for children's opportunities to play.

The aims of the course are to:

- support the playwork workforce by providing an initial step into a playwork learning programme for those playworkers and playwork volunteers who have yet to gain a formal qualification
- offer a 'refresher' for playworkers who may work at specific times of the year with no playwork practice in between those times
- provide other professionals with knowledge and support to consider the effects of their decision making on children's play.

Let's talk about play is designed to provide seasonal playwork staff and volunteers – including young people – with the essential features of play and playwork, acting as a refresher for seasonal staff and an entry course for volunteers. These people are part of the playwork workforce.

The Why play? part of the course is designed to engage other professionals in dialogue about why children's play is important and how they can consider it within their role. These people are

referred to in the Welsh Government's statutory guidance, *Wales – A play friendly country*, as part of the wider play workforce.

The course content combines short presentations, small group work, whole group discussions, and creative activities and games. The expectation is for the sessions to be delivered face-to-face with participants attending the entire session. This enables the use of more creative methods and better informal interaction during games and creative activities. However, it is possible to adapt these sessions to be delivered online using tools for small group activity in addition to showing presentations.

The course has already been delivered in a number of areas across Wales – from Conwy to the Vale of Glamorgan. It has been designed to be delivered by occupationally competent play professionals who have successfully completed the Award in Delivering Dynamic Playwork Training (ADDaPT) Level 3 qualification. Play Wales provides a comprehensive package of teaching and learning resources which are available for delivery by any ADDaPT tutor.

You can find out more about Let's talk about play, as well as other training and qualifications, on our website: www.play.wales/playwork/training

Play Champions at Windsor Clive Primary School



In December 2024, our Assistant Director Marianne Mannello visited Windsor Clive Primary School in Cardiff. On behalf of Play Wales, Marianne was delighted to accept a donation from money raised by the children as part of World Children's Day events held in the school.

Marianne returned in February this year so that the children could tell us about their fundraising efforts:

Windsor Clive Primary School was awarded its UNICEF Silver Rights Respecting Schools Award in November 2023 and we are now working hard to achieve our Gold Award. In Rights Respecting Schools, the children and adults work together to make sure children's rights are being promoted and respected. The whole school community works together to put children's rights into practice every day.

A group of children in years 2 to 6 form the School Government to represent all pupils and ensure their voice is heard in decisions made about the school. Our School Government is committed to improving teaching and learning and the health and wellbeing of pupils. We are also passionate about maintaining an environmentally friendly school and contributing to the community. The School Government works hard (and have fun) raising money both for our school and charities.

For World Children's Day on 20 November 2024, each class took part in an 'athon' to raise sponsorship money for Play Wales. There was a walk-athon, a dance-athon, a silent-athon, an art-athon, a Mario-cart-athon and a kindness-athon. The activity wasn't just about raising money, it was also about raising awareness of children's rights. When we were asking people to sponsor us, we also talked to them about children's rights and about the right to play. When we told Marianne about this, she called us Play Champions!

“ We chose to support a play charity because play helps us to do things that make us happy. It gets our mind off things that may be bad and is good for mental health. It is really important to play because we only live once. ”

The School Government has a good plan to go for our Gold Rights Respecting School Award. This award is all about learning about rights and thinking about how we can make minor changes to make a big difference, for us and other children, too. The role of our School Government is to represent children's voices and remind children that they are Duty Holders. We help the Duty Bearers – the adults in school – to take our opinions seriously.

When Marianne visited us in December, she asked for our ideas about how Play Wales could use our donation, and she was impressed by our suggestions. When she came back recently, she told us that our donation had helped to put play packs together for children who are living in places like hotels while they are waiting for a house or flat to be ready for them. She explained that some of these children didn't have things to play with and that they sometimes lived in small places with little space for play. She told us how our ideas helped decide on what to include in the play packs.

On the visit, Marianne said:

“ I would have loved to meet every single student to say thank you for the money you raised, but the School Government represented Windsor Clive Primary School so well. ”

The Flying Seagulls in Wales

Founded in 2008, The Flying Seagull Project is a children's charity committed to bringing joy and positivity to communities in crisis through play, music, creative workshops, circus, magic and performances. To date, the Seagulls have shared more than half a million smiles in 24 countries across four continents.

At the beginning of the year, The Flying Seagull Project launched its Jump 'n' Jive 25 Tour spreading laughter, play and joy to children across the UK. As part of this exciting initiative, they undertook a two-week tour in Wales delivering interactive shows and free play circus sessions.

Play Wales was pleased to help the Seagulls identify groups of children to visit on their tour. Focusing on groups of children living in difficult situations, the team of performers and play practitioners worked with refugee groups, children in hospitals and hospices, children with additional needs, young carers and children in temporary accommodation.

When Marianne visited Windsor Clive Primary School she would have loved to meet all the children to say thank you, but this wasn't possible. So, we were delighted that the Jump 'n' Jive Tour could visit and spend time with all the children, from nursery to Year 6. Two weeks after

the visit, the School Government was still buzzing with excitement when they told Marianne all about it.

The Seagulls' interactive, high-energy play session was packed full of laughs and included a mix of storytelling, magic, circus, clowning and music. Through the free and creative play session, children and adults had an opportunity to try something new. The Seagulls generously provided enough juggling balls, hoops, diablos, stilts and plates for everyone to have a go in a friendly and funny way.

The children at Windsor Clive Primary School had a great time:

“ I loved it because it felt like extra playtime. ”

“ I loved it because the clown broke the rules. ”

“ It was really cool trying out new things I hadn't done before. ”

“ It was friendly, funny and no one was sad or angry. ”

“ It was good to try challenges with friends, like walking on sticks. ”

An interview with the new Minister for Children and Social Care



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

In September 2024, Dawn Bowden MS was appointed as the new Minister for Children and Social Care. We recently chatted to the Minister about her own play memories and ambitions for children's opportunities to play in Wales.



Mike Greenaway, Dawn Bowden MS and Keith Towler

What are your favourite play memories?

For me it was playing in the street with friends after school and weekends. This would mainly be hopscotch (marking out the numbers with chalk), 'Mrs Brown's Shopping Basket' and 'What's the Time Mr Wolf?'. It was a lot safer to do that when I was a child as there were far fewer cars on the streets, particularly as Mrs Brown and Mr Wolf games involved walking/running across the road! We also had a wood near my house (now used for housing) and we would often go there and climb and swing on trees or pick wild flowers. Our house had a decent sized garden, and, in the summer, I used to play cricket with my brother and splash around in the paddling pool. My mother still lives in the house where I grew up and when I go there now, I never see children playing in the street.

Looking at your own experience, where do children play in your community today? How does this differ to when you and your children grew up?

Much like where I grew up, I rarely see children playing in the street in my community now. The streets are far busier and not safe places for children to play. However, there are far more play facilities than when I was a child, so I do see children in the parks, playgrounds and school premises. One of the other big differences I think is not seeing young children out on their own. I used to go out with my friends alone from quite a young age. I generally don't see a lot of older children around either and I do wonder if that is to do with use of computer games and screens where they can play with friends without actually leaving the house!

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

Our ambitions for play can only be achieved by working collaboratively, across Welsh Government policy areas, supported by Play Wales and our other key stakeholders, the local authorities and their partners. Together we will realise our vision for play in Wales, to support children's right to play and improve children and young people's opportunities to play with their friends in their communities.

I am delighted to see the excellent progress made against the Welsh Government commitments, as set out in the response to the Ministerial Review of Play steering group report by Julie Morgan MS, former Deputy Minister for Social Services in October 2023.

Our first Ministerial Review of Play progress report, published in early March 2025, demonstrates that the Welsh Government places great value on play and its importance in the lives of children in Wales. We believe that children have a fundamental right to be able to play, and that play is central to their enjoyment of life and contributes to their wellbeing, physical, mental, social and emotional health.

“ I will continue to champion and advocate for children's right to play, recognising its vital importance in children's development. ”

In our latest analysis of 7,000 children's views on opportunities to play across Wales, they are telling us that playing out with their friends in their neighbourhoods is important to them. How can we improve opportunities to play for today's children and future generations?

It's great to hear directly from children about what's important to them. We recognise that for children themselves, playing is one of the most important aspects of their lives. They value time, space and permission to play along with having quality places in their communities.

This is an area we are focusing on as part of our actions in response to key recommendations from the Ministerial Review of Play. We will continue to work with local

authorities to support our ambitions in improving the availability of play opportunities and improving the quality of play spaces, creating inclusive and accessible play spaces.

The Welsh Government published its final budget for 2025-2026 on 20 February 2025 and this includes further funding of £5m to local government to improve playgrounds and play facilities for children.

I look forward to hearing the views of children and young people, parents and carers and playwork practitioners, which will be captured as part of the local authority Play Sufficiency Assessments, due for submission to the Welsh Government in June 2025. Their voices will help us to measure the impact of our work to date and drive forward actions to deliver our vision for Wales to be a play friendly country.

Ministerial Review of Play – a Welsh Government update

In 2014, the Welsh Government set out its vision for play for children in Wales with the publication of *Wales – a Play Friendly Country*, statutory guidance to local authorities on assessing for and securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas.

Since legislating in support of children's play as part of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, we have continued to work towards Wales being a play friendly country. Between 2019 and 2022, the Welsh Government undertook an in-depth and collaborative review of its play policy work and considered the progress made in achieving the Welsh Government's vision for play. The review had two aims:

- to assess the Welsh Government's work relating to play policy
- to help the Welsh Government shape how it develops and progresses the play agenda.

The *Ministerial Review of Play Steering Group Report* made key recommendations and suggested milestones for the Welsh Government to consider in building on the progress made in being a play friendly country, giving children and young people sufficient opportunities to play.

The Welsh Government responded to the report and outlined the actions to be taken forward to achieve the steering group's anticipated results.

In our response, we set out 67 short, medium and long-term timeframes for each action.

Ministerial Review of Play progress report

The progress report, published by the Welsh Government on 5 March 2025, demonstrates the achievements made to date and outlines the actions we will take forward to meet the anticipated outcomes.

Overall, good progress has been made against each recommendation, however, there is further work to do to support Wales being a play friendly country.

All 34 short-term actions have been completed. Eight of the fifteen medium term actions have been completed, along with six of the eighteen long term actions. Moving forward we will report on progress for the medium- and long-term actions that are in progress and on track.

This is an exciting time for play policy, where the actions we are taking forward will build on the positive work being undertaken

across policy areas, by local authorities and key stakeholders.

Our focus will be on the key themes considered by the review of play:

- Alignment of key legislation that impacts on the right to play
- Play Sufficiency Duty and funding
- Spatial justice
- Playwork provision and regulation
- Workforce and qualifications
- Play and education.

We are committed to Wales being a play friendly country and to working collaboratively to support children's right to play and improve children and young people's opportunities to play. We will build on the progress made and continue to explore and take forward identified actions.

We are unable to do this in isolation. Our ambitions can only be achieved by working collaboratively, across Welsh Government policy areas, and with key stakeholders, local authorities and their partners in: advocating the importance of children's right to play, promoting the benefits of play for children's wellbeing, and ensuring children have sufficient opportunities to play.

Find out more about the progress report at: www.gov.wales/ministerial-review-play-progress-report-february-2025

Workforce development

National Occupational Standards Update

As we have previously reported, the UK Playwork NOS Consortium comprises Play Wales, Play Scotland, PlayBoard Northern Ireland, Play England and the Playwork Foundation.

Since the last issue of *Play for Wales*, the consortium has recruited individuals with playwork and sector expertise to be involved in the review of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Playwork. Two groups have been established:

1. the Playwork NOS Writing Group
2. the Playwork NOS Advisory Group.

These groups will meet throughout the process to review and develop the NOS.

The next step is to develop a Functional Map. This map will provide an overview of the proposed NOS so that stakeholders understand the broad direction of the NOS that will be developed. It will also be used to generate the detail of the NOS.

The NOS Writing Group is made up of committed sector experts who will write the new NOS. Membership of the group includes representatives from each of the four nations, who were recruited for their knowledge and expertise in relation to playwork, training, qualifications

and standards development. The group will report back to the consortium on its key functions:

1. To review current playwork NOS
2. To develop a Functional Map for playwork NOS
3. To develop a suite of NOS for playwork
4. To consult with the Playwork NOS Advisory Group, the playwork sector and other key stakeholders in the sector on the draft Functional Map and resulting NOS
5. To ensure the new playwork NOS meet requirements set by the UK Standards and Framework Panel, UK Playwork NOS Consortium and the Playwork NOS Scoping Review (2023).

The NOS Advisory Group will act as a critical friend to the NOS Writing Group and the consortium. This group will meet at key points in the development process to review the work on the Functional Map and resulting NOS. This is part of the consultation and engagement process.

The final NOS will be consulted on as part of a wider public consultation in Summer 2025. This will include regional events across the UK, which will be held online but may include some face-to-face engagement.

For more information read *Review of the National Occupational Standards for Playwork 2024/2025: Information sheet #1*: www.play.wales/playwork/workforce or email nosreview@play.wales

Spotlight on ...

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 in the sector. For this issue, we chatted with Kian Wilson, a playworker at Llanharan Community Development Project in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Can you tell us a bit about yourself and how you got into play/playwork?

I got into playwork as since a young age my mam had been a playworker, so I would be going to playschemes. Another reason I got into it is because of how I can work around my sixth form lessons in the week by working in an after-school club.

What is your job title and what does your role involve?

My job role is a playworker. During term time my job involves picking children up from school walking them down to a community centre then organising activities and providing resources for them.

What is the most important or enjoyable aspect of your work?

The most important aspect of my job is making sure the children feel safe in the setting, and the next most important thing is that kids enjoy coming to settings.

Is there anything you find challenging about your job?

One thing I find challenging about my job is working with limited resources, as in our playscheme setting we have to transport all of the resources in a small van.

What would you say to other people who are interested in working in playwork?

One thing I would say to someone who is interested in playwork is to just try it, chances are that you will enjoy it so give it a go!

Workforce development

Promoting playwork and play provision

To support our partners and play providers to promote playwork on a local and national level, we have produced two new short video clips:

- What does it take to be a playworker?
- What is open access playwork provision?

What does it take to be a playworker? has been produced to show what it takes to be a playworker. We know that playwork is an important and fulfilling role but it is not as well known as other professions in the children's workforce. The video includes comments from playworkers explaining what is unique and exciting about a career in playwork.

What is open access playwork provision? has been produced to help parents and carers understand what open access play provision is and how it works. Play Wales – as part of its *Playful Childhoods* campaign – developed this short video to raise awareness about this type of play provision, as well as to promote open access playschemes to parents and carers.

Both videos have been filmed in playwork settings across Wales and feature comments from children, parents and playworkers. Our thanks to all those who took part.



Get involved

Play Wales has produced a media pack to help our partners to share the videos on social media and includes further ideas of when and how to promote the messages. If you would like a copy of the media pack, please email info@play.wales

You can view the videos on our *Playful Childhoods* YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/@playfulchildhoods4400

Playwork Principles 20th Anniversary

This year will mark 20 years since the Playwork Principles were formally adopted by the sector. The Playwork Principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork.

They describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people.

Experienced playworkers and playwork trainers from around the UK were invited to provide their expertise in

the development of the Playwork Principles. Play Wales administered the process under the instruction of the Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group, who still hold them in Trust today. They were formally endorsed by the sector in 2005.

We will be celebrating the anniversary throughout 2025 as part of our programme of conferences and events. Look out for more on this as the year progresses.

You can find out more about the Playwork Principles on our website: www.play.wales/playwork/the-playwork-principles

Playful communities

Playworkers promote active travel with children in Torfaen

Torfaen County Borough Council has launched an innovative initiative to promote active travel among children and teenagers by integrating play with sustainable transport.

This approach involves community-based scooter and bike sessions, with playworkers acting as facilitators, helping children build confidence in using active travel options safely.

This initiative is part of the council's Active Travel Plan and Play Sufficiency Action Plan, aimed at encouraging active travel journeys around the community and to access play provision. The goal is to create a culture of active travel that is both fun and educational, ensuring that children and teenagers can navigate their communities safely and independently.

Funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, playworkers received training to deliver Scoot FIT sessions within community play settings, along with scooters and protective equipment for children to use. Playworkers also received bike maintenance training as well as cycling skills and road safety training. A fleet of scooters were purchased for both children and playworkers to use, which are transported by the play team to play and school settings to deliver the fun, interactive and informative sessions.

Within the sessions, games are played on the scooters, such as football, as well as balance skills and safety tips. Scooting helps to develop and improve agility, balance, coordination, muscle strength and endurance. The sessions also help boost confidence and resilience levels as well as encourage teamwork skills. The activities are designed to be inclusive and accessible, ensuring that all children, regardless of their abilities, can participate and benefit from the sessions.

Officers from the Play Service and Transport and Highways team worked together to successfully deliver the project across the county. Their collaboration has been key to the initiative's success, ensuring that the sessions are well-organised and effectively meet the needs of the community. The project has also involved local schools and community groups, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility for promoting active travel.

Recent findings from a consultation with children, linked to the Play Sufficiency Assessment, revealed that a significant number of children use scooters and bikes to travel around the community. To date, the Scoot FIT sessions have been



delivered to over 1,000 children and teenagers in Torfaen, making a positive impact on their travel habits and safety.

The feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, with many children expressing increased confidence in their ability to travel independently and safely.

“ I have really enjoyed the scooters with the playworkers. I have learnt to balance better and its really awesome playing games on the scooters. ”

Rhys, aged 14

“ I don't have a scooter at home, I like going on the scooters at playscheme with my friends. ”

Kane, aged 10

“ I like going on the scooters with the playworkers and my friends ... it's fun! ”

Lottie, aged 6

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

For more examples of playful communities in Wales visit: www.playfulchildhoods.wales/play-in-the-community/inspiration