



Developing play and early years provision in Gypsy and Traveller sites

A toolkit

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About this toolkit

Who is it for?

The toolkit has been designed for anyone who takes responsibility for, or is involved in, managing or developing new and existing Gypsy and Traveller sites. This may be:

- planning departments and officers
- architects
- local authority Gypsy and Traveller liaison officers
- consultation and participation managers
- site wardens and managers
- play development teams
- neighbourhood policing teams
- Gypsies and Travellers.

The toolkit should be used in conjunction with the Welsh Government's *Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Wales* guidance (which includes reference to play areas).

How has it been developed?

This is a reviewed and updated edition of a previous toolkit developed by Play Wales and Travelling Ahead. The original publication was informed by consultations with young Gypsies and Travellers. The children and teenagers highlighted the importance they place on space, time and permission for play. Whilst living on a site provides many children and teenagers with companions to play with, the lack of appropriate space and facilities to play is a recurrent problem identified by children.

To inform the first edition, we also established and consulted with a focus group of providers during the drafting process and used their experiences to develop the models and address the most significant issues. Findings from consultations and surveys also identified that services, such as playgroups and staffed playwork provision, can support integration and address issues of misunderstanding.

In more recent informal engagement, a common reason why sites did not meet the needs of families included the lack of a play area. Children have indicated that opportunities for play are limited due to no designated space for play near where they live. Children seek alternative spaces, including waste ground, roads around the site or lanes leading to the site. Children report that having no dedicated space, no gardens, traffic coming in and out of the site, rubbish and dog mess limited their opportunities for play. Some opportunities to play are restricted due to the close proximity of parked vehicles and homes.

The suitability of existing space and the views of parents and other adults impact on the opportunities to play that children can access. This toolkit is intended to support planners to address these issues.

What is it designed to do?

This toolkit is designed to provide clear and concise information that helps to create opportunities for play for children on Gypsy and Traveller sites.

The toolkit features information intended to help understand and address issues of concern. It also provides practical, step-by-step tools and templates for undertaking work linked with removing the barriers to accessing opportunities to play faced by Gypsy and Traveller children.

It is widely accepted that many Gypsy and Traveller children have some opportunities to play outdoors. They report enjoying activities such as den building, riding bikes, making tree swings, climbing trees and playing hide and seek around the site.

The toolkit is intended to address the physical barriers to designated play space whilst also providing an opportunity to consider offering other types of play, such as creative and imaginative play.

Why has it been developed?

The toolkit has been developed to help local authorities respond to statutory play sufficiency duties. Section 11 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 places a duty on local authorities to assess and secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas.

The Play Sufficiency Duty is part of the Welsh Government's anti-poverty agenda which recognises that children can have a poverty of experience, opportunity and aspiration, and that this kind of poverty can affect children from all social, cultural and economic backgrounds across Wales.

The Welsh Government has produced statutory guidance, *Wales – a Play Friendly Country*, for local authorities on assessing and securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas. Local authorities undertake Play Sufficiency Assessments every three years. As part of these, local authorities must assess the extent to which the play needs of Gypsy and Traveller children are understood and provided for.

Using the toolkit

The toolkit is designed to be used when considering opportunities for children living on sites.

The toolkit recognises the Gypsy Traveller roadside heritage. Staying at roadside enables families to immerse themselves in their historical and cultural way of life. It provides children with the opportunity to understand nomadic ways and learn more about the skills and contributions of their heritage.

This heritage includes unique and important traditions, and skills such as scoping the area for resources, landscaping, agricultural work and motor-related work. Roadside experiences for children preserve the diverse culture, providing immediate and long-term skills for children.

The toolkit has three sections:

1. **Importance of play** – this section includes information about the immediate and deferred benefits that access to play brings to children. It also includes a description of a rich play environment, which defines the features needed to help children make the most of their opportunities to play.
2. **Models of provision** – this section provides the rationale, and identifies the benefits and key features of successful models of play provision.
3. **Tools to support** – this section includes a range of tools to audit, assess and plan for play, and includes ideas for engagement with children and parents.



This toolkit supplements information available in other Play Wales publications:

Developing and managing play spaces covers two main themes:

- Design – focusing on the design of new play spaces, including templates related to:
 - participation with children
 - procurement
 - design
- Management – focusing on how to manage an existing or newly built play space, including information and templates related to:
 - risk management policy and procedures
 - maintenance and inspection
 - engaging with children
 - assessing play spaces.



Creating accessible play spaces provides practical, step-by-step tools and templates for undertaking work linked with removing the barriers to accessing play space faced by disabled children and their families. The toolkit includes information and templates related to:

- self-assessment – designing and providing an accessible play space
- reasonable design consideration
- play space access assessment.



Playing outdoors in early years settings provides clear and concise information for early years settings and practitioners to increase opportunities for children in their care to play and spend more time outdoors. The toolkit includes information and templates related to:

- setting based outdoor space assessment tools
- engaging with parents
- engaging with young children
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for staff.



Section 1: Introduction

Children have a right to play, as recognised in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). As an indication of the significance the United Nations places on children's play it has published a General Comment on Article 31. This document – General Comment no. 17 – identifies that play has the key characteristics of fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity.

Playing is central to children's physical, mental, social and emotional health and wellbeing. When they play, children contribute to their immediate wellbeing and to their own development.

There is a well-established body of solid evidence that shows the contribution that play, particularly self-organised play, can make to children's long-term and immediate wellbeing, to their physical health and to their mental health and resilience. Various studies have concluded:

- **Play supports socialisation:** when they play, children interact with others, develop friendships and attachments with peers, deal with conflict, and learn respect and tolerance.
- **Play builds resilience:** playing boosts children's emotion regulation, confidence, creativity, problem-solving skills and perseverance, enabling them to cope with stress and challenges throughout life.
- **Play is crucial for good health and wellbeing:** being active through play helps children physically and emotionally, contributing to their health and happiness.
- **Play supports children to feel part of their neighbourhoods and wider communities:** playing allows children to learn about the world around them, make connections, and develop a sense of identity and belonging.
- **Play supports learning and development:** building the structures of the brain and skills such as critical thinking.

Play value

The term play value describes the range and quality of play opportunities and experiences offered by a play environment. It is also used to describe the value a space, or piece of equipment, brings to children to help them extend their play.

A space rich in play value creates opportunities for a variety of physical, social and sensory play experiences. It offers all children and teenagers the opportunity to freely interact with or experience the following:

- **Other children and teenagers** – with a choice to play alone or with others, to negotiate, co-operate, fall out and resolve conflict
- **The natural world** – weather, the seasons, bushes, trees, plants, insects, animals and mud
- **Loose parts** – natural and man-made materials that can be manipulated, moved and adapted, built and demolished
- **The natural elements** – earth, air, fire and water
- **Challenge and risk taking** – both physical and emotional
- **Playing with identity** – role play and dressing up
- **Movement** – running, jumping, climbing, balancing and rolling
- **Rough and tumble** – play fighting
- **Senses** – sounds, tastes, textures, smells and sights.

Good spaces to play within a community show the people living there that playing is important. The play spaces create a hub for a community, offering opportunities for adults and teenagers to become involved and socialise together.

Children and families value quality play spaces, the relationships they make through them and the contribution they make to communities.

Section 2: Models to be considered

Models of play provision

1. Communal play spaces
2. Providing indoor places for playing on site
3. Early years provision
4. Staffed playwork provision
5. Encouraging integration into local play provision
6. Supporting community self build play spaces
7. Doorstop provision

This part of the toolkit focuses on models of play provision. It has been developed using case studies of provision from across Wales. It provides the rationale, and identifies the benefits and key features of successful models of provision.

Most children will play without the need for adult intervention, even in the most barren of spaces, but an environment rich in possibilities enables them to make the most of their opportunities to play. Some children need supportive adults and the company of other children to benefit from the environment around them.

For various reasons, children and teenagers on Gypsy and Traveller sites may not be attending education on a full-time basis but they are keen to learn. Early years and playwork provision have expanded future prospects by providing teenagers with opportunities to volunteer, and gain childcare work experience and undertake training.

It is common for the eldest children in families to have been given responsibility at a young age. Providing opportunities for playing and socialising enables us to meet the play and recreational needs of teenagers.

Due to the nature of the homes of Gypsy and Travellers on sites storage space is limited and families are not always able to provide a broad range of resources to support children's play. Often, sites are overcrowded or surrounded by unsuitable and hazardous environments.

There may not be outdoor space situated near family plots. Children and teenagers often do not live close to play facilities – transport, access and inclusion are issues for many Gypsy and Traveller children and teenagers.

Information about equipped areas for play can be found in the Play Wales toolkits listed on page 6.

1. Communal play spaces

Children and families value quality play spaces, the relationships they make through them and the contribution they make to communities. Play equipment can offer shared experiences and children with different needs can play together in well-designed play spaces. Some equipment, such as shelters, provide space for socialising, while recognising the limitations of lack of availability of indoor space and inclement weather.

Loose parts are materials that can be used for playing, with no specific set of directions that can be used alone or combined with other materials. Therefore, loose parts can be used in any way that children choose and can be adapted and manipulated in many ways. Examples of loose parts play materials include, paper, stones, sticks, water, sand, leaves, feathers, tools, nails, boxes, fabric, ropes, wood, pots, animals, plants, metal, clay, mud, tables, chairs, blankets – everything and anything that can be moved or manipulated as part of play.

To make the most of a play space, children need to be able to adapt and shape it to meet their play needs and it needs to change over time and provide new opportunities for play. The addition of loose fill surfaces such as sand or bark, the inclusion of water, and trees and bushes will provide a supply of loose parts that change with the seasons, which children will use in a variety of ingenious ways.

Play spaces with fixed equipment often require large footprints for each piece. To address this, there is often a move towards promoting the use of natural environments and natural features. Some residents have raised concerns that open space has been taken over, for storing motors, scrap or horses. Some fixed equipment, with a balance of natural features surrounding the area, may be a solution to these concerns.

Key features of good play spaces or things to consider:

- Spaces are designed with the needs and characteristics of the local community in mind, identifying location and likely range of use and users.
- Spaces have a distinct local character in terms of the particular design, material and features included.
- The natural features of the spaces, such as existing trees and natural puddles, are respected and integrated.
- The space and context as a whole is as important as individual play features in creating a successful play space.
- Spaces include play materials and play features that are non-prescriptive and therefore encourage imagination and suggest many different ways of being played on or with.
- Spaces do not rely solely on manufactured play equipment for the play opportunities offered. Spaces use manufactured equipment to enhance what is on offer.
- The design of the spaces ensures that when play equipment is used, it is integrated with and complements other site features.
- The location of the play area is away from the main traffic run of the site.
- The spaces incorporate opportunities for children to encounter or create challenge and risk.
- The needs of residents are considered when planning and installing play features.

2. Providing indoor places for playing on site

When planning community facilities as part of site design or refurbishment, it is important to consider how children and teenagers might use the space. Well-designed indoor spaces for playing are planned so that they can be used flexibly and offer an appropriate range of opportunities. The provision of community facilities support community engagement. In many communities, good early years and playwork provision can act as a springboard for other services and community involvement.

Being able to access quality early years provision, well designed and resourced play spaces and staffed playwork provision brings extensive benefits for children, parents and the community.

Key features of well-designed indoor spaces for play:

- Spaces provide rich experiences – children can explore, experiment, and learn through direct experience.
- Spaces provide a sense of belonging – children and teenagers value being close to people they know, have familiar and comfortable objects, and being in a setting that has a personal history for them.
- Spaces contain resources which are appropriate, well maintained and accessible for all children.
- Spaces are planned so that they can be used flexibly and a varied range of opportunities to play and socialise is provided.



3. Early years provision

The support families can access through early years play provision is extremely valuable in meeting the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community.

Having quality early years experiences supports children to settle in new environments. This provides support for the transition into school, allowing the children to understand the social 'rules' when outside of the family unit and to form relationships with new adults and their peers. Playing allows children to enjoy challenging experiences, investigate and discover for themselves and therefore become independent learners.

Playing is important for children to gain confidence and self esteem. The opportunities to play in early

years provision is open ended and the children are encouraged to choose what they play and who with. Good early years play settings support children to have the confidence to try new things and develop an interest in learning. Playing in these settings promotes skills such as creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking.

Providing a rich outdoor environment increases opportunities for learning and increased physical play. Staff in settings such as these have noticed an increase in socialisation and less aggression. Early years services staff build positive relationships with parents and this helps families gain confidence and access other services they and their children need. Forest school is a model that can be provided really well on sites, especially where there is no purpose-built building available.

Key features of successful early years provision or things to consider:

- Qualified, passionate and enthusiastic professionals are employed.
- Observations of each child are undertaken to ensure their individual needs.
- Staff understand the need to be nurturing and supportive of each child's needs and help parents and children face the temporary separation that occurs when children attend.
- Staff work closely with a range of professionals including: health visitors, speech and language therapists and the Flying Start advisory team.
- Links are made with the local schools and transitions are supported to ensure that children access mainstream education at the nursery/reception stage.
- A range of opportunities to play are on offer and any outdoor space is used to best effect.
- Staff have gained a good cultural understanding by actively learning from families.

4. Staffed playwork provision

Playworkers create opportunities and places where children and teenagers can play freely and with confidence. Places where they can encounter a range of opportunities and possibilities – where the adults involved understand the nature and importance of all aspects of children's play and work to support it. Playworkers see children and teenagers as competent

individuals. They understand the need for children to encounter and create uncertainty and challenge as part of their play. Playworkers neither direct nor organise play, they are trained to judge when or whether to intervene.

Playworkers enable children to extend their own play and they protect and enhance the play space so that it is a rich play environment. Playworkers ensure that

the play space is inclusive by supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

Outreach playworkers on site

Peripatetic playwork projects are staffed by a small team of trained playworkers, visiting a site, once or twice a week for a couple of hours. They will be equipped with ideas and resources and will work to help children create places to play in their local area, reassuring parents that it is safe for children to take part in play sessions. These sessions may operate outdoors or in indoor facilities, where they exist. Playworkers offer a range of opportunities that children may not have access to, such as creative, messy and sensory play, as well as opportunities to socialise.

Mobile provision visiting the site

A mobile play service supports the delivery of play opportunities and resources to children in communities that have no local, easily accessible staffed play provision or play resources. It provides an 'indoor' space offering a range of opportunities for playing out and socialising that may not be available to children and teenagers due to the nature

of their living accommodation. Mobile play services travel to these areas to meet the play and socialisation needs of children and families.

The play provision is usually timetabled so that children and families know when and where playworkers and resources will be available.

Mobile play provision can also:

- offer a space for consulting with children across a number of communities
- offer a welcoming space where families can find out how to support their children's play
- provide a toy library or a scrapstore.

One example of mobile play is the playbus. Traditionally, playbuses were 'community buildings on wheels'. A playbus can operate as a crèche, pre-school or parent and toddler group, twilight youth drop-in, out of school play service and much more. Although we have seen a decrease in playbus services, there are other mobile services which can be used for play through partnership working with local play development teams.

Key features of successful staffed outreach and mobile playwork provision or things to consider:

- Playworkers are flexible and able to cope with the fluidity of the site.
- Playworkers should have a good understanding of the demographics of the site.
- Playworkers should make contact with other service providers already known on site to be introduced to community members.
- Playworkers should be clear about the nature of the provision and how parents can support it to help allay parental concerns.
- Playworkers provide a variety of play opportunities which offer new and novel experiences.
- Playworkers provide support to challenge negativity should children and teenagers wish to express themselves in a way that moves away from a stereotypical way of playing.
- Staff have gained a good cultural understanding by actively learning from families. They have a good understanding of the traditions of the community and the site.
- It is flexible and creates a bespoke service to respond to children's play needs in different communities.
- It reaches isolated, disadvantaged and under resourced communities.
- It can pilot projects in a range of different areas and with different groups of children.
- The needs of residents are considered when planning and delivering outreach playwork provision.



5. Encouraging integration into local play provision

Sometimes, it is possible to work with local services to help integrate the parents and their children into the local community. This often focuses on health and wellbeing and play, but also supports Gypsy and Traveller families to explore their own culture and the Gypsy and Traveller community.

It is not uncommon for Gypsy and Traveller families to feel disengaged from the local community. The children can often feel isolated and discriminated against. When playwork teams have successfully supported integration, they have started by working on sites or perhaps taking the children on organised trips to local attractions. Successful integration projects often start by organising events for parents and younger children, as this helps to begin discussions about the importance of education and integration.

This approach helps playworkers to gain the trust and respect of parents and supports them to suggest that the children and teenagers may benefit from the use of local community based facilities.

Key features of successful integration or things to consider:

- Playworkers have undertaken Gypsy and Traveller cultural awareness training and have a strong understanding of the traditions of the Gypsy and Traveller community.
- Playworkers make contact with other service providers already known on site to be introduced to community members.
- Playworkers are clear about the nature of the provision and how parents can support it to help allay parental concerns.
- Playworkers consider arranging visits to provision for parents prior to organising sessions for children.
- Any issues regarding transport are identified and addressed before the process of integration starts.
- Playworkers understand that integration takes time and need to be aware that this may be challenging for all children.

6. Supporting community self build play spaces

Community self build play spaces are developed, built and maintained by local people to meet the needs of their community.

Developing a play space which includes using manufactured equipment and surfacing can be an expensive process. But often, with appropriate guidance, there are a range of skills that already exist in communities that can be employed to make quality play spaces and to make money and resources go further. At the same time, working together on a play space can nurture a sense of community cohesion and ownership.

Whilst there is guidance on safety surfacing and equipment to be used in play spaces, it is often misunderstood and if negotiating bureaucracy proves difficult, it is worth obtaining professional advice. In addition, community self build play spaces do not have to be entirely built by the community – some elements in the design and build process can be outsourced.

Key features of successful community self build projects:

- Staff supporting the initiative have undertaken Gypsy and Traveller cultural awareness training.
- A culture of community cohesion is supported.
- There is a response to local need.
- Local skills and resources are used.
- Skill sharing and skill building are supported.



7. Doorstep provision

Parents have reported that having space for play allocated alongside plots would help them offer opportunities for their children to play.

Key features of plot based play space:

- A well-drained, reasonably flat grassed area.
- A shed or storage unit for equipment.
- Features that allow playful behaviour and exploration:
 - rocks/logs for balancing and climbing
 - planting for sensory features and seasonal change
 - landscape modelling.

Section 3: Tools to assist

Tools

1. Self-assessment tool
2. Undertaking an options analysis
3. Participation and engagement methods with children
4. Play audits
5. Working with parents and families
6. Working with the wider community
7. Skills audit
8. Site play policy

This part of the toolkit has been prepared to support us to consider ways in which time, space and permission to promote freely chosen play can be provided as part of site development or refurbishment. It provides a range of tools to assist the process.



Tool 1: Self-assessment tool

The self-assessment tool allows you to consider the extent to which the site responds to a range of features that help to provide opportunities to play.

- The Feature column sets out a range of criteria to consider for the provision of play.
- The What we are doing well column enables us to evidence the strengths of our provision and list evidence and examples.
- The What we would like to do better column enables us to explain the areas in which the opportunities or provision do not fully meet the criteria.
- The Actions column should be used to show the intended action to rectify shortfalls.

Describe the site, including ages
of children

Feature	What we are doing well / opportunities	What we would like to do better / challenges	Actions
A shared vision of the importance of play			
An environment where children's play is sufficiently free from waste, pollution, traffic and other physical hazards			
There is availability of leisure time, free from other demands			
The provision allows freedom from social exclusion, prejudice or discrimination			
Space and opportunities to play outdoors in a diverse and challenging physical environment, with easy access to supportive adults			
The outdoor area is varied and interesting			

Feature	What we are doing well / opportunities	What we would like to do better / challenges	Actions
Children of different ages can play and socialise together			
There are graduated opportunities for risk taking – both physical and emotional			
Opportunities to experience and interact and play in natural environments and with animals			
Opportunities to explore and understand the cultural and artistic heritage of their community, participate in, create and shape it			
Children can play with the four elements – earth, air, fire and water			
Children have the opportunity to experience sensory stimulation			

Feature	What we are doing well / opportunities	What we would like to do better / challenges	Actions
Recognition by parents of the value of play			
Recognition of site staff of the value of play			
Recognition of other adults of the value of play			
Children can visit parks or other places of interest nearby			

Tool 2: Undertaking an options analysis

The use of an options analysis template can help planners to determine the best model and approach to take to provide good opportunities to play for children and teenagers.

Options analysis template

Option: Develop site based staffed provision			
Issues to be considered	Advantages (+1)	Disadvantages (-2)	Total
There is a local organisation or department that can provide skilled playworkers who are culturally aware			
Parents would benefit from a playwork project to help them support children's play			
Children would benefit from the presence of sensitive and skilled adults			

Option: Develop site based play area				
Issues to be considered	Advantages (+1)	Disadvantages (-2)	Total	
There is a budget to respond to the play needs of children of all ages				
There is capacity to engage with children and residents				
There is space to build a facility				
There is space for outdoor play areas(s)				
There is space for plot based play space				
What are the community views?				
What is the impact on community relations?				
What skills exist within the community?				

Option: Offer integration into existing services				
Issues to be considered	Advantages (+1)	Disadvantages (-2)	Total	
It is easy for children to get to/travel to the provision				
The provision is staffed by culturally aware playworkers				
Children express a desire to attend				
Children learn about cultural diversity				
The provision is not territorial in nature				
What is the impact on the existing provision?				

Option: Consider a mix of provision				
Issues to be considered	Advantages (+1)	Disadvantages (-2)	Total	
Play needs and preferences of the population of children is understood				
Children have a variety of opportunities to choose from				

Tool 3: Participation and engagement methods with children

Participation can happen in a number of ways:

Workshops – facilitating workshops with children using playful activities will enable them to feel actively involved, develop their understanding of the project and help them generate ideas for the space. This might include physical games, art and craft activities, mapping, storytelling, small group discussions, one-to-one or peer interviewing.

Observations – providing opportunities for children to play in an area and making observations of their favoured play behaviours gives a good indication of what children like to do without taking them away from playing.

Play audits – using, or adapting the Play space audit tool in the *Creating accessible play space* toolkit listed on page 6 provides evidence of how children already use a particular space and the action plan can be used to shape a plan based on evidence from observations as to how the space could be developed.

Building, planting, clearing – if there are elements of the play space that can be developed by the community, getting children and teenagers involved can help them shape the space and give them a feeling of ownership. Planting trees/bulbs, digging, painting, building and clearing rubbish are great ways of involving the community in the development of the play space and raising awareness of the developments being made. It may be that these sorts of community activities are where teenagers put forward their ideas during informal chats – ensure there is a way of recording the information.

Allow for change as part of the design process – children and teenagers like to be able to change their environment. This is why children build dens and knock them down, constantly adapting them. Providing elements of a play space that children can keep changing ensures that they can have a direct role in the evolution of the space over time. This could be an area that is allowed to grow wild that is entirely for children's use or a bike dirt track that they can adapt.

Questionnaires – targeting questionnaires to a particular group of people can be a good way of ensuring a reasonable number of responses. Examples of questions that can be adapted to be appropriate, can be found in surveys in the Play Wales toolkits listed on page 6.

As with all participation methods the questions asked need to be open but specific enough to avoid gaining unrealistic responses. The results of the questionnaires can help ensure the play space provides for the wider range of things children like to do – surprisingly the responses will not all be about swings and slides!

Facilitating engagement

It is crucial for facilitators to introduce themselves to families on site before undertaking any observation work or engagement with children and teenagers. This helps us to be clear about what we are doing and the benefits we hope this work will bring for the community.

For existing sites, it is important to involve children and teenagers living there. For new sites, the local authority education team may provide a mechanism for engagement. Children and teenagers can help:

- undertake an audit of how, and more importantly which, parts of the site are already being used – the children are best placed to identify the potential for play
- tell us where else children and teenagers are spending their time in the local community off the site and what they do there – this will help to plan priorities
- identify the routes that they use to get to and from the places they play, or if they play off site, what method of transport they use
- identify the barriers that might prevent greater use of off site amenities, such as roads and water courses and also perceived community boundaries, cultural and ethnic divides.

Tool 4: Play audits

It may be helpful for facilitators to introduce themselves to families on site before undertaking any observation work or engagement with children and teenagers. This helps us to be clear about what we are doing and the benefits we hope this work will bring for the community.

To understand what could be offered, it is important to consider the local community and environment in

which children live. Given time, space and permission to play, children will naturally choose to play wherever and whenever they can. Once what is available to children is known, it can be assessed against how children need to play.

Play audits provide a process to measure effectively children's play needs are being met within a community.

Playing outdoors in early years settings

In this toolkit we have a range of tools and templates to support play audits and to help identify the potential for a space to promote play, including:

- Children as auditors
- Play space audit checklist
- Play space audit template.



This is what one group of children living on a Gypsy and Traveller site had to say about what's good and not so good about their opportunities to play.

What is good about the space on or near your site where you play?

'We all live close to each other.'

'My friends all live and are from my community.'

'We like the community cabin we do a few activities and learn there a few times a week.'

'We can explore the forest and space behind the site.'

What stops you from playing?

- Lack of spaces and places to play
- Broken equipment around site
- Old abandoned cars
- Litter
- Dog mess
- Rats running around.

Tool 5: Working with parents and families

Cultural traditions are extremely important to Gypsies and Travellers and understanding some of these can go a long way towards forging trusting and respectful relationships.

Different groups of Gypsies and Travellers have different traditions. The things that tend to be important for everyone are:

- the family
- looking after children, the elderly or the ill
- cleanliness
- religion
- travelling.

Gypsies and Travellers usually live in independent and self-sufficient ways, where they look after themselves. Men and women often have different roles, with women looking after the home and men going out to work, often in their own businesses.

Early years and play providers may find themselves working with a broad age range of children, perhaps with a number of siblings or groups of children at the same time. This can help to support the involvement of parents or other family members and help put them at ease.

Things to consider when engaging with parents and families

Be respectful of any special occasions, bereavements and travelling, and ask families if they would still like play provision to continue at these times.

The area may be unknown to the family, parents may not have local knowledge of services and arrive without a support network or confident sense of belonging within the community.

Gypsy and Traveller parents may not have experienced early years or play services themselves and may not be familiar with it or at ease with it.

Gypsy and Traveller parents may have concerns about the possibility of their children experiencing prejudice or racism. They may be concerned about the attitudes of other parents and professionals. These concerns can be intensified if parents have unhappy memories of their own play experiences.

Some parents may feel that they are not fulfilling their role by sending their child to an early years or play setting.

Sometimes, traditional gender roles have an influence on whether or not parents support their children to play. Mothers may wish to keep a child at home for as long as possible. This can be influenced by a sense of positive identity within her community associated with being a mother. Fathers sometimes prefer their boys not to attend play settings, but to remain with them learning a 'cultural role'.

Tool 6: Working with the wider community

When considering the options for providing opportunities for playing on Gypsy and Traveller sites, it may be that a number of individuals and groups will come together in a group to plan the arrangements.

It is worth contacting other organisations in the area, including other departments of the local authority, to identify what other play provision might be available locally and what support they might be able to offer.

Most local authorities have a play officer and there are voluntary play organisations across Wales. They can potentially help with advice about the range of play provision that can be developed and promoted using the existing site. They may be able to offer short-term staffed play sessions.

Those working in staffed playwork settings in particular may be able to offer advice on concerns over fears of damage and vandalism. They may also help to organise a play event on site to promote playing and to answer questions that might arise.

Holding a community event may be a good way to help parents and others to understand what is being planned and how they can help. Here, ideas can be shared and the space that will be available for children and teenagers for their own free play can be discussed.

This may also provide a good opportunity to promote the importance of play to parents and the wider community and allay any fears they may have.

Making community events playful

This information sheet aims to help make community events more playful for children and teenagers. It also offers ideas about how to create playful experiences, along with simple low-cost play ideas.

Community events are ideal opportunities to meet with other people in a fun and friendly way – and to promote the importance of play. This helps parents to gain confidence to allow children to play out.



When asked how their opportunities to play could be made better, this is what children had to say:

- Having good waterproof clothes for bad weather
- Building a shelter to hang out
- Remove and clean up dog mess
- Contact pest control
- Have a bigger community hub for learning with kitchen facilities
- Have a space to play that is ours.

Tool 7: Skills audit

Look at the skills in the group. Are there any gaps in knowledge where you may need to ask for specialist help? It may be necessary to ask for support to address certain skills gaps.

Skills audit template

Skill needed	Who has the skill?
Leadership	
Supervising workers	
Team building	
Time management	
Managing conflict	
Managing change	
Project management	
Monitoring work	
Evaluating work	
Administration skills	
Specialist play knowledge	
Specialist childcare knowledge	
Publicity skills	
Report writing	
Event organising	
Fundraising	
Risk management/assessing	
Planning and design	
Building	
Landscaping	
Maintenance and repair	

Tool 8: Site play policy

Adopting a site play policy will make a significant contribution to providing rich opportunities for children and teenagers to play and socialise. A play policy will state the value that the community places on children and teenagers.

Site play policy template

This site recognises the importance of all the children who live here, and their visitors, having sufficient time and good places to play freely as part of their day.

To children, playing is one of the most important aspects of their lives. Playing contributes to children's health, wellbeing and happiness, as well as to their learning and their ability to learn. Some children only have the opportunity to play with their friends at the site. Most importantly, playing contributes to children's ability to thrive and survive.

We believe that we can make a very positive contribution to children's lives by valuing their urge and desire to play and providing for a broad range of play opportunities within the site.

This site recognises that children will naturally create and seek out challenging situations. While making the most of their play some children may have accidents, get dirty or wet or upset. We recognise that any potential risk of harm to children needs to be balanced with the potential for good that may come from their taking part in a particular form of play. We will do our best to avoid children coming to serious physical or emotional harm by carefully managing the play opportunities that we provide.

This site believes that adults' attitude towards, and understanding of, children's play behaviour will have a significant effect on the quality of the play opportunities offered within and outside the site.



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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.