



Making it possible to do Play Sufficiency:  
Exploring the conditions that support local  
authorities to secure sufficient opportunities  
for children in Wales to play

*'It's about incorporating play at every opportunity. You can have two upstand kerbs, if they're five and a half metres apart, you've got a call for kerby, haven't you? You can plant two trees regulation goal post distance and you've got Wembley Stadium.'*

*We recommend that you view this publication in a current version of Adobe Reader to be able to use the Bookmark function to navigate the document*



**Authors: Wendy Russell, Mike Barclay, Ben Tawil and Charlotte Derry**

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# Contents

<b>About the authors</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>About the panel</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>List of report cards</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>9</b>
Key messages from the research	<b>9</b>
Policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange	<b>10</b>
The built and natural environment	<b>10</b>
Children's and community services	<b>11</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1.0 Introduction to the study</b>	<b>13</b>
1.1 Research aims and methodology	<b>13</b>
1.2 The power of the example: report cards	<b>15</b>
1.3 Desk-based review	<b>16</b>
1.4 Local authority focus groups	<b>17</b>
1.5 Data analysis	<b>20</b>
1.6 The shape of the report	<b>24</b>
<b>2.0 Policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange</b>	<b>25</b>
2.1 Policy and strategy	<b>25</b>
<i>Report Card 1</i>	<b>25</b>
<i>Report Card 2</i>	<b>25</b>
2.2 Strategic partnerships	<b>27</b>
<i>Report Card 3</i>	<b>27</b>
<i>Report Card 4</i>	<b>28</b>
<i>Report Card 5</i>	<b>28</b>
2.3 Advocacy and infrastructure organisations	<b>28</b>
<i>Report Card 6</i>	<b>29</b>
<i>Report Card 7</i>	<b>29</b>
<i>Report Card 8</i>	<b>29</b>
2.4 Research	<b>30</b>
<i>Report Card 9</i>	<b>31</b>
<i>Report Card 10</i>	<b>31</b>
2.5 Education, training and knowledge exchange	<b>33</b>
<i>Report Card 11</i>	<b>33</b>
<b>A summary of recommendations on policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>3.0 The built and natural environment</b>	<b>36</b>

3.1 Child friendly cities and urban design	37
3.2 Housing design	40
<i>Report Card 12</i>	40
<i>Report Card 13</i>	40
3.3 Streets	41
<i>Report Card 14</i>	42
3.4 Freedom of movement	43
<i>Report Card 15</i>	44
3.5 Playgrounds, parks and open spaces	44
<i>Report Card 16</i>	45
<i>Report Card 17</i>	45
3.6 Rural issues	45
<i>Report Card 18</i>	46
<b>A summary of recommendations on the built and natural environment</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>4.0 Children’s and community services</b>	<b>48</b>
4.1 Playwork	48
<i>Report Card 19</i>	49
<i>Report Card 20</i>	49
<i>Report Card 21</i>	50
4.2 Schools	50
<i>Report Card 22</i>	52
<i>Report Card 23</i>	53
4.3 Youth work	53
<i>Report Card 24</i>	54
4.4 Cultural institutions	54
<i>Report Card 25</i>	55
<i>Report Card 26</i>	55
<b>A summary of recommendations on children’s and community services</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>5.0 Conditions to support securing sufficient opportunities for play: concluding thoughts and recommendations</b>	<b>57</b>
5.1 Repair and maintenance	57
5.2 Relatedness	64
5.3 Rights	65
5.4 Re-enchantment	67
5.5 Conclusion and final remarks: taking play sufficiency forwards	68
<b>Appendix 1: Abbreviations and acronyms</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Report Cards</b>	<b>78</b>

## About the authors

**Dr Wendy Russell** has worked in the play sector for over 40 years, first on adventure playgrounds in London, then in development, training, education and research roles. She has worked with the public, community and private sector at local, national and international levels. She is currently working as a consultant, lecturer and researcher in children's play and playwork, both independently and for the University of Gloucestershire, where she co-founded the biennial Philosophy at Play international conferences. She has a long involvement, through Play Wales, with the Welsh Government's Play Sufficiency Duty, in its development, carrying out four research projects and co-delivering professional development programmes for local authorities.

**Mike Barclay** is co-director of Ludicology. He is a qualified playworker, design engineer and adult trainer. Mike worked for 10 years as the Play Sufficiency Lead for Wrexham Council. His work continues to specialise in Play Sufficiency, involving participatory research with children; coordinating partnership working; developing more play-centred policies and practices; ensuring play and playwork are integral to the planning of services for children. Mike's work on Play Sufficiency has appeared in peer reviewed journals, professional publications and he has presented at national and international conferences.

**Ben Tawil** is co-director of Ludicology. He has worked in early years settings, in management positions at adventure playgrounds and as a national play development officer. Ben also has academic experience in both Higher and Further Education. His research projects include investigating the effects of loose parts play and physical activity, the sufficiency of children's opportunities for play and the influence of a playwork recess intervention on the school community. Ben regularly presents at national and international conferences and his work is published in peer reviewed journals, edited books and industry publications.

**Charlotte Derry** is an independent play and museum consultant. A former playworker and museum and art gallery professional, she currently promotes the work of the cultural sector in support of well-being, sustainability and play as an Associate of the Happy Museum. She delivers play development training for the cultural sector and is heading up an emerging sector network group, Playful Places, which aims to support museums and cultural venues to do more to improve the conditions for play and playfulness. Charlotte has also been part of the research team for two Play Wales projects exploring both the success of the Welsh Play Sufficiency Duty, and the conditions for securing sufficiency. She is co-author of *Rules for a Playful Museum* with Manchester Museum and has published and presented internationally.

## About the panel

**Tim Gill** is an independent scholar, writer and consultant. He is a global advocate for children's freedom to play and explore, and for a balanced approach to risk in childhood. The New York Times described Tim's 2007 book *No Fear: Growing up in a risk-averse society* as 'a handbook for the movement for freer, riskier play'. Tim's work cuts across education, childcare, recreation, planning and urban design. He is a Built Environment Enabler for the UK Design Council, and in 2017 was awarded a travelling fellowship from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust to study child-friendly urban planning. His website is [www.rethinkingchildhood.com](http://www.rethinkingchildhood.com).

**Dinah Bornat** is co-director of ZCD Architects, a practice in East London. Their work extends from small scale to medium sized residential, office and commercial buildings. The practice is passionate about socially inclusive architecture and urban design and has published a number of studies on the subject which supports their engagement work, aiming to bridge the gap between children and young people's lived experience and built environment objectives. Dinah is a Mayor's Design Advocate for the Mayor of London, a design review panel member of Harrow and Hounslow Councils and works with a number of local authorities across the country.

**Keith Towler** was the Children's Commissioner for Wales (2008 – 2015) and is currently an Independent Consultant. He is a respected children's rights expert with over 30 years experience in social work, youth work and youth justice roles. Keith is the Chair of the Interim Youth Work Board for Wales and the Wales Member of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. Keith is also the Treasurer of Play Wales and a Patron of The Venture in Wrexham and The Windfall Centre in Llandrindod Wells. Keith was a member of the International Play Association (IPA) Working Group that was asked by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to take a lead role in helping to draft the General Comment on Article 31.

# List of report cards

Name and number	Report section
1 Development of a risk management policy in Wrexham	2.1
2 Service-specific play implementation plan (Social Services)	2.1
3 Playing Out (Conwy summer holiday playschemes)	2.2
4 Partnership working on a Play Streets project in Cardiff	2.2
5 Establishing strategic groups with responsibility for play sufficiency	2.2
6 Playing Out Community Interest Company (CIC) in Bristol	2.3
7 Playday	2.3
8 Fields in Trust – Deeds of Dedication	2.3
9 Developing a research project with children in Monmouthshire	2.4
10 Research with schools in Cardiff	2.4
11 Life conferences in north Wales	2.5
12 Housing design in Vauban, Freiburg, Germany	3.2
13 Play in housing developments	3.2
14 Hackney Play Streets in London	3.3
15 Antwerp Speelweefselplan ('playspaceweb')	3.4
16 Rethinking play provision for disabled children in Cardiff	3.5
17 Green infrastructure and planning policy in Monmouthshire	3.5
18 Leasing of a woodland space in Wrexham	3.5
19 New playwork delivery model in Cardiff	4.1
20 Playwork as community work in Plas Madoc in Wrexham	4.1
21 Play KX in London	4.1
22 Rich Play Awards in Conwy	4.2
23 Schoolyard Oasis Project in Paris	4.2
24 Development of an inclusive youth club in Merthyr Tydfil	4.3
25 More Playful Museum Project at Manchester Museum	4.4
26 Play-Work Exhibition at Tŷ Pawb in Wrexham	4.4

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## Executive summary

This research study was carried out by Wendy Russell, Mike Barclay, Ben Tawil and Charlotte Derry. It builds on three previous studies (summaries available on the Play Wales website) that saw the Play Sufficiency Duty as one of paying attention to the conditions that support children's ability to find time and space to play. The current study took this principle back a level, focusing on the **conditions that support local authorities to take actions in support of children's opportunities to play**.

These conditions are affected by a whole range of contingent factors and circumstances that make it possible for people to enact Play Sufficiency (including people, personalities, knowledge, experience, relationships, policies and their interpretations, funding, organisational culture, national and international trends, research and physical landscapes).

The report highlights the connections and opportunities within these factors and circumstances, and provides examples and recommendations for Welsh Government, Play Wales, local authorities and the children's workforce. The research had **three strands**:

- desk-based research to identify international examples of actions taken at policy and practice levels in support of children's play;
- focus groups and some interviews with three local authorities to explore examples of actions taken, the conditions that supported these actions, issues faced by those who want to make a difference, and possible solutions and recommendations;
- working with a panel of 'expert witnesses', across professional domains, to advise on research outputs and recommendations (Tim Gill, Dinah Bornat and Keith Towler).

The focus groups included people working at strategic and frontline delivery levels across three interrelated professional domains:

- policy, strategic partnerships and advocacy (including research and knowledge exchange)
- the built and natural environment
- children's and community services.

The report includes 26 report cards, examples of actions taken to support children's play and the conditions that supported these actions, most by the case study authorities with some from the desk-based research. Each example shows the unique contexts, processes and people involved, but may offer adaptable ideas for those working to support children's play.

### Key messages from the research

Our findings encouragingly point to five headline conditions that can support local authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities for children:

- **policy** alignment with, and promotion nationally and locally of, the Play Sufficiency Duty;
- the right **people** in the right place at the right time with sufficient authority, capacity, capability and consistency;
- a consistent and dedicated source of **funding** for Play Sufficiency;
- existing and new **information**, including research and ways to share information;
- **openness to possibilities** (organisational cultures that allow for being able to respond to opportunities that arise).

These headline conditions underpin 13 recommendations.

## Policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange

The research found that at both national and local level there is a need for more **alignment of policies** through explicit links to the Play Sufficiency Duty in other Acts, Measures and statutory instruments. Given the strength of evidence of play's contribution to physical and mental health and well-being, the Play Sufficiency Duty's capacity to contribute to these agendas should be acknowledged.

There is also a need to **promote the Play Sufficiency Duty** itself at local and national levels.

Developing **specific local policies** can aid practitioners to work in ways that support children's play, including risk management policies that support staff to adopt a risk-benefit approach.

The statutory requirement to work in **partnership across professional domains** is a powerful enabler. The research found that successful examples involved committed individuals who had the motivation, passion, experience, knowledge and authority to instigate, inspire and maintain partnership working. This suggests that effective investment in Play Sufficiency means giving Play Sufficiency Leads the time (both the hours allocated in job roles and the length of time for development work to show results), space (one's place in the organisation confers the remit, authority and ability to make decisions and influence decision makers) and permission (an organisational culture of being open to experimentation) to do this, mirroring the key principle of the Play Sufficiency Duty itself in terms of children's time, space and permission to play.

The research highlights the importance of the work of national and local third sector **advocacy and infrastructure organisations**. The pivotal role of Play Wales in helping to create and maintain conditions for local authorities to deliver Play Sufficiency cannot be stressed enough. This is embodied in the experience, expertise and

commitment of their staff and the willingness of Welsh Government to work with them.

Opportunities for cross-professional **training, qualifications** and other forms of **knowledge exchange** have been significant enablers of effective partnership work leading to actions to support children's play.

In each of our three case study authorities, **research** with children was a starting point for actions to support children's play. Such research included creative ways of doing research with children on their relationship with their everyday spaces, often involving direct engagement with relevant spaces, for example, map-making, photographing significant spaces and walkabouts. Such research focuses on the micro-detail of very specific neighbourhoods. There is ample evidence of the generic issues that support or constrain children's play; these methods help adults to pay attention to the specifics of *this* space at *this* time for *these* children, enabling specific responses.

## The built and natural environment

Children's ability to play out is a matter of **spatial justice**: a just organisation of public space acknowledges children's right to play out and makes that possible. There is a growing body of research and practice supporting **child-friendly cities, housing design and streets** that show the value of designing and/or creating access to safe, nearby spaces and limiting moving and parked traffic.

Research on children's **freedom to roam** paints a picture of decline over decades. Nevertheless, if the conditions are right, children's preference is still for playing out. Many initiatives that support children's freedom of movement are closely linked to actions to support active travel.

Although we stress the importance of children having the freedom to roam and play out in their neighbourhoods, **designated playgrounds and parks** are a significant part of children's play lives. We found several examples of more creative approaches to designing for

children's play, supported by a growing number of resources, including Play Wales' community toolkit on designing and managing play spaces, aimed at supporting community groups, play associations or Town and Community Councils.

On average, roughly a third of the Welsh population live in **rural areas** (settlements with a population under 10,000), with that figure much higher in some areas. There is less attention paid to rural childhoods than to urban ones.

### Children's and community services

The influence of **playwork** on and the contribution of playworkers to the development and enactment of the Play Sufficiency Duty nationally and locally cannot be overstated. Those with playwork backgrounds and/or remits have repeatedly been the instigators or enablers for actions, pulling people together, developing collective wisdom, facilitating and developing responses to research with children, promoting the value of Play Sufficiency to relevant departments and organisations at national and local level.

Health and well-being is at the forefront of Welsh Government policy for **schools**, offering clear synergies with the Play Sufficiency Duty. There are several examples of improving play times in schools, but less success with attempts to open up school grounds out of school hours.

Despite differing aims, there is great potential for **youth workers** to contribute to securing sufficient opportunities for older children to 'play' (even though the children themselves they may not call it that). One specific area is the intention in the Youth Work Strategy for Wales to map youth work provision, including transitional provision (pre-11 years old), creating clear links with Play Sufficiency Assessments.

Finally, there is a growing interest within the **cultural sector** to understand and support children's play within museum and gallery institutions and in heritage sites.





## Recommendations

This report makes 13 recommendations for actions that can support local authorities to deliver on the Play Sufficiency Duty. Many of these will feed into the work of the current Ministerial Play Review. Headline recommendations are given here; the recommendations section at the end of this report expands on these to acknowledge work already being undertaken, give a rationale and context and make suggestions for implementation.

**Recommendation 1:** At national level, we recommend that Welsh Government continues the work being done to undertake and report on a mapping process to show the current and potential relationships between the Play Sufficiency Duty and other key legislation, policies and initiatives. The report should make recommendations for strengthening the links, particularly where explicit reference to the Play Sufficiency Duty would help create conditions for local authorities to deliver on the Duty.

**Recommendation 2:** We recommend that the Ministerial Play Review considers a protocol for Child Rights Impact Assessments in ways that can ensure the Play Sufficiency Duty is taken into consideration.

**Recommendation 3:** We recommend that local authorities work towards a more explicit and high-level alignment of the Play Sufficiency Duty to other policies, protocols and initiatives.

**Recommendation 4:** We recommend that a funded strategy to promote the Play Sufficiency Duty be developed by Welsh Government in partnership with Play Wales.

**Recommendation 5:** We recommend that Welsh Government seeks ways to provide a more consistent funding stream to support the statutory Play Sufficiency Duty.

**Recommendation 6:** We recommend that where resources are available at local authority level, they should consider being used in the first place to fund a permanent senior-level Play Sufficiency post whose role is to work strategically on Play Sufficiency.

**Recommendation 7:** We recommend that Welsh Government commissions Play Wales to work with them to continue current work to review, refresh and relaunch the full *Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit* in the light of both this research and *Children's Right to Play in Wales*, and also any changes that may arise from the Ministerial Play Review.

**Recommendation 8:** We recommend that local authorities find ways to embed partnership working on Play Sufficiency in their systems.

**Recommendation 9:** We recommend that Welsh Government, Play Wales and local authorities work to build on current efforts to bring cross-disciplinary professionals together, both to promote the Play Sufficiency Duty and to share research, experiences and ideas, for example through training, professional development programmes or multi-agency conferences.

**Recommendation 10:** We recommend that Welsh Government works with Play Wales to explore ways to support further research to inform delivering on the Play Sufficiency Duty.

**Recommendation 11:** We recommend that local authorities consider investing time and resources in ongoing ethical research with children using observations, mapping and other creative methods at micro-neighbourhood level, enabling a more in depth understanding of children's play habits and preferences to develop, and sharing those findings with other adults to enhance collective wisdom.

**Recommendation 12:** We recommend that Welsh Government and Play Wales review current information resources produced by Play Wales, including the *Focus on play* series and general collection, identifying areas for new or refreshed resources, and linking these directly to the new *Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit*.

**Recommendation 13:** We recommend that an assets-based approach to Play Sufficiency is adopted at national and local level in ways that support a re-enchantment with children's play.



# 1.0 Introduction to the study

Wales was the first country in the world to legislate in support of children’s play, placing a statutory duty on local authorities to assess and, as far as is reasonably practicable, secure sufficient opportunities for children to play, as part of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010. In its Statutory Guidance to the Duty, the Welsh Government states that it:

*‘encourages Local Authorities to acknowledge the importance of play in children’s lives and make a firm commitment to work strenuously within their own structures; with partner organisations; with children and their families and communities to ensure that children have access to the play opportunities that they want and have a right to expect.’<sup>1</sup>*

This legislation is of international significance: in 2013, shortly after all 22 Welsh local authorities had submitted their first Play Sufficiency Assessments to the Welsh Government, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child published a General Comment on Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which includes a recommendation that States Parties legislate in support of children’s play using the principle of sufficiency, taking a lead from the actions of the Welsh Government. In that document, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child notes:

*‘The Committee, in its reviews of implementation of the rights of the child under the Convention, is concerned by the poor recognition given by States to Article 31 rights. Poor recognition of their significance in the lives of children results in lack of investment in appropriate provision, weak or non-existent protective legislation and invisibility of children in national and local level planning. In general, where investment is made, it is in the provision of*

*structured and organised activities. Equally important is the need to create time and space for spontaneous play, recreation and creativity, and the promotion of societal attitudes that support and encourage such activity.’<sup>2</sup>*

These principles have informed this research study, which also draws on and develops conceptual tools used in three previous research studies on the Play Sufficiency Duty, two that were carried out at the commencement of each part of the Duty (assessing and securing sufficient play opportunities),<sup>3</sup> and a more recent study reviewing changes that have taken place over the six years and three rounds of Play Sufficiency Assessments.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.1 Research aims and methodology

This study focuses on the duty on local authorities to **secure** sufficient opportunities for children in their area to play, the second part of the Welsh Government’s Play Sufficiency Duty. Within this focus, we acknowledge that the processes of assessing and securing are not separate but interrelated and interdependent, and in places we have highlighted approaches to assessing Play Sufficiency as key actions towards securing it (for example, local neighbourhood creative and spatial research with children that leads to locally-tailored actions). We also acknowledge that Play Sufficiency is an ongoing process rather than an end point, insofar as maintenance and further re-assessments will always be necessary even if children’s opportunities for play are considered sufficient at a particular moment.

Our previous research has framed the Play Sufficiency Duty as one of paying attention to the conditions that support the emergence of playing, through the twin processes of **accountability** and **response-ability**: developing ways of accounting for how local conditions might support or constrain opportunities for playing and in response developing actions that might

reconfigure the way spaces work to open up possibilities for play. This includes designated spaces for play, the public realm and the institutions of childhood.

For this research study, we take this principle back a level, focusing on the **conditions that support local authorities to take actions in support of children's opportunities to play**. These conditions are affected by a whole range of contingent factors and circumstances (that can include people, personalities, knowledge, experience, relationships, policies and their interpretations, funding, organisational culture, national and international trends, research and physical landscapes) that make it possible for people to enact Play Sufficiency.

Given this focus, the research aims were:

- to identify existing or potential examples of practice in securing play sufficiency;
- to focus on the conditions that are likely to have maximum impact, regardless of the capacity and resource of local authorities;
- to explore ways that the findings can be developed into practical, simple and sustainable models, tools or training;
- to make recommendations for a range of resources and actions to help create local conditions that can support authorities to secure sufficiency.

There were three strands to the research:

- desk-based research to identify international examples of actions taken at policy and practice levels in support of children's play;
- focus groups and some interviews with three local authorities to identify examples of actions taken, the conditions that supported these actions, issues faced by those who want to make a difference, and possible solutions and recommendations;
- working with a small panel of 'expert witnesses', across professional domains, to advise on the design of research, the findings

and recommendations and research outputs. These were Tim Gill (independent researcher and advocate for children, Rethinking Childhood), Dinah Bornat (architect, Mayor's Design Advocate for the Mayor of London, ZCD Architects) and Keith Towler (former Children's Commissioner for Wales 2008-2015, Chair of the Interim Youth Work Board for Wales).

We drew on and developed the same principles and conceptual tools that have been used for the first three studies. These are briefly summarised here:

- **Collective wisdom:** acknowledging that there are many different ways of knowing and working, both across professional domains and in terms of children's different ways of knowing about their everyday lives and spaces.
- **Account-ability and response-ability:** the intertwined processes of *accounting* for children's ability to find time and space for playing, both in public space generally and in the institutions of childhood, and *responsiveness* in terms of rethinking habits and routines so that children can play, particularly in their neighbourhoods. Because of the way public space is organised, children are often excluded from playing out; this makes their right to play a matter of *spatial justice*.
- **Amin's four registers:** adapting Ash Amin's four registers for a 'good city',<sup>5</sup> namely repair and maintenance, relatedness, rights and re-enchantment. A brief summary of this adaption is given below, and in this study, it was used as a framework for the local authority focus groups (see Section 1.4) and for the recommendations (see Section 5):
  - **Repair and maintenance:** This is about keeping in good repair the many policies, funding streams, objects, technologies and practices necessary for societies to function, including children's ability to find time and space for playing. These things are necessary and they also create habits

of practice that can exclude some people from making use of and contributing to the common resources of public space and civic life. In this sense, this register is also about holding habits and routines up to critical scrutiny to see how they might support or constrain children's play.

- **Relatedness:** This register examines the connectedness, through the development of collective wisdom, of people of difference, operating at interconnected scales (neighbourhood, authority, national, global). In terms of Play Sufficiency, it is about adults acknowledging children's different relationship with and experiences of their environments as well as the right of different children to play, and it is also about working in partnership across professional sectors.
- **Rights:** This register addresses the right to participate in and shape neighbourhoods. In terms of Play Sufficiency, it is about respecting children's right to play as enshrined in Article 31 of the UNCRC and developed in General Comment 17. It is also about children's rights to participate in their own cultures of playing in their everyday lives, linking to Article 15 of the UNCRC (the right to peaceful assembly) as well as more formal Article 12 rights (the right for children to have a say and be heard in matters affecting them). From this perspective, children's right to play is a matter of spatial justice.
- **Re-enchantment:** This register pays attention to the things that make life worth living; it is about opportunities for free association and sociality in public spaces. For children, this largely means playing. This register also refers to adult response-ability in terms of a re-enchantment with children's play: the many, often small, changes that can be and have been made that leave space open for children's play to emerge.

- **An assets-based approach:** although we have not been explicit about this, the previous three research studies have implicitly applied an assets-based approach to Play Sufficiency, aligning with the approach taken in the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 and by Public Health Wales: '*An assets approach identifies factors that support good health and well-being and relies on working locally with communities*'.<sup>6</sup> Adapting this to Play Sufficiency requires moving away from a deficits-based view of children towards celebrating their skills and competence as players as well as their rich situated knowledge of their particular relationships with local spaces (collective wisdom). At the heart of this concept is the principle that if conditions are right children will play, and our response-ability as adults is to co-create those conditions. Given the wealth of evidence regarding play's contribution to health and well-being,<sup>7</sup> the Play Sufficiency Duty offers a powerful and significant assets-based and preventative contribution to realising the aims of a number of Welsh statutory instruments, particularly the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015. Play is what children do if given the chance; it is their way of being responsible for their own health and well-being.

## 1.2 The power of the example: report cards

In addition to the conceptual tools introduced above, this project takes a particular approach to the use of examples, presented in the form of 26 report cards. Drawing on the work of Brian Massumi,<sup>8</sup> and in line with the principle that multiple ways of knowing help build collective wisdom, the examples presented here are not offered as the best practice; nor have they been selected from an exhaustive trawl. Those working to improve children's opportunities to play will not necessarily be able to pick up an idea and replicate it exactly in their area. This does not invalidate the examples, however, far from it.

The ideas themselves are adaptable and can play out differently elsewhere. Also, being able to see what can and has been done is useful for strategic and responsive planning as well as for advocacy.

More importantly, however, the examples collectively show the conditions that support local authorities to deliver on the Play Sufficiency Duty. Each singular example shows the messy and contingent details of the unique contexts, processes and people involved. In this sense, they can stand for nothing but themselves. Nevertheless, although their value lies in their singular and *intensive* detail, we can discern patterns in the conditions that enabled the examples to be actualised; thus, they are also *extensive*. This has allowed us to propose some broad conclusions on the conditions that support actions to secure sufficient opportunities to play.

### 1.3 Desk-based review

The purpose of the desk-based review was to identify illustrations of actions that have been taken to support children's ability to find time and space to play beyond Wales. Again, of particular interest were the **conditions** that enabled the actions to emerge and to succeed. As Ray Pawson<sup>9</sup> notes, interventions are not neat, replicable, isolated and linear, but are messy and contingent. We were not looking for examples of best practice, nor did we select from an exhaustive trawl: we were looking for examples that could act as a vehicle to discern and demonstrate assemblages of conditions. However, it was not always possible to appreciate these for all of the examples. Some of the examples presented in this report from both the desk-based review and the focus groups will resonate with advocates and professionals for a range of reasons.

Carrying out a review to address the interests of this project was not straightforward. Much of the academic, peer-reviewed literature is either theoretical, making the case for particular approaches, understanding and/or actions; or evaluations of instrumental outcomes from specific interventions where playing is valued for

something other than play, such as increased physical activity or improved skills. 'Grey' literature on the other hand, meaning materials produced by (often small and local) organisations outside of the main publishing channels, often also has a point to make and acts as promotional material, perhaps occluding the messiness, contingency and unintended consequences of actions and interventions.

In addition, exploring the conditions that enable the emergence and sustainability of actions to leave space and time open for play implies a single starting point: a local activist, a new housing development, a new policy or regulation, for example. But the messiness, contingency and often opportunism of actions extends to appreciating that there is no discernible single point of beginning or ending: everything is always in the middle, always in the process of becoming through a series of encounters. Many of these are chance events, concepts and people that happen to collide and coalesce in a particular space and time, adding further to the difficulty of setting up examples as actions to be replicated in a simplistic and causal manner. Nonetheless, this does not diminish the value of exploring examples and their conditions, as they will add to the toolkit of those in strategic, advocacy and development positions regarding children's right to play. There are things that can be done to cultivate conditions that make the emergence of chance events more likely by enabling concepts and people to collide and coalesce.

To further complicate things, play permeates all aspects of the everyday lives of children, families, institutions and spaces. Actions to improve children's freedom of movement, for example, will inevitably affect their capacity to find time and space for playing, although the walkability of a neighbourhood cannot be absolutely equated to its playability.<sup>10</sup> This means searching with a wide sweep so as not to separate interventions whose primary purpose may initially appear tangential, (such as design of the built environment, actions to support environmental sustainability, walkability and active travel schemes, open space strategies, or health promotion schemes) from those



explicitly aimed at supporting children's ability to find time and space for playing.

For these reasons, together with the time limitations of the project, a systematic literature review was not considered possible or appropriate. The methodology therefore was a mix of some searches of the academic, professional and advocacy literature; recommendations and pearls of wisdom from the project's expert witness panel and the team (whose networks are extensive, interdisciplinary and international); together with two callouts on Twitter for examples. Given the social media networks of the research team, Twitter was chosen as the best platform to offer potential to extend the diversity of examples beyond the UK and our own immediate knowledge. The first of these Twitter callouts yielded 50+ responses, many linked to education or play provision, several on sport projects, less on design of the built environment, with many writing about what should be done rather than what has been done. There was also a heavy focus on the urban, which is understandable as this is the focus of much international research given the fast growth of urbanism and the projection that by 2050, 70 percent of children worldwide will live in cities.<sup>11</sup> There is less attention paid to rural childhoods than to urban ones. A second Twitter callout for specifically rural examples yielded 20 further responses.

Given all these caveats, the desk-based review did not seek to be exhaustive. The aim was to gather several examples to build a taste of what has been tried and what might be possible, and the conditions that might enable actions to support children's capacity to find time, space and permission to play. The review identified examples of projects and interventions that are accessible digitally, either through academic publications, professional websites, social media and the knowledge and experience of the research team and panel. For some of the examples, we carried out further interviews to explore the conditions that supported them.

An internal, outline report on these examples was used to inform the design and facilitation of the focus groups and plenary sessions with our case study local authorities, and it also fed into the overall data analysis process. Only a small number of the examples we found in the desk-based review have made their way into this report; those that have were selected because they help to broaden and/or deepen the examples from the focus groups. All efforts have been made to verify sources and to check details, but this is a small-scale study, largely desk-based and carried out in a short timescale.

## 1.4 Local authority focus groups

One of the principles of the Play Sufficiency Duty is the requirement to work across policy areas and professional domains. This is considered to be a major achievement of the Duty: its statutory nature, enacted initially through the requirement for three-yearly Play Sufficiency Assessments, has created the conditions for dialogue amongst those involved with planning, transport, housing, open spaces, green infrastructure, parks, education, social services and more. Where this has worked well, professionals who would not previously have considered that children's play was their responsibility, have acknowledged how their work affects children's ability to move around freely and find time and space to play and have been open to making changes.

Given this, we worked with three local authorities: Cardiff, Conwy and Monmouthshire. These were selected on the basis of their diversity, on information gathered in the previous study and on their ability to participate. We brought together, in focus groups, people working at strategic and frontline delivery levels across three broad professional domains, noting of course that these domains are interrelated:

- policy, strategic partnerships and advocacy (including research and knowledge exchange)
- the built and natural environment
- children's and community services.

These domains provide the headings for the three key chapters of this report.

Prior to each of the local authority events, a member of the research team worked with the Play Sufficiency Lead in each area to identify a range of examples or areas of work to be discussed across each of the professional domains, and to identify potential focus group participants whose work was associated with each of the examples.

The focus groups were held consecutively, mostly on the same day, with a plenary the following day to review and reflect on the cross-domain actions, conditions and issues, and to think forward. Where key individuals were unable to attend the focus groups, we used interviews to gather their stories. Each focus group was facilitated by two members of the research team, using multiple methods of accounting for the information gathered, in line with the principle of acknowledging that there can be no single account of such experiences. Discussions were audio recorded, notes were taken by a researcher and ten of the eleven focus groups were also recorded by a graphic illustrator, Eleanor Beer.

Each of the focus groups began with a brief introduction and context-setting to the research, which also introduced the conceptual tools briefly described above. Amin's registers were used to devise key questions for the focus groups, starting with 're-enchantment'. This starting point was intended to bring enthusiasm and optimism to the fore; the opening questions in this register were aimed at sharing stories of actions that had worked well, and then moved on to dig deeper into the conditions that supported those actions. The prompt questions are included in this report (see 1.4.1 below), because they show how the conceptual tools of the registers were used to encourage dialogue and also because others may wish to use them to review their own actions taken in support of Play Sufficiency. Often, the first few questions were enough to get the conversation flowing and the others were used as prompts to ensure areas were covered, raised when the moment was right, rather than being used in a rote fashion.

In the focus group discussions, we were interested in the conditions that made these examples possible, the people involved, the detail of how the examples came about, the chance meetings, the unexpected opportunities, the challenges and setbacks. We were interested in working with the messiness of real life. As we stated in *Children's Right to Play in Wales*:

*'Policy does not take place in a vacuum, and there have been many variables and events that have affected the progress made by local authorities, including each authority's starting point; austerity measures; the capacity, capability, confidence and consistency of people involved; changes in legislation, funding streams, inspection regulations and personnel.'*<sup>12</sup>

Following the focus groups, plenary sessions were held in each local authority. Prior to the sessions, the research team summarised key ideas from the focus group discussions by placing post-it notes onto an eco-systems model of nested circles (home, local communities, local governments, national government), recognising that these scales are interrelated. These were used to inform discussion at the plenary groups, together with the graphic illustrations.

It is of note that the processes developed for surfacing the detail of work undertaken in each local authority area were valued by those involved for their reflective benefits and for enabling them to think forward in respect of securing and developing Play Sufficiency. This made us realise that the approach we used in the focus groups can serve as an example of ways those responsible for leading on Play Sufficiency may engage with professional colleagues to explore their respective account-ability and response-ability. With this in mind, the questions used in the focus groups have been included below.

### 1.4.1 Focus group discussion prompts:

<p><b>Re-enchantment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did the idea come about (what were the conditions that enabled the examples to emerge and to be realised)?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was different about this example to other work?</li> <li>• What part has this example played in safeguarding and improving assets that support play?</li> <li>• How has people’s understanding of Play Sufficiency been altered in respect of this example?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Stories of (re)enchantment: What stories can you tell of how it developed to fruition?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planned and chance events</li> <li>• Barriers overcome</li> <li>• Lucky connections</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Repair and maintenance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What needed to be in place for the idea to be realised?</li> <li>• What issues was it trying to address (spatial/temporal conditions; repair/ rights/re-enchantment)?</li> <li>• What habits, routines and practices were addressed/changed in this example (spatial configurations/conflicts, temporal arrangements/conflicts, institutional arrangements)?</li> <li>• Was it aimed at particular children/communities?</li> <li>• How can the changes be maintained for the benefit of all?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Relatedness</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What partners are involved and in what ways?</li> <li>• Were children directly/indirectly involved in the idea and/or making it happen?</li> <li>• Has there been any community engagement and if so, to what end?</li> <li>• Has it involved having to advocate or shape attitudes?</li> <li>• What issues/considerations did you face (spatial/temporal/institutional) and how did you negotiate/overcome them?</li> <li>• What if any have been/will be the workforce development implications?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Rights</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How were children’s rights considered?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflecting on the example how would you say children are viewed, in respect of things like being-becoming citizens/citizens in the making?</li> <li>• How do you think this example influences children’s position in society?</li> <li>• How do you think the example influences children’s agency?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Finally</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your plans now with this example?</li> <li>• Do you think this could be done elsewhere? What tips would you have for others?</li> </ul>



## 1.5 Data analysis

Data gathered from the desk-based review were written up in a draft internal report. Data gathered at the local authority events were recorded using three methods: notes taken at the event, audio recording and recording by a graphic illustrator. The graphic illustrations combined all the focus groups for each local authority on one page. These are presented here as a preliminary taste of one of the multiple accounts of the dialogue and to showcase the examples discussed in each area.

All the researchers familiarised themselves with all the forms of data. We then spent a day 'playing' with the data in a creative and diffractive fashion,<sup>13</sup> reading insights through one another, weaving data through the conceptual tools, our own experience and knowledge and the project aims to produce ideas on how to use which examples in the report and the broad conclusions and recommendations regarding the conditions that can support local authorities to take action to secure sufficient opportunities for children to play.





# MAKING IT POSSIBLE TO SECURE PLAY SUFFICIENCY

## PLAY STREETS PILOT

**HAVING INFORMAL MEETINGS WITH RESIDENTS WAS KEY**

**PILOT OUTPUTS**

- TOOLKIT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES
- RESIDENT-LED STREET CLOSURES

**TIPS**

- PHYSICAL RESOURCES
- SUPPORT IN INFORMAL MEETING
- MANAGE EXPECTATIONS
- CONVERSATIONS ON WHAT'S NEEDED

**SCHOOL STREET CLOSURES**

ASKING CHILDREN FOR THEIR IDEAS ON SAFETY AND ROAD CLOSURES

WE LOOKED TO HACKNEY FOR INSPIRATION

5 SCHOOLS IN CARDIFF

WE NEED MORE SUPPORT

BE WILLING TO ADAPT

**CLOSURE 4 STREETS ACROSS CARDIFF**

WE WANT SAFER STREETS

**NATIONAL PLAY DAY**

FOR OUR CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES

**SENDING OUT LETTERS TO NOTIFY**

ALLOWING RESIDENTS TO SET THE PARAMETERS

**HAVING A FUND ALLOWED US TO BUY STREET CLOSURE KIT**

ROAD CLOSED

**WHATS APP GROUP**

**GIVE PEOPLE TIME TO EXPLAIN YOUR PLANS, RESPOND TO HOW STREET REACTS**

**ACTIVE TRAVEL PLAN**

## COMMUNITY PLAY

**PROJECTS: PICNICS**

PLAY IS A COMMON LANGUAGE

HOUSING ASSOCIATION HELP WITH FOOD

**TAKING PLAY SESSIONS INTO SCHOOLS**

**SPREAD THE WORD**

CLEANERS & CARE-TAKERS ARE, AT TIMES, BETTER NETWORKERS

**WHY SCHOOLS?**

- EVERYONE CAN PARTICIPATE
- SOME PARKS ARE UNSAFE
- SOME CHILDREN ARE VULNERABLE AFTER SCHOOL HOURS

**NETWORKS WITHIN SCHOOLS ARE KEY**

PLAY HELPS BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

**(20 SCHOOLS) CONFERENCE**

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR PERFECT PLAY SPACE?

**UN CHILDS VOICE**

PLAY SUFFICIENCY PROJECTS

SCHOOLS CAN BE ADVOCATES

**TIPS**

- STAFFING (experience)
- PHYSICAL RESOURCES
- PLANNING (consistency)
- WILLING TO CHANGE
- CREATIVITY

USE WHAT'S AROUND YOU

SKILLS LOOK AT WHAT'S AVAILABLE!

**PLAY EMPOWERS CHILDREN & HELPS WITH SOCIAL SKILLS**

## DISABILITY PLAY

**PLAY = and = TRAINING**

SOME IS PROVIDED WITH VISUAL STRATEGIES AND SENSORY SETTINGS

**CHALLENGES**

- FINDING SUITABLE BUILDINGS
- SAFE ENVIRONMENTS
- SO MANY DIFFERENT NEEDS (ever changing)

**PARKS**

WAYS OF CATERING TO DISABLED WITH DISCOVERY and SENSORY EQUIPMENT

NEW DEVS JUST WANT HOUSES

**TIPS**

- SHARE GOOD PRACTICE
- HIGH LEVELS OF SUPPORT
- SEE BIG PICTURE
- SMALL CHANGES MAKE A DIFFERENCE
- GET PARTNER BUY IN
- INFO. IS KEY

**WHAT WORKS? FIRST OPP.**

**GOOD HISTORY OF CHILD PROVISION**

**GOOD RELATIONSHIPS**

- WORKING WITH FAMILIES
- IDENTIFYING NEEDS

**WHAT MAKES SETTINGS SUCCESSFUL?**

- work off your own initiative
- 1 page profile
- no training

**1 PAGE PROFILE**

INFO GETS PASSED ONTO CHILDCARE PROVIDER.

**GETTING OUT OF THE CITY**

**CARDIFF SESSIONS**

VISUAL © ELEANORBEER.COM 2019



# MAKING IT POSSIBLE TO SECURE PLAY SUFFICIENCY

**HOUSING & LOCAL AUTHORITY PARKS**  
 Having Quality Standards was the catalyst for environmental improvements

**CONFERENCE**  
 DESIRE TO CHANGE

**PERSONALITY IN ORGANISATIONS**  
 EMPATHY

**CULTURE**  
 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE & PERMISSION IS THE SEEDBED FOR CHANGE

**DESIGNING SPACES and FACILITATE meetings with children**

**RE-EDUCATE**  
 CHANGE MINDSETS

**PROTECT GREEN SPACES**

**PASSION & BELIEF**  
 SUCCESS IS A HUGE DRIVER

**SUSTAINABILITY & UTILISATION OF SPACES**  
 TRUST THAT CHILDREN KNOW HOW TO USE THE SPACES

**TIPS**

- HAVE A P.O.C TO SHARE GOOD INTENTIONS
- HAVE CONFERENCES / WORKSHOPS
- MINDFUL OF PLAY IN JOB DESCRIPTIONS
- BE COMMUNITY FOCUSED

**IN ORDER TO DESIGN WITH SUCCESS - TALK TO THE CLIENT**

**WHAT DO YOU WANT?**

**INCORPORATE PLAY AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY**

**SPEAK WITH PARENTS**

**(RICH PLAY AWARD)**

USE LOOSE PARTS & JUNK TO **PLAY**

IMAGINATION

WHAT NEEDS TO BE IN PLACE FOR THIS TO WORK?

PROOF TO SHOW IT WORKS

OPEN MIND

TAKING A LEAP OF FAITH

IT GIVES US MORE IDEAS!

IT HELPS TO **DEVELOPS SKILLS**

BOOST SELF-ESTEEM & FRIENDSHIPS

PUT IT INTO Curriculum Time

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

- LOTS OF STUFF!
- ASK YOUR LOCAL BUSINESSES TO DONATE FREE MATERIALS

**FREEDOM**  
 IS SO GOOD FOR CHILDREN

USING **NATURAL MATERIALS**

**CVSC TRAINING**  
 WE HAD OUR EYES OPENED TO POSSIBLE POSITIVE CHANGES

RECYCLED MATERIALS

DENCH I CHHARRAE!

DEVELOPS SKILLS

BOOST SELF-ESTEEM & FRIENDSHIPS

PUT IT INTO Curriculum Time

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

- LOTS OF STUFF!
- ASK YOUR LOCAL BUSINESSES TO DONATE FREE MATERIALS

**FREEDOM**  
 IS SO GOOD FOR CHILDREN

**(PLAYING OUT)**

ORIGINALLY PLAY SCHEMES CATALYST

**CVSC**  
 & BUY IN FROM TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

NEW FUNDING EVERY 12 MONTHS

SUPPORT

NEED TO GET EARLY INTERVENTION & SUPPORT for them

**RELATIONSHIPS**  
 CONWY SESSION

**CHALLENGES**

- MAINTAIN RELATIONS
- STAFFING
- KNOCKING DOOR OFTEN

PLAY GRANT HAS HELPED

**ENGAGEMENT**

FAMILIES CAN ENGAGE WITH A VARIETY OF SERVICES / SESSIONS

THERE'S BEEN A **SHIFT** IN WHAT ADULTS THINK

**ADVOCACY**  
 IS A KEY PART OF OUR ROLES

**TIPS**

- BUY 2 VANS
- HR SUPPORT
- INSURANCE (harr)

**WHAT DO YOU NEED?**  
 TOWN + COUNCILS **FUNDING** REGULARLY FOR MORE SESSIONS (MORE YEAR-ROUND)

**BANK OF RELEASE STAFF**

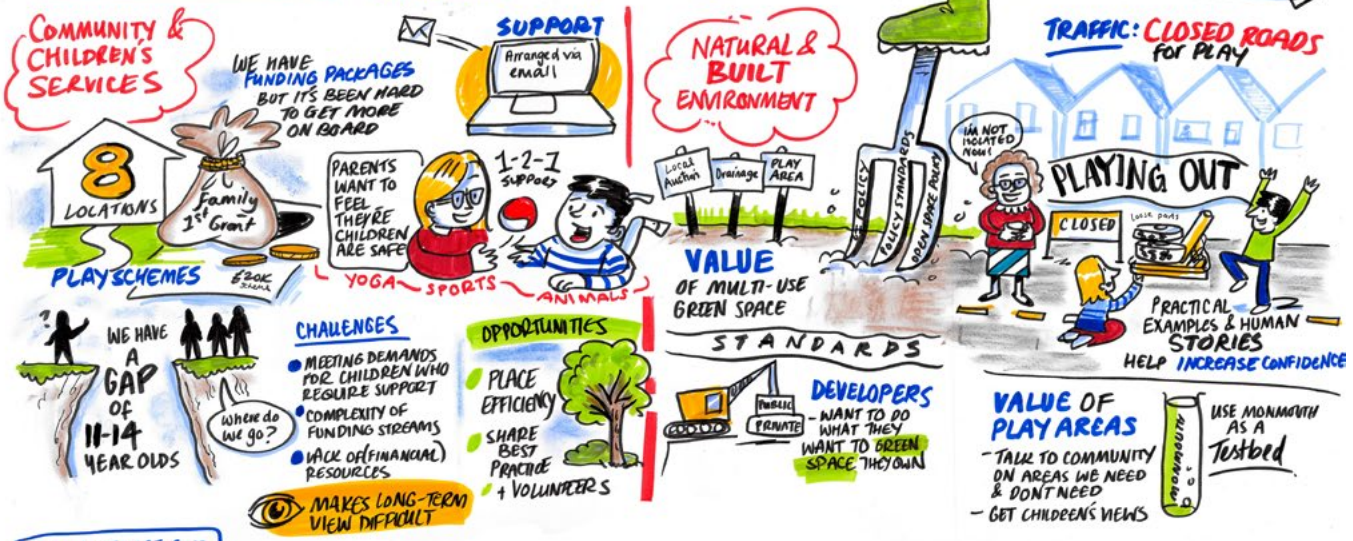
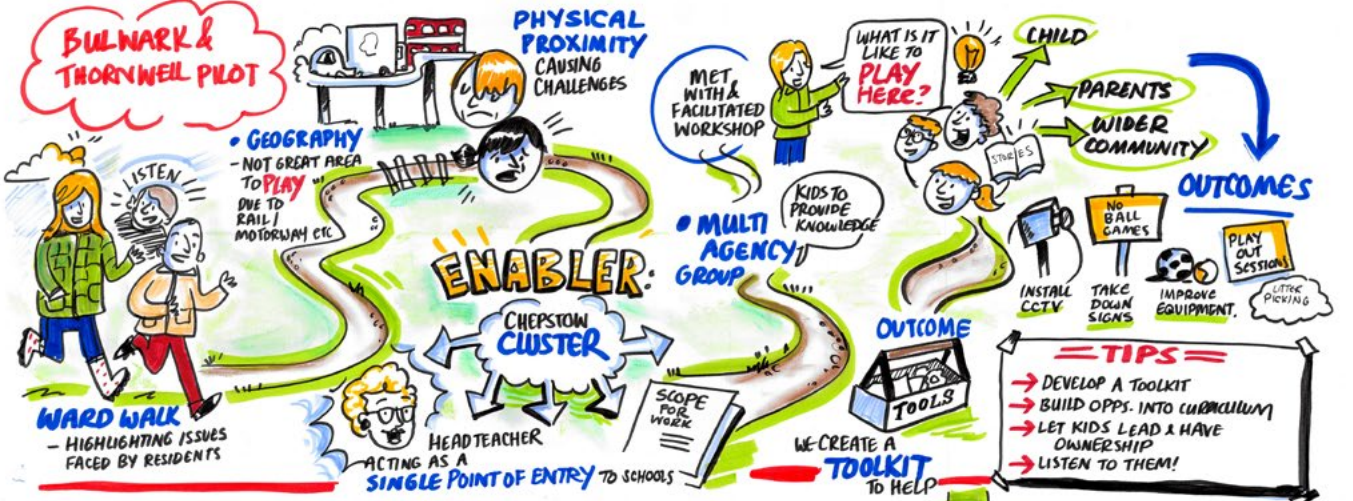
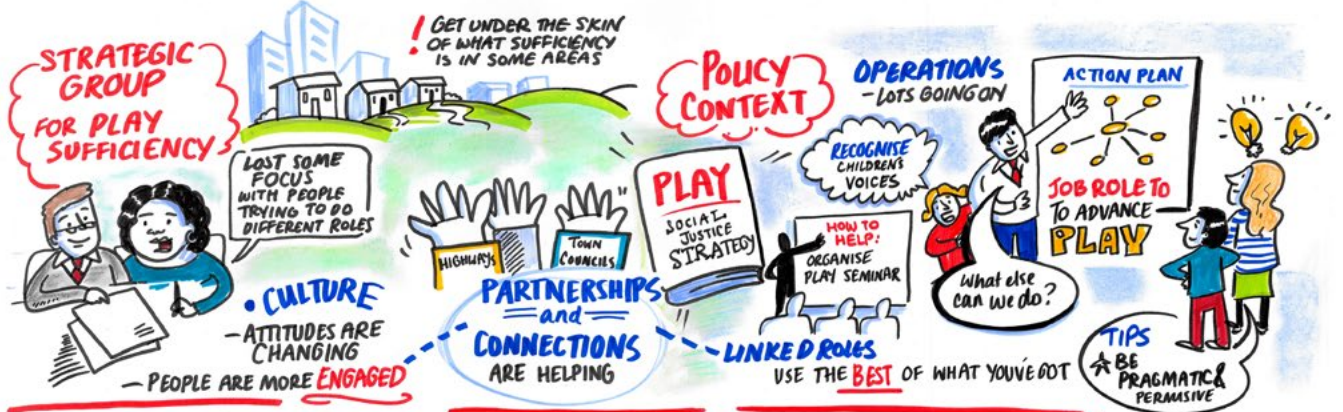
**KIDS GET A LOT OUT OF IT!**

**HOLIDAY HUNGER**

**SOMETIMES CHILDREN JUST NEED TO BE LEFT TO PLAY**



# MAKING IT POSSIBLE TO SECURE PLAY SUFFICIENCY



MONMOUTHSHIRE 2019

VISUAL © ELEANORBEER.COM 2019



## 1.6 The shape of the report

The central three sections of the report are structured using the three professional domains used for the local authority focus groups as ways to cluster the examples, namely policy, strategic partnerships and advocacy (including research and knowledge exchange); the built and natural environment; and children's and community services. As will become clear, often the examples span several domains and operate across scales (home, community, local government, national government, global). Within each domain sub-section, there is a general introduction and then specific examples are presented in very brief infographic form as report cards. Woven throughout the narrative will be further details as they illustrate some of the conditions for actions to be realised, building the argument for the recommendations.

Each section closes with a conclusion that includes the headline recommendations presented in more detail in section 5. Section 5 returns to Amin's registers (repair and maintenance, relatedness, rights and re-enchantment) to bring together the findings and summarise the conditions that support local authorities to take actions to secure sufficient opportunities for children to play, offering recommendations and concluding thoughts. Recommendations are presented under the headings of Amin's registers, as this acknowledges the interrelatedness of the three domains of sections 2, 3 and 4. However, this does mean that the numbering of recommendations presented in the conclusion to sections 2, 3 and 4 are not sequentially numbered.





## 2.0 Policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange

This domain embraces all those high-level contexts, relationships and actions that contribute to making it possible for local authorities to enact Play Sufficiency, including policy development and implementation; strategic partnerships that operate at a sufficiently senior level to make a difference; and a range of forms of knowledge exchange practices including research, advocacy, education and training. Such actions might be seen as 'remote' or indirect, but they are intimately interwoven with more direct actions at local level, contributing to a co-produced landscape that supports children's ability to find time, space and permission for playing. Although we continually stress the interrelatedness of contexts, people and actions, we have had to separate out aspects, to uproot them from their context and relatedness, to present this report with some kind of coherent structure. Policies, practices, spaces, institutions and people do not operate in isolation, nonetheless, we have offered headings to provide a way of organising the rich material this research has gathered.

### 2.1 Policy and strategy

This section considers national and local government strategies, plans, initiatives and ideology as well as specific pieces of legislation. All these can be seen as 'outputs' of interrelated and contextual policy processes that include agenda setting (what is seen as important), developing specific policies and then implementing and evaluating them. As we said in *Leopard Skin Wellies*:

*'Policy (including legislation) develops through a sequence of interrelated decisions, often building incrementally and opportunistically (as a response to changing conditions politically and economically) on what has come before rather than through radical change. It is influenced at a number of levels by networks of actors with varying agendas and resources such*

*as political, constitutional or legal authority, financial power, knowledge and expertise, control over the flow of information, network connections, and so on.'*<sup>14</sup>

This shows the complex and contingent nature of how any policy emerges. The two report cards given here show how specific local policies have developed in response to a recognised need to give official support and permission to practitioners to work in specific ways that support children's opportunities to play on their own terms, including taking risks. The conditions that supported the development of these policies included the Play Sufficiency Duty itself and key people who saw the need for official policies that could respond to current constraints on children's opportunities to play.

[See Report Card 1](#)

[See Report Card 2](#)

#### 2.1.1 The Play Sufficiency Duty

Of course, the Play Sufficiency Duty itself sits within the domain of Policy and Strategy, and much has been achieved since its commencement in 2013 despite the deep-cutting, disenchanting forces of austerity measures whose effects ripple across all aspects of children's everyday lives. However, this, together with the agreed cost-neutral basis for commencing the second part of the Duty, has required local authorities to think differently about how to work towards securing sufficient opportunities for play. The Welsh Government's All Wales Play Opportunities Grant (AWPOG) funding has helped significantly in this, although has not been without issues, as discussed in *Children's Right to Play in Wales*.<sup>15</sup> The existence of the Play Sufficiency Duty, and its requirement to rethink local authority responses, has set many hares running in many directions, influencing people's work in ways it is impossible to quantify.

However, throughout the focus group conversations across the three professional domains, and in the plenary sessions, several recurring issues arose in relation to policy-level actions that could help to create conditions to enact Play Sufficiency. We have brought these together here, supplemented by observations we have also drawn from the desk-based research and our previous research.

### Alignment of policies

In a blog article looking at UK planning law, Adrian Voce discusses early pre-publication findings from research commissioned by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), stating that:

*'The research indicates that in recent years, of the four UK nations, Wales has had the most child-friendly planning policy ... the latest Planning Policy Wales (PPW) was released in December 2018, and now aligns with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015, to embrace the concept that people-centred placemaking is a route to wellbeing. Children's rights also form the basis of child-focused legislation in Wales, including a duty on local authorities to assess and develop plans for a sufficiency of play opportunities for all children. With appropriate "linking-up" of all these policy areas and faithful implementation, Wales has the greatest potential for child-friendly planning at present.'*<sup>16</sup>

It is that 'appropriate linking up' that is crucial. Although the requirement to work across policy areas has helped to open doors to partnership working at local government level, there was a feeling that more can be done to support this at national level.

Partnership working has meant that to some degree and in some areas there is a more sophisticated awareness of just how much other policy areas affect children's ability to find time and space to play, but this is not always reflected in Acts, Measures and policies themselves, or in

the statutory instruments or guidance attached to them. Similarly, given the strength of evidence of play's contribution to policy agendas such as physical and mental health and well-being, more could be made across Welsh Government of the Play Sufficiency Duty in helping to realise these agendas.

### Promotion of the Play Sufficiency Duty at national level

There was a sense from the discussions that the Play Sufficiency Duty, as part of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, has a lower status than other pieces of government legislation or national initiatives. For many years, until Scotland passed the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, Wales was the only country in the world to have such legislation, despite it being a firm recommendation from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in General Comment 17, published in 2013. There has been much interest from other countries in the Welsh Play Sufficiency Duty, and the Welsh Government should be proud of its role in the beginnings of a shift in policy narratives concerning children's play. The desk-based review carried out for this study shows an international interest in children's use of space from international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), urban and town planners, architects, landscape architects, educators, the cultural sector, health professionals, those interested in issues of environmental sustainability and transport, and more.

Wales took a bold and radical step introducing the Duty, which was coherent with the rights-based approach to all Welsh legislation affecting children, and this has opened the door to innovative approaches, actions and practices. The statutory instruments that support the Duty acknowledge both the intrinsic value of play as well as its capacity to speak to other policy agendas (although these are not binary opposites). They also embrace the fact that children play anywhere and everywhere, making play a matter of spatial justice and therefore the responsibility of more than just play services, crucial though these are. The deliberate ambiguity in the concept of sufficiency caused some

consternation initially, but is now welcomed by some, (as our interviews for *Children's Right to Play in Wales* show), as it allows for creativity and a willingness to think differently about assessing and securing sufficient opportunities for play.<sup>17</sup>

Given the potential for the Play Sufficiency Duty to speak to other agendas (precisely because of its radical understanding of both play and the concept of sufficiency), more should be done to promote the Duty itself across Welsh Government and local authority departments, national bodies, voluntary and community organisations and with the public more generally. The current Play Wales *Playful Childhoods* campaign<sup>18</sup> is to be commended in promoting the importance of play to families; what we are suggesting here is that the Play Sufficiency Duty itself also needs to be promoted, both to professionals and to communities.

## 2.2 Strategic partnerships

A major achievement of the Play Sufficiency Duty since its commencement has been the opportunities that have flowed from effective partnership working. Partnership working was one of the key narratives of the new Welsh Assembly Government from the start,<sup>19</sup> and at a national level, this has been seen in the fruitful partnership with Play Wales that has been central to supporting local authorities to deliver on the Play Sufficiency Duty.

At local authority level, the Duty requires working across local authority departments, with professionals in the voluntary and community sector, and with children and families in neighbourhoods. As we showed in *Children's Right to Play in Wales*, the extent to which local authorities have been able to establish effective relationships with professional colleagues across departments has varied, but most authorities reported good working relations with some departments, if not all. The focus groups enabled us to delve more deeply into the conditions that supported effective partnership working. All the examples given in this report are examples of partnership working, but most are placed in other domains and sections of the report.

One example offered here shows a partnership model for delivering Open Access outdoor playschemes between Town and Community Councils, Conwy County Borough Council and Community and Voluntary Support Conwy (see Report Card 3). A key enabler here was the expertise, experience and networks of the Play Sufficiency Lead (employed by Community and Voluntary Support Conwy), together with a functioning cross-departmental Play Sufficiency Task and Finish Group.

### See Report Card 3

The statutory requirement to work across professional domains is a very powerful enabler; alongside this, it needs to be acknowledged that building relationships and effective partnerships takes time and some consistency and considered leadership. Time and again, the examples we heard involved committed individuals who had the motivation, passion, experience, knowledge and authority to instigate, inspire and maintain partnership working. This suggests that effective investment in Play Sufficiency means giving Play Sufficiency Leads the time, space and permission to do this, mirroring the key principle of the Play Sufficiency Duty itself in terms of children's time, space and permission to play.

*Time* implies both sufficient hours for the role (our research indicates that this would preferably be at least one full time post that can focus exclusively on Play Sufficiency) and also the length of time it takes to realise and embed innovations.

*Space* refers to one's place within organisational structures, the importance of having the remit, authority and ability to make decisions and influence decision makers. This is for two reasons. Firstly, if the Duty is to have the status it deserves, the lead officer should be in a position to make those policy and strategy connections. Secondly, in authorities that do have a dedicated play service, the orientation is often towards operational delivery, meaning that lead officers spend their time on operational issues and do not have the space for working strategically.

Finally, *permission* refers to the organisational culture: the really exciting changes that have occurred in organisations that encourage innovation and experimentation, and where staff are supported to work opportunistically and to engage with uncertainty.

Many of the examples gathered from the focus groups highlighted how a partnership with others operating at senior level, or working on a high-level strategy or programme, was able to provide the connections and impetus to make things happen. One example of this is the Play Streets initiative in Cardiff (see Report Card 4).

### See Report Card 4

Another conclusion we drew from the case study authorities concerns the potential of a high-level **strategic** group whose role is to think forward on Play Sufficiency rather than just monitor it; such a group can from time to time establish task and finish groups where necessary (see Report Card 5).

### See Report Card 5

In line with this is the importance of being able to interconnect all the authority's strategies, and that Play Sufficiency itself needs to be referenced in top level plans and strategies. Some authorities have developed protocols regarding when to work cross-departmentally, including when to bring in professionals working on Play Sufficiency.

More generally, bringing people together to talk about Play Sufficiency is valuable: this might be occasional themed conferences with invited speakers (for example, Play Wales ran a conference on research into Play Sufficiency in 2019), or it might be a more general awareness raising or sharing research and/or stories of what has been achieved both within and across authorities. The chance to talk, to engage face-to-face, helps to re-enthrall people with what more might be possible to secure Play Sufficiency.

## 2.3 Advocacy and infrastructure organisations

This section looks at the role of organisations outside of local authorities that can promote, support and even fund actions to support Play Sufficiency. Since its inception in 1999, the Welsh Assembly Government (now the Welsh Government) sought to develop a different form of governance from that of the UK Government, with particular narratives of partnership working between key stakeholders, traditional welfarism and universality of services, and placing citizens at the centre.<sup>20</sup> Within this, there is a strong history of working in partnership with the 'third sector' (non-governmental organisations who work for the public good and are non-profit making), formalised in the 2006 Government of Wales Act's Third Sector Scheme. The Act '*requires Welsh Ministers to make a Scheme which is a statement of Welsh Ministers' intent to support and promote, in the exercise of their functions as Welsh Ministers, the interests of relevant voluntary organisations*'.<sup>21</sup> Within this, there is a particular commitment to sharing views and opinions, and consulting on new and ongoing legislation and legislative processes.

This can be seen in the pivotal role of Play Wales in helping to create the conditions for local authorities to be able to deliver on Play Sufficiency. As we stated in *Children's Right to Play in Wales*, the importance of this work and the experience, expertise and commitment of Play Wales staff cannot be stressed enough. They were key players in developing the legislation and statutory guidance and are funded by the Welsh Government to support the processes of Play Sufficiency in a number of ways, including '*through regional meetings to support local authorities with Play Sufficiency; commissioning and disseminating research; national reviews of local authority Play Sufficiency documents; commissioning professional development programmes; running a series of cross-professional conferences; developing playwork qualifications through the Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales (PETC Wales); commissioning, writing and publishing information sheets and toolkits; and personal officer support*'.<sup>22</sup>



The role of the third sector has changed significantly over the last few decades given first the shift to contractual relationships with the state, with increasing levels of performance measurement and competition, and secondly the effects of austerity measures. The loss of the regional Play Associations, originally funded, but not exclusively, through the Big Lottery, has been keenly felt by local authorities in terms of their capacity to deliver on the Play Sufficiency Duty. The few Play Associations that remain operate with significantly reduced capacity, with varied operations across service delivery and infrastructure support. In addition, there is still a network of County Voluntary Councils covering each local authority, and a few of these play a significant role in supporting the delivery of the Play Sufficiency Duty. There is implicit appreciation here then that third sector organisations may have pre-existing conditions that enable responsiveness. While this may be true, third sector organisations still report being stretched to an unreasonable and unsustainable degree by the requests of local authorities to be responsive and account for what they are doing, much of which is beyond what local authorities could do themselves.

The strength of the third sector, when it is working well, is simultaneously to work in partnership with the state and to operate as a critical friend. Those that establish themselves as advocacy organisations are free(er) to campaign and lobby, and to raise funds, in ways that the public sector is not. Often formed around a single issue and with passionate and committed personnel (whether paid or voluntary), they can present powerful arguments and can be powerful allies for Play Sufficiency Leads. For example, the

Bristol-based Community Interest Company (CIC) Playing Out started originally with two local mothers trying to close a residential street for their children to play and over ten years have developed into a national and international 'movement' (see Report Card 6). Playing Out has supported the development of play streets in Wales, including attending a meeting with Cardiff Council staff and Play Wales, and providing the basis for the street play manual for residents in Wales on the Play Wales website<sup>23</sup> (see Report Card 4 in Section 2.2).

### **See Report Card 6**

Closely linked to advocacy are the single-issue campaigns that can support delivering on the Play Sufficiency Duty. Two examples of current campaigns are given here. The first is Playday (see Report Card 7), which offers an opportunity to hold a public event that can bring together children, families, communities, professionals and politicians as well as promote the importance of play to the media. These annual events provide a high-profile opportunity through which political and public awareness of play and the Play Sufficiency Duty can be raised, thereby encouraging people to pay greater attention to these issues beyond the events themselves.

### **See Report Card 7**

The second is a part of the work of Fields in Trust to champion the importance of parks and green spaces and to protect and support them. Land can be protected from development through a Deed of Dedication (see Report Card 8).

### **See Report Card 8**

## 2.4 Research

In the context of this study, research is seen as a fundamental part of the development of collective wisdom, through the twin processes of account-ability and response-ability. Account-ability is about finding multiple ways to account for children's relationship with their environments (which includes interrelated physical, social and affective aspects); it requires paying attention to children's ways of knowing about space and what it has to offer. Response-ability is about adults developing an ability to be responsive to the ways in which children move through their everyday environments and keep these environments open to possibilities for playful moments to emerge. Play Sufficiency itself may be described as a continuous process of research, of gathering multiple ways of knowing across policy, professional practice and communities about how spaces work to constrain or support children's ability to find time and space to play. Whilst the three-yearly Play Sufficiency Assessments might mark technical and bureaucratic deadlines, with a flurry of intensive activity in the run up to the submission date, account-ability – accounting for, gathering information – should be ongoing, so that when the three-yearly cycle comes round, authorities have a sound evidence basis for the assessment and the action plan.<sup>24</sup>

The Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit requires authorities to say how they have consulted with children; the shift suggested here is away from thinking in terms of consultation and towards research. There are several examples of Welsh local authorities supplementing the valuable online surveys<sup>25</sup> with more creative research with children undertaken at a very local level. In each of our three case study authorities, research with children had been a starting point for actions to support children's play and for doing things differently. The rich data gathered from children can be used as evidence not only to inform the Play Sufficiency Assessment and action plan, but to influence others, including parents. Dinah Bornat and Ben Shaw highlight the value of researching with children in terms of urban neighbourhood design:

*'The expertise of children to be able to bring life and insight to a place through their stories and descriptions is invaluable to professionals working on urban development. The knowledge of children needs to be paired with the expertise of urban professionals in design and delivery. Engagement of children must focus on the lived experience not abstract concepts of urban design.'*<sup>26</sup>

One example from our study is the research process undertaken in Conwy through a partnership with the social landlord (Cartrefi Conwy) and the Principal Play Officer at Community and Voluntary Support Conwy (see Report Card 13, in section 3.2), where research with children highlighted how they played on the estate and what needed protecting; the report from this provided the basis for the design brief. Observations of children playing were as important as the research with children. This, together with attending a 'Park Life' conference (see Report Card 11, in section 2.5) and the ongoing relationship with the Principal Play Officer, meant that the social landlord's Environmental Development Officer (a landscape architect) was motivated to think beyond designated places for play to also consider how the landscape can be used as a multifunctional environment and as part of that how to create affordances for play throughout the public realm:

*'It's about incorporating play at every opportunity. You can have two upstand kerbs, if they're five and a half metres apart, you've got a call for kerby, haven't you? You can plant two trees regulation goal post distance and you've got Wembley Stadium.'*

The Environmental Development Officer described how his designs often faced opposition from parents who wanted to see traditional playgrounds; here the research evidence from the children themselves was more convincing than the professionals' opinions – and, of course, that they could evidence that the spaces incorporated into the designs were popular with children.

There are several creative ways of researching with children about their relationship with their everyday spaces. Asking children in surveys or interviews will yield useful general information, but often the rich material gathered from research can reach beyond the limits of language and a formal consultation context. Such methods can use games and other creative activities, and often involve direct engagement with relevant spaces: map-making, photographing significant spaces and walkabouts. The aim is to appreciate children's different relationships with space, what they find exciting, safe, boring or scary, and the significance attached to places through naming. Such research focuses on the micro-detail of very specific neighbourhoods, rather than broad generalisations about children's use of space. There is ample evidence of the generic issues that support or constrain children's play; what these methods do is help adults to see and pay attention to the specifics on *this* space at *this* time for *these* children, enabling specific responses (see Report Card 9 and Report Card 10).

**See Report Card 9**

**See Report Card 10**

Often such research reveals the power relationships inherent in how spaces are produced. Adult intentions for space – the purpose behind urban, town and traffic planning – often give priority to movement of people and goods over places to meet and play.<sup>27</sup> Abstract space designates single functions for specific sites, often designed to protect property and other private interests. A low wall, for example, demarcates a pavement and a private house, its design intention is to prevent the public from entering the private space.

But to a small child, it affords the possibility of balancing along the wall, disrupting the original design purpose.<sup>28</sup> A bus stop is designed to help move people around for work or leisure (both economic activities); for a group of teenagers it offers a place to congregate. Whether wall-climbing or hanging out in the bus stop are acceptable to more powerful adults depends on many factors. Kytta's fields of action<sup>29</sup> provide a useful conceptual tool here and have been used much in Play Sufficiency research.<sup>30</sup> The fields of promoted and constrained action refer to affordances that can or cannot be actualised. In between these two fields and overlapping them is what she terms a field of free action. The low wall will call to the small child and she wishes to climb it whether it is permitted or not: children will seek to enlarge their fields of free action, sometimes to the concern or irritation of adults.

(As an aside, a key insight this tool offers for those planning for children's play is that adults cannot provide a field of free action, since to do so would render it a field of promoted action. Nevertheless, we can be aware of it and leave space open for fields of free action to be actualised.)

Walkabouts, map-making, soundscapes and photographing significant spaces are all methods that can help towards gathering collective wisdom on what spaces afford for children's playing both physically and socially. Such spatial methods move beyond the limits of language and can to an extent mitigate the impact of disproportionate power relations between adults and children in research contexts, but adults still need to bring an ethical sensitivity to those relationships and to the responsibility of knowing more about where and how children use space for playing. Another example of researching with children that has drawn significant conclusions regarding design for child-friendly cities is that undertaken by Dinah Bornat and Ben Shaw. They too have used:





*'methods [that] enable us to get space-specific insights rather than general comments on children's lives ... [and that move] away from a partitioning of behaviours, towards a more holistic understanding of children and their lives, by focussing on their right to move around their local area safely and in accordance with their own wishes and desires. We do this by both listening to children themselves and by observing how they use spaces, drawing conclusions that suggest that the design and layout of a neighbourhood can have a real and lasting impact on their lives'.<sup>31</sup>*

Maps are particularly powerful in terms of developing a collective wisdom regarding space. Children's maps offer a very different topography from official maps, showing what they think is important to include and how they want to represent specific spaces and features. The *Mapping the City* project at Northumbria University<sup>32</sup> has this to say about the power of maps:

*'Maps represent knowledge and power. Knowing where the best soil is, the quickest way from A to B, and how to navigate dangerous lands has always provided big advantages. This is why the history of maps is so closely linked to ruling elites and the military. For these groups, geographical knowledge represented immense amounts of control over those people, places and treasures included in maps.*

*Cartographers, as the makers of maps, are, therefore, incredibly powerful. Cartographers begin with a blank page: a map where nothing exists. Because a map can't show everything – it would be too big or too cluttered to be useful – decisions are made about what to include and what to leave out. Mapmakers bring into being content which they or their masters deem significant and, importantly, they decide what to leave out. Entire mountain ranges, populations or even countries can be made invisible at the stroke of a cartographer's pen, or click of their mouse. That is a lot of power to wield.'*



Working with children to draw maps of the spaces they frequent (neighbourhoods, schools, town and city centres, parks and green spaces) opens up the opportunity for children to disturb that power through sharing their rich and situated knowledge about the spaces they access and what matters most to them.

We end this sub-section with a word of caution regarding the ethics of researching with children about their relationships with space and where they play. Sometimes research may reveal spaces where children play that (some) adults feel are not suitable (for example, quarry pools, railway cuttings, or particular areas that may be considered socially risky), with actions to prevent access to such spaces. Or they may reveal spaces children feel are secret, where they wish to escape adult attention. Making children's places known may also carry risks, in terms of publicising the whereabouts of children to those who may wish to harm them. These are ethical issues that should be addressed with respect and sensitivity.

## 2.5 Education, training and knowledge exchange

In 2017, Play Wales published a workforce development plan that reinforced the difference between the playwork workforce and the play workforce, the latter being all those professionals whose work has an impact (direct or indirect) on children's ability to find time and space to play. Many of these (but not all) will already be highly qualified and experienced in their own professional sphere, and so professional development opportunities need to acknowledge this and work at an appropriate level.

As we reported in *Children's Right to Play in Wales*, innovative ways to engage non-play professionals in appreciating their role in Play Sufficiency, have included the 'Life' conferences (School Life, Park Life, Home Life, Street Life) (see Report Card 11); a professional development programme for local authorities; and the development of an e-module on play for non-play specialist local authority staff.

Events and training or professional development programmes also have the benefit of bringing people together locally, regionally or nationally, facilitating networking and partnerships both across and between authorities, allowing a sharing of stories and experiences, sparking ideas or suggesting solutions to knotty problems.

### See Report Card 11

Play Wales has a key role here also, through their support of the Life conferences, their commissioning of a professional development programme for local authorities, commissioning research, and in their own regional meetings and conferences, together with the impressive range of information sheets and toolkits they produce for local authorities to draw on. This research and the Ministerial Play Review provide an opportunity to review and refresh these, including the full Play Sufficiency Duty Toolkit.

In Wrexham, the play development team has developed a programme of training aimed at professionals who work directly with children. The brochure highlights the importance of these professionals being able to develop their understanding of play:

*'In doing this there needs to be a cultural shift from seeing play as just one of the "tools" adults can use when intervening in children's lives to a situation where understanding and supporting play is recognised as being fundamental to understanding and working with children. Practitioners then need access to professional development opportunities that reflect their level of experience and prior knowledge, allowing them to continuously deepen their understandings of play-centred practices. The play workforce in Wrexham therefore needs access to play based qualifications and training opportunities that range from basic, introductory courses to degree (or even postgraduate) level studies.'*<sup>33</sup>

For those who have already qualified in related professions (such as teaching, youth work or social work, childcare or community development), Play Wales has developed Managing a Holiday Play Scheme Award (MAHPS), a Level 3 Award intended to qualify those registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) as the Person in Charge of a holiday playscheme.<sup>34</sup> The Level 2 Award in Playwork Practice (L2APP) acts as a short, freestanding qualification, providing seasonal playworkers with a licence to practice in regulated settings; in addition, when held in conjunction with an appropriate early years childcare or youthwork qualification it also provides a transitional qualification for those wishing to work in playwork settings.<sup>35</sup>

As well as training for the play workforce, Play Wales' work includes the development of training and qualifications for the playwork workforce.

This work is a crucial element of the workforce's capacity to secure sufficient opportunities for children to play. The recently revised suite of Playwork: Principles into Practice (P<sup>3</sup>) qualifications and associated training materials recognises the changing nature of playwork practice in Wales and includes the broader development and advocacy role that playworkers have been doing as part of their role in securing Play Sufficiency (as articulated in the Playwork Principles) (see section 4.1).

The Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales (PETC Wales) approves qualifications that can be included in the *List of Required Qualifications to work within the Playwork Sector in Wales* held by the sector skills council for playwork. Following the disengagement of SkillsActive from playwork, sector skills representation is an issue that is currently being considered by the Ministerial Play Review.





## A summary of recommendations on policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange

Section 5 contains the full recommendations, including more detail on context, rationale and suggestions for implementation. The recommendations from this section of the report are summarised here.

**Recommendation 1:** At national level, we recommend that Welsh Government continues the work being done to undertake and report on a mapping process to show the current and potential relationships between the Play Sufficiency Duty and other key legislation, policies and initiatives. The report should make recommendations for strengthening the links, particularly where explicit reference to the Play Sufficiency Duty would help create conditions for local authorities to deliver on the Duty.

**Recommendation 2:** We recommend that the Ministerial Play Review considers a protocol for Child Rights Impact Assessments in ways that can ensure the Play Sufficiency Duty is taken into consideration.

**Recommendation 3:** We recommend that local authorities work towards a more explicit and high-level alignment of the Play Sufficiency Duty to other policies, protocols and initiatives.

**Recommendation 5:** We recommend that Welsh Government seeks ways to provide a more consistent funding stream to support the statutory Play Sufficiency Duty.

**Recommendation 6:** We recommend that where resources are available at local authority level, they should consider being used in the first place to fund a permanent senior-level Play Sufficiency post whose role is to work strategically on Play Sufficiency.

**Recommendation 7:** We recommend that Welsh Government commissions Play Wales to work with them to continue current work to review, refresh and relaunch the full *Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit* in the light of both this research and *Children's Right to Play in Wales*, and also any changes that may arise from the Ministerial Play Review.

**Recommendation 8:** We recommend that local authorities find ways to embed partnership working on Play Sufficiency in their systems.

**Recommendation 9:** We recommend that Welsh Government, Play Wales and local authorities work to build on current efforts to bring cross-disciplinary professionals together, both to promote the Play Sufficiency Duty and to share research, experiences and ideas, for example through training, professional development programmes or multi-agency conferences.

**Recommendation 10:** We recommend that Welsh Government works with Play Wales to explore ways to support further research to inform delivering on the Play Sufficiency Duty.

**Recommendation 11:** We recommend that local authorities consider investing time and resources in ongoing ethical research with children using observations, mapping and other creative methods at micro-neighbourhood level, enabling a more in depth understanding of children's play habits and preferences to develop, and sharing those findings with other adults to enhance collective wisdom. To support this, we also recommend:

- local authorities consider combining this research with existing Geographic Information System (GIS) and other spatial data held by the local authority;
- Welsh Government works with Play Wales to explore how to support professionals to undertake neighbourhood research with children, for example through publications or events.

**Recommendation 12:** We recommend that Welsh Government and Play Wales review current information resources produced by Play Wales, including the *Focus on play* series and general collection, identifying areas for new or refreshed resources, and linking these directly to the new *Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit*.

### 3.0 The built and natural environment

The Statutory Guidance for the Play Sufficiency Duty notes:

*'For children to have sufficient play opportunities, they need time to play, space to play and the recognition by adults that this is every child's right so that all children are allowed this time and space'.<sup>36</sup>*

The right to time, space and permission to play are enshrined in both Article 31 of the UNCRC, the right to play, and Article 15, the right to peaceful assembly. Section 2.4 of this report highlights how researching with children on their relationship with neighbourhood environments reveals how economic interests dominate in design policy and practice in the built environment, often excluding children from the public realm. Much of this comes down to cars (moving and parked), which to a significant degree has resulted in children (and often adults too) being removed from public space. This withdrawal makes public space less inhabited, increasing adult fears for safety.<sup>37</sup> This is why we talk about children's right to play out as a matter of spatial justice: children have a right to participate in everyday life through being out in public spaces playing. Once this principle can be acknowledged in the public realm, it can also be useful as a lens for considering children's right to play in policy instruments (section 2) and in children's and community services (section 4).<sup>38</sup>

Space is more than an inert background for human activity, it is an active force that shapes all aspects of human and non-human life; the spatial, temporal and social are thoroughly entangled and mutually implicated across layers of organisation in a messy, non-hierarchical manner. For example, the layout of roads has historically privileged drivers' needs over walkers', limiting possibilities for other forms of movement through 'common sense' routines of social control and discipline. Street lighting or the lack

of it affects how safe streets may feel in winter months highlighting temporal dimensions. These design and spatial practices, which also include playgrounds, schools and the other institutions of childhood, mean that children have disappeared from the street and their presence there is seen as 'out of place'. But equally, given that spaces are relational productions, streets can also be sites of greater justice produced by coalitions of forces that work to overcome inequalities. The quest for greater spatial justice, and the challenge to the multiple and often apparently minor and mundane injustices that may limit different children's ability to play out becomes a policy, design and practice linchpin (including highlighting the interrelationship of design and traffic infrastructure planning).

The concept of spatial justice extends local authority account-ability and response-ability beyond counting playgrounds, parks and playschemes towards the requirement to pay attention to how spaces and childhoods are ordered, and adults' roles in this ordering. The focus on economic growth over social justice privileges the movement of goods and people (intensifying traffic) and the privatisation of spaces as well as increasing income inequalities reduce access to the 'common wealth' of the material and social world. This plays out in housing developments through the processes of land acquisition and land value, where land may be bought and sold on several times, increasing the cost of the land and therefore the money needed to be recouped through sale of houses. Children are precluded from such calculations, and despite the best intentions of landscape architects, the outside space is often reduced to the purely functional in economic terms.<sup>39</sup>

The Play Sufficiency Duty offers an opportunity to reconfigure the ways we think about the relationship between play, childhood and adulthood by inviting questions of what might constitute a 'just' environment and children's opportunity to take advantage of conditions and



resources through co-creating time and space for playing. Thus, rather than treating play as a discrete, self-contained and situated activity, the Duty provokes broader questions about democracy and a right to the 'commons',<sup>40</sup> particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable. This is a matter of central concern when one considers the positioning of the Play Sufficiency Duty within wider Welsh Government anti-poverty and well-being strategies that claim play opportunities may mitigate the negative effects of poverty, build resilience and reduce 'poverty of experience' for low-income families.<sup>41</sup>

This section therefore considers the actions that have been taken towards more just distributions of common spatial resources in favour of children. It does this across interrelated issues of urban and housing design, streets and children's freedom of movement, as well as parks, playgrounds and open spaces.

### 3.1 Child friendly cities and urban design

It has already been noted that many of the documented examples of policy and practice actions taken to support children's ability to find time and space to play are urban. This is not surprising, as most people in the UK live in cities and have done so for decades: in 1950, 79 percent of the UK population lived in cities and towns, and although numbers dwindled in the late twentieth century as families left in favour of suburbs and new towns,<sup>42</sup> there has been a return to the city with the UK urban population predicted to rise to 92.2 percent by 2030.<sup>43</sup> Figures for Wales are considerably lower, however, with current data suggesting only 67.2 percent live in urban areas,<sup>44</sup> although this too is set to rise (see section 3.6 for more detail).

This rise is mostly down to young professionals and urban regeneration; those who have remained and started families tend to be wealthier. Conditions for poorer families, including '*housing prices and quality, services, living in transient or less than desirable neighbourhoods*'<sup>45</sup> have deteriorated, in stark contrast with the

regeneration of cities aimed at those with sufficient disposable income to spend in cafes, bars, cinemas, art galleries and artisan shops.

There is a universal movement towards considering child-friendly cities. International initiatives can be seen in the UN's 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 11, UN-Habitat III and Unicef's Child Friendly Cities and Communities Initiative. The Unicef Child Friendly Cities and Communities Initiative includes goals that address living in a '*safe, secure and clean environment*' and having '*opportunities to enjoy family life, play and leisure*',<sup>46</sup> although the initiative is broader than this, considering the whole range of children's rights. UK cities that are currently working with Unicef towards Child Friendly City status are Aberdeen, Cardiff, Derry, Liverpool, London Borough of Barnet and Newcastle. Other municipalities, for example Leeds, Hackney Council and Swansea, are working towards the principle of being child friendly, but not in direct partnership with Unicef.

Cardiff was the first city in the UK to be formally accepted on to the Unicef Child Friendly Cities and Communities Initiative in 2017. The project lead, a senior youth worker with an understanding of and commitment to children's play, identified opportunities for synergies across the Child Friendly Cities and Communities agenda and the Play Sufficiency Duty, most notably through two specific actions: play streets and consultation with children towards the Play Sufficiency Assessment (see Report Card 4, in section 2.2, and Report Card 10, in section 2.4).

In October 2019, the first international summit on child friendly cities was held in Cologne. The Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Education, Employment and Skills of Cardiff Council attended, together with the officer leading on Cardiff Child Friendly Cities programme and a delegation of children and young people. At the summit, over 100 mayors from 40 countries signed a Declaration committing to work towards the goals of the declaration to make their cities more child friendly.<sup>47</sup>

However, notwithstanding these actions in Cardiff, it has been suggested, that the Unicef initiative focuses on services and its impact on the built form of cities and children's right to the public realm has been limited.<sup>48</sup> Hackney Council, however, offers an example of advocacy and long-term partnership working between Hackney Play Association and Young Hackney (the Council's services for children aged 6-19 years), architects, politicians and others to develop actions towards child-friendly neighbourhoods beyond service delivery to include housing design (including researching with children to inform neighbourhood design), play streets and school streets.<sup>49</sup>

Alongside the Unicef Child Friendly Cities and Communities Initiative, there is a body of work and practice that has focused on the design of child-friendly built environments. Internationally, this includes the Bernard van Leer Foundation's Urban 95 programme (researching cities from the point of view of three-year-olds), and 8-80 Cities (working on the principle that if cities work for 8-year-olds and 80-year-olds, they will work for everyone). At a European level, this is mirrored in the work of the European Network of Child Friendly Cities and the Child in the City conferences. There are also examples from several cities that have taken actions to support children's freedom of movement and recognised children's playful movements through space, as well as designated provision for play (for example, Tim Gill's study of European and Canadian cities of Antwerp, Calgary, City of North Vancouver, Freiburg, Ghent, New Westminster, Oslo, Rotterdam and Vancouver City<sup>50</sup>).

While most of this has focused on cities, many of the principles apply to smaller settlements. At a municipal level, the motivations for actions are several, and tend to be overlapping. In his research on child-friendly urban planning and design in Europe and Canada, Tim Gill identifies three: children's rights and well-being, economy and demography, environment and sustainability, adding:

*'While typically grounded in values around children's rights, it gains most traction when it is linked to other agendas such as sustainability, public health, or economic and demographic change.'*<sup>51</sup>

A frequently articulated maxim here is that if a city works for children it will work for everyone, highlighting the overlaps with issues of environmental sustainability and a stronger focus on social rather than only economic aspects. Much of this has to do with reprioritising public space for people rather than traffic (moving and stationary), a theme that recurs throughout this research.

In its report on designing for urban childhoods,<sup>52</sup> Arup identifies two key interdependent concepts for child-friendly cities: **everyday freedoms and children's infrastructure**. Children's infrastructure refers to *'the network of spaces, streets, nature and interventions which make up the key features of a child-friendly city'*, and the freedoms are to do with freedom of movement necessary to make use of this infrastructure. Key to this infrastructure are the spaces and streets in front of people's homes. Arup highlights how working to make cities better for children benefits everyone socially, economically and environmentally, noting (their emphases):

*'Providing multifunctional, playable space – beyond the playground – can enable everyday freedoms and create a public realm for all ages to enjoy together.'*

*Interventions at the neighbourhood scale offer the greatest potential to create a children's infrastructure network that allows safe and enjoyable journeys.'*

*Decision makers should be opportunistic and strategic, and integrate child-friendly thinking into all aspects of city making.'*<sup>53</sup>



From its research, Arup identified several recommended interventions to make cities more child-friendly, including:

- neighbourhood mapping led by children to gain insights (see section 2.4);
- traffic measures and pedestrian priority (see section 3.3 and 3.4);
- play streets, community gardens and intergenerational spaces (see section 3.3 and 3.5);
- playable spaces, reactivating wild spaces and playful encounters such as public art (see section 3.5);
- multifunctional green infrastructure such as stormwater parks (see section 3.5);
- playful cultural and heritage sites; multi-use community spaces (see section 4.4).

These actions highlight the importance of creating conditions to support play in realising a child-friendly city and are consistent with the research done for this report, as can be seen in many of the report cards. They form a useful guide for councils wishing to support children's play. The report also lists many examples of actions taken

to make cities more child-friendly. Although 'child-friendly' and 'play-friendly' are not necessarily the same thing, when it comes to urban design, the parallels are significant.

In terms of neighbourhood design, research by ZCD Architects that mapped spatial aspects of four neighbourhoods in Wrexham recommended the following key 'rules' be observed in working to secure Play Sufficiency in neighbourhoods:

- *'enable all public and shared spaces to be accessible and playable;*
- *provide direct access to a variety of shared/car free spaces throughout a development;*
- *allow play close to home and avoid a single play area;*
- *aim for universal or a significant majority of the dwellings to have direct access to these spaces;*
- *create safe footpaths and networks connecting all external spaces;*
- *allow for overlooking from dwellings.'*<sup>154</sup>



Wider messages were offered from a more recent study in Hackney, London which emphasised the importance of: researching with children to bring to life their expertise and insights into how space works or not for them; advocating for and providing children with time, space and permission to play; focusing on spatial inequalities across age and gender; and child-focused design that reflects the wayfaring and opportunistic nature of play, with spaces that are *'accessible, overlooked by dwellings, car free and connected to another place or space'*.<sup>55</sup> This work is continuing, building on the research methods used in Wrexham Play Sufficiency Assessments<sup>56</sup> and working with children aged between 8 and 18 years, and has considerable potential to change engagement processes in the design of the built environment.<sup>57</sup> This highlights the importance of local authorities considering investing time and resources in ongoing research with children (see section 2.4).

### 3.2 Housing design

It is not surprising that housing design has a significant influence on children's ability to play out. Research carried out using extended observation of how people use external areas of ten recently completed housing schemes across the UK found that children were the dominant users of external space, with positive links between children playing out and use by other members of the community. Car-free shared spaces that could be directly accessed from dwellings were used most, whereas spaces intended for shared use often had high levels of anti-social parking.<sup>58</sup> The study mapped how long children were playing out unsupervised, showing a clear relationship between physical qualities of the housing schemes (access to safe, nearby shared space; connecting networks and street characteristics) and the length of time and numbers of children playing out, concluding that *'it is possible for housing developments to encourage children to stay outside for longer periods'*<sup>59</sup> through getting the design right.

Getting the design right involves accountability and response-ability: accounting for children's use of space through gathering collective wisdom (including research with children and observation) and responding in ways that support their access to common spatial resources.

Two report cards are offered that illustrate key principles of play-friendly housing design. The first is from Vauban in Freiburg, Germany (see Report Card 12).

#### See Report Card 12

A more recent cohousing example is Marmalade Lane in Cambridge, where an intergenerational cohousing group worked with the City Council, developers and an architect to design and build 42 homes plus shared facilities to a sustainable brief and one that also includes a popular and well-used car free outdoor space where children can play.<sup>60</sup>

The second report card is from one of the local authority focus groups (see Report Card 13), and offers the example of Cartrefi Conwy's informal protocol of working with Conwy's Play Sufficiency Lead (employed by Community and Voluntary Support Conwy) and local children to inform design briefs for new developments (this is also discussed in section 2.4 of this report).

#### See Report Card 13

King's Crescent Estate in Hackney, London offers an example of how such wisdom can lead to design that works for the whole community. The rebuild of this council estate, the first new-build council housing in the borough for 30 years, won several awards (RIBA National Award winner, recipient of the Mayor's Prize New London Awards and Housing Project of the Year, AJ Architecture Awards), partly because of its approach to community consultation. Mark Lemanski from Muf Architecture describes the public realm design as being about creating a playable public realm for all ages:



*'The centrepiece of Kings Crescent is a new playable street that runs the length of the site, named Murrain Road after the late resident who ran a local youth club. The street is both route and destination, making a new connection to Clissold Park, and is a shared resource for residents and neighbours from the wider area – settled and incoming, young and old.*

*The design puts the local generation of children at its centre, both formally and through use. It challenges the perception of a street as a utilitarian space by introducing natural materials and a theatrical atmosphere. In doing so it prompts debate about the potential of our urban fabric to be adapted, and density interpreted as an intensification of use.*

*Murrain Road makes space for a multitude of recreation types: traditional play equipment combined with natural elements such as logs, rocks and water; props for imaginative play such as a theatre and a large table; and amenity areas for all ages such as bespoke seating that caters to the elderly as well as it does to teenagers. It provides a space where a child can learn to ride a bike, invent new games with friends, or draw on asphalt with chalk. The street is complemented by a series of communal courtyards that make provision for community flower and vegetable growing, alongside further opportunities for play, socialising and respite from domestic life.<sup>161</sup>*

Hackney Council has worked in close consultation with residents and has learned lessons that will be applied on phase two of this development. Most significantly the shared courtyards will be opened up so that residents across the estate will be able to enjoy the spaces together. This is significant for children, who will be able to call on friends and play across the estate. In the context of stories of segregated playgrounds<sup>62</sup> it

is important to show that this is what residents are asking for and what local authorities can and should deliver.

The centrepiece for this award-winning design is a street, and it is to the street that we now turn.

### 3.3 Streets

As long ago as 1986, Robin Moore wrote:

*'Making streets liveable ... is the topmost action that would advance both children's access to diversity and the child's right to play.'<sup>63</sup>*

The street has always been a contested space for children's play, particularly for working class children. In the early days of urbanisation, it was often seen as a site of moral danger; later, its dangers were extended to motor traffic. The early days of the playground movement both in the UK and elsewhere were partly to remove children from the streets where they were considered to be both at risk and getting up to no good.<sup>64</sup> Despite these concerns, the street has been a place to play for many children. However, a complex mix of contemporary factors (including parental fears) mean that playing out is not as ubiquitous as it once was, although children do still play out where conditions support it, as the research with children carried out for several Play Sufficiency Assessments shows. There is a strong argument to suggest, however, that traffic, both moving and parked, is a major contributor to the decline of conditions that support playing out; this leads to a withdrawal of people from the street more generally, opening up space for other fears (for example fear of attacks, stranger danger).

Concern about the dangers of traffic is not new. The steep rise in traffic and numbers of children injured or killed by cars in the 1920s, particularly in working class streets that middle class car owners users cut through,<sup>65</sup> led to the introduction of designated Play Streets. It is interesting to note, given the current renaissance of local parent activism, that these came about both through

*'bureaucratic top-down intervention but also a fiercely radical protecting of domestic space campaigned for by working-class mothers'.<sup>66</sup>*

The first play street legislation was enacted in 1938, after several local initiatives and an inquiry by an inter-departmental committee set up by the Department of Education and Ministry of Transport. Local authorities submitted orders for play streets to the government, often following campaigns by mothers, for road closures. These were designated through the use of road signage aimed at motorists, which prohibited entry every day, sometimes between specific times. These play streets operated until the 1970s, when the increasing power of business interests and car owners over local mothers led eventually to their demise.<sup>67</sup>

In the intervening period, barriers to children playing on the streets have grown:

*'In a nutshell, since 1980, car ownership and traffic volume have both more than doubled ... and residential streets have become so physically and psychologically dominated by cars that people – and children in particular – have been pushed out of the space ... We know that it is real traffic danger, not imagined "stranger danger" that is parents' main concern ..., contrary to what the media would have us believe.'<sup>68</sup>*

In more recent times, there has been a growth in projects aimed at reclaiming streets for children's play, through roadscaping, street play projects, peripatetic playwork projects, and local resident action. These actions are steps towards more sustainable solutions, and, according to a recent poll commissioned by Living Streets, there is still a long way to go. The number of children playing out has declined further over the last decade (a period where many interventions have been made to address the situation), and almost three quarters of parents of 4-11-year-olds felt that traffic had increased in their streets.<sup>69</sup>

The more recent renaissance of play streets has taken a slightly different form from that of the 1930s-1970s, in that the model is of residents applying for a street closure order from the local council to close the street to traffic one day a week or month for children to play out. At these events, adult residents also come out onto the street, offering the opportunity to build connections for adults as well as children. This is the model that was enacted by the Bristol-based Community Interest Company, Playing Out, which has since developed into a movement with national and international take up and influence (see Report Card 6, in section 2.3).

Partly due to high profile media coverage, the model has caught the imagination of local residents elsewhere, who have then contacted local infrastructure organisations who have been keen to support the initiative. This is the story for the two examples given here in Cardiff (see Report Card 4, in section 2.2) and Hackney (see Report Card 14).

### **See Report Card 14**

In an extension to residential street closures, Hackney Council has also introduced school streets, where roads outside schools are closed to motor vehicles (except those with exemptions) at school pick-up and drop-off times. This is partly a safety issue and also an action aimed at cutting pollution levels (2017 figures for the whole of London show that 360 of 1460 primary schools exceeded the annual mean NO2 EU limit value; previous years' analyses have shown that over three quarters of those school exceeding limits are in deprived areas<sup>70</sup>). Signage informs drivers and, after an introductory period, cameras enforce fixed penalty notices for drivers without exemptions.<sup>71</sup> These have been piloted in five school zones, with three being made permanent. There is a guide for schools that Hackney Council has sent to every council in the country.<sup>72</sup> Hackney aims to roll out the programme across its primary schools, and the plan is that schools will have to opt out of rather than opt into the scheme.<sup>73</sup>

The idea of play streets can be seen in many other countries, including Australia,<sup>74</sup> Canada,<sup>75</sup> the USA<sup>76</sup> and many European countries. In Belgium, play streets have been operating since 1998 with a different model from the UK one. Typically, they are open throughout the school holidays, sometimes one day a week, sometimes for seven consecutive days, for slightly longer periods of time (for example in Ghent, they run from 2pm until 7pm for a maximum of 14 days in the summer holidays).<sup>77</sup> There are restrictions on the kinds of streets that can apply to be play streets, and at least three volunteer residents have to sign the agreement and take responsibility, and agreement must be obtained from the majority of households. The council provides a box of equipment, with larger pieces of equipment available to hire for free. Belgian street play signs are also provided by the council and are included in the Belgian Highway Code as an official road sign.

Quebec has also taken a slightly different approach to play streets. The introduction of Free Play Zones was kick-started when a father in Beloeil, a suburb of Montreal, complained to a councillor that his son had been given a ticket by the police for playing street hockey and breaking anti-noise by-laws. The councillor, who remembered fondly his own days of playing street hockey, agreed there was something wrong with this and so began the *Dans ma rue, on joue* (in my street, we play) project, starting with adjusting local anti-nuisance byelaws to allow for free play in the street. Now (2019) there are 48 residential streets that are designated free play zones, with 30 kph speed limits and signage asking motorists to slow down and stating free play is permitted between 7am and 9pm. Other towns followed suit, and in 2017 the Quebec National Assembly adopted a law granting municipalities more autonomy, including *'the power to permit free play in the streets'*.<sup>78</sup>

### 3.4 Freedom of movement

There is a considerable body of research that charts the decline in what is generally termed 'children's independent mobility' (CIM). The term was coined in the seminal and oft-quoted 1990 study *One False Move*<sup>79</sup> and refers to children's ability to move around their neighbourhoods without adult supervision. Not only is this a very adult-centric perspective (a bit like talking about children going out 'on their own'), it does not take into account the relational nature of life. As we said in *Leopard Skin Wellies* (the first Play Sufficiency Assessment research report):

*'children's capacity to move is intimately connected to the relational qualities of the space (people, spatial features, technologies) rather than being apart from such attachments; children continually have to negotiate the social and environmental conditions of their lives that both limit and enable their movements..'*<sup>80</sup>

Children are rarely out 'on their own' independently, often they are with peers and siblings, but even when they are not, they are connected to absent others (for example, through agreed or negotiated protocols, or by mobile phone) and also through their intimate connection to and situated knowledge of spaces in terms of knowing the safe and scary spots and people. It is for this reason, as well as the connections to the principle of spatial justice, that we have chosen to use the term 'freedom of movement'. (We acknowledge that children's mobility without adults applies more to those in middle and late childhood, and recognise the work being done on making built environments more child friendly for younger children, for example, through the Bernard van Leer Urban 95 project.)

The research on children's mobility paints a picture of decline over decades, but meta-analyses of the studies show little consistency in forms of mobility that are included or the methods used to collect data.<sup>81</sup>



Much of the research has relied on perceptual data (often of parents) and self-reporting,<sup>82</sup> although there is no doubt that children's ability to roam has been curtailed significantly. Nevertheless, if the conditions are right, children's preference is still for playing out, as was shown in the research for many Play Sufficiency Assessments.

By far the biggest barrier to freedom of movement for children is traffic.<sup>83</sup> Other barriers might be understood to flow from this: if more children and adults are outside, some of the other fears lessen, for example, stranger danger, bullying, harassment, violence, or parents' concerns about being seen as negligent. One of the follow-up studies to the original *One False Move* study concludes that actions that '*enable freedom of movement include urban planning and development; children's mobility programmes; education and guidance on road safety and sustainable mobility; and campaigns and events*',<sup>84</sup> concluding that '*The best initiatives we have found focus on transforming urban environments to enable children's independence and development, as part of a wider programme of social, environmental and economic development*'.<sup>85</sup>

Many initiatives that support children's freedom of movement are closely linked to actions to support active travel, such as Transport for London's Mini Hollands programme, part of the Mayor's Healthy Streets initiative. The Dutch city of Antwerp's *speelweefselplan* (playspaceweb) has children as its starting point, using detailed data from children and the municipality's own Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping, to identify routes they use most to travel between home, school, playgrounds and parks, and make them more child and play friendly (see Report Card 15). These examples show the potential for synergies between the Play Sufficiency Duty and the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013. Other examples were given in *Children's Right to Play in Wales*, including one authority that worked in partnership with the Road Safety Team, schools and a local supplier to develop a Scoot to School initiative.

**See Report Card 15**

### 3.5 Playgrounds, parks and open spaces

Playgrounds are often the first thing that adults, both in their professional and parental roles, think about when considering supporting conditions for children to play. This was raised in several of the interviews with Play Sufficiency Leads in *Children's Right to Play in Wales*, with many expressing a desire to encourage colleagues and communities to think beyond designated times and spaces for play. This is to be welcomed, and we have made this case in previous research reports. At the same time, the value of playgrounds as a significant part of children's play lives needs to be acknowledged; as does their significance to parents' feelings of confidence to allow their children to play out.

Over the last few decades there has been a growing literature promoting more open-ended design approaches, away from what has been termed KFC (Kit, Fence and Carpet) playgrounds.<sup>86</sup> Much of this has moved towards more natural and asymmetrical features, more opportunities for manipulation, and more opportunities for risk-taking, as argued in Play England's 2008 publication, *Design for Play*,<sup>87</sup> as well as in the statutory guidance and other support materials on Play Sufficiency.

The statutory guidance lists the ingredients of quality play provision, stating that it should offer opportunities to interact with: other children, the natural world, loose parts (an abundance of materials whose use is not prescribed), the four elements, challenge and uncertainty, changing identity, movement, rough and tumble play, and all the senses.<sup>88</sup> In addition, the Play Sufficiency Assessment form includes an item on play space assessments of outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces, and the full toolkit includes official guidance on how to conduct these.<sup>89</sup> Play Wales has also published a community toolkit on designing and managing play spaces, aimed at supporting community groups, play associations or Town and Community Councils.<sup>90</sup> These official guides are useful in supporting local authorities to deliver on both Play Sufficiency Assessments and actions to improve children's opportunities to play.

The example we have offered here from our Cardiff focus group is of the conditions that supported the development of an inclusive natural community space (see Report Card 16).

### See Report Card 16

The Cardiff example leads to a closer examination of looking beyond designated spaces for play. In the focus groups for this study there were examples of local authority staff looking for creative ways to leave space open for children's play more generally, alongside a more considered approach to issues of accessibility in designated playgrounds.

One example is the approach to Green Infrastructure and planning policy in Monmouthshire (see Report Card 17), where formal protocols are in place to work cross-departmentally and with communities on certain sized developments, and where opportunities for play are considered as part of the wider benefits of requiring developers to consider green infrastructure (GI) as part of the planning process. This is in line with the Welsh Government's Natural Resources Policy (2017), which forms a statutory part of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. This policy addresses play under the Local Environmental Quality and Community Wellbeing key policy area, stating that:

*'Outdoor play and learning in green spaces is important to children and their health, development and understanding and appreciation of the environment, as supported by Wales: a Play Friendly Country'.<sup>91</sup>*

Similarly, the Welsh Government's Prosperity for All strategy highlights early years as one of its five key priorities. These national policies and strategies have influenced the work of Monmouthshire's Green Infrastructure and Countryside team.

The Monmouthshire team also commissioned a play value assessment of their designated play spaces and as a result of this assessment is are moving towards an understanding of play space provision that exists on a continuum from playful environmental modifications right through to larger more substantial fixed equipment playgrounds.

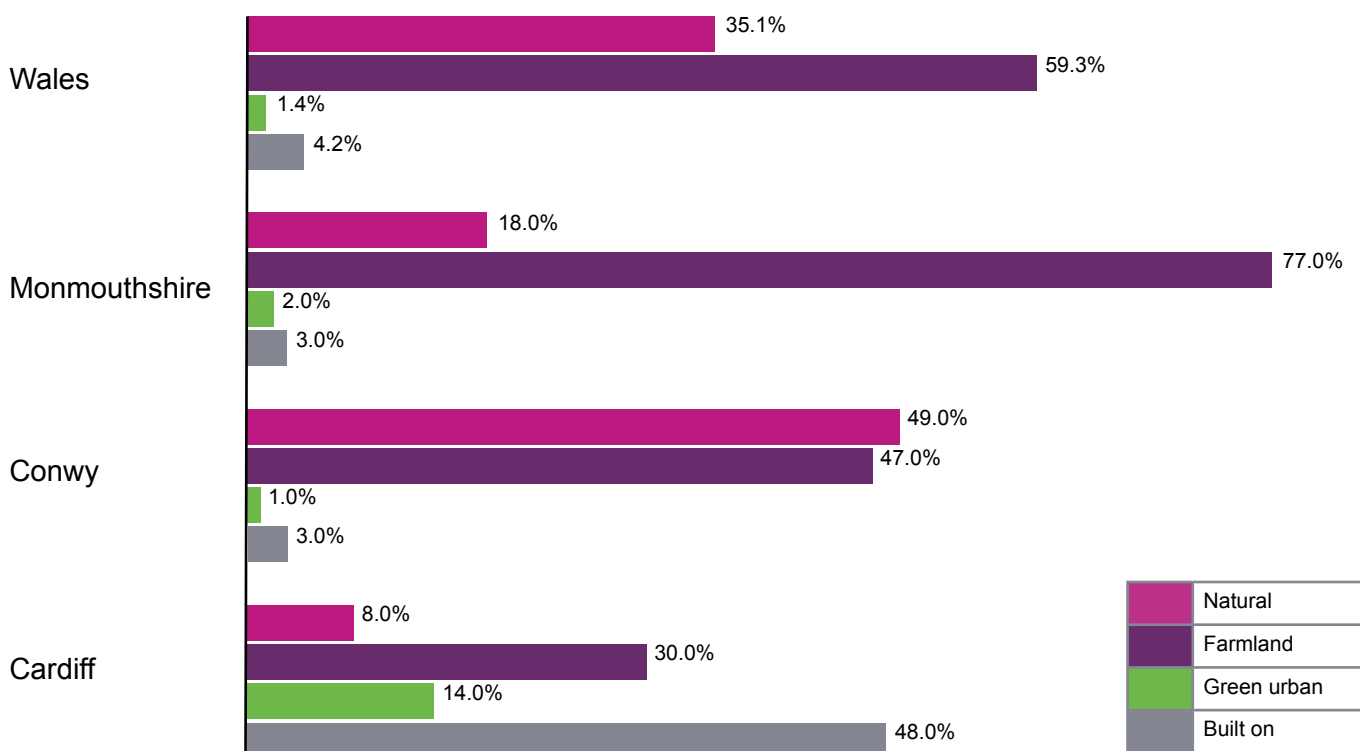
### See Report Card 17

## 3.6 Rural issues

In our interviews with Play Sufficiency Leads for *Children's Right to Play in Wales*, we heard often about the fantastic countryside in Wales: beautiful mountains, seascapes, beaches, woodlands and so on. Yet much of this is inaccessible for a variety of reasons. On average, roughly a third of the Welsh population live in rural areas (settlements with a population under 10,000), with that figure much higher in some areas.

For example, in Monmouthshire, 47 percent live in rural areas.<sup>92</sup> According to the Corine Land Cover Inventory, 4.2 percent of land in Wales is built on (compared with a UK average of 5.9 percent), 59.3 percent is farmland, with 35.1 percent listed as natural and 1.4 percent as green urban. The chart below compares the Welsh figures with our three case study authorities as examples<sup>93</sup>:

## Wales land use examples



Numbers aside, there is less attention paid to rural childhoods than to urban ones. The few studies that have been carried out show that rural children have less freedom of movement than urban children.<sup>94</sup> Although the myth of the rural idyll may suggest children have more green and open space for playing, in reality, this is difficult to access, mostly because it is private farmland, as we heard in interviews in *Children’s Right to Play in Wales*. One local authority 2019 Play Sufficiency Assessment drew on information from non play-specific community mapping carried out by the Creative Rural Communities Team in four areas across the authority, which yielded useful information on play opportunities.

In conversation with one Play Sufficiency Lead, she reported that their Play Sufficiency Assessments had shown strongly that rural children rated higher satisfaction than urban children, but she was aware that the opposite was true in the neighbouring authority. She felt this may be down to different ruralities: in tiny rural villages where people know everyone there seems to be more permission for freedom of movement, whereas isolated rural living has all the same barriers (lack of designated play spaces, country lanes with no pavements, not

having friends close by) and none of the social connections that can help mitigate these barriers. This is certainly an area where more research is needed.

Securing sufficient opportunities for rural children to play brings with it a different set of challenges from supporting urban children to play. One example comes from Wrexham, where the play development team was able to support a local landowner to make a small piece of woodland available for children to play (see Report Card 18). We heard of other examples in *Children’s Right to Play in Wales*, for example an outdoor recreation team being aware of how children use open spaces and woodlands, often seeing dens and swings, which they kept an eye on and only took down if they thought they were unsafe and could not be modified. Another local authority had produced a booklet listing spaces where children can play that did include designated play areas but also other spaces for playing, including parks, green spaces, public gardens, ponds, woodlands, mountains and lakes, with ideas on how parents and children can use those spaces for playing.

[See Report Card 18](#)



## A summary of recommendations on the built and natural environment

Section 5 contains the full recommendations, including more detail on context, rationale and suggestions for implementation.

**Recommendation 10:** We recommend that Welsh Government works with Play Wales to explore ways to support further research to inform delivering on the Play Sufficiency Duty.

This could include:

- supporting reflection on and evaluations of specific actions to improve children's opportunities to play;
- encouraging developers to carry out post-occupancy evaluation of new residential schemes;
- encouraging and supporting ongoing local research with children (see Recommendation 11);
- supporting research specifically into issues facing children in rural and low populated areas;
- exploring the possibility of national research into the impact of the Play Sufficiency Duty;
- exploring the possibility of national and/or local research into aspects of the Duty that are less well served by research and practice examples, for example rural children and play;
- supporting regular conferences and other ways to bring people together to share research.

**Recommendation 11:** We recommend that local authorities consider investing time and resources in ongoing ethical research with children using observations, mapping and other creative methods at micro-neighbourhood level, enabling a more in depth understanding of children's play habits and preferences to develop, and sharing those findings with other adults to enhance collective wisdom.

To support this, we also recommend:

- local authorities consider combining this research with existing Geographic Information System (GIS) and other spatial data held by the local authority;
- Welsh Government works with Play Wales to explore how to support professionals to undertake neighbourhood research with children, for example through publications or events.

## 4.0 Children's and community services

Having considered the overarching – or underpinning – policy and strategic conditions needed to support securing Play Sufficiency, and then considered more generally the role of local authorities in opening up the public realm to accommodate children's desires to engage playfully with their environments, we turn now to specific services that work directly with children and families. These services include, but are not limited to, playwork, youth work, schools and cultural institutions such as museums and heritage organisations. The section opens with playwork and then moves on to consider how other professionals and institutions can work together to create conditions for Play Sufficiency.

### 4.1 Playwork

The influence of playwork and the contribution of playworkers on the development and enactment of the Play Sufficiency Duty cannot be overstated. Playwork in the UK is guided by an officially endorsed set of principles. These were developed in 2004 by the Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group, which was initiated and facilitated by Play Wales, and funded by Welsh Government.<sup>95</sup> These principles describe what it is that makes playwork unique amongst professional working with children: it has **as its core purposes** the co-creation of spaces that support children's open-ended and intrinsically motivated playing and advocacy for children's self-organised play. Although playwork can and does help to meet instrumental policy agendas such as physical activity levels, mental health and well-being, community cohesion, crime reduction and so on, these are not its primary objectives. The only outcome for playwork is that children can play. Of course, this can create tensions for playworkers, but the principles remain.

It is this play and playwork advocacy role that forms the basis of Play Wales' policy work, which built, in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government, an agenda for children's play in Wales from the first days of the devolved Assembly.<sup>96</sup>

The first policy relating to children and young people, *Children and Young People: a Framework for Partnership* (2000), established a £1m Play 2000 Grant, which included money for research<sup>97</sup> and led to a number of policy instruments aimed at embedding play within national and local policy. Wales was the first country to adopt a Play Policy in 2002<sup>98</sup> and a Play Strategy in 2006.<sup>99</sup> Lottery funding helped to establish an infrastructure for play development through enabling the development of a network of the regional play associations in 2006 alongside the development of playwork training and qualifications and further research, including a major inquiry into barriers to play for children and young people in Wales.<sup>100</sup> These paved the way for the introduction of the Play Sufficiency Duty as a part of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, and Play Wales then worked in partnership with Welsh Government to develop the statutory guidance and toolkit. This advocacy work at national level has been and continues to be the foundation for creating conditions for local authorities to enact the Play Sufficiency Duty.

Similar advocacy has also played a fundamental and leading role in working towards Play Sufficiency at local level. The Play Sufficiency Duty has enabled an experienced and trained playwork workforce to work both within and across local authorities to engage with different professionals in appreciating the nature and value of play and their role in supporting it. The direct (in terms of working directly with children) and indirect (in terms of working with other adults to advocate for play) contributions made by playworkers across most of the examples included in this report are considerable. Those with at least a playwork background if not a playwork remit have repeatedly been the instigators or enablers for actions, pulling people together, developing collective wisdom, facilitating and developing responses to research with children, promoting the value of Play Sufficiency to relevant departments and organisations (at both national and local government levels).

Without the contribution of playwork to the Play Sufficiency agenda, the Duty would not have produced the achievements it has.

This is despite the fact that playwork posts in local authorities have been disproportionately hit by austerity measures across the UK.<sup>101</sup> For example, in one authority the playwork team shrank significantly over a seven year period (which included project funding coming to a close and loss of sessional workers as well as management posts), with dedicated buildings previously used for service delivery being offered for community asset transfer.<sup>102</sup> This required them to think differently about how to deliver the service, and using information from their Play Sufficiency Assessments, they have moved away from a focus on fixed sites and towards responding to different community based issues (see Report Card 19).

### See Report Card 19

The potential for playwork to operate as a form of play-centred community development work was identified in the first research report in 2013, where we noted:

*'The playwork workforce, while fulfilling a valuable role in developing quality play provision, is identified in some PSAs as having an equally and perhaps underexplored role as a wider "community resource" working outwards from the designated site into the surrounding environment.'*

This was echoed in later research in one local authority, where the Play Sufficiency Assessment had identified big differences in children's satisfaction with their opportunities to play across neighbourhoods. The research found that attitudes towards playing out in one neighbourhood, where satisfaction was very high, were much more tolerant, and that this had been (at least partly) due to playworkers from the local adventure playground deliberately working

on the estate with the children over time. This conversation shows the stark difference:

*'Neighbourhood B Professional 3: You often see, you know as you're driving out at home time, you see the children playing on those areas. You do see them playing on the grass, you see them playing on the rocks...'*

*Neighbourhood B Playworker 1: ... We drove through and I remember seeing [Child]. There was a group of girls and they were by the phone boxes, just on the path. So, they weren't on a piece of grass or anything, and they'd built, like, a massive den out of blankets, and they had all their toy prams with their dolls and stuff. And it's like, wow!*

*Neighbourhood B Playworker 2: Can you imagine, on [Neighbourhood A] high street, seeing a den with covers in it?*

*Neighbourhood B Playworker 1: Yeah, you couldn't imagine it.*

*Neighbourhood B Playworker 3: It's kind of permission that them things can happen in little hidey holes and things, whereas in [Neighbourhood A], permission is the park only. Your kids are only allowed to play on the park because that kind of says, that's what you do. In [Neighbourhood B] it's not a coincidence that you'll find a den in the corner...'<sup>103</sup>*

This work has continued, as Report Card 20 shows. The example also shows the importance of research to inform Play Sufficiency Assessments and action plans, part of the twin processes of account-ability and response-ability (as can also be seen in Report Card 10 in section 2.4, which provides another example of playworkers working with others towards Play Sufficiency).

### See Report Card 20



Beyond Wales, playwork can also work as a response to developers' habitual ways of meeting planning guidance regulations through providing traditional playgrounds, as the example of Play KX shows. Report Card 21 tells the story of a potential playground designer suggesting to the developer that rather than building a traditional playground, playwork sessions could be run with loose parts in the prestigious Kings Cross redevelopment.

### See Report Card 21

The examples in this report show how embedded into practice this way of appreciating children's playful relationship with space has become over the six years since the commencement of the Play Sufficiency Duty. They document the far-reaching degree to which playwork has supported children's play in myriad ways, both directly with children and indirectly with other professionals supporting them to take a more considered approach to accounting for children's play and their response-ability towards it.

In his evaluation of staffed play provision, Joost Beunderman highlights how important children's relationships with playworkers are:

*'Trusted, personal relationships with adults are highly valuable for children and young people; and less common, in our atomised and cautious society, than they used to be. In the settings explored here, these adult-child relationships are of a different kind from those that they usually experience at home or in school.'*<sup>104</sup>

Equally important are relationships with parents, other professionals and policy makers. The title of his report is *People Make Play*. We can say the same of the Play Sufficiency Duty in Wales: at the heart of successful actions in support of children's play are people who appreciate play for its own sake and the conditions necessary to allow it to emerge.

It is for this reason that we recommend that the most effective investment in the Duty is in people, and specifically in a full time (as a minimum) Play Sufficiency Lead that has the time, space and permission to bring a playwork approach to assessing and securing sufficient opportunities for children to play (see section 2.2).

## 4.2 Schools

Children's health and well-being in schools is at the forefront of Welsh Government policy for schools; this helps to create conditions to support partnership work with schools that can help secure Play Sufficiency. In the summer of 2019, Estyn carried out a thematic review of primary and secondary schools on pupils' health and well-being, linking this clearly to the success of schools and pupils' achievement.<sup>105</sup> The review found that pupils are happier and healthier when well-being is embedded in school life.<sup>106</sup>

The report lists characteristics of the two thirds of primary schools and one third of secondary schools that have an inclusive whole-school approach to pupil health and well-being, and this includes an *'environment and facilities that promote good health and wellbeing, such as space to play, socialise and relax at break time'*.<sup>107</sup>

Alongside this, the Welsh Government's new Curriculum for Wales 2022 has identified four purposes of the curriculum as developing children and young people as:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.<sup>108</sup>



From the research on the benefits of playing,<sup>109</sup> the links with many of the key points under these headline purposes are clear, including:

- build mental and emotional well-being by developing confidence, resilience and empathy
- take part in physical activity
- form positive relationships based upon trust and mutual respect
- face and overcome challenge
- have the skills and knowledge to manage everyday life
- are questioning and enjoy solving problems
- think creatively to reframe and solve problems
- identify and grasp opportunities
- take measured risks
- express ideas and emotions through different media.<sup>110</sup>

In the Spring 2019 issue of the *Play for Wales* magazine (No. 52), Play Wales identifies key

messages for schools from its joint statement on outdoor play with Public Health Wales. These can be summarised as:

- schools should be encouraged to make their school grounds available for free play out of school hours;
- time for free play during and after the school day is essential to children's well-being and schools should consider this in their timetabling and setting of homework;
- new schools should be designed to support children's outdoor play.

In addition, the statement says that:

*'Public Health Wales is committed to ensuring that protected time for play and rich environments for play should feature as necessary criteria in any refreshed criteria for the Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Scheme and the Healthy Pre-school Scheme.'*

This shows that there is a clear role for the Play Sufficiency Duty to support the Welsh Government's ambition for schools and children in education. This was recognised in discussions at the Cardiff focus groups and plenary sessions, where a head teacher acknowledged that there were *'city wide and national expectations that schools will promote the importance of play as part of their planned and unplanned curriculum'*. She went on to say that it was *'really important that Welsh Government takes a lead on promoting the importance of play to parents and teachers, ensuring that it links to all national policies involving children'*, noting that a lot of head teachers in Cardiff would not know that Wales is the first country to legislate for play: *'It's all done in little silos by individuals – it's a missed opportunity'*. This indicates that not only is it important to promote the importance of play, but to promote the Play Sufficiency Duty itself to support local authorities to enact the Duty.

There are several avenues and resources to begin these conversations with schools, including working with networks and school clusters, using the model of the 'School Life' conference, or using the resources developed by Play Wales.<sup>111</sup> Where interventions in schools have taken place across Wales, they have mostly been initiated by those in play development or playwork roles or with a background in playwork, highlighting that a key condition for improving children's opportunities to play at school is the involvement of someone with the capacity, knowledge and experience to support schools to make changes.

The average time that schoolchildren spend in breaks from lessons is 20-22 percent for primary aged children and 16 percent for secondary school children. This represents a sharp decline since 1995 in times given over to breaks in formal teaching.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, this time spent at school is a significant part of the school day and it is worth paying attention to children's experiences of these times, which are also potentially time for playing. General Comment 17 on Article 31 of the UNCRC specifically mentions the importance of time and space for playing at school.

As well as it being a right, good quality play experiences at play times also bring other benefits for both children and schools as a whole, including:

- children enjoy play times more;
- they return to learning more readily – teachers report up to 20 minutes extra teaching time after breaks;
- there is better engagement in learning;
- staff-pupil relationships are better;
- there are fewer behavioural issues;
- children seek less help with incidents and accidents;
- there is a reduction in accidents because there is less aimless running around;
- children are physically active;
- improved physical activity/literacy;
- children engage in a wide range of play forms with each other, often with children they did not mix with before;
- school generally is a happier place to be.<sup>113</sup>

There is a growing interest in improving children's time, space and permission to play in schools, and there are several organisations working to support schools to do this. The shared principles are in terms of developing a culture in the school that supports children's play, including developing a play policy and providing training for all staff and particularly those working directly with children at play times; working to develop the outdoor space into a rich play environment, and particularly working with an abundant supply of small and large loose parts; supporting children to access as much of the outdoor space as possible in all weathers.<sup>114</sup> An early example that served as inspiration for the development of a number of programmes was Bristol Scrapstore's Play Pods,<sup>115</sup> funded in 2006 through the Innovation Fund, part of the Big Lottery Fund's English Children's Play Programme. The local example offered here is Conwy's Rich Play Awards (see Report Card 22).

**See Report Card 22**



As well as improving playtimes in schools, Play Wales has been working to support schools to open up school grounds for children's play out of school hours (as recommended in the joint statement with Public Health Wales). Play Wales has developed a toolkit to support schools in doing this. An action research project to pilot the toolkit identified a number of challenges, including schools wishing to restrict times and spaces where children could play out of hours, as well as which children could use the facilities and what forms of play they could engage in.<sup>116</sup>

One authority's Children's Play Services has also worked with some schools on promoting 'out of hours play'. This has yielded some small success but only when Play Services manage and operate the out of hours provision. This has happened during summer holidays in one area and after school in a different area. Generally, opening up school grounds beyond the school day has proved difficult to achieve.

Sometimes, the impetus for change comes from unlikely places. Paris is currently working on a strategy to 'green' its schoolyards through replacing asphalt surfaces with green planting, and opening them up out of school hours. However, the primary driver for this is not to enhance children's opportunities to play but environmental issues, highlighting again the close synergies between child-friendly environments and the sustainability agenda (see Report Card 23).

**See Report Card 23**

### 4.3 Youth work

*'Playing, particularly in terms of children's development, tends to receive much greater attention in the early years of children's lives (up to the age of seven) than in later childhood. Playing is mostly associated with the behaviour of very young children, again overlooking and potentially dismissing its value for older children.'*

*This emphasis on the role and value of play for younger children could lead adults to thinking that people grow out of playing around the age of 10, just when they move to secondary school. However, by only spending a short time in the company of teenagers it's evident that this is clearly not true.'*<sup>117</sup>

In our research for *Children's Right to Play in Wales*, one issue that arose was Play Sufficiency for children over 12 years of age. This was also recognised by Welsh Government, as it was a priority in the guidance for AWPOG funding in 2019, and in the Children's Commissioner's *Spotlight Report on article 31*, which notes that:

*'Children over the age of 13 often felt that their local area offered few places to spend their free time in a safe and enjoyable way. Their current experiences depicted them resorting to visiting places, often outdoors, that they and other members of their community felt were unsuitable.'*<sup>118</sup>

The official age range covered by youth work in Wales is 11 to 25,<sup>119</sup> although in some areas, youth workers do run provision for children younger than 11. The Play Sufficiency Duty applies to all children who have not reached the age of 18.<sup>120</sup> This shows an overlap of age, creating conditions for partnership working with youth workers. The overall aim of youth work

is informal education, with an eye to positive outcomes for young people, whereas the primary outcome for the Play Sufficiency Duty is that children have sufficient opportunities to play, although leisure and recreation are also included. This presents a different focus, as well as different professional infrastructures, qualifications and inspection processes. Nevertheless, the potential for youth workers to contribute to securing sufficient opportunities for older children to 'play' (even though they may not call it that) is considerable. This is recognised in the *Youth Work Strategy for Wales*, which defines informal education as

*'the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment – from family and neighbours, work and play, the market place, the library and the mass media.'*<sup>121</sup>

In one authority's 2019 Play Sufficiency Assessment, youth workers (who also had substantial playwork experience) recognise that this supports children's opportunities to play. The Play Sufficiency Assessment recognises that *'greater recognition should be given to the role of youth work in providing for older children's time and space for play'*.<sup>122</sup>

In other areas, the connection is not so readily felt, for example in one focus group for *Children's Right to Play in Wales*, youth workers said, *'We don't really get everything that the playworkers do – we're youth workers and we're not comfortable offering that ourselves yet'*. Whilst we do not advocate for youth workers to become playworkers, there is a strong argument for youth workers appreciating the value of play in the lives of children. In one local authority, where play and playwork training had been offered, one attendee noted in evaluation their interest in further training, particularly how *'play crosses with youth work and should be embedded in youth work practice'*.<sup>123</sup>

The L2APP (see section 2.5 for more details) was developed as a transitional qualification to enable youth workers to appreciate play and their role in supporting it, particularly in transitional and third sector youth work provision.

One of the aims of the *Youth Work Strategy for Wales* is that youth work is accessible and inclusive. Report Card 24 shows how an inclusive ethos emerged in one youth club in response to one child's desire to attend and a 'can-do' attitude from staff and parents.

### See Report Card 24

Elsewhere, youth workers have talked about the problems of cutting services and closing youth clubs.<sup>124</sup> Not only did this reduce opportunities for older children, it also had a knock-on effect on younger children's confidence in being able to play out without being disturbed by the older children, whose behaviour was often seen as anti-social.

Another potential point of connection with Play Sufficiency is the stated intention in the Youth Work Strategy for Wales to map youth work provision, including transitional provision (pre-11). This suggests there is value in working in partnership with those who develop Play Sufficiency Assessments. The Interim Youth Work Board for Wales is soon to commission work on this mapping and the chair would welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with the play sector on this.<sup>125</sup>

## 4.4 Cultural institutions

There is a growing interest within the cultural sector, from provision funded by local authorities, the Arts Council or independently, to understand and support children's play within museum and gallery institutions and in heritage sites. To date, cultural institutions such as Arts Council Wales, Heritage Lottery Fund or the Museums Association have not made any high-level statement or commitment which explicitly mentions or supports play and children's rights, but there have been some long-standing and experimental programmes that have influenced

a change in mindset. Play Wales has voiced an intention to build on the experiences of such projects to create resources for museums to link into supporting the Play Sufficiency Duty as well as exploring developing training options for the sector.

One such example emerged from the Happy Museums Project, which operates across England and Wales, which could be used to support museums in Wales to become more play friendly. Launched in 2011, it *'provides a leadership framework for museums to develop a holistic approach to wellbeing and sustainability'*.<sup>126</sup> Part of this framework is a set of six principles, the first of which is to create the conditions for wellbeing through encouraging *'opportunities for playfulness, creativity, activity, interaction and aesthetics'*.<sup>127</sup>

The Happy Museum has shown ongoing commitment to supporting play, funding the Manchester Museum More Playful Museums project (see Report Card 25), a small sector guide *Rules for a Playful Museum*,<sup>128</sup> and mentoring support to meet the demand from their community of practice for a sector support group on play.<sup>129</sup> These approaches are based on the principle of creating conditions that support playing rather than appropriating play as a mechanism for learning; again, the value of drawing on playwork expertise here is acknowledged (see section 4.1).

### See Report Card 25

These ideas are growing. The South London Gallery, for example, ran a Making Play project with Lottery funding from 2008 to 2011 and this has continued in different forms: in the gallery, in a repurposed shop (The Shop of Possibilities), on local estates and now in the Art Block. St Fagan's National Museum of History in Cardiff worked with artist Nils Norman to develop a play area that echoed the historic buildings on the site. In 2019 the first ever Playful Museums conference took place in Sydney, Australia, developed by Museum Next, and the V&A made a commitment to re-develop their Museum of Childhood into *'the most Joyful Museum in the world'*.<sup>130</sup>

The link between play and cultural institutions can also be made through specific exhibitions, such as the recent Play Work exhibition and linked conference at Tŷ Pawb Gallery in Wrexham. Here, the exhibition space was turned into a staffed adventure playground for ten weeks, highlighting the heritage of adventure play within Wrexham and significantly boosting visitor figures at Tŷ Pawb through the offer of a free, open-access town-centre play space (see Report Card 26).

### See Report Card 26





Another example is the Foundling Museum Exhibition and book of images *Child's Play*.<sup>131</sup> This was an artist-led (Mark Neville) and policy-informed collaboration, which sought to raise awareness of the importance of play and to focus attention on how conditions for children could be improved. The book, with a foreword from Adrian Voce, was disseminated to key policy makers, experts and each of the UK's 433 local councils. A related symposium held by the gallery explored the issue of spaces for play, looking at real and imagined barriers to play in cities.

The National Trust has for some time invested in expert advice and guidance on its support for risky play and to develop its play offer as a way of encouraging families and children to engage with both outdoor and indoor sites. So too have other national environmental and heritage organisations such as Natural England and the Forestry Commission to varying degrees. The National Trust published *The Natural Childhood Report*<sup>132</sup> in 2012 and promoted the *50 Things to do before you're 11¾* challenge, which grabbed the attention of then UK Government Education Secretary Damien Hind.<sup>133</sup> About ten years ago the National Trust took an active approach to move away from playgrounds next to car parks and to work with specialists to rethink its play offer. The National Trust asked, 'If a play area is the answer, what is the question?'<sup>134</sup> as a way of exploring understandings of play with the Trust

context.<sup>135</sup> Its outdoor work has included social spaces for resting and playing; networks of play trails and playful interventions on routes; playful invitations; and loose parts, the '*raw ingredients of play*'.<sup>136</sup> The Trust has also been drawing on these experiences to make its inside spaces more playful too. In 2019 the Trust piloted *50 Things to do Indoors*, working with staff to overcome the challenge of such an approach in heritage sites where collections and built assets have to be cared for alongside enhanced engagement and programming.

All these examples show that there is a very real interest in cultural institutions engaging in children's play, and that developing additional partnerships to extend and advocate for Play Sufficiency could be positively explored. Play Sufficiency Leads or Play Sufficiency working groups could explore the development of formal connections with local arts and heritage institutions to extend and support the provision of opportunities for children to play, including through carrying out research with children. Much expertise from play development teams and playworkers could be shared with museum staff teams. There could also be some investment in enhancing the *Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit* to include more representation of the cultural sector (see Recommendation 8), and council leads for culture and heritage could be invited into the Play Sufficiency working groups.

## A summary of recommendations on children's and community services

*Section 5 contains the full recommendations, including more detail on context, rationale and suggestions for implementation. The recommendations coming out of this section of the report are summarised here.*

**Recommendation 4:** We recommend that a funded strategy to promote the Play Sufficiency Duty be developed by Welsh Government in partnership with Play Wales.

**Recommendation 5:** We recommend that Welsh Government seeks ways to provide a more consistent funding stream to support the statutory Play Sufficiency Duty.

**Recommendation 6:** We recommend that where resources are available at local authority level, they should consider being used in the first place to fund a permanent senior-level Play Sufficiency post whose role is to work strategically on Play Sufficiency.

## 5.0 Conditions to support securing sufficient opportunities for play: concluding thoughts and recommendations

Throughout our work on Play Sufficiency, we have framed the Play Sufficiency Duty in terms of the responsibility to pay attention to the conditions that support play to emerge in children's everyday lives: in neighbourhoods, in dedicated spaces for play and in the institutions of childhood. In this research, we take the same principle back a level, and suggest that there is a range of conditions that support local authorities to work towards securing sufficient opportunities for children to play.

Our findings point to four key headline conditions that can support local authorities to deliver on the Play Sufficiency Duty:

- **policy** alignment and promotion (including a greater prominence for the Play Sufficiency Duty in other national and local policies and strategies);
- **people** (the right people in the right place at the right time with sufficient authority, capacity, capability and consistency);
- **information** (existing and new information, including research);
- **openness to possibilities** (organisational cultures that allow for being able to respond to opportunities that arise).

These four headline conditions are considered in more detail in following sections. We have presented them using the four registers that Ash Amin proposes for the 'good city',<sup>137</sup> namely repair and maintenance, relatedness, rights and re-enchantment (see section 1.1 for a brief introduction). In our three previous research studies, we have suggested that these registers can be readily adapted to form a framework for considering Wales as a play-friendly country – the 'good country', and we have used them in this study as both a theoretical and an analytical framework. Here we return to them to organise the broad patterns that have emerged from the many singular examples we have presented

through the report cards in sections 2 to 4. Amin's account is more than a purely theoretical framework: it favours pragmatic, everyday actions that can unsettle inequitable patterns of spatial production. Children's play often does this anyway, re-appropriating space to use it in ways not intended by its designers (walking on low walls, avoiding the cracks in the pavement, hanging out at the shops). If adults pay attention to these temporary collective disturbances of existing practices, they can work towards spatial design and other practices and conditions that offer '*outcomes that benefit the more rather than the few*'.<sup>138</sup> One example of this is the way that the Environmental Development Officer in Conwy responded to his awareness of how children use space, designing in kerbs that afford kerby and trees that can become goal posts (see section 2.4). It is about thinking differently, seeing children's right to play as a matter of spatial justice and fair access to common spatial resources.

The interrelated recommendations that follow have been developed from this research; we are also aware that the Welsh Government is currently conducting a Ministerial Play Review, and some of these points already form part of this review. Some recommendations are addressed to the Welsh Government, some to Play Wales, some to local authorities and some overlap. It should be recognised that many are predicated on the assumption that Play Wales can continue to play the pivotal role it has done to date, both through adequate funding and the continuation of the partnership approach that has underpinned Play Sufficiency work since the start.

### 5.1 Repair and maintenance

This refers to the many policies, practices, objects and technologies that help to keep things going, from traffic lights and timetables to the Play Sufficiency Duty itself. These need to be kept in good repair and at the same time should be subject to regular scrutiny to consider how

they might exclude children from accessing the common goods that shared space has to offer.

Some of this involves paying attention to what is already there. Actions to support children's play are sometimes but not always about delivering new projects. Often, children will know where and how they want to play, and adults' role is to protect that, whether that is informal space, formal space or existing services. For informal space, sometimes this is a question of sensitive and appropriate research with children, sometimes it is about developing capacities to pay attention to 'play traces',<sup>139</sup> and sometimes children choose to play in spaces that adults cannot see. There will be a balance between supporting children's play and other considerations, for example safety and legal aspects, as in the story we told in *Children's Right to Play in Wales* about the countryside officers who would often come across dens and rope swings, and who would carry out a risk-benefit assessment on them and leave them be if they were safe, or if unsafe, try and adapt them, and only if necessary remove them.

Former Children's Commissioner for Wales, Keith Towler, wrote in 2015 of a film he had been given that had been made by a group of young people in rural west Wales:

*'It told the story, a true story, of how a new housing development destroyed a play space. The play area was a muddy bank. A piece of land used by children and young people extensively. At no point during the planning process for this new housing development did anybody consult with children and young people. The new housing has no play provision as part of the development and the one area that children used has been flattened by bulldozers and built over. The film is powerful and demonstrates that these children and young people should have had a say in the planning process and they should have been heard.'*<sup>140</sup>

It is worth also reiterating here the option for landowners to seek a Deed of Dedication to protect parks, open spaces and playground land. A Deed of Dedication, through Fields in Trust, will ensure land can only be used for sport, play or recreation and to protect it against sale or development (see section 4.4).

In addition, our research has identified key actions that can be taken in terms of repair and maintenance that can help create conditions to support the delivery of Play Sufficiency.

### 5.1.1 Alignment of policies at national level

At a national level, *Children's Right to Play in Wales* suggested that there was a need to promote cross-departmental working across Welsh Government to raise awareness of the Play Sufficiency Duty and to align it more explicitly with other policies. The recommendations listed here build on this and are developed from the discussions in section 2.1 of the report. We are aware that some of these recommendations are already being addressed through the Ministerial Play Review and through the ongoing work carried out by Play Wales; we have also noted this in some specific recommendations.





**Recommendation 1: At national level, we recommend that Welsh Government continues the work being done to undertake and report on a mapping process to show the current and potential relationships between the Play Sufficiency Duty and other key legislation, policies and initiatives. The report should make recommendations for strengthening the links, particularly where explicit reference to the Play Sufficiency Duty would help create conditions for local authorities to deliver on the Duty.**

We are aware that work has already begun on this, both through the review of 2019 Play Sufficiency Assessments undertaken by Play Wales, and through the Ministerial Play Review.

The Play Sufficiency Duty acknowledges the value of play for its own sake, and it also recognises that playing can contribute to other policy agendas. Often, children's play is simply separated off as a concern for **policies relating only to children and families**, many of which are service focused (for example, social services, early years, education, playwork and youth work). These are very important, and this report includes examples of how to support children's play in schools, early years childcare settings, the care system and youth provision. In addition, we have shown how playworkers can work to support children's opportunities to play both in playwork provision and more broadly through strategic and community development roles. However, it is not just policies relating to children and families that have an impact on how, where and when children can play. Given that play is interwoven throughout children's everyday lives wherever they are, broader policies also need to take children's play into account. Play Wales has produced a series of *Focus on play* briefings for a range of professionals (planning, health, education, transport, early years childcare providers and practitioners, Town and Community Councils).<sup>141</sup> These can help inform both the policy links and the argument for more explicit references to the Play Sufficiency Duty.

Each of the report cards offered in this report includes specific policy drivers that have helped create the conditions for those actions in support of children's play; many examples include policies beyond the Play Sufficiency Duty. This work is made much easier if key policies, statutory guidance and other official Welsh Government documents make explicit reference to the Play Sufficiency Duty. This not only makes partnership working easier, but may also open up access to a range of resources including funding streams. Relevant current policies and initiatives include, but are not limited to, the Curriculum for Wales 2022 and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools when considering the Play Sufficiency Duty and **schools** (see section 4.2); the current review of Early Years Education and Care and the review of the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare in terms of **early years and childcare provision**; and the Youth Work Strategy for Wales 2019 in terms of **youth work** (see section 4.3).

In addition, given that play is interwoven throughout children's everyday lives, there is potential for alignment across a broader array of policy areas. We wish to highlight four areas here: well-being, planning, sustainability and children's rights.

- **Well-being:** The evidence is compelling for the contribution that self-organised play can make to children's well-being, particularly in terms of mental health and resilience (through attachments to peers and to place, emotion regulation, stress response systems, pleasure, openness to learning)<sup>142</sup> and to their physical health.<sup>143</sup> In this sense, play is children's own way of taking care of themselves and of ensuring their own health and well-being, embracing an assets-based rather than deficit view of children's own capabilities. It makes sense, therefore, for policies beyond the Play Sufficiency Duty, in particular the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, to pay attention to the conditions that support children's ability to engage in self-organised play.

- Planning:** This has emerged as a priority area for consideration in terms of adults' roles in helping to create conditions that support children's opportunities to play. The configuration of both the built environment and of green infrastructure is fundamental in this regard (for example, see report card 17). This is reflected in the fact that the Scottish Government, influenced by the Welsh Government's Play Sufficiency Duty, has recently introduced a statutory duty to carry out Play Sufficiency Assessments and has positioned this in its Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. Yet, a recent review of child friendly planning in the UK notes that '*children are mostly visible by their absence*'.<sup>144</sup> In the comparison that report makes of the four UK nations, Wales comes out well, although still falls short of being able to earn the title of child friendly. We recommend that the Welsh Government considers the recommendations in that report. In Wales, the planning system is guided by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, further highlighting the relationship between this Act and the Play Sufficiency Duty. The draft National Development Framework 2020-2040 is informed by the Well-being of Future Generations Act as are the strategic framework for Strategic Development Plans at a regional level and Local Development Plans at local authority level.
  - Sustainability:** The synergies between child-friendly environments and the environmental sustainability agenda are considerable. Many of the actions currently being taken in the name of environmental sustainability, such as reducing the use of the private car and shifting street priority towards active travel modes; investment in green energy and public transport; the greening and rewilding of spaces, including school grounds; green infrastructure practices, and so on, can all contribute to a more play-friendly built and natural environment. Again, this highlights the relationship with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and more could be done to bring these synergies to the fore. In addition, there are strong links with the Active Travel Act 2013, the Environment Act (Wales) 2016, together with the Natural Resources Policy (2017) (which explicitly acknowledges the benefits of outdoor play and references the Play Sufficiency Duty statutory guidance) and Prosperity for All (2017).
  - Rights:** Children's right to play is enshrined in Article 31 of the UNCRC, developed further in General Comment 17 from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. We also highlight here the importance of Article 15, the right to peaceful assembly: this right is little acknowledged and frequently breached through hostile architecture design, street signage (such as 'no ball games' signs) and spatial practices that render children out of place in the public realm (such as social landlords requiring tenants to prevent their children playing out, or young people being moved on and prevented from gathering on streets or in shopping centres).
- The Welsh Government has always taken a rights-based approach to legislation affecting children, being the first country in the UK to embed the UNCRC into domestic law. The Welsh Government has recently undertaken an inquiry into the impact of its Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011. Section 1 of this Measure places a duty on Welsh Ministers to have 'due regard' to the articles of the UNCRC when exercising any of their functions. To ensure compliance with this duty the Welsh Government introduced a Child's Right Impact Assessment procedure (CRIA) intended to consider the potential impacts of policy initiatives on children's rights. Evaluations<sup>145</sup> of the CRIA process have highlighted the need to ensure knowledge and expertise in undertaking the assessments, both through reviewing training for Ministers and senior civil servants and taking a multi-agency approach to carrying out CRIAs, including the use of experts.
- In 2018, the Welsh Government published a report on compliance with the Duty,<sup>146</sup> committing

to revisions of the Children's Rights Scheme and the CRIA together with looking again at sector specific training on children's rights. These points have been raised again in responses to the current inquiry from both the Wales UNCRC Monitoring Group and Play Wales. We suggest that CRIsAs should explicitly take the Play Sufficiency Duty into account, both in legislation aimed at children and young people and also in broader well-being, environmental and planning policies and initiatives.

This leads to the second recommendation:

**Recommendation 2: We recommend that the Ministerial Play Review considers a protocol for Child Rights Impact Assessments in ways that can ensure the Play Sufficiency Duty is taken into consideration.**

### 5.1.2 Alignment of policies at local level

At local authority level, we also suggest that the Play Sufficiency Duty should be given higher level attention and status, both in terms of officers leading on it and in terms of its alignment with other local authority policies and procedures. This can be encouraged in a number of ways, including through a revised toolkit or Statutory Guidance (see Recommendation 7), depending on the outcomes of the Ministerial Play Review. Here, we make recommendations on areas to consider as a part of this alignment.

**Recommendation 3: We recommend that local authorities work towards a more explicit and high-level alignment of the Play Sufficiency Duty to other policies, protocols and initiatives.**

This can include:

- explicitly referencing the Play Sufficiency Duty in primary policies, supplementary guidance and other strategies and initiatives undertaken by the authority across all departments;
- considering children and the Play Sufficiency Duty when undertaking impact assessments

of new policies (for example through Equalities Impact Assessments, since children and young people are recognised in the protected characteristics of age);

- adopting specific protocols and policy frameworks to support those working directly and indirectly with children to support their play, including adopting a risk-benefit approach.

We recommend the same areas for consideration as outlined in 5.1.1 above, namely policies relating to children and families, well-being (including local Well-being Plans), planning (including Local Development Plans and housing guidance), sustainability (again including local Well-being Plans) and children's rights.

### 5.1.3 Promotion of the Play Sufficiency Duty at national level

Given the potential for the Play Sufficiency Duty to speak to other agendas (precisely because of its radical understanding of both play and the concept of sufficiency), more should be done to promote the **Duty itself** across Welsh Government departments, national bodies, local authorities, the voluntary and community sector and with the public more generally.

**Recommendation 4: We recommend that a funded strategy to promote the Play Sufficiency Duty be developed by Welsh Government in partnership with Play Wales.**

This might include:

- **A programme of education** across all national government departments for both members and officers, drawing on the success and lessons from professional development actions at local government level, including the 'Life' conferences.
- **Ministerial statements and/or White Papers** on the role of play and the Play Sufficiency Duty across policy areas, following the mapping process outlined in Recommendation 1.



- **A National Pledge or Declaration** for public bodies to sign up to saying they support the Play Sufficiency Duty, including, for example, Future Generations Commissioner, Natural Resources Wales (including Wales Green Infrastructure Forum), Public Health Wales, Area Health Boards, Health Education and Improvement Wales, Social Care Wales, the North and South Wales Police Federations, National Museum Wales, Arts Council of Wales, Sport Wales, Design Commission Wales, The Royal Town Planning Institute Cymru, Welsh Local Government Association and more.
- **Adding to and promoting the range of information resources produced by Play Wales.** These might include further written guides and/or promotional and informative material in other media such as videos, podcasts, exhibitions. (see Recommendation 12).

#### 5.1.4 Time, space and permission for Play Sufficiency Leads

The statutory guidance outlines that children should have time, space and permission to play;<sup>147</sup> we suggest that to create the conditions that support local authorities to deliver on Play Sufficiency, Play Sufficiency Leads should also have sufficient time, space and permission to develop partnerships, work with uncertainty, be responsive, undertake ongoing research, experiment with small changes and so on. As we say in section 2.2, time implies both sufficient hours for the role (preferably full time) and also the length of time it takes to realise and embed innovations.

In this context space refers to one's place within organisational structures, together with the authority to make decisions and influence decision makers. This is for two reasons. Firstly, if the Duty is to have the status it deserves, the lead officer should be in a position to make/influence those policy and strategic connections. Secondly, in authorities that do have a dedicated play service, lead officers' roles here are all

too often spent on operational issues and they are rarely afforded sufficient space for working strategically.

Finally, permission refers to the organisational culture: we have noted the really exciting changes have occurred in organisations that encourage innovation, experimentation and risk, and where staff are supported to work with uncertainty and to be responsive to chance opportunities that can arise from such dynamic working practices.

We suggest that investing in the Play Sufficiency Duty means investing in people at both national and local level (Welsh Government officers, Play Wales and in local authorities). At local level, investment is likely to be most effective if it is used to employ a full time Play Sufficiency Lead officer at a sufficiently senior level, either within the local authority or in a sufficiently senior position within a local third sector partner such as a County Voluntary Council. Having a permanent post provides for maintenance and sustainability of knowledge and history of the local context, the consistency and capacity to seek and lever in additional funding from other sources, build partnerships over time, develop longer term strategies and be responsive to unforeseen opportunities.

This is a consideration for local authorities; however, it also has implications for the way that Welsh Government invests in the Duty. As we stated in Children's Right to Play in Wales, whilst the significant sums of money that have been invested through the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant (AWPOG) have funded good work, the unpredictable and last-minute nature of the funding militates against effective long-term strategic planning. In some cases, a lack of consistent funding costs more, since assumptions cannot be made about specific projects, and arrangements (including Service Level Agreements (CVC), recruitment and training) have to start from scratch each year, as explained in Report Card 3 in section 2.2). This gives rise to two recommendations:



**Recommendation 5: We recommend that Welsh Government seeks ways to provide a more consistent funding stream to support the statutory Play Sufficiency Duty.**

**Recommendation 6: We recommend that where resources are available at local authority level, they should consider being used in the first place to fund a permanent senior-level Play Sufficiency post whose role is to work strategically on Play Sufficiency.**

Local authorities may also wish to consider where to place such a role, either within the authority departmental structure or outside of it (for example in a CVC), to encourage thinking beyond traditional and dominant narratives that limit the Duty to questions of play provision (important though these are) towards seeing it in terms of spatial justice for children.

Time, space and permission for Play Sufficiency Leads to enact Play Sufficiency includes other aspects of the conditions that support the work. A major enabler is the full *Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit*. We appreciate that parts of the toolkit were amended in 2015, that the assessment template form is regularly reviewed;

we suggest here that both this research and that in *Children's Right to Play in Wales*, work already undertaken by Play Wales, together with the Ministerial Play Review, offer an opportunity for a full review, refresh and relaunch. The relaunch could be an element in promoting the Play Sufficiency Duty. In terms of the assessment form template, some Play Sufficiency Leads felt there was a value in the format not changing too much because people had become familiar with it. However, although the format could remain similar, changes may be necessary following the Ministerial Play Review anyway. One point that was raised more than once in interviews is the 'so what?' aspect of a Play Sufficiency Assessment: the current traffic light format allows a green if the assessment has been done, rather than an evaluation of the actual findings of the assessment, what the issues are and what this means in terms of an action plan.<sup>148</sup>

**Recommendation 7: We recommend that Welsh Government commissions Play Wales to work with them to continue current work to review, refresh and relaunch the full *Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit* in the light of both this research and *Children's Right to Play in Wales*, and also any changes that may arise from the Ministerial Play Review.**

We are aware that this was identified in the review of the 2019 Play Sufficiency Assessments carried out by Play Wales for Welsh Government, and that Play Wales' ongoing support work with local authorities has included discussions particularly regarding the assessment template form. As we noted in *Children's Right to Play in Wales*, there is a range of opinions across local authorities regarding how much and in what ways the assessment template should change.

The review could include, but would not be limited to:

- reviewing the assessment template form to encourage broader and deeper detail and discussion on the issues and actions;
- reviewing the job description for the Lead Officer to reflect the ideas we have presented regarding time, space and permission to undertake the role;
- reviewing the Play Sufficiency Working Group Model Terms of Reference to allow for a strategy group and task and finish groups model, emphasising the high-level nature of the strategy group (see also Recommendation 8);
- recommendations for carrying out ethical research with children using mapping and other creative methods (or signpost to an information sheet on this, see Recommendation 11);
- encouragement and guidance to carry out research and evaluation of actions taken in terms of their impact on children's opportunities to play;
- a review of the range of information sheets and toolkits that Play Wales has produced, with a planned, funded programme of updates and additions (see Recommendation 12).

## 5.2 Relatedness

In Amin's account:

*'this register is about working with connections with difference (different professionals, policies, children and communities). A play-friendly Wales is one that pays attention to difference in order to change habits of practice that exclude access to common resources'.<sup>149</sup>*

### 5.2.1 Children as different

From this perspective, given their different relationship with space and time, children themselves can be seen as different from adults rather than as not-yet-adults lacking the skills, knowledge and experience to participate as full citizens. This register also requires thinking about different children, always working with the particular rather than rushing to generalise. The example of the inclusive youth club in Merthyr Tydfil (Report Card 24, section 4.3) shows an openness to work with difference. The example also shows joy and enchantment, seeing the development as 'a happy accident'. Recommendations flowing from this observation are given in the 'rights' and 're-enchantment' sections below as examples of assets-based working.

### 5.2.2 Cross-professional working

The other aspect of being open to difference and a multiple collective wisdom is the requirement to work cross-professionally. This research, and particularly the example report cards, show the complex entanglement of everything and everyone coming together at the right time in the right place and in the right way to produce successful actions in support of children's play. This often happens in what may seem serendipitous and unpredictable ways, yet there are some conditions that can be nurtured so that when opportunities arise they can be made the most of. In particular, maintaining networks and knowing the possibilities are key in a constantly changing landscape. In this respect, people are fundamental to delivering on the Play Sufficiency Duty.



What has emerged from this research study, and particularly in the focus group discussions, are the mutual benefits of pooling different knowledge, expertise and capacity to act. This is already embedded in PSA processes, but there was a feeling from discussions that this could also be more explicitly recognised at local authority level through a range of actions, including developing, extending or formalising frameworks and protocols for collaboration and sharing.

**Recommendation 8: We recommend that local authorities find ways to embed partnership working on Play Sufficiency in their systems.**

This might be done through, for example:

- explicitly acknowledging and including the Play Sufficiency Duty in high level policies, strategies and plans (see Recommendation 3), particularly those to do with the built and natural environment;
- creating explicit protocols for partnership working that position the authority as an enabler rather than a service deliverer or commissioning agency, or divesting of responsibilities through Community Asset Transfer;
- considering broader and underdeveloped possibilities for partnership work, for example with cultural services (such as museums galleries and heritage sites – see Report Card 26);
- considering the establishment and maintenance of a high-level strategic group on Play Sufficiency whose role is to think creatively rather than merely monitor, together with specific task and finish groups where and when needed (see section 2.2).

**5.2.3 Working together to promote the Play Sufficiency Duty**

At national level, Play Wales has developed an excellent range of resources that are invaluable in both informing professionals about how their work affects the Play Sufficiency Duty and for

professionals to use in their work.<sup>150</sup> These are further discussed in section 5.3.2. Alongside this, a conclusion we came to through this research is that face-to-face engagement is a powerful way to ignite sparks of ideas and sow the seeds of partnership working, helping to create conditions that support the enactment of Play Sufficiency. Again, there have been good examples of this, and such work should continue.

**Recommendation 9: We recommend that Welsh Government, Play Wales and local authorities work to build on current efforts to bring cross-disciplinary professionals together, both to promote the Play Sufficiency Duty and to share research, experiences and ideas, for example through training, professional development programmes or multi-agency conferences.**

This can be done both within and between local authorities. The ‘Life’ conferences across north Wales (see Report Card 11, section 2.5) offer a proven model that can readily be used elsewhere, as does the professional development programme that has been delivered in three authorities to date. Conferences can support sharing of research, actions and issues to support the development of broader collective wisdom. Play Wales conferences, such as the annual Spirit conference and the occasional special conferences on Play Sufficiency, are good examples and should continue.

**5.3 Rights**

Amin’s register of rights is closely linked to that of relatedness. It also draws on the concept of the ‘right to the city’ as described by French philosopher Henri Lefebvre,<sup>151</sup> which presents a different perspective on human rights. Generally speaking, rights are seen as individually held and intimately connected to the machinery of governments and the law. For Amin, rights are held in common rather than individually. Similarly, for Lefebvre, the right to the city is not to do with individual rights to receive or consume what cities have to offer, but to actively participate in the making of the city. Looking beyond the

specifics of cities, this is about the right to the common wealth. In a 'good country', rights are about participation in everyday life and the ability to shape and benefit from common resources. And as Amin says, '*the right to participate presumes having the means and the entitlement to do so*'.<sup>152</sup> As with the register of relatedness, rights are about the right to be different. Here we can conceive of children as citizens in the here-and-now rather than only future producing and consuming citizens, and their very different ways of shaping their environments needs to be respected.

In a working paper on children's right to play that was commissioned to support the campaign for a General Comment on Article 31 of the UNCRC,<sup>153</sup> play is considered across the three groupings of the UNCRC, namely provision, protection and participation. Playing is configured as the way that children participate in everyday life; self-organised playing can be seen as a form of self-protection (as described in section 5.1.1). From this 'provision' becomes a matter of attending to the conditions that support children's opportunities to play. This requires the interwoven aspects of account-ability and response-ability. Where this takes us is that for children to actualise their right to participate through playing, adults need to develop and work with collective wisdoms, including those of children.

Given this, we consider here the range of information resources that can help to build conditions that enable local authorities to deliver on the Play Sufficiency Duty.

### 5.3.1 Further research

In our conversations with Play Sufficiency Leads, they have valued the process of gathering the necessary data for Play Sufficiency Assessments, but often voice frustration that they have not had time or resources to do the research in sufficient depth or detail. Many of the examples in this report show the value of investing in ongoing research over the full three-year period rather than in the period immediately running up to each three-yearly submission. This is particularly the case with researching with children (see section 5.3.2).

We suggest that the processes of account-ability and response-ability are interrelated and interdependent: the cycle of research/collective wisdom and actions should be continuous. Given this, not only should research be continuous but reflection on and evaluation of actions should be an explicit part of the process. Over time, this would yield rich information on both local particularities and broader principles.

### **Recommendation 10: We recommend that Welsh Government works with Play Wales to explore ways to support further research to inform delivering on the Play Sufficiency Duty.**

This could include:

- supporting reflection on and evaluations of specific actions to improve children's opportunities to play;
- encouraging developers to carry out post-occupancy evaluation of new residential schemes;
- encouraging and supporting ongoing local research with children (see Recommendation 11);
- supporting research specifically into issues facing children in rural and low populated areas;
- exploring the possibility of national research into the impact of the Play Sufficiency Duty;
- exploring the possibility of national and/or local research into aspects of the Duty that are less well served by research and practice examples, for example rural children and play;
- supporting regular conferences and other ways to bring people together to share research.

### 5.3.2 Research with children

The Play Sufficiency statutory instruments highlight the requirement to consult with children (in line with UNCRC Article 12); here we suggest that 'consultation' is reframed as research, acknowledging children's crucial contributions to

collective wisdom. This can be done as a specific project at very local neighbourhood level as in Monmouthshire (see Report Card 9, section 2.4). In some cases (for example, the research in Antwerp, see Report Card 15), it is used in conjunction with existing spatial and Geographic Information System (GIS) data held by the municipality.

We would again stress the ethical sensitivities required when carrying out research with children to find out where they play. These issues are discussed in some detail in section 2.4.

As well as researching directly with children about their local neighbourhoods, adults can also learn to become more attentive and attuned to moments of play as they go about their everyday lives, discerning particular spatial arrangements, rhythms and refrains.

Consistently through our research studies into Play Sufficiency and in every one of our case study local authorities included here, research on and with children was a springboard for change. Details of approaches to this can be found in section 2.4. Because of this, we feel that it requires a separate recommendation.

**Recommendation 11: We recommend that local authorities consider investing time and resources in ongoing ethical research with children using observations, mapping and other creative methods at micro-neighbourhood level, enabling a more in depth understanding of children’s play habits and preferences to develop, and sharing those findings with other adults to enhance collective wisdom.**

To support this, we also recommend:

- **local authorities consider combining this research with existing Geographic Information System and other spatial data held by the local authority;**
- **Welsh Government works with Play Wales to explore how to support professionals to undertake**

**neighbourhood research with children, for example through publications or events.**

### 5.3.3 Information resources and toolkits

Play Wales has developed a useful collection of information sheets and toolkits for local authorities to use. The *Focus on play* collection, aimed at a range of professional sectors, can inform the policy mapping process (see Recommendation 1). Similarly, the mapping exercise may well show gaps in this collection. Furthermore, the review and refresh of the toolkit may also identify areas for developing more information material. These may be in a range of media including written, video, podcasts, or more promotional approaches such as exhibitions or conferences.

**Recommendation 12: We recommend that Welsh Government and Play Wales review current information resources produced by Play Wales, including the *Focus on play* series and general collection, identifying areas for new or refreshed resources, and linking these directly to the new *Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit*.**

These might include:

- Researching with children (see Recommendation 11);
- Play and Local Well-being Plans
- Play and Local/Strategic Development Plans;
- Play and green infrastructure;
- Play in rural areas;
- Play in cultural institutions and heritage sites.

## 5.4 Re-enchantment

As we have asserted in previous research reports, children’s play is itself a process of enchantment and re-enchantment with space, a way of disturbing the usual spatial productions to produce moments of hope and where it feels good to be alive. There is much to celebrate about the Play Sufficiency Duty. *Children’s Right to Play in Wales* highlights some of the ‘small



*and sometimes larger scale actions, which might be understood as disturbances of the usual ways of going on with life. These are not isolated interventions but come about through a series of encounters over time and at multiple scales of operation. The Duty and its forces, the individuals involved (often chance encounters of being in the right place at the right time), the spatial and temporal configurations, the zeitgeist brought about by more public conversations about children's play – all these things and more will affect how spaces work.'*<sup>154</sup>

#### 5.4.1 An assets-based approach to re-enchantment

We have suggested here that such enchantment fits well with an assets-based approach to Play Sufficiency: children are generally resourceful and competent players and when conditions are right can find time and space to play, with all the health and well-being benefits that this may bring. Researching with children in the ways suggested in this report can re-enchant adults with children's creativity, nonsense and delight with the world as well as identifying barriers to play. Recommendation 13 brings together many of the points and preceding recommendations to encourage a re-enchantment with children's play and the Duty itself.

**Recommendation 13: We recommend that an assets-based approach to Play Sufficiency is adopted at national and local level in ways that support a re-enchantment with children's play.**

This could include:

- using the full Play Sufficiency Assessment cycle to do neighbourhood level research with children (mapping and creative approaches at micro-neighbourhood level) and documenting conditions that contribute to and factors that constrain sufficiency of opportunity to play as the basis for critical reflection and re-enchantment;

- alongside this, use existing data within the local authority to map the spaces children use and the routes in between as the basis for actions;
- document and evaluate actions taken to review their impact on children's opportunities to play;
- encourage the development of organisational cultures that explicitly support thinking differently, experimentation, working with uncertainty and risk taking, embedded explicitly in policy documents and protocols;
- develop celebratory promotional and information-sharing strategies for the Play Sufficiency Duty that can re-enchant ideas about children's resourcefulness and playfulness.

#### 5.5 Conclusion and final remarks: taking play sufficiency forwards

Despite the challenges of austerity measures, this research highlights the continued enthusiasm for and commitment to the Play Sufficiency Duty in Wales. The work that has been done both at national and local level to create the conditions that support children's play is impressive. Wales is to be congratulated both for its bold, radical and innovative legislation and for the cross-sectoral partnerships that have begun to show how children's right to play is a matter for any profession whose work affects children's ability to find time, space and permission to play. As we stated in *Children's Right to Play*:

*'Children's right to play is a matter of spatial justice. Adult account-ability and response-ability is about holding spatial habits and routines up to critical scrutiny to see how they might include or exclude children and young people from accessing common resources available.'*<sup>155</sup>

We hope that at least some of the concepts, ideas and examples offered in this report resonate with those whose responsibility it is to secure sufficient opportunities for children to play. Although some of them may not be immediately replicable, knowing that they have been done elsewhere can be seen a part of the broader toolkits that people build up themselves over the years. It may be that the ideas themselves re-enchanted or re-invigorated some people, or that others can use them as examples to convince more powerful others of the value in trying them out.

What we have tried to do in this report is identify the conditions that have enabled specific actions to be taken and have presented them in the form

of recommendations, in the hope that they can be proactively developed across national and local government, as well as by Play Wales and other national and regional bodies. These conditions range across policy, people, information and organisational culture and are grounded in the principle that the concept of 'sufficiency' is an ongoing collaborative process of engagement and experimentation, requiring people to be open to doing things differently. The report is timely given the work of the Ministerial Play Review, and we hope that it can serve to inform that significant piece of work, as well as to make a difference at local and community level and to those engaged daily with securing sufficiency for children's play.



## Appendix 1: Abbreviations and acronyms

The report cards used in this report use a number of technical abbreviations and acronyms and some of these are also used throughout the narrative.

<b>AWPOG</b>	All Wales Play Opportunity Grant, funding which is usually allocated late in the year if reprioritisation of budgets allows
<b>CBC</b>	County Borough Council
<b>CIC</b>	Community Interest Company
<b>CPD</b>	Continuing Professional Development
<b>CRIA</b>	Child Rights Impact Assessment
<b>CVC</b>	County Voluntary Council
<b>DBS</b>	Disclosure and Barring Service (criminal record checks for those working with vulnerable groups)
<b>GI</b>	Green Infrastructure
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information System
<b>LA</b>	Local Authority
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>PETC Wales</b>	Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales
<b>PSA</b>	Play Sufficiency Assessment
<b>PSD</b>	Play Sufficiency Duty
<b>RTPI</b>	The Royal Town Planning Institute
<b>SLA</b>	Service Level Agreement
<b>TCC</b>	Town and Community Councils
<b>WFG</b>	The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
<b>WG</b>	Welsh Government



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- <sup>1</sup> Welsh Government (2014) *Wales – a Play Friendly Country*, Cardiff: Welsh Government, p8 (our emphasis).
- <sup>2</sup> United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2013) *General Comment 17 on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (article 31)*, para 1, our emphasis.
- <sup>3</sup> These were: Lester, S. and Russell, W. (2013) *Leopard Skin Wellies, a Top Hat and a Vacuum Cleaner Hose: An analysis of Wales' Play Sufficiency Assessment duty*, Cardiff: Play Wales; and Lester, S. and Russell, W. (2014) *Towards Securing Sufficient Play Opportunities: A short study into the preparation undertaken for the commencement of the second part of the Welsh Government's Play Sufficiency Duty to secure sufficient play opportunities*, Cardiff: Play Wales.
- <sup>4</sup> Russell, W., Barclay, M., Tawil, B. and Derry, C. (2019) *Children's Right to Play in Wales: Six years of stories and change since the commencement of the Welsh Play Sufficiency Duty*, Cardiff: Play Wales.
- <sup>5</sup> Amin, A. (2006) The Good City, *Urban Studies*, 43(5/6): 1009–1023.
- <sup>6</sup> [www.publichealthwalesobservatory.wales.nhs.uk/health-assets/](http://www.publichealthwalesobservatory.wales.nhs.uk/health-assets/)
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- <sup>13</sup> Mazzei, L.A. (2014) Beyond an Easy Sense: A diffractive analysis, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(6):742-746.
- <sup>14</sup> Lester, S. and Russell, W. (2013) *Leopard Skin Wellies, a Top Hat and a Vacuum Cleaner Hose: An analysis of Wales' Play Sufficiency Assessment duty*, Cardiff: Play Wales, p16.
- <sup>15</sup> Russell, W., Barclay, M., Tawil, B. and Derry, C. (2019) *Children's Right to Play in Wales: Six years of stories and change since the commencement of the Welsh Play Sufficiency Duty*, Cardiff: Play Wales.
- <sup>16</sup> <https://policyforplay.com/2019/09/18/uk-planning-policy-mainly-fails-children-but-london-wales-and-scotland-begin-to-show-the-way/>
- <sup>17</sup> These points are made in our three earlier research reports.
- <sup>18</sup> [www.playfulchildhoods.wales](http://www.playfulchildhoods.wales)
- <sup>19</sup> Guarneros-Meza, V., Downe, J., Entwistle, T. and Martin, S.J. (2014) Putting the Citizen at the Centre? Assembling Local Government Policy in Wales, *Local Government Studies*, 40(1): 65-82.

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- <sup>21</sup> Welsh Government (2019) *Third Sector Scheme Wales Annual Report 2017-2018*, Cardiff: Welsh Government, p7.
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- <sup>28</sup> The Bernard van Leer Foundation's Urban 95 Programme is researching what cities look like at 95cm, the average height of a healthy three-year-old: <https://bernardvanleer.org/urban95-challenge>
- <sup>29</sup> Kytta, M. (2004) 'The Extent of Children's Independent Mobility and the Number of Actualised Affordances as Criteria for Child-friendly Environments', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 24, pp. 179-198.
- <sup>30</sup> For example, Barclay, M. and Tawil, B. (2015) Assessing Play Sufficiency in Wrexham, Wales, *Journal of Playwork Practice*, 2(2):191-200.
- <sup>31</sup> Bornat, D. and Shaw, B. (2019) *Neighbourhood Design: Working with children towards a child friendly city*, London: ZCD Architects, pp3-4.
- <sup>32</sup> <https://mappingthecity.net>
- <sup>33</sup> Wrexham County Borough Council Play Development Team (2016) *Training Brochure*, Wrexham: Wrexham Youth and Play, Wrexham County Borough Council, p2.
- <sup>34</sup> [www.playwales.org.uk/eng/mahps](http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/mahps)
- <sup>35</sup> [www.playwales.org.uk/eng/l2app](http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/l2app)
- <sup>36</sup> Welsh Government (2014) *Wales – a Play Friendly Country*, Cardiff: Welsh Government, p17.
- <sup>37</sup> Shaw, B. et al (2015) *Children's Independent Mobility: An international comparison and recommendations for action*, London: Policy Studies Institute.
- <sup>38</sup> The rest of this introductory text is adapted from a draft paper written by Stuart Lester (unpublished). We see it as Stuart's ongoing contribution to our research.
- <sup>39</sup> This insight was gained from a discussion with architect Dinah Bornat.
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- <sup>45</sup> Krishnamurthy, S. (2019, p.1) Reclaiming spaces: child inclusive urban design, *Cities & Health*.
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- <sup>47</sup> [www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/mayors-and-local-leaders-announce-declaration-of-cologne-at-child-friendly-cities-summit/](http://www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/mayors-and-local-leaders-announce-declaration-of-cologne-at-child-friendly-cities-summit/)
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## Report Cards

- 1 Development of a risk management policy in Wrexham
- 2 Service-specific play implementation plan (Social Services)
- 3 Playing Out (Conwy summer holiday playschemes)
- 4 Partnership working on a Play Streets project in Cardiff
- 5 Establishing strategic groups with responsibility for play sufficiency
- 6 Playing Out Community Interest Company (CIC) in Bristol
- 7 Playday
- 8 Fields in Trust – Deeds of Dedication
- 9 Developing a research project with children in Monmouthshire
- 10 Research with schools in Cardiff
- 11 Life conferences in north Wales
- 12 Housing design in Vauban, Freiburg, Germany
- 13 Play in housing developments
- 14 Hackney Play Streets in London
- 15 Antwerp Speelweefselplan ('playspaceweb')
- 16 Rethinking play provision for disabled children in Cardiff
- 17 Green infrastructure and planning policy in Monmouthshire
- 18 Leasing of a woodland space in Wrexham
- 19 New playwork delivery model in Cardiff
- 20 Playwork as community work in Plas Madoc in Wrexham
- 21 Play KX in London
- 22 Rich Play Awards in Conwy
- 23 Schoolyard Oasis Project in Paris
- 24 Development of an inclusive youth club in Merthyr Tydfil
- 25 More Playful Museum Project at Manchester Museum
- 26 Play-Work Exhibition at Tŷ Pawb in Wrexham

# 1 Development of a risk management policy in Wrexham

## Domain

Policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange

## Description

Development of a policy framework enabling practitioners to adopt a balanced approach to risk management in their work with or on behalf of playing children

## Policy instigators and drivers

- Play Sufficiency Duty
- Recommendations from local authority Play Sufficiency Assessments
- All Wales Play Opportunity Grant funding used to develop guidance around particular concerns

## People instigators and drivers

- Play Wales officers
- Local authority Play Development Team
- Experienced playworkers from adventure playgrounds
- Advocates working nationally to promote a risk-benefit approach
- Sympathetic health and safety officers

## Resources/enablers

- Play and playwork theory and practice
- Publication of *Play for a Change...* and *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide*
- Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) endorsement of a balanced approach to risk management

## Process

- Writing the original policy and design of the risk management framework
- Developing dynamic risk-benefit assessment guidance for staff
- Delivering risk management training to staff based on the policy
- Producing detailed risk-benefit assessments to clarify local authority position on a range of specific issues and situations

## Challenges

- Gaining endorsement from the local authority executive board – made possible by the statutory duty

## Outputs/outcomes

- The policy has enabled local authority Play Development Team to address a range of situations where people have raised concerns regarding provision for children's play
- Elements of the policy/framework have been used in a range of different settings where children play
- The policy was used in the Welsh Government *Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit* for local authorities



## 2 Service-specific play implementation plan (Social Services)

### Domain

Policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange

### Description

Co-production of a service-specific play policy implementation plan and play and risk management guidance for Social Services' Looked After Children Team and foster carers

### Policy instigators and drivers

- Play Sufficiency Duty
- County Play Policy Implementation Plan
- Wrexham and Conwy Play and Risk Management policy
- Play Wales' capacity to support through their Workforce Development Officer

### People instigators and drivers

- Play Sufficiency Lead (funded by Families First and employed by County Voluntary Council) capitalising on chance meetings to improve opportunities for play
- Looked After Children Team staff advocating to senior management for improved approach to children's play
- Willingness of senior management to engage with change

### Chance

- Feedback from children and foster carers on playschemes saying they couldn't usually engage in 'this sort of play'
- Play-aware social worker at the same playscheme echoing similar concerns
- During delivery of an introductory playwork training to foster carers, realising that policy and guidance for Social Services and foster carers needed to be addressed

### Process

- Play Policy Implementation Plan and risk management guidance developed in partnership with Social Services senior management and foster carer advisory group
- Submitted to Scrutiny Committee for approval and Insurance Department to test fitness for purpose
- Training provided for management and departmental staff
- Annual delivery of combined training to both foster carers and Looked After Children staff, ensuring shared knowledge and understanding and reducing barriers

### Challenges

- Supporting Looked After Children Team to embed the policy and guidance in their practice
- Ongoing mapping with other departmental plans to avoid conflicting messages
- The process of development must include all key players and as such is slow

### Outcomes

- Improved understanding of play by foster carers, Social Services/Looked After Children Team
- Much less uncertainty about what playing children can do
- An excellent example of how service-specific play implementation plans and guidance can be developed and improve children's opportunities for play

### Next steps

- Review and refresh, learn from experiences and improve

## 3 Playing Out (Conwy summer holiday playschemes)

### Domain

Policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange

### Description

Partnership model for open access outdoor playschemes between Town and Community Councils, County Borough Council and Community and Voluntary Council (CVC)

### Policy instigators and drivers

- Play Sufficiency Duty and findings from local authority Play Sufficiency Assessments
- Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015
- Families First allocation of funding for 'Playing Out' coordinator
- All Wales Play Opportunities Grant used to develop grant scheme

### People instigators and drivers

- Cross-departmental Play Sufficiency Task and Finish Group's appreciation play's value
- Education Department lead person for the council working with the uncertainties of 'Playing Out' project
- Play Sufficiency Lead (funded by County Borough Council's Families First and employed by CVC) and 'Playing Out' Coordinator
- Town and Community Councils (often clerks)

### Process

- Play Sufficiency Lead and Coordinator present to Town and Community Councils and request expression of interest to contract Playing Out
- Play Sufficiency Lead and Coordinator assess level of commitment and liaise with CBC departmental lead to commence administrative and recruitment processes
- Town and Community Councils confirm funding/contracting commitment
- County Borough Council department lead organises Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, mandatory training, payroll, insurance and vehicles

### Challenges

- Workload of negotiating agreements annually with 15-20 Town and Community Councils
- Working with uncertainty: recruitment processes need to begin prior to finalising funding agreements
- Funding for coordinator is agreed annually making longer term planning difficult

### Outputs/outcomes

- Approximately 2000 children and similar numbers of parents/carers engaged
- One-to-one inclusion worker integrating children with additional requirements into 'mainstream' provision
- Running playschemes near Family Centres provides opportunities for engagement, information share and early intervention
- Improved uptake of Holiday Hunger programme
- Families follow playschemes around the borough, building friendship networks
- Parents become more relaxed and take a different approach to their children's play

### Next steps

- Develop longer term Service Level Agreements with Town and Community Councils for funding

## 4 Partnership working on a Play Streets project in Cardiff

### Domain

Policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange

### Description

An illustration of the range of players and connections involved in initiating and developing a play streets project

### Policy instigators and drivers

- Play Sufficiency Duty
- UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative and Cardiff's Child Friendly City Strategy, particularly the Safer Streets theme

### People instigators and drivers

- Local parents
- Children (through previous Child Friendly Cities and Play Sufficiency research)
- Play Development Team, who had done some play streets work
- Play Wales
- Team Leader for Transport Policy, Cardiff Council
- Very supportive Councillor and Portfolio Holder for Transport Policy (and Board Member for Street Games)
- Child Friendly Cities Officer with understanding of play and cross-council connections

### Process

- Local parents contacted Playing Out (Bristol) wanting to start a street play initiative
- Play Wales hosted a meeting with local advocates, the authority's Play Development Support Worker, and representatives from Public Health Wales
- A pilot was set up, evaluated by Play Wales and two students from Cardiff University
- The Child Friendly Cities Officer was able to help set up and chair a task group with relevant officers to establish application procedures for street closures
- All Wales Play Opportunities Grant funding to purchase road closure kits

### Challenges

- Local objections can prevent activists from continuing
- Balance of time and capacity for the Play Development Team to initially support residents through the application process

### Outputs/outcomes

- Street Play embedded and process and protocol established within council
- Child Friendly Cities street play objectives ongoing



## 5 Establishing strategic groups with responsibility for play sufficiency

### Domain

Policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange

### Description

Where examples exist, these multi-disciplinary strategic groups are developing into 'thinking groups' where challenges in respect of play sufficiency can be picked up and discussed strategically

### Policy instigators and drivers

- Play Sufficiency Duty
- Other local policy duties and initiatives

### People instigators and drivers

- Play Sufficiency leads located in various departments across different local authorities
- Officers in policy and partnership development roles
- Policy leads from other departments and partner organisations
- Elected members with responsibility for play sufficiency

### Chance

- Strategic groups evolving into 'thinking groups' rather than just monitoring progress against action plans

### Process

- Establishing, maintaining and facilitating the group
- Engaging representatives from diverse policy areas

### Challenges

- Ensuring play sufficiency doesn't get lost amongst other agendas
- Identifying preferred reporting mechanisms / strategic position of the group
- Clarifying the function of the group, making it worthwhile for people to be involved
- Pressure on time for all involved
- Changes in personnel

### Outputs/outcomes

- Improved partnership working in support of play
- Greater recognition of responsibilities across policy areas
- Increased capacity to respond to the Play Sufficiency Duty
- Opportunities to discuss challenges in respect of play sufficiency

## 6 Playing Out Community Interest Company (CIC) in Bristol

### Domain

Policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange

### Description

'Parent and resident led movement restoring children's freedom to play out in the streets and spaces where they live' ([www.playingout.net](http://www.playingout.net))

### Instigators and drivers

- Initially two local mothers wanting their children to be able to play out on the street
- Experience of closing streets for street party gave the idea for play street closures
- Support from other residents on the street and local council
- The success of early experiments led to developing a replicable model

### Development of the broader model

- Local pilots
- Support from Bristol Council, who established Temporary Street Play Orders
- Interest from others led to developing the Playing Out model and making it available through a website
- Playing Out CIC formed 2011
- Network of play streets growing across the UK

### Strategies

- Development of a simple and replicable model, networks, resources and advice
- Use of social and mainstream media encourages parents to contact their own councils and play associations
- Commissioning research showing evidence of value in terms of children's health and well-being, stronger communities, active citizenship and wider culture change
- Lobbying

### Challenges

- Opposition to the idea from a minority of people (streets are for cars, cars may be damaged, children may get run over)
- It is important to challenge these with evidence

### Outputs/outcomes

- As at July 2019, 63 UK councils have a street play policy – almost 1000 communities have played out, involving 3000 children
- In June 2019 the UK Government published official guidance to English local councils on street closures to support children playing out
- International interest and adaptation of the model

**Reference:** Ferguson, A. (2019) Playing out: a grassroots street play revolution, *Cities & Health*, 3(1-2): 20-28.

# 7 Playday

## Domain

Policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange

## Description

Playday is the UK national day for play, traditionally held on the first Wednesday in August ([www.playday.org.uk](http://www.playday.org.uk))

## Instigators and drivers

- Started in 1986 in London as a response to impending cuts to play services
- The initial aims were to raise the profile of play and alert people to possible cuts to services

## People instigators and drivers

- The originators were Mick Conway, Paul Bonel and Kim Holdaway
- Today, Playday is supported by Play England, Play Wales, PlayBoard Northern Ireland and Play Scotland

## Development

- Playday grew across London and in 1991 went national
- Some years, Playday has had resources to commission research and a media campaign

## How it works

- Anyone can run a Playday event in their community
- Resources are on the website to help with planning, campaigning and using the media
- Those running events are asked to register them on the website to track the reach and to inform the public about events in their area

## Outputs/outcomes

- Playday events can help to promote the value of play as well as play services and, in Wales, the Play Sufficiency Duty
- It is a high-profile opportunity to bring people together, including council members and officers
- In Wales, it has often led to other initiatives and actions to support play sufficiency



## 8 Fields in Trust – Deeds of Dedication

### Domain

Policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange

### Description

Landowners can apply for a Deed of Dedication that will protect open spaces from development in perpetuity

### Instigators and drivers

- Fields in Trust's aim is to protect green and open spaces against threat from financial and development pressures

### How it works

- Outdoor recreational space that has public access can be protected through a binding legal agreement called a Deed of Dedication
- The application for a Deed of Dedication must be made by the landowner
- Guidance and the application form are available on the website: [www.fieldsintrust.org/protect](http://www.fieldsintrust.org/protect)

### How it can support play sufficiency

- Local communities would need to work with local landlords
- Fields in Trust Cymru may be able to give advice and support

## 9 Developing a research project with children in Monmouthshire

### Domain

Policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange

### Description

Pilot project involving children as research designers and participants developed in response to adult residents' concerns about play

### Instigators

- Community walk with local councillor and local authority officer, where a common theme of play emerged through conversations with local residents
- Need to involve children identified through partnership meeting set up in response to residents' concerns
- All Wales Play Opportunities Grant funding to support the research project

### Drivers and enablers

- Local authority officer from Communities and Partnerships Development Team with passion for children's rights and listening to children
- Local authority officer from Countryside Section with extensive knowledge about play provision in the local area
- Strong cluster working between schools with one head as single point of contact

### Chance

- Headteachers' willingness to be involved was increased due to a parent at a school also asking for support to improve opportunities for play

### Process

- Bringing partners together to focus on a particular neighbourhood
- Working with a cluster of schools in the community
- Facilitating sessions with children to design research
- Producing questionnaires, data gathering and analysing responses
- Feeding back results to children and supporting them to develop recommendations

### Outputs/outcomes

- Children presented findings to Town Council who promised to act on all recommendations
- Section 106 money was allocated to the community as a consequence of the research
- A toolkit has been developed aimed at enabling other schools to facilitate similar processes as part of the new curriculum

# 10 Research with schools in Cardiff

## Domain

Policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange

## Description

A small research project into children's play which came about through two council initiatives recognising shared objectives and working together

## Policy instigators and drivers

- Child Friendly Cities Cardiff had a target of three consultations with children for the first year of the project
- Play Sufficiency Assessment includes requirement for research with children
- Rights Respecting Schools initiative motivates headteachers

## People instigators and drivers

- Play Development Support Worker
- Senior Youth Worker, Child Friendly Cities Initiative

## Process

- Email invitations to schools and administration of responses by Child Friendly Cities Lead
- Development of one day playful and engaging consultation event in schools
- Play Development Team planning for consultative conversation with teachers
- Production and dissemination of report

## Drivers and enablers

- Child Friendly Cities Lead who understands play and can connect varied departmental objectives
- Money and time in place for research with children through Child Friendly Cities plan, can be designated to Play Development Team
- Schools and headteachers willing participants: take up for participation in research exceeded capacity of research event

## Outputs/outcomes

- Play Development Team has designed playful research tools for children and teachers
- Research report produced by Play Development team, a key part of 2019 Play Sufficiency Assessment
- Novel contacts between schools and headteachers made by Play Development Team (previously a challenge to make contact with schools)
- Child Friendly Cities strategy objectives for consulting with children and communities in the first year of the project met

## Next steps

- Intention to repeat process for next Play Sufficiency Assessment
- Growing confidence of Play Development Team to design and manage future research



# 11 Life conferences in north Wales

## Domain

Policy, advocacy, knowledge exchange

## Description

Series of themed conferences with the core aim of advocating for play and engaging more people cross-professionally in paying greater attention to the Play Sufficiency Duty

## Policy instigators and drivers

- Play Sufficiency Duty
- Local authority Play Sufficiency Assessments identified a common theme of needing to engage a much broader range of professionals across multiple policy areas
- All Wales Play Opportunities Grant funding used to run conferences

## People instigators and drivers

- Play Officers North Wales Group with a history of working together
- Same individuals leading on local authority Play Sufficiency Assessments
- Play Wales supporting collaborative working
- Expert and engaging speakers in play and playwork

## Process

- Design, publicity and facilitation of five themed 'life conferences', each targeting a particular policy area and range of professionals: home, school, park, street and health

## Challenges

- Loss of play officers in some local authorities
- Limited capacity of play officers across the region

## Outputs/outcomes

- Hundreds of practitioners working across diverse policy areas actively engaged in thinking about play
- Many initial introductions made between play officers and those working in other policy areas
- Over time some of these have led to established working relationships and 'spin off' projects
- Conference model repeated in other areas across Wales

# 12 Housing design in Vauban, Freiburg, Germany

## Domain

The built and natural environment

## Description

A housing settlement co-designed according to environmental and child-friendly principles

## Policy instigators and drivers

- Municipality's sustainability standards for development of the settlement
- Citizen participation model

## People instigators and drivers

- Two very motivated individuals
- A group of ecologically and socially minded local activists
- Vauban Forum co-ordinating several co-housing groups
- Council officers

## Process

- Co-housing groups worked with council to design neighbourhoods according to environmental, social, economic and cultural standards

## Chance

- A key study into children's use of space and playground design, commissioned and accepted by the municipality, influenced design of public space

## Challenges

- Several conflicts and compromises during the process, including accommodating a group of squatters

## Outputs/outcomes

Child-friendly design through:

- Good transport links, cycle and pedestrian pathways
- Car parking set away from housing
- Neighbourhoods are designed in U-shaped blocks, creating play streets/home zones that cannot be used for traffic or parking
- Deliberate high-density design means more green space
- The seven neighbourhoods are separated and joined by five resident designed parks with play features in line with report

**References:** Coates, G. J. (2013) The Sustainable Urban District of Vauban in Freiburg, Germany, *International Journal of Design & Nature and Ecodynamics*, 8(4), 265–286.

Blinkert, B. (2004) Quality of the city for children: chaos and order, *Children, Youth & Environments*, 14(2): 99-112.

# 13 Play in housing developments

## Domain

The built and natural environment

## Description

Partnership working between the Play Sufficiency Lead and Cartrefi Conwy's (social landlord) Environmental Development Officer

## Policy instigators and drivers

- Play Sufficiency Duty
- Historic and ongoing importance of housing standards guidance and ministerial statements on environmental improvement

## People instigators and enablers

- Cartrefi Conwy Environmental Development Officer, with a background in landscape architecture, was powerfully affected by a play memories activity as part of a 'Park Life' conference; has a personal interest in making the public realm more playable
- Play Sufficiency Lead with knowledge of children's play, the ability to conduct small scale research into play with children, and the leadership skills and motivation to maintain contacts between developments
- Cartrefi Conwy has a progressive organisational culture embracing social responsibility/social justice, risk-taking, innovation and creativity

## Process

- Environmental Development Officer contacts Play Sufficiency Lead during early planning stages of new developments
- Play Sufficiency Lead carries out small scale research with children exploring their current use of space and play preferences
- Findings from research are developed into a design brief
- Environmental Development Officer interprets the brief, creating design for designated play spaces and playful interventions/affordances across the public realm

## Challenges

- Working with planners and insurers to move away from the perceived constraints of European safety standards

## Outputs/outcomes

- Research with children is used to inform landscape design
- Children's contribution to collective wisdom helps challenge communities' ideas on play spaces (adults tend to want traditional playgrounds, but research with children shows otherwise)

## Next steps

- Adaptations and amendments to job descriptions that capture the emergent collective wisdom



# 14 Hackney Play Streets in London

## Domain

The built and natural environment

## Description

Residents close off their streets to through traffic for a few hours weekly or monthly, so that children can play out more safely and neighbours come together

## Instigators, drivers and enablers

- Hackney Play Association wanted to support play streets, but did not want to impose top down
- Phone call from a local resident wanting to set up a play street provided the launchpad
- Strong networks and council support

## Process

- Strong networks, good partnerships and a high level of support from Hackney Council led to an initial pilot year of agreeing street closures
- Following this, funding from Hackney Council's Get Hackney Healthy Board supported further development of play streets, through the employment of a play streets co-ordinator since 2013 (the first resident to contact Hackney Play Association)
- Hackney Council now has a clear procedure for approving street closures and provides street signs

## Models

- A residential streets model (similar to the Playing Out model)
- A school model (Hackney Play Association offers a guide specifically for schools)
- An estates model

## Challenges

- Criticism that the play streets model particularly benefits middle class professional neighbourhoods
- Hackney Play Association offered two responses to this:
  1. Having middle class professionals involved has had spin-offs in terms of influential networks with policy makers and also their own professional practice support for children's play beyond play streets (for example architecture and nursery provision)
  2. Further research was commissioned into street play on housing estates to understand better the issues; funding means they can offer close support, provide resources such as street signs and a start-up pack of play resources that can be topped up

## Outputs/outcomes

- The establishment of over 60 play streets
- Resources to support play streets across the three models

**References:** Interview with the Director of HPA and Councillor Chris Kennedy.

Gill, T. (2015) *Hackney Play Streets Evaluation Report*. London: Hackney Play Association and Hackney Council. [www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets](http://www.hackneyplay.org/playstreets)

# 15 Antwerp Speelweefselplan ('playspaceweb')

## Domain

The built and natural environment

## Description

A rolling programme of developing networks of car-free cycling and walking routes connecting neighbourhood play spaces, schools and youth centres, supplemented with 'play offers' along the way

## Instigators and drivers

- The enthusiasm of the council officer responsible for play spaces
- The city's policy objective of encouraging families to move to or stay in the city
- A neighbourhood approach to planning

## How it works

- Key is a large-scale data gathering through a vast, user-friendly open databank which children are actively encouraged to use and a skilled data analysis team (the officer describes this as a 'gamechanger')
- The data are used to develop a picture of key sites and the routes between them
- Proposals are developed and refined with further participation

## Challenges

- Lack of space in a densely populated city
- Political opposition to measures that restrict car use
- Dependence on one individual with commitment to the project

## Outcomes

- Access to play space has improved

**References:** [www.antwerpen.be/nl/info/57e3c42e15fb6d2b200ec37f/antwerpse-speelweefselplannen](http://www.antwerpen.be/nl/info/57e3c42e15fb6d2b200ec37f/antwerpse-speelweefselplannen)  
Gill, T. (2018) Antwerp's Play Space Web: smart, child-friendly neighbourhood planning in action, Rethinking Childhood blog

# 16 Rethinking play provision for disabled children in Cardiff

## Domain

The built and natural environment

## Description

Issues concerning disabled children's play generated a new approach to park and playground design through a one-off project to develop a new natural community space

## Policy instigators and drivers

- Landscape development plan
- Open space policy and planning
- Play Sufficiency Duty and assessment

## People instigators and drivers

- Principal Landscape Officer
- Disabled Children's Play Co-ordinator
- Parents with concerns about inclusive play in parks and playground equipment
- Play Sufficiency Working Group

## Enablers

- Vocal parents highlight issues around inclusive fixed equipment
- Lack of resources to maintain and install high quality disability play equipment
- Gap in inclusive provision in parks identified through Play Sufficiency Assessment
- Work with parents on the design and maintenance of designated play areas led to conversations with Landscape Officer
- Willingness of Play Sufficiency Working Group to problem-solve the issue with Disability Children's Play Co-ordinator and Principal Landscape Officer

## Process

- Heritage Lottery Fund-funded landscape project provides new opportunity for re-thinking provision for inclusion
- Play Sufficiency Working Group problem-solved Heritage Lottery Fund project in light of constraints around disability play provision in parks

## Challenges

- Managing public expectations alongside reduced budgets
- Parks felt under huge pressure from parents – vandalism results in further complaints
- Parks officers not keen to make very specific specialist provision, want to try to provide something that works for most people

## Outputs/outcomes

- Consultation with parents
- Natural outside space developed incorporating accessible pathways, sensory discovery trail and disabled toilet facilities, including hoist
- Project kick-starts re-thinking by Landscape Team and Parks to incorporate more natural and sensory environments to cater for children with reduced mobility and to cater for most people, including siblings (and not just specialist provision)

# 17 Green infrastructure and planning policy in Monmouthshire

## Domain

The built and natural environment

## Description

Developing philosophy around placemaking and the value of multi-functional green infrastructure with the potential to support play sufficiency

## Policy instigators and drivers

- Green Infrastructure policy within local planning strategy supported by supplementary planning guidance
- Local planning protocol for larger developments requiring cross-departmental responses to applications
- Welsh Government's Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Natural Resources Policy (2017), Prosperity For All (2017) and Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015
- Active travel agenda

## People instigators and drivers

- Strategic landscape architecture lead and proactive individuals employed at a strategic planning/policy level within Green Infrastructure and Countryside Team
- Lead Officer responsible for play sufficiency also sits with that department

## Process

- Developers and planners analysing Green Infrastructure assets and opportunities and how these can be protected, managed and enhanced
- Departments/officers with different responsibilities collectively assessing and making recommendations on planning applications

## Challenges

- Traditional prescriptive standards do not reflect children's use of space for play
- Tensions between competing agendas within some developments
- Adapting policy approach used in urban environments for more rural areas
- Enabling and defining approaches to new natural and wild play opportunities

## Outputs/outcomes

- Standards being applied pragmatically and creatively on a case by case basis
- Better-quality developments that meet strategic and operational aims across the local authority
- Looking beyond destination places for play to consider play as a function of all public space

## Next steps

- A forthcoming Green Infrastructure Strategy, supported by the existing planning policy, develops the planned approach towards play development across the county



# 18 Leasing of a woodland space in Wrexham

## Domain

The built and natural environment

## Description

Supporting the process of leasing a piece of woodland for children to play

## How it came about

- Following research for the first Play Sufficiency Assessment, some Lottery funded playwork sessions were moved from urban to more rural areas
- Towards the end of Lottery funding, staffed sessions were replaced by community development support from an individual worker
- The owner of the local industrial estate offering to lease a piece of woodland (on a 'peppercorn' rent) to the local Community Council so that they could open it up to children for playing

## Process

- The council's Play Development Team helped develop a risk-benefit assessment for the site, which included gaining advice from the authority's Planning and Health and Safety departments who both visited the site
- No changes were made other than building a fence between it and the adjacent industrial estate
- The Community Council then agreed a lease with the landowner and arranged for their insurance to cover public use of the land
- Some staffed play sessions were initially facilitated, to encourage people to use it but since then the space has just been left open for the children to play

## Spinoff

- Play Development staff use this as an example when talking to community stakeholders about what might be possible

# 19 New playwork delivery model in Cardiff

## Domain

Children's and community services

## Description

Re-structuring of a playwork service that improved the local authority's response-ability to the Play Sufficiency Duty

## Policy instigators and drivers

- Austerity agenda resulted in closure of dedicated centres for provision
- Criteria within and findings from Play Sufficiency Assessment
- All Wales Play Opportunities Grant funding used to pilot new playwork projects

## People instigators and drivers

- Senior staff in the Playwork Team shaping the structure of the service
- Experienced playworkers with in-depth knowledge of local communities
- Close working relationships between playworkers and other practitioners developed over long periods of time

## Key processes involved

- Adopting a more peripatetic approach by reducing reliance on dedicated centres for delivery of playwork provision
- Local area play development teams carrying out local audits of organisations and playwork provision
- Identifying opportunities to work differently through connections with other professionals
- Using Play Sufficiency Assessment information as a steer for developing the service

## Challenges

- Staff and families feeling the loss of dedicated centres and the relationships associated with them
- Proving more difficult to include disabled children in playwork provision where dedicated centres are no longer available
- It takes time for projects to develop and become embedded in communities

## Outputs/outcomes

- Playwork Team has a better understanding of play sufficiency
- Playwork is increasingly seen as community work
- Reputation and profile of the Playwork Team is improving
- Service is more proactive in addressing societal barriers to play and identifying groups of children who would benefit most from playwork provision

## 20 Playwork as community work in Plas Madoc in Wrexham

### Domain

Children's and community services

### Description

Recognition and enactment of playwork as a form of play-centred community development

### Policy instigators and drivers

- Welsh Government's anti-poverty programmes
- Invest Local programme (funded by Big Lottery)
- Play Sufficiency Duty and findings from local authority Play Sufficiency Assessments

### People instigators and drivers

- Third sector playwork provider
- Highly experienced and dedicated playworkers with rich situated knowledge
- Continuous Professional Development opportunities including playwork degree at local university
- Local authority Play Development Team supporting service provider
- Local research exploring the role of playwork in the context of play sufficiency
- History of playwork provision in the area

### Process

- Playwork provision started as seasonal community playschemes
- Year-round provision developed to include an adventure playground, community playschemes and street play
- Playworkers became increasingly involved in other types of community work (for example events, family support, holiday hunger programmes)
- Community decided to fund team to provide both playwork and other community development support

### Challenges

- Sustainability of funding and lack of dedicated funding for playwork
- Lack of understanding around the role of the playwork profession

### Outputs/outcomes

- Children and parents report high satisfaction with opportunities to play
- Community places a high value on the work of the team
- Team actively involved in many aspects of community life

# 21 PLAY KX in London

## Domain

Children's and community services

## Description

Playwork sessions using loose parts in the 67 acre regenerated Kings Cross, London development

## People instigators and drivers

- Kings Cross Centre Limited Partnership
- Assemble (a collective working across architecture, design and art)
- A team of playworkers who are also artists, musicians, dancers/choreographers, circus performers

## Development of the project

- The management company wanted to build a children's playground
- They contacted Assemble, a Turner-prize winning collective with experience in children's play
- Assemble responded by saying that open space should be left open and not filled up with equipment, suggesting instead they spend the money employing playworkers to run daily sessions using loose parts – the management company agreed

## Strategies

- The sessions are run using a playwork ethos
- Parents are required to stay – they are welcomed and invited to sit and watch their children play with the loose parts
- Everything is documented – an Instagram account quickly gained 1500 followers
- Moving indoors in the winter allowed a partnership to be built with the Central St Martin's Art School: students watched the children play and asked for help on play-based projects – permission was given to skip dive
- Management concerns that the sessions were 'messy' were allayed through creating a boundary with red carpet (rather than the railings they had provided)

## Challenges

- Although sessions were very popular, and parents lingered (and spent more in the high class retail outlets and artisan cafes) – the playing was seen as messy and restrictions began to be imposed
- It is unclear how long the funding will last

## Outputs/outcomes

- Sessions are successful with a diverse group of children and parents
- Loose parts, self-organised play and playwork are being showcased in a high-end development

**Reference:** notes from a presentation by playworker Penny Wilson at the Art of Playwork conference at Tŷ Pawb, Wrexham (October 2019)



## 22 Rich Play Awards in Conwy

### Domain

Children's and community services

### Description

A project working with early years childcare and school settings to improve opportunities for children's play through implementation of loose parts play and playwork training

### Policy instigators and drivers

- Play Sufficiency Duty: findings from Play Sufficiency Assessments identified a need to improve quality of existing opportunities for play in early years childcare and school settings
- Programme developed from Big Lottery funded Play Rangers – Dewis Chwarae project
- Council's Education Department funded development of an early years childcare and child minders version
- Delivery of the Rich Play Award funded by Families First

### People instigators and drivers

- Play Sufficiency Lead with knowledge and ability to deliver both the training and the awards scheme
- Support from cross-departmental Play Sufficiency Task and Finish Group
- Heads of schools and childcare settings' willingness to adopt the scheme and change existing practices
- Early adopters used as advocates for the awards scheme ensuring a constant flow of new, willing settings

### Process

- Settings engage in a professional development opportunity to better appreciate the place of play in the setting's offer
- Children develop the play policy and carry out workshops on children's rights
- Management and staff are supported to develop risk assessment practices
- Changes in practice are supported through delivery of loose parts play provision, modelling practice, training and peer support

### Challenges

- Working in a timely enough way for settings to engage through their existing plans and timetables
- Revisiting institutions to provide continued support in response to staff turnover and other issues

### Outputs/outcomes

- Improved quality of playtimes
- Improvements in children's behaviour or perceptions of their behaviour
- Broader changes in practice following reflection on the value of play and children's ability to make use of opportunities for play
- Very positive feedback from inspectors at both early years childcare settings and schools

### Next steps

- Establish a robust evaluation to persuade more settings to come on board
- Develop a regional approach to work with schools in line with GwE (north Wales school improvement programme)

## 23 Schoolyard Oasis Project in Paris

### Domain

Children's and community services

### Description

This project aims to 'green' Paris schoolyards through replacing asphalt surfaces with green planting and opening the spaces for public use out of school hours

### Instigators and drivers

- Part of Paris' resilience strategy
- Environmental rather than play drivers: the 2003 heatwaves killed 700 people in Paris and the density of buildings in the city causes an 'Urban Heat Island' – climate change increases the risk of flooding from the river Seine
- Greening school yards therefore provides a low-cost solution that can help with cooling and rainwater runoff, with the added benefit of providing additional community and play space out of hours

### Project aims

The project is still in the planning stage and its aims are:

- Adapt the schoolyards by replacing asphalt with porous material, enhancing revegetation, modernising water management
- Reinforce social cohesion by co-designing the schoolyards together with each local community with the aim of opening them up for community use
- Protect the health of the most vulnerable by adapting the infrastructure children use as well as through the opening of these spaces to elderly people

### Lessons

- Shows potential synergies between environmental issues, green infrastructure and children's play

## 24 Development of an inclusive youth club in Merthyr Tydfil

### Domain

Children's and community services

### Description

A youth club with an inclusive ethos that emerged through staff gaining first-hand experience of working with children who require higher levels of support

### People

- A child who needed additional support
- Long serving youth workers (who have also accessed playwork training)
- Consistency and sufficient capacity within the staff team
- Teamwork and a 'can do' attitude

### Resources/enablers

- Staff attended the Amber Green Inclusion Scheme, an organisational development programme
- Large dedicated youth club facility
- Access to transport

### Chance

- Staff describe their progressive attitude to inclusion as a 'happy accident'
- Inclusive practice emerged through sheer will, determination and good fortune

### Challenge

- Prescribed performance measures do not account for real value of the service

### Outputs/outcomes

- High percentage of children accessing the setting who have some form of impairment
- Children who require higher levels of support bring additional staff with them
- Inclusive ethos so embedded that young people often support each other without adult intervention
- Increased parental confidence resulting in high level of enquiries from other families

# 25 More Playful Museum Project at Manchester Museum

## Domain

Children's and community services

## Description

A project to help develop museum staff to take responsibility to account for children to find time and space to play

## Policy instigators and drivers

- Happy Museum Principles around well-being and sustainability
- Playwork Principles and academic research into children's right to play
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation funded Happy Museum cultural experimentation
- Access and engagement strategy, Manchester Museum

## People instigators and drivers

- Head of Engagement, Manchester Museum committed to developing greater opportunities for child-led play in the museum
- Play and playwork trainers interested in developing and challenging museum culture and encouraging child and play friendly spaces
- Director of Happy Museum supported experimental ideas from other sectors

## Process

- Staff training, mentoring, experimental gallery interventions, co-creation of a practice guide and the development of play champions to embed playful practice

## Enablers

- Existing relationship between trainers and Museum Officer from previous playful exhibition projects (including play training) at Salford Museum Service
- Two successful funding bids awarded by the Happy Museum
- Visitor Assistants fully on-board with training and embedding new ways of working
- Managers support continuation of approach and advocate for it more widely
- Happy Museum provide on-going guidance, practical and financial support

## Challenges

- Staff changes slow down the embedding of play champions
- Competing demands on museum staff time sometimes inhibits development
- Ongoing communication of playful approach constantly required for new staff and visitors

## Outputs/outcomes

- Play champions established with regular playful days and ongoing volunteer training
- Project written up and disseminated at museum conferences
- Training developed for other cultural settings including heritage sites and a zoo, assisted by play champions
- The study – a playful exploratory space for adults developed in response to thinking more deeply about what play meant for the museum

## Next steps

- Establishing support organisation to evolve playful museums, including training



## 26 Play-Work Exhibition at Tŷ Pawb in Wrexham

### Domain

Children's and community services

### Description

An exhibition celebrating playwork, the creative space they seek to facilitate, and the artistic endeavour of artists. The exhibition included the transformation of the main gallery into a staffed adventure playground

### Policy instigators and drivers

- Play Sufficiency Duty
- Public engagement in the arts
- Arts Council and All Wales Play Opportunities Grant funding

### People instigators and drivers

- Creative Director at Tŷ Pawb's long standing relationships with Play Sufficiency Lead
- Long standing history of playwork in Wrexham
- Local authority Play Development Team
- Playworkers from local adventure playgrounds
- Artists and gallery technicians
- Original idea emerged from a professional development programme delivered in partnership with University of Gloucestershire

### Process

- All Wales Play Opportunities Grant funding used to recruit consultants to help curate the exhibition
- Design and delivery consultation with all partners
- Development of operational plan and risk-benefit assessments and guidance
- Sourcing of staff and materials for the exhibition from local adventure playgrounds
- Promotion and delivery over a ten-week period
- Conference to close the exhibition bringing together artists and playworkers

### Challenges

- Lack of capacity to build and staff the exhibition as effectively as was hoped
- Existing operational commitments prevented playworkers contributing as much as they would have liked

### Outputs/outcomes

- Engaging over 10,000 visitors
- Reputational benefit for all involved
- Unique opportunity to advocate for play, playwork and play sufficiency
- Interdisciplinary exchanges and the generation of collective wisdom
- Sparked potential for other opportunities to arise



**Authors: Wendy Russell, Mike Barclay, Ben Tawil and Charlotte Derry**

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