

# Play for Wales

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Play news and briefing from the national charity for play



New Model Army Photography

## Play – the importance of risk



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## Thank you

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

This issue of *Play for Wales*, as well as previous issues, is available to download at [www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk)

## It's up to you! Allowing children to manage risk

The creation of places where children are encouraged to take and manage risks in play must surely be the responsibility of play providers, whether that is in local authority parks, adventure playgrounds or schools.

When the Play Safety Forum (PSF) was writing *Managing risk in play provision: A position statement* back in 2000, we had to argue the case for the importance of risk with practitioners, inspectors, parks departments, health and safety officers, politicians and even the occasional playworker!

In those days we had to argue the case for the value of risk and its role in increasing resilience, creativity, competition, co-operation, self-discovery, in fact every aspect of free play. Thankfully those days are past. I rarely hear anything now but agreement about the importance of risk in play.

So why do we not see more creative opportunities for play being available to children? I don't just mean risky opportunities, but truly creative ones. Why doesn't play pervade the public realm? Every shopping centre or pedestrian street? Woodland, heath or common? Let alone parks, adventure playgrounds or schools.

I believe that the biggest barrier is that providers, designers and manufacturers are scared of the risks they would have to take to realise this children's utopia. Imagine: 'Please dad, can we go down to the shopping centre to play on the trees/swings/rocks/zip wire over the mud/sand/grass!' Instead of 'Oh no! Not shopping again.'

The answer is in the reluctance felt by practitioners to accept, enjoy and take the risks necessary to realise this dream and principally this is professional risk. Risk to one's career of making a mistake, of being sued, of losing a job. One can only be sympathetic with this predicament, but it is our

## Guest Editorial

job to encourage and persuade those responsible to take up the baton on behalf of children and their needs, rather than to protect their own self-interest.

In writing *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide* and more recently guidance on the application of risk-benefit assessment (RBA), we have given practitioners the tools and a road map to help in this task. We have also worked with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to realise our aim to have the philosophy and the application of RBA accepted.

What is needed is a better understanding of why providing risky play opportunities happens so rarely and how we could help to enable such work. Should we be focusing on the policy makers and directors of departments? As Chair of the PSF I welcome any feedback from the field about what more could be done in support, and what more we could do in the future.

**Robin Sutcliffe,**  
Chair of the Play Safety Forum  
[www.playsafetyforum.org.uk](http://www.playsafetyforum.org.uk)



## News

# £6.3m Progress for Success funding



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

The Welsh Government's Progress for Success European funded programme will bring £6.3 million of investment in upskilling the early years, childcare and playwork workforce at level 2 and 3 and above.

Progress for Success within North West Wales, West Wales and the Valleys was approved by the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) in December 2015. Welsh Government is confident that it will become a pan-Wales programme to also include East Wales.

The main purpose of Progress for Success is to increase the quality of provision accessed within registered, maintained and non-maintained settings, by increasing the levels of recognised childcare and playwork qualifications held by the existing early years, childcare and playwork workforce.

### Progress for Success has two separate strands:

- Strand 1 is the main focus and proposes to fund existing practitioners, who currently hold no, or low level, recognised childcare or playwork qualifications, up to level 3 (this will also include level 2, where appropriate).
- Strand 2 proposes to fund a smaller proportion of existing practitioners through new qualifications at levels 4 to 6. Care Council for Wales is taking forward the development of the new qualifications and these are to be in place from September 2016.

The funding available within Strand 1 is for work based learning qualification delivery

following the apprenticeship route only. Playwork NVQ's at level 2 and 3 on the apprenticeship framework will be funded.

Playwork: Principles into Practice (P<sup>3</sup>) is not currently on the apprenticeship framework so at this stage and the foreseeable future, it will not be possible to fund this qualification through this programme.

We welcome this investment into playwork qualifications, however we recognise from our experience and knowledge of the sector that this funding brings with it limitations to the number of playwork learners who will benefit.

We understand the following details will apply when the funding is made available later this year:

### About the programme:

- The tendering process for work based learning providers to bid to deliver qualifications on the Progress for Success programme will begin in June 2016 and will be available to providers on the Innovation Lot of the existing work based learning framework.
- The successful work based learning providers will be able to commission training from local training providers.
- Learners have to be in permanent employment in playwork for a minimum of 16 hours per week.

- The funding will be for learners whose role includes work with children within the age range of 0-7 years.

- The funding will be for learners aged 25 and over.

We welcome feedback from playwork organisations, employers and practitioners relating to the challenges and opportunities this programme brings for upskilling the workforce.

If you would like to share your comments and experiences, especially if it's related to individual learners' training requirements, please email [workforce@playwales.org.uk](mailto:workforce@playwales.org.uk) – we will collate responses share with lead Welsh Government officials.

[www.gov.wales](http://www.gov.wales)



Playday  
2016

Wednesday 3 August  
[www.playday.org.uk](http://www.playday.org.uk)

# New edition – community toolkit

Originally published in 2012 the *Developing and Managing Play Spaces* community toolkit has been updated to include the latest information, legislation and resources.

It has been designed for anyone who takes responsibility for managing or developing a play space in a community. This may be a community council, local play association or a residents group.

The toolkit is intended to provide a single source of support and signposting for community groups to navigate some of the challenges of managing or developing a play space.

Download for free at:  
[www.playwales.org.uk/eng/communitytoolkit](http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/communitytoolkit)



## New team member

Welcome to our new Finance Officer, Ruth O'Donoghue.



Ruth is responsible for the accounting and financial systems, working part time from our office in Cardiff. Prior to joining our team she worked for a charity providing supported accommodation and support services.

After eight years as our Finance Manager, Jacky Jenkins left in November 2015. We wish Jacky well in her new home in West Wales.

[www.playwales.org.uk/eng/team](http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/team)

## Social Media



[www.facebook.com/PlayWales](http://www.facebook.com/PlayWales)



[twitter.com/PlayWales](https://twitter.com/PlayWales)



## Space Saviours play area

Space Saviours is a Big Lottery funded project to support tenants of four South Wales housing associations to transform open spaces in their communities. Through the project, Play Wales has supported a tenant led group to develop a natural play area in Wildmill, Bridgend.

**Rachel Lovell, Project Officer at V2C housing association said:**

*'We held a number of workshops over the summer to inspire tenants and capture their ideas about making better use of neglected and unloved areas in their communities. Play Wales' natural play workshop inspired a number of tenants to imagine a safe, fun and more enticing space that all ages could enjoy. [Tenant and board member] Sarah Hay had clear ideas about how her estate could be better and with support from Play Wales produced exciting designs and a project plan.'*

Those plans have now been implemented and the play area officially opened in February 2016.

<http://spacesaviours.co.uk>

# What next for the Children's Commissioner?



Safer local areas with more places to play; tackling bullies; more timely support on mental health and emotional well-being issues were some of the top priorities voiced by over 7,000 children and young people taking part in the Children's Commissioner for Wales' Beth Nesa I What Next? Consultation – one of the largest of its kind in Wales.

The consultation aimed to consult as widely as possible with children and young people (aged 3-18+) in Wales, as well as gain perspective from parents, carers and professionals.

'More places to play' was the highest priority (49%) for almost half of children aged three to seven which reflects the importance of play for children.

In response to the findings which will inform her future

priorities, Sally Holland said:

*'To be an effective champion, in my role as Children's Commissioner for Wales, it's vital that I know directly from children and young people what they feel I should be speaking up about on their behalf. Children have important views that must be listened to.'*

Drawing on the results of the consultation, and other relevant sources of evidence, Sally

Holland's priorities for the next three years include play and leisure. By 2019, the Commissioner hopes that the Welsh Government and public services will have made significant progress towards delivering better access to play, culture and leisure activities for children, particularly those living in poverty and disabled children.

[www.childcomwales.org.uk/en/what-next](http://www.childcomwales.org.uk/en/what-next)

## New report reveals disabled children in Wales are missing out on play



A report by the national deafblind charity, Sense Cymru, reveals the severe restrictions facing disabled children in accessing play.

The report identifies failings that result in disabled children missing out on play opportunities that are vital to their emotional, social and physical development. 'A lack of attention by government, insufficient funding at a local level and negative attitudes towards disabled children and their families' are all barriers highlighted in the report.

The report calls for urgent action to address these inequalities and to enable local authorities to deliver on their Play Sufficiency Duties for children with multiple

needs, and to meet the Welsh Government's aim to make Wales a play friendly country.

### Key findings from the report:

- Children with multiple needs are only accessing two or three of the five sessions they are entitled to under the Early Years and Childcare Plan due to lack of funding to support their inclusion in early years' settings.
- 92% of parents felt that their child did not have the same

opportunities to play as their non-disabled peers, and 81% of parents reported difficulties in accessing mainstream play groups and local play opportunities.

- 51% of children had been turned away from play settings by providers, failing to meet their legal duties under the Equality Act 2010.

**The full report findings and recommendations can be downloaded at:**  
[www.sense.org.uk/play](http://www.sense.org.uk/play)

# Changes to childcare law

Changes to childcare law in Wales are coming into force in April 2016. As a regulator Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) wants to make sure children's development and well-being outcomes are central to the experiences they receive.

From 1 April, play provision, holiday schemes, child minders, and childcare catering for children under the age of 12 and for more than two hours a day will be regulated by CSSIW.

## How this will affect you

Some staffing ratios previously set out in the National Minimum Standards (NMS) are set to change from April. You will need to ensure that the service you provide considers the well-being needs of children aged 8 to 12. There are changes to NMS to take account of the needs of older children; and CSSIW will be changing the way it inspects childcare and play.

Regulations will exempt some youth services (those specifically for children who have reached the age of 11) from registration.

## Inspection framework for childcare and play

From April 2016 CSSIW's inspection framework will place a greater emphasis on improving child development and well-being outcomes.

## What CSSIW is doing

If you are currently registered with CSSIW, you should have received a letter advising you of the changes you will need to make. You have 28 days from the date of the letter to declare whether you intend to vary your service in relation to the new changes.

If you are not currently registered with CSSIW, but provide childcare or play for children aged 8 to 12 for more than two hours a day, you will need to register by 1 April.

## How to prepare

Here's what you need to do to ensure you are prepared for the changes ahead. You need to have:

- a valid DBS certificate
- valid insurance
- valid first aid from April 2016

that covers the full age range of the children you provide regulated care for. You should update your:

- statement of purpose
- child protection/management policies
- complaints procedures.

**You should also read and ensure you comply with the revised NMS for Childcare and the updated regulations.**

CSSIW may ask you for information regarding your floor space/floor plan in relation to the ages of children you provide care for, but will not require evidence as to the planning status of your premises, nor will you be required to declare that you have consulted your local planning authority.

## Thank you

**Imelda Richardson, Chief Inspector, Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales:**

**Changes to childcare law**

If you're **registered with us** to provide childcare or play, you're covered for children up to age 8 years.

**From April 1st 2016** this age will increase to **12 years.**

### We will:

- send out letters to all registered childcare and play providers in February.**



If you look after children up to the age of 12 and need to amend your numbers, you must:

- take action in February to respond to our letter.**



No change to your numbers?

- Read the updated regulations.**
- Read the changes to National Minimum Standards.**

Got questions? Unsure?

- Read the frequently asked questions on our website.**



### Contact us in Welsh or English

0300 7900 126

CSSIW@wales.gsi.gov.uk

@CSSIW

CSSIW



Arlyngwrth Cofreithio a Gwasanaethu, Cymdeithas Cymru/Prifed Cymru, Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

*'Thank you for the work you do in protecting and nurturing the children you provide care and play for. It may seem daunting at times providing a quality service while also being "switched on" to new regulation changes and I appreciate that change can sometimes be unsettling. This is a positive step forward which will ensure the consistency and quality of childcare and play in Wales and this will no doubt increase parental confidence in the sector.'*

# Wales – A Play Friendly Place

Wales – A Play Friendly Place is a Play Wales campaign to help build a network of support for play across Wales. Share what's happening locally which is either protecting or prohibiting children's right to play on the Facebook page: [on.fb.me/playfriendlyplace](https://on.fb.me/playfriendlyplace)



Sarah Meyrick and Zoe Proctor tell us about providing unstructured outdoor play at their Wild Tots outdoor community group in Monmouthshire.

At the centre of our Wild Tots ethos is wild play which promotes children and adults being active outdoors through the seasons and embracing all weathers.

We focus on starting young while integrating the different generations into our unstructured, outdoor ethos. Wild Tots prides itself on filling a field with mums, dads, grandmas, grandpas, nannies, aunties, uncles, toddlers, older siblings, babies and bumps!

The sessions are outcome and theme free which create endless

opportunities for unstructured child led play, to explore and discover the natural environment.

We have replaced traditional toys with loose parts and a visit to a local scrapstore has generated endless fun, resourcefulness, collaboration and problem solving between children and adults alike.

Parental responsibility is paramount. But our ethos is of mutual support and collective responsibility by everyone in Wild Tots. Adults and children all get stuck in to make the sessions easy and welcoming for everyone to be involved.

At Wild Tots we believe in building a positive outdoor experience for both children and adults and



acknowledge the famous saying 'there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing' and seek to help and inform children and adults on how to dress for the weather. Wild Tots actively promotes and encourages the importance of children and adults being able to confidently understand their own safety with a Wild Leader and peer guidance and support if needed.

The success of the model has given us the inspiration to set up as a social enterprise to enable others (for example parents, local authorities and housing associations) to set up their own Wild Tots group that continues our ethos of being outdoors, unstructured, affordable and inclusive.

*'We spent the most enjoyable, and rare, couple of hours watching our two children play in your mud kitchen at Wild Tots. This was a huge milestone for us... never in Noah's three and a half years have we seen him so focused, so grossed, so relaxed in any activity for such a sustained time. And the big surprise for us was how our 11 year old responded to the environment too... She loved it as much as her brother, and to see the two of them enjoying playing together and for so long was a complete joy, and a first!'*  
**Noah's family**

# Making health and safety 'child's play'

Judith Hackitt CBE, Chair of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) tells us how to use health and safety to enable challenging play, not to stop it.

I believe passionately that children should be allowed, and encouraged, to take part in challenging and adventurous play, because apart from the obvious enjoyment aspects, it has many benefits that will help to produce well-rounded adults.

## Challenging play

Many schools and play settings already facilitate challenging play opportunities for children and we want others to have the confidence to follow their lead.

We want challenging play to be the norm and not just for the few.

Challenging play presents an opportunity for children to begin to cope with and learn from failure, fear or lack of ability. It allows them to feel the satisfaction of trying again and succeeding. The benefits, in terms of honing skills in decision-making and teamwork, should not be underestimated. These are essential skills for life.

HSE never seeks to ban activities on the basis that they pose a risk to those taking part. We take account of the wider benefits to physical and mental health and to society as a whole. This is exactly how we ought to view children's play.

Wrapping children up in cotton wool achieves nothing. Children who grow up unable to anticipate and deal with risk can lack self-confidence and may be less prepared to make decisions as adults. Stifling play can have negative consequences.





Some children adopt the unnecessary fears of their parents and may become afraid to take part.

At the other end of the scale are those children who will seek out risky play if it isn't provided for them. If play isn't stimulating enough, children seeking a thrill will adapt their play to provide it. This could lead them to take unnecessary risks in dangerous environments. We all remember the school dare devil. The one who climbed that little bit higher or boasted of playing 'chicken' on the railway track. These activities often lead to serious or fatal injuries. Unfortunately HSE still has to deal with situations where children have entered construction sites or quarries with heart breaking consequences for families and those who have to deal with the aftermath.

There will always be some children who push the boundaries, but in general, when children have access to space that offers challenging play opportunities, there is less temptation to seek out play in wholly unsuitable places. If we all agree that challenging play is good for children and recognise that there are clear disadvantages to stifling it, then why is there sometimes a perception that organising such activities is daunting and not worth the hassle?

It's not the law that gets in the way. More than 40 years on from the creation of the Health and Safety at Work Act, it remains, fundamentally, fit for purpose. It is designed to enable activities to take place, not to stop them. This includes children's play.

The *Children's Play and Leisure: promoting a balanced approach* high-level statement (2012) is intended to reassure educators, play providers and parents that health and safety should not be a barrier to providing challenging play. Contrary to what you may read in the press, HSE has never aimed to eliminate all risk.

We recognise that exposure to some risk is inevitable within the context of many activities such as children's play.

What do you think of when you hear the words health and safety? Piles of paperwork? Barriers? Difficult decisions? It's just not worth the hassle? It is time to re-think any preconceived ideas.

**If we look at risk assessment – something that fills people with dread – it needn't be a burden. Start with, 'What do we want to do?' and 'What are the benefits?' then, 'How can we ensure it is a safe and enjoyable experience for all?'**

**Risk assessment is about enabling not preventing. If you are planning a challenging activity, thinking something can't be done 'because of health and safety', please challenge that initial thought, because it is very likely that it can be done!**

Over the last few years HSE has been very successful in challenging and dispelling myths via the Mythbusters Challenge panel; we have heard of bans on skipping ropes, balloons and conkers, even frilly socks, all wrongly identified as health and safety issues.

But what if something goes tragically wrong? Play providers are expected to deal with risk responsibly and sensibly. If things do go wrong, provided sensible and proportionate steps have been taken, it is highly unlikely that there would be any breach of health and safety law, or that it would be in the public interest for HSE to bring a prosecution.

If a serious or fatal injury occurs, HSE or the local authority will normally investigate. For fatal accidents, the police will also be involved. HSE has brought prosecutions in rare cases where there was evidence of recklessness or a clear failure to follow sensible precautions. However, it is important that play providers do not interpret this as meaning that to avoid prosecution by HSE they must eliminate even the most trivial risks.

We cannot always predict what people will do. Adults (even parents) can sometimes unwittingly put their own children in danger. Play providers cannot be held responsible for those who choose to behave in this way.

Parents are as diverse as their children. Some are risk averse, while others are keen for their children to experience exhilarating activities. Trying to reconcile these differences is a challenge. When organising opportunities, the key is to ensure that parents are provided with enough information to help them make an informed choice. Ultimately, if a parent does not want their child to take part in challenging play, it is their decision. We can only explain the risks and the benefits. Well-informed parents and carers may be less likely to pursue civil legal action in the event of a minor injury.

There can never be a guarantee of immunity from civil or criminal action, but careful planning and assessment makes it less likely and easier to defend decisions.

Play providers have HSE's support and encouragement in helping to prepare children for living safe and healthy lives.

[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)



# Play and resilience

Brighton University's Professor of Child, Family and Community Health, Angie Hart explores how playing, and risky play opportunities in particular, contributes to developing children's resilience.



All children and young people need and want to take risks physically and emotionally as they grow up, regardless of their culture, background or impairment.

Play has specific features that allow children to try out, in relative safety, new strategies and solutions to challenges. Playing promotes both physical and emotional flexibility through the rehearsal of new and unexpected behaviours and situations<sup>i</sup>.

The benefits of risk taking include: extending skills, developing physical and emotional capacities, challenging ourselves in new ways and gaining direct experience of the consequences of our actions,

including learning how to deal with failure. Being brave and conquering a fear is something that is very important to children and a sign of growth.

## How playing contributes to resilience

Resilience is often thought of as the ability to 'roll with the punches'. Some children can rise above adversity to adapt to serious challenges, stress and risks without much help. For others, this is less easy and they will need support to do so. Hence, resilience is a concept involving not only the psychological qualities of the child but also the child's family, social networks and neighbourhood. It is our response to life's experiences – both the good ones and the very challenging and worrying ones – as well as how we access others to help us.

**Children's play 'provides a primary behaviour for developing resilience, thereby making a significant contribution to children's wellbeing'<sup>ii</sup>. This suggests that play contributes to developing resilience through a number of interrelated systems including:**

- Emotional regulation
- Pleasure and enjoyment of promotion of positive feeling
- The stress response system and the ability to respond to uncertainty
- Creativity and the ability to make new and different connections
- Learning
- Attachment to people and place
- Problem solving.

Play is a key mechanism for developing resilience and dealing with stress and anxiety. It provides effective strategies for dealing with uncertainty and contributes to good physical and mental health.

## References

- i Lester, S. and Russell, W. (2008) *Play for a Change: Play, Policy and Practice: A review of contemporary perspectives*. London: Play England
- ii Masten, A and Obradovic, J (2006) 'Competence and resilience in Development' *Annals of the New York Academy of Science*, 1094: 13-27. Cited in *Play for a Change*

- iii Gordon, G. and Esbjorn-Hagens, S. (2007) 'Are we having fun yet? An exploration of the transformative power of play', *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 47: 198 - 222. Cited in *Play for a Change*
- iv How to use the resilience framework – Young Minds [www.youngminds.org.uk/training\\_services/academic\\_resilience/what\\_is\\_academic\\_resilience/academic\\_resilience\\_framework](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/training_services/academic_resilience/what_is_academic_resilience/academic_resilience_framework)

## The need to provide risky opportunities

If children have opportunities to encounter uncertainty and deal with potential hazards it helps them to develop resilience – their approach to life becomes more confident and they can better deal with what our uncertain world throws at them. If they are protected from everything that is potentially emotionally or physically harmful they will have less chance to develop resilience. So wrapping children in cotton wool is not the answer. In general we are trying to support children to develop as robust people who can stand on their own two feet and take life's knocks. Of course, for some children the knocks they suffer from will be too much, and so I'm not saying that anything goes here!

Children need to take risks and will also deliberately seek out chances to create risk-taking opportunities in an environment of certainty and relative safety – 'Risk-taking in play offers a way of being "in control of being out of control and so enjoy a sense of both risk and mastery simultaneously"'.<sup>iii</sup>

Risk taking is a natural part of growing up – it is a way of learning how to survive. If we don't introduce opportunities to experience risk in a play setting, children will seek the thrill and sense of achievement that comes with overcoming fears, in places that are less appropriate where there are no experienced people around to keep an eye on them. They can practice taking risks within the relatively safe setting of a play space.

Taking a resilience perspective involves finding ways to beat the odds for individual children and also to change those odds for disadvantaged children more generally. Play therapists have an important role to play in supporting children to imagine, process and practise 'resilient moves' they can make for themselves. As part of their wider professional responsibilities and networking, play therapists can advocate for change on behalf of disadvantaged children in general.

## Resilience framework

Boingboing has produced a Resilience Framework which 'summarises a set of ideas and practices that promote resilience', based on research and practice development called Resilient Therapy<sup>iv</sup>. Play therapists might find the resilience framework useful as a tool to help structure specific play experiences for children.

Through play children can make friends and mix with other children, have a laugh and develop new skills – all of which contribute to developing resilience.

[www.boingboing.org.uk](http://www.boingboing.org.uk)

## The ABC model to dynamic risk management

Play Wales, in partnership with Simon Bazley (Playful Futures), has worked with Wrexham's Play Development Team to develop an approach to behaviour based risk-benefit assessment. Further work between the play development team and staff from The Land adventure playground has developed guidance for *The ABC Model for the Dynamic Risk Management of Common but Potentially Hazardous Play Behaviours*.

The approach is a detailed risk-benefit assessment that considers common but potentially hazardous play behaviours displayed by children during staffed play sessions. It is intended to support dynamic risk assessment by individual practitioners when working with playing children. It recognises that, whilst children's play behaviours can be complex and present themselves in many different forms, the ways in which serious harm might occur are likely to be similar across different forms of behaviour.

For example, the ways in which injury could occur, and the factors that practitioners need to take into consideration, are likely to be similar whether children are climbing a tree, swinging on a rope or sliding down a mud bank. Therefore one risk-benefit assessment that can be applied to a wide range of behaviours has been produced rather than having many different activity-based assessments that in practice duplicate one another.

This model aims to support practitioner's dynamic assessment of risk by identifying:

**A**ctions that are likely to result in harm

**B**ehavioural Modes of children that may lead to them having a diminished awareness and ability to manage risk for themselves and/or others around them

**C**ontext specific factors that may increase the likelihood and potential severity of harm.

The approach is well received with Wrexham based playworkers. Play Wales will be working with Wrexham's play development team to promote the ABC model to other playworkers in Wales as well as to others who support children's play, such as childcare, early years and school settings.

# Risky play for all children

Equality, inclusion, and play advocate and trainer Ally John tells us why every child needs to take risks as part of their play; and she shares her experiences of risk taking as a child.

Too much energy and focus is placed on physical risk. Risk assessment forms fail to acknowledge that play exposes all children and young people to more than just physical risk. As responsible adults we have a responsibility for keeping children safe but this extends to supporting all children and young people to manage risk for themselves, not just physical risk but also the intellectual, social and emotional risk they expose themselves to.

We can all remember the times as a child when we felt unsure how, or if we could do something, of being afraid that we might be making a fool of ourselves in front of our peers or feeling upset or angry because we hadn't been included in something by our friends. But we learnt to deal with the risks and yes, sometimes it hurt physically, emotionally and we made the wrong decisions but we learnt from it and rarely made the same mistakes again.

Disabled children and young people have few opportunities to play independently, and let's face it we all took more risks as children when adults weren't around. Consequently disabled children and young people are much less likely to be given the chance to experience the

emotional, intellectual and social risks that enable children to master challenges and deal with their emotional responses to them.

## Is risk, riskier for disabled children?

As parents, carers and loving human beings, it is completely understandable that we want to keep children safe at all times.

If you are responsible for the care and welfare of a disabled child, you may have been told by medics and society at large, even by your own sense of guilt, that you must take more care of; and take responsibility for ensuring the life of this disabled child is as easy as possible.

The term 'mollycoddling' usually springs to mind when we think about disabled children being exposed to risk. Not just the physical types but the emotional, intellectual and social opportunities of experiencing: losing, rejection, succeeding and getting things wrong. There is an argument that suggests the more adults mollycoddle, the more children will push the boundaries. Whether us adults like it or not, both disabled and non-disabled children will seek out opportunities to take risks and push boundaries.





**As I reflect on my own childhood, I smile to myself and recall the many times I would deliberately go looking for dangerous and naughty things to do. For me it was about the thrill of getting away with it; would I be caught? What would happen if I got caught?**

I vividly remember waiting for the night nurse to finish doing her round, getting out of bed, crossing the dormitory, and helping my best friend Jenny into her wheelchair, then we would sneak off to the boys dormitory, to give them all a goodnight kiss ... in exchange for cigarettes.

As I look back on this and identify the different kinds of risk I took, are they any different to the risks that non-disabled children take? Didn't I just want that similar thrill of being scared, caught, being told off, having power, breaking the rules? These feelings and challenges we experience through play, are needed to equip all of us for life.

### **Barriers to risky play**

Whilst facilitating a workshop on risky play at the last Play Wales Spirit conference, one of the participants made an observation about one of the activities. The conversation went like this.

**Participant:** *I came on a training day you did about 10 years ago, why are you still doing the same exercise, as you were doing then? The conclusion we came up with then is the same as what is on the wall now?*

**Me:** *It is sad for me to be doing the same exercises as I did with you 10 years ago. I find it incredibly frustrating. But as you can see nothing has changed in those 10 years. You/we are still identifying and building that same disabling wall as you did 10 years earlier. Why is that?*

Silence prevailed as an air of awkwardness filled the room!

As loving, caring, socially aware folk, we find the idea of little change difficult to swallow. But the evidence was there before us. The disabling wall was full of attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers to why disabled children couldn't access risky play opportunities.

And similar to most other times when undertaking this activity it's not the environment that stops the risk from being taken, it's the prevailing attitudes within the space! This attitude can be fossilised in policy and procedures, practice becomes sterile and institutionalised. The hope of any child having risky play opportunities dissolves.

The Health and Safety Executive's *Children's play and leisure: promoting a balanced approach* high-level statement applies to disabled and non-disabled children. However, whilst this disabling wall exists, disabled children will never have similar opportunities to grow through play as their non-disabled peers.

All children need and want to take risks as they play, enabling them to test their limits, undertake new experiences and develop their skills. Children would never learn to ride a bicycle, swim, climb a tree or use a skateboard unless they were intrinsically motivated to respond to challenges that involve the risk of failing or being injured.

**Disabled children have a greater need for play providers to provide opportunities to take risk as they are often not given the choice or opportunity to enjoy the same range of risks as those enjoyed by their non-disabled peers.**

# Emotional risk and benefit



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When we think of the importance of children experiencing challenge and uncertainty as part of their play we often concentrate on physical risks. Providing time, space and permission for children to take emotional risks is equally as important for their happiness, wellbeing and development.

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All children want and need to take emotional risks. However, we need to be aware that what is everyday and ordinary to some children may represent a huge risk to others. For instance, some children may find it extremely stressful and may be fearful to enter a room full of other children or to get their socks damp, while others are happy to stand on stage in front of an audience and be doused with a bucket of water.

We need to be sensitive to the level of emotional risk taking that is evident among all children, but we also need to recognise that disabled children may face even bigger challenges because of their

past experience and the attitudes and assumptions of people in a position of influence in their lives. Emotional risk taking may also be a huge challenge to children who are depressed, anxious or who have obsessive compulsive tendencies.

Protecting children from harm is important – as adults we have a duty of care. Being over protective is potentially harmful, but so too is failing to recognise when aspects of the play are causing unnecessary and unwanted emotional stress to a child. Stress can prevent children from engaging in their preferred type of play.

**Children may do, or want to do things that may put them at emotional risk, for example:**

- Experimenting with wearing different types of clothes, make-up and hairstyles
- Playing in ways that are not deemed typical for their gender, for instance, an older boy playing with a doll in a pram
- Openly disagreeing with the dominant view of other children and voicing opinions

**We can support children by providing an environment to help them feel able to take emotional risk. The environment is:**

- One where all children feel welcome, accepted both as individuals and as part of a group, and free to play
- One that enables children to express how they feel, whether it be in relation to events and people while playing, or in relation to other aspects of their lives
- One that supports all children's experiments with feelings and provides stimulus that will help children experience new feelings within an emotionally secure space
- One that helps all children to express their emotions in ways that will not put either them or others at risk.

**Children are under increasing amounts of pressure in their lives, from their families, society and their peers. Here are some of the pressures that children face that may affect their emotional well-being:**

- Pressure from the media – there is strong influence from the media for children to have the latest gadgets, holidays, cars and clothes. Children may feel inadequate if they don't have these things.
- Peer pressure to conform by wearing the 'right' outfits, owning the right gear and talking about the right things, with accompanying teasing/bullying if this is not achieved. This can lead to feelings of inferiority, rejection, shame and loneliness.
- Pressure from family/culture – children can feel under pressure to conform to family and cultural expectations even when these don't concur with general society or peer expectations. This can lead to a clash of cultures between peers and family, for instance having to follow particular religious conventions that are different to those of most of the local community or school.

*'Childhood is the time we begin to establish our identity, to find out what sort of person we want to be and how we relate to others. But it is a risky business. For most children, free play with others is the opportunity to experiment with ways of thinking, of believing, and of doing things. To emerge successfully with their sense of self secure. Without that opportunity, children may conform too early to expectations, or drift through life unsure of their true identity. To deny children play is to deny them the chance to work out who they really are.'*

**Mike Shooter,  
Consultant Psychiatrist (retired)  
and Chair of Play Wales**

Peer pressure is highly influential – pressure from the children themselves for others to cease behaving in a way that is unacceptable to them will often be far more successful than adult intervention.

Children develop socially through play. For some children the path to forming friendships is a rocky one. Some children have one close friend and others attract lots of friends and are universally well liked. Some children have no friends. Some children enjoy playing alone, whilst others like to play in groups. Some children constantly fall out with others.

**Children will sort out their own friendship patterns and pecking orders during play and it is not our place to organise perfect harmony. Playing alone is not a crime (it is very necessary for some children) but there are times when our sensitive intervention can help an unconfident child find their feet, become more assertive and more socially adept. Some children may need help to communicate and interact with others or just to start a conversation (whether it be verbal or a 'play conversation') while some may never have played before and need our support to introduce them into a playful environment.**

# Let us out of the bubble-wrap

## How adults can support children's need for risky play

Children need and want to create challenge and uncertainty as part of their play. Remember jumping off higher and higher steps? Swinging round with a friend until you fell over? Climbing trees? Balancing along high walls? Play fighting?

This play helps children to be emotionally and physically resilient, to have flexible responses to difficult and changing situations. So, far from putting our children in danger of harm, this kind of play raises their confidence, and develops their brain's potential to deal with what life throws at them. This resilience and flexibility will have lifelong benefits – it can actually keep them safer in the long run.

### We can support our children by:

- Questioning and confronting the 'conker banning' culture – is it really necessary?
- Remembering that accidents happen – it is impossible to make our children totally safe – and accidents can sometimes teach children at first hand how to take care of themselves.
- Enabling and supporting our children to make their own



judgments about whether they are capable of doing something, or whether they are safe. Trusting their judgment unless the consequences may be truly life-threatening.

- Taking a common sense approach – we can do our children harm by being overcautious or making them scared of situations or people. They need to know how to keep themselves safe but they also need to have the confidence to make their own way in the world.
- Thinking before saying no – children seek out wobbly

and challenging things to do because they need to. We need to use our judgment, and weigh up whether it is really crucial to say no or whether we are saying no out of habit.

- Asking ourselves, is the benefit to children of challenging and sometimes scary play (to them and us!) greater than the potential for harm.
- Remembering that children can be at greater risk within their own home – accident statistics show that they are more likely to be injured in the home than outside at the playground or in the woods.





Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# Wales' Year of adventure

We recently chatted to Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism, Ken Skates AM about the Welsh Government's Wales: Year of Adventure campaign.

Playing, and having the opportunity to play is such an important part of childhood and I have some very fond memories of the games and mini-adventures I had as a child. We had a tree in the woods at the back of our house which was a central part to lots of our games. One summer, I remember (with the help of my four brothers) making an action man hideout among some hollowed out tree roots. We also had hours of fun building zip wires and hidden caves for the many adventures we wished we could do in real life. Many of which I've had a chance to do as part of Wales' Year of Adventure this year!

Our aim for Wales Year of Adventure 2016 is to build on a wave of exciting new developments, and over 10 years of ongoing investment to make Wales one of the UK's leading adventure destinations.

Adventure means different things to different people, and whilst some of our activity will focus on pure adventure experiences for surfers, cyclists, canoeists, hikers and so on; Wales's big celebration will also include a wide range of adventures aimed at the people of Wales. Physical, natural, cultural – we will celebrate the rich variety of experiences Wales has to offer people of all ages, all abilities.

The Year of Adventure theme was deliberately selected to



complement and feature the Dahl Centenary. Roald Dahl believed firmly in the power of adventure to expand horizons and change lives: and that is our ambition too. Yes, adventure is exciting, thrilling, fun: but adventure also has the potential to transform.

The Great Weekend of Adventure which will take place 2-3 April is the ideal opportunity for children and their families to take part in activities on their doorstep. Locals and visitors will get the chance to try something new with some of the exciting opportunities on offer in Wales.

We are very lucky in Wales to have many excellent attractions which offer first time experiences for children – from being a zoo keeper to trying out one of the longest or fastest zip wires in Europe or venturing underground for some trampoline fun, exploring caves or getting a glimpse at what it was like to work underground in the coal and slate industries.

Adventure can also happen anywhere from the back garden, to our communities to the amazing natural surroundings we have in Wales. Our beaches are ideal settings for all adventures from catching your first fish, building the biggest sandcastle or getting creative with beach art. Our forests and woodland are ideal locations for building dens, hunting for bugs or making mud pies.

For a simple family adventure we don't need anything more than Wales' wonderful landscape – from the challenging mountains of Snowdonia to our epic 870 mile coast path. The coast path is full of histories and stories at every turn which will get the imagination going – from a glimpse at some of our amazing castles or seeing caves and coves which would have been a smugglers paradise.

**Happy Adventures!**  
[www.visitwales.com](http://www.visitwales.com)

# A study: UK and Germany outdoor play opportunities

Ellen Weaver, a researcher from Freiburg University in Germany shares the findings of a study that compared children's access to outdoor play opportunities and parental attitudes towards risk in play in the UK and Germany.

German research has found that children from deprived families played outside significantly less than children from well-off families, such that 'street childhood' has now become an indicator of wealth rather than poverty.

The 'Raum für Kinderspiel' project, conducted in Baden Württemberg in 2013, examined the play patterns of over 5000 children, and demonstrated that the quality of children's residential environment directly impacts on their ability to exercise their right to play.

Children living in socio-economically deprived neighbourhoods had significantly less opportunity to play outside independently of adults than children in better-off families, who tended to live in areas with child-friendly urban design. The German researchers point to the importance of play without adult supervision as essential for children to develop basic physical and social autonomy, so this inequality of play opportunities has profound, long term consequences.

A small scale survey carried out in 2015 compared the German findings with the play opportunities of children in the UK, as reported by their parents. This survey found that the quality of the children's home environment in the UK was more child-friendly than in Germany, when measured by factors such

as proximity to play spaces, traffic speed and volume.

Nevertheless, the study showed that the average time that UK children spent outside without supervision was significantly less than their German counterparts. For example, five year olds living in the least child-friendly areas spent as much as four and a half times less time playing outside without adult supervision in the UK compared to the equivalent children in Germany. Nine year olds in the least child-friendly areas played outside without adult supervision for an average of 23 minutes a day in the UK, in contrast to an average of 90 minutes a day in Germany.

Leaving aside the quality of residential areas as a factor in the amount of outdoor play available to children, the study also asked parents in Germany and the UK a hypothetical question to assess their attitudes towards risk and safety in children's play. The results showed UK parents to be considerably more risk averse than their German counterparts.

It appears that the changes in attitudes towards danger and children's independence, which have reduced children's freedom in the UK over the last few decades, have not had the same effect in Germany.

The UK study was intended as a preliminary project to gain an indication of the relevance of

comparative research, and the results confirm further research is warranted to investigate the reasons for differences in attitudes and in children's play opportunities between the UK and Germany. The aim of the next stage of the research is to identify the barriers currently impairing children's outdoor independence in all parts of the UK to inform policies which could overcome, or at least reduce, these barriers.

The proposed project is a collaboration between sociology Professor Baldo Blinkert of Freiburg University and Risk Management Professor David Ball of Middlesex University. A UK wide and German study is being designed to compare children's outdoor play and the criteria of all relevant adult decision makers. The research will, in particular, examine what impact the law has on children's play, and whether the different legal systems in the jurisdictions studied are relevant factors allowing or impairing children's independence and outdoor play.

It is hoped that the next stage of the comparative research will contribute towards regaining some of the vital childhood opportunities which have been lost over the last two generations.

**More information about the research:** <http://article.sciencepublishinggroup.com/pdf/10.11648.j.hss.20150305.11.pdf>

# Ever decreasing circles

Gill Byrne, RAY Ceredigion's Executive Officer, explains the results of her research into the changes in the distance children travel to play over the last three generations and what may have caused the changes.

The 'ever decreasing circles' research project interviewed different generations of five families, where family members had all grown up and played in the same rural location in Ceredigion. The aim was to contrast the experiences of outdoor independent play across the generations, and use this evidence to assess whether distances travelled to both designated and undesignated play destinations had increased, stayed the same, or decreased.

The method was to meet with family groups, carry out a semi-structured interview supported by the use of Ordnance Survey maps, a separate copy of the map for each family member. As part of the interview each family member marked the map, including both where they lived and the distances they travelled to play destinations, as well as recounting their memories of play behaviours. The use of the Ordnance Survey maps enabled accurate measurements of distances travelled and therefore meaningful comparisons between individuals.

Five families were interviewed with an age range of 18 to 84 with a total of 13 interviews completed and further information gained on four young people aged under 18. Open University regulations precluded interviews with anyone aged under 18, however parents were questioned about the play behaviours of their children in the under 18 age group.

As predicted, the results of these interviews show that the distances children and young people travel to play destinations has decreased dramatically over the generations interviewed. The starkest example of the differences between generations was illustrated by interviews with a grandfather aged 63, his daughter aged 39 and the play behaviours of her two children, aged seven and ten. This family still lives in the same area that the father was raised; he lives in the same street and his daughter and grandchildren live opposite.

During his childhood and youth he travelled distances of 13.5 miles, (27 including distances both there and back), both by bike and on foot. These journeys included bike trips by road to swim in rivers, and trips on foot along the coast and climbing cliffs down to deserted coves. In contrast his daughter travelled 0.93 miles from home, (just under two miles including return distance), to play on the hillside within view of the houses, and spent time making dens in the bracken and brambles. She also remembered playing on an area of tarmac between the backs of the houses, where all the children from the estate would congregate to play. Both generations, father and daughter, played sometimes with siblings but mainly with neighbours' children who lived on the same housing estate. The most striking finding was that the youngest generation, aged seven and ten, are not allowed to leave

the garden of the house they live in unless accompanied by an adult. So, in three generations independent travel to play destinations has decreased from 13.5 miles, to less than a mile, to zero.

**Of the five families interviewed four illustrate a steep decline in distances travelled between generations whilst in the fifth, although not so dramatic, the distances have halved.**

The information collected during the interviews shows that along with a decrease in distances travelled there has been a corresponding change in the types of play, with less play that could be described as 'risky'. The older generations enjoyed playing on rope swings over the weir, catching crabs on the beach and roaming the local hill fort, whereas the youngest generation only access the hill fort during a walk with an adult and they spend their free time at organised activities.

All participants were asked what has affected children's play since they played as children. The three repeating answers (in no particular order): increased traffic on the road; the perception of stranger danger; and women nowadays are out at work, whereas for previous generations mothers tended to be at home, meaning that when children played out they could call into a number of homes for drinks and plasters. This also helped parents and families to know each other – interviewees expressed that this is no longer the case and contributes to the reluctance to allow children to play outdoors unsupervised.

# Workforce development

## Qualification requirements for playwork settings

Changes to childcare regulations, that come into force on 1 April 2016, require that playwork settings that operate for more than two hours a day and with children under the age of 12 register with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW).

A 'playwork setting' includes: adventure playgrounds, holiday play schemes, out of school care (including breakfast clubs, lunch clubs, after school clubs, holiday clubs), school and community play centres, mobile play projects, specialist play projects, indoor play centres and family activity centres, and play ranger provision.

(For more information about changes to childcare and play provision regulations see page 6.)

If the above criteria applies to you or your staff, the following information may help to ensure your staff have the appropriate qualifications for their posts.

### Registered person and Person in charge

The person named to CSSIW as the registered person requires a level 3 qualification in playwork that is included on the SkillsActive list of required qualifications. If the registered person is not on site you will need to appoint a person in charge with a suitable level 3 playwork qualification. This includes Playwork: Principles into Practice (P<sup>3</sup>) level 3 which has been developed by Play Wales and a range of other suitable qualifications available through other awarding bodies such as Cache and City and Guilds.

You also need to consider contingency to ensure there is a member of staff with a suitable level 3 qualification to deputise for the person in charge.

### Playworkers

At least half of the remaining staff will require a level 2 qualification in playwork that is included on the SkillsActive list of required

qualifications. This is intended to allow the play setting to employ volunteers or unqualified playworkers while they achieve the necessary qualifications.

### Differences for persons in charge of holiday play schemes (currently in place until September 2018)

If the play setting only runs during school holidays the registered person/person in charge does not need to complete a full playwork qualification if they hold another qualification at level 3 or above in working with children and young people (including youth work, teaching or childcare). However, they will need to undertake additional units outlined below which are quicker and less expensive to achieve than full qualifications. Both of these qualifications are on the SkillsActive list of required qualifications.

### Managing a Holiday Play Scheme Award

This qualification has been specifically designed for people working as the registered person/person in charge of a holiday play scheme. It is accredited by Agored Cymru and has been developed by Play Wales and YMCA Wales Community College in partnership with SkillsActive and Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs. For more information see page 21.

If you are over 19 years of age, hold a relevant level 3 qualification and have experience of staffed play provision you may be eligible to undertake this qualification.

To register your interest in Managing a Holiday Playscheme courses being run by our partner YMCA Wales Community College, please complete an application form available at: [www.playwales.org.uk/eng/mahps](http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/mahps)

### Transitional Award from Early Years to Playwork

The transitional award has been designed to enable those with level 3 early years qualifications to gain skills in playwork and enable them to work temporarily in a playwork setting such as a holiday play scheme. The transitional award is two units and can usually be completed in less than 12 months.

If you are over 18 and hold a relevant early years qualification you may be eligible to undertake this award. The award is accredited by a number of awarding organisations.

### Further information

To find out about playwork qualifications in your area:

- Check the Play Wales website for details of upcoming courses [www.playwales.org.uk/eng/events](http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/events)
- YMCA Wales Community College delivers P<sup>3</sup> and the Managing a Holiday Play Scheme Award: [www.ymca-wales.ac.uk](http://www.ymca-wales.ac.uk)
- Speak to your local college about upcoming courses
- Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs can advise on playwork training and qualifications for Out of School Childcare settings: [www.clybiauplantcymru.org](http://www.clybiauplantcymru.org)

# Managing a Holiday Play Scheme (MAHPS) update

During the Summer of 2015 Play Wales, working closely with partners YMCA Wales Community College, SkillsActive and Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs, developed a new Agored Cymru qualification to meet regulatory requirements for registered persons/persons in charge of a holiday play scheme.

Historically, there has been a challenge, both financially and time related, for people in these roles to undertake a full level 3 playwork qualification when they are often qualified to level 3, and working in other related roles including, teaching, youth work, childcare or sports coaching. Welsh Government commissioned the development of this new qualification to support learners to gain a playwork qualification specifically aimed at the context of a

holiday play scheme to ensure that this type of provision can continue to meet regulatory requirements with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW).

The MAHPS Award consists of two units at level 3 – each worth 2 credits. Many of the assessment tasks take place in the classroom with additional written reflections at the end of each day. Unit 1 relates the application of the Playwork Principles to a holiday play scheme whilst Unit 2 focuses on the legislative and regulatory requirements involved in leading and managing a holiday play scheme.

Two pilot courses funded by YMCA Wales Community College have been delivered (Cardiff and Wrexham) over three days each with a week between

each session for learners to complete assessment tasks.

Mike Greenaway, Director of Play Wales and registered person in charge at Bishopston Playscheme, who undertook the pilot course said:

*'The course was both enjoyable and challenging. It provided an opportunity to reflect on our own and other's varied experiences; what some of us have been doing for many years and what was good and what we might improve. The assessment tasks were relevant to our work requiring us to consider our roles in managing our respective holiday play schemes and how we ensure children experience the best play opportunities. It was pleasantly thought provoking.'*

[www.playwales.org.uk/eng/mahps](http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/mahps)

## A workshop for CSSIW inspectors

Play Wales has recently worked closely with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) by facilitating two open access play provision workshops for its inspectors.

Historically, there have been challenges over the inspection of open access provision compared to other childcare provision, in that children have to be free to come and go from the provision. Changes to childcare regulations from April 2016 mean that play provision for children up to the age of 12 will be inspected. CSSIW is keen to engage with Play Wales and the playwork sector to ensure that changes to the inspection framework and staffing ratios are proportionate and relevant for open access play providers.

Over 50 inspectors attended the two workshops, delivered at CSSIW offices in Llandudno Junction and Penllergaer. Following a morning considering the nature of open access play provision, during which inspectors watched our training film *Pushing Eddie in the Nettles with Connor*, vibrant discussion took place regarding what constitutes

good quality open access play provision. Inspectors also scrutinised the new statement regarding staffing ratios for open access play provision to consider how this will work in practice:

*'Staffing ratios should be sufficient and proportionate, contributing to a positive environment for all children attending. Staffing ratios should reflect the circumstances of the setting including the site and level of activities undertaken, how risks are managed, the experience and qualifications of staff, community context, age and abilities of the children attending and allow for contingency in case of emergencies.'*

(The ratio of 1:13 for children aged 5-7 remains the same).

Play Wales welcomes the flexibility this introduces because it allows providers to make a decision on staffing ratios based on the context

of their provision, supported by pragmatic risk management.

Feedback from the workshops was positive and it represents another step towards proportionate inspection for open access play providers.

### Donna Davies, Policy Advisor to the Chief Inspector said:

*'The workshops have been extremely helpful in building inspectors' understanding and skills of the diverse range of open access play to meet needs of children and young people ... In collaboration with Play Wales, we are making changes to our new inspection framework to ensure it is proportionate and relevant for open access play.'*

We also facilitated focus groups with open access play providers in February 2016 and will continue to work closely with CSSIW and Welsh Government over the coming months on changes to the regulation and inspection of open access play provision.

# Wrexham's Play Sufficiency Professional Development Programme



Wrexham County Borough Council's Play Development Team has worked with Stuart Lester from the University of Gloucestershire to facilitate a professional development programme aimed at supporting those involved in the play sufficiency process by providing them with access to challenging and inspiring ideas and concepts, guided by one of the leading thinkers on children's play in the UK.

The process helped to gather data to inform the completion of the Play Sufficiency Assessment submitted in March 2016 and has further developed local partnerships which will in turn improve the local authority's ability to secure sufficient opportunities for children's play.

This series of workshops explored adult (and children's) roles in establishing more favourable conditions to support children in navigating time and space to play, and were based on key themes developed in the University of Gloucestershire's MA 'Professional Studies in Children's Play' programme. The workshops also drew upon the ideas and principles identified in two research studies into the implementation of the Welsh Government's Play Sufficiency Duty (Lester and Russell, 2013, 2014).

In designing these workshops, it was important to highlight that they were intended to be responsive to local conditions; as Lester and Russell (2013) note each local authority has a contextual approach to supporting children's play that is composed from complex and unique factors – such as history, relationships, resources, priorities, economics, local politics. It was therefore recognised that the

programme design must start from these conditions – workshops were negotiated both beforehand and constantly reviewed during delivery.

Rather than just being 'taught' sessions, the programme was participative and emergent. There was also an expectation that the process would involve 'action' i.e. that participants would apply ideas, principles and methodologies in practice and share their findings as a process of building 'collective wisdom' that supports the assessment and securing of sufficient play opportunities. 28 professionals from 22 different local authority departments and partner agencies were involved in the programme, with many identifying benefits from being involved:

*'This approach has been very useful in bringing together different professionals whose job roles have an impact on children's play in one way or another. In turn, these sessions have allowed people to reflect on how children's play impacts on their own and others' job roles and how working together can only deliver better outcomes for all!'*

**Sue Astle, Training Mentor and Assessor**

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*. University of Gloucestershire and Play Wales.

Lester, S. and Russell, W. (2014) *Towards Securing Sufficient Play Opportunities*. University of Gloucestershire and Play Wales.

## National Occupational Standards Review

In the last issue of *Play for Wales* we reported on the progress of the review of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for playwork currently being undertaken by SkillsActive.



Following the national focus groups that took place across the four nations in August and September 2015, concern was raised by many that the Playwork Principles were not fully referenced.

We are pleased to report that following engagement with the

sector, the Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group and the four national play organisations, that the Playwork Principles are now fully integrated into the NOS as knowledge and understanding for every standard with an overarching statement regarding the Principles at the front of the NOS.

The standards are currently being finalised with language and terminology being agreed upon. SkillsActive aims to complete the review by Spring 2016 and we remain optimistic that they will meet the needs of the sector and more accurately reflect current playwork practice in Wales.