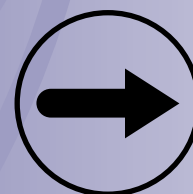


Play Policy Implementation Plan

Information Document



Play

DfTE Information Document No: 002-06

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Play in Wales



**PLANT A PHOBL IFANC - GWEITHREDU'R HAWLIAU
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE - RIGHTS TO ACTION**



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Adran Hyfforddiant ac Addysg
Department for Training and Education



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

- Title of document:** Play in Wales: The Assembly Government's Play Policy Implementation Plan
- Audience:** Chief Executives of Local Authorities, Directors of Social Services; Directors of Education; Children and Young People's Framework Partnership Co-ordinators, Children Partnership Co-ordinators; Young People's Partnership Co-ordinators, County Librarians; Relevant Children's Voluntary Organisations; Community Voluntary Services; Principal Youth Officers; Directors for Transport and Environment; Road Safety Officers; Police Chief Constables; Local Authority Health Groups; Play Development Workers; Toy Libraries; Colleges; Parks Officers and Managers; Play schemes and Youth Centres; Local Authority Planning Officers; Welsh Local Government Association; Members of the Play Policy Implementation Group, Assembly Members; Big Lottery Fund, Skills Active, Care Council for Wales
- Overview:** This document sets out how the Welsh Assembly Government will implement the principles detailed in the Play Policy. It draws together the Assembly Government's existing support for play and direction for the future.
- Further information:** Enquiries about this document should be directed to:
Elinor Jones
Tel: 029 2080 1119
e-mail: play@wales.gsi.gov.uk
- Additional copies:** Can be received from:
Elinor Jones
Tel: 029 2080 1119
e-mail: play@wales.gsi.gov.uk
- Related documents:** Consultation on the Recommendations of the Play Policy Implementation Group, issued in November 2004.

PLAY IN WALES

THE ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT'S PLAY POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

1. Introduction

In October 2002 the Welsh Assembly Government published its play policy. That set out our recognition of the vital importance of play, and our commitment that society should seek every opportunity to support it. This action plan now sets out to explain how the principles in the play policy will be implemented. It:

- draws together the Assembly Government's existing support for play;
- sets out our future direction for play;
- lists a number of key actions and a timetable for delivery; and
- highlights innovative practice.

This document is founded on the aims and priorities outlined in the Welsh Assembly Government strategic plan, 'Better Wales' and the policy statement, 'Children and Young People: Rights to Action'.

'Better Wales' sets out a long-term vision of Wales as a place which values its children and young people. It includes amongst its core values the statement that 'children and young people should be treated as valued members of the community whose voices are heard and needs considered across the range of policy making'.

This action plan contributes towards the Better Wales key action area 'Better quality of life', and the Assembly Government's commitment to both improve the quality of life of everyone living in Wales today. It also supports the aim to ensure that our actions over the coming years bequeath to future generations an inheritance they will value and build on to achieve further, lasting improvements.

'Children and Young People: Rights to Action' sets out the Assembly Government's actions under its seven core aims for children and young people. This action plan is a significant contribution to achieving the core aim that all children and young people should have access to a range of play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities.

The action plan proposes a way in which the commitment to implementation articulated in the Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy may be met, and how the Play Policy relates to and contributes towards other complimentary Assembly Government strategic plans. It is a response to the report of the Play Policy Implementation Group's report and our

public consultation on that report. The recommendations of the Play Policy Implementation Group are attached as an Annex to this document.

Play Policy

This policy statement has been produced to reflect the value that the Welsh Assembly Government places on play and the importance of children in our society. It reflects our commitment to ensure that children and their needs are central to policy making and that provision is made to meet those needs.

The statement is founded on the principle that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK Government in December 1991, recognises the importance of play for the child.

The Welsh Assembly Government, in seeking to ensure the full implementation of Article 31 of the Convention, intends that this statement should contribute to creating an environment that fosters children's play and underpins a national strategy for providing for children's play needs.

The Welsh Assembly Government believes that:

play is the elemental learning process by which humankind has developed. Children exhibit a behavioural imperative and instinctive desire to play. It has contributed significantly to the evolutionary and developmental survival of our species. Children use play in the natural environment to learn of the world they inhabit with others. It is the very process of learning and growth, and as such all that is learnt through it is of benefit to the child.

play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development - not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live.

play is so critically important to all children in the development of their physical, social, mental, emotional and creative skills that society should seek every opportunity to support it and create an environment that fosters it. Decision making at all levels of government should include a consideration of the impact of those decisions, on children's opportunities to play.

play is first and foremost the process of a child's own, self-directed learning and as such is a process that has a validity for all ages of children. It is such a vital component of a child's life that the child's capacity for positive development will be inhibited or constrained if denied free access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

It is the very freedom and child centredness of play that makes it such an effective and comprehensive learning process.

This policy statement is predicated upon the principles that:

every child is entitled to respect for their own unique combination of qualities and capabilities;

the perceptions of the child, their views and opinions should always be respected for each child is connected to, and a bearer of, a wider culture;

the child's free choice of their own play is a critical factor in enriching their learning and contributing to their well being and development.

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises the significance and the value of play in children's development and that children have an innate desire to seek out opportunities to take increasing risks. This is an essential part of their play and learning. It requires us to respond positively by extending the range of environments and opportunities available for children's play while continuing to have due regard for their physical and psychological well being.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to ensuring that all children have access to rich stimulating environments, free from inappropriate risk, and full of challenge, thereby offering them the opportunity to explore through freely chosen play both themselves and the world.

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that the impact of modern society on children's lives has significantly restricted their opportunity to play freely and has resulted in a poverty of play opportunities in the general environment. It is therefore committed to encouraging the creation of high quality 'compensatory' play provision that is appropriate, local, stimulating and challenging for all children in Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government commits itself to the development in partnership of a strategy that will set out the way in which the principles in this statement can be implemented.

2. Encouraging more play provision

The Assembly Government has created a new statutory framework, and provided new resources that will help develop new play provision.

The Children Act 2004 imposes a duty of co-operation between agencies that promote the well being of children and young people. It specifies that one of the purposes of this co-operation is to improve the well being of children relating to education, training and recreation. Play is therefore included in a specific duty in the primary legislation. That duty will be supported by statutory guidance that is currently out to consultation. The Act will also require local authorities to prepare Children and Young People's Plans, setting out the joint priorities and objectives of the local partners. The current intention is that the first of these plans will cover a three-year cycle beginning in April 2008. Detailed guidance on these plans, which will build on the existing Children and Young People's Framework Plans, will be issued for consultation in 2006.

Action: The Assembly Government will include in Children Act planning guidance a duty to co-operate in addressing the play needs of local children and young people. This will include the need for staffed adventure play that provides children with a rich play environment to compensate for the loss of natural open space. It will also point out the need for play to be inclusive of all children; none should be excluded because of issues such as different levels of ability, language, race or gender.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF'S PLAY STRATEGY

The Council recognises the value of play for child development, and for promoting children's well being, social interaction and skills development.

Recognising the need to establish a robust strategic framework for expanding existing play opportunities, and for maximising the contribution of all those local organisations interested in, and involved with, children's play, the Lifelong Learning Division of the Education and Children's Services Group commissioned a well-known voluntary organisation, Valleys Kids, to undertake preparatory work for a comprehensive Play Strategy.

Valleys Kids' brief was to lead a wide-ranging consultation with key local stakeholders, so that whatever was eventually produced would have significant local support and, most importantly, would encompass all the perceived play needs of children, young people, and their communities.

Key to the gathering of information and respondents' views was the development of a questionnaire, supported by personal interviews (face to face and by telephone) focus group meetings, and by workshops. Consultees' included voluntary organisations, schools, health workers, teachers and parents. The views of children were sought, too, but the resources available were not sufficient for the development of a large-scale exercise.

The Play Strategy which resulted includes nine key objectives relating to audits of provision, play promotion, staff training, quality assurance, the contribution of fixed play areas, and resource implications.

The Play Strategy was formally adapted by Fframwaith, the children and young people's strategic planning framework. The multi-agency Play Strategy Group – whose terms of reference are to work towards the implementation of the strategy – reports to Fframwaith.

Local authorities are free to use their own funding for all types of play, but in 2000 the Assembly Government introduced new funding specifically for play. Since April 2003, that stream of funding has been within Cymorth - the Children and Youth Support Fund. Play is a key theme within Cymorth and every local authority has continued to use Cymorth to support play. Allocations to local authorities under Cymorth are increasing by a total of £11.5 million between 2005-06 and 2006-07.

TRAVELLERS PLAY PROJECT

This Cymorth-funded project in Cardiff aims to integrate and include children from Gypsy and Traveller communities into mainstream local open access play and youth provision, to raise awareness of Gypsy and Traveller culture and to counter discrimination and prejudice.

Activities include 4 sessions per week for Gypsy and Traveller young people aged 5-15 yrs living on the two Local Authority sites at Rover Way and Shirenewton with availability made for housed Gypsy and Traveller children where possible, regular swimming sessions at Pentwyn leisure centre, involving children with Cardiff's Mass Carnival, a video project with HTV Wales and an Arts Recycling project in partnership with Eastmoors and Tesco.

The Extending Entitlement programme for the 11-25 group is founded on ten entitlements. One of those is "an opportunity for recreational and social opportunities in a safe and accessible environment."

The Assembly Government worked with the Lottery to provide more than 24,000 new out of school childcare places between 1999 and 2002. Across Wales these have provided safe play environments before and after school, and during school holidays, while helping parents with childcare. The Childcare Action Plan, published in 2002, began with a clear statement that childcare is a key part of the programmes to support children. The Assembly Government is not interested in supporting care that merely warehouses children. Quality out of school care should provide children with opportunities for freely chosen play, and therefore make a significant contribution to this action plan.

Action: The Assembly Government will produce guidance on what constitutes quality play opportunities.

The Assembly Government also worked with the Lottery to develop proposals for at least one Integrated Centre in each local authority area. The centres are required to include open access play facilities within their networks of services. It is intended that the benefits of adventure play can be spread by this mechanism in some of Wales' most disadvantaged areas. Currently 30 centres are open or in hand. The next stage in their development will be as part of the Flying Start Initiative, under which the Assembly Government has made available £46 million for interventions for 0-3 year olds in disadvantaged areas over the next two years.

The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (NSF) emphasises the importance of play and leisure in children and young people's mental health and psychological well being, and requires the Children and Young People's Framework Plan to include services and facilities for inclusive play and leisure.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 established rights for disabled people to have the same access to 'goods and services'. The Disability Discrimination Act 2004 requires service providers to take reasonable steps, to tackle physical barriers to access for disabled people.

INTERPLAY

Interplay began in 1987 as a summer play project and has since grown to become a year round provider of inclusive play and leisure for 5 –19 year olds in the counties of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot.

The majority of users have some degree of learning disabilities; many have physical impairments, sensory impairments and challenging behaviour. Interplay does not run play schemes, but instead provides additional support staff to enable children aged 5-11 with various needs to be integrated into play schemes organised by local authorities, local voluntary groups and leisure centres.

During the summer there are fortnightly sessions known as 'Choosedays' where the young people decide upon their own itinerary and activities with the assistance of trained workers. Similar activities take place throughout the year. Interplay also runs 2 inclusive performing art groups that meet on a weekly basis in the counties they operate in. Interplay is also involved with the Blue Light Discos organised by the South Wales Constabulary, integrating 13 plus age groups.

Interplay is heavily involved in play training for community-based play schemes in both counties. This ensures that all local authority play staff receive training on inclusion.

In 2005-2006 Interplay is receiving Cymorth funding of £26,259.

The Big Lottery Fund has consulted on priorities for its programmes, agreed with the Assembly Government. It is now developing a new programme on Children's Play and Active and Healthy Families that will

- develop new and stimulating play opportunities for children;
- promote the long-term strategic development of play provision across Wales; and
- develop joined up approaches to promote healthy eating, exercise and play among children and families.

The Programme has an overall budget of approximately £20 million, and will incorporate dedicated funds for play development and for new play provision.

Action: The Big Lottery Fund will work with the Welsh Assembly Government and key stakeholders working on play and healthy lifestyles to ensure that the programme meets local and national priorities and has a clear strategic impact.

If practitioners throughout Wales are to share and implement the Assembly Government's vision of the importance of quality play experiences, there is a need to develop a common idea of what good play facilities look like. The experts in identifying what is needed are of course children and young people, who should be involved in planning and designing facilities.

Action: The Assembly Government will work with practitioners, communities and children to develop standards for a wide variety of play provision, that will be mandatory for play funded by specific grant and will give a lead to other provision. The standards will build on the existing National Minimum Standards for Open Access Play. They will encourage children and young people to be included in planning and designing local play facilities.

3. The Role of Schools

The Assembly Government agrees with the Implementation Group that schools are well placed within the community to provide a range of opportunities for children's play. School playgrounds and playing fields can often represent the only local open space in urban areas.

The Foundation Phase for children from 3 to 7 years recognises the international evidence that children learn best through play and being actively involved in activities. School grounds, if well designed, landscaped, and managed, offer children and young people a valuable range of stimuli, ideas and resources.

The Foundation Phase and Play

Play Wales working with 'Playpeople' has developed a programme of one-day courses that supports early years teachers and teaching assistants, providing them with ideas to create the best outdoor environment that centres on the value and integrity of children's learning through play.

This course is tailored to meet the particular needs of teaching staff preparing for the Foundation Phase in Wales. It is being delivered through Local Education Authorities. "The Foundation Phase: a 'play-led' approach" explores the delivery of early years learning in schools from a play perspective. The course defines a 'play-led' approach to learning and summarises the current state of research into the link between learning and play. It significantly enhances training and support which focuses on environmental improvements.

Initial feedback has been positive and indicates that by the end of the day practitioners have a clear understanding of the 'play-led' approach to early years learning and have many practical ideas of the play environments and materials needed to put this approach into practice.

One of the Assembly Government's Top Ten commitments in Wales: A Better Country is to improve school buildings so that they are fit for purpose and properly maintained by 2010. There is a budget to support improvements to school buildings and the school site, which at the local authority's discretion may be used to improve landscaping so as to make a more rich and exciting play environment. In order to ensure that maximum benefit is obtained from such landscaping, pupils should always be consulted, through mechanisms such as Schools Councils, about how the environment of schools/setting can be changed.

This development will provide spaces that serve the play policy and enable children to interact with the environment and each other. The spaces will provide for the experience of a range of play types, both for use by the children attending during the school day and for children and wider community use out of school hours.

Schools can play a key role in creating and improving opportunities for play and informal recreation. Schools are actively encouraged to develop a community focus and to open up their playing fields or make parts of their grounds available outside school time as play resources. This is particularly important in areas where there is limited playing field or open space provision.

The Welsh Assembly Government is making £3 million available through Local Education Authorities in 2005-06 and in each of the following two financial years to help schools develop a community focus. Play schemes would be eligible for funding providing they meet the scheme criteria.

The reduction in children's ability to play freely out of doors outside school hours means that the importance of school playtimes has increased in terms of offering scope for play that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is important that both teaching and non-teaching staff should have an understanding of the philosophy and practice of play. This includes knowledge of play types, play behaviour, play needs, and appropriate intervention styles.

Action: The Assembly Government will support the development of training resources on play for teaching and non-teaching staff in schools, and bring them to the attention of all schools.

Action: The Assembly Government will highlight the opportunity for new play facilities provided by Community Focussed Schools, and will provide guidance as to how these might be developed effectively.

4. Play in the Community

Children and young people want to meet up and play in open spaces wherever they occur. But the growth in motor traffic over the last 40 years has greatly increased the reluctance of parents to let their children roam freely. Young people have told us that they want more facilities to meet up and socialise. But, in the absence of more suitable provision, communities often feel threatened by congregations of young people on the street.

It is estimated that only 45% of 5-16 year olds now walk to school. This has a negative effect on their ability to explore their locality and the opportunity to play together. Other journeys made independently - to see a friend or have access to play outside - have also lessened. Children and young people should be given every chance to fulfil their potential and access to play, leisure and sporting facilities is important in realising this aim.

Walking to school leads to higher levels of physical activity, including the opportunities to play, which has a positive impact on a child's health. It is important that we open up these chances for active lifestyles as more children are experiencing health problems as fitness has declined.

Many adventure playgrounds incorporate an element of self-build using natural resources. Building play opportunities can draw communities together. When communities are actively involved in planning play, across the generations, there can be wider benefits for social cohesion, social enterprise and the inclusive impact of voluntary initiative. Adults who become involved in the planning or delivery of play opportunities locally acquire the transferable skills of the social entrepreneur. Play opportunities have acted, in many parts of Wales, as a catalyst to further community development, involvement, and participation. This can be the most effective way to engender feelings of ownership by the wider community and, as a result, more people have an interest in the playground.

'Flat pack' playgrounds

Cardiff County Borough Council has worked with a small company based in the Cotswolds to develop structures for new playgrounds that can be assembled by the community.

The concept itself is extremely simple. It uses various lengths of prepared timber and a series of steel sockets into which the timbers fit. The sockets come in a variety of shapes which gives those who are building the structure flexibility in terms of initial design and add on modifications.

Workers began to refer to these structures as "flat pack" as a way of making the concept of playground design and build much more accessible in people's minds.

The project to date has seen a number of structures built at a variety of sites across Cardiff. Some have been built utilising volunteer support from various businesses as part of their work in the community, some have been built by groups of young people and some have been built by play staff at play centres. A structure has also been adapted for use in a nursery setting.

The cost of these structures can be about one tenth of the price of traditional equipment.

Cardiff Council now hopes to develop a suitable training package that can go alongside the component purchase and to develop the concept as an integral part of a more naturalistic approach using fallen trees, boulders, sand, gravel and natural landscaping as part of playscapes.

The provision of trained playworkers and play rangers can help in making environments safer, by supporting and facilitating opportunities for children to play.

Planning policy and transport policy are influential in determining how space in communities is used. Planning Policy Wales, supplemented by Technical Advice Notes, sets out the Assembly's planning policy, which is used by local authorities preparing development plans for their area and in taking planning decisions.

The Assembly Government has made large investments in Safe Routes to School to make the streets around school more safe. The Assembly Government's Road Safety Strategy calls for more 20-mph zones, and for 20 mph to be the speed limit in new residential developments unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Strategy promotes the greater use of shared space ideas, and Home Zones in particular. In order to do this in existing areas, local communities should be in the forefront of planning, designing and implementing their own Home Zone solutions – with local authorities and consultants providing the necessary technical expertise.

20 mph zones in Neath Port Talbot

Fifty-seven schools within Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council have had advisory 20-mph zones installed around them. The aim of the scheme is to reduce vehicle speeds in and around schools, in particular the approach to School Crossing Patrols, hence the zonal approach. The start of each zone consists of a gateway feature incorporating a plateau and one pair of the nine different types of 20-mph sign being used. The signs have different motifs, which is dependent upon whether the school is primary or secondary. Local pupils designed the motifs. The zone also consists of red road markings. Early indications show that speeds are dropping in these zones, making them much safer for pupils to walk to school.

The Assembly Government will seek to ensure that, in preparing planning policy, appropriate account is taken of the need for children and young people to have opportunities and facilities for play and exercise.

The Assembly Government notes that Local Authorities may dispose of land at a price under commercial value if a consequent community benefit, such as retaining play space, justifies it. "Best value" is a general principle to be applied to the whole range of an authority's operations and services, rather than to individual transactions.

The Assembly Government will support the preparation of new guidance for local authorities. The guidance should consider the planning issues raised by the needs of different age groups and types of community – from urban areas with a lack of open space, to rural areas where villages may face fast through traffic.

Action: The Assembly Government will consult widely, including with children and young people in reviewing the Planning Technical Advice Notes which relates to open space, play and recreation.

Action: The Assembly Government will encourage those involved locally with transport and play to co-operate in taking forward the Home Zone policies of the Road Safety Strategy for Wales.

Action: The Assembly Government will support the development of new guidance for Local Authorities on appropriate community play provision. This will complement the Technical Advice Notes and include the issues of staffing and ensuring that responsibility is not delegated to community councils without appropriate expertise.

5. A playwork profession

The Assembly Government wishes to see play provision staffed by workers trained to understand how to promote inclusive freely chosen play. The Assembly Government supports the notion of a playwork profession. The Assembly Government support flexible qualifications to attract and retain recruits to childcare, youth work, and play, while ensuring that the quality of children's play is not compromised. The Assembly Government has already supported Play Wales to undertake the UK lead of a review of the Playwork Values and Assumptions that underpin the Playwork NVQs, and endorses the outcome of this work, the Playwork Principles.

The Assembly Government wishes to ensure that different professions can understand each other's language and value the contributions that they make. It will be working with the UK Government and the Care Council for Wales in developing an integrated children's workforce, including the development of a single qualifications framework, incorporating playwork, and a common core of skills and knowledge. The Care Council will be bringing together a network representing those working with children and young people, including SkillsActive, the sector skills council for playwork. This will be the mechanism for facilitating consultation on the proposals for developing the workforce, including the common core for qualifications. The inclusion of SkillsActive and its role in supporting playwork reflects the Assembly's recognition of the unique nature of play in being a child-determined agenda.

Action: The Assembly Government will continue to work with Play Wales and other partners to seek to ensure that there are appropriate training opportunities at all levels for play workers.

Action: The Assembly Government will work with the UK Government on the development of the children's workforce, including a single qualifications framework and the development of a common core of skills and knowledge.

Action: As part of both this Action plan and the Childcare Action Plan, the Assembly Government will seek ways of addressing recruitment and retention issues, in conjunction with the Sector Skills Council SkillsActive.

6. Managing risk and parental concerns

The Play Policy Implementation Group pointed to the reduction in children's opportunities to play freely outside of the home. Children and young people living in Wales have become sheltered from the environment that might support their developmental play needs. Many are driven to school and leisure time activities, are watched when at play and never experience the freedom of playing without constraining supervision. As a result, they have fewer opportunities to explore the world they live in, to choose their own friends, to learn independence and to gain knowledge of the characteristics of their community.

To acknowledge this is not to criticise parents and carers, who have genuine concern for the children, particularly in the light of modern traffic conditions. In some communities, they may also fear that allowing children to 'play out' will be interpreted as poor parenting. The Assembly Government will look for opportunities to promote to parents active play and managed risk, which offers such wide benefits to children and society.

Play providers are finding it more difficult to meet children's needs in the light of increased insurance premiums. Part of the reason for the higher premiums is the cover against legal action taken by parents against play providers if children suffer injury. The Assembly Government will look at every opportunity to influence this position, but must recognise its powers are limited. Government cannot influence the right of parents to take action where negligence has given rise to injury. However, Government can influence the context in which such legal action takes place. Central Government sets the guidelines for "no win, no fee" litigation, and the Assembly Government would support a review of this arrangement as it affects children's services.

Government can also indicate what it regards as good practice in risk management, recognising that support for play and children's development requires a balanced judgement of risk. Through the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales, the Assembly Government regulates staffed play provision serving children aged under 8 and can ensure that such a balanced approach is taken in these settings. In judging this balance, it will take into account the report of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Children review that has been conducted by Gwenda Thomas AM.

The Assembly Government has funded the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action to produce a DVD for voluntary bodies on risk management.

Action: The Assembly Government will request central Government to review the impact of "no-win no-fee" arrangements on children's activities.

Action: The Assembly Government will revise the Regulations for Childminding and Daycare to require risk assessment that balances risk against the benefits of the play opportunity, rather than an avoidance of all unnecessary risk.

Action: Through new standards for play provision, the Assembly Government will define a public benchmark of balancing risk against benefit in play.

Action: The Assembly Government will incorporate encouragement of play at all ages in the Assembly Government's parent support programmes.

Action: The Assembly Government will produce a handbook for parents on what constitutes quality play and how they can help facilitate it.

7. Play across the Assembly

Play is a child's right and is a fundamental part of childhood. At the same time it provides a number of benefits to children and communities that cross Ministerial portfolios. In particular it supports long term mental health and psychological wellbeing and social skills. There is international evidence that active play helps prevent obesity.

Research (Macket, R. University college London, 2004) has established that children need regular opportunities for outdoor play in order to maintain healthy levels of physical activity. The BMA published a paper on Preventing Childhood Obesity (June 2005) that highlights the benefits of play and the value of outdoor play spaces. This confirms that medical experts and government policy agree that more physical activity from an early age is essential to combat the growing public health issues regarding children and young people.

The Assembly Government's Child Poverty Strategy, "A Fair Future for our Children" is based on the principle that children experience poverty in many different ways – poverty of income, of services, and of participation in society. The support to play through Cymorth – the children and youth support fund has been concentrated on disadvantaged areas. This action plan will help to provide greater access to play opportunities, and thus address this aspect of service poverty.

This action plan has discussed some of the ways that policies on issues such as planning, transport and education can affect children's opportunities to play. The Assembly Government uses a Policy Gateway to test new policies for their impact on existing priorities that cut across Ministerial responsibilities. This will be amended to ensure that the impact on play is considered when new policies are developed.

Action: The Assembly Government will continue to ensure that play is recognised as a means of providing enjoyable psychological and physical activity for all children and will commission research in Wales on the psychological benefits of freely chosen play.

Action: The Assembly Government will proof its policies for their impact on children's play through its Policy Gateway.

Implementation

The Assembly Government is concerned that the focus should now be on achievable action rather than statements of principle. The last few years have seen a far greater acknowledgement of the value of freely chosen play across Wales. To ensure that this momentum is not lost, the chart below sets out a timetable that can be monitored for the implementation of the recommendations in this action plan. This will be achieved by regular cross governmental monitoring meetings within the Assembly Government.

Implementation Timetable

Action	Timetable
<p>Action: The Assembly Government will include in Children Act planning guidance a duty to co-operate in addressing the play needs of local children and young people. This will include the need for staffed adventure play that provides children with a rich play environment to compensate for the loss of natural open space. It will also point out the need for play to be inclusive of all children; none should be excluded because of issues such as different levels of ability, language, race or gender.</p>	<p>March 2007</p>
<p>Action: The Assembly Government will produce guidance on what constitutes quality play opportunities.</p>	<p>March 2007</p>
<p>Action: The Big Lottery Fund will work with the Welsh Assembly Government and key stakeholders working on play and healthy lifestyles to ensure that the programme meets local and national priorities and has a clear strategic impact.</p>	<p>Details to be announced Spring 2006</p>
<p>Action: The Assembly Government will work with practitioners, communities and children to develop standards for a wide variety of play provision, that will be mandatory for play funded by specific grant and will give a lead to other provision. The standards will build on the existing National Minimum Standards for Open Access Play. They will encourage children and young people to be included in planning and designing local play facilities.</p>	<p>Begin: February 2006 Complete: March 2008</p>
<p>Action: The Assembly Government will support the development of training resources on play for teaching and non-teaching staff in schools, and bring them to the attention of all schools.</p>	<p>September 2007</p>
<p>Action: The Assembly Government will highlight the opportunity for new play facilities provided by Community Focussed Schools, and will provide guidance as to how these might be developed effectively.</p>	<p>September 2006</p>

Action	Timetable
Action: The Assembly Government will consult widely, including with children and young people in reviewing the Planning Technical Advice Notes which relates to open space, play and recreation.	Consultation to begin Spring 2007
Action: The Assembly Government will encourage those involved locally with transport and play to co-operate in taking forward the Home Zone policies of the Road Safety Strategy for Wales.	Ongoing
Action: The Assembly Government will support the development of new guidance for Local Authorities on appropriate community play provision. This will complement the Technical Advice Notes and include the issues of staffing and ensuring that responsibility is not delegated to community councils without appropriate expertise.	March 2007
Action: The Assembly Government will continue to work with Play Wales and other partners to seek to ensure that there are appropriate training opportunities at all levels for play workers.	Ongoing
Action: The Assembly Government will work with the UK Government on the development of the children's workforce, including a single qualifications framework and the development of a common core of skills and knowledge.	Ongoing
Action: As part of both this Action plan and the Childcare Action Plan, the Assembly Government will seek ways of addressing recruitment and retention issues, in conjunction with the Sector Skills Council SkillsActive.	Guidance issued by March 2006
Action: The Assembly Government will request central Government to review the impact of "no-win no-fee" arrangements on children's activities.	March 2006

Action	Timetable
Action: The Assembly Government will revise the Regulations for Childminding and Daycare to require risk assessment that balances risk against the benefits of the play opportunity, rather than an avoidance of all unnecessary risk.	September 2006
Action: Through new standards for play provision, the Assembly Government will define a public benchmark of balancing risk against benefit in play.	March 2008
Action: The Assembly Government will incorporate encouragement of play at all ages in the Assembly Government's parent support programmes.	Ongoing
Action: The Assembly Government will produce a handbook for parents on what constitutes quality play and how they can help facilitate it.	September 2006
Action: The Assembly Government will continue to ensure that play is recognised as a means of providing enjoyable psychological and physical activity for all children and will commission research in Wales on the psychological benefits of freely chosen play.	Commission research: September 2006 Report: September 2007
Action: The Assembly Government will proof its policies for their impact on children's play through its Policy Gateway.	March 2006

Summary of Recommendations of Play Policy Implementation Group

Recommendation		Related Action Plan Section
1	That the Welsh Assembly Government place a statutory duty upon local authorities to provide for children's play needs to meet national minimum standards.	2. Encouraging more play provision
2	That the Welsh Assembly Government commit itself to supporting the transformation of those areas of school grounds not dedicated to sports activities, by landscaping and planting, to create compensatory natural spaces that provide children with a rich play environment.	3. The Role of Schools
3	That the Welsh Assembly Government support the development of training for school staff, teaching and non-teaching, to better enable them to recognise and understand the value of play as children's self directed learning, and how they as adults might better facilitate that play in school play time.	3. The Role of Schools
4	That the Welsh Assembly Government ensures that all teacher training courses for new teachers and nursery staff in Wales, include content that addresses the most recent developments in the understanding of children's play as children's self-directed learning and how playwork facilitates that process.	3. The Role of Schools
5	That the Welsh Assembly Government ensures that in future it will direct resources and initiatives, to take account of the fundamental significance of play in children's and young people's healthy development and lifestyle.	2. Encouraging more play provision and 7. Play across the Assembly
6	That the Welsh Assembly Government, remain cognisant of features of play deprivation when considering the distribution of new lottery funds including the Young People's Fund.	2. Encouraging more play provision
7	That the Welsh Assembly Government support the development of action research to inform the issue of play deprivation and its consequences upon the individual child and society in general.	7. Play across the Assembly

Recommendation		Related Action Plan Section
8	That the Welsh Assembly Government includes consideration of children and young people and their play needs in the Assembly Government Policy Integration Tool.	7. Play across the Assembly
9	That the Welsh Assembly Government require all Local Authorities and Framework Partnerships to take a lead role in the development of Local Play Policies and Strategies for policy implementation when considering the development of Community Strategy.	2. Encouraging more play provision
10	That the Welsh Assembly Government clarify aspects of 'Extending Entitlement' so as to ensure that this initiative makes the maximum possible contribution to meeting children's play needs.	2. Encouraging more play provision
11	That the Welsh Assembly Government continue to support the development of the unique role of the playworker, to facilitate children's play within the community.	5. A playwork profession
12	That the Welsh Assembly Government ensures the development of Higher Education training and qualifications appropriate to the needs of those whose role combines playwork, early years work, community development and youth work.	5. A playwork profession
13	That the Welsh Assembly Government, in recognition of the increased parity of role, support the integration of Playwork pay and conditions into the Joint National Committee conditions of service and pay scales for Youth Work and Community Work.	5. A playwork profession
14	That the Welsh Assembly Government supports this development to produce a new range of playwork training materials and courses to meet the needs of the playworker in the twenty first century.	5. A playwork profession
15	That the Welsh Assembly Government develop concise guidance that will enable the development of a community build play area programme throughout Wales.	4. Play in the community

Recommendation	Related Action Plan Section
16 That the Welsh Assembly Government ensure that Community Land Trusts (and others) have first refusal on any suitable public land that becomes available for sale, in order that pockets and areas of open space, wasteland and woodland, particularly within urban areas, where children and young people already play, can be protected.	4. Play in the community
17 That the Welsh Assembly Government should prepare and keep under review new guidance with respect to children's play provision.	2. Encouraging more play provision and 4. Play in the community
18 That the Welsh Assembly Government support the development of a coherent public education programme and publicity campaign to ensure that the developmental play needs of children are recognised for their critical importance to society and its future.	6. Managing risk and parental concerns
19 That the Welsh Assembly Government, pursue all avenues to ensure the development of an environment in which the balance between children's play needs and their need to experience risks, is not compromised by inappropriate use of litigation.	6. Managing risk and parental concerns
20 That the Welsh Assembly Government revise The Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations to ensure that the Regulations do not militate against provision being made to meet children's developmental needs to learn how to manage risk.	6. Managing risk and parental concerns
21 That the Welsh Assembly Government commends to other bodies the exemplar of the Forestry Commission's important contribution to the development of provision to meet children's play needs throughout Wales.	2. Encouraging more play provision
22 That the Welsh Assembly Government promote the use of traffic calming and Home Zones within existing and new developments to increase the use of residential roads for children's play.	4. Play in the community
23 That the Welsh Assembly Government continue to stress the importance of local authorities working in partnership with voluntary organisations, and through them children within local communities.	2. Encouraging more play provision
24 That the Welsh Assembly Government publish a programme for implementation of the recommendations, identifying key milestones and a time frame against which they may be measured.	7. Play across the Assembly