

Planning for Play

This session discusses:

- The importance children's play and its importance for health and wellbeing
- International and national policy context
- Case studies from across Wales exploring interventions to enhance opportunities to play
- Information about various resources, related to planning for play

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Assistant Director: Policy, support and advocacy

Play Wales



Play Wales is the national charity for children's play



We champion every child's need and right to play:

Raising awareness

Promoting good practice

Providing advice and guidance across all sectors

We envision a future where play is valued in Wales for being crucial to a healthy and happy childhood.



What impacts on opportunities to play?

- changes in neighbourhoods including increased car use, increased traffic (moving and parked), changing work patterns
- parental restrictions due to perceptions of neighbourhood safety (traffic, bullying, racism, stranger danger)
- increase in participation in structured activities and educational demands
- ***children are 'out of place' in the public realm, increasing intolerance towards children and young people playing and meeting up***

(Ministerial Review of Play, 2023)

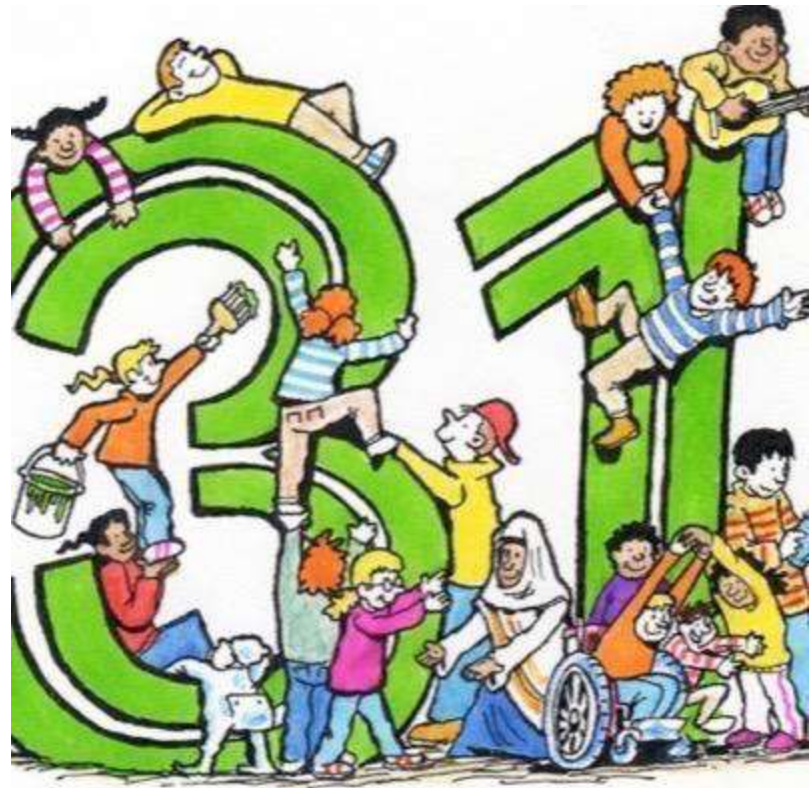


The policy....



The right to play

- All children have the right to play as enshrined in Article 31 of the **United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**
- *Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. (UNCRC, 1989)*
- **General Comment No 17** raises the importance and increases accountability



How the UNCRC General Comment No.17 defines 'Play'...

- the key characteristics of play are fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity
- is a fundamental and vital dimension of the pleasure of childhood
- an essential component of physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2013)





Factors for an optimum environment

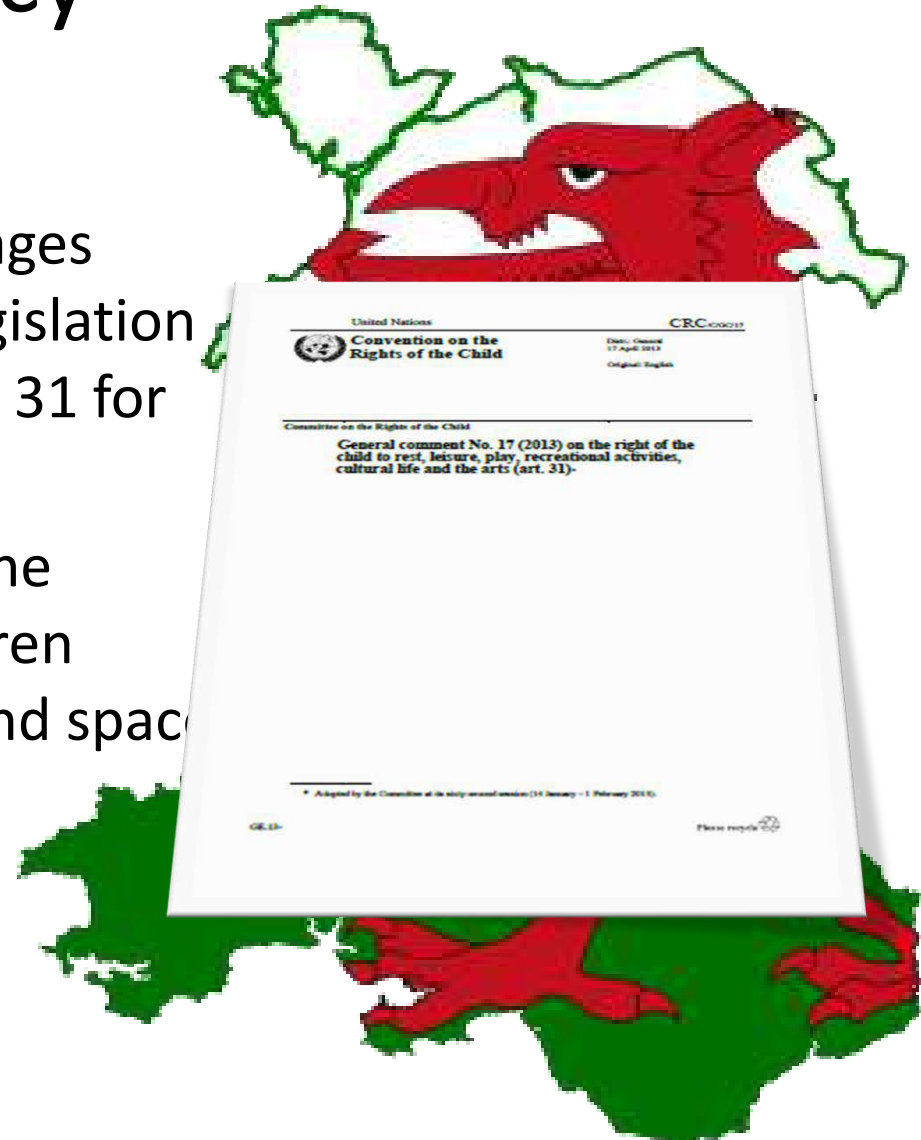
- Freedom from social exclusion, prejudice or discrimination;
- An environment secure from social harm or violence;
- An environment sufficiently free from waste, pollution, traffic and other physical hazards to allow them to circulate freely and safely within their local neighbourhood;
- Availability of leisure time, free from other demands;
- Accessible space and time for play, free from adult control and management;
- Space and opportunities to play outdoors unaccompanied in a diverse and challenging physical environment, with easy access to supportive adults, when necessary;
- Opportunities to experience, interact with and play in natural environments and the animal world;
- Opportunities to invest in their own space and time so as to create and transform their world, using their imagination and languages;
- Recognition by parents, teachers and society as a whole of the value and legitimacy of the rights provided for in article 31.

General Comment 17 & sufficiency

- (a) **Legislation and planning:**

The Committee strongly encourages States to consider introducing legislation to ensure the rights under article 31 for every child

Such legislation should address the principle of sufficiency – all children should be given sufficient time and space to exercise these rights.





Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010

2010 nawm 1

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PART 1

CHILD POVERTY, PLAY AND PARTICIPATION

CHAPTER 1

ERADICATING CHILD POVERTY

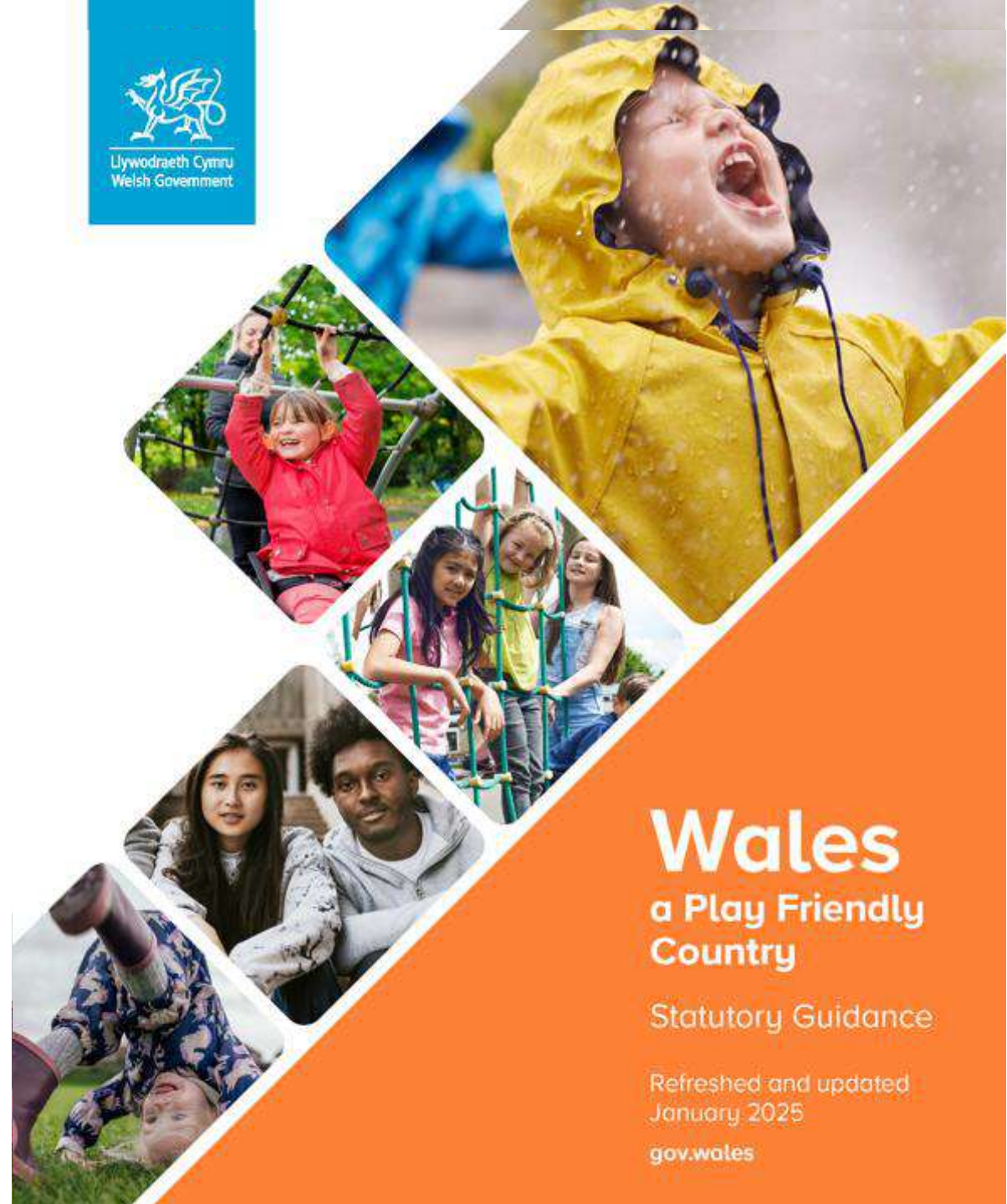
CHAPTER 2

PLAY AND PARTICIPATION

A bit of context ...



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Wales

a Play Friendly
Country

Statutory Guidance

Refreshed and updated
January 2025

gov.wales

Matters to be assessed:

A: Population

B: Providing for diverse needs

C: Space available for play

D: Supervised provision

E: Charges for play provision

F: Access to space/provision

G: Securing and developing the play workforce

H: Community engagement and participation

I: Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas

Play Sufficiency Assessments are submitted every three years

Thema: Poblogaeth Theme: Population

Mae'r thema hon yn ymwneud â: This theme relates to:

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Matter A: The number of children in respect of each age range within its area

Mater B: Anghenion plant o wahanol ddiwylliannau a chefnidiroedd o fewn ei ardal
Matter B: The needs of children from different cultures and backgrounds within its area

Mater D: P'un a oes tâl am ddarpariaeth chwarae a lle codir tâl
Matter E: Whether there is a charge for play provision and where there is a charge

Thema: Darparu cyfleoedd dan oruchwyliaeth Theme: Supervised provision

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Mater Ch: Darparu cyfleoedd chwarae dan oruchwyliaeth
Matter D: Supervised provision

Mater E: Hyfforddiant gwaith chwarae a datblygu'r gweithlu
Matter G: Playwork training and workforce development

Thema: Lleoedd lle mae plant yn chwarae Theme: Places where children play

Mae'r thema hon yn ymwneud â: This theme relates to:

Mater C: Y lle sydd ar gael i blant chwarae, gan gynnwys manau agored, ac unrhyw ofod arall
Matter C: The space where children can play, including open space, and any other space

Mater Dd: Mesurau traffig a ddefnyddir i hyrwyddo mynediad at chwarae
Matter F: Traffic measures that are used to promote access to play

Mater Ff: I ba raddau y mae polisiau addysg a chynllunio datblygu lleol yn ystyried yr angen i wella cyfleoedd chwarae i blant
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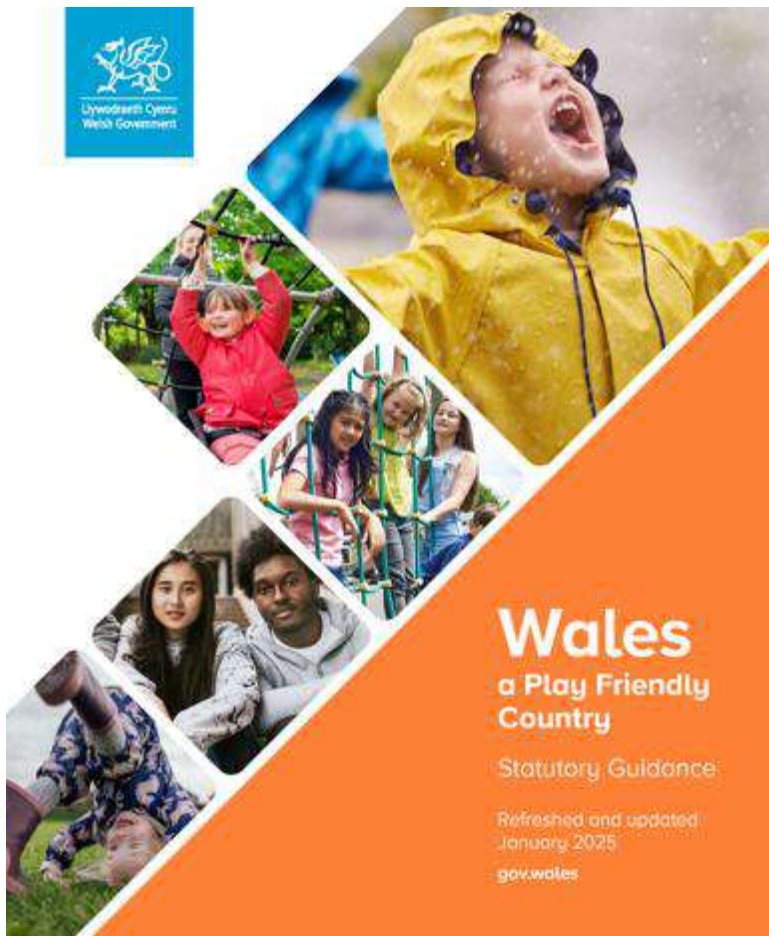
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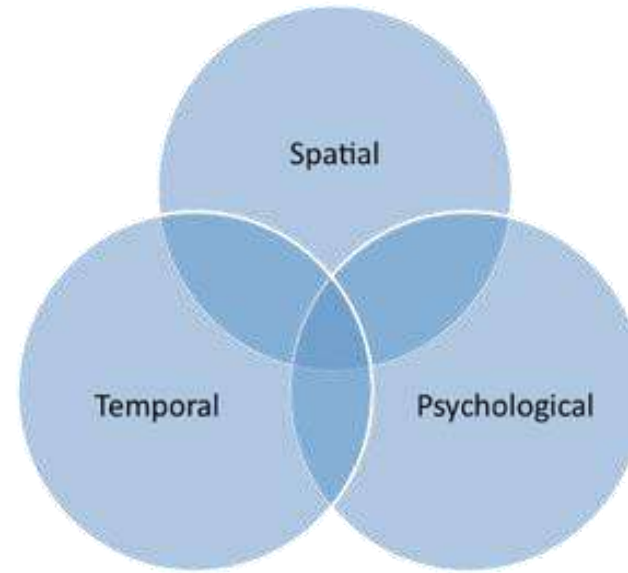
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Matter H: The level of community engagement and participation

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



Matter C:

Space available for children to play

- *Open Spaces*
- *Outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces*

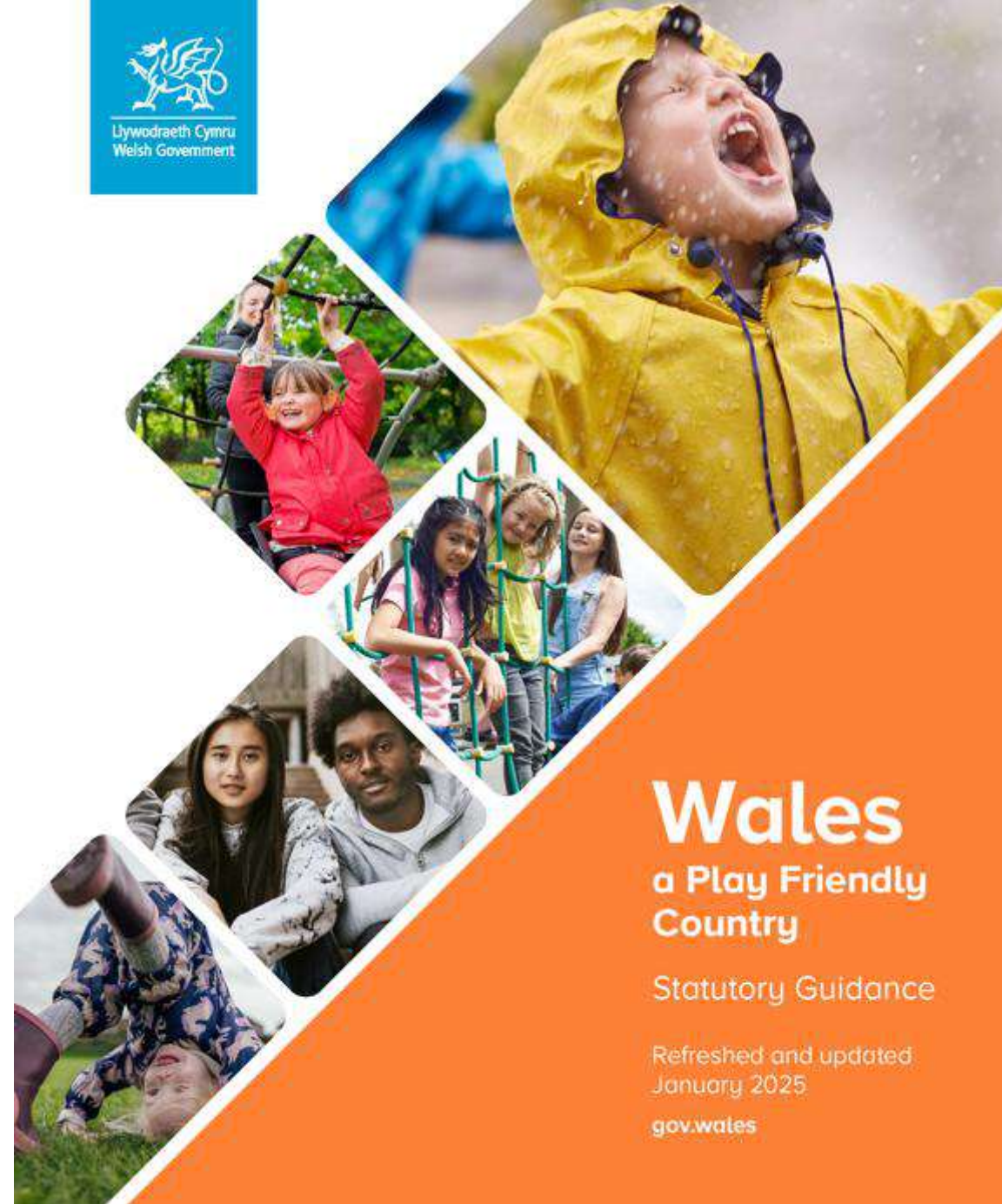
Local authorities must assess the extent to which they:

- *assess play spaces for play value and potential to increase in play use as set out in the Statutory Guidance*
- *undertake access audits at all designated play spaces and implements proposals to improve access and safety*

Quality play provision offers all children and young people the opportunity to freely interact with or experience:

a rich play environment

- Other children - of different ages and abilities with a choice to play alone or with others, to negotiate, co-operate, fall out, and resolve conflict.
- The natural world - weather, trees, plants, insects, animals, mud.
- The four elements - earth, air, fire and water.
- Challenge and uncertainty - graduated opportunities for risk taking; both on a physical and emotional level.
- Changing identity - role play and dressing up.
- Movement - running, jumping, climbing, balancing, rolling, swinging, sliding and spinning.
- Rough and tumble - play fighting.
- The senses - sounds, tastes, textures, smells and sights.
- *Loose parts* - natural and synthetic materials that can be manipulated, moved and adapted, built and demolished.



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....now a bit of research



The compelling evidence....

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



What the experts
say...

Yr hyn mae plant yn ei ddweud am chwarae yng Nghymru

Chwarae Cymru
Play Wales

Penawdau cenedlaethol 2025

Fe ofynnem i blant ac ardegwyr yng Nghymru ddweud writhym beth sy'n dda a beth sydd ddim cystal am y cyfleoedd i chwarae yn eu hardal leol. Fe ddywedon nhw writhym ba mor fodlon ydyn gyda phryd, sut a ble y gallant chwarae.



Holwyd
7,825
o blant ac ardegwyr.

★ Mae
5,477

o blant ac ardegwyr yn chwarae'r tu allan y rhan fwyaf o ddyddiau, neu o leiaf ychydig ddyddiau'r wythnos.

Ond, mae **37%** o blant anabl yn fwy tebygol o beidio chwarae'r tu allan fyth, neu bron byth.

“Does unman imi fynd achos alla' i ddim cerdded llawer ac rydw i yn fy nghedair olwyn.”



★ Mae
5,634

o blant ac ardegwyr yn fodlon gyda'r amrediad o fannau ble gallant chwarae neu hongian o gwmpas.

“ Mae LLAWER o le a llawer o frindiau a chuddfannau cyfrinachol.”

Ond, mae **23%** o blant anabl a **15%** o blant ethnig lleiafrifol yn dweud nad ydyn nhw'n teimlo'n ddiogel pan maen nhw'n chwarae neu'n hongian o gwmpas.



★ Dywedodd
1,095

o blant ac ardegwyr bod oedolion yn ddrwg eu tymer oherwydd eu bod yn chwarae'r tu allan.

Mae tymer ddrwg oedolion yn cael ei brofi fwy gan y grwpiau hyn:

- **18%** plant hŷn
- ◆ **16%** plant anabl
- ▶ **16%** bechgyn



“ Mae angen i bobl hŷn beidio bod mor ddrwg eu tymer pan fydd plant yn cael hwyl.”

Y darfun a gyflwynwyd gan blant ac ardegwyr ar draws Cymru yw eu bod yn cael caniatâd i fynd allan, yn teimlo'n ddiogel, ac yn gallu chwarae yn y manau ble maent am chwarae a'u bod, ar y cyfan, yn fodlon gyda'u cyfleoedd i chwarae.

Fodd bynnag, mae dal lle i wella. Mae ambell grŵp o blant ac ardegwyr yn sefyll allan yn eu hadrodd am lefel bodlonrwydd lefel gyda'u cyfleoedd i chwarae. Mae'r rhain yn cynnwys plant ac ardegwyr anabl a phlant ac ardegwyr ethnig lleiafrifol.

O'i gymharu â bechgyn, mae rwy o ferched, yn enwedig rhai iau –

36%

– sydd ddim yn cael chwarae'r tu allan ar eu pennau eu hunain.



“ Mae rhieni'n anesmwyth amdonom ni'n mynd allan ar ein pennau ein hunain heb oruchwylieth oedolyn.”

www.chwarae.cymru

What children say about play in Wales

Chwarae Cymru
Play Wales

National headlines 2025

We asked children and teenagers in Wales to tell us what's good and what's not so good about the opportunities to play in their local area. They told us how satisfied they are about when, how and where they can play.



7,825
children and teenagers questioned.

★ **5,477**

children and teenagers play out most days, or at least a few days each week.

But, **37%** of disabled children are more likely to never, or hardly ever play out.

“ There is nowhere for me to go because I can't walk much and I am in my wheelchair.”



★ **5,634**

children and teenagers are satisfied with the range of spaces where they can play or hang out.

“ There's a LOT of space and a lot of friends and secret dens.”

But, **23%** of disabled children and **15%** of ethnic minority children say they don't feel safe when they play or hang out.



★ **1,095**

children and teenagers said adults are grumpy about them playing out.

Adult grumpiness is experienced more by these groups:

- **18%** are older children
- ◆ **16%** are disabled children
- ▶ **16%** are boys



“ Older people need to stop being so grumpy when kids have fun.”

The picture presented by children and teenagers across Wales is that they are allowed out, feel safe, and able to play in the places they want to, and overall are satisfied with their opportunities to play.

However, there is still room for improvement. Some groups of children and teenagers stand-out in their reporting of low satisfaction with their opportunities to play. These include disabled children and teenagers and ethnic minority children and teenagers.

Compared to boys, more girls, especially younger ones –

36%

aren't allowed out to play on their own.



“ Parents are uneasy about us going out alone without adult supervision.”

www.play.wales

When you are not in school, what types of places do you play or hang out in?

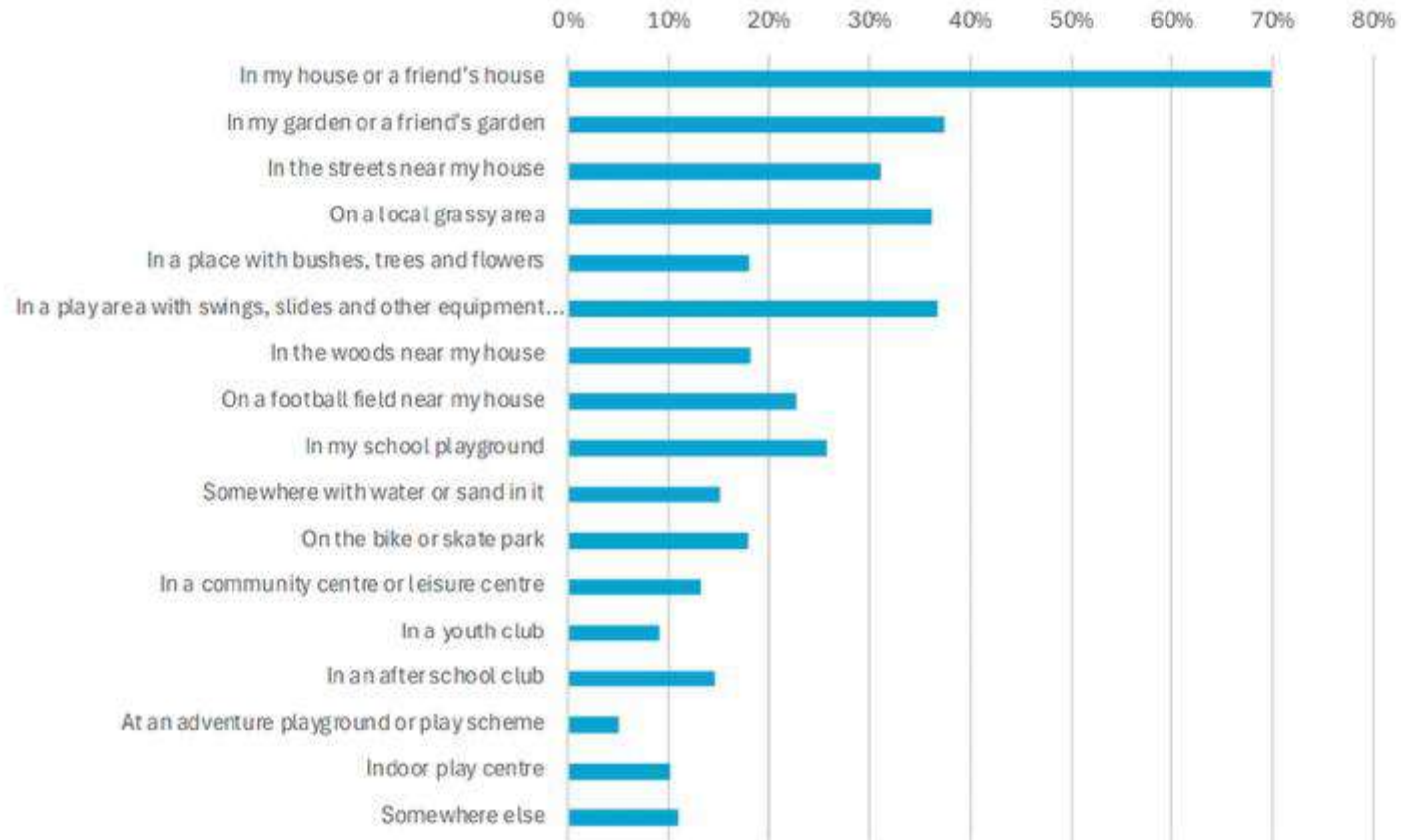


Figure 3: The places children play (5,586 responses)



Chwarae Cymru
Play Wales

What children say about play in Wales: 2025

'I feel *amazing* when playing, nothing to worry about.'

Findings 2025...

For children under 11, play areas with swings, slides and other equipment to play on seem really important

Their importance in contributing to play sufficiency should not be underestimated

For older children, the streets, open ground, local woods and other informal spaces were more important

Disabled children and ethnic minority children report using a lower than average number of play spaces.



What's good about your area for playing?

- *'Making dens in trees and playing with my friends.'*
- *'There are a lot of children in my street and we are all good friends. My parents can see through the window and keep an eye on us.'*
- *'Me and my friends like to just walk around exploring and we don't get into trouble'*
- *'There are lots of places to jump and move that helps me with my ADHD.'*

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Some case studies from Wales



- Design led approaches
- Loose parts play shacks, play sheds, play boxes
- *Stay and play* afterschool play sessions
- Doorstep play

Design led approach







Thinking outside the box....

- The local Play Development Team works with local organisations to introduce the idea of the box.
- The team worked to fix the box in place on their land.
- Parents and community members are supported in opening the box and using the resources.
- This resulted in volunteers coming forward to act as key holders to the box.
- Training was delivered to the volunteers and other interested community members as part of the development work surrounding the installation



Neighbourhood playwork provision

***“Make sure that there are
playschemes and playworkers
so that we can play and have
fun—and our parents know we
are safe”***



Stay and play...using school grounds

- Existing school facilities can offer significant opportunities to satisfy not only the learning needs but many of the social and recreational needs for the community.
- School grounds often represent the largest single outdoor asset in many communities.

Our research found:

- Children's control
- Having enough time and opportunity to play
- Parents making the most of facilities in their local area
- More outdoor play opportunities for all ages
- A less risk adverse approach to play

“One of the parents said it felt more secure in a school than in a park because it's almost a sanctioned space so she feels that it's safe, that she can relax.”

[School teacher, post project]

Stay and play pilot project

Report card

Description

Children and families are encouraged to stay after school to play on the grounds at schools in Merthyr Tydfil. The sessions are initially supported by Community Focused Schools officers and Family Engagement/Liaison Officers.

Policy instigators and drivers

- Play Sufficiency Duty
- Recommendations from local authority Play Sufficiency Assessments
- All Wales Play Opportunity Grant funding used to support purchase of equipment
- Community Focused Schools guidance

People instigators and drivers

- Local authority Play Development Team
- Enthusiastic Community Focused School Manager
- Experienced Community Focused Schools officers
- Supportive head teachers and school staff
- Play Wales
- Family engagement and liaison officers (school based)

Resources/enablers

- Officer time (Play Wales and Community Focused Schools)
- Storage and equipment provided
- Headteachers' willingness to be involved was increased due to recognition of lack of opportunities to play during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Parents are looking for more opportunities for children to play outdoors

Process

- Agreeing model with school
- Agreeing roles and responsibilities
- Six-week pilot with ongoing monitoring
- Producing options analysis for sustaining the activity at school level

Play street projects

“Make sure that streets are safe enough so that we can get to the place where we play”

“We moved to the street during the pandemic, so we didn't know any of our neighbours. Since the street play, we have met lots of people and our children have too, it has created such a neighbourly ethos, full of fun and kindness. Having the opportunity for our boys to play outside of our house without the worry of them getting hurt has been invaluable.”





Publications from Play Wales



Quick wins...

Language is important

- changing phrasing from 'play provision' or 'play opportunities' to 'opportunities to play' helps to reframe the expectation.
- talk about playfulness rather than play (as an approach rather than a time and space bound activity)

Chwarae Cymru

Play Wales

Plentyndod
Chwareus
Playful
Childhoods

www.chwaraecymru.org.uk
www.playwales.org.uk

www.plentyndodchwareus.cymru
www.playfulchildhoods.wales

Diolch yn fawr!
Marianne@playwales.org.uk

Places to play

So, if we played in places like this....



...why do so many children end up playing in places like this?



And, how do we get....

From this



...to this?

