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# Play Sufficiency Assessment

## Toolkit

**PART THREE**

**Additional Information and Tools**





# PART THREE

## Additional Information and Tools

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## 1. Consultation and participation

### 1.1 Overview

Children's right to participate in all matters affecting them is enshrined in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). When given the opportunity to participate, children are also given the opportunity to make change – personally in their lives, in their communities and globally.

In Wales, the children's participation agenda has developed in a distinct and unique way. These developments are set within the framework of the Welsh Government's commitment to the UNCRC, now formally adopted as the basis of all its work regarding children (Rights to Action, Welsh Government, 2004).

The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure, 2011, places a duty on Welsh Ministers to have due regard to the UNCRC in decisions made on policy and legislation. This underpins all the work the Welsh Government does to enhance the lives of children and young people (aged 0-25).

### 1.2 Play and participation

The children of Wales have a right to take part in decision-making processes that affect them. They also have a huge interest in playing, in having time, quality places and freedom to play in their own way.

Given that play is so important to all children, we need to ensure that any participation they have in decision-making is meaningful, not tokenistic and does not unnecessarily curtail their time and freedom to play.

Active and meaningful participation is an enabling right – empowering children to influence decision-making and bring about real change, for themselves and their friends.

Play is children's priority – their agenda. When we support their right to play, we support their agenda; we collaborate with them and this implies that we work alongside them – we offer ideas, we support their ideas, we have a common goal.

Participation is a process rather than an event, with varying degrees of involvement from being consulted on a predetermined issue to children choosing their agenda, making their own decisions and taking them forward. It is useful to consider which degree of participation is most appropriate and effective in different settings and situations.

Participation is about nurturing a culture where children of all identities, interests and abilities are listened to and actively involved.

When undertaking any research project involving children, Play Wales advises that reference is made to The National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales. The Standards are designed to improve the process of children's participation in decision-making. The Standards measure the 'quality' of the process of children's participation against key agreed indicators. The Standards are available to download from the Welsh Government website:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/participationstandards/?lang=en>

*Blast Off!* Guides are a series of good practice guides developed by the Participation Unit to promote positive participation approaches with different groups of children. These guides can be downloaded at:

[www.participationworkerswales.org.uk/resources.aspx](http://www.participationworkerswales.org.uk/resources.aspx)

### 1.3 Surveys and audits

Schools are an ideal place to undertake surveys with large numbers of children. Involving whole classes of children will often provide a more representative picture of the views and issues affecting access to play.

Good surveys focus on ‘experiences’ rather than ‘things’, particularly the more obvious and superficially exciting elements of provision.

Far too often, in the name of ‘consultation’ or ‘engagement’ children may be asked to envisage their ‘ideal’ play area or play setting. However, their limited experience – limited both by their age and the existing poverty of provision – may prompt them to want what they already know.

Survey facilitators may benefit from reading Play Wales’ *Beginners guide to participation* information sheet, which is available to download at:

[www.playwales.org.uk/information sheets](http://www.playwales.org.uk/information sheets)

### 1.4 Undertaking survey work

Many Local Authority departments and their partners already consult with children. For a comprehensive Play Sufficiency Assessment, it will be advantageous to use the same questions across the authority in order that results can be compared and used to track change over a period of time.

Local play providers and community groups who wish to better understand the play experiences of the children they provide services for may also use the survey questions.

The sample survey questions that have been produced seek the views, as well as the experiences of children. They are designed to be used with children of different ages and abilities, although the methods may differ. The questions can be adapted to gauge the general views of a population group, or be used by specific groups to review the provision they offer children. Alternatively, a few may be selected as part of other Local Authority surveys.

Surveys can be undertaken interactively through group work and workshops or via questionnaires (either written or electronic).

*Please refer to tool 5 – Sample Survey Questions and Notes for Facilitators*

### 1.5 Methods to use when surveying children

Children’s Rights Spice ‘em up! is a useful guide and toolbox of methods for working with children to raise awareness of their rights:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/youngspice/?lang=en>

*Please refer to tool 6 – Techniques for Surveying Children*

## 1.6 Children as auditors

A child at play will naturally and instinctively interpret a space and make changes to it, or else simply move on because the space doesn't offer, or has ceased to offer, what they need. For those responsible for assessing play spaces, the most reliable source of information will be the children. When we are assessing a play space we need to remember that this is our agenda and not theirs. We need to be mindful not to infringe on their time, but if children are to feel the play setting belongs to them, their participation is beneficial in supporting a sense of ownership.

Some children simply enjoy having a role to play. Their natural curiosity will cause them to ask what is going on when they see someone counting resources and they may want to help. Without duress and with some guidance there are a number of ways children can inform the assessment of the play space.

Looking at maps with children can be a good way to look at the geography of an area and begin to understand how children are playing within it. It is critical that we do not share precious information on children's secret places with other adults who might stop children playing in those places unless there is an urgent and serious danger.

Other methods include children:

- drawing pictures of what they like to do
- interviewing other children about their interests
- producing and completing questionnaires with their peers
- taking photos of what's happening in the play space.

Going out into the community, sensitively observing children playing and chatting to them will also help gather information from those children who may not attend the play setting. If we do this, we should make sure not to look too 'official' as children are likely to scatter and disappear!

It is important to remember that with any children's involvement with auditing they do not feel we are promising things we can't deliver. What we are doing at this stage is mapping and interpreting the space and what happens within it to support decision-making processes. If at any point through the process we convey mixed messages over the future development of the setting or resources, children will feel disengaged and their sense of ownership damaged. Children across different stages of understanding will interpret things varyingly, so keeping participation developmentally appropriate will help reduce the risk of misunderstandings happening.

## 1.7 Protocol for participation

If there is a range of facilitators involved in the survey it may be useful to develop a shared protocol that considers the following (based on Pupil Voice Wales):

There is often a requirement to involve children in the planning and evaluation of service development. In order to fit within the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards and to safeguard children from unethical consultation and participation processes there is a need to detail your intentions and requirements.

The following questions will establish a protocol in which children's participation is conducted using fair methods ensuring their involvement is acknowledged, valued and utilised.

**INFORMATION** – The children involved will need information that is clear and easy to understand. What are the aims and objectives of the piece of work and what do you hope to achieve?

**CHOICE** – The children will be asked if they want to be involved, however we will also need parental consent. Who will be responsible for seeking suitable consent for children's involvement? What personal data about the participants will you need and why?

**NO DISCRIMINATION** – All children have a right to be involved but we have to keep the work manageable. How many children would you like to be involved? Are there limitations on who can participate and if so why?

**RESPECT** – It is important that children are respected during the process and their ideas, views and experiences are taken seriously and listened to. Will children have a real possibility of influencing the decision-making process? Can you provide evidence that the ideas and views of children will be conveyed to policy/service development?

**YOU GET SOMETHING OUT OF IT** – Children should benefit from taking part in the process to make sure that participation is a positive experience. What will the individuals gain from the participation experience?

**FEEDBACK** – Receiving feedback is important so children know if they have made a difference and how their ideas have been used. Who is responsible for producing feedback material and what method will be used? How long will it be before the children receive feedback and who is responsible for this?

**IMPROVING HOW WE WORK** – It is good practice to continue to improve how we work with children by asking them to evaluate our work. Who is responsible for the evaluation process and how will this be run?

## 2. Conducting the Play Sufficiency Assessment

The following Matters need to be taken into account when conducting the Play Sufficiency Assessment in accordance with the Statutory Guidance.

### 2.1 Assessing Matter A: Population

A wide range of play and leisure opportunities should be available to all children in Wales. The Local Authority should set out what steps need to be taken to improve play opportunities for children, and later secure play opportunities that meet the needs of all children when the second part of the duty is commenced. This will involve investigating the needs of and provision for specific groups of children.

The Local Authority will already have detailed information about the local child population that may be held by planning, performance management or research and evaluation departments. These departments (or similar) will be able to help identify how data is held and what is the most accurate for their respective local area. Many Local Authorities rely on information provided by schools and other providers through the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC) when considering child population as it can often represent the most accurate picture of the local child population. The PLASC is collected every January and covers nurseries; primary, secondary and special schools detailing pupil numbers by age; gender; free school meals; special educational needs and other variables.

#### Possible sources of information

Characteristics of population required	Possible Source
Number of children by age <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0-3 year olds</li> <li>• 4-7 year olds</li> <li>• 8-12 year olds</li> <li>• 13-15 year olds</li> <li>• 16-17 year olds</li> </ul>	Stats Wales is a free-to-use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download tables from the most detailed official data on Wales. <a href="http://statswales.wales.gov.uk/index.htm">http://statswales.wales.gov.uk/index.htm</a>  The results of the 2011 census carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) were published in July 2012.

Characteristics of population required	Possible Source
continued	<p>Area maps for each Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) in Wales are available from the link below. LSOA is the geographic unit used in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD). LSOAs are built from groups of Output Areas (OAs) used for the 2001 Census. There are 1,896 LSOAs in Wales each with a population of about 1,500. Because the size and boundaries of LSOAs have not changed since they were created in 2004, the same areas are analysed in the three recent WIMD updates (WIMD 2005, WIMD 2008 and WIMD 2008: Child Index). The maps can be used alongside each of the three updates to identify the area covered by each LSOA.</p> <p><a href="http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=17819">www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=17819</a></p>
Number of disabled children	<p>There is not a definitive source of data that provides current numbers of disabled children. However, data may be available from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and Disabilities Team</li> <li>• Local Health Boards</li> </ul> <p>This data could be enhanced by engagement with children in this population to understand potential barriers to access play opportunities.</p>
Number of Welsh speakers  Children educated through the medium of Welsh  Children for whom Welsh or English isn't their first language	<p>Welsh speakers data by Local Authority based on the 2011 census is available at: <a href="http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?Reportid=3852">www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?Reportid=3852</a></p> <p>Education Services</p> <p>Education Services ONS data</p>
Ethnicity	<p>This data will also be available from the ONS and relate to the 2011 census. This data can be enhanced by engagement with children in this population to understand potential barriers to access play opportunities.</p>

## **Defining communities**

Local Authorities will already define communities for both data collection and service development/delivery. These will be the areas that make most sense locally. They may be based on electoral wards, learning communities, boundaries, residential communities or other criteria relevant to local population groups.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment should describe how local knowledge is used and the rationale the Local Authority uses to define communities.

## **2.2 Assessing Matter B: Providing for diverse needs**

The Local Authority should aim to offer play opportunities that are inclusive and encourage all children to play and meet together. It should recognise that there may be barriers for some children in taking part in the range of play opportunities in their area. This could be due to disability/impairment; children's own communities' cultural values or other environmental or attitudinal factors.

It should recognise the needs of children with a range of disabilities and the different access requirements within these disability groups. For example, children with a hearing impairment will have different requirements to those with mobility requirements. Furthermore, children with a hearing impairment may have different access needs, depending on their preferred form of communication.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment should cover:

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

An Equality Impact Assessment is a process designed to ensure that a policy, project or scheme does not discriminate against any disadvantaged or vulnerable people. Many Local Authorities already undertake Equality Impact Assessments as a means of ensuring that the public-sector equality duty is met.

An equality impact assessment involves assessing the likely or actual effects of policies or services on people in respect of disability, gender and racial equality. It helps to make sure the needs of people are taken into account when a new policy or service is developed and implemented or a change is made to a current policy or service.

### **Carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment**

This assessment examines in detail the process of finding out what kind of equality impact a policy may have and which groups of people it will affect most.

*Please refer to tool 7 – Equality Impact Assessment Template*

## Inclusion

The principle that there is no discrimination against people and positive steps are taken to ensure that all children can participate to the fullest extent. An inclusion audit is not a requirement but it can provide evidence that we have made every reasonable adjustment to remove barriers to inclusion as required by the Equality Act 2010.

## Access

An access audit is the term used to describe a process by which the environment, a building or organisation is evaluated for its accessibility. An access audit explores and suggests ways of improving access. By undertaking an audit, what an organisation does well and where attention needs to be focused for improvement can be identified.

An Access Audit:

- Identifies barriers.
- Can reinforce anecdotal evidence.
- Provides a valuable tool for prioritisation – quick, inexpensive, changing behaviour and practice.
- Demonstrates an organisation has a commitment and a planning system to show 'reasonable adjustments'.

Depending on the type of audit to be undertaken, and before any work starts, it should be made clear what will and will not be covered by the 'brief'. If adequate finance is not available to commission an impartial audit, it may be possible for a number of partners to peer review each other's settings.

*Please refer to tool 8 – Considerations to Include in Access Audits for Settings*

## Play Space Access Assessments

Enabling children to access play spaces helps them and their families build relationships and neighbourhood networks that can bind communities and promote social inclusion.

It is unrealistic to claim to create a play space in which every element is accessible to every child. Children will not all access the play experience in the same way as each other. For example, gates that are suitable for children using wheelchairs to open and shut can be too easy for children with autistic spectrum disorder who would benefit more from latches that are out of reach. What is crucial, is that children's right to play is recognised, that they can access the experience of playing as fully as possible in their own way and that unnecessary barriers (social and technical) are removed.

The Local Authority should demonstrate that it considers access issues for a range of different disabilities and other diverse needs, such as rurality, ethnicity and other cultural factors.

The Play Space Assessment tool in Assessing Matter 3 is designed to support the assessment of the space for accessibility by the greatest number of children living in communities.

## Providing for play in rural areas

Children living in rural areas will face different issues to those living in more urban or semi-urban Local Authorities. They may face challenges participating and having their voices heard.

There is a popular misconception that play opportunities are somehow better in rural areas. In fact, the relative lack of population, dispersed settlement patterns and poor transport in rural areas can leave some children very isolated. Linear villages, heavy through and/or commuter traffic, lack of pavements and edge-of-village playing fields can all be barriers to children playing.

Parental restrictions on children's freedom of movement can have a more limiting effect on rural children, while public play provision tends to be very limited and intensive farming practices can leave little access for informal play.

## 2.3 Assessing Matter C: Space available for children to play

### Play Value

Quality play provision offers all children the opportunity to freely interact with or experience the following:

- **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.
- **Loose parts** – natural and man made materials that can be manipulated, moved and adapted, built and demolished.
- **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.

### Children and outdoor space

When children travel through a landscape, they do not so much walk purposefully; rather they play their way to their destination. They spend much of their time wandering off a route and stopping to play rather than at pre-determined destinations. We know that there is a range of elements that children like in their play environments, these include:

- Water
- Vegetation such as trees, bushes flowers and long grasses
- Animals; for example creatures in ponds and under stones
- Sand (even better if it can be mixed with water)
- Diversity and change
- Natural colours (rather than manufactured/primary ones)

- Places to sit on, in and under
- Places that provide shelter and shade
- Different levels and nooks and crannies
- Places with height that offer view points
- Places with opportunities to swing and slide
- Places that offer privacy
- Structures and materials that can be changed
- Space to make ‘special places’/place making

There is a growing evidence base that identifies the value and benefits of children playing outside in natural settings. Successive studies have demonstrated that children prefer to play outdoors and seek a range of settings for this. Children use a variety of spaces for meeting and being with friends and playing, not always in adult designated sites but particularly in environments that offer rich possibilities for active engagement.

### **Underpinning values**

The Local Authority can use the consideration of playable space within Open Space Assessments to articulate a commitment to ensuring that quality environments for play, ‘hanging-out’ and informal recreation are available to all its children.

- Areas of common public realm should be places where generations, individuals, groups and communities can share.
- Parents and carers should expect that local open spaces should be available for children to enjoy playing, free from unacceptable levels of harm.
- Open spaces should be varied and interesting environments.
- Parks and open spaces should be reviewed to show the extent to which they contribute to local play opportunities or could do so in the future.
- Changes to open spaces should be made where necessary to ensure that they become accessible to children and enrich their opportunities for playing.

### **Open space**

Open spaces will often afford casual and informal opportunities for play. Open spaces are potentially important areas where children can play or pass through to reach other play areas.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) requires local planning authorities to provide a framework for well-located sport, recreation and leisure facilities. The objectives set out in PPW can best be achieved by undertaking local assessment of need and audits of existing provision. These assessments, taken together form an Open Space Assessment, which should have been used to inform the preparation, monitoring and review of Local Development Plans.

It is expected that all space that is available for actual or potential public use, whether owned by the Local Authority or privately, will be assessed.

### Open space categorised by function and size

The Statutory Guidance requires that the Play Sufficiency Assessment should take into account:

- Grassland/scrubland
- Woodland and amenity green space
- Beaches and river and lake sides
- Public parks and gardens (in addition to play areas within the parks)
- Residential streets
- School grounds
- Brownfield sites
- Village greens, town squares, plazas and other urban public spaces
- Incidental pockets of land, for example alongside roads, paths, car parks etc.

It is also useful to categorise open space by function and whether it is designated as play space or not. Technical Advice Note (TAN) 16 sets out a typology of open spaces based on function.

Recognising the importance of multi-functional open spaces, TAN 16 suggests the typology is used to identify the primary function of spaces and adapted to local variations as needed.

It should, however, be recognised that most open spaces serve a variety of functions, particularly in urban areas. For large sites with more than one primary function, it may also be useful to consider sub-dividing the sites to identify their different functions, which can then be related to standards.

The larger an open space, the more varied the potential for recreational opportunities and the further people will travel to visit. It is therefore also useful to categorise open spaces by size.

### A space should be assessed for the environmental quality it provides:

Typology	What this typology includes and features within it
<b>Public parks and gardens</b>	Urban parks, country parks and formal gardens Trees and bushes, natural slopes, footpaths and walls
<b>Natural and semi-natural green spaces</b>	Woodland, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands, open access land and wetlands
<b>Green corridors</b>	River and canal banks, footpaths, cycleways, bridleways, disused railway land and rights of way
<b>Outdoor sports facilities</b>	Tennis courts, bowling greens, sports pitches, golf courses, athletics tracks, school and other institutional playing fields and other outdoor sports areas

Typology	What this typology includes and features within it
<b>Amenity green space</b>	Informal recreation spaces (private or open to the public), green spaces in and around housing and other premises (e.g. hospital or school grounds), industrial and business premises, domestic gardens and grounds and village greens
<b>Allotments, community gardens, and city (urban) farms</b>	Allotment gardens
<b>Civic spaces</b>	Civic and market squares, and other hard surfaced areas designed for pedestrians
<b>Water</b>	Open air tidal and freshwater pools, ponds, rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs, docks and harbours
<b>Residential streets</b>	Cul-de-sacs and quiet streets which offer close proximity to houses, ease of access, smooth linear play surfaces for everyday games, opportunities such as rollerblading and skating, skateboards and cycling
<b>School grounds</b>	Playing fields play equipment, environmental features such as ponds, bushes and trees. Flat linear surfaces.
<b>Brownfield sites</b>	Any land or premises which has previously been used or developed and is not currently fully in use, although it may be partially occupied or utilised. It may also be vacant, derelict or contaminated. Therefore a brownfield site is not necessarily available for immediate use without intervention.

### Outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces

The Statutory Guidance requires that the Play Sufficiency Assessment should take into account:

- Playgrounds and play areas
  - Doorstep
  - Local
  - Neighbourhood
  - Destination

- Recreation (sports) fields – natural and artificial
- Multi use games areas (MUGAs)
- Wheeled play areas – BMX bike and skate parks
- Youth shelters.

A space should be assessed for:

- Play value
- Actual distance to travel from where children live
- Quantity of provision in relation to number of children
- Accessibility and suitability in relation to different ages, abilities, dry and wet weather use
- Acceptable levels of opportunities for beneficial risk taking
- Its existing use for play
- Potential for increasing use for play

### Quantity

Many Local Authorities already have established and up to date data regarding the quantity and location of designated play spaces as described above. Some will have commissioned external surveys/assessments that provide an overview of unsupervised outdoor maintained play spaces.

Where this is the case, it would be useful to extend this list to include areas managed by other agencies (such as Town and Community Councils, Forestry Commission, National Trust or schools). This provides a more coherent picture and will support the Local Authority to make this information accessible as described in Statutory Guidance Matter F (*Information; events; publicity*).

Where there is comprehensive and up to date data, Local Authorities are in a good position to undertake or pilot the undertaking of Quality Assessments.

### Play Space Assessments

A Play Space Assessment is a valuable tool to identify the actual and potential use of existing space, whether it is open space or an unstaffed designated play area. If children already use the space for playing, there will be evidence of this and this tool is designed to help to identify where children are playing, what they are doing there and how often they use the space for playing. It will also assist in the recognition that apparent signs of neglect such as litter, broken branches on trees and graffiti are, in fact, often signs of use by children.

Being able to identify the areas or pieces of equipment that are most used and how they are used, will help to ensure that existing play opportunities are safeguarded and add value to what is already there.

A well-conducted play space assessment also helps in a number of other ways. It forms part of the participation and engagement process and can help in the collection of evidence to support what the community and children are saying. Conducted at regular intervals (for example six monthly) it can be used to help monitor how the space is being used and how often.

## How to conduct a Play Space Assessment

The Play Space Assessment tool is intended to be used for an observation that should take at least half an hour. Ideally, this should be undertaken during different times of the day to see how different age groups use the space. Observations can be undertaken at weekends or after school and during the day to observe pre-schoolers using the site with their parents. The timing of observations will depend on the site that is being considered.

There will be play behaviours that can be identified without needing to see children actually playing, for example if children hang out on boulders or seated areas, there will be signs of wear from scuffing feet or holes dug with toes or sticks.

Also, if the space is an appealing place for children it is likely there are a number of factors that contribute to this. Children have told us that issues such as how well lit the space is, how close it is to homes, and whether or not there are places to shelter contribute to a sense of feeling safe and appeal to a broad age range. If this is the case the design of the space will need to be such that it provides for that wide age range and for a changing demographic.

All children have different play needs and wishes that can change with time. Separating people into age and other groups is not necessarily beneficial (although some may need particular support to meet their own needs). Interaction between all age groups and members of society is a vital process that supports all children to feel more confident about playing out and hanging out. Building relationships with other children gives an opportunity to share knowledge of the people and geography of neighbourhoods and to share lore such as traditions of playing, rules of games, places for play (for example an old lamppost which has been used for generations as the base when playing games such as hide and seek or *What's the Time Mr. Wolf?*).

There are a number of play behaviours under the 'activity observed' heading in the Play Space Assessment tool – these are described in more detail below to assist in the observation.

***Walking/travelling through space*** – If a space has a pathway running through it children may play as they move through the space even if they aren't intending to stop – behaviours can include jumping off kerbs on bikes/ scooters, swinging off trees, jumping over things, running down a bank, free running/parcour. Consideration may be given to actions for development that will change the way children travel through the space, such as re-routing a pathway, which may encourage better or more play opportunities.

***Sitting/gathering/hanging out*** – Even without formal seating areas there will be places where children choose to hang out. Signs of wear on the ground near seating areas, under climbing frames, at the base of trees/boulders or items brought in to the space such as bits of carpet, crates, buckets that could be used as chairs are all evidence that children are using an area to gather and hang out. Where there are no current obvious opportunities for formal seating areas, or gathering places, creating these will support making the space a more social place that can be used by a wide range of ages from families with younger children, to older children hanging out and chatting with their friends. This is a matter to consider when making actions for development within a play assessment.

**Riding – bikes/scooters/skateboards** – Children using bikes can be observed. How are they using the space? Are they just used to transport children to the space or are they being ridden in the space. What features are they using to ride down/jump/skid on? Is there evidence of construction from children – mud ramps, timber etc.? Are there any improvements that can be made to support wheeled play opportunities in an informal way?

**Use of natural features (eg, trees/bushes/mounds/hills)** – What existing natural features are being used? Informal access points into wooded areas and under trees/bushes can be observed for signs of litter or items brought in to the space that could show den building activity or secret spaces. Wear on bark or bases of trees and broken limbs on trees show evidence of children climbing trees; similarly evidence of objects left in the trees such as planks of wood, rope, and fabric. Thought may be given to how to increase natural features by planting that will create more play opportunities.

**Playing with the elements** – Consideration should be given to whether children have access to the range of natural elements to play with. Children have a fascination with the natural world and should have the opportunity to experience water, earth (mud), fire and air. The site should be assessed for provision of access to all of these, and consideration given to ways in which play with the elements can be incorporated.

**Use of the senses (taste, smell, sight, sounds, textures)** – Children’s movement through the space can be observed; rustling leaves, sand, touching bark, feeling cold metal, rolling in grass, playing with shadows all provide opportunities for sensory play.

**Movement** – Children’s movement through the space should be considered. There should be a range of opportunities to move in different ways in a play space for example running, jumping climbing, balancing, rolling, swinging, sliding, dancing and chasing.

**Rough and Tumble** – Children learn about their own physical limitations, strength, controlling anger and boundaries through rough and tumble. This can come in many forms including play fighting, cops and robbers, chasing, hide and seek – it will be clear from laughter, smiles and other facial expressions that this is a game and the children are treating it as such.

**Risk and challenge (physical)** – Children want to experience increasing levels of challenge. This doesn’t need to be high-risk activity; it can be as simple as a toddler building up from jumping off the bottom rung of a ladder to the second and then the third. Where there are opportunities for children to take physical risks they will generally look for ways to improve and build the challenge. For example a bike ramp made of bricks and planks of wood will soon have more bricks added as children’s confidence grows.

**Playing with props/loose parts** – Children can be observed bringing props in from outside to enhance their play. This could be a rope for a swing or some wood for a den, toy cars to build a road in the mud or using natural elements like stones, flowers, leaves, berries to build small worlds, potions or simply to create a pile or sort and categorise items.

**Playing with identity** – Children play with who they are and what they look like. This could be role-play games, such as changing how they look with mud on their faces and dressing up.

*Use of motorised vehicles/quads* – The space should be assessed to determine whether it's used for this sort of activity, whether legitimately or not.

*Walking dogs* – The space should be assessed to determine whether it is used regularly for dog walking by children or adults and whether there is evidence of dog fouling. Consideration may be given to ways to minimise the impact of this. For example dog waste bins, signs, working with dog wardens, boundaries to the play space.

*Please refer to tool 9 – Play Space Assessment Template*

## 2.4 Assessing Matter D: Supervised provision

### Playwork provision

#### Defining playwork provision

Good playwork provision enables children to extend their own play and they protect and enhance the play space so that it is a rich play environment. A rich play environment is:

- a varied and interesting physical environment that maximises the potential for socialising, creativity, resourcefulness and challenge.
- a place where children feel free to play in their own way, on their own terms.

Where children don't have access to local friends, time and places to play that support their play needs, staffed play provision can compensate by offering a place where children can invent and extend their own play.

Playworkers ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

The Local Authority should assess play provision in its area for the extent to which these opportunities are of a quality that meets the enjoyment, social and developmental needs of the children in its area. Many documents have been produced by specialist play organisations advising on the criteria associated with high quality and successful play spaces. The Welsh Government considers that a rich play environment is one which is flexible, adaptable and has varied interesting physical features that maximises the potential for socialising, creativity, resourcefulness, challenge and choice.

Quality play provision offers all children the opportunity to freely interact with or experience the following:

- **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.
- **Loose parts** – natural and manmade materials that can be manipulated, moved and adapted, built and demolished.
- **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.

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

All staff should work to the Playwork Principles.

*Please refer to tool 10 – The Playwork Principles*

### Assessing quantity

A record of staffed play and recreational provision should be made as part of the Play Sufficiency Assessment.

The type of staffed provision that should be included is:

- holiday playschemes
- adventure playgrounds
- play opportunities supported by peripatetic playworkers (play rangers)
- Mobile provision, such as play buses
- clubs and youth groups
- organisations which provide resources for these settings (such as toy libraries or scrap stores)

What's to be assessed	Issues to consider
<b>Structure of provision</b>	
Number of providers	Ideally, this should provide a picture of all provision in the Local Authority that is delivered by the Authority, funded by the Authority or delivered by partner organisations.
Number of places	As well as including provision which is registered with Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW), this should also reflect the capacity of places providers can offer with current staff and venue, etc.
<b>Characteristics of provision</b>	
Type of provider	Categorising types of provision help to identify sufficiency.

What's to be assessed	Issues to consider
Cost at point of entry	Identifying price structure will help establish sufficiency and whether some children experience discrimination.
Opening times	Identifying hours of operation and whether or not the provision is open year round will help establish sufficiency.
<b>Characteristics of users</b>	
Key groups	This will enable assessment of attendance at provision by disabled children, those for whom Welsh is a first language and those educated through the medium of Welsh; children for whom English or Welsh is not their first language, and other recorded cultural factors including ethnicity (including gypsy traveller children, refugees and asylum seekers), and whether some children experience discrimination.

### Assessing quality

Play Wales' *The First Claim ... a framework for playwork quality assessment* publication aims to enable playworkers, and any other adults with an interest in children's play, to analyse, by observation and reflection, the play environments they operate. It gives a framework to assess the quality of what is being provided and experienced. It allows users to explore:

- the nature of what children are doing
- the possible developmental and therapeutic roles of playing
- the roles and functions of the playworker (or other adult)
- the most appropriate ways of intervening in the play process
- the language and concepts of playwork.

*The First Claim ...* is intended to complement other quality assurance procedures.

*Please refer to tool 11 – Quality Assessment Tool*

This Quality Assessment Tool is based on the First Claim Framework and will support play settings to determine to what extent they are offering access to a rich play environment.

## Identifying the need for specialised provision

Most Local Authorities and their partners work towards providing an inclusive playwork service, supported by a protocol and set of core principles. It is widely recognised that enabling all children to play and to play together, is a benefit to the whole community.

While playworkers are specialists in facilitating children's play, they may not have all the skills necessary to support some of the more physical, emotional, medical or communication needs of a particular child.

Children with complex health care needs, are defined as 'children who are dependent on their parent or carer carrying out an invasive clinical procedure which is essential, either as part of their routine care, or within an expected emergency situation.'

It is imperative that there is an agreed and well-known mechanism to determine when specialised provision is needed. The most effective way of ensuring this is demonstrating a strong liaison between play services and play organisations, the children with disabilities team and the local health board.

## 2.5 Matter E: Charges for play provision

A factor that affects whether children have sufficient play opportunities or not, is whether they or their families can afford to pay for provision where there is a charge for taking part. This will clearly have the greatest affect on children from low income families; children living in areas of deprivation; disabled children, children living in isolated rural areas and those who may need extra cost support to access provision.

To accurately assess whether there are sufficient play opportunities for all children, the Local Authority will need to identify children whose families (for whatever reason) would struggle to pay for them to take part in a range of play opportunities and recreational activities. The Local Authority will also need to identify the cost level of the provision within its area and the extent to which it meets the play needs of all children.

The assessment should show how these matters are taken into account and the effectiveness of measures that the Local Authority takes to mitigate the excluding affects of charges.

A specific tool has not been included here, but the recommendation is that information on charges for recreational provision is collected by the Local Authority and matched against needs of the local population.

## 2.6 Assessing Matter F: Access to space/provision

Whilst we traditionally see roads, streets and pavements as providing access to destinations, we should recognise that children do not only walk and cycle; wherever they can, they play their way to their destination. Children stop to play as they go, and are diverted from the straightest route to enable them to play with whatever they find.

The speed and volume of traffic, modern street design and prevalence of parked cars can present significant barriers to children's movement by walking, cycling or using a mobility aid.

The Play Sufficiency Duty creates the opportunity for Local Authorities to redress some of the barriers and develop better access to play, to enable more children to play and move around their community.

### **Access to play in the transport policy context**

Access to and accessibility to space and provision focuses on the opportunity for children to reach their play destinations using transport systems that prioritise walking, cycling and public transport. Children should not have to rely on adults for transport because of excessive travel distance or lack of appropriate routes that may be used safely.

### **Environments – designing play friendly streets**

*Manual for Streets* provides guidance for practitioners involved in the planning, design, provision and approval of new residential streets, and modifications to existing ones. It aims to increase quality of life through good design, which creates more people orientated streets. *Manual for Streets* offers guidance on design which emphasises the place function of streets, making them more people centred. This kind of approach can not only improve walking and cycling routes, but, done well, can make the street more playable. Key measures that can be introduced include:

- Restricting traffic speeds to 20 mph or lower in residential streets
- Making crossing and junction improvements
- Projects such as Home Zones in urban areas, Quiet Lanes in rural areas and Sustrans DIY streets
- The development of a well publicised and easy to navigate process for local communities or service providers to arrange regular road closures to support children to play in their own communities.

### **Ensuring a collaborative approach**

Local or regional transport plans should prioritise walking, cycling or affordable public transport to access play provision. They will identify a locally appropriate trip destination. However, they should also recognise residential streets and routes to provision as places where children play.

Local Development Plans should incorporate play spaces and formal provision and routes to these.

Play development services and organisations, youth support services, open space planners and other services planning provision should take independent travel by children into account when siting provision.

### **Helping people get to play places – site considerations**

Routes in and out of provision and spaces where children play should be monitored and information about the mode of travel should be gathered. In order for children to make best use of their environment for playing, the following site information should be considered when carrying out accessibility audits:

- suitable pedestrian and cycle crossing points are provided on routes to places where children play
- existing walkways and cycle routes (especially traffic free) are already linked to or extended into parks, playgrounds and other open space where children play
- sufficient lighting and casual surveillance of the site to allow access throughout the year
- pavements en route to the site wide enough and free from clutter
- parking regulations are regularly policed to ensure prams, wheelchairs and families can walk freely without having to go into the road
- the frequency and wheelchair accessibility of bus services to play places
- cycling restrictions if they exist should be reviewed in parks to make sure that they are not applied unnecessarily to allow children to make full use of the space to have fun and get used to riding a bike or using other forms of wheels
- cycle parking should be provided at play provision
- authority wide 20 mph default zones in built up areas should be considered, both in terms of potential contribution of physical safety and to support children and their parents to feel safer
- local walking and cycling maps should show routes to play provision.

This information should be cross-referenced with local surveys of children to gather their views.

### **Information; publicity; events**

The Local Authority has a function in communicating and advocating for children's play rights, needs and wishes.

Play Wales provides support for organisations which have an interest in children's play at a local level. This can help them advocate, develop and promote an environment where all children have the freedom, opportunity and place to play as an integral part of their community every day. As part of the process of developing resources Local Authorities and partners may wish to use the information sheets and other communications that Play Wales produces to inform their own publications.

### **Identifying the audience**

As well as publicising information about events and play opportunities, the Local Authority should also promote the importance of play to the wider community.

The information produced needs to be accessible to:

- Children and young people
- Parents
- Local communities
- Media.

## Web-based information

Developing a clearly identified play section on the Local Authority website and keeping it up to date will contribute to the distribution of comprehensive information and relevant links for children and parents.

It is important to encourage anyone writing for the web, to be sparing with words and keep the story brief and to the point. The web pages should be engaging and informative enough for adults to make informed decisions, but at the same time simple enough that children can understand.

### Good practice in designing family and child friendly web pages:

Each paragraph should be a self contained piece of copy. Paragraphs shouldn't rely on other paragraphs.

- Start with the conclusion. The most important information should be at the front of a sentence, paragraph and page and then explained.
- Try using the journalist's questions to form the first sentence of the opening paragraph:
  - What?
  - Why?
  - When?
  - Who?
  - Where?
  - How?
- Signpost as much as possible. Using subheadings and lists helps the web reader.
- Provide web links as part of the story.

## 2.7 Assessing Matter G: Securing and developing the play workforce

It is important to understand the structure of the workforce locally in order to secure and develop the play workforce in the Local Authority. The community and voluntary sector should contribute to Local Authority workforce surveys as key stakeholder employers across Wales.

Defining the play workforce is challenging and it may vary across Local Authorities. Broadly speaking, we can say that anyone employed whose role has an impact on children playing – those who may either directly facilitate their play, design for playing, or those with the power to give permission for children to play, or not – should be encompassed within the play workforce.

Some roles within the play workforce will be more critical to success than others, such as those in playwork, or those responsible for the design and planning of towns and public open spaces.

### Playwork

Playwork is a highly skilled profession that enriches and enhances children's play. It takes place where adults support children's play but it is not driven by prescribed education or care outcomes. (SkillsActive)

SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council for Active Leisure, Learning and Wellbeing has also given a definition of settings where playworkers are employed:

- Adventure Playgrounds
- Holiday Playschemes
- Out of School Care – including breakfast clubs, lunch clubs, after school clubs, holiday clubs (3-16 years)
- School and Community Play Centres
- Mobile Play Projects
- Specialist Play Projects
- Indoor Play Centres and Family Activity Centres.

Where job roles overlap between early years, childcare and playwork it is strongly recommended that an individual undertake transitional qualifying units.

For example:

- A. Where an individual is employed in an out of school club with the age range of three to 11 years old the recommended qualification is playwork, and their Continuous Professional Development (CPD) should recommend a top up with a transitional award in early years and childcare.
- B. Where an individual is employed in a day nursery with an age range of six months to seven years old but spend the majority of the day caring for children under three years of age, and after school hours works with children three to seven years old the recommended qualification is children's care learning and development; and their CPD should recommend a top up with a transitional award in playwork.

As our practice changes to accommodate children's play, we should not see these qualifications as a limit but a minimum, and we should define a role by the process it supports or facilitates and the age of the children rather than by the setting where it takes place. Playworkers already work in open spaces, for example in parks and on public beaches in roles such as Play Rangers. In time employing playworkers within school settings, youthwork settings and wider may be deemed appropriate to advocate and facilitate play where children are.

Local Authorities may also decide that enhancing the skills of existing staff with playwork qualifications or tailored play programmes based on the National Occupational Standards laid out for those working with children playing by SkillsActive, will be the way forward. Enhancing the knowledge across the broad spectrum of the play workforce will be key to finding creative solutions and working effectively across the wide range of sectors.

Playworkers require different levels of qualification depending on the nature of the job. As a rough guide:

**Induction courses** give learners an introduction to the skills and knowledge that a playworker needs. Although they don't provide an accredited qualification, they may be a good place to begin for learners with no experience of working with children in a play setting who would like to find out more and get a taste of what the job requires.

**Level 2** is for playworkers who work under supervision.

**Level 3** is for playworkers who work on their own initiative, plan and organise their work and supervise others.

**Level 4 and above** is for experienced practitioners who are expected to manage or develop a complex setting or a number of settings across an area.

SkillsActive has produced an updated list of accepted qualifications for the playwork workforce in Wales (2011-2012) – for playworkers, playwork employers, CSSIW, the Welsh Government and national organisations.

A list of current qualifications for playwork is available at:  
[www.playwales.org.uk/acceptedplayworkqualifications](http://www.playwales.org.uk/acceptedplayworkqualifications)

### **The play workforce**

Defining the play workforce may be best answered by establishing a series of questions that will give the answers, such as:

- Where do children play?
- Where could they play if they were allowed?
- How do children get there?
- What adults work there?
- What adults are responsible for designing the space?
- Who is responsible for overseeing, maintaining or cleaning the environment?

Once these questions are answered there will be a long list of job roles which impact on children's play such as teachers, youth workers, park wardens, town planners, care workers and the police.

Understanding the role they take and how it impacts on children's play will then define which skills and understanding may be needed to support children's play. For example, for the police understanding whether something is seen primarily as antisocial behaviour or children's play behaviour can help them respond to a situation more appropriately.

Not all job functions that impact on children's play sit within the responsibility of Local Authorities – the police being a prime example. However, this might be an example where good community work can build learning partnerships to benefit children, which can be incorporated into the Assessment.

### **Undertaking a Training Needs Analysis**

A Training Needs Analysis identifies a range of issues related to workforce development such as:

- number of workers
- management structure
- qualification levels
- training opportunities
- volunteers
- systems for staff appraisal planning, and evaluating learning delivery.

Most Local Authorities will already have established structures for training needs analysis which are conducted at timely intervals in order to plan and budget for existing and future staff development. A useful fact sheet on undertaking training needs analysis is available from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development: [www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/identifying-learning-talent-development-needs.aspx](http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/identifying-learning-talent-development-needs.aspx)

However, in order to establish a Wales wide picture of what is needed to up-skill the play workforce and to plan with partners such as the Further Education sector, a shared data set is important and can support joint commissioning. Incorporating a workforce survey into training needs analysis will provide that picture.

*Please refer to tool 12 – Workforce Survey: Employee Questionnaire Template*

### **Employer/Setting Questionnaire**

Training needs analysis based on a workforce survey will under normal circumstances only extend to personnel directly employed by the Local Authority. However a wider range of data will be needed from play settings within the Local Authority run by other employers – the third sector.

In addition to the above workforce survey, the Employer/Setting Questionnaire should gather the additional data that will be needed to ensure successful planning is made for the provision of learning with partners.

This includes numbers, demographics and recruitment issues locally. These should be completed by playwork settings throughout the Local Authority, whomever the employer.

The Local Authority can also consider mapping other settings where children play in its area. These include prisons as visitors, hospitals as patients/visitors, armed forces bases and other care facilities.

It is important that is in done in conjunction with the workforce survey above, in order to gain the full range of data required.

*Please refer to tool 13 – Employer/Setting Questionnaire*

## **2.8 Assessing Matter H: Community engagement and participation**

- Community Information
- Community Events
- Engaging with the Media
- Social Media

### **Community Information**

#### *Top tips for a playful community*

To encourage parents and carers and local communities to support children playing out confidently beyond any organised event, these top tips may help:

**1. Prepare children to be road safe**

Streets make up the major part of public space within communities. We can prepare children from an early age by telling them and showing them ways to keep themselves safe on and around roads.

**2. Look to our own driving habits**

Parents are often concerned about traffic when giving children permission to play out. As drivers, we can drive at safe speeds in the same way we would wish others to drive in the residential streets where our children play.

**3. Help children get to know their neighbourhood**

If we are less reliant on travelling by car ourselves in our local communities, children will get to know their local streets. Walking to and from local facilities such as the shops, school and the park can help us identify solutions together with our children to keep themselves safe.

**4. Be community friendly**

We can get to know local people, neighbours and other families, and agree with each other to keep an eye out for children. This fosters a sense of a safe community, allowing more children to play out more, and to be safer doing so.

**5. Trust children**

We can make agreements with children on where and how long they go out to play. If they know their local area, their address and phone number, and whom they can call on, and tell the time, it helps to make those arrangements.

**6. Be realistic**

Keeping our worries in perspective and knowing neighbours and local residents who can be called upon if there are any concerns, will help. The benefits of playing out far outweigh the risks.

**7. Make a change**

We can join with others locally to campaign for changes to our neighbourhood that may make our local areas places where children can play out confidently. We can promote the importance of playing out to other people within our neighbourhoods by word of mouth or holding community events and letting others know about them.

**Community Events**

Community play events are a good way celebrating children's right to play. As well as a celebration, these events also promote the need for play and better play opportunities for children.

Community play events raise awareness of local issues, and give children and whole communities an opportunity to get together.

Ensuring that community events are playful means that children and adults can meet and spend time alongside each other in a relaxed way. When children are given the opportunity to play they meet and get to know other children and adults in the neighbourhood, building familiarity, trust and a community spirit. This helps parents to gain confidence to allow children to play out at other times of the year.

Consideration may be given to celebrating and enjoying achievements during the event to let other people know how successful it was – remember to thank everyone involved. Writing a brief article about the event (including a photo or two) that can be circulated locally can help promote the idea of playing out in the community beyond the event. It may be possible to report on the event in a local newsletter or newspaper to share the idea with others. This can be useful to remind people how important children are to our communities and how important good outdoor play experiences are to them.

### **Engaging with the Media**

The Local Authority also has a role in promoting children's rights to balanced media coverage.

#### **Article 13**

Children and young people have the right to get and to share information as long as the information is not damaging to them or others.

#### **Article 17**

Children and young people have the right to reliable information from the mass media. Television, radio and newspapers should provide information that children can understand and should not promote materials that could harm children.

The Local Authority and its partners are well-placed to provide a full, fair picture of children and young people's news, views, activities, and issues across the media.

### **Social Media**

Social media is a way of communicating with each other using a variety of internet applications. Popular forms of social media include:

- Facebook
- Bebo
- MySpace
- Twitter
- Flickr
- Setting up a blog
- Producing and uploading a podcast
- Posting a video on YouTube.

Social media has had a dramatic impact on how people discover, read, and share news and information. Children are particularly skilled at using social media to communicate with their peers.

The Local Authority can encourage children to use the same options to influence decision makers and promote their good news stories.

### **Assessing Matter I: Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas**

Children's play is an issue for policy makers, planners and providers across a range of Local Authority policy areas. In addition to the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 there are a number of other policies, the implementation of which also contribute to the purpose of achieving the creation of a play friendly society that offers a wide range of free play opportunities.

This section is designed to provide the rationale and practical, provision based ideas that may be used by the Local Authority to make the case for including play in the various policy areas, to enhance children's play opportunities.

#### **Education and schools**

Existing school facilities, in most cases, offer significant opportunities to satisfy not only the learning needs of all learners, but many of the social and recreational needs for the community.

Children tell us that playtimes are the most important part of the school day to them. Many children also tell us that at school is the main opportunity they have to spend time playing with their friends. Schools often offer ideal space for children to play and interact with one another. It is important to develop a strong play element in order to provide a healthy school environment.

One of the key opportunities for children to play with their friends at regular intervals is during school playtime, including at breakfast clubs. School playtime was traditionally one of the occasions when children could interact in a relatively safe environment with little adult control. However, more recently, these opportunities have dwindled due to a reduction in time given over to 'playtime'. Children tell us that they often rush eating their lunch at school to have more time to play. The withdrawal of playtime is often used as punishment. School play times are as important to children as break times are to school staff. Like adults, school playtime is part of children's 'work/life balance'.

In many areas, both urban and rural, school grounds can offer neutral public open space in the local community. Having access to such a space can enhance the opportunities that all parts of the community around the school have for outdoor recreation and play.

Children generally make more use of the outdoors and spend more time outside than adults, so, the positive effect of access to school grounds for them is potentially even higher than it might be for adults.

#### **How ...**

The Local Education Authority (LEA) could disseminate information to school head teachers and board of governors highlighting:

- the value of play training and support for lunchtime supervisors
- the need to consider the inclusion of well-designed play space when capital improvements are being made

- that adequate time should be given for both lunch and playtime
- the benefits of protecting and not withdrawing playtime as ‘punishment’
- the benefits of allowing ample time for play, rather than shortening or reducing the amount of time give over to play.

### Town and Country Planning

In all local planning authorities, the statutory Local Development Plan is the starting point when considering planning applications for the development or use of land. It provides the essential framework for planning decisions. The need for play space should be addressed and referred to in this plan.

The local planning system can be used to improve access to play opportunities for children and involve them in shaping their own communities.

Standards for play provision can be developed locally. Setting robust local standards based on assessments of need and supply of existing play spaces forms the basis for redressing quantitative, qualitative and access deficiencies.

#### How ...

Local Development Plans (LDPs) should include locally determined play space standards. Embedding these standards in LDP documents will also help to protect existing play space. Supplementary Planning Documents can provide detailed advice and guidance to developers and local people on what is expected in terms of the quantity, quality and accessibility of new play space provision, and any required maintenance contributions.

Principles to consider when setting play space standards:

**Access:** All children aged birth to 17 years old should have access to at least three types of good quality play space all within easy, safe walking or cycling distance of where they live. This should include:

- a doorstep play space: a small space, within sight of home, where children, especially young children can play within view of known adults – normally within one minute walking time of the child’s home
- a local play space: a larger space which can be reached safely by children beginning to travel independently and with friends, without accompanying adults and for adults with young children to walk to with ease – normally within five minutes walking time of the child’s home
- a neighbourhood play space: a larger space or facility for informal recreation which children, used to travelling longer distances independently, can get to safely to play and take part in informal recreation with their peers and have a wider range of play experiences – normally within fifteen minutes walking time of the child’s home

**Quality:** Local standards that consider play value, location and maintenance can be developed using the Play Space Assessment Tool *Appendix 10*. These standards should be based on the assumption that a rich play environment is one which is flexible, adaptable and has varied

interesting physical features that maximises the potential for socialising, creativity, resourcefulness, challenge and choice. It is a trusted public space where children feel free to play in their own way, on their own terms.

**Quantity:** Each Local Authority needs to develop its own local spatial standards for play space, informed by the characteristics of the area and the identified needs of the population. This should be based on the assumption that any child should be able to play freely and take part in a range of recreational activities in their communities at times and in places that meet their needs.

### **Traffic and Transport**

Fear of road accidents is a key barrier to outdoor play cited by parents, carers and children. Children need play spaces that have safe access routes encouraging independent travel. Good quality play spaces should also be free from noise and pollution from road traffic. Creating a built environment, which encourages walking and cycling, has benefits for levels of physical activity.

Road traffic is a major barrier to children's play for a number of reasons. It prevents access to play spaces because of real and perceived fears of road accidents; prevents journeys on foot or by bicycle; reduces quality play spaces due to noise and air pollution from nearby roads; and busy roads means fewer informal opportunities to meet others. Guidance in Planning Policy Wales (Technical Advice Note (TAN) 18) recognises the importance of promoting safer road conditions leading to improved safety and opportunities for children's play.

### **How ...**

Red tape surrounding temporary road closures has to some extent been addressed. In some areas, residents have been allowed to apply for three formal road closures a year for street parties or other community activities.

Local community groups can be supported to hold more frequent road closures for a few hours after school or on weekends by groups of neighbours and communities, without having to apply each time. Temporary road closures can be short (2-3 hours) with one or two volunteer stewards at each road closure point. The idea is to provide a safe space near home at a time when children need and want to play. At the start working with the community to agree a street closure will help children, parents and the wider community get used to the idea that reclaiming the street can work. With time, residents can be allowed vehicle access and the stewards' role will be to ensure this happens safely. The aim is to cause as little disruption as possible to normal life, demonstrating that street play doesn't require much more than an agreement amongst motorists to prioritise children's safety and recognise their right to play.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

Playing contributes to children's physical wellbeing; active play is one of the easiest and most natural ways that children of any age can engage in the necessary levels of physical activity. When given the opportunity to play children are likely to be physically active by running, jumping, dancing, climbing, balancing, digging, lifting, swinging, sliding, pushing and pulling.

Active play is the most common type of physical activity that children take part in outside school, and unstructured play may be one of the best forms of physical activity for children.

- Prolonged and wide-ranging exercise develops stamina (informal sports, chase games, climbing, building).
- Climbing develops strength, co-ordination and balance, while jumping contributes to bone density.
- When children repeat an action as part of their play they are often in the process of calibrating – learning to manage growing bodies – as well as developing agility, co-ordination and confidence.

Playing allows for peer interactions that are important components of social and emotional wellbeing. When playing alone, children begin to recognise their own emotions, feelings, and thoughts, as well as how to control them. Children also learn to feel comfortable with being by themselves and learn ways to manage their boredom on their own. Through play children experience a range of emotions including frustration, determination, achievement, disappointment and confidence, and through practice, can learn how to manage these feelings.

- Creating and encountering risky or uncertain play opportunities develops children's resilience and adaptability and can contribute to their confidence and self-esteem.
- Socialising with their friends on their own terms gives children opportunities to build emotional resilience, to have fun and to relax.
- Fantasy play allows for imagination and creativity, but it can also be a way of children making sense of and 'working through' difficult and distressing aspects of their lives.

### How ...

Local Health, Social Care and Wellbeing initiatives can:

- Promote the importance of play in health publicity campaigns.
- Consider the impact on children's play in Health Impact and Health Equality Impact Assessments.
- Provide information to parents that highlight the value of playing and its role in a healthy lifestyle.
- Create links with local play services.
- Identify partnership funding to support local play initiatives.

### Child Poverty

In its Child Poverty Strategy for Wales (2011), the Welsh Government recognises the right to play and its contribution to children's development and resilience. The strategy values play as being a vital element in children's development and can provide a strong protective factor in children's lives. The strategy highlights that play can, to an extent, shield children from the negative aspects of poverty and allow them to develop their resilience to difficulties and uncertainties in their lives. The Play Sufficiency Duty allows Local Authorities to recognise the contribution they make in countering the poverty of experience that many children in Wales face.

**How ...**

The Local Authority can provide council premises and space free of charge to organisations that provide free (at the point of entry) play provision for children, with an agreement with the provider that entry fees remain free at the point of entry.

**Early Years and Childcare**

Early years and childcare settings have traditionally understood and recognised the important role that playing has for young children. However, some report that parental concerns for structure and organised activities have prevented them providing the amount of free time play opportunities that children want and need. These settings have good relationships and regular contact with parents and are ideally placed to support better information regarding the importance of play – in the settings, in the home environment and independently, when children are competent to do so.

**How ...**

- Provide regular opportunities for freely chosen play for children in their care
- Ensure staff are supported to understand and recognise the benefits and importance of play and where appropriate are supported to gain a playwork qualification
- Understand the consequences of play deprivation
- Explore and overcome the barriers to providing opportunities for freely chosen play in settings
- Use the tools in this Toolkit to assess the quality of the play environment of the children in their care

**Family policy and initiatives**

Many of the problems that parents say they find a challenge (for instance managing aspects of children's behaviour) can be addressed by improving children's access to play opportunities that meet their needs and quality space for playing. Playing together is important for family bonding and play provision gives an opportunity for both children and adults to extend their social and peer networks – which is proven to increase resilience.

**How ...**

Play provision should be included in family initiatives – it is often available when families need it most (after school, during school holidays, evenings and weekends) filling in gaps when other services are unavailable.

Parents should be encouraged and supported to attend staffed play projects. This provides an opportunity to observe their children play, and to speak with playworkers who can make sense of play behaviour – parents then feel more confident and better able to manage their children's play needs away from the staffed provision.

Family and parent support groups should provide parents with information, which supports them to address concerns about letting their child play out.

### **Inter-generational policy and initiatives**

Many organisations provide structured activities that bring older and younger people together successfully. However, most of the work tends to be led by the older person's sector and can tend to focus on a desire to allay the fears of older people.

However, children can also be fearful of older generations.

Different age ranges – for example, five year olds and fifteen year olds – can and do mix without conflict. In fact, teenagers will often be caring towards younger children. It is a myth that teenagers as a matter of course intimidate younger children. However, many younger children are fearful of older children, partly, or, in some instances, mainly because the opportunities to gather in the same space have diminished.

Many areas have installed and developed play space by approaching it from an 'age related' typology. Seeking to impose age restrictions on space creates the conditions for tension and conflict between generations – adults seeing the 'wrong' age group in a space designated for young children will see this as 'anti-social behaviour'. It also creates the conditions for tension between teenagers and authority. This is in part because age-designated space represents a rule that is in practice unenforceable – older children like to 'hang out' near their homes with friends often at a time of day (such as the evening), when for the most part very young children will be indoors.

### **How ...**

Inter-generational approaches with regards to play provision should be developed to address the concerns of children as well as other members of the community.

Play spaces should be designed so they are multifunctional and offer a range of leisure and recreation opportunities for users of all ages, as well as being playable.

### **Community Development**

Community cohesion is what happens when different groups of people get on well together, have similar life opportunities and trust each other and their local institutions.

With regards to children and their access to play opportunities the advantage of living in a cohesive community is that children feel that their voices are heard and that their needs are being met. Children understand what is expected from them as members of their community, but more importantly, adults living and working in that community understand the impact their actions have in terms of children's sense of permission to play and sense of belonging. When adults don't understand children's play, misunderstandings can more easily develop into tensions.

Play provision contributes to community cohesion. The more friendly the environment is for children, the more they will play out. This has a tangible impact on decreasing perceptions of isolation, not just for the children themselves but also the wider community. Children are not just citizens of the future they are citizens of now and deserve to have their play needs fully met.

For members of the community, play provision provides significant opportunities to meet similarly placed and minded members of the community. Play provision can contribute significantly to social interaction and decrease perceptions and the realities of isolation.

### How ...

Very often, local communities are best placed to respond to the play needs of local children, with the support of the voluntary sector. All Local Authorities should indicate the level of co-operation and support provided so as not to devolve all responsibility for children's play.

### Community Safety

The restriction imposed on children's freedom of movement by the potential misuse of anti-social behaviour orders (ASBO's) in the UK is of particular concern to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Community safety contributes to community cohesion and is effective in supporting the development of a better understanding of children's play and play behaviour. Having a deeper understanding of children's play and providing space for play supports communities to distinguish between play behaviour and otherwise.

Providing children access to creative and stimulating play opportunities within their communities, reduces the likelihood that they will seek alternative ways of satisfying their natural urge to play, to seek excitement, challenge and adventure. All too often such alternatives will bring them into conflict with the adult world.

### How ...

Police And Communities Together (PACT) groups should be encouraged to identify ways to engage with children to ensure that decisions reflect their needs and to ensure that children have a greater understanding of wider community safety issues and concerns.

PACT groups should identify practical ways that it can support children to feel safer in their community.

### Health and Safety

Children's play necessarily involves opportunities to experience risk and challenge and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) supports this viewpoint with the following statement issued in 2005:

*'Sensible health and safety is about managing risks not eliminating them all. HSE is not in the business of stamping out simple pleasures wherever they appear and at whatever cost. We recognise the benefits to children's development of play which necessarily involves some risk, and this shouldn't be sacrificed in the unachievable goal of absolute safety.'*

Key points:

- There is intrinsic value in children experiencing uncertainty and personal challenge through their play.
- Children need to feel free to experience risk and challenge of their own volition and they will only be able to do this if we allow some degree of uncertainty to remain.
- The play provision we create aims to support children to experience reasonable levels of risk for themselves.
- There is a need for balance between ensuring appropriate levels of protection and preserving reasonable levels of uncertainty.
- We aim to manage risk so that whenever reasonably possible the risk of injury children are exposed to is proportional to the potential benefits associated with the situation.
- Controls will be reasonable and realistic whilst ensuring unnecessary risks are minimised.
- Risk management incorporates a number of different elements that work together to form a continuous cycle, improving our practice.
- Children are capable of managing some risk for themselves and their competency will develop as their experience grows.

### **Risk-Benefit Assessment**

Risk-benefit assessment is an approach to risk assessment that also takes into account the benefit to the child of having access to a particular risk. This is a rational consideration in children's play provision.

For example the risks associated with a climbing frame are slips and falls from equipment. The controls we might put in place to minimise risks are impact absorbing surfacing, not have free-fall heights above a certain measurement and ensuring there are adequate hand and footholds.

But why would we let children climb to height anyway? This is where we consider the benefits. Likely benefits include: building physical strength, balance and co ordination; children learning to assess risks for themselves and experiencing feelings of excitement.

Building risk-benefit assessment into our risk management approach shows that we have considered all these factors, which increase the playability of the play space.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Play Safety Forum have recently published a joint High level statement.

The high level statement can be downloaded at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childs-play-statement.htm>

### **How ...**

The Local Authority could consider providing a badged umbrella insurance scheme for other organisations that provide play opportunities in local communities. This would contribute to a more coherent approach across the Local Authority.

The Local Authority could develop a risk benefit management policy. Whilst having a risk management policy goes beyond HSE requirements for conducting a risk assessment, it provides a robust framework for how an organisation manages risks over time and uses the knowledge gained to update and improve operational (paper based) risk assessments.

*Please refer to tool 14 – Model Risk Benefit Management Policy*

This model policy provides a format that can be adapted for local use. The policy sets out the risk-benefit approach to managing risks and allows input of procedures for particular aspects of the policy, for example the frequency of inspections and routine maintenance programmes.

### 3. Developing the Play Sufficiency Action Plan

#### Agreeing Priorities

The **Play Sufficiency Assessment Framework** will have identified a range of actions to inform the Action Plan. It is likely that there will be a long and diverse list of actions to be worked through in a short time.

It will be necessary to agree the priorities as part of the Action Plan development.

To do this, the Play Sufficiency Working Group will need to identify and agree criteria. Criteria should be specific, realistic and achievable.

Suggested factors to consider when setting criteria:

- this a pressing need (i.e. is there a serious issue of play deprivation?)
- it is very likely that we can make a big difference addressing this action
- the action addresses the play needs of a vulnerable group
- we have capacity to work on this action
- we can start working on this straight away

It may also be useful to consider:

- Are any of our partners working on this already that we could work with or support?
- What are the cost implications of this action?
- What are the benefits of this action?
- Do we have the skills and expertise locally to address the action?

Once four or five criteria have been agreed, Local Authorities can use a locally determined process (such as a SWOT Analysis or similar) for the prioritisation of actions.

#### Gathering and presenting data

When gathering and recording results of the Play Sufficiency Assessment, it is useful to establish an agreed mechanism for keeping, using and updating the information.

This will mean adopting an appropriate IT database/spread sheet approach that can be easily linked with a Geographical Information Systems (GIS) database.

The Local Authority GIS team will be able to identify purpose built systems that the Local Authority can use.

#### Analysing patterns

Once both the mapping/auditing and the consultation stages have been undertaken, all the relevant information should be available to undertake a detailed analysis of existing play opportunities appropriate to the identified needs of the community.

The assessment will have achieved the detailed mapping and recording of all types of play spaces; assessed their quantity, size and distribution; and their quality and accessibility for use by different groups.

Local consultation will provide information about the needs, desires and barriers faced by different communities.

These two sides of the process need to be brought together. The depth and content of this analysis should feature:

- characteristics and needs of age groups
- characteristics and needs of social/community groups
- characteristics and needs by geographical area
- overall distribution and characteristics of provision
- quality of provision
- quantity of provision
- accessibility of provision

This analytical stage should therefore provide relevant issues and opportunities that will be used to inform the Securing Play Sufficiency Action Plan.

### **The benefits of Geographical Information systems (GIS)**

Play provision assessment has traditionally been undertaken and reported through words, pictures, tables, charts and maps. However, it is strongly recommended that Local Authorities use GIS for the Play Sufficiency Assessment.

GIS can be an effective way of:

- linking the consultation findings with the assessment of provision;
- identifying real travel distances and likely barriers to accessibility, such as busy roads;
- depicting provision as outlined in the Statutory Guidance, relative to age and the identified needs of specific communities and social groups;
- identifying areas of deficiency, measure catchment areas and relate the distribution of play opportunities to socio-economic and demographic characteristics;
- identifying best locations for new or improved facilities;
- identifying interventions which might improve access, such as traffic calming or new walking routes;
- establishing appropriate local standards;
- monitoring changes in play provision;
- supporting the planning and maintenance of play spaces.

## 4. The Action Plan

The Action Plan will provide the strategic planning and policy framework for the priorities for action identified in the assessment process.

The Regulations and Statutory Guidance that detail this section of the Measure state that the Play Sufficiency Assessment should include an **Action Plan** with associated costs, which sets out the targets, priorities and milestones for achieving play sufficiency over the three year period. The plan must include indicative budget requirements for achieving sufficient play opportunities in the Local Authority area and indicative budget requirements for developing the full action plan once the second part of the duty is commenced.

### **Please refer to Section 2b: Play Sufficiency Action Plans**

We recommend that the first part of the Action Plan should show actions from **April 2013** which the Local Authority and partners intend to take, with regard to the Play Sufficiency Assessment, to improve play opportunities for children in their area. This should also show actions included in the Single Integrated Plan.

The second part of the Action Plan should show the actions from **April 2014** which the Local Authority and partners intend to take to comply with the commencement of the second part of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, Section 11, to secure sufficient play opportunities for children in its area, with regard to the play sufficiency assessment.