

**Swansea**  
**Children & Young People's**  
**Play Strategy**  
**2010 Implementation Plan**

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## Introduction

*Every child has the right to play, and in Swansea we are committed to ensuring this right.*

Swansea's Play Partnership is a representative group of public and voluntary sector organisations seeking to develop a co-ordinated and strategic approach to play provision across Swansea.

The Children's Play Strategy is intended to be an active document, with targets to be achieved over the coming years. As such, it will be subject to regular review by Swansea's Play Partnership.

This Strategy Implementation Plan has been developed by the Play Partnership, in consultation with children, young people and the wider community. It sets out a firm commitment from the Play Partnership that children's play will be a priority in all local decision making. For this to be effective it will require ownership and co-operation between Local Authority departments, voluntary and private sector organisations.

It is intended that this Strategy will provide the foundation for a simple message that Swansea is a place that values and provides for play.

**Swansea's Play Partnership**  
**January 2010**

# Executive Summary

## The Importance of Play

Play is vital to every child's development in many ways. Through play they learn key social, physical and emotional skills. As such, play is a right, recognised in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Each child is different and will play in their own way.

Adults must recognise the impact that they have on a child's play opportunities. While children will sometimes need support, it should be recognised that they will often benefit from opportunities to play without adult supervision. Adults, including parents, and particularly playworkers, must understand the impact they have, given consideration to the differences of each child.

## The Welsh Assembly Government's Play Policy and Implementation Plan / A Play Strategy for Swansea

The Welsh Assembly Government launched its Play Policy in 2002; the first National Play Policy. It set out its commitment to providing for play and its accompanying Implementation Plan 'Play in Wales' was released in 2006.

To build upon the national policy and to demonstrate its own commitment to play, Swansea's Children's Play Strategy was launched in 2004.

This document sets out the objectives of the Play Strategy and how it, as well as the co-ordination of play locally, sits within the overall approach to planning for children & young people in Swansea.

## Encouraging More Play Provision

This looks at opportunities available and whether and indeed how more are required. It will address the key issue of access to play and ensuring that what is provided is appropriate for the needs of all children.

## The Role of Schools

This section examines schools and the impact they have on play opportunities. As a key community resource they will have provision and facilities for play. Additionally, the school day will feature a range of play opportunities, whether it be in the traditional playground or, significantly, as part of the newly developed Foundation Phase.

## Play in the Community

Provision for play in Swansea is centred firmly around the belief that children and young people should have play opportunities available in their local community. This may include staffed play provision, local play spaces, or simply the opportunity to play outside their own homes. It will address the many issues which now mean that for many children, this isn't possible and what can be done about it, including issues of safety and child protection.

## A Playwork Profession

A good playworker will understand the importance of play and the impact that their involvement will have in the creation of an environment that encourages free play. As such, they need to be supported through quality training and, significantly, relevant and appropriate qualifications to ensure the professionalism of the playwork sector.

Additionally, they will need support and guidance, as well as access to quality placements and ultimately the potential for a career in facilitating play opportunities.

There needs to be the tools and mechanisms in place to ensure that children and young people at play are protected.

## **Managing Risk**

Children will actively seek out risk and challenge as part of their play. In a society where opportunities for taking risks are largely being removed, many of today's children are losing the ability to assess and manage risk.

Play settings must be supported to understand the importance of access to appropriate risk as part of the play process. They must be able to effectively risk assess and give consideration to each individual's abilities, to ensure they get the full benefit.

## **Working Together**

Swansea's key strength is the many passionate and knowledgeable organisations, local projects and individuals who are committed to ensuring children have access to quality play provision. It is vital that they work closely in developing a shared vision and recognising the contribution each partner makes.

Play touches upon so many areas, including health, anti-poverty, education, social services and child protection, recreation and local planning. Play contributes to the success of each, and they in turn impact upon play and as such key officers and organisations from each must recognise and value the role they have to play.

## **Advocating for Play**

While everyone values their own childhood play experiences, not all will fully appreciate how vital it is that all children have access to a range of play opportunities as an essential part of their development.

It is vital that this message gets put across to remind everyone how they felt while at play and to do what they can to support children to play, whether as part of their work role, or their role as a parent, grandparent or carer.

Those working in play are there for children and young people, and will often be their voice. They will involve them wherever they can and ensure that their needs and interests are represented.

## The Importance of Play

Play is what children and young people do. Whether they are in the park climbing trees, sitting in their room making up songs, hanging out at the bus stop with friends, or watching the rain trickle down a window pane, it is play. Play can be imaginative, messy, dramatic, quiet, challenging, upsetting, scary, fun, boring, naughty or fulfilling.

Play is a major process by which children and young people learn about themselves and the world around them. It is only by testing boundaries and questioning that children and young people can truly understand their existence and how they fit in with the world.

Children and young people don't need a reason to play; they will play wherever they are and with whatever is available to them. This is because they have an inborn drive to engage with the world. Take shopping for example; it is much more common to see children and young people sliding under shelving units, hiding amongst the clothes, than sitting happily in the trolley seat admiring the neat and functional layout of the store.

It must be acknowledged, however that some disabled children and young people may initially need to be encouraged to develop their natural drive to play. This must be recognised and supported by play professionals.

Through playing, children and young people learn the life skills that will sustain them in later years, and, because play is self-directed they develop creative, physical, intellectual, emotional and social skills. Play deprivation, or the lack of exposure to all aspects of play, can harm children and young people's development

Every child has a right to play, be safe and be consulted on decisions which affect them. This is stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>1</sup>.

All children and young people play differently, because they are individuals. It is vital that this is recognised by adults, especially those who have an impact on opportunities to play. Children and young people must be at the centre of the process when designing, facilitating and adapting play spaces and provision.

Adults can have a great impact on a child's play opportunity. The role of parents and other carers is key to this, recognising their child's need for support where appropriate, but also the freedom to experience things for themselves. Professionals interacting with children at play must appreciate the impact their contribution makes.

It is for this reason Swansea's Children and Young People's Play Strategy actively encourages partnership working and supports cross sector consultation to ensure that all children and young people are represented and their uniqueness taken into account. For the purpose of this document children and young people means all children and young people between 0 and 19 years, embracing diverse ability, strengths, heritage, culture, ethnicity and social stature.

Where references may be made specifically to disabled children and young people, this document refers to the Social Model of Disability<sup>2</sup> which 'makes the important difference between 'impairment' and 'disability'' *Disability Wales*

<sup>2</sup>Disabled people are disabled by society not by an impairment they may have, for example a child or young person who uses a wheelchair is unable to use the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of a building where only stairs have been provided. A child on the autistic spectrum may be unable to attend their local services due to staff attitudes and understanding. Play is creative, and adults must think creatively to ensure that ALL children and young people are catered for and that play spaces are equitable.

# The Welsh Assembly Government's Play Policy and Implementation Plan

In 2006 the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) published its Play Policy and Implementation Plan<sup>2</sup> which is a clear recognition that children and young people and their play needs must be central to policy making.

Play professionals and advocates for play understand the delicate nature of play and how (sometimes unknowingly) adults can impact negatively on the process. Play opportunities are subject to influences which are out of the control of children and young people, such as increasing traffic, property development and parental fears. This often results in a lack of freedom to roam previously treasured by earlier generations. We must respond to meet the play needs of this generation to ensure a fully rounded society exists in the future.

'The right to play is a child's first claim on the community. Play is nature's training for life. No community can infringe that right without doing deep and enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens' *David Lloyd George*

It is for this reason that the Play Partnership takes responsibility for overseeing Play in Swansea and ensuring that a range of suitable play opportunities are available across the City including fixed playgrounds, open and closed access play provision, adventure playgrounds and in some cases targeted play clubs. Targeted play clubs may be necessary to ensure specific play needs are being met whilst being sensitive to outside influences/specific requirements for instance play for disabled children and young people.

## Where this Strategy Sits

The Children's Play Strategy will be part of an overall approach to policy and planning across Swansea. It sits under the Children and Young People's Single Plan, which feeds into the Community Strategy for Swansea.

**Swansea's Community Strategy** states that, by 2020, it wants Swansea to be a distinctive European City. This is to be achieved through 6 themes:

*Everyone has a great place to live*

*Everyone feels safe*

*Everyone is part of a prosperous economy*

*Everyone has the best possible start in life*

*Everyone can enjoy the best possible health*

*Everyone's services are the best they can be*

*Everyone has a good education*

**The Children and Young People's Single Plan (CYP Single Plan)** is the defining statement of intent and priorities for services received by children and young people. It is structured around 7 Core Aims (Appendix 2) to deliver the theme '*Everyone has the best possible start in life*'. **The CYP Single Plan Executive Board** is responsible for overseeing this.

**The Play Partnership** will lead on issues relating to planning for play locally and will feed into all Core Aims but particularly Core Aim 4 'Play, Leisure & Enrichment' and Core Aim 1 'Early Years'.

## A Play Strategy for Swansea

Swansea's original Play Strategy was published in 2004 and was developed through consultation with key stakeholders including children and young people. The 2004 Strategy outlined 5 objective areas for the development of play.

- 1 To ensure there are high quality, appropriate, accessible and resourced play opportunities for all children and young people across Swansea.*
- 2 To put play in the spotlight, advocate for and on behalf of children and young people, their need to play, and promote greater awareness of the role of play in child development and benefits of play for everyone.*
- 3 To consult, observe, involve and work in partnership with children and young people and other agencies in the planning and delivery of the strategy and play service.*
- 4 To raise the quality of playwork practice, by promoting the development of training and appropriately qualified staff.*
- 5 To increase the value of play spaces in Swansea in terms of design, location and maintenance so they meet the needs of children and young people.*

In response to the WAG Play Policy Implementation Plan and as part of an ongoing commitment to reviewing its own Children's Play Strategy, the City and County of Swansea and its partners have developed an updated strategy document which specifies areas for implementation, to reinforce the basic principles outlined in the existing document.

In October 2006, a sub-group of the Play Partnership was tasked with overseeing this action. The Play Partnership exists to provide a co-ordinated approach to the development of play, linking in to the over-arching Children and Young People's Framework Partnership.

Following consultation with the wider Play Partnership, other stakeholders, and a Play Strategy Consultation Event, the revised Children's Play Strategy for Swansea was approved by cabinet in July 2007.

*It is important to note that the objectives of the original Children's Play Strategy, founded as they were from extensive consultation, remain valid. This document provides an updated focus and time-scaled actions for delivery of what is a statement of principle.*

In order to develop what has generally been perceived as an 'aspirational view of play' into a true working document it is essential for it to include;

*Details of current progress  
Clear, time-scaled actions  
Required Resources*

*Good practice examples  
Links to key policies and plans*

# The Strategy

## 1 Encouraging More Play Provision

Swansea benefits from a great natural environment for play, with its extensive beaches and parks. Additionally, it has a strong infrastructure of play provision. This shows Swansea to be an area of diversity in relation to play opportunities.

Despite this, 97% of Swansea children want more places to play<sup>1</sup>. This is particularly prevalent in some geographical areas as well as certain groups of need, such as disabled children and young people, Welsh speaking children and young people and children and young people from BME Communities.

These places for play should come in a range of opportunities in order to ensure maximum choice and access. Staffed provision ensures that adults familiar with the play process can facilitate play to benefit individual children. Additionally, parks, play areas and open spaces provide a permanent place for children to go, by themselves or with friends and family.

Provision needs to be sufficiently varied to meet the play needs of all children and young people. It should target long summer holidays and out of school hours, while taking into account weather and lighting conditions. Information on what is provided should be readily available to all.

It is vital for play providers and others with a responsibility for play to work together to provide a co-ordinated approach to delivery and planning. Swansea's Play Partnership provides an opportunity for this to take place, as well as providing links into other supporting agendas.

Play begins at birth, and recognition is given to the role of pre-school projects. It is vital that the Play Partnership and relevant Early Years development agencies and partnerships work closely, to ensure smooth transitions and streamlined services.

The Play Partnership also have strong links with the Young People's Partnership (YPP), to create the same cohesion at the upper end of the 0-19 year age bracket.

It is vital to ensure effective access to and use of funding opportunities. Cymorth and Big Lottery Child's Play and People & Places funding, as well as other funding opportunities, have a key role to play in providing new opportunities and retaining existing provision. The priority for this must be ensuring the best fit with what is needed locally.

The Play Partnership must be in a position to co-ordinate potential funding to best meet strategic priorities for play. To do this, it must have a clear idea of current provision, resources and needs.

### Support for Play Providers

*Employed by the City & County of Swansea, from Cymorth funding, Play Development Workers work in geographical areas to establish new projects and support existing ones. They provide advice on funding, training and good practice, as well as identifying levels of provision and areas for development.*

*PlayRight, the local Play Association, offers access to resources, training and information to community play projects via its Play Resource Centre.*

<sup>1</sup> Based on consultation with Swansea school children aged 7-11 in relation to the Play Strategy Jan-March 2006 (Sample size 235)

## Commitment to Equalities

*The original Play Strategy document was subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment with participation from partners associated with disabilities and minorities. In addressing equalities issues, the post of Ethnic Minorities Play Development Worker has been introduced, as has a Play Access sub-group of the Play Partnership to address access for children with disabilities. The organisation Interplay exists to support access to play and leisure opportunities for disabled children and young people and plays a key role.*

*While play is a right for all children, it is recognised that contributing factors will impact on individual's access to play. It is important that all provision gives due consideration to such factors to ensure equity of access where appropriate.*

*It is the responsibility of all partners to this strategy to ensure that resource implications are factored in.*

## Recommendations

- 1.1 Create a full picture of current provision to identify gaps, overlaps and scope for future development.
- 1.2 Focus initially on disabled children and young people
- 1.3 Evaluate the development and effectiveness of the Play Partnership
- 1.4 Look to co-ordinate funding and resources to ensure an effective fit against the CYP Plan priorities
- 1.5 Support a Big Lottery Child's Play bid that will best meet strategic priorities
- 1.6 Play Partnership to develop clear links with key partnerships to ensure a commitment to play across the 0-19 year age range

## 2 The Role of Schools

It is often the case that children and young people have their greatest opportunity to play with peers whilst at school and that school grounds can provide a valuable community play space.

When consulted, 85% of Swansea children and young people aged 7 to 11 said they want more play time in schools<sup>1</sup>.

Schools are being encouraged, by WAG, to open up their facilities out of school hours through the Community Focused Schools Initiative, which promotes maximum use of the facilities to meet the current needs of the community.

The introduction of the Foundation Phase by WAG has highlighted that learning through play is imperative and that Play and Education's roles are often complimentary.

The Draft Framework for Children's Learning in the Foundation Phase states: *"Children learn through first hand experiential activities with the serious business of play providing the vehicle. Through their play, children practice and consolidate their learning, play with ideas, experiment, take risks, solve problems and make decisions individually, in small and in large groups"*.

The Education Effectiveness Team's support for schools includes a menu of training which promotes play and active learning as part of the curriculum framework both indoors and outdoors. A 5 day National training pack for Foundation Phase has been developed. Module four of this training is entitled 'Experiential learning in Practice'.

### Ysgol Crug Glas

Ysgol Crug Glas operates a holiday Playscheme that utilises its specialist facilities outside of school term providing play provision to meet the specific requirements of disabled children and young people.

## Recommendations

2.1 Encourage development of school grounds within Swansea to maximise opportunities for children's play

2.2 Support schools to help them develop a plan to open up their sites for community use

2.3 All appropriate school staff to receive supplementary play training, and all play staff to receive training in education pedagogy and curriculum

### 3 Play in the Community

Every child benefits from having the opportunity to engage in play within their own community. If any area is to truly be regarded as play friendly, there needs to be a range of accessible play opportunities available locally to all children.

Play providers are supported by a range of local sources. This includes advice, guidance and training from Play Right and Interplay to ensure play provision is high standard and inclusive of all children and young people as well as financial support from the local Play Fund which supports community-led play projects,

City and County of Swansea Parks Department and neighbouring authorities have shown that access to open green spaces is vital in providing community play opportunities which are appropriate to the needs of that community.

Outreach Playworkers provide play opportunities in areas with little or no provision. They can be key to facilitating the play process, although the value of the sustainability of spaces where children and families can play at all times, must also be recognised.

The Play Partnership will focus on how to make best use of the spaces that are available for children to play. Fixed play equipment, staffed open access provision, community-build play structures and natural play spaces all have a play value. With limited funding for play in open spaces, the focus must be on creating appropriate, cost-effective play areas, which utilise all the resources available, and complement the surrounding environment. This can be achieved through a variety of means, including use of natural materials, planting or landscaping, careful and appropriate positioning.

Swansea City Council's Regeneration Department is working on a Development Plan for its Play areas, based on four key objectives (see Appendix 4). This plan will look to ensure that play spaces effectively meet local need, are sustainable and in keeping with the make-up of the community and the local environment.

Natural and green play spaces enable children to access fresh air and provide a relaxing, yet stimulating, interesting environment. Time spent in natural play spaces can aid good health and a sense of wellbeing. Play England reveal that 70% of adults enjoyed most of their adventures outdoors, during their own childhood, compared to 29% of today's children.

Children at play need to feel safe and to be safe. A child's right to play should not be compromised by any danger to their personal safety. This was a key issue identified under 'Safe to Play' in the recent Swansea Children & Young People's Needs Assessment.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Bonymaen Community Play Project**

*Began in January 2006 engaging fully with the community of this Communities First area to develop a service which is fully responsive to the needs of local children and young people. Having a main focus of providing outreach open access play provision in open green spaces.*

*Playworkers have also proactively worked to embed and advocate the benefits of supervised outdoor play to the community as a whole.*

*Partnership work with local schools through 'The play worker in schools initiative', has broadened the projects outreach play service and the recruitment and empowerment of local young people as project play workers has fostered a sense of community ownership to the project.*

<sup>1</sup> Swansea City & County: A Children and Young People's Integrated Needs Assessment - GHK April 2007

It is vital that young people are able to get to their local or chosen play area. Consideration needs to be given to providing *safe routes to play* which can focus on footpaths, adequate lighting, traffic calming measures and anything else which will aid accessibility by young people.

Children's opportunities to play outside their own homes is not only affected indirectly. The 'No Ball Games' and 'Not in my back yard' cultures and even some public policy, creates the perception that children are not to play outside their own homes.

Welsh speaking communities' access to play opportunities through the medium of Welsh in Swansea are limited. Welsh speaking children and young people should have the opportunity to engage in play in their chosen language.

## Recommendations

3.1 Development Plan for Fixed Play Areas produced to enable a co-ordinated and effective approach that maximises the effectiveness of City & County of Swansea Play Areas

3.2 Outreach Playworkers to support the development of and access to parks and open spaces for play should be encouraged

3.3 Seek funding for a Welsh Language Play Development Worker to work with Welsh speaking communities in Swansea

3.4 Research into measures to increase the likelihood of children and young people to 'Feel Safe at Play'

## 4 A Playwork Profession

Key to ensuring sufficient access to quality play opportunities is having playworkers who are trained and committed to the value of play and playwork. A playworker understands the need for play to be both a child-led experience and yet one in which varying degrees of support may be required by individual children. They understand also the impact any support or intervention may have on that child's individual play processes.

There has been a significant increase in the number of playworkers both nationally and within Swansea over the past few years. Cymorth and other funding sources have developed several new projects and grant funds, resulting in hundreds of full or part-time playworkers within the area. It is important that there is sufficient planning to ensure that the many Cymorth funded posts can clearly demonstrate they meet application criteria and therefore continue.

### Swansea Playworker Forum

*The Playworker Forum was introduced in 2005, as an information exchange for local play providers, giving the opportunity to receive information from a national perspective, as well as feeding into the Play Partnership.*

While the majority of tasks have been identified by WAG, as laid out in their Play Policy Implementation Plan, there is still a great deal of work to be done locally. Key to developing professional status is the level of quality training and qualifications, quality assessment and the longer term aim of parity of pay with similar occupations such as Youth Work.

The need to ensure that those who work with children at play are suitable must be paramount. Procedures must be in place to ensure that pre-employment vetting occurs and that community projects are supported to achieve this. This regulation, including the completion of Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Checks, should be in line with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

Additionally, all those employed, or volunteering, with children and young people need access to child protection and other appropriate training, including the Common Assessments Framework(CAF) and Team Around the Child (TAC).

Wherever possible, all play projects should look to be regulated through registration by the Care & Social Services Inspectorate of Wales (CCSIW). This will assist in ensuring accountability for the service provided and aid child protection. In the interim, when evolving projects are not deemed ready for registration a Quality Assurance scheme developed by the CCS Children's Play Team will aid local regulation and monitoring.

Play Wales have developed a training programme, to reflect the Playwork Principles. Such qualifications are now more significant in response to the National Minimum standards for Childcare (including Open Access Play Provision)<sup>1</sup>, which require Playworkers to be suitably qualified from 2008. It recognises the growth and development of Playwork within Wales and is being delivered locally, providing a consistent level of understanding. It will also address Training Pathways from Induction standard to Level 7. At the current time, there are more trainers able to deliver the new P3 (Playwork Principles into Practice) in Swansea than any other area.

There will be a significant financial commitment involved in equipping the sector with the required qualifications. Efforts will need to be made to secure external funding while maximising existing resources. Additionally, it will almost certainly be necessary to prioritise places on qualification courses to those who are in the greatest position to provide benefit.

<sup>1</sup> National Minimum Standards for Children's Day Care Service, in line with the Children's Act 1987

With the development of the profession and the availability of training and qualifications, local playworkers need access to a range of quality placements to hone their skills.

### **Play Resource Centre**

*PlayRight's Play Resource Centre provides support and advice as well as, training and research opportunities for Playworkers. The PRC gives local Play Providers access to a wide range of other resources, such as a lending library, scrap store and tailored workshops.*

Equally, the sector needs to be encouraging committed staff into playwork, who will benefit from the potential for playwork as a career. While all should be encouraged, a particular emphasis currently could be placed on attracting male staff or those from ethnic minorities who are currently underrepresented.

If projects work closely together, they will share good practice, but also increase the potential for full-time employment of playworkers if staffing is shared.

With a focus on community-led play, it should be recognised that community members are often willing to support their local provision in a paid or voluntary capacity, that requirements for qualifications will provide an opportunity for some, but be prohibitive to others. It should also be noted that many are prevented from operating provision due to requirements for CSSIW registration and to comply with additional paperwork such as the completion of Criminal Reference Bureau (CRB) checks and their associated charge. Effective community play projects may in future see qualified playworkers operating alongside local staff and volunteers, giving consideration to all requirements. The approach to community led provision should be reviewed in light of this.

The role of local volunteers should not be underemphasised. Each year, the Children's Play Team hosts an event with the Lord Mayor that recognises the contribution played by volunteers within local play provision. This event is usually attended by around 50 people. Parents, grandparents and others are a key resource in play delivery, and their impact should be recognised.

Professional Development is a key priority area for the play sector. As such, it is vital that a local Workforce Development Strategy be developed to plan and co-ordinate the development of playwork. This should link to the national Children's Workforce Strategy.

## **Recommendations**

4.1 Local play projects should be supported to meet qualification requirements for registration with Care & Social Services Inspectorate for Wales

4.2 Key staff and volunteers should be identified to obtain relevant qualifications

4.3 Those agencies responsible for providing careers advice should be in a position to detail the advantages of and routes into playwork

4.4 Playworkers need access to quality placements to hone their playwork skills and practice

4.5 The Play Partnership must ensure access to training and quality of practice for Playworkers within Swansea and have a plan for its effectiveness

4.6 Review the process for administering CRB checks across the area

## 5 Managing Risk

Taking risks is part of our evolutionary process. Play is the way children and young people find out about themselves and the world around them. In order to fully understand themselves, mistakes must be made, emotional responses triggered, resilience developed and problem solving engaged. It is the duty of adults to support this process.

The Play Profession recognises that physical and emotional risk\* are both as important as each other to children and young people development. All risk taking is individual to the child/young person. Theories surrounding risk taking have been developed based on science, observation and experience. One of the main theories introduces 'Riskogenics' which states that each person develops an understanding about the level and type of risks they are willing to take. Playing during childhood forms the foundations of ones own 'riskogenics'. Self directed risky play experiences increase children and young people's ability to 'risk assess' situations and develop their own 'risk management' abilities. This is not true of all children and young people as some children and young people will never be able to identify risks; this must be recognised by Playworkers and included in risk assessments.

Play's role in aiding children and young people's development through risk-taking is being recognised within and beyond the Play Profession. The Play Safety Forum has produced guidance on Managing Risk in Play that explains the need to balance the risk against the detriment caused by removing the risk taking opportunity.

The need for children to experience risk was also identified in the original WAG Play Policy and followed up with specific actions in its implementation plan.

The Play Partnership must strengthen their links with parenting programmes in order to develop parental understanding of the developmental importance of risk.

*\* An emotional risk is when a child/young person runs the risk of feeling/looking silly, or not being accepted into a group for example disagreeing with a peer, or joining a group for the first time.*

### Bishopston Playscheme

The holiday playscheme run by Bishopston Play Association at Bishopston Primary School each year has seen a long-running level of understanding and support by the families of the children who attend. Parents expect that their children will have access to fire, to water and to engage in activity with an element of risk. Their children will also have the opportunity to sign in and out of the play session when they wish. This mutual understanding has been developed through clear communication and a commitment from the organisers to promoting quality play.

## Recommendations

5.1 The local authority needs to provide a statement on the value of access to risk in play to support information from the Assembly

5.2 Ensure that local health and safety inspectors are making decisions and recommendations which respond to the principles of the Health and Safety Executive

5.3 Quality Play Provision will allow opportunities for children and young people to engage in risky play. It is therefore essential that Playworkers are appropriately trained and confident in their decisions when managing and evaluating risk.

## 6 Working Together

While it may be relevant for the Play Partnership to lead on implementing the Play Strategy, it is essential that ownership across the board is required for it to be fully effective. It has been demonstrated that play is largely cross-cutting with evidence of lead responsibility with Education, Planning and Regeneration & Housing Departments. Likewise, the value of play must be recognised on its own merits by the City & County of Swansea. This should occur in the development of appropriate policies and strategy.

With the commitment to play from the Welsh Assembly Government, it is important to retain effective communication, feeding in on local issues while also receiving and acting on guidance and policy from the Assembly.

Ultimately, it must be clear who is accountable for delivering the Strategy and how the document fits into the overall Community Strategy within the City & County of Swansea area. The development of the Children & Young People's Single Plan gives the potential for clarifying play's contribution to services for young people, as well as the various organisations that have a role to play. It also emphasises the importance of play from a very young age and play seen within the wider context of other services. These include parenting, childcare, health visiting and child development generally as well as the importance of integrating service delivery.

Play has a key role in meeting the local priority areas of the CYP Plan and Cymorth of Safeguarding, Poverty and Substance Misuse and will be looking to achieve this in partnership with a range of local agencies and organisations.

In addition to the safeguarding measures identified within Chapter 4, Swansea's Play Strategy and play generally have been proven to have a positive impact on eradicating child poverty as part of Bridging the Policy Gap<sup>1</sup>, and a close connection between play and Social Inclusion.

While the responsibility for play development sits within the Community Regeneration service, the management of play areas lies with Culture & Tourism. Both benefit from their position within the Regeneration Department, although play impacts upon a range of services and, arguably all Directorates. Likewise, it should not be the case that other policy will contradict the sentiment of the strategy.

Provision of effective play spaces in housing developments, as part of Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act (1990) is one example in which several directorates contribute at different stages.

### **Swansea Play Partnership**

*Swansea's Play Partnership was established in 2004 and since then has played a major role in co-ordinating play within the City & County of Swansea area. The cross-cutting nature of play has lent itself well to partnership working, with representation from Social Services, Education, Environment, Parks and a range of voluntary sector organisations.*

An effective strategy and its resulting implementation can only occur with contribution by all potential partners. The Children and Young People's Play Strategy needs to be acknowledged by Heads of Service as contributing to their targets and priorities, and that their Services have contributions to make. Additionally, it must be able to demonstrate its links to other appropriate strategies, such as Health & Wellbeing, Transport, Community Safety, Sustainable Swansea and the Corporate Plan.

A co-ordinated approach will ensure effective use of resources to meet identified strategic priorities within this document. Consideration should be given to joined up working and use of locally allocated grants such as the Play Fund to streamline services pool resources and make effective use of limited Play funding. Core funding and external grants should be utilised as efficiently as possible, both in terms of being targeted correctly, and through maximising effectiveness.

## Recommendations

6.1 A clear reporting link from the Play Partnership to the CYP Executive Board must be identified

6.2 Play and its benefits needs to be recognised in all key policies relating to Children & Young People

6.3 No policy or strategic document produced by the City & County of Swansea should negatively impact upon the Play Strategy and the CYP Single Plan.

6.4 Dialogue is required between Regeneration and Social Services to ensure appropriate support for projects which cut across play and care or respite

6.5 There needs to be a Play 'Champion' who is a figurehead for play locally. This should be an officer at Service Head level or above, or a Ward Councillor.

6.6 The Children's Play Strategy progress needs to be effectively monitored

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## 7 Advocating for Play

While a child's right to play is largely recognised, the nature and content of play itself remains an issue that has shown to divide opinion locally. Play cuts across a range of Service agendas and this needs to be recognised.

A key factor for ensuring widespread understanding and recognition is advocacy. This involves providing a clear explanation of play and its benefits, as well as the many forms of play and play provision. This will ensure a consistency of understanding which is vital to securing support for play.

It is telling that 90% of Swansea children and young people want someone to tell adults how important play is. While 53% of respondents feel adults don't think play is important<sup>1</sup>.

In giving a voice to play, it is important to ensure that a voice is also being given to the children and young people themselves. They should be consulted and involved wherever possible and it is the responsibility of the professional to ensure that their views are given due consideration, particularly where they may conflict with the view or agenda of adults. All children and young people should be afforded the chance to contribute, regardless of age or individual need.

The value placed on play by all adults, but particularly parents, has a huge influence on a child/young person's opportunity to experience quality play opportunities. While all adults will have their own childhood play memories, it is often the case that valuing a child/young person's opportunity to play is secondary to other factors. Equally, types of play which they may have engaged in themselves, are now seen as either dangerous or otherwise inappropriate.

Play has a vital role in developing parent and child relationships. At play, families will build relationships, but also learn problem solving, achievement and have fun! It is recognised that some parents may benefit from being supported to engage with their children through play. Therefore information and events to promote family play should be encouraged.

### **The Play Promise!**

As part of the celebrations for National Playday 2008, the Children's Play Team launched 'The Play Promise'. The Promise was aimed at encouraging children and adults alike to recognise the importance of play and saw thousands signing up.



### **Play Champions**

Within Swansea's communities are many people who are passionate about the importance of play. They are often the best placed to advocate for local understanding and, as such, the Play Partnership has recognised several of these as 'Play Champions' who can spread the message of play and be consulted on key issues.

Open access play, regarded as key to child-centred provision, has been met with some reservations from parents and even from partner organisations. It is vital that work takes place locally to raise awareness of the meaning and benefits of open access play.

Play contributes to a range of agendas including Health & Wellbeing and this should be recognised. A child/young person who engages in varied play opportunities is more likely to be physically and psychologically healthy through being active, particularly if this includes access to the natural environment.

<sup>1</sup> Taken from consultation on Play Strategy with Swansea school children, Spring 2007

## Recommendations

- 7.1 All new Initiatives relating to local play provision or policy must evidence the contribution by children and young people in this development.
- 7.2 Positive images of play should be presented to parents and the wider community.
- 7.3 All members of the Play Partnership continue to advocate for Play
- 7.4 Opportunities to Champion for Play are formalised and available for community members
- 7.5 A marketing plan for the development of play should be produced
- 7.5 Support should be given to all local events that promote play, e.g. local celebrations for National Playday

### **Contributors**

Thank you to the following organisations which were involved in the consultation and development of the revised Children's Play Strategy;

The Children & Young People of Swansea, ABC Funclub, African Community Centre, Bonymaen Kids Play Initiative, City & County of Swansea Education/Regeneration/Social Services, Dynamix, Forest School, Interplay, Language & Play, Menter Iaith Abertawe, Minority Ethnic Women's Network, Play Partnership, PlayRight, Play Wales, Special Families Forward, St Helen's Primary School, Swansea Community Farm, Swansea Toy Library, Swansea Women's Aid, TOPIC House, Ty Fforest, Welsh Pre-School Play Association, Ysgol Crug Glas

# Appendix 1

## Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy 2002

*The Welsh Assembly Government believes that play:*

- is the elemental learning process by which humankind has developed. Children exhibit a behavioural imperative and instinctive desire to play. It has contributed significantly to the evolutionary and developmental survival of our species. Children use play in the natural environment to learn of the world they inhabit with others. It is the very process of learning and growth, and as such all that is learnt is of benefit to the child.
- encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental part of healthy development - not only for children, but for the society in which they live.
- is so critically important to all children in developing their physical, social, mental, emotional and creative skills that society should seek every opportunity to support it and create an environment that fosters it. Decision making at all levels of government should include a consideration of the impact of those decisions, on children's opportunities to play.
- is first and foremost the process of a child's own, self-directed learning and as such is a process that has a validity for all ages of children. It is such a vital component of a child's life that the child's capacity for positive development will be inhibited or constrained if denied free access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.
- It is the very freedom and child centredness of play that makes it such an effective and comprehensive learning process.

**This policy statement is predicated upon the principles that:**

- every child is entitled to respect for their own unique combination of qualities and capabilities;
- the perceptions of the child, their views and opinions should always be respected for each child is connected to, and a bearer of, a wider culture;
- the child's free choice of their own play is a critical factor in enriching their learning and contributing to their well being and development.

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

*It is committed to ensuring that all children have access to rich stimulating environments, free from inappropriate risk, and full of challenge, thereby offering them the opportunity to explore through freely chosen play both themselves and the world. The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that the impact of modern society on children's lives has significantly restricted their opportunity to play freely and has resulted in a poverty of play opportunities in the general environment. It is therefore committed to encouraging the creation of high quality 'compensatory' play provision that is appropriate, local, stimulating and challenging for all children in Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government commits itself to the development in partnership of a strategy that will set out the way in which the principles in this statement can be implemented.*

# Appendix 2

## 7 Core Aims

Every child has the right to....

1. have a flying start in life
2. have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities
3. enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation
4. have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities
5. are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised
6. have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing
7. not be disadvantaged by poverty

# Appendix 3

## Playwork Principles

These establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork and as such must be regarded as a whole. They describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people. They are based on the recognition that capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

1. All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well being of individuals and communities.
2. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
3. The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
4. For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.
5. The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
6. The playworkers' response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
7. Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
8. Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children to extend their play. All intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.

## Appendix 4

Objectives for Swansea City Council's Regeneration Department' is working on a Development Plan for its Play areas, based on four objectives;

- *Ensure the quality of Swansea play areas in terms of safety and play value*
- *Provide access to play areas for all children in the City & County of Swansea area*
- *Ensure community ownership*
- *Effectively utilise internal and external funding for play spaces*

### Glossary

**106 Agreement** - Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows a local authority to enter into a legally-binding agreement or planning obligation, with a land developer over a related issue. The obligation is sometimes termed as a 'Section 106 agreement'. This will generally include provision of recreation/play facilities.

**Adventure Playground** - An open access setting staffed by playworkers, with materials and support so children can build and adapt their play space to suit their own needs. It compensates for lack of natural space where children can play independently of adults.

**Care & Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW)** – The regulatory body responsible for registering care settings in line with Children Act requirements

**Closed Access** – Relates to a range of settings which differ from Open Access. These include full day, sessional and out of school care among others. While play may occur in these settings, their primary role is to provide care.

**Open Access** - Permanent or short-term provision, in a variety of settings with or without premises. Whilst the term Open Access applies to registered provision for children under 8 years, such provision usually caters for a wide age range, including those over 7. The purpose is to provide staffed play opportunities for children in the absence of their parents. Children are not restricted in their movements, other than where related to safety matters and are not prevented from coming and going as and when they wish. They have the freedom of choice as to what range of play they wish to undertake and with whom.

**Play Rangers** – Trained playworkers who facilitate informal play in open spaces

**Play Wales** – The national organisation for children's play in Wales. It is a charity which provides advice, support and guidance to playworkers & projects.

## Links to Key Policies

