

Play for Wales

Play news and briefing from the national charity for play

Issue 41 Winter 2013



Playful places



Contents

2	Editorial	11	Wales – A Play Friendly Place
3-5	News	12-13	General Comment
6	Play in Prison	14	Tim Gill interview
7	Hospital Play	15	Managing Risk in Play Provision Young Ambassadors
8	Play opportunities for Gypsy and Traveller children	16	Playworkers Forum National Occupational Standards
9	Playful museum		
10	Sandy Ground project		

Thank you

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

This issue of *Play for Wales*, as well as previous issues, is available to download at www.playwales.org.uk

Editorial

On 1 February 2013 the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted a General Comment that clarifies for States Parties (governments) worldwide the meaning and importance of Article 31 of the Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC).

As Marianne Mannello and I travelled to Geneva at the end of September to be part of the official launch of the General Comment, there was a sense that we were travelling to celebrate something quite special.

The launch did indeed have a celebratory air about it, but it was underpinned with a serious message – a recognition that it was actually the beginning of something ... of the next steps needed to make the right to play (and other rights enshrined in Article 31) a reality for children around the world. No longer would Article 31 of the UNCRC be the 'forgotten Article', as it had become to be known.

The launch attracted over 80 international delegates, all with passionate stories about why they were there and about the

children and young people they represented. The variety of organisations represented reminded us that playing happens anywhere that children and young people spend time and is highly important in most aspects of their lives. So as advocates for play it is important that we highlight the importance of providing for children's play in a range of places.

When she spoke Kirsten Sandberg, Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, reflected that whilst the Committee's work tends to focus on children living in areas of conflict, child abuse, exploitation and poverty there is an essential need for all of them to be able to play and that playing helps them cope with their environment; and in future the Committee will be increasing its focus on play.

In Geneva, colleagues from around the world wanted to know about the strides that Welsh Government and Welsh play providers have made in terms of children's play. It is clear that our achievements are admired, and to a point, envied. But we mustn't let that lead to complacency. Never have the eyes of the world been on us more.

The first part of the 'Play Sufficiency Duty' of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 has been commenced, now is the time for Welsh Government to set out the timetable for commencement of the second part of the duty – which requires local authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities in their area.

Wales, as part of the UK State Party, will report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva in 2015. Wouldn't it be fantastic if officials could report real evidence that the government's actions have enabled more children to access their right to play with a real sense that we have all been successful in making Wales a more play friendly place?

As children who helped to develop children and young people's resources to support the General Comment, so poignantly say, 'If we all take Article 31 more seriously, our lives will be so much happier and healthier.'

Mike Greenaway, Director



News

New Play Wales publications

Over the summer months Play Wales has published a series of new and updated information sheets as well as a toolkit aimed at supporting schools to use school grounds for playing out of teaching hours.

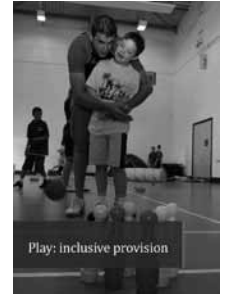
Play and risk

Written by Tim Gill this information sheet aims to set out why a balanced, thoughtful approach to managing risks in children's play is needed. It provides an overview of risk-benefit assessment, which is widely accepted as a suitable approach. It is a useful guide for a wide range of people who have an interest in children's play.



Play: inclusion and disability

Originally written in 2006 this information sheet has been updated by Di Murray to include practical considerations to take into account to ensure play environments are inclusive. It also includes the most up to date legislation and policies in relation to inclusion and disability.



Play and the early years

Written by Janet Moyles this information sheet explores what is play and its importance to and for children's development in the early years (birth to seven years old). It also explores the importance of adult roles, advocacy and the child's right to play.



Safeguarding children

Originally written by Sue Bradshaw in 2008 this information sheet has been updated to clearly set out practical ways of ensuring children's safety whilst playing within a wide range of situations; and ensuring that all parties involved understand and implement policies and procedures to safeguard children appropriately.



Play deprivation: impact, consequences and the potential of playwork

Written by Professor Fraser Brown this information sheet examines current evidence on the importance of play in children's lives and practical suggestions for overcoming play deprivation.



Use of school grounds for playing out of teaching hours

This toolkit has been designed to help head teachers, governors and local organisations to work together to consider making school grounds available to local children out of teaching hours.



It is designed to provide clear and concise information for school communities and their partners to assess the feasibility of making school grounds available for children's play out of teaching hours.

It considers a range of issues which need to be taken into account and includes quotes from head teachers and case studies which demonstrate a range of models. It also provides practical, step-by-step tools and templates to undertaking work linked to the opening of school grounds for playing out of teaching hours.

To develop this toolkit, Play Wales established and consulted with a focus group of head teachers and external stakeholders during the drafting process and used their questions, responses and experiences to address the most significant issues.

Role of adults in children's play

This information sheet provides support for adults involved in children's play in understanding how they can provide the best conditions with regard to space, place, time, resources and attitude for children to play. It supports adults in a wide range of situations in understanding their varying roles in providing for high quality play opportunities for children.



Inspiring learners: how to be a more effective trainer

This information sheet provides information on how playwork trainers and assessors can best support learners and increase the effectiveness of playwork training.



All of the publications are available to download for free at: www.playwales.org.uk/eng/publications

Active Travel (Wales) Bill 2013

The Minister for Culture and Sport, John Griffiths has passed the Active Travel (Wales) Bill, which will make walking and cycling safer in Wales. As a result of the Welsh Government Bill – considered to be a world first – a duty will be placed on local authorities to plan a network of walking and cycling routes and then work to deliver it.

Sustainable travel charity Sustrans Cymru has led the campaign for legislation on active travel in Wales over the last six years. National Director Jane Lorimer said:

'The passing of this legislation shows that Wales's leadership is serious about making walking and cycling the normal choice for more of our everyday shorter journeys ... change won't come overnight, but the framework is now in place to make us a cycling nation.'

www.wales.gov.uk

New playwork journal

Journal of Playwork Practice is a new interdisciplinary academic journal that aims to advance the study and practice of playwork practice. Published by Policy Press in association with Common Threads, *Journal of Playwork Practice* will include peer-reviewed papers by academics from a wide range of disciplines relevant to playwork practice. It will also include reflective essays from practitioners using playwork practice in a diverse range of international settings.

The first issue of the journal will be available – in print and online – in April 2014.

www.policypress.co.uk/journals_jpp.asp

Project Wild Thing

At Play Wales we are huge believers in getting children playing outdoors. That's why we're supporting *Project Wild Thing*. It's a major campaign aimed at reconnecting children with nature, supported by more than 300 organisations – including National Trust, RSPB and Play Wales.

The campaign launched in October with the release of a wonderful documentary, *Project Wild Thing*, which takes a humorous look at a rapidly growing problem: British children's disconnection from nature. It sees filmmaker and father, David Bond, take on the brands that consume a third of his daughter's life by appointing himself Marketing Director for Nature. Convinced that the outdoors is the best playground for children, he embarks on a nationwide marketing campaign to 'sell' nature to British families.

Watch the trailer at:

www.projectwildthing.com/film

To download the film, buy a DVD, or find a special community screening in your area visit: www.projectwildthing.com



Take the Wild Time pledge and swap some 'screen time' for 'wild time'. Become a Marketing Director for Nature this winter: brave the cold and get your children outdoors!

www.projectwildthing.com

A thank you to Margaret

Margaret Jervis MBE DL who has been the Chair of Play Wales' Board of Trustees since its inception in 1998 stood down at our recent AGM. The staff and Board offer a heartfelt thank you to Margaret for all her time, passion, dedication and support to the organisation and children's right to play in Wales; it has been a privilege to work with her.

Margaret has played a key part at a national level since the mid 80s and in Play Wales' exciting journey over the last 15 years – from the Welsh Government national Play Policy (2002); to being appointed by the then Minister for Health and Social Services Jane Hutt to chair the Play Policy Implementation Group that drew up recommendations for a government play strategy, to

developing the Playwork Principles (2005), to establishing the National Centre for Playwork Training and Education – Playwork Wales (2007), to hosting the International Play Association world conference (2011) and the commencement of the Play Sufficiency Duty as part of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

And to step into her impressive shoes, we welcome Dr Mike Shooter CBE, a retired Consultant Psychiatrist as the new Chair of the Play Wales Board of Trustees.

www.playwales.org.uk/eng/governance

Playday 2013 – playful places



Over 850,000 children and families went out to play at hundreds of Playday events across Wales and the rest of the UK in August.

Survey results released for Playday 2013 found that over 50% of adults reported playing out at least seven times a week when they were growing up, compared to less than a quarter of children (23%) today.

With 40% of children saying they want to play out more, it is clear that there has never been a better time to get out and play! We need

to support children and recognise that for their health, wellbeing and long-term development they need playful places and opportunities to play outside all year round.

Upon his visit to a Playday event at Morgan Jones Park in Caerphilly, Deputy Minister for Tackling Poverty Vaughan Gething AM said:

'Play is such an important part of our children's lives, helping them to grow both physically and emotionally. This event is a unique way to celebrate this. It is important that all of us remember that play is vital to a child's development and we must all make sure we give them every chance to do so.'

Playday 2014 will take place on Wednesday 6 August.



www.playday.org.uk

Spirit 2014 14/15 May 2014
Holiday Inn, Cardiff

For the latest information and to book a place visit:
www.playwales.org.uk/eng/spirit2014

New job

Following four years as Play Wales' Qualifications Co-ordinator Maria Worley has recently been appointed as a College Secretary at the YMCA Community College. She was responsible for the administration involved in providing our Playwork: Principles into Practice (P³) qualifications. We will continue to work closely with Maria and the YMCA College to provide P³ qualifications. Good luck in your new job Maria.

Swansea: first Welsh local authority to adopt UNCRC

Swansea has become the first local authority in Wales to adopt the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Councillors voted unanimously to adopt the UNCRC, which means a duty will be placed on the Council to have due regard to children and young people's rights in all its business.



An annual Children and Young People's Rights Scheme will be published to let people in Swansea know what the Council is doing to embed due regard and children's rights. The authority will work closely with Swansea University to ensure that what it is doing is both working and transparent.

www.swansea.gov.uk

Social Media



www.facebook.com/PlayWales



twitter.com/PlayWales

Play in prison

Christine Andrews works as a volunteer playworker and Trustee at a women's prison. Along with Social Services she was involved in setting up a play project for children visiting their mothers. Initially a prison governor was concerned about the noise the children made during visiting time and wanted a crèche. It was explained that what was needed was a play project, which was set up and has been extended to include a visitor centre. As a Trustee Christine has responsibility (with fellow Trustees) for managing the staff and the play project. Christine tells us about the play project that provides play opportunities during social visits and family fun days.

Have you ever visited a prison? They are intimidating places and for children particularly scary places. But if a parent, sibling or other relative is imprisoned children often want to visit to ensure they are okay and they will be missing that person.

So you are visiting a prison; you go through the gates, are searched, sniffed at by dogs and then go through a number of other gates and into a huge hall which has either fixed tables and chairs or four chairs with one a different colour. Prisoners enter wearing a band or jacket and they have to sit in a designated place and cannot get up. For the children visiting it is very different to seeing them at home, which can feel very restrictive.

Most social visits last for two hours and sitting for that length of time is difficult for children. This is why providing play in prison is so important – it helps the children to have something else to do.

In the prison where I work there are two playworkers in a small designated play area at the end of the Visits Hall. It is well equipped with play materials, games, arts material, dolls, and dressing up clothes. Children come and go from the play area and many will make cards or pictures for their mother to take back to her cell. Some will take puzzles or cards and play with their mother at the table, but many find it difficult to re-establish relationships in such a restricted setting. Some children also feel intimidated by

the constant movement of the prison officers around the hall.

Play is important for all children but by providing play opportunities in a prison setting it helps to relieve the stress the children may feel and provides them with some normality. In the play area children will meet other children who are in the same situation.

There are all sorts of constraints imposed by the prison. All play material has to be passed by the security – no scissors, play dough or sharp objects can be taken into the prison. The ages of the children and young people vary from a few days old to teenagers of 15 and 16 years old.

An estimated 150,000 children a year will have a parent in prison. This affects their lives significantly and yet often teachers, playworkers and childcare workers may not even be aware of the changes in a child's life. When a mother goes to prison the children are cared for by relatives or put into foster care, which results in a number of readjustments.

It is a very interesting and rewarding job but playworkers have to be very flexible to meet the variety of needs. All prisons need qualified playworkers but not all have them. SkillsActive has produced National Occupational Standards for playworkers working in prisons which will build upon the skills and standing of those working in play areas in those settings (see Playwork related National Occupational Standards article on page 16).



Hospital Play

Sue Reardon, the play co-ordinator of the play department at the Noah's Ark Children's Hospital for Wales in Cardiff tells us about the importance of play in hospitals. Sue started working as a nursery nurse at Llandough Hospital in 1989 and qualified as a play specialist in 1992.

For a child playing is normal, it is instinctive. As play is vital to a child's healthy growth and development it is acknowledged that when children undergo medical and surgical procedures, ensuring access to play is maintained carries even greater significance. Play bridges the gap between home and hospital.

Play allows a child to come to terms with, and work through, strange experiences; strange surroundings; separation; anxieties; pain and discomfort. The play specialist will provide a wide range of familiar toys and play activities, which can enable a child to express their emotions (fear, anxiety, anger for instance). The use of play in hospital also reassures the vulnerable child and the parents; it promotes good communication and builds trust with members of staff.

Hospital play can highlight any underlying anxieties for children of all ages and stages of development. The play specialist's observations and evaluations can give a valuable insight and enable other members of the multi-disciplinary team to have a better understanding of the child's needs.

Hospital play gives the child time to understand unpleasant procedures. Through the use of dolls for example, roles can be reversed helping the child to gain control and confidence, reduce anxiety and develop coping skills.

Many patients have to undergo painful procedures. The play specialist's aim is to reduce the trauma of these procedures by assessing the child's knowledge about their medical condition and what intervention will be required.

Preparing children for procedures is a large part of the play specialist's role. It enables the child to understand what is going to happen to them during the procedure and allows the play specialist to identify and rectify any misconceptions the child may have. It also enables the play specialist to provide information in advance of the procedure in a quiet, confident manner bringing reassurance to the child and the parents. The use of dolls, picture books and where appropriate the use of real equipment is a useful and practical aid to preparation for procedures.

Most children benefit from distraction techniques and it is essential for the play specialist to have a variety of distractional toys to be used when called upon. Examples for younger children include puppets, bubbles, glitter wands, surprise pop-up toys and books. For older children the play specialist may use guided imagery, relaxation techniques or chat to them about their favourite television programme, music or fashion.

The role of play specialist in a hospital setting is vital to the health and wellbeing of every patient in their care.

'Many of the feelings that hospitalised children have can be supported through appropriate intervention by the play specialist who is trained to understand the specific affects of hospitalisation and illness on the changing developmental needs of children.'

(Paediatric Nursing 2000: vol. 12, no. 7)

www.playwales.org.uk/eng/hospitalplay

For further information about hospital play and play specialist training visit:

National Association of Health Play Specialists: **www.nahps.org.uk**

Hospital Play Staff Education Trust: **www.hpset.org.uk**

Clown Doctors

Clown Doctors are professional performers who have been trained to work in hospitals and hospices. They work with medical staff and hospital play specialists in various hospitals and hospices across the UK and around the world to bring laughter and fun to children and their families. Clown Doctors use storytelling, music, improvisation and clowning to engage the children and to help them come to terms with their situation using humour and play.

Play opportunities for Gypsy & Traveller children

Play Wales is working with Save the Children Wales' Travelling Ahead project and Shirenewton Playgroup (Cardiff Childcare Service) to produce a guide to support local authorities to consider and include play and early years provision when developing new Gypsy and Traveller sites.

The Welsh Government is working to update the good practice guide on Site Design (which includes reference to play areas) under Objective 5 of the *Travelling to a Better Future Action Plan*, which states that 'The Welsh Government will revise and refine the Good Practice Guide in Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Wales.'

We would like the new guide to inform the Welsh Government guidance or sit alongside it.

Play Wales and the Travelling Ahead project have been approached at various times by early years, play and childcare providers, who voice concern that many Gypsy and Traveller children living on sites have inadequate access to safe play spaces and to appropriate facilities which will allow early years and family support services to be developed and delivered on site.

Gypsy and Traveller children have reported that they frequently face extreme racism making it harder



for them to participate in leisure activities. Gypsy and Traveller children told the National Assembly for Wales Children and Young People Committee's *Provision of Safe Places to Play and Hang Out* inquiry (2010) that they were often unable to access organised play activities because of the distance from their homes. They also felt that the locality of their homes restricted their access to safe places to play and that they were often only able to make friends with other travellers as they were cut off from a more mixed environment.

The guide will recognise that due to limited indoor space, the outdoor environment is particularly important to Gypsy and Traveller children. It will include good practice guidance for the development, design and management of outdoor space. It will highlight how investing in early years and play provision on sites can increase community and social cohesion, help children settle into new environments and alleviate parental concerns. It will also include key features of

successful early years provision, staffed outreach play provision on sites, and integration into existing provision.

It will be designed to support inclusive practice and the development of areas for children and young people to play and gather, especially if there isn't suitable provision within walking distance on a safe route.

The guide will support the bringing together of the opportunities presenting themselves in the new Housing Bill, which will place a duty on local authorities to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers where a clear need has been identified and the Play Sufficiency duties set out in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

The guide will be available in the new year.

www.travellingahead.org.uk

A more playful museum

Stuart Lester,
Senior Lecturer
in play and
playwork/
professional studies in
children's play at the
University of Gloucestershire
reports on a playful
experiment at Manchester
Museum.

A Visitor Services Assistant (VSA) at Manchester Museum approaches three children in the entrance hall and presents them with a precious and fragile dinosaur egg (a blown goose egg). She asks them if they would take it to the VSA on another gallery. The children smile as one of them takes the egg and flanked on either side by her friends they carefully climb the stairs, whispering and giggling amongst themselves. At some point they find the VSA and hand over the egg.

This is just one of many playful moments initiated by the team of VSA's following their enthusiastic participation in a collaborative action research project, with support from the Happy Museum programme, designed to test and exploit the correlation between playing and wellbeing within museums.

The intention of the project was to open up museum space for more playful use by children. Rather than focus on segregated spaces and adult designed activities

Manchester Museum recognised the potential of the entire museum environment as a place where children's play might emerge. To initiate this perspective change, a programme of staff development and support was designed that invited the VSA's to view children's presence in galleries through a playful lens. This approach acknowledged the possibility that the VSA's could be affected and enchanted by moments of playfulness, and that, with practice and deliberation, could distinguish more subtle movements and affects with associated children's co-creation of play spaces.

Following this initial period, consideration was given to ways in which VSA's might develop spatial cues to enhance the playful moments. The intention was to design for creativity to simply see 'what might happen if...?', and represented through the phrase 'playful surprises'. For example, a VSA laid down a length of kitchen roll along the middle of the gallery floor and stood back to observe what might happen. One child wandered alongside, asking his father 'What is this for?' and receiving a reply 'I don't know'. Shortly afterwards, another child started to walk along the roll, careful to both stay on the paper and also not to tear it. More children followed, and as they reached the end turned around and started to walk back.

This created a further challenge as children moving in opposite directions now had to negotiate their way past each other.

Significantly, the VSA's growing confidence to experiment to see what might happen led to an intuitive intention to open up space to more playful possibilities, some of which began to relate to the sense of wonder afforded by the exhibits and gallery spaces. Perhaps more significantly the VSA's remarked on attitudinal changes to children's playful presence and an increase in their own levels of enjoyment, enchantment and relaxation.

A greater understanding of play is embedded with a more playful approach occurring in both the formal and informal activities within the museum. As with the children carrying the egg, it cannot return to where it was. Habitual ways of perceiving children and the production of museum space have been re-configured, leaving space for further playful disturbance.

For more information about the project contact:

Stuart Lester: slester@glos.ac.uk

Anna Bunney,
Curator of Public Programmes at
Manchester Museum:
anna.bunney@manchester.ac.uk

Charlotte Derry:
charlotte@moreplayfulplaytimes.org

www.happymuseumproject.org

The Sandy Ground Project

Those of us involved in playwork and play provision know full well the important role that play spaces have in supporting children to feel part of their own community and reduce social isolation. From time to time, we hear of others who understand this importance and are striving to make the lives of children better by providing for their play. We caught up with Bill Lavin, the founder of The Sandy Ground Project in the United States.



Bill's story starts at the time of the attacks on the World Trade Centre in September 2001. As a fire captain in New Jersey, he and his colleagues were called upon to respond to these emergencies. Soon after, letters

and cards, intended to 'cheer the fire fighters up' piled in from a class of school children in Mississippi, whose teacher was the niece of one of Bill's colleagues.

Four years later, Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Mississippi coastline, and remembering the kindness of that class of children, the New Jersey State Firefighters' Mutual Benevolent Association raised funds to support children affected by the hurricane. When Bill visited a school to see what the funds had been used for, he realised that the children were desperate for a playground and he and twenty other fire fighters built three accessible play areas on the coast of Mississippi.

Last autumn, Hurricane Sandy struck the Eastern coast of America, causing severe damage to parts of New Jersey, New York and Connecticut. The New Jersey fire fighters were busy supporting efforts to rebuild the New Jersey shore, when news of the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Connecticut reached them. Soon after, Bill received an email from a nine year old girl in Mississippi thanking him for building the playground for her and her friends five years previously. Bill was reminded that the playgrounds



were far more than just structures – they helped children to avoid being 'dragged down' by adult issues, such as insurance claims. He came up with the idea of rebuilding the coast in honour of the children and teachers killed in Newtown by building playgrounds in their memory.

The Sandy Ground Project aims to build 26 playgrounds, which will be a memorial to the victims of the shooting. All 26 families of the Newtown shooting victims support the project and have had design input into the plans for the playgrounds that will honour their family member.

Jen Hubbard, who's daughter Catherine was one of the victims of the shooting, said,

'Breaking ground and realising that kids are going to be playing here sooner rather than later means there's hope that we are going to be okay – because the kids are going to laugh and they are going to run around and they are going to play. For the community, this is where we can learn to be happy again.'

Reflecting on his experience, Bill said,

'I think these playgrounds will help people feel less isolated. Our big message is that we need to support children to spontaneously play, to support them to be kids again and to recapture and celebrate childhood.'

The playgrounds are being built through community involvement, volunteering and fundraising. Patti Dickens, the Founder of the RAINE Foundation, which funded one of the playgrounds said, *'Devastation, destruction and despair are words that the Foundation had been hearing since October 29, 2012...Many homes washed away. But everyone realises that this is nothing compared to losing a child. The Sandy Ground playground symbolises hope – hope for a family who were devastated by the loss of a child, and hope for a community which lost so much.'*

Wales A Play Friendly Place

Wales – A Play Friendly Place is a Play Wales campaign to help build a network of support for play across Wales. Share what's happening locally which is either protecting or prohibiting children's right to play on the Facebook campaign page. Here is an example of a project that is contributing to developing friendly places for playing children.

Shirenewton playgroup in Cardiff opened in February 2006 and has since developed into valued childcare provision, providing play opportunities for two to four year olds on a Gypsy and Traveller site.

The importance of play within this community is very high, and the support that families can access through the provision is extremely valuable in meeting the needs of this vulnerable ethnic minority.

Having quality early years experiences supports children to settle in new environments. This provides support for the transition into school, allowing the children to understand the social 'rules' when outside of the family unit and to form relationships with their peers and new adults.

The playgroup provides opportunities for the children to enjoy challenging experiences, investigating and discovering for themselves thus becoming independent learners. The setting helps children to build confidence and self-esteem; the play is personally directed and the children are encouraged to participate in a range of activities that are intrinsically motivated.

The children attending are encouraged to take part and develop an interest for learning.

Due to the nature of the homes of Gypsy and Travellers storage space is limited and families are not always able to provide a wide range of resources to support children's play. Being able to access quality early years provision has a huge benefit for the children.

The development of an outdoor area for the playgroup has been hugely beneficial – members of staff have observed the positive effect it has on the children's behaviour at the setting. The new opportunities for learning and increased physical play have greatly reduced the display of negative behaviour, especially in the boys.

A muddy kitchen, builder's yard and friendly space (den) form part of the outdoor area on a regular basis. Construction and small world resources, as well as paint, glue and materials are also on offer both in the outdoor and indoor environments. Children are encouraged to be active learners through their play, with support from the staff.

Qualified, passionate and enthusiastic professionals are

employed and are essential to ensure quality provision is provided in the setting. Members of staff understand the need to be nurturing and supportive of each child's needs. Each session is evaluated and staff are encouraged to be reflective about their own practice and are supported in their professional development.

on.fb.me/playfriendlyplace



The right to play

worldwide campaign

On 30 September 2013 the International Play Association (IPA) launched a worldwide campaign to build awareness and understanding of the importance of play in the life of all children. It aims to break down the increasing barriers in children's living conditions that have a negative impact on children's space and time for play.

The catalyst for this campaign is the adoption of the General Comment on Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

At a special launch symposium in Geneva, Switzerland (the symbolic home of the United Nations) children's rights experts and advocates, representatives of non-governmental organisations and dignitaries from 18 countries around the world joined the IPA, Bernard van Leer Foundation and members of the UN Committee. Speakers included the Chair of the UN Committee of the Rights of the Child, Kirsten Sandberg, who welcomed the General Comment and assured the symposium that the Committee would be considering how it would use the recommendations it makes in Concluding Observations to worldwide governments to promote and protect the right to play.

Article 31 of the UNCRC covers the child's right to play, to rest and leisure and to engage in arts and culture.

Speaking from Geneva, Theresa Casey, President of IPA said:

'Without play, rest and participation other rights of children cannot be fully realised. We really hope that today marks the day, which ends the naming of Article 31 as the most forgotten, neglected, misunderstood article of the UNCRC. Instead today will mark the day that we begin a worldwide campaign for children's right to play.'

Children and young people resources

To support the campaign Play Wales was asked by IPA to produce child friendly resources to promote Article 31 that will help children (and adults) understand the key messages of the General Comment. We engaged with groups of children and young

people to develop resources to describe the scope of Article 31. As part of the resources cartoonist Les Evans produced a universal symbol to promote the right to play. The resources also include a postcard, an A3 poster and an A4 poster with the key messages.

When undertaking this work we referred to the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales. The seven standards aim to improve the process of children and young people's participation in decision-making. They promote the participation of children and young people in making decisions, planning and reviewing any action that will affect them.

Briefly this is how we responded to the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales.

Information – using text developed by IPA during the General Comment drafting process we worked with a small group of young people to make it accessible. We used this text with every group and amended it along the way, removing words that were not easily understood.

Choice – the starting point for each discussion was the image of the universal symbol, which would be used as a 'logo' for the campaign. All of the groups we engaged with asked for text as part of the resources. When asked about the





'Governments must find ways to get rid of the things that get in the way of play. If governments take all of this seriously our lives will be happier and healthier.'

Children and young people get something out of it – as well as active involvement in the development of resources of international significance, with key links to the UNCRC, participants received copies of our 'Play in your Community' poster and 'I have the right to play' wristbands – specially commissioned wristbands to celebrate the child's right to play.

Feedback – Cynthia Gentry, Communications Officer for IPA, said, 'I LOVE it! It is the perfect amount of text and images. Please tell the children they did a great job.' Play Wales will share the feedback received during visits to the groups that requested feedback about the process. A certificate of thanks will also be presented to participants.

Improving how we work – it is good practise to continue to improve how we work with children and young people by asking them to evaluate our work. Play Wales will manage this through the preferred method of the groups, either in person during feedback sessions or through an online survey.

The children and young people's resources will be available to download at: www.ipaworld.org

www.playwales.org.uk/eng/generalcomment

To produce the children and young people's resources Play Wales worked with the following groups: Artworks – Valleys Kids youth arts project; Bishopston Playscheme; Caerphilly Youth Forum; Ceredigion Heritage Youth Panel; Mencap Cymru Young Ambassador Play Our Way Project; and UNA Exchange international volunteers.

For more information about the groups visit:

www.playwales.org.uk/eng/article31resources

need for text, one young woman responded, 'I need words and nice pictures. Sometimes it's hard for me to find the words I need when I'm talking to adults about how things could be easier for me.'

No discrimination – because this project was taking place during the school holidays, we were clear from the outset that participants would be free to join or leave the process if they wished. We also ensured that we engaged with groups that are involved in activities described in the whole of Article 31, not just those attending play sessions. We ensured, as far as possible, that the text and images are appropriate and understandable in different parts of the world and for children in different circumstances.

We were careful not to use language and images which are too fleeting or too euro/western-centric.

Respect – we wanted to ensure that what we produced makes sense and is valued by children and young people. The feedback from all of the groups was analysed and reasonable amendments were made to the resources we provided to the International Play Association.

Children and young people unequivocally asked for the key messages in the text to be written from their perspective. This change undoubtedly makes the resources stronger, more meaningful and hard to ignore. One of the most powerful messages is a call to action for governments:

An interview with Tim Gill

We chat to childhood expert and co-author of *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide*, Tim Gill about play safety, a risk-averse society and risk-benefit assessment in play.

Can you tell us a little bit about what led to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) producing the high-level statement on play and your involvement?

The story behind the HSE statement is that the idea of risk-benefit assessment has been around in play for four or five years and came up through the *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide*. Then when the new government came in [to power] there was a promise of a broad review of health and safety. Those of us that were involved in play safety felt that it was time to get stronger support and clear support from the new government for a more balanced and thoughtful approach to risk.

Play England, Play Wales and others, lobbied the coalition government through the Young Review to secure a commitment to promote risk-benefit assessments. The Young Review came out with a really clear action point and then it was given to the HSE. The HSE was given the job of promoting risk-benefit assessment and that's where the statement came from.

Why was the high-level statement needed and what is it intended to do?

You could say that we already had the *Managing Risk* guide, the HSE had given its endorsement to the guide – there is a nice paragraph in the guide from the HSE saying that we support this. But it's a different thing to have a document with the

Health and Safety Executive logo on it. Health and safety officers are aware of the difference between a statement from the HSE and them saying nice things about someone else's statement. So the difference that it makes in a nutshell, is that it has more clout because it has come from the health and safety police and not from a group of organisations.

In your keynote presentation at our Spirit 2013 conference you spoke about recent policy developments and guidance like *Managing Risk* and the high-level statement. What difference have these made on the ground and to decision makers?

In the conference room when I asked how many people had come across *Managing Risk* maybe 60 percent to 70 percent of the audience said yes. Then I asked people about risk-benefit assessment and how many were using it. Again a good proportion said yes. So people are using this process particularly within playwork and my sense is that people feel that it is a better process and that it is helping people make better judgment on the ground. We have some examples of services that are making more adventurous offers; they are offering kids the chance to climb trees or they are taking a more relaxed approach to children organising activities for themselves and playground designers are being more creative and producing more adventurous environments. So you can actually go and see these things happening.

In your book *No Fear* you refer to a risk averse society. Do you think this has peaked and what has influenced or caused this?

I think it has peaked. I think we are seeing this in a number of

areas. We could also look at the UK government scaling down the bureaucracy on vetting and safeguarding; a number of people were really worried about the big database and systems being proposed and we have rode back from that so I think we have reached a high water mark with anxiety around risk.

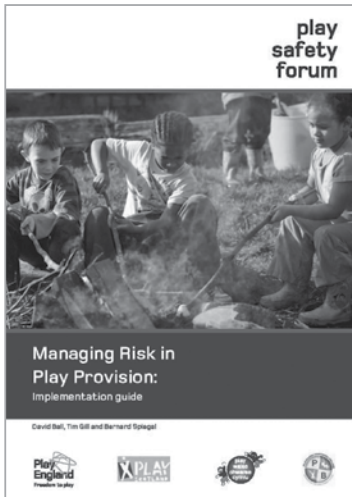
Why that has happened I'm not entirely sure. It may just be that it couldn't get any worse or it may just be one of those things that goes in cycles. I would like to think that my advocacy and the advocacy of Play Wales and actually quite a growing band of authors, artists, sports people, politicians and even the media have all played a role. The media is actually very interesting; it faces both ways on risk now.

You still hear the horror stories and the scaremongering but you also find a lot of coverage in the media of them giving risk averse local authorities, councils and schools a hard time. All of those are encouraging signs.

We were impressed with how the media handled the April Jones case in Machynlleth – the media didn't blame her parents for allowing her to play outside.

I think that's right and that's a good example, but lets hope that it comes back to this idea that people have realised what we lose if we are completely paranoid about 'what might happen if ...' and all the bad things. Kids get a worse childhood and this comes back down to what is our vision of a good enough childhood and it is one which allows for uncertainty, allows for adventure and allows for challenge which means allowing for risk.

Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide



Written by David Ball, Tim Gill and Bernard Spiegel

The Play Safety Forum has produced a new edition of *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide* to help strike a balance between the risks and the benefits of offering children challenging play opportunities.

It shows how play providers can replace current risk assessment practice with an approach that fully takes into account the benefits

to children and young people of challenging play experiences.

The guide is aimed at those responsible for managing play provision, and will be useful for those who manage spaces and settings in which children play, and for those involved in designing and maintaining them.

www.playwales.org.uk/eng/managingrisk

Young Ambassadors

In her inspirational closing presentation to a recent Play Wales conference, Ally John, an inclusion and challenging disability advocate and trainer, called for more adventurous activities for disabled children that allowed them to take risks and risk assess for themselves.

This echoes what Young Ambassadors for Mencap Cymru told us when we met with them this summer. The Ambassadors were part of Play Our Way, a Mencap Cymru project funded by Children in Need, which supported young people with a learning disability to socialise independently of their families – an elusive pastime for many disabled young people.

'Really, what I want is to make friends and take part in what's going on where I live.'

'I really liked having the chance to free run and go rafting. I'm normally over protected and it was good to do something that felt out of control.'

'I enjoy having time to be away from my family, I felt grown up.'



'I like doing things that scare me (white water rafting), it's scary but after I feel relieved.'

Pupils attending special schools often speak of their love for school – school provides access to friends whereas weekends and holidays can often be lonely.

Often providers of play and recreation opportunities will present problems: insurance, capacity, experienced staff. All understandable reasons but they serve only to disguise the real barrier to inclusion – fear. Many are worried that inclusion will impact on the group, others fear about their ability to adequately support a disabled child to take part, others still fear about parental worries; and finally fear of litigation should something go wrong.

In a recent blog reflecting on the views of young people engaged in the Play our Way project, Sian Davies from Mencap Cymru wrote:

'Attitudes are a problem, but it would be disingenuous to imply this is purely about leisure providers. The reality is, people with a learning disability are constantly being protected, both

by professionals and parents. This is understandable, but we need to be upfront that the consequences can sometimes lead to segregation.

'And this brings us back to fear. Instructors are afraid because they have little understanding or experience, parents are afraid because they're unsure instructors have real understanding and the young people themselves are terrified because they feel ill equipped to deal with new situations independently.

'Including [disabled] people requires some imagination, flexibility, and self-confidence; one-off training courses are rarely sufficient. Instructors need to spend time with individuals to understand their needs; this is true if you have a disability or not. We need to be willing to accept disabled people into mainstream activities. And they, their parents and our clubs and leisure centres need to be willing to take a risk.'

www.mencap.org.uk/wales/projects/play-our-way



Playworkers Forum 2013

This year's Playworkers Forum took us north once again to the lovely Gladstone Campsite, near Hawarden in Flintshire. Over 40 playworkers from across Wales attended.

The first day opened with Fraser Brown, Professor of playwork at Leeds Metropolitan University speaking inspirationally about the history and foundations of playwork bringing it to life with compelling examples of how a playwork approach has positively affected some of the most abused and play deprived children of Romanian orphanages in which he has worked.

Participants took part in three workshops designed to consider in detail our roles and responsibilities as playworkers, whether we regularly work face to face or have a more strategic or developmental

role and how this all interrelates with the Playwork Principles.

Day two ensured learners were up to a lively start with some group games before separating into two workshops. Ben Greenaway led a detailed session unpicking the Playwork Principles, looking at them from a fresh perspective whilst the remaining participants braved the inclement weather to hone their practical skills at building temporary play structures with Dafydd Myrddin Hughes.

The Playworkers Forum continues to show that opportunities for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) are crucial for playworkers and that networking and group reflection underpin an event like this. Delegates praised the structure and pace of the event but most significant was the opportunity to meet playworkers from other projects

and parts of the country and share experiences and good practice.

Would you be interested in contributing to the Playworkers Forum?

The Playworkers Forum is organised by a steering group representing a number of organisations from across Wales and each year the group aims to meet the needs of the sector.

For the 2014 Playworkers Forum the steering group is keen to hear from anyone who has experience of delivering playwork training/facilitating workshops who would like to develop a workshop suitable for this event.

If you are interested in delivering a workshop for the 2014 Playworkers Forum please contact Ben Greenaway for an expression of interest form – ben@chwaraeplant.org.uk

Next year the event returns to South Wales; further details will be available nearer the time.

Playwork related National Occupational Standards

SkillsActive

Last year, in response to requests from employers, SkillsActive (the sector skills council for playwork) gained funding to develop additional national occupational standards (NOS) covering playwork in some of the less traditional settings where play takes place: women's refuges, prisons, and indoor play areas.

NOS describe what a competent person should know, understand and be able to do for a particular job role. Although they are used by awarding organisations and sector skills councils as the basis for qualifications, and that is possibly how they are best-known, they have many other useful applications. So while SkillsActive works towards having them

approved for awarding bodies to include in their qualifications, here are some ideas about how to put these standards into practice.

Carry out play in a women's refuge recognises the very specialist work undertaken by playworkers in this type of setting, supporting children emotionally and working with adults in refuges to recognise the children's needs, and to provide support. This unit could be used to form the basis of a job description and person specification for the recruitment of play staff at a refuge, or as the foundation for a supervision and appraisal process for existing play staff.

Carry out playwork in prisons covers the role of a playworker in planning and implementing play opportunities for children and young people visiting a parent or relative in prison. It includes

the understanding of working in a restricted and stressful environment while ensuring that prison rules and regulations are followed. This unit, aimed at the playworker in charge, could be used to develop induction training or even an induction checklist.

Contribute to the operation of an indoor play centre is relevant to work in a range of indoor spaces for play including family entertainment centres and enclosed play settings. Amongst other functions, it covers facilitating children's parties and interaction with parents, and could be used to inform a job description for work in this area or used as the standard in the performance review process.

www.skillsactive.com/our-sectors/playwork