



**Partneriaeth Plant a Phobl Ifanc Conwy  
Conwy Children & Young People's Partnership**

# Conwy Children and Young People's Partnership

## Play Strategy

“Working in partnership for all children’s right to play”

### 2010-2013

## Consultation document

**Please send written consultation responses by Friday 20<sup>th</sup> August 2010 to:  
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# 1. Introduction

*“This strategy is fully supported by the agencies and organisations which make up Conwy Children and Young People's Partnership. Conwy Children and Young People's Partnership is committed to ensuring that all children and young people in Conwy can access their fundamental right to play.*

*Conwy Children and Young People's Partnership Board*

In the National Play Policy (2002), the Welsh Assembly Government defines play as *“children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated”*. That is, it is what children do when they follow their own ideas for their own reasons. It is neither structured nor directed by adults. With this play strategy Conwy formally adopts the National Play Policy and it's recognition of the importance of play in children's lives.

Given time and space, children will play. It is their natural behaviour and the way in which children learn about the world around them and develop strategies for coping with uncertainty in order to be flexible, resilient individuals. In *Play for a Change - a review of contemporary perspectives* (Play England 2008), the authors challenged the view that play is all about preparation for adulthood and provided a wealth of evidence to suggest that playing is more about what it does for children now as individuals, rather than how it develops skills for them to be better adults;

*“there is a need to move away from an instrumental view of play that Play for a Change has found in much policy and practice, and towards a recognition that the benefits of play accrue from its characteristics of unpredictability, spontaneity, goallessness and personal control, rather than directly from it's content”*

In other words, national and local policy has tended to encourage the use of play as a tool to develop specific skills perceived to be important in adult life and in so doing, sometimes taken away the spontaneity of playing that is it's own unique and vital feature.

In Conwy we believe that developing opportunities for children to experience freely chosen play experiences within their communities is an area of critical importance. Furthermore, that the barriers to children playing are similar across demographic areas, from rural to urban and across socio-economic differences. To deprive children of playing is to deprive them of fundamental experiences that contribute to their physical and emotional well-being and should be considered as an area of child poverty.

The play strategy sets out how Conwy Children and Young People's Partnership will secure children and young people's right to play through the development of staffed and unstaffed play provision and, most critically, through working together to address the barriers to children accessing their right to play in their communities.

This strategy refers to children and young people in Conwy aged 0 -25.

## **What we want to achieve**

We want Conwy to be a place where the right to play is recognised for every child and young person and that proactive steps are taken to ensure time and space is made for playing.

In Conwy there are 3 key aims of the play strategy:

- I. To address organisational attitudes to children's play to better understand children's play behaviour and how to best support it.
- II. To address barriers within children's communities that unduly restrict their time and space to play
- III. To provide compensatory, inclusive play provision where children's time and space to play is compromised.

We recognise that play is a right for all children in Conwy and that the best way to safeguard that right is through continued partnership working with all agencies, organisations and individuals in Conwy whose work impacts on children and young people or the communities and spaces in which they find themselves. This strategy aims to ensure these stakeholders recognise the impact they have on children's freedom to play and work together to address the barriers highlighted within this document.

Finally, we recognise the link between resilient communities and resilient individuals and foresee a future in Conwy where ALL children and young people can be visible participants within the life of their communities through playing.

## 2. Why we have a Play Strategy

### i) Children, young people and families in Conwy



*“In the community I live in, we have been told off for playing in our street so many times by one of the neighbours that the younger kids have learnt not to bother playing out at all . . .” (Young Person, age 15)*

*“Other adults are so concerned about their cars and getting to their houses quickly that they think children should not be allowed to play out near their homes . . .” (Parent, Colwyn Bay)*

### ii) Children and young people’s rights

The right to play is enshrined within Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which states *“Parties recognise the right of the child to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.”* Furthermore, because the play strategy recognises children’s right to be out playing with friends in their own communities Article 15 of the UNCRC is also of prominence: *“Parties recognise the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.”*

The play strategy impacts specifically on core aim 4 of the 7 core aim for children and young people which states children should *“have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities”*. However, as playing is what children do throughout childhood and in any spaces in which they find themselves, we recognize the impact that quality play opportunities have on all 7 of the core aims (see annexe 2).

### iii) National and local context

In November 2009 the National Assembly passed new legislation under the Children and Families Measure which will introduce a statutory duty to secure sufficient play opportunities for children and young people within a local authority area. This Play Strategy is the key policy document in Conwy intended to define how organisations and departments in Conwy are working together to secure sufficiency of play opportunities.

Through the legislative framework made available to the Welsh Assembly Government by the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 and the Child Poverty Act 2010 the government vision is to eradicate child poverty by 2020. There is recognition not only within this legislation but also within the draft Child Poverty Strategy, that poverty of play experiences is a critical target area in addressing child poverty.

In 2002 the Welsh Assembly Government published the National Play Policy, the first national play policy to be adopted by any government in the UK. This policy document defined play and

recognised the vital importance of play in children's lives and the wider impact on society as a whole;

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

The play policy was followed in 2006 by the Play Policy Implementation Plan which sets out how the Welsh Assembly Government will realise the vision set out in its play policy.

Furthermore the importance of play in children's healthy development and well-being is realised through numerous key policy documents in Wales. Most notably Climbing Higher – Creating an Active Wales, the National Service Framework for Children Young People and Maternity Services and the Foundation Phase curriculum in schools.

The development of this strategy is a key outcome under the Conwy Children and Young People's plan 2008-2011, under core aim 4 which states: “Deliver and implement a local play strategy.

Annexe 1 contains further references to national and local policy context.

### **3. The Delivery of Play within Conwy**

*“I don’t think there should be any ‘No Ball Games Signs”  
(Young Person, Conwy)*

Conwy Children and Young People’s Plan sets out the Partnership’s strategic direction for play under Core Aim 4.

The Core Aim Group 4L (a sub-group to the Children and Young People’s Partnership), which includes representatives from a number of partner agencies and organisations, is responsible for monitoring this strategy.

*“Have access to safe play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities and information”*

Responsibility for implementing and reviewing the play strategy action plan sits with the Principal Play Officer.

Sections 3.1 to 3.8 highlights play strategy objectives against the barriers to children and young people playing identified through local and national consultations. This section is supported by additional information in Annexes 1-5.

#### **3.1 The Infrastructure for play development in Conwy**

*“We need to ensure play is high on the agenda of all organisations who work with children and young people” (Professional, Conwy)*

Conwy Voluntary Services Council currently employs a part-time Principal Play Officer whose key role is the development and implementation of the play strategy. This post is funded through the Cymorth fund and therefore will end on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2011.

Conwy CBC Active and Creative Lifestyles Department are the grant recipient for the BIG Lottery North West Wales Play Forum (NWWPF) Infrastructure project which employs two regional play development officers one of whom is employed to cover Conwy and North Gwynedd to develop networks and a training infrastructure for playwork in North West Wales. This project ends on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011.

Conwy CBC Active and Creative Lifestyles Department are the grant recipient for a regional play ranger project on behalf of NWWPF through the BIG Lottery Child’s Play Programme. This project will place 3 teams of play rangers into communities in Conwy, Gwynedd and Ynys Môn to resource and facilitate play opportunities and work within communities to address barriers to children playing. This project will provide limited provision but is intended to demonstrate a value for money model of staffed playwork provision that could be adopted locally. This 3.5 year project will also employ a project co-ordinator.

In order to respond to the play objectives within the Children and Families Measure, Child Poverty Strategy, Creating an Active Wales and to fully realise the aims and objectives within this strategy, it is vital to maintain a strategic play officer role within Conwy. The impact of a strategic officer could be significantly increased given the presence of play development worker(s) who could work closely with community groups to support community ownership, voluntary sector play delivery, funding support and bring critical added value to the play rangers project.

There is currently £86,000 of funding contributed from core budgets and town and community council's towards running the summer play scheme provision. A phased approach to developing year-round community led play provision utilising some of this funding towards play development staff would provide greater play provision within communities where it is needed most. This would mean a less intense model of provision during the summer holidays but would echo good practice models that have been developed in Wrexham where year-round voluntary sector play provision is predominant.

In addition, given the links between poverty of play experience and child poverty combined with the current lack of play specific provision in Conwy, funding released as part of the child poverty strategy could be allocated to a play development project specifically to focus on addressing the 5-years objectives of this play strategy.

As the strategic lead on play within Conwy, the core aim group 4L facilitates a play sub-group to address issues specifically relating to play and play development on its behalf. The strategic impact of such a group could be maximised through a wider membership including community representation. This would ensure information is fed from community based play providers via the Core Aim 4 group to the Children and Young People's Partnership Board.

There are currently good working relationships with the other regional play forum in North Wales, NEW Play who work across the counties of Flintshire, Wrexham and Denbighshire. There are significant benefits to maintaining and developing these links particularly in relation to play training and promoting a united voice for North Wales on a national level.

## **Objectives**

**3.1.1 – Secure funding for a full-time strategic play development officer to be the lead on implementing the play strategy and be a key link in addressing new duties relating to play under the Children and Families (Wales) Measure**

**3.1.2 – Consider the addition of further play development staff to work closely with communities in developing community based play provision.**

**3.1.3 – Maintain and develop representation on North West Wales Play Forum to promote cross-regional working and sharing of good practice**

**3.1.4 – Develop the membership of the play sub-group to a more representative play forum**

**3.1.5 – Develop links with NEW Play in relation to regional play development.**

## 3.2 Addressing the barrier of traffic and vehicles in residential areas

*“The cars get in the way of us playing but no one tells them off” (Young Person, Colwyn Bay)*

The rise in car use has made a significant impact on children’s freedom to play out within their communities. When children are young in particular, their first experiences of playing out are often in the residential streets nearest to their homes where parents can keep a watchful eye on them. These early experiences give children valuable coping mechanisms once they have the freedom to roam further. In some cases, residential streets are so busy with cars that the only option is for children to go further to nearby parks or quieter streets but then busy roads can provide an obstacle to gaining access to play spaces. Similarly in rural areas, increased traffic on roads with often narrow or non-existent footpaths is a barrier to children moving around safely within their communities.

In some cases residential areas also feature ‘No Ball Games’ signs in order to safeguard vehicles and property within the street. Whilst this notion is entirely understandable, the concept of ‘no ball games’ is synonymous with ‘no children’. A recent trend in Wales is to offset the impact of No Ball Games signs or remove them completely to be replaced with ‘play priority area’ signs that can redirect children to a dedicated play space. Similarly, ‘slow children playing’ signs can give a message to drivers that children are likely to be playing out in the streets near their homes.

Safer-routes is a UK-wide initiative that focuses on developing safer routes to schools and playing fields and links closely with community based purposeful routes. Developing links between play development and highways and infrastructure is a key aim if we are to promote safe ways for children to access local places to play. Similarly, ‘playable routes’ is a term used to describe safe routes that have been specifically designed to have some inherent play value, this could be as simple as running near a stream or through trees where children can climb and build dens.

DIY Streets is a pilot project from Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity where communities work together with the local authority, housing associations, tenants and residents and community safety partnerships to implement simple measures that make residential streets more liveable. This includes traffic calming measures, community gardens, reconfiguring parking arrangements and including features that are attractive to children. This can be as simple as multi-purpose seating that can be both sat on and climbed on.

Encouraging communities to run street parties is a simple way to get communities working together in the interests of getting children out and developing inter-generational relationships. Sometimes if a positive relationship has been formed, when certain play behaviour becomes an issue it can be easier for the community to resolve it without the need for outside intervention. A small grants scheme to purchase basic resources alongside a community toolkit could support communities to close residential streets for the day to traffic and host a street play party. Simple resources such as chalks for street drawing, cardboard boxes for building and ropes for skipping can give a firm message that children are allowed to play and begin to develop a positive image of children within their communities.

### **3.2.1 –Establish ways in which play can be incorporated further in to safer routes/ community based purposeful routes**

### **3.2.2 – Support communities to reclaim their streets for children’s play**

### 3.3 Addressing the barrier of adult perceptions of children's play

*“Older people misunderstand us and phone the police when we're out on the street . . .  
It's like they've forgotten what it's like to be kids”  
(Young person, 14)*

When asked as part of the consultation process about barriers to their play, the single biggest influence stated by children and young people has been adults in their community who persistently move them on. When asked about THEIR play experiences as children adults have told us consistently about climbing trees, building dens, scrumping, setting fires, trespassing and playing knock and run. This suggests that children's play behaviour has not necessarily changed but that attitudes to play have and that 20 years ago, there was more space for children to play away from the eyes of adults.

There are a number of ways in which adult perceptions can be addressed, the addition of playworkers into communities can help to build positive relationships and act as advocates for children's play, this is dealt with in more detail in section 3.8 – a playwork response.

It is important to engage with agencies and organisations who work within communities including the police, youth services, 5 x 60 officers, communities first, surestart, flying start, housing associations, residents groups and town and community councils, in order to establish ways in which they can support communities to be more play friendly. We intend to develop a short training package around advocating for play in order that complaints from local residents are dealt with tactfully and in a way that doesn't negatively impact on children's general freedom to play.

**3.3.1 – Raise the profile of play and encourage communities to place a greater value on it**  
**3.3.2 – Develop training opportunities for organisations and agencies involved in communities to support them to advocate for children's play**

### 3.4 Address the barrier of limited play space or space with low ‘play value’

*“we can’t play in the street because it’s a busy road . . . there isn’t enough space for us to play”*  
(Young carers group – age 9-11)

Playable space is a term that refers to public space that has been specifically designed to include consideration of how children might play there. Playable space can be within residential areas, parkland or town centres and will include most or all of the features that contribute to a rich play environment (see annexe 4). However, they may not be specifically designated as play areas and are more likely to be spaces that meet the needs of a wider age range. A good example of natural playable space is the beach where children and adults share a space on shared terms including an understanding that children will play there in a range of ways.

The concept of developing ‘playable space’ is strengthened through guidance relating to local planning authorities development plans. ‘Planning Policy Wales’ (2002) provides the strategic policy framework for these plans which is then supplemented by 20 topic based technical advice notes (TAN’s). TAN 16: Sport, Recreation and Open Space states:

*“While formal, equipped play areas provide opportunities, particularly for young children within communities, these are not the only forms of provision which should be offered. Wheeled play areas, ball game areas, ‘playable space’, community woodland and informal areas for ‘environmental play’ can provide opportunities for children to interact and gain the social, health and well-being benefits which come from opportunities for active physical play”*

This vision from within planning guidance gives a good representation of a range of play space provision and challenges the opinion that communities need to have a fixed equipment play area in order to meet children’s play needs. Furthermore, money that is released with new housing developments as part of Section 106 agreements could be utilised to develop these kinds of ‘playable spaces’ rather than installing a few pieces of equipment that provide limited play value.

Within Conwy, the majority of fixed equipment playgrounds in Conwy are managed and maintained by the parks department within environmental services. There is a commitment and understanding that, in order to provide a rich play environment (annexe 4) within fixed playgrounds, it is necessary to include access to natural elements, landscaping and non-specific items which can be used in a variety of ways. The term ‘loose parts’, refers to natural and man made materials that can be manipulated, moved and adapted, built and demolished and can include sand and bark chippings as well as the inclusion of trees which drop their leaves and twigs.

Play England engaged with play design experts from across the UK to develop ‘Design for Play – a guide to creating successful play spaces’ (2008). This document sets out a process for developing new play spaces that incorporate natural elements, landscaping, planting and may evolve over time. This process takes a participative approach with communities and could be supported by playworkers engaging with communities and children and young people. Design for play highlights 10 design principles which underpin the approach and could be used within Conwy to support the development of even more positive play environments.

The 10 principles for designing successful play spaces:

Successful play spaces . . .

- are ‘bespoke’
- are well located

- make use of natural elements
- provide a wide range of play experiences
- are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children
- meet community needs
- allow children of different ages to play together
- build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge
- are sustainable and appropriately maintained
- allow for change and evolution

Community schools by definition, see themselves as resources within a community. School grounds are also often excellent resources for play. With the increase of Forest School spaces and investment into playable school grounds through the implementation of the Foundation Phase, there are now even more reasons to make use of these spaces for play out of school hours. It is recognised that this brings with it a range of challenges and concerns regarding vandalism and safety on unsupervised grounds. It is also recognised that each school will have different experiences of achieving this vision and that there is the opportunity to work with schools and communities to overcome some of these concerns and find workable solutions. This may include providing playworkers to facilitate children's play on school sites out of school hours.

**3.4.1 – Increase use of existing outdoor play spaces**

**3.4.2 – Protect spaces where children play and encourage the creation of more playable public space**

**3.4.3 – Encourage the development of inclusive play spaces which offer a range of play experiences including use of natural features and landscaping through adopting and embedding the 10 design principles**

**3.4.4 – Support communities to plan and fundraise for play**

**3.4.5 – Encourage the use of school grounds for play out of school hours**

### 3.5 Addressing the barriers faced by disabled children

*“Most of our friends are from school, we don’t really play with other kids in our community”*  
(Children and Young People from Ysgol y Gogarth 12-17)

It is important to recognise that there is no single solution to addressing access to community-based play provision for disabled children but that there are a suite of options, many of which are applicable to all children. Within this section are some specific objectives aimed at addressing additional barriers for disabled children.

Through this play strategy, we approach the term ‘disability’ through the social model of disability which puts the individual first and views how they are only ‘disabled’ by the ways in which society does not make provision for their particular impairments. When making provision for disabled children it is critical to proactively consider how we engage with children and their families. Some disabled children and young people already access provision within their communities but many more could if appropriate support was available. With the growth in community-based staffed play provision envisioned by this strategy, the need for playworkers to engage with families in order to address the barriers to playing will be emphasised.

One of the biggest barriers highlighted through local consultation, is that children who attend special school are usually transported out of their communities and therefore tend to have less friends where they live. This situation can also be an issue for some children who attend faith schools or welsh medium provision. Open access playwork provision in communities can be a good way of supporting children to make friends in their community whilst providing a supportive environment with trusted adults.

Where staff are provided to support children’s play, good quality playwork training will take account of providing play opportunities that meets the needs of all children and also support children to follow their own ideas and for their own reasons. Additional disability awareness or play and inclusion training such as ‘Everyone can Play’ (Playwork Partnerships) can support staff to be more aware of how their playwork practice impacts on individual children. Impairment specific training can also be useful if playworkers work regularly with children who have a particular medical diagnosis. However, children are individuals with their own likes and dislikes and knowing about these is often far more important in providing quality play experiences. Promoting playwork training for those who work in segregated provision could also have a positive impact on children’s play experiences.

In relation to play space design, the inclusion of non-specific design elements provides the opportunity for children and young people to play in a way that suits them. Loose parts, a varied landscape, sights, sounds, sensations and smells are all an inherent part of providing a rich play environment and can be used to create a space that is more inclusive. Whilst there are a range of impairment-specific items of play equipment that can give children the opportunity to swing, slide or go round and round, further consideration to the design of the play environment as a whole could produce a space that is inherently more inclusive of a range of play needs.

In recent years, the Assembly Government have made additional funding available to local authorities to support play for disabled children. This additional money presents a real opportunity to realise the 3 key aims of this strategy for disabled children.

#### **3.5.1 – Promote inclusion and improve access to play provision in Conwy**

#### **3.5.2 – Engage with organisations that support disabled children and their families to develop inclusive and segregated provision that meets children’s play needs**

### **3.5.3 – Ensure future inclusive play funding is targeted to meeting the 3 key aims of the play strategy for disabled children**

## **3.6 Addressing the barriers of sufficient time for play within increasingly structured lives**

*“We’re not allowed to run about during break time at school”  
(Young person aged 13)*

Children and young people’s time has become increasingly structured with more and more children attending structured out of school activities, shortened play times at school and a dominant view point that play is somehow frivolous. With the importance of play being highlighted in so many policy documents as being vital for healthy physical and emotional development it is important to consider a range of ways in which we can make time for children to have quality play experiences.

With the implementation of the foundation phase curriculum, 3-7 year olds in schools and approved non-maintained nursery settings, will receive a curriculum where play and learning are intrinsically linked. The Foundation Phase asks practitioners to observe children whilst they play in order to understand where children are on their learning journey. Practitioners then plan developmentally appropriate tasks in order to teach children the skills and concepts needed to move them further along their learning journey. The concepts and knowledge acquired during these focussed tasks provide children with a repertoire of skills that they then take back into their own, freely chosen play. The foundation phase is about adults understanding and challenging children’s potential for learning by facilitating inspiring play environments. It also includes opportunities for play in the outdoor environment where children can learn by having first hand experience of solving real life problems and learning about conservation and sustainability.

There is a real opportunity to build on the development of play in schools through the foundation phase and forest schools to develop quality play experiences throughout the school day. The ‘Playwork Principles into Practice – P<sup>3</sup>’ training is a bespoke playwork qualification at level 2 and 3 which could be offered to foundation phase practitioners and lunchtime supervisors to support different approaches to providing for play.

In order to make time for play, the work with communities highlighted throughout this strategy is critical. The development of resilient communities means that communities understand and have ways of accommodating children’s place in their community. This inevitably means making time for play and realising that space on it’s own does not provide children with the things they need to be able to access their right to play. Attitudes of the wider community as well as parents have a huge impact on children’s time to play.

### **3.6.1 – Develop the range of play opportunities available to children whilst at school**

### **3.6.2 – Promote learning and development through play**

### **3.6.3 – Promote the availability of relevant bilingual playwork training to schools and other organisations**

### 3.7 Addressing the barrier of managing risk and parental concerns

*“It would be good if there were places where kids could build a fire safely, like a fire pit in the park”  
(Parent, Kinmel Bay)*

When we talk about children’s play, the concerns about children’s safety and risk management inevitably follow. It is important that we consider children’s safety when are planning for play but also understand that building in opportunities for children to experience risk and challenge actually support children to develop.

Children’s play provides a primary behaviour for developing resilience which is defined as the ability to spring back from and successfully adapt to adversity. When children play they experiment with uncertainty by learning to ‘gain control of being out of control’ (Russell and Lester 2008). What this means is that children will very rarely put themselves in a situation of ‘being out of control’ where they can’t then regain control, they experiment in order to push their boundaries and develop.

In 2005 the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) made the following statement about children’s play:

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

Whilst the health and safety executive so frequently get blamed for organisations being risk averse they are proactively challenging this perspective.

There is concern over litigation and it’s growth in the UK although both the National Play Policy and recent developments regarding no-win, no-fee arrangements nationally, suggest that this culture is to be challenged. Furthermore, if we fail to address this culture within the play strategy we are in danger of developing sterile play provision that gives children no freedom to play and develop.

If we accept that risk and uncertainty are intrinsic features of children’s play then we can prepare by ensuring our risk management process is robust. There are a number of ways in which this can be achieved; Firstly, standard risk assessment forms give no space to consider the benefit accrued from engaging in a particular activity. However, this is a critical element of the judgement we make as adults as to whether the benefit of a given activity outweighs the risk. Adopting an approach of risk-benefit assessment is one way of addressing this. Secondly, children are dynamic individuals and so is the natural environment, and our risk management process needs to accommodate ways of adapting to children’s ever changing play behaviour and quest for uncertainty. Thirdly, policies and procedures form a critical part of our risk management approach and should be considered as such.

What this suggests is that in order to effectively manage risks within both staffed and unstaffed play provision that a thorough risk management process should be **strategic**; through policies and procedures, **operational**; through paper based risk-benefit assessment, and **dynamic**; through a rationale that provides flexibility and freedom for children to play whilst managing the risks involved. This dynamic risk-benefit process should adapt and evolve to inform the strategic and operational elements.

Furthermore, if we are to adopt a varied and flexible risk management process, that organisations share this approach with insurers. The support of insurance companies is a key part of managing potential claims in the event of an accident. Accidents can and do happen if children are playing, as stated by the Health and Safety Executive. We need to support insurers to challenge claims made against play provision where robust and effective risk management procedures are in place.

When we talk to parents about play, the barriers they highlight range from traffic, to stranger danger to children's physical safety. Conwy's parenting strategy highlights 3 key areas in order to better involve and support parents. The Children and Families Information Service (CFIS) is a single point of contact for information to parents. Information relating to the importance of play and play provision within Conwy can be shared through this service. In addition, information on how best to provide for children's play and to support parents through strategies for allowing their children out to play can be shared through CFIS and parents forums. Organisations who work directly with families such as Flying Start and Surestart are also key links to sharing information regarding promoting play and sharing information regarding play provision.

**3.7.1 – Review risk management processes for play provision to include strategic, operational and dynamic risk-benefit assessment.**

**3.7.2 – Support those providing for play to enable children to experience risk and challenge**

**3.7.3 - Promote play with parents and encourage them to support their children to play**

**3.7.4 – Work with organisations engaging with families to promote play**

### 3.8 A playwork response

Playworkers are trained professionals who work in communities with children and young people and the wider community to facilitate opportunities for children to play. Playworkers work to the playwork principles (annexe 3) that are nationally recognised as the ethical and professional framework under which they operate. Contrary to common perceptions, a playworkers role is not to play with children, but to facilitate an environment in which they can play. This can involve; preparing and adapting the space, be it indoors or outdoors; providing resources for children to play with; engaging with the community, local organisations and parents to address local barriers to play; and to be an advocate for children in their community. In some cases, playworkers will do very little face to face work with children at all and spend the majority of their time working with other adults to ensure children's time and space to play is not compromised.

Playworkers work in a variety of settings. These can include parks and open spaces, open access play schemes, closed access play settings, schools, out of school childcare, play centres, hospitals and adventure playgrounds.

The term 'Play Ranger' refers to a playworker whose role is specifically to work within a community utilising parks, open spaces, school grounds, woodland, beaches or streets to facilitate play opportunities. Their role is mobile to be able to respond to where children are playing, or could be if some of the local barriers were removed. Whilst much of their role is to facilitate play opportunities and work with children, equally critical is their role within communities as advocates for play. They may work with any of a range of organisations to include schools, residents associations, police, youth workers and local businesses in order to promote the child's right to play. This model of provision is being piloted and tested through the BIG Lottery Play Ranger Project across North West Wales. Securing funding to further develop this model of provision across Conwy will bring significant added value to the BIG Lottery Play Ranger project.

Playwork provision works most effectively when it is dynamic and responsive to the needs of the community. The development of future staffed playwork provision should be in participation with communities working to train and recruit local volunteers and paid staff.

Playworkers do not solely operate in open access play provision and many professions either already have, or would significantly benefit from, elements of a playwork approach. Training is therefore critical as are developing opportunities for people to gain quality playwork experience. With so many organisations already engaging with communities, there is significant benefit to providing deeper playwork understanding to those organisations rather than setting up new playwork projects.

**3.8.1 – Work alongside the BIG Lottery Play Rangers project to enhance project success**

**3.8.2 – Promote and develop the infrastructure for bilingual play work training and work experience in Conwy and across North Wales**

**3.8.3 – Identify and secure funding to develop further community-based, bilingual, staffed playwork provision**

**3.8.4 – Promote a playwork approach to organisations working with children and young people**

**3.8.5 – Engage with organisations delivering playwork provision to ensure quality across Conwy**

**3.8.6 – Promote playwork as a profession**

## **4. Conwy Play Strategy Action Plan**

A 5 year action plan with detailed one year actions will be developed to support the delivery of this strategy, and will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

The following statements apply to the Action Plan:

- The principles set out in this strategy will inform the content of the Action Plan.
- Actions will be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and have a clear timescale.
- The content of the action plan will be influenced by consultation with / participation of children, young people and families
- The content of the action plan will be influenced by input from stakeholders and core aim groups

**The action plan will be based on the objectives within this strategy:**

**3.1.1 – Secure funding for a full-time strategic play development officer to be the lead on implementing the play strategy and be a key link in addressing new duties relating to play under the Children and Families (Wales) Measure**

**3.1.2 – Consider the addition of further play development staff to work closely with communities in developing community based play provision.**

**3.1.3 – Maintain and develop representation on North West Wales Play Forum to promote cross-regional working and sharing of good practice**

**3.1.4 – Develop the membership of the play sub-group to a more representative play forum**

**3.1.5 – Develop links with NEW Play in relation to regional play development.**

**3.2.1 –Establish ways in which play can be incorporated further in to safer routes/ community based purposeful routes**

**3.2.2 – Support communities to reclaim their streets for children’s play**

**3.3.1 – Raise the profile of play and encourage communities to place a greater value on it**

**3.3.2 – Develop training opportunities for organisations and agencies involved in communities to support them to advocate for children’s play**

**3.4.1 – Increase use of existing outdoor play spaces**

**3.4.2 – Protect spaces where children play and encourage the creation of more playable public space**

**3.4.3 – Encourage the development of inclusive play spaces which offer a range of play experiences including use of natural features and landscaping through adopting and embedding the 10 design principles**

**3.4.4 – Support communities to plan and fundraise for play**

**3.4.5 –Encourage the use of school grounds for play out of school hours**

**3.5.1 – Promote inclusion and improve access to play provision in Conwy**

**3.5.2 – Engage with organisations that support disabled children and their families to develop inclusive and segregated provision that meets children’s play needs**

**3.6.1 – Develop the range of play opportunities available to children whilst at school**

**3.6.2 – Promote learning and development through play**

**3.6.3 – Promote the availability of relevant bilingual playwork training to schools and other organisations**

- 3.7.1 – Review risk management processes for play provision to include strategic, operational and dynamic risk-benefit assessment.**
- 3.7.2 – Support those providing for play to enable children to experience risk and challenge**
- 3.7.3 - Promote play with parents and encourage them to support their children to play**
- 3.7.4 – Work with organisations engaging with families to promote play**
  
- 3.8.1 – Work alongside the BIG Lottery Play Rangers project to enhance project success**
- 3.8.2 – Promote and develop the infrastructure for bilingual play work training and work experience in Conwy and across North Wales**
- 3.8.3 – Identify and secure funding to develop further community-based, bilingual, staffed playwork provision**
- 3.8.4 – Promote a playwork approach to organisations working with children and young people**
- 3.8.5 – Engage with organisations delivering playwork provision to ensure quality across Conwy**
- 3.8.6 – Promote playwork as a profession**

## 5. Principles

The following principles apply to this strategy.

**Playwork Principles** (Annex 3) – The Playwork Principles 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 children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

**Bilingual Provision** – Through the implementation of the play strategy there is a commitment to the development of provision which allows a choice to use English or Welsh. This refers to the development of provision, information and training relating to the objectives within this document.

**Accessibility** – Through the implementation of the play strategy objectives, there is a commitment to ensuring that provision, information and training is easily accessible and takes consideration of a range of different needs.

**Participation and Children's Rights** – The Play Strategy is built on Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to uphold children's right to play in Conwy. Furthermore the National Participation Standards will be taken into account in all provision that affects children and young people.

**Safeguarding** – The children and young people's partnership will ensure the safeguarding of children and young people participating in staffed play provision.

**Risk management** - We are committed to the principle of sensible risk management procedures that allow for consideration of risk against benefit utilising a risk-benefit assessment procedure that allows children and young people to extend their play and experience risk and challenge, including consideration of dynamic risk-benefit assessment.

## 6. What we all get out of it

*“Play can help build resilience – the capacity for children to thrive despite adversity and stress in their lives”*

By providing for children’s play, we ensure through a range of means that children are not deprived of valuable childhood experiences. By affecting attitudes to children’s play we make a difference to communities. If children, especially young children are visible in residential area’s that gives a message that the community is a friendly place to be. Signs of children within communities, far from being ‘messy’ are evidence that this is a community where children can experience a childhood full of playful experiences. Abandoned bikes, chalk on the street, balls and even litter are signs that a space is being used by children and, in pursuit of proof that our play strategy is making a difference, we should be collating exactly this sort of evidence.

**Benefits to children and young people** – *“play is important both in terms of emotion regulation and in terms of developing social networks and skills”*

Playing has a huge range of benefits that apply to children’s physical and emotional well-being. Given time and space children will play, it is their agenda, their learning, their stress relief and their fun. Playing helps children develop place attachment – the attachment to the communities in which they live; peer attachment - in terms of their ability to formulate relationships with others; and emotion regulation – enabling children to learn to cope with stressful situations;

**Benefits to families** - *“Children value a diversity of spaces to support their everyday play lives, including indoor and outdoor space”*

The play strategy looks to create compensatory play provision that compensate children for their loss of freedom to play in the general environment. It also aims to address community attitudes to children that sometimes impact negatively on children’s freedom to play. These aims should provide freedom of choice for families and they should know that the children and young people’s partnership in Conwy actively encourage and support children’s right to play. Children should be visible in their communities, children should be able to play out, whether there is a play scheme, play ranger, play area or not.

**Benefits to communities** – *“Play provides the opportunity for social interaction and development of affiliations”*

Where there are significant barriers to children’s play, communities may benefit from an increased level of compensatory provision. Where communities wish to develop their own play provision locally they may benefit from support to fundraise or plan for how they will deliver it. And where communities are affected by our partnership approach to ensuring children’s right to play attitudes may change to allow greater tolerance of children’s play behaviour within communities.

**Benefits to organisations -**

If organisations who work with children and young people can work to better understand their play behaviour, they can support communities to become places where children can play. Also, through training and awareness raising there are opportunities for staff development in relation to playwork. Furthermore, there are the benefits to organisations of developing partnerships with all

those who impact on children and young people or the communities in which they live. Finally, with the prevalence of objectives relating to play within national and local policy, a greater understanding of how and why children play will enable organisations to respond better to national guidance and duties.

(All quotes from Play for a Change, Play England 2008)

## **Annexe 1 - National and Local Policy Context**

**Children and Families Measure**

**Child Poverty Strategy**

**TAN 16 – Playable space**

**National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services**

**Climbing Higher**

**Creating and Active Wales**

**Conwy Children and Young People’s Plan**

**Foundation Phase Curriculum**

**Conwy Community Strategy**

**Conwy Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategy**

## **Annexe 2 - Further Information to Support the Content of the Strategy**

### **Rationale for how playing impacts on all 7 of the Seven Core Aims**

#### **1. have developed a flying start in life and the best possible basis for their future growth and development**

Providing young children and families with quality opportunities to play supports the development of positive early attachments. Play enables physical, emotional and mental development and the learning of skills that contribute to children's healthy development. It also supports the development of good parenting skills.

#### **2. have access to a comprehensive range of education, training and learning opportunities, including acquisition of essential personal and social skills**

Play is recognised as essential to children and young people's learning about themselves, others and the world around them. Playworkers facilitate play opportunities for children well into adolescence and provision such as outreach play projects and adventure playgrounds are proven to engage with even our most excluded children.

Providing playwork training within the 14-19 pathways and Extending Entitlement agenda provides work experience for young people. Young people and young adults who are given the opportunity to volunteer in local community play projects acquire a range of transferable children's service and social entrepreneurship skills.

#### **3. enjoy the best possible physical and mental, social and emotional health, including freedom from abuse, victimisation and exploitation**

Quality play opportunities provide considerable physical and mental health benefits to children. Playworkers can facilitate and enhance local play opportunities close to where children live. Their presence allows children to create an environment that fosters their play where they feel safe within their own communities. Outreach playworkers such as play rangers support children to reclaim open space for play. This supports children's health and levels of physical activity, whilst developing a sense of importance within their own communities.

Staffed play opportunities allow children to experience a sense of adventure and risk, with help on hand if needed. Where play provision does not exist, we know that children will seek out fun and challenge in areas and in ways that may be dangerous.

#### **4. have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities**

Play is children's culture. Quality play settings that provide a rich play environment provide children and young people with opportunities that may act as a springboard into more organised sport and cultural activities. Additionally, they provide children who choose to avoid the structure of organised sport and cultural activities to gain experience in their own way on their own terms.

## **5. children are listened to, treated with respect, and are able to have their race and cultural identity recognized**

When asked what is important to them, quality play opportunities are among children and young people's top priorities. When we value children's play we value children.

Quality staffed play settings are by nature participative and non-discriminatory. They provide an environment where children can experiment with and explore their identity (who they are and what they look like) and the identity of their peers.

Playwork by its nature encourages and supports participation. Playworkers create spaces and facilitate opportunities that allow children and young people to change and adapt their own environment to suit their own needs and wishes.

By observing children at play in a rich environment planners have the opportunity to learn from what they see and plan services which better meet children's needs and drive to play.

Providing a range of experiences and visits as part of participative exercises and events allows children to make informed choices; we must remember that children tend to have limited experience and will opt for what they know.

## **6. have a safe home and a community that supports physical and emotional wellbeing**

Staffed play provision provides children with the opportunity to experience risk and develop their own risk management skills, as well as their own strategies for dealing with bullies.

As an integral part of a community, quality play provision engenders a sense of ownership in children and young people. There is a strong history of enhancing social cohesion by involving local people in play provision.

## **7. is not disadvantaged by child poverty**

Open access staffed play provision is free at the point of entry.

The concept of play deprivation (where a child's health, well being and long term development is detrimentally affected by lack of opportunity to play) is still being debated, but it is clear that there is such a thing as poverty of experience, which may occur whatever the circumstances or social background of a child or young person.

Providing quality play training at community level upskills local community members and enables those with an interest in playwork, or similar career, to enter the workforce.

## **Annexe 3 - Further Information to Support the Content of the Strategy**

### **The Playwork Principles**

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 and control 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 playworker's 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 and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.

The Playwork Principles are held in trust for the UK playwork profession by the Scrutiny Group that acted as an honest broker overseeing the consultations through which they were developed.

The Playwork Principles were endorsed by SkillsActive in 2004.

## **Annexe 4 - Further Information to Support the Content of the Strategy**

### **A rich play environment**

#### **A rich play environment is:**

a varied and interesting physical environment that maximises the potential for socialising, creativity, resourcefulness and challenge.

a place where children feel free to play in their own way, on their own terms.

#### **Play provision**

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

the local play area, parks, play centres, staffed adventure playgrounds, out of school care, play schemes, playgroups, nurseries, and schools.

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

**other children and young people** - with a choice to play alone or with others, to negotiate, cooperate, fall out, and resolve conflict;

**the natural world** - weather, trees, plants, insects, animals, mud ... ;

**loose parts** - natural and man made materials that can be manipulated, moved and adapted, built and demolished;

**the four elements** - earth, air, fire and water;

**challenge** and uncertainty - both on a physical and emotional level;

**changing identity** - role play and dressing up;

**movement** - running, jumping, climbing, balancing, rolling;

**rough and tumble** - play fighting;

**the senses** - sounds, tastes, textures, smells and sights;

**feelings** - pain, joy, confidence, fear, anger, contentment, boredom, fascination, happiness, grief, rejection, acceptance, sadness, pride, frustration ...

## Annexe 5 - Further Information to Support the Content of the Strategy

### Glossary of terms used throughout this document

- **Children** – people aged 0 to 10 years
- **Young People** – people aged 11 to 25 years
- **The Early Years** - the first five years of a child's life
- **Parents** – parents and carers who are legal guardians of their children
- **Play Provision** – staffed or un-staffed facilities and services whose *primary* purpose is to provide children and young people with opportunities to play.
- **A Rich Play Environment** – a space where children and young people are able to make a wide range of choices; where there are many possibilities so that they can invent and extend their own play. It is a varied, inspirational and interesting physical environment that maximises the potential for socialising, creativity, resourcefulness and challenge. It is a place where children feel free to play in their own way, on their own terms.<sup>1</sup>
- **Play Value** – refers to the scope and potential for play offered by the environment the child is in. The greater the range of possibilities and opportunities for different types of play behaviour to occur the greater the play value of the setting. An awareness of play value also enables staff to identify the benefits gained by a child of experiencing a specific play opportunity, for example, if a child is climbing a tree, staff must balance the child's safety with the value of the experience to the child (see Risk / Benefit Assessment).
- **Fixed Equipment Play Areas** – un-staffed play spaces incorporating permanently fixed, manufactured and natural playground equipment.
- **Open Access Play Provision** – staffed play provision where children are free to come and go as they wish. "Open access" applies to the level of care provided to children within the setting and is used to differentiate this type of provision from childcare or "closed access" settings where staff have an agreement with parents and carers to keep their child on site for a specified period of time.
- **Closed Access Play Provision** – staffed play provision whose service is closed access due to the young age or specific support requirements of the children attending.
- **Childcare** – staffed, closed access provision whose *primary* purpose is to provide a service to parents and carers. However these settings can also provide children with quality play opportunities.
- **Compensatory Play Provision** – play provision which is designed to compensate children for the loss of, appropriate, naturally occurring play opportunities within the general environment.
- **Playable Space** – public areas not provided specifically for play but that are designed in such a way that they encourage play to take place.
- **Risk / Benefit Assessment** – a risk assessment process which takes into consideration both the need to protect children from serious injury and the potential developmental benefits that children could gain from experiencing a particular activity.
- **Dynamic Risk Assessment** – an ongoing process of assessing risks within a rapidly changing environment.

<sup>1</sup> Definition adapted from: Play Wales, [www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk), January 2009

## Annexe 6 - Links / Relationship to Other CYPP Strategies

Participation Strategy

Inclusion Strategy

CYP Plan

## Annexe 7 - Useful Contacts

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