

SUBJECT:	PLAY ACTION PLAN AND PLAY SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT
MEETING:	Children and Young People Select
DATE:	21 February 2019
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To advise members of the timescale for the submission of the play sufficiency assessment and to present progress on the assessment and the proposed action plan for 2019/20.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To receive and scrutinise an update of progress on the play sufficiency assessment and the proposed action plan for 2019/20
- 2.2 To note the intention to report the results of the assessment and progress in delivery of the action plan to a future meeting for scrutiny by this Committee.

3. KEY ISSUES:

Background

- 3.1 Statutory Play Sufficiency Assessments (PSA) were undertaken in 2013 & 2016. The duty on local authorities is to undertake a full review of the PSA every three years. The updated PSA is required to be submitted to Welsh Government by 31 March 2019 having been approved by Cabinet or in a final version timetabled to be so approved.
- 3.2 **“Wales: A Play Friendly Country”** is statutory guidance to local authorities on assessing and securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas. It gives detail to the duty under Section 11 of the Play Opportunities, Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.
- 3.3 In summary, the statutory requirements are that a local authority
- must assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area; and
 - must secure sufficient play opportunities in its area for children, so far as reasonably practicable, having regard to its assessment.
- 3.4 In addition to undertaking a full review every three years, local authorities are required to produce a progress report and update the Play Action Plan on an annual basis.
- 3.5 The guidance provides the following internationally recognised definition of play:

“Play encompasses children’s behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live”.

3.6 Play is defined for the purposes of the measure as including (but not limited to) “any recreational activity”. This recognises that children enjoy and benefit from taking part in a wide range of activities that are, in the main, organised by adults for children. These can include junior and youth clubs; leisure centre and sporting activities; cultural and arts activities; indoor play centres and events organised for children and their families. These recreational activities may offer a combination of adult led organised activities, and opportunities for freely chosen and child led play.

3.7 Welsh Government sees the range of play opportunities for children covered under the measure as being:

- Freely chosen play – with or without adult supervision/facilitation.
- Structured recreational activities – in the main led by adults, with predefined rules.

These opportunities can be available in a range of spaces and settings and any setting may afford both opportunities for freely chosen play and structured recreational activities.

3.8 The matters to be taken into account in the PSA, each of which is assessed against fixed criteria set out in the guidance (in total 102 criteria), are broad in their scope impacting widely across the authority’s activities:

Matter A: Population

Matter B: Providing for diverse needs

Matter C: Space Available for Children to Play (open spaces; outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces)

Matter D: Supervised provision (play work provision; structured recreational activities)

Matter E: Charges for play provision

Matter F: Access to space/provision & Information; publicity and events

Matter G: Securing & Developing the Play Workforce

Matter H: Community engagement and participation

Matter I: Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas (education/schools; town & country planning; traffic & transport; early years plans; family policy & initiatives; inter-generational policy and initiatives; health and safety)

Detailed assessment against the criteria is currently underway.

3.9 Based on a review of the 2013 PSA and advice shared across the Regional Play Sufficiency Assessment Network, supported by Play Wales, the approach adopted for the 2016 PSA was to identify fewer, better-focussed and more integrated themes/actions. This approach, founded on a view that a strategic approach was more likely to support partnership progress, has proved sound and so it is proposed to adopt the same approach to the 2019 review. The proposed approach is therefore to refine and reflect progress and ambition against the core actions set in 2016 rather than fundamentally change direction. This intent will be tested through internal and external consultations in the coming weeks.

Proposed action areas

3.5 Inevitably, with pressure on resources and no dedicated budget or play coordinator progress has been challenging. However, through partnership working, especially with Town and Community Councils, and support across the authority good progress has been achieved in some areas. At this stage, the proposal is to retain the five action areas to focus further action over the next PSA period:

3.5.1 Space for play – Identified in 2016 as, the overall approach to fixed play provision and the opportunities for play within open spaces; including fully assessing the condition of and demand for existing provision and identifying new opportunities; the application of play space standards / developer contributions; the potential for multi-use spaces / natural play etc. through integration of a wider “green infrastructure” approach.

Progress includes:

- a more integrated and innovative approach to multi-use spaces / natural play etc. in new development;
- a new destination play area at Caldicot Castle County Park;
- extensive consultations to agree the location of a new destination play area in Monmouth; and,
- supporting the provision of enhanced indoor play facilities at Monmouth Leisure Centre.

Further actions include:

- extending the new approach to development to include a review of existing fixed play provision through play value / inclusive play assessments;
- a pilot project looking to rationalise the fixed play provision in specific areas in Monmouth;
- seeking to address the issues identified in the Bulwark and Thornwell play research pilot, including the use of school grounds; and,
- extending this approach to other communities.

Previous consultations identified the limiting factors for outdoor play as including local environmental quality, traffic and perceived safety and the Bulwark and Thornwell play research pilot has also highlighted the need to adopt a broad community based approach in the next PSA period to secure increased play opportunities.

3.5.2 Supervised provision – Identified in 2016 as, working with partners to develop the community play framework for open access play provision; including assessing the impact of the changes; seeking to develop the model and engage new partners and exploring the potential for further inclusive community based provision including at other times of the year.

Progress includes:

- the open access community play model to provide free inclusive summer play opportunities successfully developed and delivered since 2016 through partnership working and funding from Town & Community Councils, Families First Funding and Play Opportunity Grant;
- the Partnership & Engagement Team supporting community led 'playing out' sessions; and,
- Youth Service staff achieved a play work level 3 qualification

The future opportunities include:

- building on the "food and fun" provision via the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) and bilingual playschemes pilots both proposed for 2019;
- enhancing the inclusive aspects of the schemes; and,
- to work to secure wider community provision, and provision beyond the summer holidays.

3.5.3 Providing for diverse needs – Identified in 2016 as, adopting a more integrated approach across the authority to join up provision and ensure the needs of children with disabilities and/or families with diverse needs are better supported to access play opportunities.

Progress includes inclusive provision at the open access playschemes for children with disabilities and working with colleagues in leisure, education and social services to further develop our wrap around provision, such as access to the Monmouthshire Games.

Future actions include addressing the needs of children with more complex needs where an inclusive setting is not appropriate, further developing the wrap around provision and to improve our engagement with parents and schools to ensure that we can offer a more bespoke package to those children most in need.

3.5.4 Policy Integration – Identified in 2016 as, supporting the Play Strategy Group, to develop into the implementation group for the play action plan, involving a wide range of internal and external partners; including identifying better links and integration with other programmes and partnerships e.g. the Creating an Active and Healthy Monmouthshire strategy.

Progress includes the integration of the Play Strategy Group with the Children and Young Peoples Sub Group of the Creating an Active and Healthy Monmouthshire partnership. Future actions include maintaining close engagement with internal and external partners and enhancing links with the wider youth offer.

3.5.5 Engagement and Information – Identified in 2016 as, recognising that the existing information base is not adequate to fully understand the demand for, and sufficiency of, play opportunities and that the level of work required to remedy this had proved beyond the current PSA process. Tasking the Play Strategy Group to identify a practical and economic way forward to remedy this; including working with Town and Community Councils; sharing existing data, building a fuller picture of existing provision; and utilising existing mechanisms to engage with children and young people.

This action has proved a harder one to address. The key area to progress is gathering more local intelligence and children’s views. Recently completed is child led research on play in the Bulwark and Thornwell neighbourhoods of Chepstow led by the Community and Partnership team with participation from Thornwell Primary School, Pembroke Primary School and Chepstow Comprehensive. This project, a first for Monmouthshire (and possibly Wales), has produced rich information on play including views from children, parents and community. A toolkit will be prepared to support rolling out this approach to other communities. The results of a Year 5 Play survey completed by Monmouthshire primary schools using an all Wales “Play Wales” approach are being analysed and will feed into the PSA.

The proposed focus for the next PSA period is to support a roll out of the Chepstow pilot project or similar community based approaches to inform future actions and initiatives.

3.6 Members views on the suggested action areas and proposed focus for the new PSA / Action plan period would be most welcome.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 The statutory matters mean that the PSA will include an assessment of the extent that play opportunities are inclusive and recognises the positive impact that securing sufficient and accessible play opportunities can have on children, families and communities. The provision of free open access play contributes to the Social Justice Strategy.

4.2 The safeguarding responsibilities of the Authority and partners for children and young people are fully integrated into the identification of appropriate actions and reflected in the PSA and guidance.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Option	Benefits	Risks	Comments
Do nothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of direction and vision in delivery No access to play opportunity grant Loss of existing relationships / partnerships 	Not fulfilling statutory requirements to have a Play Sufficiency Assessment and a Play Action Plan
Review Play Sufficiency Assessment and prepare new action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides direction and vision in delivery Allows access to play opportunity grant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of buy in from partners 	Meets statutory requirements to have a Play Sufficiency Assessment and a Play Action Plan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports existing relationships 		
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6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1 Assessment criteria for the PSA measures are set out in Statutory Guidance / the PSA Toolkit prepared by Play Wales on behalf of Welsh Government and the requirement to undertake an annual review.

7. REASONS:

- 7.1 “Wales: A Play Friendly Country” is Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities on assessing for and securing, as far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient play opportunities for children in their area by addressing the defined measures set out in legislation.
- 7.2 The provision of sufficient play opportunities for children contributes to wellbeing objectives and the corporate plan: Providing children and young people with the best possible start in life – enabling children to be active and participate in play, particularly outside is important, not just to obesity but also for broader child development

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 There is no dedicated play budget so provision depends on partnership working. The substantial financial support from Town and Community Councils, from the Welsh Government Families First Fund and when available Play Opportunity Grant with support from voluntary sources has enabled the successful delivery of the summer play schemes. Play Opportunities Grant has been made available on occasions by Welsh Government but not consistently and usually as underspend towards the year end. Whilst the grant is welcome and has been well used to improve play opportunities its timing and uncertainty mitigates against fully strategic spend.
- 8.2 Play Opportunities Grant of £10K will be available towards the PSA review process in the remainder of 18/19.
- 8.3 There are no other direct resource implications associated with the PSA. Having an up to date PSA and Action Plan is a pre-requisite for accessing any Play Opportunities Grant, and positions the authority and its partners to seek external funding for specific initiatives / actions in the plan.

9. CONSULTEES:

Enterprise DMT; Chief Officer, Children and Young People; Community and Partnership Development Manager

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1: Future Generations Evaluation

11. AUTHORS:

Mike Moran, Community Infrastructure Coordinator

Matthew Lewis, Green Infrastructure and Countryside Officer

12. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 07894 573834 E-Mail: mikemoran@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01633 644855 E-mail: matthewlewis@monmouthshire.gov.uk