

Appendix 1



Monmouthshire Play Action Plan and Play Sufficiency Assessment June 2022

Introduction

“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.

In summary, the statutory requirements are that a local authority must

- assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area; and
- secure sufficient play opportunities in its area for children, so far as reasonably practicable, having regard to its assessment.

The duty on local authorities is to undertake a full review of the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) every three years and update the Play Action Plan on an annual basis. The new PSA has to be submitted to Welsh Government by 30 June 2022, having either been approved by cabinet or in a final version timetabled to be so approved.

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”.

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.

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.

Play Sufficiency Assessment

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 100 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)

The play sufficiency assessment against the criteria is appended (**Appendix 2**)

Policy Statement

All children have the right to play as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Article 31 of the Convention says:

Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

The Council recognises the importance of play in children's lives, for both its recreational value and for the important part that it plays in children's physical and emotional health and well-being and in their personal development. Play provides a platform for children to learn, to have fun and to develop friendships with other children in a variety of settings from the school playground to formal open spaces and the wider physical environment. Play is a common denominator that should be capable of being enjoyed by all children irrespective of their social or cultural background or the ability of their parents to pay for the opportunity to participate.

Accessible play opportunities contribute to children's lives and to the well-being of their families and communities, thereby contributing to the well-being objective to provide children and young people with the best possible start in life and helps deliver the social justice strategy to address inequalities in our county by contributing to developing child friendly communities.

Our Approach

The approach adopted for both the 2016 & 2019 Play Sufficiency Assessments was to identify fewer, focused and more integrated themes/actions to sustain over the three-year period to the next assessment. This approach, founded on a view that a strategic approach was more likely to support partnership progress, has proved sound. The 2022 review takes the same approach, to refine and reflect progress and ambition against the core actions set in 2019 rather than fundamentally change direction. Overall, the intent is that the Play Action Plan should continue to prioritise freely chosen play rather than attempt to duplicate wider leisure and recreational planning processes.

Space for play

Identified in 2019 as the overall approach to fixed play provision and the opportunities for play within open spaces and the wider environment; including fully assessing the condition and play value of existing provision and identifying new opportunities; the review of play space standards/developer contributions; and the potential for multi-use spaces/natural play etc. through integration of a wider “green infrastructure” approach.

Progress includes:

- Completing play value assessments of 110 existing fixed play areas
- A more integrated and innovative approach to multi-use spaces / natural play etc. supported by play opportunity grant, use of section 106 contributions and Local Places for Nature grant, including a pilot rationalisation scheme in Monmouth. Other grant funding opportunities, such as the Active Travel Fund, has been used to support the integration of play provision into transport projects – supporting a wider agenda and filtering into key policies such as the Active Environments element of the Healthy Weight Healthy Wales strategy.
- Approving a new approach to identifying play requirements in new developments
- Delivery of a new destination play area at Chippenham Fields, Monmouth
- Supporting the community aspirations to improve The Dell playground in Chepstow
- A move towards the use of more sustainable materials and a greater proportion of accessible equipment
- Completing play audits of our museums and attractions

Previous consultations, including the Bulwark and Thornwell play research pilot, identified the limiting factors for outdoor play as including local environmental quality, traffic and perceived safety risks. This has highlighted the need to adopt a broad community-based approach in the next PSA period to secure increased play opportunities. Community consultation over the Monmouth pilot showed widespread support for this new approach, as well as wider children and young people data captured through the recent Active Travel Network Map consultations.

The proposed action areas are:

- **Local environment quality / wider green infrastructure** – continue to encourage and enable child friendly and playable environments
- **Community development** – supporting and enabling community action, including street play via training on road closures etc, as required
- Potential for **school grounds** use outside the school day
- **Fixed play**
 - Maintaining a fixed play capital investment strategy as opportunities and funding arise including securing developer contributions as applicable, prioritised to reflect the results of the play value assessment, inclusivity of use, more accessible new schemes for fixed play and specific user groups, e.g. teenage girls and natural play potential
 - Completing the Monmouth pilot of rationalisation / improvements and extend this approach to Chepstow in 22/23 and seek further funding to rationalise and improve fixed play based on this approach.
 - Applying the revised play standards when assessing new development proposals
 - Supporting and enabling community driven play proposals
 - Further consideration of play opportunities in rural areas including partnership with Community Councils and other providers
- **Indoor Play Provision** – Following the success of the indoor play provision at Monmouth Leisure Centre other sites, most notably Caldicot is being explored to scope future potential through investment. Another area that is being focused on is working with local providers to deliver indoor play provision at existing facilities.
- **Museums and Attractions** – developing the play offer inside and outside our museums and heritage attractions to reflect the play audits recently completed
- **Recreation and sport** - Continue to promote the importance of participation in play and active sports and continue to develop young people as sports ambassadors through schools and local voluntary sports clubs and coordinating potential for play delivery through the Active Gwent Delivery Plan (via Sports Development). Following council approval, the draft Leisure and Physical Activity strategy will play a key role in shaping the future Sport, Leisure and Play provision across Monmouthshire. By ensuring a coordinated approach with key partners such as Sport Development, Leisure and Youth Service it will enable a targeted approach to our play offer ensuring a children and young people focused approach.

Supervised provision

Identified in 2019 as building on the open access community play model – reviewing progress and considering future delivery options, 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.

This area of delivery has been significantly impacted by the pandemic both in terms of flexibility of delivery and the recognition of the importance of play opportunities and resulting significant changes in funding streams.

Progress includes:

- Developing the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) “food and fun” offer
- A rapid pivot from delivery via a partnership with Torfaen Play Services to direct delivery by MonLife to support activity hubs alongside Children Services disability hubs specifically for children with more complex needs
- The development of a targeted Family Engagement open access holiday provision spreading across Monmouthshire to combat the rurality of our county and provide localised opportunities
- A flexible response across 2021 to support a wide range of activities under the “Summer of Fun” and “Winter of Well Being” programmes alongside expansion of the Food and Fun offer and a half term Holiday Playworks provision

Despite the challenging period we have faced in response to the Covid 19 pandemic significant progress has been made across our play offer and foundations put in place for continued growth over the next three-year period The proposed action areas are:

- Building on the **open access community play** model – reviewing progress and considering future delivery options including supporting equality of access (see Providing for Diverse Needs below)
- Maintaining a **bilingual play** scheme offer
- Sustaining the **Holiday Hunger /Food Offer** (SHEP / Food & Fun / Playworks)
- **Widening community provision** – including identifying new partners and coordinating with other community provision and providers; working more proactively to share information between services and with partners in the voluntary sector; including seeking to extend open access play opportunities in more rural parts of the county.
- **Provision beyond summer holidays** – seeking to extend open access play opportunities at other times of the year.
- **Structured play provision** – continuing to coordinate with Monmouthshire Games, Playmakers, Positive Futures and the wider youth offer

Providing for diverse needs

Identified in 2019 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, specific provision for children with greater needs and working across the authority to further develop our wrap around provision, such as access to the Monmouthshire Games. However, it is recognised that there is still progress required to achieve full equality of access across service delivery and a need to further investigate the barriers to access for specific user groups.

The proposed action areas are:

- **Inclusivity of supervised provision** and provision for **children with greater needs** – to explore the options to ensure the needs of children with disabilities

and/or families with diverse needs are better supported to access play opportunities, including research with parents of children with disabilities or behavioural / specific needs around the accessibility and suitability of existing supervised play provision (both specific provision for children with disabilities and the wider integrated provision) to identify the barriers, and the required measures to overcome these, to assist in greater equality of provision.

- **Inclusivity of fixed play** – assessment and improvement (as above).

Workforce Development

The development of a flexible and specialist workforce will play a pivotal role in our future play ambitions. To enable us to seek continued progress in this essential agenda we have recently appointed a 'Play Development Lead' who will join us in September 2022 following their notice period, this is an exciting appointment and resource to support our future ambitions. Staff and volunteers who are able to move confidently between programmes across our wider youth offer will ensure that a coherent programme of delivery is put in place ranging from open access mainstream opportunities through to targeted direct interventions. The future development of our workforce will be based on a data led approach, making informed decisions across the play strategy group and with wider stakeholders.

With a closer alignment to Sport Development, Leisure and Youth Services within MonLife's portfolio, along with Children's Services and wider MCC stakeholders we will explore existing leadership and pathway into employment programmes to provide the specialist knowledge, skills and training to develop a comprehensive inclusive play offer with children and young people at the heart of the planning.

We will work with other play providers and in cooperation with Monmouthshire Early Years to assist them in meeting their training needs.

Engagement and Information

Identified in 2019 as the proposed roll out of the Young People's Voices in Play Toolkit (based on the young person led Chepstow play pilot) and engaging with young people utilising the playmakers programme and direct feedback from play schemes.

Progress includes engagement and feedback from young people via play provision, the playmakers programme and Monmouthshire Games. The Young People's Voices in Play Toolkit was developed but the impact of the pandemic meant this school cluster led approach could not be rolled out. The authority also participated in Play Wales funded research to explore the conditions that support local authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities.

The proposed action areas are:

- Rolling out the **Young People's Voices in Play Toolkit** to obtain young people's views on local play issues and opportunities

- Continuing to engage, and seek feedback from young people supporting play opportunities and links to wider well-being
- Research to identify the barriers to assist in identifying measures to ensure greater equality of provision (as above)
- Improving the play information available online through the **Family Information Service** and other platforms, such as the **MonLife holiday Activities Website**
- The development of a localised marketing and play brand that children, young people and parents / guardians can relate to

Partnerships and Policy Integration

Identified in 2019 as maintaining and developing partnership with Town and Community Councils, other partners and community groups, and maintaining the Play Strategy Group.

Progress includes sustaining partnerships with Town and Community Councils to support play delivery and following a period of abeyance during the pandemic, restarting the Play Strategy Group, now as a subgroup of the Children and Young People's Partnership.

The proposed action areas are:

- Maintaining partnerships with **Town and Community Councils**
- Engaging with **community partners and social landlords** to improve our understanding of their provision and opportunities for future collaboration
- Maintaining the **Play Strategy Group** and extending the representation of external partners

Way forward

The intent is that these action areas remain the focus for action over the next 3-year period of the Play Sufficiency Assessment (2022 - 2025), which the Play Strategy Group will address.

The 2022/23 budget round identified the creation of a new **Play Development Lead** post to contribute to the strategic direction and delivery of play right across Monmouthshire.

This post based in MonLife's Youth, Community and Sport and Community Teams, will coordinate the statutory play duties and co-ordinate, and support the Play Strategy Group.

As required by guidance the proposed actions for 2022/23 are highlighted against the statutory matters below.

Proposed actions for the period of 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

Matter	Priorities	Targets	Links to other Matters	Resources, including costs	Funding source (new or existing funding streams)
Statutory Guidance-policy framework	Maintain and review the Play Action Plan	<p>Keep the Play Action Plan under review with reports to Select Committee / Cabinet as necessary</p> <p>Maintain the play strategy group as a subgroup of the Children and Young People’s Partnership with a focus on the implementation of the play action plan.</p>	All matters	Core MCC / partners	Core MCC
Matter A: Population	Using available data to contribute to a better understanding of the demand for, and sufficiency of play opportunities	<p>Maintain progress, including working across services, with schools, town and community councils; sharing existing data, building a fuller picture of existing provision and the play workforce.</p> <p>Utilise the 2021 census data when available to inform future plans and programmes</p> <p>Create a pupil engagement survey to capture data and information on existing play baseline data to support future implementation'</p>		Core MCC / partners	Core MCC / partners
Matter B: Providing for diverse needs	Seek to gain a better understanding of the local demand for, and sufficiency of play	Continue to adopt a more integrated approach across the authority to join up provision and ensure the needs of children with disabilities		Core MCC	Core MCC

	opportunities for diverse needs groups	<p>and/or families with diverse needs are better supported to access play opportunities.</p> <p>Undertake a specific research project, including parents of children with disabilities or behavioural / specific needs, around the accessibility and suitability of existing supervised play provision (both specific provision for children with disabilities and the wider integrated provision) to identify the barriers, and the required measures to overcome these, to assist in greater equality of provision.</p> <p>Continue to work with the LGBTQ+ community in Monmouthshire to ensure that young people feel supported and confident and that they have a genuine opportunity to influence the way that the council supports young people with issues and concerns with their sexual orientation or gender reassignment</p>		Core MCC	Core MCC
Matter C: Space available for children to play	To improve fixed play provision and the opportunities for play within open spaces, prioritising increasing play value and inclusivity, and supporting and enabling community driven play proposals	<p>Complete the pilot fixed play / local places for nature scheme in Monmouth and implement its roll out to Chepstow.</p> <p>Review progress and undertake preliminary work to support the extension of this approach to other communities</p> <p>Continue to incorporate play assessments and seek developer contributions based on the revised approach agreed by Cabinet in January 2021 into Green Infrastructure comments on planning applications. Closer alignment to Active Travel routes to provide better access to play</p>	Matter F	£87,000 Core MCC	WCVA Local Places for Nature Preparatory Grant Core MCC

		<p>provision and creating a more connected environment.</p> <p>Deliver the currently funded fixed play capital investments and seek funding for further improvement schemes</p> <p>Supporting and enabling community driven play proposals, including the play area renewal project at Castle Dell, Chepstow</p> <p>Continue to support Playing Out (encouraging street play in communities) with interested parties; supporting and enabling wider community action.</p>		<p>£390,000</p> <p>£25,000 MCC</p> <p>Core MCC</p>	<p>MCC/Section 106 Funding</p> <p>Core MCC & lottery bid /other funding</p> <p>Core MCC</p>
Matter D: Supervised provision	Continue to build on the community play framework for open access play provision	<p>Direct delivery of the “Summer of Fun” including open access playscheme / Food and Fun in Summer 2022 and Holiday Playworks provision over the school October half term period</p> <p>Explore grant funding opportunities to grow reach and level of provision provided across Monmouthshire, both in term time and holiday periods.</p> <p>Continue to promote the importance of participation in play and active sports and continue to develop young people as sports ambassadors through schools and local voluntary clubs (Including links to the Monmouthshire Games, Playmakers and Positive Futures programmes and the wider youth offer)</p>		Core MCC	<p>Core MCC</p> <p>Partnership and external grant bids for 21/22: Town & Community Councils, Families First, SHEP (WLGA) etc.</p> <p>Welsh Govt Holiday Playworks funding</p>

		Deliver supervised play opportunities for primary aged children over the other school holidays (Subject to prevailing Covid restrictions)			
Matter E: Charges for play provision	Enhance our information base, including building a fuller picture of existing provision. Develop the community play framework for free open access play provision	As Matter A above As Matter D above	Matter A & D	Core MCC	Core MCC
Matter F: Access to space/provision	Improve our information base and fully integrate these measures to better understand the local barriers to play for children and young people so we can increase access to play opportunities Enhanced information, publicity and events	Continue to engage with children, young people and parents to better identify the limiting factors & barriers to accessing play opportunities, Coordinating with promotion of the wider youth offer, the Family Information Service and the MonLife holiday Activities Website	Matter C	Core MCC	Core MCC
Matter G: Securing and developing the workforce	Develop a flexible and specialist workforce to support our future play ambitions.	Support Playworks training at appropriate levels and explore existing leadership and pathway into employment programmes to provide the specialist knowledge, skills and training required.	Matter A & D	Core MCC	Core MCC

	Enhance our information base, including building a fuller picture of existing provision and the play workforce	To form part of the approach to Matter A above			
Matter H: Community engagement and participation	Develop the community play framework for open access play provision Support and enable wider community action to enhance play opportunities	As Matter D above As Matter C above. Supporting and enabling community driven play proposals, including at The Dell, Chepstow Continue to support Playing Out (encouraging street play in communities) with interested communities; support and enable wider community action to enhance play.	Matters C & D	Core MCC	Core MCC
Matter I: Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas	Identify better links and integration with other programmes and partnerships through the Play Strategy Group	Extend participation in the play strategy group supported by the appointment of the Play Development Lead	Matter A	Core MCC	Core MCC