

Manifesto for children's play in Wales



Play Wales has four asks for **play**, for health, for children, for everyone

Wales – a play friendly place

Play Wales is calling for the next Government in Wales to continue to prioritise provision for play. We are asking all political parties to recognise that having time, freedom and good places for playing are of paramount importance to all¹ children, their families and the wider community.

Playing contributes to the wellbeing and resilience of all of us – we need to work hard to foster environments that support children's play.

Everyone knows that playing is good for children. And there is a growing body of solid evidence of the long-term benefits. Evidenced studies show that play projects²:

- are just as effective as sport and PE programmes in boosting physical activity levels and hence helping to tackle child inactivity and obesity
- support children to become more resilient through the development of their emotional and social self-management skills
- provide powerful opportunities for children to engage positively with their school and the wider community, and with nature and the environment
- encourage neighbourliness, volunteering and social action, and improve community cohesion.

¹ When we talk about all children this includes every child regardless of their culture, impairment, gender, language, background, behaviour or need.

² Gill, T. (2014) *The Play Return: A review of the wider impact of play initiatives*

We need to address barriers to playing; this is a task for all of us, and especially government. Policy on planning, traffic, housing and open space, schools and childcare have a direct effect on opportunities to play.

Successive Welsh Governments, with all party support, have taken an international lead in adopting a Play Policy and more recently legislating for children's play in Wales; the first government in the world to do so, for which Wales rightly receives continued wide acclaim.

Play Wales is calling on all political parties to continue to maintain this momentum and consider the following set of initiatives:

In schools:

recognition of the need for play before school, during play/break times and after school hours. Addressing this need could involve playtime support including training and awareness-raising for school staff and parents, coupled with the provision of suitable equipment and materials for active, creative play.

In parks and public play space:

recognition of the benefits of children's presence in parks and public space. This could involve investment in a programme focusing on communities and offering cross-sector training for those who plan, design, build and manage our communities. Delivered through a partnership of local authorities, play providers, and others with an interest in children within communities, more of us will understand the importance of children's play and our role in creating child-friendly public spaces.

In neighbourhoods:

recognition of children's need to play out in their community. Addressing this could involve the development of regular sessional road closures in residential streets with an additional focus on streets around schools, and linked to active travel policies. Also, support for parents and residents by reducing red-tape around traffic regulations, consultation, insurance etc. play and our role in creating child-friendly public spaces.

In staffed play services:

recognition of the key role of adults in facilitating children's play. This could involve support for staffed provision to test social prescription models with health agencies, delivering locally organised play projects in disadvantaged areas that can run practical ideas sessions on active, creative play for local residents to encourage volunteering, social action and asset-based community development.

Decision makers can be confident that investing in these asks will result in improvements in children's health and well-being, and hence a reduction in the pressures on the National Health Service in Wales and the public purse. What is more, the level of investment needed would be modest, cost-effective and support local authorities to comply with their statutory duties to assess and secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas.

Freely chosen play is critically important to all children and young people as part of their everyday lives and within their own communities. We can all be part of making Wales a place where children can benefit from playing as part of their everyday lives.



www.playwales.org.uk

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