



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

# Review of the Capacity and Delivery of Play Training in Wales

12 April 2010

**melyn**  
*Consulting*

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## **Introduction**

The Children and Families Measure places a statutory duty upon local authorities within Wales to sufficiently provide for children's play. This Measure will lead to a groundbreaking legal framework for children's play never seen before across the world, placing Wales at the cutting edge of thinking around childhood and children and young people's future place in society; and contributing significantly the Welsh Government's response to the challenge of Article 31 of the UNCRC.

This Measure should contribute to a future for children and young people where all public spaces are seen as playable spaces, where children and young people are seen and heard in our society playing freely. To succeed with such an ambitious vision the communities of Wales will need to see a significant shift in society's views and attitudes towards making children and young people's right to play towards happen.

It will be the role of the children and young people's workforce to turn that thinking into reality for children; with a critically important position for the playwork sector whose understanding of the provision of environments for play and the facilitation of 'playing' has to be the lynch pin for the vision of the Welsh Assembly Government.

## **Review Process**

### **Project Aim**

The aim of this project has been to undertake a review of playwork training in Wales in order to assess the development of playwork training; to enhance the delivery of play opportunities in Wales; and consider the best model of provision currently available.

### **Objectives**

In meeting the aim and number of objectives have been met including;

- consultation with play practitioners and play organisations to develop an understanding of the current provision of playwork training and the benefits of playwork for children and young people;
- the presentation of a summary of playworker's training and qualification needs;
- presentation of a summary qualification framework for playwork training in Wales;
- An assessment of variances in current playwork qualifications and the playwork profession;
- Examination of the role that the National Centre for Playworkers Training plays in the development and delivery of playwork qualifications and

training, involving a summary of consultation with playworkers and practitioners on this issue.

## **Methodology**

### **Desk Research**

An element of desk research took place to set the subsequent research within a broader policy context. This has included reference to Assembly Government policy relating both to play such as the Children & Families Measure; Play Policy Implementation Plan; and wider cross-cutting workforce strategy such as the CQfW, alongside appropriate UK-wide strategy eg. *Quality Training, Quality Play*.

### **Consultation with Playworkers**

Bi-lingual survey forms were sent by email to 258 playworkers who previously responded electronically to the 2008 Play Wales Playwork Survey (and who consented to be contacted again in the future) along with 51 people who had attended play training over the previous 12 months. In total 101 responses were received by email (33%).

A further 152 playworkers who responded to the 2008 Play Wales Playwork Survey (and who consented to be contacted again in the future) were contacted by telephone along with a number of those who responded to the electronic survey. Of these, 122 were interviewed in detail by telephone.

Both the survey and the telephone interviews investigated playworkers understanding of;

- current playwork training and qualifications;
- playwork Wales, the National Centre for Playwork Education and Training in Wales.
- playworkers' perceptions of current play qualifications, play training;
- the playwork profession;
- the most accessible and effective models of delivering playwork training;
- unmet needs for play training and qualifications.

### **Consultation with Playwork Employers**

A sample was taken from the responses to the 2008 Playwork Survey along with a selection of playwork employers taken of CSSIW registered out of school childcare play providers and open access play providers.

Employers were interviewed by telephone to investigate their understanding of: current playwork training and qualifications; Playwork Wales, the National Centre for Playwork Education and Training in Wales. In addition, questions were asked to gain

an understanding of Playworker employer's perceptions of current play qualifications, play training and the playwork profession; and to assess unmet needs for play training and qualifications.

### **Consultation with Stakeholders / Training Providers**

The major stakeholders in Play Training were contacted including; Play Wales; Skills Active (the UK Sector Skills Council for Play); Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs. In addition, all of the 10 Big Lottery funded Play Infrastructure projects (Child's Play Programme) were contacted and interviewed about the development of both regional play partnerships and the impact on training and qualifications of the Round Two Play Project plans.

All of the known play training providers were contacted to establish: the range of playwork training currently being delivered in Wales; identify the number of playworkers currently receiving training; make an assessment of overall playwork training capacity across Wales; assess the take-up of playwork training against capacity.

### **Consultation with Local Authorities**

The lead officer for play development in each of the 22 local authorities in Wales was interviewed by telephone to ascertain the current state of play provision in each area; establish the role of the local authority in delivering, funding or supporting play training; and to investigate any plans to respond to the duty to secure play provision as set out in the Children & Families Measure (2010).

## 1. Policy Context

- 1.1 In understanding Play Training and the future shape of the play sector, it is important to examine current policy and take account of other factors that may result in changing demand for play training.

### ***Play Policy***

- 1.2 The Welsh Assembly Government is fully committed to the promotion of children's play and was the first home administration to set out a Play Policy and develop a strategy. The Assembly Government's Play Policy (2002) set out its recognition of the vital importance of play and commitment that society should seek every opportunity to support it and to create an environment that fosters it.
- 1.3 The Assembly Government's Play Policy Implementation Plan (2006) set out how the principles within the Play Policy would be implemented. It was founded on the aims and priorities outlined in the Assembly Government's strategic statement 'Children and Young People: Right to Action'. The Implementation Plan set out a number of commitments relating to the Play workforce. These included;
- a) That the Welsh Assembly Government continue to support the development of the unique role of the playworker, to facilitate children's play within the community:
  - b) That the Welsh Assembly Government ensures the development of Higher Education training and qualifications appropriate to the needs of those whose role combines playwork, early years work, community development and youth work:
  - c) That the Welsh Assembly Government, in recognition of the increased parity of role, support the integration of playwork pay and conditions into the Joint National Committee conditions of service and pay scales for Youth Work and Community Work:
  - d) That the Welsh Assembly Government supports this development to produce a new range of playwork training materials and courses to meet the needs of the playworker in the twenty first century.

- 1.4 There has been progress against these commitments on a number of fronts;

### ***The National Centre for Playwork Education and Training in Wales***

- 1.5 In delivering many of the commitments to support the development of the unique role of the playworker set out in the Play Policy Implementation Plan,

the Welsh Assembly Government and Skills Active are contributing financial support up until 2011 to develop a National Centre for Playwork Education and Training in Wales, hosted by Play Wales but directed by a Committee made up of stakeholders from across the sector.

- 1.6 The centre provides infrastructure for playwork training and education: development and delivery of playwork qualification and continuous professional development; the strategic co-ordination of playwork education and training delivery; viability and sustainability of playwork learning programmes; networking for employers, trainers and assessors; information dissemination, communication and quality assurance for employers in Wales.
- 1.7 The key role of the centre is to develop and embed Playwork learning and skills with and for employers in Wales. This includes the delivery of playwork programmes in further and higher education, and continuous professional development tailored to meet the needs of employers.

### ***BIG Lottery Child's Play Programme***

- 1.8 The aims of the Child's Play Programme include: the development of new play spaces for children in their communities; the development of play opportunities that provide space for children to choose how they play; and the development of staffed open access play opportunities.
- 1.9 Over two rounds of funding, the Programme will support two types of strategic projects; Infrastructure projects and Play projects.
- 1.10 It was recognised that many areas in Wales lacked the capacity to apply for play projects straight away and that local infrastructure needed to be developed to deliver play opportunities. The Infrastructure projects work with statutory and voluntary providers to identify existing capacity, identify need and support the development of strategic proposals to meet those needs. 10 such projects worth approximately £2.5 million were funded at round one covering the whole of Wales. Some cover single local authority areas, but most cover a wider geographical area. They are predominantly led by the Third Sector, although a small number are led by local authorities. After some initial difficulties, these projects are now generally gathering momentum and are providing a strategic focus for play provision in the areas that they cover. With the duty to co-operate in mind, regional play associations can play a vital role in ensuring that voluntary play providers are able to have a voice and effect change when working with other agencies. They may also have a role in assessing local training needs.

## **Children & Families Measure**

1.11 The Play Policy Implementation Plan's commitment to place a statutory duty on local authorities to provide for children's play needs was enshrined in law as part of the Children & Families Measure (2010). Local authorities in Wales have a duty to;

- Assess the sufficiency of play opportunities
- Secure sufficient play provision (with regard to quantity and quality)
- Publish information about play opportunities.

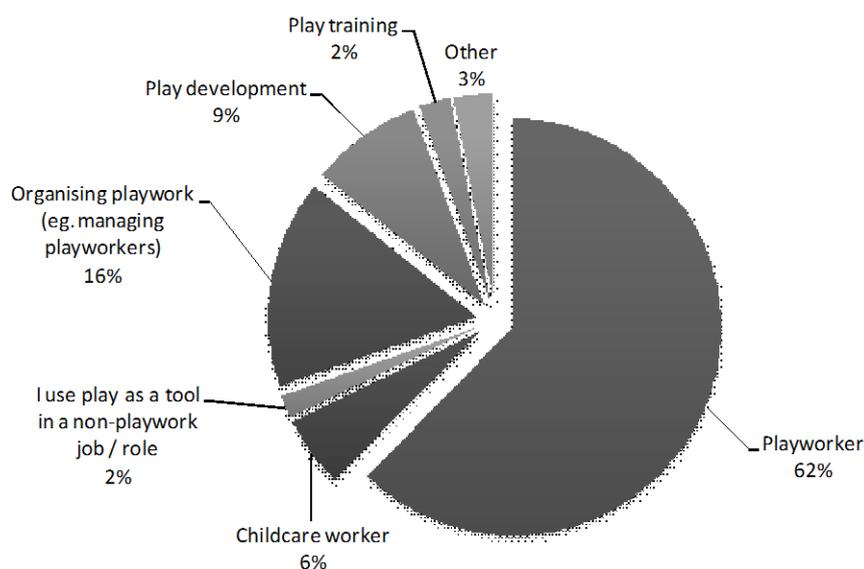
1.12 The duty has the potential to contribute to a significant increase in the volume of playwork and therein the amount of play training. However, the implications will depend very much on how regulations are developed that define 'sufficient' play opportunity.

## 2. Play Provision and Playwork in Wales

### *The Play Workforce*

- 2.1 The term playworker has been used throughout this document to denote a person who uses play as part of their work or volunteering activity; or they manage or coordinate play. A range of people who considered themselves to be playworkers were invited to respond to consultation to inform this Review. They included people working in a range of vocational areas and for a variety of employers.
- 2.2 The exact size and scope of the play workforce is difficult to accurately assess as playworkers are employed and operate across a wide range of sectors and employers. The 2006 Care Council for Wales research of the play, early years and childcare workforce<sup>1</sup> estimated that there were likely to be over 5,000 playworkers in Wales.
- 2.3 Play as an emerging profession contains people working in a wide variety of roles, in differing positions of responsibility and in a range of settings. The survey of playworkers<sup>2</sup> captured this diversity so as to develop a clearer picture of the workforce. To provide a comparative analysis of the general roles undertaken by those involved in play, respondents to the survey were asked to describe their job or volunteering under a number of broad headings.

**Figure 1: Playwork roles (n=451)**



<sup>1</sup> Care Council for Wales (2006) Scoping & Mapping of the early years, childcare and play sector

<sup>2</sup> Melyn Consulting (2008) Play Wales Workforce Development Report

- 2.4 Of the 451 people who responded to this issue, the majority (62%) described themselves as Playworkers. Of the remainder, nearly a quarter were managers of other playworkers or were involved in play development.
- 2.5 Within the 3% of people who categorised themselves as 'Other' were those involved in the administration of play settings, strategic management, youth work and information services. While some of these people would not usually be included within a definition of playwork, their willingness to participate in the survey suggests that they have a sense of belonging to the play sector. Their responses also highlight the need to examine playwork in far wider terms, that include a range of vocations and professions that have the potential to influence children's play and therefore require an understanding of play values. These include people working in planning, transport, police, environmental services, sports & leisure, education, early years & childcare, health and community development. Interpretation of the Children & Families Measure in its widest sense will require a holistic view of play provision that will require this range of engagement and for which training will be a crucial issue.

### ***Play Provision in Wales***

- 2.6 Play in Wales is provided by a wide range of organisations spanning a number of sectors. These include out of school childcare; holiday playschemes; adventure play; open access play provision; and community play.
- 2.7 According to CSSIW<sup>3</sup>, there were 539 out of school clubs across Wales in 2009. These were registered for over 18,000 places which based on average occupancies means that over 30,000 children in Wales are catered for, representing around 8.5% of the population of children aged 5 to 14 years. In addition, there were 545 day nurseries, many of which offer childcare and play to school-aged children.
- 2.8 Registered open access play provision amounted to 80 settings registered for 3,500 places. However, as settings catering for over-eights only are not required to register the total volume of open access play provision is far greater. This leaves a large amount of play provision unquantifiable.
- 2.9 While out of school care is predominantly provided by the private and voluntary sector, most open access play is delivered or commissioned by local authorities. However, play provision varies widely from county to county. As part of this review, all 22 local authorities were contacted to gain a perspective on the delivery of open access play and the development of play policies and strategies across Wales.
- 2.10 In some authorities, there is no one who is directly involved with play services, so a representative was identified who had some link through a steering group,

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<sup>3</sup> Registered childcare and open access play provision September 2009

for example, within the authority. In other cases, training provision for the authority lies with an individual with a broad remit across children and young people's services. From this, a picture of the diversity of patterns of delivery can be drawn up, broadly into four groups:

- Authority delivers services through or additionally with Round 1 infrastructure funds 2 (Local authorities)
- Authority delivers services in partnership with voluntary services and volunteers (10 Local authorities)
- Authority delivers some services and commissions out others to partners (6 Local authorities)
- Authority commissions out all play services to organisation with infrastructure funds (4 Local authorities)

2.11 One local authority that currently commissions some of its' services to partner organisations said that it is intending a full re-structure next year and to commission out all its' play services.

2.12 Only one local authority employed more than 10 full time staff in their play service (Flintshire) in a variety of roles; Three authorities employ 4 or 5 full time staff within their play unit; half of the local authorities (12/22) employ 1 or 2 workers full time within a strategic role to develop play provision in the area and organise training. Where the authority is commissioning out all play services, there is usually no member of staff within the authority who has responsibility for play, though play services normally sit within another section of the Council, such as within the Children and Young People's Partnerships (CYPP), Sport and Leisure or Early Years and Childcare. Some officers expressed the view that it was helpful for play services to be situated under the umbrella of CYPP in order to access funding for training, but also to raise the profile of play work with others who work with children.

2.13 There is currently a clear link between local authorities and the BIG Lottery Child's Play programme. The remit of the Round 1 projects has been to develop an infrastructure for play provision and training that works well within the local area. While a couple of Infrastructure projects are specific to one authority, the majority of these infrastructure projects work alongside two or three county areas to support services.

2.14 Local authorities were asked whether they have a play strategy and implementation play in place:

- 15 local authorities have a Play Strategy in place
- 13 local authorities have a Play Development Plan operational
- 6 local authorities have a draft Play Strategy

- 5 local authorities have a draft Play Development Plan
- 3 local authorities have no Play Development Plan in place

### **Local Authority Play Provision**

- 2.15 Although the level of play staffing is very different between all local authority areas, the number of play staff does not necessarily reflect the amount of play that is taking place within the area. Where the local authority is working in partnership to support or be supported by voluntary groups who have their own funding, an indefinite and large amount of play provision might be taking place of different types. Where the council is commissioning out play provision through service level agreements, this is necessarily dependent on funds that the council is able to secure. In both of these scenarios, it was mentioned by officers that the play sector generally feels it is more productive for councils to develop community-led play provision and that in some cases, local authorities were too controlling regarding what services should be provided for children and young people.
- 2.16 Having a strong lead from a local authority can also be seen as very beneficial in the development of play provision: in Wrexham for example, there is a large team of both full time and part time staff. Play workers do not just deliver play services but also support communities to set up their own provision where possible. They are aiming to raise the profile of play by publicly launching their latest play strategy and are setting up a local play forum to include representatives from Early Years, Planning & Economic Development, the Youth Service, Youth Justice and appropriate voluntary sectors, such as adventure play, special needs and disabilities. In contrast, the view was also expressed that where a local authority was delivering a lot of play provision, it can be at the expense of the development of the voluntary sector. One infrastructure project officer said: “*There’s no chance for voluntary organisations yet.*”
- 2.17 Those working at a strategic and developmental level of play provision described the difficulties of setting up a models of delivery and training that work in different areas of Wales – sparsely populated rural communities set against cities, towns with areas of social deprivation which attract extra funding alongside areas that do not attract extra funding and which struggle to deliver play provision. In Monmouthshire the authority struggles to deliver play services and to access relevant play training. This is partly because the county is prosperous and not eligible for extra funding initiatives. They are hoping that the Round 2 Lottery funding will make a “big difference” to funding and provision, because at the moment it is felt that they are not able to serve the children in their local community adequately.

2.18 In Conwy, there is a fairly small amount of play provision taking place at the moment: sport through leisure centres during the summer holidays and limited closed provision through Integrated Children's Centres funded by Flying Start. The NW Wales Play Forum feels that they are on the verge of making "big steps" through the infrastructure project, setting up local networks, partnerships and supporting voluntary play organisations and training the local workforce. They are aiming to develop a peripatetic workforce that work in rural communities to provide play opportunities to children and young people. However, they said that 80% resources should be spent not on providing play, but on working with parents, schools and communities to remove barriers to play. A working example of this type of practice can be seen in Pembrokeshire which has pockets of deprivation and rural communities as well. The Children's Projects Development Officer described their provision as follows:

- Mobile play provision is quite extensive throughout the county, with some delivery at fixed sites.
- Go Play – out of hours school project, training staff in schools (lunch time staff, teachers' assistants) to take this work forward.
- Play in the Park – open access, play rangers. Training communities to carry this work forward (through Communities First funding)
- Play for children with additional needs – both inclusive and exclusive play planned for this summer.

2.19 Several local authorities said that they are having to make cuts in play provision over the coming year because of cuts in their budget, they are either unable to pay their own seasonal staff, or unable to commission services. Bridgend said that they have had a "huge budget cut" in mainstream provision, which means they can offer less in terms of community based projects and mobile provision. Gwynedd said: "*We have already had cuts in the play budget with further cuts expected next year. This means that holiday schemes will offer fewer hours, with fewer staff*". More than one authority said that they were suffering a shortage of staff who are trained to Level 3 (not just in Playwork) and that they were having to reduce or completely cut their holiday play schemes because they could not meet registration requirements.

### ***Funding for Play***

2.20 Whilst not directly related to this Review, a consideration of funding for play provision is important as the amount of provision relates directly to the supply of playwork employment and hence demands for training.

2.21 Funding for open access play services rarely comes solely through local authority core budgets, instead Cymorth, Flying Start, Communities First, Big Lottery provide most of the current funding used by local authorities to provide

or commission play. Many of those local authority officers interviewed felt that this reflected their council's attitude towards the play sector and its importance to senior officers in terms of priorities of funding. For example, one officer said that their authority had had draft plans to draw up a play unit for the past six years, which was "very frustrating" for those who were committed to play provision. He said that senior management do not necessarily see how play provision is different from sports or childcare and that they have "*very blinkered views on what it entails*". Another said: "*Local authority senior officers do not necessarily understand play work ... so they need to consult more with children and playworkers*". Another respondent said that their local authority did not really understand that the role of a play officer needs to be strategic and not involved in the delivery of "*trips out and play schemes*" and with this view came a lack of support for the post. Another said: "*At a strategic level, we want a quality workforce but there is no funding to resource and train them.*" These attitudes may present some considerable challenges in meeting the duties set out in the Children & Families Measure.

2.22 Some local authority officers expressed a concern that if funding did come directly to the Authority for playwork, that it would need to be ring-fenced for play services alone since other priorities would inevitably take funding from this pot. Others were anxious that existing sources of external funding were for a fixed term and that they would not be able to continue many play services if the source of funding came to an end. Many expressed their frustration at the short-term nature of funding and the lack of commitment they felt it showed towards the children and young people's needs in their area: "*Play is in danger of being lost*" said one infrastructure project officer. They said that a sustainable source of funding is needed to ensure that the networks and resources (trained staff and play provision for children) put in place by infrastructure projects is not wasted. One out of school club manager said:

*"We need sustainable long term funding to build a work force. The Government is throwing money at problems ...as soon as something is set up, three years later it is changed or removed."*

### 3. Assessment of the current and future needs of the workforce

- 3.1 The Children & Families Measure will inevitably change the way in which play is perceived and has the potential to widen the scope of people's understanding of play. Such a change will without doubt affect the play workforce itself and its training needs; but there may also be a more fundamental change in how other sectors view play, engage with play and eventually incorporate a greater understanding of play and play values within their own work.
- 3.2 An assessment of Play Training therefore needs to take account not only of current needs but must make an assessment of what the play sector might look like in the future in light of changes brought about not only by the measure, but accounting for the BIG Lottery Child's Play Programme.

#### ***The Playwork Profession***

- 3.3 In the Play Policy Implementation Plan, the Welsh Assembly Government set out its desire to see a play provision staffed by workers trained to understand how to promote inclusive freely chosen play; and the notion of a playwork profession.
- 3.4 Within the broadest definition, playwork is clearly a profession as a vocation founded upon specialised education and training. However, many aspects of how other professions define their status are missing in playwork. For example, in areas such as teaching, nursing or social work professionals are members of a professional body; they are regulated; have degrees or higher level qualifications; and receive continuing professional development.

#### **Playworkers Perspectives**

- 3.5 Consultation with playworkers found that the majority<sup>4</sup> of those involved in playwork recognise it as a profession and despite missing many of the trappings of professional status, are convinced that it deserves professional status.

*“Absolutely, we operate to a professional framework as do teachers and social workers. We suffered historically from a lack of qualifications, structure and pathways but that has changed.”*

- 3.6 Yet playworkers also say that this is not always the perception of other professionals towards them. A lack of awareness and understanding of play

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<sup>4</sup> 51% of those responding said they thought that Playwork was a profession

from other professionals means that it is difficult for playworkers to advocate the benefits of play.

*“Yes, we are a profession but I don’t think other people think we are and because of that we have encountered problems, for example in child protection cases where people won’t share information with us. They will with youthworkers and schools but we are not viewed as professionals”.*

*“I would like to think that play is a profession but don’t know if it is perceived by other people as such. Play needs to raise its profile, not pay lip service. There’s a lot of stigma attached to the world of play.”*

- 3.7 In general, professions enjoy a high social status, with regard and esteem conferred upon them by society. This high esteem arises primarily from the higher social function of their work, which is regarded as vital to society as a whole. A problem for Playwork will inevitably be in society’s views and attitudes towards the importance of play in children and young people’s lives.

*“There is a common misconception we spend days playing. We’re not taken seriously as a profession. “*

*“Need to make other professionals more aware of the importance of play then they might recognise the value of our work.”*

- 3.8 A significant issue highlighted consistently by those playworkers who were consulted was around low pay and poor terms and conditions of employment. These were seen as being a barrier to playwork becoming professional and being recognised as such.

*“Yes, we work to a professional standard but we are underpaid and undervalued.”*

*“We are equally professional but this is not reflected in funding, security or pay scales.”*

*“As a profession, we are undervalued and underpaid. There is no distinction made between childcare and playwork at all.”*

*“Playwork is a unique sector, but not always recognised on the same level as other jobs, such as youth work. Playwork is at the bottom of the pile.”*

- 3.9 Despite the majority of playworkers saying that they felt professional, a significant minority did not. A barrier to professional recognition for playwork may be the attitudes of playworkers themselves.

*“Lots of people don’t see us as professional. It is better than it was 20 years ago but even in our profession we don’t see ourselves as professional.”*

*“No, it is an aspiration in sector but it will never be considered up against say, teaching.”*

- 3.10 Recognition of playwork qualifications as impacting on professional status was a recurrent theme expressed by those playworkers consulted. While few

doubted the value of playwork qualifications, the restricted availability of employment opportunities in play made them seem of less value.

*“We are not taken seriously as a profession. People don’t recognise qualifications outside of the sector. They don’t realise that we have transferable skills and qualifications.”*

*“No, playwork is a second local authorities career. Young people do very short anti social hours. If they get qualifications not sure they stand them in good stead as they can only use them for playwork. Not transferable to other professions.”*

### **Employer’s perspectives**

3.11 Opinions of those employers consulted were divided on whether the profile of playwork has been raised through recent investment, but all agreed that the career path needs more promotion. Most felt that any promotion should emphasise how playwork is unique in its approach and different from other sectors who are working with children and young people.

*“Playwork needs more promotion as a career. Even where training is available, there are no jobs to move into.”*

*“Generally, local authorities do not see playwork as a distinct area of provision, or as a profession. It is difficult to define what a playworker is.”*

*“There is no clear path for people who want to become playworkers.”*

*“The profile of the profession is gradually being raised and play is being put on the agenda.”*

3.12 Some employers felt that there has been a radicalisation of the playwork workforce, which has made it difficult for them to share common ground with others working with children and young people:

*“Playworkers can be quite radical, in terms of pushing the boundaries, but it is important that we recognise the work that others are doing in EYCC, that have a role to play as well.”*

*“The role of the playworker is important, but more important is the necessity of working closely with other partners.”*

### **Playwork Careers**

3.13 Over 90% of those consulted said that they felt playwork is a worthwhile career. Playworkers are generally highly committed and dedicated to playwork and play values despite limited career opportunities and a lack of recognition.

*“Playwork is limiting, but is worthwhile. Because it is not seen as statutory provision to provide (as youth work) it becomes less important. Needs to be more cohesiveness to come into line with youth and early years.”*

*“Yes it’s a worthwhile career. I will be here till I retire. Don’t think it’s appreciated as a worthwhile career - only by the people who do it.”*

*“Yes definitely something I will carry on doing. Older playworker at 43. Didn’t think I would go down this route but think it’s a good work opportunity for all ages.”*

- 3.14 For some, the lack of both job and career opportunities is frustrating enough to consider leaving the sector.

*“Am 45 so feel may move on in next 2 years to something else. Pay is poor, not enough hours to make it viable.”*

*“ I like working in the environment, worthy role for play but hard work. Sometimes don’t feel it’s recognised as a worthy thing in schools as qualifications structure different to teaching.”*

*“It’s difficult. I don’t see myself coming out of play by choice but don’t know where else can progress onto? No next level up. Can’t see myself being in play long term as opportunity not there.”*

*“Playwork is worthwhile role but unfortunately as there’s no career structure and pay structure for play workers I can’t see myself staying long term.”*

- 3.15 The sustainability of play projects was an issue raised by both playworkers and employers – particularly local authorities. As a non-statutory service, play is felt to be particularly difficult to maintain.

*“I think it is a worthwhile career but funding is problematic re: sustainability issues. To sustain well staffed play provision we need resources to keep it going. I see play as good transitional provision – there is a real benefit in local play opportunities. It’s very important to engage with families and children in need in the community. It plugs lots of gaps left by other services but it’s difficult to sustain. I’ve just heard that funding has been pulled for my project.”*

- 3.16 Many local authority playworkers are employed on a part time, piecemeal basis (to fit in with out of school hours). More than one respondent said that in order to have a trained and qualified workforce, the posts must have enough hours (suggested 20+ hours all year round) to make it worthwhile to pursue as a career. Within many areas, there are a large number of workers who work on an entirely voluntary basis, who are not paid for their work. In one local authority, 125 voluntary staff run the summer holiday play schemes, without remuneration, apart from their expenses.

### **Recruitment & Retention**

- 3.17 In all sectors of playwork employment (at the level of delivering playwork to children and young people), employers report that there is a difficulty of recruiting, training, qualifying and retaining staff.
- 3.18 Of the employers responding to the 2008 survey, 85% had recruited at least one member of staff in the previous 12 months. The majority of those responding (58%) said that they found it difficult to recruit the play staff that they needed and a further 23% said that it was hard. Private sector employers

were most likely to say that they found it most difficult to recruit. This is perhaps due to the lower wages that are offered to workers in this sector.

3.19 In terms of recruitment, several reasons were given for difficulties in attracting suitable staff:

- There are not enough workers in the labour market who are qualified to Level 3 in either playwork, or childcare, who can then run settings. Playwork is the sought qualification, but often employers are forced to accept candidates who hold childcare or youth and community qualifications, with suitable experience.
- There are not enough training courses that offer Playwork at Level 3.
- There are not enough employees in the work sector with appropriate Level 2 qualifications, but employers are forced to accept candidates who are willing to work towards Level 2. Not all temporary seasonal staff achieve their Level 2 qualification because there is not enough incentive to do so.

3.20 The view was expressed by employers that young people preparing to enter the labour market are not given information, advice and guidance about playwork as a career. It was felt that Careers Wales advisers working in schools and colleges did not know enough, if anything, about playwork as an option and that they would not necessarily distinguish the field from childcare<sup>5</sup>. The out of school hours nature of play work does not fit easily with work experience for Y10 students who may be interested in this kind of work. It would also present a problem to work with people who are a similar age to themselves, but they would need directing to a younger age group.

3.21 In terms of retaining staff, many employers in all sectors spoke of the frustration of recruiting suitable staff, training them to an accredited level and then losing them. This happens for a variety of reasons: for example, they were only taking on the play work role to supplement another job or course of study at college or university, or another reason given is that workers then move on to an employer who can give them better pay, terms and conditions.

3.22 One infrastructure project officer summarised the difficulties for the sector in the following way:

*“Resources do not fulfil the needs of the sector for a number of reasons:  
- geographical / rural mix of Wales makes workforce difficult to train and play provision more difficult to deliver*

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<sup>5</sup> Playwork Wales has begun to make links with Careers Wales to discuss how to work with them to promote the playwork as a job or as a career. This is a challenging notion for many in the sector who feel they cannot promote playwork as a career with the significant bulk of the workforce being either seasonal or part-time.

- much play provision is through summer holiday schemes, so that the workforce is used seasonally
- playworkers are paid low wages, for part time hours on short term contracts, in a sector where career progression is poor.
- 60% of the workforce are unqualified and are not meeting delivery standards
  - there is not adequate funding for training for the workforce”

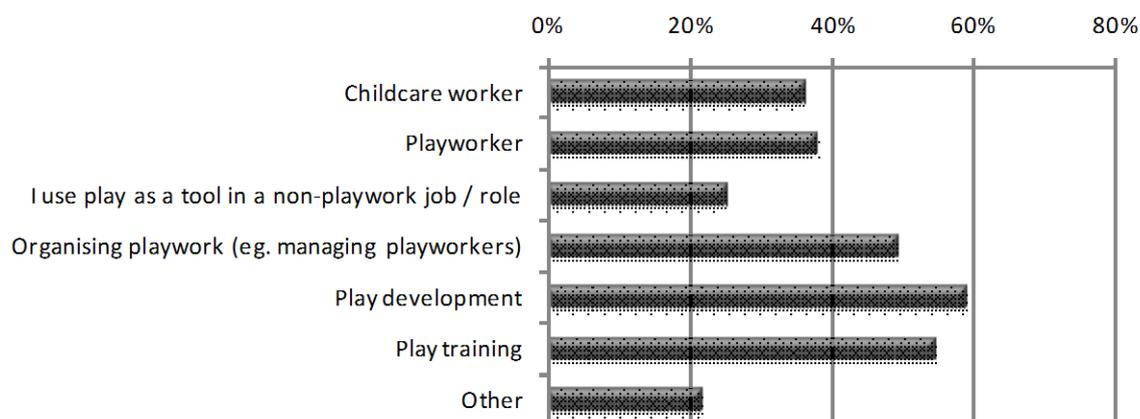
### Current Qualification Levels

3.23 People surveyed<sup>6</sup> were asked to identify the highest level of education that they had achieved in life. This was set out using the *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales* levels. Relative to the population as a whole, people working in play are more highly educated with; 86% being qualified at Level 2 or above (65% in Wales as a whole<sup>7</sup>); 71% educated to Level 3 or above (47% in Wales); and 39% with a Level 4 qualification or higher (27% in Wales).

3.24 There were differences in educational attainment by the roles that people had in play with a trend towards people having a higher educational level in play development or management roles.

3.25 People working in play were also asked whether or not they held a playwork qualification. In total, 41% of respondents said that they held a recognised playwork qualification<sup>8</sup>. Those working in play development and play training were most likely to hold a qualification while those who worked in other roles but used play were least likely to be qualified in play. The most common qualification held was found to be the NVQ Level 3 Playwork held by 10% of those involved in play in Wales.

**Figure 2: Proportion of people holding a playwork qualification by role**



<sup>6</sup> Melyn Consulting (2008) Play Wales Workforce Development Report

<sup>7</sup> Office for National Statistics December 2007 Qualification levels of working age adults by UK country and region

<sup>8</sup> Of these, a proportion held qualifications that enabled them (for regulatory purposes) to work in a play setting (eg. NNEB) but from the information provided it was clear that they did not hold a specific play qualification.

- 3.26 Follow up interviews found that of those describing themselves as playworkers were more likely to hold a playwork qualification (63%) with an increasing number (11%) having undertaken elements of the P<sup>3</sup> (Playwork Principles into Practice) qualification.

### ***Demand for training***

- 3.27 Assessing current and unmet demand for training requires consideration of a number of factors.

### **Employment Opportunities**

- 3.28 Firstly, in common with other sectors (eg, youth work, childcare) the main driver for training is employment. Because playwork is not a regulated and protected profession, people more often than not start working as playworkers without a playwork qualification. For many playworkers, their induction before starting work on for example, a summer holiday playscheme will be the first play training they receive. In this way, the demand for training is linked to the supply of jobs in play.
- 3.29 Local authorities who are employing a seasonal and often part time play workforce for the summer holiday period normally conduct their own induction / introductory courses, to provide employees with the basic knowledge they need and fulfil statutory guidelines in terms of training in generic topics such as: child protection, 1<sup>st</sup> aid, health and safety. This might be developed in-house, or might be part of the P<sup>3</sup> course, whether employees are going on to work towards this qualification or not. Quite commonly parts of the P<sup>3</sup> course are used, without accreditation.

*“As part of workforce (childcare and playwork) strategy, have developed a six week (12 hour) CPD introductory course in playwork, which leads on to P3 / L3, free of charge.”*

*Caerphilly County Borough Council*

*“The council gives these workers basic generic and activity based training. It is definitely a need for the future that this should include play principles. Training is a grey area at the moment.”*

*Gwynedd County Council*

- 3.30 In the voluntary sector access to training and qualifications varies according to the priorities of the managers, the size of the organisation and the geographical availability of training courses. Where funding for courses is identified in the overall budget as a priority and training for qualifications has been set up as an expectation of staff, there is more commitment on the part of the employee to complete. At the other end of the scale, there are out of school clubs and

holiday clubs which are run by managers who have very little knowledge about play as a work sector and who do not distinguish it from childcare.

- 3.31 In private day nurseries that offer out of school provision, staff are typically trained to Level 3 in childcare for working with younger children during the day and may occasionally access some training in playwork topics. This depends however, on the priority given it by the nursery manager and the availability of this type of continuing professional development training (CPD) locally.

### **Availability of Funding for Training**

- 3.32 While many playworkers subsequently go on to gain playwork qualifications, their ability to do so is linked to on-going employment opportunities and the availability of funding to pay for training. In this way, the demand for playwork training is driven by the availability of funding.

- 3.33 Interviews with all 22 local authorities found that funding for training across Wales is entirely inconsistent. It depends on funding streams for different initiatives; whether different pockets of funding have been accessed creatively; and whether partnerships have been formed with other organisations.

*“Funding streams for different areas are so hit and miss. If Cymorth funding dries up, we will be back to where we were before.”*

*Flintshire County Council*

- 3.34 In several areas, budget cuts have affected training budgets and they will only be offering statutory generic training to workers.

*“All our training needs are unmet, because there is no training budget.”*

*Local Authority Play Development Officer*

- 3.35 In the voluntary and private sector, several employers said that they were really struggling to train their staff because the CPCKC budget has ‘dried up’. One after school club manager said:

*“CPCKC used to offer a good training programme, with a variety of useful courses such as play principles and practice and inclusion, but now the funding has gone.”*

- 3.36 The sector is like a sponge in terms of demand for training in that it will soak up as much training as can be offered – affordably. At no stage in this research did we find a surfeit of play training. There were some areas where play training courses were not full but this often related to the type of course offered; rural issues; timing; or cost.

## Specific Training Needs

- 3.37 Particular sectors of the play workforce need specific training. Consultation with employers and local authority officers singled out the out of school club sector as needing training in play, but also day nurseries and partner organisations such as police, youth service, outreach workers and leisure centre staff were identified as sectors that would benefit from play training. A common theme from playworkers, employers and local authorities was the need for training for work with disabled children to improve the inclusivity of play provision.

*“The out of school sector needs all the CPD you can manage.”*

*Caerphilly County Borough Council*

*“Out of school clubs are still the biggest area of need (for playwork training) and there are 20 more applications for courses next year, than there are places. Funding does not usually match up with skills shortages.”*

*Cardiff County Council*

*“We need skills training and awareness for everyone who has involvement with children – schools, parents and out of school hours provision.”*

- 3.38 Some out of school clubs and day nurseries interviewed mentioned that they use an out of school training pack produced by Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs and that this is a very useful way for managers to help out of school club staff through in-house training. Others have found it difficult to access relevant training. One day nursery manager said about accessing Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs (CPCKC) training: *“There is loads of training in early years, but this is all for the care of younger children”* and *“We have 42 staff here and we can’t release staff often for training.”*
- 3.39 Some areas do offer training in issues specific to playwork, but these are by no means across the board. Topics for specific training include: inclusive play, environment and element play, involving young people in consultation, play cycles, intervention, facilitating games, risk and fire, adventure play, working in areas of deprivation and working with disabled children. Some managers in the voluntary and private sectors said that they felt that the quality of training is not consistent within training organisations.

*“The quality of training is not always high.”*

*“The quality of training is variable. Some is very good and some less good.”*

*“450 in a room and the trainer just read from OHPs”.*

- 3.40 In some areas transition modules have been developed to help employees from other training and qualification routes move into the playwork sector. Although playwork has some shared training needs with the childcare sector, respondents felt it is important to make the distinction. *“The balance is massively out of kilter.”*

*“We found that there was a need for a transitional CPD module for people with childcare qualifications, who want to work in playwork, so made this available. Thinks the biggest hurdle is transferring from one sector to the other – change in ethos and principles.”*

*Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council*

### **Impact of the Children & Families Measure**

3.41 The Children & Families Measure is likely to have an impact on demand for playwork training specifically and playwork in general. As part of this research, local authority play officers and Infrastructure project executive officers were asked how they thought the Measure would impact on their services. All of the respondents welcomed the fact that play work will be raised by the Measure.

*“It will be useful. The Measure will give extra muscle to the development of play provision.”*

*“We hope that this will bring a higher profile for playwork and that we will stop being the ‘poor relatives’.”*

*“Hopefully it will have an impact on play provision and training.”*

3.42 Some however, had reservations and were anxious that more play provision would be asked for as a result of the Measure, but that they would not be able to resource it, especially when they are facing cuts in funding.

*“In terms of play becoming part of statutory provision, it’s great, but it’s got to come with more money.”*

*“The Measure identifies a statutory function to provide play, but it is not enough to identify gaps in provision, there has to be a commitment to fill them.”*

*“It needs to be recognised that the sector should receive core funding and not just funding from Cymorth. If the funds for play go to the council, it needs to be designated funding, so that it doesn’t get siphoned off to another sector.”*

3.43 Respondents were also sceptical about the wording of the Measure and the how the terms would be defined in guidance.

*“We need to ask what “sufficiency” means. It’s got to be people on the ground, not playgrounds.”*

*“The impact of the Measure will depend on the guidance given and the definitions of ‘play’ and ‘sufficient’. The broader the definition, the easier it is to say that it has been achieved.”*

*“We need a definition of ‘sufficiency’. We are worried that WAG will try to impose restrictions on play delivery, in response to consultations nationally. We really need to be able to respond locally – both in terms of knowing what provision is needed and where to spend the funding.”*

### **Impact of BIG Lottery Child's Play Programme**

- 3.44 Round Two of the BIG Lottery Child's Play Programme has seen ten strategic project applications covering Wales being developed which are currently being considered by BIG Lottery for approval in April 2010. The applications will contribute to the development of ten regional peripatetic playwork projects, providing free, inclusive, staffed play opportunities where it has been found that children and young people need it most, in their communities. This community based model of provision will have profound effects on the supply and demand for playwork training and qualifications both in the short-term - as lottery funding is used to recruit playworkers – and in the longer-term as community based models are embedded.
- 3.45 Round One Infrastructure projects have already started to build capacity in anticipation of Round Two with trainers recruited and trained, or in some cases, links made with local colleges to develop play training courses.
- 3.46 If all of the Round Two projects receive approval, there will be an increase in the workforce as peripatetic playworkers or 'play rangers' are recruited. A survey of the 10 Infrastructure projects suggest that this will result in an additional 140 playwork posts being created over the 4-year lifetime of the projects. While in the overall workforce this is only a small number of jobs, they will be high calibre, well-funded and supported posts that have considerable potential to enhance the profession and develop additional career opportunities.
- 3.47 The full potential of the Child's Play Programme however, will be in its success in building local, community infrastructure to continue to deliver and develop play. This will require not only training capacity to support the needs of paid workers that might be sustained after project funding ends; but initial and on-going training for volunteers within communities. This will require models of training to be that are appropriate for community volunteers who have no interest in playwork as a profession, but also those who may take on a volunteering role as a first step towards gaining a vocational qualification.

## 4. Current models of Play Training

- 4.1 Training delivered to the Play sector falls broadly within a two categories: Firstly, is training that leads to the award of a recognised vocational qualification in Playwork. Within this field there are a number of levels of qualification and methods of delivery; secondly, is continuing professional development training (CPD) that provides workers with professional expertise with which to maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge and skills and develop the personal qualities required in their professional lives. CPD may in some cases, contribute towards a qualification at all levels and qualification units are often used to deliver CPD. Higher Education courses in Playwork can also be part of a programme of CPD. Some CPD can be termed issue-based training, examining specific issues relating to people's work (eg. behaviour management; drug & alcohol awareness) while some might be statutory training such as First Aid; Food Hygiene etc.

### ***Vocational Training***

- 4.2 In Wales, vocational playwork training is delivered by a range of organisations including independent training organisations including Further Education Colleges, Play Wales, Cybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs, local authorities and increasingly, local play associations.
- 4.3 Methods of delivery vary widely according to the level of qualification, the type of qualification and the approach of the organisation involved. All however - if accredited - are underpinned by the National Occupational Standards (NOS)<sup>9</sup> These are a set of benchmarks developed by SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council, that outline the competence required by playworkers in a number of areas. They are available at levels two, three and four, and underpin what playworkers study when taking qualifications at these levels.
- 4.4 Currently, there are three broad approaches to qualifications training in Wales:

### **National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Route**

- 4.5 A number of awarding bodies offer Playwork NVQs. To achieve an NVQ, candidates should be in a job role and must prove that they have the ability (competence) to carry out their job to the required standard. Typically, playwork candidates will work towards an NVQ that reflects their role in a paid or voluntary position, so NVQ 2 for a Playwork Assistant; NVQ 3 for a Playworker.

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<sup>9</sup> SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council for the Playwork sector is overseeing the rationalisation of qualifications from the National Qualification Framework to the Qualification and Credit Framework. These changes are required by Government and the timeframe for this is April 2009 – December 2010. Qualifications within the current list of accepted qualifications for Playwork may become predecessor qualifications when the changes to the UK Qualification Frameworks are finalised. All new qualifications will be required to meet the design principles agreed by the Sector Skills Councils.

## Diploma Route

- 4.6 Some awarding bodies deliver Playwork Level 2 and Level 3 as a Diploma course for which there is no compulsory work-based assessment although it is expected that learners will already be in employment or volunteering in a playwork setting. Some courses can also be undertaken by distance learning. In Wales, CACHE is the dominant awarding body for this training with both the main providers of play training – Play Wales and Clybiau Plan Cymru Kids Clubs – both delivering CACHE courses. The term 'CACHE' is therefore often used to denote this type of qualification training by most people within the sector.

## Playwork Principles into Practice (P<sup>3</sup>) Route

- 4.7 While similar in structure to the Diploma route (the qualification is made up of an Award, Certificate and Diploma) the P<sup>3</sup> course is quite different in content. While adhering to National Occupational Standards, it was developed by Play Wales to meet the needs of playwork employers in Wales who had expressed a desire for the development of new playwork qualification for Wales that reflected the vision for playwork practice in Wales. The qualification is designed to allow playworkers to access the training in a progressive incremental way. This approach particularly meets the needs of temporary, seasonal playworkers that commonly work on summer holiday playschemes. Currently, P<sup>3</sup> is only accredited at Level 2.

## The views of Employers

- 4.8 The great majority of employers interviewed thought that the best way to deliver training and qualifications was through conducting a short introductory / induction course which was specialised for the group, followed by short modular inputs from an accredited course. After qualification, most employers expressed the view that specialised CPD should then be accessed to fill particular gaps in knowledge and practice, such as working in areas of multiple deprivation or disability.
- 4.9 Many of those interviewed working for local authorities and Infrastructure Projects were involved in piloting P<sup>3</sup> training and were keen to examine the possibilities that the approach had in sustaining training provision.

*When the play work workforce become their own trainers, they can manage themselves as a resource.*

*“We have no training budget, so the team are their own resources.”*

*“We need to train a local network of P3 trainers that can train over a wide area (eg three counties locally – Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Newport).”*

*“We want to train 3 peripetetic P3 trainers across Conwy, Gwynedd and Anglesey, to train the workforce.”*

*By training trainers in the locality through P3 training can hold on to the quality of delivery. In this way, the workforce can be developed and hopefully in the future, more of these workers will want to be trained as trainers.*

- 4.10 Employers from local authorities, the voluntary sector and the private sector varied on their views about qualifications and this related partly to how much choice they had in taking qualifications in their area. Some people felt strongly that at Level 2, the P<sup>3</sup> route was more suitable than the CACHE route for playwork, but others felt that both were very useful qualifications:

*“People working across the age groups need to have both qualifications.”*

*“The two qualification routes are very different but both are very useful.”*

*“It is up to the individual whether they prefer the style of P3 or CACHE NVQ L2 Playwork.”*

*“I feel that playwork can be delivered successfully from a variety of qualification backgrounds.”*

- 4.11 One out of school club employer from Anglesey (where playwork qualifications have not been available) said:

*“I don’t think it matters whether it is childcare or playwork qualifications. What matters is personal skills and experience.”*

- 4.12 For all courses, employers thought that the quality of delivery was one of the most important factors: *“The trainer has a major influence on the quality of the course.”*

- 4.13 Some local authority employers mentioned that they had been “put off” using the P<sup>3</sup> as a qualification, when they used it in its’ early stages because the *“pilot was too big to be manageable”* and this resulted in *“a lot of unfair criticism for Play Wales”*.

- 4.14 Of the employers contacted in the out of school and day nursery sectors, many were unaware of P<sup>3</sup> and Play Wales. Some had little idea of the nature of playwork qualifications at all.

### **Level 3 Award in Playwork (CACHE) Diploma / NVQ**

- 4.15 As the only Playwork qualification at this level, some respondents said that they would welcome the development of a Level 3 P<sup>3</sup> for playwork. However the issue for most was whether the Level 3 Diploma / NVQ route is available in their area, because many were having to use childcare qualifications to meet statutory staffing requirements for settings:

*“I would strongly advocate this in place of Childcare Level 3, for leaders of playwork settings.”*

- 4.16 Although negative aspects of Diploma / NVQ Level 3 were not really raised, it was felt that the course would be improved if it could incorporate *“managing staff and disciplinary procedures, because workers need this information in order to lead.”*
- 4.17 One local authority employer said that they were fast-tracking university students on Level 3 Diploma courses to lead play settings, but this is no longer possible for funding reasons. This has meant that there will be no holiday schemes in the area outside day nursery provision this year. The officer commented that she had not been happy with this method of qualifying, because it was not rooted in practice.

### **Level 2 Award in Playwork (CACHE) Diploma / NVQ**

- 4.18 Employers generally felt that the CACHE Level 2 Playwork course was good, but many commented that this was only the case if the trainers were experienced in playwork themselves.

*“Good, if not rushed”*  
*“Can be good quality but it depends on who is delivering it.”*  
*“CACHE L2 depends on the quality of the teaching and the quality of the placement.”*

- 4.19 One or two employers said that because the Diploma route was established and used for many vocational qualifications that it had more credibility in the labour market.

*“The CACHE NVQ in Playwork holds more water than P3 as a professional qualification.”*

- 4.20 This route was thought to be good for training large numbers of workers, because whilst there is a placement, there is less practical assessment carried out by assessors. For example, Flintshire expects 110 seasonal workers to have achieved CACHE Level 2 Diploma in Playwork, or be working towards it this year.
- 4.21 Criticisms of the CACHE Level 2 Diploma route included the view that it takes longer to deliver than P<sup>3</sup> which can make it more expensive with small numbers. Most negative points were made around the fact that it does not have a practical assessed element: *“All theory and people don’t get the practice.”* It was felt that the quality of the qualification rests significantly on the quality of the student’s placement. One EO commented: *“I would ditch CACHE completely because it is too cloclal authoritiessroom based and not available bi-lingually.”*

### Playwork Principles into Practice - P<sup>3</sup>

4.22 Many more respondents were in favour of the P<sup>3</sup> qualification for working in play and there were many comments which reflected their admiration for the enthusiasm and commitment of the P<sup>3</sup> trainers: *“The trainers delivering P<sup>3</sup> were excellent.”*

4.23 Many comments focused on the content, centring on play principles and practice:

*“Definitely in favour of P<sup>3</sup> as a qualification because it is based on play principles and work-based assessment.”*

*“The content is up to date and fit for purpose.”*

*“P<sup>3</sup> is good for anyone working with children, even if they are working in childcare.”*

*“P<sup>3</sup> is not only suitable for open access play. It trains workers to change any setting to allow children to play freely. Staff working in all settings with children need to be trained to allow this to happen.” (non verbatim)*

*“It has great benefits to the play sector and really impacts on how the play worker facilitates play.” (P<sup>3</sup> trainer)*

*“P<sup>3</sup> is the most suitable qualification for summer playscheme staff.”*

*“Very suitable for open access training – it really makes a difference you can see.”*

4.24 Another aspect of the P<sup>3</sup> that employers liked was that they felt it really challenges the workers and based in practical self-reflexive practice.

*“P<sup>3</sup> produces a lot better playworkers.”*

*“After P<sup>3</sup>, playworkers are more ready to do their job.”*

*“P<sup>3</sup> is more challenging to the play worker than the CACHE course.”*

*“As a CACHE tutor, I have learned a lot from P<sup>3</sup>.”*

4.25 Employers, on the whole, felt that the method of delivery produces better playworkers:

*“It is robustly assessed and not necessarily local authorities room based, making it ideal for smaller groups. We intend to train P<sup>3</sup> trainers, in order to train a greater proportion of the workforce.”*

*“The best way to learn is alongside other playworkers.”*

4.26 Negative comments about P<sup>3</sup> focused on the amount of work needed to gain the full qualification:

*“The P<sup>3</sup> is a lot of work – would really expect this to be an advanced level course.”*

*“For volunteers, P<sup>3</sup> is too in-depth. There is too much theory.”*

*“P<sup>3</sup> is quite a big commitment” for employees who are not directly working in play, such as teaching assistants and lunch time supervisors.”*

*“There needs to be an incentive to finish the course to qualification level.”*

- 4.27 In terms of content, some felt that legislation should be covered, as it is in the NVQ route. It was thought by some that P<sup>3</sup> is not so good for training large numbers of seasonal workers because of the cost for large groups, if using P<sup>3</sup> trainers:

*“P<sup>3</sup> would not be suitable for our training needs because the trainers could not observe / assess that number of people on a course”*

*“P<sup>3</sup> is much more expensive to deliver.” (Employer with a large workforce)*

- 4.28 Many LA and infrastructure project employers were using parts of the P<sup>3</sup> course to train staff, but not taking it to the qualification level. One had developed their own playwork OCN that feeds into City & Guilds Level 2 in Playwork.
- 4.29 Some worried about the future of P<sup>3</sup>, whether it was sustainable and felt responsibility for giving their workers qualifications that would have currency in the future.

*“I feel that no-one really knows where the P<sup>3</sup> is going and whether it will continue and that workers may end up with a qualification that doesn't mean anything.”*

- 4.30 This uncertainty around P<sup>3</sup> and its funding is also a factor in some employers using CACHE Level 2 instead. For example, Flintshire Local Authority Play Services have decided to put their Playwork staff through a Cache level 2 Certificate in playwork qualification. Their decision to do CACHE Level 2 Playwork was due to uncertainty over the funding of P<sup>3</sup> which did not meet their deadline in planning and advertising for the course and appointing trainers to facilitate with Playwork Occupational Competence. Blaenau Gwent are also delivering CACHE level 2 Certificate in playwork qualification to their playwork team, yet would like to deliver P<sup>3</sup> in the future if funding can be secured for Playwork training as the funding at local level has been spent on Community Focused schools.

### **The views of Playworkers**

- 4.31 Of those playworkers interviewed, some made comments about the models of vocational play training that they had experienced. A number of playworkers had undertaken qualifications through a variety of models and could therefore make comparisons.

*“P3 has more embedded practical application. Historically CACHE was more clocal authoritiesroom based. Also P3 more embedded Welsh perspective. CACHE Doesn't have that as much. Playwales have tried to ensure quality of P3 and P3 trainers. Some people have had negative experiences of CACHE 2 and 3 because of variability in*

*delivery, trainers, etc. CACHE perfectly adequate but as a springboard until we can deliver P3 at levels 3 and 4."*

- 4.32 One recurrent theme was from those taking Diploma courses who were finding it difficult to get enough practical experience.

*"More support from my employer because working full time and doing a training course would have been needed to do placement somewhere else to get sufficient perspectives."*

*"More practical work opportunities. Practice for new playworkers, especially those with no kids or previous experience."*

- 4.33 65% of the 122 playworkers interviewed said that they were aware of the different levels of Playwork qualifications and their relationship to different roles in playwork. However, many of these noted that their awareness was partial, e.g. only up to roles for those holding level 3.
- 4.34 Only 20% of those who did not have any playwork qualifications had a good knowledge of play training options. Of these only a few said that they were aware of the different levels of playwork qualification.
- 4.35 Very few of the playworkers who did not have a specific playwork qualification felt that it would be useful to them. These were generally people working in day nurseries, out of school clubs or allied professions. Several indicated that other qualifications may be more valuable and appropriate to them, whilst others indicated that there were negative implications to holding playwork qualifications.

*"I have the background; I just don't have the piece of paper. I have worked in the sector for 25 years and feel having qualifications from other area is more useful than play qualifications. They can be restrictive, with a degree in playwork it is all you can do. They have a few management units in there but not a lot else. They are not recognised to the same level."*

*"I come from a youth background and don't want to go with a younger age group. These qualifications far outweigh what a playwork qualification would give me. Wouldn't benefit me in my current role."*

### **Continuing Professional Development**

- 4.36 A wide range of CPD takes place in the Play sector but access often seems to depend on the availability of funding either through employers or from local authorities through local Children & Young People's Partnerships.
- 4.37 The 2008 survey of playworkers found that the most common non-vocational training undertaken by playworkers was First Aid, followed by Child Protection training and Inclusion.

- 4.38 There is also the need for transitional modules to raise the skill levels of those crossing over between childcare and play.

*“We found that there was a need for a transitional CPD module for people with childcare qualifications, who want to work in playwork, so made this available. I think this is the biggest hurdle is transferring from one sector to the other – change in ethos and principles.” Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council*

- 4.39 Opportunities for CPD are also needed to provide opportunities for those engaged in the delivery of qualifications to maintain a contemporary understanding of theory and practice within play, playwork and delivery of learning. This includes CPD at a higher level – Level 4 and above – if Playwork is to progress as a profession. The opportunities for study at degree level in Wales are very limited in Playwork - as discussed in the next section.

- 4.40 Many playwork employers clearly rely on CPD rather than qualification training to ensure that their workers have the necessary skills to do the job.

*“Workers are not going to be rewarded by their salaries, so they must find their job rewarding and stimulating. They need to be kept up to date with new ideas about children and how to work with children.” (day nursery manager)*

- 4.41 Local authorities who are employing a seasonal and often part time play workforce for the summer holiday period normally conduct their own induction / introductory courses, to provide employees with the basic knowledge they need and fulfil statutory guidelines in terms of training in generic topics such as: child protection, 1<sup>st</sup> aid, health and safety. This might be developed in-house, or might be part of the P<sup>3</sup> course, whether employees are going on to work towards this qualification or not. Quite commonly parts of the P<sup>3</sup> course are used, without accreditation.

*“As part of workforce (childcare and playwork) strategy, have developed a six week (12 hour) CPD introductory course in playwork, which leads on to P3 / L3, free of charge.”*

*(Caerphilly County Borough Council)*

*“The council gives these workers basic generic and activity based training. It is definitely a need for the future that this should include play principles. Training is a grey area at the moment.” Gwynedd County Council*

- 4.42 While local authority employers commonly commission or develop their own CPD or induction training, in it less common in other sectors where the reliance is often on piggy-backing on training designed for other sectors ie. childcare, or training provided by the sector organisations such as CPCKC. Some employers in the private and voluntary sector however, do pro-actively arrange training for their staff. One manager of an Out of School Club setting said that they arrange for a child psychologist to hold a session for the employees. She

said: “CPCKC offer courses locally, but do not often offer courses in behaviour management.”

- 4.43 In some areas, training is offered in issues specific to playwork, but these are by no means across the board. Topics for specific training include: inclusive play, environment and element play, involving young people in consultation, play cycles, intervention, facilitating games, risk and fire, adventure play, working in areas of deprivation and working with disabled children. Some managers in the voluntary and private sectors said that they felt that the quality of training is not consistent within training organisations.

### **Cross sector CPD**

- 4.44 Critical to the success of the Children & Families Measure is not just education of the playwork sector, but also on those sectors that use play in their work and professionals who will have the most impact upon the development of playable spaces and local community environments where children spend significant times within their childhood playing.
- 4.45 Pockets of good practice are being established through the delivery of P<sup>3</sup> where Play Development Officers are successfully drawing other sectors to take part in playwork qualifications. In Caerphilly, courses are running with playworkers, youth workers, lunchtime supervisors and fire officers are proving very successful in changed attitudes and practice locally. In Pembrokeshire, an 'Introduction to Play' induction programme has been designed for ancillary school staff, but could be modified and tailored for staff working in other settings, such as the Youth Service and OSC. Not all of those working with children need accredited training in playwork.
- 4.46 In England, the Play Shaper is a national professional development programme for senior managers involved in the planning, design and management of communities. Play Shaper events provide an opportunity for local authorities, Children's Trusts and their partners to work together to understand the importance of children's play and to enhance their role in creating child-friendly public spaces.
- 4.47 The programme emphasises how investing in play can help achieve the targets and priorities of professionals working in planning, health and safety, education, health, regeneration, the voluntary and community sector and the police. Play Shaper is being delivered by a partnership led by Play England, with Playwork Partnerships and SkillsActive, under contract to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

## 5. Availability and accessibility of Play Training & Qualifications

- 5.1 The availability and accessibility of training and qualifications in play is dependent on a number of factors. In part, the number of jobs in playwork will drive demand for training as it does in most other work sectors; regulation may play a part in the demand as it does particularly in the childcare sector; availability of training locally and through a variety of learning routes plays a part; and finally, the cost of training is a major factor in a broadly low-paid sector.

### **Qualifications Training**

- 5.2 Because of the complexity of funding routes that are used to support play training it is almost impossible to quantify the amount of qualifications training being delivered in Wales.

### **Work-Based Learning Providers**

- 5.3 In many sectors, funding for work based learning is driven by DCELLS through the network of Further Education colleges and Work-Based Learning (WBL) providers. In Playwork, the availability of qualifications through these providers is patchy. A survey of the 24 FE Colleges in Wales found that while all were able to deliver Playwork courses as accredited centres, in practice, only 6 were actively engaged in delivering training. These were in general, colleges with close links with the local authority (eg. Pembrokeshire College). Colleges said that there was little demand for Playwork courses and even if there was, some had difficulties in finding trainers with suitable occupational competence to deliver.
- 5.4 Consultation with employers found that availability of Level 3 Playwork is a particular problem for in many areas:
- 5.5 In Ceredigion, the nearest Level 3 course is at Pembrokeshire College and there are no local assessors to visit employees in their local placements. CACHE NVQ Level 2 is not available in Ceredigion either: "*Cybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs had funding for Level 2, but that has fallen through*". In North West Wales, neither Level 2 nor Level 3 Playwork qualifications are currently available in the area. To compensate for this, the Infrastructure Project is training some of their own trainers in P<sup>3</sup> who can then provide bi-lingual training. In Monmouthshire employers said that because Level 2 and 3 Playwork were not available locally, staff with Level 3 childcare qualifications are recruited to lead play settings. Similarly in Newport, the local officers said that it was very hard to come by Level 3 Playwork, so they have to make do

with L3 Childcare, which they said has a very different culture so is less than ideal.

### **Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs**

- 5.6 For the out of school sector, CPCKC has over recent years been the major provider of Playwork training and related subjects (underpinning knowledge to support playworkers in carrying out their role e.g. child protection, first aid, health and safety as well as business skills and committee skills such as fundraising and business health checks) in Wales. Figures from CPCKC suggest that over the past three years they have delivered training to an average of 5,436 playworkers a year.
- 5.7 However, the number of accredited Playwork Training courses delivered by Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs is considerably lower for 2009-10 than in previous years. From 2005 to 2008, out of school club playworkers in the 15 Objective 1 counties were able to access free training which was funded from the ESF Kids' Clubs Project. During 2007-8, WAG funded a number of courses for CPCKC to deliver Playwork training in the Objective 3 counties. However, during 2009-10, only 4 out of the 22 Local Authorities were funding Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs to deliver CACHE qualifications in Playwork resulting in just 4 qualification courses being delivered in 2009/10 compared with 77 courses in 2007/08. CPCKC has no plans to deliver any qualification training in 2010 / 11.
- 5.8 Given the lack of Playwork training available through mainstream work-based-learning routes, it is unlikely that playworkers working in the majority out of school clubs will be able to access any qualification training. Given the regulatory requirements for clubs, this will either threaten the sustainability of provision, or more likely, will result in a de-skilling of the workforce as playworkers have no choice but to take childcare qualifications. This situation is compounded by there being no clear Playwork Qualifications Framework from which employers and CSSIW are able to work from.

### **Play Wales**

- 5.9 Play Wales delivers both CACHE Diploma courses and the Playwork Principles into Practice (P<sup>3</sup>). Between January and July 2009, they delivered P<sup>3</sup> to 215 learners. Figures for the second half of the year will reflect the ongoing delivery of P<sup>3</sup> in a number of areas of Wales, but P<sup>3</sup> is clearly a qualification in its infancy reflected by the number of learners that it is currently reaching. However, the infrastructure being developed through P<sup>3</sup> is probably the most important aspect with a skilled and vocationally competent network of trainers having been put in place. Furthermore, Playwork Wales has supported Play Wales to develop a substantial funding bid to the ESF Convergence Programmes that if successful will contribute significantly to the infrastructure

for delivery and development of playwork qualifications for Wales over the next 3 years and beyond. If funding for Playwork Wales continues it will provide significant match funding to a pot worth between £6-8 million as well as vital capacity to that programme which will support the qualification of in excess of 3000 learners.

### **Higher Education**

- 5.10 Higher Education courses, one of the potential routes for CPD though playwork programmes, are limited in Wales. Currently, Glyndwr University delivers the only playwork BA (Hons) programme within Wales. In its second year of delivery, it is looking to be an excellent asset to playwork and programme personnel engage heavily through committee structures, supported CPD opportunities such as the Adventure Playworkers Forums and contributing to sector conferences.
- 5.11 However, from a location perspective alone, one University cannot cover Wales unless distance learning is involved, which does not necessarily suit all learners. Whilst some learners do undertake the distance learning programmes at the University of Gloucestershire, anecdotal evidence from colleges and learners themselves, suggests that playworkers are currently attending other programmes delivering, for example, Youthwork or Early Years, often attempting to adapt assignments to suit practice whilst gaining the breadth of thinking necessary. Playwork Wales has recently established a Higher Education Committee to support and encourage the delivery of playwork programmes within HEIs in Wales.
- 5.12 Higher Education is not the only solution and Playwork Wales, in consultation with the sector, has developed a CPD strategy to encourage the development and uptake of CPD opportunities, however with such limited funding available to deliver qualifications to the sector, CPD opportunities are not seen as a priority.

### ***Employer's Perspectives***

- 5.13 Employers said that the quality of training can be inconsistent and sometimes poor, especially where there is no accreditation for qualifications. This can have an impact on the playwork sector locally in terms of poor play environments. One infrastructure project officer commented that the local college which offers Level 2 & Level 3 in Playwork, has found that in looking for placements for students, that the play provision in the local authority area is not of a sufficiently good standard to use as placements.
- 5.14 Timing of courses can affect the take up of courses by workers and some authorities felt that worker's specific needs were not being taken into account:

*“Training is offered in the day time which is at the wrong time for our workers. Most of them have other day time jobs.” (Bridgend)*

5.15 Distance from training centres can also be a barrier in accessing training. For example, workers on Anglesey need to travel to mainland Bangor for playwork training.

5.16 Frustration was voiced by some training managers that sometimes training courses could not run because they did not have enough people on the courses. *“We need commitment from workers to undertake the training.”* However, many workers themselves said that they have constraints on how much training they can attend in their own time and how much training they actually want to take up for a part time job with low pay. Some employers said that they much preferred in-house training (with external trainers) that had been tailored to the needs of their particular organisation and workers, without the need to travel long distances at the end of the day. This is a particular problem for rural areas.

5.17 Lack of availability of trainers in the locality restricts the training made available to workers and employers find it frustrating when training is available to some but not to others, either for funding or organisational reasons:

*“There may be competent trainers in other playwork sectors, but they are not always free to deliver outside their organisations.*

*“Trainers are “so thin on the ground” and there has never been so much need for play training. We can offer basic generic training but training which is more specific to the sector, such as disability issues and challenging behaviour.”*

5.18 Funding for training across the local authority areas of Wales is entirely inconsistent, depending on funding streams for different initiatives, whether different pockets of funding have been accessed creatively and partnerships formed with other play organisations.

*“Funding streams for different Local authorities are so hit and miss. If Cymorth funding dries up, we will be back to where we were before.” (Flintshire)*

5.19 In several areas, budget cuts have affected training budgets and they will only be offering statutory generic training to workers. One Play Officer said: *“All our training needs are unmet, because there is no training budget.”*

5.20 In the voluntary and private sector, several employers said that they were really struggling to train their staff because the CPC budget has ‘dried up’. One after school club manager said: *“CPC used to offer a good training programme, with a variety of useful courses such as play principles and practice, and inclusion, but now the funding has gone.”*

## **Playworker's Perspectives**

- 5.21 Opinions as to sufficiency of access to play training opportunities were variable across the playworkers who were interviewed. Some people felt that there were enough training opportunities in their area/ organisation whilst others indicated some key barriers to training. These were generally: lack of funding (especially for the private and voluntary sector); geography (eg. a lack of training in Carmarthenshire, Monmouthshire and Ynys Mon); timing of training; information and general availability.

*"The cost doesn't affect us in Cardiff as we deliver and run CACHE but not the P3 (it is too long and expensive to deliver, takes too long to get the final award. The colleges don't think it is a good option to deliver playwork - go for childcare instead. Coleg Glan Hafren have dropped playwork courses. The nearest to Cardiff is now Barry for people who want to do playwork."*

*"Think there is a lot available in Cardiff (Playwales P3), LA Play Dept (CACHE levels 2 & 3). The main barrier is funding. Council play department will pay training. Voluntary sector need to pay yourself. Quite expensive, Support off employers, time for training, placements, homework is lacking with some employers. Voluntary sector placement part time or voluntary. More flexibility or support would help. Most courses run during the day. There is one that runs during evenings in Barry but not sure about Cardiff."*

*"Locally it is difficult. Don't know what is available. Travel and location can be problematic. Powys is geographically isolated. No universities and only a few FE colleges. Childcare training but no playwork availability limited."*

*"Biggest barriers at moment financial. Offer level 2 qualification and difficult for employers in dire straights financially."*

*"Not enough advertising. Not visible enough."*

*"No, cost implications for organisations like us. Can get free play, subsidised training for Teaching Assistants and childcare but play is overlooked every time. All boroughs train childcare workers but no possibility of accessing grants for playwork limiting us in what we are able to provide."*

*"Not in north Wales, nothing available on Ynys Mon, have to travel. Timing of training courses difficult. Difficult to juggle onto mainland if working. Nothing available for local authorities 10 years on Mon improved but still not very good."*

*"Cost prohibitive. Sometimes have to pay for certificate, can do training but don't hold certificate if can't afford £150."*

## **Playwork Wales, The National Centre for Playwork Education & Training**

- 5.22 The overall aims for the National Centre are to provide infrastructure for training and education development and delivery, strategic coordination, viability and sustainability, networking, information dissemination, communication and quality assurance.
- 5.23 The vision of The National Centre in terms of the development of an infrastructure for delivering qualifications has primarily been on supporting existing infrastructure and making connections where there are gaps in delivery

with an emphasis on developing a localised ability to deliver.

- 5.24 In response to the regulatory requirements The National Centre has worked with the Care Council for Wales and DCELLS to establish a list of accepted qualifications for playwork in Wales. Qualifications within this list may become the predecessor qualifications when the changes to the UK Qualifications Frameworks are finalised. All new qualifications will be required to meet the design principles agreed by the SSCs.
- 5.25 The National Centre has also undertaken work to further establish the networks to support workforce development. It is establishing new relationships with FE colleges in Wales; a few of whom currently deliver playwork qualifications and some who don't. The primary intention is to facilitate local relationships between them and play development workers and bring them within a Wales-wide communication network.
- 5.26 In response to the needs expressed by the sector, The National Centre has been providing support to employers and Play Development Officers across Wales for the delivery of P<sup>3</sup> and CACHE. Some regions are now beginning to work in partnership with FE colleges as part of their local solution to deliver P<sup>3</sup>.
- 5.27 Much of the focus of The National Centre has been on P<sup>3</sup> for the reasons outlined above, including its status within SSC Strategy, the additional infrastructure support provided to embed new qualification structures, the growing success of employer recognition and available sources of funding.
- 5.28 Funding whilst limited, has been available to offer Training and Assessor qualifications as well as specifically related CPD. The National Centre has established a network of trainers and assessors of over 40 practitioners qualified to deliver and assess playwork qualifications, both P<sup>3</sup> and CACHE. The National Centre is currently looking at ways to widen participation in this network to support other playwork training deliverers whilst maintaining the quality and rigour applied to be able to deliver P<sup>3</sup>.
- 5.29 A key task set out in the the National Centre Implementation Plan 2006-2011 is to work with other agencies to develop a good working partnership Career Wales, Jobcentre Plus, Learn Direct, Basic skills Cymru, CVLS, WCVA and others to address the issues of recruitment and retention particularly around the 14 – 19/25 age range. There is a significant opportunity to strengthen links between The National Centre and Learner/Youth Support Services/ FE institutions and playwork training providers to improve opportunities and potential for young people through the 14-19 learning pathways.
- 5.30 The National Centre has representation on the Playwork Education and Training Council, Wales, the SkillsActive standing committee for playwork policy and strategy for the SSC in Wales. This committee includes in addition,

representation from:

- SkillsActive
- Play Wales
- Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs
- LA, voluntary and private sector employers
- WLGA
- PSU
- ETS Wales
- FE and HE institutions

5.31 The National Centre manager attends Play Officer Wales Networks - North and South, the Early Years and Childcare Workforce Network, Basic Skills Cymru Committee and holds regular meetings with regional networks including voluntary sector, Local authorities and FE. Representation of The National Centre on some Core Aims groups relating to the Children and Young People's Single Plans Is presently being explored.

5.32 The National Education and Training Centre Committee responsible for its management and direction has been established, with representation from:

- Play Wales Board of Trustees
- Play Wales
- Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs
- SkillsActive
- Employer networks.

5.33 A Higher Education Committee with representation from 5 HEIs in Wales has also been established; to include representation from the University of Gloucester in recognition of the number of students from Wales on learning distance programmes.

5.34 The National Centre has an established bi-lingual website that is regularly updated with news and information. It works with the wider team at Play Wales to deliver a series of conferences and seminars relating to workforce development for the sector. At the most recent seminar this month, it has consulted upon a new Communication Strategy that is currently in production. This innovative strategy is based around a communication pledge that individuals undertake to share and communicate, with clear promises in communication methodologies, regularly etc, as well as establishing the key information to be shared by networks. It takes a different approach to communication that will be evaluated for success.

5.35 Playworkers themselves, have had varying amounts of contact with the National Centre to date with 43% of those interviewed having heard of the National Centre. However, there was a mixed response as to understanding of what the National Centre does with regard to those who said that they had heard of it.

*“Something able to be a support and reference for playwork. Good for providing support for those establishing play in an area.”*

*“Central point where all training needs are re courses, trainers, qualifications of trainers, background of trainers.”*

*“Promoting playwork and supporting playworkers.”*

*“Not physical centre, they are learning and development playwork training and qualifications. Have P3 framework.”*

*“There to promote playwork not just play sector but related professions that are interested. Points people to courses/ careers in playwork. Joint commissioning playwork to make money go further. Promote status pay and knowledge of careers in playwork in here.”*

*“To support and give literature/guidance, lists of trainers, help us put training packages together. Playwales has taken on role of training officer remotely for us (don’t have this capacity internally).”*

*“They provide information and training and monitor qualifications in playwork.”*

*“Deliver P3, run courses for trainer and assessors, courses and conferences, Provides support for organisations and play development staff across Wales.”*

5.36 Responses were mixed with regard to perceived helpfulness of the National Centre. Around a third of interviewees felt that the National Centre may be of help to them in some way. For those who said that they felt that the National Centre could be of help responses mainly centred on: provision of information; advice; signposting and training. In relation to training one respondent commented that the National Centre:

*“Could be useful for good practice and information sharing. Publicise courses but need to be accessed for no/ minimal costs. Lots of talk to deliver training for working with young children but no one seems willing to put their money where their mouth is. All talk.”*

## 6. A Playwork Qualifications Framework

- 6.1 The Assembly Government's Play Policy talks about elevating the status of the playwork profession and ensuring that playworkers in Wales have quality learning experiences as part of their professional development. In addition, the Children & Families Measure will require those in other sectors either using play in their work, or requiring an understanding of play to have access to training and qualifications so that children's play is well facilitated wherever children choose to play.
- 6.2 All vocational sectors need a comprehensive qualifications framework to enable workforce development to take place. For playwork in Wales a qualification framework needs to cover all levels from basic induction to higher degrees.
- 6.3 Skills Active has worked with the Care Council for Wales and DCELLS to establish a *List of Accepted Qualifications for the Play Workforce in Wales* (see Appendix 1). Qualifications within this list may become the predecessor qualifications when changes to the UK Qualifications Frameworks are finalised. All new qualifications will be required to meet the design principles agreed by the Sector Skills Councils.
- 6.4 As with the *List of Accepted Qualifications for the Early Years and Childcare Workforce in Wales*, the Playwork qualifications list recognises only qualifications that contain elements of vocational assessment as being acceptable while identifying other qualifications that are vocationally related but do not involve a work-based assessment. This is an important distinction that can be used to help employers and regulators alike. However, the list is not currently being used as a reference by CSSIW inspectors leading to confusion and a further degradation of play training as employers are told by inspectors to look for early years & childcare qualifications for workers in regulated settings.
- 6.5 Furthermore, as the Framework only covers qualifications at Level 2 and Level 3, it cannot be seen as a comprehensive qualifications framework. To meet the aspirations of the Assembly Government's Play Policy, a framework is needed that recognises routes from Entry Level to Level 6 or 7 qualifications, in line with the *Credit & Qualifications Framework for Wales*. The framework will also need to recognise the diversity of the play workforce in providing appropriate learning opportunities to those with differing roles in a range of settings. While the fundamental principles of good playwork should run through all training and assessment, the delivery and structure of training should be flexible to meet different worker's needs.
- 6.6 Critical to raising the competence of those with early years and childcare qualifications who work in play is the increased availability and take-up of

transitional awards such as the *Level 3 Award in Playwork for Early Years and Childcare Workers*. Whilst this award is present on the current qualifications list, the regulatory framework provides no incentive for practitioners to undertake it. As a result it is not commonly available in Wales.

- 6.7 A qualification framework for Playwork needs to be mindful of the need to fit in with a more integrated qualifications framework for the children and young people's workforce as proposed by the draft *Children & Young People's Workforce Strategy* as developed by the *Children & Young People's Workforce Development Network* in 2009. This approach will require the development of common modules in playwork that can be used across a range of vocational areas. Some of these should be related to formal awards that are recognised by regulators (such as the *Level 3 Award in Playwork for Early Years and Childcare Workers*) while others need to be developed to enable professionals from across the children & young people's workforce to be schooled in the fundamentals of play principles and practice at different levels.
- 6.8 A blueprint for a qualifications framework for playwork is set out in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Qualifications Framework for Playwork Blueprint**

<b>CQfW Level</b>	<b>Vocational Qualifications</b>	<b>Related Awards or Modules for non-Playworkers</b>
<b>Entry / Level 1</b>	<i>Playwork Induction Course*</i>	<i>Introduction to Playwork Principles &amp; Practice*</i>
<b>Level 2</b>	NVQ Level 2 Playwork Level 2 Diploma in Playwork Level 2 Playwork Principles into Practice) P <sup>3</sup>	<i>Level 2 Award in Playwork for Early Years and Childcare Workers*</i>  <i>Playwork Principles &amp; Practice Module for Children &amp; Young People's Workers at Level 2*</i>
<b>Level 3</b>	NVQ Level 3 Playwork Level 3 Diploma in Playwork  <i>Level 3 Playwork Principles into Practice) P<sup>3*</sup></i>	<i>Level 3 Award in Playwork for Early Years and Childcare Workers</i>  <i>Playwork Principles &amp; Practice Module for Children &amp; Young People's Workers at Level 3*</i>
<b>Level 4-5</b>	<i>Foundation Degree in Playwork</i>	<i>Playwork Principles &amp; Practice Module for professionals working with children &amp; young people*</i>
<b>Level 6</b>	Playwork Degree	

\* Not currently available

## 7. Summary and Recommendations

7.1 This review provides an in-depth view of playwork training and qualifications in Wales. Through consultation with practitioners, employers and stakeholders it has been possible to identify a range of gaps and priorities that need to be addressed if the Welsh Assembly's aspirations for the Play Workforce are to be met and an infrastructure to support the Children & Families Measure developed.

### ***Play Policy***

7.2 The Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to Play is explicit, as set out in the Play Policy, the Play Policy Implementation Plan, and the Children & Families Measure. To deliver on its commitments, the Assembly Government needs to support the development of a skilled, trained and qualified workforce able to meet the play needs of children and young people. Progress against the Welsh Assembly's Play Implementation Plan has been made on a number of fronts, but there is clearly much left undone.

7.3 The new duty on local authorities to provide for children's play needs set out in the Children & Families Measure will undoubtedly have an enormous impact on the sector and on the workforce. The consequences of the Measure for workforce can only be guessed at this stage, but the delivery of the duty will require a significant increase in the volume of playwork and therefore the amount of play training required.

7.4 Round 1 of the lottery-funded Child's Play Programme is supporting the development of local infrastructure that has the potential to sustain the delivery of play training. Round 2, will inevitably increase the demand for play training both from play professionals and from other professions, from community-based groups and from volunteers.

7.5 The development of the National Centre for Playwork Training & Education is a key part in developing a play training infrastructure to support the Implementation Plan, the Children & Families Measure and the Big Lottery Child's Play Programme.

### ***Play Provision***

7.6 Play as an emerging profession contains people working in a wide variety of roles, in differing positions of responsibility and in a range of settings. Unlike many other areas of work, playworkers are not a homogenous group therefore we need to examine playwork in far wider terms that include a range of vocations and professions that have the potential to influence children's play and therefore require an understanding of play values.

- 7.7 There are likely to be around 5,000 people employed as playworkers in Wales but there will be thousands more who use play as part of their work in other fields. They work in a wide range of organisations spanning a number of sectors. These include out of school childcare; holiday playschemes; adventure play; open access play provision; and community play.
- 7.8 There is currently an inconsistency in the approach taken by local authorities in Wales regarding play. While there are pockets of good practice developing in areas such as Wrexham and Caerphilly, in many areas, play is neither clearly understood nor valued. Not all local authorities take a strategic lead on play with little senior level local authority commitment lacking in many areas. Often it is unclear where play 'sits' which results in an uncoordinated approach. Because of a focus only on Early Years in some areas playwork employers in many regions report an inability to access Flying Start monies for play training (though this was stated as an explicit expectation of this fund in Welsh Assembly Government guidance). Access to support, funding and cross-sector working is clearly highly dependent on play being represented on Children & Young People's Partnerships.
- 7.9 Local authorities are significant providers of play and employers of playworkers - although the situation differs widely across Wales. Those already committed to delivering, coordinating or commissioning play should find meeting the Measure less difficult. Where play is not understood, or not seen as a priority within local authorities, funding for play is often under pressure. Future budget pressures on local authorities will undoubtedly exacerbate this.
- 7.10 Currently, funding for play rarely comes from core local authority budgets but from a variety of sources including Cymorth, Flying Start and the lottery Child's Play Project. This is felt to reflect the low status attached to play.
- 7.11 The BIG Lottery play infrastructure developments provide a unique opportunity to develop local play training structures. The sustainability of these networks should be a priority for the Assembly Government in supporting play and the play workforce.

## **Recommendations**

- Guidance on the new duty within the Children & Families Measure needs to present an unambiguous definition of play sufficiency and stress the importance not only of play being appropriately recognised and supported within local authorities, but the role that local authorities must take in supporting the play workforce – across the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- The WLGA Partnership Support Unit should have a role in changing attitudes towards play within local authorities in preparation for the new duties.

- The Welsh Assembly Government should investigate ways in which the local infrastructure projects can be continued to provide a basis for meeting the development needs of the play workforce at a regional level. These projects are ideal to bring together local authorities, employers, colleges and work-based learning providers to coordinate local delivery of play training.

### **Current and future needs of the workforce**

- 7.12 An assessment of Play Training needs to take account not only of current needs but must make an assessment of what the play sector might look like in the future in light of changes brought about by the Children & Families Measure and the BIG Lottery Child's Play Programme. Development of a more integrated children & young people's workforce will also shape the training and qualifications needs of the sector.
- 7.13 Playwork is a developing field that does not have many of the things that define other professions e.g. professional regulation, a professional body, degree-level entry. Yet playworkers themselves feel that they are professional but not recognised as such – particularly by other professionals across the Children & Young People's workforce. Playworkers feel that a lack of understanding amongst colleagues and within local government administration along with a lack of recognition of playwork qualifications by regulators, leads to a low value being placed on play and playwork.
- 7.14 While playworkers themselves feel that playwork is a worthwhile career, opportunities to make a career are few and far between. The lack of full-time work, poor pay, little recognition and insecure funding are all issues that affect career development.
- 7.15 Employers find it difficult to recruit quality playworkers for many similar reasons, but they also have difficulties getting applications from people with playwork qualifications. For CSSIW regulated services, this results in employers accepting workers with childcare qualifications, but little training in play. Employers feel that that young people preparing to enter the labour market are not given information, advice and guidance about playwork as a career.
- 7.16 Relative to the population as a whole, people working in play are more highly educated than the general population although those with a higher educational level tend to be in play development or management roles.
- 7.17 Demand for playwork training is closely linked to the supply of playwork jobs. People tend not to follow a vocational training path in play unless they are already employed as a playworker. Furthermore, as there is no common approach to induction for playworkers across Wales. This will inevitably lead to

a variation in the quality of play provision. In particular, more and more playworkers in out of school settings have little play training and often lack an understanding of basic playwork principles.

- 7.18 The take-up of play training is inextricably linked to funding as few employers fund employees to train through vocational routes. Unlike the normal dynamic where the availability of training through for example, colleges or work-based learning providers, is led by demand from the sector, the demand for playwork training is linked to the supply of affordable and accessible courses. In particular, the out of school sector is highlighted as having poor access to play training opportunities.
- 7.19 As well as training that leads to vocational qualifications, there is a lot of demand from playworkers for issue-based or statutory training. The availability of such training is variable across Wales.
- 7.20 Changes in demand for playwork training to support the new duty set out in the Measure will depend on how local authorities are guided in defining 'play sufficiency'. With a very broad interpretation that looks at play as a cross-cutting issue, then there will be a significant increase in demand for play training targeted at a wider audience of non-play professionals. The BIG Lottery project is also likely to increase demand for non-vocational play training. Facilitating this will require the development of appropriate training and of an infrastructure of experienced local trainers.

## Recommendations

- The Assembly Government should advise CSSIW that appropriate qualifications for regulation under the National Minimum Standards for practitioners working with children in out of school settings and open access play settings are primarily those set out in the Skills Active *List of Accepted Qualifications*, and secondarily, those set out by Care Council for Wales for *Childcare and Early Years*.
- Government should set out a longer term goal to require all those working with children over the age of 5 years in regulated settings to hold an appropriate playwork qualification or a play transition award.
- Skills Active should be supported in developing a voluntary Register of Playwork Professionals in Wales. A register could help to ensure the quality of playwork is maintained as the workforce expands. It would also encourage employers to recruit staff who provide the best possible play opportunities.
- The National Centre for Playwork Education and Training should be supported in its work with Careers Wales to raise the profile of playwork as a career.

- The inconsistency of funding for Playwork should be addressed strategically by Government. This is needed on two levels; firstly funding to enable access to existing training for practitioners; and secondly, funding to enable the development of new qualifications and training that are needed to meet the challenges of community and cross-sector learning that will be created by the Measure.
- The capacity of the sector to fund training is very limited with most employers having no funding for workforce development. Given the new duty set out in the Children & Families Measure, there is a strong case for core funding for workforce development. The availability of ring-fenced funding to the playwork sector would significantly enhance its ability to take control of workforce development, training and qualification programmes.
- Were central funding to be made available, Education and Training Standards Committee Wales (ETS) may be seen as ideally placed for an extended role as a potential host. It is an established cross sector committee within playwork, youthwork and community development, that could appropriately distribute grants to the sector. Linking its current role (one of setting standards and quality assurance) with funding, makes it particularly well placed to deliver quality outcomes.

### ***Current models of Play Training***

- 7.21 Most playwork training in Wales is either for vocational qualifications or continuing professional development which may or may not, lead to a qualification.
- 7.22 The majority of vocational training that is available in Wales is at Level 2 or Level 3 via the Diploma or NVQ route. At Level 2, Diplomas are most commonly available through either CACHE or the SQA awarded P<sup>3</sup> course. At Level 3, the CACHE Diploma is the most common training route to gaining a qualification. P<sup>3</sup> is a newly developed Wales-specific qualification that seems to better meet the needs of temporary, seasonal playworkers that commonly work on summer holiday playschemes. Employers have differing views on the relative merits of the CACHE and P<sup>3</sup> Level 2 qualification routes, but the quality of trainers is the main concern of both employers and practitioners.
- 7.23 At Level 3, there is limited choice in qualification training and many employers said that they would welcome the development of a Level 3 P<sup>3</sup>.
- 7.24 A wide range of CPD takes place in the Play sector but access often seems to depend on the availability of funding either through employers or from local authorities through local Children & Young People's Partnerships. Opportunities for CPD at a higher level are also limited. CPD is crucial for many seasonal playworkers who may not undertake accredited training but through

induction packages and other CPD are provided with some basic knowledge. Much of the CPD accessed by playworkers in the out of school sector is aimed more at the early years and childcare sector and is not always appropriate.

7.25 There is some cross-sector CPD playwork training being developed in local areas which workers in other sectors are able to access. The development of this strand of training will be important in implementing the Children & Families Measure.

### **Recommendations**

- The diversity of the play workforce requires a range of training routes and qualifications. On-going support from WAG is needed to develop qualifications and training that is going to meet the needs of an expanding sector. This should include support for the further development of P<sup>3</sup> – in particular the development of training infrastructure (vocationally competent trainers). This may require short-term input of resources until the qualifications are mainstreamed and delivered through colleges and by work-based learning providers.
- Investment is needed to develop cross-sector training packages that will embed good play principles across the wider workforce in response to the play duty set out in the Children & Families Measure.
- Guidance to local authorities regarding the Measure should set out clearly the need for good quality CPD for the Play workforce and how this should be delivered and funded.
- The out of school sector is in danger of becoming de-skilled in playwork with almost no opportunities for practitioners to access training towards play qualifications. This is particularly acute at Level 3. Government should work with CSSIW to provide better guidance that encourages practitioners to access playwork training rather than early years and childcare – thereby increasing demand to which training providers should respond.
- Packages of CPD aimed at the wider children & young people's workforce need to be developed at a number of levels to support implementation of the Measure.
- The sustainability of programmes developed under the BIG Lottery programme will require new community-based play training opportunities that require central support for their development.

### **Availability and accessibility of Play Training & Qualifications**

7.26 The availability and accessibility of training and qualifications in play is dependent on; the number of jobs in playwork; regulation; the availability of

training and finally, the cost of training. Quantifying the amount of playwork training being delivered in Wales is therefore very difficult.

- 7.27 Playwork is not generally delivered by mainstream training providers in Wales. Of the 24 FE colleges in Wales, only 6 actively deliver playwork training, along with only 2 or 3 work-based learning providers. Level 3 Playwork is only available in 3 FE colleges in Wales. This results in practitioners taking childcare courses for regulatory purposes thereby de-skilling the play workforce and affecting the quality of play experiences for children.
- 7.28 The large amount of training delivered by Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs in the run-up to the regulatory changes in 2008, while resulting in a large number of playworkers in the out of school sector becoming qualified seems to have displaced mainstream training providers from delivering playwork. Now that CPCKC are no longer in receipt of ESF funding to deliver the same volume of training, out of school club staff find it almost impossible to access playwork courses.
- 7.29 Play Wales are the other major deliverer of playwork training. While also a CACHE centre, Play Wales more recently has been focused on developing and delivering P<sup>3</sup> training. The infrastructure being developed through P<sup>3</sup> is probably the most important aspect with a skilled and vocationally competent network of trainers having been put in place.
- 7.30 Higher Education courses, one of the potential routes for CPD though playwork programmes, are limited in Wales. Currently, Glyndwr University delivers the only playwork BA (Hons) programme within Wales.
- 7.31 Employers said that the quality of training can be inconsistent and sometimes poor, especially where there is no accreditation for qualifications. This can have an impact on the playwork sector locally in terms of poor play environments.
- 7.32 Other barriers to training include distance from training centres, timing of courses, and courses cancelled due to minimum numbers not being achieved. The competence of trainers was an issue that was repeated by many employers and practitioners.
- 7.33 Employers and playworkers lack information about playwork training. The National Centre for Playwork Education and Training is starting to become known and is increasingly becoming a resource used by the sector, but still has some way to go to meet the needs of playworkers.

### **Recommendations**

- In the long term, Playwork training should be mainstreamed, with funding for playwork coming through the normal DCELLS routes and delivered by

Further Education and Work Based Learning providers. In the short-term however, intervention is needed to stimulate demand while supporting a basic level of supply.

- Demand for playwork training needs stimulating through changes in the regulations for Daycare & Childminding that in the short-term, recognise playwork qualifications as valid, and in the longer-term require playworkers in regulated settings to hold playwork qualifications.
- Demand for training also needs to come from good guidance to local authorities regarding their role in supporting the play workforce under the Children & Families Measure.
- While a lack of demand has depressed the supply of playwork training, a lack of competent trainers, poor promotion of courses and a shortage of information exacerbates the situation. The Assembly Government should continue to support the National Centre for Playwork Education and Training during this critical period of change of expansion to address these issues. The National Centre also has a role in over-seeing the re-connection between the supply and demand for playwork training across Wales – taking a coordinating role with the local infrastructure projects, FE and work-based learning, employers, DCELLS and the national organisations.

### **A Playwork Qualifications Framework**

7.34 A qualification framework for Playwork needs to cover all levels from basic induction to higher degrees. While Skills Active has worked with the Care Council for Wales and DCELLS to establish a *List of Accepted Qualifications for the Play Workforce in Wales*, this is for regulatory requirements and therefore only looks at levels 2 and 3.

7.35 To meet the aspirations of the Assembly Government's Play Policy, a framework is needed that recognises routes from Entry Level to Level 6 or 7 qualifications, in line with the Credit & Qualifications Framework for Wales. The framework will also need to recognise the diversity of the play workforce in providing appropriate learning opportunities to those with differing roles in a range of settings; provide opportunities for transition to playwork from other sectors; and contain common modules through which professionals from across the children & young people's workforce can receive training in play principles and practice

### **Recommendations**

- The Assembly Government should work with partners - including Skills Active to publish a comprehensive qualifications framework that can support workforce development and link with developing integrated qualifications frameworks for the children & young people's workforce.

## Appendix 1: Accepted Qualifications for Playworkers 2009-2010 (Skills Active)

The following **Level 2** qualifications are the accepted qualifications to work in supervised roles in Playwork

Accepted Occupational Qualification  (qualified to practice)	Predecessor Qualification  (Still current, qualified to practice)	Example Job Roles	Example Settings	Vocational Related Qualification  (not qualified to practice)
<p><b>Diploma in Playwork Level 2 (CITY AND GUILDS)</b></p> <p><b>NVQ in Playwork Level 2 (CITY &amp; GUILDS, CACHE, EDI, EDEXCEL)</b></p> <p><b>Diploma in Playwork: Principles into Practice Level 2 (SQA) (available Wales only)</b></p>		<p>Assistant playworker</p> <p>Playworker</p> <p>Holiday playscheme worker</p> <p>Out of school playworker</p> <p>Adventure playworker</p> <p>Play Ranger</p>	<p>Out of School  (including breakfast, lunch, after school and holiday clubs (3-16 years))</p> <p>Holiday playschemes</p> <p>Adventure playgrounds</p> <p>School and community play centres</p> <p>Parks and playgrounds</p> <p>Mobile Play projects</p> <p>Specialist play projects</p> <p>Summer camps</p>	<p>Award in Playwork Level 2 (CACHE)</p> <p>Certificate in Playwork Level 2 (CACHE, CITY AND GUILDS)</p> <p>Certificate in Supporting Playwork Practice Level 2 (CACHE)</p> <p>Award in Playwork: Principles into Practice Level 2 (SQA) (available Wales only)</p> <p>Certificate in Playwork: Principles into Practice Level 2 (SQA) (available Wales only)</p>

The following **Level 3** qualifications are the accepted qualifications to work in supervised roles in Playwork

Accepted Occupational Qualification  (qualified to practice)	Predecessor Qualification	Example Job Roles	Example Settings	Vocational Related Qualification  (not qualified to practice)
<p><b>Diploma in Playwork Level 3 (CACHE, CITY AND GUILDS)</b></p> <p><b>NVQ in Playwork Level 3 (CITY &amp; GUILDS, CACHE, EDI, EDEXCEL)</b></p> <p><b>Award in Playwork for Early Years and Child Care Workers (EDEXCEL, CACHE, CITY &amp; GUILDS)</b></p> <p><b>Award in Early Years and Child Care for Playworkers Level 3 (CACHE, CITY &amp; GUILDS, EDEXCEL)</b></p> <p><b>Play Development Level 3 (CACHE, CITY &amp; GUILDS)</b></p>		<p>Senior playworker</p> <p>Playworker</p> <p>Holiday playscheme Coordinator</p> <p>Out of school playworker</p> <p>Adventure playworker/manager</p> <p>Play Ranger</p> <p>Lead Play Ranger</p>	<p>Out of School  (including breakfast, lunch, after school and holiday clubs (3-16 years))</p> <p>Holiday playschemes</p> <p>Adventure playgrounds</p> <p>School and community play centres</p> <p>Parks and playgrounds</p> <p>Mobile Play projects</p> <p>Specialist play projects</p> <p>Summer camps</p>	<p>Award in Playwork Level 3 (CACHE)</p> <p>Certificate in Playwork Level 3 (CACHE, CITY &amp; GUILDS)</p> <p>Certificate in Supporting Playwork Practice Level 3 (CACHE)</p> <p>Diploma in Supporting Playwork Practice Level 3 (CACHE)</p>