



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

REPORT, DOCUMENT

# Ministerial review of play progress report: February 2025

A review of progress made against the actions set out in our response to the Ministerial Review of Play Steering Group.

**First published:** 5 March 2025

**Last updated:** 5 March 2025

**This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.**

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/ministerial-review-play-progress-report-february-2025-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement) (<https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement>).

# Contents

**Introduction** (<https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/67009#166749>)

**Current Progress** (<https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/67009#166751>)

**Focus for next steps – February 2025 to May 2026** (<https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/67009#166753>)

**This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.**

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/ministerial-review-play-progress-report-february-2025-html> for the latest version.

Get **information on copyright** (<https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement>).

# Introduction

In 2014, the Welsh Government set out the vision for play for children in Wales with the publication of '**Wales - a Play Friendly Country** (<https://www.gov.wales/wales-play-friendly-country>)' statutory guidance to local authorities on assessing for and securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas.

Since legislating in support of children's play as part of the **Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010** (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2010/1/contents>), between 2019 and 2022, the Welsh Government undertook an in-depth and collaborative review of its play policy work and considered the progress made in achieving the Welsh Government's vision for play. The review had two aims:

- to assess the Welsh Government's work relating to play policy
- to help the Welsh Government shape how it develops and progresses the play agenda.

The Ministerial Review of Play Steering Group Report made key recommendations and suggested milestones for the Welsh Government to consider in building on the progress made in being a play friendly country, giving children and young people sufficient opportunities to play.

## **Written Statement: Ministerial Review of Play - Response to the Steering Group recommendations (23 October 2023) | GOV.WALES**

(<https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-ministerial-review-play-response-steering-group-recommendations>)

Welsh Government responded to the report and outlined the actions to be taken forward in order to achieve the Steering Group's anticipated results. In our response we set out 67 actions which had short, medium and long-term timeframes for completion.

**This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.**

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/ministerial-review-play-progress-report-february-2025-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement) (<https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement>).

This Progress Report demonstrates the achievements made to date and outlines the actions Welsh Government will take forward to meet the anticipated outcomes.

Overall good progress has been made against each recommendation, however, there is further work to do to support Wales being a play friendly country. We are unable to do this in isolation; our ambitions can only be achieved by working collaboratively, across Welsh Government policy areas, with key stakeholders, local authorities and their partners.

## Number of actions completed and actions in progress

	Completed	In progress
Short term actions	34	
Medium term actions	8	7
Long term actions	6	12

All short-term actions have been completed; moving forward, we will report on progress for the medium and long-term actions remaining.

# Current Progress

## **Key recommendation 1: Take a strategic approach to play sufficiency across all Welsh Government policy areas.**

Since the initial response from the Deputy Minister for Social Services in 2023, on 11 September 2024, Dawn Bowden was appointed Minister for Children and Social Care and holds responsibility for children and young people within her portfolio.

To support oversight of cross policy working between play and other policy areas, an internal Ministerial Review of Play Implementation Board has been established. The Play Review Implementation Board (PRIB) meets 6 monthly and brings together all policy areas in Welsh Government which have an impact on play and is comprised of policy lead members who are working together to review and progress our actions.

One of these actions is the establishment of a Welsh Government Play Champions group. The group supports cross policy work in improving play opportunities for children and young people. Play Wales and Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs joined the first play champions session to raise awareness of the valuable contributions play, and the play work workforce make in improving outcomes for children.

We continue to work strategically with a broad range of policy colleagues across the Welsh Government to ensure any new and emerging policies, where relevant, have regard to play sufficiency.

Some examples of this work include:

Working across the Safeguarding and Play policy areas in Welsh Government to involve stakeholders, including play providers of both registered and

unregistered provision, to consider what else we can do to support robust safeguarding systems to keep children safe. This includes work to refresh the Voluntary Code of Safeguarding Practice and to ensure active engagement with the childcare, play and playwork sectors during any consultations or events related to the Code.

Within the Welsh Government, our aims for an anti-racist Wales and the work we need to do to get there, are set out in the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan. The Plan was updated in October 2024 and the eleven childcare and play actions revised to be stronger and more measurable. The Plan makes clear that there is a lot of work to do, but we are up to the challenge! Earlier this year DARPL and Cwlwm produced the Creating an Anti-racist culture in settings toolkit. The toolkit has been included within the refreshed Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit for local authorities. This is a key and exciting development as the toolkit aims to offer practical advice for settings on how to embody an anti-racist approach.

We have been engaging with the work of the Disability Rights Taskforce to support the development of a Disability Rights Action Plan, which will include actions and outcomes to create long-term positive change for disabled people, putting the Social Model of Disability at the heart of our vision for Wales. We want all children and young people to be able to access play opportunities and not denied their right to play and learn in their locality.

## **Key recommendation 2: Ensure that Welsh Government policy instruments include measures to support children's ability to make the most of opportunities to play.**

Good progress has been made on actions to ensure children's right to play is recognised as a cross-cutting theme within policy areas, and for local authorities being supported to assess and secure sufficient opportunities to play.

Through collaborative working with Play Wales and Local Authority Play leads,

we have reviewed and refreshed the suite of Play Sufficiency Assessment documents and published an updated **Play sufficiency assessment form** (<https://www.gov.wales/play-sufficiency-assessment-form>), along with other related templates and a refreshed **Play Sufficiency Assessment toolkit** (<https://www.gov.wales/play-sufficiency-assessment-toolkit>). The **statutory guidance for local authorities** (<https://www.gov.wales/wales-play-friendly-country>) has also been refreshed and will be published in March 2025. This will support the positive work being taken forward by local authorities in improving play opportunities for children across Wales.

In response to the suggested milestone to support the use of the review of Play Sufficiency Assessments to highlight issues that are consistently challenging for local authorities, Welsh Government officials will continue to attend the Play Sufficiency National Network meetings, facilitated by Play Wales, and will feedback to the PRIB any highlighted challenges.

### **Key recommendation 3: Ensure that any plans for recovery from the pandemic and cost of living crisis consider children's right to play.**

The Welsh Government places great value on play and its importance for children's health and wellbeing. Play Wales have published a number of resources to support the sector in highlighting the benefits of play including a briefing paper **Focus on play - how play supports children's mental health** ([https://play.wales/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Focus-on-play-%E2%80%93-how-play-supports-childrens-mental-health\\_2024.pdf](https://play.wales/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Focus-on-play-%E2%80%93-how-play-supports-childrens-mental-health_2024.pdf)).

The publication of the Play Wales analysis of the 2022 Play Sufficiency Assessments "State of Play" and a report "What children say about play in Wales: 2022" drafted by Dr David Dallimore has been disseminated to stakeholders to share findings on Play Sufficiency across Wales. The Welsh Government will consider findings from local authority survey work as part of their 2025 Play Sufficiency Assessments.

As part of its agreed Welsh Government funded activity, Play Wales commissioned the **Playing and being well literature review** (<https://play.wales/playingandbeingwell/>) in acknowledgement that the Play Sufficiency Duty on local authorities was commenced over ten years ago and in light of the fact that the Ministerial Review of Play was underway. Undertaken by Dr Wendy Russell, with Mike Barclay and Ben Tawil from Ludicology, it is a review of recent research into children's play, social policy and practice, with a focus on Wales. This was published and launched at the Play Wales conference held in Cardiff on 21 November 2024.

The Welsh Government Play Review Implementation Board considers any new and existing policies or programmes and its impact on children's play and playwork.

#### **Key recommendation 4: Ensure that the implementation of the full breadth of the statutory Play Sufficiency Duty is adequately resourced and funded.**

Progress has been achieved in reaching the anticipated outcome of local authorities being better supported to implement the Play Sufficiency Duty through more strategic allocation of funding and resources.

Funding of £220,000 (£10,000 per local authority) was awarded in July 2024 to support local authorities with their Play Sufficiency Assessments, which are due for submission in June 2025.

In 2024–2025 Welsh Government continued to core fund Play Wales, the national charity for children's play, and the Cwlwm childcare consortium made up of 5 organisations, delivering a bilingual integrated service which aims to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and families across Wales.

Welsh Government has continued to support the Playworks Holiday Project (a



holiday hunger initiative) which aims to support access to increased play opportunities for children and young people during the school holidays and provide healthy food / snacks. Grant funding for this project is awarded to local authorities via the Children and Communities Grant flexible funding programme to provide children with access to staffed play work provision during school holidays. An annual award of £1 Million per annum has been awarded since 2021.

Within our 2025/26 draft budget, we have an indicative allocation of £220,000 (£10,000 per local authority) to support local authorities to progress activities within their Play Sufficiency Assessment Action Plans.

We will continue to review funding options and consider opportunities to support children's access to play opportunities.

### **Key recommendation 5: Support the delivery of a public information programme about the right to play.**

We want a Wales that enables children and young people to access their rights, including their right to play, have good well-being and fulfil their potential, no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic circumstances) are. Play can also be a means of reducing inequalities between children living in families that can afford costly recreational provision and those that cannot, so reducing poverty of experience for all children.

**Teulu Cymru** (<https://www.gov.wales/teulu-cymru>) has supported Play Wales to promote the **Playful Childhoods Wales campaign** (<https://playfulchildhoods.wales/>) and promoted the first UN International Day of Play which was held on 11 June 2024, and UK Play Day on 7 August 2024. Play Wales has published articles in a range of external publications, such as:

- Children in Wales magazine

- Smalltalk, the magazine for members of Early Years Wales
- Public Health Network Cymru

In addition, Play Wales has contributed to external stakeholder newsletters, school governor bulletins and published play-based learning materials for schools on Dysg.

Welsh Government has worked with Play Wales and local authority play leads to identify Regional Play Leads. These leads have been linked with their local Regional Partnership Board to provide play representation and advocacy on children and young people subgroups and NYTH/NEST working groups. Welsh Government and Play Wales have supported the representatives in this role through training and reflection meetings.

### **Key recommendation 6: Apply the Play Sufficiency Duty more widely to include a range of other bodies.**

The Welsh Government will commission research support to review the 2025 Play Sufficiency Assessments, which will be submitted in June, in order to consider progress against statutory duties and identify key themes.

We will continue to work with the sector and key stakeholders in raising awareness of the Play Sufficiency Duty and in considering the suggested milestones in achieving the Steering Group's anticipated results.

We have contributed to the series of webinars hosted by Play Wales which considers the Play Sufficiency Duty in Wales and how its implemented. The webinars have been broadcast nationally and internationally and celebrate Welsh play policy and legislation.

## **Key recommendation 7: Ensure the right to play is sufficiently incorporated in strategic policy instruments and decisions.**

The rights-based approach of the Welsh Government to its policy making regarding children, allows for the Play Sufficiency Duty to explicitly articulate the intrinsic value of play as a right, alongside the more instrumental value of its role in other policy agendas such as tackling child poverty, health and well-being, learning and development, and community cohesion.

Welsh Government review UNCRC Articles (including Article 31 – the right to play) and consider how their proposals or policy developments enhance or challenge each Article. The UNCRC is considered in its entirety.

## **Key recommendation 8: Ensure that the principle of play as a matter of spatial justice is recognised and understood throughout Planning Policy Wales.**

We will continue to work across policy areas and with key stakeholders to take forward the long-term actions to support the recognition of play within planning arrangements. Welsh Government officials will continue to address these requirements through changes to **Planning Policy Wales** (<https://www.gov.wales/planning-policy-wales>).

## **Key recommendation 9: Ensure that the views and experiences of children inform the ways in which neighbourhoods are planned and managed.**

Welsh Government will continue to work collaboratively across policy areas and with key stakeholders to support children's opportunities to play within their neighbourhoods.

For children to have sufficient opportunities to play, they need time to play, space to play and the recognition by adults that this is every child's right. This recognition is crucial to ensure that all children are allowed time and space to play.

The refreshed Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit for local authorities was published in December 2024. This includes information and tools for local authorities regarding developing child friendly consultation programmes at neighbourhood level to support children being active agents in the play sufficiency process.

In the upcoming School Streets guidance for local authorities, set to be published on 27 March 2025, detail is included on how play streets can complement school streets, as demonstrated in one of the featured case studies.

### **Key recommendation 10: Ensure there are adequate safeguarding arrangements in playwork settings.**

Welsh Government has committed to building on the Code of Safeguarding Practice by engaging widely and exploring views on ensuring that those who provide services or offer activities for children and for adults who may be at risk, have proportionate and effective safeguarding arrangements in place. The Play Review Implementation Board members will be engaged in this activity.

Play Wales has shared The Code of Safeguarding Practice with their network members following play policy officials attending an Open access play network meeting raising awareness of actions being taken forward in response to Ministerial Review of Play Report Recommendations.

Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs have supported members with a published Safeguarding Health Check, which supports settings to ensure their policies,

procedures and practices meet safeguarding requirements and duties.

The Foundations Framework Wales, developed collaboratively by the sport sector, Sport Wales, Early Years Wales and Play Wales suggests enablers of sport, physical activity and play opportunities should:

- Develop policies and procedures that reflect the latest safeguarding legislation and guidance for children in Wales and are reviewed every two years.
- Create environments which adhere to essential safeguarding expectations and requirements to ensure safe practice.
- Support new facilitators, management, and board members to build their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding to the agreed level.
- Ensure children feel safe in the activity spaces and places, both indoor and outdoor.

### **Key recommendation 11: Review child minding and day care regulations and orders relating to playwork.**

Work has commenced on reviewing the **National Minimum Standards for regulated childcare for children under the age of 12** (<https://www.gov.wales/national-minimum-standards-regulated-childcare>), with a focus on open access play standards, and the Review of the Childminding and Day Care Exceptions Order. This also includes work on exploring a proportionate approach to the registration and inspection of open access play settings.

The review of the Child Minding and Day Care Exceptions (Wales) Order 2010 will consider whether the exemptions to child minding and day care are relevant and proportionate. Over the last 6 months, a programme of engagement with key stakeholders has been taken forward to support the development of options. The information gathered is now being analysed to form policy intentions and inform the public consultation due to take place in Summer 2025, subject to

ministerial agreement.

As part of this work, Welsh Government has issued guidance '**Registering as a childcare provider: exceptions** (<https://www.gov.wales/registering-childcare-provider-exceptions>)' to explain when a provider of childcare, play or activities for children does not need to or is not eligible to register with Care Inspectorate Wales

## **Key recommendation 12: Develop a strategic infrastructure for playwork workforce development.**

We are committed to the development of a high-quality play workforce which will benefit children and young people from different backgrounds and with a variety of needs. Our approach, which places the child and their holistic development at the heart of everything we do, is crucial for supporting all children and young people now and in the future.

The **Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan** (<https://www.gov.wales/childcare-play-and-early-years-workforce-plan>) published in 2017 was reviewed, **refreshed and published in July 2024** (<https://www.gov.wales/childcare-play-and-early-years-workforce-plan-review-and-refresh>).

Play Wales has developed 'Chwarae o Safon', a quality assurance framework for playworkers and is arranging a small scale funded roll out in Spring 2025 to 6 settings. The self-assessment materials will be freely available on the Play Wales website following feedback from the funded rollout. Play Wales has accessed support from Cardiff Business School interns to make the external quality assurance element of Chwarae o Safon sustainable, but also affordable to settings.

Progress has been made in response to the request to formalise the role of the Playwork Education and Training Council Wales (PETC Wales), as a key

consultee with Qualifications Wales to support the consideration of new requests for the approval of qualifications for playwork.

The Welsh Government asked Qualifications Wales to add a requirement to their approval process whereby any new playwork qualifications will need a letter of support from PETC Wales before the qualification could be added to the qualification's framework. In partnership with Play Wales, this was actioned and communicated and is now a recognised part of the process.

The role of Social Care Wales (SCW) in supporting playwork will be long term and dependant on the Health and Social Care Bill coming into force in 2025. SCW support for playwork will need to be built in and developed over time and within the budget available.

### **Key recommendation 13: Ensure sufficient funding is available for play and playwork workforce development.**

Good progress has been made to work towards achieving the anticipated outcomes in supporting the playwork workforce. Contracts are currently in place for playwork qualifications and next steps regarding the provision of playwork qualifications are being reviewed.

The Welsh Government provides funding to Play Wales and they have a specific funding objective around workforce development, which enables them to provide training and continuous professional development for the wider workforce.

Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs continue to deliver training for required playwork qualifications to the sector to help mitigate the recruitment and retention pressures on the sector, with plans to deliver 750 qualifications under the Training and Support programme.

Recruitment practices advice is currently available via Social Care Wales for the

whole childcare and playwork sector and was considered as part of the review and refresh of the Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan July 2024.

**Key recommendation 14: Promote the importance of play and the use of school grounds as a community asset for play through community focused school policy.**

Good progress has been achieved in supporting the importance of play within schools. Play Wales used the International Day of Play to share a range of resources with schools. Play Wales facilitates a Play in schools network comprising of organisations who support play in schools. Play Wales was an Exhibitor at the National Education Show in Llandudno (June 2024) and Cardiff (October 2024), promoting children's rights to play and benefits to play and play based learning.

We are considering including the Health and Safety Executive high-level statement on play and risk-benefit assessment in guidance for schools on use of school facilities.

Chapter 25 of the School Governors Guide has been revised and published to include play.

Guidance has been published on Community Focused Schools (CFS), Family engagement and community engagement. The guidance recognises the importance of enrichment opportunities as part of a Community Focused Schools approach, including through play in supporting the well-being of children.



## **Key recommendation 15: Increase and improve play and break times in schools**

Estyn have completed a thematic report linked to early years and play titled 'Impact of poverty on educational attainment, support, provision and transition for early education'. This was published in November 2024.

**Thematic Report: Impact of poverty on educational attainment, support, provision and transition for early education - Estyn** (<https://estyn.gov.wales/improvement-resources/thematic-report-impact-of-poverty-on-educational-attainment-support-provision-and-transition-for-early-education/>)

The Childcare and Early Years Capital programme, through the small grants element of the programme and as part of major capital funding for local authorities, has been used to purchase play equipment for indoor or outdoor use for settings registered with Care Inspectorate Wales. Examples include the development of outdoor play areas to help improve the quality of play equipment/facilities which will encourage children to play.

Play Wales has published play and play based learning materials for schools promoting the benefits of play for children's wellbeing and learning, including:

- the Right to Play workshop
- A play friendly school guidance for a whole school approach
- Reading list for teachers
- Focus on play briefing

Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs organised a 'Playground Takeover' event with local authority play and education partners to highlight the importance of and the right to play. This also supported the advertising of Playwork qualification opportunities and celebrating the UN's inaugural International Day of Play. 60 children thoroughly enjoyed the takeover, facilitated by Clybiau Plant Cymru

Kids' Clubs, playworkers, learners, teachers and local authority officers.

## Focus for next steps – February 2025 to May 2026

This is an exciting time for play policy, where the actions we are taking forward will build on the positive work being undertaken across policy areas, by local authorities and key stakeholders.

Our focus will be on the key themes considered by the review of play:

- Alignment of key legislation that impacts on the right to play
- Play Sufficiency Duty and funding
- Spatial justice
- Playwork provision and regulation
- Workforce and qualifications
- Play and education

We will continue to work across policy areas to ensure Play Sufficiency is considered in relevant new and emerging policy areas and continue to monitor membership of the PRIB and Play Champions group to support cross policy working between play and other policy areas.

Local authorities will submit their Play Sufficiency Assessments and action plans by 30 June 2025. Welsh Government will work with Play Wales to support analysis of these submissions, and related survey work in order to measure progress and next steps in assuring children have sufficient access to play opportunities. A review to consider progress against Play Sufficiency statutory duties and identify key themes will be commissioned in Summer 2025. This will help inform exploration on the potential development of a Play Charter and the Ministerial Review of Play Report suggestion of widening the scope of the statutory duty.

Further cross policy work and engagement with key stakeholders will be taken forward in relation to planning arrangements and ensuring children have sufficient spaces and places to play.

Welsh Government has committed to building on the Code of Safeguarding Practice by engaging widely and exploring views on ensuring that those who provide services or offer activities for children and for adults who may be at risk, have proportionate and effective safeguarding arrangements in place.

We will continue to explore funding options to support children's access to play opportunities.

The Welsh Government will continue to work with key partners in considering how the importance of play is incorporated in the professional learning resources for school practitioners. We also recognise play and break times are an important part of the school day, where children are supported to have time for play and for socialising with their peers along with time to eat healthy meals.

We will work collaboratively across policy areas to consider the outcomes from the recent Senedd Petition to: **Introduce a network of Toy Libraries around Wales.** (<https://business.senedd.wales/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=44676&Opt=3>)

We are committed to Wales being a Play Friendly Country and to working collaboratively to support children's right to play and improve children and young people's opportunities to play. We will build on the progress made and continue to explore work and take forward identified actions.

**This document may not be fully accessible.**

For more information refer to our [accessibility statement](https://www.gov.wales/accessibility-statement-govwales) (<https://www.gov.wales/accessibility-statement-govwales>).

**This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.**

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/ministerial-review-play-progress-report-february-2025-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement) (<https://www.gov.wales/copyright-statement>).