

# Flintshire Play Strategy 2011 - 2014

## Strategy Document



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



# Play in Flintshire



*“The right to play is a child’s first claim on the community. Play is nature’s training for life. No community can infringe that right without doing deep and enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens”*

David Lloyd George (1925)

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## Introduction

The purpose of this three-year play strategy is to increase the number of children and young people having regular access to a wide range of play opportunities within their own communities. The strategy encompasses play for all ages from 0 to 25 years in recognition that both children and young people play and that there is no specific age limit to playing. This strategy applies to all types of play provision and aims to address issues that concern the restriction of play opportunities & the removal of barriers to children's play in the general environment.

This strategy is supported by Flintshire's Children and Young People's Plan 2008 – 2011

This is the second play strategy for Flintshire. The first was produced in 2004 -2009 ahead of the Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy Implementation Plan (2006) by the Flintshire Play Unit in partnership with the newly-formed Flintshire Play Forum. Flintshire County Council has a well-established infrastructure for play with origins in the mid 1980's and facilities and services are managed by the Flintshire Play Unit within the Leisure and Culture Division of the Lifelong Learning Directorate. The Play Unit in partnership with the Flintshire Strategic Play Forum, has developed this new play strategy.

In 2002, the Welsh Assembly Government published what is widely acknowledged as the first national Play Policy and, as a result, established Wales as one of the world leaders in providing for children's play. They subsequently launched their Play Policy Implementation Plan (2006), which identified how the Play Policy would impact on the play experiences of children and young people in Wales.

Flintshire's Play Strategy 2011 - 2014 follows the same format as the Welsh Assembly Government's Play Policy Implementation Plan. It begins with our play policy, which gives our definition of play and explains our understanding of its critical importance in the lives of children and young people. The way we plan to implement this policy is then described over six chapters. Each chapter heading relates to a priority area for play development. A number of objectives, which we plan to work towards over the next four years, are then identified under each of these headings.

This Play Strategy aims to provide the reader with background information about play, an overview of the play sector in Flintshire and a rationale to support the identified objectives. This document is accompanied by a strategic action plan, which describes the specific actions we will take to meet these objectives. The action plan should be seen as a 'work in progress' and will therefore be evaluated and reviewed by Flintshire's Strategic Play Forum on an annual basis. A new action plan will be developed each year for the three-year life of this strategy. This will ensure we can accommodate new developments in the rapidly changing field of play provision.

Flintshire is fortunate to have a number of play settings & services that have been recognised as models of good practice and our play sector includes individuals who have been instrumental in the development of the play agenda nationally. With this new Play Strategy we hope to build on this success and ensure that Flintshire remains a front-runner in the development and provision of play not only in Wales but across the UK as a whole.

## Terminology

- **Children** – people aged 0 to 10 years
- **Young People** – people aged 11 to 25 years
- **The Early Years** - the first five years of a child's life
- **Parents** – parents and carers who are legal guardians of their children
- **Play Provision** – staffed or un-staffed facilities and services whose *primary* purpose is to provide children and young people with opportunities to play.
- **A Rich Play Environment** – a space where children and young people are able to make a wide range of choices; where there are many possibilities so that they can invent and extend their own play. It is a varied, inspirational and interesting physical environment that maximises the potential for socialising, creativity, resourcefulness and challenge. It is a place where children feel free to play in their own way, on their own terms.<sup>1</sup>
- **Play Value** – refers to the scope and potential for play offered by the environment the child is in. The greater the range of possibilities and opportunities for different types of play behaviour to occur the greater the play value of the setting. An awareness of play value also enables staff to identify the benefits gained by a child of experiencing a specific play opportunity, for example, if a child is climbing a tree, staff must balance the child's safety with the value of the experience to the child (see Risk / Benefit Assessment).
- **Fixed Equipment Play Areas** – un-staffed play spaces incorporating permanently fixed, manufactured and natural playground equipment.
- **Open Access Play Provision** – staffed play provision where children are free to come and go as they wish. "Open access" applies to the level of care provided to children within the setting and is used to differentiate this type of provision from childcare or "closed access" settings where staff have an agreement with parents and carers to keep their child on site for a specified period of time.
- **Closed Access Play Provision** – staffed play provision whose service is closed access due to the young age or specific support requirements of the children attending.
- **Childcare** – staffed, closed access provision whose *primary* purpose is to provide a service to parents and carers. However these settings can also provide children with quality play opportunities.
- **Compensatory Play Provision** – play provision which is designed to compensate children for the loss of, appropriate, naturally occurring play opportunities within the general environment.
- **Playable Space** – public areas not provided specifically for play but that are designed in such a way that they encourage play to take place.
- **Play Deprivation** – the name given to the notion that not playing may deprive children of experiences that are regarded as developmentally essential and result in those affected being both biologically and socially disabled.<sup>2</sup>
- **Risk / Benefit Assessment** – a risk assessment process which takes into consideration both the need to protect children from serious injury and the potential developmental benefits that children could gain from experiencing a particular activity.
- **Dynamic Risk Assessment** – an ongoing process of assessing risks within a rapidly changing environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Definition adapted from: Play Wales, [www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk), January 2009

<sup>2</sup> Play Wales, Play Deprivation (briefing paper), 2003



# Flintshire Play Policy

## The Right to Play

This Play Policy is founded on the fundamental right of children and young people to play, as recognised by:

1. The Welsh Assembly Government's National Play Policy (2002)
2. Core Aim 4 of the Welsh Assembly Government's Seven Core Aims for Children and Young People, which states that: *"All children and young people have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities."*<sup>3</sup>
3. Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that: *"Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts."*<sup>4</sup>

Flintshire's Children and Young People's Framework Partnership, recognises that the impact of modern society on children's lives has significantly restricted their opportunity to play freely and has resulted in a poverty of play opportunities in the general environment.

Play is a child-led agenda. It is what children and young people want to do and what they choose to do when given the freedom, independence, time and space to determine their own behaviour. If we value our children and young people and see them as equal citizens then we must uphold their right to play.

As a result, this play policy and accompanying play strategy adopts and endorses the principles and priorities set out in the Welsh Assembly Government's Play Policy (2002) and Play Policy Implementation Plan (2006).

## What is Play?

Flintshire's Children and Young People's Framework Partnership believes that:

*"Play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development - not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live."* (WAG Play Policy 2002)<sup>5</sup>

**Freely chosen** means that children themselves choose when, how and what to play. Play is not part of a set programme and does not have any steps that need to be completed.

**Personally directed** means children themselves control the content of their play and they decide the rules and roles they take when playing.

**Intrinsically motivated** means that play is undertaken for its own sake, and not performed for any reward, certificate or status. Play is the process that children are

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<sup>3</sup> The Welsh Assembly Government, Children and Young People: Rights to Action, January 2004

<sup>4</sup> The United Nations, The Convention on the Rights of the Child, November 1989

<sup>5</sup> The Welsh Assembly Government, Play Policy, October 2002

involved in rather than the end product.<sup>6</sup>

Play transcends age, ability, ethnicity, social standing, religion and gender. It can take many different forms and it has many different characteristics. It is this scope and potential in play that makes it inclusive to all children and young people.

## The Need to Play

*“Play is the elemental learning process by which humankind has developed. Children exhibit a behavioural imperative and instinctive desire to play. It has contributed significantly to the evolutionary and developmental survival of our species. Children use play in the natural environment to learn of the world they inhabit with others. It is the very process of learning and growth, and as such all that is learnt through play is of benefit to the child.”* (WAG Play Policy 2002)<sup>7</sup>

Play is critical to children’s physical and emotional well-being and is central to a healthy child’s life. It impacts on the development of both their bodies and their brains. When given the opportunity to play children are more likely to be physically active by running, jumping, dancing, climbing, digging, lifting, pushing or pulling. Through play children experience a wide range of emotions including frustration, determination, achievement, disappointment, confidence and upset, and through practice, can learn how to manage these. By playing with their peers children also develop their social skills and build strong friendships, which lead to positive feelings of happiness and belonging.

Children deliberately seek out physical and emotional uncertainty in their play. From birth children are inquisitive and curious with a deeply rooted and compelling drive to explore the unknown and experiment with their surroundings. By taking risks and having adventurous play experiences children can challenge themselves, test the limitations of the environment around them, develop problem-solving skills and find creative approaches to new situations. Ultimately play influences a child’s ability to be adaptable and resilient, to cope with stressful events and therefore enables them to support their own well-being.

Play is the essence of childhood, and anything other than free access to the broadest range of opportunities for **freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated** play, will have a detrimental affect on the development of the child.

## Providing for Play

This policy states that play is critical not only to children but for the society in which they live. We therefore believe that **everyone** in the County has a responsibility to uphold children’s right to play whether they are involved in providing for play or by ensuring restrictions on play are avoided whenever possible. Due to the impacts of modern society we are committed to developing more high quality compensatory play spaces; however we also recognise that the freedom to play should not be constrained to these areas but should instead be promoted throughout the child’s community.

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<sup>6</sup> Definition adapted from: Play Wales, [www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk), January 2009

<sup>7</sup> The Welsh Assembly Government, Play Policy, October 2002

Objective 1.1

Sustain and further develop the infrastructure in Flintshire needed to support children's play.

Flintshire Strategic Play Forum (A sub-group of Flintshire's Children's and Young People Partnership) has ultimate responsibility for the implementation of this strategy. However, a strong infrastructure for play is needed to ensure this strategy's objectives and actions become a reality and that children's right to play receives the support it deserves.

### **Play Network**

With the reinvigoration of the play strategy in Flintshire, it has been recognised that there is a need for a grassroots play organisation to support the development of sustainable community provision across the county. The Play Network will be a forum open to anyone in Flintshire who has an interest in upholding children's right to play. The network will aim to give play providers, individual practitioners, parents and other community members the opportunity to identify barriers and restrictions on play at ground level; celebrate success in play provision; share information and resources; provide support and advice to each other; be consulted and give their opinion on matters affecting play and contribute towards researching and evidencing the benefits of play and play provision.

Members of the play network can work together to raise the profile of play in Flintshire and encourage the development of more, community based, play provision. By increasing the membership of the network we can further demonstrate the wide-ranging support available for play and ensure our play services are responsive to the needs of local communities.

### **Flintshire Strategic Play Forum**

Flintshire's Strategic Play Forum will represent the Play Network at a strategic planning level and work in partnership to address issues identified by Play Network members. The forum aims to give strategic direction to the development of the play sector by encouraging greater partnership working between play providers and by ensuring that impacts on play are considered in all matters affecting the lives of children and young people. The Strategic Play Forum will oversee the effective implementation and evaluation of this strategy, and its subsequent action plans.

The Strategic Play Forum is made up of representatives from voluntary and statutory partners whose work impacts on children and young people's play. These members each have a responsibility in upholding children's right to play and influencing the work of their partner organisations.



## Flintshire Play Unit

The Flintshire Play Unit supports communities across Flintshire to uphold children and young people's right to play by:

- Increasing public recognition of children's right to play and its critical importance to their physical and emotional development.
- Ensuring play is integral to the strategic planning of services for children and young people.
- Giving children, young people and their communities the opportunity to participate in the creation and development of play opportunities.
- Supporting local communities to develop and sustain quality, inclusive, open access play provision.
- Supporting the development of playwork as a profession.

The Play Unit is based within the Leisure and Culture division of the Lifelong Learning Directorate. The team will facilitate the development of the Play Network and the Strategic Play Forum and is represented on the North East Wales Play Forum.

## The Countryside Service

Countryside Services is part of the Environment Directorate within Flintshire County Council. Through its management of 28 countryside and urban fringe sites, together with 20 circular routes on the Public Rights of Way network, Countryside Services currently promotes and passively manages a wide variety of recreation activities, across the County. These include walking, jogging, fitness trails, orienteering, cycling (both 'on' and 'off road'), informal games, kite and model aircraft flying, golf, fishing (coarse and sea), horse riding, bird watching, boating, wildfowling and geocaching.

On 13 January 2010, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) published its Physical Activity Action Plan - *Creating an Active Wales* - to implement the strategic aims of *Climbing Higher*, the 20-year national strategy for sport and physical activity.

*Creating an Active Wales* gives the leadership role for the local delivery of WAG's national action plan to the Health, Social Care & Well Being Partnership (HSCWB), working with the Children & Young People's Partnership, Local Service Board, Local Authority, Local Health Board, Public Health Wales, Communities First and Third Sector partnerships. Once developed, the new *Creating an Active Flintshire* Action Plan will need to be agreed by HSCWB before being submitted to WAG for approval. Sport Wales (formerly Sports Council for Wales) will have a key role in supporting this process, particularly in providing the Flintshire partners with the evidence to inform plans and for monitoring and evaluating their implementation.

- The percentage of the people in Wales using the Welsh natural environment for outdoor activities will increase from 36% to 60%
- 95% of people in Wales will have a footpath or cycle-path within a ten minute walk.
- No one should live more than a six-minute walk (300m) from their nearest natural green space.

## **FCC Leisure Strategy - 2009-14 (Page 33):**

Walking, cycling and outdoor play (whether it be in play areas or wheeled sports parks) help adults and youngsters accumulate physical activity time as part of everyday living and there is a clear link between the design of the environment and participation in these activities. In the future, it is important that we ensure Flintshire's natural environment – which is largely 'free of charge' – supports individuals to undertake regular physical activity as part of everyday life.

### **Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership:**

Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCP) are statutory bodies which plan local education provision for children below compulsory school age and plan childcare provision for children aged from 0 to 14. Flintshire's EYDCP also aims to support children's play in recognition of its importance in the early years of their lives. In relation to this Play Strategy, Flintshire's EYDCP will lead on:

- Promoting the importance of play in the early years of children's lives.
- Supporting the development of play provision for early years children.
- Encouraging childcare settings to provide the best possible play environments.
- Encouraging primary schools to enhance their outdoor areas for play.
- Supporting the development of play based early education provision.

### **NEW Play**

NEW Play (North East Wales Play Forum) is a consortium of voluntary, statutory and community partners from Wrexham, Flintshire and Denbighshire. Five members of Flintshire's Strategic Play Forum sit on this group which aims to share good practice and work in partnership to develop play strategically across the region.

In December 2007 Flintshire County Council, as lead applicant, was awarded funding from round one of the Big Lottery Fund's Child's Play programme to develop an infrastructure project across the region –NEW Play. Through the employment of a Regional Executive Officer and a Regional Play Development Officer this project aims to achieve the following three key strategic objectives:

- 1) NEW Play will develop and become a sustainable constituted group to advise, support, provide and plan for children's play across the region.
- 2) Clear and demonstrable links of communication will be made with strategic decision makers, playwork forums and local communities, across the three counties, to promote the value of play and playwork.
- 3) A clear and tangible framework will be developed locally that will provide a strategic approach to workforce development and quality playwork provision across the region.

Further to this, in April 2010, the Flintshire County Council, as lead applicant, was awarded £1 million to develop a peripatetic play service across the region, based on the work undertaken by NEW Play

## Leisure Services

Leisure Services directly manages:

- 159 fixed equipment children's play areas
- 11 informal ball play areas
- 6 wheeled play areas

Objective 1.2

Ensure children and young people can participate in the design; development and evaluation of play provision.

*"In the child's daily life, play is his/her only experience of being in control of events"*  
(Foundations in Playwork)<sup>8</sup>

Adults can facilitate the play process but it is children and young people who decide and initiate how, what and with whom they play. Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation identifies increasing degrees of participation, the top two being when children initiate and direct projects and when children and adults share decision-making<sup>9</sup>. Effective participation is therefore an ongoing process best facilitated where a relationship of equality exists between children, young people and adults.

By ensuring that, whenever possible, children and young people are invited and encouraged to actively participate in the creation and construction of play spaces we can promote their ownership of these areas and help them to develop a sense of responsibility for the places they play in. This will hopefully lead to more highly attended and better-maintained provision, which will have been developed to best suit the requirements of those accessing it.

Playworkers, as part of their everyday activities, will be in constant dialogue with children and young people about their play needs and wants via which children and young people will present many ideas and issues that may not be drawn out through more formal consultation processes. Therefore, we must recognise the professional observations and recollections of playworkers as a valid method of consultation and support them to evidence this information in order to inform the future development of play provision.

Children and young people need to be made more aware of issues affecting their play, how they can support their own play needs and where they can access play provision. The play sector needs to utilise channels of communication that people in the age range of 0 to 25 years interact with on a regular basis, including the Internet.

The developing Flintshire Youth Forum does provide an opportunity to involve young people in the wider issues affecting their play experiences. The purpose of the Youth Forum will be to include more young people in the democratic process and encourage them to become politically active in making and influencing decisions that affect them. It will give participants the opportunity to represent or champion the views of others and will therefore promote the inclusion of all young people.

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<sup>8</sup> Foundations in Playwork, Open University Press, July 2008

<sup>9</sup> Source: [www.freechild.org/ladder.htm](http://www.freechild.org/ladder.htm), January 2009

Objective 1.3	Promote inclusion and improve access to play opportunities for marginalized, segregated or disabled children and young people.
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*“Nothing should come between a child and their play”*

(Jane Hutt, Children’s Minister for Wales)<sup>10</sup>

If given the opportunity all children will play irrespective of their age, ability, ethnicity, social standing, religion or gender. However, they can also face barriers due to any of these factors. We must promote a consistent and effective approach to inclusion in all our play provision and strive to identify solutions to barriers because **all** children have an equal right to play.

Play has great therapeutic value to all children. When playing children have the opportunity to ‘let off steam’, to get rid of excess energy, to relax and de-stress. By ‘playing out’ problems and issues they are experiencing in their lives outside of play children can help themselves to understand and reason with what is happening to them. The therapeutic nature of play becomes increasingly important when children are experiencing additional stresses due to deprivation, segregation or through being disabled.

### **Children with Disabilities:**

In recent years the Assembly Government has made additional funding available to local authorities across Wales to enable them to better support disabled children to play. This additional money presents an opportunity to make a real, and sustainable, difference in the play experiences of children with disabilities and so we must ensure it is used as effectively as possible and leads to a significant increase in the number of these children having access to play opportunities that meet their support requirements.

It is important to recognise that there is unlikely to be a ‘one size fits all’ solution to providing play opportunities for children with disabilities because the type and complexity of their disability can vary widely from one child to the next. Some children and young people with disabilities already access play provision within their own community and many more could if provided with additional support. Some children may require help to develop the skills needed to interact with others in more mainstream settings and some will have severe and multiple disabilities which mean that anything less than one to one support is inappropriate.

Sometimes it can be the concerns of parents and carers over whether their child will receive the support they require that creates a barrier to children attending play settings. Any projects developed must therefore work closely with families to reassure them and encourage them to feel confident about allowing their children to access play provision.

Often it is the physical environment that children come into contact with that can disable them. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 requires service providers to take reasonable steps, to tackle physical barriers to access for disabled people. We are therefore committed to ensuring consideration is given to the accessibility of all new

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<sup>10</sup> Jane Hutt, Children’s Minister for Wales, speaking at the WLGA annual conference in Llandudno, October 2008

play provision and that play providers are supported to identify potential changes that would improve accessibility in existing settings. The key to doing this successfully will be consulting with the experts i.e. the children themselves, their families and the professionals who have experience of working with them.

#### Example of Regional Good Practice - Flintshire Buddy Scheme

**“We have learnt over the past years that to provide a truly inclusive service requires effort, enthusiasm, understanding, patience and stamina.”**

Janet Roberts – Flintshire County Council Play Development Officer

2010 was the 6<sup>th</sup> year of operation for the Flintshire Buddy Scheme funded by CYMORTH in partnership with the local authority and local town and community councils. The Buddy scheme has provided invaluable evidence of ‘good practice’ with regard to effective partnership working and true community cohesion and social inclusion.

In the early days of CYMORTH funding, the issue of a lack of play opportunities for children with disabilities was raised via Flintshire Children’s Services and the Flintshire CYPP at a ‘fledgling’ Flintshire Play Forum meeting in April 2005. In response the Play Unit and Playworkers recognised the need to establish and engage in a relationship with children, families and other professionals. It was clearly essential to build up confidence and understanding in the services that the Play Unit could provide. After much discussion between partners, an ‘out of hours’ play club was formed. This club has proved to be an invaluable ‘springboard’ for the provision of play services for disabled children.

The success of this initial pilot scheme meant the Play Unit was able to plan the Buddy Scheme to be delivered as part of and run parallel to the county-wide Summer Playscheme programme in partnership with local Town and Community Councils. A team of Playworkers from the existing Play Team were able to act as ‘buddies’ for a small group of disabled children. The evidence provided indicating the success of this pilot project led to the employment in Summer 2006 of ten Playscheme Buddies working with twenty three children who attended playschemes in their own locality during the summer. Buddies are employed as part of a larger play team on site at summer playschemes and provide one – one support (where necessary) for disabled children. An important aspect of the role is the maintenance of contact between parents/carers and the Play Unit. Buddies meet with individual families before the scheme commences and continue to work with them throughout the duration of the playscheme.

For Summer 2007, 55 children were registered with the Buddy Scheme and 14 Playscheme Buddies were recruited. In 2010 there were 71 children identified via the Scheme. Children with disabilities do attend summer playschemes, but it is apparent that a high number of the ‘Buddy scheme children would never have accessed local play provision without the buddying process.

Close monitoring and evaluation of the schemes has provided us with much evidence of both the need and success of each scheme and highlights a small but significant impact.

## Language

Flintshire has a diverse and multi cultural society and includes families from many different countries. As a result there are children living in Flintshire whose first language is not English or Welsh. Play can be inclusive of different languages and it is possible for two children who speak different languages to play together. Therefore, play provision should not be prescriptive about the language children use when playing and, in staffed play provision, we will encourage the employment of workers whose language best suits that of the children who are most likely to attend the setting.

However, we also recognise that language and culture can create a barrier for some children and that this may make them feel less confident about accessing play provision. Playworkers within staffed play provision can support children to overcome language barriers by mediating between them and their peers and can, therefore, support children to feel more confident about socialising with each other. Flintshire County Council will continue to work with partner organisations to promote play opportunities to these communities.

## Welsh Language

Wales has witnessed a considerable increase in the number of children and young people able to speak Welsh (from 14.9 % of 3 to 14 year olds in 1971 to 37.2 % in 2001). Flintshire has also witnessed an increase. Census figures for 1991 and 2001 show an increase of 2000 children of school age (aged 3 to 15) living in Flintshire able to speak Welsh. For many Welsh speaking children from homes where their parents cannot speak Welsh, the school provides one of the few opportunities for them to speak the language. Flintshire Strategic Play Forum believes that children and young people who are learning Welsh or are Welsh speaking should have opportunities to play and socialise in Welsh also.

It acknowledges that that much needs to be done to increase opportunities to provide this group with a wide range of social opportunities to use their Welsh outside the classroom, so that they associate the language not only with education, but also with leisure and cultural activity and, above all, with pleasure and enjoyment. This is a view that was strongly supported in the response to the Welsh Assembly Government's *Have your Say* exercise relating to its draft strategy for the Welsh language *A Living Language: A Language for Living*, where a number of respondents suggested that 9 to 13 year olds should constitute an important age group for the strategy, since it is at this stage that many children take long-term decisions with regard to where and when to use Welsh.

The Flintshire Strategic Play Forum places a value on local, community based play provision, and in order to increase opportunities to provide young people with social opportunities to use their Welsh outside the classroom. It acknowledges the need for more trained and qualified Welsh speaking playworkers and promoting the importance of more training opportunities that are delivered through the medium of Welsh, or bilingually. This will be reflected within the annual action planning for the Forum

Play Wales have developed a suite of qualifications known as *Playwork: Principles into Practice* or *P3*. This course can be delivered in English or Welsh and is available as a qualification on the qualifications Credit framework, endorsed by SkillsActive, the sector skills council for Wales.



P3 is the only playwork qualification with significant accompanying Welsh Language materials. The course has already improved the confidence and skills of many people who work with children in Wales and has the potential to improve the play experiences of all children who access play services

Additionally, we will ensure that Welsh language awareness training for playworkers will form part of annual action planning for the Forum.

Much work has been done by organisations like the Urdd, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin and Menter Iaith Sir y Fflint to provide local children and young people with increased opportunities to play through the medium of Welsh. We will work closely with these organisations and other partners to build on these services for children and young people to ensure, as far as possible, that freely chosen play may lead to an increase in the use of the Welsh language.

### **Marginalized Children**

Due to their living situation, some children may require different types of support if they are to access play opportunities. Some children may have no local play provision or may find it hard to access provision because of where they live, for example, children living in small rural communities or children living on traveller sites. Looked After Children sometimes move between foster carers in different communities and therefore may struggle to build relationships with local play settings and Young Carers will have less time for play because of the additional responsibilities they have at home.

Some children, because of their home environment, may find it hard to mix with their peers or may be less aware of what other children feel is acceptable within a play setting. Playworkers can support children to recognise the accepted social 'norms' within a play setting and can, therefore, support them to engage with other children from within that community.

Over the life of this strategy we will support the development of projects aimed at removing barriers to play, that specific groups of children may be experiencing, and will, therefore, work towards Flintshire being a place where all children can access their right to play.

### **Play in Hospitals**

Children who reside in Flintshire access a number of hospitals for treatment including the Wrexham Maelor Hospital, Ysbyty Glan Clwyd, Bodelwyddan and the Countess of Chester Hospital

The NHS Trusts have identified that children need to continue playing when spending time in hospital and the importance of play staff in supporting children to cope with the stresses and anxiety of having to be in hospital. These staff can create an environment that encourages children to regain confidence through play and deal with feelings of anger, frustration and uncertainty that are likely to occur during these difficult times. Play specialists use a play-based approach to help children understand their illness or injury and prepare for any medical procedures that may be necessary. They are trained to use distraction techniques and support other hospital staff in the diagnosis and rehabilitation of child patients.

Objective 1.4	Ensure the quality of play provision in Flintshire
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Play Wales is the national organisation for children's play. They were closely involved in drafting the national play policy (2002) and in providing recommendations for the Assembly Government's Play Policy Implementation Plan (2006). Play Wales describes quality play provision as a place where children and young people have the opportunity to freely interact with or experience the following:

- **Other children and young people** - with a choice to play alone or with others, to negotiate, co-operate, fall out, and resolve conflicts;
- **The natural world** - weather, the seasons, bushes, trees, plants, insects, animals, mud, etc;
- **Loose parts** - natural and man-made materials that can be manipulated, moved and adapted, built and demolished;
- **The natural elements** - earth, air, fire and water;
- **Challenge and risk taking** - both on a physical and emotional level;
- **Playing with identity** - role play and dressing up;
- **Movement** - running, jumping, climbing, balancing, rolling;
- **Rough and tumble** - play fighting;
- **The senses** - sounds, tastes, textures, smells and sights;
- **Feelings** - pain, joy, confidence, fear, anger, contentment, boredom, fascination, happiness, grief, rejection, acceptance, sadness, pride, frustration, etc. <sup>11</sup>

When developing any type of play provision we must strive to maximise the play value it offers to children and young people. We must also remember that the primary reason for developing play provision is to provide children and young people with a high quality place to play. Therefore any other adult led agenda we may have must be secondary to this.

### Play Environments:

Fixed equipment play areas have provided children with places to play for many years. However with restrictions on children's play becoming increasingly common there is a need to ensure that the spaces we design for play provide children and young people with access to the widest possible range of play opportunities. Fixed equipment play areas alone may not be able to provide all the elements of a rich play environment and so, when possible, they should be located to form part of a wider play space of, at least, one of our parks. These large parks incorporate hills, slopes, open green spaces, trees, bushes, water courses, fixed play equipment and sports facilities. They allow children to experience the natural environment and its elements; to be physically active and interact socially with others; they stimulate the senses and give access to a wide range of places that encourage imagination and discovery. Our parks provide children, young people and their families with a varied and stimulating environment in which to play, socialise and relax. We will attempt to recreate this richness of play opportunity in the other play environments that we create.

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<sup>11</sup> Play Wales, [www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk), January 2009

## Quality Assurance & Fixed Equipment Play Areas

Flintshire County Council's fixed equipment play areas are wholly financed from within the Leisure Services budget. Despite the announcement in September 2008 of a £350,000 County Council improvement scheme for ten Flintshire play areas to be upgraded and refurbished, together with the allocation of a further £17,500 to the play areas' annual maintenance budget from 2009 onwards, the long term viability and sustainability of Flintshire's equipped play areas remains a key issue for the Service to address.

Below is a Key Action from the Leisure Strategy 2009-14 (it forms part of one of the three Key Strategic Priorities: Renewal of the County's leisure provision):

KEY ACTION	BY/TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBILITY	OUTCOME
Rolling programme of improvement for fixed equipment play areas to be upgraded and refurbished across the County	Year-on-Year Annual Commitment	Public Open Spaces Manager	Continuous service improvement and enhanced customer experience

The long term viability of Flintshire's equipped play areas has long been identified as a Service risk on the County Council's Strategic Assessment of Risks & Challenges (SARC) document (Reference: CD10: Leisure – Future Provision). The annual repair and maintenance budget for play areas – effectively, £600 per site – is insufficient in terms of long term sustainability.

Mitigating action has been determined to offset this risk. During Quarter 1 of 2010/11, the Head of the Play Unit will commission an external playground specialist to undertake a condition survey of the play areas considered to be in the greatest need of investment. This survey will mark the first stage of a strategic evaluation of the County's existing fixed play provision. (Please refer to Appendix A which provides an early example of the survey findings.) In addition to this work, a small group of Members, accompanied by an Officer from the Play Unit, will visit those play areas identified as being in need of improvements during the latter part of 2010/11. This initiative was agreed by the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Both investigations will ensure that in the future, the play areas' limited annual maintenance budget is directed towards the sites which not only require refurbishment but which also are located in the areas of greatest community need.

The process will be assisted by mapping work being undertaken by the Flintshire Green Spaces Partnership Project Team. The Project Team, which includes Officers from Leisure Services, Planning, Countryside and the Biodiversity Team, is responsible for completing a County-wide Accessible Natural Green Spaces Study (ANGS), in accordance with the Countryside Council for Wales' (CCW) ANGS Toolkit. One of the mapping booklets produced by the Project Team displays Output Areas (Ward populations based on the 2001 Census) for the whole of Flintshire. During Summer 2010, a Contractor (employed by the Project Team) will conduct site visits – 'ground truthing' – in order to determine the 'naturalness' and accessibility of the county's green spaces. The completion of the 'ground truthing' exercise will, ultimately, lead to the production of an inventory of the County's Accessible Natural Green Space. The next step will be to identify those areas where there is ANGS deficiency, in

accordance with the prescribed CCW standards, and to determine where the greatest potential lies for site enhancement.

The level of funding for play should reflect the critical importance it has in the lives of children and young people. However, we also need to ensure that we make best use of resources we have and, therefore, we will prioritise the development of play provision in communities where children are experiencing the greatest degree of play deprivation. The way we tackle play deprivation in each community will depend on the characteristics of the local area and it is important to recognise that children can be deprived of play for a wide range of reasons, including:

- A lack of appropriate space to play
- Space that exists offering little in the way of inspiration for play
- Barriers accessing existing space

The National Playing Fields Association has changed its identity “Fields in Trust”. Fields in Trust (FIT) have reviewed the 6 Acre Standard and have issued a new FIT standard for the provision of recreational open space. Unlike the historic NPFA 6 Acre Standard which recommended the broad provision of 6 acres of recreational open space for every 1000 people, the FIT standard seeks to take a more sensitive approach which considers if a locality is rural or urban in character. This approach means that FIT standard contains dual benchmark standards for rural/urban open space provision and is less prescriptive than the former 6 Acre Standard since broader interpretations of the standards can be made especially in semi-urban authorities such as Flintshire. It is also clear within the FIT standard that Local Authorities should continue to develop local standards and should move away from reliance on national standard. This is in accordance with Planning Policy Wales and the Technical Advice Note 16: Sport and Recreation.

The Flintshire Open Space Survey was published in 2007/2008 and seeks to identify whether the recreation needs of the County are being met, given the provision of existing open spaces. The Survey used the NPFA 6 Acre Standard to determine whether sufficient open space provision existed and whether the communities needs were being met or not. Unfortunately the advent of Fields in Trust (FIT) and the replacement of the 6 Acre Standard has fundamentally affected the findings of the Flintshire Open Space Survey. The FCC Open Space Survey used the NPFA 2.4 hectare standard (metric equivalent of 6 acres) to identify under and over provision of Public Open Space. In reviewing FIT it is clear that the FIT Standards increase the amount of open space provision from 24m<sup>2</sup> per person (NPFA) to 35.5m<sup>2</sup> per person (Urban Areas) and 42.8m<sup>2</sup> per person (Rural Areas). Given the above change it is important to note that the Open Space Survey findings in 2005 should be treated as an absolute minimum since they are now below the recommended standard of 35.5m<sup>2</sup> per person (urban area). A review of the Open Space Survey is currently underway to ascertain the full affects of the changes in national standards. However, it is clear that there remains a need for Flintshire to develop its own local open space standard.

There is an allocated budget for the maintenance and development of all Flintshire County Council owned play areas, Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs), youth shelters, skate parks and BMX tracks. However, the level of funding available is limited and currently only contributes towards the maintenance of this type of provision rather than the development of new and existing sites. All new developments are therefore reliant on external funding either through grant aid or section 106 agreements. This not only makes the job of improving our play areas very difficult but can also result in the development of smaller play areas with reduced play value.

Within the County Council's budget for 2010 / 11 a limited fund has been established for the improvement of play areas in Flintshire. In March, 2010 Leisure Services invited Town & Community Councils to work in partnership with the County Council on a match-funding basis - £ for £ - in order to secure improvements to play areas. In this way, local communities will be actively engaged in identifying where improvement works will take place and the benefits of the limited fund will be spread across the County.

The total fund available for improvement works in 2010/11 is £55k with a further sum of £6k retained for the ongoing maintenance requirements of the new works. It is anticipated that the provision of funding will be maintained over 2011/12 and 2012/13, thereby permitting a degree of forward planning.

**'Design for Play: A Guide to Creating Successful Play Spaces'** has been published by Play England and the UK Government Department for Children, Schools and Families. The guide explains that *"creating inspiring play spaces that will please, excite, challenge and satisfy children requires knowledge of play, technical skill, an understanding of children and, above all, imagination"*. It goes on to identify 10 principles for designing play spaces. These state that successful play spaces are:

- 'bespoke'
- well located
- make use of natural elements
- provide a wide range of play experiences
- are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children
- meet community needs
- allow children of different ages to play together
- build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge
- are sustainable and appropriately maintained
- allow for change and evolution. <sup>12</sup>

### **The Role of Staff:**

Staff in open and closed access settings can enhance and enrich play environments by extending the range of play opportunities available to children. Playworkers work on the idea that the more flexible and adaptable the environment, the greater the flexibility and adaptability of the children in it. Simon Nicholson (1971), when discussing his theory of loose parts stated *"in any environment both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it"* <sup>13</sup>. Loose parts refer to any object that is free to be moved and manipulated. To playworkers this often means junk including carpet tubes, cardboard boxes and old sheets i.e. things that cost very little but that allow children to extend their play by building dens, making space ships, dressing up, generating noise, in fact, anything that their imagination will allow them to create.

By giving play and childcare practitioners easy access to a wide range of junk materials and other cheap resources we can support them to sustain varied and interesting play environments. By encouraging the introduction of playworkers to existing, unstaffed, play environments we can further increase the play value of these types of spaces.

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<sup>12</sup> Play England, Design for Play: A Guide to Creating Successful Play Spaces, 2008

<sup>13</sup> Foundations in Playwork, Open University Press, July 2008



## **Cymorth Grants**

There have been two main grants awarded to the Flintshire Play Unit which have enabled an increase in play opportunities for all children in Flintshire primarily by creating a play development team to plan and deliver play services. The grants have been awarded since 2004:

### **Play Development in Flintshire & Play for Disabled Children.**

This funding has enabled:-

- Employment of a Play Development Officer
- Employment of a Wheeled Sports Development Officer
- Employment of Community Playworkers
- Employment of Playscheme Buddies
- Development of staffed supervision at open access, 'out of hours' play clubs
- Improved training for the seasonal workforce
- Improved partnership working to achieve joint aims

The Care & Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) regulates and inspects staffed play provision using the national minimum standards set by the Welsh Assembly Government. The National **Minimum** Standards for Open Access Play Provision (2003) requires settings to have adequate policies and operating procedures, suitable facilities and appropriately trained staff to ensure children receive an adequate level of care. The Assembly Government is in the process of reviewing these standards, however registration is, currently, only mandatory for provision which caters for children under the age of eight and runs for more than two hours per session.

We will encourage all staffed play provision to become registered with CSSIW and will support settings to ensure all staff are subject to an enhanced disclosure by the Criminal Records Bureau and have attended child protection training. However Flintshire also needs a quality assurance scheme for staffed play settings, which will allow providers to demonstrate increased levels of quality in play provision above that of the national minimum standards.

Within its Play Policy Implementation Plan, the Welsh Assembly Government identified actions around developing standards for a wide range of play provision and the development of new guidance to establish what constitutes quality play opportunities. Any standards created from these actions will be implemented in Flintshire if endorsed by the play sector nationally.



Objective 1.5	Increase the financial resources available for developing play provision and use available resources as effectively as possible.
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### **Section 106 Agreements:**

Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 introduced the concept of planning obligations and relates to legal agreements between local authorities and developers made during the planning application process. They allow local authorities to specify necessary contributions from the developer to meet local needs and to offset the negative impact new developments will have on services in the surrounding area. This surcharge placed on developers can be financial or require the construction of additional facilities and can be used to address a number of issues including open space and children's play provision.

Planning obligations can present a significant source of funding for local communities and we need to take full advantage of this by ensuring that funding for the development of new or existing play spaces is obtained from any new housing developments that are likely to place added pressure on our already limited play resources.

The forthcoming Local Development Plan (LDP) will identify all the potential planning sites available up until 2021. The majority of these are for smaller developments on brownfield sites (previously developed, underused and vacant land within settlement limits) and therefore smaller housing developments are likely to become increasingly common. Section 106 agreements, currently, only apply to developments of 10 or more dwellings. There is, therefore, a need to reduce this threshold and review the way in which contributions from Section 106 agreements are utilised.

When planning applications are received there is an eight-week window in which to identify requirements for Section 106 agreements. This means communities need to be proactive in surveying what already exists in their area, identifying local needs and specifying contributions required from potential new housing projects. This could be achieved through the development of community partnership action plans, which would need to include services for children and young people.

Objective 2.1 Promote learning and development through play.

### **Flying Start**

The Assembly Government's 'Flying Start' initiative provides free, high-quality, sessional childcare places for eligible two year olds in targeted areas. The childcare setting provides opportunities for children to choose, follow and develop their own interests within a rich play environment. Children have daily access to a range of play opportunities including sand, water, mark-making, painting, role-play, home corner, dough and music. This daily access gives the children the time and space to explore, investigate, practice and consolidate their learning through play and an opportunity to take risks, try things out in a non-threatening way and make the connections necessary for understanding.

The Flying Start initiative aims to support families in the early years of their children's lives. This access to play in 'Flying Start' settings helps to develop children's well-being, independence and personal, social and language skills in preparation for The Foundation Phase. At all points of contact with parents the need for children to play is promoted and advice is given to parents on how they can support this.

It is important to recognise that while Flying Start settings are only set up in targeted areas other early years settings including playgroups and nurseries can provide children with these same vital opportunities for play right across the county.

### **The Foundation Phase**

In 2003 the Welsh Assembly Government published 'The Learning Country' in which its vision for the transformation of education and lifelong learning in Wales was outlined. The aim was to transform the life chances of people in Wales for the better by enhancing our knowledge and skills-base, and in partnership with local communities, strengthen foundations for learning.

The Foundation Phase is a new framework for learning for 3-7 year olds. It is a skills-based curriculum based on the fact that children learn through play and on research evidence which suggests that children do not begin to benefit from extensive formal teaching until about the age of 7, in line with their social and cognitive development. Where children are exposed too soon to formal teaching it can result in some children underachieving and attaining lower standards.

Throughout their formative years, children's learning develops more rapidly than at any other time. The Foundation Phase curriculum focuses on the developmental stages through which each child progresses. It places greater emphasis on experiential learning, active involvement and the holistic development of children. This includes developing their self-esteem and confidence to experiment, investigate, learn new things and form new relationships. It is hoped that this will support them to

develop positive attitudes to learning so that they enjoy learning and, therefore, want to continue with their education for longer.

The Foundation Phase asks practitioners to observe children whilst they play in order to understand where children are on their learning journey. Practitioners then plan developmentally appropriate tasks in order to teach children the skills and concepts needed to move them further along their learning journey. The concepts and knowledge acquired during these focussed tasks provide children with a repertoire of skills that they then take back into their own, freely chosen play.

The Foundation Phase is about adults understanding and challenging children's potential for learning by facilitating inspiring play environments. It also includes opportunities for play in the outdoor environment where children can learn by having first hand experience of solving real life problems and learning about conservation and sustainability.

The Foundation Phase is being implemented over a four year roll-out period, which started in September 2008 for all 3-4 year olds and is being rolled out until September 2011 for all 3-7 year olds. The Foundation Phase curriculum will be delivered in schools and also in approved non-maintained settings for funded three year olds.

More information about the Foundation Phase is available by visiting:  
[www.wales.gov.uk/foundationphase](http://www.wales.gov.uk/foundationphase)

## **Beyond the Early Years**

It is clear that the importance of play in the early education of children is already being recognised and some major steps have been taken to support this. However we must also recognise the important contribution play can make in the learning lives of older children and that, although they can begin to benefit from more formal education, children continue to play as they grow older and play continues to be vital to their holistic development well into their teenage years.

We will encourage teaching and non-teaching staff in education settings to develop a greater understanding of play behaviour, its importance in the mental and physical development of children and young people and how they can support it both in and out of the classroom.

## **Community Focused Schools**

Schools can play a key role in creating and improving opportunities for outdoor play and informal recreation. Where possible schools should be actively encouraged to open up their playing fields to provide open access staffed play provision and space for play, particularly in areas where there is limited playing fields or open space provision.

Partnership arrangements will need to overcome barriers with regard to potential damage to property referred to earlier in the strategy

The Flintshire County Councils approved School Modernisation Strategy states:

Improved Learning Environments

Our modernisation programme will deliver high quality environments. In new school buildings and refurbishments we will endeavour to deliver:

Buildings and grounds that are welcoming to both the school and the community whilst providing adequate security

Well-designed external spaces offering a variety of different settings for leisure, learning and sport

Good use of the site balancing the needs of pedestrians, cyclist and cars and enhancing the schools presence in the community

**Plas Derw Trust – Flintshire Forest School**

Plas Derw Trust runs Forest School and Outdoor and Environmental Education for children and young people. They operate all year round & provide term time sessions, after school clubs and holiday clubs in local woodland. The sessions provide the participants with structured activities along with time for freely chosen play and self discovery within the woodland environment. Such activities have been proven to show an increase in self esteem, confidence and communication skills.

Objective 2.2	Develop the range of play opportunities available to children and young people when at school.
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Play times are an important part of the school day. Play times give children and young people the opportunity to engage briefly with the uncertainty and spontaneity of play between structured lessons and help children to free up their minds and make them ready for the next class. The same consideration should be given to the design of outdoor spaces in schools, where children spend their play times, as is given to the inside of their buildings. By developing school playgrounds into rich play environments and encouraging a wide range of play behaviours we can support children and young people to extend their play experiences.

The Welsh Assembly Government’s Healthy Schools Initiative recognises that happy, healthy students are more likely to achieve in school and that children and young people need to be physically active to be healthy. Research (Macket, R. University College London 2004) has also established that children need regular opportunities for outdoor play in order to maintain healthy levels of physical activity<sup>14</sup>.

The Assembly Government’s Play Policy Implementation Plan explains that the budget to support improvements to school buildings can, at the local authority’s discretion, be used to improve landscaping so as to provide a richer and exciting play environment. However re-developing school playgrounds may not automatically require large sums of money. We are fortunate in Flintshire to have a “self build” experience from the development of our two adventure play-settings at Gronant and Bryn Gwalia, Mold. ‘Self build’ works on the principle that play structures within the setting are designed and built by the children, the staff and members of the local community. It is likely that most schools include children whose parents and carers would be willing to give some of their time and expertise to help with the development of their child’s school playground especially if it could be accessed outside of the school day.

<sup>14</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, Play Policy Implementation Plan, 2006

We can further enhance these play environments by providing staff who are trained to facilitate play and by introducing 'loose parts'. Qualified playworkers will be used to support existing lunchtime supervisors to facilitate and encourage different types of play to the point where the supervisors would be experienced enough to take on responsibility for enhancing the play environment themselves. Lunchtime supervisors often live local to the school they work in and so training them could help promote play within the surrounding community.

Objective 2.3	Increase access to play opportunities on school grounds outside of school hours.
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The Assembly Government's Play Policy Implementation Plan recognises school grounds as important play resources especially in communities where there is a deficit of playing field or open space provision. Schools in these communities will be encouraged to open up their grounds for play outside of the school day. This work will be prioritised in communities with the greatest deficits of playing space.

Vandalism to school property has been a problem in the past and so there are issues around the management of school grounds including insurance and liability concerns and responsibility for maintenance. These are not impossible problems to fix but the play sector will need to work in partnership with schools to support them in finding creative ways of navigating these potential barriers.

Providing playworkers on school sites after school hours would help to extend the play experiences of children who access the site and help to ensure the environment is used appropriately. Many Out of School Childcare Clubs already do this by providing the children, whose parents pay for them to attend, with a wide variety of play opportunities using school facilities.

In some cases it may be possible to develop play provision which is both open and closed access simultaneously and therefore allow parents to choose the level of care given to their children. For example, parents of children who live local to the setting may be happy for them to attend free of charge and come and go as they wish but parents of children who live further a field may want to pay an additional fee for staff to keep their children on site until they can collect them.

Objective 3.1

Raise the profile of play and encourage communities to place a greater value upon it.

By raising the profile of play in the public domain and increasing people's understanding of play's critical importance in the lives of children and young people we hope to foster a society that values play and *expects* to see children playing.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in 2008, identified that in Britain there is currently a "*general climate of intolerance and negative public attitudes towards children*"<sup>15</sup>. The reduction in free opportunities for children to play has resulted in communities which are less used to seeing children out playing and therefore less tolerant of play behaviour. Children are equal members of their community and their community should, therefore, support their play needs. However, in the development of this strategy children and young people identified adults as the number one barrier to them playing.

We will encourage community residents to get back in touch with children's play and to remember how they played as children. In addition to this, we will ensure that professionals working in communities have an awareness and therefore a greater tolerance, of different types of play behaviour so that they can be seen to set an example to other community members. Real incidents of anti social behaviour still need to be addressed but, in doing this, we need to be realistic about what children's play can involve.

**Playday** is an annual UK wide event celebrating children's right to play. Each year the event has a different theme aimed at promoting one aspect of children's play. Playday is supported in Flintshire at each of the 70 summer playscheme sites

Political support for the play sector is vital to its profile, sustainability and further development. We will, therefore, work closely with elected members and community councils to ensure they are aware of how the play sector is developing and to advise them on ways of promoting play in their areas.

As a front runner in the development of play provision in Wales, Flintshire is also involved in raising the profile of play nationally. Representation of the Flintshire play sector at national events allows us to share our knowledge and gain from the experiences of others across the country. Wales will also be hosting the 2011 International Play Association conference and we hope Flintshire will have a key role in this.

<sup>15</sup> The Guardian Newspaper, Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2008



Objective 3.2	Develop new and enhance existing compensatory play provision.
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Open access play provision can be permanent or short term and with or without premises. The purpose of this provision is to compensate children for the lack of naturally occurring play opportunities within their community by providing them with access to an enriched play environment. Open access settings are staffed by playworkers who are trained to facilitate children's play and are free of charge because children should not have to pay for their right to play.

Open access play settings encourage children to be in charge of their own play and to shape the environment they play in. They can extend the play experiences of children beyond those available in un-staffed play areas and allow children to display a wide range of play behaviours including those that may be seen as negative in other areas of the community, for example, being loud, destructive, chaotic and boisterous.

Every community has a responsibility to support its own children to play and by far the most successful open access play projects in Flintshire are those that have a high level of involvement from the local community. The benefits of this are recognised in the Assembly Government's Play Policy Implementation Plan when highlighting the need for adventure playgrounds:

*"Building play opportunities can draw communities together. When communities are actively involved in planning play, across the generations, there can be wider benefits for social cohesion, social enterprise and the inclusive impact of voluntary initiative. Adults who become involved in the planning or delivery of play opportunities locally acquire the transferable skills of the social entrepreneur. Play opportunities have acted, in many parts of Wales, as a catalyst to further community development, involvement, and participation. This can be the most effective way to engender feelings of ownership by the wider community and, as a result, more people have an interest in the playground"*<sup>16</sup>

### **Adventure Playgrounds and ICCs:**

Adventure (or "junk") playgrounds are the ultimate in staffed open access play provision. They provide year round adventurous play opportunities on a permanent site enclosed by a fence. Within this fence children are encouraged to manipulate, create and recreate their own environment and therefore take ownership of their play space. The main advantage these settings have over open access playschemes is that the children can consistently enhance their play environment without having to see it being packed away at the end of each session.

The Assembly Government's Integrated Children's Centre initiative aims to promote cooperation between voluntary and statutory organisations and encourage the development of multi-disciplinary teams working across different professions. These ICCs are not stand alone buildings but act as a hub for a network of services including open access play, early years education, community training, childcare and other family support services.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The Welsh Assembly Government, Play Policy Implementation Plan, 2006

<sup>17</sup> The Welsh Assembly Government, Children and Young People: Rights to Action, January 2004

Flintshire now has a total of three ICC Networks on the development of the open access play element of this initiative. These are The Den, Gronant (Rural North Family Centre), Buckley Westwood and the Aston Family Centre. Throughout the duration of this play strategy more adventure playgrounds and experiences will be developed in partnership

It is important to recognise that not all communities have a sufficient number of children and young people to sustain an adventure playground. However, other open access playschemes can still provide children and young people with adventurous play opportunities and we will support them in doing this.

### Flintshire County Summer Playscheme Programme

2010, was the 14th year for the Local Authority to provide the county-wide Summer playscheme programme, held at 70 sites across Flintshire. Some playschemes have existed long before that with Quayplay at Connah's Quay in its 35th year!

As in previous years, all schemes were provided in partnership with local Town and Community Councils and the Welsh Assembly Government via the Cymorth Fund for Play Development in Flintshire

The play sessions are provided for children aged between 5 - 12 years (Except at Quayplay 5 -11 years) and are fully-inclusive, free of charge and provided by a team of 110 seasonal Play-workers who attend an intensive 6 day training course including:-

P3 Level 2 Play-work Award

Paediatric First-aid

Risk-assessment and management of risk

Disability awareness

Managing 'challenging behaviour' in a play environment

All Play-workers are employed via a rigorous recruitment process, which includes an application, interview, personal and medical reference and enhanced CRB Disclosure process.

The play-workers provide a child led service where trained play-workers facilitate open access play. Play-workers provide opportunities to participate in informal, spontaneous, creative and social play activities.

Flintshire is the only Local Authority in Wales to provide a county wide playscheme programme in partnership with Local Town and Community Councils. The Summer Playschemes provide the 'corner-stone' for our play provision in Flintshire and also provide an invaluable 'kick-start' for many generic and community based play projects.

The Flintshire Play Unit has a wealth of experience in supporting communities that demonstrates a commitment and willingness to provide for children's play and our ultimate aim is to have an open access play project in every community that requires it. However the team will take a proactive approach to developing playschemes in communities that feature amongst the 30% most deprived in Wales. This focus will be in line with priorities set out in the new community regeneration strategy for Flintshire.

## Example of Regional Good Practice

### Quay Play

2010, marked the 35<sup>th</sup> year of the largest open access play scheme in North Wales located at Connah's Quay Sports Centre. The scheme was established by Connah's Quay Town Council in 1975 and thousands of children have benefited over the years. The Town Council, the Local Authority and the Welsh Assembly Government work closely to develop and improve the Playscheme. The scheme is registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) as an open access facility.

Quayplay's operating time is 10.00am – 11.45am which runs from Monday to Friday for 5 weeks during the school summer holidays. Children are free to arrive at any time during the session, however two buses operate to 'collect and return' children from areas in Connah's Quay. During 2010, there were 460 children registered to the scheme with a daily attendance of 150. The highest daily attendance reached 215, with a total attendance of over 3000.

A team of playworkers are employed via the partnership approach, with the local authority and Connah's Quay Town Council, to deliver the scheme to a quality standard. Connah's Quay Sports Centre offers children a variety of play environments to explore. This includes four indoor rooms, a seating area, an astro turf, and a playing field. Equipment and loose parts are provided by the playworkers to enhance the environment and, ultimately the play experience for the children.

The Town Council contributes £10,000 (approx.) towards staffing and transport costs. The local authority match funds this amount via the Cymorth Fund for Play Development in Flintshire. The Cymorth fund enhances the provision by funding; Playscheme Buddies to attend Quayplay sessions with individual children, training for 10 playworkers, employment of a 'person in charge' (legal requirement for CSSIW), rigorous monitoring and evaluation and £1200 to provide another scheme within a popular green space within the town (Wepre Park). The local authority also provides officer and manager time with regards to the CSSIW process, furthermore all records are retained and recorded appropriately. The scheme is closely monitored and evaluated to provide evidence of the impact of the play experience for the children who attend and to inform future projects within the locality.

Objective 3.3

Improve access to existing outdoor play spaces and protect the places where children play

Park rangers and park officers provide activities and maintain an environment that allows children to extend their play experiences. In doing this they encourage more children to access our parks and play outdoors.

In other areas of Wales peripatetic playwork or "play ranger" projects have been set up to enhance other local play spaces and to encourage children to play outside more often. They may also help to maintain play areas by reducing vandalism and promoting ownership. Playworkers on these projects do not have a fixed base but instead transport their play resources between numerous sites where children and young people should be found playing. This model of provision would be particularly suited to rural areas where naturally occurring, informal space suitable for play exists but is not being accessed regularly by local children and young people.

For play provision to be used to its full potential children and young people must have easy access to it and feel confident about travelling from their homes to these locations. By developing safe routes through communities that are well lit and can be overseen by local residents we can encourage more children to walk and cycle to where they play. For play provision further a field the Assembly Government's Children Act planning guidance for Local Authorities identifies that transport departments need to be engaged in support of children and young people's right to play to ensure that play facilities are accessible through affordable transport. This is especially important where young people want to access specific types of provision that may not be available in their own community, for example, skate parks and BMX tracks.

Objective 3.4	Encourage the creation of more 'playable' communities.
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The local streets around where children live are an important play resource. Children want to feel safe when they play, in fact if they do not feel safe they will not play. As children get older their horizons broaden, their boundaries increase and they tend to venture further a field in search of new experiences. However, younger children will want to play near their homes so that they can be in close contact with the people who can protect them. Street play makes an important contribution to community cohesion because it promotes social interaction between families.

Unfortunately there has been a significant reduction in the numbers of children playing in the street compared to previous generations. One of the main reasons for this has been the huge increase in traffic on our roads. There is obviously a very real danger to children from cars so parents and carers are understandably concerned for their child's safety. However, it is the vehicles that we should restrict and not the children.

As a County we must continue to take steps to reduce the speed of traffic in residential areas by introducing more traffic calming measures. Parked cars are also a major problem because they reduce the space available for play and restrict visibility of pedestrians. We will therefore encourage the use of driveways and garages and reduce on road parking whenever possible.

Residential streets often incorporate grassed spaces suitable for children to play on. However another restriction on play comes from the regular use of "no ball games" signs in public areas. Although these signs may be meant to reduce damage to property, they also send a message to children and young people that their desire to play is not welcome. As our Play Policy states play is of benefit not only to the child but also the society in which that child lives and so we will be encouraging the use of signs that promote and raise awareness of children's play rather than restricting it.

The design of residential streets must give consideration to children's play and incorporate elements that encourage play to occur. For example, the road layout in new housing developments should restrict the speed of vehicles, minimise on street parking and provide children with space to play outside near their homes. Examples of good practice and innovative design are needed to challenge more traditional approaches to street design.

## Flintshire UDP 2000-2015 – Policy SR4 Protecting Recreational Open Space

Development which would result in the loss of playing fields, play areas, informal recreation areas, and other recreational open space will be permitted only where:

- a) There is already adequate recreational open space in the surrounding area; and
- b) The County Council as local planning authority is satisfied that the land will not be required in the longer term for school or community use; and
- c) The site has no visual or amenity value worthy of retention; or
- d) Where the development of the site would result in an under-provision of open space in the surrounding area, an equivalent area of replacement space is provided in an appropriate location.

## Flintshire UDP 2000-2015 – Policy SR5 – Public Open Space and New Residential Development

New residential development will normally be expected to include open space at a minimum rate of 2.4 hectares per 1000 population. This provision will include outdoor sport and recreation space together with equipped play space. In exceptional circumstances, where it is not possible to provide open space on the development site, then suitable off-site provision or contributions to new or improved facilities including equipment, will be sought.

A similar policy in favour of protection will be recognised in the new Local Development Plan in 2016 and define our planning policies until 2031 (relevant policies detailed above).

These same principles of protection should also be applied to the reconditioning of land for other services.

**'Manual for Streets'** was published by the UK Government's Department for Transport and endorsed by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2007. The manual provides guidance relating to the design of residential streets and recommends that consideration is given to the function of streets as places where people live. It recognises that streets should not be designed purely to accommodate the movement of motor vehicles and that consideration should also be given to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, accessibility, parking, utilities, street furniture and lighting and maintenance. In doing this the manual recommends a maximum speed limit of 20mph in residential areas.

The manual identifies the fact that *"good design is fundamental to achieving high-quality, attractive places that are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable"* and recognises that partnership working among practitioners is key to the design process. It also underlines the importance of inclusive design and states: *"design that accommodates the needs of children and disabled people is likely to suit most, if not all, user types"*.<sup>18</sup>

One of the key reasons we must now take steps to provide for play is the loss of naturally occurring, informal play spaces due to the redevelopment and reconditioning of land. Although we will create more compensatory provision, play should not be confined to these areas and so there is a need to protect and enhance the other formal and informal open spaces where children play.

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<sup>18</sup> Department of Transport, Manual for Streets, 2007

## “Playable” Public Space

The Assembly Government’s ‘Planning Policy Wales’ (March 2002) provides the strategic policy framework for the effective preparation of local planning authorities’ development plans. This is then supplemented by 20 topic based Technical Advice Notes (TANs. Technical Advice Note 16: Sport, Recreation and Open Space, states:

*“While formal, equipped play areas provide opportunities, particularly for young children within communities; these are not the only forms of provision which should be offered. Wheeled play areas, ball game areas, ‘playable space’, community woodland and informal areas for ‘environmental play’ can provide opportunities for children to interact and gain the social, health and well-being benefits which come from opportunities for active, physical play”<sup>19</sup>*

Some of our open spaces are sterile places which offer little in the way of inspiration for play. As our parks demonstrate, places that are good for children’s play can be good for everyone. Innovative approaches to landscape design and site planning in public spaces are needed so that certain types of play are promoted while other types, which might cause hazards to other users, are discouraged. Large flat spaces will inevitably attract ball based games. However, slopes, mounds, rocks, trees and benches would make this less attractive and might encourage more imaginative play instead.

The review of the Open Spaces Survey currently underway considers open space as a multifunctional resource and looks at the existing and potential value of sites in terms of their amenities and biodiversity and the opportunities for play, health and well-being that they offer. The Local Development Plan will merge these objectives and the concept of “playable” space within planning policy and will, therefore, encourage the development of open space that offers a much wider community value. To support this, examples of good practice for ‘playable’ space will be identified to provide a bench mark for the development of future open space provision.

Our County Summer Playscheme Programme demonstrates that a wide range of ages can enjoy public space together, if given the opportunity. By encouraging the creation of “playable” public space we can help to develop places that everyone can use and therefore help to build a stronger sense of community.

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<sup>19</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, Technical Advice Note 16, 2008



Objective 4.1 Increase the number of people gaining Playwork qualifications.

Playwork is a profession and playworkers are trained to do their jobs. Playworkers work in a wide range of settings including adventure playgrounds, open access playschemes, out of school childcare clubs, play centres, peripatetic play projects and hospitals. A framework of eight principle statements, known collectively as the Playwork Principles, guide Playwork practice and these establish the approach all playworkers should take to providing for children's play.

A playworkers role is not to simply play with children. Playworkers facilitate inspiring spaces where the conditions are right for freely chosen play to occur and which maximise the play opportunities available to children. In doing this, Playworkers support children to construct, dismantle and therefore adapt their own play environments.

In a world where children and young people are increasingly supervised, playworkers must avoid adulterating the play process whenever possible and only become involved in play if necessary due to health and safety reasons, or if invited to do so by a child. This ensures the child remains in control of their own play and uses the worker as a resource with which to extend their own play experiences. An effective playworker can enable and encourage a wide range of play behaviours while seeming to have little or no interaction with the play activity itself.

We will encourage the development of an appropriately qualified work force for play to support the development of more, high quality, staffed play provision and to meet the regulatory standards associated with this type of provision.

Playwork Wales (the national centre for Playwork Education and Training) has recently developed a new suite of qualifications known as "**Playwork Principles into Practice**" or "P3". The courses consider play from a biological, social and psychological perspective. They explore the significance of children's play in human evolution and how playworkers might effectively facilitate the play process. The syllabus is centred on the child at play and addresses some of the tensions that arise between adult agendas and the child's drive to play.

The qualifications are designed to allow workers to access the training in a progressive, incremental way. Each level of the course comprises of three stages: the award, certificate and diploma and each stage builds on the foundations of the previous one. The courses combine tutor led theory, practical Playwork, observations and reflection time and aim to ensure playworkers can put what they have learnt into practice before moving onto the next stage of the qualification.

Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs supports playwork in 'out of school' club settings across Flintshire and, when funding permits, can provide CACHE Level 2 and 3 Playwork qualifications to its affiliated members. In addition to this they offer a Level

3 transitional qualification for Early Years and Childcare workers wanting to move towards a career in playworker.

We are also very fortunate in the region that Glyndwr University has, in 2008, introduced a degree in Play and Playwork. Students graduating from this programme will be able to follow careers in face to face playwork, play development, playwork training and education, play project management as well as in associated professions such as youth work, community work and childcare.

The Play Unit will work in partnership with NEW Play to further develop this framework for playwork training and ensure a strategic approach to workforce development across the North East Wales region. This will include the development of short courses aimed at introducing people to the playwork profession. These short courses will be particularly useful to professionals working in other sectors and members of local communities who are interested in play but have little experience of attending training and gaining formal qualifications.

All available Playwork courses will be advertised and accessible through our Family Information Service. Playwork will also be promoted as a career in schools and we will ensure school leavers are aware of the training available and the qualifications required to enter the profession.

Objective 4.2	Support the continuous professional development of playworkers in Flintshire.
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The key to developing high quality, staffed, play provision is retaining experienced playworkers within the play sector and encouraging their continued professional development. To do this we need to make the prospects for playworkers more attractive and increase the number of full time playwork posts available.

There is currently no nationally recognised pay scale for playworkers and many are underpaid given the fact that they engage with some of the most vulnerable children in the most deprived communities and work outside all year round and in all weathers. The play sector in Flintshire will support the development of a national pay scale.

If given the opportunity many Playworkers would work in several play settings in order to create a more full time position for themselves. They could, for example, be employed to work during school lunchtimes as well as after school hours and during school holidays. We will also encourage the development of multi disciplinary personnel capable of working across children and young people’s services.

Playwork practice in Flintshire must be informed by local, regional and national developments within the play sector. We will ensure that our playworkers are given opportunities to share their ideas, concerns and experiences with each other and representatives from further a field.

The unpredictable and inventive nature of children’s play is such that Playworkers need to be given time to continuously review and evaluate the way they have approached different situations so that they can inform and improve their future work. Effective Playwork is based upon an ongoing process of reflective practice. If supported well this process will improve the quality of play opportunities and playwork

practice and, in turn, contribute to the development of the profession and our understanding of children's play.

**“The First Claim... a framework for playwork quality assessment”** was developed by Play Wales in 2001. By encouraging playworkers to observe and reflect on the opportunities they create for children and the role they take within play spaces, the framework provides playworkers with a mechanism for analysing the current quality of their work and identifying means by which that quality can be increased.

Across three levels (basic, intermediate and advanced) the framework enables playworkers to consider the range of play opportunities they provide, the invention styles they choose to take, the types of play behaviours which children display, the mood and nature of children's behaviour, the relationships between children and the physical environment and their approach to working in a child's environment.<sup>20</sup>

Principle 4 of the Playwork Principles states that *“For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas”*<sup>21</sup>. We will therefore ensure that playworkers have access to the, up to date, information and resources needed to do this and that they are supported to feel confident about raising the profile of children's right to play.

Objective 4.3	Promote a playwork approach to working with children and young people.
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Playworkers aim to suspend prejudice and be non-judgemental when working with children and young people and therefore facilitate the play process free from other, adult led, agendas. They strive to remember what it was like to be a child and are therefore sympathetic and supportive of children's play behaviour.

Playworkers consider children as *being* as well as *becoming*. Many services targeted at children and young people aim to support them to become well rounded, autonomous adults capable of making a positive contribution to our society. In these situations children may be considered as 'adults in waiting'. The developmental benefits that children gain from playing are unquestionably vital to their healthy, holistic development. However, play is also critical to children's well being in the here and now. Children's play behaviour is innate, it is what children do. Playworkers therefore support the play process. It is what children and young people do.

A playworkers role is to identify and remove barriers to children's play. This may include supporting children to address and resolve non-play problems in order for them to feel free to play. Within staffed play settings social interaction between children and playworkers is inevitable. In open access settings children themselves choose to attend and therefore choose to interact with the playworkers. This leads to the development of parallel relationships between playworkers and children built on equality, trust and respect. Playworkers aim to empower children and therefore support them to raise their self-esteem and build their confidence.

Over time playworkers will interact with a wide range of children and their families and can become respected and valued members of the local community. However, it is important to recognise that these relationships will only develop where staffing is consistent and the provision is regular and permanent.

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<sup>20</sup> The First Claim – a framework for playwork quality assessment, Play Wales, 2001

<sup>21</sup> The Playwork Principles, Endorsed by SkillsActive, 2005

Playworkers in Flintshire have many skills and should receive recognition for the important and complex role they undertake. Playwork is an emerging profession and there is a need to further promote and evidence its benefits to children, young people and their communities. By supporting the commissioning of research into playwork we will contribute to the national development of this profession.

Objective 5.1

Support those providing for play to enable children to experience risk and challenge.

The Health and Safety Executive made the following statement in January 2005:

*“Sensible health and safety is about managing risks, not eliminating them all. HSE is not in the business of stamping out simple pleasures wherever they appear and at whatever cost. We recognise the benefits to children's development of play, which necessarily involves some risk, and this shouldn't be sacrificed in the pursuit of the unachievable goal of absolute safety.”<sup>22</sup>*

We need to compensate for children and young people not being able to have adventurous play experiences in the general environment by providing opportunities for this in the play settings we create. Staffed play provision can extend the degree of risk and challenge that children have access to beyond that available on unsupervised sites.

It is important to recognise that risky play does not, necessarily, mean dangerous. Nearly all types of play incorporate a degree of physical or emotional risk whether it's balancing, climbing, singing, dressing up or even playing with someone new. Risky play can be any play opportunity that provides children with a sense of adventure and allows them to step outside, or at least to the edge, of their comfort zone. Obviously we want to avoid serious injury but getting bumps and scrapes is an important part of playing because childhood involves a great deal of trial and error. We would, for example, never learn to walk if we were not allowed to fall down.

There is a perception of an increased risk to children and young people in our society not borne out by evidence. If we do not address this issue we are in danger of allowing children to develop who are not appropriately prepared to support their own well-being. By continuing to work with local authority insurers to understand the importance of children and young people experiencing risk and by encouraging them to recognise the risk management skills of individual qualified workers we can help to ensure that inappropriate claims for insurance are addressed.

All play services currently provided by the local authority and often in partnership are risk managed in line with corporate and directorate guidance in terms of the legal requirement for risk assessment of any play service or facility.

The Flintshire Play Unit and the Health and Safety Unit have always and will continue to work in partnership to provide and improve services for children and young people in Flintshire.

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<sup>22</sup> The Health and Safety Executive, January 2005

**'Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide'** has been published by Play England and the UK Government's Department for Children, Schools and Families. The guide is based on the Play Safety Forum's position statement, 'Managing Risk in Play Provision' (2002) which recognised the conflict between the need for children to experience risk and challenge in their play and the need for providers to offer acceptable levels of safety. At the heart of the implementation guide is the move from risk assessment to risk-benefit assessment and it encourages providers to show how their judgements about risk and safety take into account the benefits to children.

The guide is written for those responsible for managing play provision, especially unstaffed public play areas, and for those involved in designing and maintaining such provision. It gives providers greater clarity about their responsibilities and duties and discusses how these relate to law, public policy and standards. In doing this it aims to address some of the confusion and anxieties people have about providing adventurous play opportunities.

The guide has been endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive, The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and Play Wales.

Playworkers are trained to facilitate risky play and choose an intervention style that balances safety with the developmental benefits of allowing children to continue their play. By its nature play can be chaotic and can change direction suddenly and therefore paper forms alone cannot fully support staff to assess all the risks that may occur in any one session. Playworkers need to constantly assess the risks they see before them and base their interventions on their prior experience and knowledge of the children involved. This process is known as dynamic risk assessment and is already recognised as an effective way of working by other organisations including the Fire Service.

We need to put trust in the abilities of trained playworkers and support their work by developing a risk management tool that recognises the importance of dynamic risk assessment and recommends best working practice when providing for a wide range of risky play opportunities. With additional training this same system could be used by other professionals including early years workers, youth workers and park rangers.

Objective 5.2

Promote play with parents and encourage them to support their children to play.

In the early years of children's lives parents should be encouraged to actively play with their children. Early play is critical to forming close attachments between parents and their children and it is key to the development of children's speech and language skills. As children get older they will seek greater independence and autonomy and will, increasingly, need to play away from the protective gaze of parents. It is a parent's role to ensure children have sufficient time for freely chosen play in their day.

Previous generations of children were encouraged to "get out and play" and most adults can recall stories about adventurous play experiences they had when they were children. Unfortunately this is now, often, not the case and, heightened anxieties over their safety has led to a significant drop in the number of children playing out in their communities. This is partly due to the high profile media coverage given to tragic, but thankfully rare, incidents involving children. In addition to this, the time children spend watching TV and playing on computers indoors has increased and resulted in them having less time to play outside in the natural environment.



Parents are vital when it comes to encouraging their children to play. However, if they are to feel confident in doing this we need to support them to put the dangers facing their children into perspective and to recognise the detrimental consequences of their children not playing outside. Some parents, themselves, may have been deprived of play as children and will therefore need an increased level of support if we are to break this cycle of play deprivation.

Flintshire's forthcoming parenting strategy will recognise play as a cross cutting theme and through this we will ensure that:

- Parents have access to information about the benefits of play, advice on supporting children to play and details of where their children can access play provision.
- Training sessions will be developed for parents aimed at providing them with the knowledge and basic skills needed to support their children's play at different stages of development.
- Staff working with parents will be supported to promote the importance of play and to give advice on how different ages of children should be encouraged to play.

A reduction in close-knit communities has meant that many parents do not have the informal support networks once available. As a result parents can be left feeling isolated and unsure of what is best for their children. We will, therefore, ensure that any advice available to parents about play is consistent across the county.

Objective 6.1

Ensure impacts on play are considered in the planning of all services and restrictions on play avoided whenever possible.

Play is so critically important in the lives of children and young people that we must take all possible measures to ensure we avoid reducing their opportunities to do it.

Impacts on play need to be considered in the planning and development of all council services and therefore all new strategies and action plans should be impact assessed against our Play Policy statement. Council departments should also be encouraged to assess the degree to which their work might restrict children and young people's freedom to play and give consideration to how they could go about reducing these impacts.

To guarantee that these processes take place we will ensure that all relevant decision-making panels within Flintshire continue to include a representative who is prepared and able to champion and advocate for children's right to play. This should include appropriate Scrutiny committees, and the Council's Executive. Once identified these Members will be supported by the play sector to access the relevant information needed to perform this role effectively.

Objective 6.2

Ensure play is integral to the strategic planning of all Children and Young People's Services.

Play is a child's right and therefore must be valued on its own merits however we must also recognise the wide-ranging benefits that can be gained by providing for play.

Flintshire's Community Strategy, sets out the vision, priorities and goals for improving Flintshire up until 2020.

The Children and Young People's Plan 2008 – 2011 explains Flintshire's vision for children and young people and provides a framework for all services that will contribute towards this.

Our Play Policy, this Strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan all identify that play makes an important contribution to the underpinning principles identified by the CYPP and therefore impacts on all aspects of children and young people's lives.

The Strategic Play Forum and the Play Unit will be consulted in the development of all children and young people's services to ensure that the benefits of providing for play have been given appropriate consideration. Partners will also be encouraged to consider utilising a joint commissioning process, to ensure equitable contribution towards the play sector in acknowledgment that play provision is a preventative service.

For more information about any of the issues contained within this Play Strategy please contact the Play Unit 01352 702456

## **Appendix A**

### **2010 – Fixed Play Area Survey**

#### **Sample Surveys**

- **Albert Avenue Play Area, Flint**
- **Fron Park Play Area, Holywell**
- **The Bonc Play Aread, Mynydd Isa**



## Albert Avenue - Play Area

### Flint

Grid Reference: **SJ 25272 72321**

Easting: **325272**

Northing: **372321**

Address: **Albert Avenue, Flint**  
 Owner: **Flintshire County Council**  
 Maintained By: **Flintshire County Council**  
 Local Council: **Flint Town Council**  
 Local Council Clerk: **Mr G N I Jones**  
 Ward: **Flint Oakenholt Ward**  
 Councillor: **Cllr. Rita Johnson**  
 Survey Date: **Monday 19 July 2010**

<b>Review Future</b>	Û
<b>Maintain &amp; Improve</b>	Ū
<b>High Standard</b>	Ū

<b>Strategic Importance: High</b>
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Undertaken By:

Andy Wilson-Chalon & Colin Bevan

## Survey Results:

### Brief History:

Last upgraded in 1990, has since had some minor improvements.

### Summary:

Albert Avenue Play Area is located within the urban area of Flint. It is an important play area which for the purposes of this Survey is considered to have more than local importance serving a wider densely developed "Neighbourhood" area. Within the context of Flint's Play Areas Albert Avenue is the second most important play facility in Flint, the foremost play location in Flint being Cornist Park (Ref.034) which is a "Destination" facility.

Albert Avenue "Neighbourhood" Play Area is a very well used play area serving a child and youth population that make up some 29% of this neighbourhood play areas catchment area. Given the urban character of the locality it is not surprising to note that this play area has scored poorly because of high usage resulting in what has become a tired play area which requires a high degree of maintenance works especially as equipment increases in age.

The play area has been assessed and found that it is sufficiently equipped to cater for the full range of play ages (under 8s-under 20s) however there are shortcomings in this play facility given the absence of facilities to cater for ball games, wheeled play, and shelter for casual youth gatherings. The play area also scores poorly given that it is not user friendly for children and carers with sight or mobility difficulties.

The assessment of this play area has demonstrated that whilst the play area is well placed to facilitate and deliver the play needs of the local community the lack of investment within the play area means that the play area is failing to meet the needs and expectations of the community. It is to be expected then that this play area should score so poorly through this play survey.

### Recommendation:

As a strategically important facility with ample space for development the provision of ball games, wheel play opportunities and a casual youth gathering place along with measures to improve the condition of existing play items is recommended.

## Albert Avenue - Play Area



### Site Analysis:

<b>Strategic Importance:</b>  4 - High	5 - Very Low	Review Future	Ü
		Maintain & Improve	Û
		High Standard	Û

Category	
Urban - Neighbourhood	
Site includes provision for:	
Young Children (Under 8):	Ü
Older Children (8 to 14):	Ü
Youths (15 to 19):	Ü
Ball Games:	û
Wheeled Play:	û
Youth Meeting Shelter:	û

Play & Amenity Value	%	Rating
See "Methodology" PDF for more details		
ALL	26% to 50%	4 - Low
Features	51% to 70%	3 - Medium
Under 8	71% to 85%	2 - High
8 to 14	26% to 50%	4 - Low
15 to 19	Less than 26%	5 - Very Low
DDA Access Level	%	Rating
26% to 50%		4 - Low

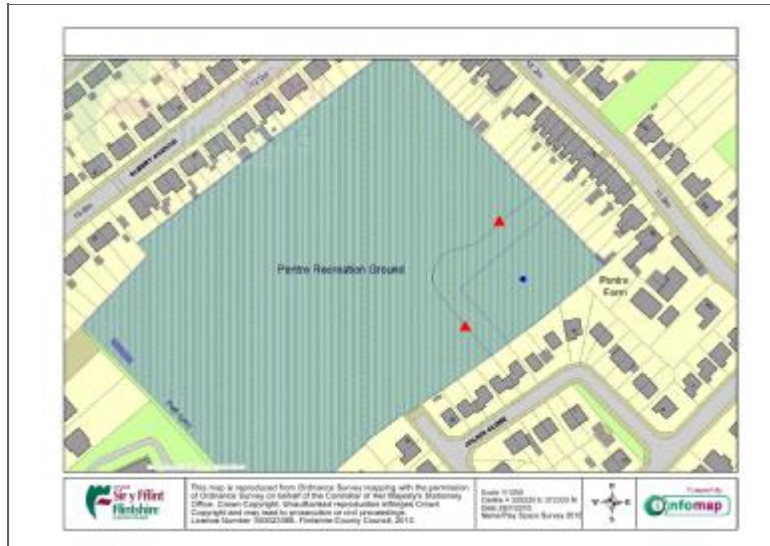
Site Factors	Rating
See "Methodology" PDF for more details	
Site factors OVERALL:	4 - Low
Strategic Importance:	4 - High
Condition:	4 - Low
Maintenance:	4 - High
Usage:	2 - High

Deprivation Factor & Rank	Children & Youth POPULATION			
	ALL (Under 19) %	Young Children (Under 8) %	Older Children (8 to 14) %	Youth (15 to 19) %
	3 - Medium	See "Methodology" PDF for more details		
389	29%	12%	11%	7%



## Albert Avenue - Play Area

1:1250 Scale Plan  
Showing Play Area Location



1:5000 Scale Map  
Showing Play Area in Context of  
Linked Sites & other  
Recreational Spaces



1:1250 Scale  
Aerial Photograph  
of Play Area location







ID:

056

## Fron Park - Play Area Holywell

Grid Reference: **SJ 18474 75692**

Easting: **318474**

Northing: **375692**

Address: **Fron Park, Holywell**  
Owner: **Flintshire County Council**  
Maintained By: **Flintshire County Council**  
Local Council: **Holywell Town Council**  
Local Council Clerk: **Mr D C Pierce**  
Ward: **Holywell Central Ward**  
Councillor: **Cllr. Peter Curtis**  
Survey Date: **Tuesday 13 July 2010**

**Review Future** Û  
**Maintain & Improve** Û  
**High Standard** Û

**Strategic Importance: Very High**

Undertaken By:

Andy Wilson-Chalon & Richard Roberts

### Survey Results:

#### Brief History:

Upgraded in 1994 and in 2009 as part of a capital allocation to improve town park play areas - £50,000 has been spent to upgrade the play area. .

#### Summary:

Fron Park Play Area is located within the urban area of Holywell. It is an important play area which for the purposes of this Survey is considered to have exceptional local importance within Holywell as a "Destination" Play Facility.

Fron Park "Destination" play facility is a very well used play area serving a child and youth population that make up some 20% of this destination play areas catchment area. This play area was the subject of significant investment and refurbishment in 2009 and as such scores positively for age, condition and low maintenance.

The play area has been assessed and found that it is sufficiently equipped to cater for the full variety of children's play ages however there are shortcomings in this play facility given the absence of wheeled play facilities and a shelter to facilitate casual youth gatherings. The play area scores positively with regards disability access and has been rated as having high degree of disability access for children and carers with sight or mobility difficulties.

The assessment of this play area has demonstrated that the play area is generally meeting the needs and expectations of the community but that improvements should be undertaken to improve the play offer of the facility to better accommodate youths.

#### Recommendation:

Whilst not an immediate priority the addition of 'very low key' wheel play opportunities and a shelter for casual youth gatherings along with the addition of access to toilets & refreshments required for a 'Destination' Play Area would be a significant advantage.

## Fron Park - Play Area



### Site Analysis:

<b>Strategic Importance:</b>  5 - Very High	4 - Low	Review Future	û
	4 - Low	Maintain & Improve	ü
	High Standard	High Standard	û

Category	
<b>Urban - Destination</b>	
Site includes provision for:	
<b>Young Children (Under 8):</b>	û
<b>Older Children (8 to 14):</b>	ü
<b>Youths (15 to 19):</b>	û
<b>Ball Games:</b>	û
<b>Wheeled Play:</b>	û
<b>Youth Meeting Shelter:</b>	û

Play & Amenity Value	%	Rating
See "Methodology" PDF for more details		
<b>ALL</b>	<b>51% to 70%</b>	<b>3 - Medium</b>
<b>Features</b>	<b>51% to 70%</b>	<b>3 - Medium</b>
<b>Under 8</b>	<b>71% to 85%</b>	<b>2 - High</b>
<b>8 to 14</b>	<b>51% to 70%</b>	<b>3 - Medium</b>
<b>15 to 19</b>	<b>26% to 50%</b>	<b>4 - Low</b>
DDA Access Level	%	Rating
<b>71% to 85%</b>		<b>2 - High</b>

Site Factors	Rating
See "Methodology" PDF for more details	
<b>Site factors OVERALL:</b>	<b>3 - Medium</b>
<b>Strategic Importance:</b>	<b>5 - Very High</b>
<b>Condition:</b>	<b>3 - Medium</b>
<b>Maintenance:</b>	<b>2 - Low</b>
<b>Usage:</b>	<b>2 - High</b>

Deprivation Factor & Rank	Children & Youth POPULATION			
	ALL (Under 19) %	Young Children (Under 8) %	Older Children (8 to 14) %	Youth (15 to 19) %
	5 - Very High	See "Methodology" PDF for more details		
145	20%	9%	6%	6%



## Fron Park - Play Area

1:1250 Scale Plan  
Showing Play Area Location



1:5000 Scale Map  
Showing Play Area in Context of  
Linked Sites & other  
Recreational Spaces



1:1250 Scale  
Aerial Photograph  
of Play Area location





ID:

173

## The Bonc - Play Area Mynydd Isa

Grid Reference: **SJ 25825 63765**

Easting: **325825**

Northing: **363765**

Address: **The Bonc, Mynydd Isa**  
Owner: **Flintshire County Council**  
Maintained By: **Flintshire County Council**  
Local Council: **Argoed Community Council**  
Local Council Clerk: **Mr. Rhodri Hampson-Jones**  
Ward: **Argoed Ward**  
Councillor: **Cllr. Hilary McGuill**  
Survey Date: **Thursday 22 July 2010**

<b>Review Future</b>	û
<b>Maintain &amp; Improve</b>	û
<b>High Standard</b>	û

<b>Strategic Importance:</b>	<b>Low</b>
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Undertaken By:

Andy Wilson-Chalon & Dilwyn Jones

### Survey Results:

#### Brief History:

Upgraded in 1990, and in the last 12 months, with the help of a very active local group it has undergone a major refurbishment, the play area has undergone a £100,000 upgrade and a new multi-use games area has been provided at a cost of £45,000, additionally an area for dog exercise has been created to keep dogs out of the play area.

#### Summary:

The Bonc Play Area is located on the southern edge of Mynydd Isa in a semi-urban area. It is an important play area which for the purposes of this Survey is considered to have more than local importance serving a wider "Neighbourhood" area. Within the context of Mynydd Isa The Bonc is the foremost "Neighbourhood" play facility however access to the play facility for most users is across the busy Mold Road which separates the main residential area of Mynydd Isa from The Bonc.

The Bonc is a "Neighbourhood" plan facility serving play needs within the Mynydd Isa area there is no alternative neighbourhood play facility within Mynydd Isa although the nearest local plan areas are Wats Dyke (Ref.187) and Bod Offa (Ref.007).

The Bonc Neighbourhood Play Area is a very well used play area serving a child and youth population that make up some 23% of this Neighbourhood play areas catchment area. The Bonc was the subject of significant investment in 2010 and it is not surprising to note that this play area is in excellent condition and requires only a low degree of maintenance works.

The play area has been assessed and found that it is sufficiently equipped to cater for the full variety of children's play ages however there are shortcomings in this play facility given the absence of facilities to cater for wheeled play, or provide for shelter for casual youth gatherings. Whilst there are some shortcomings in the play offer The Bonc does score very highly with regards accessibility for children and carers with sight or mobility difficulties.

The assessment of this play area has demonstrated that The Bonc is set to perform very well following the 2010 refurbishment of the facility and will facilitate and deliver the play needs of the local community. There are however outstanding issues including the lack of wheeled play provision and the challenges posed by the Mold Road for children safely accessing the play area which require further consideration and review.

#### Recommendation:

It is recommended that consideration be given to providing 'very low key' wheeled play provision and address the challenge posed by the Mold Road for children safely accessing the play area.

## The Bonc - Play Area



### Site Analysis:

<b>Strategic Importance:</b>  2 - Low	1 - Very High	Review Future	û
	High Standard	Maintain & Improve	û
			û

Category	
Semi Urban - Neighbourhood	
Site includes provision for:	
Young Children (Under 8):	û
Older Children (8 to 14):	û
Youths (15 to 19):	û
Ball Games:	û
Wheeled Play:	û
Youth Meeting Shelter:	û

Play & Amenity Value	%	Rating
See "Methodology" PDF for more details		
<b>ALL</b>	<b>71% to 85%</b>	<b>2 - High</b>
<b>Features</b>	<b>71% to 85%</b>	<b>2 - High</b>
<b>Under 8</b>	<b>Over 85%</b>	<b>1 - Very High</b>
<b>8 to 14</b>	<b>71% to 85%</b>	<b>2 - High</b>
<b>15 to 19</b>	<b>51% to 70%</b>	<b>3 - Medium</b>
DDA Access Level	%	Rating
	<b>71% to 85%</b>	<b>2 - High</b>

Site Factors	Rating
See "Methodology" PDF for more details	
<b>Site factors OVERALL:</b>	<b>2 - High</b>
<b>Strategic Importance:</b>	<b>2 - Low</b>
<b>Condition:</b>	<b>1 - Very High</b>
<b>Maintenance:</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
<b>Usage:</b>	<b>2 - High</b>

Deprivation Factor & Rank	Children & Youth POPULATION			
	ALL (Under 19) %	Young Children (Under 8) %	Older Children (8 to 14) %	Youth (15 to 19) %
	<b>1 - Very Low</b>	See "Methodology" PDF for more details		
<b>1431</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>6%</b>





# The Bonc - Play Area

1:1250 Scale Plan  
Showing Play Area Location



1:5000 Scale Map  
Showing Play Area in Context of  
Linked Sites & other  
Recreational Spaces



1:1250 Scale  
Aerial Photograph  
of Play Area location

