

# Flintshire County Council Play Sufficiency Assessment Executive Summary



2025 - 2028

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# An Executive Summary of the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) 2025 - 2028: The state of play in Flintshire

## 1. Local Authority Summary Statement

This phased approach is guided and monitored by the Play Sufficiency Monitoring Group (PSMG), a newly established cross-sector body chaired by the Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture, and Leisure. The PSMG includes representatives from Education, Children's Services, Community Services, Transport Planning, third sector, and Welsh Government regional partners, and is tasked with ensuring progress, accountability, and adaptability over the lifespan of the PSA.

The Play Sufficiency Action Plan, informed by the findings from the Big Play Survey and multi-agency consultation, sets out clear milestones across the three-year period. Year 1 includes the launch of multilingual and culturally inclusive play programmes. Year 2 prioritises the development of five 'Safe Routes to Play' schemes, while Year 3 focuses on embedding play provision requirements into all new planning and development policies across Flintshire.

Flintshire County Council is deeply committed to ensuring that all children in the county have access to safe, inclusive, and stimulating play opportunities. This commitment is reflected in the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA), which serves as a tool for evaluating current play provisions and identifying actions to ensure that these provisions meet the needs of all children. The PSA is a key element of the local authority's approach to fulfilling its obligations under the Welsh Government's guidance and ensuring that children in Flintshire can access high-quality play experiences that contribute to their development and well-being.

The PSA 2025–2028 sets out a phased three-year strategy, beginning in Year 1 (2025–26) with key actions including the launch of multilingual play programmes, the expansion of the Mostyn Integration Project, and the development of five safe pedestrian routes to play spaces. These early milestones ensure momentum from the outset while laying the foundation for long-term impact.

The main outcomes arising from the PSA 2025 highlight both the strengths and areas for improvement in Flintshire's provision of play opportunities. The assessment indicates that while significant strides have been made in providing accessible and inclusive play for all children, there are still challenges, particularly in rural areas, for children with disabilities or additional learning needs, and in securing consistent, long-term funding for play services. These areas will be a key focus of the Play Action Plan, which proposes measures to address the gaps in provision, expand access to play spaces, and ensure that all play provisions are inclusive, safe, and strategically aligned with other local policies.

The proposed actions to achieve sufficiency include the enhancement of existing play spaces, investment in targeted programmes for underrepresented groups (such as children from low-income families and ethnic minorities), and further integration of play into local development and planning strategies. Flintshire is also committed to improving collaboration with external partners and increasing community engagement to ensure that play is fully embedded in the lives of all children.

The local authority continues to promote mutual understanding, trust and respect as we build positive and effective relationships with home educators to safeguard the educational interests of children and young people.

## 2. Methodology

The Play Sufficiency Assessment for Flintshire County Council was undertaken through a comprehensive process that involved extensive consultation, data collection, and analysis. The assessment was based on a combination of quantitative data, including demographic information and the findings from the Big Play Survey, and qualitative data gathered from children, families, and local stakeholders.

The PSA was agreed by key internal departments within the local authority, including the Play Development Team, Children and Family Services, Education, and Transport, ensuring a whole-systems approach to the evaluation of play provision. Furthermore, Flintshire worked closely with external partners such as community organisations, schools, housing associations, and youth services to gather insights into the needs of children and families, as well as to identify current strengths and areas of development in the local play environment.

The local authority also engaged in collaboration with Welsh Government initiatives and regional partnerships, particularly in relation to funding opportunities, strategic frameworks, and the promotion of a child-friendly approach to urban planning and development.

## 3. How engagement with children and families has informed the Play Sufficiency Assessment

The views of children and families have been vital in shaping Flintshire's Play Sufficiency Assessment. Feedback regarding the availability, quality, and accessibility of play opportunities has highlighted areas for improvement.

Concerns about safety have been incorporated into the action plan, focusing on traffic-calming measures, pedestrian safety, and ensuring that future play areas are designed with safety as a priority. This includes improving road safety in areas where children feel unsafe and ensuring that new play spaces are accessible and safe to reach.



The need for more local play spaces, especially in underserved and rural areas, has driven plans to create additional play spaces. These will cater to various age groups and be multi-functional, ensuring all children can access quality play environments.

Feedback on inclusive play spaces has led to a strong focus on making more play areas fully accessible. The action plan includes retrofitting new and redevelopments of existing spaces for children with disabilities, creating new inclusive play hubs, and collaborating with disability groups and ALN specialists to meet diverse needs.

### How This Information Has Informed the Play Action Plan

The data from children and families directly influenced the Play Action Plan, which includes the following measures:

1. **Increasing Play Spaces:** Creating more accessible play areas, particularly in rural and underserved areas, including spaces for children with disabilities.
2. **Improving Safety:** Introducing safety measures such as pedestrian crossings, speed bumps, and safer routes to play spaces.
3. **Enhancing Inclusivity:** Developing inclusive play areas with sensory-friendly features, wheelchair-accessible equipment, and bilingual signage for Welsh-speaking children.
4. **Building Community Connections:** Continuing collaboration with community groups, schools, and external partners to ensure play spaces reflect cultural and social needs.
5. **Expanding Cultural Diversity and Social Integration:** Promoting cultural diversity through new play provisions that encourage social inclusion and integration for children from all backgrounds.



## 4. Maximising resources

Flintshire County Council has made significant progress in maximising available resources to support children's opportunities to play. Through effective budget allocation and collaboration with local partners, the Council has created a sustainable approach to play provision. This includes integrating play initiatives with other services, such as Education, Children's Services, and Community Services, to maximise resources and avoid duplication.

The Play Development Team has successfully secured additional funding through local grants and external sources, such as Town and Community Council funding, to support programmes like the Summer Playscheme, which operates in over 45 locations. There has been a notable increase in investment in rural areas, with mobile play services introduced to bring play to underserved communities, ensuring equitable access across Flintshire.

Since the last Play Sufficiency Assessment, Flintshire Play Development has expanded its play provision beyond the traditional summer months, transitioning to an all-year-round delivery model. This shift ensures that play remains a priority not only during school holidays but also throughout the school term. Additionally, resources have been redirected to rural areas, ensuring that children in these communities have consistent access to play services year-round.

Flintshire has also effectively utilised several Welsh Government programmes to further enhance its play provision:

1. **The Active Travel Act** has improved safe routes to play spaces, particularly for children in areas with limited transport options.
2. **Safe Routes in Communities (SRIC)** funding has been used to create safer walking and cycling routes to play areas, enhancing accessibility and safety.
3. **Children and Communities Grant** has supported inclusive play projects, ensuring access for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with additional learning needs.
4. **Flying Start** funding has been integrated into early-years play provision, promoting social and emotional development for children under five.
5. The **Welsh Government's Bilingualism Strategy** has expanded Welsh-language play services, ensuring accessibility for Welsh-speaking children.

By leveraging these programmes, Flintshire ensures that resources are efficiently allocated and aligned with national policies. The Council's strategic approach continues to enhance play opportunities, with a focus on sustainability, collaboration, and equitable access for all children.

## 5. Monitoring

Effective monitoring is key to successfully implementing the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) and its Action Plan. While Flintshire County Council has made progress in integrating play into broader strategies, the monitoring process is still being formalised. This section outlines strategic responsibility for play, the PSA's links to regional and local frameworks, and the current state of monitoring.

### **Who Takes Lead Strategic Responsibility for Play in Flintshire**

Strategic responsibility for play lies with the Lead Officer for Play Development and the Play Development Team, who oversee the delivery of play services across Flintshire. The team works collaboratively with Children and Family Services, Education, Housing, and Transport to coordinate play opportunities. However, the monitoring structure could be further enhanced with more formal oversight to ensure consistent delivery and evaluation of play services.

### **How the PSA Links to the Public Service Boards, Regional Partnership Boards, and Local Development Plan**

The Play Sufficiency Assessment aligns with the Flintshire Public Service Board (PSB), contributing to initiatives focused on children's well-being, mental health, and community safety. Strengthening the PSA's integration into the PSB's action plans will further support these objectives.

The North Wales Regional Partnership Board (RPB) also uses the PSA to align play services with regional child and family strategies. Furthermore, the PSA's inclusion in the Local Development Plan (LDP) will ensure that future developments include play provisions, such as parks and safe routes, enhancing access to play for all children.

### **How the Play Action Plan is Monitored**

Flintshire is enhancing the monitoring of the Play Action Plan. Currently, monitoring is carried out through departmental collaboration but would benefit from a more formal, coordinated approach. The Play Sufficiency Monitoring Group (PSMG) will be established to oversee progress and ensure the action plan remains on track.

#### **Proposed Membership and Structure of the Play Sufficiency Monitoring Group (PSMG)**

The PSMG will bring together key stakeholders to monitor and evaluate the Play Action Plan's progress. Members will include:

- Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture, and Leisure (Chair)
- Lead Officer for Play Development
- Representatives from Child and Family Services, Education, Community Services, Parks, Transport Planning, and external community organisations
- Parents' and children's representatives to ensure community input
- Welsh Government or relevant regional partners

### **How the Play Action Plan is Monitored**

The Lead Officer will facilitate the group, ensuring efficient meetings and regular progress reviews. The group will operate under clear terms of reference with defined responsibilities, deliverables, and timelines.

### **Strengths and Opportunities of the Group**

The group will leverage diverse perspectives from internal and external stakeholders, ensuring that all children's needs are represented. Its multi-sector approach will enhance the effectiveness of the Play Sufficiency Action Plan and ensure play is prioritised across the Council's work, from urban planning to community development.

### **Opportunities for Continued Growth**

The group will evolve based on the needs of the community and the progress of the action plan. Ensuring consistent engagement and commitment from all members will be key to its success.

Flintshire County Council is committed to improving play provision for all children. Establishing a formalised monitoring structure through the PSMG will build on existing progress and ensure sustained success. This, along with stronger links to regional and local planning frameworks, will increase accountability and reinforce play as a strategic priority.

## **6. Conclusion**

The Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) has provided Flintshire County Council with a valuable overview of the current state of play provision, highlighting areas where progress has been made and identifying opportunities for improvement. The insights gained from this process have shaped a Play Action Plan that aligns with the Council's ongoing commitment to providing high-quality, inclusive, and accessible play opportunities for all children.

Key outcomes from the assessment include a greater emphasis on inclusive play spaces, community engagement, and ensuring access to safe, local play areas. These successes, along with the ongoing work to address gaps in provision, demonstrate Flintshire's dedication to enhancing children's well-being and ensuring that play is prioritised in local policies.

Looking ahead, the Play Sufficiency Monitoring Group will be instrumental in ensuring that the Play Action Plan is effectively implemented, and that progress is continuously evaluated. With a clear focus on expanding and improving play spaces, engaging with communities, and securing sustainable funding, Flintshire is well-positioned to build on the work already undertaken and continue to make meaningful improvements in play provision.

The next steps will focus on strengthening collaboration, increasing access to play, and ensuring that play remains a central part of the council's strategic priorities. As Flintshire works towards these goals, the collective efforts of local departments, partners, and communities will be crucial in creating a sustainable and vibrant play environment for all children.



## 7. Theme analysis

### Population:

**Matter A: The number of children in respect of each age range within its area**

**Matter B: The needs of children from different cultures and backgrounds within its area**

**Matter E: Whether there is a charge for play provision and where there is a charge**

### What children have told us:

Children have expressed a need for more accessible play spaces, especially for younger children in rural areas and older children seeking independent play opportunities. They also highlighted the importance of inclusive play areas that reflect cultural diversity and support all backgrounds.

### Strengths

- Flintshire offers a variety of play services across different age groups, including tailored opportunities for younger children in schools and holiday schemes.
- A notable percentage of children between the ages of 5-12 have access to local community-based play schemes, which have seen increased engagement and participation.

### Weaknesses

- Younger children in rural areas have fewer accessible play spaces within walking distance.
- Older children (12-16) have reported limited play opportunities, particularly those seeking more independent or non-structured play, such as teen-specific hangout areas or sports facilities.

### Opportunities

- Targeted investments in youth-specific play spaces for older children, such as outdoor sports areas, can address the needs of this age group.
- Increase of mobile playschemes for rural areas could reach younger children who are currently underserved.

### Threats

- The risk of growing populations in certain areas may put pressure on existing play spaces and infrastructure, limiting the availability of safe, accessible areas for children.
- Changing demographics may make it difficult to meet the diverse play needs of a wider age range without more flexible and adaptable play spaces.

**Places where children play:**

**Matter C:** The space where children can play, including open space, and any other space

**Matter F:** Traffic measures that are used to promote access to play

**Matter I:** The extent to which education and local development planning policies take into account the need to enhance play opportunities for children

**What children have told us:**

Children have told us that they enjoy a variety of play spaces, but many want more accessible outdoor areas in their neighbourhoods, particularly places to play independently, such as safe parks or open spaces near their homes.

**Strengths**

- Flintshire has a good network of public parks and open spaces that children can access freely.
- Play areas are often well-equipped with interactive play structures and multi-functional spaces for different age groups

**Weaknesses**

- Some areas, especially in rural communities, lack dedicated play spaces or have play areas that are difficult to access due to poor transport links.
- Many play spaces are perceived as underutilised because they don't have features that engage older children or those with disabilities.

**Opportunities**

- The creation of multi-use play areas that cater to various age groups and include nature-based play could provide new spaces for children to enjoy.
- Increased investment in outdoor play zones could support environmental learning and connect children more with nature.

**Threats**

- Limited space for development in urban areas could reduce the opportunity to create new play spaces in areas with growing populations.
- Urban sprawl may lead to play areas being replaced or encroached upon by new developments, leaving fewer spaces for children.

## Supervised provision:

**Matter D: Supervised play provision**

**Matter G: Playwork training and workforce development**

### What children have told us:

Children have expressed a desire for more unstructured play opportunities outside of school, particularly during school holidays, where they can engage in supervised activities that are both fun and child-led. Some children also mentioned that they would like more variety in the supervised play sessions offered, such as activities that are not just sports-focused but include arts, crafts, and nature-based play.

### Strengths

- Flintshire offers a wide range of supervised play programmes for children, particularly through initiatives like the Summer Playscheme and evening and other holiday provisions.
- These programmes are generally well-received, with unstructured sessions that allow children to learn new skills and engage in safe, fun play under adult supervision.

### Weaknesses

- Some children report that availability of supervised play is limited in certain rural areas, leading to fewer opportunities for those children to participate in activities.
- There is also feedback that the range of activities in supervised programmes can be narrow, and children sometimes feel that the activities do not fully cater to their interests, especially for older children.

### Opportunities

- Expanding the variety of supervised play activities offered, particularly for older children, could ensure that a broader range of interests is addressed.
- Increasing outreach efforts in rural communities could make these programmes more accessible to children who live in less urbanised areas.

### Threats

- Without continued investment in supervised play programmes, there is a risk that demand may outstrip supply, particularly during school holidays, leading to overcrowded sessions or programmes that cannot accommodate all interested children.
- Budget constraints or staff shortages could also limit the ability to expand or maintain supervised programs at the current level.

**Policy synergy, engagement, advocacy and information:**

**Matter F:** Measures used to promote access to play, including the provision of information, publicity and events

**Matter G:** Training opportunities for the play workforce

**Matter H:** The level of community engagement and participation

**Matter I:** The extent to which other policies of a local authority take into account the need to enhance play opportunities for children

**What children have told us:**

Children have highlighted that they want more information on where and how they can access opportunities to play. Many children feel that publicity efforts, such as flyers and online platforms, are not always clear or easy to access, especially when it comes to new or seasonal programmes.

**Strengths**

- Flintshire has made great strides in promoting access to play through the Flintshire Play Development Facebook and Instagram page and the redeveloped Flintshire Play Development website, which have helped raise awareness of available play opportunities.
- Successful events like community play days and festivals have been well-received by children, giving them a chance to engage with local play providers and enjoy free activities.

**Weaknesses**

- Some children feel that there is a lack of centralised information on local play spaces, with not all events or opportunities being effectively publicised, particularly in rural areas.
- Digital access to play information can be a barrier for some children, especially in households where internet access is limited.

**Opportunities**

- Increasing the use of mobile apps or interactive websites that provide real-time information about available play spaces, events, and activities could improve access to play information for children.
- Community outreach efforts in schools, community centres, and libraries can help ensure that all families, especially those in rural or low-income areas, are aware of the available opportunities.

**Threats**

- Over-reliance on digital platforms may leave out children and families without easy access to technology or the internet, exacerbating inequality in access to information.
- A potential lack of funding for promotional campaigns could limit the ability to reach a wider audience and raise awareness of local play opportunities.