

Monmouthshire Play Action Plan and Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) June 2025 Summery Report

“**Wales: A Play Friendly Country**” is statutory guidance to local authorities on assessing and securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas. It gives detail to the duty under Section 11 of the Play Opportunities, Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

In summary, the statutory requirements are that a local authority must

- assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area; and
- secure sufficient play opportunities in its area for children, so far as reasonably practicable, having regard to its assessment.

The duty on local authorities is to undertake a full review of the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) every three years and update the Play Action Plan on an annual basis. The new PSA has to be submitted to Welsh Government by 30 June 2025, having either been approved by cabinet or in a final version timetabled to be so approved.

The guidance provides the following internationally recognised definition of play:

“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”.

Play is defined for the purposes of the measure as including (but not limited to) “*any recreational activity*”. This recognises that children enjoy and benefit from taking part in a wide range of activities that are, in the main, organised by adults for children. These can include junior and youth clubs; leisure centre and sporting activities; cultural and arts activities; indoor play centres and events organised for children and their families. These recreational activities may offer a combination of adult led organised activities, and opportunities for freely chosen and child led play.

Welsh Government sees the range of play opportunities for children covered under the measure as being:

- Freely chosen play – with or without adult supervision/facilitation.
- Structured recreational activities – in the main led by adults, with predefined rules.

These opportunities can be available in a range of spaces and settings and any setting may afford both opportunities for freely chosen play and structured recreational activities.

Play Sufficiency Assessment

The matters to be taken into account in the PSA, each of which is assessed against fixed criteria set out in the guidance (in total 100 criteria), are broad in their scope impacting widely across the authority's activities:

Matter A:	Population
Matter B:	Providing for diverse needs
Matter C:	Space Available for Children to Play (open spaces; outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces)
Matter D:	Supervised provision (play work provision; structured recreational activities)
Matter E:	Charges for play provision
Matter F:	Access to space/provision & Information; publicity and events
Matter G:	Securing & Developing the Play Workforce
Matter H:	Community engagement and participation
Matter I:	Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas (education/schools; town & country planning; traffic & transport; early years plans; family policy & initiatives; inter-generational policy and initiatives; health and safety)

For the 2025 PSA these matters have been split into four themes

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

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

Supervised provision:

Matter D: Supervised play provision

Matter G: Playwork training and workforce development

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

Policy Statement

All children have the right to play as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Article 31 of the Convention says:

Every child has the right 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.

The United Nations sees children's play as highly important and therefore adopted General Comment no. 17 on Article 31 of the

UNCRC.

A General Comment is an official statement that elaborates on the meaning of an aspect of the UNCRC that needs further interpretation or emphasis. The aim of this General Comment, produced by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, is to clarify the importance of Article 31.

General Comment no. 17 defines play: 'as a behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled and structured by children. Play takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise.' The objectives of General Comment no. 17 are to:

- Increase understanding of Article 31's importance, both for children's wellbeing and development, and for helping other rights in the Convention to be achieved.
- Clarify the provisions and obligations that are associated with Article 31.
- Provide guidance on the legislative, judicial, administrative, social and educational measures needed for Article 31 to be implemented for all children without discrimination.

The Council recognises the importance of play in children's lives, for both its recreational value and for the important part that it plays in children's physical and emotional health and well-being and in their personal development. Play provides a platform for children to learn, to have fun and to develop friendships with other children in a variety of settings from the school playground to formal open spaces and the wider physical environment. Play is a common denominator that should be capable of being enjoyed by all children irrespective of their social or cultural background or the ability of their parents to pay for the opportunity to participate.

Accessible play opportunities contribute to children's lives and to the well-being of their families and communities, thereby contributing to the well-being objective to provide children and young people with the best possible start in life and helps deliver the social justice strategy to address inequalities in our county by contributing to developing child friendly communities.

Our Approach

With the implementation of a Play Development Lead, priority over the past three years has been to continue to develop a strategic

approach with a focus on partnership working. With play being a whole local authority's responsibility, it has been fundamental that there is a lead person to bring together all stakeholders within the council to monitor and collaborate to ensure ongoing progress.

The Play strategy group has been reestablished, and members all have work connected to one or more of the matters of the PSA. Outside of the strategy group links have also been established with further stakeholders including leisure, youth and community teams and a consistent program of delivery is available.

To support in the development of the 2025 PSA all stakeholders were responsible for reporting on the matters that related to their work and to develop actions accordingly. Overall, the intent is that the Play Action Plan should continue to priorities freely chosen play rather than attempt to duplicate wider leisure and recreational planning processes.

Summary of theme evaluation.

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

A variety of data assessment tools are used to support in the planning of play assessments and provisions. These include the 2021 census and Data Cymru Dashboard, this allows us to view each ward in Monmouthshire by a number of themes such as people, transport, housing, and skills & employment. The Council has created a Wellbeing assessment. The assessment has been produced following a range of engagement and draws on a wide range of data, reports, and academic studies to develop an evidence base to help us understand well-being in our county. Updated PLASC data shows us the levels of eligible free school meals to allow us knowledge of low income and areas of deprivation.

Monmouthshire is geographically large compared to many local authority areas in Wales. It is semi-rural in nature and is often perceived as leafy and affluent. The county covers an area of approximately 880 square kilometres, with an estimated population of 95,164. There is a higher-than-average proportion of older people in the county which is forecast to rise further. In contrast, the number of under 18s is forecast to decline by 2033.

As a predominantly rural county, with 53% of the total population living in wards defined as being in urban areas the rurality of our county needs to be considered when planning for play. Historically we have funded transport to allow those in rural areas to be transported into the main towns to access supervised play provision; however, the uptake of this was limited and could not be sustained. We provided outreach stay and play sessions in these rural areas but again this was not well attended. During consultation periods for the current Play Sufficiency, focus groups were held with children within rural schools. It was voiced by the children that due to the environment of their locality it allows for quality play and meets their needs. Approximately 70% of children in rural schools stated they play and hang out with their friends most days. The percentage of children across Monmouthshire as whole that said they play and hang out most days was 42%. Trellech primary school, a rural school has opened the school grounds for play after school once a week for children to stay behind with those collecting to continue playing. This has been positively received, and it is highlighted in the action plan that MonLife Play will continue to work with and encourage further schools in rural areas to offer this as an option for families.

Given Monmouthshire's location in the South-East corner of Wales, as well as its shared border with England, there is a general perception that Welsh language use is low. However, the 2021 Census showed that Monmouthshire was one of only two local authorities in Wales to see a rise in Welsh language speakers over the previous decade, from 9.7% to 9.9%. A likely factor in this rise is the growth of the two Welsh-medium primary schools, based at either end of the county: Ysgol Gymraeg y Fenni in Abergavenny, and Ysgol Y Ffin in Caldicot. This is recognised and the authority continues to develop its Welsh Language offer. At recent recruitment for summer holiday play assistants, it was stated as desirable for candidates to be Welsh speaking. Of the 208 applicants who applied 50% stated they were either fluent in Welsh or were Welsh learners. This will allow for all holiday provisions to have a high level of Welsh speaking staff and allows us to confidently say that we provide bilingual provision throughout the authority.

As a local authority we pride ourselves on our cross departmental collaboration. MonLife Play team, Children's Disabilities team and schools with SEN units work closely to ensure children can access appropriate provisions. The sport and community team provides services for the re-engage team where they work with children and education services to provide provision and support to children who struggle to access school. It is felt that this collaboration allows for good knowledge and opportunity to continually assess the play needs and act accordingly. During the consultation process for the PSA, Action for Children, the Children's

disabilities teams and SEN schools all worked to consult with their children using the consultation surveys. Although there were responses from these children, they were very limited, and it can't be said that we reached an appropriate amount of these children to say we heard their voice. It is felt that we need to develop a different approach to consultation in the future to ensure consistency with this demographic. This will be an action from the PSA.

Since the last PSA the councils play provisions has developed in quantity and consistency. Using a mixture of funding pots to ensure there is a mix of supervised provision, family provision and inclusive provision. This continues to grow and is an action of this PSA to continue to grow this program. All of these are free at the point of access.

Places where children play:

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

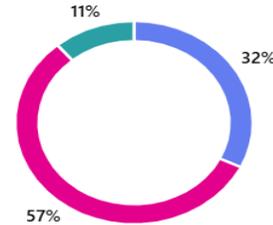
Matter F: Traffic measures that are used to promote access to play

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

Consultation has taken place across the local authority to gauge how children feel about their access and spaces to play. Across an online questionnaire, attendance at all schools during playmaker sessions, young ambassador's events and focus groups in schools we were able to gain 332 responses from children aged 5-11. When asked about their favourite things to play and if they can play these things in their neighbourhood 40% said they could do most of their favourite things, 48% said they could do some of their favourite things while only 12% said they could do none of their favourite things. When children were asked, what grown-ups can do to help them play out more there were two suggestions that came out the most- Find safer ways to cross the roads to go out/get around" and "help my parents understand that it's okay to play and hang out" Children were asked about their neighbourhood:

In your neighbourhood, which of these is true?

● There are lots of my favourite places to play or hang out	107
● There are some of my favourite places to play or hang out	188
● There are hardly any of my favourite places to play or hang out	37



Children were consulted on the quality of their play opportunities at lunch and breaktimes in school. 49% of the children asked said they could play most of the things they like in school break times with only 5% stating they couldn't play any of the things they like. All schools within the authority have developed their outdoor space to encourage play, with all schools having access to large fields and play yards. 50% of schools responded to provide detail for the PSA and it was evident that most of the schools have opportunity for climbing, physical play, natural play, quiet areas and a variety of equipment for children to access. Schools are very understanding of the importance of freely chosen play and provide for this as much as possible. In consultation with children the majority said they would like to see more equipment; particularly open-ended items and it came up repeatedly that football was either an issue in as much it stops others from accessing space or that schools are limiting football to avoid negative behaviours. Some schools have found ways to balance this need, so all children feel their play needs are being met.

All schools provide opportunities for extracurricular activities in a range of interests with 12 schools providing their premises for after school childcare operating with the ethos of the Playwork Principles. Two schools have implemented stay and play after school allowing use of the school grounds for play after school hours.

Audits for play value and potential to increase play use have been completed across all parks in the council's ownership. 6 out of 11 parks have been reassessed in 2024 and all have increased in value to be rated as good. These have been improved because of information gained through previous assessments. Castle Park (Castroggi) playground in Caldicot is near completion and once this is complete there will be a destination play area with a play value ranked as "good" in each of the five main towns.

Supervised provision:

Matter D: Supervised play provision

Matter G: Playwork training and workforce development

The council operates a range of inclusive play provisions which offer rich play environments for the children following the Playwork Principles. These include supervised provision for 1 hour and 55 min which provides the option to use the leisure centre pool to play freely and a packed lunch. Since the last PSA the amount of provision that is available has increased and has become a regular timetabled feature in all holidays providing consistency to residents. There is evidenced feedback from children & families with high satisfaction ratings. We continue to monitor, expand and adapt where needed. Children's voices in these provisions determine how we develop the quality of these provisions. The average uptake percentage across all provisions is 67%. This meets the national average.

The appointment of a Play Development Lead since the last PSA has allowed for even more contact with other partners providing Playwork. Work has been completed to provide knowledge of Playwork to partners in a variety of departments whose work has a direct effect on children's play. Sport Development team collaborate alongside the play team to promoting Playwork. Ensuring it is incorporated into the outcomes delivered for Sport Wales and Monmouthshire County Council. This has been recognised as sector leading by Welsh Government and other partners.

The open access schemes that we operate are not required to be registered with the CIW, but they do meet the regulatory requirements and the national minimum standards. The Play Development lead is highly experienced in CIW processes and regulations and ensures that policies, safeguarding and registration procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure they meet the national minimum standards. The biggest identified shortfall is the NMS criteria on qualified staff within Playwork. This is recognised as a national difficulty, and we are trying to meet this need as far as reasonably practicable (Please see below)

The Play Development lead has been developing the provisions provided by the local authority since taking up the role in 2023. They have been working to develop the consistency of the provisions by developing a regular workforce at each provision where focused training is provided. Using observations and feedback from children they have purchased resources and changed planning processes to improve quality. In 2024 a Play Quality Audit - (First Claims) was used as a baseline assessment to all. This audit will be completed again in 2025 by the site leads who will take ownership of the development plan with support from the Play Development lead.

Continued professional development has increased with the implementation of the Play Development Lead (PDL). There is a suite of training now available that can be delivered by the PDL. The PDL has recently become qualified to deliver the L2 APP. Agored Cymru Level 2 Award in Playwork Practice – this course provides a broad introduction to Playwork. It is the entry requirement for the P3 route and must be completed successfully before progressing to the other qualifications in the series. As a standalone qualification, it is also suitable for those working in holiday playschemes. It includes information about the importance of play, inclusion, Playwork theory and creating spaces for playing. An action of the 2025 PSA is to provide this training to 40% of leisure assistants who work in leisure centers to support them in ensuring centers can be developed into a playful space (10% in each of the four leisure centers). This will also support The Monmouthshire Games program. With consideration to the review on the exceptions order this will prepare the TMG program for the possibility that there could be a need to register with CIW as part of an appropriate standard.

There have been initial meetings with the LA training, learning and development team to implement play on Thingi- the LA's learning system. This will allow play to be an option for all employees but a mandatory training badge for all those employed to work with children in a recreational capacity. This will be an action of the PSA.

The Play Development Lead is responsible for the completion of the PSA. Their role sits with the Sports Development team. This is unique across Wales and has been recognised as sector leading. All sports development officers are trained in Playwork and use this knowledge as part of their work in developing the sports agenda across the authority. Play now plays an integral part of the leadership program, young ambassadors, and playmakers program. With the implementation of Sport Wales Foundation Framework, play sits appropriately into this. Our sports Development team continuously endorses play in the implementation of the Foundation Framework.

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

MonLife Play team has been working with MonLife Marketing team to develop a more robust area of the MonLife website. This includes information on what is available for play provision and spaces for play within Monmouthshire. The area also contains information on the importance of play, linking to a variety of information portals that can provide families with advice and guidance on

play. It also contains all reporting and updated and historical PSA documents. Social media teams for MonLife also promote available provisions and as part of their “soft content” engagement, promote play importance, rights and guidance. From consultation with parents for the 2025 PSA it was identified that 52% of parents use MonLife/MCC social media and website to access information on opportunities and guidance on play. It is an action of the 2025 PSA to continue to promote play through our social media and online platforms. Cross partnership working continues to ensure that the councils Family Information Service is utilised to promote opportunities for play within the local authority.

2024 National Play Day was celebrated by offering a full day of play opportunities within the Caldicot area. All opportunities were free at the point of access and the importance of play was promoted throughout the day. The event saw a variety of activity including fire building, climbing wall, sumo wrestling, den building, messy play and sport. Departments across the local authority provided activities at no cost including, youth service, heritage and attractions, leisure services, Monmouthshire housing association and communities and wellbeing. The event was promoted as being accessible for the whole local authority. There were approximately 400 people who attended the event. It has been approved that this will happen again in 2025 with the option to hold two events one in the North and one in the South. As well as the in-person event, play was regularly promoted on social media using posts to provide ideas on low-cost play.

The communities and Wellbeing team are being relocated into MonLife as of March 2025. This team links to the communities of Monmouthshire supporting with a variety of services. These include, community focused schools, tackling poverty and promotion of community support. Historically this team has produced a way of delivering street play which supported the closure of roads within housing estates to allow children to play in the streets. With changes to management and structure, work on this has been halted, however, the structure is still robust to continue. The Play Development Lead (PDL) already has strong links with this team and the repositioning will allow for this to develop further.

Community focus school lead has worked with the PDL and Play Wales to support two schools to open their grounds for the use of play after school. This has proved successful with strong case studies. An action of the PSA is to further develop this work with more schools with particular focus on schools in rural areas.

Way forward

The intent is that these action areas remain the focus for action over the next 3-year period of the Play Sufficiency Assessment (2025 - 2028), which the Play Strategy Group will address.

The 2025 budget round identified the continuation of the **Play Development Lead** post to contribute to the strategic direction and delivery of play right across Monmouthshire and to monitor the action plan.

This post based in MonLife’s Youth, Community and Sport and Community Teams, will coordinate the statutory play duties and co-ordinate, and support the Play Strategy Group.

As required by guidance the proposed actions for 2025/2026 are highlighted against the statutory matters below.

Play Sufficiency (2025) Play Action Plan

Actions to be taken to address the issues / shortcomings recorded in the Play Sufficiency Assessment to secure sufficient opportunities to play.

Proposed actions for the period of (1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026)

Theme / Matters	Action to achieve sufficient play opportunities	Priorities	Milestones	Resources needed	Funding source	Lead Person
Population [Matters A, B, E]. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The play needs of Welsh language speaking children are understood and provided for 	Continue to ensure there are sufficient Welsh speaking staff at all play	Keep an up-to-date record of Welsh speaking staff	As part of annual quality audits. These take place in	MCC translation services PDL time.	PHP funding Food and Fun WGLA	Becky Hall PDL 2025

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The play needs and support needs of disabled children are understood and provided for 	<p>provisions to allow Welsh speaking children to communicate through the medium of Welsh. Ensure that all resources are bilingual. Monitor the implementation of incidental Welsh as far as reasonably practical.</p> <p>We will continue to work with stakeholders who support children with disabilities and additional needs.</p> <p>A more practical approach will be sort and implemented to ensure that the needs of disabled children can be consulted in a more meaningful way. MonLife Play team will</p>	<p>Continue to assess and monitor the need for exclusive Welsh speaking provision with consideration to sustainability.</p> <p>This will be a priority agenda item of the Play sufficiency group</p>	<p>February and October holiday periods and are actioned accordingly.</p> <p>Consultations will take place annually at the beginning of each financial year and again at the end of the financial year.</p>	<p>Sport development time</p>	<p>Core funding</p> <p>CCG funding</p> <p>Sport Wales Core funding (EDI)</p>	<p>Team Manager - Children with disabilities team, 2025</p> <p>Spots Development Officer with priority of foundations projects, 2025</p>
---	---	--	---	-------------------------------	--	--

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play projects and providers have access to a range of resources which support inclusion 	<p>work closely with commissioning services to achieve this.</p> <p>Further develop our kit library to include a range of play resources and have robust procedures in place to ensure inventory and replenishments.</p>	<p>This will be prioritised as a completion for the end of this cycle of the PSA</p>	<p>PDL and Sport and community manager will assess this termly</p>			
<p>Places where children play [Matters C, F and I]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools provide access to school grounds for playing out of school times. 	<p>Play development lead will continue to collaborate with schools to develop the use of school grounds for play utilising the Stay and Play offer piloted and supported by Play Wales, Community Focused Schools and the Play Development team.</p>	<p>This will be prioritised as a completion for the end of this cycle of the PSA</p>		<p>PDL Community Focused School Lead</p>		<p>Becky Hall PDL Community Focus School Lead</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated play areas and playgrounds are assessed for play value and potential to increase in play use 	<p>A full re assessment will be completed on all parks to assess for new scores and to re score those that have had improvement. Piggies Hill and Western Hill have been identified as priority for improvement this will include increasing the value of the skatepark in Piggies Hill to support older children's play. All parks identified as low play value will be included in infrastructures development plans for improvements and actions will be made based</p>	<p>This will be completed by March 2026</p>			<p>AWPOG funding S106 funding Town Council funding</p>	<p>Community Infrastructure Manager</p>
---	--	---	--	--	--	---

	on access to appropriate funding					
<p>Supervised provision [Matters D and G]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a comprehensive range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities available for playworkers in the area 	<p>PDL will continue to provide CPD to all staff providing play provision. A target of 40% of leisure assistance (10% at each site) will be trained in L2APP to ensure knowledge of Playwork and playful spaces at all LC's and to prepare for any changes that may come about as a result of the exception order review.</p> <p>Learning and development team to implement play on Thinqi- the LA's learning system. This will</p>	<p>This will be prioritised as a completion for the end of this cycle of the PSA</p> <p>This will be prioritised as a completion for the end of this cycle of the PSA</p>	<p>Annual assessment to monitor target</p>	<p>PDL time. Play Wales course cost</p> <p>PDL time. Request for support from sports development team. Thinq system</p>	<p>PHP funding</p> <p>Core funding (for PDL time and Learning and development team)</p>	<p>PDL Area and Town Managers.</p> <p>PDL Sport and Community Lead</p> <p>Learning and Development Team.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Local Authority offers Playwork provision which offers a rich play environment as described in the Statutory Guidance 	<p>allow play to be an option for all employees but a mandatory training badge for all those employed to work with children in a recreational capacity.</p> <p>Continue to provide a quality consistent program of delivery and enhance where the needs are identified.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Annual assessment against progress</p> <p>Annual reporting and consultation with children, town councils and stakeholders.</p>	<p>PDL Leisure manager Town councils Children and young people</p>	<p>Town and community council funding PHP Food and Fun (WGLA) Sport Wales</p>	<p>PDL Sport and Community Lead Head of Leisure Services</p> <p>Area and Town Managers</p> <p>Town and Community Councils</p>
<p>Policy, engagement, advocacy and information [Matters F, G, H, I]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play sufficiency and other training awareness sessions are available for professionals and decision makers whose work impacts on children's opportunities to play 	<p>The promotion of play sufficiency will continue to be a priority of the council and a standard agenda item on all sectors whose work impacts on children's opportunities to play. Play sufficiency</p>	<p>Play Strategy Group (PSG) will continue to meet quarterly.</p> <p>Task and Finish groups will be created to support actions arising from Play Strategy Group meeting.</p>	<p>Minutes of PSG meeting will be drawn quarterly.</p>	<p>PDL Sport and community Lead. PSG DMT</p>	<p>Core funding PHP</p>	<p>PDL Leisure manager</p>

	<p>group will continue to meet and prioritise play on all agendas that connect to matters of the PSA.</p> <p>Membership of the group will be constantly reviewed and extended upon as priorities develop</p>					
--	--	--	--	--	--	--

