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Consultation Document

**Guidance to Local Authorities on
assessing for and securing sufficient
play opportunities for children in
their areas.**

Date of issue: 02 Apr 2012

Responses by: 25 Jun 2012



Guidance to Local Authorities on assessing for and securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas.

Overview

This draft guidance has been prepared under Section 11 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010. It places a duty on Local Authorities to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in their area for children in accordance with the regulations.

The main aim of this consultation is to ensure that those affected by this guidance have opportunities to offer their views regarding its contents, and to suggest additions and amendments.

How to respond

Stakeholders can respond to this document by answering the Consultation questions at Appendix 1.

E-mail responses can be returned to:
PlayOpportunities@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Written responses can be returned to:
Lisa Griffiths
Childcare and Play Policy Branch
Heath, Social Services & Children
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
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CF10 3NQ

Consultation events for Local Authority Officers and Members, together with third sector organisations and other interested stakeholders will be held across Wales during the consultation period.

Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

The consultation documents can be accessed on the Welsh Government website at www.wales.gov.uk/consultations

Contact details

For further information:
PlayOpportunities@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Or write to:
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Data protection

How the views and information you give us will be used

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

Creating a Play Friendly Wales

Guidance to Local Authorities on assessing for and securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas.

This Guidance is designed to support Local Authorities in fulfilling their duties as set out in the Children & Families (Wales) Measure 2010, Section 11, on Play Opportunities. This duty is underpinned by Regulations that set out what matters are to be taken into account when assessing whether a Local Authority has sufficient play opportunities for children in its area.

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1. Introduction

The Welsh Government places great value on play and its importance in the lives of children in our society. We believe that children have a fundamental right to be able to play, and that play is central to their enjoyment of life and can contribute to their wellbeing. We also believe that play is essential for the growth in children's cognitive; physical; social and emotional development. There is much evidence to support this belief and an increasing understanding of play's contribution not only to children's lives, but also to the well-being of their families and the wider community¹.

Children's right to play is enshrined in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is also established as one of children's rights under Core Aim 4 - Play, Sport, Leisure and Culture, of the Welsh Government's 7 Core Aims for Children, set out in *Children & Young People: Rights to Action, 2004*².

The Welsh Government wishes to create an environment in Wales where children have excellent opportunities to play and enjoy their leisure time. Our Play Policy³ states that:

“Play is so critically important to all children in the development of their physical, social, mental, emotional and creative skills that society should seek every opportunity to support it and create an environment that fosters it. Decision making at all levels of government should include a consideration of the impact of those decisions, on children's opportunities to play.”

To achieve this purpose the Welsh Government has included consideration of play within its policy development and is now placing a duty on Local Authorities to do the same. The duty requires Local Authorities to assess for and with regard to that assessment, secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas, so far as reasonably practicable. This duty will be commenced in two parts - see Play Policy development in Wales; and Legal Basis below.

Wales is the first country in the world to establish such a duty within its legislative framework, so there are no precedents for this work. We wish to work with all stakeholders to make this legislation fit for the purpose of creating a play friendly Wales with all the benefits that this will offer to our children. We welcome your views on this Statutory Guidance and ongoing involvement with the play agenda.

¹ Lester, S. and Russell, W. (2008) *Play for a Change – Play, Policy and Practice: A review of contemporary perspectives*. National Children's Bureau for Play England: London.

² <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childreneyoungpeople/publications/rightstoaction/?lang=en>.

³ Play Policy (2002).

2. Play Policy development in Wales

To achieve the outcomes for children that play provides, the Welsh Government worked with stakeholder organisations to create the **Play Policy** in 2002 and the **Play Policy Implementation Plan** in 2006 (see Appendix A Associated Policy documents). These documents set out the Welsh Government's vision for Play for children in Wales and the actions that it intended to take to realise this vision. The Welsh Government recognises that to achieve the aim of creating a play friendly Wales and to provide excellent play opportunities for our children, it is necessary for Local Authorities, their partners and other stakeholders to also work towards this purpose. Therefore a section on "Play Opportunities" was included in the **Children and Families (Wales) Measure**, which received royal assent in 2010.

3. Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 (Legal Basis)

Chapter 2, Section 11 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure sets out the duty on Local Authorities as regards Play Opportunities.

3.1 Play Opportunities

Section 11 -

Local authority duties in respect of play opportunities for children

- (1) A local authority must assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area for children in accordance with regulations.
- (2) Regulations may include provision about:-
 - a. The matters to be taken into account in assessing sufficiency.
 - b. The date by which a first assessment is to be carried out.
 - c. Frequency of assessments.
 - d. Review of assessments.
 - e. Publication of assessments.
- (3) A local authority must secure sufficient play opportunities in its area for children, so far as reasonably practicable, having regard to its assessment under subsection (1).
- (4) A local authority must:-
 - a. Publish information about play opportunities in the authority's area for children.
 - b. Keep the information published up to date.

(5) In performing its duties under this section, a local authority must have regard (among other things):-

- a. To the needs of children who are disabled persons (within the meaning of section 1 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (c. 50).
- b. To the needs of children of different ages.

(6) In this section:-

“play” includes any recreational activity;

“sufficient”, in relation to play opportunities, means sufficient having regard to quantity and quality.

Welsh Ministers have decided to commence the duty in two parts. The first part will cover the duty on Local Authorities to assess for sufficient play opportunities, sections 11(1); 11(2); 11(5); 11(6) and will be commenced in 2012.

The second part of the duty on Local Authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities in their areas for children, so far as reasonably practicable, having regard to the assessments, 11(3); and the duty to publish information about play opportunities for children in their areas and keep the information up to date, 11(4) will be commenced after full consideration has been given to the assessments and the Local Authorities’ plans for securing sufficient play opportunities.

This Statutory Guidance is intended to support Local Authorities in completing their play sufficiency assessments and sets out the purpose of the duty and the matters to be taken into account in assessing sufficiency, as set out below. A toolkit will also be made available to support the production of the assessments.

Under Section 71 of the measure, “child” (“plentyn”) means a person who has not attained the age of 18.

This guidance is issued in accordance with Section 17(3) of the Children and Families Measure, which states that:

*In exercising its functions under **sections 11 and 12**, a local authority **must** have regard to any guidance given from time to time by the Welsh Ministers.*

4. Timetable for the completion of the Play Sufficiency Assessments and planning for securing sufficiency; monitoring and reporting.

The Local Authority has the duty under the Measure to assess for and with regard to the assessment, secure sufficient play opportunities.

The Local Authority must complete the assessment of play opportunities for children in its areas in the period set out in the regulations, which is 4 months. The commencement of this duty is anticipated to be commenced on **2 November 2012**.

Local Authorities are required to complete and submit a copy of their play sufficiency assessments to the Welsh Government by **01 March 2013**. Funding has been allocated by the Welsh Government to support them in conducting the assessments and Local Authorities have been informed of their allocations.

The toolkit will be available from the summer of 2012 to enable Local Authorities to start preparation of the assessment.

Local Authorities are required to produce a Single Integrated Plan by **31 March 2013**. The Play Sufficiency Assessment must provide the evidence necessary to ensure that each Local Authority complies with the duty of section 11(3) of the Measure, that it secures sufficient play opportunities for children in their area, so far as reasonably practicable. The Play Sufficiency Assessment must also contribute to the overall needs assessment and the action plan for securing sufficient play opportunities must be incorporated into the Single Integrated Plan.

Progress made on securing sufficient play opportunities, as set out in the single integrated plan should be reviewed on an annual basis, with further Play Sufficiency Assessments being carried out every three years.

5. Definition of Play

The definition of play as used in the Play Policy and Implementation Plan is the one that had been developed by the play sector and is recognised internationally. This states 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”.

The Welsh Government wishes to emphasise this definition of play. It also recognises that play can include a wide range of recreational activities.

The Welsh Government sees creating an environment where children can freely play as central to the aim of this section of the Measure. We recognise that our society has changed significantly in recent years in the extent to which it is accepted as the norm for children to go out to play and organise where they go and what they do in their own time. This has come about for various reasons including increased concerns about risks to children from increased traffic density; perceived danger from adults who may pose a threat to children; lack of safe places to play; increased television and computer use and sometimes a negative view of playing children by other sections of the community. For these reasons we aim to make communities more play friendly by valuing and increasing the opportunities for play throughout the community. The intended outcome will be more children playing both inside and outside and so enjoying the health, social, cognitive and emotional benefits that play provides.

Play is defined for the purposes of the measure as including “any recreational activity” (Section 11(6) Measure). The definition of play includes but is 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; and events organised for children and their families. These recreational activities may offer a combination of organised activities, and opportunities for freely chosen and child led play. In any of these situations children should have the choice of taking part and a voice in what opportunities are offered and how they are organised.

We see the range of play opportunities that are covered under the Measure as being:-

- **Freely chosen Play** - With or without adult supervision.
- **Structured recreational activities** - For children and young people.

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.

Examples within these categories and a glossary of terms is provided in Appendix B.

6. Priorities for assessing freely chosen play and recreational activities

The Play Sufficiency Assessments to be carried out by each Local Authority under this duty should give a comprehensive assessment of freely chosen play opportunities, with or without adult supervision, as described in the Play Policy.

The assessment should also cover structured recreational activities for children covering opportunities for leisure, sporting and cultural activities, which are covered together with play under the Welsh Government’s Core Aim 4 for children and young people. We recognise that much work has and is being carried out in these areas and do not wish to require duplication with other assessments. We therefore require clear and concise statements on these areas of provision, with cross reference to other relevant assessments of delivery so allowing Local Authorities to utilise existing information.

Play as a tool within other policy agendas

Play is also seen as an important tool or method in achieving other agendas relating to children’s well-being and development. These include:

- Childcare and early years development.
- The Foundation phase.
- Education.
- Healthy living.
- Resilience and mental well being.

The Welsh Government fully recognises the importance and validity of play being seen as experiential learning; a source of physical activity; and in some contexts a form of therapy, by professionals and others working in service areas for children. It also recognises the importance of service providers and practitioners in all relevant areas being aware of the balance between play as contributing to an adult led agenda and play that is child led simply for the child's enjoyment and well-being. The child led play also achieves many of these desired outcomes. The importance of training for professionals to support children's play and creating environments that promote play in the context of other policy areas including: childcare; education; health and well-being should be given consideration in assessing the sufficiency of children's play opportunities.

7. What are sufficient play opportunities?

Section 11(6) sets out that "sufficient" in relation to play opportunities means sufficient having regard to **quantity** and **quality**.

The Welsh Government recognises that clearly setting out a required quantity and quality of play opportunities for a particular area is not a straightforward task as it depends on many variables including:

- The natural environment and geography of the area.
- The built environment and characteristics of the communities.
- The demography of the area.
- Existing play opportunities and provision.
- Existing organisational structures.
- The wishes of the children and their families.

These will all affect what is:

- The present situation.
- What changes are needed to create a play friendly environment.
- How these can be achieved.

We acknowledge that what is considered as sufficient and achievable will depend on these variables and should be determined locally, in accordance with the matters covered in the Regulations and this Statutory Guidance. This includes consultation with children and their families and communities.

Quantity

The quantity of play opportunities should be such that any child should be able to play freely and take part in a range of recreational activities in their communities.

Quality of provision

The Local Authority should assess play provision in its area for the extent to which these opportunities are of a quality that meets the enjoyment; social and developmental needs of the children in its area. Many documents have been produced by specialist play organisations giving advice on the criteria associated with good quality and successful play spaces. Play Wales propose that a rich play environment is a varied 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.

Quality play provision offers all children the opportunity to freely interact with or experience the following:

- **Other children** – with a choice to play alone or with others, to negotiate, co-operate, fall out, and resolve conflict.
- **The natural world** – weather, trees, plants, insects, animals, mud.
- **Loose parts** – natural and man made materials that can be manipulated, moved and adapted, built and demolished.
- **The four elements** – earth, air, fire and water
- **Challenge** and uncertainty – both on a physical and emotional level.
- **Changing 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.

<http://www.playwales.org.uk/landing.asp?id=6>.

Under the different sections of the play sufficiency assessment the Local Authority should take account of the extent to which children have access to play spaces with high play value; and to a range of recreational activities that meet their needs.

8. Play Sufficiency Assessments: Matters that need to be taken into account

8.1 Population

The assessment should present data about the number of children living in the Local Authority area to enable an assessment of their potential play requirements. The data should provide information about the numbers of children in different categories that may affect their play requirements. The data should also show if the area is classified as one of disadvantage/deprivation.

This should cover the number of children in each, ward, broken down into Lower Super Output Areas by:

- age groups for 0-3 year olds; 4–7 year olds; 8–12 year olds; 13-15 year olds; 16–17 year olds;
- recorded number of disabled children in each age group;
- Welsh as a first language; and
- other recorded cultural factors, including other language and gypsy traveller children.

8.2 Providing for diverse needs

The Local Authority should aim to offer play opportunities that are inclusive and encourage all children to play and meet together. It should recognise that there may be barriers for some children in taking part in the range of play opportunities in their area. This could be due to disability/impairment; children's own communities' cultural values or other environmental or attitudinal factors. The play assessment should cover the extent to which:

- Play opportunities are appropriate to the requirements of children from diverse communities and cultures, including those in isolated rural areas.
- Play opportunities are appropriate to the requirements of Welsh language speaking children.
- Mainstream play opportunities are accessible to and inclusive of disabled children.
- Disabled children receive support to access play opportunities
- Separate provision is available for disabled children if there is a clearly identified need for this.
- Community planning; traffic and transport initiatives cover the requirements of disabled children to access play opportunities.

8.3 Space available for children to play

Open Spaces

The Local Authority should recognise that all open spaces within their area are potentially important areas where children can play or pass through to reach other playable areas or places where they go. The Play Sufficiency Assessment should take into account:

- Grassland/scrubland.
- Woodlands and green spaces.
- Beaches and river and lake sides.
- Public parks and gardens.

- Residential streets.
- School grounds.
- Brownfield sites.

As part of the Play Sufficiency Assessments Local Authorities should draw upon existing Open Space Assessments and other local sources of information to map areas that are used for play or could potentially be used for play. The open spaces considered should include those set out in the Welsh Government Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note (TAN) 16 “Sport, Recreation and Open Space” (2009)*; Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12 “Design” 2009* and Creating an Active Wales (2009)* as well as brown field sites; residential streets; public parks and gardens; and school grounds.

A space should be assessed for:

- Distance to travel from where children and young people live.
- Its accessibility, being clear from hazards and its play value.
- Its existing use for play.
- Its potential for play use.
- Plans for how these areas can be made hazard free and more encouraging of children’s play.
- Consideration of plans for future use with regards to the potential for play use.

Any change of use for open spaces, or areas that become disused, will come under the guidelines and regulations set out as part of the planning system in *Planning Policy Wales* and the associated Technical Advice Notes.

It is expected that any assessment relating to planning of open space and leisure and recreation, will be undertaken with close collaboration with the Local Authority Play Officer and that Open Space Assessments (OSAs) will inform the Play Sufficiency Assessment and vice-versa, to avoid duplication of effort.

Outdoor unstaffed maintained play spaces

The Play Sufficiency Assessment should take into account:

- Playgrounds (equipped)
 - Local Areas for Play (LAPs).
 - Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs).
 - Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs).
 - Destination play areas.
- Recreation (sports) fields – natural and artificial.
- Multi use games areas (MUGAs).

- Wheeled play areas – BMX bike and skate parks.
- Youth shelters.

A space should be assessed for:

- Distance to travel from where children live.
- Quantity of provision in relation to number of children.
- Accessibility and suitability in relation to play value (quality).
- Accessibility and suitability in relation to different ages; abilities; dry and wet weather use.
- Its existing use for play.
- Potential for increasing use and play value.

Playing Fields

The Local Authority should recognise the importance of playing fields as areas of community use for organised sporting activities and for play and informal recreational use. The Playing Fields (Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions) (Wales) Measure 2010 empowers the Welsh Ministers to make provision by way of regulations for the involvement of communities in decisions by local authorities about proposed disposals of fields. A “local authority” in this context is a county/county borough council, community council and a national park authority.

The Welsh Ministers will, in due course, consult on draft regulations to be made under the Measure. Such regulations will place a duty on local authorities to assess the impact of the disposal of a playing field on local communities in regard to health and well-being and related strategies and plans (including the play sufficiency assessment). The regulations will also require local authorities to consult with local communities and appropriate sports and other organisations prior to a decision to dispose of a playing field (as defined in the regulations).

Any impact assessment should recognise the importance of playing fields to children’s opportunities to play and include children, young people and their families in any consultations on such decisions.

8.4 Supervised provision

8.4.1 Supervised play provision

The Play Sufficiency Assessment should take into account:

- Holiday play schemes (registered and unregistered).
- Open access play provision.
- Out of school childcare.
- Adventure playgrounds.

- Play opportunities supported by peripatetic playworkers (play rangers).
- Leisure centre provision of free play opportunities – free swimming; play sessions.
- Clubs and youth groups.

This provision should be assessed for the extent to which:

- There is sufficient provision to meet the needs of children and their families.
- The provision meets the regulatory requirements and National Minimum Standards for that setting, as set out by the Welsh Government; Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) or other inspection body.
- The provision works to achieve high standards in offering play opportunities for children as developed by the Sector Skills Council for Play (SkillsActive) and the play sector.

8.4.2 Structured recreational activities for children

Under the Measure recreational activities form a part of Play Opportunities.

As set out in Shared Planning for Better Outcomes (2007) Youth Support services and the Youth Service should provide children with their entitlement to accessible recreational and social opportunities, sports, culture, music and arts.

The Welsh Government wishes to avoid duplication of assessments of provision and service delivery within the range of youth support services and other areas providing for Sport, Leisure and Culture, so requires less information on this provision within the Play Sufficiency Assessment. (See Paragraph 6). A statement should be provided of sufficiency in these areas with cross reference to the relevant sections in each policy area's assessments of provision.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment should take into account the extent to which:

- The Local Authority is delivering on its responsibility to secure the services set out under Core Aim 4 for sport, leisure and culture.
- Local "Creating an Active Wales" Plans are increasing play and recreational activities for children.
- Local Authority Partnership Agreements (LAPA) are contributing to increasing free play and recreational activities.
- The sports agenda is contributing to the provision of sufficient recreational activities for children.
- The cultural and arts agenda, is contributing to the provision of sufficient recreational activities for children.
- The Local Authority Youth Service is providing for children's opportunities for leisure and association.

8.5 Access to space/provision

The Welsh Government is committed to reducing road traffic collisions and injuries, and developing a safer environment for all. The goal is a safer country - for our children and for all the people of Wales.

Local Authorities have powers to introduce 20mph limits where appropriate – for example in residential areas where children play. The number of 20 mph schemes in Wales has risen steadily in recent years, largely due to Welsh Government funding through our Local Road Safety Grant and Safe Routes programmes.

Under the Welsh Government's Local Transport Services Grant, Local Authorities are allocated annually sums to help them boost the number and range of subsidised local bus and community transport services. While the majority of local bus services are provided commercially, local authorities have powers to subsidise services that they believe are required to meet a social need. To achieve this they use their own budgets but also the annual allocations that they receive under the Local Transport Services Grant Scheme.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment should take into account all factors that contribute to children's access to play or moving around their communities including:

- Traffic calming.
- Play streets.
- Safe walking, cycling routes.
- Public transport provision.

These factors should be assessed for:

- The number of 20 mph limits in residential areas.
- The effectiveness of these limits in allowing for children to safely move around their communities and playing outside.
- The potential for increasing the number of 20 mph limit areas to promote play opportunities.
- The Local Authority's provision of safe walking and cycle routes and potential for increasing these.
- Confirmation that their public transport planning and decisions about expenditure on bus and community transport services reflect their assessment of children's needs to access play.

8.6 Securing & Developing the Play Workforce

The Local Authority and partners will need to undertake or secure the managerial and delivery functions necessary to achieve sufficient play opportunities. This will include the co-ordination of the required assessment of the cross cutting policy

areas; the integration of the assessment results into the single strategic plan and the delivery of the play agenda by a sufficiently resourced, sized and qualified workforce.

The play workforce should have or be supported in achieving the qualifications required by the Welsh Government's National Minimum Standards for Regulated Settings; the accepted qualification levels set out by SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council covering Play; and other requirements set out by other associated inspection and regulatory bodies including CSSIW. The Local Authority should support the development of the play workforce including the involvement and training of other professionals within the children's workforce; volunteers and community members, in line with the National Occupational Standards for the sector.

The assessment should provide information on the organisational structure of the policy area which manages the Play agenda and the play workforce.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment should take into account the extent to which:

- The structure and size of the Play workforce (policy and delivery) is able to achieve sufficient play opportunities for children in the area.
- The level of qualifications of the play workforce is sufficient and appropriate for their roles.
- Training is available for the play workforce to achieve the necessary qualifications.
- Community groups, volunteers and parents are supported in engaging with the development and delivery of play opportunities and receive appropriate training.
- Training is available for volunteers and parents to develop their knowledge and skills in play work.

8.7 Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas

To achieve the outcomes we desire for children and to create a child friendly society that offers a wide range of free play and leisure opportunities, it is necessary for policy and implementation across many policy areas to contribute to this purpose.

The Local Authority should examine all its policy agendas for their potential impact on playing children and embed targets and actions to enhance children's play opportunities into all such strategies and policies.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment should take into account the extent to which the following policy areas include consideration of, and actions to enhance children's play opportunities. This should also cover any other Local Authority agendas that affect children. The Play Sufficiency Assessment should show that they have taken account of these policy areas either through the provision of related information or by cross-referencing to the related plan with reference to the detail on play.

Policy area to be considered in the assessment:

- **Education/schools**
 - The extent to which children are provided with an interesting play environment for breaks during the school day.
 - The extent to which schools provide play opportunities during out of school times, including evenings; weekends and holiday periods; including open access to school grounds and use of premises for activities.
 - the extent to which schools encourage children to walk or cycle to school.
- **Community Planning** – planning of the built environment and use of public and open spaces.
- **Traffic and transport** – as regards safety for play within community areas; safe routes for walking, cycling or using public transport to access play; leisure provision and school.
- **Health and Wellbeing** – as regards recognising the importance of freely chosen play and leisure activities in contributing to both children’s and their family’s physical health.
- **Child Poverty** – as regards recognising the potential of play to increase children’s resilience and mental well-being in difficult situations.
- **Early years/Childcare and Family policy and initiatives** – as regards the importance of play within this policy area, and the benefit to parents and families as a whole from a wide range of play opportunities.
- **Inter-generational policy and initiatives** – as regards the value of an inter-generational approach to play and leisure opportunities for the benefit of children and people from older age groups.
- **Community Development** – as regards to:
 - recognising the rights of children to play within their communities;
 - promoting communities that support and provide for play opportunities for their children;
 - promoting communities that value the benefits this provides for both children and the community as a whole.
- **Community Safety** – as regards recognising the rights of children to play within their communities and providing a safe environment for this to happen.

8.8 Information; publicity; events

For children and families to take part in play opportunities, leisure activities and events it is necessary for them to know what is available in their area.

The Welsh Government would like to see each Local Authority develop a clearly identified play section on its website to give comprehensive information about all play opportunities; play areas; activities; clubs and events for children in its area. It would also be useful to provide information and relevant links for parents, to promote support for, and involvement with play opportunities within the wider community. This information could also be provided through the Local Authority's other publicity methods.

Events which encourage play and which promote the normalisation/acceptance of play activities in community spaces will contribute to play being accepted at other times, as will publicity of events and providing positive information and news stories to develop positive community attitudes to children and their right to play.

The Local Authority could use physical on site signposting of areas within the community which are available for children to play, to provide a clear message to both children and adults that children are welcome to play in this area. This could take the form of play equipment or more symbolic indication of permission to play. It should be clear that this does not limit children's play just to these areas.

The assessment should cover the extent to which:

- Information about play areas; play and leisure activities; clubs and events for children is readily available through the Local Authority website and other sources.
- Information about the accessibility of provision and contact for support if required.
- Information about events for the whole family are available.
- Information of how parents; community groups; volunteers can become involved in providing play opportunities.
- The Local Authority publicises positive information about children and to promote a positive attitudes towards children and their achievements.

9. Policy Framework

9.1 The Play Sufficiency Assessment and Partnership working

To achieve a play friendly society that offers a wide range of play and recreational opportunities it is necessary for all partners within the community to work together for this purpose.

The Welsh Government encourages Local Authorities to acknowledge the importance of play in children's lives and make a firm commitment to work strenuously within their own structures; with partner organisations; with children and their families and communities to ensure that children have access to the play opportunities that they want and have a right to expect.

The relevant partnerships are likely to include:

- Town and Community Councils.
- Third sector organisations.
- The private sector if appropriate.
- Community groups.
- Children and their families.

As well as working with relevant organisations within its area, planning and delivery of play provision can take place on a regional and cross Local Authority basis where appropriate, and with national organisations that support the development of play. Each area should be proactive in developing play opportunities for children in its own area, as well as being supportive and sharing good practice with other authorities/organisations to promote play for all children in Wales.

9.2 Completion of the Assessments

The Single Integrated Plan is increasingly becoming the mechanism through which action on local priorities is planned and delivered, and outcomes monitored and evaluated, based on an assessment of local needs. Action to develop, monitor and scrutinise the Single Integrated plan is coordinated by the Local Service Board, bringing together leaders of local government, the NHS, the police, third sector and the Welsh Government itself.

Local authority representatives on the Local Service Board should ensure that the Play Sufficiency Assessments form part of the local needs assessment and that the assessment and the proposals for securing sufficient play opportunities are integrated into the planning, implementation and review of the Single Integrated Plan at every stage of the planning cycle.

Action plans are the essential building blocks of the Single Integrated Plan, and set out in detail what actions each of the Local Service Board partners will undertake over 3–5 years to achieve outcomes which contribute towards identified long-term goals.

Legal duties on local partners in respect of play remain. Participation of children in planning for play and the monitoring of play provision can become part of developing citizen engagement and scrutiny procedures.

9.3 Providing and maximising resources

Because play covers a wide range of provision; facilities; services and community organisation, it is essential that budgets that cover all these areas contribute towards the purpose of securing sufficient play opportunities.

Local partners should identify and use these budgets, including reprioritisation if necessary, to ensure that there are sufficient resources to secure the play opportunities required for its area. Review of budgets of relevant policy areas that

affect children's play opportunities and maximise their benefit for play should contribute to the Single Integrated Plans.

10. Consultation & Participation

For play opportunities to meet the requirements of children it is essential that they are consulted on what they want from play and leisure activities.

The Local Authority should consult with children as to what play opportunities; play provision; activities and events they want in their area. The participation and consultation methods should comply with the Welsh Government's Children and Young People's Participation Standards and section 12 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 on Participation. The Authority should also consult with parents; the local community and any other interested stakeholder on the development of play opportunities and developing child and play friendly communities.

The assessment should take into account:

- The views of children, obtained through consultations, on what play and leisure provision they want in their areas; how they would like their neighbourhood to be organised to provide the play opportunities they want; and what barriers stop them from playing.
- An analysis of the results of these consultations and how these have or will be used to inform future plans.
- The views of parents, families and other stakeholders, obtained through consultation, on play provision/opportunities and how this has or will inform future plans.

11. Future Developments

The Welsh Government will consult on the draft regulations and statutory guidance on the Children and Families (Wales) Measure, section 11, Play Opportunities for a 12 week period, starting at the beginning of April 2012. Responses to the consultation will be used to inform the final documents. It is anticipated that the first part of Section 11 will be commenced on 2nd November 2012.

A toolkit is being developed to support Local Authorities in conducting the first Play Sufficiency Assessment.

Appendix A

Associated policy and legislation

Play Policy (2002)

In October 2002 the Welsh Government published its Play Policy, which was founded on Article 31 of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child. The Play Policy was produced to demonstrate the importance that the Welsh Government places on the value of play in childhood and the importance of children in our society. It stated that:

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to ensuring that all children have access to rich stimulating environments, free from inappropriate risk, and full of challenge, thereby offering them the opportunity to explore through freely chosen play both themselves and the world.

It made clear the Welsh Government's commitment to children, and policymaking and provision designed to meet their needs. The Play Policy was a broad statement of principles rather than a detailed prescription of how provision should be implemented.

Play Policy Implementation Plan (2006)

To further the commitment of the Play Policy, the Welsh Government worked with partners to develop an implementation plan, which was published in February 2006. This reaffirmed the Welsh Government's commitment to play and how it related to and contributed towards other UK and Welsh Government policies and strategic plans. It set out actions that the Welsh Government would take including:

- *Creating a duty of co-operation in addressing the play needs of children and, regardless of issues such as levels of ability, language, race or gender.*
- *Working with stakeholders, including children, to produce Standards for a wide range of high quality play provision.*
- *Checking its own policies that impact on children's opportunities to play, including planning and transport, for consideration of and promotion of play.*
- *Providing information and training materials for schools and parents on facilitating play.*
- *Supporting the development of the Play workforce.*

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The right to engage in play and recreational activities is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 31.1 of the Convention states that "State Parties recognise 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”.

Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure (2011)

The Welsh Government put before the National Assembly for Wales a proposal for a new ‘Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure related to the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Measure was unanimously accepted and received royal assent in 2011. The Welsh Government believes that the new Measure will be an effective way of ensuring that, in doing its work, it will place greater emphasis on helping children and in Wales to access the rights which are set out in the UNCRC, as a step towards them all achieving well-being. This increased emphasis will apply to all the Articles, including Article 31.1 relating to a child’s right to play.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s Concluding Observations in 2008 stated that the UK should:-

95. Do more to make sure all children can enjoy their right to rest and play, and to take part in leisure and cultural activities. These activities should be appropriate for all different age groups (ranging from little children to teenagers).

96. Make sure all playgrounds are of good quality and accessible to all children, including disabled children.

The Children Act (2004)

This imposed a duty of co-operation between each Local Authority in Wales and their partners as set out within section 25 of the Children Act 2004 to make arrangements to promote the well being of children. It specified that one of the purposes of this co-operation was to improve the well being of children relating to education, training and recreation and therefore play.

‘Better Wales’ set out a long-term vision of Wales as a place which values its children and young people. It included amongst its core values the statement that ‘children and young people should be treated as valued members of the community whose voices are heard and needs considered across the range of policy making’.

‘Children and Young People: Rights to Action’ (2004)

This set out the Welsh Government’s seven core aims for children and young people. The Play Policy Implementation Plan made a significant contribution to achieving the core aim 4: that all children and young people should have access to a range of play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities.

The Childcare Act (2006)

The Childcare Act placed a duty on Local Authorities to assess childcare provision in its area. It also places a duty on Local Authorities to provide information on services or facilities for children and young people, including play, sports and other recreational facilities. This information can be used to contribute to the Play Sufficiency Assessments.

Shared Planning for Better Outcomes (2007) provided Regulations and Guidance for Local Authorities and their Partners on producing Children and Young People's Plans. Core Aim 4 requires that all children and have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities.

Section (7.3) states that Local Authorities should plan with their partners to provide or secure play opportunities for children and young people. Youth Support services should provide young people with their entitlement to accessible recreational and social opportunities, sports, culture, music and arts.

This includes:

- *Play strategies, including plans for staffed adventure play.*
- *Leisure and sporting opportunities.*
- *Out of school hours childcare and holiday play-schemes.*
- *Action to promote other out of school hours activity.*

Shared Purpose – Shared Delivery (2012)

Draft statutory guidance on single plans “Shared Purpose – Shared Delivery” issued in January 2012 for three months' consultation with an implementation date for the first plans of April 2013. The intention is that each area will develop a single integrated plan, based on a single needs assessment and owned by the Local Service Board. It will be built on the separate statutory plans now in place. The plan should cover the whole range of outcomes for the locality and discharge duties arising from legislation including the Children Act 2004 and NHS Wales Act 2006. The local Play Sufficiency Assessment should contribute to the overall needs assessment that will inform the single plan. Legal duties on local partners in respect of play remain.

Planning Policy Wales (2011)

Any change of use for open spaces, or areas that become disused, will come under the guidelines and regulations set out as part of the planning system in *Planning Policy Wales*. The planning system should take account of all land use and the views of all members of the community, including children. It emphasises the importance of designing places where people, including children, want to live and play. Consultation and community engagement are built into the planning system from beginning to end and Local Authorities will be expected to relate the Local Development Plan and Community Plan to the consultation and engagement with children and their families on play opportunities, which form part of the Measure.

*The Welsh Government *Technical Advice Note (TAN) 16 "Sport, Recreation and Open Space"* (2009) advises local planning authorities to undertake an Open Space Assessment (OSA). This should take account of all formal and informal recreational open space (including playing fields) and should include an assessment of local need and an audit of local supply. This will provide evidence for policies in the Local Development Plan for the provision of open space. Tan 16 Wales states that open space "should be regarded as all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport, recreation and tourism, and can also act as a visual amenity, and may have conservation and biodiversity importance".

**Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12 "Design"* (2009) emphasises the need to incorporate places of leisure and recreation, and access routes for walking and cycling, into development proposals from the outset, to create a sense of place.

Creating an Active Wales (2009)

The Welsh Government recognises the importance of creating an environment that makes it easier and safer for people to choose to be more physically active; also that active play contributes to children's physical health and fitness, both during childhood and into later life. Creating an Active Wales includes a section on access to quality play and on woodlands and green spaces.

*** Woodlands and green spaces**

In *Creating an Active Wales (2009)*, the Welsh Government sets out a vision where all children would frequently play outdoors in safe environments and that people would use their local environment for active recreation. One of the actions in the document was to improve access to woodlands and green space especially those near disadvantaged communities. For this action the Welsh Government undertook to work with the National Trust. We recognise the importance of woodlands and green spaces for children to play and develop an understanding of and respect for the environment. The play sufficiency assessment should include an assessment of children and young people's access to woodlands and green spaces as an opportunity to play, particularly in disadvantaged communities and work with relevant partners in addressing issues of access and removal of hazards.

Child Poverty Strategy (2011)

The Child Poverty Strategy, which sets out the Welsh Government's ambition to eradicate child poverty, recognises the importance of making poverty less damaging for children. It emphasises children's right to play and states that "the Welsh Government sees play as being a vital element in children's development and something that can provide a strong protective factor in children's lives. It can, to an extent, shield children from the negative aspects of poverty and allow them to develop their inner resources and build resilience to difficulties and uncertainties in their home and other parts of their lives."

Shared Purpose – Shared Delivery (2012)

Draft statutory guidance on single plans "Shared Purpose – Shared Delivery" issued in January 2012 for three months' consultation with an implementation date for the first plans of April 2013. The intention is that each area will develop a single integrated plan, based on a single needs assessment and owned by the Local Service Board. It will be built on the separate statutory plans now in place. The plan should cover the whole range of outcomes for the locality and discharge duties arising from legislation including the Children Act 2004 and NHS Wales Act 2006. The local Play Sufficiency Assessment should contribute to the overall needs assessment that will inform the single plan. Legal duties on local partners in respect of play remain.

Appendix B

Glossary of Terms

Provision for children's play: play provision offers a place, in a range of settings which are unsupervised and supervised where children can invent and extend their own play.

- **Open space:** land laid out and used for the purposes of public recreation or has public value. Open spaces can be as diverse as informal amenity space, sitting areas, public parkland, landscaped areas, incidental open space (such as tree belts and screening. A Typology of Open Space is included in Technical Advice Note (TAN) 16: Sport, Recreation and Open Space.
- **Designated play space:** A place that has been designated specifically for children's play as its principal function.
 - **Door-step:** A play space, within sight of home, where children, especially young children can play within view of known adults.
 - **Local:** A larger space which can be reached safely by children beginning to travel independently and with friends, without accompanying adults and for adults with young children to walk to with ease.
 - **Neighbourhood:** A larger space or facility which children and young people, used to travelling longer distances independently, can get to safely and spend time in play and informal recreation with their peers and have a wider range of play experiences.
 - **Playable space or shared public space:** A place where children can play that is not specifically designated for play and which does not have play as its principal or only function.
 - **Inclusive play space:** Play provision that is accessible and welcoming to disabled and non-disabled children
 - **Destination play areas:** A play space within a key site, such as a park. It is aimed at attracting families and similar groups for longer visits and tend to be the same size or larger than neighbourhood sites.
 - **Multi-use games areas:** An enclosed area, using a synthetic grass or hard surface for playing sports formally and informally.
 - **Youth shelters:** An area dedicated to local children as a place to hang out.

- **Wheel park/wheeled play:** An area for activities on wheels such as skateboarding, rollerblading and BMX biking.
- **Staffed open access play sessions:** Open Access play provision can be permanent or short-term provision, located in a variety of settings with or without premises. Whilst the term Open Access applies to registered provision for children under 8 years, such provision usually caters for a wide age range of children, including those over 8 years and older. Open access provision for children 8 years and older is un-regulated. The purpose of the provision is to provide staffed play opportunities for children in the absence of their parents. Children are not restricted in their movements, other than where related to safety matters and are not prevented from coming and going as and when they wish. Children have the freedom of choice as to what range of play activity they wish to undertake and with whom they play
- **Adventure playgrounds:** An open access setting staffed by trained play workers, where children can find materials and support so that they can build and adapt their own play space to suit their own needs. It is a rich play environment that compensates for today's lack of accessible natural space where children can play independently of adults.
- **Peripatetic playwork (play rangers) project:** An open access, often short term project staffed by a small team of trained playworkers, visiting a different place, a park, estate play area or other public space, once or twice a week for a couple of hours. They will be equipped with ideas and equipment, and will work to help children places to play in their local area, and to reassure parents that it is safe for children to play out.

Consultation on Statutory Guidance on Play Opportunities

Consultation Response Form

Your name:

Organisation: (if applicable):

Email/telephone number:

Your address:

Question 1: Do the draft regulations and statutory guidance clearly set out the range of matters that Local Authorities, and their partners, need to consider when completing the play sufficiency assessment?

Yes

No

If you have answered no, please provide a brief explanation of what you feel could be added to the regulations or statutory guidance:

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Question 2: Are the matters to be covered set out in sufficient detail for the Local Authorities, and their partners, to conduct a full assessment?

Yes

No

If you have answered no, please suggest how this could be improved:

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Question 3: Further to the toolkit, are there any additional support mechanism that could be put in place to assist Local Authorities, and their partners, in conducting the play sufficiency assessment?

Yes

No

If you have answered yes, please provide details of the support mechanisms:

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Question 4: How do you think that Local Authorities, and their partners, should consult with children, their families and communities on the subject of existing play opportunities and how to improve them?

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Question 5: Do you think that the Welsh Government have captured the right balance between the assessment for freely chosen play and recreational activities?

Yes

No

If you have answered no, please provide details on how you think the balance should be captured:

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.....
.....

Question 6: Have you any further suggestions how Welsh Government, Local Authorities and other stakeholders can work together to identify and secure sufficient play opportunities?

Yes

No

Please provide any suggestion to improve joint working:

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Question 7: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not been specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

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.....

Responses to consultations may be made public – on the internet or in a report.

If you would prefer your response to be kept confidential, please tick here: