

CYP(3)-03-10 paper 4

Children and Young People Committee

Inquiry into provision of safe places for children and young people to play and hang out

Play Wales' submission of additional evidence as requested by the Committee

1. In your written evidence, you state that 'streets congested with parked cars have a significant effect on feelings of safety and perceived legitimacy of playing out' and go on to state that 'adults' needs for protection and space for their cars are routinely and unquestioningly prioritized over children and young people's need to play out and hang out. What should be done and by whom to address such issues?

1.1. There is no one solution to the problem because there is a combination of factors that contribute:

Driver/car owner behaviour/attitude

1.2. As far as we are aware the only provision made in the Highway Code for children using the street to play is as follows:

1.2.1.1. Rule 218 sees the introduction of Home Zones and Quiet Lanes. These are places where motorists can expect to find people using the whole of the road and include areas where children may be playing. Motorists are advised to drive slowly and carefully in these areas.

1.3. This kind of guidance for drivers suggests that Home Zones and Quiet Lanes are the **only** places where we might expect children to be playing – the wording needs to be changed to include all residential areas. Guidance to driving instructors should also be reviewed

1.4. Driver education on sharing residential streets with other members of the community is crucial for learner drivers, but also there needs to be ongoing public education that reinforces the message that residential streets are for everyone and raises awareness of the impact of car ownership.

1.5. We would seek further support for car-sharing initiatives, public transport improvement initiatives and campaigns encouraging walking and cycling..

Planning and design of residential streets

1.6. We understand that existing Manual for Streets and Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12 guidance is routinely overlooked in favour of out-dated guidance and that its implementation is not scrutinized. This guidance and advice applies to new-build housing and not to existing housing stock, therefore making a difference to only a very small proportion of the communities where children could play.

1.7. We strongly recommend that the Committee seek evidence from Mike Biddulph of Cardiff University Planning Department who has a specialist's understanding of the issues and has evaluated home zone and DIY streets initiatives.

- 1.8. Current planning guidance states an allowance of so many parking spaces per new build home – this does not extend to existing housing stock. In established residential areas parking permits might go some way to reducing the number of parked cars on the streets and encourage those owners who can to use their drive.
 - 1.9. There is potential for better use and sharing of existing local space – either for parking or playing. Initiatives that encourage local participation to come up with shared creative solutions could be supported through Community Councils, residents associations and other organizations with a community focus working in partnership with children and young people. For instance, local audits of where people park, where children already play and empty spaces where people might park or play that aren't being fully used might initiate creative local solutions to congestion and lack of play space. This could be part of the sufficiency audit contained in the Children and Families Measure.
 - 1.10. We would draw the Committee's attention to recommendations 6.6.3 and 6.6.4 in our written evidence.
2. Your evidence in respect of adult perspectives states that the 'view that playing out is not desirable (particularly when combined with the perception that playing out is unsafe) is one of the biggest barriers to children and young people being able to play and hang out with confidence. How significant a role do parents and carers play in respect of these issues?
- 2.1. Parents and carers have a significant influence on their children and on other adults – research suggests that peer pressure is more effective than education when it comes to affecting changes in behaviour, either for the negative, or the positive.
 - 2.2. Successive surveys and consultations suggest that many adults recognize the importance of outdoor play, however, actually turning this recognition into reality and changing entrenched views and beliefs is a complex task. We need to avoid criticizing parents and carers. There is a clear role for Government in creating an environment of encouragement and confidence building that helps to empower parents to make changes within their communities as their children's allies
 - 2.3. The news media and popular entertainment have a great influence on parents' thinking. We need to facilitate the placing of positive images and examples of children enjoying and benefiting from playing out in the media and popular TV programmes, and offer real examples of parents from different cultures and classes who are relaxed about their children playing out - the support of popular charismatic media personalities who are parents would help. This kind of 'media exposure' combined with a clear and unequivocal policy and legislative background has, for example, had a

significant positive effect on attitudes towards homosexuality over the past 20 years.

- 2.4. The trend towards keeping children inside could also be slowed through concerted public education and community work to build parents' and carer's confidence in the legitimacy and desirability of playing out and hanging out. The message of every professional practitioner involved with a family from conception onwards (from midwives and health visitors, social workers and clergy, to early years practitioners and schoolteachers) needs to encourage a practical, supportive 'mythbusting' approach to children and young people playing out and hanging out.
- 2.5. Just as there is no question but that literacy or sport is beneficial and that barriers need to be overcome, so we need to foster an environment where there is no question but that children and young people can and should play out.
- 2.6. Some play provision has supported parents to gain confidence that their children can and should play out – peripatetic playworkers who visit outdoor spaces in order to reclaim them for children's play, offering play opportunities and then gradually withdrawing when a pattern has been established, can make a significant contribution to the confidence of both children and adults. We have evidence of projects working in Wales that have successfully considered the views of parents and sensitively engaged with them to allay their fears and misconceptions of open access (staffed) play provision. This has been particularly effective with some parents and carers of disabled children.
- 2.7. Commercial interests who produce and sell electronic games and activities, have massive advertising budgets and a vested interest in children staying inside the home and being 'consumers'. Electronic gaming and socialising is a part of today's play culture, however, Government has a role in balancing these interests with those of children who when asked where they would prefer to play on the whole reply that they wish to be outside. . Such an approach would not only uphold and promote children's right to play, but also contribute to health and participation promotion.

Further information regarding the Rotterdam norms as requested by the Committee.

2.8. The text below is taken from an abstract presented at a 'Child in the City' conference in Rotterdam in 2008. The accompanying power point presentation can be found here:

2.9. <http://conference.europoint.eu/childinthecity/presentation/Rosemarie%20Maas.pdf>

In 2003, the city council and sub municipalities agreed on the necessity of a set of norms for outdoor play areas that was specific to Rotterdam, based on a recognition:

Space for outdoor play is easily sidelined to other interests

There were no clear guidelines of when a residential areas has enough outdoor play areas

Outdoor play areas are quite often planned in places that are not easily accessible to children and there is often not enough space closer to home

The need to combat a lack of exercise

In 2004, a set of norms was drafted based on theoretical studies and investigations on the subjects of:

The development of children, their sport and play behaviour and their need for outdoor areas

Children's traffic skills

Survey of existing norms for outdoor play areas

Inclusion of a set of norms for outdoor play areas in urban planning processes, both in policy and in urban planning procedures.

These proposed norms were tested in 2005 and 2006 in several different living environments, particularly in neighbourhoods where land use was under discussion. This showed that

The proposed norms are compatible with current urban planning, if implemented in time.

The norms are realistic. Most investigated areas conformed to the norms already. This is surprising, as these new norms for Rotterdam are stricter than the guidelines most often handled in the Netherlands.

The norms could be used as a tool to measure whether or not restructuring plans reserve enough outdoor play areas. It could also be used as a policy instrument to evaluate whether or not enough outdoor play areas have been made allowance for in existing neighbourhoods. Possible compensation measures have been outlined and are currently being tested.

The Rotterdam Norms for outdoor play areas consists of 3 key elements:

AND

One central recreational area of at least 5000m² within each large barrier block (bigger than 15ha). In smaller barrier blocks (less than 15ha) one big recreational area of at least 1000m² is enough*

These areas should contain the following urban planning features:

Centrally situated
Visible from housing
In unpolluted places
Parking ban on the recreational side of the road
Access to sunshine and shade
AND

*Larger recreational areas (of at least 1000m²) should be at least every 300 metres from the central recreational area; in densely built areas** every 200 metres. There should be areas appropriate for outdoor play at least every 300 metres or 200 metres (respectively).*

AND

Wider pavements (3-5 metres wide) suitable for play on at least one side of the street, preferably the sunny side

() 'Barrier blocks' are areas within barriers consisting of roads with a speed limit of 50km/h or higher, water (river, canal, pool, lake, ponds), rail infrastructure (tram and railway lines) and/or business and industrial areas.*

*(**) Densely-built areas are those that have 75 houses/ha or more.*

The norms came about as a result of consultation between various municipal services, including urban planning and housing services, public works, municipal health services, department of youth education and society, development agency and sport and recreation.

2.10. As stated in our earlier evidence, it is our understanding that the interpretation of the Rotterdam norms has resulted in all public open space being designated as children's play space (unless good reason can be found otherwise).

2.11. The Rotterdam norms might be regarded as a mainland European equivalent to the National Playing Fields Association Six Acre Standard that is included as an appendix to Planning Guidance TAN 16 - which refers to LAPS, LEAPS and NEAPS as outlined below. Again this Standard only applies to new development or re-development.

2.12. The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) designed a format offering guidance to Local Authorities and developers addressing the issue of play space. The guidance addresses:

- Size
- Location
- Play space
- Position from other areas of the built / social environment.
- Walking time (the group identified that distance wasn't the best

measurement for
accessing but walking time).

2.13. A Local Area for Play (LAP)

A small area of unsupervised open space specifically designed for younger children mainly between the ages of 4-6 years of age. The location of the area is determined as within 1 minute walking distance. The area should be appropriate for low-key games; flat and level with grass surfacing. A guard rail, fence or shrubbery should be used as a safety buffer zone to protect against road related accidents.

2.14. Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)

An unsupervised area equipped for children of early school age and within five minutes walking time of home. The area should be appropriate for the ages of 4-8 years of age, although consideration should be given to younger supervised children. LEAP's should offer at least 5 types of play function and should have seating for accompanying adults.

2.15. Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)

An unsupervised site servicing a substantial residential area. This area should be equipped for older children, age's 8-14 years. It should have provision for slightly younger children. NEAP's should be located within 15 minutes walking time from home. The size of the play area should accommodate 8 differing types of play equipment providing challenges and enjoyment appropriate to the age group. Seating for accompanying adults and teenager meeting areas should also be catered for.

2.16. However the focus on specific dedicated provision is part of an old paradigm that seeks to segregate children from the wider community and does not address the reality of childhood where children play their way through the community, from the moment they step outside their house to the time they return home. That is not to say that provision that meets the LAPS, LEAPS and NEAPS model is not of use; it is often all children have got in their communities where they may be perceived as legitimately playing. But we need to consider whether this sort of traditional provision represents value for money, given that children can so rarely access it without an adult presence.

Play Wales, 8 February 2010

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