

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar [Flaenoriaethau'r Chweched Senedd](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) consultation on [Sixth Senedd Priorities](#)

CYPE SP 94

Ymateb gan: Mike Greenaway, Cyfarwyddwr, Chwarae Cymru

Response from: Mike Greenaway, Director, Play Wales

Beth yn eich barn chi yw'r prif flaenoriaethau neu'r materion y dylai'r Pwyllgor eu hystyried yn ystod y Chweched Senedd? Os oes modd, nodwch eich barn o ran sut y gallai'r Pwyllgor fynd i'r afael â hyn.

What do you consider to be the main priorities or issues that the Committee should consider during the Sixth Senedd? Where possible, please set out your view about how the Committee could address them.

Theme 1: School-age education

Play Wales has seen an increase in contact from parents with concerns about the the withdrawal of playtime as part of behaviour management policy and also because of the shortening of school days.

The practice of withdrawing breaktime as a punishment for bad behaviour, slow progress or forgetting equipment is still common across many schools. When playtime/breaktime is withdrawn or parts of it withheld, children are publicly humiliated, and for many that experience creates a negative situation. Excluding children from playtime can make them vulnerable to name calling, isolation or bullying. Ensuring that playtime exclusion does not feature in behaviour regulation strategies will encourage collaboration and co-operation, which helps children be happy and healthy.

It is important to note and pleasing that Welsh Government's *Framework on embedding a whole school approach to emotional and mental well-being*ⁱ now makes it explicit that play should not be removed from children at school as a form of punishment.

The importance of play in school for children of all ages is shared by others. Concerns about diminished opportunities for play at school, especially for vulnerable groups such as children with special educational needs and disabilities, and children living in poverty has already been highlighted by the British Psychological Society



Division of Child and Educational Psychologists in a Position Paperⁱⁱ. Additionally, it has been found that curriculum pressures have led to reduced opportunities for play in schoolsⁱⁱⁱ.

The Active Healthy Kids Wales 2018 expert group recommended that providing sufficient breaks for play and would contribute to overall physical activity for children^{iv}. Additionally, Estyn's *Healthy and happy – school impact on pupils' health and wellbeing* report^v evaluates how well primary and secondary schools in Wales support the health and well-being of their pupils. The report makes several references to school play and break times. The report highlights that schools that apply a whole school approach to supporting health and well-being provide an environment, facilities and space to play, socialise and relax at break times.

In a 2019 report^{vi} the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee expressed disappointment to hear that reductions in lunch breaks and break times (which provide daily opportunities to get active) are common in schools. It urged the Welsh Government to review how widespread this practice is in schools across Wales. Play Wales is not aware of such a review taking place.

Play Wales recommends that during the sixth Senedd, the CYPE Committee:

Considers the wide range of national policy and initiatives that support children to access their right to play across educational settings. It should scrutinise to what extent play is valued and provided for in these settings, not only for instrumental educational outcomes, but also for the immediate well-being benefits it brings to children of all ages.

Theme 2: Further and higher education

The development and delivery of playwork qualifications at further education level have traditionally benefitted from and relied upon European funding. There is concern that the system of allocation of replacement funding will have a negative impact on the playwork qualifications, negatively impacting on the professional development of practitioners.

Play Wales recommends that during the sixth Senedd, the CYPE Committee:

Considers scrutinising the impact that changes to funding mechanisms have had on the sustainability of the development and delivery of playwork qualifications.



Theme 3: Health and well-being, including social care (as they relate to children and young people)

In April 2020, The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concerns about the physical, emotional and psychological effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns and other measures on children.^{vii} The Committee called on States to protect the rights of children. In particular, it stressed the need to consider the health, social, and recreational impacts of the pandemic on the rights of the child. It implored governments worldwide to explore alternative and creative solutions for children to enjoy their Article 31 rights to play, rest, leisure, recreation and cultural and artistic activities. Whilst the previous Children, Young People and Education Committee undertook its own inquiry into the impact of Covid-19, it is disappointing that there was little reference to the recognition of the importance of the right to play for a healthy and happy childhood.

Opportunities to play are particularly beneficial during a pandemic. The 2018 International Play Association's *Access to Play for Children in Situations of Crisis toolkit* notes that, '*In situations of crisis, stress, weakened physical and emotional development, feelings of lack of control and loss of trust steadily multiply if children lack everyday opportunities for play.*'^{viii}

Some children reported playing more in the very early days of the pandemic^{ix} and lockdown; however, these figures dropped significantly in January 2021^x. Access to play varied for children in Wales, with many reporting missing school, friends and having opportunities to play and socialise^{xi}. Children in disadvantaged circumstances were hard hit, especially those with no access to private gardens, or in neighbourhoods with little or no public space.^{xii}

A rapid review of the impact of quarantine and environmental restrictions on children's play shows that play is considerably altered. Emerging evidence suggests that prolonged school closure, staying at home and social restrictions during outbreaks of disease could have serious consequences for children's physical and mental health.^{xiii} A key conclusion from the review notes, that:

'as we learn how to support children living in and emerging from a pandemic-related lockdown, play may be one of the most important areas of focus to promote children's health and well-being.'^{xiv}

Researchers, academics and advocates^{xv} have raised concerns that at a time of increased stress and worry, children have also faced reduced access or significant change to play and the benefits it offers/affords for coping, enjoyment of life and development.

Play Wales recommends that during the sixth Senedd, the CYPE Committee:



Ensures that interventionist programmes for children intended to support Covid-19 recovery are complemented by a focus on supporting children to be active participants in building their own resilience. Any programmes that support children's physical and mental health should be scrutinised to ensure that they feature opportunities and time for self-directed play.

Theme 4: Children and young people

In terms of children's play, Welsh Government has led the way by publishing the world's first Play Policy in 2002, followed by a Play Sufficiency Duty, enacted in 2012 as part of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

There have been four small-scale research studies undertaken since the commencement of the Play Sufficiency Duty^{xvi}. The studies draw together the successes and challenges facing local authorities in the implementation of the Play Sufficiency Duty.

The most recent research study^{xvii} makes a number of recommendations regarding the conditions that can support local authorities to develop actions to secure sufficient opportunities for children to play. In summary, they include:

- policy alignment with, and promotion nationally and locally of, the Play Sufficiency Duty
- the right people in the right place at the right time with sufficient authority, capacity, capability and consistency
- a consistent and dedicated source of funding for Play Sufficiency
- existing and new information, including research (especially hyper local research with children and ways to share information)
- supporting organisational cultures that allow a response when opportunities arise.

We draw the Committee's attention to the current Ministerial Play Review^{xviii}, commenced by the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services in autumn 2019. The aim of the Review is to assess where Welsh Government is with respect to play policy and to inform how we develop and progress the play agenda. Unfortunately, the Review was stalled in March 2020 due to the pressures and uncertainties that the coronavirus pandemic brought. Welsh Government recommenced the Review in winter of 2020 and it is ongoing.

Play Wales recommends that during the sixth Senedd, the CYPE Committee:



Scrutinises Welsh Government's response to the Ministerial Play Review and its recommendations.

ⁱ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/framework-on-embedding-a-whole-school-approach-to-emotional-and-mental-well-being.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Hobbs, C., et al. (2019) *Children's Right to play position paper*. Leicester: The British Psychological Society Division of Educational and Child Psychology.

ⁱⁱⁱ Baines, E. and Blatchford, P. (2019) *School break and lunchtimes and young people's social life: A follow-up national study*. Final report (EDU/42402) to the Nuffield Foundation.

^{iv} Edwards, L. C., et. al (2018) Results From Wales' 2018 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth *Journal of Physical Activity and Health* 15, s2; [10.1123/jpah.2018-0544](https://doi.org/10.1123/jpah.2018-0544)

^v Estyn (2019) *Healthy and happy – school impact on pupils' health and wellbeing* report. Cardiff: Crown copyright 2019 <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-report/healthy-and-happy-school-impact-pupils-health-and-wellbeing>

^{vi} National Assembly for Wales Health, Social Care and Sport Committee (2019) *Physical Activity of Children and Young People*. Cardiff: National Assembly for Wales Commission Copyright 2019.

^{vii} [The Committee on the Rights of the Child warns of the grave physical, emotional and psychological effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and calls on States to protect the rights of children](#)

^{viii} King-Sheard, M., Mannello, M. and Casey, T. (eds) (2018) *Access to Play for Children in Situations of Crisis: Play: rights and practice: A toolkit for staff, managers and policy makers*. Faringdon: International Play Association, page 4.

^{ix} Children's Commissioner for Wales (2020) *Coronavirus and Me*. Swansea: Children's Commissioner for Wales.

^x Children's Commissioner for Wales (2021) *Coronavirus and Me*. Swansea: Children's Commissioner for Wales.

^{xi} Children in Wales (2021) *Children and Young People's Consultation on the Ministerial Play Review*. Cardiff: Children in Wales.

^{xii} Health & Attainment of Pupils in a Primary Education Network (2020) *HAPPEN at Home Survey – Early Results for Schools report*. Swansea: HAPPEN; Children's Commissioner for Wales (2020) *Coronavirus and Me*. Swansea: Children's Commissioner for Wales.

^{xiii} Graber, K. M., Byrne, E. M., Goodacre, E. J., et al. A rapid review of the impact of quarantine and restricted environments on children's play and the role of play in children's health. *Child Care Health Dev.* 2021; 47: 143– 153. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cch.12832>

^{xiv} Ibid, page 1.

^{xv} See for instance: Russell, W. and Stenning, A. (2020) Beyond active travel: children, play and community on streets during and after the coronavirus lockdown, *Cities & Health*, DOI: [10.1080/23748834.2020.1795386](https://doi.org/10.1080/23748834.2020.1795386); Gill, T. and Monro-Miller, R. (2020) *Play in Lockdown: An international study of government and civil society responses to Covid-19*.

and their impact on children's play and mobility. Faringdon: International Play Association; Cartwright-Hatton, et al. (2020) *Play First: Supporting Children's Social and Emotional Wellbeing During and After Lockdown*. Brighton: University of Sussex.

^{xvi} See Play Wales website: [Play Sufficiency Research](#)

^{xvii} Russell, W., Barclay, M., Tawil, B. and Derry, C. (2020) *Making it Possible to do Play Sufficiency: Exploring the conditions that support local authorities to secure sufficient opportunities for children in Wales to play*, Cardiff: Play Wales.

^{xviii} <https://gov.wales/written-statement-update-ministerial-play-review? ga=2.179183204.1752561893.1578568171-2102679765.1568392042>

