

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar gyfer yr ymchwiliad: [A oes gan blant a phobl ifanc anabl fynediad cyfartal at addysg a gofal plant?](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) for the inquiry: [Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare?](#)

AEC 37

Ymateb gan: Chwarae Cymru

Response from: Play Wales

1.1 Play Wales, the national charity for play in Wales advocates for the right and need for all children to play. Our key areas:

- raising awareness
- promoting good practice
- providing advice and guidance across all sectors.

1.2 Our work includes:

- Policy: Working with others to inform the development of policy and other children's play issues
- Information service: Promoting the value of children's play by providing timely and current information
- Advice and support: Providing specialist knowledge about all issues that affect children's play
- Workforce development: Contributing to the professional development of the playwork and play workforces.

1.3 We worked closely with the Welsh Government to develop its Play Policy¹, Play Policy Implementation Plan and on its groundbreaking 'Play Sufficiency' legislation. Section 11 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010² places a duty on local authorities to assess and secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their area.

1.4 We also drafted the report for the Ministerial Review of Play Steering Group (2022) and accompanying background paper.³

1.5 Playing is the most natural and enjoyable way for children to be active, keep well and be happy. It is fundamental to children's wellbeing and healthy development as articulated in the Welsh Government Play Policy.

1.6 Play Wales is pleased to have an opportunity to input into this inquiry.

¹ <https://play.wales/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Play-Policy.pdf>

² <https://play.wales/play-policy-legislation/play-sufficiency/>

³ https://play.wales/news_category/ministerial-review-of-play-report-published/

1.7 Our contribution is informed by information gathered from our network of playwork teams and organisations working in community based staffed playwork provision across Wales.

1.8 We have structured our response based on the consultation document provided by the Committee, referring to the issues we have evidence for.

The extent to which children and learners are currently able to access all parts of childcare and education provision, including the way in which the curriculum is taught and extra-curricular activities.

1.9 Many local authority and voluntary sector playwork providers, which deliver a programme of provision, also offer supported spaces for disabled children. Most of this activity is during the school summer holidays. These spaces are dependent on a number of factors, such as:

- The extent of support needed (1:1 support is a challenge for providers)
- The skill set of staff
- The accessibility of buildings and spaces.

The extent to which children and young people have been excluded from aspects of education or childcare due to their disability or neurodivergence.

1.10 Parents report that the opportunities and provision available for disabled children is limited and can be difficult to find. There are various clubs, playwork settings and childcare provision for children who are neurotypical. This is not the always the case for neurodiverse and disabled children.

The extent to which families and children feel that they have been affected by direct, indirect or discrimination arising from disability.

1.11 The lack of specific, accessible buildings and play settings during the school holidays means that disabled children can feel singled out and often not provided with a fun and challenging place to play with peers. When these opportunities are available, they are often limited in terms of duration and the amount of sessions offered.

1.12 Through the Wales Children's Omnibus Survey (2022), Play Wales asked 379 children in full-time education a range of questions about their experiences of school playtime. 82% of children like play time as it enables them to be with friends. However, the data raises concerns, with 61% of children reporting that they have missed playtime. The most frequent reasons are to catch up with work or because a teacher felt that they misbehaved.

1.13 Play Wales has received queries from concerned parents which seems to suggest that this practice often relates to disabled and neurodiverse children.

1.14 The removal of break time as a punishment for behaviour and its inclusion within behavioural management policies can cause stigmatisation and conflicts with children's right to play. It can also be counterproductive, as it is often impacts most on children who find it difficult to focus in class and need to get out and move.

1.15 The Welsh Government's *Framework on embedding a whole school approach to emotional and mental well-being* makes this explicit – play should not be removed from children at school as a form of punishment.

1.16 The Welsh Government's Ministerial Review of Play Steering Group considered education and schools as a key theme. A key recommendation of the Steering Group report calls for an increase and improvement in play and break times in schools.

The impact of any lack of or limited access on a child or young person's mental health and well-being and educational outcomes | Whether disabled and neurodivergent children and parents of disabled and neurodivergent children have the same level of choice as other children and parents and what issues affect choice or school or childcare

1.17 The school holidays are difficult for all parents. Disabled and neurodiverse children do not appear to have the same choices as neurotypical children. As a result, they will find the holidays difficult due to lack of opportunities to play and socialise with friends and peers. This is detrimental to their development and progress made in term time and can setback their social development. In addition to the impact on longer term outcomes, Play Wales is concerned about the impact these limited opportunities have on the immediate wellbeing of children. We want all children to have a healthy and happy childhood through play.

The barriers for schools and childcare providers in offering accessible provision.

1.18 Some of the main reasons brought to our attention are:

- Lack of regular and sufficient funding
- Poor retention of staff due to low pay and lack of regular number of work hours available
- Increase of number of disabled children
- An increase in the number of parents who are seeking specific specialist provision
- Increased anxiety in parents of disabled children leading to worry about children being included in community based provision
- Lack of buildings that can cater to the increased needs of the children, such as, parking, location and accessibility
- Many special schools are well-equipped to provide specialist provision when it is needed; however, building work is often carried

out during the school holidays, meaning specialist provision is unable to operate. Staff who mainly work in these clubs during the school year are the Teaching and Learning Support Assistants who work all year round in the school. They often don't want to work during the holidays.

How well disabled and neurodivergent children and their families are consulted or informed of the choices in education or childcare available to them.

1.19 Play Wales has undertaken an analysis of the local authority Play Sufficiency Assessments (PSAs) and Play Action Plans submitted to the Welsh Government in June 2022.

1.20 The review analysis concluded that there appears to be a continued commitment to ensuring that the underpinning principles of consultation, participation and engagement are adhered to.

1.21 Focus groups with disabled children and parents of disabled children feature as activity across all Play Sufficiency Assessments and/or Play Action Plans.

1.22 The review identified a commitment by local authorities to undertake more in-depth consultation with children and communities. This is both as action research at neighbourhood level or with particular focus groups of children. This commitment is more common where there is play development capacity either within a local authority or a partner organisation.

Whether parents of disabled and neurodivergent children and the children themselves receive effective information and support from local authorities and schools

1.23 Parents report that they are not always aware of where they can find help, support, and provision for their children. The limited provision available isn't widely advertised and shared mainly with Child Health and Disability social workers (CHAD) who identify the most in need. These spaces are often limited due to the lack of staffing in the sector.

Conclusion

Meeting the play needs of all children through the provision of accessible and inclusive opportunities to play continues to be a priority for local authorities and

their partners in Wales. In the main, there appears to be a greater consideration to the general principles of inclusivity.

Although out of scope for this inquiry, our review of Play Sufficiency Assessments also considered opportunities to play for disabled children regarding accessibility to outdoor play spaces, such as play areas and playgrounds.

We would be happy to share this information should the Committee find it useful.