

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 75

Ymateb gan: Darlithydd, Ysgol Seicoleg Prifysgol Caerdydd

Response from: Lecturer, School of Psychology Cardiff University

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.

Thema 1: Addysg oedran ysgol | Theme 1: School-age education

Thema 2: Addysg bellach ac addysg uwch | Theme 2: Further and higher education

Thema 3: Iechyd a lles, gan gynnwys gofal cymdeithasol (i'r graddau y maent yn ymwneud â phlant a phobl ifanc) | Theme 3: Health and well-being, including social care (as they relate to children and young people)

Thema 4: Plant a phobl Ifanc | Theme 4: Children and young people

Play is a vital ingredient for happy and healthy childhoods. For young children growing up in the COVID-19 pandemic, their social experiences have been drastically transformed in ways which are likely to affect their social development. According to a survey of 23,700 children and young people between the ages of 3 and 18 in Wales, the biggest impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been "not being able to spend time with friends" (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2021). As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and social restrictions, children's opportunities to play with other children are vital to their recovery following a long period of uncertainty and confusion.



Research highlights the vital importance of play with other children for development and mental health. Our research lab in the Cardiff University Centre for Human Developmental Science is currently running projects investigating the importance of play in 5-to-8-year-old children living in the UK. Particularly, we are interested in how children's sharing of humour is one of the building blocks of warm and playful relationships that serves important cognitive, emotional, and social functions. In a recent study of children living in Wales, we found that children's humour relates to their tendency to engage in pretend play and ability to understand the thoughts and feelings of others. We are now running a major study, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (PI Dr Amy L. Paine, Cardiff University School of Psychology), to investigate how humour and play might act as a protective factor for child wellbeing.

More than ever, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a need to emphasise the importance of playful childhoods, and to give children opportunities to experience humour, silliness, and joy in the face of an uncertain and confusing situation. It is recommended that a top priority should be the recognition and support of children's development by prioritising play to help Wales build back better following the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions. This should be achieved by ensuring that every child is given the opportunity, freedom, and a safe and quality environment to play with others.

Evidence from Research:

Paine, A. L., Hashmi, S., Howe, N., Johnson, N., Scott, M., & Hay, D. F. (Under Review). "A pirate goes nee-nor-nee-nor!" Humor with siblings in middle childhood: A window to social understanding?

Hashmi, S., Gerson, S., A., Paine, A. L., Vanderwert, R. E. (2021). Doll play prompts social thinking and social talking: Representations of internal state language in the brain. *Developmental Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/desc.13163>

Hashmi, S., Paine, A. L., & Hay, D. F. (2021). Seven-year-olds' references to internal states in virtual and non-virtual contexts of play. *Infant and Child Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/icd.2223>

Paine, A. L., Karajian, G., Hashmi, S., Persram, R. J., & Howe, N. (2020). "Where's your bum brain?" Humour, social understanding, and sibling relationship quality in childhood. *Social Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12488>

Paine, A. L., Howe, N., Karajian, G., Hay, D. F., & DeHart, G. (2019). "H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, PEE! Get it? Pee!" Siblings' shared humour in childhood. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjdp.12277>

