

Dawn Bowden AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Plant a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Minister for Children and Social Care



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1485
Ein cyf/Our ref DB/10164/24
Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee
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Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 16 October regarding your committee's current consideration of the petition from Bleddyn Lake, which asks the Welsh Government to work with all relevant groups in Wales to introduce a nationwide network of toy libraries.

The Welsh Government places great value on play and its importance in the lives of children in our society. Wales was the first country to legislate, guaranteeing children's right to play in Wales. Under the legal duty, local authorities assess the sufficiency of play opportunities and secure, as far as is practicable, sufficient and inclusive play opportunities for children. Local authorities must undertake a Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) every 3 years and work with their partners to secure sufficient play opportunities that meet the needs of families in their areas, including those living in areas of deprivation and with diverse needs.

In accordance with [The Play Sufficiency Assessment \(Wales\) Regulations 2012](#), local authorities must include an action plan as part of the Play Sufficiency Assessment process. Where their assessment identifies an insufficiency in play opportunities for children in their area, they must set out what steps need to be taken to improve the opportunities for children to play or where sufficiency is identified, set out what steps need to be taken to maintain opportunities for children to play. The next full 3 year PSA is due to be submitted to the Welsh Government in June 2025.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

In response to recommendations made within the Ministerial Review of Play [report](#), we are working with Play Wales and the Local Authority Play Sufficiency Network in reviewing and refreshing the '[Wales - a Play Friendly Country](#)' Statutory Guidance. The guidance and accompanying toolkit support local authorities in assessing and, as far as is reasonably practicable, securing sufficient opportunities for children to play in their areas.

Each local authority will determine its priorities in securing sufficient play opportunities within its Play Action Plan in line with the Play Sufficiency Assessment process, which includes consultation with children, young people and their families.

In reviewing local authority Play Sufficiency Play Action Plan Progress Reports, there are examples of collaborative work between local authorities and their partners to support the availability of play opportunities, resources and equipment. Across Wales, partnership work is being undertaken to provide materials for play. This mainly includes the provision of resources in communities, childcare settings and schools. Most of these projects are providing what are known as 'loose parts', which are described in the Statutory Guidance as "natural and man-made materials that can be manipulated, moved and adapted, built and demolished". Such materials are cheap and accessible and can include sand, water, shells, fabric, buckets, boxes, rope, tyres, bottles, wood and scrap materials of all kinds that can be used to facilitate and encourage play.

The many benefits for children of playing with loose parts include increasing their levels of creative and imaginative play and helping them to be more physically active. Additionally, providing these everyday objects can help divert reusable waste away from landfill, whilst improving opportunities for play and creativity.

The Welsh Government provides a number of grant schemes, including the Childcare and Play Grant and the Playworks Holiday Project within the flexible funding Children and Communities Grant, which local authorities can access to work with partners to provide play resources, including toys. One example relates to a local authority supporting and promoting a play lending library as an active resource for play for families, professionals and the wider community through the use of the Childcare and Play element of the Welsh Government's Children and Communities Grant.

The Committee may also wish to note that since [Beyond Recycling](#) was published in 2021, the Welsh Government has invested over £4million through the Circular Economy Fund (CEF) to repair and re-use projects across Wales in collaboration with local authorities and third sector partners. This funding was awarded to build on previous successful rounds of CEF funding and has supported the creation of over 50 hubs, which includes those located in town centres.

We have also made significant investments into community organisations such as Benthg Cymru, which has enabled a broadening of their network of 'Libraries of Things' to 23 sites across Wales. They have leased items over 15,000 times leading to estimated carbon savings of 180,000 kg of CO₂e. The vast majority of items they stock are second-hand donations or purchases, meaning they are both diverting valuable material from landfill and replacing purchasing from new.

We are currently evaluating the CEF funding provided to date, which will allow us to accurately determine the impact of this and future interventions in Wales.

I hope the Petitions Committee will find this reply helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dawn Bowden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a long, sweeping underline.

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