

Briefing for the Petitions Committee

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 13 Mawrth 2018

Petitions Committee | 13 March 2018

Research Briefing: We need Welsh Government funding for play

Petition number: P-05-804

Petition title: **We need Welsh Government funding for play**

Text of petition: We call on the National Assembly for Wales to provide annual designated funding to provide financial support to all Local Authorities in fulfilling their duty in line with their Play Sufficiency Assessments in order to avoid further closure of open access play provision such as RAY Ceredigion.

Legal position

Wales was the first country to legislate for children's play, under the [Children and Families \(Wales\) Measure 2010](#). Section 11 of the Measure requires local authorities to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area for children and to secure sufficient play opportunities, so far as reasonably practicable. Local Authorities are also required to publish information about play opportunities in their areas and keep this information up to date.

To support Local Authorities to undertake their duties, the Welsh Government produced [Wales: A Play Friendly Country, Statutory Guidance](#) on assessing for and securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas. The guidance gives details as to the nine matters which local authorities need to take account of in this regard. It does not specifically reference funding. One of these 'matters' relates to 'Charges for play provision'. It includes the following:

Play opportunities in open spaces and outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces (Matter C) will, other than in exceptional circumstances, be free of charge to children and any accompanying adults. Supervised provision both for playwork provision and structured recreational activities (Matter D) may incur a cost to children and their families. This could be through voluntary contributions, entry charges and payment or subscriptions for activities. A further cost could be for transport to these opportunities (Matter F). Any charges will clearly affect whether a wide range of play opportunities are available for all children and therefore the sufficiency of provision for a particular area. It should

be appreciated that even relatively small costs for low income families with several children can mean that opportunities are not available to these children.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment should show which play opportunities involve a charge and the amount of that charge. It should take into account the extent to which any charges

affect the sufficiency of play opportunities for:-

- Children living in low income families.
- Children living in areas of deprivation.
- Children living in rural areas.
- Disabled children or children with particular needs.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment and Play Action Plans should show the extent to which Local Authorities take charges into account for these children and their families and the measures used to mitigate these circumstances including:

- Provision of no cost opportunities for children to play.
- No or low charges for Local Authority premises used for play provision.
- **Grants or subsidies for play providers. [Bold is our emphasis]**
- Subsidised transport costs for children travelling to play opportunities.

Information of no or low cost play provision will be accessible via the Family Information Service available in each local authority area.

Ceredigion's Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan

The website of the Family Information Service includes a [summary of the Play Sufficiency Assessment for 2016](#) alongside [Ceredigion's Play Action Plan 2017-19](#). The summary document states:

A lack of funding or capacity resulted in some deterioration, for example:

In 2013 the Local Authority was working in partnership with RAY Ceredigion to deliver the Child's Play project and "offer play provision which offers a rich play environment." The Child's Play project enabled a high level of excellent play provision across the county. Play provision was severely compromised when the Child's Play project ended in December 2014. (Status changed from Green to Amber)

Conclusion

We are making slow and steady progress towards the provision of sufficient play opportunities for children and young people in Ceredigion despite the current economic climate.

It goes on to say:

We will now be looking to the future and linking our Play Sufficiency Assessment requirements to the development of the new Wellbeing Plans required under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act. This gives us an opportunity to re-position play within the wider wellbeing agenda as part of the Public Service Board priorities.

Welsh Government funding for play

Funding for local authority play provision primarily comes from the Revenue Support Grant but there is also grant funding provided to some national organisations. Further detail is set out below:

Revenue Support Grant

The [Welsh Government's website](#) states:

Well over 80 per cent of local authority spending is met from support provided to local authorities in the form of Revenue Support Grant (RSG), non-domestic rates and a variety of grants provided for specific policy purposes in areas such as education and transport.

It also states:

The Welsh Governments distributes RSG to local authorities using a commonly agreed formula. Local authorities are responsible for deciding how they spend their allocation of RSG on the services for which they are responsible, which includes schools. **The underlying principle of the local government settlement is that funding is not earmarked for particular services. The Welsh Government does not set targets for local authority expenditure. [Bold is our emphasis]**

Welsh Government grant funding

In November 2018, as part of scrutiny of the Draft Budget 2018–19, the Welsh Government provided a [paper](#) to the Children, Young People and Education Committee. In respect of funding for play it referred to:

Providing local authorities with **£2.3m** funding each year since 2012 to support local authorities to meet gaps identified through their childcare sufficiency assessments and their play sufficiency assessments.

Referring to past funding it outlined that the Children and Families Delivery Grant (CFDG) from October 2014 to 30 September 2017. One aim of this grant was to increase opportunities for children in Wales to play. The grant for play awarded to Groundwork Wales ended in September 2017. The grant for Play Wales were extended to March 2018. The Welsh Government explain:

Wales was the first country to place play on a statutory basis in recognition of its significant contribution to children and young people's physical, social and cognitive development and wellbeing. Play Wales has a strategic role in supporting local authorities to deliver their statutory duties in relation to play and in supporting the Welsh Government to take the play agenda forward in Wales. It was in recognition of this that I decided to extend the funding for Play Wales beyond September 2017 for a further 6 months, bringing the total amount of funding to £360k in 2017–18. I am currently considering a business plan to provide future support to Play Wales from 2018–19 onwards.

RAY Ceredigion

[Ray Ceredigion](#) is a registered charity which runs a range of activities for children. The Charity Commissions [website](#) states:

RAY Ceredigion supports children and young people out of school and those that work or volunteer with them including in open access play and childcare settings. We work to increase understanding of and to support children and young people's right to play, leisure and recreation. RAY Ceredigion covers the county of Ceredigion in West Wales.

The website also states that its income in the year ending March 2017 was £194.5K compared to an income in February 2014 of £406.1K. Its [Statement of Financial Activities](#) in the year ending March 2017 provides further details of this income.

National Assembly for Wales

The Children and Young People Committee of the Third Assembly published a [report on Safe Places to Play and Hang Out](#) in 2010.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.