

11 March 2019

Petition P-05-804 We need Welsh Government funding for play!!

Dear Mr Rowlands

Further to your correspondence dated 1st February to seek Play Wales'

- views on the issue raised by the petition generally;
- information about the reviews of Play Sufficiency Assessments and Action Plans, and
- response to the comments made by the petitioners over your social campaign.

I have provided Play Wales' response below.

About Play Wales

Play Wales is the national charity for children's play. We work to raise awareness of children and young people's need and right to play and to promote good practice at every level of decision making and in every place where children might play. We provide advice and guidance to support all those who have an interest in, or responsibility for providing for children's play so that one day Wales will be a place where we recognise and provide well for every child's play needs. Our team of six works across Wales – our work includes:

- Policy
- Information service
- Advice and support
- Workforce development.



One day Wales will be a place where we recognise and provide for every child's play needs

Un dydd bydd Cymru'n wlad ble y byddwn yn cydnabod ac yn darparu ar gyfer anghenion chwarae pob plentyn

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Our views on the issue raised by the petition

The issues raised by the petitioner appear to relate most specifically to the funding for infrastructure and staffed playwork provision.

It is salient to note that at the time of the introduction of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, the inclusion of the Play Sufficiency Duty was predicated on an understanding that there would be no additional funding and that local authorities would not be required to spend new money; rather to best meet the duty they should consider spending existing monies differently.

That said, Play Wales has long campaigned for specific and continued funding for play since its establishment in 1998.

It is important to note that since 2012-13, local authorities have been allocated approximately £9,000,000 by Welsh Government (through reallocated budgets) to respond to their respective local play sufficiency actions. Within their action plans, local authorities are considering and including actions which might be progressed should funding become available. So, although there are capacity and timing issues with short-term and one-off funding, it appears that most local authorities (if their local spending procedures allow) are relatively well prepared to respond when funds requiring a spend within a short time frame become available. It should be noted, however, that this might not be as effective as a commitment of the same sum of regular funding for long-term strategic actions. That said, we understand that any funding available is being used to good effect regardless of the time frame available.

Whilst there are concerns that the allocation of funding through one-off grants results in short-term actions or activity regarding grants, it is our view that this funding has enabled local authorities to respond to local play provision deficiencies. However, we are concerned that local voluntary play organisations, such as the petitioner, may not be receiving the most effective benefit from this funding. This issue might be addressed by stronger accompanying guidance from Welsh Government when funds are released.

Information about our reviews of Play Sufficiency Assessments and Action Plans

Play Wales has undertaken annual analysis of the local authority play sufficiency progress reviews and action plans submitted to Welsh Government in September 2017 and June 2018. A review of full statutory Play Sufficiency Assessments submitted by local authorities was also undertaken in 2016. During each of the reviews, Play Wales has been asked to provide overview of specific areas:

- 2016 – an analysis of Matter G (Workforce Development)
- 2017 – an identification of issues, examples of good practice and challenges and barriers which might be addressed by the various Welsh Government policy areas covered in Matter I (Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas). Welsh Government also asked for information about play opportunities for disabled children with particular regard to accessibility to play areas and spaces. Information regarding this was presented in a separate paper, *Accessibility of play spaces for disabled children*.
- 2018 – actions assessed locally as progressing at red or amber level to inform the possible allocation of funding should it become available.

In these reviews, Play Wales was asked to provide an overview of:

- Progress being made in each local authority in Wales
- Progress on actions of national interest.

Analysis of the documentation indicates that the Play Sufficiency Duty continues to serve as a national driver for the planning of play provision locally. Across Wales it appears that progress has been made in terms of meeting some of the Play Sufficiency Action Plans. However, this is largely due to the additional All Wales Play Opportunities Grants allocated to local authorities by Welsh Government in February 2017 and November 2018.

Information provided in the reports and action plan varies across Wales; this is to be expected. The breadth of the Matters, the varying capacity of local authorities and the historic models of delivery across local authorities makes a pan Wales analysis problematic. That said, the cost of officer time continues to be consistently identified as the most significant obstacle to progressing actions within the Play Sufficiency Action Plans. Furthermore, it was foreseeable that increasingly severe financial restrictions are resulting in a reduction in capacity of local authorities and their partners, which is significantly impacting on the progress in addressing identified priorities.

However, the findings of the reviews indicate that despite significant and unprecedented financial pressures being faced by local authorities, there have been attempts at progressing actions throughout Wales. There appears to be good collaboration interdepartmentally within local authorities. This is most evident in those areas with a designated play sufficiency lead officer.

Local funding cuts, a national re-focus on Families First and the decision to close the Communities First programme, feature across all the progress reports as contributing to the uncertainty and challenge of sustaining levels of staffed play provision.

It is of concern to Play Wales that whilst the Welsh Government originally introduced the second part of the Play Sufficiency Duty on a 'cost neutral basis', with a clear message that there would be no further funding, there was an implicit expectation that there would be no less investment by local authorities in support of children's play.

Play Wales social change campaign

The Play Wales *Playful Childhoods* campaign helps parents, carers, grandparents and community groups to give children good opportunities to play at home and in their neighbourhoods. A key aspect of this campaign was the launch, in October 2018, of a new bilingual website – [Playful Childhoods | Plentyndod Chwareus](#).

During the summer of 2018 Play Wales directly facilitated seven 'Right to Play' roadshows across Wales. We worked with local play providers to engage with the general public to discuss the right and need to play in and around communities and the importance of communities taking action to protect this right. We produced promotional materials that highlight the importance of play and signpost people to our *Playful Childhoods | Plentyndod Chwareus* website.

Our initial engagement was located in areas with a deficit of local play associations. We are currently fundraising with a view to deliver similar roadshows in other parts of Wales. In this phase of promotion and engagement, it is our plan to work with local play providers and organisations (such as the petitioner) to help them to better promote the right to play along with their local services.

At the time of the launch of the website, we circulated a bilingual media pack to a range of partners (including the petitioner), asking them to help us to spread the word about *Playful Childhoods*. As well as introducing the new website, we provided a range of resources to help in sharing the information with local networks:

- Text for websites, newsletters and e-bulletins
- Social media posts and hashtags
- Photos and graphics
- Information posters.

The *Playful Childhoods | Plentyndod Chwareus* campaign is a slight departure for Play Wales from previous work, which focuses on a professional and semi-professional audience. *Playful Childhoods | Plentyndod Chwareus* provides an opportunity for us to more effectively support a non-professional audience – parents and the general public – with accessible information and support.

The website is successfully reaching its target audience – parents, carers and grandparents and feedback to date is overwhelmingly positive. We are also reaching and engaging with the target audience via the *Playful Childhoods | Plentyndod Chwareus* Facebook and Instagram pages.

Since the launch, it has also become clear that the website and accompanying resources, such as the *Playful Parenting booklet*, are valuable and useful for professionals working with children and families. We have received a number of requests for hard copies of our resources and materials to create a visual display at settings such as Family Information Centres.

Should you require clarification of any of the issues or have further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Greenaway', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Greenaway
Director