Exploring Play Sufficiency:
a report on the webinar series January – May 2025

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Exploring Play Sufficiency webinar series

Note: ChatGPT has been used to inform this report in some places. Occasionally, direct wording from ChatGPT has been used, but only when checked carefully against the transcripts and agreed by speakers.

The *Exploring Play Sufficiency* webinar series ran from January to May 2025. It was funded by the University of Gloucestershire, curated by Dr Wendy Russell (Senior Research Fellow, UoG) and Mike Barclay and Ben Tawil (Ludicology), chaired by Wendy Russell, and supported by Play Wales.

Wales was the first country to introduce a statutory Play Sufficiency Duty on local authorities, requiring them to assess and secure sufficient play opportunities for children as a part of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure in 2010. The idea was incorporated into the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment 17 on article 31, children's right to play, which was published in 2013 following a campaign spearheaded by the International Play Association. GC17 recommended that governments legislate for children's play using the principle of play sufficiency. Scotland introduced a Play Sufficiency Duty as a part of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. At the time of writing, we do not know of other countries who have introduced a statutory Play Sufficiency Duty.

There were four webinars in the series:

1. Introduction to the concept of play sufficiency, its history and some key principles
2. Examples of play sufficiency operating at national level
3. Examples of play sufficiency operating at local government level
4. Examples of play sufficiency operating at neighbourhood level

The webinars proved to be very popular, with over 270 people registered for the first one, across 17 different countries and a spread of practitioners and policy people across a range of professional areas such as playwork, early years, health care, planning, urban design, national and local government and more. Subsequent webinars had lower numbers, but always over 150. Actual attendances were lower than the numbers registered, but attendances (counted as individual log-ins) averaged out at around 70 people. Evaluations showed a high level of satisfaction with the format and content, and a sizeable interest in continuing the discussion through a Play Sufficiency Forum.

The webinars were recorded and published on a dedicated *Exploring Play Sufficiency* YouTube channel.

This report aims to summarise the information and discussions had during the webinars. Information is current for when the webinar was held, but this is a fast-moving issue in the UK, and there will have been some changes since the webinars. Occasionally, where an update is simple, for example the publication of an imminent document referenced by presenters, we have included that.

Appendix 1 has the biographies of all contributors.

Webinar 1: Introducing Play Sufficiency

This introductory session, held on 21 January 2025, aimed to set the scene for the whole series and introduce the concept of play sufficiency through:

1. looking at the background and history of the concept with those who were there at the start: Mike Greenaway (Director of Play Wales), Theresa Casey (independent writer and consultant, then president of the International Play Association, IPA) and Keith Towler (Chair of Play Wales and past Children's Commissioner for Wales)
2. introducing key principles and conceptual tools that Wendy Russell and Ludicology been developing through our research and play sufficiency (Mike Barclay and Ben Tawil from Ludicology).

A bit of history (Mike Greenaway, Theresa Casey and Keith Towler)

Mike Greenaway spoke about the origins of the concept of play sufficiency within Wales, and the role of Play Wales, the NGO for play in Wales, where he has been the Director since its inception in 1998. From the outset, legislating for play was a goal, and this was realised over a period of time, working closely with the newly devolved government in Wales, initially called the Welsh Assembly Government and now the Welsh Government. The Welsh Assembly Government commissioned Play Wales to produce a 'State of Play' report that recommended the adoption of a Play Policy, which was finally agreed in 2002. The Play Policy was a broad statement of intent, with a commitment to produce a play strategy. Recognising that children's opportunities to play were affected by the actions of many governmental departments, the government established a cross-departmental working group to work on a play strategy, with Play Wales providing the secretariat. The Play Policy Implementation Group recognised then that there was a need for legislation that placed a statutory duty on local authorities to provide for children's play. The Play Policy Implementation Plan was published in 2006, and although there was no action attached to the recommendation for a statutory duty, discussion began a couple of years later to draft the legislation. During the drafting process, which drew both on the legislation for statutory youth services and on the 1944 Education Act (repealed in 1996), lawyers struggled with the vagueness of the idea of sufficiency until it was pointed out that the 1944 Education Act had placed a statutory duty on local authorities to secure "adequate" facilities for recreation, including, amongst many other things, playgrounds and play centres (section 53). However, the 1944 Education Act did not include any duty to assess adequacy/sufficiency, nor any oversight to ensure implementation. Eventually, play sufficiency legislation was included in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure in 2010, which mostly was an expedient move, as it happened to be the best place for a Play Sufficiency Duty at that time. Initially it was a miscellaneous item, but by the end of the drafting process for that Measure it was Chapter 2 in its entirety.

Theresa Casey then spoke about the inclusion of the idea of play sufficiency in General Comment 17 on article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). At the time, Theresa was president of the International Play Association and worked with other international children's organisations to lead a campaign to ask the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for a General Comment on article 31. A General Comment is an official document produced by UN Committees to address an area of a Convention that is overlooked, misunderstood or poorly implemented, and is issued to all the governments that have ratified that Convention. It does not add to any obligations on governments, but explains how governments should be implementing that particular aspect, in this case article 31 of the UNCRC. It was not long after the 1989 publication of the UNCRC itself that people began referring to article 31 as the forgotten article. Governments' reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child rarely mentioned play, nor was the Committee including it in the concluding observations back to governments. The International Play Association (IPA) was very concerned about how children's right to play was being overlooked, being seen as either trivial or a luxury, something to consider once other rights had been addressed. There was a similar sense of erasure amongst members of the Committee also, with one supportive member, Lothar Krappmann, commenting that it was good that the Committee and IPA had found each other. IPA is an international member organisation with no paid staff and few resources, but a lot of passion and commitment, and the IPA committee could see that "there were things that were happening around the world for children that could be made better if we could put a focus on children's play". The campaign for a General Comment was built by bringing together key international organisations as co-signatories, writing frequently to the UN Committee and working to gather evidence for the need for a General Comment. Two key pieces of work, supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, were a Working Paper on *Children's Right to Play: An examination of the importance of play in the lives of children worldwide* and global consultations on infringements of children's right to play in eight countries. The process of working with many people to gather the evidence and of frequent communication with the UN Committee meant that, when the Committee did agree to have General Comment on article 31, a lot of the ground work had been done. Although the original campaign was for a General Comment on children's play, in the end the agreement was for a General Comment on all aspects of article 31.

Following this, Keith Towler talked about the process of drafting the General Comment from his perspective as Children's Commissioner for Wales at the time. He had been struck by how much play was an issue when he spoke to children in Wales in different contexts – hospital, school, children's prison, care settings – and felt that children's voices had to be heard about a clear insufficiency of opportunities to play. Early discussions drafting the General Comment were about what children might think play sufficiency looked like internationally, and this included situations such as war zones

and other situations of crisis. The role of a Children's Commissioner is about holding governments to account, and the discussions on how far the General Comment could make specific requirements of governments concluded by acknowledging this was not the purpose of a General Comment, which was more about providing interpretation and analysis of specific UNCRC articles so that States have guidance around putting these into practice.

Theresa added that although there were some references to sufficient opportunities through early drafts, there was not anything specific in the final section that addressed governments' obligations to respect, protect and fulfil children's article 31 rights until quite late in the drafting process. The final version of General Comment 17opens this section with reference to sufficiency, stating:

> The Committee strongly encourages States to consider introducing legislation to ensure the rights under article 31 for every child, together with a timetable for implementation. Such legislation should address the principle of sufficiency – all children should be given sufficient time and space to exercise these rights.

In this way, the principle of sufficiency is embedded in the rest of the section.

Mike elaborated further by saying that they had commissioned Gerison Lansdown to lead the drafting of the General Comment, which is a quasi-legal document with a prescribed structure. They were able to brief her well to include principles into the required structure, including the importance of children having time, space and permission to play, and the importance of local authorities working cross-departmentally.

Play Sufficiency: Principles, Concepts and Application (Mike Barclay and Ben Tawil)

The second part of the webinar saw Mike Barclay and Ben Tawil talk about principles, concepts and application of play sufficiency. This section of the report is taken from an article they published on LinkedIn on 23 January 2025, itself based on their presentation.

Relational Capabilities Approach to Playing and Being Well

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment 17 and Wales' Play Sufficiency Duty explicitly highlight the need for a new approach to children's right to play. Historically, in the UK and much of the minority world we've been caught up in a view of children that sees them in terms of what they will become: producing and consuming adult citizens. This view often reduces play to either an immature frivolity or an instrument for development. This dominant lens has shaped and prioritised some policies, practices, spatial arrangements, and cultural values over

others. For example, prioritising the movement of vehicles, goods and workers has seen children withdrawn from the streets as a space for play. Prioritising the privatisation of space, and bringing every small space into use for housing, commerce, industry or traffic flow has seen a reduction in the spaces where children can play. Prioritising formal learning in schools has seen a shortening of play times. Prioritising child development has seen a focus on educational out-of-school activities, leaving less time for unstructured playing. This is to say nothing of the massive expansion of the toy and gaming industry and private pay-for-play places.

This phenomenon has been referred to as a perfect storm where the unintended consequences of prioritising the economy over other aspects of wellbeing has reduced the time, space and permission for children's self-organised neighbourhood play. Children's outdoor play has been increasingly confined to designated play areas, mostly the playground, and whilst these are valuable community assets, children's play is often seen as out of place anywhere else. This is a form of social and spatial injustice where children to a large degree no longer have access to what the wider public realm has to offer.

What is refreshing about both GC17 and the Play Sufficiency Duty is the directive to do things differently, to try to develop a new lens, a new way of seeing children, childhood and their play. This was exemplified in the Deputy Minister's speech introducing the Welsh Play Sufficiency Duty when they emphatically stated:

> This duty means readdressing the dire way in which children's play has been provided for, requiring a radical rethink about why play matters, where and when play takes place, and who has responsibilities for it. This is more than just counting playgrounds!

The new way of thinking that was influencing the developments of both GC17 and the Play Sufficiency Duty has continued to evolve and it is one that acknowledges children's right to participate fully in public life, largely through play. It highlights the importance of formal and informal spaces and their accessibility, diversity, and quality and also that opportunities for play in schools, health centres, youth spaces and beyond must be considered alongside the broader systems of governance that influence children's play. These might include policies and plans associated with health and wellbeing, planning, housing, and education for example. This holistic effort cannot be confined to one department or funding stream, rather it involves a meshwork of relationships among children, adults, professionals, organisations, and systems, as well as resources, objects, and less tangible factors like sensations and desires.

Over years of our work with play sufficiency and informed by the recent literature review we carried out with Wendy Russell; this approach has evolved into what is described as a Relational Capability Approach for playing and being well. This approach emphasises the dynamic and reciprocal relationships between children and the various dimensions

of their lives—physical, emotional, social, economic, and political. Influenced by both Amartya Sen's and Martha Nussbaum's Capability Approach, it foregrounds social and spatial justice and defines a good life as one where individuals have the capability to pursue what they value. For children, the capability to play means having the time, space and permission to play and being able to make the most of those resources and opportunities.

This presents a strong ethical, moral, economic and social argument for adults to work towards producing those conditions through both policies and practices.

The principle of play sufficiency is about much more than designated play provision alone. Play is not simply confined to specific times and spaces. Playing is a fluid and polymorphous process that emerges wherever and whenever conditions allow. Whilst children have the capacity for playing and being well, converting that capacity to a capability is largely relationally dependent on the conditions available to them. As such it is the job of those involved in play sufficiency to work with that meshwork of relationships, leveraging their capability to work towards producing the social, environmental and personal conditions through both policies and practices for children to play and in so doing, creating the capability for children to support their own wellbeing.

This vignette describes just one small place where children have historically played and continue to do so, it alludes to the meshwork of relationships, capabilities and conditions in play in just one place where playing is commonplace.

In a suburb of a small city, a large tree with three rope swings, located in a wider grassy area, has become a focal point for children's play. Children aged approximately 8 to 12 can often be found swinging, climbing, and playing around it. The main swing, which dates back six or seven years, was originally installed by the owner of a nearby house, but recent additions have been made by local children, including a 12-year-old boy who also built a small tree den.

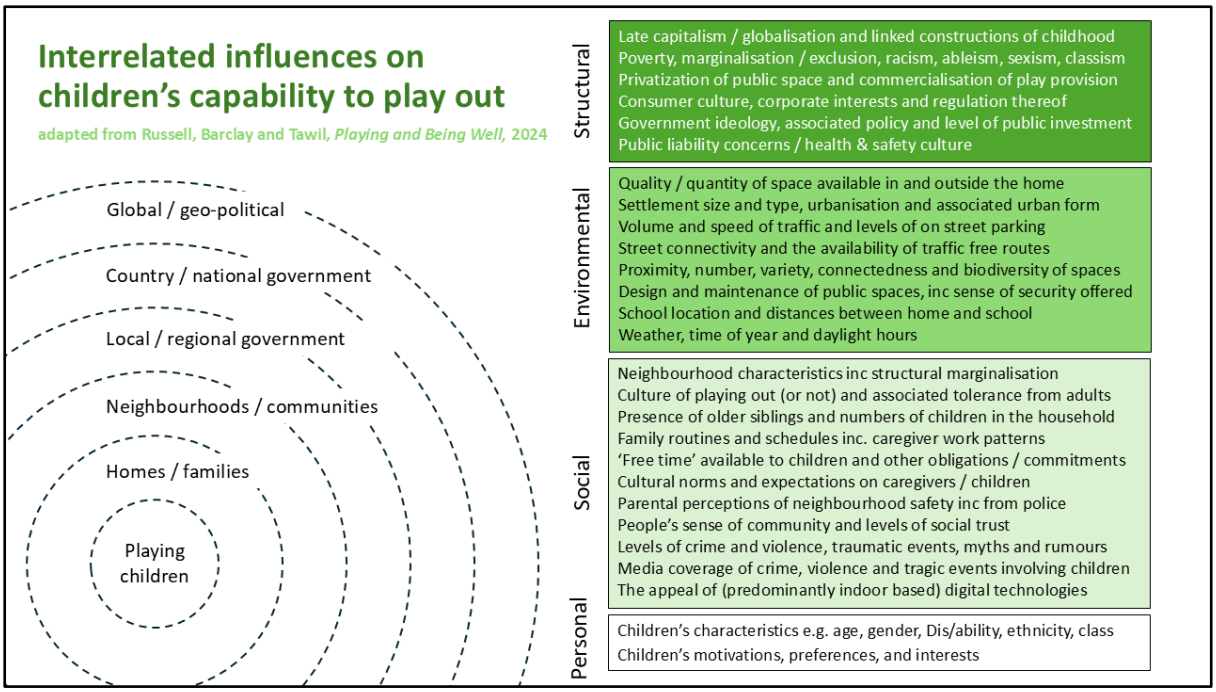
The housing estate consists of terraced houses with rear gardens and driveways. One house on a corner plot, overlooking the rope swings, features a communal-style front garden where the children also congregate. The crescent-shaped road in front of the houses is low traffic and safe enough for children to roam. Across the grassy strip, however, lies a busier A-road, seldom crossed by unaccompanied children. However, there is a big tree stump next to this busy road which children have used for a variety of purposes, including as a stall for selling refreshments.

Children from the local area, many of whom have played at the swing since they were toddlers, now come without adults and bring friends. Families and teenagers passing through also stop for a quick swing. The grass beneath is worn bare, a testament to the swing's popularity. This patch of land is owned by a local housing association, whose maintenance workers are often seen looking at the swings, but they haven't taken them down.

Variables Influencing Children's Play Patterns

That's just one every day but life-affirming example of children's play. If we take a moment to consider what contributes to that scenario, it quickly becomes evident that children's capability to play and their associated play patterns are relationally produced and co-dependent on a multitude of inter-related personal, social, environmental and structural factors and forces that, in this scenario, combine to create localised conditions that render this space more rather than less open to the possibility of playing.

This includes the proximity of the space to homes, the arrangement of housing, the presence of trees, the low level of traffic, the number of children in the neighbourhood, the tolerance of adults and so on. We can think of these as variables influencing children's play, which operate at various scales from children's personal characteristics and preferences to their social and environmental experiences of home, neighbourhoods and communities, through to the organisational and structural influences of local and national governance and even broader geo-political issues. In our literature review, Playing and Being Well, we include a list of such variables identified through research that influence children's opportunities for play as identified in the following image (which has been updated since publishing this article on LinkedIn).



This isn't an exhaustive list, but it serves to demonstrate the range of influencing variables that adults need to pay attention to when assessing and evaluating how children's opportunities to play are shaped by the hyperlocal and wider context of their lives. In doing so, those making such assessments will be better placed to identify actions that can protect and enhance assets that support play, as well as reduce constraints on children's freedom to play. This means we've got a lot more to think about when it comes to children's play but fortunately, there are places where these variables work in support of children's continued desire to play out, which we can learn a lot from.

The vignette below, developed out of a play sufficiency assessment we did with a local authority in Wales, captures the interrelatedness of a whole bunch of variables and how they have worked together, in this case, to create conditions supporting play sufficiency.

> This is a semi-rural village, with a population of around 1000 inhabitants. The village starts at the bottom of a valley and extends upwards on the steep valley side. It's a former coal mining community, most people know each other and have lived in the village most, if not all, of their lives.
>
> The village comprises of mostly terraced housing built around streets and cul-de-sacs snaking their way up the steep sides of the valley. This slows moving cars down but moving and parked cars are common. As are multiple pathways, some official some not, that have been worn over generations as the quickest way to get from one place to the next. There is woodland, a small river, small fishing lake – all on the edges of the village. The village itself is situated between three formal playgrounds at each of its three furthermost points.

A group of 10 children aged ten or eleven who live in various places across the village report playing out most days. Most of them can identify by name 10 to 16 places they play. When asked about playing they rarely mention playing at home. They talk about destinations for playing and the incidental features along their routes as they wayfare across their community. They all watch YouTube, play on phones, have homework, and do occasional organised activities, but these are all in addition to playing out with friends, not instead of.

Play Sufficiency as an Organising Principle

The principle of play sufficiency offers a radical and powerful way of rethinking our priorities for children, families and communities. By prioritising play alongside other adult agendas and positioning play as central to our thinking, we can ensure children and their way of engaging with the world have much greater influence over how we govern and the design of environments and services we create for people.

Play is central to children's lives and to their being well. Children, their play and wellbeing are also unsurprisingly a priority for their parents and carers. Playing out is a significant positive influence on social cohesion and the development of wider social community networks amongst both adults and children. Finally, most adults, even if they aren't parents, remember playing fondly and value efforts to support it and can see the wider benefits of those efforts on community sociability and interaction. It is because of this interrelatedness that play sufficiency is a good organising principle for local authorities and local communities because it requires adults to pay greater attention to the ways their decisions and actions support or constrain children's ability

to find time and space to play and can be a shared agenda around which efforts to improve things can be arranged, coordinated and implemented.

In our experiences of working with adults, we have found that when given the opportunity to use the concepts we present today as ways of influencing their thinking they have quickly come to realise the unintended consequences of existing policies and practices and been able to identify ways in which those policies and practices can be rearranged to better support the conditions that support play. Equally we have found that adults working with the principle of play sufficiency have found it deeply motivating and transformative.

Account-ability and Response-ability

The concept of play sufficiency provides a lens through which we can examine a wide range of issues and variables to consider how they impact on the rights of children and explore how they might be re-imagined and re-arranged to create more favourable conditions for playing. This is, as we have described, transformative for those who are open to working with this principle. But this is more than just a concept, there are tried and tested ways of 'doing' play sufficiency. We're particular fans of the cyclical nature of the Welsh Duty which was introduced in two parts, the duty to assess the sufficiency of children's opportunities to play and the duty to secure play sufficiency.

There is both a research and action element which brings us to the idea that this ongoing process of play sufficiency is dependent on both the account-ability and response-ability of adults, with these dual processes being mutually dependent: our ability to change the way we respond to children's play depends on how we're accounting for it and our influences upon it.

Account-ability in this context is about our ability as adults to take account of children's everyday play lives, to understand the conditions children and their caregivers are experiencing in their immediate localities and how these shape opportunities for play.

Account-ability is then also about accounting for the ways in which we as adults have an impact (both positively and negatively, directly and indirectly) on children's capability to find time and space for play.

Throughout our experiences of doing play sufficiency, research with children has been a catalyst for change. But if we're serious about securing play sufficiency for all children we need a strategic and robust approach both in terms of generating credible evidence on which to base our interventions as well as evaluating the results.

This is where combining research methods is important. Quantitative surveys are useful for generating a large response rate, establishing a baseline and key performance indicators, as well as identifying generalised trends in children's play patterns, and differences in those experiences across communities. But to really understand why

things are the way they are and what we might do in response requires more qualitative research at a hyperlocal level including face-to-face research with children and detailed spatial audits.

Paying Attention to Difference

There isn't one universal version of childhood but many diverse childhoods and therefore many different experiences in terms of opportunities for play influenced by age, gender, location, dis/ability, class, ethnicity, race, religion and so on. These variables intersect to create a kaleidoscope of experiences. By paying attention to these diverse and different experiences we can build a picture of who is and who isn't experiencing play sufficiency and importantly, the reasons for this.

A clear example of this element of the work comes from work we did with a local authority on the experiences of play (in)sufficiency. As a part of their more general play sufficiency assessment they had identified children experiencing low levels of satisfaction with their opportunities for play and predicted this may be because of their particular protected characteristics. We were commissioned to help with this work and worked with five cohorts of children, all between 10-14: children who were also carers, children with English as a second language, gypsy Romany traveller children, rurally isolated and children educated outside of mainstream school in a pupil referral unit. The following vignette focuses on the last of these groups.

> Children educated in the Pupil Referral Unit faced unique challenges in their play experiences. Due to space and resource limitations, their play often consisted of

structured, sedentary activities, offering little escape from the constraints of the classroom.

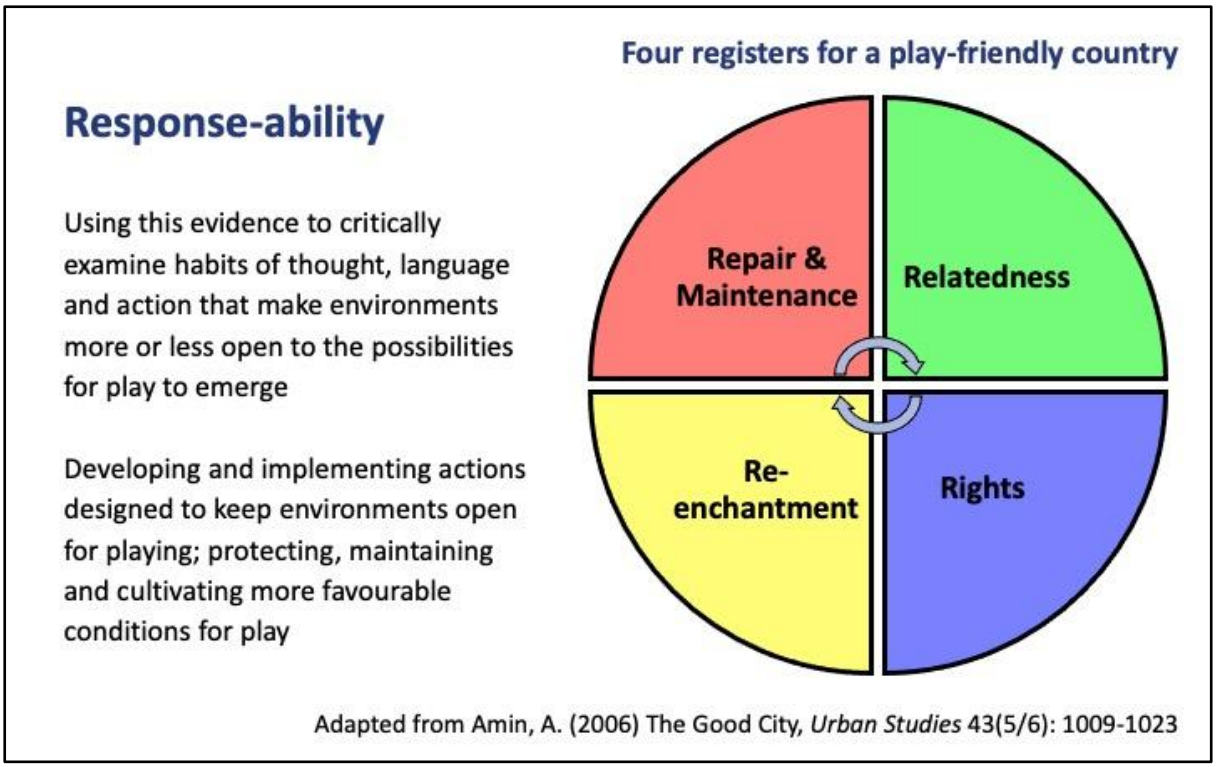
Breaks and playtimes were often earned through a points system which further limited their opportunities for play. The Pupil Referral Unit worked with children from both junior and secondary and the small space available for play poorly facilitated their varied play preferences. Contests amongst younger and older children were common over scarce resources and opportunities for play was further constrained by rules put in place to reduce disturbance to those people living in residential properties adjacent to the school.

Beyond school, children reported minimal or no opportunities to play outside the home. For some, bullying, neighbourhood safety concerns and parental fears over accusations of anti-social behaviour limited them from playing out independently. As a result, their play was often confined to screen-based activities at home. This reliance on virtual entertainment was often reinforced by parents and support services, as a way to ensure safety or manage behaviour. Children attending the Pupil Referral Unit outside of their neighbourhood experienced isolation from their neighbourhood playmates and peers limiting their connectedness to their local community and neighbourhood friendship networks. The resultant effect was that their friendship networks were made up of friends from a diverse geographic area that they only met during school term time.

As one practitioner remarked, school is often the only place where meaningful play can happen for these children, highlighting the need for more robust and inclusive play provision. For these children a quality school play time intervention could significantly increase their opportunities to play as could the provision of some form of neighbourhood playwork project where trained staff may give parents confidence to allow their children to attend and where those children can be supported to interact and integrate with their local neighbourhood peers once more.

Response-ability

What that vignette alludes to in its concluding section is the other aspect of play sufficiency, our response-ability, which is about taking this evidence and comparing it with various areas of policy and practice to explore the extent to which the way we do things supports or constrains children's play. This is about critiquing our habits of thought, language and action that make environments more or less open to the possibilities for children to play. This includes planning for play at an organisational and neighbourhood level, combining infrastructure improvements with activation. Doing so also requires a de-centring of fixed professional roles, working together across professional domains, recognising our collective wisdom and response-abilities towards children and their play. A tool we've found useful in thinking about the range of responses required is adapted from Amin's registers of a good city (see image below).



Here, repair and maintenance is about protecting and maintaining the times, spaces, policies and practices that currently enable play, as well as repairing how things work structurally to better support play.

Relatedness is about working with difference, including how children experience their environments differently to adults and the many different professions that impact on play, bringing people together to develop a more collaborative and comprehensive response.

Rights is about paying attention to and upholding children's collective right to play throughout adult decision-making and recognising that this right is closely link to other rights associated with children's participation in public life, freedom of expression and gathering together.

And then re-enchantment is about the many, often small-scale, actions that can be taken to re-enchant people's connection to children's play and the public realm for playing, recognising that children's play itself can re-activate and enliven such spaces.

Responses

Across the last 12 or so years we've seen a wide range of strategic responses in support of play sufficiency, and by way of a conclusion, we are simply going to list some of them...

- High level commitment to the principle of play sufficiency and the endorsement of strategic priorities at local authority cabinet level.
- The development of organisational play policies and position statements.

- The formation of strategic partnerships overseeing action plans.
- Multi-agency conferences exploring play in particular contexts, for example schools.
- Major improvements in partnership working across professional domains.
- Health and safety policies that promote a risk-benefit approach to children's play.
- Impact assessment processes paying attention to children's right to play.
- Supplementary planning guidance that promotes a broader approach to providing for play.
- The appointment of play sufficiency lead officers.
- Neighbourhood wide plans for play.
- Street play projects including regular street closures.
- School street projects.
- Innovative play space developments.
- Large scale play events and pop-up installations to promote play.
- Interventions in schools to improve children's freedom at play times.
- Shifting the delivery of playschemes from summer holidays to after school in term time.
- Increases in community council funding for play.
- A community development approach to playwork.
- Inclusion projects enabling specific children to access play provision.
- The gifting of left over land from a private landowner to a community council.
- And allowing rope swings to stay up.

The list goes on and continues to grow as more and more people adopt the principle of play sufficiency.

QnA

The last section of the webinar was given over to questions and answers. Main points are summarised here.

- General Comment 17 (GC17) acknowledges the spatial nature of children's play when it says that play "takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise".
- The slide on interrelated influences on children's capability to play out does a lot of work, and should be seen more as a meshwork than a hierarchy, as influences are thoroughly entangled.
- Research into play sufficiency in Wales can be found here.
- Returning to the question of sufficiency: this is a deliberately vague concept as it is not possible to prescribe what sufficiency should be for all children in all contexts. Having to think about what is sufficient engages more people in the

conversation, which is the whole point of the exercise: play sufficiency is a process.

- GC17 makes explicit reference to children requiring particular attention in order to realise their rights under article 31. A question was asked about how the issue of Disabled children's play is often mentioned in policies but is less clear in practice. Theresa Casey gave a thoughtful response to this, saying that often play can be used as a rehabilitation tool with Disabled children, which does not align with the definition of play in GC17. Infringements of Disabled children's right to play came up consistently in all the countries that were part of the global consultations prior to the General Comment. The play sufficiency assessment in East Lothian, Scotland, audited the playgrounds and found none of them were inclusive or accessible. In that situation, GC17 can be used as an advocacy tool pointing out the obligations of governments to address this.
- What are the differences between play and recreation, and how are older children included? GC17 usefully provides clear definitions of play, recreation and leisure and emphasises the child-led nature of playing. Older children may not call what they do playing, but the definition is still useful.

The webinar ended with thanking all those who had contributed and looking forward to the next webinar, looking at play sufficiency at national level.

Webinar 2: Play sufficiency at national level

This webinar, held on 25 February 2025, heard from:

- Marianne Mannello (Assistant Director, Play Wales) and Ruth Conway (Deputy Director of the Early Years, Childcare and Play Division within the Welsh Government), talking about their experiences of play sufficiency and play policy in Wales;
- Marguerite Hunter Blair OBE (CEO, Play Scotland) on what is happening in Scotland, where play sufficiency is a planning duty, linked to local development plans;
- Adrian Voce (Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Starlight) on play sufficiency at national level in a specific context, namely that of healthcare;
- Eugene Minogue (Executive Director, Play England) and Alan Herron (Chief Executive, Playboard Northern Ireland) reflecting on what the speakers have said and what this might mean for their respective countries.

Play Sufficiency in Wales (Marianne Mannello and Ruth Conway)

Wales has a devolved government now known as the Senedd Cymru (Welsh Parliament). Play Wales is the national charity for children's play and champions every child's needs and right to play, envisioning a future where play is valued for the crucial role it has in a healthy and happy childhood. Play Wales, which receives annual core funding from the Welsh Government, was established as a national charity in 1998. This was around the same time as the National Assembly for Wales (which became the Senedd Cymru in 2020) came into being, and there has been a fruitful relationship between the two since. A history of play policy in Wales is available here.

In the early days, the Welsh Assembly Government commissioned a State of Play Review that recommended developing a coherent policy framework for play in Wales. In 2002, what is thought to be the first national Play Policy in the world was published by the Welsh Assembly Government. This was a brief statement of principle with a commitment to develop a strategy to implement the principles. In 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government adopted the UNCRC as the basis for policymaking for children in Wales, and at the same time established a Play Policy Implementation Group. This was a partnership group to develop recommendations on how the principle statements within the Play Policy should be developed. A key recommendation was that the Welsh Assembly Government should place a statutory duty upon local authorities regarding children's play. In 2006, the Welsh Assembly Government published its Play Policy Implementation Plan. One of the actions for the Assembly Government was to include in Children Act planning guidance a duty to co-operate in addressing the play needs of local children and young people.

A specific Play Sufficiency Duty was included in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, and this placed a statutory duty on local authorities to assess, and as far as is reasonably practicable, secure sufficient play opportunities for children. Wales was the first country in the world to introduce such a statutory duty on local authorities. The duty to assess sufficiency of play opportunities was officially commenced in 2012, with the first assessments being submitted in 2013, and the duty to secure sufficient play opportunities was commenced in 2014. The word 'secure' is important legally, as it does not place a statutory duty on local authorities to *provide* play opportunities directly, and it allows play providers to apply for funding from sources that would not give money for something the local government has a duty to provide. (For a discussion on the development of the Play Sufficiency Duty, see the section on Webinar 1.) The duty has statutory instruments, namely the Measure itself, The Play Sufficiency

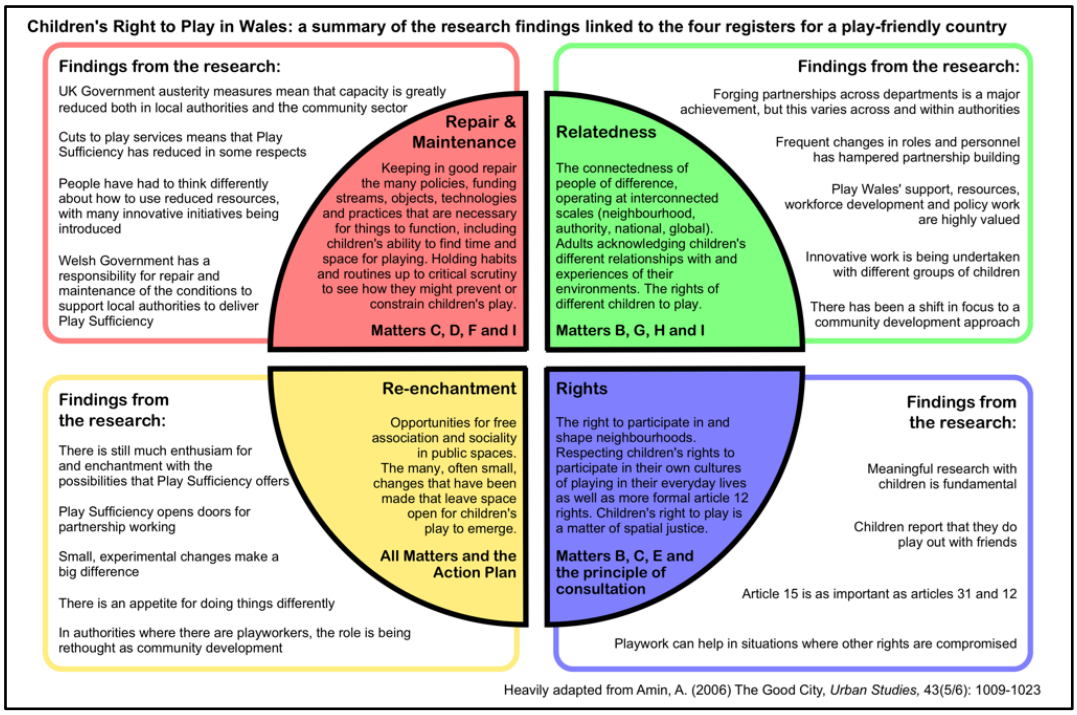
Assessment (Wales) Regulations 2012 and statutory guidance. Local authorities complete a thorough Play Sufficiency Assessment and submit this to the Welsh Government every 3 years and then complete annual action plans and progress reports on their actions to secure play sufficiency.

Local authorities assess across nine 'Matters' that cover over 100 criteria in the Play Sufficiency Assessment template form:

A: Population
B: Providing for diverse needs
C: Space available for play
D: Supervised provision
E: Charges for play provision
F: Access to Space/provision
G: Securing and developing the Play Workforce
H: Community engagement and participation
I: Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas

At the time of the webinar, local authorities were working on their current PSA, due to be submitted to the Welsh Government at the end of June 2025.

Since the Play Sufficiency Duty was commenced, Play Wales has commissioned four research studies, which were funded by the Welsh Government. In the first webinar, Ben Tawil and Mike Barclay briefly introduced Ash Amin's (2006) four registers of repair, relatedness, rights and re-enchantment as a useful tool that has been used in this research, and the 2019 study maps to what extent the research has linked those registers to the ambitions of Wales being a play-friendly country.



From Russell, Barclay, Tawil and Derry (2019) Children's Right to Play in Wales: Six years of stories and change since the commencement of the Welsh Play Sufficiency Duty

The research has shown that there is still enthusiasm for the Play Sufficiency Duty at local and national government levels, and people have particularly valued working with colleagues across departments in the local authority. Play sufficiency is an ongoing process that is rights-based, recognising play's value for children's lives in the here and now, as well as for future focused outcomes.

The Welsh Government has recently undertaken an in-depth and collaborative Ministerial Review of Play, between 2019 and 2022 (temporarily suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic). The Review had two aims: to assess the Welsh Government's work related to play policy and to help the Welsh Government shape how it develops and progresses the play agenda. There were six themes:

1. **Alignment of key legislation affecting children's right to play** discusses the need for alignment of national play policy and the Play Sufficiency Duty of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 to key primary and over-arching legislation, namely the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The synergy between these three pieces of ground-breaking legislation is explored.
2. **The Play Sufficiency Duty and funding** discusses implementation issues of the Welsh Government's Play Sufficiency Duty since it was enacted in 2012. It highlights the importance of working strategically and collaboratively at local and regional level for children's play and considers funding arrangements.
3. **Spatial justice** explores why and how we need to make our neighbourhoods and other public spaces more encouraging and welcoming for play. It highlights key national policy drivers which have an impact on more children being able to play in their neighbourhoods and public areas.
4. **Playwork provision and regulation** considers the current context and a range of historical issues regarding the registration of staffed playwork sessions. It explores ways to improve necessary systems so that more children can feel safe in the range of opportunities they enjoy in their free time.
5. **Workforce and qualifications** differentiates the play workforce and the playwork workforce. It highlights the valuable role of playwork and issues around training and qualifications whilst also offering insight into how the professional development of the range of other professionals that affect children's play can be supported.
6. **Play and education** considers the range of national policy and delivery initiatives that support children to access their right to play across educational settings. It highlights the need to ensure that play is valued in these settings, not only for instrumental educational outcomes, but also for the immediate wellbeing benefits it brings to children of all ages.

The Ministerial Play Review Steering Group's report included 15 recommendations supported by suggested milestones on how the anticipated outcomes in the report could be achieved. The Welsh Government published their response to the recommendations outlining how they intended to take forward or explore further the recommendations and suggested milestones. A progress report published in February 2025 shows that of the 67 actions listed in the response, 48 have been completed, and the remaining 19 are medium or longer term. A Ministerial Review of Play Implementation Board has been established that meets 6-monthly, bringing together lead members across all policy areas in the Welsh Government that have an impact on play. A Welsh Government Play Champions Network has also been established to support cross-policy work and improve play opportunities for children, meeting bi-monthly. The Welsh Government continues to work collaboratively with Play Wales and all local authorities. The suite of Play Sufficiency Assessment documents have been reviewed and updated, with refreshed statutory guidance. The Welsh Government remains committed to Wales being a play-friendly country and to working collaboratively.

Play Sufficiency in Scotland (Marguerite Hunter Blair OBE)

As in Wales, it has taken a long time to embed a statutory duty for play into law in Scotland. The journey began in 2007 and by 2028, all Scottish local authorities will have completed their play sufficiency assessments. A survey of local authorities in 2007 highlighted how differently they planned strategically for play and the different resource commitments they had. At that point there was a recommendation for baseline information to be recorded by local authorities and held nationally. A play commission

carried out in 2008 recommended a national play indicator, underpinned by a statutory duty, that would have measures to record and monitor play opportunities in terms of accessibility, inclusion, affordability, quality, and children and families' satisfaction.

Although this was not implemented by the Scottish Government, Play Scotland published their own play sufficiency assessment toolkit, together with supporting resources, as Getting It Right for Play in 2012 (updated 2025). The toolkit was rolled out to about a third of all local authorities in Scotland over the next eight years. This take-up helped to make the case for a national statutory duty much stronger and in 2012 Play Scotland submitted a petition to the Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee calling on the Scottish Government to introduce a Statutory Duty for Play on local authorities to provide sufficient and satisfying play opportunities for children of all ages and abilities. Although mapping play spaces was included in open spaces strategies as a part of the Community Empowerment Act (2015), this was not a full play sufficiency duty and so the campaign continued. However, the process of giving evidence to the Petitions Committee did build cross-party political awareness of play, and it did result in a commitment to the Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision and Action Plan, vision and action plan, published in 2013, where sufficiency and inclusion are principles, but still not a statutory duty. Building on this political momentum, an Inclusive Play Charter (2016) was developed, which was debated in Parliament, receiving cross-party support.

This laid the ground for proposing a legal play sufficiency duty as an amendment to the review of the Planning Act, together with the requirement for children's participation in planning. After joining forces with Scottish Alliance for People and Places, and persuading more people from the children's sector to support the campaign, both these amendments were eventually included in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. Following

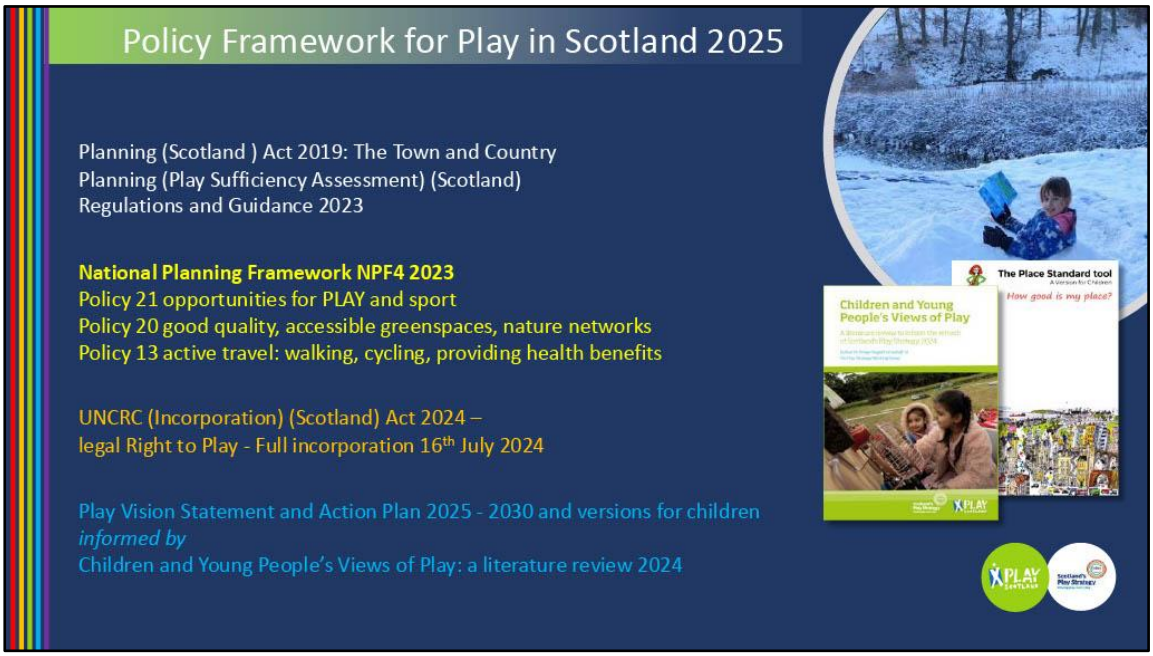
this, Play Scotland was asked to consult children and young people on the Play Sufficiency Assessment Guidance and Regulations, as well as the new National Planning Framework (NPF4). The response from children was the most ever achieved in a Scottish Government consultation.

Play Scotland then carried out the first two local authority Play Sufficiency Assessments and used that learning to write the 2025 edition of *Getting It Right for Play*.

Part of making the case for play was to map it against key policy agendas in poverty, education, health and placemaking, as well as drawing on the UNCRC General Comment no 17 (discussed in webinar 1).

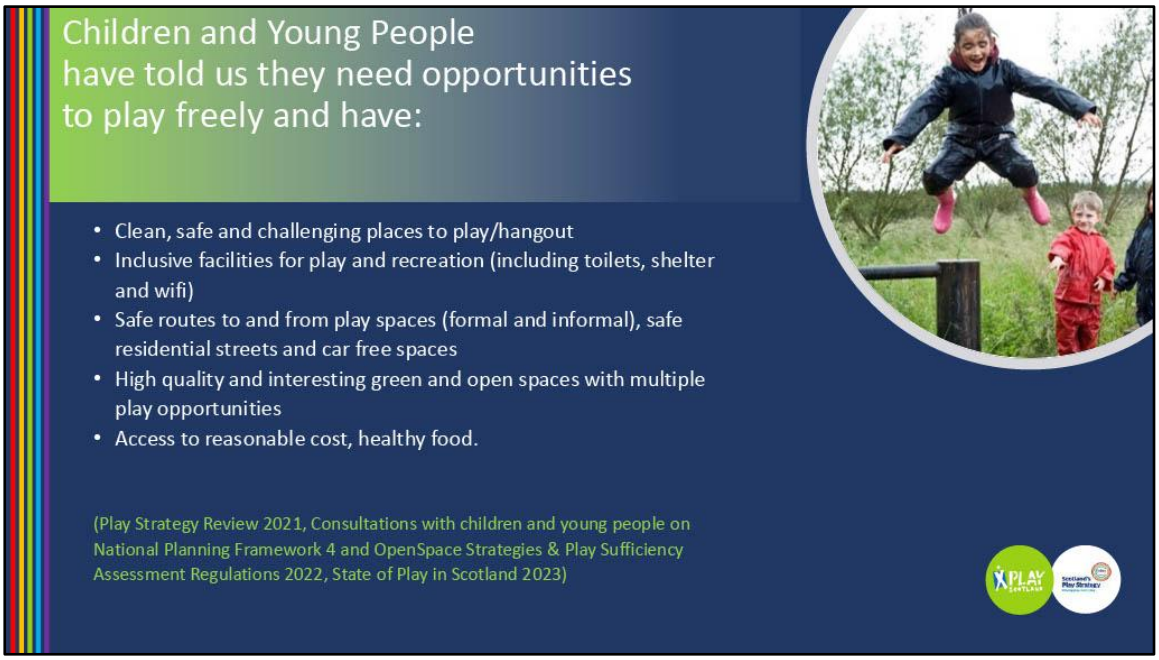
The policy framework for play in Scotland now includes:

- The statutory duty itself, in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019
- The Regulations and Guidance, published in 2023
- National Planning Framework 4, published in 2023, which is the overarching planning document in Scotland that local authorities use when doing their Development Plans, and which includes three policies that relate to children's play
- The full incorporation, in 2024, of the UNCRC into Scottish Law, which means children have a legal right to play. The Planning Act and the Planning Framework do not constitute a legal duty for play (only to assess play sufficiency); it is the incorporation of the UNCRC into law that does that.
- The Play Vision Statement and Action Plan 2025-2030, which has three drivers; place, parents and practitioners. As part of the development of the Play Vision Statement and Action Plan, Play Scotland commissioned a literature review which highlighted the views of children and young people.



The Planning Act (Scotland) 2019 brought in a fundamental change in engaging and empowering communities, including children and young people. It was about removing conflict, establishing collaboration, introducing local place plans, and requiring consultation and participation in local development plans. All members of a local authority's planning committee now must do training on the planning system in Scotland before making planning decisions.

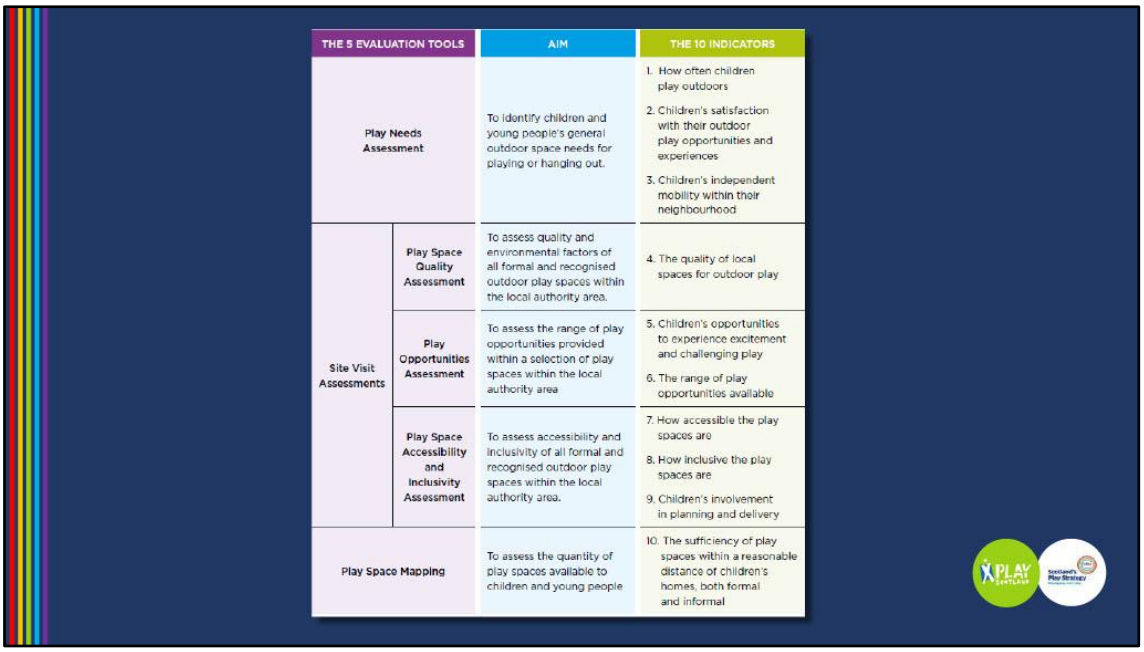
Play Sufficiency Assessments require planning authorities to assess the quality, quantity and accessibility of play opportunities, to consult on this and to publish an evidence report that then feeds into the Local Development Plan. It is for all children and young people, ages zero to 17, with particular attention to girls, Disabled children and young children. National consultation with children and young people has consistently given the same responses.



A lot of what children ask for makes every community a better place to live for all.

National Planning Framework 4 is Scotland's spatial strategy, aiming for sustainable, productive, liveable places that can support healthier lives. All this fits entirely with the idea of play sufficiency.

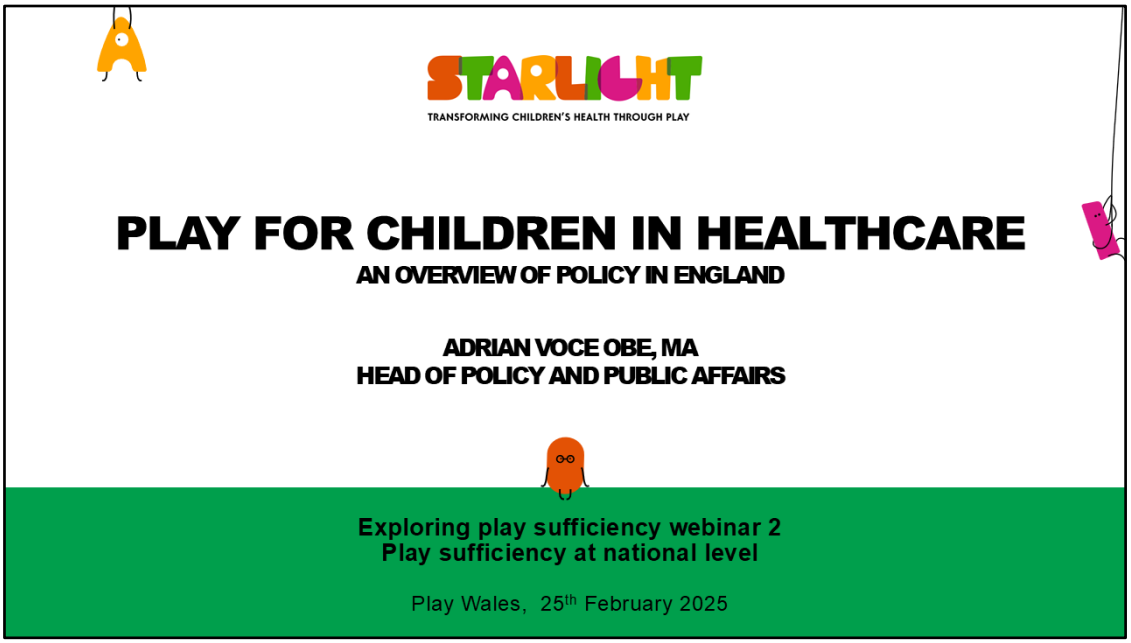
The revised *Getting it Right for Play* has five tools and ten indicators to support local authorities in their play sufficiency assessments, supporting them to do this through co-production and co-design with children. The new guidance is particularly focussed on accessibility and inclusion, using the definitions provided by the CPPF document Including Disabled Children in Play Provision.



THE 5 EVALUATION TOOLS		AIM	THE 10 INDICATORS
Play Needs Assessment		To identify children and young people's general outdoor space needs for playing or hanging out.	1. How often children play outdoors 2. Children's satisfaction with their outdoor play opportunities and experiences 3. Children's independent mobility within their neighbourhood
Site Visit Assessments	Play Space Quality Assessment	To assess quality and environmental factors of all formal and recognised outdoor play spaces within the local authority area.	4. The quality of local spaces for outdoor play
	Play Opportunities Assessment	To assess the range of play opportunities provided within a selection of play spaces within the local authority area	5. Children's opportunities to experience excitement and challenging play 6. The range of play opportunities available
	Play Space Accessibility and Inclusivity Assessment	To assess accessibility and inclusivity of all formal and recognised outdoor play spaces within the local authority area.	7. How accessible the play spaces are 8. How inclusive the play spaces are 9. Children's involvement in planning and delivery
Play Space Mapping		To assess the quantity of play spaces available to children and young people	10. The sufficiency of play spaces within a reasonable distance of children's homes, both formal and informal

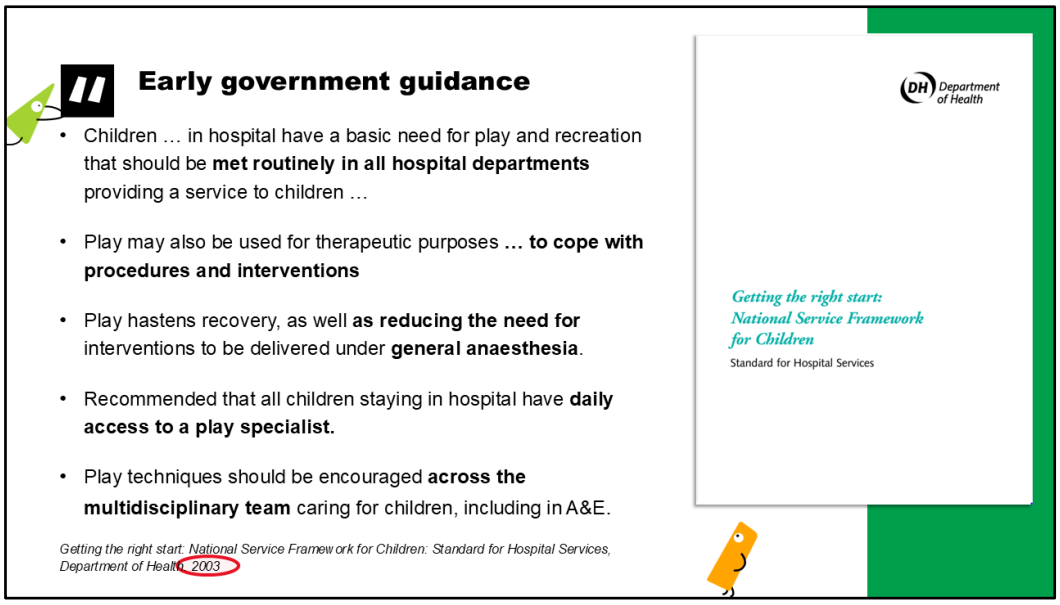
Each local authority in Scotland will complete their Play Sufficiency Assessment, and associated report by 2028. This will be a huge moment for Scotland, establishing a baseline for improvement as we work together to give Scotland's children better and more play opportunities.

Play sufficiency at national level in healthcare settings (Adrian Voce)



As the national charity for children's play in healthcare in the UK, Starlight works both to support health play practitioners and as policy advocates for the importance of play in healthcare settings. UNCRC General Comment 17 makes an explicit link between children's right to good health care and their right to play, connecting article 31 and

article 24, and recognising that children's play can facilitate children's experience and aid their recovery when they are in hospital. Previous UK Government guidance dating back to 2003 recognised that children have a basic need for play in the healthcare system and that play helps them to cope with procedures and interventions, hasten recovery, and reduce the need for general anaesthetic. This guidance recommends that all children should have daily access to a play specialist, and that the whole multi-disciplinary team around children should be encouraged to understand and apply play principles when working with children. Hospitals can be scary places and being ill can be painful and distressing; health play practitioners can help mitigate the risk of trauma. This is recognised in the current (2021) NICE guidance:

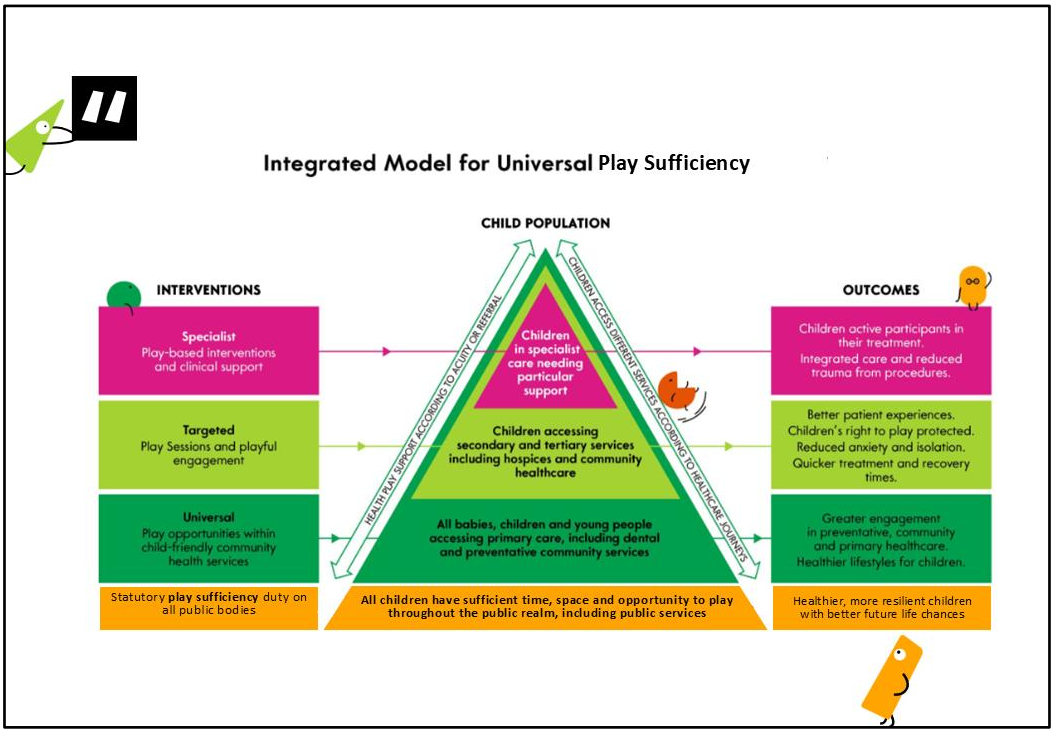


This guidance is not reflected in reality: for the 1.8 million children admitted to hospital each year in England, the provision of health play services for children in England is sporadic, inconsistent, and patchy:

To try and address this a shortfall, NHS England asked Starlight to jointly chair a task force on children's play in health care, which met between 2022 and 2023 and involved over 60 professionals and all the key organisations. The task force produced new guidelines for healthcare commissioners and NHS trusts in England, recommended standards and a checklist for health play services, published in 2025 as *Play Well*. Starlight also published a report of the work of the task force, titled A Common Purpose as well as, jointly with the Society of Health Play Specialists (SOHPS) and Skills for Health, a workforce development strategy, which NHS England had asked them to produce as a further output of the taskforce. Across the four pillars of capacity, capability, professionalisation and recognition, Starlight's strategy proposes the NHS create1000 new health play professionals each year, reaching the 3000 needed over three years. This was included in Starlight's manifesto as a part of their policy asks to the UK Government.

In terms of play sufficiency in healthcare, there is a clear insufficiency of opportunities to play that needs to be addressed. Although UNCRC General Comment 17 talks about sufficient time and space for play, space becomes a different question in healthcare settings, as children are often spatially constrained and less mobile.

Looking at play sufficiency within healthcare beyond hospitals, the pyramid diagram below, drawn from the NHS's personalised model for healthcare, as adapted for the Play Well toolkit, recognises the need for children to be able to play in all healthcare settings, including in community health settings. Starlight proposes extending this model of children's healthcare (illustrated by the bottom, yellow, level of the pyramid) to identify sufficient access to play as an essential element of preventative health.



If policy recognises the importance of children's play for their health and wellbeing as an issue of public health, then a statutory play sufficiency duty needs to be on all public bodies, not just local authorities, and should be part of an enlightened policy for children's health as part of the UK Government's vision for raising the healthiest generation of children ever.

Reflections (Alan Herron and Eugene Minogue, QnA)

Alan Herron reflected that although children's right to play is recognised in the 2011 Northern Ireland Assembly's Play and Leisure Policy Statement and also in the Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015, there is no explicit play strategy that places a statutory play sufficiency duty. Because of this, Playboard Northern Ireland's advocacy has focused at the local council level, and they have supported seven play strategies within 11 councils, all of which have key elements of play sufficiency embedded within them and which are built on the right to play. The challenge is that these local successes, with significant investment, have depended on longstanding and successful local advocates, and when they move on there is no regional policy framework and regional legislation.

Eugene Minogue reflected that England does not have a devolved government in the same way as Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and has been without a national play strategy since 2010. At national level, play has largely been sidelined. Play England has been advocating for play sufficiency for some time, but this was ramped up in 2023 and was part of the manifesto published ahead of the 2024 General Election. Play sufficiency is embedded in that, drawing on what has been happening in Wales and Scotland. Working with the new government since 2024, there have been small wins for children's play through tabling amendments to legislation, such as smoke free playgrounds in the Tobacco and Vapes Bill and protecting formal play spaces from development in the revised National Planning Policy Framework. There are now some real policy opportunities for play sufficiency to submit amendments on play sufficiency in upcoming legislation such as the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill (a more holistic Welsh model) and the Planning and Infrastructure Bill (akin to the Scottish model). Whichever piece of legislation it can be included in, the detail will be in the secondary legislation, the statutory instruments. Plus there is The Play Commission, whose interim report was launched in the House of Commons yesterday (24 February 2025[1]). It does feel there is some momentum in England, with more MPs supporting the idea, and with the recent debate in the Commons on children's play. There are also opportunities around English devolution and the restructuring of local government, with larger authorities with devolved powers and coterminous public services.

[1] The full report was launched in the House of Commons on 11 June 2025

The chair commented that there is always an element of pragmatic opportunism in terms of which legislation can be used to accommodate a play sufficiency duty, and each effort continues to keep the issue visible in the policy process. Because play permeates so many areas of children's lives, and therefore policy areas, it could be included in a number of departments and pieces of legislation. In addition, there is a question as to which public bodies should have the duty place upon them.

Eugene responded that this should probably be local authorities, although with the imminent changes, there is a lot of uncertainty as to where particular responsibilities and powers (e.g. housing, planning) might lie. Regarding Northern Ireland, Alan felt that local and regional government both had a role, and that planning policy seemed to be a potential home, although there was a risk that broader play issues could themselves be sidelined should a greater focus be placed on play primarily within residential development planning contexts. It is important that the broader context of play is protected, e.g. including play in schools, youth settings and all of the spaces that children typically use. Situating play in one specific policy area runs the risk of narrowing the focus. For example, at local government level, traditionally the focus has been on fixed play parks, which limits the opportunities for improving opportunities for play elsewhere within the community. Play is fundamentally a cross-departmental issue, placing it within a single policy silo risks negating opportunities in other key areas of children's lives.

From a Scottish perspective, Marguerite Hunter-Blair pointed out that they had always been clear that the duty to carry out play sufficiency *assessments* should be in planning, which is within local authorities. However, she also clarified that this was not the same as a duty to secure sufficient opportunities to play, which Scotland does not have in that way. What enshrines the right to play in law is the UNCRC coming into Scots law, and this extends to all public authorities.

The issue of which public bodies a play sufficiency duty should fall on has also be reviewed in Wales. Marianne Mannello reported that, 15 years on from the enactment of the duty in Wales, the Ministerial Review of Play discussed this and recognised the need to extend beyond local government to public bodies such as Health Boards that have an interest and need to be held accountable in terms of what they do for children's play. Incorporating this extension into legislation depends on what the programme for government is, and so this is a long game. However, the Ministerial Review of Play Steering Group recommended that Welsh government consider a charter for children's play that other bodies could sign up to, for example, Sport Wales, Natural Resources Wales, or National Health Service Wales. Whilst this is not a legal duty, it does begin the process of awareness raising and getting play on the agenda for future changes in the law. For those considering possible legislation in other countries, it is key to include the

broadest perspectives on where children play, and to work cross-professionally. In Wales, the play workforce is everyone whose work affects how children play.

Adrian Voce reflected on how far play policy has come in the last 30 years in the UK, and that it is important to acknowledge what has been achieved in Wales and Scotland, and the importance of imagining what could be. He argued that the long-term vision must be for a genuinely cross-cutting whole government, whole public realm, adoption of children's rights of play. Pragmatically, local government has a key role to play, but we need to include others like schools and health services. Children's need for play opportunities and to be supported by play practitioners is never more acute than when they are in healthcare settings. In terms of which national government department should lead, Adrian put the case that this should be a department that carries some influence across the whole of government and has a significant budget.

Marianne reflected that at local government level, play was located in many different departments, which supports the idea that everyone has a role to play.

A question was then put regarding the ethics of requiring local governments to carry out research with children and what checks and balances national governments have in place in terms of the work local government do for their play sufficiency assessments.

Marianne responded that local authorities are required to submit their triennial play sufficiency assessments and their annual action plans and progress reports to the Welsh Government, and Play Wales is then commissioned to review them. These reports are published in *State of Play* reports (the 2022 report can be found here). The editing of the reports is collaborative. There are big differences in how local authorities respond, and the depth of information varies according to the size of the team and which departments they are in. The revised support toolkit tries to address this, and Welsh Government are currently looking to provide feedback to local authorities. This has to be put within the context of the play sufficiency duty being introduced on a cost-neutral basis, although there have been some pots of funding. Whilst the duty should be adequately funded, it is also important to recognise that low or no cost actions through collaboration can be effective.

The webinar ended with thanking all those who contributed, and with information on the next webinar looking at play sufficiency at local government level.

Webinar 3: Play sufficiency at local government level

This webinar, held on 1 April 2025, heard from:

- Jenny Rutherford (Play Strategy Officer, Leeds City Council) talking about experiences of engaging with the idea of play sufficiency in an English local authority
- Etive Currie (Place Lead for Spatial Planning, Glasgow City Council) sharing experiences of carrying out a play sufficiency assessment in Scotland
- Tracey Jobber (Play Service Manager and Play Sufficiency Assessment Lead Officer, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council), also talking about carrying out a play sufficiency assessment in an English local authority
- Gareth Stacey (Assistant Team Lead for Play and Youth, and Play Sufficiency Lead Officer, Wrexham), talking about 15 years of play sufficiency in North Wales.

Play Sufficiency in Leeds (Jenny Rutherford)

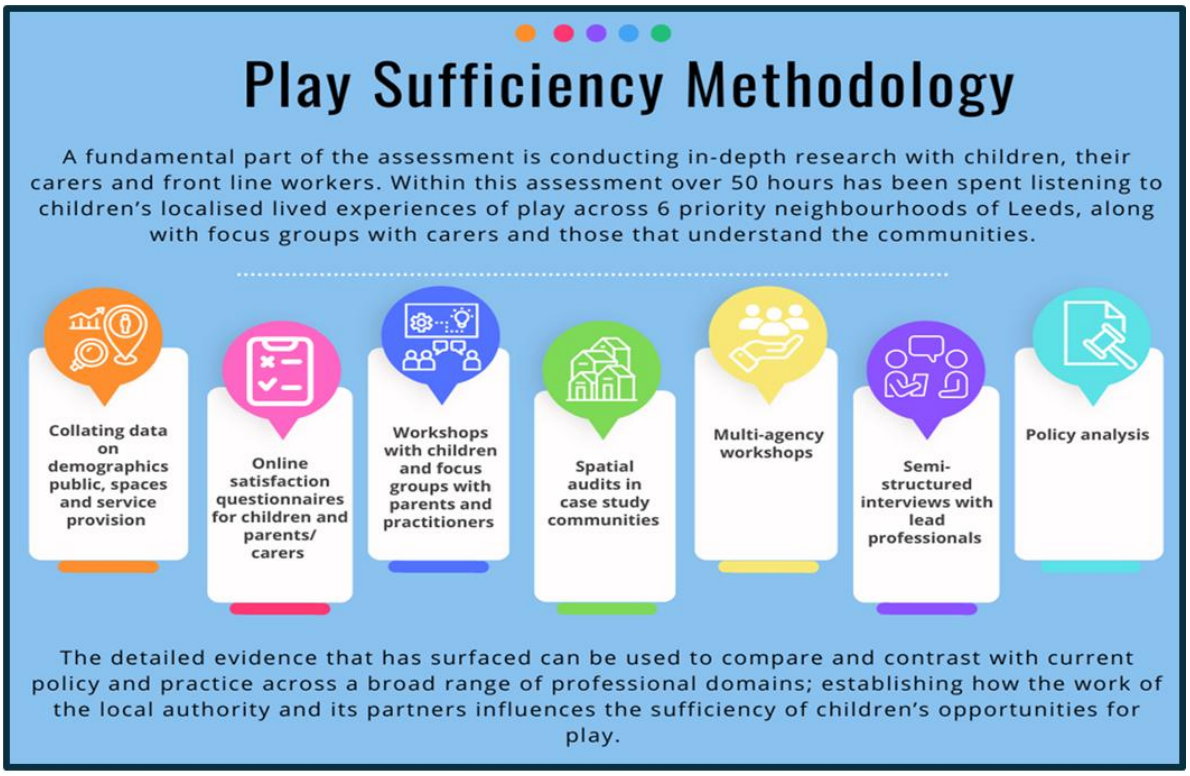
Leeds has pursued an ambition to become a Child-Friendly City since 2012. Although children and young people have consistently been a policy priority, play specifically had not been formally recognised or embedded within local governance, strategy, or policy frameworks.

The initiative for play sufficiency work emerged from the work of Active Leeds, a council service aimed at supporting communities to move more. What was noticed in the work in priority neighbourhoods most affected by poverty was that adults consistently raised concerns about lack of opportunities for children to play. A response at neighbourhood

level was to work in partnership with LS14 Trust, a trusted grassroots community organisation, and Playful Anywhere, who brought in a play box – a staffed shipping container filled with play resources. This work transformed a local green space that had previously been a no-go zone. The value of such work was well understood at local level, but it was difficult to have any influence at local authority level.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, LS14 Trust wanted to continue supporting the families in that neighbourhood and so they worked with Playful Anywhere to develop mini play boxes that the council delivered to homes alongside food and medicine parcels. What this did was make the value of play visible to some politicians who then expanded the mini boxes across all of the priority wards, enhancing the status of play within the council through aligning it with those basic needs.

This provided the impetus for Active Leeds to commission Ludicology to lead on a knowledge transfer process, supporting the staff to carry out a play sufficiency assessment. An implementation team was set up with colleagues from Active Leeds, public health and third sector partners including LS14 Trust. The team was trained in research skills, including how to run workshops and focus groups with children from school years 5 and 9 (9-10 year olds and 13-14 year olds), and how to analyse the data gathered.

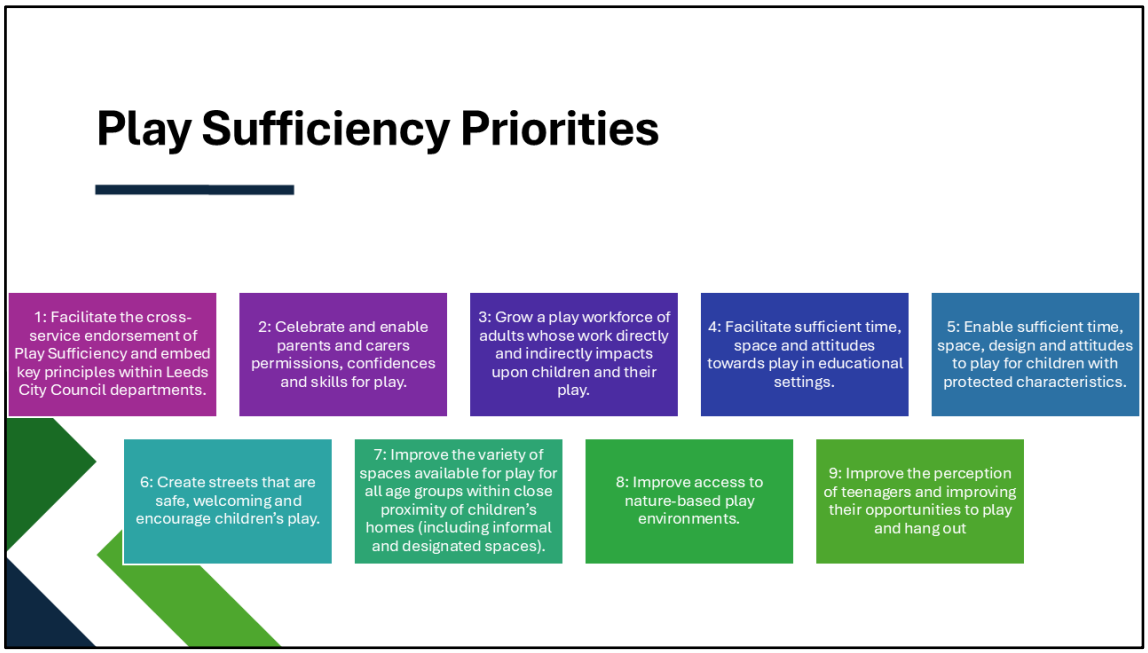


The research was carried out across six priority areas that were all affected by poverty. In terms of numbers participating in the research, it was much easier to gain access in primary schools than secondary schools, as can be seen in the figure below:

The end result was a robust evidence base and an implementation team that appreciated how play sufficiency aligned with their agendas.

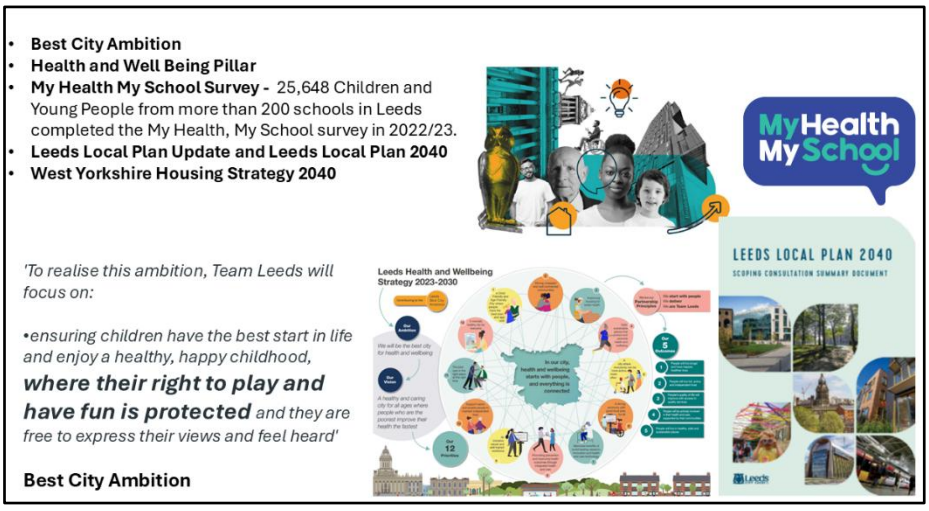
One of the more striking findings from the data collection was that children, unprompted, articulated clearly how much playing helped with their mental health and emotion regulation, that it could be a welcome respite from “hard times” and that “play makes life amazing”. Another big theme concerned permissions to play out in public spaces. Although many children said they were satisfied with their opportunities to play, this was often in the home or in gardens for those who had them. Many children and adults did not feel neighbourhoods were safe, or there was restrictive signage. Children were clear on what made streets good or bad for playing. Traffic, both moving and parked, restricted playing, and they did not like rubbish on streets. They liked streets where they could meet up with friends and where there were features that supported playing, like walls and smooth surfaces. They also liked natural features, such as trees or playing with sticks, leaves or conkers. A choice of spaces was important, as older and younger children did not like sharing spaces for playing. Children talked about how important friendships were for them and how play helped to consolidate friendships. There was a varying picture of playing in schools, where some children saw schools as a safe place to play but others did not rate playtimes highly. Playful adults supported play in schools.

From the research nine priorities informed an action plan:



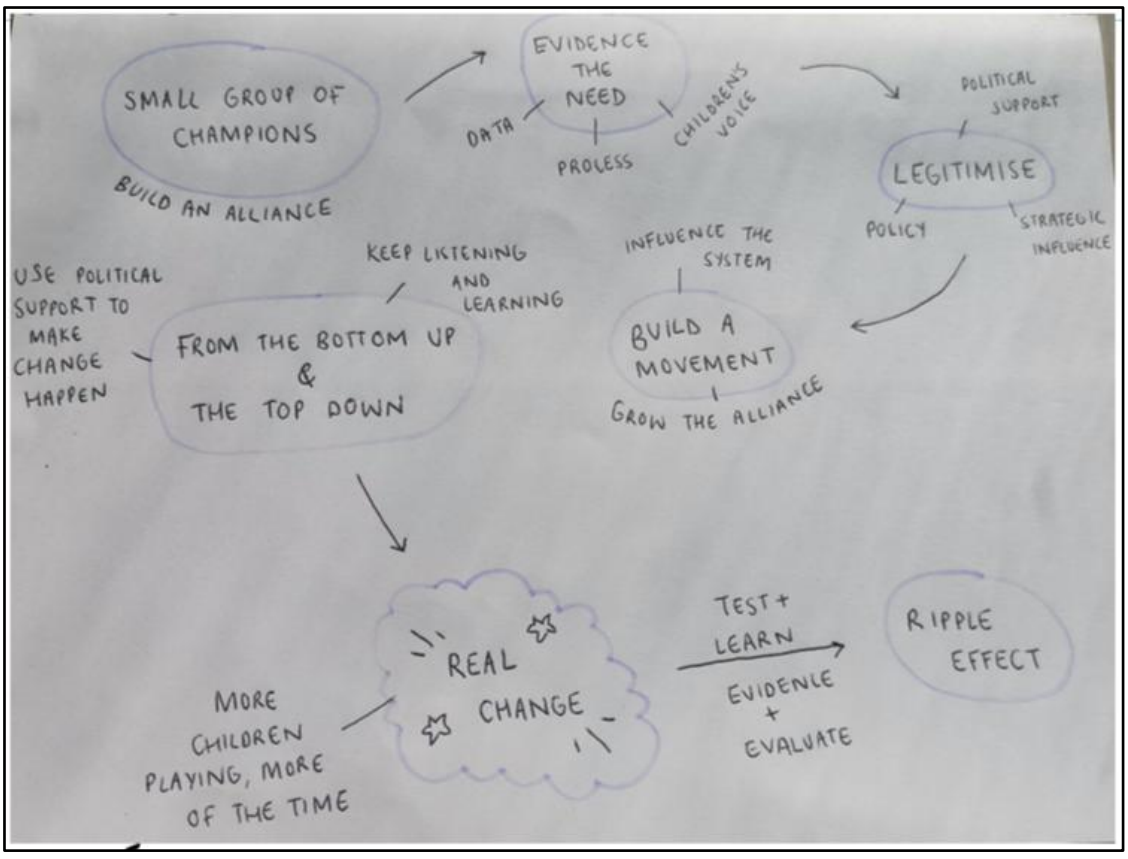
A summary can be found here. Embedding the principle of play sufficiency across the council has been important. The research was shared through an awareness raising campaign, through individual conversations, team meetings and workshops, and the realisation grew that play is everybody's business. A policy analysis showed that play was absent from key policies, and even though staff saw the value, they could not justify spending time on it. Support from planning and housing was particularly welcome.

A turning point came when the evidence was taken to the Executive Board, the highest level of decision-making in the council, which endorsed the principles and the approach, appointed a play champion and supported the action plan. Following this, play was embedded in several policies such as the Best City Ambition, the Health and Wellbeing Pillar, and into the update of Leeds Local Plan. Play was also included in the My Health, My School survey, so children's satisfaction with their opportunities to play can be monitored annually. It has changed the conversation about play from just playgrounds to playful neighbourhoods.



A challenge is making sure the strategic work really has an effect on more children playing out more of the time, and so some local work is being done to test and learn and encourage a ripple effect. This includes removing no ball game signs, training for local organisations and installing a play trail and invitations to play.

More information here.



Play Sufficiency in Glasgow: involving children and young people (Etive Currie)

The statutory duty for planning authorities to assess play sufficiency is a part of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, and is further regulated by:

- the Town and Country Planning (Play Sufficiency Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2023, which outline how local authorities should undertake their play sufficiency assessments
- the National Planning Framework 4 (mostly Policy 21) and
- UNCRC article 31, as the UNCRC has been incorporated into law.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment regulations address the quality, quantity and accessibility of both formal and informal play spaces and require authorities to consult with children and young people. The approach to play is more than counting playgrounds, it also includes doorstep play, playing in nature, play on the way, playing in neighbourhoods, playing everywhere.

Planning (Scotland) Act 2019

The Town and Country Planning (Play Sufficiency Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2023

- came into force on 19 May 2023
- planning authorities to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities for children when preparing an evidence report to inform the making of local development plan

Planning authorities must:

- identify and map formal play spaces
- assess and provide statements as regards the overall (a) quality, (b) quantity, and (c) accessibility of formal and informal play spaces
- consult children, their parents and carers during the assessment
- publish

Images: provided by Scottish Government 2023

A world class city with a thriving and inclusive economy where everyone can flourish and benefit from the city's success.

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

National Spatial strategy supports the delivery of:

- Sustainable places
- **Liveable places,** where we can all live better healthier lives
- Productive places

National Planning Policy:
POLICY 21 PLAY, RECREATION AND SPORT
Policy Intent:
To encourage, promote and facilitate spaces and opportunities for play, recreation and sport.

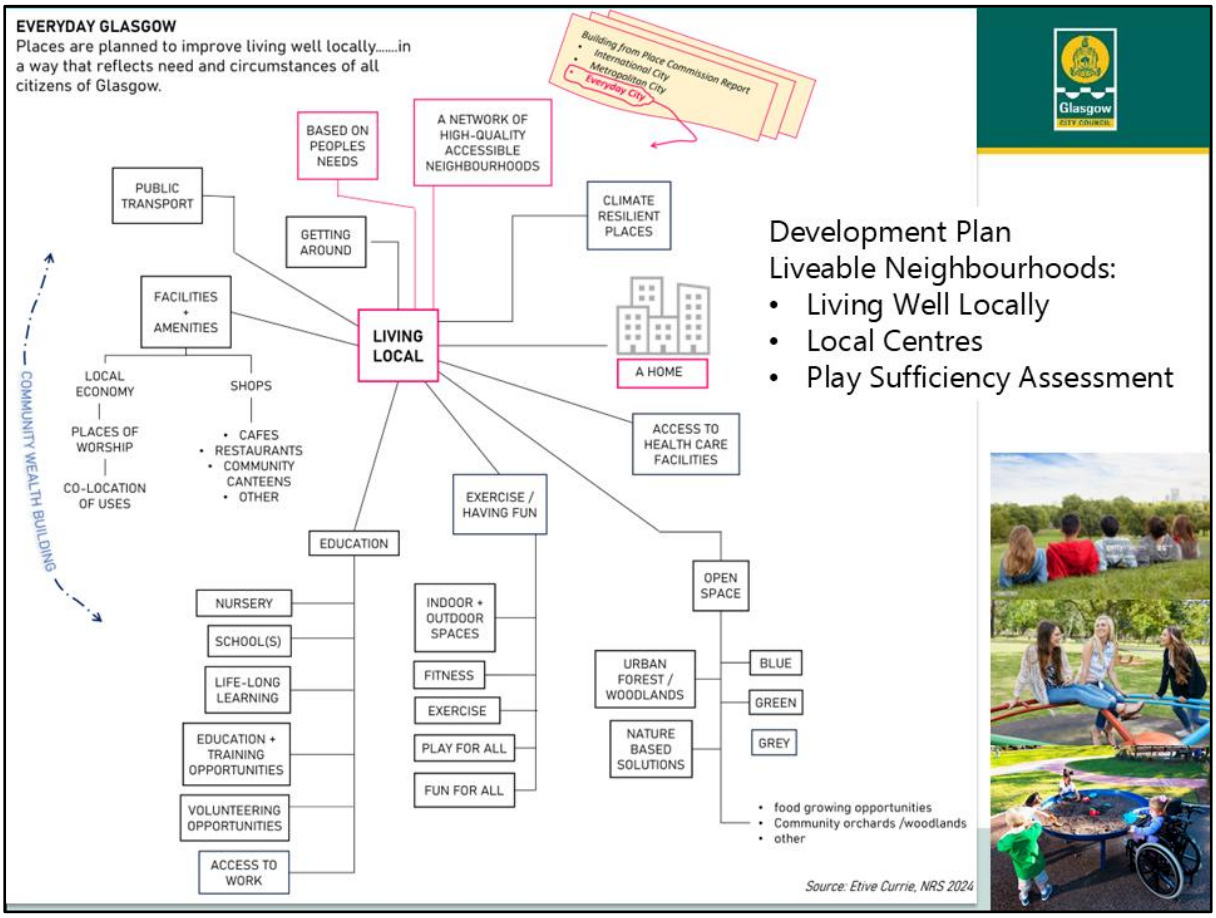
Policy Outcomes:

- Natural and built environments are improved, with more equitable access to opportunities for play and recreation.
- Physical and mental health are improved through provision of, and access to, outdoor recreation, play and sport facilities.

A world class city with a thriving and inclusive economy where everyone can flourish and benefit from the city's success.

A key tool for Play Sufficiency Assessments is the Place Standard Tool. This is a resource produced by the Scottish Government that underpins the place-based approach to

planning and can be used by local authorities in preparing their Development Plans. There is a version of the Place Standard Tool for children and one for young people. It takes a holistic place-based approach aimed at engaging meaningfully with children to find out what they think of the spaces where they live. It is therefore a crucial tool in Play Sufficiency Assessments and links with the idea of liveable neighbourhoods and the Living Well Locally approach (similar to 20 minute neighbourhoods but less divisive) as well as other strategies such as open space strategies and forest and woodland strategies.



Working with colleagues in Education was a challenge, but in the end agreement was reached on how to use the Play Standard Tool with children across the ages in preparing the Glasgow Play Sufficiency Assessment. In the end 700-800 children across 12 primary schools participated in using the tool to find out how to create a better offer for play. Further work is planned with primary school aged children. Early years children produced word clouds and drawings, primary school children were supported by teachers to visualise ideal play spaces, and secondary school children focused on their lived experience, where they go and what barriers they face. Glasgow City Council also partnered with the Centre for Civic Innovation to work with young people to co-design the approach, piloting it in one school, with sessions being led by young people, and then rolling it out to 18 secondary schools across the city, with over 5000 responses (29% of the pupil population), a 1714% increase in participation from previous

methods. The methodology includes a survey on Mentimeter and a design jam, and an information pack means that schools can run the co-design themselves.

Glasgow City Council's Play Sufficiency Assessment Pilot has been recognised through a Planning Excellence Award from the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) in 2024, where it won the "Best in Show" (overall winner) award for Scotland.

Work continues with Education, the Parks Department and the Centre for Civic Innovation and the children and young people themselves. There are plans to set up test sites where children can test natural play areas and play equipment and redesign them. Ultimately the City Council wants to develop a how-to guide for inclusive play across Glasgow that will be used to inform plans, strategies, decisions on planning applications, and creating a play strategy for the city. The intention is that the future of play sufficiency in Glasgow is about co-designing inclusive, flexible, and meaningful places with young people at the centre. This requires a cultural shift toward embedding children's voices in urban planning and recognising the value of play in community life.

Play Sufficiency in Sandwell (Tracey Jobber)

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council is in the West Midlands of England, and has had a dedicated play service over the last 25 years, with funding in 2006-2007 to build infrastructure for play spaces. The existing play strategy, however, was long overdue for review and so Play Sufficiency presented an ideal opportunity to evaluate us to the current position on play and identify what was and was not working for who and where, and how to develop some responses to that. The real strength of carrying out a Play Sufficiency Assessment is that it fits well with Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council's moves toward an evidence-based approach to commissioning services. The process of conducting a Play Sufficiency Assessment provides the data that enables the formulation of strategic evidence-based action plans that make the best use of financial and human resources available in the current landscape.

The PSA also aligns well with other strategic priorities for the council, including its intentions to become a Child Friendly Community and Growing Up in Sandwell's ambition for children and young people to be supported to lead happy, healthy lives with a range of play opportunities.

The council carried out the first PSA in 2019, but although all data collection was complete, follow up work, specifically working with other departments in the council, was curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, some adjustments were made on the evidence to commissioning play provision. Despite this limited capacity for action, Sandwell's most recent play satisfaction survey in 2024 indicates that satisfaction levels have risen from 2019 from 72% to 75%.

In order to carry out the Play Sufficiency Assessment, Sandwell MBC have partnered with Ludicology. They have extensive experience in supporting local authorities in conducting PSAs and who provided the theoretical and ethical framework, along with research tools for the assessment. Their support has enabled members of the implementation team (whose main work is not necessarily with children or research) to be able to collect data, code data and conduct data analysis to create narratives around each of the case study research areas.

The implementation team has been recruited from a diverse range of departments from across the council each bringing their own knowledge and experience from their relevant specialisms to look at what they do through the lens of play. The team are highly motivated and engaged in the process and their commitment has been an unexpected highlight of conducting the research. This means that more officers at the local authority now have the experience and skills to conduct more of this type of evidence-based research.

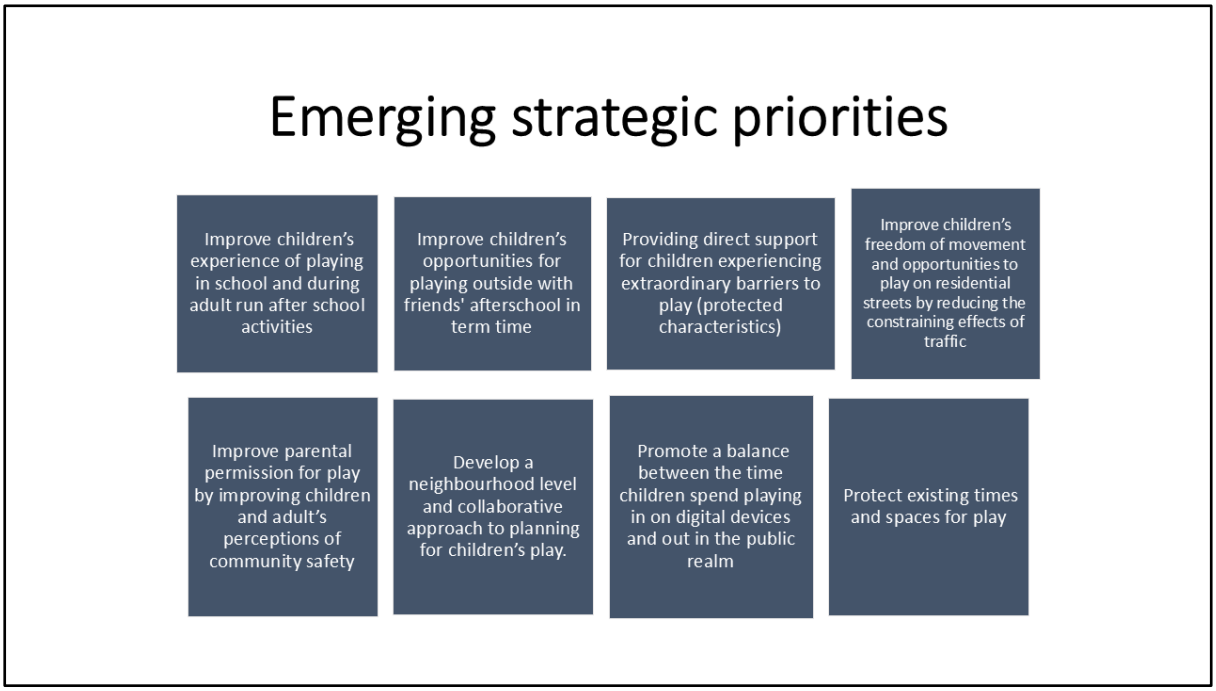
The research was mixed methods working with children and families to explore local conditions for play and children's actual lived experiences of playing.

In February 2024 an online play satisfaction survey was conducted, inviting all year 5 students to participate. The survey consisted of 16 questions asking children about time, space and permission for play and asking them to rate their overall satisfaction with play. There were 1525 responses out of a possible 4862, a sample size that gave a 99% confidence level rating in the data collected.

The responses from the survey enabled identification of primary schools where students rated high, medium and low levels of satisfaction with their opportunities for

play, helping to identify places for further research including workshops with children from the participating schools and a spatial audit. The same online survey was conducted with year 9 students and parents to identify differences from year 5 responses and to be able to triangulate the data. The process also involved engaging with over 30 Senior officers including knowledge transfer sessions, semi structured interviews and presentations. Such a mixed methodology is robust, credible, transferable and transparent and will hold up to scrutiny.

Eight emerging strategic priorities have been identified from the data that are being explored further through semi structured interviews with officers to help refine them.



Priority 1 is to improve children's experience of playing in school and during adult run after school activities. As children spend most of their time in school, improving children's experience of playing there is crucial.

Priority 2 is to improve children's opportunities for playing outside with friends afterschool in term time. Children said that they were not allowed to play out after school in their local neighbourhoods due to parental concerns around safe access to places, including concerns about traffic. This becomes a matter of spatial justice which requires a local authority response.

Priority 3 concerns providing direct support for children experiencing extraordinary barriers to play. Children with protected characteristics (specifically children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities, transgender and LGBTQ+) said that they face even greater barriers to access free play opportunities than other children.

Priority 4 is to improve children's freedom of movement and opportunities to play on residential streets by reducing the constraining effects of traffic.

Priority 5 is about cultivating a culture of permission within local neighbourhoods for children's opportunities for playing out, improving adults' and children's sense of community safety by addressing associated parental concerns.

Priority 6 is about planning for play at a neighbourhood level, working with communities so that they can support children's play, with playwork being seen as community development and cohesion work.

Priority 7 is about promoting a balance between the time children spend playing indoors on digital devices and outside in the public realm.

Priority 8 acknowledges the importance of protecting the existing times and spaces for play for those children who access positive play experiences.

Officers have been identifying quick and easy changes they can make immediately as well as the more strategic decisions and considerations, and this is already changing the landscape and narrative towards children's play. Examples are the removal or replacing of no ball games signs and including children's voices in a tenants and residents housing conference. There has been good support from departments, particularly Planning, Housing, Public Heath (HDRC), Neighbourhoods, and Policy and it has been a good opportunity to conduct advocacy work across departments to talk about the importance of play.

The full assessment is still being written, and action plans being finalised with the plan to take to cabinet for approval in June 2025.

Everyone who has been involved with the assessment has shown a huge amount of commitment and enthusiasm, which has made the whole assessment process exciting. Colleagues in Public Health are particularly excited as the PSA demonstrates perfectly how the Council is using data and evidence to support decision making, which they have showcased on their Heath Determinants Research Collaborations. Sandwell HDRC is a 5-year partnership between the Council, the University of Birmingham and the voluntary sector, working with wider partners and stakeholders across the borough. They are currently looking at putting together a PhD course on housing, play and wellbeing.

In summary, Sandwell has embedded play sufficiency into its strategic planning, using evidence to improve play opportunities, tackle inequalities, and build a child-friendly borough. The process has boosted officer skills, fostered cross-departmental collaboration, and is already changing policy and practice on the ground.

Play Sufficiency in Wrexham (Gareth Stacey)

Wrexham, like other local authorities in Wales, has completed four Play Sufficiency Assessments (2013, 2016, 2019, 2022) and is currently completing its fifth, due to be submitted to the Welsh Government in June 2025. Over that time, a number of benefits of having a statutory Play Sufficiency Duty have become apparent. First, it provides the person responsible for play sufficiency with a mandate to go to other departments whose work affects children's play and say there is a requirement that they support children's play through their work. Second, it requires taking triennial play sufficiency assessments through the local political system, engaging at a high level with the council's Scrutiny Committee and Executive Board, raising the profile of play within the authority. Third is the terminology, we have a shared language for talking to others about play sufficiency, and it is accepted that supporting children's play is a good thing. However, there is still a lot of work to do, including some actions dating back to 2013; play sufficiency is an ongoing process, something worked on constantly, not only when an assessment is due.

Local authorities in Wales have a prescribed template that has 116 criteria across 9 Matters [see webinar 2], meaning there is a lot to consider. Data collection methods are similar to those described by previous speakers:

Play Sufficiency Assessment Process in Wrexham

- Children's play satisfaction survey
- Targeted focus groups
- Officer engagement
- Community profiling
- 2022 - 0ver 1790 individuals involved
- 39 service areas/organisations

www.wrecsam.gov.uk | www.wrexham.gov.uk

A key part of assessing play sufficiency is children's levels of satisfaction with their opportunities to play, done through the survey. These are followed up with targeted focus groups, for example with young carers, disabled children, teenagers, LGBTQ children, home-educated children, because it is anticipated that they face extraordinary barriers.

Children's satisfaction with play

Survey Year	No. of responses	Overall satisfaction rating					
		% Great	% Good	% Satisfied	% OK	% Not Good	% Rubbish
2021	1277	38.1	33.0	**71.1**	20.6	4.4	3.9
2018	1248	41.7	36.8	**78.4**	16.7	2.7	2.1
2015	1066	36.2	36.8	**73**	19	4.8	3.2
2012	90	34.4	33.3	**67.7**	24.4	6.6	1.1

**86% of children reported that covid had an impact on how they play in 2021

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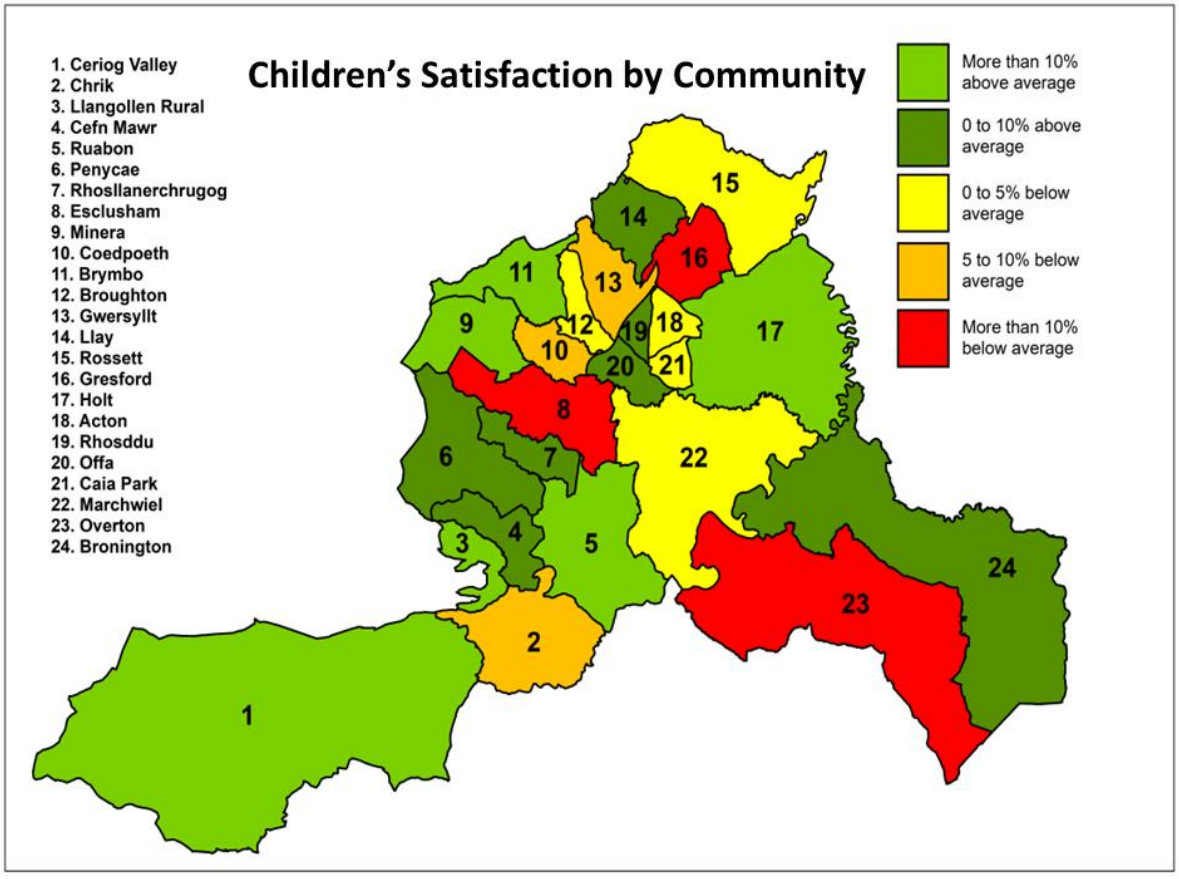
Because there have been several PSAs, levels of satisfaction can be tracked over time. These were steadily rising and then dipped in the 2021 survey because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's opportunities to play. The 2021 survey had the highest percentage (3.9%) of children saying their opportunities to play were rubbish.

The survey also asks about time and space to play, and can be mapped onto the geography of Wrexham across its wards. The infographic produced (below) needs to be treated with caution because of issues to do with sample sizes and representation, but it does give an indication of where things are working and where they are not working. This allows further detailed local work to be undertaken to look at the conditions for play where children were or were not satisfied.



Collecting all the data is the account-ability part of the process. In terms of response-ability, Wrexham has developed 13 priorities for action that guide the work of the Play and Youth Team and structure the annual action plans and progress reports. These have been fairly constant over time, with the 13th being added in the 2019 PSA, and are:

1. Increase time for playing during term-time
2. Enhance opportunities for playing in Winter
3. Secure safer streets for play
4. Secure a wider range of spaces for play
5. Secure spaces for play in close proximity to children's homes

6. Secure and maintain quality play provision
7. Secure a greater range of provision for teenagers
8. Improve children's subjective experience of time and space in adult supervised provision
9. Enable parents to identify ways in which they can support children's play
10. Improve support for disabled and marginalised children
11. Improve generalised negative attitudes towards teenagers and their play
12. Ensure children have easy access to friends
13. Enable communities to identify ways in which they can support children's play.

Wrexham adopts a systems-based approach framework for achieving play sufficiency with six key elements:

1. Planning for play: embedding considerations of how children use and move through space in planning and policy, from high-level strategies to practical site-level decisions.
2. Playwork as community development: delivering play schemes and adventure playgrounds as community hubs and also working in the community to create and cultivate conditions for play.
3. Professional development: an extensive training programme, including e-modules, delivered to a wide range of professionals (planners, sports coaches, youth workers, artists, councillors, etc.) to understand and support play.
4. Policies for play: a play pledge and embedding play in strategic policies (for example, open public spaces strategy, youth sports strategy) and securing recognition across the authority.
5. Play development team: acting as the key driver, supporting other departments and reminding them to consider play.
6. Partnerships for play: building collective wisdom and shared responsibility, although partnership working is always vulnerable to staff turnover.

Wrexham has been working with Ludicology and the University of Gloucestershire to develop approaches to researching play sufficiency at hyperlocal level, where in-depth research can identify play sufficiency issues and actions specific to that neighbourhood. Looking forward, Wrexham intends to roll this approach out across other neighbourhoods, focusing on community-led, tangible actions informed directly by children's experiences.

QnA

A specific question was asked of Etive Curry about the connections between the Play Sufficiency Assessment and Glasgow as a national park city. The hope is that there will be a good tie-in, as the PSA results are embedded in the Open Space strategy. The

vision is parks “spill out into the streets” making green streets for play so that children can “play their way across Glasgow.” The data from the PSA is mapped onto Glasgow’s Environmental Digital Twin, an interactive atlas. This has made a big difference explaining what the PSA is.

Another question was about what has to be in place to effect change, to implement the responses identified in PSAs. Responses included the importance of building relationships with people to bring them along and the importance of political support from councillors. Councillors often hear about lack of play opportunities from residents, so with some, this political support is readily forthcoming.

The issue of engaging with communities was raised. This can sometimes be difficult, and can require a long slow process of making the work known (by advertising it on social media, reporting back from research and consultation carried out, inviting support), being available, and using stories from other people’s lived experience. Starting with those who want to engage helps to build momentum, in terms of engaging both with communities and councillors.

Practical tips for getting going include starting with allies and supporting officers, growing influence, building momentum through small and quick wins and using stories that can inspire hope and support. With council staff and members, the UNCRC and General Comment 17 can be an entry point, as well as residents’ desire for better play provision.

Key success factors include embedding the Play Sufficiency Assessment and action plan into wider planning strategies; securing political commitment at leadership level; building relationships and partnerships across different areas of expertise and responsibility; storytelling; small visible wins; leveraging children’s rights frameworks and not waiting for permission – starting quietly and building support.

The webinar ended with thanking all those who had contributed, looking forward to the next one on play sufficiency at neighbourhood level.

Webinar 4: Play sufficiency at neighbourhood level

This webinar, held on 13 May 2025, heard from two speakers researching play sufficiency at a neighbourhood level and then from two speakers talking about national initiatives that operate at neighbourhood level:

- Lauren Cole, Play and Childcare Development Assistant for Carmarthenshire County Council
- Matluba Khan, Senior Lecturer in Urban Design and Co-Director of the MA in Urban Design at Cardiff University
- Alison Stenning, Professor of Social & Economic Geography at Newcastle University, play street organiser and founder of North Tyneside's PlayMeetsStreet and board member of Playing Out
- Michael Follett, founder and director of OPAL Outdoor Play and Learning.

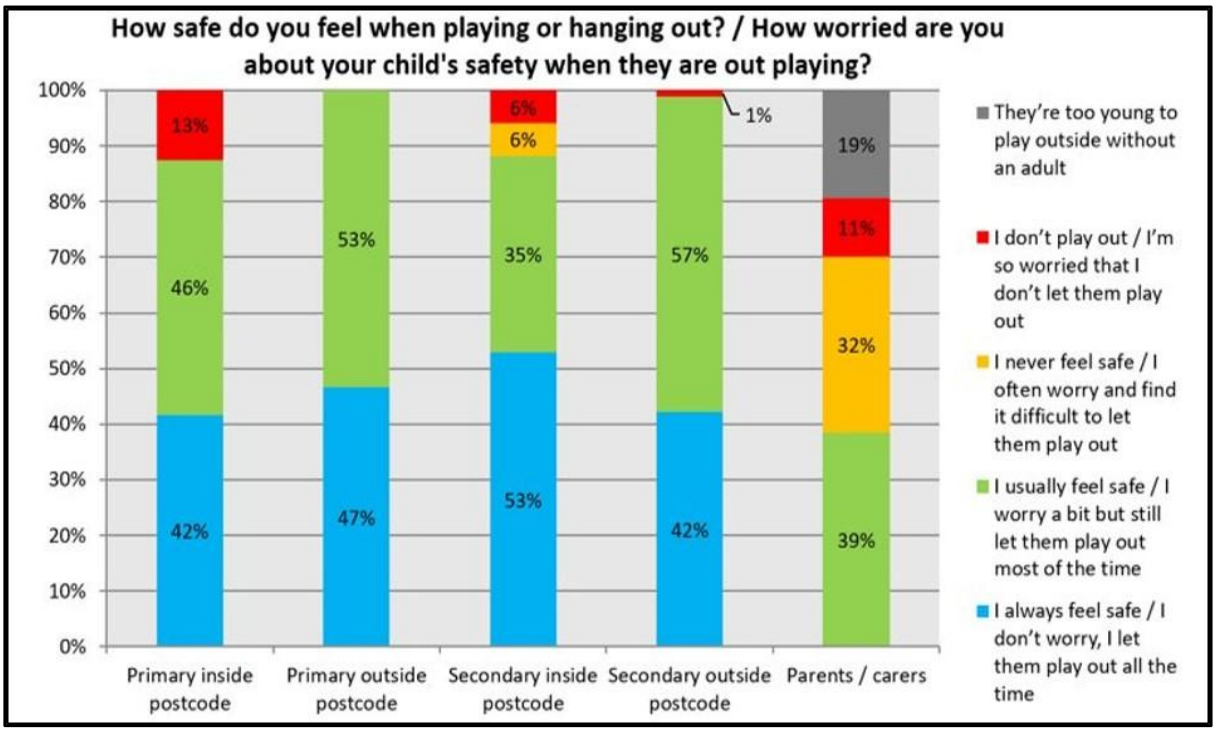
Developing a neighbourhood response to the Play Sufficiency Duty in Carmarthenshire (Lauren Cole)

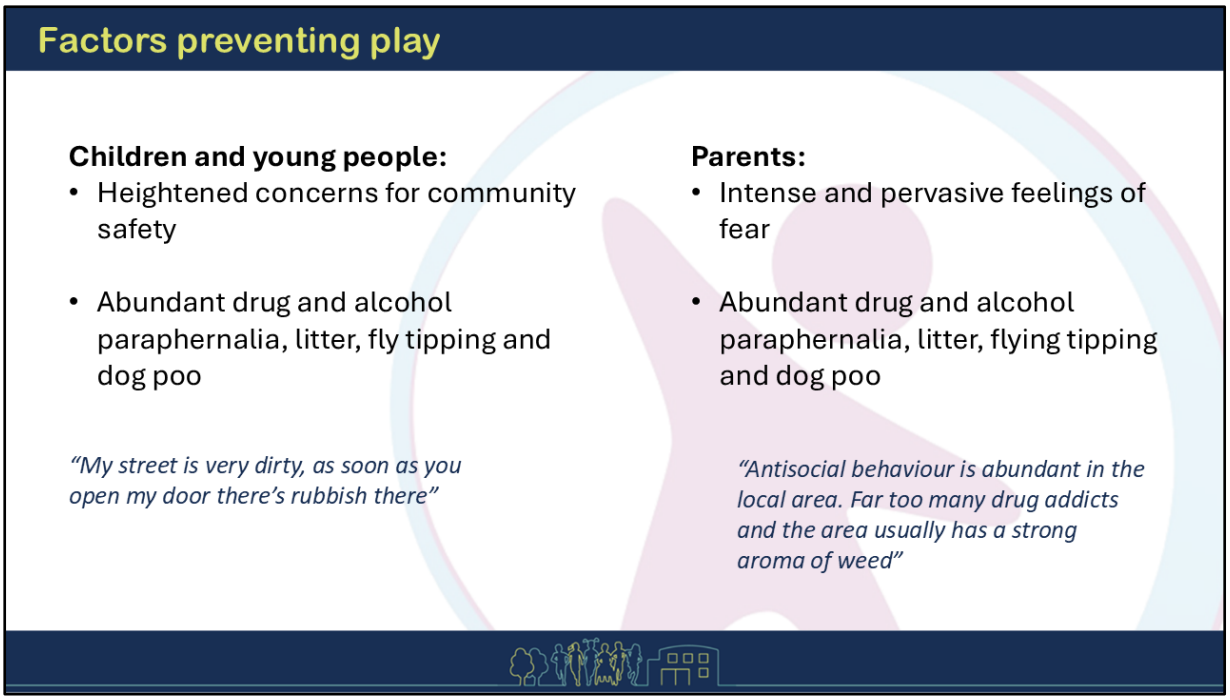
In 2023-2024, Carmarthenshire County Council participated in a research study with the University of Gloucestershire and Ludicology, piloting a mentoring package to support local authorities in carrying out neighbourhood level research as a response to the Welsh Play Sufficiency Duty. The focus was a neighbourhood within Tyisha ward, one of the most deprived areas in Carmarthenshire that is currently the focus of a multi-million pound regeneration project called Transforming Tyisha. The neighbourhood comprised a primary school, a family centre, a small park with some fixed playground

equipment, and a dog park. Housing is mostly terraced houses with alleyways behind. The purpose of the research was to engage residents (including children) to gain a rich picture of what it is really like for children living and playing in this neighbourhood, what supports or constrains children's opportunities to play out, and to use this to create a plan that could inform the work of the Transforming Tyisha regeneration project.

The research used quantitative and qualitative methods, gathering data through surveys, spatial audits, focus groups, and workshops. In talking about play, children said that play was about being physically active, not being told what to do, hanging out with friends, having fun and a laugh, doing different things in different places. They recognised that play helped them to feel well physically and mentally. In the focus groups, adults stories of playing shared similar characteristics, but they felt they had more freedom and were more adventurous than children today.

The play satisfaction surveys had responses from children inside and outside the small neighbourhood area, and this allowed for comparisons. For example, 68% of primary school children in this neighbourhood said they never or hardly ever played out, compared with 38% outside the neighbourhood; equally secondary aged children living inside the neighbourhood played out less frequently than their counterparts who attended the same school but lived outside the neighbourhood. Children living outside of the neighbourhood had greatest freedom to play out, could access more places to play and were more satisfied with their opportunities to play. Although broadly children always or usually felt safe when playing out, this was not the same for parents and caregivers, of whom 62% felt so worried they either did not allow their children to play out unsupervised or found it difficult to do so.





The workshops with primary children showed how those who did play out were limited to a few very local places, mostly at weekends or in the summer. Secondary school children had more freedom to roam. Primary school children said they were worried about anti-social behaviour, including from teenagers. They were also concerned by environmental issues such as litter, dog mess, fly-tipping, and the prevalence of drug and alcohol paraphernalia. The focus group with parents and caregivers revealed overwhelming and intense feelings of fear of crime and violence associated with drug and alcohol abuse and also dangerous dogs.

Three key priorities for improving public space emerged from the data and discussions: cleaning up and improving the local area, making the area feel safe, and having more adventurous play opportunities.

These three priorities formed the basis of a design brief developed during a community planning workshop. Residents identified areas for community cleanups, they wanted more litter and dog bins put in place, and they highlighted the locations for bird and bat boxes and bug hotels, and they wanted to add more landscaping, greenery and flowers.

Area mapping

In terms of feeling safer, they wanted better lighting and moving the dog park away from the children's playground. There were discussions around a trusted adult presence to reassure parents and support children's play. They wanted to develop a network of playable spaces adding more adventurous play equipment, codesigning seating and shelters and creating an informal pump track.

The recommendations coming out of the community concept plan echoed these discussions:

Recommendations

1. Cultivate a culture of permissiveness

Fostering a culture of playing out requires someone to be responsible for helping to eradicate the sense of fear children, young people and parents feel about playing within the local community.

2. Implement a neighbourhood beautification project.

A community beautification project is any effort to enhance the physical appearance and overall aesthetic quality of a neighbourhood.

3. Develop a network of playable spaces.

Create a network of low cost and low maintenance playable spaces in several areas across the neighbourhood.

A formal report was written from this research and a presentation given to the Tyisha Children and Families Workstream Steering Group, and from this several projects have

developed. The Local Places For Nature officer used Welsh Government grant funding for tree planting, planting hedgerows, putting in bat and bird habitat boxes, planting wildflower sites, as well as installing vertical and horizontal logs that can act as habitats and also be played on. A public housing association are consulting with residents regarding enhancing the lanes behinds the houses. There are also ongoing discussions involving local school pupils and the community about developing a small green space near the school.

The Tyisha Children and Families Workstream Steering Group has taken on responsibility for the three recommendations of cultivating a culture of permission, neighbourhood beautification project, and a network of playable spaces. A smaller working group has been created with the intention of recruiting resident representatives. Carmarthenshire is also coming to the end of a full Play Sufficiency Assessment, and this research has fed into that, together with plans for more hyperlocal research in other neighbourhoods.

Designing neighbourhoods that support children's play sufficiency through codesign with children and young people (Matluba Khan)

Why codesign research with children and young people? Because children and young people engage with space differently from adults. They interpret spaces through what they can do in them rather than what those spaces look like. Traditional planning often neglects children's needs, limiting play to standardised playgrounds that are unequal in quality and access, especially in low-income areas. This highlights the need for more integrated equity and place-based approaches to understanding play sufficiency in planning and design in the built environment.

Early research was with children, teachers, local architects, architecture students, and the wider community to redesign a school playground in Bangladesh, where playgrounds are open to the community out of school hours. Playgrounds are generally bare, unsurfaced spaces that only cater for a few kinds of games. Creative methods were used with the children and young people including collective drawing, model making, creative exercises and focus groups to explore children's experiences, which helped inform a more inclusive and engaging design. Teachers and parents were actively involved, aligning play design and educational goals. Local craftspeople built the playground, many of whom were family members of students, helping to create a sense of ownership and ensure the design was culturally and materially appropriate.

The research demonstrated tangible benefits. Through behaviour mapping, the team compared playground use before and after the intervention. Initially, play activity was limited and gender-biased: boys dominated the open grounds for football and organised sports, while girls occupied the peripheries. Post-intervention, the diversity of play

forms increased, and gender participation became far more balanced. Academic outcomes also improved among students who participated in the design and use of the playground. The project received multiple awards and became a model for participatory and inclusive school-ground design.

This formed a foundation for work at neighbourhood level working with Cardiff University and other international partner institutions. The collaborative approach to assessing play sufficiency at neighbourhood level has now applied in several contexts, including Grangetown (Cardiff, Wales), Rayer Bazar (Dhaka, Bangladesh), and Bassoli (Campo Grande, Brazil). Multiple methods have been used, including surveys with parents and caregivers, observation of public spaces, workshops with children, and stakeholder interviews to build more inclusive community plans.

The research found that parental perceptions strongly influence whether children are permitted to play outside. In Rayer Bazar, for example, while children were more visible playing outdoors than in wealthier neighbourhoods, parents remained deeply concerned about road safety, antisocial behaviour, traffic hazards, and teenage gangs. These findings emphasized the need to address both physical and social barriers to play.

Observing where children play is used to complement, not replace, children's own stories of where they play. Children often make use of informal play spaces, such as alleyways and dead-end streets. These areas are frequently overlooked by planners, but play a crucial rule in children's everyday play experiences.

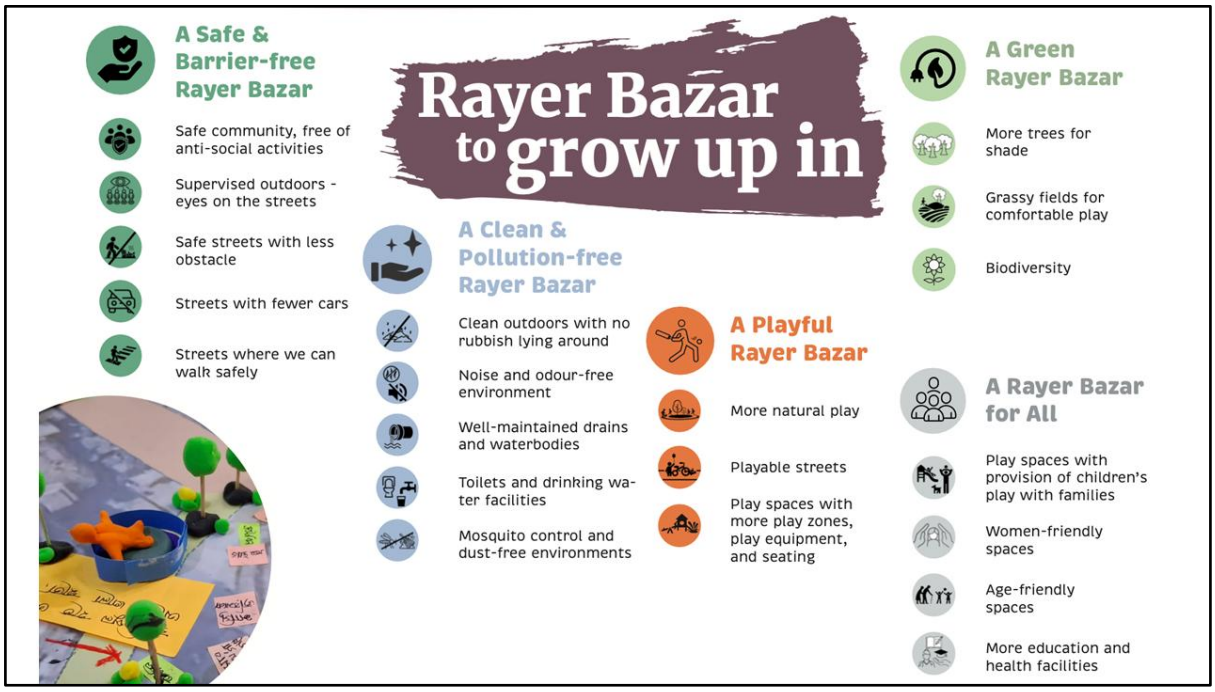
The co-creation workshops have four steps: mapping what is there, walking interviews, envisioning future spaces, and identifying priorities. To begin with, children created maps showing how they currently use their neighbourhoods, noting emotional attachments, favourite and avoided spaces, and perceptions of safety. Second, walking and talking in the neighbourhood can capture deeper insights than the maps. An important point is that children's feelings about spaces are often complex and mixed: the same spaces can be labelled as both liked and disliked. Safety, cleanliness, inclusivity are top priorities. Children often identified informal play spaces like alleyways and highlighted social as well as physical barriers, for example, crime, traffic, pollution, gender exclusion. More recently, the research has also supported children to share their insight through digital mapping tools, such as U-map as part of the Public Map Platform project focusing on the Isle of Anglesey. These initiatives aim to make children's input accessible to planners and policymakers, helping to inform and support decision making.

In the third stage, children co-design their future neighbourhoods creating manifestos, overview plans, and physical models of desired changes. A place-based approach is used, and children do not see designing for play as designing solely for children, but for members of the wider community who face restrictions to their use of public spaces. In the last stage of setting priorities for change, children helped to identify what should happen immediately and what could wait a few years. An Urban Room model was also introduced to engage large groups of children through multiple interactive stations, allowing broad participation even within limited timeframes.

Analysis across neighbourhoods revealed complex and mixed feelings about spaces. The research team used traffic-light mapping to categorise areas: green (safe and comfortable), amber (somewhat safe but with restrictions), and red (unsafe or

inaccessible). Even ostensibly “green” areas, such as parks, were not always perceived as positive. Children valued these spaces for their social function but often pointed out missing play equipment, lack of inclusive facilities, and unsafe or antisocial behaviour occurring within them.

In Grangetown, “safe and clean” emerged as a unified theme. In contrast, in Rayer Bazar, due to heightened issues of pollution, crime and congestion, safety, cleanliness, and busy streets were treated as separate priorities. Children’s concerns extended beyond their own experiences, and they also spoke about the safety and inclusion of older adults, girls, and disabled peers, demonstrating a sophisticated social awareness. One of the most significant insights was that children’s visions for play are holistic and community-oriented, not self-centred. They do not confine play to playgrounds or child-exclusive areas; instead, they imagine neighbourhoods that promote safety, inclusion, and belonging for all: families, elders, disabled residents, and marginalised individuals alike. The analysis underscored that children’s experiences of place are multifaceted, shaped not only by physical features but also by social dynamics, emotional associations, and perceived risks.



The co-created outputs included neighbourhood plans, maps, and models that highlighted priority zones for improvement. These were shared through community exhibitions and citywide showcases, ensuring that policymakers, parents, and the wider public could engage with children’s ideas. The results were documented in accessible formats to ensure transparency and influence on local decision-making.

Children’s leadership in these projects positioned them as protagonists of change, challenging the traditional adult-dominated planning paradigm.

While participatory mapping and codesign are powerful tools, the researcher emphasized their limitations. Mappings can be flat and silent on social context. It is also essential to think about whose voices are being heard in producing these maps and how easily inadvertent exclusion or oversimplification of complex spatial narratives can happen. Critical, qualitative reflections and discussions are crucial for addressing these issues.

Also important is working closely with local authorities from the start, asking them to respond to the children's plans, and how children's access to public space can be embedded into policy and practice, for example through Supplementary Planning Guidance and play strategies. Sustainability is sometimes difficult because of the time-limited nature of research projects. To support planners, designers, playworkers, youth workers, and teachers and researchers, a toolkit has been developed, helping also to scale up the approach.

In summary, children should be recognised as protagonists in urban design. A place-based, equity-focused approach that integrates their lived experiences leads to more inclusive, safe, and meaningful neighbourhoods for everyone.

Play Streets and Play Sufficiency (Alison Stenning)

At the heart of this reflection is a powerful idea: the streets where children live - doorsteps, pavements, and immediate surroundings - are among the most valued spaces for play. Play streets are temporary road closures that allow children to play outside their homes. The picture above illustrates what makes play streets so powerful: children on scooters, toddlers with chalk, dogs, babies, and families mingling. It

encapsulates the vitality of reclaiming local streets as spaces for children's spontaneous, child-led play.

Play streets share common goals with play sufficiency in terms of expanding everyday opportunities for children to play, reinforcing community ties, and reshaping how neighbourhoods are imagined and experienced. Streets matter for play, and this is recognised in the Welsh Government's Play Sufficiency Duty. Children do not simply move through their neighbourhoods; they "play their way" through them. Walking, cycling and exploring are punctuated by spontaneous play, social interaction and discovery. In this way, streets serve as connective tissue between homes, schools, and parks; they are spaces of mobility and play simultaneously.

Doorstep play at the heart of play sufficiency:

"For many children the pavements and roads outside their front doors represent not only access to play provision, but also a space in its own right, where they can play; sometimes the only public open space in a community. We also recognise that when children travel somewhere they don't just walk or cycle but they play their way through their community."

https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-07/wales-a-play-friendly-country.pdf, p.25

The connection to many of the 'Matters' outlined in Play Sufficiency Assessments are clear: play streets work for children with diverse needs and different ways they might want to play; they create safe spaces for playing; they bring communities together and they address many other areas of policy. Research into the impact of play streets shows benefits for children's health, stronger communities, active citizenship, active travel and culture change.

These kinds of play streets began in Bristol in 2009, when two mothers, Alice Ferguson and Amy Rose, wanted their children to enjoy the same freedom they had growing up. Their simple but radical insight was that nothing new had to be added to enable play, but something did have to be removed: traffic. By temporarily restricting cars, they created safe, accessible space right outside their homes.

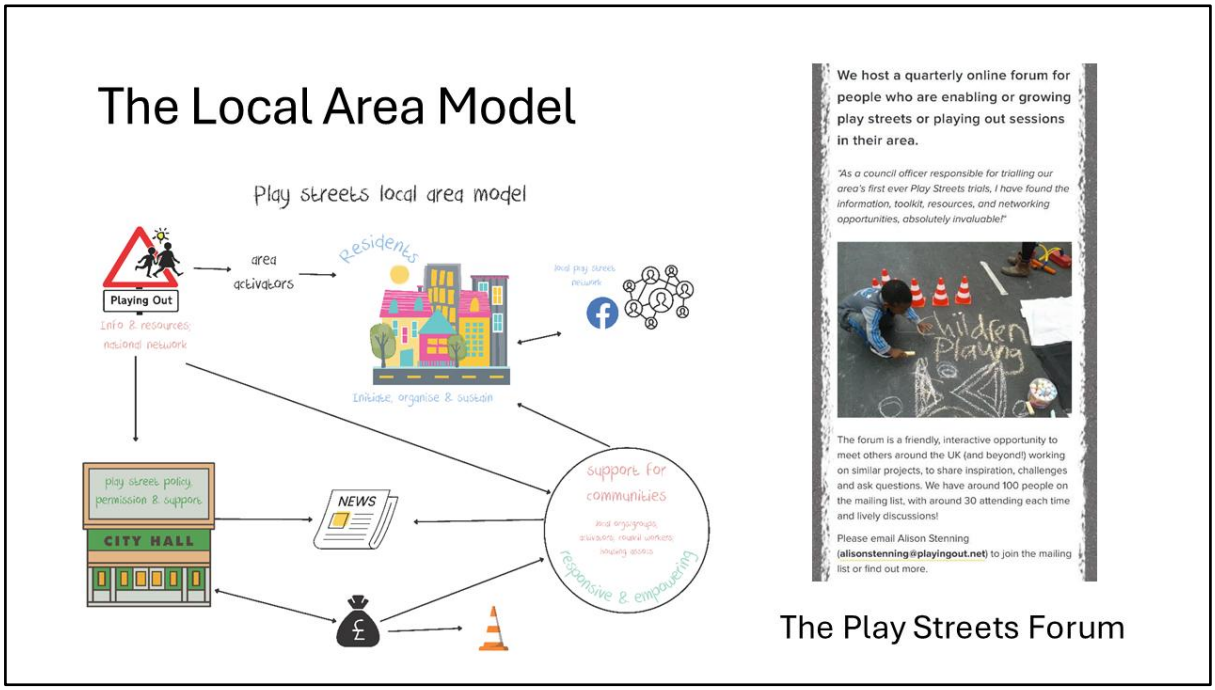
This idea quickly spread. In 2011, Playing Out was established as a community interest company, working with Bristol City Council to develop a Temporary Play Street Order, a legal framework allowing residents to close streets for up to three hours per week. From there, the initiative expanded nationally, and by 2024, over 1,650 communities across 100+ local authority areas had participated.

While initially focused on supporting Play Street activators directly, Playing Out has since broadened its mission. Its vision is now more ambitious: that all children should be free to play outside their homes, every day, for health, well-being, and belonging. Play Streets remain the entry point, but the long-term goal is cultural and infrastructural transformation.

Play streets are resident-led and resident-organised, and the model is strikingly simple. Residents consult with others on the street and then apply for permission to close their street, put up official signs, and steward the closure to ensure safety. Through-traffic is excluded, but residents' cars can enter at walking pace, escorted by volunteers. Children bring toys, balls, chalk, scooters, or simply their imagination. They often share possessions, creating a communal pool of resources. Neighbours without children are also invited and included, fostering intergenerational connection. Some join for conversation, others to steward, and many simply enjoy the sense of liveliness and community.

The simplicity of the model belies its power. By making temporary space for play, it begins to normalise children's presence on streets, shifting perceptions of what streets are for.

The success of Play Streets depends on an ecology of actors. At the street level, residents initiate closures. Local authorities provide legal and administrative frameworks. Housing associations, community groups, and volunteers often offer support. At a broader level, Playing Out coordinates national advocacy, training, and resources, while the Play Streets Forum connects practitioners from across sectors, including council officers, housing providers, activists and residents. This layered model demonstrates how hyperlocal action is sustained by wider institutional and policy frameworks. Without resident enthusiasm, nothing happens; without council permissions and national advocacy, residents cannot act. The ecology must work at all levels to enable widespread change.



The Play Streets Forum

The forms of play observed on Play Streets are extraordinarily diverse. Parents in North Tyneside, asked to document play activities in 2022, listed almost all categories from Bob Hughes' taxonomy of play types, a well-known framework for understanding children's play.

Activities included:

- Physical play: running, ball games, skipping, scootering.
- Creative play: chalk drawings, performances, make-believe worlds.
- Use of indoor toys outdoors: board games, dolls, remote-controlled cars.

- Collective neighbourhood play: toys and games becoming shared resources.

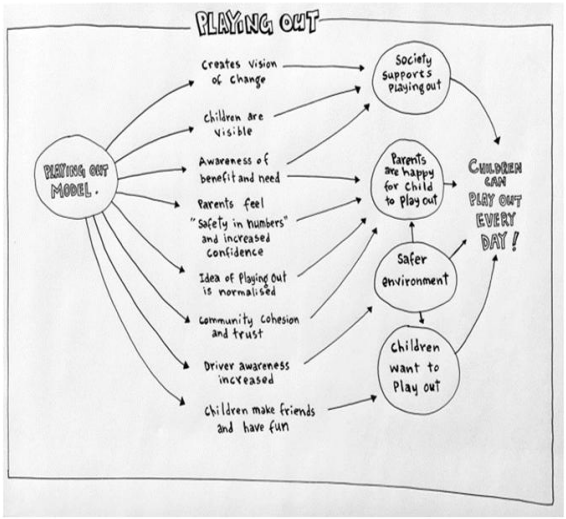
This variety underscores why children value doorstep play so deeply: it offers freedom, flexibility, and choice. Streets become extensions of the home, but with added sociality and outdoor space.

Research shows that the impact of play streets is far-reaching in terms of physical activity, mental health and wellbeing, sense of community and belonging, active travel and campaigning:

- children are 3-5 times more active during a play street than on a 'normal' day
- play streets enable children to learn or improve physical skills (including cycling, scotting, skipping, roller-skating, and ball games)
- 74% of parents report that their children make new friends on their street through play streets
- 82% of parents report that their children grew in social confidence on their play streets
- 45% of survey respondents reported that play streets actively alleviated loneliness
- 87% of respondents said their street felt like a safer, friendlier place to live after starting play streets
- 89% of respondents know more people on their street as a result of play streets
- 80% report that play streets enabled children to learn or improve riding a bike
- 57% felt that play streets had changed how they felt their street could be used
- being involved in play streets has led residents to campaign for zebra crossings and 20mph zones, create parklets, campaign around air quality, and change their own driving and travel behaviour.

Play streets have always been seen as a means to an end rather than an end in themselves, instilling culture change to support children playing out every day. Conversations during play streets raise broader issues of car culture and children's exclusion from streets, air quality and the environmental impacts of traffic, and the climate crisis and the need for sustainable transport. Given this, play is no longer trivial, but central to reimagining fairer, healthier, and greener communities.

Play Streets and Culture Change



Despite successes, there are still social, spatial and environmental barriers both to play streets and to playing out more broadly (as an issue of play sufficiency). Parents often express anxieties about safety, responsibility, or permission. Social, physical, and environmental inequalities also shape who feels able to organise or participate. Organising play streets takes time, sometimes there is conflict between neighbours (both residential and institutional), drivers may not be supportive, there are sometimes risks of anti-social behaviour raising questions about who is responsible.

There are echoes here of the experiences in Carmarthenshire, underlining the connections between play streets and play sufficiency. Play streets and play sufficiency are mutually enabling and reinforcing, ensuring children have access to space to play on their doorstep, that communities are engaged in the remaking of neighbourhoods for play, that children's play is linked to their mobility and to the wider spaces of their everyday lives. All this raises questions of social, spatial and environmental justice, putting the emphasis both on communities themselves, but also importantly on policy agendas across the local authority and beyond. The need for national guidance on play streets connects to the growing calls in England for a national play strategy and play sufficiency legislation and the wider vision for doorstep play.

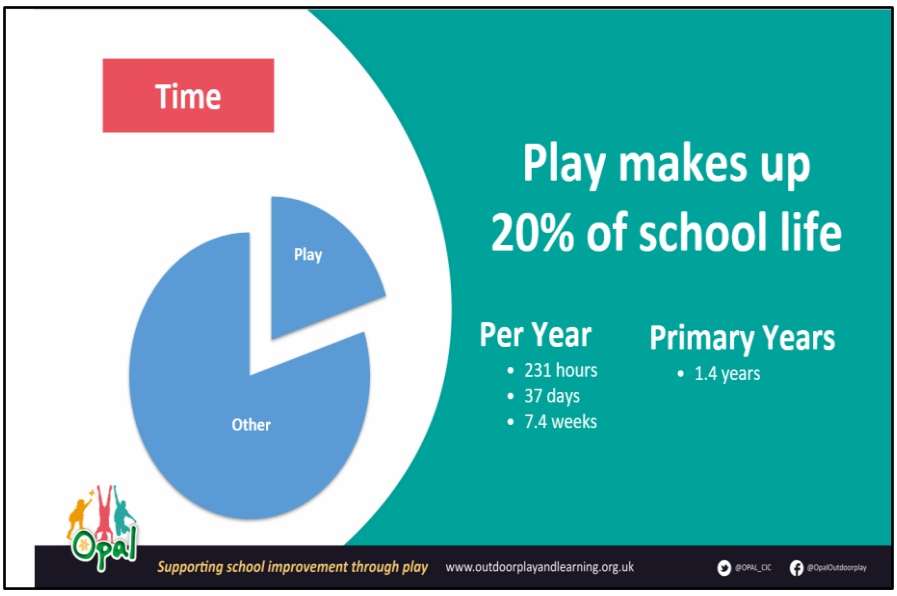
Transforming Play in Primary Schools: The OPAL Approach and the Pursuit of Play Sufficiency (Michael Follett)

Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) was founded in 2011 with the specific aim of making playtimes fantastic for primary school children. At that time, many schools wanted to improve the quality of children's play but struggled to find the time, expertise, or resources to make that happen. Teachers and leaders were busy focusing on curriculum, assessment, and administration, while playtime was often overlooked or poorly supported.

Recognising the need for a specialist organisation dedicated solely to improving play in schools, OPAL was created. In its first year, OPAL worked with 11 schools. Since then, demand has grown rapidly as schools recognised the positive impact of rethinking playtime. Now, with over 45 OPAL mentors, OPAL has run programmes in over 2,000 schools throughout the UK, with over a million children benefitting, meaning it can make a significant contribution to play sufficiency simply because of its capacity to reach so many children. OPAL now also supports schools in Poland, France, Canada, USA, Spain, Malaysia, and Singapore.

The vision is simple but ambitious: every primary school child should have an amazing play experience every day, with no exceptions. Whether a child loves or hates football, prefers quiet creative play or group games, every child deserves a playtime that is joyful, inclusive, and enriching.

Each UK primary school child attends school roughly 190 days per year and spends around one hour a day in playtime. Across seven years of primary education, that adds up to 1.4 years of their school life spent in play. Despite this, playtime is rarely included in strategic planning or improvement frameworks.



The challenge OPAL sets is: “What headteacher would fail to plan strategically for 20% of what a child does in your school?” Playtimes are typically okay, not brilliant, and are left to evolve haphazardly. Yet, nothing in a school gets better by chance. Through OPAL, schools are given the structures, methods, and support they need to treat play with the same rigour and strategic thinking as academic subjects.

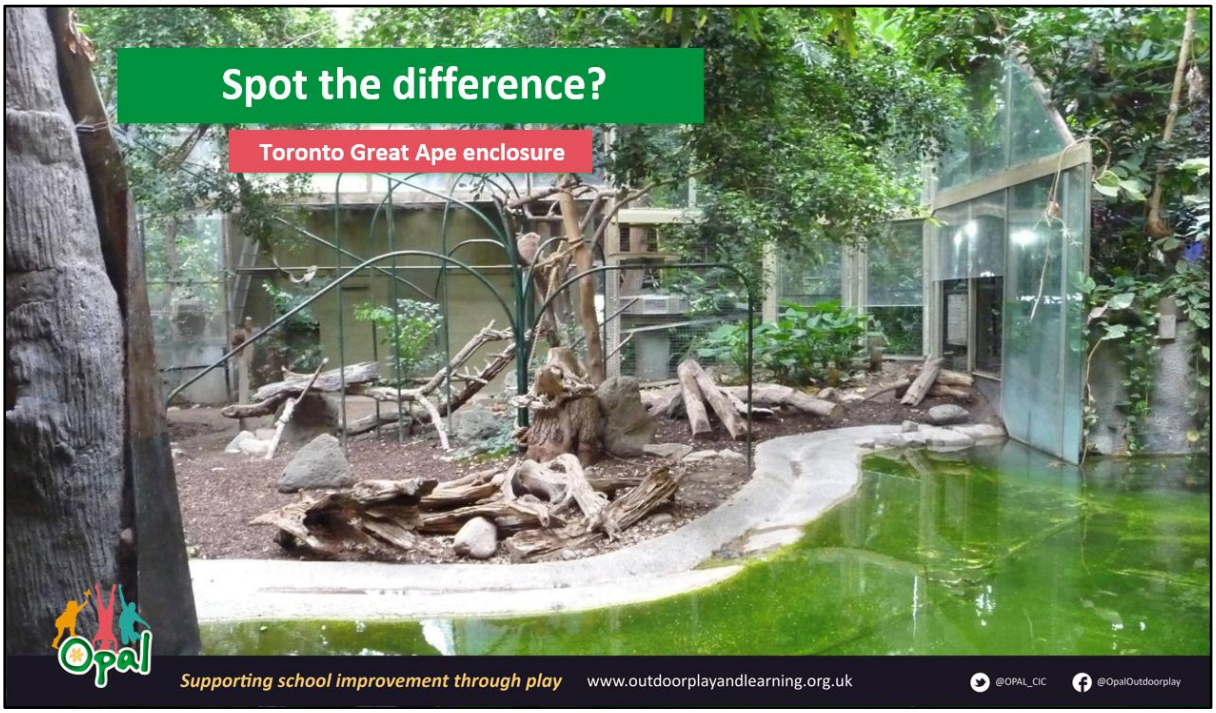
The OPAL programme is not simply about adding equipment or organising playground games. It is a cultural transformation programme that reshapes how schools understand and support play. The programme runs for 18 months and includes eight structured meetings between the school and an OPAL mentor. Together, they assess and improve 18 key areas of practice, culture, and resourcing that determine the quality of play. The goal is to shift a school from “average playtimes” to a culture where play is central to the school day - vibrant, inclusive, and self-sustaining. In the top level OPAL schools (Platinum), it feels like a party every day. There are children dressing up, there are children in trees, there are children digging holes. They are dancing to music, they are making mud pies, they are sliding down hills in canoes and barrels.

American bank robber Willie Sutton, when asked why he robbed banks, replied, “Because that’s where they keep the money.” By analogy, OPAL focuses on schools because that’s where they keep the children. OPAL can make a significant contribution to play sufficiency because of its capacity to reach large numbers of children. Nearly all UK children attend school, spending significant amounts of time there. Improving play in schools therefore has a greater and more sustained impact than other interventions. From a play sufficiency perspective, schools represent a resource hiding in plain sight: they already have the spaces, the staff, the culture, and the daily routines needed to deliver meaningful play for millions of children.

Schools are uniquely positioned to contribute to community-wide play sufficiency. Yet many schools close themselves off from the public after hours, locking gates and fencing off playgrounds. Two examples were given of how schools might make themselves more accessible outside school hours. One was from an elementary school in San Francisco, seen by sheer chance. A notice was displayed on the gate on a Saturday afternoon, saying, “Please come in, use our school grounds. Play with the tires, play with the bikes, play in the sandpit—and look after our stuff.” Children were inside the school grounds, playing freely. The community was trusted to use and care for the space. Nothing was stolen or vandalised. That's not going to happen in every neighbourhood, but the fear of something going wrong does hold schools back from making such valuable resources available to contribute to play sufficiency.

A cultural shift away from fear of damage, theft or litigation and toward trust could unlock enormous community benefit. The second example is from Toronto, where legal responsibility for school grounds transfers from the education department to the parks department at 3 o'clock, meaning school grounds can be included in the idea of sufficient play in neighbourhoods for children.

To provoke further reflection, parallels were drawn between the bonobo enclosure of Toronto Zoo and the 'before' picture from an OPAL school.



Zookeepers are aware that they need to provide healthy environments for the animals in their care. Young bonobos, as intelligent primates, need opportunities to climb and

develop upper-body strength; proximity to nature; spaces to hide and spaces to explore; objects to manipulate and create with; social closeness and variety.

In contrast to the rich environment of the bonobo enclosure, the image of the school playground has a barren tarmac space surrounded by a high solid fence, with yellow signs at the top warning of razor wire, prompting the question as to whether the wire was to keep others out (why would they want to climb into such a featureless space?) or keep in the 220 "intelligent primates" who attend this school. In the UK, the Animal Welfare Act legally requires that all animals' environments must be suitable to the needs of the species. The metaphor highlights a serious point: children have little power to improve or redesign their own environments. Adults - the 'zookeepers' of childhood - control access, time, and space. If we take children's rights as seriously as we do animal welfare, we must ensure that their basic species needs for movement, exploration, creativity, and social interaction are met. Key questions to ask include:

- Do children have freedom of movement?
- Do they have time and permission to play?
- Are their environments rich, stimulating, and safe?
- Do they have access to nature and loose materials to explore?

With the right vision, schools can easily meet these needs. Furthermore, this can make a significant contribution to play sufficiency. The play services that can be offered through local council or voluntary sector play teams, such as playgrounds, play buses, play rangers and holiday playschemes, are valuable. Yet none reaches as many children for as much time as school play improvements do. Pound for pound, improving school

playtimes is the most efficient and impactful investment for achieving play sufficiency. The average UK primary school has around 220 pupils, each attending for 190 days a year, with roughly an hour of playtime daily. That means each school already provides over 40,000 hours of potential play annually. If those hours are joyful, creative, and inclusive, the contribution to children's well-being—and to community-level play sufficiency—is enormous. Schools already possess the raw ingredients:

- Space: Most schools have generous grounds, often with green areas, trees, or varied terrain. Even when surfaces are hard, there is potential for transformation.
- Culture: Schools understand children and children's needs. They care about children's welfare.
- Time: Schools formally allocate 40–60 minutes daily for play. This is a guaranteed, structured window for implementing improvements.
- Boundaries: The fenced nature of schools provides a safe and contained environment where loose parts and natural materials can be introduced without excessive risk.
- Resources: Schools can use low-cost, creative approaches instead of expensive fixed play equipment. OPAL encourages schools to use loose parts play, introducing simple, open-ended materials such as planks, tyres, crates, tarpaulins, fabrics, and sand. These invite imagination, co-operation, and physical exploration far beyond what static climbing frames or plastic structures can offer.

Despite these advantages, many schools remain hesitant. Common worries include:

- Who will insure it?
- Who is responsible if something breaks?
- The 'hurty and dirty problem': adults' discomfort with the idea of children getting minor injuries or messy clothes.
- How much supervision is needed?
- What if parents or governors object?

Experience shows that such fears are generally disproportionate and rooted in risk aversion rather than reality. Schools that adopt OPAL find that with clear structures, shared responsibility, and trust in children's competence, problems are rare and manageable.

Schools are not only part of the play sufficiency offer, they are central to it. They already possess the infrastructure, staffing, and routine presence of children that make sustained, high-quality play achievable at scale. In terms of play sufficiency, schools are the largest untapped play resource. If every primary school committed to delivering exceptional play for every child, the UK would take a giant leap toward fulfilling its

obligations under the UNCRC. Play sufficiency is not only about quantity of opportunities, but also about quality, and OPAL's work shows how that quality can be systematically developed and measured.

A vision of what is possible comes from a school in Bristol that has been part of the OPAL programme for twelve years. Two full generations of pupils have now passed through the school, none of whom have ever known anything but joyful, creative, adventurous playtimes. For these children, excellent play is simply normal. It shapes their confidence, relationships, and sense of belonging. It transforms the school culture, staff morale, and even academic outcomes, as happier, more resilient children learn better.

The message is clear: we are so nearly there. Schools have the time, the space, the people. They just need a little push. That push comes through structured support, courageous leadership, and a shift in mindset from seeing play as a break from learning to recognising it as a vital part of education and wellbeing.

QnA

A question asked of Lauren Cole was whether there were differences between boys and girls regarding neighbourhood safety issues, access to spaces or their suggested improvement. Lauren responded that there were no clear differences in the survey or in the primary school focus groups (although these were fairly evenly split across genders they were quite small). In the secondary school focus groups, some girls did say that they needed to take more precautions than boys when playing out to make them feel safe. There is the potential to look further at this. Mike added, having been involved in this research, that in the secondary school focus group, the boys were very confident and spoke out more than the girls, so there is an argument for researching with specific groups. Matluba added that in the context of her work in Grangetown, with 150 children, both girls and boys highlighted the challenges girls and young women face. Sports space tended to be occupied by teenage boys. This was also something that came out in our work in Bangladesh, where parents generally did not allow girls outside because they were concerned about their safety in relation to sexual harassment and girls themselves talked about the lack of availability of toilet and other facilities for girls.

A question for Matluba Kahn was whether children in her mapping workshops had been given examples of child friendly spaces, and safer spaces for girls and young women was a priority in the neighbourhood. Matluba replied that they focused on what was there, what was valued, and the challenges children faced. The children were not given examples, instead they used a range of tools to encourage their own creativity and their own ideas for developing a manifesto. Examples come from specific contexts and are

influenced by cultural and social practices that are not the same everywhere. We would use examples very cautiously so as not to have too much influence on children's ideas.

A question for Alison Stenning asked what more local authorities could do to support play streets beyond establishing a formally adopted policy on play streets and streamlining the application process. Alison spoke about how the history of play streets in their contemporary form largely rely on residents having the time, capacity, ability and willingness to engage with the council and to fill in forms, to take risks and to take responsibility. These are issues of spatial, social and environmental justice, and if local authorities are willing to support, to help navigate any conflicts, and to take on some of those risks and responsibilities, play streets are more likely to happen in those areas of greater disadvantage.

The webinar ended with thanks to all those who had contributed.

Appendix 1: biographies of contributors

Mike Barclay and **Ben Tawil** work together as **Ludicology**, providing consultancy, research and training on children's play. Since the introduction of the Welsh Play Sufficiency Duty, they have been developing approaches to 'doing' play sufficiency at neighbourhood, local authority and national levels in both England and Wales. They are also mentors for the OPAL programme, working to improve play times in schools. **Ben** previously held management roles at two adventure playgrounds, worked as a national development officer for Play Wales, and lectured in play and playwork. **Mike** was Wrexham Council's play sufficiency lead for over 10 years and has a background in open access play provision and out of school childcare. Most recently, with Dr Wendy Russell, Mike and Ben co-authored *Playing and Being Well*, a comprehensive literature review of recent research into children's play, social policy and practice, with a focus on Wales.

Theresa Casey is an independent consultant and writer, and a Trustee of Playgrounds for Palestine UK. Theresa served as President of IPA from 2008-2017, the period in which IPA worked towards the publication of General comment No. 17 by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. With Valerie Fronczek, Theresa co-chaired the IPA group leading the international call for a General comment on article 31. She and Valerie subsequently co-led the Core group managing the GC drafting process on behalf of the UN Committee, facilitating involvement of experts, advocates and children's groups from around the world.

Lauren Cole has 4 years of experience as a Play and Childcare Development Assistant for Carmarthenshire County Council. Previously, she worked as a Primary Teacher and in Early Years settings. She has completed two Play Sufficiency Assessments and enjoys directly enhancing children's opportunities to play.

Ruth Conway is currently Deputy Director of the Early Years, Childcare and Play Division within Welsh Government and has been in post just over a year. She is a career civil servant with more than 30 years' experience -17 years of which was in Education. During her time in education Ruth held various roles which have involved working across Welsh Government Departments, providing a strong foundation to build on for her current role.

Etive Currie works for Glasgow City Council, where she is the lead officer for their Play Sufficiency Assessment and also for their Living Well Locally process. She was a co-designer of the Scottish Place Standard Tool, and as such, she represents the Council at national and international levels to talk about and run training sessions on the place standard tool. Her work builds on the national place-based approach to create a collaborative co-design approach with children and young people about where they go, what they do, and what needs to change. She is also a WHO (World Health

Organisation) Place adviser and contributes to global research, development, and delivery on everything placemaking.

Michael Follett is founder and Director of OPAL CIC. He is a former playworker, teacher, school improvement officer. He led play policy and strategy for two local authorities from 2000 to 2011 where he was instrumental in developing innovations such as Play Rangers and the Play Pod project. Michael was on the board of Play England for six years and has acted as adviser on play to The National Trust, The Football Association and the National Lottery. His book Creating Excellence in Primary Playtimes is published by Hachette and the Japanese translation will go on sale in 2026.

Mike Greenaway has been Director of Play Wales since its inception in 1998. He has been instrumental in advising Welsh Government on children's play policy; on its the adoption of the world's first national play policy in 2002, and play strategy in 2006; and in 2010, the development of a statutory duty requiring local authorities to provide for play. He has been a Trustee of the IPA since 2008, and with colleagues was instrumental in the development of General Comment 17 that supports article 31. . . and he is a playworker for 2 weeks every summer.

Alan Herron was appointed Chief Executive Officer of PlayBoard Northern Ireland in June 2022, having previously served as PlayBoard's Director of Service Delivery and Development since 2009. He played a key role in shaping Northern Ireland's first *Play and Leisure Policy*, providing technical guidance to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. He also contributed to the development of *Bright Start* – the NI Executive's childcare strategy – and led delivery of the Department of Education's *Play Matters* programme under the Children and Young People's Strategy. Over the past decade, Alan has driven PlayBoard's collaboration with local councils to advance children's right to play, leading to the creation of strategic play frameworks and ensuring that children's voices inform local decision-making.

Marguerite Hunter Blair OBE is Chief Executive of Play Scotland. She established the Scottish Play Commission (2007) and led the campaigns for Scotland's Play Strategy (2013) and a Statutory Duty for Play in the Planning (Scotland) Act (2019). Marguerite is Chair of the Play Strategy Refresh Group, a vice-Chair of Planning Aid Scotland, and Secretary of IPA Scotland. Formerly, CEO of Playboard Northern Ireland and Community Services Manager, Belfast City Council.

Tracey Jobber is the play service manager and PSA lead officer at Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. She has been working with and supporting children and young people in a variety of roles including the voluntary and community sector for over 20 years. She currently lives in Shropshire and is looking forward to springtime as she enjoys growing her own fruit and vegetables.

Dr Matluba Khan is an academic at the School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University, with a strong commitment to designing and researching spaces for play—for and with children. Her work explores participatory design and planning, intervention research, and the evaluation of environments that support pedagogy, play, health, and wellbeing. Central to her research is the pursuit of creating just and equitable spaces for all. Dr. Khan's co-designed projects have earned international recognition, including the Inspiring Future Generations Award 2023 (Finalist), RTPI's Sir Peter Hall Memorial Award 2023 (Finalist), EDRA Great Places Award (Winner, 2016) and the ASLA Honor Award (2017).

Marianne Mannello is an Assistant Director: Policy, Support and Advocacy at Play Wales, the national charity for children's play. She joined Play Wales in 2002, having been one of its trustees before this. She leads on play sufficiency, children's rights, health and wellbeing and neighbourhood play provision. Marianne works with the Welsh Government and local authorities in Wales with regards to Play Sufficiency Assessments. She leads on the Active Play indicator as a member of the Active Healthy Kids Wales Report Card Expert Group and is a member of the Wales UNCRC Monitoring Group. During the coronavirus lockdown, Marianne achieved a long held ambition to master the hula hoop.

Bringing over 25 years of senior leadership experience in Local Government, **Eugene Minogue** has delivered transformative strategies across play, youth, parks, health, wellbeing, physical activity, leisure, and sport services. During his 23-year tenure at Westminster City Council, he led high-impact initiatives, and in recent years, he has excelled as an interim leader and consultant, advising Local Authorities on complex challenges. Alongside his Local Government career, he has held roles at Sport England and Parkour UK, where he was CEO for 10-years. He is currently the Executive Director at Play England and is the founder of the 'Know Ball Games' campaign, which campaigns for the removal of 'No Ball Games' signs. Beyond his executive career, Eugene contributes at a strategic level through committee positions with Open Active, the Sport and Play Construction Association (SAPCA), and World Urban Parks (WUP), driving innovation and policy development.

Dr Wendy Russell is an independent researcher and educator on children's play and a Senior Research Fellow in Play at the University of Gloucestershire, where she co-developed and taught on the MA in Professional Studies in Children's Play. She has worked in the play and playwork field for many decades, initially on adventure playgrounds and then in development, research, training and education with local, national and international organisations. Her research focuses on children's play, particularly in terms of policy, the politics of space and ethics. She has contributed to researching play sufficiency for over ten years and, with Mike Barclay and Ben Tawil, co-

authored *Playing and Being Well,* a review of contemporary research into childhood, children's play, policy and practice.

Jenny Rutherford is Leeds City Council's Play Strategy Officer and works in the Child Friendly Leeds team. Alongside colleagues in Active Leeds, she leads on Play Sufficiency. Amongst other things, Jenny is part of the core team developing Leeds' Community of Play and leads on the city's Play Street project.

Gareth Stacey is the current play sufficiency lead for Wrexham. He has worked within the play sector across a number of local authorities in North Wales over the past 15 years. He has been involved, in some capacity, in every play sufficiency cycle since its commencement in 2012 in Wales.

Professor Alison Stenning started organising a play street on her own street in 2015, and in 2017 started to work, with two other local mothers, to support and develop play streets across the whole of North Tyneside, facilitating – as PlayMeetStreet North Tyneside – around 100 streets to establish regular and occasional play streets sessions. Since July 2023, she has been a member of Playing Out's board and currently convenes Playing Out's online Play Streets Forum (for people who are enabling or growing play streets in their area). She also researches play streets and neighbourhood play as an academic geographer at Newcastle University.

Keith Towler is the current Chair of Play Wales and is a Patron of The Venture in Wrexham. He served as the Children's Commissioner for Wales (2008 – 2015) and during this period published a number of reports including those on advocacy, child protection, play, child trafficking, young carers, disabled children and young people, and looked after children. Keith was a member of the International Play Association (IPA) Working Group that was asked by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to take a lead role in helping to draft the General Comment on article 31.

Adrian Voce is head of policy and public affairs at Starlight, where he is working closely with NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care to improve recognition and support for children's play in healthcare. His long career in play has included working on adventure playgrounds, most recently at Lollard Street in London, and being the first director of both London Play and Play England, where, in the 2000s, he led the campaign for and worked with the government to deliver the national play strategy for England before it was abandoned in 2010. Adrian is the author of *Policy for Play: responding to children's forgotten right* (2015). He has a Masters degree in Professional Studies in Children's Play and in 2011 was awarded an OBE for 'services to children'.