

National Assembly for Wales
Children and Young People Committee

Provision of Safe Places to Play
and Hang Out

November 2010



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National Assembly for Wales
Children and Young People Committee

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Children and Young People Committee

The Children and Young People Committee was appointed by the National Assembly for Wales to consider and report on issues affecting children and young people in Wales.

In particular, the Committee may examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Welsh Government and associated public bodies and consider reports of the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

Often adults do not take the views of children and young people seriously. As politicians, we have a responsibility to encourage children and young people to voice their opinions and to listen to them. The Children and Young People Committee was established to help do that.

Powers

The Committee was established on 16 October 2007 when a motion to establish it was agreed in plenary. It will exist for the whole of the Third Assembly. Its powers are set out in the National Assembly for Wales' Standing Orders (SOs), particularly SO 21. These are available at www.assemblywales.org.

Current Committee Membership



**Helen Mary Jones
(Chair)**
Llanelli
Plaid Cymru



Eleanor Burnham
North Wales
Welsh Liberal Democrat



Sandy Mewies
Delyn
Labour



Jonathan Morgan
Cardiff North
Welsh Conservative Party



Joyce Watson
Mid and West Wales
Labour

The following Member was also a member of the Committee during this inquiry:



Angela Burns
Carmarthen West and South
Pembrokeshire
Welsh Conservative

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Chair's foreword

“The right to play is the child's first claim on the community. Play is nature's training for life. No community can infringe that right without doing enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens.” David Lloyd George

Playing may seem frivolous to some but in fact it is of vital importance that children and young people have time to relax, explore the world around them and push their boundaries through play.

We all have fond memories of the time we spent playing as children and young people. Indeed, it has been pointed out to us during the course of this inquiry that even as adults we need time to relax and play, be that a trip to the cinema or time spent with friends.

As adults, we need to enable the children and young people in our society to share the simple pleasures of playing, hanging out and spending time with friends. The United Nations Convention on the rights of the child, which the Welsh Government is in the process of making law in Wales, states that children have a right to leisure time. This report explores the barriers that exist in society that prevent that right becoming a reality for children and young people across Wales.

The 26 recommendations contained within this report relate to wide ranging issues such as transport, planning and the needs of specific groups of children and young people. The Committee calls on the Welsh Government to not only accept the recommendations made in this report but to set out in detail in its response how each challenge will be met.

The Committee is grateful for the time taken by over 2700 children and young people who participated in the ‘it’s all about you’ project that prompted this inquiry. We also owe thanks to nearly 1200 children and young people who gave evidence to this inquiry, alongside other stakeholders and play providers. We hope that your experiences will help us to make a real difference to the lives of children and young people across Wales.

Helen Mary Jones AM

Chair, Children and Young People Committee

The Committee's Recommendations

Recommendation 1. The Committee urges the Welsh Government to complete its review of the standards and guidance for play at the earliest opportunity in order to enable local authorities to assess the sufficiency of their current play provision and make robust plans for future provision. The guidance should include a clear definition of 'play' that includes both structured and free play, as described in paragraph 25 of this report. (Page 20)

Recommendation 2. The Welsh Government should carry out a short and focused review of the play policy implementation plan involving external stakeholders which should be completed before the next election. The results of the review should record progress to date and make recommendations to the Deputy Minister that will assist him to refocus the plan on those areas that are still valid in light of the recent legislation and a greater than ever need to prioritise public service delivery. (Page 21)

Recommendation 3. The Committee recommends that revised guidance is issued in relation to the Children and Young People partnerships by the Welsh Government which re-states the pivotal role of the partnerships in developing strategic approaches and supporting the delivery of play and leisure provision. The guidance should require all local authority departments and relevant agencies to fully demonstrate their engagement with the partnership process. (Page 25)

Recommendation 4. In light of the evidence that demonstrates a higher incidence of injury and death as a result of road traffic accidents for children living in a deprived area, the Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should refocus their efforts to address child pedestrian injuries in the most deprived areas Wales. This should achieve an improvement in indicators 15 and 16 of the Welsh Government Child Poverty Milestones and Targets in respect of pedestrian injuries for 5-14 year olds. (Page 30)

Recommendation 5. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should ensure that road safety is included in the Welsh curriculum. (Page 30)

Recommendation 6. The Committee recommends that the Children and Young People Partnerships take a greater and more consistent role in driving forward the needs of and engagement of children and young people in the planning process. Planning departments should work with the partnerships to develop practical ways they can ensure that the needs of children and young people to have safe places to play and hang out are given appropriate weighting within the planning processes and decisions. The Committee further recommends that the Partnership Support Unit, which supports CYP Partnerships, gathers together examples of good practice in planning participation and disseminated that information to all partnerships in a meaningful way. (Page 35)

Recommendation 7. Guidance issued as a result of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure (2010) should include a good practice guide to consultation which sets out the need to give consultees the full facts available, including budgetary information, and the need to inform consultees of any decisions made in light of the consultation and the reasons for those decisions. (Page 35)

Recommendation 8. The Committee recommends that statutory guidance relating to the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 stipulate that the participation of children and young people in the decision making processes should take place across a wide range of local government departments. Participation should not be restricted to those departments overtly concerned with children and young people, for example; education and social services, but should also take place in, for example; planning, transport and housing. In order to enable children and young people to participate in a meaningful way, guidance should require local authorities to support capacity building for young people. Such support work should extend beyond youth forums to encourage local authorities to engage with as wide a range of children and young people as is possible. (Page 37)

Recommendation 9. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should amend Planning Policy Wales 3 and the supporting Technical Advice Notes 12 (Design) and 18 (Transport) to make it a more explicit requirement for the guidance about play provision in the 'Manual for Streets' to be used as an inherent part of any design for communities. (Page 39)

Recommendation 10. The Committee recommends that where, for financial reasons, local authorities are targeting the use of street lighting, routes to play areas should be prioritised. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that lighting systems are built in to plans for play facilities, particularly for facilities aimed at older children and young people for whom it would be entirely reasonable to be out after dark. (Page 41)

Recommendation 11. The Committee recommends that local authorities maintain dialogue with children and young people in order to monitor issues of cleanliness and good order and focus cleaning and maintenance resources on problem areas. (Page 42)

Recommendation 12. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government develop a set of health and safety guidelines for play settings that allow for adventurous play. These should be developed in consultation with play providers, children and young people and other stakeholders. (Page 44)

Recommendation 13. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government works with other stakeholders to review the benefits of launching a new campaign to help children and parents manage risks, identify potentially dangerous situations and know how to keep themselves safe both in and out of the home without unnecessarily curtailing the freedom and experiences of children and young people. (Page 46)

Recommendation 14. The Welsh Government should ensure its intergenerational work is undertaken cross-departmentally to ensure input from relevant children and young people policy work as well as older people policy development. (Page 49)

Recommendation 15. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government reviews how intergenerational work can be embedded into the school curriculum in order to maximise the interaction between generations in a positive way. (Page 54)

Recommendation 16. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government hosts four regional media summits which should aim to dispel the media myths surrounding children and young people and should demonstrate the negative impact for the whole community of negative news stories regarding children and young people. The Committee further recommends that the Welsh Government holds

discussions with the UK Government to explore the benefits of holding similar press summits on a UK wide basis. (Page 54)

Recommendation 17. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government carries out a focused review into approaches and methods that could be implemented to reduce the instance of out of school bullying, and to support victims of such bullying. Such a review should pay particular regard to the issue of disabled children and young people as victims of bullying. The Committee also calls on the Welsh Government to confirm the timescale for issuing its anti-bullying guidance, which was due to be published in December 2009. (Page 58)

Recommendation 18. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government issues guidance to local authorities to ensure that they provide supervised play opportunities for children and young people in a variety of settings. Consideration should also be given to the training of play supervisors to eliminate any misinterpretation of reflective practice that may result in a lack of action against bullying in a play setting. (Page 58)

Recommendation 19. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government prioritises the provision of concessionary fares on public transport for 16 – 18 year olds to enable them to access leisure and recreational facilities as well as educational and training opportunities in their wider locality. (Page 61)

Recommendation 20. The Committee recommends that the current public transport system should be re-assessed against the needs of children and young people, alongside those of other users. If the re-assessment highlights systemic problems with public transport provision in Wales, then further steps should be taken by the Welsh Government to ensure that those issues are resolved. (Page 61)

Recommendation 21. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government issues guidance to local governments to ensure that pupils are not excluded from extra curricular activities because of difficulties in securing transportation home at the end of the activity. (Page 62)

Recommendation 22. The Welsh Government should ensure that all mainstream play opportunities are inclusive, although specialist play provision should also be made available to disabled children and young people who request it. When assessing the needs of carers for disabled children and young people, consideration should be given to any

support a carer may need to enable disabled children to access such play opportunities. (Page 68)

Recommendation 23. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government takes appropriate steps to ensure that the statutory obligations that require all new public buildings in Wales to be totally accessible are met, and that accessibility features are retrofitted to all public buildings where and when possible. (Page 68)

Recommendation 24. The Committee recommends that local authority pricing structures are changed to provide play and leisure opportunities free of charge where possible. Family tickets should also be made available with prices that reflect the number of adults, as well as the number of children in a family. (Page 70)

Recommendation 25. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government considers the play needs of Gypsy Traveller children and young people in its Gypsy Traveller Strategy. The development of play development plans should be made with the participation on gypsy traveller children and young people, along with their parents. Furthermore, planning guidance issued in relation to Gypsy Traveller site development should include a mandatory obligation to provide play opportunities on each site. (Page 71)

Recommendation 26. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should undertake a review of the role that both Community Focused Schools and all maintained schools play in supporting safe play and leisure opportunities with a view to maximizing the opportunities for safe places to play and hang out that schools can offer communities. The review should include consideration of issues relating to premises, finance, integration with local provision and good practice models with a view to maximising opportunities to share facilities. (Page 74)

Introduction

Why did the committee decide to do an inquiry into the provision of safe places to play and hang out?

1. During the summer of 2009, the Children and Young People Committee carried out a participation project called “it’s all about you.” Children and young people were asked to complete a ballot paper outlining the issues they thought the Committee should be investigating in the future.

2. The engagement effort was promoted through press releases, with ‘Dewi the Dragon’ joining Committee Members in touring the Urdd Maes and Royal Welsh Show, to urge young people to get involved.



3. Over 2700 children and young people submitted a ballot paper.

The results of the vote are shown in diagram 1.

4. The ballot papers asked voters to highlight any additional issues they were concerned about that were not listed on the ballot paper. These are shown in diagram 2.

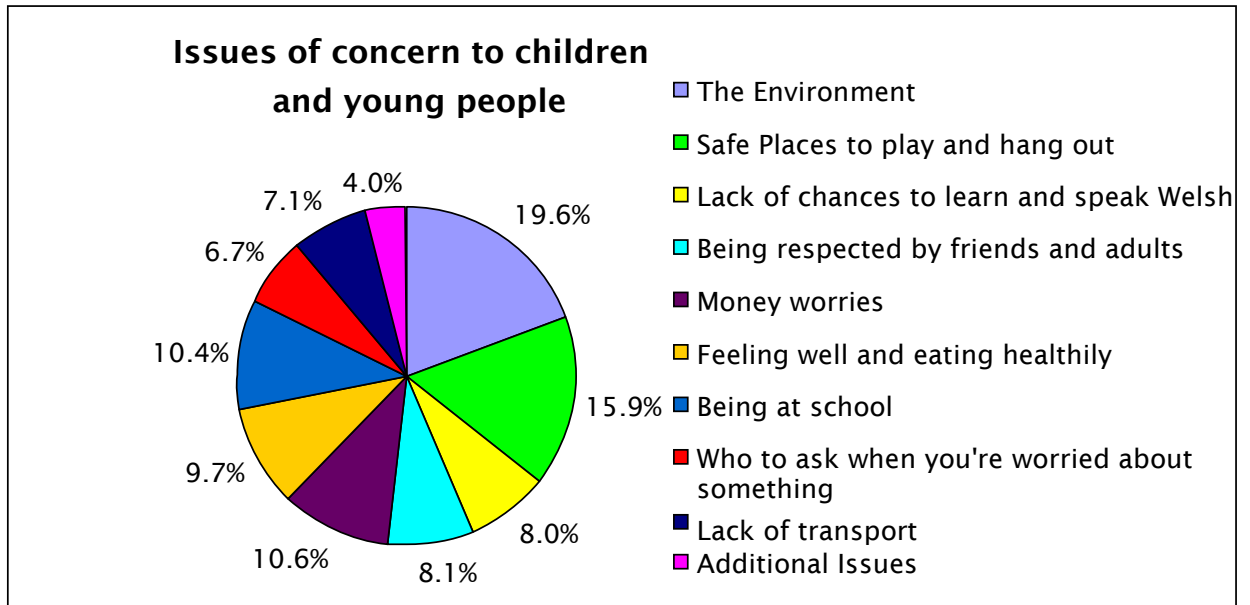


Figure 1: the results of the total “it’s all about you” project vote

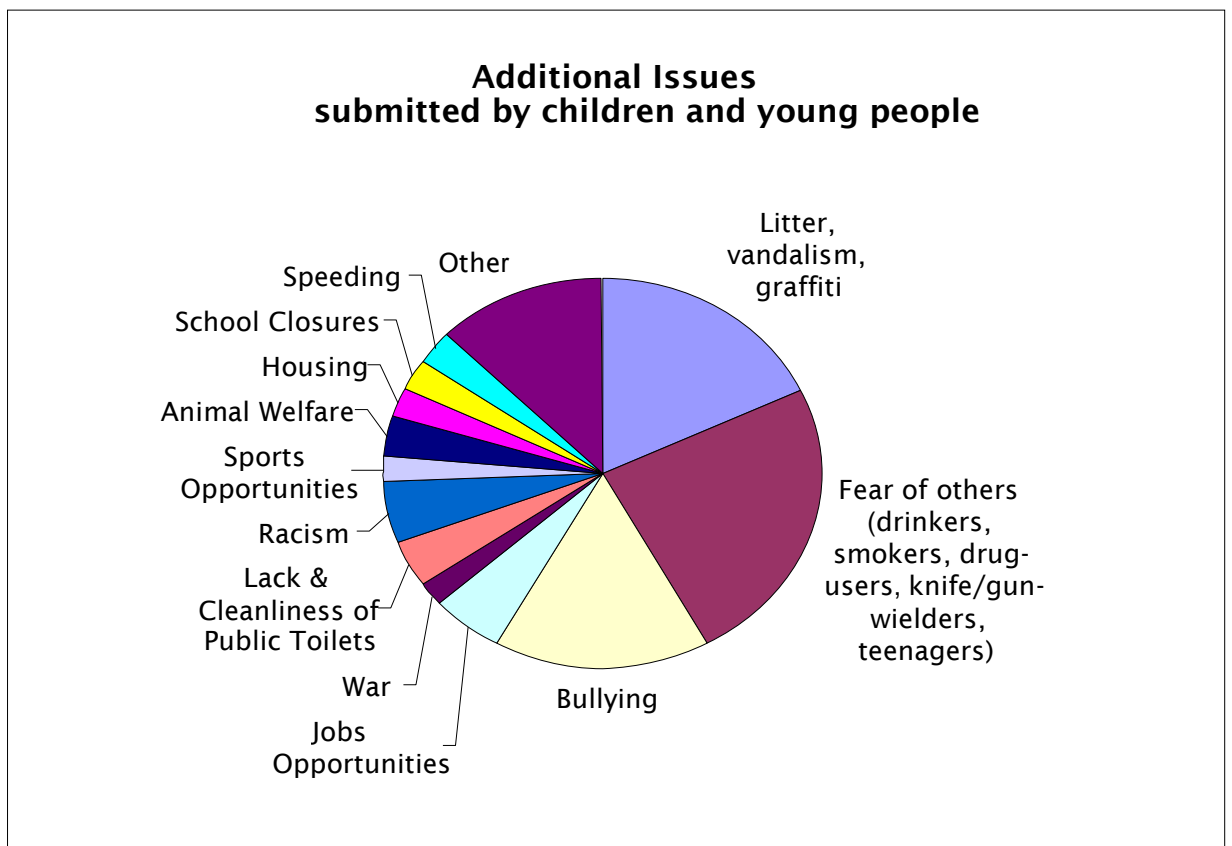


Figure 2: Additional issues (4% of the vote) raised in the “it’s all about you” project

5. The top three concerns for the young voters were:
 - the environment;
 - safe places to play and hang out; and
 - money worries.
6. The Committee referred the first and last issue to other Assembly Committees. The Children and Young People Committee then agreed to hold an inquiry into the provision of safe places to play and hang out in Wales in order to make recommendations about how the Welsh Government might improve provision. The largest proportion of additional issues highlighted by the vote; 'fear of others' and 'litter and vandalism' would be included in the inquiry.

How did the Committee conduct its inquiry?

7. The inquiry was launched in December 2009 in Llwynhendy, Llanelli, where the Committee took evidence from children who attended the local schools; Ysgol Brynteg and Ysgol Brynsierfel.
8. The Committee issued a questionnaire aimed at children and young people to enquire about their experiences and fears when accessing play opportunities and / or hanging out. In order to engage children and young people with the inquiry, the Committee also:
 - met with children and young people across Wales to speak with them directly;
 - held a workshop for disabled children, young carers, asylum seeking children and others in North Wales;
 - held an open meeting in North Wales for members of the wider community to share their experiences and thoughts with the Committee;
 - visited several play provision sites such as Rhyl Adventure Playground;
 - encouraged children and young people to send the Committee pictorial and video evidence;
 - welcomed some young people, supported by Funky Dragon, to the Senedd to give oral evidence to the Committee. And our Assembly Education Team held workshops with children and young people on our behalf.

9. The Committee also called for written evidence from external stakeholders and held 8 formal evidence gathering sessions, taking more than 11 hours of oral evidence. Oral evidence was received from:

- The Deputy Minister for Children;
- Play Wales;
- The Children's Commissioner for Wales;
- Barnardos Cymru;
- The Welsh Local Government Association;
- Sports Council for Wales;
- Rhyl Youth Action Club;
- Iwth Pen Youth Club;
- Rhyl Football Club;
- Children in Wales;
- Fairbridge Cymru;
- Sustrans Cymru;
- Association of Chief Police Officers and PACT;
- The Beth Johnson Foundation;
- Co-Train;
- Big Lottery fund;
- Scouts Wales.

10. The Committee is very grateful to all our witnesses for contributing to this inquiry.

Terms of Reference

11. The terms of reference for the inquiry were as follows:

To inquire into the experiences of children (aged 11 and under) and young people (aged 11-18) in Wales in accessing safe places to play and hang out.

The inquiry will:

Consider issues affecting the play experiences of specific groups of children and young people such as:

- children and young people living in rural areas;

- children and young people living in disadvantaged areas and in low income households;
- disabled children and young people;
- children and young people from marginalized groups such as the Gypsy Traveller community.

Review issues relevant to existing provision such as:

- the consistency and the quality of provision;
- what can be done to make the play and leisure facilities that do exist in communities to be safer and feel safer;
- the costs of accessing provision, including transport costs.

Review the effectiveness of current policy provision and initiatives in providing safe places to play and hang out such as:

- Welsh Government Play Policy and Play Implementation Plan;
- potential impact of Children and Families (Wales) Measure;
- existing Youth and Leisure Services;
- planning Policy and its implementation;
- Welsh Government Communities First Programme;
- role of Schools and specifically Community Focused Schools;
- Homezones;
- community safety initiatives such as Police And Communities Together (PACT).

Examine the impact of specific barriers to safe places to play and hang out such as:

- bullying;
- negative stereo types of children and young people / perceptions of anti-social behaviour;
- traffic and road safety issues.

Key themes and issues emerging from the Committee's inquiry

12. Having carried out the inquiry, the committee is now able to provide a set of conclusions and evidence-based recommendations to the Welsh Government, and to relevant others. A summary of our recommendations is shown on pages 6 to 10.

13. Witnesses agreed that access to sufficient play and leisure opportunities is vital for children and young people. Play Wales state that:

“Playing contributes to the wellbeing and resilience of human beings - particularly young ones. Having welcoming places, enough time and the company of others to play with every day, is of great consequence to all children and young people - as adults we need to foster environments that support this.”

14. The Committee considered that 6 key issues emerged in the course of the inquiry. These were:

- the strategic priority of play;
- planning and road safety;
- the impact of fear;
- transport;
- addressing the play needs of particular groups of children and young people;
- the role of schools.

These are considered in the following sections of the report.

The strategic priority of play

Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010

15. The Measure, which gained royal approval in February 2010, requires each local authority to carry out a play audit and secure sufficient play opportunities in its area for children, so far as is reasonably practicable.

16. The Measure also requires local authorities to have regard to the needs of children who are disabled within the meaning of section one of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Disability is discussed in more detail in a later chapter.¹

17. The Committee welcomes the Welsh Government's recognition of the importance of play. The Deputy Minister told the Committee in January 2010 that:

“We were the first legislature in the United Kingdom, and probably in the world, to have a proper joined up play policy. We are now moving into a new era of development with the Proposed Children and Families (Wales) Measure that is soon to be enacted, which specifically legislates for play. The development of that legislation, how it rolls out, the guidance that emerges as a result of it, and how we work with our partners, particularly in the statutory and voluntary sectors, will be crucial to how the agenda develops. So, the commitment is there and it is now a matter for us to grasp the legislative framework that will be available to us to pursue the agenda.”²

18. The Committee has received evidence that in the past, local authorities have been perceived to give play a very low priority. BIG lottery told the Committee that:

“Last year our applicants and grant holders were telling us that play is not necessarily seen as being the business of local government, partly because in Wales, traditionally, it has been taken forward by the third sector...The advent of the Measure in particular, and the requirement to plan and provide an audit of play provision, should knock that up the agenda in local authorities considerably”³

19. The Deputy Minister indicated that the Welsh Government would ensure play continued to grow in the consciousness's of local authorities by asking searching questions about what is happening on the ground. He stated that:

¹ At the time of writing, the Equality Act 2010 had not been brought into force

² ROP, 19 January 2010, paragraph 10

³ ROP, 25 May 2010, paragraphs 188-190

“The final backstop is the option, where necessary, of attaching specific terms and conditions to any funding for play to ensure we have proper working in this regard.”⁴

20. In January 2010, the WLGA told the Committee that:

“We are waiting for the draft regulations to come forward from the Welsh Assembly Government which will give much more detail on what “sufficiency” means in relation to providing sufficient play facilities in local areas. While we welcome the proposed Measure, the devil will be in the detail and we will want further discussions on this when the regulations are drafted.”⁵

21. In June 2010, the WLGA highlighted that in addition to the need to clarify ‘sufficiency’ there was a need to define ‘play’ more clearly. They asked

“Will play be defined as a particular, restricted set of activities, or will it have that wider scope that we see as being important?”⁶

22. The current definition of play adopted by the Welsh government, as set out in its ‘Play Policy Implementation Plan’ is:

“play encompasses children’s behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development - not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live.”⁷

23. However, 42.9 per cent of the children and young people who responded to the Committee’s questionnaire told us that they wanted adult supervision or organised activities in order to feel safe when playing or hanging out,

24. Barnardo’s Cymru told the Committee that:

“Local interpretation of how ‘freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated’ play is implemented in services has

⁴ ROP 15 June, paragraph 136

⁵ ROP, 23 February 2010, paragraph 17

⁶ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 77

⁷

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/playpolicyimplementation/?lang=en>, page 2

led to varied provision and quality. This variation is in relation to what activities should be offered, how many adults should intervene and what participation means. In some areas play workers will provide some structured activities whilst in others they do not offer any activities because it is thought that children will create their own play and workers don't wish to interfere with children's free play experience. Anecdotally we know a few play and youth workers have said that anti bullying is an adult agenda and so do not intervene to stop bullying, whereas in other areas play workers build children's awareness of bullying issues and their capacity to deal with bullying.”⁸

25. The Committee understands the concerns of local authorities who are awaiting guidance on what 'play' is and how 'sufficiency' will be measured but considers it imperative that any definition of play issued by the Welsh Government should provide for both 'freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated' play and structured, adult led activities in order to provide for the variety of opportunities that children and young people should have access to. The Deputy Minister has previously indicated that regulations and guidance will be in place by 2011 – 2012.⁹

26. The WLGA told the Committee that, as a result of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, “authorities are increasingly adopting a more corporate approach to play.”¹⁰ The Committee was pleased to hear that play is starting to be addressed at a higher level in local authorities. However, given the uncertainties that still remain with regard to the definition of 'play' and 'sufficiency', the Committee is concerned that lasting change may be stalled unless the Welsh Government provides clear guidance on these issues.

27. The Welsh Government recognises how closely the two definitions are linked. The Head of Children and Families Programmes Branch told the Committee that in order to assess sufficiency, “we need to look at what 'play' means and what constitutes 'play', thereby gaining an

⁸ Written consultation response SP 05: Barnardo's Cymru, page 7

⁹ Play Wales conference 'Sufficient Play Opportunities for Children: what is good enough?', February 2010

<http://www.playwales.org.uk/downloaddoc.asp?id=550&page=1008&skin=0>

¹⁰ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 65

understanding of how sufficient it is to meet the needs of children and young people”.¹¹

28. He also told the Committee that the Welsh Government’s review of the standards and guidance for play will “create a new framework for assessing the sufficiency of play”.¹² The Committee would therefore expect the guidance to include a clear definition of play that included both free play and more structured activities.

The Committee urges the Welsh Government to complete its review of the standards and guidance for play at the earliest opportunity in order to enable local authorities to assess the sufficiency of their current play provision and make robust plans for future provision. The guidance should include a clear definition of ‘play’ that includes both structured and free play, as described in paragraph 25 of this report.

Play Policy Strategy and the Play Policy Implementation Plan

29. In 2004 the Welsh Government published ‘Children and Young People: Rights to Action’ outlining the future policy direction for children and young people and within which the Government ‘translated’ the UNCRC articles into seven core aims for children and young people. The Welsh Government adopted these seven aims as the basis for all its work with children and young people in Wales. Core aim 4 states that ‘all children and young people should have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities.’

30. The Welsh Government [*Play Policy, 2002*](#) is a broad statement of principles relating to play and states:

“The Welsh Assembly Government, in seeking to ensure the full implementation of Article 31 of the Convention, intends that this statement should contribute to creating an environment that fosters children play and underpins a national strategy for providing for children play needs.”

31. The Welsh Government [*Play in Wales: Play Policy Implementation Plan, 2006*](#) draws together the Welsh Government’s existing support for

¹¹ ROP, 19 January 2010, paragraph 18

¹² ROP, 19 January 2010, paragraph 1

play; sets out future direction for play; lists a number of key actions and a timetable for delivery; and seeks to highlight innovative practice.

32. Witnesses have been generally positive about the play policy and implementation plan, although some have suggested that implementation has been more successful in some areas than others. The Big Lottery Fund suggested that:

“Our experience from implementing the Programme suggests that many of the issues identified by the [Play Policy Implementation Group] still require action.”¹³

33. As play audits are being carried out as a result of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure, the Committee considers this to be the right time for the Welsh Government to review the implementation of its play policy and progress on delivering the individual actions and recommendations as detailed in the implementation plan. Such a review should be published and would provide a clear picture of what has been achieved to date, allowing the Deputy Minister to refocus the plan on those areas that are still valid in light of the recent legislation and a greater than ever need to prioritise public service delivery.

The Welsh Government should carry out a short and focused review of the play policy implementation plan involving external stakeholders which should be completed before the next election. The results of the review should record progress to date and make recommendations to the Deputy Minister that will assist him to refocus the plan on those areas that are still valid in light of the recent legislation and a greater than ever need to prioritise public service delivery.

Local Authority co-ordination of play opportunities

34. Witnesses have raised concerns that local authorities are not always delivering play opportunities in a strategic and co-ordinated way. The Big Lottery Fund felt that local authority ‘silos’ were difficult for them to penetrate.¹⁴

35. In its written evidence to this inquiry, the WLGA stated that:

¹³ Consultation response SP14, The Big Lottery Fund paragraph 2.1

¹⁴ Consultation response SP14, The Big Lottery Fund paragraph 4.1

“The Children and Young People’s Partnerships have responsibility under the Children Act 2004 to develop the Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) based on the seven core aims. Under core aim 4 every Children and Young People’s Partnership will have developed a plan for play provision within their area based on need.”¹⁵

36. Some of the concerns raised in respect of local authority co-ordination can be illustrated by the roll out of the Big Lottery Play Funding. For example, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) told the Committee that:

“It has been difficult to engage directly with the Big Lottery Fund as a children and young people partnership or a local authority. We have been required, or it has been requested that we always communicate with the Big Lottery through our local lead body, which has been the local voluntary sector organisations, supported by Play Wales.”¹⁶

37. Les Jones, of the all Wales Association of Children and Young People’s Partnership Support Officers, told the Committee that the process that they had been going through to form new groups and take big lottery plans forward has resulted in:

“a much stronger play network in our children and young people’s partnerships, and much better collaboration between local adjoining partnerships as well. However, it has been a difficult process, and it has not been helped by the distance that has been kept between the strategic leads in the local authorities, the children and young people’s partnerships and the Big Lottery Fund.”¹⁷

38. The Deputy Minister told the Committee that the Children and Young People’s Partnerships have a role in:

“Ensuring that there is proper partnership working with other organisations and their communities. There will be updated guidance to the CYP partnerships, which we hope will make clear their delivery role in relation to play. That guidance will be

¹⁵ Consultation response SP15, Welsh Local Government Association, paragraph 14

¹⁶ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 67

¹⁷ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 69

issued this year. Therefore, that guidance is in the making, and the committee's findings will be central to ensuring that it is robust on this issue."¹⁸

39. The Committee welcomes the Welsh Government's intention to publish guidance to the Children and Young People Partnerships (CYPP) that will make clear their delivery role in relation to play. The partnerships, in working across local government departments and with the voluntary sector, have the potential to drive forward the co-ordinated and focused delivery of play opportunities across Wales. However, if they are to succeed, the worth of the partnerships must be recognised by all relevant departments within the local authority and the potential partners in the voluntary and statutory sector, and others.

40. North East Wales Play stated in their evidence that:

"The Welsh Assembly Government also needs to put greater emphasis on Local Authorities ensuring that consideration of play is a cross cutting theme across departments and that planners, play providers and those responsible for traffic management actively engage together to ensure we provide the best possible play environments, avoid restrictions on play whenever possible and use resources most effectively."¹⁹

41. In their oral evidence to the Committee, Sustrans Cymru recalled a meeting that they had attended with the Minister responsible for planning, her chief engineer and highway engineers. Sustrans reported that there was a dichotomy between the Minister, who had issued guidance on planning to enable play, and the highway engineers who:

"were using guidance or policy that was 15 or 20 years old...[there was] a real gulf between the people at the top, who were thinking, 'if we pull leavers, things will happen,' and the people on the ground working with a very risk-averse mindset, who govern what actually happens"²⁰

42. This example in respect of the role of the Planning Departments (discussed in more details later in this report) highlights the need to have proper engagement with CYP Partnerships. Such improved

¹⁸ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 141 - 142

¹⁹ Consultation response SP18, North East Wales Play, page 14

²⁰ ROP, 11 May 2010, paragraph 80

engagement needs to challenge outdated ways of working and focus all partners on the delivery of tangible outcomes for children and young people.

43. Evidence from the Big Lottery suggested that play was an issue that every local authority department should be engaged with. They said:

“When you dig down into local authorities and individual departments, if you want an all-encompassing and proper approach to play, you need to engage with planners, community safety partnerships and a whole host of bodies like that. They do not necessarily see play as being part of their remit. A lot of that is to do with awareness raising and educating individuals in local authority departments by saying ‘you might be dealing with transport, but if your transport policy or approach to transport means that someone cannot access a local play opportunity or an open space, that is a problem that needs to be addressed and you have a role in addressing that.’”²¹

44. A report issued by the Children and Young People Committee in October 2009, ‘Children’s Budgeting in Wales’, also recognised the impact on children and young people of a number of local authority departments such as housing. The Committee reported that it “had heard concerns from key stakeholders that they were concerned that children’s rights were not being prioritised in budgetary decision making.”²²

45. As part of its inquiry into the provision of safe places to play and hang out, the Committee wrote to all 22 local authorities in March 2010, seeking information on the costs to Local Authorities of providing such provision.

46. Thirteen local authorities were able to supply costings, although the basis for their estimates varied considerably. A further four told the Committee that they were unable to give estimates for their spend on play and youth leisure services. The remaining five local authorities were unable to provide a response to our request by the time of this report’s production in November 2010.

²¹ ROP, 25 May 2010, paragraph 188

²² ‘*Children’s Budgeting in Wales*’ Children and Young People Committee, October 2009, page 6

47. The Committee welcomes the commitment of the Deputy Minister to seek ways to introduce children's budgeting in Wales and feels that all issues concerning children and young people will benefit from a greater awareness within local authorities as a result.

The Committee recommends that revised guidance is issued in relation to the Children and Young People partnerships by the Welsh Government which re-states the pivotal role of the partnerships in developing strategic approaches and supporting the delivery of play and leisure provision. The guidance should require all local authority departments and relevant agencies to fully demonstrate their engagement with the partnership process.

Local authority support for voluntary provision

48. Some witnesses to the inquiry have suggested that local authorities could work more effectively to support the play opportunities created by volunteer provision.

49. For example, Iwth pen, a youth club in the Nantlle Valley, has 200 members and a regular attendance of more than 100 young people. The club told the Committee that "Financially, keeping the club open is a sustainability issue."²³ The club is currently struggling to cope with the ever increasing numbers of young people attending each night, and has encouraged some young people to use the local authority youth club in the area. However the club reported that:

"Ms Owen: We have to give some of our money to the local youth service so that it can offer those nights to young people free of charge. It is a bit difficult because the youth service has resources – its own buildings, its own staff, and its own policies and procedures – while we are struggling with 120 young people on virtually nothing, and yet we have to pay the youth service.

"Sandy Mewies: How many attend what is provided by the local authority on a Friday?

"Ms Owen: two or three."²⁴

²³ ROP, 22 March 2010, paragraph 152

²⁴ ROP 22 March, paragraphs 154-156

50. The Committee congratulated the youth club on the efforts they go to in order to be as inclusive as possible through its pricing policies and behaviour management. However, it is clear that the club is struggling to provide for the ever growing number of young people that attend on a regular basis and urges the local youth service to work innovatively to support the work of the volunteers.

51. Other organisations are supported through grants from local authorities. Such grants are essential to the sustainability of many of the organisations in receipt of them and so better delivery of the grants would greatly assist the operational considerations of the organisations. The Rhyl Adventure playground reported that:

“The adventure playground is funded by a grant from Denbighshire County Council that is awarded on an annual basis. Staff felt that awarding such grants on a three year basis would allow them to plan more effectively.”²⁵

52. Given the need for local authorities to ensure a sufficiency of play opportunities, and the ever increasing need to deliver more outcomes for less money, the Committee considers support for volunteer provision to be essential.

Sustainability of Big Lottery Play Funding

53. The Committee considers the sustainability of Big Lottery play funding to be essential. The Deputy Minister told the Committee that his officials had:

“met with representatives of the Big Lottery Fund last week to discuss the development of a national steering group for the children’s play programme, and the way in which we move forward with that.”²⁶

54. Representatives of the Big Lottery told the committee that:

“one of the first things we would want is to say what the definition is so that local authorities could see where they can engage and where their gaps are, against which they will be monitored...We want it to be a proper committee, with terms of

²⁵ CYP(3) AWE 10 : Committee Members note of rapporteur visits

²⁶ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 145

reference and with minuted meetings so that the issue of sustainability can be thrashed out right from the very beginning. We can work at it over a period of years, so that it does not catch anyone by surprise at year 5. If that committee does come into being and does operate in the way we envisage, we think that we can work towards sustainability with more confidence than we would without the committee.”²⁷

55. The Committee welcomes the Deputy Minister’s agreement to make the terms of reference for the national steering group available to Members, when it is appropriate to do so.²⁸

Planning and Road Safety

Traffic

56. Public spaces are for the use and benefit of all the community, but evidence suggests that in many places the needs of the car are placed above the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

57. Sustrans told the Committee that:

“Traffic is a key barrier which needs to be addressed in order to enable children’s play, as well as their ability to travel safely and independently. Local residential streets are a key public place which are currently under-used and under-valued as social space due to the negative impacts of car traffic.”²⁹

58. Committee member Joyce Watson asked pupils of Ysgol y Bedol what stopped them from going out to play when they wanted to. The children felt that cars and unsafe parking, along with bullies and a lack of designated places to play, were restricting their play opportunities.³⁰

59. The Deputy Minister for Children told the Committee that traffic:

²⁷ ROP, 25 May 2010, paragraph 202

²⁸ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 146-147

²⁹ CYP(3)-07-03: paper 3 : Inquiry into safe places to play and hang out : submission from Sustrans, page 3

³⁰ CYP(3) AWE 10 : Committee Members note of rapporteur visits

“remains the biggest risk to life and limb for the most deprived children and young people in Wales. The statistics are quite stark. A child living in a deprived area is many times more likely to be the victim of a road traffic accident than are children on average.”³¹

60. The Committee is concerned that this situation persists despite “an average annual reduction of 38 per cent in personal injury collisions and a 42 per cent reduction in the number of those killed or seriously injured”.³²

61. The Deputy Minister was unable to explain the anomaly as “there is no robust research that [he is] aware of that explains to us why this should be so.”³³ However, the 2003 report by the UK Government’s Social Exclusion Unit, ‘Making the Connections: final report on transport and social exclusion’ concluded that:

“1.33 The explanation for the variation in accident rates appears to come from a combination of both more dangerous environments and greater exposure to that danger.

_ Children from low-income backgrounds are more likely to live near main roads, more likely to play by or in roads (because they do not have safe alternative places to play) and to walk rather than travel by car.

_ Children from families in the lowest income quartile cross 50 per cent more roads than those in the highest quartile.

_ Lack of access to a car doubles the risk of injury for children, and lack of a play area at home increases it by five times.”³⁴

62. The report concerned itself only with the English situation, but the Committee considers that the findings of the report could be tested against the reality of the situation in Wales to enable the Deputy Minister to refocus the work being carried out to reduce child pedestrian injury rates in areas of deprivation.

³¹ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 157

³² ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 153

³³ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 160

³⁴ http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/social_exclusion_task_force/sets/publications_1997_to_2006/making_transport_2003.pdf page 19

63. A report published by Road Safety Analysis in 2010 entitled “Child Casualties 2010; A study into resident risk of children on roads in Great Britain 2004-08”, examined the level of risk children are exposed to is compared across 408 local authority areas and showed that children living in some areas have almost a one in 200 chance of being injured each year. The report also found that the children most at risk are those from “families on lower incomes who often live in large council estates where there is little owner-occupation” and are found in most regions in the UK, with the exception of the South East and London.³⁵

64. The WLGA suggested that more could be done to ensure that children and young people have the skills they need to stay safe. They told the Committee that:

“Generally, if there is a road traffic accident involving a child, someone is to blame somewhere, whether it is a question of speed, visibility or a lack of awareness on the part of the child. That knocks on to all sorts of other situations relating to risk and danger, and being able to deal with that and be safe with it. The Crucial Crew programme, for instance, is good at giving those skills to young people and I would like to see more of those. I think that we are losing some of the old road safety measures that we used to have, around cycling proficiency, and so on; we just do not have that now.”³⁶

65. The potential loss of road safety skills has been a matter of concern for others too. In June 2009, the North Wales Police gave evidence to the National Assembly for Wales’ Enterprise and Learning Committee inquiry into Trunk Road Management and Casualty Reduction, suggesting that:

“Road safety needs to become part of the national curriculum. What is the point of educating young people if they do not live to fulfil their potential due to being involved in a collision? This effectively means the introduction of a structured curriculum over the academic life time of a pupil that also extends into higher education and through lifelong learning facilitated by the Youth Service whose responsibility extends to young people up to the age of 25 – entirely in line with the accepted young driver

³⁵ <http://www.roadsafetyanalysis.org/projects/child-casualties-2010/>

³⁶ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 91

profile. In short delivery of the right message, at the right time, to the right students, by the right people.”³⁷

In light of the evidence that demonstrates a higher incidence of injury and death as a result of road traffic accidents for children living in a deprived area, the Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should refocus their efforts to address child pedestrian injuries in the most deprived areas Wales. This should achieve an improvement in indicators 15 and 16 of the Welsh Government Child Poverty Milestones and Targets in respect of pedestrian injuries for 5-14 year olds.

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should ensure that road safety is included in the Welsh curriculum.

Homezones and DIY Streets

66. Other witnesses have suggested that parked cars pose a threat to children’s play. Play Wales told the Committee that:

“Streets congested with parked cars have a significant effect on feelings of safety and perceived legitimacy of playing out... Adults’ needs for protection and space for their cars are routinely and unquestioningly prioritized over children and young people’s need to play out and hang out.”³⁸

67. Jonathan Bevan gave evidence to the Committee on his experiences of creating ‘home zones’. These are described as:

“a street or group of streets where pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles share the space on equal terms, with cars travelling at little more than walking pace. Home zones challenge the traditional distinction between carriageway and footway in order to redefine the street as a valuable part of the local community’s living space.”³⁹

68. The Committee considers that reclaiming streets as viable places for children to play is vital. Evidence from Play Wales focused on “how

³⁷ EL3-13-09: paper 3: Chief Constable of North Wales Police

³⁸ Written consultation response SP3: Play Wales, paragraph 3.26 – 3.30

³⁹ CYP(3)-07-10 : Paper 3 : Inquiry into Safe places to play and hang out : Submission from Sustrans, Paragraph 3.1

we can embrace children and young people in our society and our community, rather than making particular places available to them, which run the risk of becoming ghettos.”⁴⁰

69. The Children’s Commissioner for Wales shared a similar view with the Committee:

“Of those of us who travel around Wales, going to various communities, not many of us see children and young people playing in the street, not anymore. I am old enough to remember playing football in the street. I am also old enough to remember the windows that I broke and the things that I did...However, the attitude of the people where I lived towards my smashing windows was that I had to repair the window and I had to apologise, but I was still out playing football the following day. So, there was something more accepting about children being in the street.”⁴¹

70. If we, as a society, create streets that are primarily for cars and other motor vehicles, then we are sending a strong message that other types of activities should take place elsewhere. Not only is children’s play restricted within their own communities, but other elements necessary to community cohesion are lost too. The Beth Johnson Foundation told the Committee that the car had had a significant impact on communities as:

“It has changed the way in which people have contact with each other because we travel differently and therefore have much less contact with each other. At one stage, streets were a place in the neighbourhood where people came together, played and where communities interacted, and they were part of a play space where adults could supervise children, but now the car dominates the street. People are also fearful of their cars being damaged, for example by a football being kicked around and so on. It has become a very important and valuable possession. Streets are now places where you keep your car safe, rather than places where you meet and come together.”⁴²

⁴⁰ ROP, 19 January 2010, paragraph 100

⁴¹ ROP, 19 January 2010, paragraph 235

⁴² ROP, 25 May 2010, paragraph 21

71. The introduction of ‘Homezones’ has tried to redress the balance between cars, pedestrians, cyclists and children’s play but the approach is expensive, especially when retrofitted to an area. As a result of some arguments in respect of perceived prohibitive costs of Homezones, a ‘DIY streets’ approach has been developed. The DIY streets approach takes elements of the home zone format but retro fits streets in a more cost effective way. This might include the use of planters in the road to break up the line of sight for drivers and cause them to slow down. It might also include a re-configuration of parking arrangements to allow greater access to playable spaces away from cars. Some evidence has shown that the result of both approaches has created, to a lesser or greater degree, a better awareness and tolerance for other road users and has created a stronger community spirit. One project reported that after carrying out the DIY streets project, “60% of residents surveyed say they are socialising with people in their street who they didn't know before”.⁴³

72. Both approaches require significant levels of funding and the buy-in of local residents, but can be effective in creating balance between the needs of all members of a community. Although funding would be a significant issue if either of these models were used widely across Wales, the Committee considers that for some areas home zones or DIY streets could be the most viable option for restoring the balance between traffic and other road users, including children and young people who want to play and hang out.

73. The Committee notes that the Welsh Government Play Policy Implementation plan includes the following action in respect of Homezones: *‘The Assembly Government will encourage those involved locally with transport and play to co-operate in taking forward the Home Zone policies of the Road Safety Strategy for Wales’* and also includes as recommendation 22, *‘That the Welsh Assembly Government promote the use of traffic calming and Home Zones within existing and new developments to increase the use of residential roads for children’s play’*.

⁴³ CYP(3)-07-10 : Paper 3 : Inquiry into Safe places to play and hang out : Submission from Sustrans, page 11

Planning for the needs of the whole community

74. Implementation of a proactive planning system that values the needs of children and pedestrians should avoid the need to retro fit home zone or DIY streets. Given the duty of planning authorities under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to consider crime and community safety in most decisions that they make, the Committee is disappointed to hear that the safety of children and young people is still something of an afterthought to “adult-centric”⁴⁴ planners. The Assistant Chief Constable for South Wales, ACC Morris, told the Committee that planners sometimes:

“say that this is where they want to put a park, because of how the estate looks and they decide where the park, the school and the shops are going to be. They do not engage with the local community and, in this case, young people to find out what they want and where they would want it. What tends to happen is that there is a lack of ownership by young people in those types of developments. As a consequence, it either does not get used or it gets vandalised or damaged, because it just does not meet their needs.”⁴⁵

75. The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 requires local authorities to make arrangements to promote and facilitate the participation of children and young people in decision making.

76. The WLGA told the Committee that:

“When the association has looked at this issue in the past, we have concluded that the planning process is relatively sympathetic towards the provision of safe areas for play and hanging out.”⁴⁶

77. However, they also state that involving young people in the planning process:

⁴⁴ ROP, 11 May 2010, paragraph 152

⁴⁵ ROP, 11 May 2010, paragraph 153

⁴⁶ ROP 23 February 2010, paragraph 53

“can sometimes be difficult. The planning process can be long and complicated and local authorities often find it difficult to engage with young people in the area.”⁴⁷

78. The Committee has received many examples of play and youth provision that has been inappropriately sited and provided without proper engagement with local communities. Cllr Peters, Community Councillor for Langford, Neath and PACT representative, told the Committee about an Astro turf pitch which effectively stopped the children and young people who had previously used the site from accessing the new facilities.⁴⁸ Young people from Funky Dragon told the Committee about a skate park that had been sited next to a bowling green and was perceived to be causing a noise nuisance to the bowling green users. As a result, the children and young people who were the intended users of the skate park felt they could not use it for fear of causing tensions with the older generation. Such issues can be avoided by ensuring proper engagement with children, young people and the wider community from the outset.

79. The Deputy Minister told the Committee that where decisions had been made on the provision of play and leisure facilities without the participation of children and young people, it was a case of “bad governance” and “if bad practice was to continue, it would be necessary to tie funding to good practice.”⁴⁹

80. The Big Lottery felt that more could be done to ensure that play was considered across all local authority departments. They told the Committee that they faced:

“Some local authority ambivalence towards projects, with departmental ‘silos’ proving difficult to penetrate.”⁵⁰

81. The participation of children and young people in decisions that affect them is vital. It is also vital that participation is meaningful and valued by local authorities. Young people have told the Committee that they want to be consulted, informed of decisions that were made following the consultation and given the reasons behind the decision.

⁴⁷ Written consultation response SP15, Welsh Local Government Association, paragraph 30

⁴⁸ ROP 11 May 2010, paragraphs 153-154

⁴⁹ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 150

⁵⁰ Written consultation response SP 14, paragraph 4.1

The Committee feels that this approach is entirely reasonable and would form best practice when consulting with any person or groups of people.

82. The Committee has previously reported on children's budgeting as a mean of creating transparency in the spend on children and young people, but also as a means of enabling meaningful participation in budgetary decisions. In that report, it was highlighted that giving consultees information on the budgets available for any given project or service would make for a more informed discussion. The Committee reiterates that statement in this context.

The Committee recommends that the Children and Young People Partnerships take a greater and more consistent role in driving forward the needs of and engagement of children and young people in the planning process. Planning departments should work with the partnerships to develop practical ways they can ensure that the needs of children and young people to have safe places to play and hang out are given appropriate weighting within the planning processes and decisions. The Committee further recommends that the Partnership Support Unit, which supports CYP Partnerships, gathers together examples of good practice in planning participation and disseminated that information to all partnerships in a meaningful way.

Guidance issued as a result of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure (2010) should include a good practice guide to consultation which sets out the need to give consultees the full facts available, including budgetary information, and the need to inform consultees of any decisions made in light of the consultation and the reasons for those decisions.

83. Wider concerns were also raised regarding children's participation in shaping the play opportunities afforded them. The Children's Commissioner for Wales said:

“We are just not listening well enough to our children and young people. We are just not hearing what they say about their play opportunities.”⁵¹

84. More general concerns were raised by Fairbridge Cymru who identified difficulties for some young people in participating in society at even the most basic level:

“Very often it is negative adult attitudes which are cited by young people as reasons why they do not engage in positive community activities. Young people often feel that their opinions and needs are not regarded as important by adults within their community and that most are intolerant of even their visible presence on the street.”⁵²

85. The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, Chapter 2, requires local authorities to:

“make such arrangements as it considers suitable to promote and facilitate participation by children in decisions of the authority which might affect them.”⁵³

86. The Committee considers this to be one of the key elements of the Measure and would expect the new duty to eliminate some of the concerns raised by witnesses with regard to participation, or the lack thereof, of children and young people.

87. The Committee also considers it essential for local authorities and other organisations in Wales to share best practice and lessons learned in encouraging and enabling children and young people to participate in a meaningful way, with suitable feedback and explanations of decisions taken being provided within a reasonable timescale following consultation.

88. The Committee also considers that local authorities and others should not limit their efforts at engaging children and young people to the ‘usual groups’ such as local authority youth forums. Efforts should be made to engage with as wide a group of children and young people as is practicable. The use of existing networks such as schools, youth

⁵¹ ROP, 20 January 2010, paragraph 198

⁵² Consultation response SP21, Fairbridge Cymru, p4

⁵³ Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, Chapter 2:12:1

clubs etc. should be considered as a way of minimizing any additional cost implications.

The Committee recommends that statutory guidance relating to the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 stipulate that the participation of children and young people in the decision making processes should take place across a wide range of local government departments. Participation should not be restricted to those departments overtly concerned with children and young people, for example; education and social services, but should also take place in, for example; planning, transport and housing. In order to enable children and young people to participate in a meaningful way, guidance should require local authorities to support capacity building for young people. Such support work should extend beyond youth forums to encourage local authorities to engage with as wide a range of children and young people as is possible.

Section 106 agreements

89. Section 106 agreements are planning obligations that can be used by a local authority to obtain funding from a developer in certain circumstances. The funding is then used to provide services or infrastructure, for example a road, park or affordable housing.

90. The WLGA told the Committee that use of 106 agreements was difficult “particularly given the recession over the last 18 months to two years, very few have been put into place.”⁵⁴ The WLGA also cited the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) as a reason for benefits gained under section 106 agreements being lost:

“section 106 agreements will increasingly apply to social housing, and authorities will not be able to achieve the kind of planning gains from them that they have in the past. The intention is that the community infrastructure levy compensates for those changes. The impression currently is that, because the consultation process on the community infrastructure levy is so lengthy and drawn out, the advantages will not necessarily be derived in the short term. Given that it is voluntary, there is also

⁵⁴ ROP, 23 February 2010, paragraph 53

the possibility that not all authorities will take advantage of the opportunity. So, the gains of section 106 agreements may have been lost without the advantages of the CILs being available.”⁵⁵

91. Whilst recognising that there may be difficulties as planners work to realise the benefits of the Community Infrastructure Levy and the effects of that on Section 106 agreements, the Committee feels that relevant working groups within the Children and Young People Partnerships have a role to play in monitoring the agreed use and realisation of section 106 agreements. This is especially so in the context that such funding can significantly contribute to the development of new play and leisure facilities within the current funding environment. As such, the CYP Partnerships should be consulted by planning departments to make recommendations as they see fit in respect of large scale developments which attract relatively large amounts of S106 money.

92. A further reason for the benefits of section 106 agreements not being fully realised was suggested by Assembly Member Val Lloyd, who acted as a temporary substitute member of the Committee during our discussions with the WLGA. She suggested that:

“Sometimes, when section 106 agreements have been made and the council has tried to implement them – I am talking from personal knowledge here – residents have objected to a play facility next to them”⁵⁶

93. The Committee considers that the situation Val Lloyd describes would be avoided if planners considered the location of parks and play facilities as an integral part of the plan and built them at the outset rather than after an area has been populated. That way, as Assembly Member Ann Jones, another substitute Committee member during the course of the inquiry, suggested:

“When people go looking around the estate, they will then think, ‘we have young kids so we will buy a house near the play area’, while the older people who think, ‘I do not want kids nearby’ will buy a house further away.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 102

⁵⁶ ROP, 23 February 2010, paragraph 65

⁵⁷ ROP, 23 February 2010, paragraph 132

Planning guidance and policy

94. Sustrans told the Committee that although the Welsh Government has issued planning guidance that encourages play, some highway engineers were continuing to use outdated guidance that was 15-20 years old.⁵⁸

95. Sustrans also told the Committee that the principles of the ‘Manual for Streets’⁵⁹ planning guidance have been adapted and adopted in Scotland as planning policy. By issuing the principles as policy rather than guidance, planners will be required to treat them as a material consideration rather than the afterthought of an “adult-centric” process.

96. The Committee feels that play is too important to be an afterthought in any planning process. It should form an inherent part of any design for communities and should allow children and young people to fill a prominent place in society. As North East Wales Play said in their written evidence:

“The places we provide for play are also often badly located and segregated from other public areas in communities. By ‘hiding’ play provision away, we are sending out a message that play is not valued and as a result that we don’t value what children choose to do with their time. Play should not be separate to the rest of community life. Play provision should be at the heart of the community and should provide a space where children have permission to play as they choose, to get dirty and messy, to play with the elements, climb trees and make dens.”⁶⁰

97. This view reflects that of Play Wales, quoted earlier, that highlights the risk of children being segregated from the rest of the community through the use of play ‘ghettoes’.

98. The Committee feels that it is imperative that a child’s needs to play and be with his or her friends are reflected in all future planning applications.

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should amend Planning Policy Wales 3 and the supporting Technical Advice

⁵⁸ ROP, 11 May 2010, paragraph 80

⁵⁹ <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/manforstreets/>

⁶⁰ Written consultation SP18 : North East Wales Play, page 3

Notes 12 (Design) and 18 (Transport) to make it a more explicit requirement for the guidance about play provision in the ‘Manual for Streets’ to be used as an inherent part of any design for communities.

99. Although children and young people should be enabled to play outside their homes and in their local communities, it is still appropriate to provide play areas and parks. Children and young people require a variety of play opportunities and play areas, Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA’s) and open spaces can provide stimulating environments for children if they are properly laid out and maintained.

100. The Committee has been told by children and young people that it can be intimidating for some children to have to share play spaces with older children or young people. Respondee to the Committee’s questionnaire said that the things that stopped them going out to play were:

“When older people are where I would like to go”

“Other people telling us to go away because of our age”

“The older teenagers”

“If older people are there”

101. Challenging play for a toddler will in most cases be too dull for a junior school pupil. Teenagers may wish to hang out and chat with their friends rather than play on swings and slides, so there should be a variety of equipment available in any one area. However, it should also be recognised that what might be considered challenging for one 8 year old may not be considered so by the next. Areas segregated by age should be avoided to allow children and young people the freedom to play with one aged group of friends or another, or to take up new challenges at a pace suited to them.

102. The Rhyl Youth Action Group told the Committee that even where suitable facilities exist, their use can be undermined by relatively minor issues. Shane Owen told the Committee that:

“there is a skate park on the promenade. Much of the criticism that comes back from that is around lighting and shelter. Little shelters have been built there, but they are all perforated, and because they are on the promenade, the wind just goes straight

through. Therefore, as soon as it gets dark, they move away from there.”⁶¹

103. He went on to explain that:

“You can get systems in multi-use games areas...which include a button that you press to put the light on and after 10 minutes, the light turns itself off.”⁶²

The Committee recommends that where, for financial reasons, local authorities are targeting the use of street lighting, routes to play areas should be prioritised. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that lighting systems are built in to plans for play facilities, particularly for facilities aimed at older children and young people for whom it would be entirely reasonable to be out after dark.

The Impact of Fear

Litter and vandalism

104. Many of the children and young people who responded to the Committee’s questionnaire said that litter and vandalism in the area in which they played or lived made them fearful. Pupils at Rhosymedre Primary School in north Wales told Assembly Member Eleanor Burnham that smoking related litter and needles were not uncommon in local open spaces that the children would otherwise like to play in. One child at the school told Eleanor that such items were routinely thrown into their front garden from the bus stop outside resulting in restrictions being placed on where in the home the child could play.⁶³

105. Rhyl Football Club shared a similar concern regarding the cleanliness of play areas:

“There seem to be a lot of dogs in Rhyl. I did one session where we had to put cones around the dog mess, and one of the kids was zipping around the cones...and he said that it was great that

⁶¹ ROP, 22 March 2010, paragraph 22

⁶² ROP, 22 March 2010, paragraph 78

⁶³ CYP(3) AWE 11 – Note of Members Rapportuer visit to Rhosymedre Primary School

we put cones around the dog muck, because they are used to having to play in it.”⁶⁴

106. The Committee considers there to be ample law and regulation relating to the dropping of litter and the need for a responsible dog ownership. However, a problem clearly persists and must be dealt with if the existing play areas and open spaces are to be utilised effectively.

The Committee recommends that local authorities maintain dialogue with children and young people in order to monitor issues of cleanliness and good order and focus cleaning and maintenance resources on problem areas.

Health and Safety

107. Witnesses have raised concerns regarding that an overly risk-averse attitude to play could be inhibiting children and young people from hanging out safely.

108. Play Wales pointed out that:

“The evidence shows that children do not go out and seek risks; they go out to create opportunities to take risks. It is about taking risks in an environment of security – that is how children stretch themselves.”⁶⁵

109. And Barnardo’s commented that:

“Health and safety should not prevent an activity. It should help you to manage the risk.”⁶⁶

110. However, Professor Jo Sibbert highlighted that “deaths from playground injuries are now very rare” as a result of modern safety practices. He also pointed out that:

“If they [playgrounds] are seen to be safe by parents, they will allow their children to play. This will mean safety for the children and good play experience as well.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ ROP 22 March 2010, para 306

⁶⁵ ROP 29 January 2010, paragraph 155

⁶⁶ ROP 2 February 2010, paragraph 172

⁶⁷ Consultation response SP 26, Professor J Sibbert, Child Health Cardiff

111. Suggestions by Play Wales that “money is wasted on expensive surfacing and standardised manufactured equipment”⁶⁸ is refuted in Prof. Sibbert’s evidence. However, he does offer a less expensive alternative to the cushioned flooring so common in modern play areas when he cites a recent investigation that proved that sand surfaces in playgrounds not only reduce head injuries, but also arm fractures. He states:

“This is important work because it confirms that significant head injuries do not occur in modern playgrounds but also holds out the hope that arm fractures might be prevented. Sand traditionally caused concern over dog fouling but clearly now needs to be re-examined.”⁶⁹

112. The Committee feels that adventurous play is valuable to children and young people. In pushing boundaries both mentally and physically through such play, children and young people are able to develop and become confident in assessing risk for themselves. This is vital if they are to assess risk successfully in other areas of their lives. However, it would be irresponsible to expose children to unnecessary or excessive risk.

113. This issue has been considered by the UK Government which has issued revised health and safety guidelines for play. The guidelines, which have not been adopted in Wales, are designed to prevent accidents and keep children and young people safe whilst still allowing adventurous play in an appropriately controlled environment. Pete Duncan, Co-founder of Dynamix Ltd training co-operative, pointed out that:

“‘Managing Risk in Play Provision’, the Play England policy, is a strong document, which is supported by the Health and Safety Executive, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and so on”⁷⁰

114. Play Wales felt that “many of the barriers that people think exist do not in fact exist”⁷¹ as the UK Government’s endorsement of ‘Managing

⁶⁸ Consultation response SP 03, Play Wales, paragraph 3.44

⁶⁹ Consultation response SP 26, Professor J Sibbert, Child Health Cardiff

⁷⁰ ROP, 25 May 2010, paragraph 128

⁷¹ ROP, 29 January 2010, paragraph 134

Risk in Play Provision' has changed the way health and safety is considered in a play setting.

115. Scouts Wales suggested that despite the UK Government endorsing a risks/benefits approach, some youth leaders are still reluctant to take children outside as they are "paranoid that something might happen"⁷²

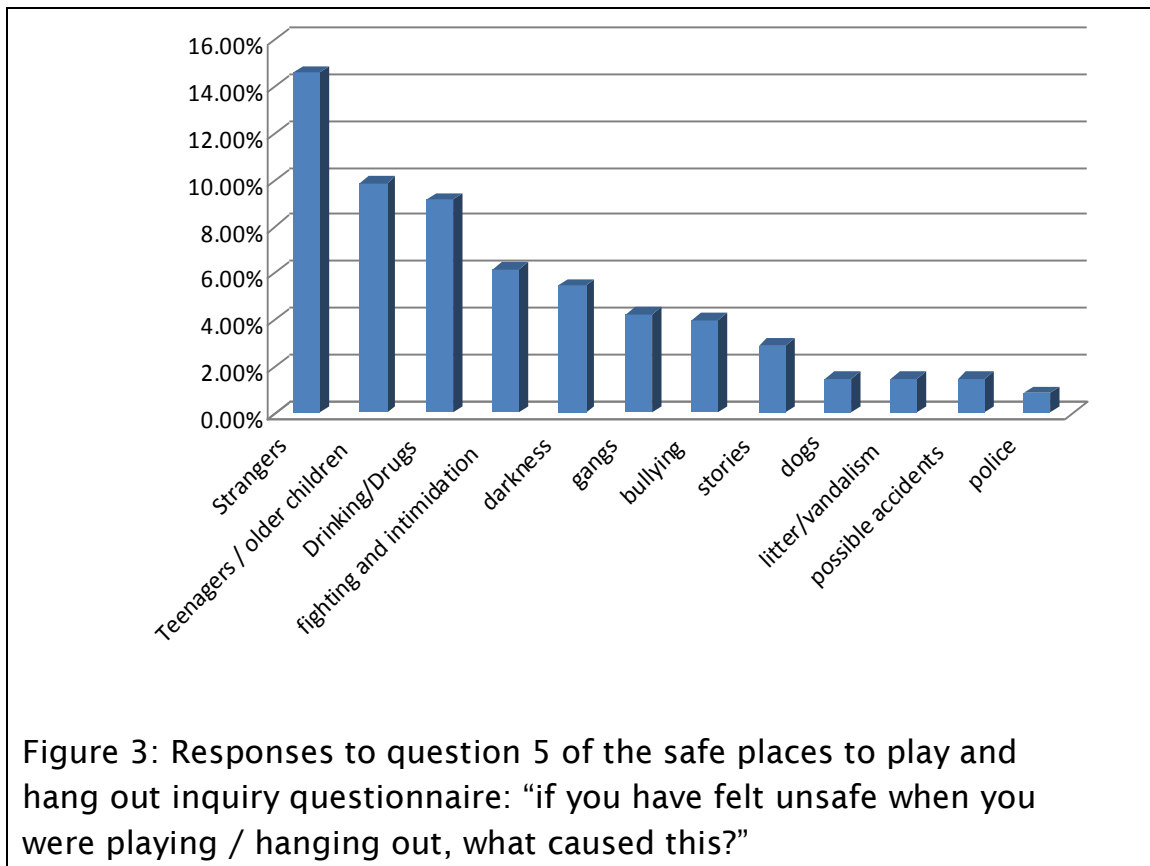
116. Given the litigious culture that is developing in the UK, it is little wonder that play providers and youth leaders have concerns. However, the Committee feels that with support and encouragement it may be possible to reassure youth leaders and play providers that some adventurous play is a positive thing. It must also be recognised that parents will sometimes need similar reassurances if children are to be allowed to join in any activities of this nature.

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government develop a set of health and safety guidelines for play settings that allow for adventurous play. These should be developed in consultation with play providers, children and young people and other stakeholders.

Stranger Danger

117. Many of the children who gave evidence to this inquiry told the Committee that they were concerned about stranger danger. 14.6 per cent of the respondents to the Committee's questionnaire said that strangers made them feel unsafe when playing or hanging out. A further 2.9 per cent said that stories or urban myths they had heard made them feel unsafe, with many of those stories featuring strangers as a danger to children. 85 percent of the children and young people who said that strangers made them feel unsafe were aged between 9 and 15 years old.

⁷² ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 48



118. Responses to the question “if you have felt unsafe when you were playing / hanging out, what caused this?” included:

“Just in case someone jumps out of the woods and got me” (10 year old girl)

“A person watching me” (14 year old boy)

“Paedophiles, murderers, rapists, unfamiliar dogs, strangers, drugs, tramps, alcoholics” (age not given)

“Strange people walking past” (14 year old boy)

119. During Eleanor Burnham AM’s rapporteur visit to Rhosymedre Community Primary School in north Wales, teaching staff identified a safe place to play as somewhere away from strangers.

120. However, ACC Morris, Assistant Chief Constable of South Wales Police told the Committee that:

“There is a perception of stranger danger, but I have a couple of figures from south Wales and north Wales. In 2008-09, we had

28 reports of kidnapping, of which only five related to young people. Of that five, only one referred to a stranger. In the South Wales Police area, in 2009-10, we had 17 reports of kidnapping, only two of which referred to young people and, in both cases, no further action was taken because there were issues with the young people reporting things. In the North Wales Police area, we have not had any reported kidnappings of young people in the last two years. So there is a perception issue around stranger danger.”⁷³

121. Barnardo’s suggested that the messages from previously run Stranger Danger campaigns should be re-focused, saying:

“I would like to see the message that we give children changed to how to keep themselves safe from adults who might harm them, which would include people in the home and when they are staying over at other children’s homes. It would be about keeping themselves safe, what that means and what appropriate and inappropriate behaviour look like, so that they are not scared to go out of the front door how to be confident, how to talk about the issues and how to recognise some of the warning signs.”⁷⁴

122. There are currently no stranger danger campaigns being run by the Welsh Government. However, campaigns such as “safer stranger, safer buildings”⁷⁵ are currently being promoted by other stakeholders. The “safer stranger, safer buildings” campaign gives a more positive message than previous campaigns, and encourages children to seek help from uniformed staff such as police, shop workers and traffic wardens or to go to reception desks in buildings if lost. Other campaigns, such as the “safe from harm” campaign launched in Fife in 2001, seek to highlight the fact that children are most likely to be harmed and abused by someone known to them. The “safe from harm” campaign seeks to help children spot danger signs and know how to seek help if they have concerns.

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government works with other stakeholders to review the benefits of launching a new

⁷³ ROP 11 May 2010, paragraph 186

⁷⁴ ROP, 2 February 2010, paragraph 163

⁷⁵ <http://www.childseyemedia.com/safety.html>

campaign to help children and parents manage risks, identify potentially dangerous situations and know how to keep themselves safe both in and out of the home without unnecessarily curtailing the freedom and experiences of children and young people.

123. The Beth Johnson Foundation for intergenerational studies suggested that:

“We have created a society where, because people are unknown, we have become fearful of people... it is made worse because, as adults, we teach children not to have contact with adults. There was a time when, if you got lost, you went to find an adult to look after you. Now, adults are seen as potentially dangerous. That is one of the things that have restricted much of that contact. We positively encourage people not to meet. If you are an older person, your motives will be suspected. If you are a young person, you may be putting yourself in a risk situation. So, there is less contact, and we are driving a wedge between the generations.”⁷⁶

124. Young people from Funky Dragon told the Committee about intergenerational work that had taken place in which young people helped older members of their community by cutting grass or shopping for them. The young people felt that intergenerational work should be facilitated more often. Rhyl Youth Action Group shared a similar positive experience with the Committee. They said:

“There is a group of young people called West Rhyl Marshals, who work with the police and the fire service. They pick a street every couple of months, and walk up and down the street. The police and the fire service will knock on the door and speak to parents and young people. The police might give them advice about security and the fire service might give them advice about fire alarms or ask if they want to have them fitted, while the young people help to clear their gardens... in return, the young people get a cup of tea and some biscuits.”⁷⁷

⁷⁶ ROP, 25 May 2010, paragraph 24

⁷⁷ ROP, 22 March 2010, paragraph 42

125. Intergenerational work creates links between younger people and older people in a community and causes people to become familiar with people in their area, rather than maintaining their 'stranger' status. However, the Beth Johnson Foundation told the Committee that:

"Today, one weakness of intergenerational work in Wales, as compared to England, is that it has been largely led by the older people sector, so it has been about older people's views and concerns."⁷⁸

126. The Committee considers intergenerational work to be a useful tool that will go some way to help re-connect communities and dissipate some of the fear that children, young people and parents feel when sharing space with people who are unknown to them. However, the work must be re-focused to take into account the views and concerns of younger people alongside those of older people.

127. The Beth Johnson Foundation also told the Committee that:

"Some interesting work has been done in relation to street parties and neighbourhoods, which has involved closing the street off for the day and giving people the opportunity to meet each other again. The research that has been done on the street parties and using those to develop community play spaces has been impressive."⁷⁹

128. Given the concerns discussed earlier in this report regarding traffic and the domination of the car in residential areas, the committee considers the relatively simple action of closing a street for the day to allow children and adults to meet, socialise and play with their neighbours seems to be entirely reasonable. And, as the Beth Johnson Foundation pointed out:

"It is important not to see play as something that only children and young people do. One reason why Scandinavian countries have been good at what they do is that play is seen as something that the whole community engages in."⁸⁰

⁷⁸ ROP, 25 May 2010, paragraph 54

⁷⁹ ROP, 25 May 2010, paragraph 22

⁸⁰ ROP, 25 May 2010, paragraph 56

The Welsh Government should ensure its intergenerational work is undertaken cross-departmentally to ensure input from relevant children and young people policy work as well as older people policy development.

Negative stereotypes of children and young people

129. The Committee has received much evidence that children and young people are often thought of in terms of negative stereotypes, and that this misconception is a major cause of fear, marginalisation and lack of respect in society. When asked if the United Kingdom was the most hostile country towards children in Europe, the Children's Commissioner for Wales answered:

“Without any question in my mind...If you look at anti-social behaviour and attitudes towards that, we are very heavy on children and young people's behaviour. Our attitudes towards children and young people are probably more negative too.”⁸¹

130. We were told of specific examples of incidents when unfounded fear has affected interactions between generations – such as the example from Fairbridge Cymru:

“One of the young people who we were talking to the other week said that he was walking down a high street in Cardiff with his headphones on and his music blaring away, when he saw an old lady drop her shopping. He went to help her and she screamed, ‘Attacker’, because her first thought was that a young person walking towards her would be a threat to her. He said ‘I just wanted to help her’. He felt embarrassed and ended up just putting his hands up and walking away.”⁸²

131. The Children's Commissioner for Wales, in his joint report to the UNCRC, highlighted the intolerance towards children and young people who occupy public spaces. The report stated:

“In one survey in England, two-thirds of children said they liked to play outside daily, mostly to meet friends. However, 80% have been told off for playing outdoors, 50% say they have been

⁸¹ ROP 29 January 2010, paragraph 227-228

⁸² ROP 11 May 2010, paragraph 16

shouted at for playing outside and 25% of 11 to 16-year-olds were threatened with violence by adults.”⁸³

132. And we have been told how children and young people are often seen as the problem rather than part of the solution. PACT representatives told the Committee:

“Everyone who attends the PACT meeting in our area is characterised as being over 40, has a similar perception of children in the area, and, to put it mildly, they demonise the young people in the area.”⁸⁴

133. Yet children playing on the street or hanging about talking to friends on the street corner is nothing new. In fact, it has been argued that children are less visible on the street now than they were in the past. Mr Hatton-Yeo of the Beth Johnson Centre for Intergenerational Studies told the Committee that:

“It is interesting, when you work with older people, to get them to consider the behaviours that they would have been involved in when they were young, because it is almost as if they had forgotten that that is what they used to do. They need to be reminded sometimes of their own experience of being young people. Many of the things they complain about now are typical of the way in which they behaved. However, 50 years ago people had much more freedom, and as a child or young person you could be much more invisible than you can now, because we have a much more regulated society.”⁸⁵

134. The evidence from PACT and Fairbridge Cymru cited above indicates that it is the older generation that are intolerant or fearful of the young, but evidence from the Beth Johnson Foundation for intergenerational studies told the Committee that:

“Negative stereotyping goes both ways; it is not just about old people being fearful of children, because children are also fearful of older people... many young people are not allowed to go out without adult support because of that fear of adults.

⁸³ The UK Children’s Commissioners report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, June 2008

⁸⁴ ROP 11 May 2010, paragraph 173

⁸⁵ ROP, 25 May 2010, paragraph 19

“The incidence of crime and victimisation of older people is very low, but the media over-report any crime or anything that happens. That has created a situation in which people are fearful, which is often not based on evidence, but assumption. Intergenerational work provides an opportunity to get underneath what the media are telling us to find out what the reality is”⁸⁶

135. Parental fears add to the mix too. The Committee understands fears relating to the safety of our children when playing out and considers it natural for parents to be concerned when their children start to gain a little independence. As North East Wales Play said in their written evidence to the Committee:

“All parents will (and probably always have) held some concerns about allowing their children out to play. However in more recent times these anxieties have been increased to the point where they are disproportionate to the real risks and are placing significant restrictions on children’s play.”⁸⁷

136. However, the Committee also heard that parents are reluctant to allow their children to play out because to do so is not considered good parenting. The Children’s Commissioner told the Committee:

“I have spoken to parents, particularly young parents, who want to be good parents and strive to do good things for their children, but they are worried that they will be labelled bad parents if they let their children play outside.”⁸⁸

137. This echoed evidence from Play Wales. Mike Greenaway, Director of Play Wales said:

“When I was a child, you saw children outside and it was legitimate for children to be playing outside, but that legitimacy has now been lost, regardless of whether you live in a rural area or an urban area. I speak to many parents who say that they would like to let their children out, but they feel as though they would be regarded as bad parents because their children would

⁸⁶ ROP, 25 May 2010, paragraph 17 - 18

⁸⁷ Written consultation response SP 18: North East Wales Play, page 3

⁸⁸ ROP, 29 January 2010, paragraph 238

not be engaged in some gainful activity that could lead to a qualification or that their play is not purposeful enough.”⁸⁹

138. The Committee considers play to be one of the most gainful activities that children can engage with. It teaches them to push the boundaries and limitations of their abilities in an environment that they control. Children learn to interact with others and with the world around them. Indeed, the play based ‘Foundation Phase’ which is being delivered in schools across Wales indicates that play based learning is creates many positive outcomes for children and young people.

139. The Children’s Commissioner summed up his argument for the legitimacy of play and our attitudes towards it when he said:

“People have to make judgements about risk and about whether they should bring their chicks home because it is getting late, and I would not criticise people for doing that, but there is something about our attitudes towards children and young people for which the commissioner, the Welsh Government, you and others can take some responsibility. It is about trying to create a culture in this society that values children as rights holders, respects them as human beings and wants to see them having a damn good time. Every one of us has had a childhood and we are still defined by the experiences of our childhood.”⁹⁰

140. The concerns expressed by witnesses to this inquiry regarding negative perceptions held by adults towards children in our society echo concerns raised by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In their concluding observations following the recent report by the UK to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee stated that:

“The Committee is also concerned at the general climate of intolerance and negative public attitudes towards children, especially adolescents, which appears to exist in the State party,

⁸⁹ ROP, 29 January 2010, paragraph 103

⁹⁰ ROP, 29 January 2010, paragraph 244

including in the media, and may be often the underlying cause of further infringements of their rights.”⁹¹

141. Whilst the UN Committee’s concern was not unique to Wales, it is clear that we have much room for improvement if we are to truly value children as rights holders and an important part of our society.

142. As the UN Committee noted, the media plays a part in the way children and young people are demonised. Fairbridge Cymru told the Committee that:

“Hanging out on street corners, around shops or in parks has been an activity enjoyed by many young people for generations yet in recent years a largely media led campaign has sought to demonise this behaviour and criminalise the young people. We have all seen the *Ban the Hoody* and the *Reclaim our Streets* headlines focused solely on removing young people from congregating and hanging out on streets. Yet very little evidence is presented that the young people targeted and ostracised by the campaigns have a history of offending or any intention of committing anti-social behaviour.”⁹²

143. Such campaigns are at odds with children’s rights under the UNCRC, specifically Article 31 which states:

“States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child”

144. The Committee therefore calls on the Welsh Government to encourage the media in Wales to present a more balanced view of children and young people in its output.

145. As previously discussed, the Committee has received evidence that intergenerational work can help to build bridges between generations, but that the work in Wales is shaped by the older generation. Given the “the general climate of intolerance and negative public attitudes towards children, especially adolescents” identified by the UNCRC and

⁹¹ Committee on the Rights of the Child: forty ninth session: consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the convention: concluding observations: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, paragraph 24

⁹² Written Consultation response SP 21, Fairbridge Cymru

others, the Committee considers it imperative that intergenerational work is re-focused to consider the views of children and young people alongside those of the older generation, as stated in recommendation 16 above.

146. The Committee recognises that any attempt to change attitudes towards one section of society towards another is not an easy task, and feels that recommendations made elsewhere in this report may go some way towards influencing such attitudes. However, the Committee would re-iterate that more can be done by the Welsh Government, local authorities and others to ensure that children and young people are routinely seen as valued members of our society with a legitimate presence in our communities and a valid opinion on matters that affect them.

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government reviews how intergenerational work can be embedded into the school curriculum in order to maximise the interaction between generations in a positive way.

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government hosts four regional media summits which should aim to dispel the media myths surrounding children and young people and should demonstrate the negative impact for the whole community of negative news stories regarding children and young people. The Committee further recommends that the Welsh Government holds discussions with the UK Government to explore the benefits of holding similar press summits on a UK wide basis.

Bullying

147. Respondents to the Committee's questionnaire cited bullying as something that prevented them playing or hanging out. Some reported that "others calling me names" had made them feel unsafe while one was afraid that "people that hate you might hit you". Another suggested that teasing that had taken place in school had carried on outside of school and had made him feel unsafe. Just under 43 per cent of respondents described a safe place to play or hang out as somewhere with organised play or adult supervision.

148. Similarly, young people from Funky Dragon told the Committee that they were keen on having adults to supervise play. They felt that parks could be very territorial for young people. They suggested that there is less bullying if adults are around. They recognised that young people can be more inclined to confide in their peers and so suggested that young people could be trained to supervise and act as an anti-bullying role model to younger children.⁹³

149. The Committee was surprised by young people's desire to have adult supervision when playing or hanging out and concerned that children and young people do not feel safe without adults present.

150. Evidence given to the Committee by other witnesses also suggested that bullying outside of school is an issue that needs to be addressed. Rhyl Youth Action Group, when asked if the young people they were working with would welcome adult supervision to reduce bullying, responded:

“Yes, 100 per cent. Even when our facilities are closed, young people will come into our building to seek refuge with our staff and talk to them about any bullying that is going on. One problem is what happens to young people when they are away from our supervision, when, inevitably, they are on the streets, on their own or with friends; that is what needs to be looked at and perhaps addressed with some sort of support system.”⁹⁴

151. Children in Wales told the Committee that for children and young people with disabilities, “bullying has always been a key issue”.⁹⁵ One respondent to the Committee's questionnaire, a 14 year old girl with disabilities said that “others calling [her] names” stopped her from going outside to play or hang out.

152. Given the particular nature of bullying directed towards disabled children and young people, the Committee would welcome a review of the Welsh Governments policies on this issue.

153. Some witnesses raised concerns regarding bullying in play settings. Barnardo's Cymru told the Committee that play workers should step in to stop bullying:

⁹³ CYP(3) AWE 04 – Funky Dragon following oral evidence session on 23 February

⁹⁴ ROP, 22 March 2010, paragraph 105

⁹⁵ ROP, 27 April 2010, paragraph 158

“It is interfering with children’s play, but if children’s play is detrimental to another child, I do not think that adults should stand by and let it happen. We would not stand by and let it happen in our workplaces, and we do not stand by and let it happen in the school ground. I know that that is a philosophy within playwork, but it would be interesting to know what the child’s perspective is of his or her experiences in that play situation. I think that children would request adults to interfere... within play and leisure settings, we feel strongly that bullying needs to be addressed.”⁹⁶

154. Pete Duncan of Co-Train said that:

“We have something called SLAR – stop, look and reflect before you act. The philosophy of playwork is that play is principle – it is about letting children play, and play out whatever they are trying to do. People would not jump in and say ‘that’s dangerous – stop, stop’. They would weigh up what was happening, reflect and watch the process continue.

“I am aware through feedback about some miss-interpretation of the reflective practice as non-intervention.”⁹⁷

155. Given the comments from children and young people welcoming supervised play, the Committee is concerned that play worker training may be mis-understood leading to non-intervention when bullying is taking place. The Committee calls on the Welsh Government to investigate the current delivery of play work training and to consider how it can ensure that no further misinterpretation takes place.

156. Rhyl Youth Action Group suggested that although supervision was positive for young people needing support, it was not always possible to provide it. They said:

“Mr Owen: One problem is what happens to young people when they are away from our supervision, when, inevitably, they are on the streets, on their own or with friends; that is what needs to be looked at and perhaps addressed with some sort of support system

⁹⁶ ROP, 2 February 2010, paragraph 152- 154

⁹⁷ CYP(3) -08-10 (p2) Inquiry into safe places to play – Co-train, page 2

“Eleanor Burnham: Would helping people with assertiveness and how to deal with issues when they are on the streets be on benefit?

“Mr Owen: Yes, so that they can manage the problem themselves. We can mostly deal with the issue, and control it, when young people are at our facilities, but they are most vulnerable when they are on their own; that support, however it is formed, needs to be there.”⁹⁸

157. The Police also recognised that support for victims of bullying outside of school was important. Mr Morris, Assistant Chief Constable for South Wales Police, told the Committee that:

“Another issue for us is bullying outside the school. We tend to find that bullying that started inside the school then starts to happen outside, which becomes more dangerous, particularly for the victims, especially as it can’t be dealt with in a closed environment like the school. So it is about how we pick up those issues and join them together. In Swansea, for example, the education, youth and lifelong learning services are working with the police to try to identify people who are bullying others inside and outside school and looking at what can be done about that. That is about joining up different silo services to identify the bullies and victims.”⁹⁹

158. Whilst recognising that not all children and young people would welcome supervised play, the Committee considers the availability of supervised play to be an important feature in the portfolio of leisure opportunities provided in an area.

159. Whilst play workers are ideally placed to provide such supervision, the Committee considers it reasonable for other people whose work will bring them into contact with children in a play setting, to be trained to fulfil a supervisory role.

160. Evidence from North East Wales Play suggested that:

“Certain teachers, police and park rangers work with children and young people on a regular [basis] but often do not recognise

⁹⁸ ROP, 22 March 2010, paragraphs 105 - 107

⁹⁹ ROP, 11 May 2010, paragraph 192

some behaviours as play behaviours ... To support children to play freely, all individuals who work alongside children and young people in society need to be aware and need to develop an understanding of children and young people's invitations and signals to play (their play cue)."¹⁰⁰

161. The knowledge that a park ranger, for example, is trained to work with children and young people and is available to support victims of bullying when they are playing or hanging out would go some way to providing reassurance to both young people and their parents.

162. Barnardo's Cymru suggested the use of 'child safety points', saying:

"It would be helpful if safeguarding was taken to a community level with adults running PACT groups, Neighbourhood Watch, community centre volunteers and local shopkeepers being aware of how to spot bullying and establishing local 'safe points' (for example local shop, community centre) for children to go to if they're scared about a stranger or lost in a community. Local safe points may reduce parents and children and young people's fears."¹⁰¹

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government carries out a focused review into approaches and methods that could be implemented to reduce the instance of out of school bullying, and to support victims of such bullying. Such a review should pay particular regard to the issue of disabled children and young people as victims of bullying. The Committee also calls on the Welsh Government to confirm the timescale for issuing its anti-bullying guidance, which was due to be published in December 2009.

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government issues guidance to local authorities to ensure that they provide supervised play opportunities for children and young people in a variety of settings. Consideration should also be given to the training of play supervisors to eliminate any misinterpretation of reflective practice that may result in a lack of action against bullying in a play setting.

¹⁰⁰ Written consultation response SP 18 : North Wales East Play, page 15

¹⁰¹ Written consultation response SP 05 : Barnardo's Cymru, page 9

Transport

163. Many witnesses told the Committee that the lack of public transport was the main barrier to accessing safe places to play and hang out. The Children’s Commissioner, amongst others, told the Committee that some young people faced a (one way) 2.5 hour journey to their local cinema on public transport that would cost them £5.50 each.¹⁰²

164. Staff at the Integrated Family Centre in Gronant, north Wales told the Committee that the availability of transport in the area was a problem not only for the children and young people in that area who wanted to access play facilities, but for also older people who needed to access public services such as healthcare.¹⁰³

165. Young people from Funky Dragon told the Committee that from the age of 15, young people are charged adult fares on public transport. This makes accessing the limited public transport even more problematic to those young people who can’t afford full fares.¹⁰⁴

166. The WLGA referred to the 2004-05 Welsh Government pilot half fares scheme for 16-18 year olds in Bridgend and North East Wales. They stated that:

“The WLGA recognises the importance of transport enabling children and young people to access play provision and would welcome a re-examination of the idea of concessionary fares for young people.”¹⁰⁵

167. However, the Deputy Minister told the Committee that:

“The Welsh Assembly Government piloted a 50% concessionary scheme for young people aged 16-18 years of age in Bridgend and North East Wales - it has now finished. The scheme was welcomed by all participants. However, the cost of rolling out the scheme across Wales is unaffordable in the current financial climate.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Consultation response SP4, Children’s Commissioner for Wales, page 6

¹⁰³ Note of rapporteur visit to the Integrated Family Centre, Gronant. 22 March 2010

¹⁰⁴ CYP(3) AWE 04 – Funky Dragon following oral evidence session on 23 February

¹⁰⁵ Consultation response S15, Wales Local Government Association, paragraph 26

¹⁰⁶ CYP(3)-09-10 : Paper 2 : Safe places to play and hang out : additional written evidence from the Deputy Minister for Children

168. The Deputy Minister went on to say that:

“There is a structural problem in how Wales organises its public transport system. My personal view is that while we continue with the current regulatory setup, particularly in relation to busses, we will never be able to do anything other than ameliorate this problem”¹⁰⁷

169. The Committee considers transport to be a key issue in the provision of safe places to play and hang out. Without proper provision of public transport, young people will continue to be excluded from accessing all of the opportunities that should otherwise be available to them. The provision of suitable public transport would have benefits for other members of the community too, older people in particular.

170. The Committee feels that concessionary fares for young people should be a priority for the Welsh Government in order to help children and young people to access the leisure and recreational facilities in their wider locality, as well as educational and training opportunities.

171. The availability of public transport, particularly in rural Wales, should also be improved. The Deputy Minister felt that public transport in Wales faced a structural problem that needed addressing. Such issues will require further consideration by the Welsh Government, but meanwhile improvements to be made to the system currently in place. Provision of Community Transport, for example, should be re-assessed in light of the needs of children and young people.

172. Scouts Wales told the Committee that:

“It does not matter whether it is to do with the scouts, guides, karate, football, rugby or whatever, if children and young people do not have the ability to get from A to B, then they cannot go, which is sad. Some schools run afterschool clubs and football and rugby and so on after school, which means that school buses must be re-jigged, but, sometimes, they cannot be re-jigged and therefore those children cannot take part in the after-school clubs.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 163

¹⁰⁸ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 44

173. The Sports Council for Wales also suggested that after school clubs were not universally accessible because if “their families did not have a car... they couldn’t take part in after school activity.”¹⁰⁹

174. The Committee was disappointed to hear that some pupils are missing out on extra curricula activities because school transportation is not available at the activity end time.

175. The Committee was pleased to hear that Ysgol Arduwy in Harlech had taken a proactive role in ensuring its pupils were able to access public transport at suitable times to allow them to travel to and from school by train. Having discussed the problems faced by pupils with Arriva Trains Wales, the school made adjustments to the timing of the school day and Arriva Trains Wales made adjustments to its timetable. These changes, among others, meant that trains were available both before and after school, and after extra curricular activities. Children are now able to access various school-run activities out of hours.¹¹⁰

176. In schools where a high proportion of its pupils use school transport, it would seem reasonable to ensure that the timing of school transport is made flexible enough to allow children and young people to access the opportunities provided. Where that is not possible, head teachers should be encouraged to restructure the school day to allow extra curricular activities to take place at a time suitable to all pupils, for example during an extended lunch break.

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government prioritises the provision of concessionary fares on public transport for 16 – 18 year olds to enable them to access leisure and recreational facilities as well as educational and training opportunities in their wider locality.

The Committee recommends that the current public transport system should be re-assessed against the needs of children and young people, alongside those of other users. If the re-assessment highlights systemic problems with public transport provision in Wales, then further steps should be taken by the Welsh Government to ensure that those issues are resolved.

¹⁰⁹ Written consultation response SP16, The Sports Council for Wales, paragraph 28

¹¹⁰ CYP(3)-14-10 – paper 7 – Additional information from Ysgol Arduwy, Harlech, relating to Safe Places to Play and Hang Out Inquiry

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government issues guidance to local governments to ensure that pupils are not excluded from extra curricular activities because of difficulties in securing transportation home at the end of the activity.

Addressing the play needs of particular groups of children and young people

Children living in rural areas

177. Evidence shows that children and young people living in rural areas are more isolated from their peers due to lack of places to play and hang out close to their homes, and a lack of transport to more urbanised areas which might have better leisure facilities. Young people from Funky Dragon told the Committee that a lack of pavements in rural areas can make it difficult for young people to travel even short distances.¹¹¹ This situation is exacerbated by poor provision of, and the cost of, public transport in rural areas, as evidenced by the Family Centre in Gronant,¹¹² amongst others.

178. Children in Wales told the Committee that public transport in rural Wales was especially vital as:

“some young people live 25 to 30 miles away from the nearest cinema or swimming pool”¹¹³

179. Observations and recommendations made under the ‘transport’ section of this report should go some way to alleviate transport concerns.

180. The Deputy Minister discussed with the Committee the use of mobile youth work as a way of providing play opportunities to children and young people in rural Wales:

“A great deal of investment has gone into mobile youth work in rural areas over the last few years. I believe that we are talking

¹¹¹ Video evidence SP 17 : Funky Dragon

¹¹² CYP(3) AWE 10 : Committee Members note of rapporteur visits

¹¹³ ROP, 27 April 2010, paragraph 177

about £5.5 million in terms of revenue and £9 million in terms of capital, thus far.”¹¹⁴

181. In June 2010, the Deputy Minister told the Committee that his officials were still working with local authorities to gather information on the effectiveness of mobile youth provision and that:

“for the first time, we shall have robust information that will allow us to measure what kind of outcomes and impact have been made by that investment.”¹¹⁵

182. In his written evidence to the Committee, the Deputy Minister referenced the Deep Rural Localities report, which was published on the 15 December 2009 and:

“provides the Welsh Assembly Government with an evidence base for supporting isolated communities to access better services and cope with every day issues. The report will help identify what the priorities are for wider rural areas in Wales and inform the future direction of policies and programmes targeted at rural communities.”¹¹⁶

183. The Committee welcomes this focus on the issues affecting people living in deep rural localities in Wales. The Committee looks forward to the Welsh Government actively including children and young people in the development of these policies, and considering their needs equally with the needs of others in the deep rural communities.

184. Witnesses raised also concerns regarding the cost of leisure facilities or children and young people living in rural areas. Although the issue of cost is discussed later in this report in more detail, it is worth considering pricing issues in the context of children and young people in rural Wales. Barnardo’s told the Committee that:

“In many parts of Wales there are fantastic outdoor activities that tourists come to enjoy, but often children and young people living in those areas cannot enjoy these natural resources (eg.

¹¹⁴ ROP, 29 January 2010, paragraph 26

¹¹⁵ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 167

¹¹⁶ CYP(3)-09-10 : Paper 2

Surfing, rock climbing, hill walking) as the activities cost too much to do and there's no transport to them."¹¹⁷

185. Iwth Pen youth club in Dyffryn Nantlle, north Wales recognised this situation in their area. They told the Committee that:

"Dim Cyfle Dyffryn Nantlle, a local group of mothers, who had set up the group to offer young people opportunities in the area, applied and received money from the Rank Foundation to fund a project called 'Climbing the Walls'. This is a project where 5 local women were to train as outdoor instructors in order to gain employment and encourage local young people to take part in outdoor activities ... Over the past year young people have had a series of opportunities to try new things, either in half day sessions, full days and a weekend away. They have been, kayaking: gorge walking: climbing: abseiling: coasteering: Snowdon climb: mountain biking. The aim is now to try and get some of the young people following accredited course in the activities of their choice."¹¹⁸

186. The club is very aware that cost is a barrier to many young people and has set its pricing structure to be inclusive:

"The main barrier to attend is cost. We do not charge an entry fee or charge anything for young people to do anything. We do not arrange any trips where some can afford to go and others cannot. When we offer young people trips away, even for the weekend, we only ask £2 towards transport."¹¹⁹

187. Barnardo's suggested that activities such as these could be made more accessible to children and young people by use of private transport and a voucher scheme:

"There are two separate issues here. The first is transport, or access. Transport is particularly problematic for rural areas. Many of the outdoor pursuits providers have their own minibuses, and I do not see why there could not be some community use of those to get to beaches or to do rock climbing. That would be something new, so it might need

¹¹⁷ Written consultation SP 5: Barnardo's Cymru, page 3

¹¹⁸ Written consultation response SP 24: Iwth Pen

¹¹⁹ *ibid*

planning and consideration. The second issue is the cost. I do not see why there could not be a local voucher scheme. For example – and this is in a different sphere but it addresses a similar problem – during the Edinburgh festival, there is a local voucher scheme or a subsidy so that residents who could not otherwise access drama events can get to enjoy the activity in their area.”¹²⁰

188. The Committee thanks groups such as Iwth Pen for their efforts to provide such wide ranging activities for all the young people in their area. Recommendations made elsewhere in this report are intended to ease the pressures faced in providing safe places to play and hang out in rural areas.

Children with disabilities

189. Witnesses told the Committee that inclusive play is important to the development of both children with disabilities and those without as they learn to play together. Children in Wales said:

“What comes through from their evaluation by the National Childminding Association, Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association and Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin is that, where families are able to be integrated into a mainstream play setting or childcare setting at a very early age, it gives the child confidence to mix.”¹²¹

190. However, the parent of a disabled teenager told the Committee:

“Please don't push inclusion too much for disabled young people. It isn't always the answer, particularly when the disabilities involve severe learning and/or autism”¹²²

191. Similarly, a nine year old boy with disabilities told the committee that he prefers specialist play provision as “I do not stand out. I feel like I can enjoy myself without stares and comments.”¹²³

192. Barnardo's Cymru suggested that integration is not always an attractive option for parents of disabled children who may have

¹²⁰ ROP, 2 February 2010, paragraph 86

¹²¹ ROP, 24 April 2010, paragraph 159

¹²² Questionnaire on safe places to play and hang out responses

¹²³ Questionnaire on safe places to play and hang out responses

concerns about the level of specialist care available in integrated play settings. They told the Committee that:

“Many parents of disabled children do not send their children to generic provision because of concerns regarding ‘open access’ rules. Disabled children may need support to stay safe at play schemes and youth clubs and parents worry that open access rules mean their child will leave the scheme without support to do it safely.”¹²⁴

193. The Committee understands that parents of disabled children may have particular worries in addition to those faced by other parents. Staff at the Integrated Family Centre in Gronant, north Wales told the Committee about the ‘summer buddy scheme’ they ran in 2009 which paired up disabled children and young people with ‘buddies’ who offer an extra level of supervision and negate the need for a carer to be present. The scheme was designed to reassure parents that their children can access the scheme and stay safe.”¹²⁵

194. Although the Committee welcomes the buddy scheme initiative, it also recognises that for some disabled children and their parents, replacing a carer with a ‘buddy’ may not be enough to reassure them that they will receive an appropriate level of care.

195. However, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales suggested that in some cases, overprotective parents and carers may be causing a barrier to disabled children’s play. He said:

“I have spoken with children in wheelchairs who would really like the ability to fall out of the wheelchair and crawl over to the slide. Now there is absolutely nothing wrong in that desire. Our innate sense, as adults, is almost immediately to pick that child up and put them back in the wheelchair. I have heard children saying ‘I wish they would stop doing that’. They mean well, but they are cutting this opportunity away.”¹²⁶

196. The Committee considers that it is important that parents are supported to find the confidence they need to allow their children to push their own barriers through play. Such support should be offered

¹²⁴ Consultation response SP05, Barnardo’s Cymru, page 4

¹²⁵ CYP(3) AWE 10 : Committee Members note of rapporteur visits

¹²⁶ ROP 29 January 2010, para 198

to parents of disabled children and young people if highlighted as a need during an assessment of their needs as carers.

197. North East Wales Play stated that:

“It is important to recognise that there is unlikely to be a ‘one size fits all’ solution to providing play opportunities for children with disabilities, due to the type and complexity of their disability can vary widely from one child to the next.”¹²⁷

198. Evidence from Action for Children concurred with this view. They told the Committee that:

“Many children require 1:1 support to stay safe and to maximise their social inclusion and personal development, and old budgets have been designed for just 2:1 support. Action for Children is disappointed that the whole of the £21 million Aiming High consequential for Wales has not reached disabled children and their families.”¹²⁸

199. For some disabled children and young people, local play opportunities have some way still to go in order to be inclusive. The National Deaf Children’s Society Cymru (NDCS) told the Committee that:

“The need for disabled children to have ‘equity of access to play and leisure services, including holiday play schemes, after school clubs and pre-school provision,’ is cited as a key action within the National Health Service Framework for Children. However, equity of access to play and leisure services is not yet a reality for many deaf children and young people.”¹²⁹

200. It is a legal requirement that buildings should be accessible, but as the NDCS evidence points out, this is not always the case.

201. The Committee feels that the Welsh Government and local authorities should continue to strive to ensure that play opportunities are fully inclusive, but that such provision should not be at the expense of specialist provision for those children and young people who wish to

¹²⁷ Consultation response SP 18, North East Wales Play, page 7

¹²⁸ Consultation response SP13, Action for Children, paragraph 4.2

¹²⁹ Written Consultation SP12: NDCS Cymru

access it. Indeed, for some children, a mix of integrated and specialist play opportunities may be required.

The Welsh Government should ensure that all mainstream play opportunities are inclusive, although specialist play provision should also be made available to disabled children and young people who request it. When assessing the needs of carers for disabled children and young people, consideration should be given to any support a carer may need to enable disabled children to access such play opportunities.

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government takes appropriate steps to ensure that the statutory obligations that require all new public buildings in Wales to be totally accessible are met, and that accessibility features are retrofitted to all public buildings where and when possible.

Children and young people living in disadvantaged households

202. Witnesses have told the Committee that cost is a major issue for children and young people living in disadvantaged households. Iwth Pen youth club gave the Committee a specific example:

“I asked a young lad why he did not go to the other youth club and he said he could not go because it cost 50p. I said that that was not much money, but he told me that there were five children in the family and that £2.50 every night was more than his mother could afford.”¹³⁰

203. Rhyl Youth Activity Group told the Committee about an issue in their area:

“There is a specialist youth gymnasium on the promenade in Rhyl that none of the young people we work with can afford even though they are the ones who would probably benefit the most from going there and being able to access the facilities.”¹³¹

204. Play Right stated that:

¹³⁰ ROP 22 March 2010, para 131

¹³¹ ROP 22 March 2010, para 20

“Funding is a massive barrier in all areas in which Play Right runs provision. Families on low income cannot afford to send their children to play clubs which charge. It is fundamental to a child’s development that they get to play freely and socialise with their peers, it is our duty to make sure those children and young people from low income families do not suffer developmentally due to poverty. Play must not be provided exclusively for those who can afford it, it is a child’s right.”¹³²

205. Barnardo’s Cymru told the Committee that “the variation”¹³³ in pricing structures across local authorities was surprising. This variation was apparent in other evidence given to the inquiry. One mother told the Committee that at the age of 14, her son was required to pay the adult entry fee to the local authority run seasonal ice-skating rink. However, a student discount was available for those over the age of 16. The higher charge for the 14 year old resulted in the family being unable to access the ice-rink as the total cost was unaffordable.

206. The Committee was also contacted by two children who told the Committee about a scheme that allows people who live or work in the local authority area to visit its castle grounds free of charge. Unfortunately, when the children’s school tried to book a visit to the castle they were turned down for free entry as the children did not have the necessary bank statements, Council Tax bills or wage slips to prove their eligibility. All documents required to gain free entry were obtainable only by adults. Such a situation is counter productive and diminishes the worth of what appears at first to be a positive scheme.

207. The WLGA told the Committee that:

“On the one hand, it would seem obvious that, in low-income situations, free provision would be the immediate resolution to some of the problems, but the feedback that we get is that, in some instances, some kind of fee is useful in order to secure commitment and to ensure that whatever provision is available is not taken advantage of.”¹³⁴

208. It would seem to the Committee that charging for activities in order to secure commitment, rather than to cover unavoidable costs, is

¹³² Consultation response SP19, Play Right, page 9

¹³³ ROP, 2 February 2010, paragraph 94

¹³⁴ ROP, 15 June 2010, para 122

unhelpful to families living in poverty. The WLGA told the Committee that “there is a high degree of sensitivity around these issues so that if the fee is viewed as a barrier or if the circumstances stop participation, then the fee would be removed.” They went on to explain that “The youth worker who generally knows the family’s circumstances can make those decisions.”¹³⁵

209. However, the Committee remains concerned that for many families the reality will be that they may not engage with a play or leisure opportunity at all if a fee is payable, and unaffordable. In that circumstance, the youth workers attached to the play opportunity will not be given the chance to waive the advertised fee. Others may allow their children to attend, but due to fears of stigma would not reveal their financial circumstances to staff and would therefore not benefit from such selective help.

210. In addition to the recommendation made below, observations and recommendations made elsewhere in this report should go some way to alleviate some of these concerns.

The Committee recommends that local authority pricing structures are changed to provide play and leisure opportunities free of charge where possible. Family tickets should also be made available with prices that reflect the number of adults, as well as the number of children in a family.

Gypsy traveller children

211. Committee member Angela Burns undertook a rapporteur visit to gypsy traveller children and young people in Pembrokeshire. The Children and young people told the Committee that they were often unable to access organised play activities because of the distance to them from their homes. One young boy told the Committee that he had to walk for about an hour to get to the local youth club.

212. Gypsy traveller girls told the Committee that they had very little freedom to go out to play. They were seldom allowed to attend organised play provision, unless a family member or close friend was a staff member at the facility. They were not allowed to wander off site

¹³⁵ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraphs 122 - 126

unless with an older young person of around 16-17 years old. As a result, they played mostly within the confines of the home. Some girls reported that they supervised the play of much younger girls, but were restricted in where they could allow that play to take place. One young girl told the Committee that she could no longer take her younger sister to the nearby play area as 'rude graffiti' had made the location unsuitable for them.

213. The boys told the Committee that they had more freedom, but still felt that the locality of their homes restricted their access to safe places to play and that they were often only able to make friends with other travellers as they were cut off from a more mixed environment.

214. The Committee is aware that the extended family is of key importance to Gypsy Traveller groups and that for Gypsy Traveller children and young people, social interaction both within and outside school, often tends to remain within the bounds of their immediate family or cultural group. The 2007 Wales NGO report Stop, look, listen: The road to realising children's rights in Wales stated that Gypsy and Traveller children frequently face extreme racism making it harder for them to participate in leisure activities. The Committee is also aware that, as with other groups of parents, the parents of gypsy traveller children can be protective of their children.

215. Although there is much need to gain a better understanding of the needs of gypsy traveller children and young people, it has been widely reported that the accommodation and site conditions faced by some gypsy travellers are appalling.

216. The Committee welcomes the Welsh Government's commitment to improving Gypsy Traveller sites, as indicated in 'A road less travelled', which it consulted on in September 2009.

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government considers the play needs of Gypsy Traveller children and young people in its Gypsy Traveller Strategy. The development of play development plans should be made with the participation on gypsy traveller children and young people, along with their parents. Furthermore, planning guidance issued in relation to Gypsy Traveller site development should include a mandatory obligation to provide play opportunities on each site.

The role of schools

217. Finally, The Children’s Commissioner for Wales, Play Wales, Barnardo’s and the Sports Council (in written evidence) all referenced the potential important role of schools in providing a safe place to play and hang out at weekends or outside normal school hours.

218. In their evidence the Sports Council for Wales state:

“Schools can play a huge role in providing a safe, welcoming environment for children and young people to meet and play together. They can be hubs of activity all day and evening, everyday of the week, places where sports clubs are encouraged to run junior activity by incentives such as discounted facility rates. We need schools where a wide range of activities are provided at reasonable prices through schools working together with youth and leisure services; schools where transport is linked to the provision of those activities; schools where young people are encouraged to come in and take part form a strong element of vibrant communities.”¹³⁶

219. Gypsy traveller children and young people told the Committee that they would be happy to use school facilities such as art and sports equipment during weekends and holidays as it would provide them with a safe place to meet with friends that they could otherwise not see out of school hours.

220. However, young people from Funky Dragon told the Committee that they would be reluctant to spend their free time at school as they spent so much time there already.

221. Scouts Wales told the Committee that they would find use of school facilities very helpful. Mr Brownsill, Field Commissioner for south and west Wales, told the Committee that:

“Part of our development project is to try to build links with local schools, where we are either opening new scout groups or expanding existing provision. The biggest problem... is the cost of sing a school and heating it properly and so on. In general, a school has to be heated in its entirety and you do not have

¹³⁶ Written Consultation response SP16, paragraph 35

zoned heating, except in more modern facilities. So, the cost of using the school has to be passed on, and it tends to be prohibitive. The other issue is whether the headteacher is willing to support scouting; some headteachers are not that keen on scouting, because, if they have scouting, they have to have guiding and this, that and the other. It does not pay them to do it, and so they just feel that they cannot afford to do it.”¹³⁷

222. In their written evidence Barnardo’s outline some of the practical barriers to schools opening up their facilities stating:

“Schools face practical problems in gaining a community focus. Schools we have worked with have looked at opening their premises outside of school hours but faced very real difficulties. To an extent these difficulties will depend upon the communities which the schools serve but in our experiences have included needles and broken bottles being left in yards, changes to insurance for damage when no caretaker is present, and a worry of vandalism (based upon previous experiences). When schools enable community members to enter the premises they have to consider child protection issues, employment issues and insurance. These can act as real barriers.”¹³⁸

223. Scouts Wales acknowledged the difficulties faced by schools when opening up their facilities to the community, but told the Committee:

“If we cannot use the building it would be useful to be able to use the grounds, because often their grounds are nearer. It would be useful if we were able to use the grounds for scouts to get their sports badges or for meeting to do a nature project. If the school has an environmental area, it would be very helpful to be able to take the cubs and beavers there to do something for their nature badges.”¹³⁹

224. Rhosymedre Community Primary School in North Wales allows the local community full access to its grounds. Roz Harrison, Headteacher at the school, told the Committee that although the school had experienced some vandalism at first as a result of the open access policy, it was no longer experiencing any problems. The school has

¹³⁷ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 19

¹³⁸ Written consultation response SP05, Barnardo’s Cymru, page 12

¹³⁹ ROP, 15 June 2010, paragraph 20

installed robust play equipment in the grounds which, along with the school field, provides a safe place for children to play outside of school hours.

225. As previously discussed, the Committee recognises that not all children and young people would wish to spend time in school outside school hours, but for some, school buildings and grounds could provide a safe and accessible place to play and hang out. Given the transport issues that many children and young people are faced with, greater community use of schools could provide facilities that might otherwise be inaccessible to some.

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should undertake a review of the role that both Community Focused Schools and all maintained schools play in supporting safe play and leisure opportunities with a view to maximizing the opportunities for safe places to play and hang out that schools can offer communities. The review should include consideration of issues relating to premises, finance, integration with local provision and good practice models with a view to maximising opportunities to share facilities.

Witnesses

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the Committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed in full at <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-other-committees/bus-committees-third-cyp-home.htm>

19 January

Huw Lewis, Deputy Minister for Children Welsh Government

Chris Tweedale, Director - Children, Young People and School Effectiveness Group (CYPSE)

Martin Swain, Head of Children & Families Programmes Branch
Tanis Cunnick, Head of Youth Work Strategy Branch

Mike Greenaway, Director Play Wales
Marianne Mannello, Assistant Director

Keith Towler, Children's Commissioner for Wales Children's Commissioner for Wales

2 February

Vikki Butler, Senior Research Policy Officer Barnardo's Cymru

Tim Ruscoe, Development officer, Assembly Liaison and Participation

23 February

Melanie Blake, Core Development Manager Funky Dragon

Jessica Simmonds, Conwy Funky Dragon

Victoria Madden, Merthyr Funky Dragon

Chris Llewelyn, Director of Lifelong Learning, Leisure and Information

Welsh Local Government Association

Naomi Alleyne, Director of Equalities and Social Justice

Huw Jones, Chief Executive

Sports Council for Wales

Anne Hamilton, Head of People and Programme Development

22 March

Shane Owen, Projects Manager

Rhyl Youth Action Group

Val Owen, Project Volunteer

Iwth Pen Youth Club Providers

Mandy Davies, Project Volunteer

Jamie Digwood, Rhyl FC Director of Football

Rhyl Football Club – Football in the Community

Lee Jones, Rhyl FITC community Development Manager

27 April

Catriona Williams, Chief Executive Officer

Children in Wales/End Child Poverty Network

Lynne Hill, Policy Director

11 May

Anthony Metcalf, Team Centre Manager

Fairbridge Cymru

Jonathan Bevan, Regeneration Project Officer

Merthyr Valleys Homes

Alexandra Allan, Liveable
Neighbourhoods Director

Sustrans

Lee Waters, Director for Wales,
Sustrans

Dave Morris, Assistant Chief
Constable for South Wales Police

Police

Martin Peters, Community
Councillor, Langford, Neath
Eugene Dubens, Caerau
Communities First Co-ordinator

PACT

25 May

Alan Hatton-Yeo, Chief Executive
of the Beth Johnson Foundation

Centre for Intergenerational Practice

Pete Duncan, Trainer and
Director of CLADA

Co-train

Barbara Wilding, Wales
Committee Member and Member
of BIG's Healthy Family
Committee

Big Lottery Fund

15 June

Jill Gloster Chief Commissioner
of Wales and senior volunteer
within Wales

Scouts

Simon Brownhill Field
Commissioner for South and
West Wales

Chris Llewelyn, Director of
Lifelong Learning, Leisure and
Information

Welsh Local Government Association

Naomi Alleyne, Director of
Equalities and Social Justice

Huw Lewis, Deputy Minister for Children Welsh Government

Elin Gwynedd, Head of Advocacy Unit

Suzanne Chisholm, Head of Rights and Entitlements Branch

List of written evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All written evidence can be viewed in full at

http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-other-committees/bus-committees-third-cyp-home/bus-committees-third-cyp-inquiry/cyp3_-inq-safe_places.htm

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Cllr Mike Whitby BNP		SP 01
Huw Lewis, Deputy Minister for Children	Welsh Government	SP 02 SP 02a AWE02
Mike Greenaway, Director	Play Wales	SP 03 AWE 01
Keith Towler, Children's Commissioner for Wales	Children's Commissioner for Wales	SP 04 AWE 03
Tim Ruscoe, Development officer, Assembly Liaison and Participation	Barnardo's Cymru	SP 05 AWE 13
Dave Morris, Assistant Chief Constable for South Wales Police	Association of Chief Police Officers	SP 06
Heledd James, Acting National Development Manager	Continyou Cymru	SP 07 SP 07a
Michelle Jones, REO	3 Counties Play Infrastructure Project	SP 08
Rhian Cook, Children and Young People's Involvement Worker	Monmouthshire Children and Young People's Partnership	SP 09
Jean Gregson, Partnership Support Officer	Bridgend Children and Young People's Partnership	SP 10

Chris Southern	Recreate, Cardiff and Vale Play Services Association	SP 11
Debbie Green, Policy and Campaigns Officer	National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)	SP 12 SP 12a
Vivienne Laing, Policy & Public Affairs Manager	Action for Children	SP 13
Rob Roffe, Policy Manager	The Big Lottery Fund	SP 14
Naomi Alleyne, Director of Equalities and Social Justice	Welsh Local Government Association	SP 15 AWE 05 AWE 11
Huw Jones, Chief Executive	Sports Council for Wales	SP 16
Melanie Blake, Core Development Manager	Funky Dragon	SP 17
Mike Dessington, Regional Play Development Officer	North East Wales Play	SP 18
Becky Cole, Adventure Play Development Officer	Play Right	SP 19
Caryl Alban, Play Officer	Carmarthenshire Children's Partnership	SP 20
Anthony Metcalf, Team Centre Manager	Fairbridge Cymru	SP 21
Shane Owen, Projects Manager	Rhyl Youth Action Group	SP 22a SP 22b SP 22C AWE 06
Val Owen, Project Volunteer	Iwth Pen Youth Club Providers	SP 23
Mandy Davies, Project Volunteer		

Jamie Digwood - Rhyl FC Director of Football	Rhyl Football Club	SP 24
Sean O'Neill, Policy Director	Children in Wales	SP 25 AWE 12
Professor J R Sibert		SP 26
Jonathan Bevan, Regeneration Project Officer	Merthyr Valley Homes	SP 27
Alexandra Allan, Liveable Neighbourhoods Director	Sustrans	SP 28 AWE 07
Pete Duncan, Trainer and Director of CLADA	Co-train	SP 29
Alan Hatton-Yeo, Chief Executive of the Beth Johnson Foundation	Centre for Intergenerational Practice	SP 30 AWE 08, 08a
Jill Gloster Chief Commissioner of Wales and senior volunteer within Wales	Scouts	SP 31
Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing	Welsh Government	AWE 09
Note of Committee Members visits	National Assembly for Wales	AWE 10
Note from Ysgol Ardudwy Harlech		AWE 14