



Report of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Cabinet – 18 July 2019

2019 Play Sufficiency Assessment

Purpose:	To update members and senior officers on the requirements and findings of the 2019 Play Sufficiency Assessment
Policy Framework:	Children & Young People's (CYP) Plan / Poverty Strategy
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) The findings of the 2019 Play Sufficiency Assessment are noted. 2) Agreement be given to allow the findings to be released as a public summary.
Report Author:	Stephen Cable
Finance Officer:	Annick Wilkes
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar

1. Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the 2010 Child & Families (Wales) Measure 2010, a duty was placed on all Wales local authorities to 'secure sufficient play' in recognition of its contribution to addressing poverty.
- 1.2 The Duty on all authorities to '*secure sufficient play as far as is reasonably practicable*' requires the completion of a Play Sufficiency Assessment every 3 years and the publication of any findings including actions to meet sufficiency.
- 1.3 To date, assessments have been completed in 2013 and 2016.

2. The 2019 Assessment

- 2.1 As with the previous assessments, the 2019 Assessment lead was the Childcare & Play Sufficiency Manager within the Poverty Prevention Service.
- 2.2 The assessment was undertaken internally between July 2018 and March 2019, in part as no funding is automatically attached to the assessment, and partly as it is recognised that undertaking the assessment generates links and opportunities for collaborative working.
- 2.3 The assessment featured extensive consultation with children & young people, parent/carers, professionals and the general public, as well as several stakeholder working groups representing the protected characteristics.

3. Key Findings

- 3.1 The assessment is based around a series of indicators for which a RAG assessment allows each authority to state if an indicator is fully met, partially met or unmet.
- 3.2 Whilst some indicators were changed from 2016 to 2019, the majority were unchanged or could be compared to previous and this presents a picture of improvement over the 3 year period.
- 2016 45 Green, 44 Amber and 2 Red**
2019 51 Green, 41 Amber and 1 Red
- 3.3 Given that this has taken place during a period in which capacity within play, as with other areas, has reduced, this is testament to how play is reaching more policy and agenda than previously.
- 3.4 The Assessment is comprised of 9 ‘matters’ or areas, for which an overall RAG grading is required.

Matter	RAG Grading	Comment
A – Population		<i>No indicators associated</i>
B – Providing for Diverse Needs	Amber Partially Met	Excellent work on supporting access to play. Very hard to fully meet.
C – Space for Children to Play	Green Fully Met	Achieved by collaborative working with colleagues in Planning, Highways, Housing, Cultural Services
D – Supervised Provision	Green Fully Met	A broad range of supervised provision in place
E – Charges for Play Provision	Green Fully Met	Support for those who require it and much provision available at little or no cost
F – Access to Space/ Provision	Amber Partially Met	Some good work in place but traffic / transport remains a deterrent to play
G – Securing & Developing the Play Workforce	Green Fully Met	Increasing recognition of the wider play workforce, including families
H – Community Engagement & Participation	Green Fully Met	Swansea’s approach to Children’s Rights is key to this

1 – Play within relevant policy & implementation agenda	Green Fully Met	Excellent examples of embedding play into policy and practice of teams and services
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3.5 **Impact of the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant (AWPOG)** – The report highlighted the impact of year end funding from Welsh Government (WG) in each of the last 3 years that has allowed for gaps identified in the assessment to be filled. It is recognised that the picture would be very different without this.

3.6 **Need to Develop Strategically** – Given the focus on sufficiency, the assessment found that the biggest strides had been made in addressing how much, rather than why and this is why it is recommended to update Swansea’s Play Strategy to give direction and context to the work.

3.7 **‘The Lost Boys’** - One of the most telling realisations during the undertaking of the assessment was that in many areas, 2018 saw a major impact on children getting out to play. There were no boys, attending sessions. There has long been a concern over how video games were detracting from play, but 2018 was the year it had most effect in Swansea.

Significantly, the arrival of the latest popular video game saw many boys in particular no longer leaving their bedrooms.

3.8 **Play within the Third Sector** - Given that Swansea’s Third Sector Play Association, Play Right, closed in March 2016, at the time of the last assessment, after 40 years representing play outside of the local authority, it is interesting to consider the impact.

3.9 **Continuing to Reclaim Play** The 2016 Assessment talked quite proudly of how play was being ‘reclaimed’ and the impact this had in a sustainable way due to incorporating play’s value into existing policy and procedure rather than providing compensatory play – at cost. This must continue to be a priority.

3.10 **Play’s Value Recognised** – Increasingly play is being seen as an essential element to include in the development of policy and practice. Historically, play was an after-thought or not considered relevant but significant examples of collaborative work with colleagues in Planning, Highways, Housing, Cultural Services among others show the mutual benefit of valuing play within the development of services.

4.0 **Conclusion**

4.1 The 2019 Play Sufficiency Assessment presents a relatively positive picture of how play is valued and provided for within Swansea.

4.2 The 1 ‘red’ area which Swansea does not achieve is in extending its insurance cover to support community projects. Additionally, other areas such as opening school grounds for play are proving problematic to develop due to implications of public accessing schools.

- 4.3 With increased pressure on resources and funding, if anything play's impact has increased over the past 3 years and that is predominantly due to the work undertaken to sell the message of play to internal and external colleagues so that its impact is felt across a range of services.
- 4.4 This and the efforts to 'reclaim play' rather than focus on, often costly, compensatory play opportunities, makes play within Swansea a good example of a sustainable and impactful approach.

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 The public summary will be produced following approval of the Assessment.
- 5.2 The implementation action plan (See pages 179-190 of Toolkit) will be overseen by the Childcare & Play Sufficiency Manager, reporting to the CYP Board via Swansea's Play Network, a cross-sector group comprised of those involved in play across Swansea.
- 5.3 It is intended that the majority of actions will be implemented by either the Childcare & Play Sufficiency Manager or the Play Development Officer, who now sit within the Vulnerable Learner Service in the Education Department, alongside internal and external colleagues.

6.0 Equality and Engagement Implications

- 6.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above.

- 6.2 The Play Sufficiency Assessment and associated All Wales Play Opportunities Grant was previously subject to a full EIA and the assessment itself is based around indicators reflecting each of the protected characteristics.
- 6.3 Additionally, access and inclusion within play is an area that Swansea has long given due regard to, with previous assessments bringing about significant developments such as work on 'gender stereotyping of toys' and the introduction of Swansea's first wheelchair swing in Victoria Park in 2017.

- 6.4 The Play Sufficiency Assessment included focus group work with both the Play Access Group (addressing access to play for those who are disabled or have additional needs) and the BAME Family & Play workstream.
- 6.5 The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which Council has embedded into the Authority's Policy Framework, particularly Article 31 – the Right to Play, sits at the heart of the Play Sufficiency Assessment and consultation and engagement with children and young people was extensive over the 6 month period (see consultation results, pages 7-14 of appendix).
- 6.6 All consultation and engagement for the assessment allowed for responses and engagement through the medium of Welsh, while Menter Iaith Abertawe were engaged in the assessment to ensure due regard to play in the Welsh language.
- 6.7 The public summary of the Play Sufficiency Assessment will be produced in plain language to support accessibility by children & young people, those with English as a second language as well as adults with learning disabilities, in response to the presentation by Swansea People First at the Equalities Representatives Meeting earlier this year.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The Play Sufficiency Assessment includes an action plan for securing sufficiency (see appendix), although these are predominantly based on 'officer time' actions – noting point 4.3 which identifies the sustainable approach to developing and advocating for play.
- 7.2 Welsh Govt. has traditionally provided the end of year All Wales Play Opportunities Grant to support play sufficiency. Between 2017 and 2019 this brought an additional £343,000 (2017 - £106,138, 2018 - £90,000, 2019 - £147,000) into the local authority.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 There is a legal duty on the local authority to undertake the assessment and release the findings via hard copy and on the council website.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices: Appendix A - 2019 Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit
Appendix B – Play Sufficiency EIA