



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**21<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2019**

#### **PLAY SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT 2019-20**

#### **REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH COUNCILLOR CHRISTINA LEYSHON, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

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#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To gain approval from Cabinet for the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) and action plan to be submitted to the Welsh Government by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, as per statutory obligation placed upon the Council in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 and the Play Sufficiency Assessment (Wales) Regulations 2012.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the PSA for 2019-20 and the supporting action plan.
- 2.2 Endorse the PSA and action plan and agree for it to be submitted to Welsh Government

#### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The preparation of the Play Sufficiency Audit is a statutory duty of the Council. As well as establishing a baseline of provision, the Play Sufficiency Assessment enables the following:
- Identification of gaps in information, provision, service delivery and policy implementation
  - Support the establishment of evidence to give an indication of distance travelled in relation to play sufficiency
  - Highlight potential ways of addressing issues relating to partnership working
  - The input and involvement of all partners increasing levels of knowledge and understanding

- A monitoring system which will involve and improve communication between professionals
  - The identification of good practice examples
  - Increased levels of partnerships in assessing sufficient play opportunities
  - The identification of actions for the Securing Play Sufficiency Action Plan which accompanies the Play Sufficiency Assessment
- 3.2 Submission of the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) and action plan to the Welsh Government by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 has been endorsed by the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most universally recognised human rights treaty and recognises that every child has the right to play. This right has been recognised and promoted for many years in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 4.2 Our vision is that all children and young people should be able to: have fun; enjoy their childhood and youth; pursue learning; and develop life skills through participating in a range of high quality play, leisure, sporting and cultural opportunities, thus ensuring we meet the interest and needs of each individual child or young person. The Council continues to work collaboratively with partners from across all departments of the Council, as well as third sector and national organisations. Wherever possible we endeavour to ensure that Welsh medium play opportunities are given the same priority as English medium provision.
- 4.3 2018/19 is the fourth year of the investment programme into children's play areas. There are more than 200 children's play areas in Rhondda Cynon Taf, many of which were in need of a complete refurbishment. The programme has been informed by annual independent play area condition surveys, which ensures that investment is targeted at the most deserving facilities. As well as modernising play equipment, improvements have also been made to increase accessibility in and around play areas, with considerable focus on enhancing the play experience that these valuable community assets offer.
- 4.4 To date more than £3.2 million has been invested, and 97 of the Council's 215 play areas upgraded. Not only is there a visual difference to how these play facilities look, but it is evident that the play areas are being used differently. It is now not uncommon to see facilities being used as a destination for families to meet and socialise together, and in some cases, host local events which have included Teddy Bears Picnics and community barbecues.

- 4.5 Under the statutory obligation placed upon the Council in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 and the Play Sufficiency Assessment (Wales) Regulations 2012, a full Play Sufficiency Assessment must be completed every three years.
- 4.6 This 2019 PSA has been compiled over the last 6 months and has involved a range of partner services that make up the PSA Working Group, including Early Years and Family Support, Resilient Families Service, the Youth Engagement and Participation Service, Sport, Leisure, Parks, Transport, Planning, Education, Disabled Children's Team, Family Information Service, the third sector and Officers working on Community Zone developments in RCT.

## **5. KEY FINDINGS OF THE 2019 PLAY SUFFICIENCY AUDIT**

- 5.1 Completion of the Play Sufficiency Audit involves an evidence based self-assessment of the local authority's position in relation to a set of criteria within each of the nine sections or 'matters'. Full details of each of the "matters" and subsequent criteria can be found in Appendix 1 of this report. For each criteria the PSA requires the Council to RAG its progress using the following definition:

Green – criteria fully met  
Amber – criteria partially met  
Red – criteria not met

- 5.2 The table below offers an overview of the RAG status of each of the matters within the 2019 PSA:

**Matter A – Population**

**Matter B – Providing for diverse needs**

**Matter C – Space available for children to play: Open space and Outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces**

**Matter D – Supervised provision**

**Matter E – Changes for play**

**Matter F – Access to space/provision**

**Matter G – Securing and developing the play workforce**

**Matter H – Community Engagement and Participation**

**Matter I - Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas**

- 5.3 The findings of the PSA will inform the Action Plan for 2019-20 to ensure that work undertaken next year addresses the shortfalls in provision identified by the 2019 PSA. Our key priority areas for 2019-20 are to improve the gathering and use of data to target play opportunities; to review the use of access audits; to develop a quality assurance framework; and to promote play opportunities across the County Borough. The full Action Plan can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 An Equality and Diversity Assessment has not been carried out in connection with the recommendation set out in this report as the contents and actions do not require a policy or service change, resulting in no reasonably foreseeable differential impacts.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 As part of the 2019 PSA, the Council were required to carry out a consultation exercise with a range of children and young people. Using the questions in the PSA toolkit, provided by the Welsh Government, an on-line questionnaire was developed and utilised to gather the views of children and young people. A total of 504 children and young people completed the questionnaire from 24 schools and 12 play schemes, running over October half-term. The sample of schools were chosen as representative of primary and secondary schools across RCT and included Welsh medium schools and special schools. Private sector businesses, such as after school clubs, childminders and education providers also contributed to the consultation and workforce development elements of the PSA. The full report can be found in the main body of the PSA, and at Appendix 3a and 3b of this report.

- 7.2 Children and young people said they preferred to play and hang out in their school yard or play areas best, with 95% of children saying they felt safe most if not all of the time. 51% of children said that they access play spaces by walking or cycling on their own. 75% of children said that they play with their friends with 15% saying they play with siblings. When asked about what they thought were the good things about playing and hanging out in their area, children said things like:

- Quiet
- Nice park
- You can do whatever you want
- Lots of grass
- Lots of stuff there
- Always food nearby
- Safe to run around and do what we like to do
- It's fun
- Fun and lots of room to play
- Nice and big

- That we get to play gymnastics and do cartwheels.

7.3 Among the list of things children identified as not good in their area when playing and hanging out were:

- Dog mess
- Dangerous
- Strangers
- Stones and litter
- Graffiti and litter
- Lots of cars
- Rusty and dirty
- Mostly concrete
- People can be too aggressive and moody against us children

7.4 79% of children stated that they preferred to speak English with a number of other languages being identified, such as Welsh, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Polish. 87% of children identified as not having a disability.

7.5 In addition to the 504 responses from children and young people, 164 adult responses were also received as part of this consultation. Adult respondents identified that children go out to play or hang out with their friends most days, preferring to play locally than go elsewhere, using play areas with swings or staying in the back garden. Parents/carers who identified that they go further afield to access play areas said they do so because facilities are better elsewhere or facilities are not suitable for their child due to not being age appropriate, poorly maintained, vandalised or not appropriate to meet the needs of children with disabilities. The dark was identified as the main reason children do not go out to play. Having more attractive places was identified as the main method of helping children to play outside and hang out more often.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

8.1 The PSA is not a business case, however, the majority of actions noted in the Assessment where standards fall below green (i.e. amber and red) require funding to implement improvements. This funding will be sought from both the Children and Communities Grant and Council Core funding for Play as well as any other monies that may become available during the financial year.

8.2 The creation of the new Children and Communities Grant will provide far more flexibility than the Council has previously had to resource current provision and future initiatives to meet identified gaps. Should Welsh Government allocate a discreet play grant to the Council during the year, the PSA action plan will be key to its allocation and spend.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 In 2012, the Welsh Government placed a duty on all local authorities to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities for children in their areas. The first Play Sufficiency Assessments and Play Action Plans were submitted to Welsh Government in March 2013.
- 9.2 In 2014, the Welsh Government commenced the second part of the duty on local authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities, having regard to their assessments. This put into effect the complete Section 11, Play Opportunities of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

## **10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

- 10.1 The PSA will contribute to the Council's corporate priorities:
- Economy – building a strong economy through resilient children able to manage risk and develop innovative solutions to challenges
  - People – promoting independence through social interactions with other children and self-management in play situations, such as team games
  - Place – creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work and where children are encouraged to play safely and respectfully
- 10.2 The PSA has been developed in full consideration of the sustainable development principles. The proposal will also support the Council to contribute to all of the seven well-being goals:-
- **A prosperous Wales:** children who learn to manage risks and socialise with others are more prepared for the demands of functioning in the adult world.
  - **A resilient Wales:** children who play learn to manage risks and recover from accidents in safe, supported environments that challenge them and allow them to grow, giving them the tools to build resilience throughout life.
  - **A healthier Wales:** children who play outside benefit from exercise and the wellbeing effects of being closer to nature.
  - **A more equal Wales:** children who play together learn to socialise and accept other children with different skills and abilities, making them tolerant, helpful and inclusive children, young people and adults.
  - **A Wales of cohesive Communities:** children who play with others benefit from understanding about turn taking and cooperation, preparing them for adult interactions, team working and leadership roles.

- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language:** children who are given the freedom to play in the language of their choice learn to be tolerant and accepting, preparing them for a multi-racial, globalised adult world.
- **A globally responsible Wales:** children who have access to play equipment and furnished with the skills and techniques to use it properly, preparing them for an adult world of finite resources.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 This report has provided Members with details of the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) for 2019-20 and the supporting Action Plan for their consideration and approval to be submitted to Welsh Government.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**  
**AS AMENDED BY**  
**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**  
**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**21ST MARCH 2019**

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MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**Background Papers**

Children and Young People Scrutiny – 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019

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