

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/22

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

16th FEBRUARY 2022

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR,
COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Agenda Item No:
Play Sufficiency Assessment 2022 - 2025

Author: Jessica Allen, Children and Young People's Service Manager

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To gain approval from Scrutiny Committee members for the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) and action plan to be submitted to the Welsh Government by 30th June 2022, 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 the Scrutiny Members:

- 2.1 Consider the PSA for 2022 - 25 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.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most universally recognised human rights treaty, 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 There are more than 200 children’s play areas in Rhondda Cynon Taf, which are incorporated into a rolling programme of investment to ensure they remain fit for purpose. The programme is 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 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.
- 4.5 This 2022 PSA has been compiled over the last 6 months and has involved a range of partner services that make up the PSA Working Group, led by the Play Development Team and involving the 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 Resilience Hub and Neighbourhood Network developments in RCT.

5. KEY FINDINGS OF THE 2022 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’, as identified by Welsh Government. Full details of each of the “matters” and subsequent criteria

can be found in Appendix A of this report, together with subsequent action plan for improvement. For each criterion of the nine 'matters', 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 areas considered as part of the 2022 PSA include:

- 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 have informed the action plan for 2022-25 to ensure that work undertaken next year addresses the shortfalls in provision identified by the 2022 PSA. Our key priority areas for 2022-25 are to improve the gathering and use of data to target play opportunities; Increase the amount of Welsh medium play provision; to roll out WG's quality assurance framework; and to promote play opportunities across the county borough via online platforms. The full action plan can be found as part of report, following the assessment.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO ECONOMIC DUTY

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 2022 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 588 children and young people completed the questionnaire from 18 schools and 7 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 workforce

development elements of the PSA. The full report can be found in the main body of the PSA, and at Appendix B of this report.

- 7.2 Most children and young people (83% of respondents) said they preferred to play and hang out in their own home or at a friend house, which is significant change to when the consultation was conducted in 2019; a sign of changing habits since the pandemic. The next most popular responses were in a designated play area (69%), in the school playground (64%), and in the streets around their house (50%).
- 7.3 88% of the children and young people said that always or usually feel safe playing in their chosen location, a reduction from 95% in 2019. When asked how adults react to them in the play locations, 87% said they felt the 'grown ups' were great with them or at least ok with them playing in that location, but almost 14% stated that the 'grown ups' seemed to be angry or grumpy about them playing there.
- 7.4 42% of children and young people said that the opportunities for playing or hanging out were excellent and could not be improved, but 7% stated that the facilities were 'not good' or 'rubbish' and needed to be made much better.
- 7.5 In addition to the consultation with children and young people, a full consultation has been undertaken with the play providers to determine if they feel equipped to provide play opportunities and meet children's emerging support needs as a result of the pandemic. These results have been analysed and the results can be found in Appendix C together with a proposed timetable of training and professional development courses to further improve their play skills to deliver meaningful play experience for children and young people in RCT, Appendix D.

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, the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant, the Playworks Grant and the Council's core funding for Play as well as any other monies that may become available during the financial year.
- 8.2 The Children and Communities Grant will continue to provide flexibility than to sustain current provision and resource future initiatives to meet identified gaps. Should Welsh Government allocate discreet play grants 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 COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN AND/OR OTHER COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 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 2022-25 and the supporting action plan for their consideration and approval to be submitted to Welsh Government.