

Way of Life: how to develop links with children's play



Through the Healthy Families Initiative, BIG will help to promote healthy and active lifestyles among children under 12 years old by creating a joined up approach to children's play, healthy eating and physical activity. Play Wales has been contracted to help deliver the Child's Play programme in Wales.

Here, Play Wales defines play and playwork and offers support for ways that the Way of Life models can develop links with children's play where appropriate.

Play

Play Wales helped the Welsh Assembly Government to write its Play Policy (2002) which defines play as follows:

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.

Freely chosen means that children themselves choose when, how and what to play. As such it is not part of a set programme and does not have any steps that need to be completed.

Personally directed means children themselves decide the rules and roles they take within their play.

Intrinsically motivated means that play is undertaken for its own sake, and not performed for any reward, certificate or status.

Playwork

Children learn and develop through play – it is fundamental to their health and well-being. In today's society there are fewer and fewer opportunities to play independently of adults (see the definition of play). So in order that children develop healthily to their full potential we need to create opportunities and spaces where they can play freely and encounter a wide range of opportunities, where the adults involved understand the nature and importance of all aspects of children's play and work to support it.

Playworkers operate under the ethos of the Playwork Principles. The Playwork Principles can be viewed at

www.playwales.org.uk/page.asp?id=50

Way of Life

Healthy Places

Many areas in Wales have already identified the need to reclaim space in local communities for children to play. Play officers/Associations are involved in identifying locations which are suitable for this purpose. This model could complement some of those local projects.

Many local authority areas organise Playday events to celebrate National Playday (a UK wide event) held every August. These events often bring together a range of organisations/initiatives and often provide space for children to play rather than take part in structured activity (physical or otherwise).

Play opportunities are facilitated by local play development workers/associations. Playworkers would provide an environment, space and materials/loose parts for children to explore.

Healthy Home Tutors

We recommend that Play Officers/Associations are involved in Healthy Home Tutor induction to enable them to provide information for parents regarding issues impacting on children at play, e.g dirt is good and accidents happen.

There is a mechanism for regular communication between the Healthy Home Tutor scheme and local play development projects in order that Healthy Home Tutors can provide parents with up to date information regarding community based play provision.

Healthy Home Tutors work with parents to support them to gain confidence to support their children to access local projects and spaces for play.

Play Wales can provide lead applicants with information regarding local play development officers and play associations.

Contact us at:

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