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## Planning for Children's Play in Wales

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Wales, as the first country in the world to legislate for children's play, provides a framework for planners and urban designers to engage children and young people (CYP) meaningfully in planning and design of their places. The [Children & Families \(Wales\) Measure 2010](#) and the [Rights of Children & Young Persons \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#) make local authorities legally responsible for assessing and securing sufficient play opportunities for children. Participation of CYP in decisions affecting them, complying with the Welsh Government's [Children and Young People's Participation Standards](#) is explicitly mentioned in the statutory guidance notes 'Wales a play friendly country' published in 2014. However, a gap is persistently felt between the policy and implementation due to the absence of a robust link between current planning practice and the Play Sufficiency Assessment process.

[Planning Policy Wales](#) puts an emphasis on good design and making provisions to meet the needs of all, including children. Planning Policy Wales also includes some more specific reference to 'active and social streets and the opportunity in new development to promote opportunities to play in streets.' There is however no specific mention of children's participation, either in design, policy or implementation. To what extent play sufficiency assessment can inform the Local Authorities' Play Action Plans and subsequently the Local Development Plan largely depends on where in the local authority the Play Sufficiency Assessment team is situated. Where the play sufficiency assessment is within the responsibilities of the LDP team, or the Parks and Recreation team, the assessment is likely to have more leverage in informing the planning decisions of neighbourhoods and parks.

We, Cardiff University academics, worked with CYP in different communities of Cardiff – Grangetown, Butetown and Llanishen - in collaboration with Child Friendly Cardiff team of Cardiff Council, to create a [children and young people's plan for their neighbourhood](#). We produced a [toolkit](#) that can enable planners, designers, teachers and youth workers to engage CYP in conversations about their local area . Planners and designers can utilise the bespoke set of tools provided to co-design a place plan with CYP for any community, which has the potential to inform both the Play Action Plan and the Local Development Plan.



*The children of a Primary School in Cardiff were working on a model for their local park, which they identified as lacking age-appropriate play features (Credit project team)*

Through correspondence with different actors within and beyond the local authority, during our research we found out that a collaboration gap exists among different bodies working to promote children’s rights and participation. The Child Friendly Cardiff team has been the bridge for our engagement work with children and young people; they brought teams together to make sure the voices of children and young people are integrated in the work by LDP team and the Parks and Recreation team.

We also found out that CYP themselves are largely unaware of how they can share their opinions on matters affecting them as many children in our activities shared, *‘This is the first time I have been asked about my views on my neighbourhood’*. The Child Friendly Cardiff team has been especially important in raising awareness of children’s rights, promoting consideration of children across the spectrum of the local authority’s activities, and helping to cut across silos in relevant policy areas.

Going forward several lessons can be learned

- 1) Involvement of planners, designers and landscape architects in delivery of the ‘play sufficiency duty’ where children’s voices are taken into account to inform design and planning of neighbourhoods, parks and public spaces
- 2) Specific mention of children’s participation in Planning Policy Wales and National Development Framework and The National Plan 2040.
- 3) Making information available and accessible on how CYP can engage in the process of planning for play.
- 4) The significance of agencies and organisations advocating for children’s rights, including rights to play