

Carmarthenshire County Council: Play Sufficiency Assessment 2022 – 2025

Summary Document



Forward

Carmarthenshire County Council recognises and celebrates a child's right to play and the importance of play in the lives of children and young people.

We are committed to providing every child with opportunities to play to help children have fun and live happy, healthy lives. Working in partnership we are committed to making sure that every child and young person living in Carmarthenshire has access to supervised and unsupervised play that challenges them, inspires them, encourages them to be creative and helps them learn and grow.

Carmarthenshire County Council recognises that play is an essential part of the lives of children, young people, and families. Quality play means creating places where children can be free to choose what they want to do as well how and why they want to do it. To quote Play Wales: "play is an incredible resource for children's emotional health¹" and "playing outdoors contributes towards agility, balance, creativity, social cooperation and concentration."² As we move past the Pandemic it is important that we acknowledge the role of play in children's recovery and future.

The Local Authority and its partners including Town and Community Council, Schools, the Third Sector, Childcare and Play Settings make the decisions about how, where and when children can access play. We have a duty to consider the play needs of children and young people living in Carmarthenshire to make sure they can access the essential experiences, opportunities and benefits of play which will enhance their learning, health, wellbeing, and social skills.

This report is an accessible summary document of the findings of the Play Sufficiency Assessment 2022 and outlines:

- Why Play Is Important
- Information Regarding the Statutory Duty
- The approach to undertaking the Play Sufficiency Assessment
- The Key Findings
- Actions for the Future

Why Play Is Important

The role of play and the opportunity to hang out with friends is fundamental, foundational, and far reaching in a child's life. *"Play is crucial to children's physical, mental, social and emotional health and well-being, and therefore to families and their communities as a whole."³*

When we asked children, young people and families in Carmarthenshire about why play is important they told us:

"Activity sessions like this are good because it can give children access to things that some people might think are the 'norm'. Reading stories and singing isn't the 'norm' for every child at home, the way it is for other children."

"I love playing with my friends, it makes me happy."

"Hanging out with my friends is a really important part of my life, because its fun and we should be having fun."

"Playing with diverse groups of children keeps them open minded. If they see another child in a wheelchair and they play with them, it can help them learn to be respectful of people."

"Play is important because the children missed out on it during COVID."

Play has a positive effect on children's physical health and well-being *"it is clear that playing has a positive impact on multiple health outcomes including increased physical activity, reducing childhood obesity, improving well-being in children and helping develop resilience."*

Why Play Is Important

Research by Mind Cymru reported that three quarters of young people (74% of those aged 13-24) said that their mental health has worsened during the period of lockdown restrictions from early April to mid-May⁴ 2022. Play helps children and young people's mental health, it *"helps children recognise and express their emotions and develop positive relationships with peers and family members. it helps them to deal with anxiety and boredom and build their ability to concentrate and focus on what's important to them."*⁵ Play has also been shown to help children and young people develop their sense of self, make friendships and build social skills.

Children learn through play, they develop essential skills through play "no matter where they live, or what kinds of resources they have, children share the same natural instinct to explore the world. The skills they hone by playing, like creativity and flexible thinking, set them up for a lifelong love of learning."⁶ Evidence shows that role of play in learning is universal, a report by Lego Foundation, Learning Through Play: Increasing, Impact, Reducing Inequality gathered evidence from early childhood programmes in 18 countries and shows *"how important the presence of play is in efforts to reduce inequality in learning and close achievement gaps in children from different socio-economic backgrounds."*⁷

The impact of play is far reaching for children, their families, and their communities. For example, *"global studies have found that investment in early childhood development reduces crime rates and increases future wage-earning potential, thus increasing government revenue. UNICEF reports that a simulation on increasing pre-school enrolment in 73 countries found benefits in terms of higher future wages of US\$ 6.4 to*

*US\$ 17.6 per dollar invested. The simulation indicated potential long-term benefits which range from US\$ 11 to US\$ 34 billion."*⁸

It is important to acknowledge that the pandemic has impacted on children and young people's relationship to play *"in ways that are both profound and somewhat contradictory. At one level, there were widespread concerns about a lost period of adolescence, missed education, and potential scarring effects for future education and work. Alongside this, however, young people spoke of having made unexpected positive changes to their lives. Indeed, many used the time afforded to them by the pandemic as an opportunity to invest in their selfcare, wellbeing, and their relationships."*⁹ The Play Safety Forum (including Play Wales, Play England, Play Scotland and Play Northern Ireland) concluded that *"little consideration appears to have been given to children's welfare outside of the impact on education. Play, as has often been the case, has been forgotten or side-lined, yet there is copious scientific evidence of its importance for development"*¹⁰.

We also shouldn't lose sight that play and hanging out friends is fun. That *"play involves children doing as they wish in their own time and in their own way. It has the key characteristics of fun, uncertainty, challenge flexibility and non-productivity"*¹¹.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment

The Welsh Government has an aspiration to create a play friendly Wales, providing excellent opportunities for our children to play. In order for this aspiration to become a reality, collaborative working between Local Authorities and a range of partners and stakeholders is required. The Welsh Government's Children and Families Measure includes a section on "Play Opportunities" which is the basis for the Play Sufficiency Assessment. Local Authorities, including Carmarthenshire County Council, are required to fulfill the following actions:

1. A Local Authority must assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area for children and young people in accordance with the regulations.
2. Secure sufficient play opportunities for children and young people, so far as reasonably practical.
3. Publish information about play opportunities within its area for children and young people.
4. Keep the information published up to date.

Whilst carrying out these duties, a Local Authority must consider the needs of:

- a. Children and young people who are disabled
- b. Children and young people of different ages

To shape and inform the assessment there is a requirement to consult:

- Children,
- Parents,

- Individuals and organisations with an interest in play, as the local authority considers appropriate.

Play Sufficiency Assessments are completed on a 3-year cycle, Carmarthenshire County Council submitted their first Play Sufficiency Assessment to Welsh Government in March 2013 with subsequent assessment being submitted in March 2016 and 2019. This current assessment will cover the period from 2022 – 2025. To support consistency of approach across Wales a toolkit has been made available, alongside the "Wales – A Play Friendly Country: Statutory Guidance." These documents set out how Local Authorities should conduct the assessments and the 9 matters that need to be considered:

- Matter A: Population
- Matter B: Providing for Diverse Needs
- Matter C: Space available for children to play
- Matter D: Supervised provision
- Matter E: Charges for play provision
- 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

Methodology

As outlined in section 2.0 there is clear statutory framework about how to approach the assessment. This section of the report outlines our approach to undertaking this assessment.

Baseline Assessment: The baseline review is the commencement of the Play Sufficiency Assessment and is critical to ensuring the process is based on a comprehensive understanding of existing provision and existing and future need. This process commenced with a review of the previous Play Sufficiency Assessments in order to identify gaps in data and develop a plan for obtaining the required data from a range of sources, the implementation of this data collation and review process. In addition, the baseline review process was used to research and identify all relevant national, regional and local policies and strategies which will form the basis of the policy review to support Matter I: play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas.

Stakeholder Engagement: A programme of stakeholder engagement including workshops, meetings and interviews took place throughout the lifetime of the assessment. This supported a collaborative process and the sharing of information and ideas. This phase commenced with a workshop that brought all stakeholders together to launch the process and collaborate on a shared vision for play and the provision of play in Carmarthenshire.

Community Engagement: We delivered a programme of community engagement that ensured the voice of children, young people, parents and carers and the community were embedded in and influenced the Play Sufficiency Assessment and action plan. This programme used a diverse range

of approaches including focus groups, community events, questionnaires, online activities, and social media.

Needs Assessment: An identification and audit of all play provision (including indoor and outdoor space) enabled an evaluation of provision in terms of quantity, accessibility, quality, and value. This process, alongside population data was used to undertake a needs assessment to ascertain the requirements for play within the area and define a vision and criteria for play within Carmarthenshire which will form the basis for the Play Assessment and Recommendations.

Gap Analysis: Using the information gathered throughout the assessment a gap analysis was undertaken to explore a range of gaps including:

- Geographical Gaps - Where a geographical area has a general shortage of supply
- Diverse Needs Gaps - Where there is a shortage of suitable places for disabled children, or children with other specific needs or requirements, including those from faiths or community groups
- Access Gaps - Where there is a shortage of accessible play provision
- Age Gaps - Where there is a shortage of play provision suitable to the needs and requirements of a certain age group (for example, school-aged children up to 18 years, if they are disabled)
- Type Gaps - Where there is a shortage in the type of play for which children, young people and parents may be expressing a preference

Methodology

- Workforce Gaps - Where there are gaps / shortages in the play workforce
- Policy Gaps - What policies to support and develop play are missing
- The COVID 19 Gap - Gaps in provision associated with the pandemic.

In addition we undertook a SOAR (strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results) analysis of each matter (APPENDIX D). This has enabled us to explore both the current situation (strengths and aspirations) of each matter to identify gaps in provision. As well as plan for the future (aspirations and results) to inform the action plan.

There matter based SOAR analyses can be found in APPENDIX F.

Action Plan Workshop: The success of the Play Sufficiency Assessment process and the ultimate implementation and delivery of the Action Plan will be dependent on a range of partners and stakeholder working together. The action plan workshop shared the results of the Play Sufficiency Assessment process and resulting gap analysis and identified key actions for the future.

What Families Told Us

Between October 2021 and February 2022 1,028 individuals and organisations completed one of our Play Sufficiency Assessment Surveys. In addition, we spoke to 104 local people including children, young people, parents and carers through a programme of focus groups and attending events and activities including play schemes, play groups and youth clubs.

29%

Can't play where they want to play because...

— 'it isn't safe'

— 'my parent/carer won't let me'



CHILDRENS SURVEY

294 primary school children completed our survey and they told us...

45%

— say that they feel safe when playing or hanging out with friends

Children who completed the survey said:

60%

Play outside/hang out with friends most days

59%

Have enough time to play

20%

Have loads of time to play

Where children play:

72%

Their house or a friend's house

46%

play areas with swings and/or play equipment

28%

Their garden or a friend's garden

49%

of children say they are allowed to play out on their own

81%

said they are allowed to play out with their friends

60%

of children rely on an adult with a car to take them to play

81%

rely on an adult with a car to get them to school

What are grown-ups like when you are playing or hanging out?'

“
58%

Most adults are great and happy with children playing out”



“
3%

Most adults are grumpy and hate children playing out”



46%

said that play opportunities in their community are 'great and couldn't be made much better'



4%

said that play opportunities in their community are 'rubbish.'

97%

of children who go to school play in the school yard

What children say prevent them from hanging out with their friends at school:



84%

Bad weather



31%

Too much schoolwork



23%

of respondents said that COVID-19 hadn't impacted on their ability to play and hang out with friends



35%

said it had had some impact

21%
reported
that...



**'I cannot
or hardly
do what I
like.'**



YOUNG PEOPLE'S SURVEY

270 secondary
school children
completed our
survey and they
told us...

84%

of young
people hang
out with
friends in
the school
yard.

The responses show that the amount of time
children spend playing or hanging out with
friends **decreases over time.**



44%

of young people hang out with
friends most days compared to
60% of children

Most popular
activities for
this age group:

64%
Being with and
talking to friends



38%
Going to
the cinema



34%
Exploring
outside



How this group feel
when hanging out
with friends:

86%
Happy

43%
Excited

42%
Free

40%
Active

Where this group
hangs out:

37%
Local
field



29%
Their
home



29%
The
beach



33%
Somewhere
else/other

What young people
say **prevent them**
from hanging out with
their friends at school:



59%
Bad
weather



32%
Too much
schoolwork



22%
No place to
play/hang out

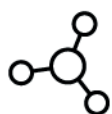
57% of young people say
there aren't places they need
or want to hang out with
friends in their community

The three most
significant
barriers to
hanging out:

38%
Nothing to
do there

38%
COVID-19
pandemic

38%
It's too dark
outside



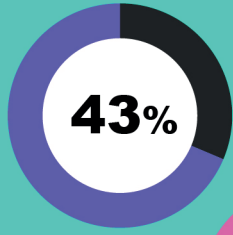
54 percentage

of young people said **COVID-19 had
affected how they play & hang out.**

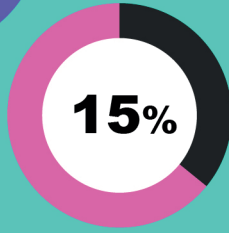
62% want to hang out more, to do this young people want 'transport to help them get there' (**59%**), 'ask dog owners to pick up their dog mess' (**22%**) and 'help my parents understand that it's okay to hang out.'

FAMILY PLAY SURVEY

423 parents and carers completed our survey and they told us...



of parents and carers want their children to play and hang out **more**



of parents and carers say their children have more than enough play time

Parents and carers told us that their families enjoy playing in...



68%
A play area



57%
Their/Friend's Garden



54%
Their/Friend's House

34%

told us their children are not allowed way from home

34%

said their children can play in 'our garden or in sight of our home'

36%

admitted that they often worry and find it difficult to let their children play out

When it comes to play parents and carers are concerned about:

49%

Road Traffic

35%

Litter/ Dog mess

29%

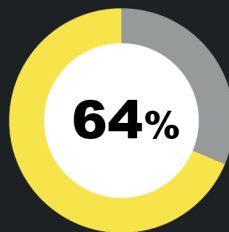
Adults

28%

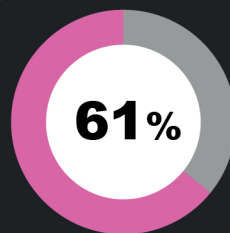
The Pandemic

56%

think that there are not enough places for children and young people to play and hang out in their community



reported that their children and families are playing less



value play more because of the pandemic

COUNCIL SURVEY

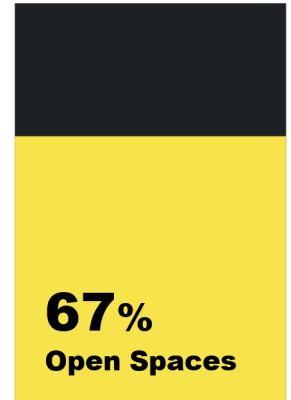
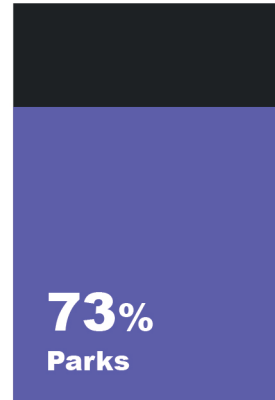
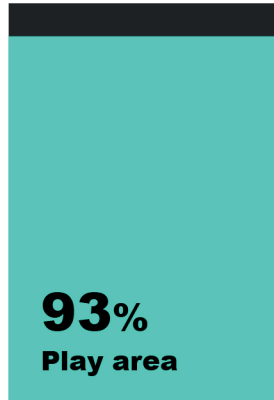
15 Town and Community Council's completed our survey and they told us...



Most popular play provision available in the community:

50% estimate that the use of outdoor space has increased due to the pandemic

Use of indoor space decreased by 27%



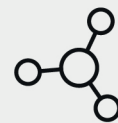
The top three barriers to play:



62%
Road Traffic



54%
Litter/
Dog mess



32%
The
Pandemic

Town and Community Councils consider the biggest gap in provision in their community to be:

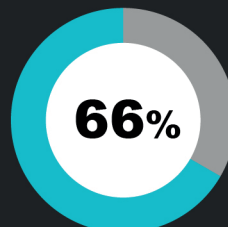
90% Places for young people to spend time and hang out

60% Play provision for pre-school children

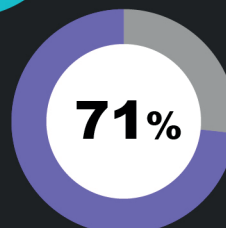
80% Inclusive / recreation space for children with disabilities and / or additional needs

87%

of Town and Community Council's said they would describe the provision of play facilities for children & young people as a priority.



Say they engage local children, young people and families when making decisions about play.



say that they are currently planning play related projects.

SCHOOLS PLAY SURVEY

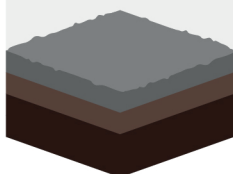
The school survey was completed by 27 primary schools and 1 secondary school and they told us...



All schools which participated in the engagement reported having places available to play; the most popular types of space to play in schools are:

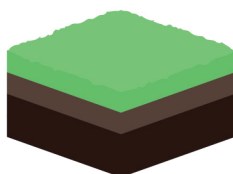
100%

Hard surface



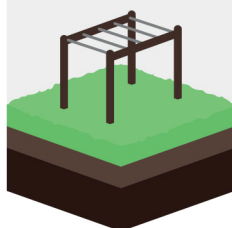
46%

Grass area



43%

Climbing equipment



55%

of schools say they have places within their campus which could be used for play but are not suitable due to reasons such as; **Poor drainage, potholes and/or not enough staff to supervise a larger area.**

69%

of schools promote play with their available space

7%

have a play policy

28%

have a long-term plan in place for protecting and enhancing play

24%

of schools have plans in place to obtain a play qualification for a member/s of their team

3%

of schools have a member of staff with a play qualification

14%

have an appointed member of staff to lead on play

All the schools that took part in the survey said they,



deliver lessons outdoors using spaces including outdoor classrooms, school yards and forest areas.”

None of the schools that took part in the survey allow children and young people to access the school grounds out of hours. The major barriers are health and safety and risk of damage to facilities. One school reported that most of their pupils live too far away to use the school.

Over **50%**

of schools **do allow supervised access for clubs and groups.**

What Stakeholders Told Us

There are a wealth of partners and stakeholders that impact on and are affected by play. We engaged these partners through workshops, meetings, and site visits. Discussions were based around 9 matters that make up the Play Sufficiency Assessment. Emerging themes from these discussions include:

- **Funding:** There is a concern among stakeholders about the current approach to funding for play, which is driven by the Welsh Government. Short term funding and limited time frames for investment result in approaches to play investment that are reactive rather than strategic. There is also concern among stakeholders, specifically Town and Community Councils, about the cost of maintaining and sustaining capital investment.
- **Concerns About Safety:** Stakeholders have raised concerns about levels of anti-social behaviour including drinking and drug taking in places where children play, and young people hang out.
- **Underserved Areas and Communities:** An acknowledgement that there are underserved rural areas and that more work needs to be done to encourage seldom heard and hard to reach groups to participate in play.
- **Engaging and Empowering Communities:** Partners believe in an aspiration to engage and empower local people to shape decisions about play and potentially deliver play to address gaps in their communities.
- **Recruiting and Retaining Staff:** Partners in settings including childcare, youth work and play projects spoke of the

challenges of recruiting and retain staff. Barriers including low salaries, lack of job security resulting from short term funding and the challenge of finding bilingual staff. Those working in the sector spoke to feeling undervalued and frustrated.

Matter A: Population

6.1 About Matter A: Population

The Play Sufficiency Assessment process requires an understanding of the data available to inform decision making. It asks us to ensure we have information about the numbers of children in different categories which may affect their play requirements including disadvantage and deprivation.

6.2 What We Found Out

There is a wide variety of data that can be used to help us understand the demand for play provision across the County. On a basic level there is population information, that helps to understand the number of children living in Carmarthenshire.

Table 1: Mid-2020 Population Estimates by Age Group¹²

Age Group	Nº of Children
3 and under	7,233
4 - 7	8,147
8 - 12	11,241
13- 15	6,535
16 - 17	4,107
TOTAL	37,263

Population estimates can be broken down into ward and lower super output areas (LSOA) to understand and explore where young people are living in Carmarthenshire, an example of how data can be mapped is shown in figure 1 (APPENDIX A).

The 2021 census is a valuable source of data that can help us to understand more about the children and families in Carmarthenshire including:

- The make up of families in Carmarthenshire and the areas in which families are living.
- The types of homes families are living in.
- How many families have access to a car or vehicle.
- Families' health issues and needs.
- Levels of employment.
- Demographic data that can inform decision making including ethnicity.
- The language children and families speak.

Other sets of data that can help us understand more about families in Carmarthenshire include:

Matter A: Population

Education

Completed on annual basis the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) collates information on all students enrolled in schools across Carmarthenshire. It collates data that can help us understand the issues and challenges facing families including take up of free school meals, pupils with additional learning needs, the number of pupils who are taught in Welsh and / or speak Welsh and the number of pupils for whom Welsh or English is not their first language.

An example of how we can use PLASC data is show in figure 2 (APPENDIX B), which illustrates take up of free school meals (FSM) by schools across Carmarthenshire. This can help us understand where children from deprived families are accessing education and potentially accessing play provision. It can also help us consider need for provision such as Breakfast Clubs and Afterschool Clubs. Whilst FSM entitlement will be for all children across Wales, starting with the Foundation Phase in September 2022. The PLASC has a range of useful data sets which can help us understand for example the additional learning needs of children and the languages children speak.

In addition, the Local Authority's Elective Home Education (EHE) advisor retains data on the number of children currently in home education. The Council also retains data on the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Health

Health in Wales and Stat Wales hold data that can help us to understand the health needs of children, young people and families in Carmarthenshire. The Carmarthenshire Well-Being Assessment contains a wealth of information that can helps up make informed decisions about play.

Deprivation

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in Wales. The 2019 index used 47 indicators, across 8 domains to measure deprivation. Figure 3 (APPENDIX C) is an example of how this data can be used showing rates of deprivation across Carmarthenshire, the darker the blue the more deprived the area.

Within the WIMD are four key indicators related to children in their early years (under 7). Table 2 below gives a summary of this information on a county wide level. This data can also be used at LSOA Level.

Table 2: WIMD indicator deprivation rates and scores for young children for Carmarthenshire and Wales¹³

	Children aged 0 to 4 in income deprivation (%)	Low birth weight (%)	Children aged 4 to 5 who are obese (%)	Foundation phase average point score
Carmarthenshire	26	5.4	12.8	104
Wales	28	5.5	11.8	104

Matter A: Population

6.3 Actions for the Future

The Play Sufficiency Stakeholder Group includes the Council and a range of partners who impact on the provision of Play in Carmarthenshire. Within each Matter this group has identified actions for the future that will address gaps and sustain and enhance play provision for the benefit of children, young people and families. The recommended actions for Matter A: Population are:

ACTION:

- Data from a wide range of sources will be used to inform decision making, ensuring that the provision of play reflects needs and is located in accessible and appropriate areas.
- Collaborate with partners to collate and share data and information that can support meaningful understanding and decision making.

Matter B: Providing for Diverse Needs

7.1 About Matter B: Providing for Diverse Needs

Every child, young person and family should be able to play. It is important to acknowledge that a range of needs can make it more challenging for children and young people to access the play they want. This matter is about ensuring that when decisions about play are made these challenges are considered.

7.2 What We Found Out

When considering provision for diverse needs we took into account both the data available (see section 6.0) and what parents / carers, children and young people who have diverse needs told us.

Rural Communities

Mapping of play provision (both outdoor play spaces and indoor provision) has enabled us to understand what is available in rural communities.

From this mapping process, rural areas have less provision than urban areas, however they arguably have more outdoor spaces that are available for play such as open spaces and woodland. Indoor provision is limited and people from rural areas spoke of the impact of the loss of community infrastructure such as schools and community buildings on play. The Clwb Bach project has shown how local people can work to respond to the play needs in their community. The project responded to community concerns about local children not playing together, as a result of going to different schools, and provides activities and events including Forest School and messy play.

Matter B: Providing for Diverse Needs

Some of the things that families living in rural areas told us include:

"It's woeful there's nothing around for miles. When you do go to the play area there's no other families there because it's not just facilities that are sparse it's people too."

"I play at school with friends but at home on my own because we don't live near anybody."

"If you live in a rural area you live in a forgotten community. We have to drive to Lampeter just to go to a play area."

"When our school closed what brought local families together went with it. We're too spread out now, the kids go to other schools we're lucky to have Clwb Bach to bring us back together."

"There's a play area for little kids but nothing for us. We can hang out at each other's houses but that's about it. And you need a lift from mum or dad to do that."

Language

Across the County there are a range of supervised play opportunities in the Welsh Language including 39 Cylch Meithrin, 21 Cylch Ti a Fi and 3 Menter Iatih community organisations. In addition Cymraeg I Blant (Welsh Government project, managed by Mudiad Meithrin) offers a range of free groups and activities for parents and young children. Urdd offers opportunities and activities for children and young people to learn and socialise through the medium of Welsh. They offer cultural and sporting opportunities through the school, in community clubs and during school holidays. There is also the vibrant Young Farmers Clubs and Welsh Language sessions at youth club provision are available.

There are challenges facing the provision of play opportunities in Welsh, with a key one being the difficulty of recruiting Welsh Language speakers for playwork roles. We spoke to a number of parents and carers who access or would like to access play provision in the Welsh language some of the things they told us included:

Matter B: Providing for Diverse Needs

“It has got better there are more sports clubs that coach in Welsh, and for my younger one more things like rhyme time.”

“I can’t speak Welsh; I am trying to learn but I feel out of place in some of the Welsh groups. I preferred the ones with a few songs in Welsh, but they seem to have stopped in covid.”

“I think there is a lot in Welsh in Carmarthenshire, but you’re more likely to have to pay for play in Welsh there’s much less free stuff than there is in English.”

“Having a play session in Welsh helps my child to understand Welsh as the norm. So she’ll think of herself as bilingual I hope, rather than having a first and second language.”

Culture

As part of developing the Play Sufficiency Assessment process we spoke to the Gypsy Traveller Education Co-Ordinator, she explained that fixed play equipment is provided on site and that opportunities for play provision have been offered, for example the Play Bus, and declined. Take up of nursery and childcare provision is also very low within this community. Through the Gypsy Traveller Education Co-Ordinator, we asked if this community would like to engage with the Play Sufficiency Assessment, this offer was declined.

LGBTQA Children and Young People

To engage the LGBTQA community we visited the LGBTQ youth project to talk to young people about their experiences. They told us they prefer provision that is for them where they “get to by myself, don’t have to hide and worry about being judged.”

Young Carers

The Carmarthenshire Young Carers service provides support for children and young people with caring responsibilities.

Matter B: Providing for Diverse Needs

Disability

The Local Authority has invested funding to provide fixed play equipment that can be used by children with disabilities. This investment will go some way to providing equality of access and we will learn from this project when making decisions about fixed play equipment in the future.

The impact of austerity has been felt by disability play clubs in Carmarthenshire. Summer of Fun and Winter of Well-Being Funding has enabled holiday provision to be developed and delivered but this is temporary fix and work with the Children's Disability Team and Commissioning needs to explore a way to find a more sustainable model for this much needed provision.

Families impacted by disability told us:

"I think there used to be groups for families like ours but not anymore. Where have they gone? Is it just there isn't the money or are we not a priority?"

"If you have a child with a disability, you were in isolation before covid. We need spaces where we can play with other families affected by disability. Families who understand how hard it is."

"I rang the number on the Council website and all they did was recommend getting in touch with Disability Sport Wales and that's not what my children need."

"I want them to play with children of all abilities but what we also need is places where your kids can play with other children who have the same needs and understand. Where the parents also understand now, we have to rely on going to places when we know it's going to be quiet."

Matter B: Providing for Diverse Needs

7.3 Actions for the Future

The recommended actions for Matter B: Providing for Diverse Needs are:

ACTION:

- Continue to fund rural play activities and play development.
- Learn from successful approaches such as Clwb Bach and empower rural communities.
- Continue to support existing and potential Welsh language settings.
- Improve outreach and engagement in a wider variety of cultural communities.
- Work with commissioners to develop a disability play offer, shaped through engagement.
- Review Play Sufficiency Stakeholder Group membership to include a more diverse and representative range of organisations.
- Take a systematic approach to investing funding, by engaging with families from seldom heard and diverse groups to develop a criterion that can then inform the funding application process. For example, work with children, young people and families impacted by disability to create criteria for supervised play provision / events. When funding becomes available use this criterion to inform the application process.
- Create a toolkit and support programme to enable communities to be empowered to develop and deliver the play provision they need.
- Working in partnership with Carmarthenshire County Council commissioning manager to explore sustainable approaches to funding play provision for groups with diverse needs.
- Work collaboratively to ensure families are aware of the play opportunities and support available to them.
- Continue to engage with and listen to communities with diverse needs.
- Explore with the Play Sufficiency Stakeholder Groups a mechanism for finding additional capacity (one member of staff) to enable the LGBTQ group to return to face to face meetings.

Matter C: Spaces Available for Children to Play

8.1 About Matter C: Spaces Available for Children to Play

Open spaces including our counties network of parks, play areas, greenspaces and woodland are important places for children to play and young people to hangout. This matter considers these spaces and the ways in which they are used and could be used by children, young people and families for play.

8.2 What We Found Out

Open Spaces

The Carmarthenshire Revised Local Development Plan (LDP) 2018 – 2033: Open Spaces Assessment (January 2020)¹⁴ looks to assess the following standards:

- Open Space Quantity: Whether new provision is needed for an area.
- Open Space Accessibility: Whether the existing provision is effectively accessible to the local community.

With regard to the provision of public open space the assessment reports that “Overall, Carmarthenshire has a high provision of public open space, with provision of both amenity green space and parks and gardens both shown to far exceed the Fields in Trust standards. However, when broken down to provision by electoral ward, 29 of the 58 electoral wards fall below the benchmark standard of 0.6ha per 1000 population for amenity green space, with 3 wards having no provision at all. Figure 8 provides a breakdown of provision of amenity green space per electoral ward. For parks and gardens, 25 of the 58 electoral wards are shown to be deficient, with 19 of the wards having no provision. Figure 9 provides a breakdown of provision of parks and gardens per electoral ward. Deficient wards seem to be predominately in the west of the county, as well as a small number of highly urban wards in the south east of the county.¹⁵”

The assessment recommends that the Local Development Plan is used in areas where there is a surplus of open space provision to protect and sustain these places for the community. Where there is a shortfall in provision, to create new spaces, protect existing ones and “where this is not possible, mitigated for elsewhere.¹⁶” Section 106 contributions continue to be an important mechanism for investing in outdoor spaces for play and the results of this assessment will be used to inform decision making.

Outdoor Unstaffed Designated Play Spaces

The Fields in Trust (FIT) Standard is a nationally recognised benchmark for the provision of outdoor sport and provision for children and young people. As previously discussed, “Carmarthenshire has a high provision of public open space, with provision of both amenity green space and parks and gardens both shown to far exceed the Fields in Trust standards.¹⁷” However, on a localised level there are significant shortfalls in provision, using the Fields in Trust Benchmark, as shown in Appendix E, taken from the Carmarthenshire Revised Local Development Plan (2018 – 2033) Open Space Assessment.

It is important to acknowledge that Carmarthenshire Council made the decision to asset transfer

Matter C: Spaces Available for Children to Play

a substantial proportion of play and recreational facilities to Town and Community Councils. Of the 127 outdoor play spaces in Carmarthenshire only Parc Howard remains the responsibility of the County Council and 17 play spaces have not yet transferred. In engagement with Town and Community Councils there were concerns about the continued maintenance and sustainability of existing play spaces. The Council has committed to providing support and advice in relation to this and funding was available as part of the community asset transfer process.

87% of Town and Community Councils say the provision of play facilities is a priority for them, with 71% saying they are currently planning projects to increase and sustain access to play. 73% engaging with children, young people and families when making decisions about play.

Outdoor spaces continue to be popular places to play with 46% of children saying, 'a play area with swings, slides and other equipment to play' is one of their favourite places to play and 37% of young people selecting a 'local grassy area or field.'

Some of the things that children, young people and families told us about their parks and open spaces include:

"There is a park near us, but I don't feel safe there, its not like youth club where there's supervision. You might go down there and find someone taking drugs or drinking. I agree with my dad it's not safe."

"My kids are in their teens and it feels like they've grown out of anything except the XBOX. What is there for them to do?"

"I think the play areas are becoming duller and unimaginative. I would like to see more natural play in my community."

"When I take my little one to a play area, sometimes there's old kids just sitting on the climbing frame and swings. They usually move on when they're asked, and you can't blame them because there is nothing else for them to do."

Matter C: Spaces Available for Children to Play

As part of the Play Sufficiency Assessment, we visited and assessed all play spaces using Tool 2: Play Space Audit and Tool 3: Places Space Access Assessment from the Play Wales Creating Accessible Play Spaces Toolkit¹⁸. This enabled us to identify shortfalls including provision for young people, accessible equipment for children and young people with disabilities and natural play.

8.3 Actions for the Future

The recommended actions for Matter C: Spaces Available for Children to Play are:

ACTION:

- Collaborate with and support Town and Community Councils to maintain, enhance and develop play provision.
- Monitoring the progress of the updated Local Development Plan.
- Share data and information so Town and Community Councils understand shortfalls in provision.
- Ensure that children, young people and families are involved in decisions about play.
- Work with partners such as Natural Resources Wales and the National Trust to promote play in open spaces and natural play.
- Section 106 and other funding is invested in a targeted manner to address shortfalls in provision.
- Promote the Carmarthenshire Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Strategy Create Playful Spaces Tool and support Town and Community Councils' both within and outside the eight towns the GBI strategy focuses on.
- Engage Town and Community Councils to support smoke free play.
- Support People Speak Up Project to remove no ball games signs in Carmarthenshire.

Matter D: Supervised Provision

9.1 About Matter D: Supervised Provision

The play sufficiency assessment states that Local Authorities should aim to offer a range of supervised play provision including play groups and structured recreational activities for children.

9.2 What We Found Out

There is a range of supervised provision available across Carmarthenshire that includes:

- Play Groups and Sessions
- Childcare Settings
- Breakfast Clubs and After School Clubs
- Holiday Play Schemes
- Clubs and Youth Clubs

The Local Authority provides childcare and play provision as part of the Flying Start programme, through the Integrated Children's Centres and youth clubs through its Youth Services provision. It provides support and funding for childcare settings. Outside of this the Authority itself does not deliver supervised provision, but it does provide funding for example through the Summer of Fun and Winter of Well-being Play streets project. As well as support for settings to improve the quality of the play they deliver through training.

Children, young people and families across the County can access a variety of play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities provided by the public, private and third sectors. Actif Sport and Leisure providing sports and leisure places and spaces for Carmarthenshire County Council. They are part of the Play Sufficiency Stakeholder Group and have supported and developed play opportunities for example a half term activity programme funded by Winter of Well-Being. They also deliver programmes to enhance the play workforce for example training teachers to deliver play activities. Their young ambassadors programme encourages children to promote play and activity to their fellows students in schools.

Matter D: Supervised Provision

9.3 Actions for the Future

The recommended actions for Matter D: Supervised Provision are:

ACTION:

- Develop a quality assurance provision for supervised play.
- Updating funding criteria to include requirements in relation to quality of provision and continuing professional development.
- Work with youth services, youth council and town and community councils to address shortfalls in provision.
- Continue to provide advice, support and training to settings to provide a rich high quality play provision.
- Play Sufficiency Stakeholder Group to develop a criterion for supervised play provision, that can be used to shape investment of funding when it becomes available.
- Explore with partners how beyond the lifetime of short term grant funding such as Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing supervised play project can be sustained and continued.
- Family Information Service Communication and Engagement Strategy.
- Continue to collaborate with the Actif Leisure Team and Youth Services, look for partnership working opportunities to address gaps in provision.

Matter E: Charges for Provision

10.1 About Matter E: Charges for Play Provision

The requirements for this matter state “the Local Authority should consider which play opportunities involve a charge and the extent to which the Local Authority takes these charges into account in assessing for sufficient play opportunities for children living in low-income families as set out in the Statutory Guidance.¹⁹”

10.2 What We Found Out

There are a range of play opportunities that are available free of charge including play opportunities at the Integrated Children Centre’s and projects delivered by organisations such as People Speak Up and Actif Leisure. Funding programmes such as Summer of Fun and Winter of Well-Being have been used to provide free play activities and events for families with a focus on areas of deprivation. It is important to acknowledge the economic realities and impact of play, it is not viable to provide free play for all.

The Family Information Service and Dewis work hard to ensure information is available to families about free and low-cost play opportunities. However, this is reliant on providers giving the relevant information to these services. Also, discussions in focus groups suggests there is limited awareness of these directories.

Talking to families suggest there is an increasing perception that play is becoming more expensive especially when total costs such as travel, and food are taken into account. Some of the things that children, young people and families have told us about the cost of play include:

“For my teenagers it’s become all about the stuff that is expensive, the tablet, the x-box. They want to have it all.”

“I have four children; it is going to get to the point that I have to pay the electric bill and they won’t be able to go dance classes and football.”

“With food getting more expensive, bills going up we’ll have to think if we can afford all the clubs they go to know.”

“Yes, the parks are free and the beach is free. That’s great. But when its cold you’re going to have to pay to play.”

“We have four children so to take them swimming or take them to soft play quickly adds up. If there is free stuff to be doing, I don’t know where to find it.”

Matter E: Charges for Provision

10.3 Actions for the Future

The recommended actions for Matter E: Charges for Play Provision

ACTION:

- Use demographics data to understand need in relation to deprivation, rurality and disability. Make informed decision around funding investment based on this information.
- Work with the Family Information Service and Dewis to ensure accurate information is available to families to help them find and access free and low-cost play.
- Make it easier for children, young people and families to find out information about public transport and subsidised travel.
- Continue to support communities in accessing funding streams and signposting to services such as CAVS for information regarding available grants.
- Encourage community play based projects to use initial funding as a starting point to a long term sustainable offer.

Matter F: Access to Space/Provision

11.1 About Matter F: Access to Space/Provision

This matter relates to how the Local Authority understands and takes into consideration the factors that contribute to children's access to play or moving about their community.

11.2 What We Found Out

Getting to and From Play

Children, young people and parents have all told us that traffic and transport impact on their ability to play:

- 60% of children told us they need an adult with a car to take them to play, 81% need an adult with a car to take them to school.
- 59% of young people said transport to get there would enable them to hang out with their friends more often.
- 49% of parents and carers say road traffic is a barrier to their children's play, with 17% citing parked cars.
- 62% of Town and Community Councils said road traffic is a barrier to play in their community, with 31% saying parked cars are an issue.

Some of the things that children, young people and families told us about accessing play included:

"If you didn't have a car where we live you would be stumped... we drive 30 minutes to go to a decent park".

"In lockdown when parks and groups were closed, we walked loads as a family... now we're back in the car to go somewhere."

"We can walk into town, but there's not much there. To go somewhere interesting, I have to ask my dad for a lift."

"What can we do near where we live? Sit on a bench, that's it."

"It's expensive to swim or use the climbing centre, hard to get to the beach as the road is 50mph and dangerous to cycle on to get there."

"I have the car at the weekends because I work, that leaves my partner with only things in walking distance and there is nothing... nothing except going to his folks."

Matter F: Access to Space/Provision

Of the 126 play areas we visited and assessed as part of the play sufficiency assessment 63 were near to public transport and 52 were in a 20pm zone and / or near traffic calming measures. The Council has a vision and commitment ‘to make Carmarthenshire’s roads safer for all users²⁰’.

The delivery of this aspiration is supported by a range of strategic approaches. For example, The Carmarthenshire: The Cycling Hub of Wales Cycling Strategy²¹ (January 2018) outlines and aspiration to ensure cycle proficiency training is available and accessible for all school children. The Council is currently in the process of consulting on Access to Walking and Cycling (Active Travel) with an aim to “increase in the number of commutes by bike and foot.²²” The Council also, keeps records of 20mph zones, schools’ safety zones and accident data. These illustrate the work that is being done to ensure people can safely travel around Carmarthenshire, but there is no specific consideration being given to access to play in this context.

Austerity and reducing budgets are continuing to impact on the availability of public transport, which is impacted on children and young people’s ability to play and hang out with friends without access to a parent / carer with a car who can take them.

Information, Publicity and Events

The Family Information Service and Dewis provide information on play provision, events and activities that are available throughout the County. However, both directories are reliant on providers / settings providing up to date, clear and concise information which is not always the case. In addition, discussions in focus group sessions have shown that awareness of both platforms in low. The Local Authority also promotes play opportunities through its social media channels and targeted channels for the Family Information Service and Youth Council. Play providers and projects also promote opportunities to play through their own platforms.

Some of the things that children, young people and families told us about finding information on play and things to do included:

“There was no information, it wasn’t clear when groups would start again. I had a new baby, and I just wasn’t in the mood to find out what was going on.”

“To find out what’s going on you have to reply really on other parents.”

“I don’t even know if there’s a park near me.”

“Covid has made it harder because sometimes it wasn’t clear if things are happening or not.”

“You have to check all these different Facebook groups and websites to find what’s going on, it would be so helpful to have one site that has everything so you could see quickly here’s what’s on tomorrow.”

Matter F: Access to Space/Provision

11.3 Actions for the Future

The recommended actions for Matter F: Access to Space / Provision

ACTION:

- Road Safety representation to be retained on the Play Strategy Implementation Group.
- Participation in the consultation on the Active Travel Strategy to ensure that play is taken into consideration.
- Support and learn from the Early Years Integration work to enhance the role of the Family Information Service.
- Ensure that play projects, providers and events provide information to the Family Information Service and Dewis.
- Continue to promote play through social media.
- Improve the reach of information through collaboration with partners and stakeholders.
- Review road closure process in relation to play. Support People Speak Up Pilot approach
- Provide updated information on play areas and other play opportunities to the Great British Play Map.
- Build play section of FIS website to sign post families to other resources and support for example Play Wales.

Matter G: Securing & Developing the Play Workforce

12.1 About Matter G: Securing & Developing the Play Workforce

This matter requires the Local Authority “to provide information on the organisational structure of the policy area which manages the play agenda and the play workforce.²³”

12.2 What We Found Out

The Local Authority does not have the capacity to keep an up-to-date record of playworkers across all play provision delivered by the public, private and third sectors. It does have the ability to use funding to support training through the Family Information Service, Childcare and Play Teams. Across the County there are people who have the specific role of playworkers, as well as people’s whose job involves play for example childcare providers, lunch time supervisors, youth workers and the Actif Leisure Team.

In conversations with playworkers and play and childcare settings it has become clear that low pay scales, short to medium term funding and the national minimum standards are becoming a barrier to recruiting staff for example one setting told us: “I am advertising three roles at the moment, three roles that will make a difference in young people’s lives, but the salary isn’t competitive and it’s a funded project, so the job is for 2 years. We’ve had no applicants yet and I can see why.” Another explained “we get people who apply to work in our setting they sound great on paper, they you check the CV and they don’t have the qualification they need. They’ve assumed they can work in childcare because they’ve been a teaching assistant.”

Volunteers are also a key part of the play workforce, supporting, enabling and empowering communities to address gaps in play provision in their local areas will require training for volunteer on a wide range of topics including how to access funding.

12.3 Actions for the Future

The recommended actions for Matter G: Securing and Developing the Play Workforce:

Matter G: Securing & Developing the Play Workforce

ACTION:

- Work with FIS and Childcare Teams to undertake a childcare and play staff audit.
- Collaborate with FIS and Careers Wales to share easily accessible information on careers in play including information on qualifications and job listings.
- FIS, Childcare and Play Teams to continue to support and deliver play training.
- Embed training requirements and professional development into funding criteria.
- Play and Childcare Development Assistant to take train the trainer training to improve capacity.
- Develop a robust and comprehensive training programme for volunteers.
- Take on board the findings of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and Carmarthenshire's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and update action plan to reflect year 1 priorities.
- Develop a robust and comprehensive training programme for volunteers.
- Communication and Engagement Strategy to promote play including training.

Matter H: Community Engagement & Participation

13.1 About Matter H: Community Engagement and Participation

This matter is about how children, families and other stakeholders are engaged and involved in decisions about play.

13.2 What We Found Out

It should be acknowledged that the Local Authority's role as a provider of play has been reduced for example, we are no longer responsible for play areas (except for Parc Howard). We provided limited play provision directly, but we do provide funding through programmes such as Summer of Fun and Winter of Well-being. Our role as a decision maker has become limited but we are committed to engaging communities and talking to them about play.

For example, the Local Authority acknowledge that in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children and young people "have the right to say what you think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect you and to have your opinions taken into account.²⁴" The Local Authority works to ensure that all children and young people know what their rights are and how to be involved in the decisions that affect their lives. This means listening to children and young people's opinions, concerns, and views, to ensure that we run provide services that meet children and young people's needs and improve the way we work.

This is achieved by working with organisations including:

- Carmarthenshire Youth Council
- School Councils
- Young Wales

The Welsh Government, the Local Authority and its partners deliver a range of community engagement and consultations that aren't about play but can provide valuable insight into communities needs and aspirations about play. Examples of this include the consultation to support the Carmarthenshire Well-Being Assessment, the Children's Commissioner for Wales Coronavirus and Me Survey and the Carmarthenshire Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).

Schools and Town and Community Councils are both key decision makers in the delivery of play. Those schools who took part in our survey told us they are committed to listening to their students about play. They use mechanisms including school councils, sports ambassadors and talking to children to ask what they think. 73% of Town and Community Council engage children, young people and parents in decisions about play through working with schools and community engagement events and activities.

Engagement with parents and carers, children and young people has illustrated a concern about safety in public open spaces, parks and play areas. Concerns including anti-social behaviour, drug taking and damage to play equipment. Data around crime trends in Carmarthenshire²⁵ shows that:

Matter H: Community Engagement & Participation

- Anti-social behaviour is trending safer having reduced from a crime rate per 1,000 residents of 44 in 2018 to 26 in 2021.
- Criminal damage has also reduced from a crime rate of 13 per 1,000 residents in 2018 to 11 in 2021.
- Drugs offenses have worsened, increasing from a crime rate of 5 per 1,000 residents in 2018 to 6 in 2021.
- Public order offences have trended worse from 7 per 1,000 residents in 2018 to 16 per 1,000 residents.
- Dyfed Powys records offences in Carmarthenshire's named green spaces, during 2021 there were 18 reported offences in named green spaces. The equivalent to 13 crimes per hectare.

This suggests a need to work with partners including the Carmarthenshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to address both the reality and perception of crime and public safety concerns in our parks and open spaces.

13.3 Actions for the Future

The recommended actions for Matter H: Community Engagement and Participation

ACTION:

- Review and expand the membership of the Play Sufficiency Stakeholder Group.
- Explore a mechanism for bringing together Town and Community Councils to talk about play and share best practice.
- Learn from community engagement being undertaken by the Local Authority and its partners for example the Carmarthenshire Well-Being Assessment, the Children's Commissioner for Wales Coronavirus and Me Survey and the Carmarthenshire Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).
- Create a toolkit for engaging communities on play which can be used by partners. This toolkit should include a mechanism for feedback to local people when decisions are made about play.
- Work with the Carmarthenshire Community Safety Partnership to address concerns highlighted by the PSA.

Matter I: Play within all Relevant Policy and Implementation Agendas

14.1 About Matter I: Play within all Relevant Policy and Implementation Agendas

This matter is about how the Local Authority thinks about the potential impact on play when developing policies and strategies. As well as about how policies and strategies are being used to enhance children's play opportunities.

14.2 What We Found Out

The Play Sufficiency Stakeholder Group has representation from a diverse range of Council departments including planning, parks and open spaces and road safety. This has resulted in improved links and different ways on thinking. An example of the progress that has been made in this area is the Carmarthenshire Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Strategy (January 2022) which focus on enhancing GBI in eight towns in Carmarthenshire. The strategy includes a GBI Toolbox which outlines different interventions that could enhance the GBI network, among which is a tool to create playful spaces.

The Local Authority is currently undertaking a Well-Being Assessment, The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 states that "in preparing its assessment, each board must take each of the following into account... the most recent assessment of the sufficiency of play opportunities in the local authority area carried out under section 11(1) of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 (nawm 1)²⁶". Work is ongoing a community focused schools strategy, there is an aspiration that this will result in schools becoming more community facing and enabling communities to use their facilities. An example of a potential way forward is Ysgol Gorlas, which will have a management agreement with the community council to enable safe and managed community access to the school.

However, it must be acknowledged that play is not meaningfully embedded in range of key policies. This limits the ability to make a case for aligning existing budget to support and enable sufficient play provision to meet the needs of the community.

14.3 Actions for the Future

The recommended actions for Matter I: Play within all Relevant Policy and Implementation Agendas

Matter I: Play within all Relevant Policy and Implementation Agendas

ACTION:

- Play Sufficiency Stakeholder Group to have a policy and strategy agenda item.
- Play Sufficiency Stakeholder Group to have a coordination approach to ensure participation in consultation on all relevant strategies and policies.
- Learn from and share learning from Ysgol Gorlas management agreement.
- Remind schools of play training and funding available to them.
- Play Sufficiency Stakeholder Group to provide a criteria to inform the schools modernisation programme.
- Continue to provide training and support, and where possible funding, to ensure early years settings offer quality play provision.
- Play training (if required) and sharing of best practice across family support initiatives.
- Use community engagement to understand if local people want access to intergenerational play. If it is a priority explore ways of creating intergenerational play opportunities.
- Signpost play stakeholders to good practice around Health and Safety for example Play Wales: Making Health and Safety Child's Play and Play and Challenge.

Play and the Pandemic

It must be acknowledged that in the period since the previous Play Sufficiency Assessment, the world has been through the Covid-19 pandemic. At the time of writing this report, several limitations are still in place and the pandemic has limited ability to engage with children, young people and families. The pandemic has impacted on both the provision of play and how children and families play. It is too early to tell the lasting impact, but this section of the report summarises what local people and key stakeholders have told us.

What Children, Young People and Families Told Us

Our surveys helped us to learn about the impact of COVID, the results showed us that:

- 23% of children said that COVID hadn't impacted on their ability to play and hang out with friends, 35% said it had had some impact.
- 38% of young people identified pandemic as a barrier to play, 54% of young people said COVID-19 had affected how they play and hang out.
- 28% of parents and carers said the pandemic was a barrier to play. 61% of parents and carers reporting valuing play more because of the pandemic. However, 64% reported their children and families playing less.

Some of the things that parents, and carers told us about the impact of the pandemic included:

"Going to groups and meeting family and friends just didn't happen. And it didn't become a habit like it did with my first child."

"My husband is long term sick; I don't want to risk the kids going to youth club. I feel bad for them, but I can't risk them bringing covid back. I worry enough about them going to school."

"Our house has become our soft play centre... at least I know it's clean."

"They didn't socialise for so long; I think they forgot how to do it. My youngest took so much longer to settle into nursery than her sister. I can only assume its because she's not used to being with other children."

"I understand why booking had to come in because of COVID but its almost impossible to get in. It's harder to get a space for messy play than to book tickets for Adele!"

Play and the Pandemic

Some of the things that children and young people told us about the impact of the pandemic included:

“Well my mum is fine with it but some of my mates’ mums hate covid and don’t let them come out and some of them catch covid.”

“Schoolwork, for a far too long period of time, became fully online and drained much of my free time into trying to figure how I’m supposed to do the work I was given, which just stressed me out.”

“When we were in lockdown we can’t go out and meet up or hangout at times and it was boring.”

“Frustrating. We would be told after school club would start again, then it wasn’t. Nobody would tell us what was going on.”

“Because I didn’t see my friends at all until we went back to school which knocked my confidence a lot.”

The Impact

Some community play provision such as parent and toddler groups and play sessions have been lost as result of COVID.

In response, the pandemic the Welsh Government has made additional funding available including the Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing. This has been used to develop a wealth of play provision that responds to community need, but there is currently no approach for sustaining this provision once that funding comes to an end.

Covid has also changed how we can engage with children, young people and families but also impacted on participation in this process. It has also changed and how we work with our partners and result in barriers that have hampered our ability to deliver all our aspirations in the 2019 – 2022 assessment.

Gap Analysis

Following the assessment process, we have identified the following gaps in provision, which can be summarised as follows:

- Geographical Gaps - Where a geographical area has a general shortage of supply
- Diverse Needs Gaps - Where there is a shortage of suitable places for disabled children, or children with other specific needs or requirements, including those from faiths or community groups
- Access Gaps - Where there is a shortage of accessible play provision?
- Age Gaps - Where there is a shortage of play provision suitable to the needs and requirements of a certain age group (for example, school-aged children up to 18 years, if they are disabled)
- Type Gaps - Where there is a shortage in the type of play for which children, young people and parents may be expressing a preference
- Workforce Gaps - Where there are gaps / shortages in the play workforce
- Policy Gaps - What policies to support and develop play are missing
- The COVID 19 Gap - Gaps in provision associated with the pandemic.

Gap Analysis

Table 3: Summary Gap Analysis

Type of Gap	Identified Gaps in Provision
Geographical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural areas are underserved, in part because provision aligns with need as defined by population and deprivation. • 9 wards have no designated outdoor play spaces: Carmarthen Town North, Carmarthen Town South, Cynwyl Gaeo, Hengoed, Llanboidy, Llanfihangel Aberdythych, Llangeler, Mandoreilo & Salem and Trelech. • 25 wards have no supervised play provision: Abergwili, Bigyn, Bynea, Cilycwm, Cynwyl Efed, Cynwyl Gaeo, Dafen, Elli, Gorslas, Hengoed, Laugharne Township, Llanboidy, Llanddarog, Llandelio, Llandoverly, Llanfihangel Aberdythych, Llangadog, Llangyndeyrn, Llannon, Llansteffan, Pontamman, Saron, St. Ishmael, Trimsaran and Whitland. Note this information is based on play provision listed on Dewis. • 16 wards have no play provision for older children and young people (indoor or outdoor provision for age 12+) Bigyn, Carmarthen Town North, Cynwyl Gaeo, Dafen, Glyn, Hengoed, Laugharne Township, Llanboidy, Llandeilo, Llanfihangel Aberdythych, Llangadog, Mandordelio & Salem, Pontyberem, St. Ishmael, Trelech and Trimsaran. Based on mid-year population estimates for 2021 4,496 children and young people aged between 12 and 19 years of age live in these wards, 30% of that age group.
Diverse Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervised play provision for children and young people with disabilities is reliant on short term funding and may not continue once this funding concludes. • Rural areas are underserved, in part because provision aligns with need as defined by population and deprivation. • Welsh Language provision is available but there is a perception that there is less free provision. Families who do not speak Welsh would also like more support to access Welsh language play provision. • The play needs for young carers and children in traveller communities are not fully understood. • LGBTQ young people need provision that is for them where they can feel safe. Youth Services do not have the capacity and resources to meet this need and return their LGBTQ group to face to face meetings.

Gap Analysis

Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with children, young people and families shows a perception that car ownership is required to access play. • Road traffic concerns are a barrier to accessing play. • Decision making around factors that impact access do not take play into account. • Low awareness of Family Information Service (FIS) and Dewis. • Families are not aware of play events, activities and opportunities in their local area. • Children and young people think there is not enough for them to do in their local area.
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is shortfall in provision for children and young people aged over 11. 35% of parks and open spaces provided for this age group. By comparison 87% serve children aged 4 to 11. • As previously discussed 17 wards have no provision for older children and young people (indoor or outdoor provision for age 12+) Bigyn, Carmarthen Town North, Cynwyl Gaeo, Dafen, Glyn, Hengoed, Laugharne Township, Llanboidy, Llandeilo, Llanfihangel Aberdythych, Llangadog, Manordeilo and Salem, Pontyberem, St. Ishmael, Trelech and Trimsaran. Based on mid-year population estimates for 2021 4,496 children and young people aged between 12 and 19 years of age live in these wards, 30% of that age group. • Engagement with older children and young people to understand what play and recreational provision they want.
Type	<p>Engagement with parents and carers suggests there is need to develop provision of the following types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of School Childcare • Youth Clubs • Supervised play provision for children with disabilities and additional needs. • Free to access Welsh language provision.

Gap Analysis

Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is not a comprehensive audit of the play workforce. • Childcare providers, schools and youth services are key to the play workforce but don't think of themselves as such. • Support and training for volunteers. • Engagement with schools • Challenge around recruitment and retention are not being addressed. • Welsh Government approach to funding does not support investment in play workforce.
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play is not embedded in key policies and therefore not considered in wider decision making.
COVID 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID related funding has addressed gaps in provision, but this offer is not sustainable.

Conclusion

It is important to acknowledge that the role and capacity of the Council in relation to play has been reduced since the first Play Sufficiency Assessment in 2013. We continue to be committed to ensure all children, young people and families can access play but it is important to consider the economic realities and our increased reliance on partners including Town and Community Councils, the Third Sector and schools to provide access to play. In addition to meet the play needs of children and young people we will need to work with local people and support them to make the difference they want to see.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment process has highlighted a range of great play provision that is benefiting the children and young people that live in Carmarthenshire. We are continuing to collaborate with partner organisations as we strive to meet the requirements of the Play Sufficiency Assessment criteria. However, we can't do everything, and we feel it is important to deliver an achievable plan that prioritises meaningful change we can deliver. Based on our engagement with children, young people and families and the findings of the assessment our proposed actions for the period of 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023 will focus on the following themes:

- Using data to informed decision making based on need.
- Supporting Town and Community Councils to understand and address play needs in their community.
- Empowering local people to develop and deliver the play their community needs.
- Engaging young people to understand what play and recreational provision they want.
- Addressing gaps in provision for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs.
- Ensuring we make the best use of funding to improve quality and address gaps.
- Enable families to easily find out what play provision is available for them.
- Celebrating and training our play workforce including volunteers.
- Embedding the value of play in policies and strategies that influence decision making.

A Way Forward

The Play Sufficiency Action Plan 2022/23 is based on the findings of the assessment process. Priorities and actions have been identified by the Play Sufficiency Stakeholder Group and agreed by the group and ratified through the Local Authorities political process.

In terms of funding to deliver change the Local Authority and partners will collaborate in accessing and investing funding for play for example funding from Section 106 and the Welsh Government. This assessment has shown a need to work closer with schools, Town and Community Councils and local people to provide play provision including low and no cost options.

The Play Sufficiency Stakeholder Group will meet on a termly basis. This group will take responsibility for the delivery of the action plan and monitor progress. They will update and review and update the action plan through the lifetime of this assessment period 2022 – 2025.

Header.

Header.

References

- 1 Accessing the Therapeutic Powers of Play A Guide for Play Workers, Play Wales (Maggie Fearn, May 2021)
- 2 Promoting Physical Activity Through Outdoor Play in Early Years Settings, Play Wales (Play Wales November 2020)
- 3 Play: Health and Well-Being (Play Wales, May 2020)
- 4 The Mental health Emergency (Mind Cymru, June 2020)
- 5 Children's Mental Health Matters (Right to Play – accessed 18 February 2022)
- 6 How Play Levels the Playing Field (Learning Through Play – accessed 18 February 2022)
- 7 Learning Through Play Represents the Best Long-term Value for Helping Kids, Regardless of Background (World Economic Forum – accessed 18 February 2022)
- 8 Investing in Child's Play Makes Economic Sense (World Economic Forum – accessed 18 February 2022)
- 9 To Lockdown and Back (Day, Percy-Smith, Rizzo, Erskine, Monchuk and Shah November 2020)
- 10 COVID-19 and Children's Play, Play Safety Forum (accessed 18 February 2022)
- 11 Play: Health and Well-Being (Play Wales, May 2020)
- 12 Population Estimates from the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (accessed 19 February 2022)
- 13 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019: Deprivation Analysis Relation to Young Children (accessed 19 February 2022)
- 14 Carmarthenshire Revised Local Development Plan (LDP) 2018 – 2033: Open Spaces Assessment (January 2020)
- 15 Carmarthenshire Revised Local Development Plan (LDP) 2018 – 2033: Open Spaces Assessment (January 2020)
- 16 Carmarthenshire Revised Local Development Plan (LDP) 2018 – 2033: Open Spaces Assessment (January 2020)
- 17 Carmarthenshire Revised Local Development Plan (LDP) 2018 – 2033: Open Spaces Assessment (January 2020)
- 18 Play Wales Creating Accessible Play Spaces Toolkit (Play Wales, November 2017)
- 19 Play Sufficiency Assessment Form
- 20 Road Safety Website (accessed 19 February 2022)
- 21 Carmarthenshire: The Cycling Hub of Wales Cycling Strategy, January 2018
- 22 Access to walking and cycling (Active Travel) (accessed 19 February 2022)
- 23 Play Sufficiency Assessment Form
- 24 Participation and children's rights (accessed 19 February 2022)
- 25 Carmarthen Crime Overview (accessed 2 February 2022)
- 26 Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 (accessed 19 February 2022)

Appendix A

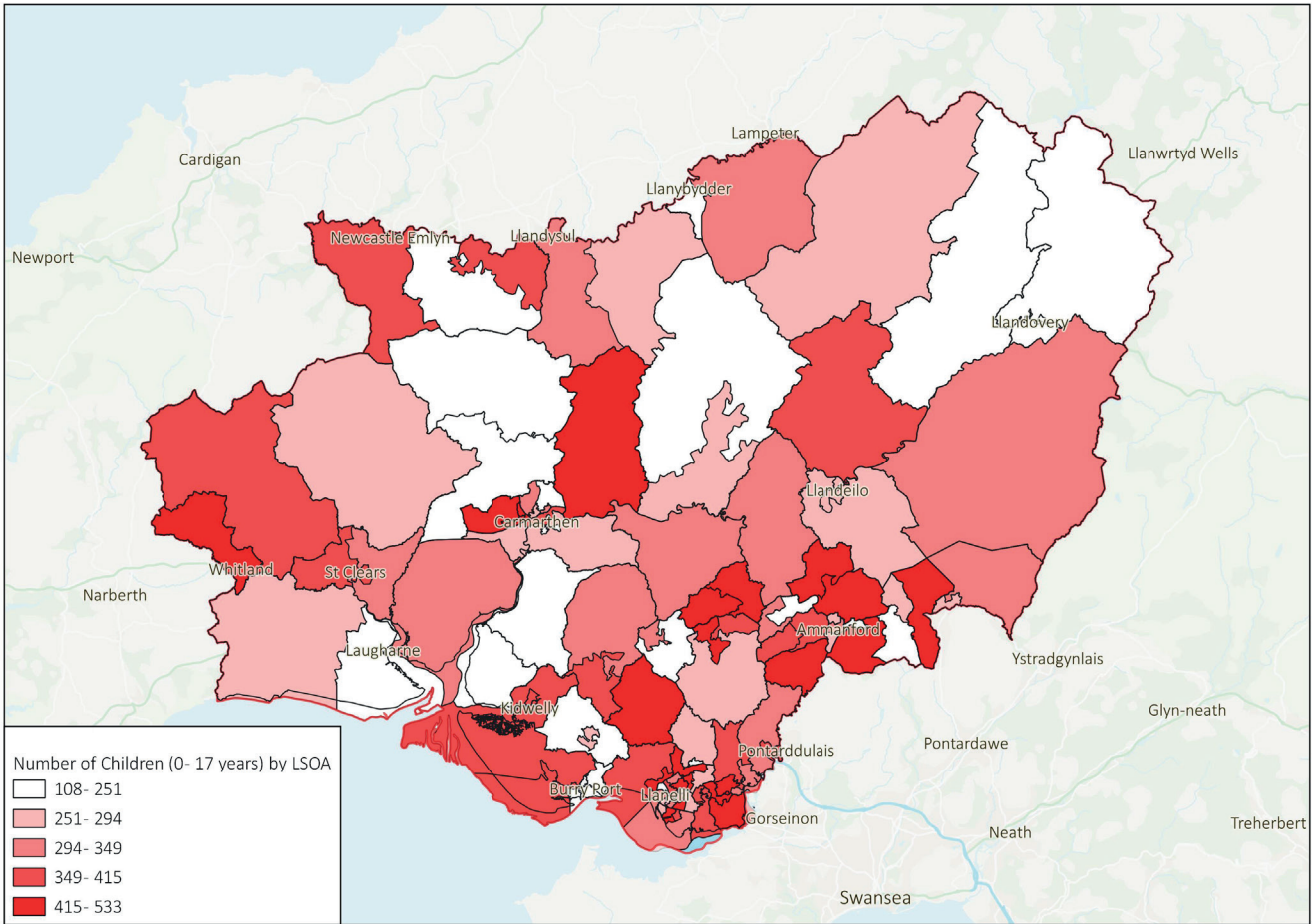


Figure 1: Age by Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)

Appendix B

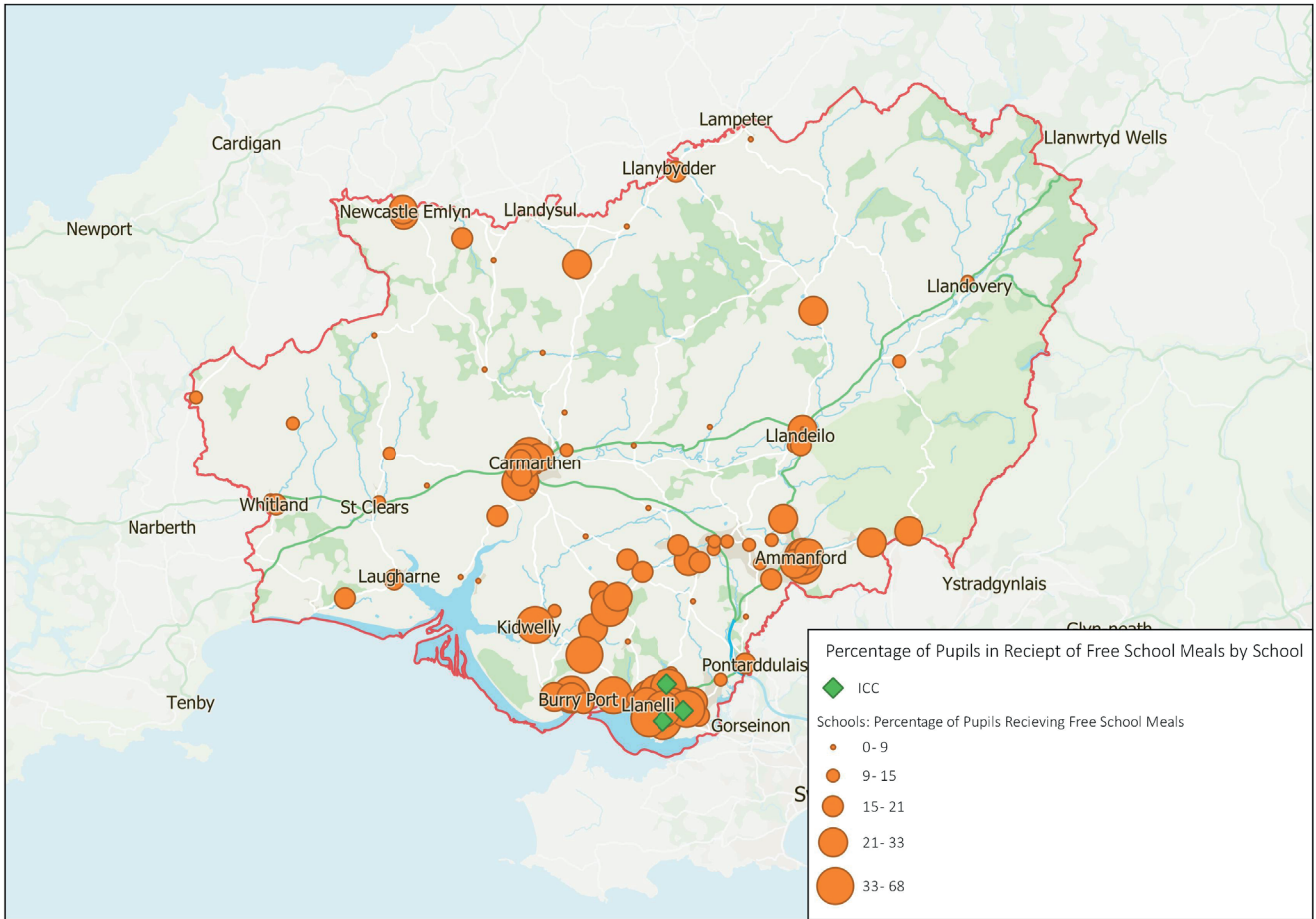


Figure 2: Take Up of Free School Meals by School

Appendix C

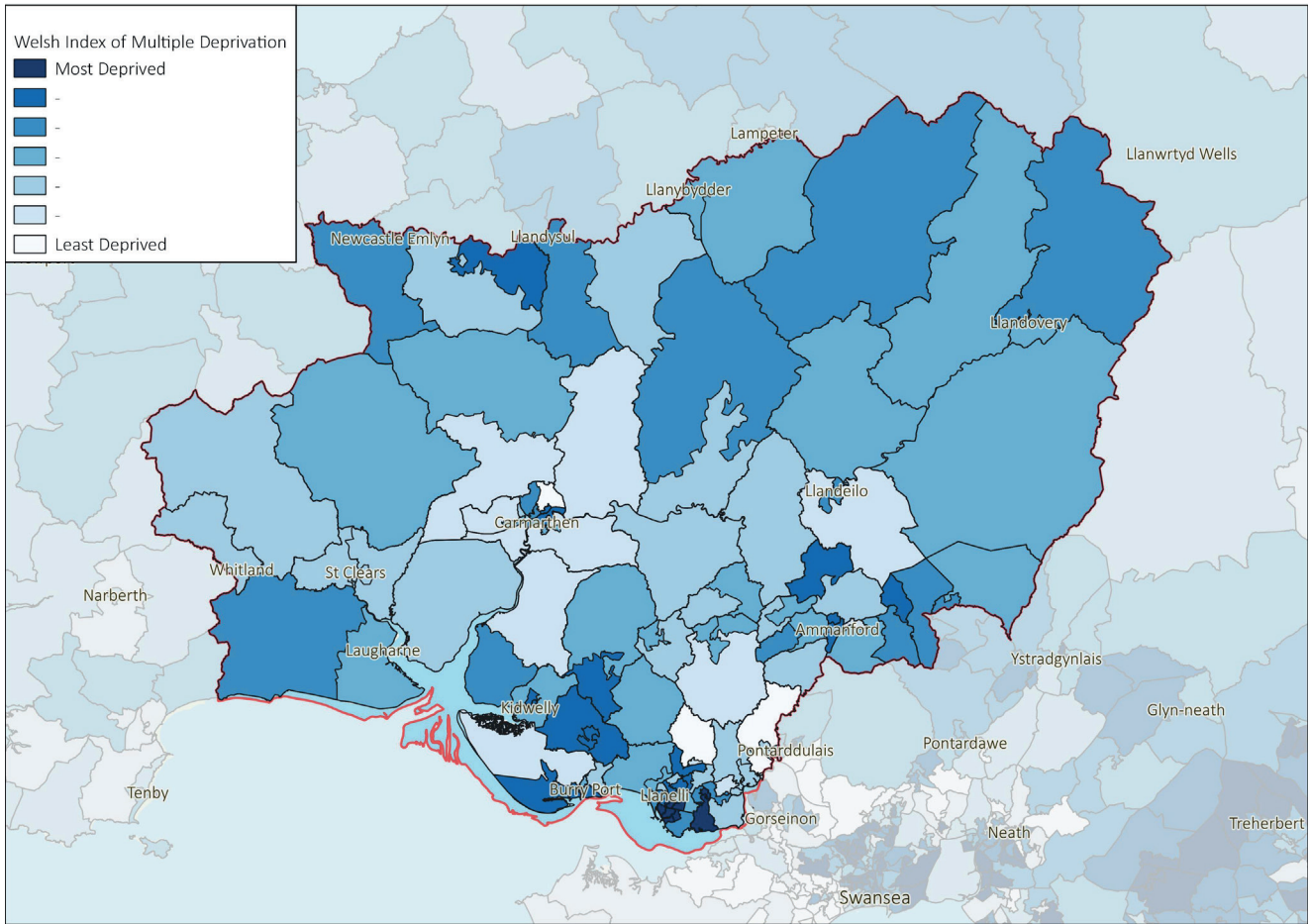


Figure 3: WIMD 2019 by Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)

Appendix D

In relation to Matter A the SOAR analysis has highlighted the following:

Strengths	Opportunities	Aspirations	Results
Matter A: Population			
<p>The location of play provision is aligned with population density and deprivation.</p> <p>A range relevant data has been mapped to enable informed decision making at County, Ward and LSOA level.</p> <p>PLASC data supports an understanding of students and their needs.</p>	<p>The Well-Being Assessment will provide information on issues facing children, young people and families.</p> <p>Work collaborative to fill data gaps particularly in relation to seldom heard groups including children with disabilities and children for whom Welsh / English is not their first language.</p>	<p>Informed decision making based on need.</p> <p>Shared data and information with partners and stakeholders.</p>	<p>Play provision better meets the needs of communities on a county wide and local level.</p>

Appendix E

Figure 5 Fields In Trust (FIT) standard provision of Play Space per 1000 population, shown by Electoral ward – Total Play Space

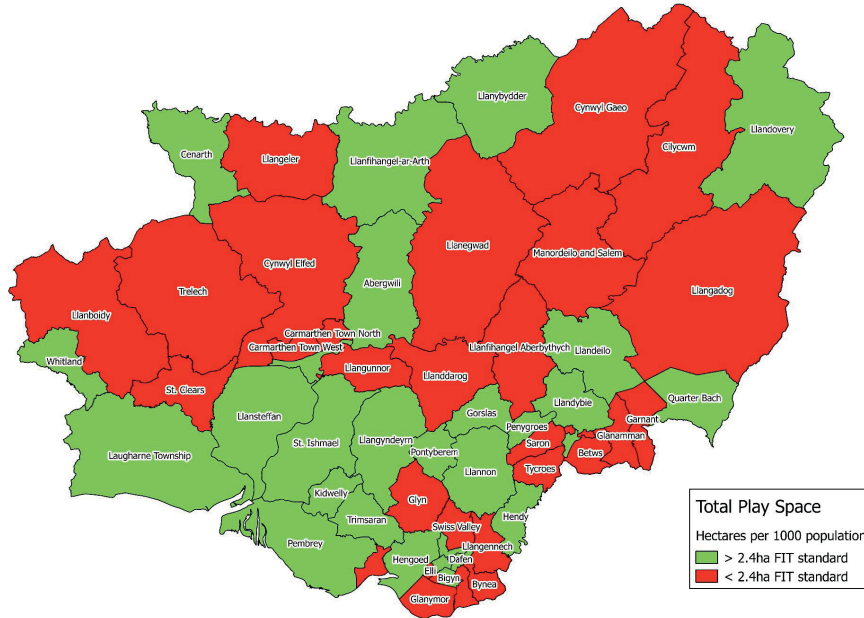
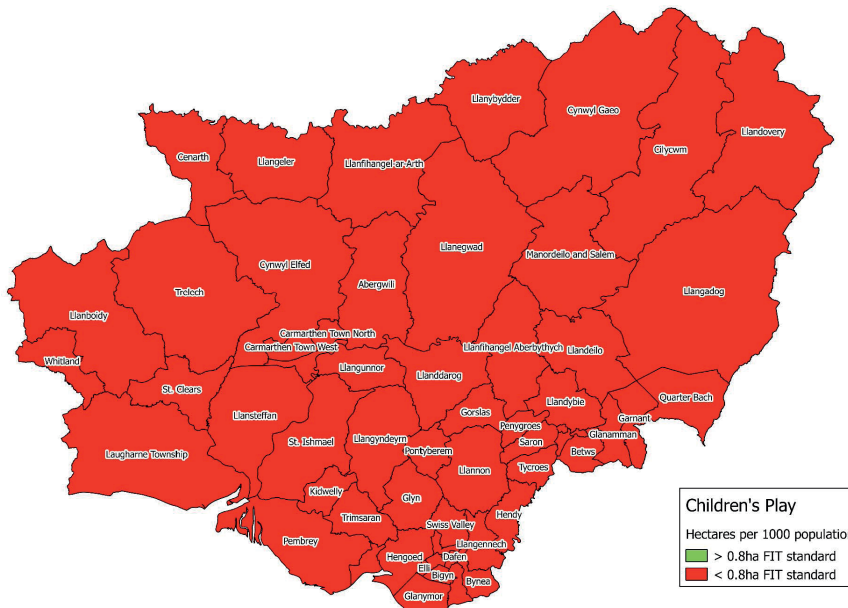


Figure 7 Fields In Trust (FIT) standard provision of Children's Play per 1000 population, shown by Electoral ward – Children's play



Appendix F

In relation to Matter B the SOAR analysis has highlighted the following:

Strengths	Opportunities	Aspirations	Results
Matter B: Providing for Diverse Needs			
<p>A range of Welsh language play provision and activities.</p> <p>Play spaces assessments identified which parks have access issues and accessible equipment.</p> <p>Investment in fixed play equipment for children with disabilities.</p> <p>Use of Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing Funding.</p> <p>Better understanding on need resulting from ALN reform.</p>	<p>Support parents who don't speak Welsh to engage with and learn from Welsh language play.</p> <p>Reconnect communities with open space they can play included greenspace and woodland.</p> <p>Develop a criterion for funding that targets and reflects the needs of groups with diverse needs.</p> <p>Sustainable supervised play provision for children and young people with disabilities.</p> <p>Share information and engagement findings with partners.</p>	<p>Empower rural communities to develop play provision that meets their needs.</p> <p>Learn from successful projects in rural communities such as Clwb Bach.</p> <p>Connect English speaking parents who want to learn Welsh to support.</p> <p>Promote free Welsh language play provision.</p> <p>Find a way to engage with traveller communities.</p> <p>Collaborate with young carers to understand their play needs.</p> <p>Support additional capacity to enable youth service LGBTQ group to return to face-to-face meetings.</p>	<p>More children and young people play in open spaces.</p> <p>More English-speaking parents participating in Welsh Language play.</p> <p>Parents and carers have better awareness of the provision available to them.</p> <p>More young carers have time in their lives to play.</p> <p>Funding responds to need.</p> <p>Empower diverse groups to make the changes they need.</p>

Appendix G

In relation to Matter C the SOAR analysis has highlighted the following:

Strengths	Opportunities	Aspirations	Results
Matter C: Spaces Available for Children to Play			
<p>High provision of public open spaces across the County. Project to address shortfall in disability provision. Open Spaces Assessment. Green and Blue Infrastructure Create Playful Spaces Toolkit.</p>	<p>Address geographical shortfalls in partnership with relevant Town and Community Councils. Connect children, young people and families with open spaces that are suitable for play. Targeted investment of available funding.</p>	<p>Existing play provision is sustained. Funding is used to address shortfall in provision for older children and young people. Encourage Town and Community Councils to use Play Wales Toolkits to assess their play provision. Involve children, young people and families in decisions about play.</p>	<p>Town and Community Councils are supported to maintain, enhance and develop their outdoor play spaces. Children, young people and families understand the open spaces that are available for play. Children, young people and families are involved in decisions about play. When funding is available to invest in open spaces it responds to need.</p>

Appendix H

In relation to Matter D the SOAR analysis has highlighted the following:

Strengths	Opportunities	Aspirations	Results
Matter D: Supervised Provision			
Variety of provision available across the County.	Develop the quality of supervised play provision. Address shortfalls for groups with diverse needs (see Matter B)	Create a quality assurance programme. Support settings to provide rich, high quality play environments. Learn from successful Summer of Fun and Winter of Well-Being projects.	The quality of supervised play provision is improved. Funding is used strategically to address shortfalls in provision. Successful projects are sustained and continued.

Appendix I

In relation to Matter E the SOAR analysis has highlighted the following:

Strengths	Opportunities	Aspirations	Results
Matter E: Charges for Play Provision			
Free play provision is supported through funding and investment. Availability of demographic information to understand deprivation, rurality and disability needs.	Ensure that families are aware of the free and low cost play opportunities in their community. Support communities to access funding for play.	Short term funding is used as a starting point for sustainable free or low cost play provision.	Families know what free / low cost play they can access. Low cost and free play provision becomes more sustainable.

Appendix J

In relation to Matter F the SOAR analysis has highlighted the following:

Strengths	Opportunities	Aspirations	Results
Matter F: Access to Space / Provision			
Road Safety Team representation on the Play Sufficiency Stakeholder Group Family Information Service (FIS) and Dewis. Expertise in the FIS team. Use of social media.	Consultation on Active Travel Strategy. Promote the benefits of being on FIS and Dewis to providers and settings. Early Years Integration Work is exploring how to improve the FIS offer to ensure families can access the information they need.	Ensure that play is taken into consideration in the development of the Active Travel Strategy. Up to date information about all play provision is available on the FIS.	Active Travel enhances family's ability to safely access play. Information about play opportunities and events is easy for families to find.

Appendix K

In relation to Matter G the SOAR analysis has highlighted the following:

Strengths	Opportunities	Aspirations	Results
Matter G: Securing and Developing the Play Workforce			
<p>Funding available to support training and professional development.</p> <p>Hard working and professional play workforce.</p> <p>Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Findings.</p>	<p>Work with FIS and Childcare Teams to undertake a childcare and play staff audit.</p> <p>Discuss impact of short term funding approach with Welsh Government.</p> <p>Easily accessible information on careers in play including information on qualifications and job listings.</p> <p>Learn from other work including the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and Carmarthenshire's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).</p>	<p>A well trained, engaged and skilled play workforce.</p> <p>Use funding to upskill and invest in the play workforce.</p> <p>Volunteer training programme.</p>	<p>Improved recruitment and retention.</p> <p>A play workforce that delivers for families.</p> <p>Volunteers are supported and empowered to deliver play in their communities.</p>

Appendix L

In relation to Matter H the SOAR analysis has highlighted the following:

Strengths	Opportunities	Aspirations	Results
Matter H: Community Engagement and Participation			
Local Authority commitment to Participation and children's rights.	Review and expand the membership of the Play Sufficiency Stakeholder Group. Work with the Carmarthenshire CSP to address concerns highlighted by the PSA.	Create a toolkit for engaging communities on play which can be used by partners.	Children, young people and families are listened to and inform decisions about play. The community understand why and how decisions about play are made. Children, young people and families feel safe in our parks.

Appendix M

In relation to Matter I the SOAR analysis has highlighted the following:

Strengths	Opportunities	Aspirations	Results
Matter I: Play within all Relevant Policy and Implementation Agendas			
GBI Strategy Community focused schools strategy.	Participation in consultation as key strategies and policies are developed. Learn from new approaches to schools access such as the Ysgol Gorslas approach.	Play Sufficiency Stakeholder Group to participate in consultation on all relevant strategies and policies. Participate in the development of the community focused schools strategy.	Play is embedded in key strategy and policy documents.