



Let US Play

The Rhondda Cynon Taf Play Strategy • 2011 - 2014

FFRAMWAITH

Working Together for Children and Young People in Rhondda Cynon Taf
Gweithio gyda'n gilydd er lles Plant a Phobl Ifainc Rhondda Cynon Taf



STRONG HERITAGE | STRONG FUTURE
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
TRETTADAETH GADARN | DYFODOL SICR



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Foreword:

For those of us who are adults and we think back to our childhood, many things will be memorable, some good and some bad. But buried away amongst those memories, those of us lucky enough will recall the freedom we experienced as children to close the front door behind us and go out and play with our friends.

We remember playing sports, getting dirty, finding treasures, building dens, finding frogspawn, making friends, playing marbles, having fun. We did this without parents, not that parents weren't important, but they were not like friends.

Through playing we experienced the world with all its joys and its disasters. It helped us learn how to get on with other children, how to win, how to lose. It helped us grow up healthily and helped us begin to learn the lessons of life that are needed to become active and useful members of society as we grew up.

These are the hopes and wishes for our young people and children in Rhondda Cynon Taf today. This Strategy is the way in this day and age that we have to work, to enable all of our children and young people to exercise their right, to access the magic of play.

It's a great piece of work, it's really important and it's up to us to make it happen so that our children can have wonderful memories and are equipped with many of the skills they will need to lead fulfilled lives as children and as adults.



Ellis Williams

Chairman
Fframwaith Children & Young People's Partnership
December 2010.



Vision

All children, young people and their families have access to a wide range of sustainable, quality play opportunities, which meet individual needs and engage local communities and families.

Our aim is that:

- All children, young people and families are able to access play opportunities free from geographical, physical, economic or social barriers to taking part.
- All children, young people and families have access to a broad range of high quality play opportunities that fully meet their needs.
- All children, young people, families, agencies and communities are aware of the benefits of play in children and young people's lives and the resources that are available.

In September 1990 the United Nations ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This document created a legal framework for the way we view, look after and value children in our society.

Article 31 states that:

“Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.”

1. Introduction



All Fframwaith Partners place a real value on play in children's lives and the importance of children in our society. They are committed to ensuring that children and their needs are central to all policies and provision meets the needs of ALL children.

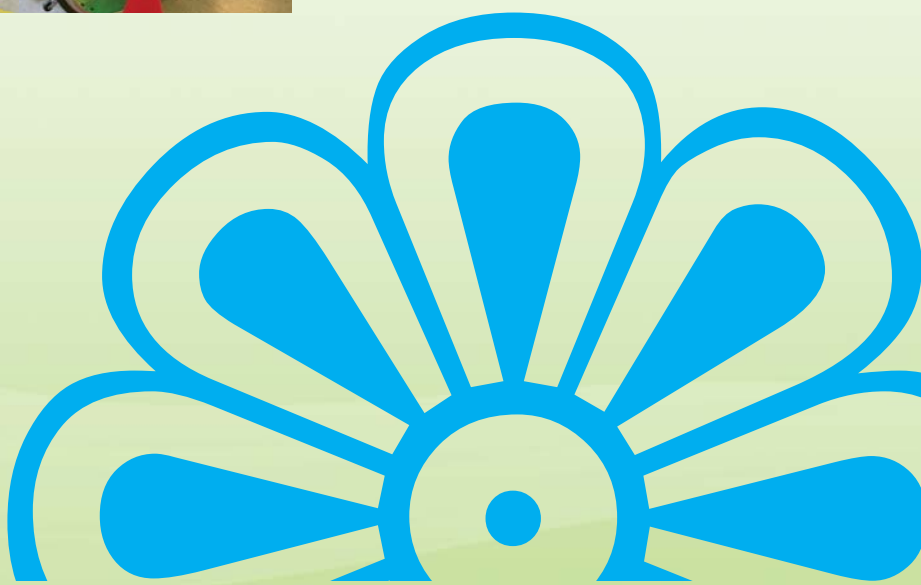
Plato wrote many years ago;

“Enforced learning will not stay in the mind so avoid compulsion and let your children play.”

Our aim is to improve play services across the authority especially in play-deprived areas and in the most disadvantaged communities across Rhondda Cynon Taf. Within the Children and Young Peoples Plan Core Aim 4 incorporates play and this strategy and action plan will be monitored and reported through this group.

In 2008, the Fframwaith Partnership agreed that a review of the existing RCT Play Strategy was required and asked Chwarae Plant to lead the work with support from key stakeholders. As part of the process a broad range of children, young people and their families were consulted.

The results of the consultation, along with recent Welsh Assembly Government policies, form the basis of this forward-looking strategy.





“ need some sellotape, scissors, a pen,
a cardboard box and some help!”

6yr old girl, Tylorstown



Key Drivers

Play and leisure activities for children and young people are at the forefront of a range of Welsh Assembly Government led policies and initiatives, but the play agenda is also referred to and highlighted in some strategies and policies not ordinarily associated directly with children. The following is a list of local and national drivers, which all influence the development and delivery of play provision:

- The WAG Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010
- Rights to Action (2004)
- Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy 2002
- Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy Implementation Plan (2006)
- National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services.
- Child Poverty Strategy for Wales and Delivery Plan 2010 (Draft)
- Rhondda Cynon Taf Children and Young People's Plan 2011- 2014.
- Live, Grow, Aspire, Achieve Rhondda Cynon Taf Community Strategy 2010 - 2020,
- Rhondda Cynon Taf Community Strategy 2010
- Health Social Care and Well-being Strategy 2011-14
- Play to Learn/Chwarae i Ddysgu (Initiated by the Sports Council of Wales on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government to support Foundation Phase Physical Development)
- Food and Fitness: Promoting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity to Children and Young People in Wales 2006



2. Why Do We Need a Strategy?

The play strategy recognises the importance of play in the lives of children and young people and it sets out what local organisations, including the Council, are going to do to ensure that all children and young people are provided with safe and stimulating play and leisure opportunities. The strategy is therefore a statement of our understanding of the need for good play opportunities and our joint commitment to ensuring local children and young people can access the resources that they are entitled to.

The Play Strategy is a tool for ensuring that play is considered and included in the work of all local agencies. The strategy is not a document to sit on a

shelf gathering dust. It is a working document that sets out the guiding principles, our plans for development and the challenges to be addressed now and over the next three years.

The strategy is based on the principle that every child has a right to play as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 31.

The Let us Play Action Plan (see appendix 1) clearly sets out our intentions for the next three years and demonstrates our strong commitment to children's play.

3. Play for All

"Fframwaith is committed to ensuring that all children and young people in Rhondda Cynon Taf have access to stimulating play environments that are full of challenges, allowing children and young people the opportunity to explore through play both the world they live in and themselves."

We consider all children and young people to be unique and we aim to ensure that as far as we are able to, we will provide a selection of play services that meet a range of diverse needs. We will ensure that ALL children and young people are able to take full

advantage of their entitlement to good quality play and leisure opportunities.

There are some children and young people locally that need extra help to be able to take part in community based play and leisure opportunities and furthermore we recognise that there are some that require special services. We will therefore continue to support an integrated approach to play provision but will ensure that the play and leisure needs of all children and young people are met, taking account of what they tell us.



4. What is Play?

Play means different things to different people. Everyone has their own memories of when, where and how they used to play. So although we know that play is critical in the lives of children and young people, it is difficult to describe accurately what we mean by “Play”.

Play is defined by those who work in the field of play, as something, which is:

“Freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated, i.e. performed for no external goal or reward.”

(Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy Implementation Group recommendations 2004.)

5. Why is Play Important?

- Play is important and a key activity within local communities, encouraging children, young people and their families to form friendships and engage in social networks and local support structures.
- It enables children, young people and their families to forge links with the wider community and is an essential building block in sustaining strong communities.
- Play is a fundamental part of healthy development, not only for individual children but also for society.

- Through play children learn a whole range of skills such as social skills, creativity, problem solving, imagination, motor skills and many more.

Indeed it is difficult to imagine strong, cohesive communities without opportunities for children and young people to play.

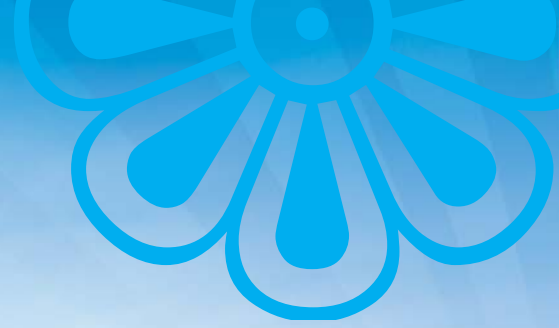
6. Play Opportunities

The play opportunities we provide in Rhondda Cynon Taf encourage children to explore, take risks and often, to the horror of some parents, get dirty. This is what makes play exciting, engaging and stimulating and ensures that children and young people not only enjoy the experience but also learn valuable life skills – including learning from their mistakes.

Investing in good quality play provides value for money. It adds value by involving children, young people and families in our communities, preventing problems from

developing and addressing issues at an early stage. Play has long-term proven benefits in community safety, health and well-being and community regeneration.





7. Play & Risk

Risk in play is an essential element that the children need to experience to enable them to develop a range of skills and build their confidence and self esteem. Risky play also equips children with strategies they need to cope with the ever-changing environment around them.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recognises the importance of play in children's lives and for their opportunities to learn about risk." (HSE 2008)

8. Playwork Principles

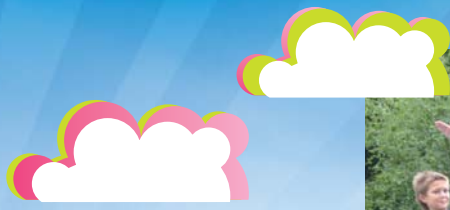
The Playwork principles have been endorsed by Skills Active, the Sector Skills Council for Playwork Education and Training.

These Principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork and as such must be regarded as a whole. They describe what is unique about play

and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people. They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities. (See appendix 4)

1. All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity and is fundamental to the healthy development and well being of individuals and communities.
2. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way, for their own reasons.
3. The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
4. For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.
5. The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
6. The playworkers' response to children and young people playing is based on a sound, up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
7. Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
8. Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.





9.1 Where have we been?

Rhondda Cynon Taf council has a long history of funding play opportunities for Children and Young People.

In 2006, the Cymorth and local Authority play budgets were combined to enable us to commission local voluntary organisations to deliver open access play. This resulted in an additional 6,000 places per year being created. The commissioning model has worked very well and enabled open access play provision to be extended to most of the disadvantaged wards within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Increasing the quantity of play opportunities of children is good, but we also want to ensure the quality of children's play experiences and the quality of the play that we provide are of the highest standard possible.

We will ensure that through the appropriate design of play spaces, good training and quality assurance schemes we will improve the overall quality of play experiences for children and young people.

We will also continue to take account of, and respond to, what the children and young people tell us.

9.2 New Developments:

The Branching Out Project

The Branching Out into the community project is a cross county strategic play project. In 2006 the Big Lottery launched the Child's Play Programme as part of the Healthy Families strand. This put an investment of £13million into Children's Play in Wales. The programme was a two round programme with the first round being for infrastructure and round two being for Strategic Play projects.

Chwarae Plant are the lead agency and are working with representatives from the voluntary and statutory sector across Rhondda Cynon Taf and Bridgend. The project's aim is develop year round, staffed, open access play in

communities that are suffering from a lack of play opportunities. The project will work in 20 communities over the four years. As well as developing new opportunities for children's play it will work closely with the community to raise the understanding of children's play and to encourage community members' involvement and support for children and young people to play.

The Branching Out into the Community Play Project is funded by The Big Lottery Child's Play Programme for four years 2010 – 2014.



Quality Play Project

The quality in Play Project is a Playwork Training Project managed by Chwarae Plant working across Rhondda Cynon Taf and Bridgend County. The project's aim is to raise the quality of play provision delivered across RCT and Bridgend by offering a variety of accredited and non-accredited playwork training opportunities. The project will also work with community members and

parents with an interest in children's play to raise the awareness of the benefits and provide opportunities for them to better realise how they can support children and young people to play in their own community.

The Quality in Play Project is funded by The Big Lottery People and Places Fund for three years 2011 – 2014.

Quality Play Spaces

Chwarae Plant have been working with Tri-county Play Association, Interlink and Torfaen Voluntary Alliance on a project within the Heads of Valleys region, to develop a number of innovative play spaces, making the most of the natural environment within the region.

Tri-county Play Association have led on the partnership and we have managed to secure funds from the Heads of the Valleys Strategic Projects Fund to get the project

started. This will see the development of play spaces across RCT, Torfaen, Merthyr Tydfil, Blaenau Gwent, and Caerphilly.

This is a demonstration project to highlight different ways of working to achieve high quality play spaces within communities that provide a focal point to those communities.

Play Pods in Schools

Play Pods in Primary Schools are a simple concept but have achieved recognisable benefits for both the children and the schools involved. Play Pods are containers full of 'loose parts' (scrap resources such as tyres, fabric, rope, guttering) sited in school playgrounds. The children access them in their lunchtimes to participate in imaginative, creative, free play. Research carried out by Marc Armitage, an Independent Play Consultant, has shown that they have significant benefits to children's ability to learn in the classroom environment and improve their academic attainment. Children of all ages are learning through play and improving their concentration, team building, co-operation and communication skills. This is having a beneficial effect on classroom learning and attainment.

Lunchtime supervisors receive playwork training, contributing to their continuing professional development and helping them to support the children in their freely chosen play. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that accidents, incidents and complaints from children have also been reduced.

It is important for the continued development and delivery of efficient, effective and top quality play services for children and young people that we build on the strong foundations, which already exist, and that we continue to work together to plan and deliver local services. (Play Pods in Schools, An Independent Evaluation 2006-2009).



10.1 Play in the Community

It is of vital importance that children have the opportunities to play close to their home in safe communities that are familiar to them.

It is crucial that play provision meets the needs of the community within which it is based. This can be achieved by developing child-friendly playable spaces, which offer a range of opportunities for play. Community based, staffed provision could also be developed. Rhondda Cynon Taf has a strong history of delivering good play opportunities within communities and this work needs to be developed further, ensuring good practice is built upon.

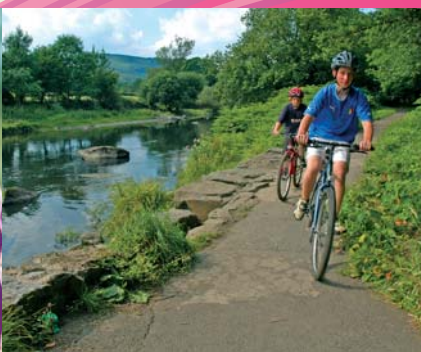
Play provision has been shown to encourage community cohesion therefore it is important that emerging play projects are embedded within the community they serve. It is important that the community takes ownership of provision and is central to its delivery. This model of provision will also mean the projects are far more sustainable in the long term. To achieve this, it is important that training opportunities are available to support community members to develop the appropriate skills required.

10.2 Schools Have a Role Too

Schools play an important role in communities and children's lives. In a 2009 consultation with children the most popular place for children and young people to play was in their school grounds.

The reduction in the children's ability to play freely outdoors outside school hours means that the importance of school playtimes has increased in terms of offering scope for play that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated.

Schools are well placed within the community to support play within the school day, by offering opportunities for children to engage with free play in their break times and also out of school hours, by opening up their school grounds and developing the space into exciting, stimulating play spaces for children to use.





10.3 Managing Risk and Parental Concerns

A sobering study, published in 1997, found that it is not the lack of provision of play facilities that limits children's outdoor or unsupervised play, but parental anxieties about children's safety. Valentine G and McKendrick J, 'Children's Outdoor Play: Exploring Parental Concerns about children's safety and the changing nature of childhood', 1997.

There is a common tension felt by play providers. The need of offering the opportunities where they can test themselves, and settings that are full of challenge against the fear of litigation and that children are not being allowed to attend.

A position statement made by the Play Safety Forum 2002 states:

"There is growing concern about how safety is being addressed in children's play provision. Fear of litigation is leading many play providers to focus on minimising the risk of injury at the expense of other more fundamental objectives. The effect is to stop children from enjoying a healthy range of play opportunities, limiting their enjoyment and causing potentially damaging consequences for their development."

It is important to acknowledge the fears that parents/carers and communities have about children playing out are genuine, even if the real dangers are greatly exaggerated. We need to develop strategies to overcome these fears so children and young people's play experiences are not limited.

10.4 Developing the Workforce

Rhondda Cynon Taf also has an active play association called Chwarae Plant with more than 50 members. As well as support, Chwarae Plant provides training opportunities for people working within the play sector and others such as parents, teachers, learning support assistants and community members.

At present, playwork is rarely recognised as a profession. The majority of the workforce within Rhondda Cynon Taf is made up of students who work on play schemes over the summer period.

There are very few workers who are on a permanent contract and the projects that do operate throughout the year offer limited hours per week. This results in people who want a career in play work having to make up the time by taking on other jobs as well.

The 2008 Play Wales Workforce Survey undertaken by Melyn Consulting, showed that 49% of the people who class themselves as playworkers have another job. Only 27% class playwork as their main household income and the average playwork wage across Wales was £6.85, which is 34% below the average hourly wage for workers in Wales and only 24% above the national minimum wage.

As playwork grows into a recognised profession, it is vital that there is training that supports this process. For playworkers, both accredited and non-accredited training is important. There is a need for staff to gain qualifications in playwork and receive non-accredited training in areas vital to their role.

10.5 Future Aspirations for Play Provision in RCT

We have a clear vision within Rhondda Cynon Taf as to how we see play and play provision developing. We have aspirations that will see children having a variety of opportunities to experience play opportunities. However, to do this we have further work to do.

We will work with individuals and communities across Rhondda Cynon Taf to understand the benefits and value of children's play.

We will aim to ensure schools have grounds which are open outside of the school day and playgrounds that have been designed to offer exciting and stimulating play opportunities.

Play space will be designed to put children and young people at the centre of the community and it will make use of the beautiful surroundings we have in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

We will develop our workforce, providing opportunities for training and development to ensure the provision offered is of the highest standard.

We will have a broad range of play provision that is accessible and inclusive for all children and young people and is available during school holidays, after school and on weekends in a variety of settings, including community centres, parks, open spaces, schools and other community settings.

We will support the high quality play provision; we will have a play resource centre which will provide a one stop shop for play providers and schools to be able to access the practical play resources needed to provide children and young people with the best possible play opportunities.

We will engage with and support families to be more playful, ensuring all children and young people have good quality play experiences.

11. Conclusion

Play remains a priority of Fframwaith Partnership and we continue to support the child's right to play. If we are able to provide quality and accessible play opportunities across Rhondda Cynon Taf we need to collaborate and seek investment from a wide variety of sources through innovative and creative ideas. This includes demonstrating the value of investment in play,

providing clear outcomes for children and young people, their families and communities and developing sustainable social enterprises.



Appendix 1

Outcomes	Measures	Current performance (Baseline)
All children, young people and families are able to access play opportunities free from geographical, physical, economic or social barriers to taking part.	Number of new areas (LSOA/Wards) that have access to play opportunities.	2010 – 11 34.8%
	% of LSOA's without access to play opportunities.	2010 – 11 65.2%
	No of children and young people accessing play opportunities: Age range 5-7 Welsh speakers Age range 8-10 CYP living in Flying Start areas Age range 11-14 CYP living in Communities 1st Disabled CYP	
	No of hours of play delivered in: Flying Start areas Communities 1st areas LSOA's falling in top 25% most deprived	Overall hours commissioned 4,297 Baseline to be established in 2011 - 12 CF Areas 4,063 8 LSOAs
All children, young people and families have access to a broad range of high quality play opportunities that fully meet their needs.	No and % of play workers achieving L2 in play work	8 level 2 qualifications achieved
	No and % of play workers achieving L3 in play work	10 level 3 qualifications achieved
	No and % of settings registered with CCSIW	9 providers registered
	No and % of settings working at 80% plus capacity.	
	No and % of repeat users	Baseline to be established in 2011-12
	% of CYP and parents rating the play provision as good or better.	Baseline to be established in 2011-12
All children, young people, families, agencies and communities are aware of the benefits of play in children and young people's lives and the resources that are available.	No of information flyers distributed.	Baseline to be established in 2011-12
	No of information posters displayed.	Baseline to be established in 2011-12
	No of families signposted to additional/appropriate services.	Baseline to be established in 2011-12
	No and % of CYP happier after playing.	Baseline to be established in 2011-12



Performance	Actions	Lead person/ organisation
	To develop school grounds into exciting, stimulating spaces for children to play and open grounds outside the school day.	
	To ensure children's participation in the development and implementation of play,	
	To raise awareness for children and young people to exciting, stimulating spaces within their community.	
	To work closely with the Education Department to influence and support the development of school grounds, existing ones and new builds.	
	To support the development of more playful areas which children and young people can access alongside other members of the community.	
	The implementation of a Quality Assurance scheme for play providers in Rhondda Cynon Taf to support organisations to strive towards the best quality play provision for the children and young people who access it.	
	To provide continued support services for the play sector within Rhondda Cynon Taf to support them in the delivery of high quality play opportunities for children and young people	
	To deliver specialised training for teaching non-teaching staff in accordance with WAG requirements to implement Play to Learn for children aged 3-7.	
	To raise awareness about the importance of children and young people having the opportunity to experience appropriate risky play.	
	To develop the skill and expertise in the play sector to deliver risky play opportunities for children and young people.	
	To develop a clear training pathway and make strong links with Playwork Wales, the National Playwork and Education Centre.	

Appendix 2

Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010

The proposed Children and Families (Wales) Measure was passed by the National Assembly for Wales on Tuesday 10 November 2009. It subsequently received Privy Council approval on 10 February 2010.

The measure underpins the Assembly Government's aim to support the UK Government's target of eradicating child poverty by 2020. It recognises that children and families in poverty often face multiple disadvantages, which require highly specialist and intensive support. It will also strengthen regulatory enforcement in childcare settings.

The measure has three substantive parts:

Child Poverty, Play and Participation

Child Minding and Day Care for Children

Integrated Family Support Teams

The part that has most impact on this strategy is part 1 child poverty, play and participation. Within part 1 chapter 2, the measure identifies local authority duties in respect of play opportunities for children. These include:

Once activated a local authority must assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area for children in accordance with regulations. A local authority must secure sufficient play opportunities in its area for children, so far as reasonably practicable, having regard to its assessment under subsection (1).





Glossary of Terms

1. **“Play”** is a process encompassing children’s behaviour, which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated.
2. **“Freely Chosen”** means that the children choose when and which play activity to undertake and as such, it is not part of a set programme and does not have any steps that need to be completed.
3. **“Personally Directed”** means that children themselves agree the roles or rules of the activity: they decide the outcomes, if there are to be any.
4. **“Intrinsically Motivated”** means that it is done for its own sake and not for any externally provided reward, certificate, or status.

Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy Implementation Group recommendations 2004.

Playwork Principles

The Assumptions and Values for Playwork were developed during the drafting of the Playwork National Vocational Qualifications in the early 1990’s. During the 2002 review of the National Occupational Standards for Playwork at level 2, the need to revise them was identified.

In the meantime within Wales, the Steering Group of the Welsh Council for the Professional Endorsement of Playwork Education and Training identified tensions between the philosophy that informs The First Claim and the Playwork Assumptions and Values.

In late 2002 Play Wales was awarded additional grant funding by the Welsh Assembly Government to host a UK review and consultation on the Playwork Assumptions and Values, and UK’s major play and playwork organisations agreed to contribute to the process. A proposal was commissioned from Play Education by Play Wales and three phases of consultation followed.

A Scrutiny Group of experienced playworkers and playwork trainers from across the UK was convened to act as an honest broker that would evaluate and revise the responses to best represent the majority view.

The Playwork Principles were endorsed by SkillsActive in 2004.



Fframwaith

Fframwaith is the Rhondda Cynon Taf Children and Young People's Partnership, which was established to promote local co-operation amongst agencies to improve the well-being of children, young people and their families.

The partnership consists of representatives from various organisations, which include the Local Authority, Health, Voluntary and Statutory Sector organisations. The partnership structure ensures that it is able to fulfil the requirements set out in the Children Act 2004.

The Fframwaith Support team co-ordinates this work and oversees the monitoring and evaluation of services commissioned by Fframwaith.



Chwarae Plant

Chwarae Plant is a Children's Play charity covering both Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough and Bridgend County Borough. Chwarae Plant is founded on the belief that play is a fundamental right for every child and young person and aims to promote the vital importance of the play process in the healthy development of both children and the communities in which they live.

Chwarae Plant is a newly formed charity, which was formerly known as RCT Play Association. In 2008 RCT Play Association took on a new project to further develop play infrastructure across Rhondda Cynon Taf and Bridgend County Borough. This resulted in a full rebranding of the organisation to better represent the future work of the organisation, which is committed to supporting the development of quality play opportunities. To this end, Chwarae Plant carries out a variety of functions including representing the needs of children, young people and play providers on appropriate partnerships and networks. We also host networks for organisations and community groups that provide play opportunities where common difficulties and achievements can be shared and good practice promoted.

