



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Play Sufficiency Assessment Form

Local Authority: Bridgend County Borough Council

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Date of completion: 30th June 2025

Revised February 2025

Play Sufficiency Assessment Form

As well as establishing a baseline of provision, the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) will enable the following:

- Identification of gaps in information, provision, service delivery and policy implementation
- Support the establishment of evidence to give an indication of distance travelled in relation to play sufficiency
- Highlight potential ways of addressing issues relating to partnership working
- The input and involvement of all partners increasing levels of knowledge and understanding
- A monitoring system which will involve and improve communication between professionals
- The identification of good practice examples
- Increased levels of partnerships in assessing sufficient play opportunities
- The identification of actions for the Securing Play Sufficiency Action Plan, which accompanies the Play Sufficiency Assessment

This template is a technical tool to support a corporate appraisal of the matters that need to be considered as set out in the [Statutory Guidance](#). It is set out in themes which allow the local authority to assess the matters set out in The Play Sufficiency Assessment (Wales) Regulations 2012 and [Statutory Guidance](#):

- Matter A: Population
- Matter B: Providing for diverse needs
- Matter C: Space available for children to play
 - Open spaces
 - Outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces
 - Playing fields
- Matter D: Supervised provision
 - Playwork provision
 - Structured recreational activities
- Matter E: Charges for play provision
- Matter F: Access
 - to space/provision
 - to information; publicity; events
- Matter G: Securing and developing the playwork and the play workforce
- Matter H: Community engagement and participation
- Matter I: Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas

A guide to completing the template is included in the PSA Toolkit. The template informs a *State of Play* report to the Welsh Government, which will include:

- The local authority’s statement: Aims, vision for play in the area
- The methodology for undertaking the PSA
- How resources are maximised for play sufficiency
- How the PSA is monitored
- How the views of children have shaped the PSA
- An analysis of each theme, which identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

The *State of Play* reports can include examples of actions taken locally to support children’s play that the local authority wishes to highlight. A report card template, inspired by play sufficiency research, is included in the Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit.

Criteria

This section contains the “matters that need to be taken into account” as set out within the [Statutory Guidance](#).

The criteria column: sets out the data that needs to be available and the extent to which local authorities meet the stated criteria.

The RAG status columns (Previous PSA RAG status and Current PSA RAG status)

Red, Amber, Green (RAG) status is a tool to communicate status quickly and effectively.

Criteria fully met.	Green - Fully met
Criteria partially met.	Amber -Partially met
Criteria not met.	Red - Not met

The evidence to support strengths column: To be used to provide the reason for the chosen criteria status and how the evidence is held.

The shortfall column: To be used to explain the areas in which the local authority does not fully meet the criteria.

What would address the shortfalls? Use this column to highlight potential solutions and/or facilitators.

Additional comments: Use this section to add in anything of relevance that is not covered elsewhere.

Theme: Population

This theme relates to:

Matter A: The number of children in respect of each age range within its area

Matter B: The needs of children from different cultures and backgrounds within its area

Matter E: Whether there is a charge for play provision and where there is a charge

To what extent does the local authority meet the criteria?

Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
The play needs of children of all ages are understood and provided for.	N/a	Amber	Data held on demographics including numbers and ages of children, statistics relating to protected characteristics and trends in children's health and wellbeing. A range of services provide for different ages of children.	Lack of data relating to children's voices and lived experiences of play makes it difficult to evaluate play sufficiency.	Establish consistent systems for evaluating play sufficiency and generating insights into children's lived experiences.
The play needs of children living in areas of deprivation and low income families are understood and provided for.	N/a	Amber	Targeted programmes in deprived areas (e.g., Active 4 Life, Food and Fun, Flying Start); inclusive capital investment in play areas; doorstep initiatives like the Caerau project.	Provision is often reliant on short-term funding; little is known about the reality of children's play lives in areas of deprivation.	Secure long-term funding, improve local quality and safety of provision, and link play into wider anti-poverty strategies.
The play needs of children living in isolated rural areas are understood and provided for.	Amber	Amber	Active 4 Life operates in rural areas; CAT programme enables community improvements; community groups like Noddfa deliver outreach play.	Little is known about the reality of children's play lives in more rural areas; rural inequality identified as a persistent issue.	Mobile/outreach play schemes, improved active travel infrastructure, and more rural community provision.
The play needs of Welsh language speaking children are understood and provided for.	Green	Green	The Urdd provides Welsh-medium and bilingual sports-based recreational opportunities.	No evidence on whether language has an influence on perceptions of play sufficiency	Bilingual play sufficiency satisfaction surveys.

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The play needs of ethnic minority children are understood and provided for.	Amber	Amber	Schools report growing ethnic diversity; inclusive general provision; some cultural sensitivity in communication and delivery.	No dedicated outreach or engagement with ethnic minority communities in play planning.	Targeted engagement and representation; inclusive design and communication strategies in diverse neighbourhoods.
The play needs of Gypsy Traveller children are understood and provided for.	N/a	Amber	School diversity data shows presence of GRT pupils; commitment to inclusion within education and wellbeing policies.	No play-specific engagement or consultation with GRT children or families identified.	Develop outreach initiatives in partnership with community groups to engage GRT children in play planning.
The play needs and support needs of disabled children are understood and provided for.	Amber	Amber	Discovery Days, youth hub , leisure access cards, capital investment in accessible play features, general positive approach to inclusion.	Limited established way of evaluating whether disabled children and their families are satisfied with opportunities to play.	Play sufficiency satisfaction surveys and targeted engagement of disabled children in play research.
The play needs and support needs of children with Additional Learning Needs are understood and provided for.	N/a	Amber	ALN learners supported through education; inclusive approaches in Discovery Days, Youth Hub and community projects.	Limited established way of evaluating whether children with ALN and their families are satisfied with opportunities to play.	Play sufficiency satisfaction surveys and targeted engagement of children with ALN in play research.
The play needs of girls are understood and provided for.	N/a	Amber	Focus groups acknowledged gendered experiences; some youth projects promote inclusive and safe spaces.	Girls often report feeling less safe in public spaces and disengaged from physical play areas.	Facilitate research into the play experiences of girls; Co-design localised plans for play with girls.
The play needs of children in emergency or temporary accommodation are understood and provided for.	N/a	Red	Housing and wellbeing services support children in temporary accommodation; some access to universal provision via schools.	Limited play provision or engagement with these children so little know about their experiences of play.	Facilitate research into the play experiences of children in emergency or temporary accommodation.
The play needs of LGBTQ+ children are understood and provided for.	Amber	Amber	Youth services promote inclusive values; safe spaces acknowledged in wellbeing work; staff trained to be welcoming.	Limited engagement with LGBTQ+ children regarding play; lack of visibility in provision design.	Consult LGBTQ+ young people and ensure public play spaces reflect their needs and safety concerns.

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The play needs of asylum seekers and refugees are understood and provided for.	N/a	Red	Asylum seeker and refugee children included in schools and some community services.	No targeted play provision or engagement with these children so little know about their experiences of play.	Partner with local support networks to engage children and families in research.
The play needs of care experienced children are understood and provided for.	N/a	Amber	Care-experienced children benefit from co-designed holiday provision and targeted support via social care, leisure and youth services.	Limited research undertaken or mechanism in place to evaluate these children's lived experiences of play.	Facilitate research into the play experiences of care experienced children to inform play planning.
The play needs of disabled children and children with additional learning needs are understood and provided for.	N/a	Amber	As above. Discovery days, Youth Hub capital investment in accessible equipment, leisure access cards, general community inclusive approach.	As above. Limited established way of evaluating whether these children and their families are satisfied with opportunities to play. Children not known to social services less well provided for.	As above, Play sufficiency satisfaction surveys and targeted engagement of disabled children in play research.
The play needs of young carers are understood and provided for.	Green	Green	Young carers supported via group sessions, respite, and school holiday clubs delivered by family support teams.	Limited research undertaken or mechanism in place to evaluate these children's lived experiences of play.	Facilitate research into the play experiences of care experienced children to inform play planning.
Play projects and providers have access to a range of resources which support inclusion.	Green	Green	General positive approach to inclusion, targeted provision, close collaboration with social services, routine service user feedback is positive	No borough wide system in place to evaluate the inclusivity of provision or the experiences of those not accessing provision.	Establish consistent systems for evaluating play sufficiency including the experiences of children with protected characteristics.
There is a well-known and agreed mechanism which is used to identify the need for separate provision for children with Additional Learning Needs.	N/a	Green	ALN assessment framework exists in education; social care referral processes, social care teams provide advice on individual needs; All About Me forms.		
There is a well-known and agreed mechanism which is used to identify the need for separate provision for	Green	Green	Disability needs assessed in education and social care settings; social care referral processes, social care teams		

disabled children and those with additional support needs.			provide advice on individual needs; All About Me forms.		
Premises and spaces used for play provision are provided at no cost or low cost to providers.	Amber	Green	Dual use school sites provide no / low-cost venues for activities. Examples of partnership working providing access to other no / low-cost facilities.		
The local authority provides grants or subsidies for providers offering opportunities to play.	N/a	Green	Short-term grants and social services funded access to Halo Leisure are in place.	No long-term or cross-sector funding framework for play providers.	Design multi-year grant schemes supporting targeted, inclusive, and community-led play provision.
Subsidised transport for children travelling to provision, which offers opportunities to play, is provided for.	Amber	Amber	Transport challenges acknowledged in rural areas; transport included in provision for disabled children.	Limited borough-wide scheme for subsidised or coordinated transport to play provision.	Pilot travel support schemes and integrate transport into future play sufficiency planning.

Additional comments

Numbers and ages of children

Bridgend County Borough has an estimated population of around 147,000 people, including approximately 27,500 children and young people aged 0–17. This represents around 19% of the total population, reflecting a relatively typical age profile for Wales.

The child and young people population in Bridgend has remained broadly stable over the past decade, with gradual changes reflecting wider demographic, social, and economic patterns. According to the Wellbeing Assessment 2022, the population is projected to increase by approximately 7.5% by 2042/43. This anticipated growth is linked to planned housing developments, particularly in urban expansion areas, which will have important implications for future play sufficiency planning. Meanwhile some valley communities have seen population decline.

Children live across a diverse range of communities, including urban centres (e.g., Bridgend town, Porthcawl), suburban areas (e.g., Pencoed, Brackla), and rural valley communities (e.g., Maesteg, Nantymoel, Bettws). Population mapping shows particularly high densities of children in Bridgend North (9,603), Bridgend East (9,246), and Bridgend West (7,336), as recorded in the Wellbeing Assessment 2022.

Bridgend County Borough has a balanced age distribution across its child population, reflecting both stable birth rates and consistent school enrolment patterns over recent years. According to the January 2024 school population data, the breakdown by age and school year is as follows:

- Ages 2–3 (Nursery): 214 children
- Ages 3–4 (Nursery): 1,365 children
- Ages 4–5 (Reception): 1,453 children
- Ages 5–6 (Year 1): 1,518 children
- Ages 6–7 (Year 2): 1,570 children
- Ages 7–8 (Year 3): 1,606 children
- Ages 8–9 (Year 4): 1,626 children
- Ages 9–10 (Year 5): 1,604 children
- Ages 10–11 (Year 6): 1,699 children
- Ages 11–12 (Year 7): 1,741 children
- Ages 12–13 (Year 8): 1,796 children
- Ages 13–14 (Year 9): 1,730 children
- Ages 14–15 (Year 10): 1,655 children
- Ages 15–16 (Year 11): 1,692 children
- Ages 16–17 (Year 12): 841 young people
- Ages 17–18 (Year 13): 610 young people

School census data from 2022, 2023, and 2024 confirms steady enrolment figures, with the overall school population consistently around 22,700 to 23,200 pupils. This includes children enrolled in nursery, primary, secondary, special schools, and alternative provision, with the primary school cohort being the largest.

In addition to mainstream schooling, the local authority supports 439 pupils in special schools and 62 in alternative provision settings such as The Bridge. These settings serve a wide age range and highlight the need for inclusive play offers tailored to children with more complex support requirements.

Across all age groups easy and safe access to a variety of inviting playable public spaces is essential for their experiences of play sufficiency. In addition, maintained nurseries, Flying Start settings and early years play groups have a key role in play provision for under-fives. For primary-aged children play provision includes initiatives like the school-based activity pods aimed at improving the quality of school play times, and holiday programmes such as Active 4 Life. For older children aged 12 to 17, the offer includes universal youth service offer, youth hubs, sports activities, and access to informal gathering spaces.

Pilot projects like the Maesteg School breaktime improvement initiative demonstrate an emerging focus on teenagers' play needs, helping schools rethink how they support adolescents' social and recreational experiences. Local health surveys have also noted that emotional wellbeing and mental health challenges increase with age, with older pupils reporting lower life satisfaction and higher rates of sedentary behaviour. This further emphasises the importance of protecting time and space for playful social connection throughout childhood and adolescence.

Trends in children's health and wellbeing

Recent data from the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Children and Young People's Health Report (2025) and the Student Health and Wellbeing Surveys (2021–2023) provide important insights into the health and wellbeing of children in Bridgend. Whilst there are many positive aspects there are also some concerning trends that have implications for play sufficiency planning.

Physical health and activity

The Child Measurement Programme reports that 12.9% of children in Bridgend are living with obesity, the highest prevalence among Welsh health boards, and 26.9% are classified as overweight or obese combined. Rates are particularly high among children living in the most deprived areas. Local participation data shows that while sport and physical activity are popular across age groups, activity levels drop significantly as children get older, especially among girls. According to the School Sport Survey 2022, participation in organised sport three or more times a week falls from 54% among 10–11-year-olds to lower rates in older adolescents. There is no such data about the prevalence of children's outdoor play.

Mental health and wellbeing

Mental health is an increasing concern across both primary and secondary age groups. Primary school data from 2022–23 identified that 12% of children met the threshold for elevated emotional difficulties scores, with some schools reporting levels as high as 42%. Among secondary students, surveys from 2021–22 show a steady decline in life satisfaction with age, with 86% of Year 7 students reporting life satisfaction scores of 6 or above on a 10-point scale, compared to 70% of Year 11 students. Additional data from the Short Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) showed lower wellbeing scores among older pupils, particularly around optimism, feeling useful, and feeling connected to others; all of which is influenced by children’s opportunities for play (or lack thereof).

Social connectedness and bullying

The Primary School Health Survey 2022–23 reported that 28% of children had engaged in or experienced bullying, with cyberbullying affecting around 21% of Year 6 pupils. These findings reinforce the importance of social play opportunities that support inclusion, build peer relationships, and reduce the risk of bullying. Children’s feedback in past consultations has highlighted the role of play in developing friendships and reducing isolation.

Sedentary behaviour and screen use

Secondary school data indicates that a significant proportion of older children, particularly girls, spend seven or more hours sitting on a typical weekday, much of it linked to screen-based and digital engagement. Primary school survey data shows that 66% of children own a smartphone, with regular use of social media and gaming platforms. This trend points to the importance of ensuring that children have accessible and appealing opportunities for outdoor and active play to balance the increasing time spent in more sedentary activities.

Health inequalities

Health outcomes in Bridgend continue to be shaped by deprivation. Children living in low-income households are more likely to experience poor physical health, lower perceptions of wellbeing, and reduced access to play and recreational provision. The percentage of children eligible for free school meals in participating schools ranges from 20 to 24% across recent surveys, underlining the importance of prioritising free and low-cost play offers and ensuring that barriers such as transport and equipment costs are addressed.

Children living in areas of deprivation

Bridgend has pockets of significant deprivation, particularly in valley communities such as Caerau, Bettws, Nantymoel, and parts of Bridgend town. According to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation and local authority data, around 18% of children in Bridgend live in poverty, and approximately 4,198 people live in low-income households. Deprivation in these communities is often linked to higher unemployment rates, lower household incomes, poorer housing conditions, and reduced access to services, all of which can have a direct impact on children's opportunities for play.

Children living in areas of deprivation can experience multiple barriers to play, including:

- Poor-quality or poorly maintained playable spaces in their immediate neighbourhoods.
- Lack of access to private gardens or safe outdoor space at home.
- Concerns around community safety, including fear of crime and traffic risks.
- Financial barriers that limit access to paid-for activities such as sports clubs, holiday schemes, or leisure centre sessions.
- Limited transport options, making it difficult to reach larger, better-equipped parks or supervised provision.

The local authority and its partners have developed a range of targeted responses to address these inequalities. One of the most notable examples is the Caerau doorstep activity project, delivered by the community anchor organisation Noddfa. This initiative brings play, sports, and creative activities directly into the heart of a deprived community, reducing reliance on families to travel or pay for opportunities.

The Active 4 Life programme has also been central in providing free or low-cost holiday play schemes in targeted areas, including Central Bridgend, Brackla, Pencoed, Porthcawl, Bettws, Maesteg Valley, Garw Valley, and Caerau. These programmes combine physical activity with fun and social engagement, helping to reduce inequalities in access to recreation. Food and Fun holiday enrichment schemes have also been delivered by schools in deprived communities, addressing food insecurity whilst also providing recreational opportunities during the summer break. However, the ongoing delivery of these initiatives remains precarious with both being reliant on external grant funding. Active4life is reliant on seasonal staff and short-term funding including contributions from Town and Community Council and Play Works funding with funding often secured at short notice on a year-by-year basis making staff recruitment and retention more difficult. Schools have also struggled to deliver Food and Fun schemes due to the availability of staff during school holidays, although there are examples of the Urdd providing sessions instead of school staff.

The council's recent investment of over £1 million in upgrading designated play areas has prioritised inclusive and accessible equipment in areas of deprivation. These upgrades have been informed by safety assessments of existing equipment, although some communities report ongoing issues in terms of maintenance and quality of provision.

In the early years, Flying Start operates across the most deprived wards, providing free childcare and family support alongside outdoor and indoor play. Family support services also deliver play-based parenting programmes aimed at improving parent-child interactions and supporting children's healthy development.

Despite these efforts, focus groups and local audits have identified persistent challenges. Families living in deprived areas are disproportionately affected by the cost-of-living crisis, with increased anxiety about travel, equipment costs, and the affordability of paid activities. Community members have highlighted the importance of informal, local spaces for play and free-to-access provision. Safety concerns, particularly around antisocial behaviour in parks and estates, can further limit children's freedom to play near home.

There is a recognised need to strengthen the integration of opportunities for play within wider community safety, housing, and regeneration strategies. Expanding inclusive, no-cost provision, improving the play value and safety of local spaces, and involving children and families in shaping services are key priorities going forward.

Children living in rural areas

Bridgend County Borough contains a diverse mix of urban, suburban, and rural communities. The rural areas are mainly concentrated in the Llynfi, Garw, and Ogmores valleys and parts of the western borough near communities such as Cornelly, Pyle, Kenfig Hill and Bettws. These areas are more likely to face challenges in terms of access to provision, shaped by geography, transport, and the availability of services.

According to local demographic assessments, approximately 19% of the borough's under-16 population live in rural wards. These communities often have lower population densities, higher levels of worklessness, and fewer local services compared to urban centres such as Bridgend town and Porthcawl. The Rural Development Plan has identified around 18 eligible wards with significant rural child populations, underscoring the need for tailored local responses.

Access to play in rural areas is shaped by a combination of landscape, infrastructure, and service gaps. Children and families in these communities frequently report:

- Limited local spaces for play or facilities, often relying on small community parks, informal green spaces, or school grounds.
- Barriers to accessing larger or more equipped sites, including poor public transport connections, long travel distances, and cost.
- Road safety concerns, especially around fast rural roads without pavements or safe walking and riding routes.
- A lack of dedicated play or youth services in some villages, leading to reliance on voluntary or community-led initiatives.

The local authority has taken several steps to improve provision in rural areas. The Active 4 Life programme, for example, delivers summer holiday play and sports schemes in rural and valley communities, offering free or low-cost activities that help reduce transport and affordability barriers. The Community Asset Transfer (CAT) programme has supported the transfer of some rural parks and play areas to Town and Community Councils and local groups, enabling improvements and upgrades to local facilities. Community anchor organisations such as Noddfa in Caerau have been central in delivering doorstep play and family engagement, helping to reach children who might otherwise have limited opportunities.

Despite these positive developments, focus groups and spatial audits consistently identify rural provision as an area of shortfall. Residents and professionals have highlighted the need for:

- More outreach services, including mobile play schemes and pop-up events.
- Improved transport solutions, especially to help children access centralised provision in urban areas.
- Investment in safe active travel routes, including pavements, crossings, and cycle paths, to enable children's independent mobility.
- Greater attention to the play value and inclusivity of local spaces, ensuring they cater to a wide age range and to disabled or neurodiverse children.

Children living in rural areas are also affected by the same health and wellbeing challenges reported across the borough, with additional risks linked to social isolation and reduced access to supportive networks. Consultation work has shown that children value spaces where they can meet friends and experience freedom close to home, reinforcing the importance of maintaining and enhancing rural provision.

Children from other minority groups

Children from other minority groups in Bridgend include children from ethnic minority backgrounds, children from Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities, LGBTQ+ children and young people, care-experienced children, and young carers. While these groups make up a relatively small proportion of the child population, they often face disproportionate barriers to accessing sufficient opportunities for play.

Ethnic minority children

Although Bridgend has lower levels of ethnic diversity compared to the Welsh average, the borough has seen a gradual increase in the number of children from Black, Asian, and other minority ethnic backgrounds, including families who have arrived from Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Schools report growing diversity, particularly in urban areas. While no dedicated play services currently target these communities, general provision aims to be inclusive. Urdd activities play an important role in offering Welsh-medium and bilingual opportunities to children from both Welsh and non-Welsh speaking backgrounds. There is, however, a recognised need to improve cultural inclusivity in design, communication, and outreach of provision, especially as local diversity increases.

Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller children

Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) families live in several parts of the county, although there are no designated permanent sites in the local authority area. While schools and social care teams work with these families, the local authority currently has no targeted play provision or engagement for GRT children. This represents a notable gap, as research consistently shows that GRT children face some of the highest levels of exclusion and deprivation, including limited access to safe, welcoming spaces for play.

LGBTQ+ children and young people

LGBTQ+ young people in Bridgend are often invisible in play and leisure policy, although small steps have been made to improve inclusion. The Maesteg School breaktime project included awareness of LGBTQ+ needs, and the BING (Bridgend Inclusive Network Group) has supported pilot LGBTQ+-friendly sports sessions. While these are positive beginnings, young people and professionals highlight the need for more LGBTQ+-inclusive environments in youth services, sports clubs, and informal gathering spaces, alongside visible messaging that all children are welcome.

Care-experienced children and young carers

Bridgend has a relatively high number of care-experienced children, with 745 children receiving local authority care and support as of 2020.

This includes children in foster care, residential care, and kinship care arrangements. These children often benefit from targeted recreation and enrichment activities, delivered in partnership with social care and Prevention & Wellbeing . Examples include co-designed holiday programmes, free access to sports and leisure activities, and tailored sessions in partnership with Halo Leisure and Awen Trust.

There are also around 549 young carers identified in the borough. Young carers' networks provide a vital lifeline, offering holiday activities, peer support, and breaks from caring responsibilities. The Prevention & Wellbeing team works closely with schools, health services, and third-sector partners to identify and support these children, though transport and access to mainstream activities remain challenges.

Overall, while there are examples of good practice, particularly in relation to care-experienced children and young carers, there are clear opportunities to improve inclusion for minority ethnic, GRT, and LGBTQ+ children. Focus group participants also raised concerns about other groups of children whose play experiences are not well understood, including children on the child protection register. Furthermore, whilst there is targeted support available to children involved with social services, many children are not connected to these services and therefore do not have access to such provision but might benefit if they did. Without a mechanism to assess the sufficiency of children's opportunities for play, it is difficult to establish any unmet need.

Neurodiverse and disabled children

Neurodiverse and disabled children represent an important and growing group within Bridgend's child population. Current local estimates suggest around 3,176 children have additional learning needs (ALN) or disabilities, covering a wide range of physical, sensory, cognitive, and neurodevelopmental conditions, including autism, ADHD, and learning impairments. School census data and service records show that these children are spread across mainstream schools, special schools, specialist resource bases, and alternative provision, with 439 children currently supported in special schools and 62 in alternative settings.

Access to play for neurodiverse and disabled children is shaped by a range of factors, including the design and inclusivity of public spaces, the availability of specialist or adapted provision, and the extent to which mainstream provision can accommodate diversity and additional support requirements. Focus groups and previous PSA data consistently highlight that families of disabled children face barriers in both physical and social access to play.

Provision in Bridgend includes several strong examples of targeted and inclusive practice:

- **Discovery Days/Youth Hub/ Wellbeing Days** are delivered as inclusive events specifically designed for disabled children and young adults aged 8–25, offering adapted activities such as swimming, cooking, sports, arts, and nature trails. These events are coordinated with Social Services with a mix of core and external funding and are highly valued by the families who have access to them.
- **Inclusive play equipment** has been installed in several local authority play area upgrades, such as at Newbridge Fields, where accessible swings, roundabouts, and surfacing have been added. The capital programme has prioritised improving the accessibility of equipment alongside general refurbishments.
- **Free swimming sessions** are offered to children with additional learning needs, supported through Welsh Government free swimming initiative across Halo Leisure swimming pools.
- **Leisure access cards** are provided to children known to Social Services, helping to reduce financial barriers to inclusive leisure and recreation opportunities supported by external funding
- **Play pods and loose parts play schemes** have been rolled out in primary schools, supported by recycling partnerships. Training is provided to schools to ensure inclusive use of resources supported via external funding.
- **Special school playground upgrades** have been supported through local investment, improving on-site play opportunities for children who may face greater barriers to accessing community provision.

Despite these strengths, challenges remain. Families frequently report difficulties in accessing local playgrounds, with barriers including a lack of appropriate equipment, poor maintenance, and safety concerns. Transport can be a significant barrier, particularly for families living in rural or disadvantaged communities. While some schools and clubs have made progress on inclusion, parents report variable staff confidence and awareness, especially in mainstream settings. Children with neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism may also experience sensory and social barriers in public spaces, limiting their ability to engage freely in local play environments.

Access to demographic data for planning

Bridgend County Borough Council has access to a broad range of demographic data that has the potential to support planning for play sufficiency. This includes population, education, health, and social care data, which together provide an important evidence base for understanding the characteristics and needs of local children.

The core dataset is the school census, which provides detailed information through the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC). This dataset includes age, gender, additional learning needs status, and free school meal eligibility, offering important indicators of socio-economic status and inclusion needs.

In the early years, data is collected through Flying Start monitoring, nursery enrolments, and the childcare sufficiency assessment, which capture information about under-fives living in the most disadvantaged areas. Social care data, including records of children on the child protection register, care-experienced children, and young carers, is used by social services and the family support team to inform targeted interventions. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation also provides detailed local profiles of deprivation levels, which are important for identifying communities where children may face additional barriers to play.

Health data, including from the Child Measurement Programme, School Health Research Network surveys, and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board reports, offers valuable insights into children's physical health, mental wellbeing, and behavioural trends. This includes information about obesity prevalence, emotional difficulties, bullying, and sedentary behaviours.

Despite the range of available datasets, focus groups with professionals identified several gaps and challenges in how this information is used. While data is often available within individual departments, it is not always systematically shared across services or used to inform neighbourhood-level planning for play.

Improving the use of demographic data when planning for play will require stronger collaboration between departments and a shared approach to spatial planning, service design and performance monitoring at a neighbourhood level. There is also an opportunity to integrate children's voices and lived experience data alongside population data to create a more complete picture.

Children's voices and lived experiences

Children's voices and lived experiences are a crucial source of evidence for understanding the sufficiency of opportunities for play in Bridgend. Past consultation exercises, programme evaluations, and service engagement activities have provided important insights into what children value, the barriers they face, and what improvements they would like to see in their communities.

Although no direct child consultation was undertaken for this assessment cycle, previous work has captured children's perspectives across a wide range of settings and groups. In 2021–22, over 4,000 children in Bridgend participated in school wellbeing surveys, providing rich data

on physical activity, mental wellbeing, friendships, perceptions of safety, and their general satisfaction with life. These surveys consistently show that children value social opportunities, physical activity, and freedom in outdoor spaces, but that their ability to access these opportunities can be constrained by factors such as transport, perceptions of safety, cost, and the availability of provision.

Introducing a county-wide child and parent/carer satisfaction survey focused specifically on play would further strengthen the council's ability to understand and respond to the lived experiences of children and families. Such a survey would provide valuable insight into both what is working well and where gaps remain. By gathering data on key drivers of satisfaction - such as time, space, freedom, safety, and access - the survey would support the development of a consistent and meaningful monitoring framework. This in turn would enable the council to track progress over time, identify inequalities across different groups and localities, and inform both strategic planning and neighbourhood-level responses.

Beyond quantitative surveys, specific engagement with care-experienced children, disabled children, and young carers has been a strength of Bridgend's play sufficiency work. Projects have included feedback sessions where disabled children and their families have helped shape future events. Young carers have been consulted on what kinds of holiday and respite activities would be most helpful, leading to the development of co-designed programmes. Secondary school students, such as those at Maesteg, have taken part in targeted projects to improve breaktime experiences, creating more inclusive and engaging school environments.

Children have identified a range of barriers to play. Safety concerns are a consistent theme, with children in some areas reporting that antisocial behaviour, poorly lit spaces, and traffic risks make them feel unsafe playing near home. Older children have highlighted the lack of informal gathering spaces where they can socialise without being moved on or perceived as a nuisance. Disabled and neurodiverse children and their families have raised issues around the accessibility of play equipment, sensory aspects of public spaces, and the need for staff who understand them. Rural children have pointed to the lack of local provision and the difficulties of travelling to centralised facilities.

Children have also expressed strong views about the quality and appeal of local spaces for play. In some areas, they have reported disappointment when new equipment was installed without their input, describing the result as "boring" or "for little kids." Where children have been meaningfully involved, such as in school-based projects or youth centre designs, they have highlighted the positive impact of having a say in shaping their environments.

A consistent finding across engagement exercises is that children want more time, space, and permission to play, whether that means having access to safer streets, more after-school activities, or freedom to explore the public realm. Children also place a high value on social connection and opportunities that bring them together with peers are seen as particularly meaningful.

Looking forward, there is a recognised need to embed children's voices more systematically into play sufficiency work. This includes establishing mechanisms for regular consultation, involving children in the co-design of spaces and services, and ensuring that their feedback leads to visible action. Focus group participants from across departments expressed strong support for expanding child engagement in future planning cycles.

Agreed actions

Actions have been prioritised by focusing on those that are achievable within existing structures and financial constraints while offering the greatest potential for impact. The emphasis has been placed on actions that would help to develop a strategic, collaborative, and cross-cutting approach to play sufficiency, whilst maintaining existing assets and services that support play. Many of these actions address multiple aspects of the four themes covered in this assessment but each has only be identified once to avoid duplication.

- Continue to invest in inclusive and targeted provision, shaped by direct engagement with children who may experience additional barriers to play.
- Introduce a triennial county-wide self-reporting child and parent survey on play sufficiency, gathering lived experience data that can be used to track progress.
- Conduct hyper-local research in 2 case study communities, improving understanding of how opportunities vary by neighbourhood and community context, using this information to inform the 2028 PSA.
- Research into the play experiences of children with protected characteristics including girls, disabled children, children with ALN, ethnic minorities, refugees and asylum seekers, young carers, and care experienced children.
- Facilitate a multi-agency event to share research findings, children's voices and experiences of play at a neighbourhood level.

Theme: Places where children play

This theme relates to:

Matter C: The space where children can play, including open space, and any other space

Matter F: Traffic measures that are used to promote access to play

Matter I: The extent to which education and local development planning policies take into account the need to enhance play opportunities for children

To what extent does the local authority meet the criteria?

Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
An up-to-date record of all designated play space, as described in the Statutory Guidance, is kept.	Green	Green	Council website includes an up-to-date list of designated play areas. Records are kept of Town and Community Council managed play areas.		
Designated play areas and playgrounds are assessed for play value and potential to increase in play use.	Amber	Amber	Routine safety inspections carried out across designated play areas; this informs capital programme priorities.	Inspection processes focus on safety and maintenance more than play value from children's perspectives.	Incorporate play value assessments of designated play areas into neighbourhood model of planning for play.
Public spaces are assessed for play value and potential to increase in play use, as set out in the Statutory Guidance.	Amber	Amber	Playable public open spaces included in Green Infrastructure assessment; focus on multifunctionality and accessibility.	Limited attention paid to the play value of green infrastructure and public open spaces beyond designated sites	Conduct holistic play value audits of community spaces using this to inform localised plans for play.
An Open Space Assessment (OSA) that maps areas that are used, or might be used for playing as listed in the	Green	Green	Outdoor Sport and Children's Play Space Audit (2021) and GI Assessment (2022) map extensive open space.	Quantitative data does not account for children's lived experiences of actual use of space.	Conduct qualitative spatial audits and hyper-local research with children to

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Statutory Guidance, has been undertaken.					compliment quantitative data.
Open Space Standards in accordance with the advice and requirements of Planning Policy Wales, have been developed.	Green	Green	Fixed play standards included in SPG; LDP policy and GI assessments align with Planning Policy Wales.	Play sufficiency priorities not explicitly embedded in OSA standards.	Embed children's right to play and play sufficiency principles explicitly in future planning policy reviews.
Green spaces are assessed for play value and potential to increase in play.	N/a	Amber	GI Assessment includes multi-functionality data for green spaces.	Play value of greenspace often overlooked.	Developer a broader and holistic approach to planning for play beyond designated play areas recognising the play function of the wider public realm.
Neighbourhood spaces are assessed for play value and potential to increase play.	N/a	Amber	Neighbourhood-level deficits identified in Play Space Audit; asset mapping supports community project planning.	Limited integration of lived experience data to define neighbourhood play value.	Combine spatial data with local engagement to assess neighbourhood-level play sufficiency.
Access audits are undertaken at all designated play spaces and proposals are implemented to improve access and safety.	Amber	Amber	Accessibility included in capital programme design and procurement briefs.	Accessibility tends to focus on the design of equipment and surfaces, less attention paid to whether children can independently access provision.	Undertake access audits of designated play spaces as part of a neighbourhood wide approach to planning for play.
A new fixed play provision standard has been developed and agreed.	Green	Green	Open Space Assessment and SPG set out benchmark standards for fixed play provision.		
Brownfield sites owned by the local authority are assessed for the potential for the site to be reclaimed to provide for children's play.	Green	Green			
The Smoke-free Premises and Vehicles (Wales) Regulations 2020 that require	Green	Green	BCBC playgrounds have been smoke free for an extended period.		

playgrounds in Wales to be smoke-free, are adhered to.					
'No ball games', or similar signs have been removed, to encourage more children playing in the community.	Amber	Amber	Recognised as outdated; informal play promoted in some community initiatives.	No borough-wide programme to review or remove 'no ball games' signage.	Audit signage and replace with play-positive messaging where appropriate as part of neighbourhood level approach to planning for play.
Play Priority Signs or similar, have been erected to encourage more children playing in the community.	Red	Red	Play priority signage previously purchased . Implementation has been limited.	No coordinated strategy for borough-wide use of play priority signs.	Expand pilot schemes and standardise signage as part of inclusive neighbourhood design.
A recognition of the importance of playing fields to children's play is included when any disposal decisions are made.	Green	Green	Deficit of playing fields makes it very unlikely that they would be disposed of. Asset transfer decisions consider multifunctional value; playing fields seen as valuable by councillors.		
Children and their families are included in any consultations regarding decisions to dispose of playing fields.	Green	Green	As above. Community engagement encouraged as part of CAT process.		
Access audits for all settings, as described in the Statutory Guidance, are undertaken.	Amber	Amber	Inclusive design in capital refurbishment of designated play areas.	Accessibility tends to focus on the design of equipment and surfaces, less attention paid to whether children can independently access provision.	Undertake access audits of designated play spaces as part of a neighbourhood wide approach to planning for play.
Guidance around creating accessible play space is referred to when refurbishing or developing new playgrounds.	Amber	Amber	Inclusive design of equipment and surfacing embedded in capital programme delivery.	Lack of consistency in how guidance is used by different departments or contractors.	Promote guidance and ensure training for staff and contractors.

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Partners collaborate to identify a mechanism for assessing the impact of speed reduction and other road safety measures on the opportunity for children to play outside in their communities.	Green	Amber	Active travel focus group identified need to monitor play impact of 20mph and school street zones.	No agreed mechanism to assess impact of traffic calming measures on children's freedom to play.	Establish shared performance measures for play sufficiency that can be used to evaluate interventions.
There is a plan to reduce the negative effect of busy roads and junctions through the introduction of speed reduction measures and provision of safe crossing points/routes for pedestrians and cyclists.	Green	Green	Commitment to 20mph in residential areas; Transport and active travel plans prioritise walking and cycling.	Consideration of children's access to opportunities for play not embedded in active travel planning.	Prioritise play access in traffic calming schemes and neighbourhood planning.
There is a plan(s) to improve walking and cycle access to parks, outdoor play facilities and local leisure centres from residential areas. To be included on the Active Travel Network Maps.	Green	Green	Active Travel plans and infrastructure improvements are likely to have indirectly benefitted children and their play.	Access routes to leisure/play spaces not consistently mapped or supported.	Ensure parks and play spaces are fully integrated into active travel infrastructure improvements.
Road safety grants and/or other funding is used to provide pedestrian safety training and cycling training for children.	Green	Green	Road Safety Team delivers Kerbcraft and National Standards cycle training in schools.		
There is an accessible and well-promoted way of arranging temporary road closures, to support more children to play outside their homes.	Amber	Amber	Draft procedures for Play Streets developed; supported by senior officers and elected members.	Pilot yet to be launched; low public awareness and operational clarity.	Implement pilot and promote guidance for communities and local partners.
Active Travel Act guidance is used when considering new developments and changes to the highway network/urban realm to ensure that safe and convenient routes for walking, wheeling and cycling are incorporated from the start.	N/a	Green	Planning and highways teams incorporate AT guidance into new developments.	Limited awareness of implications for children's play and freedom of movement.	Embed play sufficiency criteria into planning checklists and staff training.

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Child pedestrian road accident casualty data is used to inform the location and design of interventions which help children get around independently in their communities.	Green	Amber	Road safety data reviewed by transport teams; influence seen in Safe Routes and school street pilots.	No formal requirement to integrate casualty data into play planning.	Share child pedestrian data with play teams and embed in localised planning processes.
Active Travel Fund, Safe Routes in Communities and Road Safety grants and/or other funding is used to support access to opportunities to play	N/a	Amber	Active Travel and Safe Routes grants used to support walk/cycle links to schools and leisure sites.	Play sites not consistently prioritised in bid processes.	Include play site access in all relevant infrastructure funding bids.
The Local Development Plan recognises and addresses the outdoor play needs of children.	Green	Amber	The Local Development Plan (LDP) sets standards for public open space provision including designated spaces for play	Planning policy tends towards a narrow focus on designated play areas	Develop guidance that promotes a more holistic approach to planning for play beyond designated spaces alone.
Schools ensure that children are provided with a rich play environment for breaks during the school day.	N/a	Amber	Activity Pods used in some primary schools; secondary school pilot underway; outdoor play valued in wellbeing planning.	Break times often shortened; overly managed environments limit free play.	Promote free play in school policy and provide training for school staff.
Schools provide play opportunities during out of teaching hours.	Green	Amber	Schools provide a diverse range of extra-curricula activities. Holiday playschemes and enrichment activities delivered on school sites; community groups sometimes use grounds.	Provision tends towards structured recreational activities more than open-ended opportunities for play.	Promote the value of children having time and space for open-ended playing to school staff.
Schools provide access to school grounds for playing out of school times.	Amber	Amber	Draft guidance developed to support community access to school grounds; Some dual use sites supported by Prevention and Wellbeing.	Guidance not yet implemented; variable take-up by schools; concerns associated with maintenance of school sites.	Adopt guidance and develop borough-wide community use policy.
Guidance to ensure schools understand and ensure that regular outdoor play is not curtailed, is provided.	N/a	Amber	Some work done with specific schools to promote the value of play e.g. through the activity pods programme.	Play is not consistently well supported in schools, with reports of play times being	Promote the value of children having time and space for open-ended playing to school staff.

				reduced and more structured activities favoured.	
The importance of play is considered as part of the local delivery of the Community Focused Schools initiative.	N/a	Red	Play noted in school development projects as supporting wellbeing and inclusion.	Play not consistently featured in CFS initiatives.	Embed PSA principles in CFS planning and capital investment criteria.
The importance of play is considered as part of the local delivery of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme	N/a	Red	Play noted in school development projects as supporting wellbeing and inclusion.	Play not consistently featured in SCL initiatives.	Embed PSA principles in SCL planning and capital investment criteria.
The Health and Safety policies explicitly recognise the value of children being able to experience risk and challenge.	Amber	Amber	Draft risk-benefit guidance produced and aligned with Play Safety Forum principles.	Not yet adopted or widely used by schools or council teams.	Promote consistent approach through cross-department training and policy integration.
The Health and Safety policies and procedures incorporate a benefit-risk approach to health and safety assessments as recommended by ISO, the International Organization for Standardization.	Amber	Amber	Draft policy reflects ISO-aligned benefit-risk language.	Implementation across departments remains inconsistent.	Promote consistent approach through cross-department training and policy integration.
The local authority offers the provision of insurance through the local authority scheme, to all third sector play providers and community councils.	Amber	Amber	TBA		

Additional comments

Planning policy and guidance

Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) has a strong policy framework in place to support the protection and provision of spaces where children can play. The Local Development Plan (LDP) policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) set out clear standards for public open space provision including designated spaces for play, particularly in relation to new housing developments. This includes highlighting

shortfalls in existing provision and clarifying requirements for developer contributions to address these gaps. The SPG on Outdoor Recreation Facilities and New Housing Development (2022) strengthens these commitments by providing clear benchmarks, using Fields in Trust standards, and promoting inclusive design principles. However, the focus of the SPG is largely on new development, with less emphasis on addressing the quality and availability of play provision in existing neighbourhoods.

The council's wider policy commitments, including the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, support a broader vision of play-friendly, walkable neighbourhoods where children can easily access playable spaces on foot or by bike. However, while the local authority's planning and transport strategies indirectly align with the goals of play sufficiency, they do not yet make this alignment explicit or fully integrate children's right to play as a policy driver.

The 20-Minute Neighbourhood Background Paper (produced to inform the LDP) further supports the development of compact, connected communities where residents can meet most daily needs within a short walk or cycle. This principle has the potential to benefit children's freedom of movement and access to local places for play. Yet, the paper stops short of explicitly addressing the importance of play or setting out play-focused design standards, missing an opportunity to reinforce the Play Sufficiency Duty within neighbourhood planning.

Recent progress has been made in embedding more nature-based approaches and biodiversity goals into public space planning, as highlighted in the Porthcawl Placemaking Strategy and the council's Biodiversity Duty Plan (2022–2025). The Biodiversity Duty Plan focuses on nature-based solutions, climate resilience, and green infrastructure, creating opportunities to design more diverse and playful outdoor environments. However, as with the other strategies, the potential synergy with play sufficiency is implicit rather than clearly stated.

Overall, Bridgend's planning policies and guidance create a supportive environment for play by addressing open space standards, walkability, green infrastructure, and inclusive design. However, the Play Sufficiency Duty is not consistently or explicitly referenced across these policies. There is a clear opportunity to strengthen the alignment between planning, transport, and environmental strategies and to make children's right to play a visible, cross-cutting priority in policy and design at all levels.

Public open space audit and green infrastructure assessment

BCBC's Outdoor Sport and Children's Play Space Audit (2021) provides an analysis of the amount and distribution of public open spaces across the county borough. This document is intended to provide evidence to support planning decisions, justifying the need for new provision and associated developer contributions, as well safeguarding existing facilities. In doing so the assessment provides baseline data

for planning the provision of spaces where children can play, informing investment priorities, and shaping the delivery of open space improvements.

Importantly, the audit provides a quantitative analysis of different typologies of space by geographic area, and recognises that other considerations relating to accessibility, proximity and the quality of provision will be important considerations in planning decisions. This emphasises the need for more granular and qualitative insights regarding children's actual access to and use of space.

The typologies of spaces covered by the audit include playing pitches, other outdoor sports provision, equipped / designated play areas, other outdoor provision (including MUGAs and skateboard parks), and amenity green spaces.

The following standards (in line with Fields in Trust guidance) in respect of the amount of space per 1000 population are identified for each typology:

1. Playing pitches 1.2 hectares
2. Other outdoor sports 1.6 hectares
3. Designated play areas 0.25 hectares
4. Other outdoor provision 0.3 hectares
5. Amenity greenspace 1.22 hectares

The audit divides the county into the 8 smaller 'sub-areas' Bridgend, Garw Valley, Llynfi Valley, Ogmore Valley, Pencoed, Porthcawl, Pyle Kenfig Hill and Cornelly, and Valleys Gateway.

For each sub-area, maps of every identified space, its typology, location and size are provided. For each typology of space, quantitative data is then provided on how much space there should be based on the agreed standard, how much space there actually is, and the extent to which this represents a surplus or deficit compared with the agreed standard. Data from the 2011 census is used for these calculations due to the unavailability of more up to date population data at the sub local authority level at the time of production. The audit therefore suggests that findings should be considered conservative and subject to regular review.

The audit confirms that there is considerable variation across the County Borough in terms of the different types of provision available and the related surpluses and deficits. All 8 sub-areas are identified as having deficits in playing pitches, other outdoor sports, designated play areas, and other outdoor provision (with the exception of Pencoed for playing pitches). The greatest deficits are consistently identified as

being in the Bridgend, Llynfi Valley, Porthcawl, and Pyle Kenfig Hill and Cornelly areas. In contrast, the only typology of space where all sub-areas are identified as having a “surplus” is in amenity green space, with the most significant being in Bridgend, Pyle Kenfig Hill and Cornelly, Pencoed, and Llynfi Valley.

These figures suggest that in some situations it may not be the total amount of space that is lacking but the type of space based on particular typologies. However, these headline figures also mask further variations at a hyper-local level. Furthermore, without data on children’s lived experiences, the audit provides limited insights in terms of how this availability of space influences children’s opportunities for play.

The Green Infrastructure Assessment (2022) is intended to guide and inform the planning and delivery of green infrastructure across Bridgend. It establishes a baseline for a holistic, proactive, and positive approach to managing and enhancing the county borough’s natural assets - particularly in the context of the growth projected in the revised Local Development Plan (LDP). The assessment also serves as a tool to support the implementation of local planning policies related to green infrastructure, aiming to embed green infrastructure principles into land use planning, design, and management, and to ensure that green infrastructure is a central and significant component of housing developments and broader infrastructure projects.

The Green Infrastructure Assessment builds on the public open space audit by including but also looking beyond public open spaces to incorporate a much wider variety of space, including natural assets such as woodlands, grasslands, open water and coastal areas. In doing so it provides a broader strategic framework, identifying the county’s parks, waterways, active travel routes, and green corridors as interconnected assets that deliver environmental, social, and health benefits. While this assessment recognises the contribution of green spaces to wellbeing and recreation, it focuses mainly on environmental functions such as biodiversity, flood management, and climate resilience. The specific value or potential of natural spaces for play is less developed in the current analysis, leaving scope to strengthen the integration of play sufficiency objectives into future green infrastructure planning.

The assessment uses the same 8 sub-areas as the public open space audit, with detailed maps and profiles for each area - data and resources that would be useful when planning for play at a localised level.

Overall, the council’s open space and green infrastructure assessments provide a valuable platform for understanding and improving children’s access to outdoor play. However, there is an opportunity to move beyond measuring quantity and distribution to explore

children's access to and use of space more systematically. Combining quantitative audits with insights from children's lived experiences would strengthen the council's ability to plan and deliver public spaces that meet the needs of children across all communities.

Furthermore, while designated play spaces are highly valued by both children and adults, an overly narrow focus on their provision carries several risks. It can reinforce the perception that children's play belongs only in specific, confined areas and is inappropriate elsewhere in the public realm. This perspective risks overlooking the potential of wider public spaces (such as streets, greenspaces, and more natural environments) as valuable assets for play. It may also divert attention from broader environmental and social barriers that restrict children's freedom to move and play, including those that limit their ability to access designated play areas. Crucially, it does not reflect the reality of children's play, which typically occurs across a much broader range of everyday spaces. To respond effectively to children's needs, a more holistic, neighbourhood-based approach to planning for play is required — one that pays attention to and supports children's freedom of movement and ensures a diverse mix of accessible, welcoming, and playable public spaces.

Master planning projects

Bridgend County Borough has several active and emerging master planning initiatives — including strategic sites at Porthcawl Waterfront and Bridgend Town Centre - that offer significant opportunities to embed play sufficiency into long-term spatial development. These projects reflect a growing emphasis on placemaking, sustainability, and community wellbeing, all of which are consistent with the core principles of the Play Sufficiency Duty. In particular, the focus on active travel, accessible green infrastructure, and mixed-use development supports the creation of neighbourhoods where it is more likely that children can move freely and access a diverse range of playable spaces.

Although the Play Sufficiency Duty is not always explicitly referenced within master planning documents, there is clear alignment in terms of strategic goals - such as promoting walkable, connected communities, reducing reliance on cars, improving public realm quality, and enhancing access to nature. These priorities, if designed and delivered with children in mind, can contribute significantly to enabling more play-friendly environments. There is an opportunity to make this alignment more intentional by incorporating child-focused design principles, requiring impacts on children to be considered as part of planning processes, and involving children and families in the co-design of public spaces within master plan areas. Doing so would help ensure that these high-profile developments actively contribute to children's right to play and create inclusive environments that support children's wellbeing and everyday freedoms.

Capital investment in designated play areas

A recent count shows that BCBC currently owns and maintains 98 equipped play areas, while Town and Community Councils are responsible for a further 21. BCBC is also in the process of adopting additional equipped play areas from new housing developments.

A key strength of Bridgend's approach has been its dedicated capital investment programme for renovating these designated play areas. Running over several years and supported through both council and external funding, this programme has delivered substantial improvements across the county borough, with a strong focus on improving the appearance, accessibility and safety of equipment and surfaces. The Corporate Plan Delivery Plan 2025-26 continues this commitment.

This investment has largely been driven by the Play Sufficiency Duty, with funding for recent and ongoing upgrades being drawn from a combination of sources, including Play works, Section 106 contributions, and BCBC's own capital budgets. In total, around £1 million is set to be invested in the enhancement of local play areas through this scheme of work.

The programme has prioritised replacing outdated equipment, installing inclusive features such as accessible swings and multi-user play units, upgrading safety surfacing, and making general infrastructure improvements. Investment has been directed to both urban and rural areas, with particular attention paid to addressing historic underinvestment and achieving a fair geographic spread.

Recent years have seen notable improvements in some of Bridgend's flagship parks and playgrounds, particularly through targeted capital investment. Upgraded sites such as Newbridge Fields and Bryngarw Country Park now feature high-quality, durable equipment, inclusive and accessible features, and improved landscaping that encourages imaginative and active playing.

This sustained investment represents a clear strategic commitment to safeguarding and improving the borough's play space infrastructure and has been well received by communities and elected members alike. However, several limitations have emerged that should be acknowledged when assessing its long-term impact.

Firstly, the council has limited direct control over the design and selection of equipment. Procurement is typically managed through framework agreements and public tendering processes, which means that while broad specifications can be set, the final designs are often determined by suppliers and contractors. This can reduce opportunities for locally distinctive or bespoke solutions and potentially overlooks the experience of the local authority's own officers.

Secondly, there has been limited involvement of children and families in shaping the design and equipment selection. Anecdotal feedback from focus groups and community engagement indicates that in cases where children were not consulted, some new installations were seen as underwhelming, with equipment described as “boring” or not well suited to local needs. This highlights the importance of embedding co-production into future capital projects to ensure that children’s views and experiences inform design decisions.

Thirdly, while the capital programme has delivered visible improvements, it has primarily focused on formal, designated play areas. Less investment has gone into informal greenspaces, more natural play environments, or play spaces used by teenagers and older children.

Overall, the capital investment programme remains a major asset for Bridgend and a visible expression of the council’s commitment to delivering its Play Sufficiency Duty. By increasing opportunities for community and child engagement, the programme could have an even greater impact - ensuring that high-quality, easily accessible spaces are available to more children.

Play space assessments

While this capital investment is ongoing, there also remains considerable variety in the overall quality of designated play areas across the county, with concerns continuing to be raised in some communities. These differences are influenced by investment history, management arrangements, levels of community involvement and other localised issues. Such variables point towards the need for a localised and place-based approach to planning for play.

The capital investment programme has largely been informed by routine safety inspections of council-managed play areas. These inspections are undertaken regularly, with risk assessments and repairs guided by recognised safety standards. This process is focused on the maintenance, safety and condition of equipment and surfaces. Less attention has been given to the location, accessibility, design and play value of these spaces from children’s perspectives – or to other social and environmental factors that shape children’s experiences of safety (for example, traffic levels or natural surveillance from nearby homes).

Furthermore, while recognising the importance of safety, there were concerns raised in focus groups that overly risk-averse approaches may result in sterile or uninspiring spaces that fail to offer the variety, challenge, and adventure that children seek in their play. The suggestion being that improving the quality of Bridgend’s designated play spaces, requires sustained investment and maintenance, as well as a focus on play value and the development of a risk-benefit approach to decision making and design.

Community asset transfers

Community Asset Transfer (CAT) has become an increasingly important element of BCBC's approach to managing public open spaces. The CAT programme allows the local authority to transfer ownership or management of public spaces, including parks, playgrounds, and community facilities, to Town and Community Councils or other local community groups. This strategy has been used both as a response to budget pressures and as a means of fostering local stewardship and sustainability.

In the context of play sufficiency, CAT has provided a mechanism to protect local spaces for play that might otherwise have faced closure or decline due to reduced council resources. Several local playgrounds and green spaces have been transferred to community management under this scheme, particularly in smaller or more rural communities. This comes with the added benefits of CAT agreements stipulating particular considerations, for example Town and Community Council's needing to demonstrate that they have taken the access requirements of disabled people into account.

The CAT officer role, which supports communities through the transfer process, has been identified as a key strength in Bridgend's approach. This post has played a critical role in helping community organisations build governance capacity, develop funding bids, prepare business plans, and navigate legal agreements. As a result, some transferred sites have seen innovative improvements, with community input shaping how the spaces are maintained and used.

However, CAT also presents challenges and risks. Not all communities have the same level of capacity, skills, or access to funding, which can result in uneven outcomes across the borough. While some Town and Community Councils have been able to take on play areas successfully, others may struggle to manage maintenance responsibilities or invest in improvements. Supporting community groups to grow their experience and capacity also takes time. This risks creating a patchwork of provision, where the quality, safety, and inclusivity of play spaces may vary depending on local capacity and resources.

Whilst progressive in terms of the support offered, there is also potential to better align CAT processes with the Play Sufficiency Duty by embedding play sufficiency principles into CAT agreements, with technical advice and guidance on how best to provide for children's play. This should include supporting community organisations to develop a risk-benefit approach to the design and maintenance of such spaces.

Active travel and road safety

Active travel and road safety are critically important for enabling children to access spaces for play independently, safely, and confidently within their communities. BCBC's work in this area is guided by national legislation, including the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, and supported through local policies and improvement plans aimed at promoting walking, cycling, and sustainable travel.

The council has made notable progress in recent years in expanding its active travel network, particularly through improvements to walking and cycling routes that link schools, town centres, residential areas, and some key leisure destinations. Schemes such as the Pencoed Active Travel project, which reconnects communities divided by a dual carriageway, and new pedestrian and cycling infrastructure near schools in areas like Pen-y-fai and Coity, have improved local connectivity and supported children's mobility. These improvements indirectly benefit play sufficiency by making it easier and safer for children to reach local parks, playgrounds, and community spaces without depending on car-based transport.

Road safety initiatives, including traffic calming, new crossings, and National Standard Cycle Training delivered in schools, further support children's ability to travel safely to places where they play. However, feedback from focus groups has highlighted important gaps and areas for improvement. Active travel planning has largely focused on school commuting and adult transport priorities, with less explicit attention given to children's journeys to spaces for play or the creation of "playable streets" where children can play close to home.

In residential areas, concerns about traffic speed, volume, and unsafe crossings often deter children from playing outdoors or travelling independently to local play areas. While the council has mechanisms in place for temporary play street closures, these have been underused, and there is scope to promote this initiative more actively, particularly in deprived or high-density neighbourhoods where children may lack access to private gardens or local parks.

The council's active travel and transport plans also offer opportunities to embed more child- and play-focused priorities. For example, aligning active travel routes with local play space improvements, reducing traffic speed limits in residential streets, and incorporating child-friendly design into public realm projects could significantly enhance children's freedom and safety in their neighbourhoods. Similarly, stronger links between road safety education, active travel promotion, and play sufficiency planning would help ensure that transport and play strategies reinforce each other.

Support for play in schools

Schools in Bridgend play a central role in providing daily opportunities for play, and there have been encouraging developments in both primary and secondary settings. The local authority has worked proactively to strengthen support for play, although challenges remain in sustaining this progress and embedding a consistent, whole-school approach.

A key initiative in primary schools has been the Activity Pods project, which has provided 24 schools with shipping container style storage filled with loose parts and recycled materials to support play at playtimes. In June 2024, a survey showed that 16 schools were still actively using their pods, though some reported issues such as wear and tear, dwindling materials, or a need for additional training. The council responded innovatively by linking schools with Plan B recycling and Groundwork Trust to restock pods with surplus materials, making the programme more sustainable.

In secondary schools, a 'Promoting Play in Secondary Schools' project was piloted at Maesteg School, using student consultation, playground audits, and enrichment activities to improve breaktime experiences. This consultation process involved over 200 students and revealed that while 57% enjoyed breaktimes, many wanted more time, shelter, and access to varied opportunities. The school has since trialled flexible timetables, student-led enrichment clubs, and new outdoor equipment. Other secondary schools such as Brynteg also report a permissive culture towards break times with children allowed to access much of the school's outside areas with limited adult controls. There is also a growing focus on student enrichment in response to the New Curriculum for Wales, with recreational activities built into secondary school timetables. How playful and open-ended these activities tend to be is likely to depend on the staff responsible for them.

In primary schools, the Foundation Phase embeds play-based learning in the early years. However, as children move into upper primary, the emphasis often shifts toward more formal, structured learning. Focus group participants reported that break and lunch times are increasingly being shortened or tightly managed, particularly in response to behavioural concerns. Yet there is little evidence that reducing playtime leads to improved behaviour; in fact, several schools acknowledged that the strategy has had limited impact. At the same time, approaches to managing behaviour during breaks tend to favour structured activities, further reducing children's opportunities for self-directed play.

Access to space is another key constraint. Schools with only tarmac yards face significant limitations but where schools have fields children's access is also often limited to dry weather. In such situations, space becomes more contested, and children's freedom to move, explore, and

interact is more easily restricted. Midday supervisors, often central to managing playtimes, may not receive training in playwork approaches, and their role can also unintentionally shift toward control rather than support.

These pressures combine to create a school environment in which children's play is often undervalued or deprioritised. Without a consistent strategic approach, many schools are left balancing competing demands, and the space for unstructured, child-led play is easily eroded. This highlights a clear need for borough-wide guidance and support to ensure that every school can protect and promote time, space, and permission for children to play.

Concerns were raised by professionals involved in education about the costs associated with tried and tested school playtime improvement programmes like [OPAL](#) but also that schools may not understand the benefits and savings such interventions can bring about, for example through reductions in behaviour instances and the staff time required to respond to these. This highlights the need to provide school staff with more information about the value of supporting children's open-ended play.

Community use of school grounds for play

School grounds across Bridgend have significant potential to support children's play beyond the school day. As local, familiar, and often well-maintained spaces, they are especially valuable in areas where access to public open space is limited. The local authority has taken positive steps to unlock this potential, including the development of draft guidance on the community use of school grounds. This guidance addresses key practical issues such as insurance, safety, keyholder arrangements, and maintenance responsibilities, with the aim of encouraging more schools to open their grounds to local children and families after school, at weekends, and during school holidays.

strongest examples of this approach in action across many primary and secondary schools operating as community sites, where facilities such as sports halls and pitches are made available for community use outside of school hours. These sites host a wide range of recreational and sporting activities, including free holiday provision funded by the council - such as the Active 4 Life programme - and community-led clubs, many of which support children's play, either directly or indirectly.

The youth service, in such one instance, responded to concerns raised by the police about vandalism by running staffed sessions on a school site, which attracted 40 to 50 teenagers. In another case, a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) project in Pen-y-bont may help relieve pressure on a school site by providing an alternative location for ball games nearby. These examples illustrate how collaborative, neighbourhood-based planning can help address persistent challenges. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, but flexible, locally managed

arrangements - supported by schools, communities, and the local authority - could enable wider use of school grounds for play, particularly given the willingness among some schools to engage more openly with their communities.

Opening up school grounds could help address gaps in public play provision, particularly in areas where space is scarce and children's opportunities for informal play are limited. Building on existing good practice, a coordinated effort to pilot and resource wider community access - including addressing concerns around supervision, safeguarding, and cost recovery - could make a meaningful contribution to play sufficiency in Bridgend.

Risk-benefit approaches

Approaches to managing risk in children's play are key to achieving a balance between safety and the freedom children need to explore, test boundaries, and develop their capabilities. BCBC recognises the value of a risk-benefit approach and has developed a draft guidance document to support more proportionate, play-friendly decision-making across the county borough.

The guidance encourages those with responsibilities for managing risk in children's play provision to move away from a default of risk elimination and instead adopt a "safe enough" philosophy - where the physical, social, and emotional benefits of play are weighed alongside potential risks. It provides a framework for thinking about the aims and objectives of play provision that prioritises play value, children's freedom and their opportunities to engage with risk of their own volition.

Formally adopting the risk-benefit guidance and embedding it into all aspects of play provision - from design and maintenance to supervision and policy - is a necessary next step. This must be accompanied by active promotion and training for officers, schools, and community groups. Risk-benefit should become the default framework for decision-making across all play initiatives in Bridgend, helping to create rich, stimulating environments that support children's wellbeing, resilience, and right to play.

Agreed actions

Actions have been prioritised by focusing on those that are achievable within existing structures and financial constraints while offering the greatest potential for impact. The emphasis has been placed on actions that would help to develop a strategic, collaborative, and cross-cutting approach to play sufficiency, whilst maintaining existing assets and services that support play. Many of these actions address multiple aspects of the four themes covered in this assessment but each has only be identified once to avoid duplication.

- Continue capital investment in play areas, ensuring that children's views, experiences and preferences inform the design and development of all designated spaces for play.
- Promote the use of best practice guidance from Play Wales when developing designated spaces for play.
- Deliver one managing risk in children's play seminar per year to embed a risk-benefit approach across departments and partners (including schools and town and community councils).
- Develop a publicity campaign to promote temporary play street closures and work opportunistically to support the delivery of resident-led initiatives.
- Provide workshops on the Play Sufficiency Duty and the literature review Playing and Being Well as part of the annual suite of professional development opportunities available to both community and educational settings.
- Develop and pilot a collaborative neighbourhood model of planning for play actively involving children in hyper-local research, including those with protected characteristics. As part of this pilot neighbourhood planning process, work with local schools to pilot a school streets initiative, a school playtime improvement programme, and the agreed guidance on out of hours use of school grounds.
- Work proactively with three communities per year to deliver the collaborative neighbourhood model of planning for play, prioritising valley and rural areas and areas of higher deprivation. As part of this neighbourhood planning process, work with local schools to develop school street initiatives, improve the quality of play times, and implement agreed guidance on out of hours use of school grounds for children's play.
- Work with at least one secondary school per year to improve children's experiences of break times based on the Maesteg pilot.

Theme: Supervised provision

This theme relates to:

Matter D: Supervised play provision

Matter G: Playwork training and workforce development

To what extent does the local authority meet the criteria?

Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
An up-to-date record of all supervised playwork provision, as described in the Statutory Guidance, is kept.	Amber	Green	Audit of supervised provision completed as part of PSA; includes early years, youth, leisure, and cultural services.	Playwork provision limited to paid-for out of school childcare provision.	Promote the role of playwork provision in addressing situations of play insufficiency.
Playwork provision offered by the local authority provides a rich play environment, as described in the Statutory Guidance	Amber	Amber	Existing provision provides a range of recreational activities to children, with initiatives like Activity Pods in schools demonstrating approaches to creating rich play environments.	Few services formally labelled as playwork; limited open access provision.	Embed playwork principles in service design. Develop shared quality standards and provide support and training to partners.
The local authority ensures that partners offering playwork provision are supported to offer rich play environments, as described in the Statutory Guidance	Amber	Amber	Partner organisations provide a wide range of recreational activities.	Limited guidance or monitoring for play quality across third sector providers.	Develop shared quality standards and provide support and training to partners.
Staffed playwork provision that the local authority provides meets the regulatory requirements and the Welsh Government's National Minimum	Amber	Amber	Regulated early years settings meet CIW and NMS standards through regular monitoring.		Ensure all commissioned services meet NMS and embed quality indicators in contracts.

APPENDIX 1

Standards (NMS) for regulated childcare for children up to the age of 12 years.					
Staffed playwork provision that the local authority funds meets the regulatory requirements and NMS	Green	Amber	Services funded via Families First or Early Help are expected to meet registration standards.		As above.
Staffed playwork provision that the local authority's partners provide meets the regulatory requirements and NMS	Green	Amber	Commissioned services comply with safeguarding and insurance requirements.	Strengthen clarity on how standards align with playwork principles.	Review contracts to reflect playwork and play sufficiency frameworks.
Staffed playwork provision that is not registered under the Child Minding and Day Care Regulations is supported to ensure staff suitability and quality of opportunities for children to play.	N/a	Amber	Unregistered projects like Active 4 Life , Youth Hub, Wellbeing days and Discovery Days developed using co-design approaches.	frameworks for play in place.	Develop shared quality standards and provide support and training to partners.
Staffed playwork provision across the local authority works to a recognised quality assurance programme.	Green	Amber	Play included as a focus in QA processes for Early Years settings.	No borough-wide QA framework specific to playwork or supervised play provision.	Introduce a light touch play-based QA framework for staffed provision.
Settings assessed as part of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessments (CSAs) have been assessed in respect of the quality of play opportunities they provide and offer.	N/a	Amber	Play included as a focus in QA processes for Early Years settings.	Limited focus on the quality of play experiences of environments offered beyond early years provision.	Introduce a light touch play-based QA framework for staffed provision including childcare.
Local authority sport, physical activity, and active recreation plans are contributing to increasing access to play and recreational activities.	Green	Green	Comprehensive offered including Active 4 Life programme, leisure services and sports-based sessions.	Programmes often framed as physical activity and wellbeing	Ensure recreational offer include informal and play-based sessions.
The sports agenda contributes to the provision of sufficient recreational activities for children.	Green	Green	Comprehensive offer via schools, Halo Leisure and the Urdd, as well as other community groups.		Provide playwork training to staff facilitating recreational, sports based and cultural activities if appropriate

APPENDIX 1

The cultural and arts agenda contributes to the provision of sufficient recreational activities for children.	Amber	Green	Awen Trust offers comprehensive variety of cultural opportunities including play-based opportunities for young children.		Provide playwork training to staff facilitating recreational, sports based and cultural activities if appropriate
The Local Authority Youth Service provides for children's opportunities for leisure and association.	Amber	Green	Youth Network includes broad mix of universal and targeted leisure; youth hubs support free choice.		Introduced playwork provision for children in middle childhood.
The playwork workforce in regulated provision is supported to achieve the qualification level required by the Welsh Government's National Minimum Standards (NMS) for regulated childcare for children up to the age of 12 years.	N/a	Green	Flying Start and CSA-registered providers work toward qualification compliance; Early Years QA tracks workforce.	Playwork-specific qualifications not consistently prioritised across settings.	Promote playwork qualifications as part of broader workforce development.
The playwork workforce in unregistered provision has access to training and qualifications in playwork.	N/a	Red	Staff in community projects often bring play and playwork based experience from previous roles.	Limited access to playwork training or qualifications beyond registered childcare.	Promote playwork qualifications as part of broader workforce development.
The Local authority has a staff development budget	Amber	Red	Early Years and Families First budgets support some CPD; occasional play training sessions delivered.	No dedicated or protected budget for play or playwork development.	Secure training funds and promote cross-sector access to play CPD.
There is a comprehensive range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities available for playworkers in the area.	Amber	Red	Practitioners from leisure, youth, and childcare report strong interest in play-based CPD.	Limited access to playwork training or qualifications beyond registered childcare.	Promote CPD opportunities and partnerships to widen access to formal and informal learning.
Playwork is included within local Workforce Development strategies.	Amber	Red	Playwork discussed within Early Years and Youth workforce forums.	Playwork not explicitly named in formal workforce strategies.	Promote playwork training and qualifications in workforce development
Family support initiatives provide up to date information and support for parents to enable them to support their children to play.	Amber	Amber	Family Information Service and Family support teams offer advice on parenting and promotion of available activities.	Limited strategic approach to the promotion play sufficiency and children's right to play.	Promote coordinated play messaging and access routes for parents and carers.

<p>Early years and Flying Start plans and services recognise the importance of play and contribute to the provision of rich opportunities to play for younger children.</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>Strong focus on play in early years provision including Flying Start settings.</p>		<p>Ensure high-quality outdoor spaces and regular playwork CPD for Flying Start staff.</p>
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Additional comments

Playwork provision and the playwork workforce

Bridgend has historically supported a broader network of playwork provision, including open access community playschemes and after-school clubs led by qualified playworkers. However, 3rd sector opportunities do exist but are limited. Where playworkers are employed, it tends to be in out of school childcare but here again capacity has reduced as families have moved away from paid-for childcare arrangements.

Where playwork principles are in evidence - such as in inclusive programmes either internally or external community-led initiatives like the Caerau doorstep activity scheme - they are often embedded within broader wellbeing or support services. This dilution of playwork identity and practice represents a gap in Bridgend’s play sufficiency landscape. This is particularly significant in areas of higher deprivation where community safety concerns are likely to limit children’s freedom to play. Playwork has a distinctive role to play in overcoming such barriers.

With few settings employing qualified playworkers, opportunities for professional development, mentoring, and skill-sharing have diminished. This has implications not only for playwork but also for related sectors - including childcare, youth work, and family support - where playwork-informed practice could add value. Furthermore, as in the early years and childcare sectors, staffing challenges (including low pay, limited hours, and a lack of career pathways), further constrain the workforce, even where there is interest and willingness to embed playwork values.

Nonetheless, there is a clear appetite among professionals to build play expertise and opportunities to make greater use of playwork principles across non-playwork settings. Staff in schools, youth services, leisure, and early years settings have expressed interest in training on play theory, playwork principles, and risk-benefit assessments. Furthermore, many of the approaches already used in these services reflect key playwork values (such as supporting voluntary engagement, fostering independence, and creating flexible, child-led

environments) even if staff do not identify as playworkers. Making these links more explicit could help raise awareness of playwork practice and its relevance to a wider workforce. However, playwork qualifications are currently limited to the out of school childcare sector.

Moving forward, there is an opportunity for Bridgend to review its playwork offer and consider how playwork principles and practice could be more clearly supported through training, and partnership delivery. Strengthening the visibility of playwork and embedding its ethos in broader provision could help ensure that children have access to rich, child-led play experiences, even where dedicated playwork settings are not available.

School holiday provision

A range of services have traditionally been delivered to support children's play and recreation during school holidays. Currently this includes the Active 4 Life programme which provides free or low-cost holiday playschemes in targeted areas, including Maesteg, Caerau, Garw Valley, Betws, Central Bridgend, Brackla, Pencoed, and Porthcawl as well as the URDD providing a number of geographical opportunities. . These programmes combine physical activity with fun and social engagement, helping to reduce inequalities in access to recreation. However, the ongoing delivery of these initiatives remains precarious due to reliance on external grant funding including contributions from Town and Community Council. Food and Fun holiday enrichment schemes have also been delivered by schools in deprived communities, addressing food insecurity whilst also providing recreational opportunities during the summer break. However Schools have also struggled to deliver Food and Fun schemes due to the availability of staff during school holidays, The Corporate Plan Delivery Plan 2025-26 includes a commitment to enlarge this programme.. The Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing programmes (until their funding ceased) also offered free access to diverse activities including sport, circus skills, creative workshops, animal therapy, and water-based play.

Inclusive and targeted provision

Bridgend demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusive and targeted provision, with initiatives across youth work, leisure, cultural services, early years, and family support that focus on reaching children most at risk of missing out on social opportunities due to disability, disadvantage, or caring responsibilities. A key examples are Wellbeing days, youth hub and discovery days, which offers bespoke, co-designed sessions for disabled children and young people with complex needs. These events, delivered with support from social services, are tailored to individual preferences using 'All About Me' plans and include activities such as adapted swimming, craft, cooking, and outdoor play in accessible venues. Care-experienced children and young carers also benefit from dedicated group sessions, holiday

provision, and supervised recreational activities, often delivered in partnership with children and families services and community organisations. In addition, the council provides Leisure Access Cards to children and families known to social services, supporting free or subsidised access to Halo Leisure centres. Staff across youth hubs and cultural venues are briefed and trained to foster inclusive, welcoming environments for children with a wide range of needs and backgrounds, helping to ensure that inclusivity is embedded as a core strength of Bridgend's supervised play offer.

Welsh-medium provision

The Urdd plays a valuable role in promoting recreational play opportunities for children and young people in Bridgend through the medium of Welsh funding through external funding via BCBC. It delivers a range of regular after-school and holiday-time sports clubs, providing accessible and enjoyable physical activity in a culturally and linguistically supportive environment. These clubs offer opportunities to participate in games, team sports, and active play while reinforcing Welsh language use in informal, social contexts. The Urdd's provision supports both Welsh-medium pupils and those learning Welsh as a second language, helping to create inclusive, bilingual play environments. There are also plans to expand this offer further by introducing toddler sessions and swimming classes, ensuring that Welsh-medium play and recreation opportunities are available from an early age. In addition to its direct delivery, the Urdd's presence helps normalise the use of Welsh in leisure and play settings, contributing to broader goals around language revitalisation and cultural identity.

Early years services

Early years services in Bridgend provide some of the most consistent and well-embedded supervised play opportunities in the county borough. Delivered across both council-managed and commissioned settings, play is central to early years provision - not only as a developmental tool but as a right and daily experience for young children.

The core offer includes council-run and funded early education for 3-year-olds, Flying Start settings in eligible areas, registered childcare providers (including day nurseries, Cylchoedd Meithrin, playgroups, and childminders), and Language and Play programmes. Across these services, play is used to promote communication, emotional development, motor skills, and social learning, with outdoor play seen as a core part of the daily routine.

Flying Start settings operate in Bridgend's most disadvantaged communities and prioritise access to play-rich learning environments for children under four. These settings typically have well-developed outdoor play spaces and trained staff who deliver play-based learning in

line with the Curriculum for Wales and Foundation Phase ethos. These spaces often incorporate loose parts, natural materials, and sensory elements, offering young children opportunities for exploration and discovery.

In addition to formal settings, the Language and Play team delivers targeted support to families in Flying Start areas. Sessions take place in family centres and community venues and are often co-delivered with health visitors and family support workers. These sessions use play as a vehicle for family bonding, language development, and early intervention. Activities are inclusive and adaptable, with sessions incorporating music, movement, messy play, and storytelling.

The local authority also delivers training to early years staff on play theory and practice, including risk-benefit approaches and outdoor learning. Observational follow-ups are used to support reflective practice and ensure that play remains central to pedagogy and daily routines. Capital funding has been used to support outdoor play improvements, including surfacing and fencing upgrades in eligible settings. One identified strength is the requirement for applicants to explain how outdoor play and risk-taking will be supported when applying for capital funding - a clear signal that the council values play as a priority.

However, there are areas for development. While early years staff understand the importance of play, engagement with the broader Play Sufficiency Duty has been limited. Play is often framed in terms of learning outcomes rather than as a right in its own terms. Workforce shortages, staff turnover, and concerns about professional recognition remain ongoing challenges in the sector and risk undermining the sustainability of play-rich early years environments.

Out-of-school provision for under-fives - such as holiday clubs for nursery-aged children - is limited and not consistently available across the borough. This limits access to supervised settings for working families outside of term time. In addition, while Flying Start services are highly targeted, families in non-Flying Start areas may not have the same access to supported play sessions, particularly if they live in more rural areas.

Overall, early years services in Bridgend deliver high-quality, play-centred provision for young children, particularly in areas of deprivation. Strengthening links between these services and the broader play sufficiency framework would open up opportunities for joint training, shared planning, and more family-focused engagement, which would in turn support a more consistent approach to supporting children's play across all age groups.

Youth services

Supervised provision for older children in Bridgend is delivered through a strong network of partners coordinated under the Bridgend Youth Network, a borough-wide strategic and operational forum that brings together statutory and third-sector organisations involved in youth support. This collaborative approach enables a wide and flexible offer for 11- to 17-year-olds, combining universal youth work, targeted support, and informal recreational opportunities. The network is led by the local authority's youth service but includes delivery by organisations such as Halo Leisure, Awen Cultural Trust, Valleys Kids, KPC Youth & Community, and YMCA Bridgend.

The council's youth service plays a central role within this partnership, delivering a mix of centre-based youth work, outreach sessions, and school-linked provision. Youth workers create supportive, inclusive environments for informal interaction, creative expression, and social play. Sessions are designed to be responsive to young people's interests and needs, with a focus on empowerment and voluntary participation — both of which align closely with play sufficiency principles.

A flagship feature of the offer is the network of inclusive youth hubs, delivered in partnership with Halo Leisure. These spaces provide safe, welcoming environments where young people can access sports and games equipment, informal recreational activities, and wellbeing support.

The youth service and its partners also contribute to seasonal supervised provision, particularly during school holidays. This includes activities delivered through the Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing programmes (prior to their discontinuation), which offered free access to a wide range of experiences including climbing, circus skills, arts workshops, and social events. Many of these sessions were staffed by youth workers and community leaders and were delivered in community halls, leisure centres, and public outdoor spaces.

While this partnership model is a strength, access remains uneven across the borough. Provision is generally stronger in urban areas such as Bridgend town, Maesteg, and Porthcawl, while communities in the Llynfi, Ogmore, and Garw Valleys have fewer options and limited outreach. Transport continues to be a barrier for young people in rural areas, particularly outside of school hours.

The youth sector also faces workforce challenges, including difficulties recruiting and retaining qualified youth workers, especially in part-time roles. Many partner organisations operate on short-term funding cycles, limiting their ability to sustain provision year-round or invest in long-term relationship building with young people.

Despite these constraints, both BCBC Youth Services and the Bridgend Youth Network offers a strong foundation for developing play sufficiency for older children. It brings together a diverse set of partners, shares expertise, and supports flexible, community-based provision that reflects the interests and lived realities of young people. Strengthening the links between this network and the broader play sufficiency framework - including data sharing, joint planning, and shared outcomes - would help ensure that teenagers' right to play, leisure, and informal social space is recognised and supported across the system.

Leisure services

Leisure services in Bridgend play a significant role in delivering supervised recreational opportunities for children, contributing directly to the play sufficiency offer. The majority of these services are delivered through Halo Leisure, a charitable trust commissioned by BCBC to manage the county's leisure centres and swimming pools,. Halo operates in partnership with council teams and third-sector organisations, offering a blend of structured and semi-structured recreation opportunities that are open to all, with targeted access for vulnerable groups.

A key feature of Halo's contribution to play sufficiency is its provision of inclusive holiday activity programmes funded by town and community councils , often run from leisure centres and sports facilities during school breaks. These programmes include multi-sport sessions, swimming, climbing, games, and creative activities, with many of them designed to be accessible to children with protected characteristics. Halo also supports inclusive youth hubs for 8–25-year-olds, where children and young people can engage in social and recreational activities in a supervised and supportive environment.

Access to these services is supported through various mechanisms. Leisure Access Cards are available for children and families known to Social Services, allowing free or subsidised use of facilities. In previous years, Halo has also been a key delivery partner in Welsh Government-funded initiatives such as Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing, offering free play and recreational activities to large numbers of children and young people across the county borough.

In addition to centre-based provision, Halo supports schools through the delivery of swimming programmes, balance bike training, and active travel awareness sessions, helping to embed physical activity and mobility skills in early education. These services, while not always labelled as “play,” form part of a wider ecology of supervised, recreational, child-led activities that contribute to children's wellbeing and everyday enjoyment of life.

Despite these strengths, some barriers remain. Access to leisure services is more challenging for children in rural or valley communities, particularly where transport options are limited or where there is no local leisure facility. While Halo has a strong record of inclusion, cost may still be a factor for families not eligible for targeted support.

Nonetheless, Bridgend's partnership with Halo Leisure is a core strength of its supervised provision offer. It provides a scalable, inclusive model that blends recreational infrastructure with a commitment to equity and access. With continued support and closer alignment to play sufficiency planning - including promotion, outreach, and co-design with children - leisure services have the potential to reach even more children and help fill gaps in accessible, high-quality supervised play provision across the borough.

Cultural services

Cultural services in Bridgend provide a distinctive and often under-recognised contribution to supervised play provision, offering creative, social, and exploratory opportunities that are especially valued by families with younger children. The council's strategic partnership with Awen Cultural Trust is central to this area of provision. Awen operates a network of libraries, arts venues, and cultural programmes across the borough, and its approach to delivery blends informal learning, community development, and inclusive play opportunities. Awen Trust also manages the Bryngarw Country Park, a valuable asset in respect of destination spaces for play.

Libraries in Bridgend are explicitly designed to be welcoming, family-friendly spaces. Weekly sessions such as Bounce and Rhyme, storytimes, and craft workshops are well-attended and free of charge. These supervised sessions create regular opportunities for babies, toddlers, and young children to engage in social, creative, and sensory play in a safe, staffed environment. In some libraries, children are actively encouraged to move, explore, and interact with books and play materials, breaking with more traditional models of library behaviour.

Awen's newer library spaces have been designed with play in mind. The Maesteg Town Hall library, for example, incorporates physical play features such as stairs and climbing walls, as well as informal seating, floor cushions, and interactive installations. Staff are trained to support children's engagement in these spaces and to support parents and carers in using the environment playfully. Libraries also serve as safe, accessible spaces for families during school holidays and at weekends, particularly in areas where access to other community facilities may be limited.

Beyond libraries, Awen's theatre and arts programmes also provide play-adjacent experiences, including supervised youth theatre, holiday drama workshops, and participatory cultural events. While these activities are often structured, they retain a strong element of creative exploration, improvisation, and social interaction - aligning closely with the wider goals of play sufficiency.

While these services are not always identified as part of the supervised play landscape, they meet the criteria in important ways: they are staffed, free or low cost, offer regular and structured opportunities, and are open to all. They are also particularly well-used by families with young children and those seeking quieter, more creative forms of play.

Challenges remain in terms of expanding provision for older children, ensuring equity of access across the borough, and embedding cultural services more explicitly within the play sufficiency framework. Nonetheless, Bridgend's partnership with Awen Cultural Trust provides a strong model for how cultural infrastructure can support play sufficiency, especially when delivered through a community development lens.

Alignment of services with play sufficiency

While Bridgend offers a wide range of supervised provision across sectors, there is currently no formal, joined-up strategy that ensures services are consistently aligned with the goals of the Play Sufficiency Duty. Opportunities for play are embedded within early years, youth, leisure, and cultural services, this is often as a secondary outcome or under a different policy label - such as wellbeing, enrichment, inclusion, or diversionary activity .

Many council services contribute meaningfully to play sufficiency, whether through direct provision (such as inclusive youth hubs or library play sessions), or through enabling access (such as free leisure cards, outreach transport, or social prescribing). However, these contributions are not systematically coordinated or evaluated against the Play Sufficiency Duty. There is no shared set of play outcomes or reporting framework that allows partners to reflect on how their work supports children's play in a consistent way.

This disconnect is not a reflection of disinterest or resistance. Across all focus groups (including early years, youth services, health and leisure, and cultural services) professionals expressed a strong commitment to supporting children's play and welcomed the idea of greater alignment. However, most had not previously been involved in play sufficiency planning or seen their work as directly contributing to it. Several noted that clearer language, shared planning tools, and more opportunities for cross-departmental collaboration would help them engage more intentionally with play sufficiency objectives.

There are promising examples of local services beginning to recognise their role within the broader play agenda. Similarly, the use of capital grant criteria requiring early years providers to demonstrate how they support outdoor and risky play shows how targeted funding can help embed play-based objectives into service planning.

The Bridgend Youth Network, Bridgend Inclusive Network, Bridgend Young Carers Network and partnerships with Halo Leisure and Awen Cultural Trust also demonstrate the potential of a strategic, commissioned approach to delivering play sufficiency through external providers. However stronger links to play sufficiency outcomes should be highlighted and reported on.

Better alignment will not only enhance the reach and quality of supervised provision but also ensure that play is understood and delivered as a shared responsibility by all those working to support children's health and wellbeing.

Monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance

Monitoring, evaluation, and quality assurance of supervised play provision in Bridgend vary significantly across sectors, with some areas demonstrating well-established systems and others relying more on informal feedback and short-term reporting requirements.

In early years provision, robust quality assurance is embedded through national regulatory frameworks. All registered childcare and early education settings — including those delivering Flying Start — are subject to Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) registration and inspection. Settings working with the local authority also engage with internal quality monitoring processes. Observational visits, practitioner training, and capital grant applications are often used as points of dialogue about how well settings are supporting play. However, the focus is primarily on learning outcomes, health and safety, or developmental milestones not necessary an outcome to be evaluated in its own right.

In leisure and cultural services, quality assurance is typically built around user satisfaction, participation numbers, and service-specific targets (e.g. number of swims, library visits, or event attendance). Halo Leisure and Awen Cultural Trust collect regular data and conduct public feedback exercises. While some partners recognise the importance of qualitative feedback - especially from children and families - there is currently no shared framework or common indicators for assessing the quality of play experiences in supervised settings.

Youth services, particularly those working with vulnerable groups, tend to collect outcome data linked to wellbeing, confidence, and engagement. Many third-sector organisations report on participation and inclusion outcomes not necessary around children's experiences

of play. There are examples of good practice, such as youth-led evaluations and feedback mechanisms used in youth hubs or creative projects, but these are locally specific and not yet integrated into a broader system for play evaluation.

For seasonal and grant-funded provision (such as Active 4 Life, youth Hub, wellbeing days, or Summer of Fun programmes) monitoring tends to be short-term and output-focused, capturing numbers, location, and broad demographics. While this data is useful for demonstrating reach and targeting, it does not routinely capture children's experiences or assess the quality and play value of provision. Feedback from families and practitioners is collected in some cases.

Overall, Bridgend has many of the pieces needed for effective monitoring and quality assurance, but these are dispersed and sector-specific. There is currently no shared tool or process for assessing the sufficiency, inclusivity, or quality of supervised play provision across the borough. This makes it difficult to evaluate progress against the Play Sufficiency Duty or to understand where gaps in quality, access, or impact might exist.

Developing a light-touch, flexible framework for evaluating supervised play across sectors could support more consistent learning, accountability, and improvement - without overburdening providers.

Agreed actions

Actions have been prioritised by focusing on those that are achievable within existing structures and financial constraints while offering the greatest potential for impact. The emphasis has been placed on actions that would help to develop a strategic, collaborative, and cross-cutting approach to play sufficiency, whilst maintaining existing assets and services that support play. Many of these actions address multiple aspects of the four themes covered in this assessment but each has only be identified once to avoid duplication.

- Embed play sufficiency objectives in planning across early years, education, youth, leisure, and cultural services.
- Develop a light touch quality assurance framework for supervised provision with clear principles, quality standards, and expectations for inclusive, child-led play.
- Support the playwork qualification L2APP to staff across the youth, early years, leisure, and cultural sectors.

- Continue and scale inclusive, equity-focused programmes linked to 3rd sector networks, youth Hub, wellbeing days, Leisure Access Cards,

Theme: Policy synergy, engagement, advocacy and information

This theme relates to:

Matter F: Measures used to promote access to play, including the provision of information, publicity and events

Matter G: Training opportunities for the play workforce

Matter H: The level of community engagement and participation

Matter I: The extent to which other policies of a local authority take into account the need to enhance play opportunities for children

To what extent does the local authority meet the criteria?

Criteria	Previous PSA RAG Status*	Current PSA RAG Status*	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	What would address the shortfalls?
There is a clearly identified section on the local authority website, which gives information about opportunities to play as described in the Statutory Guidance (play areas, playwork provision, clubs and their accessibility).	Green	Green	'Play in Bridgend County Borough' webpage	Limited wider, proactive engagement strategy aimed at changing perceptions	Develop publicity campaigns aimed at promoting children's right to play.
Information on access to play opportunities and contact for support if required.	Green	Green	Website provides information about available spaces and services for play	No clear contact for play-specific support or inclusion advice.	Include dedicated contact points and guidance for accessing inclusive play opportunities.
Events which encourage opportunities to play and events for children and families are publicised and supported.	Green	Amber	Partners such as Awen , Halo, 3 rd sector networks run family events; community festivals sometimes include play.	focused events are regularly organised, however Play is not promoted enough	Support play within community events showcasing national Playday with cross-sector coordination.
Information which contributes to positive community attitudes to play is publicised.	Green	Amber	Some messaging via wellbeing and anti-poverty agendas indirectly support play.	Limited borough-wide messaging campaign to	Develop a strategic communications plan

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				promote positive attitudes to play.	highlighting the benefits of play.
Information and support for parents to help them encourage their children to play is publicised.	Green	Amber	Family support teams promote play through early years and youth work activities.	Information to parents can be fragmented and not widely promoted.	Create borough-wide parent-friendly guidance on supporting play and share via schools and health visitors.
The local authority engages with the media to encourage the positive portrayal of children playing in the local area.	Green	Amber	Media engagement noted in pilot projects such as Activity Pods in schools.	Media strategy not embedded across play initiatives.	Engage press and local media to tell positive stories and highlight children's right to play.
A comprehensive training needs analysis for the play workforce, as defined in the Statutory Guidance, has been undertaken.	Amber	Amber	Training needs identified through PSA; appetite for development noted across services.	Strengthen play-based training for the wider play workforce.	Providing CPD based on the findings of this assessment to departments and partners with links to play sufficiency.
There is a variety of learning and development opportunities offered to staff so that they can consider their role in supporting play.	Amber	Amber	Some opportunities exist via Flying Start, Early Years, and Family Support programmes.	Not all staff have access to learning about their role in play.	Broaden play-related CPD to all frontline professionals working with children.
There is a comprehensive range of continued professional development opportunities for a range of professionals who work with children.	Amber	Amber	A variety of CPD opportunities are available to professional who work with children.	Strengthen cohesive CPD programme for multi-agency staff linked to play sufficiency.	Providing CPD based on the findings of this assessment to departments and partners with links to play sufficiency.
Play sufficiency and other training awareness sessions are available for professionals and decision makers whose work impacts on children's opportunities to play.	Amber	Amber	Understanding Play Sufficiency workshop delivered to officers involved in this assessment.	Play sufficiency awareness to be embedded in induction or leadership training.	Deliver play sufficiency awareness workshops to officers with responsibilities that link to the Duty.
Initiatives to engage relevant groups in enhancing play opportunities for children in its area, are promoted.	Green	Amber	Much of the staffed provision available is informed by co-design approaches and service user feedback. CAT	Limited hyper-local research with children and collaborative neighbourhood level planning for play.	Develop a collaborative model of planning for play based on research with children.

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			processes encourage engagement of community groups.		
Community engagement is promoted in: Making space available and suitable for play	Green	Amber	CAT processes support community engagement in management and development of playable spaces. Some Town and Community Councils actively involved in providing for play.	Greater joined up approach to planning for play at a localised level	Develop neighbourhood-level planning model including community voices.
Community engagement is promoted in: Organising play events	N/a	Amber	Community events often include playful activities.	Play is often a secondary component of broader events.	Support community-led play events and promote through schools.
Community engagement is promoted in: Positive attitudes towards children and play	N/a	Amber	Third sector partners including , 3 rd sector networks, youth service, Halo Leisure, Awen Trust and the Urdd promote child-friendly approaches and spaces.	No specific campaign to shift community norms about children in public spaces.	Launch messaging initiative to promote positive intergenerational attitudes towards play
Community engagement is promoted in: Training on the importance of play	N/a	Red	Training embedded in some early years and community safety projects.	Training on play's value for volunteers and community leaders not routinely available.	Offer community-based play training sessions, including online resources.
There is a named person on the Local Public Service Board who champions children's play	Amber	Amber	Lead elected member for play confirmed in 2024	Play not yet consistently championed across all board-level forums.	Promote role and embed champion's involvement in service planning.
The Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan contribute to, and are incorporated within, the Well-being Plan	Amber	Amber	Play is referenced in Corporate Delivery Plan and supported through strategic aims.	Play sufficiency not yet explicitly embedded in Wellbeing Plan delivery mechanisms.	Include PSA actions and outcomes in formal Wellbeing Plan updates.
The local Public Health Team supports play and play sufficiency	N/a	Amber	Public health officers involved in PSA process and support neighbourhood play.	Play not yet a consistent priority in public health initiatives.	Include play sufficiency in Public Health Board priorities and planning frameworks.

There is a named person on the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) who champions children’s play	N/a	Red	RPB links discussed during PSA process; potential champions identified.	No confirmed named play representative on the RPB.	Nominate and support a dedicated RPB play champion.
The Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan contribute to, and are incorporated within the work of, the RPB	N/a	Amber	Play not yet embedded in formal RPB frameworks but acknowledged as relevant.	PSA and action plan not routinely incorporated into regional plans.	Integrate PSA outcomes into joint strategic needs assessments and RPB delivery.
Plans to reduce the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences recognise the importance of play and contribute to the provision of rich play opportunities	Green	Amber	Some recognition of the links between play and ACEs in Early Help and Resilience programmes.	ACEs planning doesn’t explicitly include play-based solutions.	Include play provision in ACEs resilience frameworks and programme design.

Additional comments

Strategic commitment to the Play Sufficiency Duty

Bridgend County Borough Council has made a formal and public commitment to supporting play sufficiency, most notably through its June 2024 Cabinet and Corporate Management Board approval of a cross-departmental, One Council approach to fulfilling the Welsh Play Sufficiency Duty. This decision marked a significant shift in how play is framed within the council - moving away from a primarily compliance-driven reporting process and toward a more strategic, whole-system response that recognises play as central to children’s wellbeing.

The Cabinet and Corporate Management Board report outlined a series of commitments, including the nomination of a lead elected member to champion children’s right to play and the establishment of a Play Sufficiency Steering Group to coordinate activity across departments. The report also acknowledged that, despite pockets of good practice, play sufficiency had not previously been embedded in the council’s core systems, and that more work was needed to ensure children’s right to play is fully recognised and supported across planning, delivery, and evaluation.

In approving these recommendations, the Cabinet and Corporate Management Board signalled that play is a shared responsibility that requires collaboration across department’s included but not limited to social services & wellbeing, education, housing, health, transport, leisure, planning, and community development. The report explicitly linked the Play Sufficiency Duty to wider council priorities, including

health and wellbeing, inclusion, and place-based regeneration, helping to position play as a cross-cutting issue rather than a stand-alone service.

While the high-level intent is clear, implementation of these recommendations has been affected by transition of a new group manager for Prevention & wellbeing with some of the agreed actions yet to be realised. Nevertheless, the Cabinet and Corporate Management Board decision provides a strong policy foundation for change. It has created the mandate for increased cross-departmental collaboration, better integration of play into service planning, and more consistent engagement with external partners. It also offers a valuable lever for strengthening advocacy, influencing wider policy development, and aligning investment decisions with the needs and rights of children.

This commitment is further supported by positive language in the Corporate Plan 2023-28 and more recently the Corporate Delivery Plan 2025-26, which includes a specific reference to play sufficiency. This latest update of the delivery plan is more focussed than previous versions with a reduced number of objectives, aims and performance measures. Even so, play features prominently, with a number of other commitments that align with the findings of this assessment that would also support play sufficiency. The table below highlights specific strengths directly relating to play sufficiency:

Wellbeing Objective One - A prosperous place with thriving communities		
Aims	Performance Indicators	Commitments / Projects
1.2 Protect landscapes and open spaces	DCO23.07 Number of green flag parks and green spaces (COMM)	1.2.1 Deliver projects such as woodland enhancement, develop and protect our natural environment in partnership with our communities and key stakeholders as part of our Bridgend Biodiversity Plan (COMM)
1.6 Provide opportunities for culture, leisure, and play	DCO23.10 Number of play areas that have been refurbished (COMM)	1.6.2 Continue the children’s play areas refurbishment programme and make sure inclusive play equipment is provided to allow opportunities for all. (COMM) 1.6.3 Enlarge the Food and Fun Programme for summer 2025 (EEYYP) 1.6.4 Develop whole Council action plan and networks to support the submission of the Play Sufficiency Assessment to Welsh Government. (SSWB)
Wellbeing Objective Two - Creating modern, seamless public services		
2.1 Improving how we engage with people, listening to views & acting on them.	CED59 Level of engagement (Welsh / English) across consultations	2.1.1 Improve how we communicate and engage with residents, including children and young people to help us become more customer focused and responsive. (CEX) 2.1.2 Improve the way we gather and use resident views (CEX)

		2.1.3 Improve the way we gather and use staff views (CEX)
2.4 Improve partnership working with partners, the third sector and Town and Community Councils	Number of children and young adults supported during school holidays (SSWB)	2.4.3 Work co-productively with our communities to develop their own solutions and become more resilient. (SSWB)

Leadership and partnership working

Responsibility for leading play sufficiency work in Bridgend is currently situated within the Prevention and Wellbeing directorate. Day-to-day coordination of the 2025 Play Sufficiency Assessment has been supported by commission partner Ludicology. External resources has been a key enabler for progress on several key actions identified in the previous Play Sufficiency Action Plan.

In a short space of time, the Development Officer has led work on a number of important strategic initiatives, including:

- Surveying and re-engaging schools using the Activity Pods programme, brokering a long-term restocking model with Plan B and Groundwork Trust.
- Drafting and coordinating interdepartmental collaboration on procedures for the community use of school grounds, including input from legal, health and safety, and insurance teams.
- Advancing work on a policy and framework for temporary play street closures.
- Supporting innovative school-based projects to improve breaktime environments in secondary schools, such as the student-led pilot at Maesteg.

This work provides clear evidence that even modest investment in play sufficiency leadership can have a significant impact.

There was a consensus among those involved in this assessment that maintaining a identify resources is essential to advancing play sufficiency in Bridgend. Without dedicated capacity, there is a risk that momentum is lost, especially in relation to partnership development, cross-departmental collaboration, and strategic planning.

Another barrier to coordinated leadership is the absence of a shared performance framework. While individual services collect relevant data, there are currently no agreed outcomes or indicators that allow departments and partners to evaluate their collective contribution to the Play Sufficiency Duty. Developing a light-touch, borough-wide framework would help link delivery across sectors, support accountability, and provide a clearer rationale for joint investment.

Awareness of the Play Sufficiency Duty also remains variable across the local authority. Many officers have had limited exposure to the Duty and few opportunities to understand its implications for their work. Engagement in this year's assessment process was described as the first time some professionals had been invited into a cross-sector conversation about play. Participants expressed a strong appetite for learning and welcomed the idea of further development sessions, training opportunities, and clear guidance on how their services could contribute to play sufficiency.

There is also untapped potential in developing a collaborative, neighbourhood-level approach to play planning. While some examples of good local practice exist, there is currently no framework for mapping and addressing play needs at a community scale. Supporting neighbourhood-level planning - with involvement from Town and Community Councils, schools, community groups, and families - would help tailor provision to local conditions and ensure that gaps in access, safety, or inclusion are addressed more effectively.

In summary, Bridgend has taken important steps toward building the leadership infrastructure needed to deliver on the Play Sufficiency Duty. To build on this progress, the council will need to secure resource to raise awareness of the Duty across all departments, develop shared planning and performance tools, and foster more localised approaches to co-producing play sufficiency.

Participation of children in planning and decision-making

Children's right to be heard in matters affecting them is a core principle of the Play Sufficiency Duty and a requirement under Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In Bridgend, while children's voices have informed the delivery of specific projects and services, there is currently no systematic mechanism for ensuring their participation in the planning and evaluation of opportunities for play across the borough.

Recent projects have demonstrated the value of listening to children's experiences. The Promoting Play in Secondary Schools pilot at Maesteg School, for example, was shaped by consultation with Year 7 and 8 pupils and led to tangible changes to the school breaktime

environment. Similarly, feedback from children and families has influenced decisions about youth hub, and wellbeing days. These examples show that when engagement takes place, it can directly shape provision in meaningful and responsive ways.

However, these engagements have tended to be project-specific and time-limited. The absence of a regular, borough-wide approach to gathering children's views means that the council currently lacks a robust understanding of how children and families experience play in their everyday lives, or how this varies across different communities and social groups.

There is a strong case for establishing a county-wide self-reporting survey for children and their caregivers, designed to assess the sufficiency of opportunities for play based on lived experience. Such a survey (like the version in the Welsh Government's Play Sufficiency Toolkit) could explore issues associated with time, space, permission and satisfaction, and could be repeated on a regular cycle to track progress over time. Embedding this into the council's engagement and planning frameworks would give children and families a clearer voice in shaping policy and provision.

In addition to large-scale survey work, there is also a need for hyperlocal research to understand how generalised issues - such as traffic, access to green space, or concerns about safety - play out in different neighbourhoods. This kind of place-based engagement is essential for understanding the realities of children's lives and identifying locally specific barriers or opportunities. Insights gathered through neighbourhood-level conversations, focus groups, or participatory mapping can inform more tailored, effective responses and support the development of play-friendly communities from the ground up.

To date, children's lived experiences have been largely absent from the strategic planning of play sufficiency in Bridgend. There is strong support from officers across services for changing this. Many participants in this year's assessment process expressed interest in co-production and called for new tools, frameworks, and support to help them engage meaningfully with children and families.

Play messaging, public information and promotion

Clear, consistent, and accessible messaging about children's right to play is an essential part of delivering on the Play Sufficiency Duty. It helps build public understanding, promotes a positive image of play in community spaces, and ensures that families are aware of the opportunities available to them. In Bridgend, however, there is currently no coordinated communications strategy dedicated to promoting play or supporting a more play-friendly culture among adults. Messaging remains fragmented, often delivered through individual services rather than as part of a wider, strategic narrative.

The local authority's official 'Play in Bridgend County Borough' webpage outlines a broad commitment to play sufficiency, showcasing a range of initiatives such as the Play for ALL initiative, volunteering opportunities, and the statutory requirement to carry out regular Play Sufficiency Assessments. It provides access to information about available spaces and services for play including playgrounds, beaches, nature reserves, libraries, leisure centres, and cultural venues, and signposts to key partners such as Awen Cultural Trust, Halo Leisure, and the Urdd.

Parents and carers play a pivotal role in enabling or restricting children's play, particularly in unsupervised community settings. Their attitudes toward safety, access, and social norms profoundly shape children's freedom to play. Evidence suggests that while many parents value outdoor play, their confidence is often undermined by concerns about traffic, antisocial behaviour, and lack of suitable local spaces. These concerns are particularly acute in areas of higher deprivation or where older children may be viewed negatively in public space.

At present, there is no borough-wide approach to understanding. Opportunities to involve parents in shaping local play policy are limited, and few families are likely to see themselves as partners in decision-making. The absence of a coherent public message makes it harder for residents, professionals, and elected members to recognise the importance of play or understand how local provision fits into a broader system of support for children's rights and wellbeing.

Play is promoted indirectly through communications from partner organisations (such as Halo Leisure's holiday activities, Awen's event marketing, or the Urdd's Welsh-medium sports clubs) but these are often service-specific, short-lived, and focused on programme uptake rather than on raising broader awareness of play's value. There is no consistent branding or shared language across services, and no coordinated use of council channels (such as newsletters, social media, or school communications) to highlight play as a shared priority.

Feedback gathered during this assessment reveals a strong appetite for more visible, joined-up messaging. Officers and partners have called for a shared communications plan, co-branded promotional materials, and accessible tools to help families navigate and understand the play offer. Suggestions include promoting children's right to play as part of wider wellbeing or anti-poverty campaigns; mapping supervised and informal opportunities; using social media and local media to share positive stories; and encouraging councillors to become visible champions for play in their communities.

There is also a critical role for messaging in challenging misconceptions (particularly around older children in public spaces) and in normalising everyday outdoor play as a vital part of community life. Campaigns that address concerns about risk, promote intergenerational tolerance, and highlight the benefits of child-led play could help shift public attitudes and strengthen community support.

Cross-sector policy alignment and advocacy

BCBC's overarching policy environment offers a strong foundation for supporting children's play, with a wide range of strategies demonstrating alignment with the principles of the Welsh Play Sufficiency Duty. However, beyond the Corporate Plan (discussed above), explicit recognition of play as a statutory responsibility remains limited, and there is a need to more clearly embed play sufficiency within the council's core planning, policy, and performance frameworks.

Planning policy provides some of the most robust levers for supporting play. The Local Development Plan (LDP) and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Outdoor Recreation Facilities require developers to contribute to play provision and outline minimum standards based on Fields in Trust benchmarks. The Green Infrastructure Assessment (2022) further strengthens the case for integrating play with climate adaptation, biodiversity, and health promotion. The Play Sufficiency Duty is not referenced in these documents, with missed opportunities to develop policy that better aligns with children's actual experiences of playing.

Other strategies (such as the Biodiversity Duty Plan, the Community Safety Strategy, and the Local Transport Plan) align with play sufficiency goals in principle but again lack explicit commitments to children's play. Active travel investments, urban greening, community policing, and traffic management schemes all offer opportunities to improve access to safe, child-friendly environments. Yet without a directive to think about children's play, these benefits risk being under-recognised. For example, the Local Transport Plan outlines important improvements to active travel networks but does not address traffic as a barrier to play or include child-friendly design principles in its vision for future infrastructure.

Advocacy for play could also be strengthened within sector-specific strategies. The Children's Social Care Strategic Plan, Education and Early Years Directorate Plan, and Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan all reference wellbeing, inclusion, and children's rights, yet none explicitly reference play sufficiency.

The limited shared play-related indicators or outcomes across strategies further weakens alignment. Without common measures, different departments and partners cannot easily track their contribution to play sufficiency or coordinate efforts to address deficiencies. This limits

the council's ability to advocate for play as a shared responsibility and to integrate play-friendly approaches into the design of services, infrastructure, and neighbourhoods.

To improve policy alignment and strengthen advocacy for children's play, Bridgend could:

- Embed the Play Sufficiency Duty explicitly in all relevant corporate strategies and planning frameworks;
- Introduce shared outcomes and indicators that reflect children's access to time, space, and permission to play;
- Ensure new housing, transport, and regeneration initiatives assess and respond to children's lived experiences of play as part of placemaking plans;
- Promote stronger cross-sector collaboration, ensuring play is considered across services including planning, transport, social care, education, and climate strategies.

By making children's right to play a clearly visible and shared objective across policies and services, Bridgend can shift from fragmented support to a whole-system approach that places play at the heart of child and community wellbeing.

Agreed actions

Actions have been prioritised by focusing on those that are achievable within existing structures and financial constraints while offering the greatest potential for impact. The emphasis has been placed on actions that would help to develop a strategic, collaborative, and cross-cutting approach to play sufficiency, whilst maintaining existing assets and services that support play. Many of these actions address multiple aspects of the four themes covered in this assessment but each has only be identified once to avoid duplication.

- Implement the Cabinet and Corporate Management Board approved recommendations associated with developing a play champion, named officers for each Matter and an active Play Sufficiency Steering Group.
- Sustain a resource to coordinate cross-departmental action and oversee delivery of the play sufficiency action plan.
- Share findings from the 2025 PSA with elected members and heads of service across the local authority.

- Deliver the Play Wales course Understanding Play Sufficiency with named officers for each Matter and members of the Play Sufficiency Steering Group.
- Develop a public-facing document that articulates a shared vision for play sufficiency in Bridgend, based on research with children and clearly aligned with well-being goals, that sets out performance indicators to track progress and evaluate impact.
- Ensure that explicit connections and references are made to the local authority's Play Sufficiency Duty within all appropriate policies and strategies.
- Embed consideration of the Play Sufficiency Duty within equality impact assessment processes ensuring consideration is given to impacts on children's right to play.
- Promote community events celebrating national Playday and use this as a vehicle to raise public awareness around children's right to play.
- Facilitate cross-departmental and multi-agency workshops on the topics of planning for play