



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council



AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE PLAY SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT (PSA) 2025-2028



JUNE 2025

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Local Authority Statement

In collaboration with our partners, we are committed to ensuring that all children and young people living in Neath Port Talbot can access quality play provision that is **creative, exciting and engaging**. We believe that accessibility to high quality play opportunities must be a strategic priority for children, young people and families resident across the whole Neath Port Talbot locality - including its urban, coastal and rural areas.

The Neath Port Talbot Corporate Plan 2024–2027, approved by the local authority in July 2024, sets out a clear strategic direction based on well-being objectives to be achieved by 2027. Two of these objectives are:

- all children get the best start in life
- all communities are thriving and sustainable,

The plan also includes a specific commitment to:

"Enhanced facilities, improved play and leisure services for children and young people."

Additionally, as part of the Neath Port Talbot Early Years, Children & Young People's Plan 2024–2029, Neath Port Talbot Council (NPTC) has committed to working with partners to develop a high-quality and diverse range of play, physical activity, and recreational opportunities. This supports the plan's Priority Outcome: *"All children and young people are supported to be physically healthy and feel mentally and emotionally strong."*

NPTC and its partners continue to recognise the importance of Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which states that *"every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age, and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts."*



Play is understood as a vital and important part of life for children, young people, and families as it *“lets children explore their world, discover who they are and make friendships. It helps children develop the skills they need for life, including socialising, problem solving, language development, creativity, communication, negotiation and listening”*.

NPTC and its Play Sufficiency Implementation Group (PSIG) appreciate what play can do for children and young people - their learning, education and social mobility. Together with key delivery partners, they're committed to ensuring all children and young people in Neath Port Talbot have access to high-quality play opportunities that are creative, engaging, and tailored to local needs.

We believe that giving all children and young people in Neath Port Talbot equal access to high-quality play helps mitigate the negative and adverse effects of some childhood experiences, including poverty, which can arise and escalate from a range of factors. Quality play supports healthier, happier lives and plays a vital role in children's physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

We also recognise that play means different things to different children. It includes a wide range of activities and having the freedom to choose **how** and **where** to play. To properly understand this we're committed to regularly engaging with children and young people to ensure the play opportunities we provide and fund reflect what they truly need and value.

Working with children and young people from various backgrounds and circumstances, parents, carers and stakeholders, the 2025 Play Sufficiency Assessment has resulted in the production of a co-produced Action Plan for 2025-2028.



The nine key actions emerging from this research, engagement, and consultation are:

Action 1 – theme of Population:

Continue to engage with children and young people from specific backgrounds and circumstances to understand their play needs and the barriers to accessing existing play spaces and clubs (supervised and unsupervised), including looked after children, children with additional learning needs (ALN), young carers, LGBTQ+ young people.

Action 2 – theme of Population:

NPTC and the PSIG will review how they can further engage with families to most effectively continue to inform children & young people and families about play opportunities, clubs and activities. This review will inform a Play-themed Communications Plan - which will, in turn, incorporate a plan to work further with local schools.

Action 3 – theme of Where Children Play:

Work with those responsible for and/or contribute to playgrounds and play spaces to establish a standard/good practice guide that strives for a balance between safety and challenge, and that places importance on the aesthetics of play spaces, ensuring that they are clean, well maintained and inviting.

Action 4 – theme of Where Children Play:

To ensure that All Wales Play Opportunities Fund capital grant is utilised to address priorities from the PSA in relation to playgrounds and play spaces.



Action 5 – theme of Where Children Play:

Neath Port Talbot Council and the PSIG will also seek to strengthen efforts to systematically and strategically promote the benefits of play to NPT primary, secondary and Welsh-medium schools - including so as to advise on any grant funding sources which have an objective of/criteria for upgrading outdoor and indoor school-based play resources.

Action 6 – theme of Supervised Provision:

The PSIG will continue to work with the NPT Early Years Support Team (responsible for CSA) and the Youth Service to address play themed gaps identified through both the Play and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment processes.

Action 7 – theme of Supervised Provision:

The PSIG will work with existing forums and networks – childcare providers, Third Sector Forum, Youth Providers Network – to provide and promote a comprehensive range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for playworkers in the area, including opportunities that support delivery of inclusive and accessible play.

Action 8 – theme of Supervised Provision:

To ensure that Holiday Playwork funding is utilised to address priorities from the PSA in relation to supervised play and population findings, particularly poverty, play in rural areas, and play for children with an ALN.



Action 9 – theme of Policy, engagement, advocacy and information:

To raise the profile of play at a strategic level through PSA Lead Officer attendance at NPT's Early Years, Children & Young People's Plan Priority Group 5 meeting, which includes children's play within its outcome. The group reports to NPT's Public Services Board through the Children & Young People's Leadership Group.

These actions  were shaped by these outcomes 

The 8 key outcomes from the consultation with 750 children and young people (see methodology on p.7 below) are presented here:

1. Young people across Neath Port Talbot consistently call for better access to Youth Club-style activities — especially 8–10-year-olds, who want age-appropriate clubs tailored to them.
2. Over half (51%) of 8–11-year-olds and a third (34%) of 12–19-year-olds say they rarely or never play or hang out with friends outside.
3. More young people in the northern part of the Neath Port Talbot locality (i.e. the Valleys Opportunity Area) say they don't play or hang out outdoors compared to other parts of the locality.
4. Young people prefer to hear about play opportunities via TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook.
5. Children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN) repeatedly say that 'getting to activities' is a barrier to play, especially when emotional or mental health needs make public transport difficult.
6. Many boys and girls want better local football facilities, including age-appropriate goalposts, nets, and marked pitches.



7. Skating is popular, with many young people supporting more skate parks and skating spaces.
8. Many boys and girls aged 12 to 19 said they liked youth shelters as places to hang out.



Methodology

The approach to the 2025 PSA was developed in September 2024 by Neath Port Talbot Council's Lead Officer for play, working in partnership with Place Group, a consultancy with experience in Play and Childcare Sufficiency Assessments across Wales. Place Group was selected through a transparent procurement process.

Key Methodology Elements

- Data gathering – both quantitative and qualitative
- Assessment – measuring data against the guidance and regulations to determine sufficiency
- Action Planning – creating a plan to address any gaps in play provision

Working with Neath Port Talbot's Early Years and Partnerships Team, input and support was provided by various other council teams including:

- Youth Service
- Social Care Services
- Planning Policy Team
- Education Welfare Service
- Vulnerable Learners Service
- Road Safety Department
- Family Information Service
- Communications and Marketing.

A consultation plan was developed to inform the assessment, this included:

- A programme of focus groups
- Engagement with internal and external play providers and professionals.
- Assessing the sufficiency of play opportunities in Neath Port Talbot in line with the guidance and regulations and completing Welsh Government PSA template.
- SWOT and gaps analysis.



- Drawing conclusions and recommendations from the assessment fieldwork, qualitative research and quantitative research
- Presenting the conclusions and recommendations to that Play Strategy Implementation Group
- Production of a summary report of the PSA - suitable to be published on the Local Authority website.

Engagement and Consultation Activities

Through a partnership approach, consultation was carried out by Neath Port Talbot Council officers (led by the responsible officer for Play Sufficiency) and Place Group team members between December 2024 and January 2025 and included:

- Focus groups with:
 - Primary and secondary pupils
 - Children in rural areas (e.g. Taigwaith)
 - LGBTQ+ youth
 - Refugee and asylum-seeking young people
 - Romanian community families
 - Welsh-speaking households
 - Children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN) and their families - at Ysgol Maes Y Coed, in Neath
 - Parents and carers

Each focus group session lasted around 60 minutes and involved approximately 8–15 children and young people, with a balanced mix of genders. In recognition of their time and in line with ethical guidelines, all participants received a ‘thank you’ voucher.



- Three online surveys for children and young people aged:
 - 6–7 years
 - 8–11 years
 - 12–19 years

These were piloted at Awel Y Môr Primary School and distributed through schools, the Youth Service, local play groups, and the council's Facebook page. In total, 560 children and young people responded.

- Video feedback was also collected from primary pupils, with 110 short videos (10–90 seconds each) expressing their views on play.
- A separate online survey for play professionals and providers was also conducted, gathering 32 responses to inform strategic priorities.

All findings from these consultations contributed directly to the final PSA report and the 2025 Play Sufficiency Assessment Action Plan, developed by the Neath Port Talbot Play Strategy Implementation Group.



How engagement with children and families has informed the Play Sufficiency Assessment

Three consultation methods were used to gather feedback from children, young people, and parents/carers across the area. This feedback helped shape the 2025 Play Sufficiency Assessment in relation to the nine strategic matters set out by the Welsh Government – i.e.-

- 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.

The themes raised through the engagement and consultation with children, young people and parents/carers identified priorities for Neath Port Talbot



Council and the Play Sufficiency Implementation Group to work on during the period 2025-2028. These priorities are to be aligned to issues such as:

- tailoring play to different age cohorts
- most effective promotion of play opportunities
- continuing to ensure that play opportunities are inclusive and;
- continuing to ensure children and young people feel safe while playing.

Some **headline feedback** which it is clear NPTC and the PSIG might prioritise over the period 2025-2028 is:

- Explore the viability of piloting a transition (from School Year 6 to School Year 7) type Youth Club(s)
- Improve how play information is shared by using social media platforms preferred by children and young people
- Ensure children and young people with ALN can readily attend activities, including addressing specific transport needs
- Ensure (to a degree that is financially feasible) that local football resources and equipment is age-appropriate
- Access the viability of localised Youth Shelters, considering existing youth spaces and nearby outdoor play opportunities.

The Play Action Plan that has been developed - and its need to consider the key nine strategic matters - has been informed to a broad extent by the feedback from children & young people and parents/carers - for example:

Thinking about the wards of Sandfields East and Sandfields West

in Port Talbot: consultation was undertaken at local schools (including Sandfields Primary School) with both children and young people and parents/communities - including representatives of the local Romanian community. Analysis of the responses to the targeted online survey with resident children and young people, indicated that approximately 30% of respondents were resident in wards which account for a relatively high incidence



of social disadvantage – including: (again) Sandfields East, Sandfields West and Glyncorrgwg and Blaengwynfi.

Therefore, NPTC believe that our understanding of the play needs of children and young people from low income families is a continuing strength, as is our continuing commitment to meeting their needs. The consultation also enabled NPTC and the PSIG to heighten its understanding that low income families and children and young people from lower income backgrounds can have challenges accessing play which is fee-based.

Such children and young people also fed back about the value of the local parks and green spaces and their accessibility and safety. They highlighted examples of specific (named) parks and green spaces where they believed improvements could be made - in terms of safety, age appropriate equipment and aesthetics. It was evident that we need to: (a) continue to monitor the upkeep and aesthetics of local parks, local beaches - and green spaces, in recognition of the fact that for some children and young people, who are resident in areas of deprivation, this is their only main opportunity for play and (b) continue to ensure that accessibility to specific provisions is promoted as widely as possible.

Thinking about the play needs of children living in the South Wales Valleys Opportunity Area (which encompasses Pontardawe

valley): as an outcome of engagement and consultation with such children and young people and families it became evident that ongoing work needs to focus on: (a) keeping local green spaces clean, well-maintained, and visually appealing for play

(b) finding ways to reduce costs for rural children and young people, especially around public transport and summer holiday activities

(c) improving lighting in play areas and along pathways to help children and young people feel safe.



This was further supported by additional consultation with play professionals and providers in early 2025, who consistently identified the theme of transport in rural communities as an ongoing challenge – for example:

“Transport is a problem for such children and young people if there are no opportunities in their particular location”.

“Continuing thought is needed to transport in rural areas to allow access to clubs and play facilities”.

The engagement has also enabled NPTC and the PSIG to develop targeted intentions – i.e.:

- Continue to raise awareness of existing play provision in rural communities
- Continue engagement with rural communities to gather feedback.

Thinking about the play needs of Welsh language speaking children and young people and their families to be understood and provided for:

approximately 60 Welsh speaking and bilingual: English and Welsh children and young people responded to the three online surveys - which were promoted by NPTC in late 2024 and early 2025. An additional 10 took part in a dedicated session at Pontardawe Youth Club, in January 2025. This level of engagement enabled NPTC and the PSIG to attain a good understanding of any specific needs/gaps aligned to the Welsh language. The feedback confirmed that current services — especially those delivered by the Youth Service are meeting key expectations, such as the need for safe hangout spaces for Welsh-speaking 11–19 year olds.

The outcomes of the engagement and consultation with children and young people identified the following two priorities for NPT and the PSIG to work on during the period 2025-2028:



Two clear priorities for 2025–2028 emerged:

- Promote Welsh language play information through appropriate social media platforms
- Support playworkers in accessing Welsh language training.

Thinking about the play needs of children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN):

NPTC and the PSIG are keen to work together co-designing projects with carers of children and young people with ALN, including through grant bids to develop more inclusive, accessible outdoor play spaces. Early 2025 consultation with play professionals also highlighted ALN as a key area for improvement. For example:

“Provision for ‘disabled children’s’ play is patchy”.

“More could be done to enhance staff’s knowledge of supporting play for children and young people with complex ALN”.

“Whilst park areas attempt to add ‘disability’ equipment, children with ALN can find it very difficult to access this space due to the busy and overuse of the equipment by teenage boys”.

“We have an idea of a Forest/Beach School collaboration with a sensory integration approach - which would be a fantastic project to support”.

Therefore, we are committed to supporting work with ALN children and young people including with physical disabilities, sensory impairments, Social Emotional and Mental Health needs, ASD and speech, language and communication difficulties - by exploring the types of play opportunities they value and ensuring existing projects remain inclusive. This work will also inform potential targeted grant funding bids.

Thinking about the play needs of asylum seekers and refugees are understood and provided for:

NPTC undertook specific engagement with such children and young people in late 2024 and early 2025, including those



from: (a) The Ukraine; (b) Syria; (c) Afghanistan and (d) Iran. Around 25 children and young people aged 5–17 took part in this engagement. Most said they enjoyed their play opportunities—particularly arts clubs, self-defence activities, and access to parks and green spaces. Football was a popular activity among both girls and boys. However, some faced barriers to joining local teams, including:

- a) not being able to afford boots
- b) not knowing who to contact
- c) lack of transport, as parents were unable to drive.

Our action will include more work between NPTC officers and play professionals, partners and providers to ensure that specific play ambitions of refugee and asylum seekers are met.

Thinking about the ‘play’ needs of LGBTQ+ Children and Young

People: NPTC Youth Services provides a targeted youth group for LGBT young people, which is primarily based (through the choice of young people) in Neath.

In December 2024, 18 LGBTQ+ young people took part in a dedicated engagement session. They felt their needs were largely met—especially through Youth Service support—but raised two concerns:

1. In some cases, local secondary schools and teaching staff need to show more support for in-school activities aimed at LGBTQ+ pupils.
2. LGBTQ+ pupils who are in Y7-Y9 may not have as much confidence to join targeted youth sessions.

NPTC will continue working with local secondary schools to better engage LGBTQ+ pupils - so they can meet other such pupils and find out about activities.



Maximising resources

Firstly, it's important to highlight that all outdoor parks, open spaces, and Youth Service clubs across Neath Port Talbot are free to use.

Additionally, Neath Port Talbot Council:

- a) has a Project Development and Funding Manager who can help community groups and existing play providers to access funding/budgets to deliver play projects and
- b) signposts providers and play professionals to funding available from a wide variety of grant giving sources.

The Neath Port Talbot Young Carers Service continues to offer young carers valuable opportunities to take a break from their caring responsibilities, spend time with other young carers, learn and have fun. Families First funding also continues to enable youth services to provide support for young carers.

In line with the grant criteria, funding from the Welsh Government Holiday Playwork project has been used to increase play opportunities for children and young people during the school holidays and to provide healthy food/snacks.

In 2025/26, five projects were funded across Neath Port Talbot, delivered in coordination with the Holiday Hunger programme to maximise reach. Emerging themes from the developing Play Sufficiency Assessment were used to inform priorities for use of the grant, which was opened for third sector organisations to apply for funding.

Approved applications will support delivery of:

- Play in rural wards
- Play for children with additional learning needs
- Play in areas of deprivation



NPTC childcare grants, covering both capital and revenue, also support play within early years and childcare settings.

Since the 2022 Play Sufficiency Assessment, the Council has appointed a full-time Play Sufficiency Lead Officer, reflecting its commitment to play as a community provision. This role leads PSIG activity and has enhanced networking between play professionals and providers since taking up post in November 2023.

Finally, the local authority continues to welcome the existence of Welsh Government programmes that have a play-themed focus and/or element - and will energetically continue to rollout such initiatives, supported jointly by the Play Sufficiency Lead Officer and PSIG. Such programmes will continue to include the Playworks Holiday Project and its vital role in reaching children & young people and families that may be experiencing disadvantage and challenges, plus, the Flying Start Programme - where colleagues in early years will continue to ensure that the free childcare/playgroup places for 2-3 year olds are well promoted and accessible to relevant families.



Monitoring

In Neath Port Talbot local authority, the Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Directorate holds strategic responsibility for play. This duty is led by the Director of Education, Leisure, and Lifelong Learning with the following officers holding responsibility for co-ordination and implementation of the Play Sufficiency Assessment:

- Head of Service for Early Years, Inclusion and Partnerships
- Early Years and Partnerships Coordinator
- Think Family Partnership Manager
- Play Sufficiency Lead Officer

The Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board Well-being Plan 2023-28 sets out 'to ensure that all children get the best start in life'. The local authority plays a key role in delivering change within this priority area, this includes actions and monitoring regarding the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA). The Head of Service for Early Years, Inclusion and Partnerships attends the PSB and reports on the work to address the PSA actions.

At the present time (summer 2025) there is no representative from the Neath Port Talbot Play Strategy Implementation Group (PSIG) as a member of the West Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board. However, the PSIG will, during the forthcoming planning cycle, seek to contribute to the theme of play within this forum, aligned to the Board's objectives and review how it can strengthen its input to this forum.

The PSIG has the responsibility for ensuring that a cyclical Play Action Plan is delivered and monitored - and this will be the case for the 2025-2028 version of that document.



In summer 2025, the PSIG - led and coordinated by the Play Sufficiency Lead Officer - will include members from key Neath Port Talbot Council services such as Education, Environment, Road Safety, and Youth Services, along with third sector partners (see page 38).

The PSIG chairperson is the local authority Children & Families Team Manager - and its deputy chairperson is the Participation & Engagement Officer.

To deliver on the objective of delivering high quality play opportunities to all communities throughout Neath Port Talbot, the membership of the group is invited to:

- Have the full support of their parent bodies in accessing sufficient time, skills, information and clerical support to make the necessary contribution from their organisation/department
- Involve in play strategy, all the appropriate partner organisations/departments
- Be competent and energised to contribute on behalf of their organisation/department.

Additional advisors are co-opted as needed to support and enhance the group's work.

The PSIG meets on a quarterly basis, with any necessary alternative meetings being organised by the Lead Officer for Play Sufficiency as and when required.

In terms of its collective objective the PSIG has ongoing strategic ambitions to:

- Support the work of the Play Sufficiency Assessment
- Develop and undertake the Action Plan for play: to help focus, prioritise and co-ordinate play services for children and young people
- Encourage the inclusion of play within other local strategic plans and policies
- To work towards the wellbeing goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.



Furthermore, its collective responsibilities are:

- To be the lead group to drive forward the PSA Action Plan
- To support partners in achieving the local priorities relating to play, as identified in the PSA Action Plan
- To support and innovate the local implementation of national initiatives in relation to play
- To co-ordinate and have an active involvement with the three-year Play Sufficiency Assessment
- To ensure that progress against the Action Plan is reported into the Neath Port Talbot Children and Young People's Leadership Group
- To identify appropriate projects, in order to utilise grant funding relating to play that originates from the Welsh Government - and to provide monitoring information to Welsh Government on this
- To ensure children's rights are met specifically article 31 of the UNCRC.

In terms of accountability, the PSIG reports into the Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Senior Leadership team, in line with wider local authority corporate reporting and monitoring processes, the Neath Port Talbot Children and Young People's Leadership Group, chaired by the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning, the Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board and Welsh Government.

The above responsibilities, accountability and objectives will be reviewed over the cycle of the 2025-2028 PSA.

The PSIG reviews the above terms of reference, when required, including aligned to national policy changes and developments. As of summer 2025, a number of strengths and weaknesses are identifiable – for example:



Strengths

- The PSIG has the full support of the senior leadership team within Neath Port Talbot Council's Education, Leisure, and Lifelong Learning Directorate - which has the ultimate responsibility for play sufficiency throughout the locality
- Neath Port Talbot PSIG has a strong legacy, having remained active since its inception - and members are aware of its function and their responsibilities
- The PSIG meets consistently - on an agreed quarterly basis - and is bound by an agreed Terms of Reference document, which is reviewed periodically, and which has inherent flexibility aligned to any national policy developments and innovations
- The PSIG membership is drawn from different organisations and local authority directorates, and it provides an outlet for members to meet and network in ways that may not otherwise occur or be viable
- We feel that all PSIG members feel able to contribute to the functions and innovative practice that can be realised via its collective work and objectives.

Weaknesses

- Representatives naturally have diverse work priorities and deadlines, which can - at times - affect their decision (and ability) as to whether they attend the scheduled quarterly PSIG meetings
- The local authority and region has various plans, strategies, and work/project groups in order to enact on its work and responsibilities. While play is mentioned and included in the various strategies and policy objectives - there could be greater clarity as to the specific function of the PSIG in interconnecting and reporting between the work/project groups.



Conclusion

We believe the engagement and consultation for the 2025–2028 PSA and Action Plan has helped set a clear direction for the coming years Children, young people, parents, and carers clearly understand and express the types of play and leisure activities they value and want the local authority and PSIG to prioritise.

Clear and common recurring priorities included:

- the need to maintain excellent outdoor play spaces, playgrounds and green spaces
- the ongoing importance (to children and young people) of sporting activities during their free/play time
- the ongoing need to ensure that play and activities is accessible - as is feasible - to children and young people and families from all backgrounds, communities and circumstances
- the fact that the population of the Coastal Corridor is set to increase due to the incidence of new housing developments
- the need to ensure that children and young people and families that are resident in the rural (Pontardawe valley) locality of the South Wales Valleys Opportunity Area are also prioritised.

The proposed nine key actions arising from the structured research, engagement and consultation undertaken to inform the development of the 2025 NPT Play Sufficiency Assessment are:



Action 1 – theme of Population:

Continue to engage with children and young people from specific backgrounds and circumstances to understand their play needs and the barriers to accessing existing play spaces and clubs (supervised and unsupervised), including looked after children, children with additional learning needs (ALN), young carers, LGBTQ+ young people.

Action 2 – theme of Population:

NPTC and the PSIG will review how they can further engage with families to most effectively continue to inform children & young people and families about play opportunities, clubs and activities. This review will inform a Play-themed Communications Plan - which will, in turn, incorporate a plan to work further with local schools.

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The PSIG will continue to work with the NPT Early Years Support Team (responsible for CSA) and the Youth Service to address play themed gaps identified through both the Play and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment processes.

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The PSIG will work with existing forums and networks – childcare providers, Third Sector Forum, Youth Providers Network – to provide and promote a comprehensive range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for playworkers in the area, including opportunities that support delivery of inclusive and accessible play.

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To ensure that Holiday Playwork funding is utilised to address priorities from the PSA in relation to supervised play and population findings, particularly poverty, play in rural areas, and play for children with an ALN.



Action 9 – theme of Policy, engagement, advocacy and information:

To raise the profile of play at a strategic level through PSA Lead Officer attendance at NPT's Early Years, Children & Young People's Plan Priority Group 5 meeting, which includes children's play within its outcome. The group reports to NPT's Public Services Board through the Children & Young People's Leadership Group.

We believe these priorities are achievable, as they were carefully developed to align with our resources, capacity, and overall ambitions. To ensure these priorities are addressed, we believe ongoing engagement and consultation will be essential. We plan to strengthen the 'gateways' used to reach children, young people, and families during the 2025 Play Sufficiency Assessment, while also expanding opportunities and partnerships—particularly through local schools and community networks.

We strongly believe co-production is essential to both engagement and the development of new play opportunities. To ensure the PSIG's work reflects the current views and experiences of children and young people, we will strengthen our collaboration with School Councils and Youth Clubs.

As a local authority, we remain committed to addressing priority areas identified within the 2025 Play Sufficiency Assessment. This work will be taken forward by the PSIG, who will continue to work together in partnership to review how each of the nine actions should be most effectively progressed, and which members can take key responsibilities.

Part of their progression and implementation will involve continued 'joined up working' across local authority officers, other external partners and members of



the PSIG and we are mindful that Action 2 and its ambition to produce a Play-themed Communications Plan will be a key area of focus.

Following the 2025 Play Sufficiency Assessment, NPTC is in a strong position to continue the work of play sufficiency. With an active PSIG and supportive structure, the Council has a comprehensive and actionable plan on which to deliver over 2025-2028.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment 2025 leaves the PSIG with an understanding of its position within the Neath Port Talbot regional structure and better able to inform and enact on relevant plans and strategies.

With continued and growing collaboration amongst departments, the PSA Action Plan can help align various priorities to better achieve play outcomes.



Theme analysis

Population:

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

What children have told us:

The outcomes of the engagement and consultation with children & young people informed the **Population Theme** to a significant extent. In considerations of Matters A, B and E, children and young people aged 6-19 years provided the following relevant feedback:

- ALN children and young people of all ages told us how they particularly valued their local green spaces and specialist play area equipment - as did children and young people who were resident in rural localities
- Children and young people from rural localities also repeatedly highlighted how costs and fees were a factor they had to consider, due to the fact that transport costs were also a frequent factor they and their parents had to consider
- Children and young people aged 8-10 years repeatedly highlighted how they would value more 'Youth Club-type' activities – at a specific venue, which was attended by their brothers and sisters who were of secondary age
- Welsh language speaking children and young people highlighted the importance of the promotion (including through social media) of play activities being viewable in Welsh, as well as English
- A number of girls from Neath Port Talbot's ethnic minority communities (and particular faith communities) described that they would welcome more cultural dance activities/clubs. Girls also repeatedly stated how they valued good lighting at play spaces and outdoor areas



- Boys from Neath Port Talbot's ethnic minority communities focused repeatedly on football - with some suggesting they did not know as much about local clubs as they would like - and others (like boys from all backgrounds) reiterating that local football resources, such as free to access pitches, goal posts and fencing would ideally be suitable
- Welsh language speaking children and young people highlighted the importance of the promotion (including through social media) of play activities being viewable in Welsh, as well as English
- A number of girls from Neath Port Talbot's ethnic minority communities (and particular faith communities) described that they would welcome more cultural dance activities/clubs. Girls also repeatedly stated how they valued good lighting at play spaces and outdoor areas
- Boys from Neath Port Talbot's ethnic minority communities focused repeatedly on football - with some suggesting they did not know as much about local clubs as they would like - and others (like boys from all backgrounds) reiterating that local football resources, such as free to access pitches, goal posts and fencing would ideally be suitable
- Refugee and asylum seekers - from all genders - also focused repeatedly on football. Such children and young people repeatedly highlighted how they would like to join a local team, however, they had experienced 'barriers' including:
 - a) not being able to afford boots
 - b) being unsure who to contact for information about joining a club
 - c) not being able to get to clubs/training as their parent(s) are not able to drive
- LGBTQ+ children and young people who were consulted outlined, who tended to be aged 11-19 years, were advocates of a 'club'-themed approach to hanging out, however they believed that gaps were evident in terms of how they could most effectively access activities – i.e.
 - a) Local secondary schools (and teaching professionals) needed to - in some instances - further agree to in-school activities for LGBTQ+ pupils
 - b) LGBTQ+ pupils who are in Y7-Y9 may not have as much confidence to join targeted youth sessions.



Strengths

- The Neath Port Talbot Council Youth Service was repeatedly highlighted as popular and trusted by children and young people.
- New and upgraded outdoor play provisions continue to be developed by NTPC.
- A strong and dedicated PSIG has members who represent the backgrounds and circumstances of the majority of Neath Port Talbot's children and young people.
- PSIG is committed to evolving as a forum that engages with children and young people of all ages including driven by its current vice-chair who is the Local Authorities' Participation and Engagement Officer.

Weaknesses

- The PSIG is aware that engagement with children and young people from specific backgrounds and circumstances need to be amplified – including: (a) Looked After Children; (b) Young Carers and; (c) children and young people from local Traveller Communities.
- There continues to be no designated play provision at either the Council's gypsy traveller sites.
- PSIG engagement with the schools sector could ideally be amplified - including in targeted geographical areas where there is an evidenced need for (specific type of) play activities.

Opportunities

- The energy of the PSIG and its increasing scope (through membership) will help barriers to play to be further mitigated and help to reach (a) Looked After Children; (b) Young Carers and; (c) children and young people from local Traveller communities.
- The engagement and coproduction that has been achieved for the 2025 Play Sufficiency Assessment can be further enhanced on a rolling basis throughout the period 2025-2028, including via the gateway organisations and professionals who supported that engagement and consultation.



- Further analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data achieved via the consultation and engagement phase of the 2025 Play Sufficiency Assessment will inform the targeting of ongoing play strategies and provisions.
- The Youth Service can consider the viability of piloting a transition (from School Year 6 to School Year 7) type Youth Clubs.
- Ongoing co-production of engagement methods and approaches from children and young people - including in partnership with relevant local schools and their School Councils.

Threats

- Financial viability of potential new initiatives will be aligned to (already) limited revenue and capital funding streams.
- Play being marginalised and not having the same profile as other services and activities available to children and young people and ALN children and young people.

Places where children play:

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

What children have told us:

The outcomes of the engagement and consultation with children and young people informed the **Where Children Play Theme** to a significant extent.

In considerations of Matters C, F and I, children and young people aged 6-19 years provided the following relevant feedback:

- Some public open spaces could be improved and/or enhanced in terms of them being a better play resource, including in terms of perceived upgrades to play equipment and resources - and their aesthetics



- Some parks and green spaces could (in their opinions) be more suitable for informal sports and ball games - in particular the enjoyment of football and riding on bikes
- Speeding traffic was a theme which a number of them had concerns about - for example, 35% of 12-19 year olds stated that speeding vehicles were a concern for them when they were engaged in outside play
- Certain children and young people stated that a barrier to them accessing school-based activities/clubs (after lessons) was an inability to reach home without catching a school bus
- A recurrent issue for refugee and asylum seeking children and young people was that their parents were unable to drive (in the UK)
- Some schools do not (in the experience of/to the best of the knowledge of certain children and young people) enable access to school grounds for play - in a means which children and young people state that they may prefer.

Strengths

- NPTC has a pronounced and far reaching road safety programmes which works with children and young people, in schools - including Kerb Craft for 5-7 year olds.
- Several schools provide access to their grounds and sports fields, where possible.
- Since the previous 2022 Play Sufficiency Assessment, *No Smoking* signs have been installed in *all* NPTC outdoor play areas and playgrounds.
- NPTC continues to install safe crossing points at various locations to improve children and young people's pedestrian safety.
- A number of NPT schools were energised and enthused to support with the consultation and engagement which has informed the production of the NPT 2025 PSA.

Weaknesses

- 'No ball games' - or similar signs - have not, as of summer 2025, been removed from all relevant play spaces.



- The outside play resources at certain schools would benefit from modernisation and upgrade.
- The outside play resources at certain local authority owned play spaces and playgrounds within schools would benefit from modernisation and upgrade.
- The Community Focused Schools Initiative would benefit from having an increased footprint.

Opportunities

- The engagement and consultation accounted for certain children and young people suggesting that school-based themed after school activities could have more of a focus on arts and cultural activities - which is a viable step as more and more 'gateway' community arts-focused partnerships are established by members of the PSIG.

Threats

- The omnipresent threat of funding cuts or funding shortfalls.

Supervised provision:

- **Matter D:** Supervised play provision
- **Matter G:** Playwork training and workforce development

What children have told us:

The outcomes of the engagement and consultation with children and young people informed the **Supervised Play Provision Theme** to a significant extent.

In considerations of Matters D and G, children and young people aged 6-19 years provided the following relevant feedback:

- The theme of supervised sports accounted for children and young people being generally happy with what they could access - though boys frequently believed that more free-to-access football and rugby resources would ideally



be positioned in open spaces and green spaces. (Both genders also fed back that they would welcome resources such as goal posts and surrounding fencing, on grass pitches and for 5-a-side play)

- Boys who were from refugee/asylum seeking backgrounds and those from ethnic minority communities repeatedly emphasised how important football was as a play outlet for themselves, and how they would welcome ongoing information about supervised local clubs and, again, a focus on provision that was free to access
- Dance was a repeated favoured activity among a number of responding girls - including as a supervised cultural activity. This was a wish that was fed back by girls from the Islamic faith and girls from Eastern European communities
- There is evidence that certain children and young people who live in rural areas of the locality can find it challenging to reach and attend existing supervised Youth Clubs, in particular due to (public) transport themes.

Strengths

- NPTC Young Ambassador Scheme encourages young people to become active and to become leaders through (supervised) sport.
- Overall responses from children and young people, from all backgrounds, ages and circumstances, delivered very positive feedback about the role of NPT Youth Service.

Weaknesses

- NPTC can only practically commission and provide a range of supervised play activities, opportunities and clubs aligned to financial resources and prioritisation.
- There is not currently a NPT or national recognised quality assurance scheme linked to supervised playwork provision.
- More work is required to make supervised play opportunities accessible to children and young people with ALN.



Opportunities

- The PSIG could prioritise - as much as viable - actions which focus on the feedback about popular and preferred supervised sporting activities, particularly football.
- Children & young people and parents fed back that social media platforms were increasingly becoming their 'go to' sources of information - including TikTok and Instagram.

Threats

- The supervised playwork profession is not specifically present within the live document NPTC: The Future of Work Strategy 2022-2027, which might result in play as a career being overlooked.
- Unregistered play provision - as a sector - can be fluid and it is important that relevant NPT officers keep up to date with such new providers.

Policy synergy, engagement, advocacy and information:

- **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

What children have told us:

The outcomes of the engagement and consultation with children and young people informed the **Policy Synergy, Engagement, Advocacy and Information Theme** to a significant extent.

In considerations of Matters F, H and I children and young people aged 6-19 years provided the following relevant feedback:

- Social media platforms were increasingly becoming their 'go to' sources of information - in particular TikTok and Instagram. Additional repeated



responses as to how children and young people considered it best to promote play opportunities and activities were:

- Announcements at school assemblies;
- A Neath Port Talbot 'play' phone app
- Termly flyers specifically for school bags
- Text messages to parents, carers and guardians.

Strengths

- There is an ever increasing awareness of the crucial role, among relevant professionals, of the lead officer for Play Sufficiency - both with other local authority officers and local statutory, voluntary and community sector professionals, and this is enabling more joined-up/integrated strategy and projects for children and young people.
- The local authority demonstrably and effectively engages with the Neath Port Talbot and South Wales media to encourage the positive portrayal of children playing in the local area.

Weaknesses

- Further work is needed to systematically promote an awareness - among play professionals, early years and childcare professionals and aspiring professionals - about accessibility to play-themed training courses and qualifications so as to drive further play opportunities for children and young people.

Opportunities

- The PSIG has a membership which can collectively even further progress an enhanced and synergised system for engagement, advocacy and information about play and including with children and young people.
- The PSIG also has a membership which can collectively even further progress information about (access to) training and qualifications accessible to play professionals and the registered and non-registered play sector(s).

Threats

- Financial viability of potential new engagement, advocacy and information initiatives, will be aligned to (already) limited revenue funding streams.
- Engagement 'fatigue' and the possibility of children and young people who - are resident in Neath Port Talbot - not recognising or seeing progress.



Appendix – 2025 membership of the Neath Port Talbot Play Sufficiency Implementation Group

- Active Young People Co-Ordinator
- Assistant Childcare Development Officer
- Biodiversity Officer
- Business Partner Communications and Marketing
- Chair of LLAN
- Children & Families Team Manager
- Children's Community Lead
- Co-Ordinator Early Years and Partnerships
- Commissioning Officer
- Community Focussed Schools Project Manager
- Early Years & Flying Start Manager
- Family Information Service Manager
- Flying Start Childcare Lead
- Flying Start Parenting Lead
- Green Infrastructure Officer
- Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer
- Representation from Interplay
- Neath Port Talbot CVS
- Neighbourhood Services Manager
- Participation & Engagement Officer
- Performance and Monitoring Officer
- Principle Officer for Youth and Community



- Principle Policy Planner
- Programme and Commissioning Manager
- Project Development and Funding Manager
- Project Development and Funding Officer
- Regional Armed Forces Covenant Officer
- Senior Engagement and Policy Officer
- Senior Road Safety Officer
- Senior Youth and Community Officer
- Streetcare Supervisor
- Think Family Partnership Manager
- Think Family Partnership Support Officer
- Transport Strategy Officer.