



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# An Executive Summary of the Play Sufficiency Assessment

The State of Play In  
**Rhondda Cynon Taf**

**2025**



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**



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# 1. Local Authority Summary Statement

Wales has pioneered the legislation of play since, as part of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, a statutory duty was placed on all Local Authorities to assess the level of play opportunities within their area every 3 years from 2012, with the duty to secure these opportunities commencing in 2014. The Welsh Government was the first government in the world to protect in law children's right to play.

Children's right to play is enshrined in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the most universally recognised human rights treaty, which was formally adopted by the Welsh Government in 2004:

## **Article 31 – Leisure, play and culture**

Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.

## **Article 15 – Freedom of association**

Children have the right to meet together and to join groups and organisations.

## **Article 12 – Respect for the views of the child**

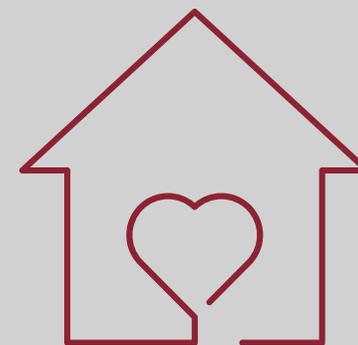
When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.

# Local Authority Summary Statement

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council also acknowledges and fully supports these rights. The benefits of play are widely recognised and as such play pervades several key national strategies which are the foundation stone of the Council's Corporate Plan 2024–2030, and many Council policies. The Child Poverty Strategy Wales (2024) asserts that “Access to high quality play opportunities is critical for the social, emotional and physical development of all children”. This belief is shared by the Council and one of the corporate priorities is to ensure all residents, including children and young people, can take care of their health and wellbeing, so they can live healthy, independent, and fulfilling lives. The Council also strives to support children and families to develop, be healthy, and enjoy activities and good play facilities and opportunities are a key pillar therefore. In addition, the importance of the right to play is embedded in the regional Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan aimed at creating a more equal Cwm Taf Morgannwg:

## Healthy Places

There are great opportunities to keep fit and healthy in our community, but physical activity rates are low, we have high levels of diabetes and obesity, and people in more deprived neighbourhoods are less likely to make use of the green and blue spaces around us. Having safe local spaces and affordable opportunities to be active is important, including play for children and young people.



# Local Authority Summary Statement

RCT recognises the intrinsic value of play in children's lives; our vision is that all children and young people should be able to: have fun; enjoy their childhood and youth; pursue learning; and develop life skills through participating in a range of high-quality play, leisure, sporting and cultural opportunities, thus ensuring we meet the interests and needs of each individual child or young person. Considering this, representatives from 28 Council service areas worked collaboratively to assess play sufficiency, evaluating areas of strength and identifying gaps which require addressing to ensure this vision becomes a reality. This assessment involved a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) evaluation of 99 criteria identified by Welsh Government related to 9 Matters/Statements required for achieving play sufficiency. An analysis of these is summarised in the table below:

Play Sufficiency Ratings	Percentage of Ratings against Play Sufficiency Criteria		Difference
	2022	2025	
Green	59%	73%	+14%
Amber	23%	27%	+4%
Red	18%	0%	-18%

# Local Authority Summary Statement

Overall, this analysis highlighted RCT has made good progress in relation to most of the play sufficiency criteria, specifically in relation to the progress of the criteria previously rated as 'red'. However, it is evident from this self-assessment that there is still progress to be made in some areas.

From 2025 Welsh Government has categorised each of the 9 Matters/Statements into 4 themes; these themes have been used to identify the overarching strengths and areas for development following the assessment process. A more detailed SWOT analysis of these themes can be viewed in Appendix 1.

Theme	Related Matters	RAG Status Percentage		
		Red	Amber	Green
<b>Population</b>	<p><b>Matter A:</b> The number of children in respect of each age range within its area</p> <p><b>Matter B:</b> The needs of children from different cultures and backgrounds within its area</p> <p><b>Matter E:</b> Whether there is a charge for play provision and where there is a charge</p>	0%	50%	50%
<b>Places where children play</b>	<p><b>Matter C:</b> The space where children can play, including open space, and any other space</p> <p><b>Matter F:</b> Traffic measures that are used to promote access to play</p> <p><b>Matter I:</b> The extent to which education and local development planning policies take into account the need to enhance play opportunities</p>	0%	23%	77%
<b>Supervised Provision</b>	<p><b>Matter D:</b> Supervised play provision</p> <p><b>Matter G:</b> Playwork training and workforce development</p>	0%	30%	70%
<b>Policy Synergy, Engagement, Advocacy and Information</b>	<p><b>Matter F:</b> Measures used to promote access to play, including the provision of information, publicity and events</p> <p><b>Matter G:</b> Training opportunities for the play workforce</p> <p><b>Matter H:</b> The level of community engagement and participation</p> <p><b>Matter I:</b> The extent to which other policies take into account the need to enhance play opportunities for children</p>	0%	14%	86%

## Theme 1: Population

The assessment has found that open access play and youth provisions offer inclusive environments, with the Youth Engagement and Participation Service benefitting from changes advised following a Sensory Audit of all Council run Youth clubs. This assessment has highlighted the need for this review to be extended to commissioned open access provision, alongside ensuring consistency in the undertaking of access audits and signposting of such information across all open access provision.

The Council has introduced Play Adapt sessions; these are exclusive play sessions catering for children and young people with additional needs. These are still in their infancy, but feedback from families to date has been overwhelmingly positive. The assessment has identified the need for these to be further developed and more readily available in terms of frequency and location; there is a need to utilise population data to plan targeted sessions to meet the needs of service users. From consultation it is evident there is also a need to further consider the needs of disabled children in relation to the accessibility and inclusivity of parks and play areas.

The requirements of Welsh language speaking children are consistently considered by the Council in its planning, with the Youth Service commissioning Welsh language enrichment activities and youth forums. However, there is a notable shortage of Welsh medium Play and Youth providers which subsequently means that whilst requirements are considered, they are not consistently catered for.

RAG Status	Number of Criteria
Red	0
Amber	9
Green	9

## Theme 2: Places Where Children Play

It is clear from consultation with all stakeholders that play is valued and children, young people and their families want safe places for children to play. The assessment identified that there are a vast range of designated places where children can play across RCT, including 217 fixed equipped play spaces, over 20 Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA), as well playing fields and open spaces. The Council undertakes Open Space Assessments, producing an assessment of need and audit of provision which encompasses opportunities for play; this is currently being reviewed to contribute to the Local Development Plan.

RCTCBC investment into children’s play spaces began in 2015, and since then RCT have committed nearly £6 million of capital investment. This funding has been used to enhance play opportunities within RCT communities, significantly improving the play experiences in children’s play areas. Between 2022 and 2025, an investment of £1.8 million in RCTCBC capital funding resulted in the completion of 41 projects. These included complete refurbishments of some play areas, as well as enhancements aimed at increasing play value and opportunities for all children to play together, with a specific focus on accessibility and inclusive play opportunities. Additionally, this funding supported the development of six MUGAs and a skate park.

RAG Status	Number of Criteria
Red	0
Amber	7
Green	23

To balance risk and play, all RCT play areas are rigorously inspected and maintained by a small team of competent and qualified individuals. Each provision is also subject to an independent annual safely inspection and play value assessment; these findings are used to inform the capital investment programme.



Full refurbishment of  
Sandy Bank Park, Ystrad



Holly Street park, Rhydyfelin:  
Addition of graphics and games to  
enhance play opportunities



**Martin's Terrace, Abercynon:  
Enhanced Inclusivity and Accessibility**



Penygraig Park Multi Use Games Area

The assessment has found that the Road Safety and Transport Strategy Service has engaged with Play Sufficiency priorities and delivered a range of initiatives aimed at improving road safety. Safe Routes in Communities (SRIC) funding awarded by Welsh Government has been used to implement a SRIC scheme in the village of Hirwaun in 2024–2025. Furthermore, the Road Safety Team, in partnership with Sport RCT, has delivered the following in 2024–2025, with plans to extend this further in 2025–2026:

- National Standards Cycle Training to over 500 Year 6 pupils
- Balance bike training to infant pupils from Reception–Year 2

The Road Safety Team has also commissioned external organisations to support with the delivery of initiatives such as Child Pedestrian Training via Kerbcraft, which was delivered to over 600 pupils aged 5–7 years old.

The Council has also published an Active Travel Network Map which sets out its aspiration to develop a network of walking and cycling routes across RCT. Moving forward, the Council are committed to utilising these developments to incorporate opportunities to play along active travel routes, with further plans to work in partnership with Sport and Leisure to promote these networks.

“The younger children have improved their balance and confidence. It’s improved their spatial awareness moving around the classroom, and we’ve also noticed improvements in their walking (balancing), jumping and decision making. It’s also been great for children with additional learning needs that have Individual Development Plans as we allocate separate time for them to use the equipment. Some of these children struggle in a large class environment, but are benefiting from using the equipment.”  
Teacher feedback following the delivery of balance bike training.

## Theme 3: Supervised Provision

The assessment has found there are well established internal (Youth Engagement and Participation Service) and Third Sector providers which deliver a wide array of open access play and youth opportunities. Council run/commissioned open access provision provides in total 16 open access play provisions and 22 open access youth provisions in term time and during school holidays. YEPS also provides a variety of open access activities and trips afterschool and during the holidays. The Arts and Culture service also offer a range of creative opportunities for children and young people to engage with. Further, a wide array of term time and holiday activities are delivered by Sports and Leisure, totalling engagement with 12,184 participants in 2024–2025. Since 2022 the below services have also had a far-ranging reach across RCT:

- Play (commissioned partners)
- 105,366 Overall attendance
- Youth Services (YEPS and commissioned partners)
- 256,255 Overall attendance
- Arts data: 18,954 Overall attendance
- Talk and Play – 24,967

RAG Status	Number of Criteria
Red	0
Amber	7
Green	16

During 2024 a Quality Assurance Scheme was devised aimed at enhancing the quality and consistency of play opportunities across open access play provisions. Moving forward, it is the intention to embed this process across play and youth open access provisions to ensure children and young people are offered rich play environments.

**Matter G:** Securing the Play Workforce is the area which has seen the most positive change since 2022. The Play Development Service undertakes an annual Play workforce audit, the results of which are used to determine a program of free training opportunities for the Play workforce. However, the audit and Play Provider focus group has highlighted that the costs incurred from attending training is a significant barrier to undertaking training. The assessment has also highlighted the need to replicate the workforce audit with the commissioned Youth providers, ensuring they are provided with equitable training opportunities to enhance the quality and consistency of provision on offer.

The benefits of play provide the foundation of Early Years early intervention and prevention work across Services such as Parenting Interventions, Talk and Play, Flying Start and a newly established service, Creating Resilience and Emotional Wellbeing (CREW) which provides 1-1 intervention for 8-11 year olds; using play therapy to build resilience and utilising open access play and youth provision as an exit strategy to engage in universal services and continue benefiting from participation in supervised provision with qualified Play and Youth workers.

## Theme 4: Policy Synergy, Engagement, Advocacy and Information

The importance of Play pervades key Council policies, ensuring the impact on play is considered across several services such as Housing, Planning, Traffic and Health and Safety. A Play Action Workshop was well attended and received positive feedback (Section 2), demonstrating an increased commitment to achieve play sufficiency through collaboration across Council services. Whilst it is evident the importance of play is considered at times, this is inconsistent across service areas. Subsequently, the Council will offer a Play Sufficiency awareness session for key decision makers; creating a bespoke online training package to create Play Champions in each service area will also contribute to achieving this objective.

The area of play and related services is prominent in community events, which are utilised to promote play and signpost play opportunities. RCT hosts the Teddy Bears Picnic, Aberdare Festival, The Big Bite, Family Fun Days as well as other several smaller scale events which provide free or low cost recreational opportunities for families.

RAG Status	Number of Criteria
Red	0
Amber	4
Green	24

## Theme 4: Policy Synergy, Engagement, Advocacy and Information

The assessment has found that the Council website and social media sites, namely Family Information Service and RCT Families, are widely used to promote play and leisure opportunities across Council Services; the YEPS website and social media also has high engagement with service users and is effective for the sharing of information. However, feedback has indicated that the high number of activities available and promotion of such information by individual service areas can sometimes be overwhelming for service users and therefore less effective at promoting engagement. Therefore, the Council are committed to collating the details of available play opportunities across service areas and publishing a summary timetable utilising QR codes to signpost to the relevant service areas. Further, the Council intends to utilise Corporate Community events to further promote play opportunities, ensuring promotion is not limited to online. On the theme of the availability of information, the Council website allows service users to search an interactive map to locate their nearest park, sports field or fixed play area on its website. However, it is currently not possible to filter these results to search for parks which are accessible and inclusive, thus this has become an identified action moving forward in line with the Population and Places themes.

**Investments near to you**

**Symbols:**  
● Red - Work Planned   
 ● Amber - Work Ongoing   
 ● Green - Work Complete

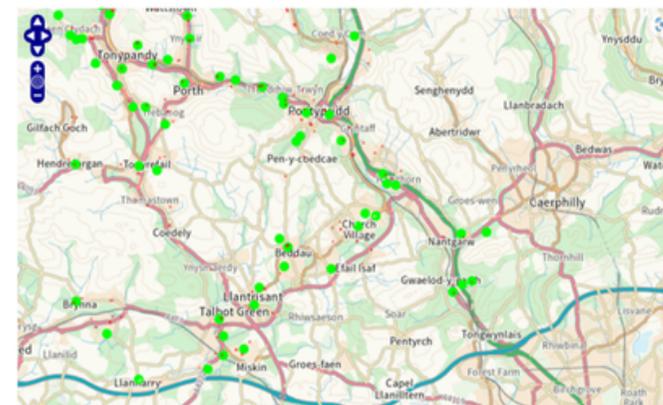
Works	Distance	Status
<b>Play Area Investment:</b> North View Terrace Full refurbishment of the children's play area scheduled	470m	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
<b>Play Area Investment:</b> Graig Avenue Park Renew safety surfacing and add a sliding item	510m	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
<b>Play Area Investment:</b> Cefn Pennar Park Renew play area	2.0km	<span style="color: green;">●</span>

**Find your nearest**

Enter your postcode to find out more about town and village centre investment near you.

House Number  Postcode

To view results please enter your address



It is clear from the assessment and consultation that play is highly valued within the school day, especially throughout Foundation Phase and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools investment programme, with designs supporting improved opportunities for all weather play. Some Primary Schools and all Secondary Schools offer a range of after school activities, although from the assessment it is evident that there has been limited progress with schools providing access to school grounds for playing out of school hours.

The assessment has identified the need to ensure Play Sufficiency criteria is considered within the Community Focused Schools agenda; RCT will benefit from improved partnership working between the Play and Youth Service, Sport and Community Focused Schools to pilot a scheme to open schools at the end of the day, utilising this time to allow children free play opportunities whilst Family Engagement Officers maximise the opportunity to engage with Parents and Carers.

## The Future of Play in RCT 2025 - 2028

From the Play Sufficiency Assessment, the following have been identified as key priorities:

- Increase the number of Welsh language play opportunities across Youth, Play, Leisure and Arts and Culture
- Increase the number and quality of play and recreational opportunities for disabled children and young people
- Improve the inclusivity and accessibility of fixed play areas
- Utilise data tools such as Power BI to ensure provision is needs led and decisions are evidence based
- Embed a Quality Assurance Scheme to enhance the quality and consistency of open access play provision
- Promote and celebrate the benefits and importance of play to communities, children, young people and all stakeholders
- Engage with Education to advocate for the opening of school grounds for opportunities to play beyond the school day
- Enrichment of active travel schemes through the implementation of artwork and opportunities for play
- Alleviate concerns regarding traffic as a major barrier to playing outside by offering more road safety sessions to children and young people

## 2. Methodology

The Play Sufficiency Assessment has been informed by information obtained from a range of sources using various methodologies. As a starting point to the assessment process the Play Sufficiency Monitoring Group membership was reviewed to ensure it included the relevant representations related to each of the 9 Matters/statements put forward by Welsh Government in relation to ensuring play sufficiency. Representatives from 28 service areas were tasked with evaluating the key criterion via a RAG rating process, which provided the foundation of the assessment; identifying strengths, areas of progress and areas which required further development.

To effectively assess play sufficiency across RCT and develop a clear action plan collaboration with range of stakeholders was essential. To emphasise the cross-cutting nature of this statutory duty, an Action Workshop was jointly hosted by RCT Play Team and Play Wales. In total 19 individuals attended from a range of Council departments; each contributed to a SWOT evaluation of the assessment criteria in relation to each of the Play Sufficiency Matters identified by Welsh Government (appendix 1), which allowed each stakeholder to highlight current strengths and identify gaps to prioritise actions moving forward. The results of the consultation surveys and focus groups were integral to this evaluation. This collaborative exercise proved productive, with post workshop survey feedback indicating that:

- All survey respondents indicated that they either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the workshop was effective in aiding understanding of Play Sufficiency and service responsibility in relation to it
- All respondents were asked to rate their confidence and knowledge of Play Sufficiency in RCT from 1 – 5 (1 = limited understanding, 5 = Confident in understanding). Prior to the workshop, the average score was 2.8, which increased by 1.5 to an average of 4.3 following the workshop

The discussions and collaboration from this workshop have proven invaluable in ascertaining the agreed PSA actions.

"it was really productive to network with colleagues from other departments and have their input into the PSA"

"had no knowledge of the Play Sufficiency Assessment prior to attending. The presenters were excellent and I found the workshop very interesting and engaging, where everybody could contribute."

"great day, loads of ideas that we could take forward"

"I found the session informative, well-delivered and extremely useful"

"[The workshop] re-energised the thought process"

The sufficiency assessment identified a need to explore the perception of the role of play within the school day, thus the service expanded its consultation to gather both the views of Headteachers via an online survey, to which there were 50 responses, which comprised 54% of the total number of RCT primary schools. The Play Team also visited 6 primary School Councils (including faith and Welsh medium) to hold focus groups and obtain further qualitative information regarding children's views of play within the school day.

Whilst the Council took the lead on the Play Sufficiency Assessment process, sufficiency would not be assessed thoroughly without the views of the Third Sector, who are commissioned to deliver open access play and youth opportunities. To effectively understand the strengths, challenges and areas of need faced by the Play Workforce, the Council conducted a Play workforce audit with Play staff from the Third Sector via an online questionnaire. In total 67 responses were received across 16 open access play provisions.

As the Third Sector provides invaluable services to the communities of RCT, a focus group was held with Play Providers to gain further qualitative insight into what they perceive to be the current strengths, barriers and priority areas for development across RCT. This, as well as, Play Workforce data returns, comments from the focus group and conversations with Playworkers during session visits, has provided invaluable information to allow the Council to identify training needs and develop a bespoke training package as an action to carry forward.

### **3. How engagement with children and families has informed the Play Sufficiency Assessment**



# How has RCT engaged with children and families?

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

## RCT Has Engaged with:



Focus Groups with Primary School Councils



Focus Groups in Youth Clubs



Children and Young People who Completed the 'Big Play Survey'



Focus Groups with Parents and Carers attending Play Adapt/ Play sessions for those with additional needs



Focus Group with 10 Young Carers



Parents and Carers who Completed an Online Survey

Conversations with Parents and Carers of children receiving 1-1 support from the **CREW** Team (Creating Wellbeing and Emotional Resilience)

## Overview of Consultation

## What do we know about those who responded to the Big Play Survey?

**Aged 5-7** 41.3%



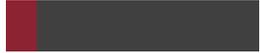
**Aged 8-11** 52.4%



**Aged 12-14** 4.7%



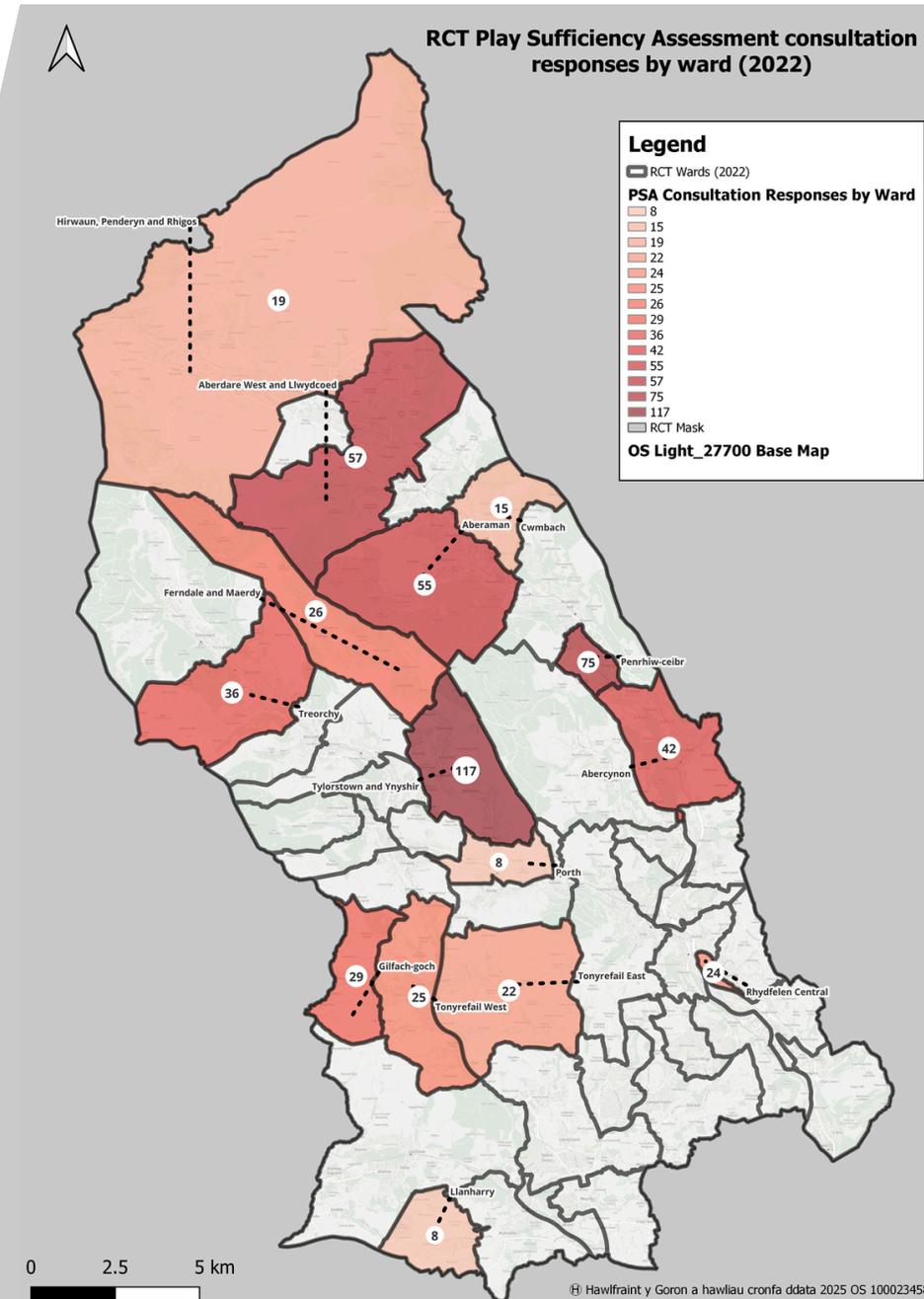
**Welsh Speakers** 11.8%



**Disabled** 7.3%

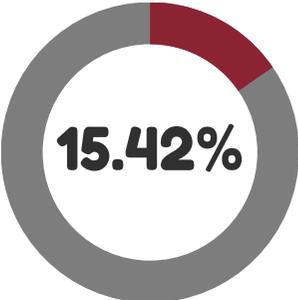


The Tylorstown & Ynyshir ward had the highest number of responses for both the 5-7 and 8-11 years age groups

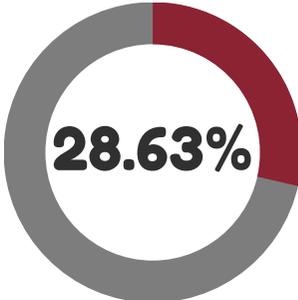


# Survey Responses by Rhondda Cynon Taf Districts

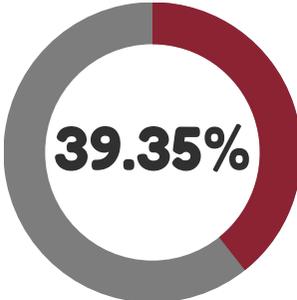
How engagement with children and families has informed the Play Sufficiency Assessment



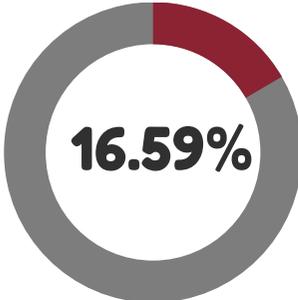
Not Identifiable



Rhondda



Cynon

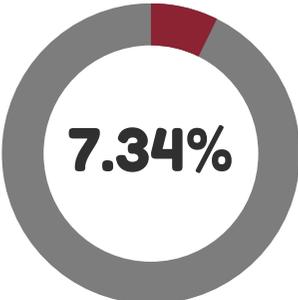


Taf

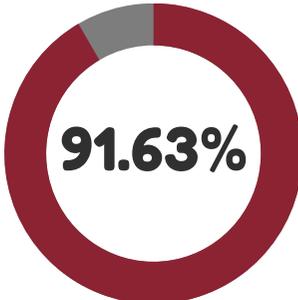
# Do you think of yourself as being disabled?



No response

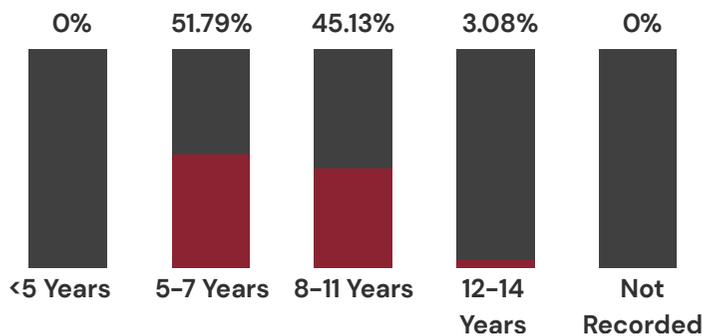


Yes

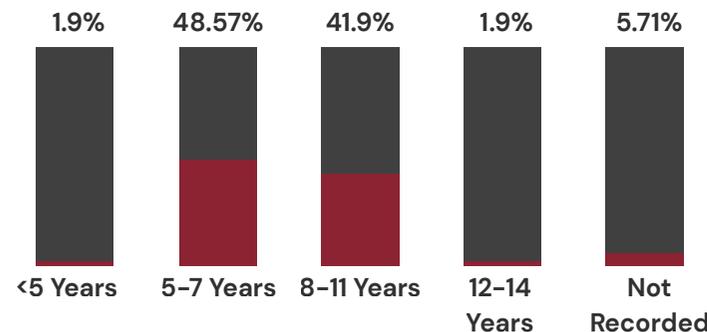


No

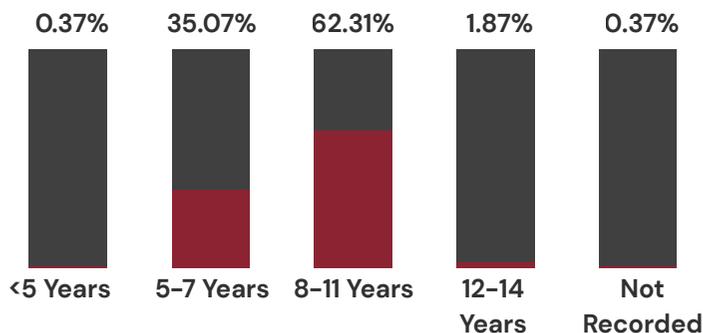
### Rhondda (195)



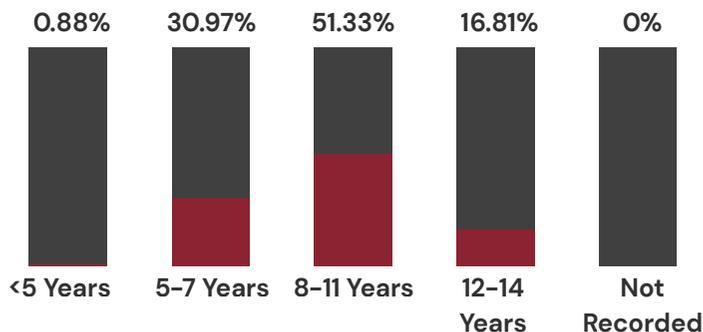
### Not Identifiable (105)



### Cynon (268)



### Taf (113)



In addition to the data sets collected from the Big Play survey, the Council recognised the importance of complementing this with qualitative evidence which was gathered through hosting several focus groups with children and young people ('How has RCT engaged with children and families? infographic'). These focus groups used semi-structured questions to allow the participants to lead the discussion, which proved most insightful.

## What children and young people have told us:

Play Wales advocate that opportunities for children to play can be supported or restricted in three main ways:

### Time

The demands on children's time and how it is structured

### Space

The amount, design and management of space where children might play

### Permission

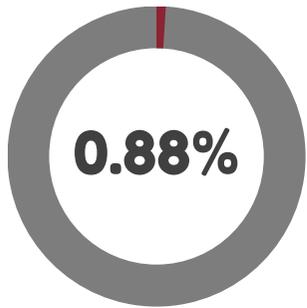
Fear, expectations, tolerance, and the way adults view childhood and play.

**Play Wales**

Therefore, these vital factors formed the basis of the analysis of children and young people's views.

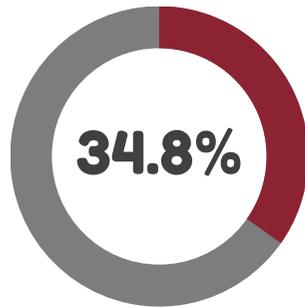
## How often do you go out to play or hang out with friends?

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



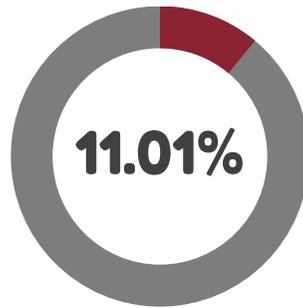
**0.88%**

No Response



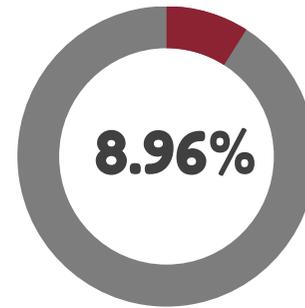
**34.8%**

A few days  
each week



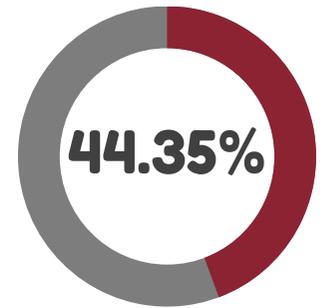
**11.01%**

Hardly ever



**8.96%**

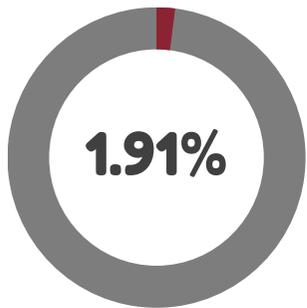
I don't play or hang out  
with friends outside



**44.35%**

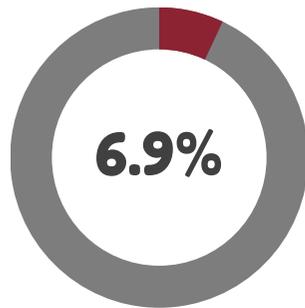
Most Days

## Do you have enough time for playing or hanging out with friends?



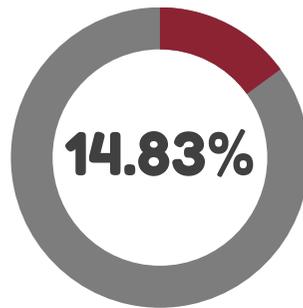
**1.91%**

No Response



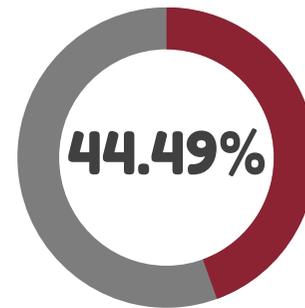
**6.9%**

No, I need a lot  
more



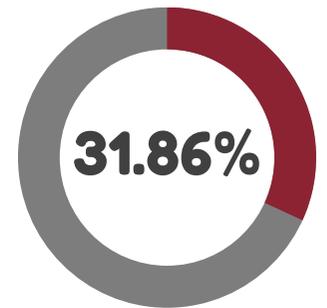
**14.83%**

No, I would like to  
have a bit more time



**44.49%**

Yes, I have loads



**31.86%**

Yes, it's just about  
enough

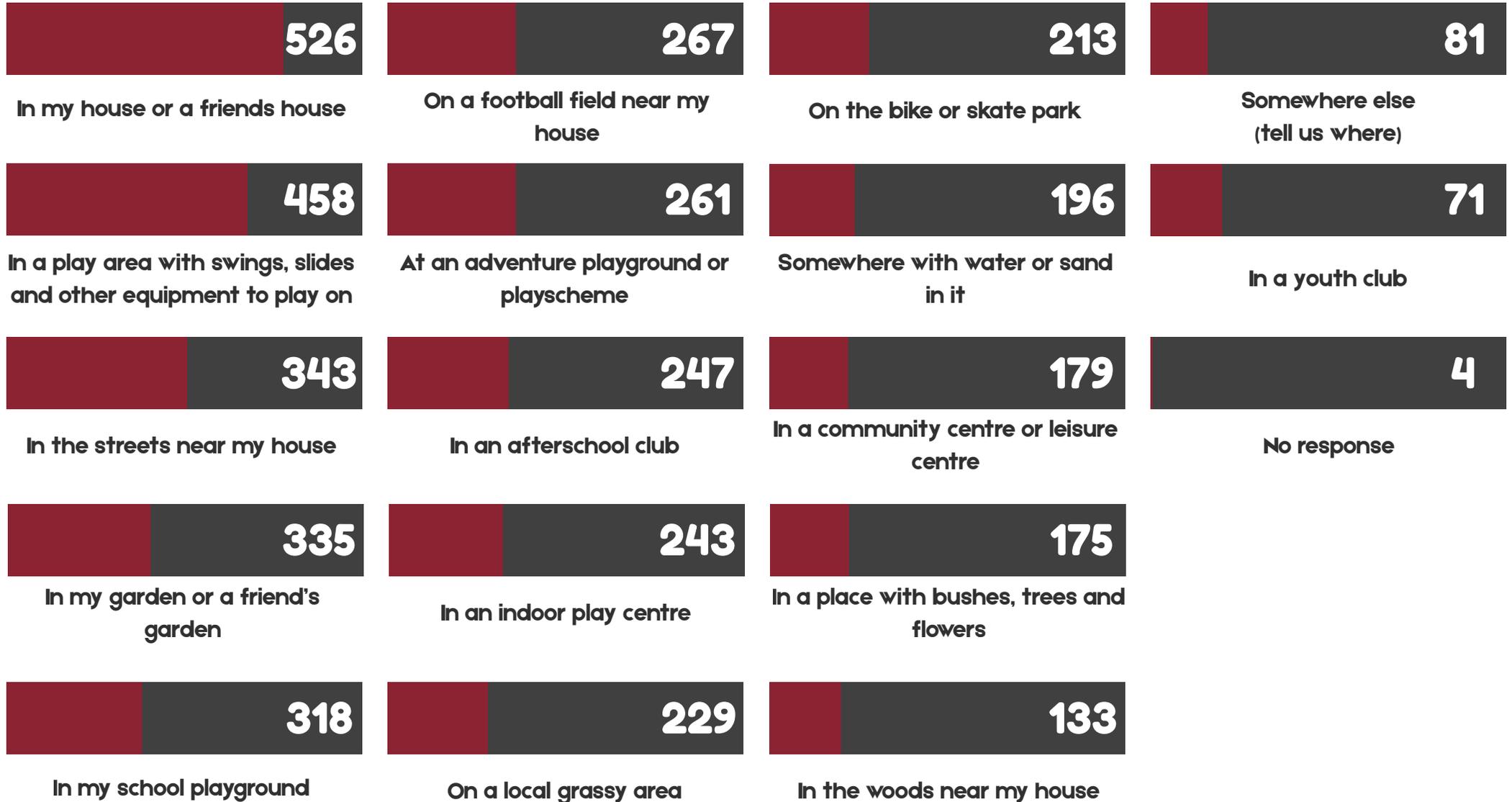
### Do you have enough time?

It is clear from the responses that the majority of children and young people (almost 80% of respondents) value and embrace opportunities to play and hang out and do so frequently. Conversely, almost 20% 'hardly ever' or do not play or hang out. The consultation also highlighted that many children and young people are able to recognise the benefits of these opportunities, with Youth Focus Group Participants identifying that the time is integral for **"building friendships"**, **"keeping fit"**, **"learning new skills"** and **"helping with mental health"**.

The survey highlighted there is an increasing preference of children and young people choosing to play or hang out in private spaces such as homes and gardens, although it is clear that young people still value access to open spaces and play areas. The survey suggests that supervised provision such as youth clubs are least favoured, although this is a reflection of the survey demographic as the average age of completion was 8 years old. Youth Focus Group participants stated that youth clubs, alongside Multi Use Games Areas/sports pitches were the preferred place to hang out, with many expressing a desire for an increase in the number of such provision and activities.

# When you're not in school, what types of places would you like to play or hang out in?

Favourite place to play

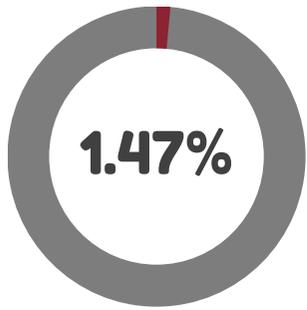


**Total Respondants 4275**

\*Respondants were able to select multiple options

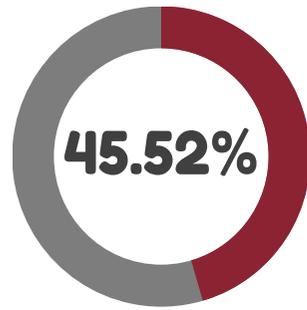
# How good are the places you play in?

The quality of places to play



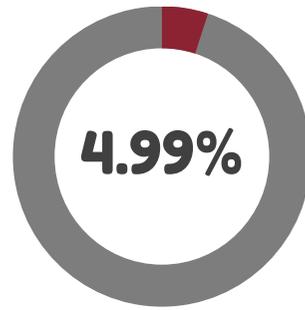
**1.47%**

No Response



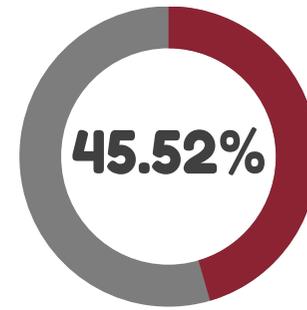
**45.52%**

They're great, I can do all the things I like



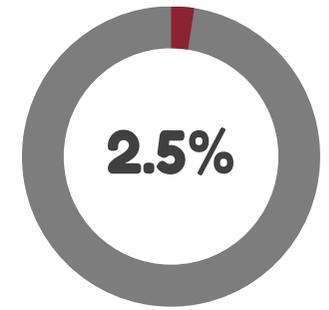
**4.99%**

They're not good, I can't do many of the things I like



**45.52%**

They're okay, I can do some of the things I like



**2.5%**

They're rubbish, I can't do any of the things I like

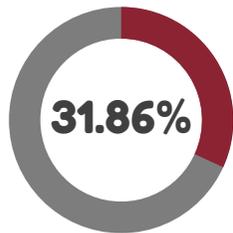
# Overall, how good are your opportunities for playing and hanging out?

Views on opportunities for play and hanging out



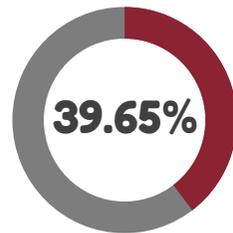
**1.47%**

No response



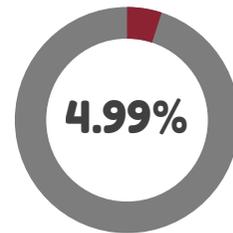
**31.86%**

It's good, but could be made even better



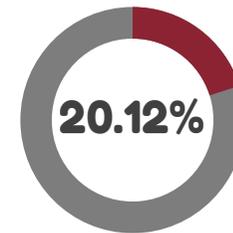
**39.65%**

It's great, and couldn't be made much better



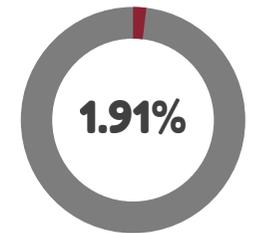
**4.99%**

It's not good and it needs to be made better



**20.12%**

It's okay, but needs to be made a bit better



**1.91%**

It's rubbish and needs to be made much better

34

The survey response indicated that generally children and young people are satisfied with the overall quality of opportunities and facilities on offer, with over 90% selecting they're 'great' or 'okay'. When asked to identify what was good in relation to play opportunities, the most common responses were:

- Parks & equipment in play areas and in some areas, the number of them
- Football pitches / fields (including 3G pitches)
- Feeling safe in these areas
- After school play provision
- Greenspaces – fields and grassy areas
- Skate Parks
- Scooter tracks
- Places to ride bikes

Children and young people reported many positive experiences in relation to opportunities for play and leisure in RCT:

"YEPS do projects with older people, I have learnt lots of new things"

**Youth Focus Group  
participant**

"I like the experiences YEPS provide, I have been to lots of different places I would never have gone"

**Youth Focus Group  
participant**

"Socialisation and keeping fit by going to Cadets builds my confidence"

**Young Carers Focus Group  
Participant**

The survey also highlighted that almost 60% of respondents felt there is still room for improvements in regards to play opportunities in RCT. Children and young people identified the following as areas which are not currently good:

- Bullying in some play areas by older young people
- Roads with common reference to the following:
  - Traffic
  - Road Safety
  - Speed of cars
- Litter & pet waste
- Lack of provision for those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)
  - Related to this in one of the responses:
    - Facilities for those using a wheelchair such as bathrooms and changing rooms
    - Suitability of provision for those using a wheelchair
- Relations between young people and adults

The following were put forward as suggestions for improvements:

- More BMX and / or bike tracks, specifically in the Cynon area
- More equipment in play areas
- More suitable areas for older children
- Safer options for riding bikes
- Existing equipment repairs in play areas
- More ALN provision
- More play areas or places to go
- More activities / afterschool provision
- “More advertising on social media” Youth Focus Group Participant

### Travelling to Places of Play

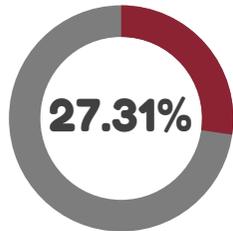
Over 2/3 of respondents indicated that they walked or cycled to places of play, although over 50% used transport to travel to school. The Council has published a network of plans to develop Active Travel routes throughout RCT aimed at encouraging residents to utilise safe routes to walk, wheel or cycle to destinations. To contribute to the Active Travel agenda, the assessment has identified an opportunity to explore opportunities for the addition of meaningful play along pedestrian routes, such as routes to schools and play areas, which has formed an action for the 2025–26 Play Sufficiency action plan.

# How do you usually get to places where you play?

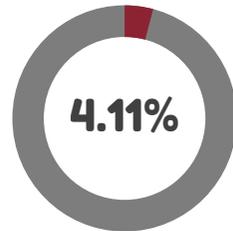
Permission



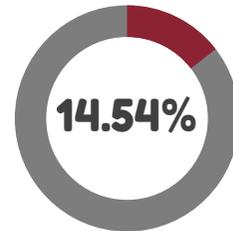
No recorded



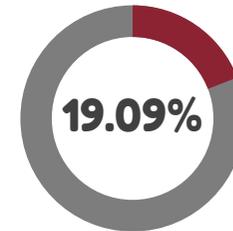
An adult takes me in the car



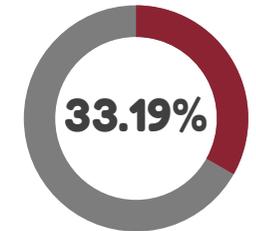
I get the bus



I walk or ride on my own



I walk or ride with an adult



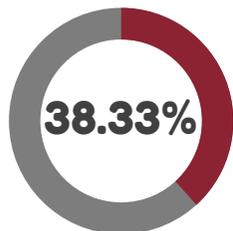
I walk or ride with my friends

# How do you usually get to school?

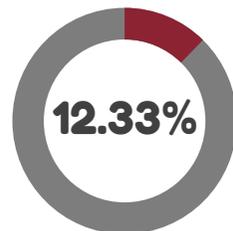
Permission



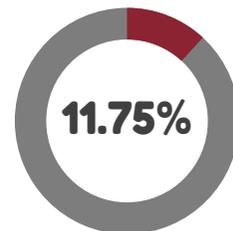
No recorded



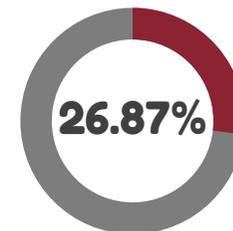
An adult takes me in the car



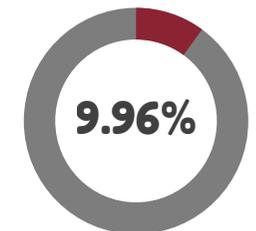
I get the bus



I walk or ride on my own



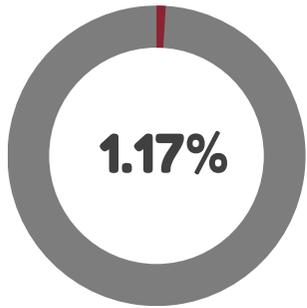
I walk or ride with an adult



I walk or ride with my friends

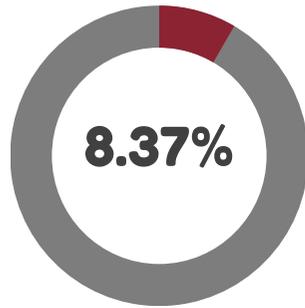
## Can you play in all the places you would like to?

Permission



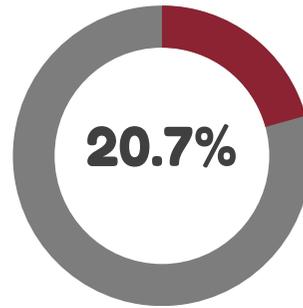
1.17%

No Response



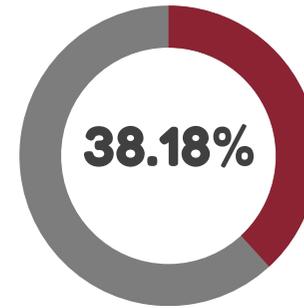
8.37%

I can hardly play in any of the places I would like to



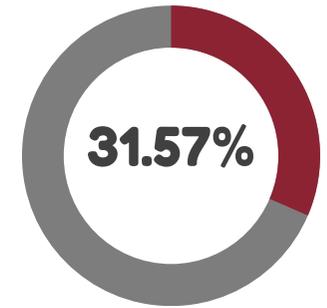
20.7%

I can only play in a few of the places I would like to



38.18%

I can play in all of the places I would like to

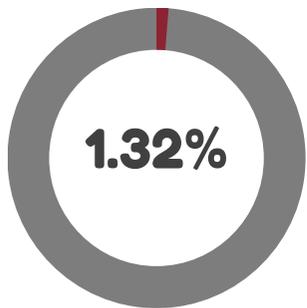


31.57%

I can play in some of the places I would like to

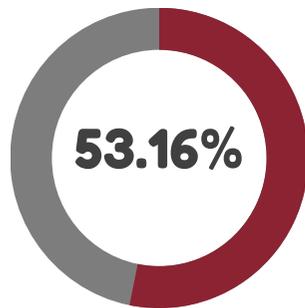
## How Safe do you feel when playing or hanging out?

Permission



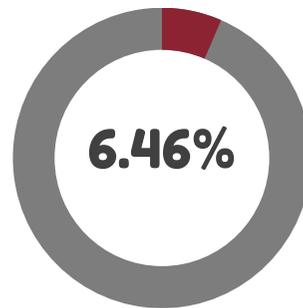
1.32%

No Response



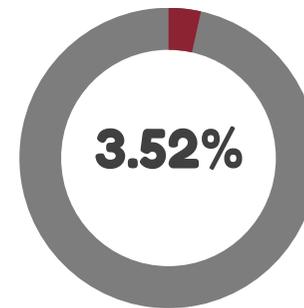
53.16%

I always feel safe



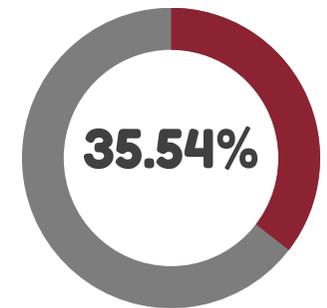
6.46%

I don't play out



3.52%

I Never feel safe



35.54%

I usually feel safe

The survey highlighted mixed responses in relation to permission to play, although the average age of respondents (8 years old) should be taken into consideration when analysing responses. Almost 2/3 of children indicated they are allowed to play outside without adult supervision and almost 30% expressed they cannot always play in the places they would like to. Although some comments indicated children experienced bullying in play areas, almost 90% of respondents indicated that they generally feel safe when playing.

"I feel safe socialising in my community because I know most people. I am always with my friends"

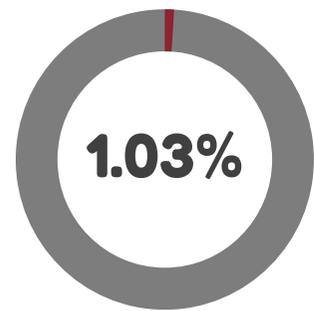
**Youth Focus Group Participant**



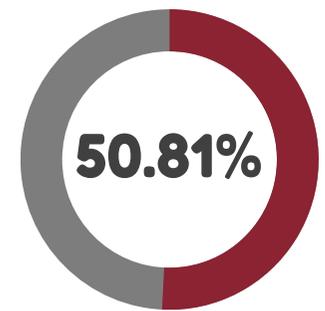
# What are grown-ups like when you're playing or hanging out?

## How Adults View Play

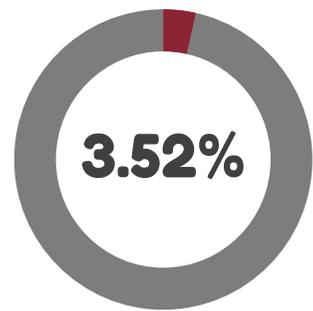
Over 80% of children and young people said adults are generally accepting of them hanging out. However, in focus groups with older children (11+), the way adults perceive young people was a common topic of discussion, showing this is still an area to think about.



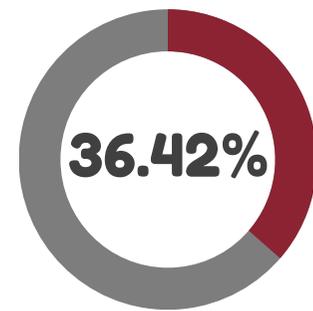
No Response



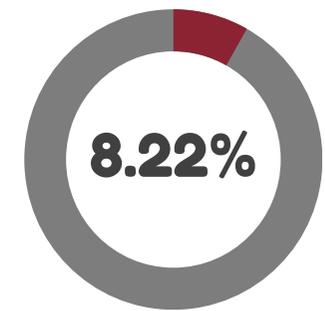
Most adults are great and are happy with children playing out



Most adults are grumpy and hate children playing out



Most adults are okay and are alright about children playing out



Some adults are grumpy and don't like children playing out

“Older people always think young people cause issues”  
**Youth Focus Group Participant**

The Focus Groups with School Councils highlighted that playing is incredibly important to children within the school day and not just beyond it, with 88% of participants indicating that they 'like' or 'love' play time. The participants described how play impacts them, highlighting the plethora of benefits at an individual and school level:

**"I like playtime because I like to run around and have fun"**

**"It makes me feel motivated to do maths"**

**"I enjoy the daily mile it's like a brain break"**

**"I feel relieved at playtime because I get a break from writing in our books"**

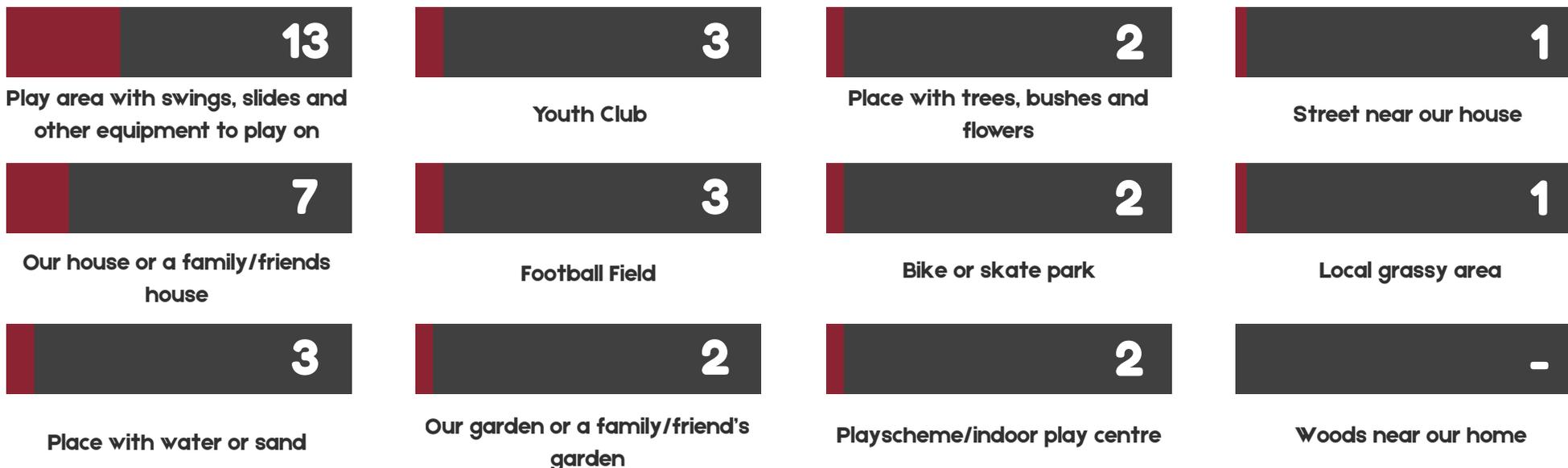
Whilst most of those children involved expressed positivity around play in school, the concern was that children desired more play opportunities, especially the older children who reported they have less breaks than those in the Foundation Phase. The Headteacher survey highlighted that the number, frequency and duration of breaks varies considerably across and within schools depending on the age of children. Further, 48% of respondents selected that break times are withdrawn from pupils with the majority citing the reason as a sanction for poor behaviour. It is clear the way in which pupils spend their break times also varies considerably, although many rich play opportunities were noted, including a range of sport activities, balance bikes, imagination shelters, use of apparatus and quiet areas. Many responses also highlighted the use of Sports Ambassador Leaders, trained Play Leaders and peer mediators to promote play during breaktimes.

Where there was negativity from the School Councils, common issues that were raised included limited play equipment; the desire for a greater number and variety of resources, as well as storage for these, was also a common response in the Headteacher survey. As well as resources, Headteachers highlighted that children would benefit from investment in play equipment on school grounds, with trim trails identified as play equipment which would enhance outdoor play opportunities. This feedback has laid the foundations for an action related to Matter 1 surrounding raising the profile of play within the school day where services will work in partnership to develop an RCT Schools Play Policy to develop a consistent approach across the Local Authority. The consultation findings have also led to improved partnerships between the Play Development Team and Community Focused Schools, creating an action to pilot the use of school grounds for play purposes beyond the school day.

# What Parents and Carers have told us

Listening to the voices of Parents and Carers was a key feature of the sufficiency assessment. The Council utilised the survey provided within the Play Sufficiency toolkit, adding additional questions bespoke to RCT. In total 40 responses were received. To further consider the views of Parents and Carers, the CREW team also held semi-structured interviews with adults during their intervention work which provided an added dimension of lived experience to contribute to the sufficiency assessment.

## Where is your child/children's favourite place to play?



Following analysis of the survey results and focus groups with parents and carers, we found that:

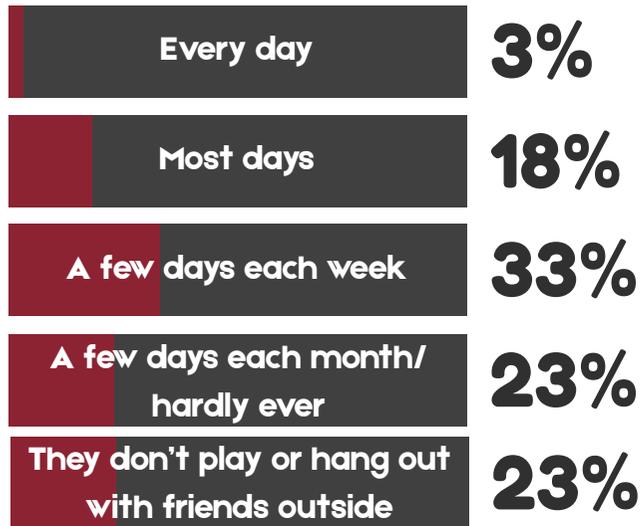
**92%**  
92% strongly agreed and 8% agreed that playing is good for children's health and happiness

The importance of play in contributing to children's health and happiness is widely acknowledged and appreciated by all Parents and Carers

Outside of school, almost half of respondents selected that their child/ children 'hardly ever' or 'don't play or hang out with friends or family'

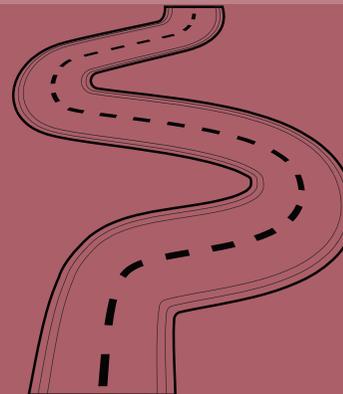
Free/unstructured play opportunities such as parks, play areas and in the home are the favoured places to play

# How often do(es) your child/children play or hang out with friends or family outside of school?



Playing in the street or local open spaces is the least favoured area of preference for playing

**Access to play spaces** was highlighted as a barrier to children playing outside



Safety concerns, primarily related to traffic, are the main barriers for children not playing outside, which has been considered when determining actions to work towards play sufficiency (see section 6)

"Roads are very busy, cars are speeding"

**Parent respondent from CREW conversations**



More adults disagreed (46%) that there are sufficient organised play opportunities in the local area in comparison to those who agreed (25%)

46% of adults agreed there are sufficient free play opportunities, although 41% disagreed

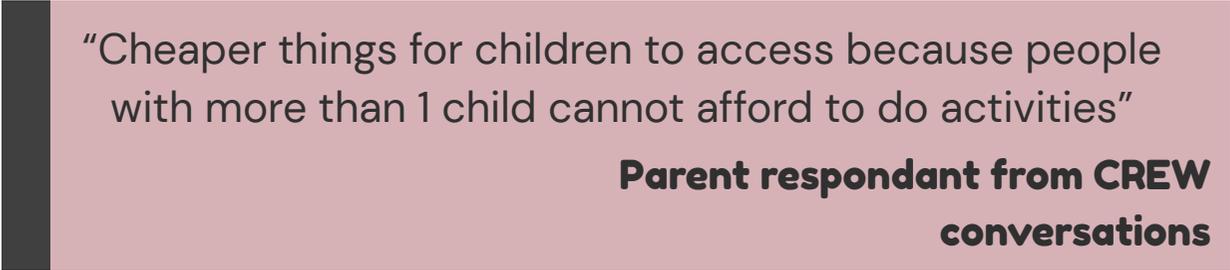


The costs incurred with attending play opportunities were raised by several participants:



“More after school activities for young children that are cheap/free such as gardening, arts and crafts, team building”

The assessment has identified there are a high number of free opportunities to play across RCT, although feedback has suggested that the promotion of such activities is not wide ranging and effective, often proving difficult to navigate for families. Subsequently, coordinating and enhancing the promotion of activities is a key priority in the 2025–26 Play Sufficiency action plan.



“Cheaper things for children to access because people with more than 1 child cannot afford to do activities”

**Parent respondent from CREW  
conversations**

From consultation it is evident there is a clear need for further opportunities for play for disabled children and young people. Ensuring all children access their right to play is a priority for the Council and therefore we felt it important that the lived experiences of disabled children and their families were heard. Subsequently, further consultation with children took place during Play Adapt sessions and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Play sessions led by Fuze, a Voluntary Organisation; this also provided the opportunity for further focus groups with the parents and carers of these children, which again were semi-structured and provided a valuable insight. From this we found that families highly value the Play Adapt sessions on offer.

Article 23 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states “Disabled children should be supported to reach their full potential. They should be provided with activities with others so that they can be an active participant in their own community. Governments should make sure disabled children receive an education, health care and opportunities to relax, play and do other activities”.

“Play adapt has been a lifesaver for me as my son doesn’t have autism, he has a rare genetic condition, all other ALN groups are for children with autism. The staff here are really supporting, and we feel welcomed.”

Families reported that opportunities to play for disabled children are limited and often costly if run by private organisations and therefore the consensus is that play opportunities are not equitable for all in RCT. Families have expressed that they face many barriers, including access to facilities:

“I am unable to use the sports centre public bridge as there are steps and I can’t get the wheel chair over it.”

**Parental Focus Group Participant**

“Really nice to have some provision in Brynna, everything for ALN seems to be up the valleys and I don’t drive so can’t get to them”

**Parental Focus Group Participant**

“ALN sessions are good however are hard to get to without a car”

**Parental Survey Respondant**

Further, the families indicated that whilst Play Adapt sessions are beneficial, they are too few in number with all expressing there is a demand for more sessions during term time and holiday periods across more locations, which has subsequently been prioritised as an action to be worked towards throughout 2025–26.

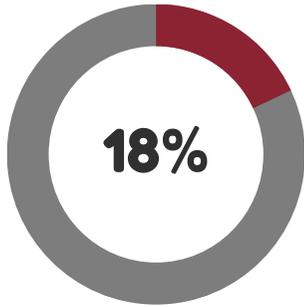
“Need more as we have no where as many places and opportunities as neuro typical children”

**Parental Survey Respondant**

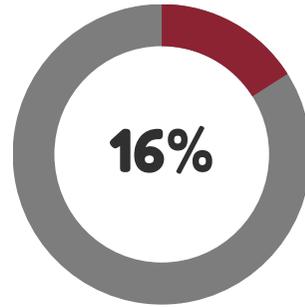
Analysis of the 50 responses from disabled children from the Big Play Survey echoes the themes highlighted by Parents and Carers. Of the children and young people who identified themselves as disabled, 34% stated that they ‘hardly ever’ or ‘don’t’ play or hang out with friends, which represents a 14% increase in the number of responses for these options in those who do not identify themselves as disabled. Similarly, 18% of respondents selected that they can ‘hardly play in any of the places I would like to’,

a 10% increase in comparison to all other responses, which is further reinforced by a 24% V 38% selection of ‘I can play in all the places I would like to’. However, in regard to the type of places Disabled Children like to play or hang out, the responses were very similar with the highest selection choice relating to playing or hanging out in private spaces, with similar percentages selecting a type of play area or an after-school play or youth club.

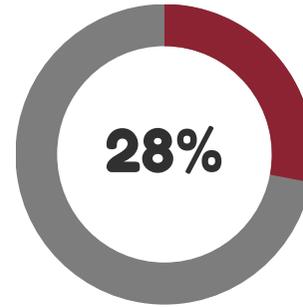
## How often do you go out to play or hang out with friends?



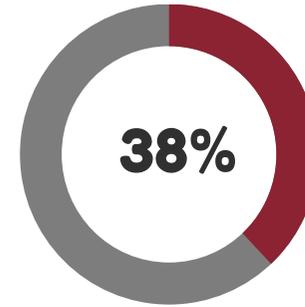
I don't play or hang out with friends outside



Hardly ever

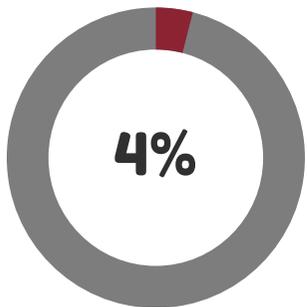


A few days a week

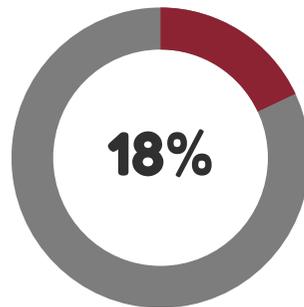


Most days

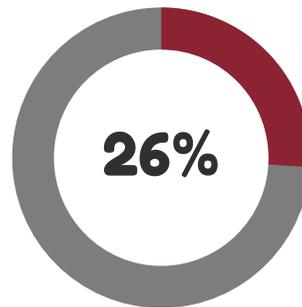
## Can you play in all of the places you would like to?



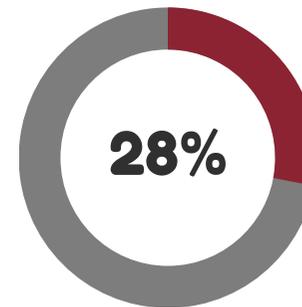
No Response



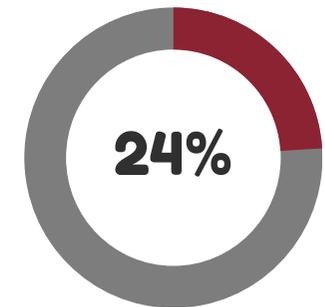
I can hardly play in any of the places I would like to



I can play in some of the places I would like to



I can only play in a few of the places I would like to



I can play in all the places I would like to

# When you're not in school, what types of places would you like to play or hang out in?

For those who identified with a disability



**Total Respondants 50**

\*Respondants were able to select multiple options

### How have these views informed the Play Sufficiency Assessment?

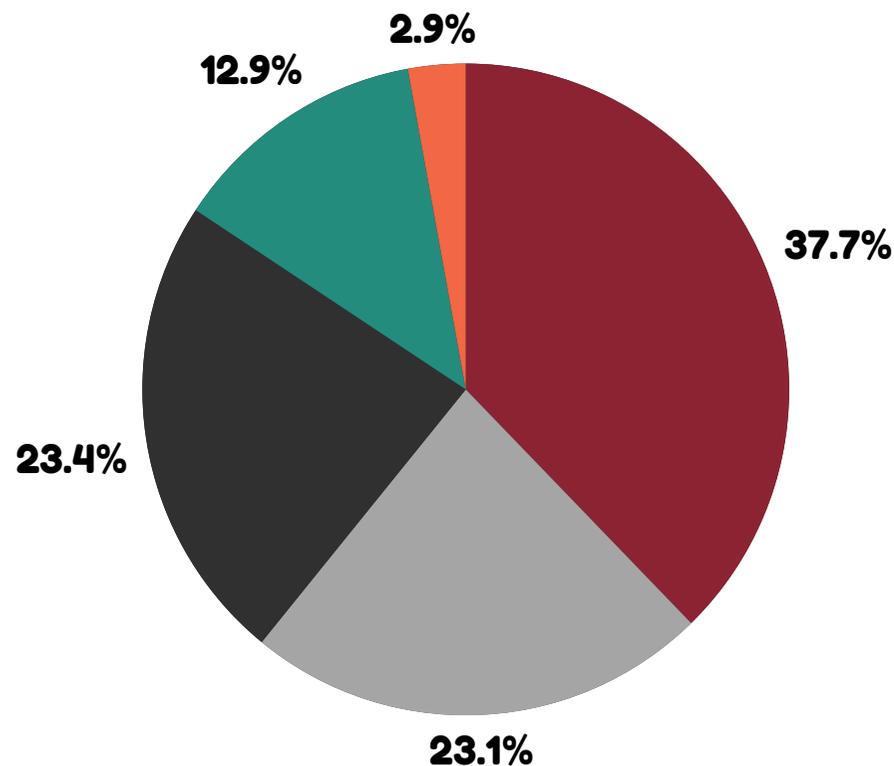
The consultation responses were analysed and linked to each of the four themes and accompanying Matters of the Play Sufficiency Assessment; this information was subsequently considered when delegates in the Play Sufficiency Action workshop undertook a SWOT analysis of each of the thematic areas (appendix 1). These views proved invaluable when evaluating current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Alongside service evaluations, these views contributed to the identification of actions to address gaps in play sufficiency as indicated in section 6.

## 4. Maximising Resources



During 2022–23 RCT benefited significantly from an increase in Welsh Government funding for play opportunities through a £457,796.00 Summer of Fun grant; this was used to provide funding to several Council services and to commission the Third Sector to deliver a vast number and range of family wellbeing activities throughout the holidays. Unfortunately, this funding was not extended beyond 2022, so the Local Authority has subsequently seen a reduction in the number of holiday activities on offer as the amount of provision could not be sustained by other funding streams. However, the importance of play across the Local Authority is recognised by a ringfenced core budget allocated for staffing costs to strategically lead the Play Sufficiency Assessment and prioritise the development of play.

Further, core budgets are utilised to support staffing costs of other service areas vital to the provision of play opportunities across RCT, including Sport, Leisure, Arts and Culture and the Youth Engagement and Participation Service.



- RCT Core
- All Wales Play Opportunity Grant
- Childcare and Play Grant
- Children's and Communities Grant
- All Wales Play Opportunity Grant (Play Sufficiency Revenue)

A child is jumping hopscotch on a colorful playground mat. The mat has blue and purple sections with white hopscotch grids and numbers 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. The child is wearing a white shirt and shorts. Other children are visible in the background.

However, implementing actions for the development of play and commissioning of activities relies heavily on external grant funding; since 2022 the Council has benefited greatly from a range of grants to enhance play opportunities which have been embraced by RCT. The funding listed below has been used by a range of Council Services, namely Play, Youth, Sport and Leisure, Arts and Cultures, Parks and Play Areas

## All Wales Play Opportunities Grant (AWPOG):

### Playworks Holiday Project (annual)

- Funding for the commissioning of Third Sector holiday open access play sessions, Play Adapt sessions and National Play Day events

### AWPOG Revenue

- Additional funding allocated in 2024 and 2025 to support the Play Sufficiency Assessment. Across 2024–25 this additional funding has allowed the Council to commit additional resources to undertake extensive consultation and collaborative work. Moving forward the Council will utilise the grant to contribute to funding the relevant 2025–26 Play Action Plan actions stemming from the Play Sufficiency Assessment

### AWPOG Capital

- RCT has benefitted from additional capital funding for 2025–26 to contribute towards achieving the identified actions on the Play Action Plan; this will primarily be used to improve the inclusivity and accessibility of existing play areas across RCT in response to views shared by Parents and Carers following Play Sufficiency consultations

## **Childcare and Play Training and Support Grant (annual)**

- Funding for the delivery of a range of mandatory and non-mandatory training sessions to upskill Play Providers and enhance the quality of provision. Training has included Safeguarding, Food Hygiene, Paediatric First Aid, Makaton and Halycon training

## **Play areas Capital (annual)**

- Annual capital investment has allowed the Council to repair, maintain and refurbish 41 play areas across RCT since 2022 in line with the annual RAG review of facilities

## **Youth Support Grant**

- Ringfenced allocation for the commissioning of Third Sector open access youth sessions
- Ringfenced allocation for the delivery of Welsh medium enrichment activities and forum work with young people

## **Arts Council Wales Grant**

- Ringfenced allocation to deliver recreational arts activities

## **Sports RCT** – Central South Active Partnership (CSAP) Funding / Sports Wales Crowdfunder / Be Active Grants / Disability Sport Wales

- Utilised to deliver a range of free or subsidised recreational activities, an allocation of which is ringfenced to target provision for children and young people
- Provide support to the voluntary sector to apply for additional funding, this mainly comes again from Sport Wales Crowdfunder and Be Active Grants.
- Targeted sessions have been delivered for Disabled Children and Young People, although in the last 12 months funding from Disability Sport Wales is no longer available

## **Families First**

- Ringfenced allocation to deliver participatory arts activities

## **Flying Start**

- Funding to support Talk and Play and Parenting sessions

## **Regional Integrated Funding (RIF) received from 2023 and extended until 2027**

- Whilst not utilised for the direct delivery of play or recreational activities, the RIF funding has allowed RCT to establish a new team: Creating Wellbeing and Emotional Resilience (CREW) stemming from an identified gap of 8–11 year olds accessing 1–1 support. The 1–1 support offered is part of an early intervention multi-disciplinary approach which uses play therapy to build resilience and improve emotional wellbeing; the sufficiency assessment has found that demand has been high and outcomes have been very positive, leading to the expansion of the CREW team in 2024 with secured funding until 2027. The exit strategy largely aims to signpost children to universal provision, most notably open access play and youth clubs, thus ensuring the importance of play remains at the forefront of the intervention

## **Safer Routes in Communities / Road Safety funding**

- Utilised by the Road Safety Team within Transport to implement initiatives to enhance road safety and subsequently addressing one of the main barriers for play opportunities within communities

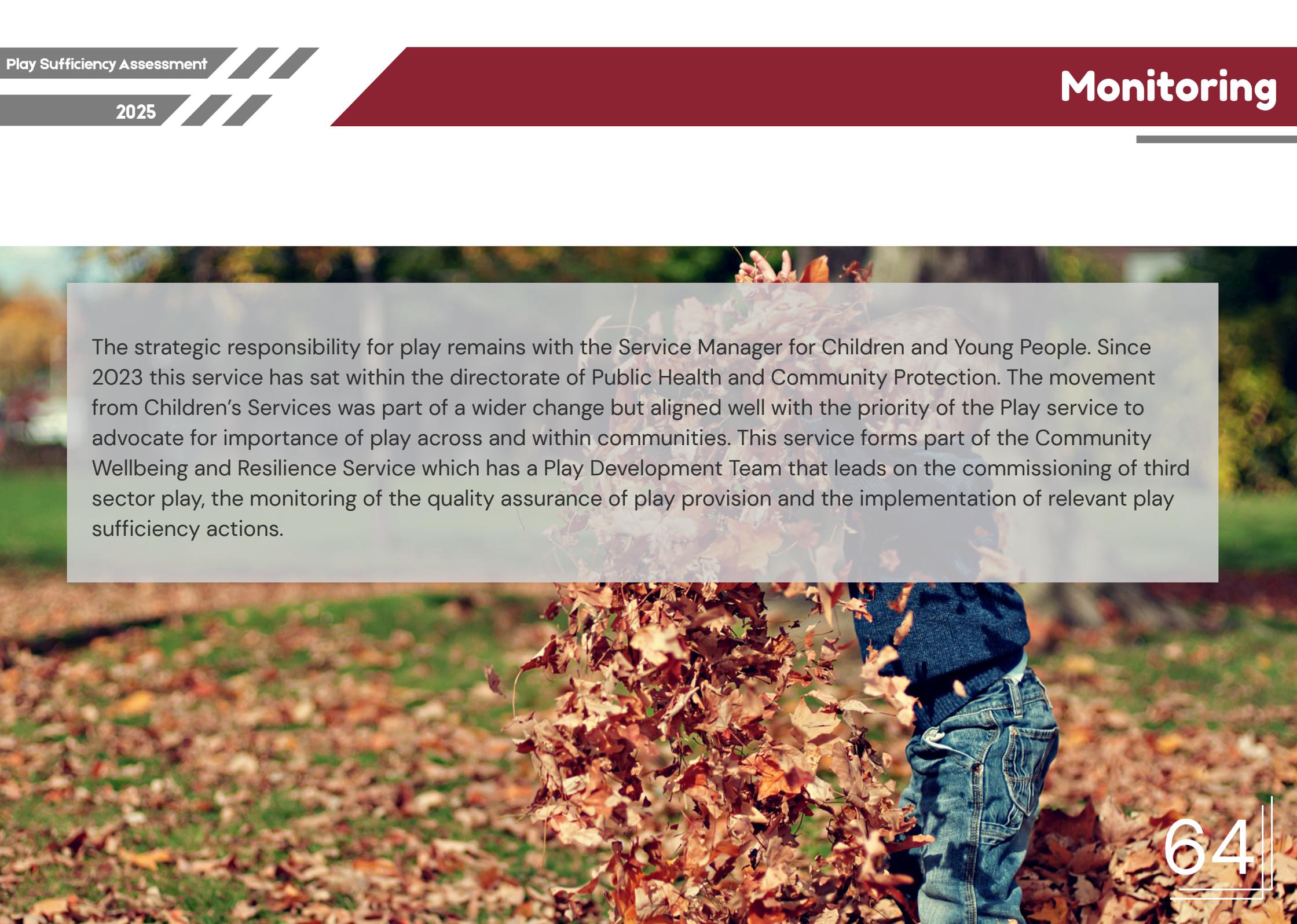
Given the current economic climate, it is acknowledged that financial resources dedicated to play are limited, therefore there is a focus on sharing resources and maximising budgets and grants through partnership working. The sharing of training costs is one area where partnership working is effective through coordination and the sharing of costs across service areas, primarily across Childcare, Play, Youth and its Third Sector partners. The sharing of resources is not limited to finances, but also includes the sharing of resources for events such as the Teddy Bears Picnic and Family Fun Days; this ensures that no costs are passed on to service users.

The Play Sufficiency Monitoring Group also facilitates the sharing of key information, such as mapping exercises undertaken by the Service Mapping Officer, resulting in the maximising of resources in relation to staff time. Following the play sufficiency assessment, it has been recognised that the maximisation of resources is not currently as effective as desired and therefore it is a priority moving forward, with many of the identified actions in the Play Action Plan involving improved cross-service partnerships, specifically in relation to Active Travel and the School Holiday Enrichment Programme; it is envisaged this will naturally result in the sharing of resources and thus improved outcomes.

Further, the 2025–26 Play Action Plan includes many low or cost neutral actions which will positively impact on play opportunities, such as improved communication with service users.

## 5. Monitoring



A child wearing a blue sweater and jeans is seen from the back, playing with a large pile of autumn leaves in a park. The child is holding a large amount of leaves, and some are falling. The background shows a grassy area with more fallen leaves and trees with autumn foliage.

The strategic responsibility for play remains with the Service Manager for Children and Young People. Since 2023 this service has sat within the directorate of Public Health and Community Protection. The movement from Children's Services was part of a wider change but aligned well with the priority of the Play service to advocate for importance of play across and within communities. This service forms part of the Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service which has a Play Development Team that leads on the commissioning of third sector play, the monitoring of the quality assurance of play provision and the implementation of relevant play sufficiency actions.

Since 2022 the Play Development Manager has chaired the Play Sufficiency Monitoring Group, but to emphasise the cross-service strategic collaboration required for the assessment, the Children and Young People's Service Manager now chairs the working group, which includes representation from key Local Authority departments as indicated in table 5.1. The working group meets on a quarterly basis to evaluate the progress of PSA actions and identify further actions required, which are subsequently RAG rated on a shared document. The sufficiency assessment has found that the sharing of key data, namely population data and demographic trends, as well as service mapping of available play opportunities is a notable strength of the PSA working group.

However, attendance at the PSA working group meetings has at times been sporadic and upon reflection the membership has not been representative of a sufficient number of Council services which are of relevance to play. Therefore, an identified action was to expand membership and to reinvigorate the importance of the PSA by distributing new Terms of Reference and seeking Senior Leadership support to ensure the statutory duty is widely understood and appreciated. As part of the 2025 cycle of Play Sufficiency Assessment, membership of the Play Sufficiency Monitoring group has since been expanded to include more representation from an increased number of Council services and attendance at meetings and workshops has since improved; this heightened engagement aligns effectively with an identified priority of ensuring Play pervades all relevant policy and documentation across the Council.

Due to the success and productivity of the face-to-face action workshop, group members have indicated a preference to hold face to face meetings on an annual basis as a form of resetting and reviewing agreed actions, whilst still maintaining quarterly on-line meetings to discuss progress of actions and ensuring that momentum, partnership working and the focus on play sufficiency is sustained.

**Table 5.1**

Service Area	
Play Development Team	Flying Start
Youth Engagement and Participation Service	Childcare
Disabled Children’s Team	Resilient Families – Parenting Team
Creating Wellbeing & Emotional Resilience (CREW) for CYP 8-11	Resilient Families – Talk and Play Team
Service Planning and Transformation	Planning Policy
Community Wellbeing and Resilience Training Officer	Traffic
Strategic Programmes and Community Partnerships	Road Safety Team
Community Focused Schools	Transport
Sport RCT	Arts and Culture
Community Sport	Library Services
Parks and Play	Community Development
Corporate Estates	Family Information Service
Cwm Taf Public Service Board	Housing
Community Safety	Health and Safety

The Play Sufficiency summary, evaluation and subsequent action plan will also be presented to the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee and the Council’s Cabinet for discussion and approval.

## 6. Conclusion



In summary, the Play Sufficiency Assessment has highlighted progress in several areas since 2022; it is clear that play is prioritised across many service areas, although the consistency of this varies. The Play Sufficiency Monitoring group membership has not been sufficiently representative of all relevant services, although there has been notable improvement in this area and thus it is envisaged this will impact upon the heightened focus on the importance of play and subsequently the progress of the identified actions noted on the Play Action Plan to address the identified gaps.

Consultation with key stakeholders has been enlightening and integral to identifying the required actions to ensure the Local Authority meets the needs identified. The additional investment specifically links to Play Sufficiency actions regarding both revenue and capital has been welcomed and will help the Council with funding the necessary resources to work towards the milestones identified in the Play Action Plan. Further, in the current economic climate, partnership working, the maximisation and sharing of resources will be a driver of success.

The action plan highlights several actions which are based on this.

In line with the key priorities identified in section 1, the Play Action Plan provides specific details of key actions identified which embrace the opportunities that were raised in the Play Monitoring Group action workshop. It is the Council's vision that these actions will be key to ensuring that children and young people receive their entitlement of having sufficient time, space and permission to play.

Theme/Matters	Action to achieve sufficient play opportunities	Priorities	Service area
<b>Population</b>			
Matter A: The number of children in respect of each age range within its area / Matter B: Providing for Diverse needs	To utilise Power BI to pilot the use of a Play data dashboard.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the use of data to encourage evidence based planning in relation to play opportunities.</li> <li>Identify appropriate data sources and the level of breakdown for each (geographical / administrative).</li> </ol>	Service Planning and Transformation
	To utilise data to offer supervised play opportunities for Disabled Children in the most appropriate locations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify areas of need to provide play opportunities for CYP with disabilities.</li> <li>Commission third sector play providers to deliver play in identified areas.</li> <li>Identify sources of data in relation to disabilities and their definitions.</li> </ol>	Service Planning and Transformation / Play Development / Disabled Children's Team / Community Sport
	To expand the number of Welsh-medium activities available to children, young people and families.	Increase the number of Welsh medium enrichment opportunities.	Play Development / Youth Engagement & Participation (YEPS) / Community Sport / Cultural Services / Talk and Play
	To undertake access audits on all open access play and youth provisions.	To undertake access audits of all YEPS provisions across RCT and any new play provisions.	Play Development / Youth Engagement & Participation (YEPS)

Theme/Matters	Action to achieve sufficient play opportunities	Priorities	Service area
<b>Places where children play</b>			
Matter C: The space where children can play, including open space, and any other space	Continue to enhance the inclusivity and accessibility of play areas in RCT.	Deliver the Capital investment programme to enhance the play opportunities, inclusivity and access in and around children's designated play spaces.	Leisure Sport and Parks
Matter F: Traffic measures that are used to promote access to play	Explore the viability of piloting Play Streets initiative via pre-planned street closures for national events.	To maximise opportunities to work in partnership with communities to facilitate street play	Traffic
	Engage with Active Travel to explore opportunities for meaningful play along pedestrian routes.	Develop a network of active travel routes which potentially serve nearby parks and play areas as well as enable users to reach other key facilities and services. Focus on cycle training in schools as well as construct infrastructure. To help promote cycle routes and rights of way to encourage recreational physical activity	Traffic / Road Safety Team
	Engage with Safe Routes in Communities to explore opportunities for meaningful play along pedestrian routes.	RCT may be invited to submit a funding bid to WG to deliver a scheme of highway measures to improve routes to schools and local facilities to encourage active journeys by walking, cycling and scooting	Road Safety Team
<b>Supervised provision</b>			
Matter D: Supervised play provision / Matter E: Charges for play provision (Population)	Improve the quality of play provision across commissioned Third-Sector Play Providers.	To roll out the new RCT Play quality assurance scheme (QAS) across all commissioned play and youth open access provisions.	Play Development / Youth Engagement & Participation (YEPS)
	Support and deliver Sport and physical activity through the Food and Fun Program Deliver subsidies holiday program through the Summer of Fun with Sport RCT.	Increase the number and variety of opportunities on offer.	Community Sport

Theme/Matters	Action to achieve sufficient play opportunities	Priorities	Service area
<b>Supervised provision</b>			
Matter G: Playwork training and workforce development	Explore the possibility of Sport Young Ambassadors undertaking Playwork Training with the view of recognising the importance of play in active lifestyles.	Utilise the "Let's Talk About Play" online video as initial training.	Community Sport
	Respond to Third Sector concerns regarding training costs.	Ensure all training offered is free/provide additional funding as a contribution towards staff time to undertake the required training/share best practise.	Play Development / Youth Engagement & Participation (YEPS)
<b>Policy, Engagement, Advocacy and Information</b>			
Matter F: Measures used to promote access to play, including the provision of information, publicity and events	Update Council website/interactive map to highlight playgrounds which have improved accessibility for disabled children and young people.	To ensure information is easily accessible and can be filtered for families in search of this information across RCT.	Leisure Sport and Parks
	Improve accessibility of information regarding free of charge/low cost supervised provision and events via the Family Information Service.	To collate the times, dates and venues of supervised holiday provision to populate timetables for Rhondda, Cynon and Taf.	Play Development / Family Information Service

Theme/Matters	Action to achieve sufficient play opportunities	Priorities	Service area
<b>Policy, Engagement, Advocacy and Information</b>			
Matter H: The level of community engagement and participation	To utilise Corporate Events as an avenue to deliver and promote open access play opportunities.	To commission Third Sector Play Providers and the Youth Service to deliver activities.	Play Development / Youth Engagement & Participation (YEPS)
	To host free holiday Family Fun day events aimed at promoting intergenerational play opportunities.	Multi-agency collaboration to offer a range of recreational activities for children, young people and their families.	Play Development / Youth Engagement & Participation (YEPS) / Community Sport / Cultural Services / Talk and Play / CREW
	Ensure community needs are considered in relation to the development/upgrading of fixed play areas.	Undertake different levels of consultation to ascertain how designated play spaces could better meet community play needs. Utilise population data to manage priorities for spend.	Leisure Sport and Parks
Matter I: The extent to which other policies of a local authority take into account the need to enhance play opportunities for children	To raise the profile of play during the school day with teaching staff and lunchtime supervisors.	Work with colleagues in Education to support schools to develop a play policy Work with colleagues in Education to support schools to develop a play policy that promotes the importance of play through the school day.	Play Development / Community Focused Schools
		Explore opportunities to share best practice to implement the Play Wales initiative to enable communities to have access to the school grounds at the end of the school day; explore opportunities of using Family Engagement Officers to lead this.	Community Focused Schools
	Develop an online training programme aimed at creating 'Play Champions' in each service area.	Work in partnership with Learning and Development to create an Online Induction Module for RCT Play.	Play Development
	Raise the profile of play amongst key decision makers.	Play Wales to host online sessions regarding the duties and importance related to Play Sufficiency Assessment.	Children and Young People's Service

# Appendix



**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 a charge

Following consultation, the following findings have told us:

**Children:**

- Young people in youth club stated they'd prefer more accessible and no/low-cost transport

**Parents/Carers:**

- Many parents stated they would prefer lower or no cost activities as many available activities cost and add up with more than one child
- The cost of parking when attending free events/activities, i.e. parking costs near parks was raised as an issue

**Parents/Carers Play Adapt:**

- Most parents in the focus group were very complimentary of the Play Adapt provision and were grateful of play opportunities offered, but the consensus is there are not enough of these opportunities available
- Many parents expressed concerns that not all adults/staff working with children and young people were sufficiently trained to understand the needs of children with additional needs

"Play adapt has been a lifesaver for me as my son doesn't have autism he has a rare genetic condition, all other ALN groups are for children with autism. The staff here are really supporting, and we feel welcomed, I also get to bring my other son and I get quality time playing with him whilst staff support him. Due to his condition, there are limited places we can go as we have to consider his wheelchair and changing facilities; Capel has everything we need. This has helped me with my mental health"

**Parent to a 6 and 3 year old**

**Play Providers:**

- Highlighted increasing concerns with funding limitations given the rising energy costs of premises and staff wages

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>Access to rich data sets (primarily population, WIMD and PLASC data) allowing the Authority to understand the local demographic; this is used to support some decision making around play, i.e. the commissioning of open access play</p> <p>Play Adapt provision caters for the needs of some children and young people with additional needs</p> <p>A rural V urban classification exercise demonstrated there is an equitable spread of open access play and youth provision</p> <p>Well established Play and Youth Providers provide inclusive and accessible open access provision across RCT, which adds value to the extensive provision offered by the Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS), Leisure, Culture and Arts</p>	<p>Limited data available (or access to such data) in relation to children with additional needs/disabilities</p> <p>Limited access to data in relation to specific cohorts of children and young people, such as Young Carers, Children Looked After, Refugees and asylum seekers</p> <p>At present Play Adapt only runs in the school holidays in 4 locations across RCT; the locations have been determined by the Play Providers desire to offer this within their designated area, as opposed to families/children and young people’s needs: this has led to accessibility issues with travelling and leads to costs incurred for free provision.</p>	<p>To utilise Power BI to pilot the use of a Play data dashboard to include relevant data to inform evidence-based planning across the Play Sufficiency Monitoring Group</p> <p>To offer training to the Play Monitoring Action Group to effectively use data to inform planning</p> <p>Utilise data held by DCT, alongside PLASC data, to commission targeted Play Adapt provisions</p> <p>Funding opportunity to broaden age range of Young Carers’ support from YEPS from 11+</p>	<p>Change to public transport contracts which could affect cost and therefore accessibility</p> <p>Shortage of Personal Assistants/121s to support children and young people with additional needs/disabilities</p> <p>Rising energy costs which affects premises hire fees to run free open access provisions</p> <p>Shortage of Welsh-medium play and youth providers</p> <p>Funding reduction for Sport and Leisure hinders the ability to sustain all provision for Disabled children</p>

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>YEPS has enhanced its youth club inclusivity since implementing changes following a sensory audit of Council run Youth Clubs</p> <p>Sport and Leisure offer sessions for disabled children and young people</p> <p>Since 2022 refurbishment has been undertaken in 41 parks to enhance their accessibility and inclusivity</p> <p>Low-cost holiday transport is available for young people with many low cost/free activities offered to children, young people and their families</p> <p>YEPS provides funding to Young Carers to support young people aged 16-25</p> <p>YEPS commission Menter Iaith to provide open access youth activities and forums through the medium of Welsh</p>	<p>Parents/carers highlighted costs as a concern during consultation; these costs were not always specifically related to the activity, but associated costs such as parking</p> <p>Many sports activities lead to costs incurred for parents/carers and often require block booking</p>	<p>Review DEWIS and materials promoted by the Family Information Service to ensure service users are able to identify provision that meets specific needs</p>	<p>Free provision is reliant on grant funding which increasingly must be used to absorb the rising costs of staff wages/on costs; should this continue in the absence of sufficient grant uplifts, the number of free sessions offered will need to reduce.</p>

**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 consultations have told us:

Following consultation, the following findings have told us:

Children:

- Focus groups undertaken with young people aged 11-14 highlighted they socialise often, primarily by attending youth clubs, sports clubs or playing football/rugby in local fields. Many said they would prefer low or no cost transport to allow them to access activities easily.
- 79.15% reported that they play 'most days' or 'a few days a week'
- 76.35% reported that they have 'loads' or 'just about enough' time to play/hang out with friends 69.75% reported they can play in 'all' or 'some' of the places they'd like to with 29.07% reporting that they can only play 'in a few' or 'hardly any' of the places they'd like to
- 77.70% of selected that they played/hung out was in their own or a friend's house
- 45.2% reported the places they play in are "great" / 45.2% reported "they're ok" with 2.5% stating "they're rubbish"
- 88.7% reported they either "always" or "usually" felt safe when playing/hanging out with 3.52% reporting they don't feel safe

- 40.81% responded “most adults are great and happy with children playing” / 26.42% selected “most adults are ok” /11.74% responded adults were either “grumpy” and “don’t like/hate” children playing
- 65.9% of children responded they’re allowed to play out alone with friends. Of those who responded:
  - 68.53% (307) aged 8–11 years
  - 22.99% (103) aged 5–7 years
  - 6.7% (30) aged 12–14 years
- When travelling for play, 33.19% walked or rode a bike with friends / 27.31% travelled in a car with an adult / 19.09% walked or rode a bike with adult supervision
- 36.65% responded opportunities for playing/hanging out “were great” / 31.86% responded “it’s good, but could be made even better”/ 1.91% responded “it’s rubbish”

Of those who responded “In a youth club” by district:

- 26.76% (19) were from Cynon
- 29.58% (21) were from Rhondda
- 38.03% (27) were from Taf

Of those who responded “In an afterschool club” by district:

- 33.60% (83) were from Cynon
- 35.63% (88) were from Rhondda
- 17.41% (43) were from Taf

Of those who responded “In a community centre or leisure centre” by district:

- 35.75% (64) were from Cynon
- 25.70% (46) were from Rhondda
- 25.14% (45) were from Taf

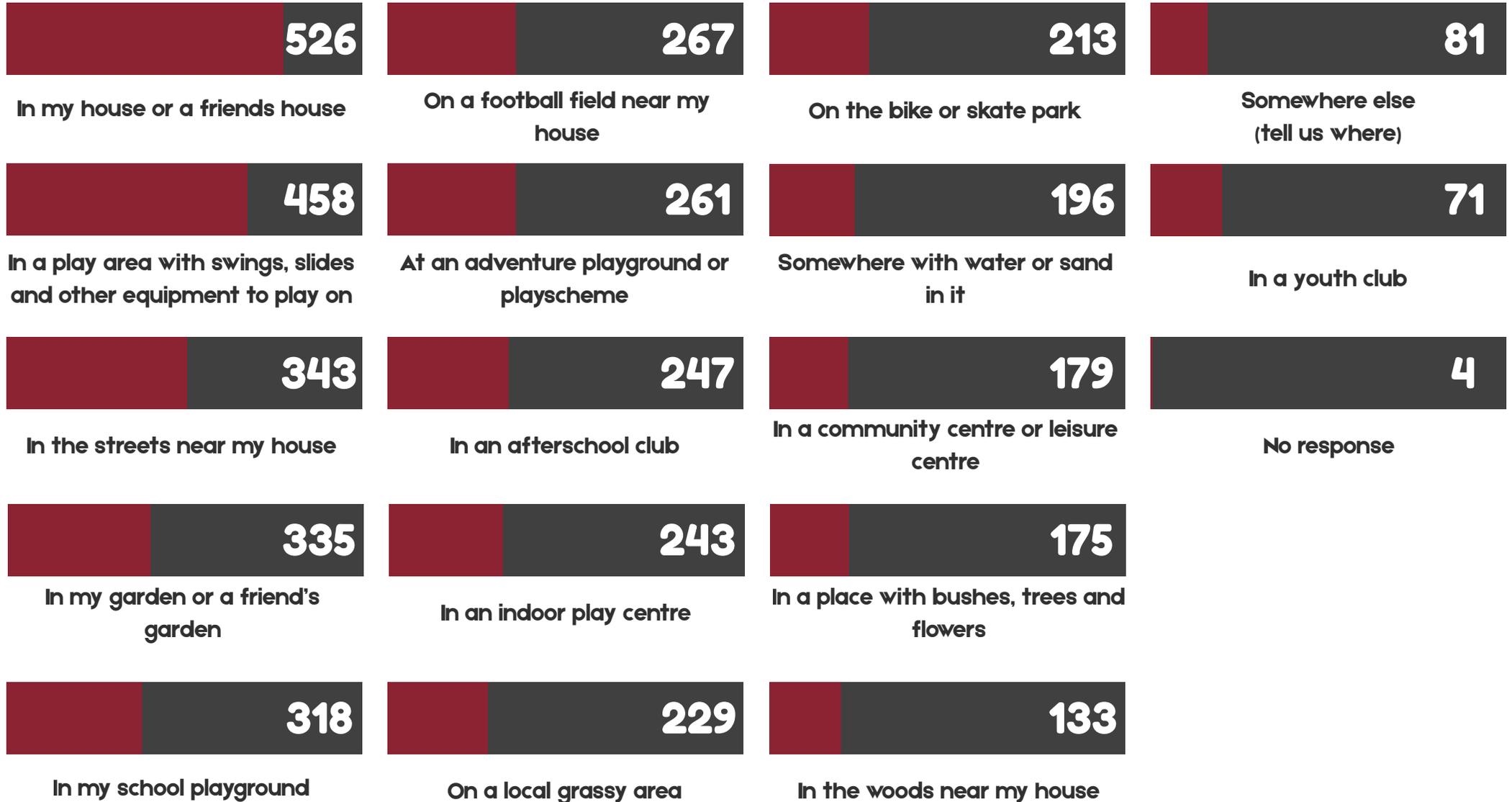
Of those who responded “In an indoor play centre” by district:

- 42.80% (104) were from Cynon
- 22.22% (54) were from Rhondda
- 19.75% (48) were from Taf

Of those who responded “In a play area with swings, slides and other equipment to play on” by district:

- 39.52% (181) were from Cynon
- 26.64% (122) were from Rhondda
- 17.90% (82) were from Taf

## When you're not in school, what types of places would you like to play or hang out in?



**Total Respondants 4275**

\*Respondants were able to select multiple options

**Common responses include:****Strengths**

- Number of parks
- Youth clubs
- Playschemes
- Grass / open spaces
- Opportunities to play football / sport
- Structured opportunities, ie. Swimming and gymnastics

**Areas to improve:**

- Bullying
- Roads
- Traffic
- Road Safety – one request for a zebra crossing
- Speed of cars
- Litter & pet waste
- Lack of provision for those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)
- Related to this in one of the responses:
  - Facilities for those using a wheelchair such as bathrooms and changing rooms
  - Suitability of provision for those using a wheelchair
- Behaviour of other young people (including swearing)
- Relations between young people and adults
- More BMX and / or bike tracks (this was a popular response for the Cynon area in particular)
- More equipment in play areas
- More suitable areas for older children
- Safer options for riding bikes
- Existing equipment repairs
- More ALN provision
- More play areas or places to go
- More activities / afterschool provision

## Parents/Carers:

### Summary of key findings:

- Parks are generally well maintained and accessible
- Common restrictions to play noted were traffic concerns with busy roads, parking availability for parks and lighting during winter months. 40 parents completed a survey:

22.2% raised traffic/fast cars as an issue

30.6% stated their child had no one to play with

45% either strong disagreed or disagreed that there are sufficient organised play opportunities

46% agreed or strongly agreed there are sufficient free opportunities, with 40% disagreeing

- **Parent (child aged 10):** more advertising needed / not many play opportunities in the area and even less in school holidays / too many busy roads / normally older children in local parks so unable to use all the activities and have to leave early
- **Parent (child aged 8):** Parks around me are nice and clean
- **Parent on restrictions:** There are roads that have to be crossed and the road we live on is very busy
- **Parent:** The parks are accessible and mostly clean and attractive.
- **Parent (child aged 5):** I think that play opportunities could be improved if the equipment was fixed and there were speed humps put in place in built up areas to make the streets safer for children to play outside.
- **Parent (child aged 10):** I understand the importance of play and would like my child to have access to more 3G pitches, more sports opportunities and playschemes for children aged 8-11.

**School Council findings:**

The school council reported that there are more playtimes in the school day for nursey and reception aged children than there are for Year 1 to 6. All the children reported having their morning break and lunchtime break but not having an afternoon break due to schoolwork taking priority. 90% of the children reported loving or liking their playtimes, with 10% not liking their playtimes. All the children reported wanting more time to play in the school day and they also wanted improved playgrounds and better equipment to play.

**Strengths**

- Playtimes allow children to form friendships
- Its beneficial to help them to learn as they burn off energy
- Children enjoy having freedom to play and run around in the fresh air

**Areas for development**

- Less fighting and arguing between the children
- More equipment
- More time to play
- Improved school yards for safety

**Parents/Carers Play Adapt:**

Families of children with ALN/Disabilities feel that their children are less advantage in their play opportunities. Through discussions staff awareness and training was highlighted also families feel what is being delivered is tokenistic offer to tick a box.

**Strengths**

- Staff in Play Adapt understand children with ALN
- Like minded children/parents/carers helps families feel supported and not judged
- The environments are safe and secure

**Areas for development**

- Better publicity of play events in Local areas
- Safer transport links
- Regular sessions not just now and again
- Better times of sessions
- More Play Adapt term time
- More ALN sessions especially on weekends
- More quiet sessions in swimming pools
- Qualified professionals to staff sessions
- Support for single parents
- Equitable spread across RCT

"I am unable to access the sports center as I don't drive, and I have 3 children under the age of 9 with my 9-year-old son having sever learning difficulties and requires 1:1 support and uses a wheelchair. To get there by walking, I must cross a narrow bridge that doesn't have any public pathway. I am unable to use the sports center public bridge as there are steps and I can't get the wheel chair over it."

**Anon, child ALN aged 9, siblings aged 5 and 3**

"Play Adapt has been a lifesaver for my family, I care for my 2 grandsons who both have Autism, there is nothing on offer for children with needs and I have to fight to get any support from anyone. I would really love to see playadapt run on weekends and afterschool."

**Grandmother to two children aged 10 and 7**

"Really nice to have some provision in Brynna, everything for ALN seems to be up the valleys and I don't drive so can't get to them"

**Parent of a 13 year old**

"The biggest barrier I have faced with <XXX> is the lack of understanding some council staff have, we go to ALN sessions but they don't get my son's needs, we have had to leave as their boundaries and restrictions have resulted in <XXX> having meltdowns, staff need to be trained"

**Parent to a 6 year old**

**Play Providers:****Strengths:**

- Lots of open space–playing fields parks

**Areas for development:**

- Accessibility for all
- Accessible equipment in parks so that disabled children can play in parks in their communities, so they don't have to travel
- Duplication of provision with providers
- Leisure Centre run swimming sessions on same day as OAP which reflected attendance
- Poor lighting outside in the nights

**Community consultation carried out by a Community Safety Officer:****The following hinders play opportunities/general areas for development:**

- available parking, sufficient street lighting and people drinking alcohol in public play areas
- lack of street lightings, CCTV, the up keep of public spaces and more free clubs/lessons for young people in leisure centres/gyms

**RCT has many strengths in relation to play opportunities, such as:**

- All respondents said that they felt RCT provided enough public play areas, clubs and leisure facilities. They felt in general the libraries provide a lot of community' groups to attend, especially for new parents. Some would like to see the open-air lido or pools reopened in the parks

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>Quantity and overall quality of parks with good investment</p> <p>Play is considered in many planning policies</p> <p>Vast amount of open/green space to encourage outdoor play</p> <p>Play, Youth, Leisure, Arts and Culture offer a variety of supervised provision</p> <p>The Local Authority has established sharing protocols with South Wales Police regarding access to personal injury collisions (PICS) and utilises this to monitor road safety to determine planning for Improvements where necessary</p>	<p>Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGA)/3G pitches are often locked due to damage incurred and subsequent costs with repairing this</p> <p>School grounds are rarely available to communities outside of the school day</p> <p>Not all open spaces are maintained effectively</p> <p>Smaller local parks are not as sufficiently maintained as larger parks</p> <p>Congested areas/traffic speed is a significant barrier to children playing outdoors from a child and parent perspective</p>	<p>Use Active Travel funding to provide play opportunities along pedestrian routes</p> <p>Improving road safety via more crossing facilities to reduce accidents and alleviate parents/carers' concerns</p> <p>Pilot Play Streets initiative by incorporating the Play Agenda into pre-planned street closures for national celebrations - utilise support from WG and Play Wales</p> <p>Pilot Play Streets via National Play Day celebrations on an annual basis (August)</p>	<p>Open spaces for play – housing shortages leading to increasing pressures to build more homes on available spaces</p> <p>Social media/media coverage often heightens concerns over traffic / pedestrian accidents</p> <p>Funding – although Play Streets is cost neutral, resources needed in regard to staff time to coordinate</p> <p>Communities may not be in support of street 'closures'</p> <p>MUGAs – significant cost implications with building, managing and maintaining; many subjected to damage</p>

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>As part of the Active Travel agenda, a significant amount of work has been undertaken to enhance road safety for children and young people, such as National Standards Cycle Training delivered to 700 pupils annually and Kerbcraft to younger children every year.</p>		<p>Explore possibility of Education opening school grounds once a week after school/during holidays on a trial basis – possibility of linking this to the role of Parent Engagement Officers and utilising the ‘free play’ time to engage and support parents on site</p> <p>Utilise capital funding for Parks investment to enhance the accessibility of play parks for disabled children and young people</p>	<p>Welsh Government Road Safety funding does not currently allow for delivery of road safety training to all schools across RCT</p>

**Supervised provision:****Matter D:** Supervised play provision**Matter G:** Playwork training and workforce development**What consultations have told us:****Parents/Carers Play Adapt:**

There is not enough free supervised provision for children with ALN, in RCT you have Play Adapt but this is only run in holidays, there is free swimming, but this is run at inconvenient times. More for children with ASD than there is for other disabilities.

**Strengths**

- Play Adapt sessions are available

**Areas for improvement**

- More sessions of Play Adapt; weekends and term time

**Play Providers:****Strengths:**

- Trusted and well established providers holding play sessions
- Stability of play and youth sessions

**Areas for development:**

- More collaborative working between the LA and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector /Funding
- Play and youth sessions being provided on weekends

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>A wide variety of play, youth, leisure and arts opportunities are available for children and families from a plethora of Council services including Talk and Play, Youth Engagement and Participation Service, Events, Arts, Libraries, Sport and Leisure. The Council also commissions Third Sector Play and Youth organisations to provide further play opportunities.</p> <p>The importance of play pervades the Early Years Agenda and Parenting support with supervised play sessions delivered by the Resilient Families Talk and Play and Parenting Teams.</p> <p>Some Play–Youth provisions have effective transition processes to maintain engagement with open access opportunities</p>	<p>Transition processes between all Play–Youth provision is inconsistent and less effective where providers do not offer both Play and Youth services within the same locality</p> <p>Sport has reported a significant drop off in engagement with secondary age children and young people</p> <p>With the exception of occasional weekend events, the plethora of opportunities available take place after school or during school holidays only</p> <p>The wide variety of supervision on offer is to some extent promoting the idea that play must be supervised and is therefore diminishing the importance of free, unstructured play (links to Policy, Advocacy, Engagement)</p>	<p>Develop partnerships between Third Sector Play Providers and Sport and Leisure to signpost opportunities on offer to children and families</p> <p>Further develop partnerships between Youth, Schools and Sport to actively promote sustained engagement through the teenage years</p> <p>Develop a coordinated program of opportunities during the weekends</p> <p>Play and Youth services to explore the possibility of increasing Third–Sector commissioning costs to include a contribution towards staff time to attend training</p>	<p>Reduction of funding for Sport and Leisure has led to a reduction in staff, further compounded by less funding from Disability Sports Wales</p> <p>Delivering provision on weekends has considerable cost implications and current budgets do not allow for this; this would also lead to a significant reduction in school holiday and/or after school provision</p> <p>Cost of living pressures may lead to lower numbers attending provision, even if free, due to associated costs such as travelling and parking</p>

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>YEPS has strong partnerships with Sport and Leisure to signpost and at times facilitate engagement with leisure opportunities</p> <p>Training opportunities offered to the play and youth workforce are extensive and range from mandatory training to best practice courses to upskill staff and enrich the opportunities offered</p> <p>Childcare and Flying Start providers undertake training such as Play Therapy and Understanding Play to deliver high quality play as part of the provision.</p> <p>The Play Sufficiency Monitoring group includes representation from all key service areas which deliver supervised provision</p>	<p>The wide variety of provision available can be overwhelming and difficult to navigate across such a large Local Authority, especially during school holidays when families are looking for this information</p> <p>Uptake of training offered to the Third-Sector Play and Youth workforce is low with Providers reporting costs for staff time to attend as the primary barrier</p> <p>The importance of play and the sufficiency assessment is not widely understood by key decision makers in the Local Authority</p> <p>Expand informal Play training opportunities beyond the Play-Youth workforce by developing an online training package to promote 'Play Champions' within each Local Authority service</p> <p>Gaps in Welsh-medium provision for Play, Youth and Leisure</p>	<p>YEPS to undertake a Youth Service Workforce audit, replicating the process used by the Play Development Team</p> <p>YEPS to utilise the skillset and experience of Local Authority Youth Workers to deliver free training to the Third Sector across Play and Youth to enhance consistency in provision</p> <p>Play Wales to deliver a session to key decision makers regarding the Local Authorities duties in relation to play sufficiency</p> <p>Family Information Service to collate a timetable of supervised provision prior to each school holiday and share this with service users</p> <p>Embed the Play Quality Assurance model and extend to Youth to ensure consistency in the provision on offer</p>	<p>Quality Assurance processes require Providers time which has cost implications</p> <p>Shortage of Welsh-medium Play and Youth providers</p>

**Policy, 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

**Parents/Carers:**

- Many events are not advertised well enough and thus go forgotten about (advertising that works e.g., strips on the roads)
- 92.3% of parents who completed a questionnaire agreed that playing is good for a child's health and happiness

**Parents/Carers Play Adapt:**

- Advertising of sessions is poor, they reported to relying on other parents for information on ALN activities and sessions

**Play Providers:****Strengths**

- Engagement from the communities

**Areas for development:**

- Old people not accepting Young People
- Parents not allowing CYP to play outside/ leave the house after school
- All communities valuing the importance of play

**Community consultation carried out by a Community Safety Officer:**

- Some adults felt intimidated by large gatherings of young people in public places, although 94% of those asked valued the importance of children and young people playing

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>The Creating Resilience and Emotional Wellbeing service uses play therapy as the basis for an intervention and signposts to universal open access play and youth provision as an exit strategy</p> <p>YEPS' social media has good reach and promotes up to date information</p> <p>Play and Youth Providers utilise own social media pages to reach their communities: this is now a contract requirement and has worked effectively</p> <p>The Play Development Team posts ideas for play monthly and has developed a video emphasising its importance</p>	<p>DEWIS can be difficult to navigate and is not always up to date</p> <p>Family Information Service (FIS) updates individual service events/provision by request, which can lead to limited information provided</p> <p>The value of play isn't consistently appreciated by key decision makers and thus isn't always considered in policy making</p> <p>Limited number of play based approaches to inter-generational activity</p>	<p>FIS to collate details of provision and update service users prior to each school holiday with one timetable of events in Rhondda, Cynon and Taf</p> <p>Tap into schools parenting apps as an effective means of sharing play related information to a large demographic</p> <p>Expand informal Play training opportunities beyond the Play-Youth workforce by developing an online training package to promote 'Play Champions' within each Local Authority service</p> <p>Offer training to non-teaching school staff, i.e. lunchtime supervisors to promote play within the school day</p> <p>Play Wales to deliver a session to key decision makers regarding the Local Authorities duties in relation to play sufficiency</p>	<p>Training costs incurred due to staff time</p> <p>Engaging with parents/carers can sometimes be perceived to be as a tick box exercise which Subsequently hinders the quality and quantity of information gather</p>

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>Play is prominent at several community family events such as Teddy Bears Picnic, Aberdare Festival and the Big Welsh Bite; relevant services delivery activities as means of promoting the importance of play/leisure</p> <p>High number of responses from children and young people for the Big Play Survey</p> <p>The development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century schools ensures building designs enables and encourages outdoor learning opportunities, especially during the Foundation Phase</p> <p>Play is explicitly identified as a priority to meet the objective of developing 'Healthy Local Neighborhoods' in the Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan, 2023-2028</p>			

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>Play is recognized within a number of policies which form the Local Development Plan, such as Community Infrastructure and Planning Obligations, and Design and Placemaking, Protection and Enhancement of the Built Environment</p> <p>Play is recognized through relevant Traffic policies with its importance demonstrated through several Traffic and Road Safety initiatives</p>			