

***The importance of
playing-
for supporting
creativity, wellbeing
and resilience***



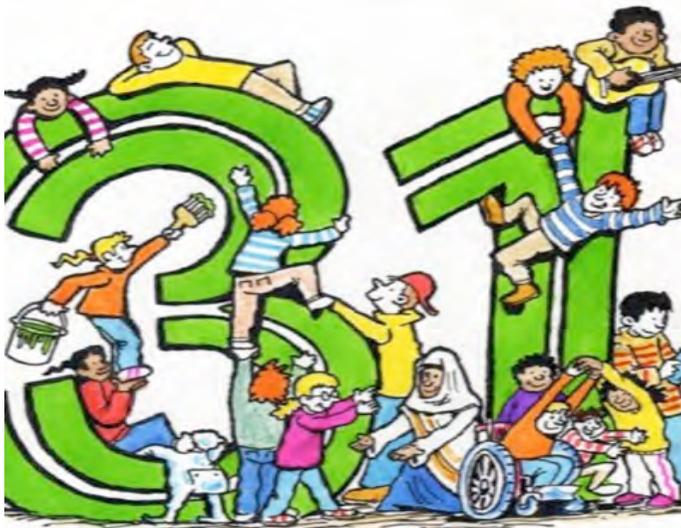
The session:

- Introduces the international and national policies for play
- Discusses research and theory regarding play in the context of supporting creativity, wellbeing and resilience
- Discusses a rich play environment and the role practitioners have in supporting access to it





The right to play



- All children have the right to play as enshrined in Article 31 of the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child
- *Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. (UNCRC, 1989)*
- *General Comment No 17 raises the importance and increases accountability*

How the UNCRC General Comment No.17 defines '*Play*'...



- the key characteristics of play are fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity
- is a fundamental and vital dimension of the pleasure of childhood
- an essential component of physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2013)



Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010

2010 nawm 1

CONTENTS

PART 1

CHILD POVERTY, PLAY AND PARTICIPATION

CHAPTER 1

ERADICATING CHILD POVERTY



Wales- a Play friendly Country-statutory guidance



Matter 1: Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas

Early years/Childcare and Family policy and initiatives

The Local Authority in its provision of services for early year's children and their families should recognise the importance of high quality play opportunities in their lives.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment should assess the extent to which:

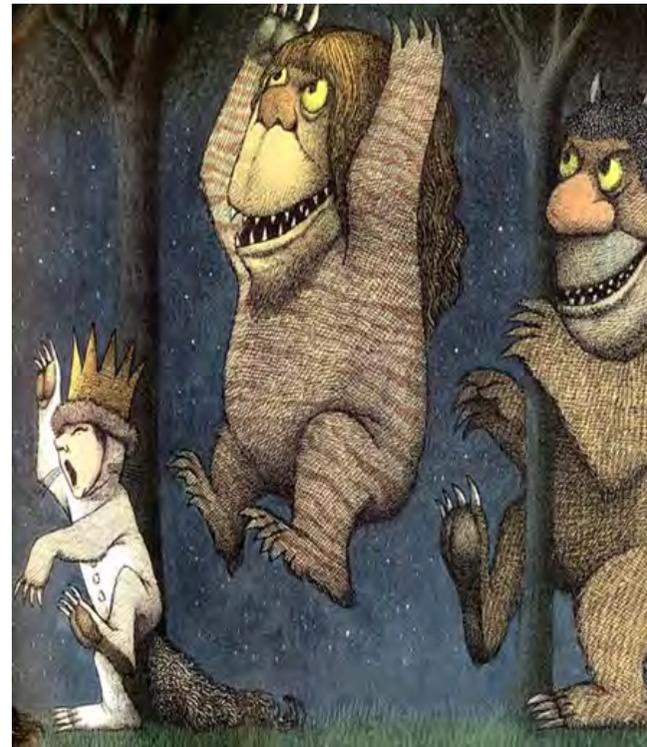
- The Local Authority recognises the importance of play within this policy area, and the benefit to parents and families as a whole, through access to a wide range of play opportunities.

-Early Years, Flying Start and family support plans and services recognises the importance of play and contribute to the provision of rich play opportunities for children.



Common Features of Play

- Heterogeneous
- 'As if' behaviour
- In control of being out of control
- Flexible, unpredictable
- Within the safety of a frame
- Intrinsically motivated
- Personal Control





Play and creativity



Play and resilience



Play and wellbeing

Play and creativity



- The key relationship between play and creativity exists in the flexibility of responses to novel and uncertain situations and the non-serious interpretation of a range of stimuli. Play supports adaptive variability rather than logical and narrow responses

(Lester and Russell, 2008)

Play and resilience



Play has specific features that allow children to try out, in relative safety, new strategies and solutions to challenges. Playing promotes both physical and emotional flexibility through the rehearsal of new and unexpected behaviours and situations. It allows children to modify behaviour to meet the challenges of their environment and, over time, to change that environment itself. This flexibility is integral to the play process

(Lester and Russell, 2008 and 2010)

Play and wellbeing

Play—and being well

Children's play 'provides a primary behaviour for developing resilience, thereby making a significant contribution to children's wellbeing' (Masten and Obradovic, 2006). This evidence suggests that play contributes to developing resilience through a number of interrelated systems including:

- Emotional regulation
- Pleasure and enjoyment of promotion of positive feeling
- The stress response system and the ability to respond to uncertainty
- Creativity and the ability to make new and different connections
- Learning
- Attachment to people and place





Rich Play Environment



“A rich play environment is one which is flexible, adaptable, varied and interesting.

It maximises the potential for socialising, creativity, resourcefulness, challenge, and choice.

It is a trusted space where children feel free to play in their own way, in their own time, on their own terms.”

Quality play provision offers all children and young people the opportunity to freely interact with or experience:



- Other children - of different ages and abilities with a choice to play alone or with others, to negotiate, co-operate, fall out, and resolve conflict.
- The natural world - weather, trees, plants, insects, animals, mud.
- Loose parts - natural and man made materials that can be manipulated, moved and adapted, built and demolished.
- The four elements - earth, air, fire and water.
- Challenge and uncertainty - graduated opportunities for risk taking; both on a physical and emotional level.
- Changing identity - role play and dressing up.
- Movement - running, jumping, climbing, balancing, rolling, swinging, sliding and spinning.
- Rough and tumble - play fighting.
- The senses - sounds, tastes, textures, smells and sights.

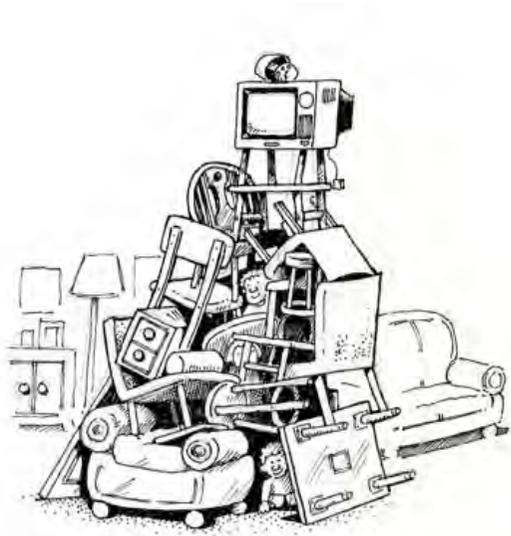
Simon Nicholson's Theory of Loose Parts (1971)

'that in any environment, the degree of creativity and inventiveness is directly proportional to the number of variables in it.'

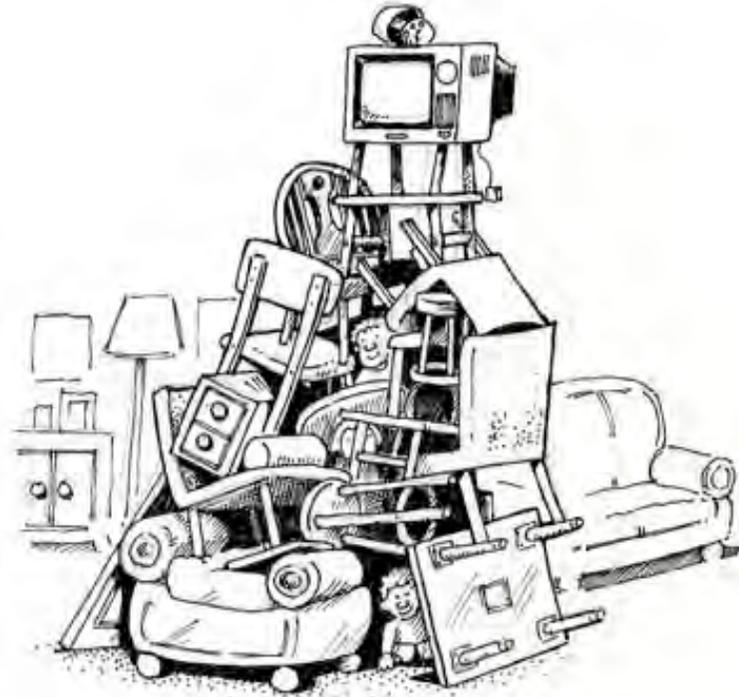


- Loose parts create richer environments for children to play, giving them the resources they need to extend their play.

Loose parts



- Objects or components that can be moved around, adapted, built, demolished, mixed, or imbued with imaginary qualities
- Paper, stones, sticks, water, sand, leaves, feathers, tools, nails, boxes, fabric, ropes, wood, pots, animals, plants, metal, clay, mud, tables, chairs, blankets, other people, words, shapes, colours, sounds, flavours, textures
- ... everything and anything that can be moved or manipulated as part of play.



See loose parts in action:

- <http://elpa.org.uk/loose-parts-play/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqi1KyJJeKg>

Resources for playing – providing loose parts to support children’s play toolkit



Published by Play Wales:

- To raise awareness of the value of loose parts to children’s play
- To provide practical guidance about loose parts play to those who work with children and young people of all ages
- To advocate the use of loose parts as an approach to developing play opportunities at home, school and in the community.

<http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/loosepartstoolkit>

Playing in early years settings...our role



- Listen to what children say about their play and genuinely value their contributions.
- Consider children's play spaces as important environments that should be protected.
- Advocate that children's play is essential for healthy development and wellbeing. It is a legitimate behaviour and their human right and this applies to children playing indoors and outdoors.
- Children's play is often chaotic frantic and noisy, and children's play spaces are often messy, disordered and idiosyncratic. We need to understand that children's conception of a desirable play space does not look like an adult's
- Support children's play by providing loose parts and rejecting over-commercialism.
- Prioritise children's time to play freely. If we over-supervise or over-protect it, we take away the child's free choice and the very thing that makes their behaviour play.

Childhood-play for the here and now



Although the benefits of play for children are substantial and wide ranging and its effects are felt far into adulthood, play is an integral part of childhood and children place great value on having plenty of places and time to play (Ipsos Mori Social Research Institute and Nairn 2011)

Children are ‘active agents’ (Lester and Russell, 2010) in their own development, and should be seen for who they are not just for who they might become.

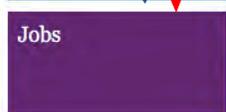
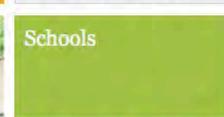


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