



**The role of the Children's
Commissioner in encouraging physical
activity and sport
- perspectives on the role of the
planning system**

www.childcomwales.org.uk

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Keith Towler's main aim is to **Safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children and young people**

All work underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

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United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)



42 rights

**For all children around the world, up to 18
years of age**

**All rights are interconnected and none more
important than others**

**All rights are necessary for child's
development**

The UNCRC sets minimum standards for children and young people's civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.



- **PROVISION** of appropriate health care, standard of living, education, facilities + support for special needs
- **PROTECTION** from violence, dangerous work, abuse and abduction, prevention of harm
- **PARTICIPATION** in society as active members of community

Article 31



- 1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
- 2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

Article 15



- 1. States Parties recognize the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.
- 2. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of these rights other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Concluding observations



- The Committee made “concluding observations” (recommendations) that the UK needs to change and improve. Some relevant topics were:
- The portrayal of children and young people in society
- The intolerance of children in public spaces
- Services for children with disabilities
- The right of children to rest and leisure activities

What do we mean by “physical activity and sport”?



- A prime requisite for engaging in activities with others is the ability to socialise.
- Play is essential to the development of this ability to socialise and to the level of physical fitness required to take part in sports.
- Sport teaches children many transferable ‘life skills’ such as sportsmanship, fairness, grace, overcoming adversity, perseverance and a desire to succeed etc. It can be very important to their development.

What do children and young people want to do?



- Meet their friends in a safe, local place
- “Hang out”
- Cycle, skateboard, rollerblade, play ball games
- Play sport - boys and girls?
 - Rugby, football, - tennis, hockey, netball

Letter to the Telegraph



- increases in traffic that make even residential areas unsafe for children;
- the ready availability of sedentary, sometimes addictive screen-based entertainment;
- the aggressive marketing of over-elaborate, commercialised toys (which seem to inhibit rather than stimulate creative play);
- parental anxiety about "stranger danger", meaning that children are increasingly kept indoors;
- a test-driven school and pre-school curriculum in which formal learning has substantially taken the place of free, unstructured play;

Children's Commissioner for Wales annual review



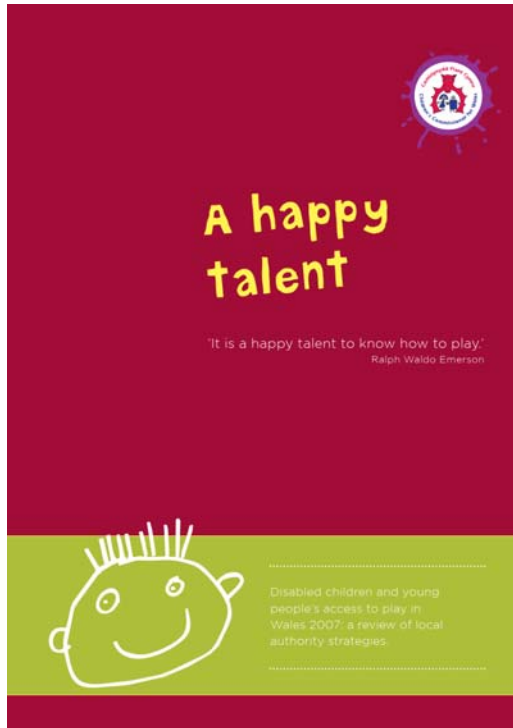
I hear constantly from children and young people that poor transport or unaffordable provision, particularly in rural areas, means that they are unable to take advantage the wider range of play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities provided for children and young people today.

Annual Review



- It is clear that although Wales led the way with a national play policy, there is still much to be done in relation to securing the right to play for every child in Wales.
- It is vital that, in relation to play, steps are taken to ensure that provision matches the expectation that is now being raised.

Disabled Children



The One Wales document commits the Welsh Assembly Government to reforming and reissuing guidance on local criteria for use in section 106 agreements.

These 'Section 106 Agreements' could be used as tools for promoting the development of play facilities, particularly when negotiating provision of open green spaces.

One Play Strategy Review has noted:
'Too often an 'adult agenda' can get in the way of delivering play-friendly developments'

Findings



- Not much original thought given to what play means to children locally
- Many strategies still do not receive full recognition within the local authority and are not adequately funded
- Some included the needs of disabled children in future play provision with no reference to improving existing provision
- Many focused on auditing or counting resources/facilities
- Some identify disability as a barrier but not how to overcome it



"Is it against the law to play football in the street?"

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Let's see more of this in our towns!



Road sign in Luxembourg



Sign in Sydney Botanic Gardens