

## EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> October 2023
<b>Report Subject</b>	Flintshire County Summer Playscheme 2023
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
<b>Type of Report</b>	Operational

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Flintshire County Council maintains a strong collaborative partnership with all Town and Community Councils, as well as the Welsh Government, to successfully execute the county-wide summer playscheme, which has been in operation since 1996.

The efficacy of the summer playscheme is substantiated by comprehensive evaluations conducted among children, young individuals, families, and communities, with input gathered through our Town and Community Councils and affiliated organisations.

Our playschemes are designed to be fully inclusive, with dedicated provisions for children with disabilities, and Additional Learning Needs through the Flintshire Buddy Scheme. Additionally, we ensure that there are measures in place to cater to the needs of Welsh-speaking children as well as encouraging a greater understanding of the Welsh language and culture amongst staff and children.

We are pleased to report that the Flintshire summer playscheme programme aligns with the objectives set out in the Local Authority's Play Sufficiency Action Plan for the year 2023/2024.

The enduring partnership with our local Town and Community Councils, and the financial contributions they generously provide, remain indispensable in ensuring the successful delivery of this crucial recreational opportunity for the children of Flintshire.

A concerted effort for year-round provision through strengthened collaboration, increased community engagement, sustainable resource allocation, and innovative programming, allows for more Play opportunities for children in Flintshire.

The challenges of staff retention, insecure funding or annual settlements, and the previous lack of engagement and advocacy around the Play Sufficiency Assessment pose significant obstacles to the effective promotion of play sufficiency and children's well-being. High staff turnover can disrupt program continuity and result in a loss of institutional knowledge. Insecure funding sources and annual settlements create uncertainty, hindering long-term planning and proactive initiatives. Additionally, the absence of engagement and advocacy efforts has led to a lack of awareness among stakeholders, making it difficult to secure necessary resources and support for programs benefiting children. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive strategies, including professional development for staff, diversification of funding sources, stability, advocacy, community engagement, and awareness-building efforts to ensure that play sufficiency initiatives can thrive and have a lasting positive impact on children and communities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1	<b>Support:</b> To establish a sustainable service, Town and Community Councils commit to a three-year in principle funding cycle for community play provision.
2	<b>Endorse:</b> To work with a range of partners, such as Adult Community Learning to offer an extensive training package for all Play Development team members to ensure quality Play Work delivery is of the highest standard.
3	<b>Endorse:</b> Town and Community Councils to opt for either three or six-week sites only, to allow for ease of recruitment, planning, business continuity and efficient use of resources.
4	<b>Endorse:</b> Endorse the 'Transition Programme' by Flintshire Play Development and Youth Services. This collaborative effort effectively prepares children for the next stage of their lives through play-based coping strategies. It has already shown success in the past academic year.
5	<b>Commit:</b> Commit to supporting the Play Sufficiency Action Plan through advocacy, attending meetings, and attending local events which will help develop the PSA Action Group, champion inclusivity, attract additional external funding, increase community engagement and help create stronger networks which will have a positive impact on children's health and well-being.

## REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE FLINTSHIRE COUNTY SUMMER PLAYScheme
1.01	In the summer of 2023, Flintshire offered a total of <b>56</b> safe site locations for playschemes, with the duration of these schemes spanning 3, 4, 5, or 6 weeks, depending on the specific requirements of the Town and Community Councils.
1.02	A collaborative effort was forged with <b>30</b> Town and Community Councils, working in partnership with the Education and Youth Portfolio's Play Development team to facilitate the successful delivery of the Summer Playschemes.
1.03	This year's Summer Playschemes introduced Welsh language into play activities across all sites. This approach aligns with Flintshire County Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. Additionally, at least one Welsh-speaking staff member was present at <b>10</b> sites, enabling a more extensive provision for Welsh-speaking children. The importance of allowing for children to use the Welsh language during the school holidays is invaluable and supports the excellent work of the education and youth portfolio in promoting the Welsh language and our culture.
1.04	During the summer of 2023, <b>32</b> children and young individuals enrolled in the Buddy Scheme, granting them access to their local community Playscheme. The Buddy Scheme supports inclusivity, accessibility, and engagement for all children, regardless of their abilities. The funding for the Buddy Scheme this year was secured through the Families First grant.
1.05	Building upon the success of last year's introduction of a new digital system that allowed parents and caregivers to remotely register their children, the Lead Officer, in collaboration with FCC IT Digital Solutions Architect, has taken further steps in its development. All Playscheme sites have transitioned to a paperless approach, with every aspect being managed through this advanced digital system. This system allows staff to register children on-site, access vital information such as emergency contact details and medical conditions, conduct daily risk assessments, file daily reports, report both minor and major injuries, and report safeguarding concerns while ensuring strict compliance with GDPR regulations. For parents who lack internet access, an option to complete forms using iPads on-site was available. Additionally, for those who faced difficulties with digital devices, Play work staff were readily available to assist in filling out the necessary forms. The system also allows the collation of essential evidence and data, with a daily report generated and sent to supervisors each evening to inform planning for the following day's priorities.
1.06	In total <b>3,681</b> children registered county-wide for Playschemes, resulting in a total daily registration count of <b>11,907</b> . <b>1,200</b> play sessions were delivered, or <b>8,000</b> hours of contact time. <b>69</b> staff were employed on short term contracts for the Summer where they received 5 days of training prior to delivery. In continuation of our commitment to fighting holiday hunger, we provided <b>5,000</b> bottles of water and <b>3,000</b> snacks bars.

1.07	Our team included three Ukrainian member who contributed significantly to our effort in ensuring that the play provision is inclusive and mirrors that of the needs and demographic of the local community.
1.08	In the current year, we encouraged all our staff to establish interactive play stations at every site. These stations were designed to facilitate creative play, enabling children to dive right into play and socialise with their peers as soon as they arrived. We have received overwhelmingly positive feedback regarding this initiative, both from our staff and from parents and caregivers. A recurring theme in this feedback is the visual delight experienced by parents when they arrive at a site with their child, seeing an abundance of equipment and resources available for their children's play. On some sites, children were arriving early to help staff set out the sites ready for the arrival of their peers.
1.09	Historically Town and Community Councils have been able to choose the length of their local Playscheme. This has been a choice of 3, 4, 5, or 6 weeks. This is becoming increasingly difficult with the need to recruit a high number of staff over a short period. 3- or 6-week sites will mean that staff can be offered 6-week contracts rather than the current format. During the Summer of 2023 we had 20 x three-week, 17 x four-week, 3 x five week, and 12 x six-week sites. 3- or 6-week sites would make the managing of schemes and sites much easier and would also offer a longer provision in some areas i.e., a Town or Community Council funding two 3-week schemes would have one three-week scheme running for the first three weeks and the other for the last which means 6 week scheme for that community area.
1.10	During the spring and summer term, the Play Development team delivered a transition project for children in years 5 / 6. The aim of this project was to ensure a smooth transition to secondary school for Year 5/6 pupils. Our sessions incorporated enjoyable games and utilised the Welsh language to foster language proficiency in a less structured manner, emphasising play-based activities. All sessions were made enjoyable and full of physical movement, while also nurturing the confidence of young individuals preparing for the upcoming transition into secondary school. We primarily worked with Year 6 students from 15 schools in Flintshire, and some Year 5 students participated, particularly those in mixed-grade classes, to provide them with a valuable head start for their future transition. This project has been praised by the schools that participated, and as a follow on from one of the schools, a Transition club was established in the Leeswood area within our youth wing that is attached to the school, with an average attendance of 23 children.
1.11	Play Development experiences a significant annual staff turnover, posing challenges in delivering top-quality services. It is difficult to train and retain staff to provide the highest quality of provision to children in Flintshire due to short term commitment funding and lack of long-term grants available. The staff turnover and lack of job security present substantial issues, resulting in the regular departure of highly skilled team workers. To retain and attract experienced staff, it is imperative that we have the capacity to plan for the long-term.

1.12	<p>An extensive training initiative is set to be administered to all fulltime and relief play staff, equipping them with the fundamental skills necessary for their roles. Following the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant upsurge in children's behavioural and well-being issues, with some displaying behaviour that surpasses their age group. By elevating our core team's qualifications to a level 2 / 3 in youth work and play work and offering our relief workers training to boost their skillset and knowledge we can ensure that children receive not only high quality play work but also valuable youth work support in their developmental journey.</p>
1.13	<p>This summer saw an increase in the complexity of children's needs. Collaboration with Youth Services, Youth Justice and Sorted have been improved, and partners were able to support the team with advice, detached work, and DACS. This collaborative working relationship has allowed for sharing of information on areas that issues are being identified and acting on them quickly.</p>
1.14	<p>Over the coming months there will be significant development of the Play Sufficiency Assessment ensuring that it underpins and promotes the development of all aspects of play provisions within Flintshire. A new Play Sufficiency Action group will meet at the end of October with the intention of meeting quarterly to ensure regular updates to the PSA Action Plan and to allow for its efficient monitoring and reporting, both internally within the Council and to Welsh Government.</p>
1.15	<p>Flintshire Play Development is planning an innovative and sustainable future to our delivery and commitment to children in Flintshire. Using the successful summer holiday provision as a blueprint, the aim is to provide holiday provisions during all school holidays. There is universal agreement of the benefits that the summer programme has on children's wellbeing, and this would be beneficial for children during all seasons. Community provision during term time will allow children the opportunity to engage with our service and their peers in a safe and supervised activity. The school-based offering will be expanded to offer projects such as PlayPals which is a 6-week project for up to 30 children to learn about the benefits of play in Child development and to train them up to become play advocates in their schools and communities. Training for parents will also be offered with support from Adult Community Learning (ACL). This will involve a three-week programme for parents covering the benefits of Play in child development and how that then helps with child language development.</p> <p><b>Future Sustainability:</b> In order to establish a sustainable service for the foreseeable future, it is imperative that the Lead Officer can devise a long-term strategy. To achieve this, we seek a commitment from our partners and other stakeholders for a three-year agreement. This commitment will have several significant benefits:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Enhanced Provisions:</b> It will enable the Play Development Team to expand its operations, providing a more extensive range of provisions throughout the year.</li> <li>2. <b>Skill Development:</b> This will facilitate the delivery of comprehensive training programs, ensuring that our team is highly qualified and capable. And will allow us to have pride in our quality as well as our quantity.</li> </ol>

**3. Stability for Staff:** Additionally, a multi-year commitment will provide medium-long term job security for our staff, fostering their confidence and commitment to the team.

This collaborative approach will pave the way for a sustainable and thriving service moving forward.

**2.00 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

**2.01 Revenue:** The revenue for summer Playschemes 2023 was received in the form of:

Town and Community Council Contributions - £133,000.00

The AWPOG Holiday Playworks Grant - £50,403.00

These contributions and awards are received annually, and it will remain the responsibility of the Lead Officer for Play Development to secure the necessary resources for Summer 2024. The sustainability of the summer playscheme hinges on the availability of this external funding.

The Lead Officer position is responsible for coordinating the summer playscheme programme and working on a sustainable future of Play Development in Flintshire. This position sits within the Youth Services Core budget.

**Capital Funding:** there has been no funding through the capital program for the current financial year.

**Human Resources:** The recruitment, employment, and training of the summer staff team within Play Development are financed by revenue grants and contributions from Town and Community Councils. The Council's HR team is a vital partner in this process to provide relevant expertise, support, and guidance. While our staffing numbers didn't match those of 2022, it's worth noting that recruitment is becoming increasingly challenging. With capacity at a minimum the recruitment process to employ so many staff for such a short period is becoming increasingly difficult.

Department	Hours	Cost
Play Development	480	£9,204.00
Employment Services	904	£16,483.13
<b>Total</b>	<b>1384</b>	<b>£25,687.13</b>

3.00	<b>IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
3.01	<p data-bbox="320 197 1155 232"><b>Impact Assessment: Summer Playscheme Programme</b></p> <p data-bbox="320 271 1390 376">The Summer Playscheme Programme is a vital initiative aimed at providing recreational and educational opportunities for children and youth during the summer break.</p> <p data-bbox="320 421 587 456"><b>Positive Impacts:</b></p> <ol data-bbox="320 456 1390 1518" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="320 456 1390 636">1. <b>Child Development:</b> The Summer Playscheme Programme has a demonstrably positive impact on the development of participating children. It provides a safe and stimulating environment for children to learn essential life skills, foster creativity, and build lasting friendships. As a result, children experience personal growth and improved social competence.</li> <li data-bbox="320 674 1390 824">2. <b>Inclusivity:</b> The program's commitment to inclusivity ensures that children of all backgrounds and abilities can participate fully. This inclusivity has a positive impact on children's self-esteem and social awareness, promoting a sense of belonging among participants.</li> <li data-bbox="320 862 1390 1012">3. <b>Community Engagement:</b> By collaborating with Town and Community Councils, the program strengthens community ties and involvement. This fosters a sense of community pride and positively impacts the overall social fabric of the region.</li> <li data-bbox="320 1050 1390 1200">4. <b>Language and Cultural Enrichment:</b> The program's encouragement of the Welsh language and cultural elements has a positive impact on children's language skills and cultural awareness, aligning with educational objectives and enhancing their cultural competence.</li> <li data-bbox="320 1238 1390 1366">5. <b>Environmental Awareness:</b> Incorporating sustainability practices into the program raises environmental awareness among children, promoting responsible and eco-conscious behaviours that have a positive impact on the environment.</li> <li data-bbox="320 1404 1390 1518">6. <b>Data Collection:</b> The introduction of a digital system for registration and reporting has a positive impact on efficiency and data collection. This facilitates better planning and decision-making for future programs.</li> </ol> <p data-bbox="320 1556 746 1592"><b>Challenges and Mitigations:</b></p> <ol data-bbox="320 1592 1390 2069" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="320 1592 1390 1742">1. <b>Recruitment Challenges:</b> Recruitment difficulties have been identified as a challenge. To mitigate this, proactive recruitment strategies, including talent sourcing and engagement, can be implemented to ensure adequate staffing levels in future programs.</li> <li data-bbox="320 1780 1390 1930">2. <b>Resource Management:</b> Managing resources, such as equipment and staff, can be a challenge. Developing resource allocation strategies and contingency plans can help address these challenges and ensure smooth program delivery.</li> <li data-bbox="320 1968 1390 2069">3. <b>Budget Constraints:</b> Budgetary limitations impact programme sustainability. Seeking diverse funding sources and grant opportunities can mitigate these challenges and secure the necessary financial support.</li> </ol>

	The Summer Playscheme Programme has a positive impact on child development, inclusivity, community engagement, language and cultural enrichment, and environmental awareness. While challenges exist, proactive strategies can be implemented to mitigate these issues, ensuring the continued success and sustainability of the program.
3.02	<p><b>Risk Management</b> – A full audit of health and safety documents was undertaken in 2023 to ensure that the Lead Officer was fully aware of where the Play Development Team were regarding H&amp;S standards. All relevant risk assessments were reviewed and updated, a new staff Emergency Procedure Handbook was produced, and the new digital system allowed for a comprehensive addition to the work carried out.</p> <p>A site visit and inspection were carried out by FCC Corporate Health and Safety Officials, who were impressed with the standards the team were working at and they mentioned that there was an obvious positive health and safety culture within the team.</p>

<b>4.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT</b>
4.01	Working in partnership with the Town and Community Councils site locations in local communities were identified where delivery was to be prioritised.
4.02	Sensitive consultations were undertaken with appropriate agencies / partners to identify vulnerable children who required support to access the playscheme.
4.03	Collaboration and information sharing with the Flintshire Sorted Drugs and Alcohol Team, North Wales Police and with Flintshire Youth Services to ensure that those children who may require intervention from these services are supported.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	<p>Appendix 1 – Health and Safety Inspection</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Summer Playscheme Objectives</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Summer Buddy Scheme/Inclusive Play Evaluation Report</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Employment Service</p> <p>Appendix 5 – Progress of the Play Sufficiency Action Plan 2022/2023</p> <p>Appendix 6 – Leeswood Transition Club Report</p>

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	<p><b>English</b> - <a href="#">Flintshire Summer Playschemes</a></p> <p><b>Welsh</b> - <a href="#">Cynlluniau Chwarae'r Haf Sir y Fflint</a></p>



	Currently the Play Development Webpage is undergoing a full revamp in the background and the new site will consist of a lot more information for parents, partners, and other organisations. We aim to have a page that is open and transparent to what the Play Development Team offers and inform of the importance of play in childhood development.
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<b>7.00</b>	<b>CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS</b>
7.01	<p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Darren Morris, Lead Officer</p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> 01352 704154</p> <p><b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:Darren.Morris@flintshire.gov.uk">Darren.Morris@flintshire.gov.uk</a></p>

<b>8.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
8.01	<p><b>AWPOG</b> – All Wales Play Opportunities Grant -Welsh government revenue/capital funding stream for the delivery of Corporate Play Sufficiency Annual Action Plans</p> <p><b>PSA</b> - Play Sufficiency Assessment</p> <p><b>DACS</b> - Drugs and Alcohol Community Support</p>