

EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 17 th October 2024
Report Subject	Flintshire County Summer Playscheme 2024
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language and Culture
Report Author	Chief Officer Education & Youth
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Flintshire County Council maintains a robust collaborative partnership with Town and Community Councils and the Welsh Government to implement a successful county-wide summer playscheme, operational since 1996. This programme has proven effective through thorough evaluations involving children, families, and community stakeholders.

In the past year under new management, the Play Development Team has focused on creating a sustainable service that enhances play provisions throughout the year and strengthens staff capabilities. The team now offers Play services in primary schools through the PlayPals Project, provides year-round community activities across Flintshire, operates playschemes during all school holidays, and oversees a comprehensive summer programme.

Additionally, Play Development collaborates with the Resettlement Team to provide play opportunities for asylum-seeking families, facilitating their integration into the community. The team also supports the Youth Service by offering Transition Clubs, which assist children aged 9 and older in their transition from primary to secondary education through engaging, playful methods.

This report highlights significant achievements, ongoing initiatives, and potential risks, ensuring stakeholders understand the value of these programmes and the importance of continued support for their success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Support Year-Round Community-Based Play Provisions: Continue to provide safe, supervised play opportunities for children in their communities, particularly in areas affected by austerity.
2	Endorse the PlayPals Programme: Promote the School delivery of the PlayPals initiative, a 6-week programme designed to empower children with knowledge of their rights to play and encourage them to become play ambassadors within their schools and communities.
3	Commit to supporting the Play Sufficiency Assessment: Actively champion play opportunities for children in Flintshire by supporting the Play Sufficiency Action Plan. This includes participating in advocacy efforts, attending relevant meetings, and engaging in local events. Through this involvement, contribute to the development of a robust Play Sufficiency Plan for 2025–2028, ensuring play remains a priority in the community.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE FLINTSHIRE PLAY DEVELOPMENT OVER 12 MONTHS
1.01	<p>In 2023, a key recommendation was to establish a sustainable service by encouraging Town and Community Councils to commit to a three-year, in-principal funding cycle for community play provision. This would ensure a stable financial foundation, enabling long-term planning and delivery of quality play services.</p> <p>2024 Progress Update:</p> <p>As of 2024, 13 Town and Community Councils have committed to the three-year funding cycle. This commitment has significantly bolstered the team's ability to plan and deliver play services for the next two years with greater confidence and efficiency. The secured funding allows for enhanced strategic planning and resource allocation, supporting the continuity of community play provision for the summer holidays.</p>
1.02	<p>Endorsement from 2023:</p> <p>To collaborate with a range of partners, such as Adult Community Learning, to offer an extensive training package for all Play Development team members, ensuring the highest standard of Play Work delivery.</p> <p>2024 Progress Update:</p> <p>Flintshire Play Development has maintained a strong working relationship with Adult Community Learning and has expanded its partnerships to include the LEAP Project. LEAP Project is Social Prosperity funding that was drawn down by UK government with the intention of supporting learners and adults in engaging in employment. This collaboration has been</p>

	<p>particularly impactful, with the LEAP Project funding crucial training components such as safeguarding and first aid this year. Additionally, the team continues to prioritise staff development, with several members actively progressing through their Level 2 and Level 3 Playwork qualifications with Achieve More Training to further enhancing the quality of play provision.</p>
1.03	<p>Endorsement from 2023:</p> <p>To support the 'Transition Programme' by Flintshire Play Development and Youth Services, which prepares children for the next stage of their lives through play-based coping strategies. The programme has demonstrated success in the past academic year.</p> <p>2024 Progress Update:</p> <p>The Transition Programme continues to evolve, with four dedicated playwork sessions now established to provide a more structured approach to supporting children aged 9+. These sessions bridge the gap between Playwork and Youth Services, offering children a youth club atmosphere within a youth club setting, helping them transition smoothly into Youth Services at age 11. The programme also focuses on developing social, emotional, and behavioural skills, providing playful strategies for managing periods of anxiety, thus preparing children for the next phase of their lives.</p>
1.04	<p>Commitment from 2023:</p> <p>To support the Play Sufficiency Action Plan through advocacy, attending meetings and events, and contributing to the PSA Action Group, with a focus on inclusivity, attracting external funding, increasing community engagement, and building stronger networks to positively impact children's health and well-being.</p> <p>2024 Progress Update:</p> <p>As we begin drafting the next three-year Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) plan, consultation has started with children in Year 5 and Year 8. This focus will allow us to evaluate progress in the next PSA cycle (2028-2031), tracking how our work impacts children as they transition through key stages. In the coming months, meetings will be held with partners, councillors, and internal departments to ensure comprehensive input and collaboration for the next phase of the PSA, reinforcing our commitment to inclusivity and community engagement.</p>
1.05	<p>Community Provisions</p> <p>Over the past 12 months, Flintshire Play Development has significantly expanded community play provision for children across the county. From April to July, services were successfully delivered in Mold Parkfield and The Holway, receiving positive feedback from the community. During the summer, additional areas were identified, and the Play Team responded swiftly by establishing 7 new provisions to meet local demand. Since April, 1,049 children have benefitted from these services, demonstrating the team's proactive approach and the growing impact of the programme.</p>

1.06	<p>School Holiday Programmes</p> <p>May Half-term During May Half Term, the Play Team delivered 8 open access play sessions at Mold Parkfields and Holway Meadowbank, with 134 child attendances. Staff, qualified in food hygiene and nutrition, also served over 120 hot meals cooked on site.</p> <p>Summer Playscheme</p> <p>Flintshire Summer Playscheme 2024: Overview and Success Metrics</p> <p>Number of Sites: 49 Staff Members: 48 Children Registered: 4,312 (record high) Total Attendances: 15,664 Children Under 5 Attending with Parents: 1,400 (figure included in total attendance) Bilingual Sites: 22</p> <p>The 2024 Flintshire Summer Playscheme achieved record engagement, with 4,312 children registered and 15,664 total attendances over six weeks—the highest since 2019. Despite the coolest summer since 2015, participation remained strong, highlighting the enhanced quality and appeal of the programme. The playscheme’s success reflects its growing impact on the community, thanks to the continued support from Town and Community Councils. We extend our gratitude to them for their invaluable contributions to this essential service for children during the summer and hope to encourage their involvement in future school holidays. Insights gained this year will inform training and delivery expectations, further improving the programme for the years to come.</p> <p>An annual Health and Safety inspection was carried out by Dave Berry and Anthony Smith (Corporate H&S Advisors). Following the inspection, we received a positive report from Dave which can be found in Appendix 1.</p>
1.07	<p>School Provisions</p> <p>PlayPals: Insights and Impact The PlayPals project successfully engaged 14 schools across Flintshire from October 2023 to July 2024, reaching approximately 430 children. Consistent attendance across the 6-week programme led to over 2,200 total attendances. Schools demonstrated a diverse mix of year groups (Years 3 to 6), with both boys and girls actively participating. The sessions focused on essential skills such as team building, leadership, communication, and creative play, which significantly contributed to children's social and emotional development.</p> <p>The project also supported children from international backgrounds and those with additional learning needs, ensuring inclusivity. Additionally, the Welsh language was promoted throughout, aligning with the Curriculum for Wales and fostering bilingual learning environments. The PlayPals project actively supports the delivery of the new curriculum by enriching the holistic</p>

	<p>development of children and contributing to key areas such as well-being, communication, and cultural understanding.</p> <p>Conclusion The PlayPals project has made a significant impact on children's social, emotional, and play skills across Flintshire. With high levels of engagement and positive feedback from both children and staff, the project has championed inclusivity, creativity, and bilingualism, supporting the goals of the Curriculum for Wales. It has laid a strong foundation for continued success in future iterations, fostering holistic development and strengthening community connections.</p>
1.08	<p>Staffing</p> <p>Over the past 12 months, the Lead Officer has worked diligently to transform the play service, which has been made possible by building a strong, well-structured team dedicated to the long-term sustainability of the service. The progress achieved over this period reflects the dedication and commitment of both the Lead Officer and the Senior Manager for Youth Services. Together, they have prioritised sustainable staffing through collaboration with partners and securing additional external funding streams. Currently, there are four full-time staff members supporting the Lead Officer in operational roles, enabling the service to run year-round. Additionally, 10 relief staff play an essential role in delivering community provision.</p>
1.09	<p>Supporting Asylum Seeking and Refugee Families</p> <p>The Play Development Team is focusing on provisions for refugee and asylum-seeking children in areas where these families live. The main objective of these sessions is to integrate these children and young people into their communities through engaging and enjoyable play activities while also gaining insight into their needs and preferences.</p> <p>Throughout the summer, the Play Team worked to establish rapport with families by offering free, open-access play sites across Flintshire. Additionally, the Play Development Team supported two forest school events for refugee families, providing play opportunities for children while learning about their cultures and their unique approaches to play. Staff facilitated a wide range of play activities, fostering an environment where everyone enjoyed learning about each other's backgrounds.</p> <p>The positive feedback received from these families has inspired the team to further collaborate with the Resettlement Team to enhance access to Play Provisions for a greater number of children.</p>
1.10	<p>Supporting Other Agencies and Groups</p> <p>Police and Community Trust (PACT)</p> <p>The Play Team supported the PACT project at Holywell Leisure Centre for several months, aiming to reduce anti-social behaviour in the area by engaging young people in activities such as football. This initiative was initiated by Holywell Town Council to foster rapport with the youth of Holywell and create a safe hub for them to gather and interact with staff.</p>

	<p>Leveraging their experience in working with Children and young people, the Play Team contributed to the effort by collaborating with other services. During the sessions they attended, over 150 children participated in football and enjoyed hot meals at the leisure centre, leading to a notable increase in engagement with young people from February onwards.</p> <p>Early Years</p> <p>The Play Development Team is actively exploring collaborative approaches to ensure the sustainability of play initiatives in both play development and childcare. The Early Years Team and the Play Development Team have been engaging in discussions to identify opportunities for increased collaboration in supporting each other's services. This partnership aims to sustain key positions by sharing resources and securing funding as needed.</p>
1.11	<p>Play Development Digital Presence</p> <p>In the past 12 months, the Play Development Team, with the support of the Digital Communications Team, has successfully updated all relevant web pages, ensuring that they reflect current information and developments. These pages are regularly revised to maintain accuracy and relevance.</p> <p>Additionally, a Facebook page was established in May 2024, which has seen impressive engagement metrics to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Followers: 757 • Reach: 19,200 • Content Interactions: 1,100 <p>These figures highlight the growing interest and interaction with our digital presence in promoting play development initiatives.</p> <p>*for further information please see Appendix 2</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS													
2.01	<p>Revenue: The revenue for the Play Development Service 2024 was received in the form of:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="320 1615 1385 2056"> <tr> <td data-bbox="320 1615 727 1715">Town and Community Council Contributions</td> <td data-bbox="727 1615 1054 1715">£139,420.80</td> <td data-bbox="1054 1615 1385 1715">Summer Programme</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="320 1715 727 1856">The AWPOG Holiday Playworks Grant</td> <td data-bbox="727 1715 1054 1856">£50,0423.00</td> <td data-bbox="1054 1715 1385 1856">Other school holidays and / or weekend work</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="320 1856 727 1957">Excell Supply</td> <td data-bbox="727 1856 1054 1957">£4,000.00</td> <td data-bbox="1054 1856 1385 1957">Contribution to the PlayPals Project</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="320 1957 727 2056">PlayPals Project</td> <td data-bbox="727 1957 1054 2056">£2,000.00</td> <td data-bbox="1054 1957 1385 2056">Income from the project</td> </tr> </table>		Town and Community Council Contributions	£139,420.80	Summer Programme	The AWPOG Holiday Playworks Grant	£50,0423.00	Other school holidays and / or weekend work	Excell Supply	£4,000.00	Contribution to the PlayPals Project	PlayPals Project	£2,000.00	Income from the project
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Resettlement Support	£87,204.00	Supporting the resettlement of Asylum Seeking and Refugee families
Play Sufficiency Assessment	£10,000.00	Welsh Government's Contribution to the Play Sufficiency Assessment revision

These funding streams are not guaranteed on an annual basis. It is the responsibility of the Lead Officer for Play Development to secure the necessary resources for 2025/2026 to continue the delivery of services, particularly the school holiday provisions including the well-established Summer Playscheme Programme which is highly dependent on external funding.

The Lead Officer position is responsible for coordinating the summer playscheme programme and to continue developing an all-year-round service for the children, families and schools and to ensure that we have a sustainable future of Play Development in Flintshire. This position sits within the Youth Services Core budget.

Capital Funding: there has been no funding though the capital programme for the current financial year.

Human Resources:

In 2024, significant adjustments were made to the summer Playscheme programme, offering only 3- or 6-week options. This change has led to a substantial reduction in the number of staff required, effectively halving the recruitment needs and alleviating the financial burden on Flintshire County Council.

In 2023, the cost of man-hours for recruitment amounted to £23,687.13. As the employer, Flintshire County Council bears the recruitment and employment costs, working closely with the Council's HR team to leverage their expertise and keep expenses manageable. The training of summer staff is primarily funded through contributions from Town and Community Councils.

Department	Man-hours	Cost
Play Development	480 – 2023	£9,204.00
	185 - 2024	£2,960.00
Employment Services	904 – 2023	£16,483.13
	414 - 2024	£6895.18*
Total	1384 – 2023	£25,687.13
	599 - 2024	£9,855.18

*inclusive of £1,719.90 for DBS checks

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>Integrated Impact Assessment</p> <p>1. Impact on the Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Impacts: The changes to the summer Playscheme programme have resulted in more efficient use of resources, allowing for better allocation of funds and staff. The 3- and 6-week options have enabled more streamlined operations, directly benefitting children, families, and local communities by ensuring the continuity of play provision while reducing financial strain. • Negative Impact: There may be a limited negative impact on staffing due to the reduced number of positions available, potentially affecting those seeking short-term employment. However, this is mitigated by early recruitment process and collaboration efforts with the Employment Service team to ensure minimal disruption. • Mitigation: The change with the number of weeks for summer playscheme length has been offset by increasing efficiency in planning and delivery, ensuring that the quality of service remains high. The focus on staff development and ongoing partnership with Adult Community Learning, Achieve More Training and the LEAP Project also mitigate potential impacts on staffing quality. <p>2. Environmental Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral Impact: No environmental impacts were identified in the assessment. The playscheme primarily operates in existing community facilities and parks, with minimal changes to the physical environment. <p>Risk Management The following key risks have been identified as part of the Integral Impact Assessment:</p> <p>1. Risk: Reduction in External Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation: The Lead Officer for Play Development is actively seeking to secure funding for 2025/2026 financial year to sustain the Summer Playscheme and other play services. Close relationships with Town and Community Councils, as well as applications for additional grants, will be key to ensuring continuing funding. <p>2. Risk: Challenges in Recruitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation: The shift to 3 – or 6-week sites has already halved the recruitment needs. To further mitigate risks associated with staffing shortages, the council’s Employment Service team is working collaboratively with Play Development to streamline the recruitment process. Regular training opportunities and staff development programmes are in place to ensure high retention rates and staff satisfaction. <p>3. Risk: Decreased Community Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation: The Play Development team is increasing community outreach efforts to engage more families and children, particularly in underserving areas. Feedback

mechanisms form participants are being enhanced to better tailor future programmes to local needs.

Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact

Principles	Impact
Long-term	Positive: Strengthen sustainability through multi-year funding cycles from Town and Community Council.
Prevention	Positive: Early recruitment strategies and funding efforts help prevent service disruption.
Integration	Positive: Play Development integrates well with other Council services, contributing to overall community well-being.
Collaboration	Positive: Creating strong partnerships with external partners including the third sector ensure wider service delivery and sharing of resources and experiences.
Involvement	Positive: Extensive community engagement and consultation, especially with children and families.

Well-being Goals Impact

Prosperous Wales	Positive: Efficient use of funds and enhanced training opportunities contribute to economic and social well-being.
Resilient Wales	Positive: Strengthen play services support community resilience and child development.
Healthier Wales	Positive: Access to quality play opportunities foster physical and emotional well-being in children.
More equal Wales	Positive: Programmes such as Playpals ensure inclusivity and reach children from diverse background.
Cohesive Wales	Positive: Community-driven programmes build social cohesion and engagement.
Vibrant Wales	Positive: Playschemes contribute to vibrant community life, with opportunities for creative expression.
Globally responsible Wales	Neutral: No direct impact identified.

The assessment demonstrates that the strategic changes in the Play Development and Community Play Provision initiatives have positioned the programme for sustainable growth while mitigating key risks and ensuring ongoing positive community impact.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	As part of the 2025-2028 Play Sufficiency Assessment review, an online consultation has been conducted with children in Years 5 and 8. The consultation aimed to gather insights into their play preferences, including how, when, and where they engage in play within their local communities.
4.02	As always, sensitive consultations were conducted with relevant agencies and partners to identify vulnerable children in need of support to access the playscheme.
4.03	Play Development regularly attends Community Conference meetings to assess the needs and concerns of local communities, ensuring these are considered in the planning and delivery of play services.
4.04	Following the completion of the Summer Playscheme, a comprehensive consultation was conducted to gather parental feedback on the overall programme and identify areas for improvement. The insights gained from this consultation will be instrumental in informing the training and strategic planning for the 2025 summer programme, ensuring continuous enhancement of the service.
4.05	Flintshire Play Development actively participates in Community Conference meetings to engage with community voices, understand their concerns, and explore how play services can effectively provide support.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1: H&S Review
5.02	Appendix 2: Website Insights
5.03	Appendix 3: Facebook Insights
5.04	Appendix 4: Open Access Playwork

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	N/A

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Darren Morris – Lead Officer Telephone: 01352 704154 E-mail: Darren.Morris@siryfflint.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS These are provided corporately on the Infonet (link) and maintained by the Executive Office
8.01	PHP – Playwork Holiday Programme PSA - Play Sufficiency Assessment PACT – Police and Community Trust LEAP – Learn, Explore, Achieve, Perform.