

**for disabled children  
and young people in Wales**



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Asbah  
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# Contents

<b>FOREWORD.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4. BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>5. IT CAN BE DONE.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>6. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Annex 1 Questionnaire for Disabled Children and Young People .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Annex 2 Play Activities Visited.....</b>	<b>68</b>



# Summary

Provision of play and leisure activities for disabled children and young people in Wales is covered by a large range of legislation and policies, from disability discrimination law to policies on children's rights to social care obligations to child poverty policies.

Despite this, the majority of disabled children participate in a limited number and range of activities and some disabled children and young people feel there is 'nothing for them'.

Disabled children and young people face barriers from lack of provision, lack of support, poor access to buildings and negative attitudes which, notwithstanding legislation and policies, prevent them from participating like non-disabled children and young people.

It doesn't have to be like this. A sizeable minority of disabled children participate in a large number of very varied activities, some integrated and some specialist, and there are a number of groups offering activities to disabled children and young people that are hugely successful. Key to success seem to be a rights-based approach, energetic staff and volunteers, involvement of children and young people, and funding no matter how modest.

Action is needed to make these opportunities available to all disabled children and young people. The report recommends:

- Support for the local development of play and leisure activities.
- Effective inclusion in mainstream activities.
- Adequate funding for play and leisure.
- More stringent monitoring of provision and enforcement of obligations.
- Celebrating good practice.



# Foreword

At a time when public authorities across Wales are facing difficult budget decisions this report enables the voices of disabled children and young people to be heard loud and clear about how important and essential play and leisure is in their lives. It is a welcome and timely reminder of the discrimination that disabled children face in accessing their right to play, recreation and leisure, a right which is enshrined in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As the report makes clear, it is in the field of play, recreation and leisure activities that children with disabilities in Wales experience the most acute sense of social exclusion and marginalisation. Consultations with children and young people repeatedly reveal the importance that they all attach to their relationships with their peers. This report reminds us that children and young people with disabilities are no different. They too want opportunities to be with friends, to play, to have fun, to 'hang out'. However for them, physical, attitudinal, cultural and social factors can place almost insuperable barriers in the way of the daily activities that other children are able to take for granted.

Since the National Assembly for Wales was established in 1999, successive Welsh Assembly Governments have promoted the rights of children in Wales, in particular their right to play. Wales was the first country in the UK to introduce a policy on play recognising that play is at the core of children's physical, cognitive, social, moral and emotional development. It is invaluable for exercising creativity, as a therapeutic tool and as a means of celebrating cultures and communities. Accordingly, exclusion from play represents a major exclusion from life for children with disabilities. This report illustrates that despite well intentioned policies, laws and guidance not nearly enough has been done by all those responsible to make sure there is provision in Wales of appropriate and equal opportunities for recreational leisure, cultural and artistic activity for children with disabilities.



The report reinforces the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2008 which urged governments across the UK to develop national strategies for the inclusion of children with disability in society and to “undertake awareness-raising campaigns on the rights and special needs of children with disabilities, encourage their inclusion in society and prevent discrimination and institutionalisation”.

We congratulate the Bevan Foundation and its partners for drawing attention to these shortcomings in this report but also for providing information on inspiring examples of what can be done to overcome barriers and realise the rights of children with disabilities to equality of opportunity - where there is the will and determination.

We hope that the Welsh Assembly Government, local authorities and civil society in Wales can use this report from the Bevan Foundation – in particular the testimonies of children, young people and parents - to make Wales a place where disabled children are enabled to participate fully in the things that all children should be able to benefit from and enjoy.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The question of play and leisure activities for children and young people in Wales has been the subject of a number of different studies and inquiries, within which the question of provision for disabled children and young people has emerged as a particular issue. Individual studies of disabled children and young people's experiences have also highlighted the special difficulties that they face.

A number of charities and organisations working with disabled children and young people became concerned and, it is fair to say, frustrated, with the lack of progress in addressing the needs of disabled children and young people, and they therefore decided to fund a small scale study, to be undertaken by the Bevan Foundation, to look into the issue.

The study began in April 2010 and involved the following:

- A brief review of the literature relevant to disabled children and young people's play and leisure in Wales.
- A survey of disabled children and young people's experiences of play and leisure, through a short questionnaire (on-line and paper, in English and Welsh), distributed via a wide range of charities and other organisations. A copy of the English language questionnaire is attached at Annex 1
- A survey of the experiences of providers of leisure and play activities for children and young people – distributed to all local authorities and other play and leisure organisations known to us.
- Visits to 11 different groups providing play and leisure activities which included disabled children and young people – a list is attached at Annex 2. We observed activities, interviewed play workers and where possible and appropriate held information discussions with disabled children and young people.
- Interviews with selected stakeholder organisations.



Altogether we had 82 valid responses to the questionnaire for disabled children and young people. Of the 76 who told us, 47 were boys and 29 were girls. Nine were aged 8-11, 39 were aged 12-17, and 15 were eighteen or over (19 skipped the question). The majority of responses were from south east Wales (38 replies), 16 from south west Wales and 19 from Mid Wales. Unfortunately North Wales was seriously under-represented with just 3 replies.

The research, although not perfect, has produced some useful and important findings about the experiences of disabled children and young people and the experiences of providers. From this we are able to make some suggestions about further action that can be taken by the Welsh Assembly Government, local authorities, charitable bodies and others. We are acutely aware of constraints on public funding and it is extremely important to note that many of the suggestions can be delivered at minimal cost or financed by private or charitable funding rather than the public purse.

We are grateful for financial and practical support for the project to:

Action for Children	Crossroads Wales
Asbah	Family Fund
Barnardos Cymru	Learning Disability Wales
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy Wales	RNID Cymru
College of Occupational Therapists	RNIB Cymru
Contact a Family Cymru	SNAP Cymru
	Tros Gynnal

However, the views in this report are the responsibility of the Bevan Foundation alone and are not necessarily shared by each or all of the project contributors.

We are also very grateful to the many individuals and organisations, including disabled children and young people and their parents and carers, for giving their precious time and views freely. We sincerely hope that they, and disabled children and young people throughout Wales, see some benefits from this project.





## 2. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

Disability, children and play are covered by a substantial body of legislation and policies, both UK-wide and specific to Wales. These provide an important context for understanding and addressing the issues facing play and leisure activities for disabled children and young people, so this section provides a brief overview of the main areas of law and policy.

### Equality Policy and Legislation

Access to play and leisure activities by disabled people, whether provided by the public, private or voluntary sectors, is covered by equality legislation. The Disability Discrimination Acts made it unlawful for service providers to treat disabled people less favourably because of their disability, and required them to make 'reasonable adjustments', including making changes to physical features of their premises, although all types of disability are covered. The Equality Act 2010 has now superseded this legislation although the basic principles remain.

Whilst this legislation is often thought of as applying to adults in the fields of, say, employment or access to services, the example given by the Equality and Human Rights Commission makes it very clear that the legislation applies to disabled children and to play and leisure activities. It is worth quoting the Commission's example in full:

"A voluntary organisation runs a play group for young children. One child who attends has a learning disability and sometimes shouts loudly, even during rest times when children have been asked to be quiet. The play group accepts that the child does not always understand when it is appropriate to be loud or quiet. They do not treat the child as if they are being naughty. In behaving like this, the play group has made a reasonable adjustment to the standards of behaviour it applies.

If the play group did decide that the child's behaviour was causing more significant difficulties for other children or for staff and that they have made all the adjustments it is reasonable for them to make, they would have to objectively justify stopping the child attending (in other words,



withdraw the service from the child). Otherwise, this is likely to be discrimination arising from disability and/or indirect discrimination because of the child's disability.'

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/guidance-for-service-users/voluntary-and-community-sector-organisations-including-charities-and-religion-and-belief-organisations/core-guidance-voluntary-and-community-sector-organisations/> downloaded 26<sup>th</sup> November 2010

One of the key features of the Act is the duty it places on public bodies, such as local authorities, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; to advance equality of opportunity; and to foster good relations between different groups in society. The Welsh Assembly Government has consulted on the arrangements for implementing this aspect of the Act, which are expected to come into force in April 2011.

In addition the UK-wide equality legislation, s.77 of the Government of Wales Act 2006 restates the principle set out in the 1998 Act, that Welsh Ministers must ensure their functions have due regard to equality of opportunity for all people. The Single Equality Scheme sets out how Welsh Ministers fulfill this obligation, including how the Department for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning will promote the wellbeing of all children and support the achievement of their full potential.

This legislation and policy is vitally important to disabled children and young people. It means that ALL providers of play and leisure activities have a statutory duty not to treat disabled children and young people less favourably than non-disabled children and young people and to make 'reasonable adjustments' to enable them to participate, whilst public authorities have an additional duty to take active steps to advance quality and good relations.

## **Policies and Legislation on Children and Young People**

Welsh Assembly Government policies and legislation on children and young people is firmly based on a rights approach, notably the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Convention gives children and young



people over 40 substantive rights, all of which apply to all children, including disabled children. Article 31 states that all children have the right to play and join in a wide range of activities. Most importantly **Article 23** of the UNCRC concerns the rights of children with disabilities – its provisions are shown in Figure 1.

### Figure 1 Article 23 of UNCRC

1. States Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.
2. States Parties recognize the right of the disabled child to special care and shall encourage and ensure the extension, subject to available resources, to the eligible child and those responsible for his or her care, of assistance for which application is made and which is appropriate to the child's condition and to the circumstances of the parents or others caring for the child.
3. Recognizing the special needs of a disabled child, assistance extended in accordance with paragraph 2 of the present article shall be provided free of charge, whenever possible, taking into account the financial resources of the parent or others caring for the child, and shall be designed to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development.
4. States Parties shall promote, in the spirit of international co-operation, the exchange of appropriate information in the field of preventive health care and of medical, psychological and functional treatment of disabled children, including dissemination of and access to information concerning methods of rehabilitation, education and vocational services, with the aim of enabling States Parties to improve their capabilities and skills and to widen their experience in these areas. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

The Welsh Assembly Government's first major policy statement on children and young people, the 2002 **Children and Young People: A Framework for Partnership**, aimed to put UNCRC principles into practice. It set up children and young people's partnerships, simplified the payment of grants to local



authorities for children's services and gave a commitment to listening to children and young people.

In the same year, **Extending Entitlement** set out 10 basic entitlements for all young people aged 11-25 living in Wales. It focused particularly on the inclusion of harder-to-reach groups of young people and also set out rights to access to leisure services such as the entitlement to free swimming in school holidays.

**Rights to Action** (2004) reflected on Wales's progress in implementing the rights contained in the UNCRC and set out a program for future action, based on the 'seven core aims':

1. have a flying start in life and the best possible basis for their future growth and development
2. have access to a comprehensive range of education, training and learning opportunities, including acquisition of essential personal and social skills
3. enjoy the best possible physical and mental, social and emotional health, including freedom from abuse, victimisation and exploitation
4. have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities
5. are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised
6. have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing
7. are not disadvantaged by child poverty.

**The Children Act 2004** was designed to strengthen arrangements for integrated children's services at the local level and, amongst other things requires each local authority area in Wales to have a Children and Young People's Plan covering all services for those aged 0-25. The plans are 'the defining statement of strategic planning intent and priorities for all children and young people's services in the local authority area'.<sup>1</sup> In building on the



UNCRC, the statutory guidance on plans<sup>2</sup> requires them to include explicit reference to play and leisure, including:

- play strategies, including plans for staffed adventure play;
- leisure and sporting opportunities;
- out of school hours childcare and holiday play-schemes;
- action to promote other out of school hours activity;
- the contribution of the Dragon Sport and PE in Schools initiatives;
- arts and cultural opportunities including museums provision;
- access to transport;
- appropriate recreational, sporting, arts and cultural experiences provided through youth support services;
- walking and cycling routes to schools and play areas that integrate appropriately and safely with other means of transport.

The guidance states that as a principle, highest priority should be given to the needs of disabled children and that disabled children and their carers should be included in the preparation of local plans. This, and other guidance, are expected to be collated into a single document in late 2010.

Children and young people's partnerships administer Cymorth funding, which includes the former play grant and other funding streams. The Welsh Assembly Government provides guidance on the allocation of funding but the decisions rest with the partnerships themselves.

The **National Service Framework (NSF) for Children, Young People and Maternity Services** (2005) is a 10 year strategy which sets national standards to improve the quality and reduce variation in service delivery for children and young people across health, social care and other local services. It is again founded on the principles of UNCRC and is designed to 'ensure that services are developed and delivered in a rights-focused way'.



The **National Youth Service Strategy**, published in 2007, set out a vision for youth services and makes strong statements about universal provision and ensuring that ‘activities take account of diversity and equality to secure access for all young people’. However there is no specific reference in the strategy to the needs of disabled young people or any steps that need to be taken to include them in mainstream youth provision.

The Welsh Assembly Government has proposed that the UNCRC provisions should be incorporated into Welsh legislation – the proposed **Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure**.<sup>3</sup> This would require Welsh Ministers to have due regard to children and young people’s rights and to set out a ‘scheme’ showing how they would do so.

The Welsh Assembly Government’s policies on children and young people are, then, firmly underpinned by children’s rights, with access to play and leisure activities featuring along with (in many) an emphasis on the needs of disabled children and young people.

### **Policies and Legislation on Health and Social Care**

Local authorities’ social services departments have a general duty under Section 17 (10) of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the interests of ‘children in need’, which include disabled children. A disabled child is entitled to an assessment of his or her needs, which should include their educational, religious, cultural and recreational needs as well as their health needs. The assessment should focus on the child’s needs and, once these are established, the local authority has a duty to ensure they are met. The Welsh Assembly Government’s Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need (2001) expressly includes ‘play and interaction with other children’ as one of the child’s development needs that should be assessed.



Not all disabled children and young people necessarily request or receive an assessment of need, but nevertheless those who do so should have their play needs taken into account.

## **Policies on Play and Leisure**

The Welsh Assembly Government's **play policy** was published in 2002 - it was one of the first national play policies in the world and the first in the UK. The policy is based on UNCRC principles and as such follows their definition of play as:

‘Children’s behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development - not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live.’

The policy did not include any reference to disabled children or young people. The play policy implementation plan (2006) sought to ensure the principles were delivered on the ground, but, like its parent policy, it did not make any reference to disabled children or young people other than to a project for disabled children in Swansea.

Chapter five of the NSF outlines the commitments to provide services, including play and leisure services, for disabled children and young people. It stated that services designed to support families of disabled children should include:

‘Provision of short breaks and additional services to enable the family to participate in the same lifestyle that parents of non disabled children experience’.

It also stated that:

‘Disabled children and young people have equity of access to play and leisure services, including holiday play schemes, after school clubs and pre-school provision, with appropriate support if necessary.’



As well as play the Welsh Assembly Government has policies on physical activity and cultural activity. The draft policy on physical activity, **Climbing Higher** (2009), aims to support children and young people to live active lives, and become active adults. It recognises the role of play in physical activity, and includes a number of proposals to support play by disabled children and young people:

- Opportunities are created for every child and young person to engage in age appropriate play.
- Ensure play is inclusive of all children; none should be excluded for reasons of ability, language, race or gender.

The Welsh Assembly Government's **culture strategy** (2002) included a commitment to 'promoting access to cultural activity for disabled people in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995'. To meet this commitment, it expected all cultural Assembly-sponsored bodies to work with representatives of disabled people's groups to ensure that they have a full understanding of disabled people's needs and that they design policies to meet those needs. The strategy also made some reference to children and young people's participation in cultural activities, although the commitments mostly related to school-based activity.

Most recently, the **Children and Families Measure**, which received Royal Assent in February 2010, places play on a statutory footing for the first time, and requires local authorities to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area for children. It also requires authorities to ensure that there are sufficient play opportunities taking into account, amongst other matters, the needs of disabled children.

### **Policies and Legislation on Child Poverty**

Play and leisure activities for disabled children and young people are also included in policies and legislation on child poverty. As with other policy





areas, they are based on UNCRC principles. The Welsh Assembly Government's 'Fair Future for our Children' strategy recognised that lack of access to play and leisure were part of the 'participation poverty' and 'service poverty' experienced by children and that disabled children were often particularly excluded. The new draft Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery plan restates the importance of access to play and leisure, and makes specific commitments in respect of disabled children and young people:

**'To support our Child Poverty Delivery Plan, we will ... help to ensure that play, leisure, recreational services (and opportunities to participate in decisions that may affect them) are available to young people with disabilities *on the same terms as they are to other children and young people.*'**  
p. 46, emphasis in original

### **Additional Commitments**

There is, then, a wealth of different policies to meet the needs of disabled children and young people. The Disabled Children Matter Wales Campaign raised concerns about the fragmentation of policies for disabled children with the then Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills who, in response, established a Task Group to monitor progress. A key output from this group was '**We are on the Way**' (2009), which brought together the Welsh Assembly Government's policy agenda for disabled children and young people, including play. It also summarised further action that the Welsh Assembly Government had taken, including:

- Provision of an additional £1 million in 2007/08 via Cymorth for play facilities for disabled children.
- Provision of £250,000 a year for 3 years (from 2009/10), to be matched by local authorities, for play opportunities for disabled children. Following the advice of the Task Group this funding is earmarked for pre-school play opportunities, unless Children and Young People's Partnerships identify gaps in provision for disabled children in other age groups.



- Provision of £1.54 million for short breaks for disabled children and young people in 2008/09 and £1.5 million in 2009/10.
- Provision of mobile disabled toilets with additional facilities for use at cultural events and planned provision of such toilets on a permanent basis at a number of cultural venues, via the Changing Places project run by Mencap.

## **Conclusion**

There is a truly astonishing wealth of legislation and policy documents that claim to promote, variously, equality of opportunity for disabled children, the rights of the disabled child, a duty to meet the needs of the disabled child, to secure access to play opportunities for disabled children and to tackle child poverty including poverty of participation. Indeed, so extensive is this literature and legislation that the disabled child's needs seem to vanish under its weight – the simple requirement to provide play and leisure opportunities for disabled children and young people is fragmented across many different policies. Whilst some of these may score some UK firsts, the question of disabled children and young people's access to play and leisure weave through most of these strategies but not in a consistent or focussed way.

The acid test of the efficacy of all this legislation and policy is whether they have improved provision of play and leisure opportunities on the ground. Moneys have been allocated to a number of different projects expressly designed to provide play and leisure opportunities for disabled children and young people, but remains to be seen whether this funding is reaching children and young people themselves. It is this which is explored in the next section.



### 3. THE REALITY FOR DISABLED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Despite the huge number of policies and strategies committed to improving play and leisure activities for disabled children and young people, studies show the paucity of provision on the ground.

National Assembly for Wales Committees have considered the question of play and leisure, and of the needs of disabled children and young people in a number of different inquiries, although the findings are disappointingly thin. The Equality of Opportunity Committee's review of services for disabled children<sup>4</sup> included leisure in its remit, but said very little about play or leisure activities in its report. The National Assembly for Wales Children and Young People's Committee's inquiry into play and leisure,<sup>5</sup> published in November 2010, expressly included disabled children but then focussed mainly on the issue of inclusive and specialist play. The Communities and Culture Committee<sup>6</sup> is currently undertaking a review of access to arts and culture, including access by disabled people, but it does not seem that evidence from disabled children has been submitted.

Surveys of disabled children and young people in Wales are also in short supply. The Welsh Assembly Government's children and young people's well-being monitor<sup>7</sup> referred to the 'paucity of data' on play and leisure activities for all children, and highlighted the particular data gap for disabled children. Its own survey of children's views of play (undertaken by Funky Dragon<sup>8</sup> and Dynamix<sup>9</sup>) included just 3 disabled children out of more than 1,000 respondents.

What information that is available suggests that there is little local provision. Claire Turner<sup>10</sup> found that although many disabled children enthused about provision, some, especially older children, felt that there were few things to do in their local area and that they had no choice about what they did. The Children's Commissioner for Wales<sup>11</sup> discussed play with 41 disabled



children and found play meant different things to different people, and that most played in structured environments with no particular times of the day, week or year which were more popular for play than others. Play Wales<sup>12</sup> argues that the belief that disabled children need care rather than play, and that their needs must be met by separate, specialist provision has been a significant factor in limiting the provision of inclusive play and leisure activities for disabled children.

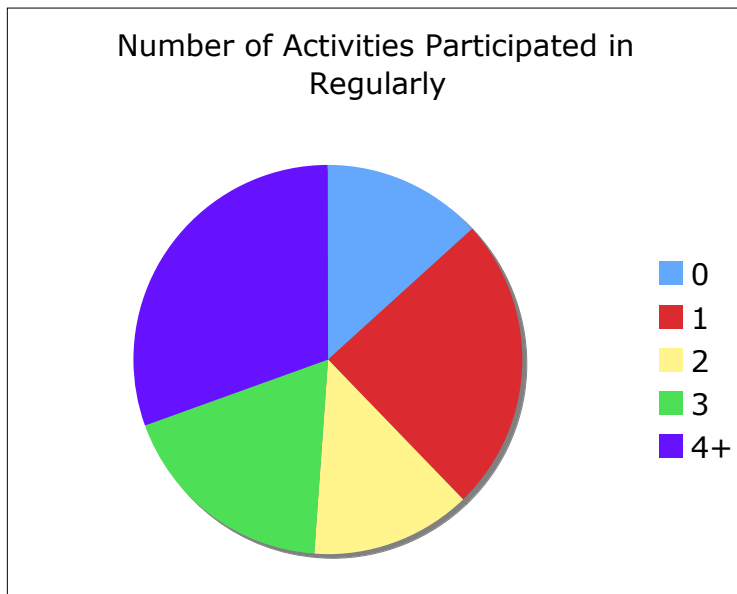
It is likely that provision in Wales is similar to the UK as a whole, where evidence from a number of UK studies suggests that disabled children are less likely to participate in play and leisure activities than non-disabled children. This holds true across different types of leisure e.g. sport, youth clubs and Girl Guides or Scouts.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Contact a Family's latest survey<sup>14</sup> (2010) found that half of families with disabled children said the opportunity to enjoy play and leisure together is poor or unsatisfactory.

### **What do disabled children do?**

We asked disabled children which activities they did regularly (twice a month or more), occasionally (two or three times a year) and rarely or never. The answers suggest that some disabled children and young people were very active in a range of activities, but that others did very little (see Figure 2). It is worth noting that the proportion of our sample who undertook a number of activities was possibly higher than amongst disabled children as a whole because some questionnaires were distributed via play / leisure groups.



**Figure 2**



Three out of ten of those who replied (25 out of 82) were involved in four or more activities on a regular basis – some examples of such children are in Figure 3. A small number of children and young people were extremely busy, reporting doing six or seven different things on a regular basis. As a worker with disabled children commented:

‘The kids who are involved are involved a lot; you see the same faces at everything.’

However, not all disabled children and young people participate in this number or range of activities. Two out of ten children and young people (16 out of 82) participate in two or three activities on a regular basis, hardly a huge level of involvement given that these activities often include visits to the local park or playground. Nearly four out of ten of those who replied (31 out of 82) reported that they did nothing or only one thing on a regular basis. Twenty children did just one thing on a regular basis, making them especially vulnerable to that activity changing or ending as some disabled children and young people told us:



**Figure 3 Disabled Children and Young People Participating in 4 or more activities**

**Anushka** is 12 and lives in Newport. She goes regularly goes to the park, theatre and swimming and also goes to a disabled children and young people's group and another youth club. She also goes to the playground sometimes, and occasionally goes to the cinema and plays sport. She most enjoys playing with her friends. She'd like to try surfing but hasn't yet – the cost and lack of availability of surf classes puts her off, and she is also concerned that there might not be the right support for her – she is deaf.

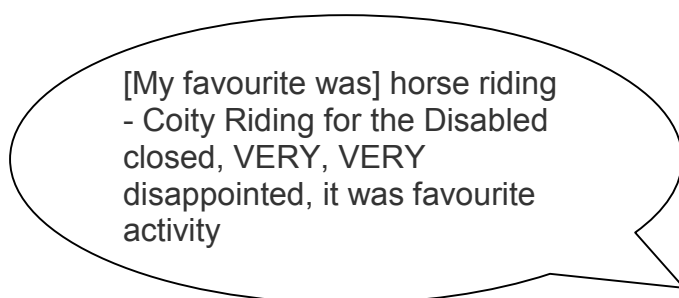
**Sam** is an 18 year old boy, living in Pembrokeshire. He goes to the cinema and theatre regularly, as well as going swimming and doing other sports. He goes to an after-school club and a disabled youth group regularly as well. His parent / carer completed the questionnaire for him, and told us Sam likes football best, because he likes 'scoring goals [and] meeting up with friends'. Sam has learning disabilities.

**Eleri** is a 12 year old girl who lives in Ceredigion. She has learning disabilities. She completed our questionnaire herself and told us that she regularly goes to the cinema, swimming, football – her favourite – and a disabled children's group. She likes football because it is 'fun, cool and awesome'! Eleri would like to try new activities but doesn't because she is worried about the cost, the lack of activities in her area and that the equipment might not be right for her.

**Gwyn** is 13 and as well as going to the local playground and park, he regularly goes swimming and horse riding – which is his favourite because he likes horses – and to a group for disabled children and young people. He would like to go to Young Farmers' Club but doesn't because it's difficult to get to (Gwyn lives in Ceredigion) but he's also worried he might be picked on or bullied. Gwyn has learning disabilities.



Eleven said they did not do any play or leisure activity regularly. These children and young people over and over again described how there was ‘nothing for me’ or ‘nothing round here’, echoing the isolation and exclusion reported by other studies.<sup>15</sup> The experiences of four children or young people who do not do more than one regular activity are in Figure 4.



Bearing in mind the possible bias in our survey towards disabled children and young people who do participate in some leisure and play activities, that six out of ten respondents have relatively limited opportunities for play and leisure, and that four out of ten have none or only 1 leisure activity, is a matter of considerable concern.

Amongst all children and young people replying, a huge range of activities were mentioned. As well as the thirteen different activities that were listed on the questionnaire, children and young people also mentioned numerous others e.g. tennis, sit-skiing, archery, bowling, trampoline and boxing as well as choir, walking, shopping, digi-lab and massage. The activity that was by far the mostly likely to be done regularly by disabled children and young people was swimming, which was done regularly by more than half of those who replied. The next most frequently mentioned regular activities were disabled children’s clubs, visits to the park and sports groups, each of which had over a third of children and young people doing them regularly.



**Figure 4 Children and Young People who do no more than one activity**

**Naomi** is 13 and lives in Newport. Her parent / carer told us that Naomi occasionally goes to the playground and park, cinema and swimming. Her mother told us:

Rarely go to the theatre or go swimming. All other activities listed we never do. Attends a disabled children's summer play scheme in Newport during summer hols. Likes running and playing football on the beach - occasionally, has rebound therapy in school – regularly.

Naomi would love to do more – her mother said she'd like to go swimming, because she likes the feeling of freedom, as well as more trampolining, listening to live music and live shows. Naomi's mother also told us that Naomi was not allowed to go to activities organized close to her school, where she could be with her friends, as it was in a different local authority to where she lived. This meant she had to attend a summer play scheme where she didn't know any of the children. Naomi has learning and communications disabilities and is blind / partially sighted.

**Luke** is 13 and didn't tell us where he lives. He occasionally goes to the theatre and likes to play with his friend. He'd like to go to the gym but is worried about feeling uncomfortable, that he will be picked on or bullied, is worried about trying something new and doesn't think that there is anything suitable in his area anyway.

**Jessica** is 18 and lives in Pembrokeshire. She likes to go to the cathedral choir and occasionally goes to the cinema. She'd like to go swimming but feels uncomfortable, is worried she'll be picked on or bullied and about lack of support. She has learning disabilities.

**Matthew** is 15 and lives in Torfaen. He has physical disabilities. He regularly goes to the cinema and occasionally goes to the theatre and swimming. He told us "America has to be the most disabled friendly place I have visited. They were so helpful and friendly towards me. We have a long way to go to come up to the standards of America, with attitude and disabled-friendly buildings etc."





A number of activities were rarely or never done by disabled children. More than 90 per cent of those who replied rarely or never attended a youth group such as Brownies or Scouts. Arts and cultural activities were also not commonly undertaken by disabled children – more than two thirds said they rarely or never went to the theatre and more than half rarely or never participated in arts, drama or music activities. It is not clear why so few children and young people in our sample did these activities, and this could be investigated further.

Perhaps more surprisingly, more than half rarely or never attended a disabled children's club – often because children and young people were not aware of one or thought there was none available in their area - and more than a third said they rarely or never visited a park.

It is worth noting that the line between play, defined as freely chosen for its own enjoyment, and therapy is not clear. Some of the activities that were mentioned by children and young people, such as massage and rebound are in fact therapies, and for many disabled children and young people swimming is also a therapy. In fact, therapy has a key role in play, with therapists encouraging children and young people's development through an exhaustive range of activities, from horse riding to gym, skiing, trampolining, basketball and cycling. Sometimes therapists will play with a child in a way a family has not experienced before, for example crawling through tunnels or climbing high.

We then asked children what their favourite activities were and why. Swimming and / or some other sport (football, trampolining and horse-riding were particular favourites) were most popular. The reasons children and young people gave for liking an activity were varied. A number of children said they enjoyed the sensory experience of physical activity:



Trampolining - meeting my friends, having freedom to jump up and down really high.

The freedom of floating in the water

Several said that when they were involved their favourite activity, they were less aware of their differences from other children and young people. Here are some examples of what disabled children and young people said:

Swimming. Because I feel light. It makes me forget I am ill

I enjoy swimming because I'm no different to all the people in the pool.

Swimming: is fun, cooling, convenient, and my son (disabled, does not communicate) can make as much noise as he likes without attracting attention

## What Disabled Children and Young People Want

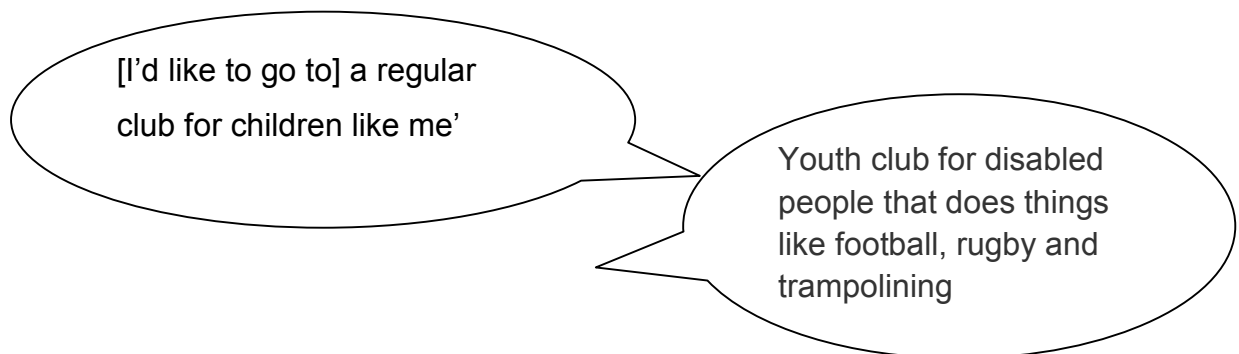
Findings from GB or UK-wide surveys suggest that disabled children want the same things from play and leisure as non-disabled children. Studies suggest that many disabled children want more choice of activity than currently available and different things to do.<sup>16</sup>

We asked children and young people completing the survey what they would like to do that they did not do at the moment. The range of answers was immensely broad, ranging from activities that some disabled children and

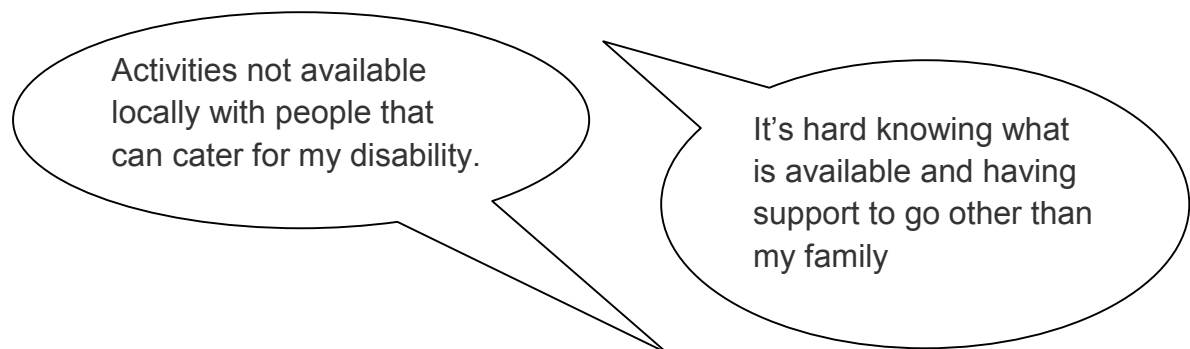


young people were already involved in, such as swimming and visits to the park, to special interests such as surfing, golf, weight-lifting, skittles / bowling and drama.

The activity mentioned most frequently was a youth club or after school club, which 11 out of 68 people mentioned. Swimming was mentioned by eight children, with riding (mentioned by five), gym (four) and dance (four) also being mentioned.



However, it is worth noting that a small number – eight people - could not identify anything that they wanted to do because they believed there was nothing available for them in their area or suited to their needs.



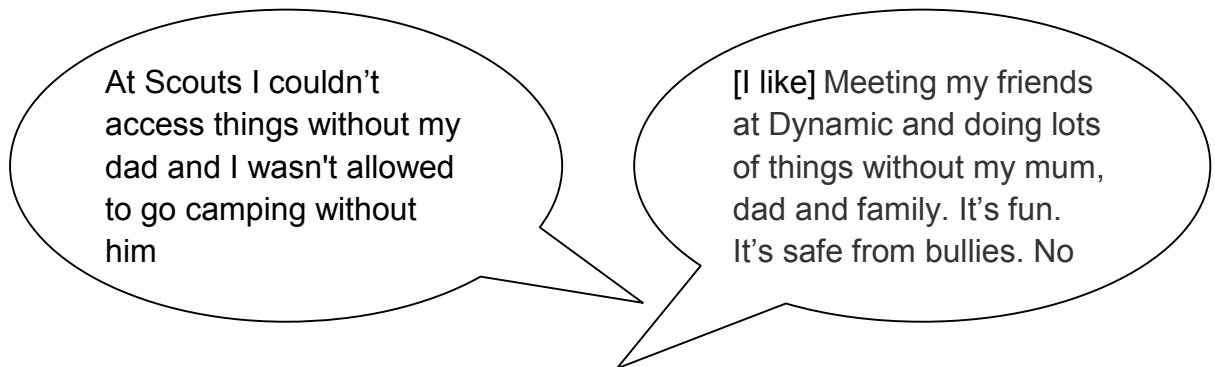
### **Structured vs Independent Play and Leisure**

The Children's Commissioner for Wales's discussions with disabled children<sup>17</sup> highlighted that most of the activities provided for disabled children and young people are structured, yet many disabled children and young people felt they

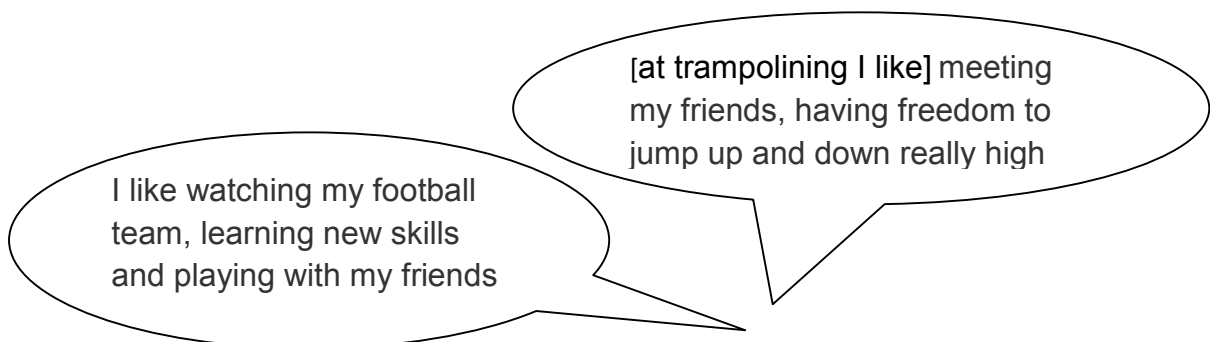


did not need an adult with them although most said they were usually accompanied by a parent or carer.

Our survey and visits to clubs produced similar findings. Although we did not specifically ask about wanting to play without parents, several children and young people commented on it:



As other studies have found, 'fun and friendship' - the social element of activities – matter as much as the activity itself.<sup>18</sup> When asked why they liked their favourite leisure activity disabled children and young people said:



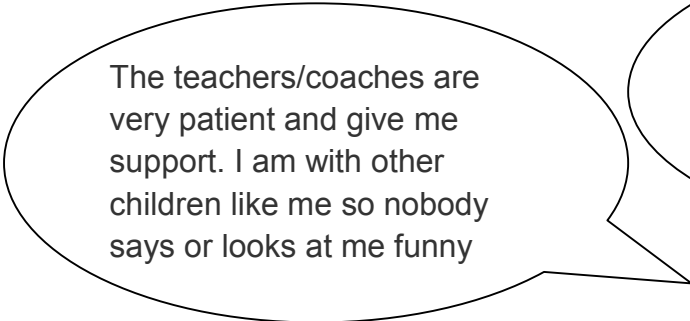
Parents and other family members were sometimes perceived by children and people as stopping them undertaking an activity. When children and young people in our survey were asked what stopped them from participating in an activity one said 'the pain in the back of my mother', another said 'my sister' and a third said 'over-protective relatives'.

However it is also important to recognize that not all disabled children and young people are able to play independently and that some forms of play provision e.g. open access may not be appropriate for them.

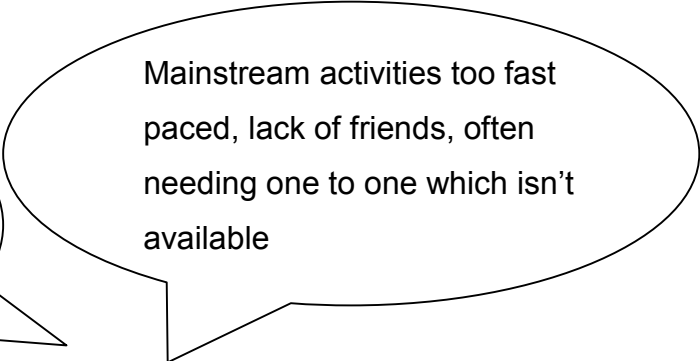
## Inclusive vs Specialist Play

There are mixed views about whether disabled children and young people should be encouraged to be included in mainstream play activities or whether specialist provision is most appropriate. Some organizations strongly advocate inclusive provision, emphasizing that inclusion enriches the play experiences of disabled and non-disabled children alike. Others however prefer environments which are specifically for disabled children and young people. This difference of view emerged in the Assembly Children and Young People's Committee's review, which was urged by one parent 'not to push inclusion too much'.<sup>19</sup>

Although they were not specifically asked, number of children said that they preferred to be involved in disabled-only groups as they felt more comfortable with others like them.

A white speech bubble with a black outline and a tail pointing towards the bottom right.

The teachers/coaches are very patient and give me support. I am with other children like me so nobody says or looks at me funny

A white speech bubble with a black outline and a tail pointing towards the bottom left.

Mainstream activities too fast paced, lack of friends, often needing one to one which isn't available

Several workers said that increasingly children and young people with physical impairments were involved in integrated groups, especially once their needs had been met through adaptations, whilst those with learning disabilities, especially complex or multiple disabilities, preferred to be in groups with other disabled children and young people.

However even this is not a firm rule – at one group for deaf children and young people there were very strong feelings against integration with hearing



people as the group saw themselves as a linguistic (BSL) minority and wished to be able to communicate amongst themselves freely.

The key point here is that there needs to be a choice about the type of group. It should not be assumed that specialist provision is the only provision needed by disabled children and young people, just as promoting inclusion is necessarily the only solution either. As one worker put it, a non-disabled person who is a golfer doesn't want to be put in an embroidery class.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear that some disabled children and young people are involved in a huge number and wide range of different activities. Some are activities that non-disabled children may take for granted e.g. swimming, visits to the cinema and park, but others are less common – archery, boxing and skiing for example. For a sizeable minority, then, there appear to be a range of play and leisure opportunities available.

However, it is also clear that the majority of disabled children – six out of ten of those who responded to our survey – participate in a relatively limited number of activities on a regular basis and that a sizeable minority participate in just one or even no activities regularly. The activities they do undertake are most commonly going swimming or to the park. For these children, there is little or anything to do and certainly no scope for choice or preference in their play and leisure.

There is considerable demand for more play and leisure activities for disabled children and young people. They want to be involved in a range of different activities, including wanting to do some activities without their parents or carers. Some disabled children and young people feel more comfortable with their peers but others like integrated groups.



That this shortage of provision should sit alongside the welter of duties, policies, commitments and plans that are committed to providing play and leisure activities for disabled children makes a mockery of all the fine statements. The reality for most disabled children and young people is, as one young person said, 'there is nothing for me'.



## 4. BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

The barriers to participation are complex and include barriers specific to disabled children, which vary with the child's disability as well as with the type of play setting, as well as barriers that affect non-disabled children as well, such as cost or transport.

We asked disabled children and young people in our survey what stopped them from doing an activity they wanted to do. The experiences of four disabled children and young people are shown in Figure 5.

The most common answer, given by 42 children and young people, was that 'there is not enough support or the right kind of support for me'. This was closely followed by lack of availability of facilities ('there is nothing like this in my area' was cited by 32 people) or difficulty getting to it (29 people). Other barriers cited were physical access, attitudes and fear or uncertainty.

We also asked disabled children and young people about their experience of access to a leisure centre or youth club / group. Just over half of disabled children and young people had been to a leisure centre in the last 3 months, and a further 27% had been in the last 12 months, meaning that fewer than 1 in 5 had not been recently. Out of the 44 people who answered a question about participation in a youth or after-school club, 34 were currently involved in a club and 13 had been involved in the past. Just under half of those involved in a club were involved in one for disabled children and young people only (in some instances with their non-disabled siblings). However 33 people had never been involved in a club, and the comments revealed that there was some concern about the lack of local provision.



## Figure 5 Barriers to Play and Leisure

**Jordan** is 10 and lives in Newport. He'd love to go to the cinema, dance, after school club, trampolining and cycling but he doesn't because *'activities [are] not available locally with people that can cater for my disability'*. He's also concerned that there'll not be enough support available and that the building or equipment won't be suitable for him. He feels there's not much available in his area and also feels that disabled people aren't welcome. He's been to a leisure centre which is OK although public attitudes are poor. He's never been to a youth group and says *'They do not welcome children like me. I need one to one support to access a club, with suitably qualified people to support me when I attend. They are not autism friendly! There are not any clubs to go to. I did go to one club on Saturdays for 6 years but Social Services got rid of it because of funding issues! Now I have nothing.'*

**Peter** is 15 and lives in Newport. The only thing he does regularly is swimming, which he likes because the water is soothing and he likes the Jacuzzi. But even this is not easy: he says the local leisure centre is good for cost, information and staff attitudes, but the toilets and changing rooms are 'very poor': *'there is no disabled changing. I am a boy and mum needs to help me. Not easy in the ladies in front of children.'*

**Rachael** is 11 and lives in Rhondda Cynon Taf. She goes to after school club and the park regularly, and also goes bowling. She'd like to go to more clubs but there aren't any in her area. Her mother said *'Being made aware of any such groups is a problem and there are very few in our area. Also due to the disability the suitability is also a problem'*. She also mentioned that funding for carers could be an issue. Rachael's been to her local leisure centre in the past but found changing rooms to be poor.

**Jonathan** is 13 and lives in Flintshire. He regularly goes to the playground and park, cinema and a group for disabled children. He'd like to go to Air Cadets but doesn't because of concerns about lack of support, the suitability of the building and feels that disabled people are not allowed to go or are not welcome. His mother told us that *'We were sent details of 5 activities that our son could attend - 2 of them stated that they were accessible for wheelchair users but down at the bottom, in the small print it stated that the activities were unsuitable for electric wheel chair users. Our son can not use a manual chair due to his medical condition!! This is unfair and has caused much heart break to us all!'* He rates changing and toilet facilities in his local leisure centre as very poor and public attitudes as poor. He enjoys going to a youth group but finds that because some families bring non-disabled children too means he is unable to drive his wheelchair independently as he is scared of driving into and injuring them.



## Quantity of Provision

One of the most important barriers is the sheer lack of provision for disabled children and young people. The Children’s Commissioner for Wales’s review of play strategies prepared by the 22 local authorities in Wales found numerous shortcomings<sup>20</sup>. The style and structure of many documents was formulaic, few strategies addressed the inclusion of disabled children in play activities adequately, with little recognition of the role of play workers or the importance of choice. However the Commissioner recognised that the review was undertaken at an early stage in the preparation of the strategies. The **Rights into Action for Disabled Children and Young People Task Group** set up to look at different local authorities’ activities, found that Ceredigion spent the least on both inclusive play and short breaks, while Cardiff spent the most in both areas.

The UNCRC’s latest visit to Wales found that disabled children continue to face barriers in the enjoyment of their rights and recommended that:

‘... Particular attention should be given to provide children, including those with disabilities, with adequate and accessible playground spaces to exercise their play and leisure activities’

In our survey of disabled children and young people, eight said there were simply no opportunities available for them:





The paucity of provision is also illustrated by the waiting lists to join the groups that do exist and the way that they have to 'ration' participation. Figure 6 shows the situation in a selection of groups across Wales.

### **Figure 6 Provision and Waiting Lists**

Circus Eruption: Circus skills for 35 young people per term and 10 young people have a disability. Demand is four times what they are able to offer.

Interplay: organise evening and holiday play for young disabled people. Currently have 700 young people on their books. They always have a response from 3 times as many young people as they are able to provide for.

The Viva Project: Provide leisure opportunities for 150 young disabled people and have a further 103 on the waiting list. They are only able to provide 1 session per fortnight to those already on their books due to staff redundancy.

Dynamic: Provide evening and holiday sessions for young disabled people. They currently have 98 young people and 8 on their waiting list. Participation is limited to once a week as funding does not allow more.

DASH: Offer leisure time to young disabled people. They currently offer a service to 200 young people but not as much as young people would like.

Touch Trust: Over 65 children and young people attend the centre in Cardiff Bay and there are 25 centres that also deliver our programme each week. They have recently expanded our premises to accommodate our waiting list.



As well as our survey of disabled children and young people we also undertook a survey of organisers and providers of play and leisure activities for young people. We contacted a number of different providers, some directly and some via umbrella organisations, asking them to forward the questionnaire to any other groups that they may be aware of.

Altogether we received 25 responses to the survey, 22 from voluntary and community organisations and three from local authorities. Some of the organisations that replied were responsible for or were umbrella bodies for a number of individual activities or groups. The number and range of responses is disappointing and is not sufficient to draw robust conclusions; nevertheless there are some useful pointers within the data which are drawn out in the rest of this chapter.

Of the 25 organisations, 18 provided integrated provision, one did not involve disabled children at all, and nine provided groups or activities specifically and exclusively for disabled children and young people (three provided both).

Those offering activities for disabled children and young people alongside non-disabled were very positive about their inclusivity:

All projects are expected to be open access and non-discriminatory.

We do not specifically target disabled people but we do try to ensure that all services and activities including youth clubs is fully inclusive

The group is inclusive of all young people regardless of their ability, gender, race, religion, background and disability

However the numbers of disabled children involved in some 'inclusive' groups did not seem to be borne out in practice. One organization committed to including all children catered for more than 3,000, of whom about 160 were disabled. Another group which was 'open to all' had 10 disabled children out of about 400 that were involved in its activities, another (quoted above) included 3 disabled young people out of 75 – 100 who participated in their activities.



Of the inclusive organizations, only eight knew whether they had policies on the inclusion of disabled children, and only ten provided disability awareness training for staff, volunteers or helpers. However eight said that if needed they would try to provide specialist help for a disabled child. While having policies and training in place is no guarantee of inclusion, it is hard to imagine that a fully inclusive organisation would *not* have such policies.

## **Physical Access**

Access to play venues continues to be a barrier for some children.<sup>21</sup> According to a report by Scope,<sup>22</sup> nearly half of families with disabled children (42 per cent) said they found it difficult to access leisure activities compared to only a fifth of families with non-disabled children.

### ***Wheelchair access***

Our survey found that disabled children's experiences were mixed. Of those who had been to a leisure centre, 70% said getting in to the building and moving around was good or very good. Only one response said it was poor or very poor. However, several respondents went on to highlight problems, e.g. broken lifts or equipment not adapted for wheelchair users.

Several of the clubs we visited also highlighted difficulties that they face as organisers:

'We cope with the facilities we have but they are not adequate. We need proper changing facilities, especially for teenagers in pads.'

'Not everywhere is fully adapted yet but you have to hope that when they do their remodelling they will take this into account.'

We found a particular issue with electric wheelchairs. Three of the clubs we visited said that they could not accommodate children who used them – one was in a building that was old and the organisers were concerned that the

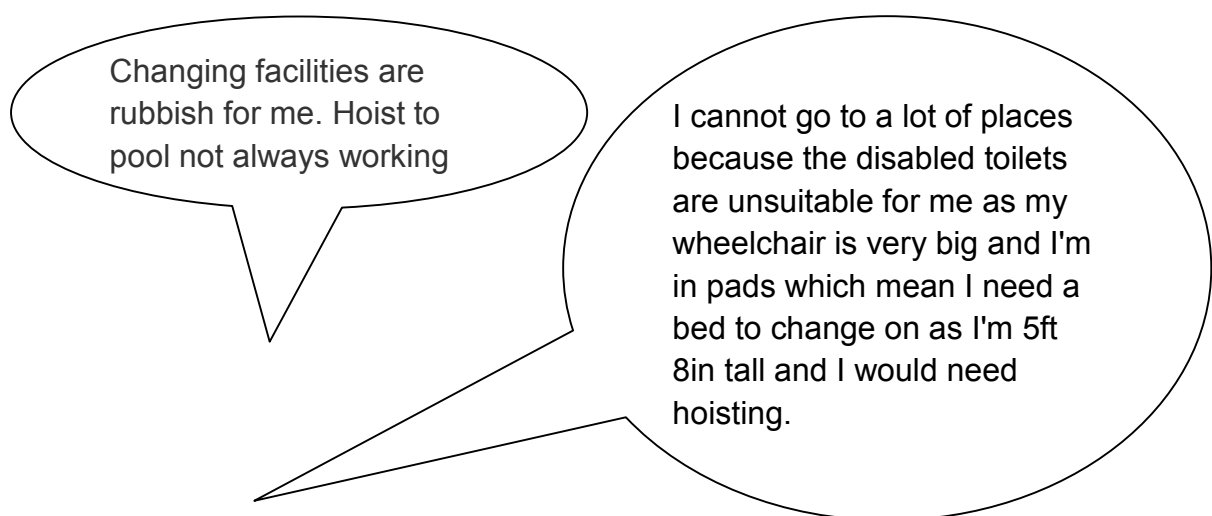


floor could not support the weight of the chairs, another could accept two electric wheelchairs but felt they did not have space for more, whilst a third had 'too many stairs' and had been unable to secure funding for a lift. In Figure 5, Jonathan's mother describes the impact of lack of wheelchair access.

A related factor is appropriate wheelchairs. Barnardo's and Whizz Kids' report on wheelchair services<sup>23</sup> highlighted, through the experiences of children, the difference that having a new wheelchair could make to children's ability to play, as did Whizz Kids evidence to the Assembly's inquiry into wheelchair services in Wales.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Changing and Toileting***

A number of surveys have highlighted the impact of the lack of accessible toilets.<sup>25 26</sup> In our survey, 30 out of 76 people who had been to a leisure centre said they found changing rooms to be good or very good, and 35 said access to toilets was good or very good. However, a minority – 17 – said that they found changing rooms to be poor or very poor, and 12 people said the same about toilets. Disabled children and their carers described various ways in which access had been problematic:

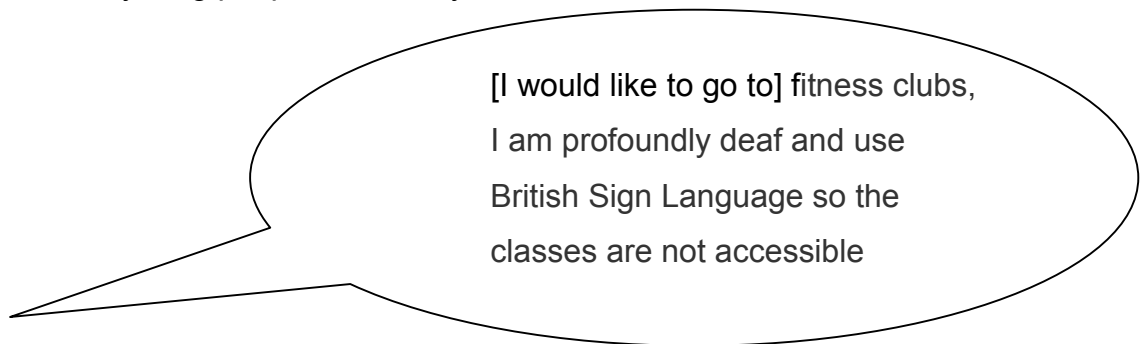




Although it is welcome that more than a third found facilities to be good, given that the Disability Discrimination Acts required local authorities and others to make 'reasonable adjustments' it is a matter of considerable concern that a substantial minority still report that changing rooms and toilets are inadequate. This is not a question of 'meeting needs' or 'being nice' – it is illegal.

### **Communications**

Communications, provision of information and signage are important aspects of accessibility also, especially for blind/ partially-sighted people or those who are deaf/ hard-of-hearing. There was only one comment about this from the children and young people we surveyed:



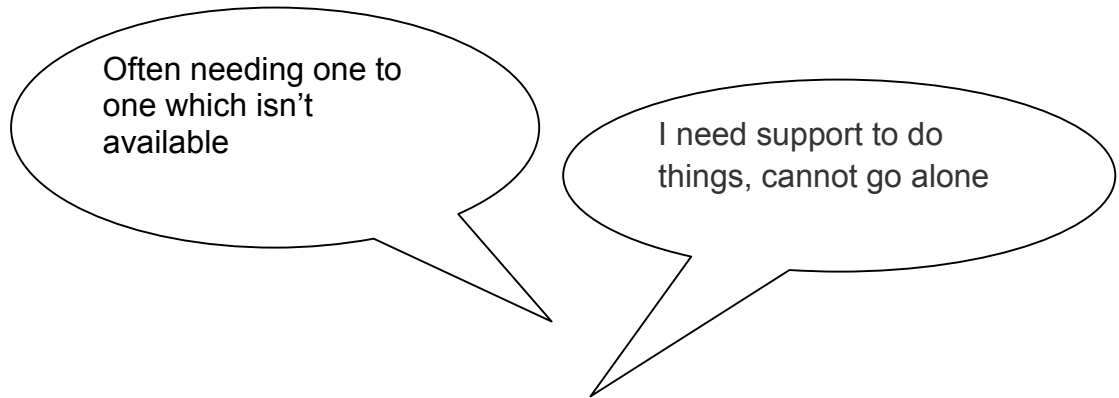
However this is not to say the issue is not important – communications need to be addressed alongside wheelchair access and are as important an aspect of equality legislation.

### **Support Needs**

Perhaps surprisingly, support needs have generally not been highlighted in other research on disabled children and young people's play and leisure (although Murray's research<sup>27</sup> on disabled teenagers' experience does so). Yet lack of support was the most frequent reason children gave for not participating in an activity, and was explained further in open-ended questions and in our visits to activities. Unmet support needs are as disabling and excluding as physical barriers to participation. The nature of support needed varied from support with communication for children and young people who



are deaf or hard of hearing, understanding of the needs of children and young people with autistic spectrum disorder, as well as patience and understanding. These examples illustrate what children and young people felt:



Staff being untrained in providing support and insufficient staff were each cited by three of the organisations who responded to our survey as reasons for not including disabled children. And even when organisations do try, their effort may be inappropriate. We were told of an organisation which had invited members of Newport Deaf Youth Club to attend and said that the event would be inclusive and accessible. However the organisers had put subtitles on their presentations, which was hard for the British Sign Language (BSL) users to follow as BSL a different language in its own right with its own grammar and syntax. As there was no BSL interpreter the young people also could not contribute easily or join in the debates. They found this very frustrating.

## **Attitudes**

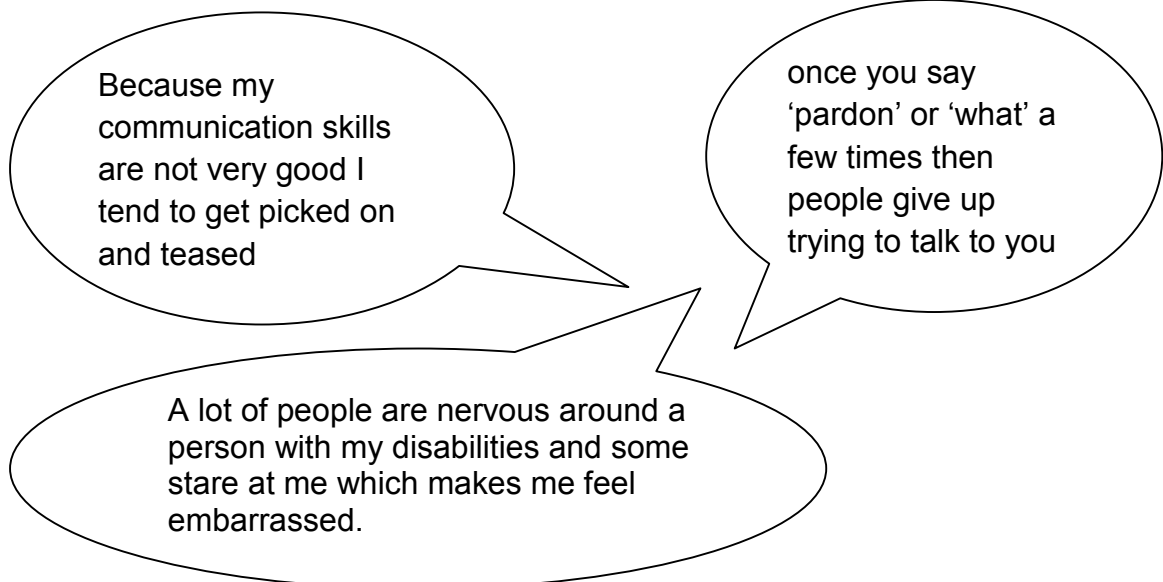
Several studies say that attitudes, amongst public and staff, are a barrier to disabled children taking part in play and leisure activities. Contact a Family's survey<sup>28</sup> found parents reported staff had poor attitudes more than good attitudes in playgrounds, parks, swimming pools and cinemas, while Barnardo's<sup>29</sup> also reported that negative attitudes amongst staff put disabled children and their parents off participating. On public attitudes, Contact a Family found that more than two thirds of families said they felt uncomfortable





on family outings with their disabled child. In the Barnardo's study 'most families' had experienced negative public attitudes, with siblings often feeling the impact most acutely, while C4EO<sup>30</sup> quotes a number of other examples of disabled children and their parents reporting discrimination and negative attitudes. At worst negative attitudes amount to bullying – Mencap<sup>31</sup> found many disabled young people reported being bullied in inclusive and mainstream leisure and recreation settings.

Our survey confirmed that disabled children (and their parents and carers) were very concerned about attitudes towards them. Fear about bullying or lack of a welcome were significant factors in children and young people not undertaking an activity. Twenty three children and young people said that they did not participate in an activity because they were worried that they might be bullied or picked on and twenty said that they would feel uncomfortable. Even worse, fourteen said that the activity did not welcome disabled children and young people whilst seven said disabled children and young people were not allowed to participate in an activity. Here is a sample of the comments:



We asked about disabled children and young people's experience of staff and public attitudes at leisure centres. Whilst just over half (44 out of 77) of respondents said that they found staff attitudes were good or very good, a minority (6) said they were poor or very poor. It was the attitudes of the public



that proved the worst – 19 out of 74 (about a quarter) said they were good or very good, and 15 said they were poor or very poor.

Those who are or had been involved in a group were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences. The attitudes of staff and other children were almost universally rated as good or very good, with only one or two ‘poor’ ratings on each criterion.

Providers of leisure and play activities also identified attitudes amongst staff as a barrier, pointing to ‘fear factor’. Staff were afraid of being overwhelmed by ‘sudden influx’ of disabled people and that they may not be able to cope, of not knowing what adaptations might be needed to enable people to be included and of the resource implications, and a fear of ‘saying the wrong thing’. They acknowledged that – in the past – children had not felt welcome and worried about being bullied.

## **Information**

Communication and information have been highlighted as barriers to inclusion by Play Wales.<sup>32</sup> The Children’s Commissioner for Wales<sup>33</sup> also found that disabled children as well as parents lacked information about play opportunities. A few people responding to our survey mentioned that they did not have information about activities or groups for disabled children and young people. Staff working with disabled children and young people commented that they found it easier to reach children who go to special educational needs schools - their parents may be more involved in networks which share information about clubs, they will have friends with similar requirements and the schools may organise visits and have their own extra curricular clubs.

‘Parents of kids who go to mainstream schools often won’t know what is going on and what is available to them. Parents of kids at SEN schools will have much better access to disability networks.’

‘It’s hard to find the way in - once you find one club it’s easier to find others.’



Some parents commented that they need more time than parents of non-disabled children and young people to make arrangements to attend an activity, and that low levels of attendance in the early days of a new activity should not be interpreted as lack of interest.

Physiotherapists are key providers of information about activities for disabled children and young people, usually recommending specific activities for the child and family and passing on details of local clubs and community facilities.

## **Transport**

These barriers, together, provide a powerful block against disabled children participating in a range of leisure and play activities. They are in addition to the barriers disabled children face from other factors not related to play and leisure provision, but which have a marked impact on it.

One of the most significant of these is transport. Contact a Family's study<sup>34</sup> found a quarter of families said that they were unable to take their disabled children on days out because of lack of transport, and 28% of responses said that supervised transport would help to overcome barriers. C4EO<sup>35</sup> found that many families have to travel out of their local area to find suitable facilities or activities for their child. Some play and leisure schemes have reported that parents find accessing a scheme difficult because of the cost of transport or difficulties using public transport with their child. It refers to one study that found that young people perceived public transport as 'unwelcoming' and limited in that it was not door-to-door.

Perhaps surprisingly, given how poor public transport is in large parts of Wales, transport did not emerge as an important factor in our survey of disabled children. Twelve people said that reaching a leisure centre by public transport was 'poor' or 'very poor' compared with 16 who said it was good or very good. For reaching a youth group, six said access by public transport



was poor or very poor, compared with eleven who said it was good. Just three people gave lack of transport as a reason for not doing an activity.

There were conflicting views amongst workers at disabled children and young people's groups. Some firmly believed that transport was the parents' or carers' responsibility, as play and leisure activities were separate and distinct from care or education (which did involve provision of transport), whilst others acknowledged that distances particularly in rural areas were a barrier.

Others recognised that disabled children and young people often travelled long distances to school and that yet more travel to a leisure activity was simply too much. For this reason at least one group held its activities at the weekend not after school. In recognition of the distances involved for children and young people, Disability Sport Wales is currently aiming to have a club for the most popular sports within an hour's drive of every part of Wales.

## **Cost**

Financial constraints are also a barrier. Barnardo's<sup>36</sup> has shown that playschemes that include disabled children are more expensive to provide than mainstream playschemes because of high staff costs, which are often passed on to parents, and that holidays for disabled children are often more expensive than mainstream equivalents. Contact a Family<sup>37</sup> found that 10% of families said they did not get involved in an activity because of cost and C4EO<sup>38</sup> also cite studies which say cost is a barrier for families.

As with transport, cost did not emerge as a significant issue amongst those we interviewed. Only six people said the cost of activities at a leisure centre was poor or very poor, compared with 30 who said it was good or very good. No one said the cost of a youth group was poor or very poor compared with 31 who said it was good or very good. A small number mentioned cost as a barrier to participating in certain activities.



## Conclusion

We have identified three broad types of barrier to disabled children and young people's participation in various play and leisure activities. The first is the sheer lack of provision of a range of activities within reasonable travelling distance. This remains a key obstacle to the full inclusion of disabled children and young people in play and leisure, and remains despite the many strategies and promises made by the Welsh Assembly Government and others. It is not clear why Ministers' commitments to equality, the rights of the child, access to play and the needs of disabled children are simply not met on the ground, but nevertheless there remains, for the majority of children, a paucity of provision.

The second set of barriers are practical issues, associated with physical accessibility (particularly toilets and changing rooms) and appropriate support for disabled children to participate. It is a matter of great concern that these barriers remain when disability discrimination legislation ought to have eliminated all but the most intractable of obstacles. Disability organisations have been highlighting the lack of accessible toilets for some time yet change seems slow to come. It surely ought to be feasible, with sufficient will and funding, for these barriers to be overcome.

The third set of barriers are much more difficult to address, as these concern attitudes and behaviour of staff and the public towards disabled children and young people. Although it is welcome that most people reported that staff attitudes were sometimes good and mostly OK, the attitudes of the public seem much more entrenched and difficult to change.

Disappointing and disheartening though the range and scale of the barriers may seem, there are, nevertheless, some cases of play and leisure activities which manage to involve, include and empower disabled children and young people. It is not an impossible task.



## 5. IT CAN BE DONE

Our research shows that there are many examples of play and leisure activities that were valued greatly by disabled children and young people. Many were mainstream services and activities, including leisure centres (notably Swansea which received 3 mentions) and Techniquest (also 3 mentions). Milford Haven Leisure Centre, local football, swimming, trampolining and gym clubs, local youth clubs and Brownies and Guides, and local cinemas were all also highlighted, along with walks in Cardiff Bay, Swansea and Swansea Bay / Gower. Other children and young people mentioned specialist groups, such as ‘Young Voices for Choices’, Boccia, Whizz Kidz, Brecon Sports Club, Dynamic and many more. We were also provided with information about a wide range of clubs and groups for disabled children and young people by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists, whose members are involved in a huge and diverse range of activities across Wales, ranging from Riding for the Disabled to Activ8 groups in Carmarthenshire.

Our leisure centre in Swansea has excellent facilities and is welcoming. I play 5 a side football there every Saturday morning

Brownies/Guides - midnight feasts are THE BEST

Go walking around the Gower. It's quiet, fresh air, and you can see the beaches. Go to the cycle path, it goes along Swansea bay and sometimes you can see Devon. Go to the Leisure Centre. Go camping



A key question is therefore if one organisation can meet the needs of many disabled children, why can more not do so? To try to establish why some groups can operate apparently successfully we visited eleven different groups (a mix of inclusive and disabled-only activities) and also interviewed key stakeholders. The groups are listed at Annex 2 and profiles of some of them are at Figures 7 to 9 (the inclusion of a group does not imply they were the best). Unfortunately the findings are not as conclusive as we would have liked, sometimes because the people we talked with were not in a position to offer views about the reasons for the success of the group or because the main issue was seen as funding. Nevertheless, there were some important indicators of the ingredients of success that, given that these are backed by other findings, could form the basis of developing disabled children's play and leisure activities in Wales in future.

**Figure 7     Dynamic, Wrexham**

Dynamic is a charity and a unique resource that provides out of school activities for children and young people with special needs. The children have a range of disabilities from physical, intellectual or sensory impairments and emotional problems, to life limiting illnesses. Different activities are provided for varying conditions, on different days of the week, and the centre also administers grants to help children to access mainstream play and leisure activities. For example the Friday Boys group is described as:

'a new group that started in September, they meet every other Friday. It is comprised of around 7 young boys between the ages of 10-12 that are more able but have challenging behaviour. This group plans all its own activities and works around integration of the young people. They enjoy trips out to bowling, the cinema or to local play areas. They also take part in more structured activities such as cookery and sports to promote independence and managing behaviours'.

It runs alongside Friday Girls, a group of disabled teenage girls, who meet to enjoy activities that improve their self-esteem.

Source: <http://www.dynamicwrexham.com/index.html>



## A Rights-based Approach

One of the most important ingredients in the groups we visited was an 'inclusive' ethos. We mean by this that the groups focused on the involvement and empowerment of disabled children and young people, whether they were in inclusive groups or in specialist groups.

These groups stressed that inclusion needed to run through everything an organisation did:

We should be inclusive in the way of our thinking and everything we do.

It was seen to be about much more than making premises physically accessible:

People think 'oh we'll put down a ramp' and they'll solve the accessibility problem, the inclusion problem, but they just haven't.

Inclusion was seen to take place through focusing on the child's or young person's ability rather than their impairments. It also means recognising their differences and strengths. Dynamic, a charity in Wrexham that provides out of school activities for disabled children and young people, explained that they said that:

We have to experience each child's individuality and work with them as individuals.

Another group, Circus Eruption, believed that 'everyone was weird in their own ways' and explained that they thought of 'labels' not 'disabilities'. They aimed to find an activity that everyone can do, no matter what their disability:

When we say that we are an integrated group, we mean that around a third of the young people in the project have been labelled as having a special need. But when we are at Circus Eruption we do all our activities together, work as a team and adapt all our games and skills to focus on abilities not disabilities.





Some groups encouraged disabled children to help others, e.g. making a drink, which was seen to boost their confidence and self esteem. In another group, disabled young people were being trained as coaches so they could pass on their (sports) skills to disabled children.

Disability Sport Wales were clear that the key was finding the groups and activities that were appropriate for the individuals they were working with. Then the focus needed to be on the skills of the coach to develop the potential of the group's members not on their disability, not least as one person pointed out because the disabled people might be the best in the group! A key factor, for both disabled and non-disabled people, in their view was the quality of the participant's experience, and that the emphasis needed to be on ensuring their experience was good.

### **Figure 8 Circus Eruption**

Circus Eruption is provides a safe space for young people aged 11–19 to learn circus skills. About a third of those participating have been labelled as having a special need.

Activities include juggling, poi, diablo, stilts, unicycling, tightrope and walking globe, as well as having fun. There are also performances, trips away and other special events.

Circus Eruption's ethos is integration and empowerment, with activities being undertaken as a team focusing on abilities not disabilities. Young people are consulted on their views and representatives elected to meet the project co-ordinator.

It is a charity run mainly by volunteers.

Several people we interviewed said that it was important to change the attitudes and behaviours of people who were not currently 'inclusive'. It was, they felt, important to explain that they CAN do this, that the obstacles are not that great.



There were mixed views about the value of disability awareness training. Some experienced workers were sceptical:

'I'm not a great fan of disability training as I believe the best training you can have is working alongside a skilled worker in a group and you can experience it yourself. Every disabled child is different. For example we have hundreds of children with a diagnosis of autism and they are all so different. They have the same diagnosis but are totally different so you cannot go to a course, sit there and have one day's training and be taught how it's going to be. Everyone is an individual so you have to get to know the young people to know how best to work with them.'

However others were very positive about disability equality training, explaining that in their experience those who had participated in one particular course showed a marked change in approach, and that her regret was that participation was not compulsory. The approach of combining 'theory' about disability equality with practical approaches to inclusion was one that they felt worked.

We were not aware that any local authority or WLGA running disability awareness training, and although the Federation of Disability Sport said they had 'an open door' to any youth organisations who were interested in disability sports training it did not seem to have been widely taken up.

It is hard to articulate precisely what this 'rights-based' ethos involves, but nevertheless there was a common theme in the practice of the most successful groups, which focused on empowering individuals, that seemed key.

### **Staff and Volunteers**

In all groups we visited the input of staff and / or volunteers emerged as a key issue, both in setting up the group and in continuing to run it.



Physiotherapists have been key in initiating a variety of provision in a number of areas. Although an activity may begin to provide therapy to children and young people, once a group is established it will be linked to mainstream clubs so that children can continue the activity locally. For example, a group of therapists in Neath Port Talbot developed a skiing project, which was then linked with Disability Sport Wales and it is now affiliated as a winter sport. Therapists continue to support the activity through the charity 'Ice Cool Kids' which fund-raises to enable children to go on a skiing holiday. It is hugely popular with parents and children alike as well as having therapeutic benefits such as helping coordination and balance, and team skills.

Similarly, officers from Disability Sport Wales have a critical role in helping to set up various disability groups then, once established, supporting them to run effectively, as well as helping mainstream groups to be fully inclusive.

It is important to note that not all groups had paid employees - some were run wholly by volunteers and others by a mix of the two. Some of these groups made use of volunteering programmes such as Millennium Volunteers, and did not automatically expect parents to volunteer. One worker recognised that some parents were exhausted by their caring role and that their child's participation in play gave both parents and child a break:

'Parents are often so worn down by the daily grind of caring that to be too involved is too much. It means taking on another layer of responsibility which is just too much for most.'

In another group, a worker commented that sometimes parents and support workers inhibited the inclusion of a disabled child or young person. They preferred the child to come to a group unaccompanied or that the parent or support worker 'stood back' to allow the child to interact with the rest of the group. Another group liked to involve other young people as volunteers so that when a disabled child went out with the club, e.g. shopping or to a pub, their carer looked more like a friend.



The critical factor was the skills of the staff and volunteers in engaging with disabled and children and young people, and having a positive attitude. In particular, several groups highlighted the skill of including disabled children and young people in a group setting, making them feel welcome and encouraging and supporting them to get involved in the way that was most appropriate for that child.

Several groups recognised, supported and rewarded the input of their volunteers. Some supported the training and the acquisition of various forms of qualification by volunteers, e.g. as coaches, youth workers, or other qualifications. Others held award ceremonies to acknowledge the role of volunteers.

It was also important that groups had adults present in an appropriate adult:child ratio. Although some groups said that 'it's not about more staff', we did visit one group where the number of staff seemed on occasions to be small in relation to the needs of the children attending – this was in part because the local authority had cut the paid staff's hours. Many groups were fearful about the impact of any spending cuts on their staff hours and numbers, especially as many staff were not full-timers but sessional workers who were felt to be especially vulnerable.

### **Including young people in decision making**

The third key theme that emerged from our visits to groups was the importance of involving disabled children and young people in the running of the group, making choices about what the group did. Involving children and young people, disabled or non-disabled, in decision making is a key element in good practice in any youth setting, and seemed to be a factor in the groups we visited.

For example, Rhyl Youth Action Group (RYAG) consults annually with around 60 - 70% of the young people who live in the area in their target age group.



This is done by training groups of local young people as community consultants then enabling them to undertake their own audit of the priorities for their peers. This process is called 'no frills consultation'. Recommendations are then built into the group's business plans and funding applications.

Other groups used other ways to involve disabled children and young people. Circus Eruption, for example, consulted young people on Tuesday evenings and 6 young people are elected by their peers to liaise with the project co-ordinator. One group involved disabled children, young people and their parents or carers as trainers of council staff and summer play scheme workers. This included parents and disabled young people devising disability awareness training including communication training. As one parent commented:

'Over the years people haven't listened to parents. It feels like this is finally changing.'

It was hard to identify precisely how the involvement of children and young people in a group's activities made for a successful group, but given that it has been recognised elsewhere as an important principle there is a powerful case for recognising it here too.

## **Funding**

The fourth key theme was funding. We did visit some groups who received little if any statutory funding, and ran mainly on volunteer input. They saw some virtue in their independence from statutory funding:

'I think in some ways funding cuts could be a good thing as it will force people to be more creative in the ways they approach things. Hopefully people will start to look at what really works and won't just throw money at projects.'



‘As we are a voluntary organisation we can change very quickly to respond to needs. Many of the statutory agencies have rigid structures and requirements which are hard to change.’

Even the groups which did not receive public funding were sometimes reliant on services provided by the public sector, e.g. the local leisure centre for a room.

However, the majority of groups depended on some statutory funding, either to access their local leisure centre, for the input of a Disability Sports Officer, to employ a co-ordinator or sessional workers, or for transport to the club. As one worker said:

I would love a far more secure funding structure. I would like to be able to offer my staff the same benefits to my staff that a local authority or health authority can.

### **Figure 9      Pembrokeshire Young Vipers Boccia**

Young Vipers Boccia, which has now merged with Crymych Panthers, play Boccia – now a paralympic sport - every Wednesday evening at Haverfordwest Leisure Centre. The game is played by young people and adults with behavioural difficulties, Cerebral Palsy, deaf/hard of hearing, electric wheelchair user, learning Disabilities, manual wheelchair user, pan disability, physical disability (ambulant), PMLD, and visually impairments. The team plays regular matches and one of the team members, aged 14, is a member of the Great Britain development squad and was runner-up to the Welsh champion last year.

The possibility of funding cuts in the future worried a number of groups. Some staff were worried that they would not be able to continue if funding was reduced:



‘Nobody quite wants to take ownership of providing disabled children’s activities. I’m worried that because everyone is fighting their own corner at the moment this is going to get even more difficult.’

The impact of any cut back in their activities on disabled children and families was felt to be huge:

‘We did an impact assessment looking at what would happen if our services were cut. We found that many of the children wouldn’t leave the house if it wasn’t for this place as it’s the only thing apart from school which they come to.’

‘Parents would be absolutely devastated if we closed. The short breaks for parents keeps a lot of children out of care and it can keep families together because family break up is huge for these families and just by having these short breaks it can take the lid of the pressure cooker in so many ways.’

Groups who were reliant on statutory funding understandably felt most threatened by any funding cuts and found uncertainty about resources unsettling:

‘We need a far more stable funding stream.’

There were exceptions however:

‘We’re used to not having any money so we’re not going to miss it.’

## **Conclusion**

Our visits to eleven different groups across Wales along with examples from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists show that it is possible to successfully support play and leisure activities for disabled children and young people, either in integrated or specialist groups. The groups covered activities from swimming to Boccia to youth clubs and circus skills.



Our discussions with the groups suggest that there are four factors which have helped them to succeed with involving disabled children and young people. By far the most important was having a strong ethos of involvement and empowerment of the individual that underpinned all the group's activities, which we have termed a rights-based approach. This ethos was evident in both integrated and specialist groups. It required not only an understanding of the social model of disability but putting it into practice. A rights-based approach had to be supported by sufficient and appropriately skilled staff and volunteers and by funding, and which was reflected in the involvement of children and young people, disabled or non-disabled, in planning and decision-making.

If these are the ingredients for success, the challenge is to transfer these key elements into the many groups and settings which have yet to involve disabled children and young people in their activities. As the Equality Act 2010 comes into force, the inclusion of disabled children and young people is not an optional extra – it is a legal requirement.





## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

This report has been a small scale piece of work which has, despite this, secured the views of more than 80 disabled children and young people (and their parents and carers), surveyed 25 groups and visited 11 groups that provide play and leisure activities for disabled children and young people, and secured the views of a number of key stakeholders.

The findings allow us to draw some important conclusions about the future direction of play and leisure provision for disabled children and young people, and to make some recommendations for action. These are the subject of the rest of this chapter.

Our first finding is that some disabled children enjoy a wide range of different activities, from ski-ing to swimming, from drama to dance, from cubs to circus skills. Sporting activities of all kinds, and especially swimming, seemed particularly popular but 'ordinary' activities such as going to the cinema are also an important part of disabled children and young people's leisure activities. However, this was not the experience of all disabled children and young people. A significant proportion only participate in a few activities, and a substantial minority in only one or no out-of-school play and leisure. For these children and young people, there is nothing to do and nowhere to go notwithstanding the laudable aims of the Welsh Assembly Government.

The barriers to involvement are simple: lack of availability, lack of support, negative attitudes and problems with physical access and communications. These four factors were critically important in shaping children and young people's participation in activities, and need to be addressed if disabled children and young people are to have a full range of opportunities. Not only are some of these barriers not impossible to overcome, they do not comply with disability discrimination legislation and the Equality Act 2010, as well as proposed Welsh legislation on children's rights.



Lack of transport, cost of activities and lack of information were much less important than the four factors mentioned above, and affect non-disabled children as well as disabled children (albeit potentially in different ways).

The range of activities disabled children do enjoy and the number of successful and popular activities show that it is not impossible to provide either genuinely inclusive or specialist activities. Even in our small scale survey we found examples of groups that involved disabled children and young people in circus skills, fishing, youth club, karaoke, swimming, Boccia and much, much more.

We identified four key ingredients of success. They are, first, a rights-based approach, and second, sufficient, well-trained staff or volunteers. This was vital whether the group was inclusive or specialist. Third, we identified the involvement of disabled children and young people in planning and decision making as essential, so that the group reflected and responded to their needs and supported their development. Fourth, we identified funding as an issue. Although some groups ran on very modest incomes indeed, all had some income whether from donations, grants or statutory funding. With severe pressure on public spending over the next four years, there are risks that funding and staff will be cut and time-consuming processes, such as involvement of children and young people, will be curtailed.

## **Action**

Our research suggests that there are a number of actions that government, local authorities and other bodies could take to improve the range, choice and quality of play and leisure provision for disabled children and young people.



### ***Support local development of play and leisure activities***

It is clear that there is still considerable scope to improve provision of play and leisure activities locally. One model for doing so is Disability Sport Wales, which has had considerable success in increasing participation in sport by disabled children and young people using lottery funding. Their approach of supporting a part-time development worker in each local authority, their model of inclusion and integration, and their focus on quality and standards could provide an exemplar for the development of disabled children's play and leisure.

With Big Lottery funding, Play Wales will shortly deliver a similar approach, with teams of play workers covering groups of local authorities to support play. Discussions should be held to consider how best to ensure play and leisure for disabled children is explicitly in the remit of the play development teams, make sure the teams are fully trained in disability equality and liaise closely with disability sports officers learning from their experience. It may be appropriate to seek additional funding for this work on disabled play to complement the Play Wales initiative.

There is potential to adapt the Disability Sport Wales model to encourage inclusion in arts and cultural activities, in which there was relatively little involvement by disabled children and young people (other than attending the cinema) yet which can offer opportunities for fun and creativity.

### ***Support inclusion by mainstream groups***

Several mainstream children's and young people's groups seemed to lack of awareness of inclusion of disabled children and young people, and many seemed to think that it was sufficient to be welcoming – it is not. Including disabled children and young people in mainstream activities requires a



change in approach, to one which specifically addresses the needs of a disabled person in its practice.

There is a role at both all-Wales and local level to engage with mainstream children and young people's groups (e.g. Brownies and Guides, St. John's, Boys and Girls Clubs) to:

- encourage effective inclusion of disabled children and young people e.g. through training and awareness raising, promotion of good practice, funding for minor improvements to premises etc.
- support providers to plan for and support participation by disabled children and young people.
- establish straightforward disability awareness training programmes that can be offered simply and cheaply.
- set out providers' legal obligations.

### ***Funding***

It is perhaps inevitable that a report calls for funding for disabled children and young people's activities. However, the funding required is not necessarily large – some groups showed how a little funding could go a long way – but it does need to be used effectively. Crucially, support for disabled children and young people's play and leisure activities should not be regarded as a soft option for cuts: provision is required by a number of statutes as well as policies, and also is very likely to be identified as a need of a disabled child or young person in an assessment. Any changes to other leisure and play services, e.g. closures of leisure centres, ought to take into account the specific impact on disabled children and young people.

Past Welsh Assembly Government funding is welcome but its impact has not been clear (on which see the section on monitoring and enforcement, below). A modest amount of funding, effectively used, ought to be able to make a real difference to disabled children and young people, as well as helping to fulfil health and social care, equality, children's rights and child poverty obligations.



### ***Stringent monitoring and enforcement***

Lastly, we suggest that the Welsh Assembly Government's many commitments to equality, inclusion and children's rights should be given 'teeth'. This could include establishing a minimum 'entitlement' for disabled children's access to play and leisure, perhaps building on the approach of Disability Sport Wales's aim to provide activities within an hour's drive of every disabled person. For example each Integrated Children's Centre could be expected to include at least one disabled children's group and one disabled youth group. The Welsh Assembly Government should also make the inclusion of play and leisure facilities for disabled children and young people an explicit requirement in local authority play strategies.

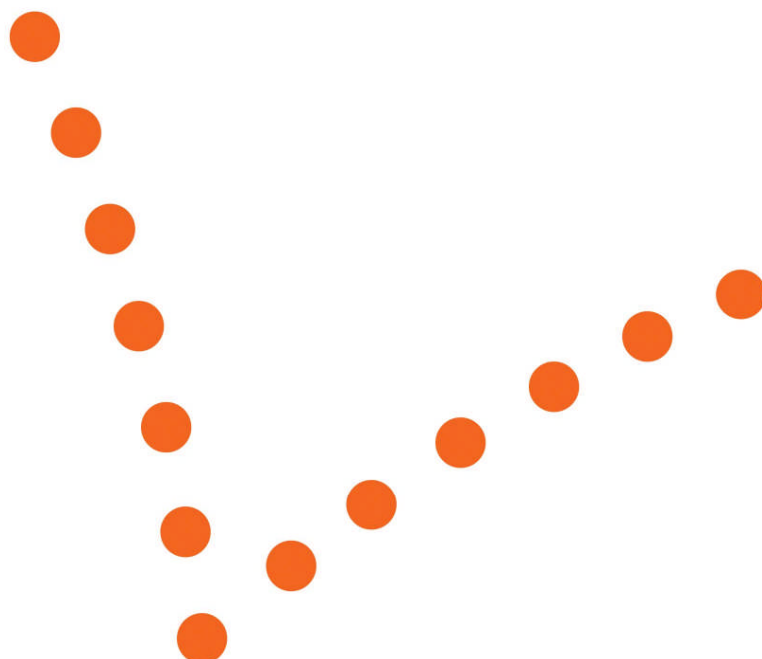
Expectations need to be backed with monitoring of provision. The Welsh Assembly Government should undertake a bi-annual audit of play / leisure facilities to be included in its Children's Wellbeing Monitor, and the Local Government Data Unit should include data on access and inclusion to local authority play and leisure activities. We suggest that the Children's Commissioner undertakes a repeat audit of local authorities' progress on including provision for disabled children and young people in their play strategies and the impact of these strategies.

Last, and by no means least, the Welsh Assembly Government should take steps to enforce the various legal requirements and policy commitments. Recipients of funding for play and leisure activities should be required to demonstrate that disabled children and young people have participated in the activities as a condition of funding, even if the funding is not expressly for disabled people. The Equality and Human Rights Commission should remind all providers of play and leisure activities, statutory and non-statutory, of their duties under equality legislation.



### ***Promote and celebrate good practice***

A key message is that disabled children and young people CAN be involved in play and leisure – it is not too difficult or necessarily too expensive. We suggest that an annual award scheme be established (perhaps similar to National Energy Action Cymru’s ‘Feel the Heat’ awards for fuel poverty) to celebrate and reward good practice in play and leisure for disabled children and young people. There could be different categories of activity and a private sector sponsor or charity could be identified to cover the (modest) cost.





## **Annex 1 Questionnaire for Disabled Children and Young People**

# **ARE YOU DISABLED?**

## **AGED 11 TO 17?**

### **Who are we?**

We are called 'The Bevan Foundation'. We are a registered charity and research centre. We have been asked by children's charities to ask disabled children and young people what they do in their spare time.

### **What is this form about?**

If you are between 11 years old and 17 could you help us by filling in this form? We are asking you about local youth groups that you may go to, what your local park is like and how you spend your free time. You can ask a parent, carer, friend or brother or sister to help you fill in the form if you want to.

### **What we will do with the things you tell us**

We are asking disabled young people who live all across Wales to fill in this form. We will look at all of the forms together and write a small book, called a report, about what disabled young people do in their spare time and the activities they enjoy. We want to make a report about lots of disabled young people's spare time activities to ask the Welsh government to provide more things for you to do.

### **About the report**

You will not be named in the report so no one will know what you have said to us. We will not share the answers from any individual young person with anyone that does not work with the Bevan Foundation. This is why we do not ask for your name or address.

### **If you want to know more or need to contact us**

You can ask us questions about our work at the Bevan Foundation or about this form. You can ring Lizzie Thomas on 01495 356702. You can email Lizzie at: [lizzie.thomas@bevanfoundation.org](mailto:lizzie.thomas@bevanfoundation.org) Or you can write to us at:

The Bevan Foundation,  
FREEPOST RSHC-XZZU-UTUU  
Innovation Centre  
Festival Drive  
Ebbw Vale NP23 8XA

You can fill in the form and send it to us or fill it in on the internet by going to [www.surveymonkey.com/s/betterplayandleisure](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/betterplayandleisure)



## PLAY AND LEISURE

1. Here is a list of activities. Can you let us know if you do any of these regularly (twice a month), occasionally (three times a year) or never. If you do an activity that we have not listed, please could you write it in the last box called 'other' at the end of the list.

*please tick all activities that apply to you*

	<b>Regularly</b> (twice a month or more)	<b>Occasionally</b> (two or three times a year)	<b>Rarely or never</b>
Visit to local play ground			
Visit to local park			
Cinema			
Theatre			
Drama, arts or music activities			
After-school club			
Swimming			
Dance / gymnastics			
Other sports e.g. football, riding			
Girl Guides / Scouts			
Boys or Girls Club			
Other Youth Club / Group			
Disabled children's group			
Other not listed above ( <i>Please write in</i> )			

- 2a. Which play or leisure activity do you MOST enjoy taking part in?

Activity (*please write in*): \_\_\_\_\_

- 2b. Can you let us know what you enjoy about doing this activity? (*please give as many reasons as you want*)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_





**3a. Is there a play or leisure activity that you would like to do but don't do at the moment?**

*(write in)* \_\_\_\_\_

**3b. What stops you being able to do this activity? Please look through the list below. Tick the boxes next to all of the sentences that explain why you can't do the activity.**

*Please tick all that apply*

It is too difficult to get to	
There is not enough support or the right kind of support for me	
I feel uncomfortable	
I am worried about trying something new	
The building or equipment might not be suitable for me	
It costs too much	
It doesn't welcome disabled people	
Disabled people are not allowed to go	
There is nothing like this in my area	
I am worried I might be bullied or picked on	
Lack of Communication Support	

If there are other things that stop you doing an activity, please can you explain what they are on these empty lines:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**4a. Have you ever visited a leisure centre in your area? Please tick one**

Yes in the three months	
Yes in the last year	
Yes sometime in the past	
Never	



**4b. We would like to know how easy it is to use your leisure centre. When you visit the leisure centre, how did you find:**

*Please one answer for each question*

	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>OK</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Very Poor</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Getting there- by public transport						
Parking						
Getting into and moving about the building						
Using changing rooms						
Using toilets						
Staff attitudes						
Public attitudes						
Information about what's on						
The cost						

**4c. If you would like to tell us more about going to your local leisure centre, please write here:**

**5a. Have you ever been to a youth group. This is a place where you go in spare time to meet with the young people who are the same age as you. This maybe things like a youth group in a community centre, Guides or Scouts, or Girls and Boys Club?**

*Please tick one*

Yes I am involved in a youth group at the moment	
The youth group I go to is:	
The youth group I go to is:	
Yes I was involved in a youth group but am not involved at the moment	
The youth group I went to was:	
No, I have never been involved in a youth group	



**5b. If you go to a youth group, or have been to a youth group, can you tick whether it was only for disabled young people, all young people, or disabled young people and their brothers and sisters.**

*Please tick one*

Disabled children only	
Disabled and non-disabled children	
Disabled young people and their siblings (brothers and sisters)	

**5c. we would like to know how easy it is, or was, for you to use the youth group. By ticking one box for each category, can you let us know how you found:**

*Please one answer for each question*

	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>OK</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Very Poor</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Parking						
Getting there by public transport						
Getting into and moving about the building						
Using toilets						
Attitudes of group leaders / helpers						
Attitudes of children						
Range of activities						
The cost						

**5d. We are really interested in the youth groups that disabled young people go to. We are also interested in knowing what stops young people from joining a youth group. If you would like to tell us more about being involved in a youth group, either now or in the past, please write here:**



**6a. What play, leisure activities or places to visit would you recommend to another disabled child?**

**6b. What are the good things about these activities or places?**

## ABOUT YOU

**7. Are you**

*Please tick one*

A boy	<input type="checkbox"/>
-------	--------------------------

A girl	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------	--------------------------

**8. How old are you (11-17)? \_\_\_\_\_**

**9. How are you disabled?**

*Please tick all those that apply to you*

Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deaf/ hard of hearing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blind/ partially sighted	<input type="checkbox"/>

Multi	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please write in)	<input type="checkbox"/>

**10. Which local authority area do you live in?**

*Please tick one*

Anglesey	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blaenau Gwent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bridgend	<input type="checkbox"/>
Caerphilly	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cardiff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carmarthenshire	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceredigion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conwy	<input type="checkbox"/>

Denbighshire	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flintshire	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gwynedd	<input type="checkbox"/>
Merthyr Tydfil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monmouthshire	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neath Port Talbot	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newport	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pembrokeshire	<input type="checkbox"/>

Powys	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rhondda Cynon Taf	<input type="checkbox"/>
Swansea	<input type="checkbox"/>
Torfaen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vale of Glamorgan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wrexham	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>

**11. Who has filled in this form?**

A disabled young person	
The parent or carer of a disabled young person	
A friend, brother or sister of a disabled young person	

**If you would like to know more about the findings of this survey please let us have your contact details:**

Name:

Telephone:

Email Address:

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP**

**PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED FORM TO:**

**The Bevan Foundation  
FREEPOST RSHC-XZZU-UTUU  
Innovation Centre  
Festival Drive  
Ebbw Vale  
NP23 8XA**

**By**

**5<sup>th</sup> JULY**



## ***Annex 2 Play Activities Visited***

Trelai Youth Centre, Ely, Cardiff

Penarth Phab Club

Circus Eruption Swansea

Dynamic Wrexham

Rhyl Youth Action Group (RYAG)

Colwyn Whales

Teglan Fisheries in Ciliau Aeron

Crymych Panthers / Young Vipers Boccia Club, Haverfordwest

Penarth Gym club

Powys Integrated Sports Club, Brecon

Newport Deaf Youth Club

Monmouthshire Inclusive Play Advisory Group



## notes

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- <sup>10</sup> Turner, C. (2003) Are you listening? What disabled children and young people in Wales think about the services they use. Cardiff: Barnardo's. Available at: [http://www.barnardos.org.uk/cymru\\_are\\_you\\_listening\\_eng.pdf](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/cymru_are_you_listening_eng.pdf)
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- <sup>12</sup> Play Wales (2007) Inclusive Play. Available at: <http://www.playwales.org.uk/downloaddoc.asp?id=233&page=67&skin=0>
- <sup>13</sup> Centre for Excellence in Outcomes for Children's and Young People's Services (2009) Improving the wellbeing of disabled children and young people through improving access to positive and inclusive activities, Disability Research Review 2. Available at: [http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/disabledchildren/positiveactivities/files/c4eo\\_improving\\_the\\_wellbeing\\_improving\\_access\\_kr\\_5.pdf](http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/disabledchildren/positiveactivities/files/c4eo_improving_the_wellbeing_improving_access_kr_5.pdf)
- <sup>14</sup> Contact a Family (2009) What makes my family stronger. Available at: <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/pdfs/wmmfs.pdf>
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- <sup>17</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales (2008) op. cit.
- <sup>18</sup> Murray, P. (2002) Hello! Are you listening? Disabled teenagers' experience of access to inclusive leisure. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation
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