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Playwork practitioners Views on Play Provision in a South Wales Local Authority

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Abstract

Each Local Authority in Wales has a statutory duty to undertake a Play Sufficiency Assessment every three years adhering to the Children and Family (Wales) Measures 2010. The first Play Sufficiency Assessment was undertaken in 2013 and the second is due to be completed by March 2016. The Play Sufficiency Assessment covers nine areas, or 'matters' which includes individual and organisations within the statutory sector and outside in the third sector who have both a direct or indirect contribution to support children and young people's play. This research contributed to one Local Authority Play Sufficiency Assessment by conducting semi-structured interviews with their Play Team. The interviews were analysed using a five phase thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and identified three main themes: diverse and inclusive practice, funding concerns and make a difference. These themes are discussed in relation to the current state of playwork in Wales.

Key Words: play; Play Sufficiency; playwork practitioner; playwork; Wales

Introduction

In 2002, Wales became the first country to publish a national play policy (WAG, 2002). This was followed up with a play policy implementation plan (or play strategy) (WAG, 2006) with six themes: encouraging more play provision; the role of schools; play in the community; playwork profession; managing risk and parental concern and play across the Assembly. The publication of national play policies and strategies also occurred in England (2009), Scotland (2013) and Northern Ireland (2010), although the play strategy in England was abandoned under the coalition government's austerity measures (Voce, 2015). The remaining play policies and strategies in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland are still in place and all share common aspects, including concepts of play being freely-chosen, intrinsically motivated for no external goal (Hughes, 1996), how play supports children's holistic development and the need for adults to support children's play across different professional domains and contexts (WAG, 2002, 2006; NI, 2010; SG, 2013).

In 2010 in a response to address child poverty, the Welsh Government published the Children and Families (Wales) Measures 2010 (WG, 2010). The Children and Families (Wales) 2010 measure included the need for all twenty two local authorities in Wales to assess the play opportunities afforded to children and young people and their participation (Barclay & Tawil, 2015). For the first time within the UK this policy made the provision of play a statutory duty. Every three years each Local Authority within Wales has to undertake a Play Sufficiency Assessment as part of the Play Sufficiency Duty where:

“(1) A Local Authority must assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area for children in accordance with regulations.....

(2) A Local Authority must secure sufficient play opportunities in its area for children, so far as reasonably practicable”

(WG, 2010: p8)

The results have to be published and the information kept up to date. The Play Sufficiency Assessment has to include the demographic profiles of the area, an assessment of all types of play space and play provision and factors that promote play. These factors can be from individuals and organisations who work both directly with children (teachers and schools, play practitioners and open access play projects, childcare workers and day care provision) as well indirectly, such as those who work in planning; traffic, transport, information and publicity (Play Wales, 2015). The first Play Sufficiency Assessment was undertaken between November 2012 and March 2013 where Local Authorities had to consider 111 criteria across nine areas, or ‘matters’ that have an impact on children’s play with the process being supported by statutory guidance (Lester and Russell, 2013; 2014: Barclay & Tawil, 2015; WG, 2012).

The first Play Sufficiency Assessment from twenty of the Welsh Local Authorities was analysed by Lester and Russell (2014) using Amin’s (2006) four registers of repair and maintenance, relatedness, rights and re-enactment as a framework. Each of the four registers were analysed collectively as a whole. From their analysis, Lester and Russell (2014) identified four key themes: partnership working; levels of consultation; collective wisdom and coherent approach. When focusing on the

aspects that were specific to the views of playwork practitioners, Lester and Russell's (2014) study identified four important aspects; partnership working; workforce (playwork) development; community engagement and funding issues.

This study explores the views of a Play Team working for a Local Authority in South Wales as the Local Authority prepares to gather evidence for submission of their second Play Sufficiency Audit in March 2016. The Play Team consists of a Play Manager, two senior playwork practitioners and three playwork practitioners who facilitate a range of play provision from open access play to family support. The first Play Sufficiency Assessment undertaken by this Local Authority involved mapping and logging play projects and play spaces, as well as looking at how school, transport, the environment, planning and a range of other services impact on children's opportunities to play. It also involved consultation with those who help plan and deliver play locally, with the general public through a media campaign and with children and young people themselves. The main themes that emerged from their first Play Sufficiency Assessment were: better, and more accessible, information about what is available; recognising the importance of safe space to play, helping people understand the importance of play, and more access to schools and their grounds for play. The research undertaken for this paper will contribute to the second Play Sufficiency Assessment focusing on the views and perceptions of the practitioners that make up the Local Authority Play Team.

Methodology

The research design adopted a qualitative approach as this enables the researcher to 'look for regularities' (Bernard and Ryan, 2010: p3) from the views of playwork

practitioners on aspects of play within their Local Authority. The data collection involved semi-structured interviews as this allows each interviewee to be asked the same questions but allows flexibility to 'modify the order and details of how topics are covered' (Bernard & Ryan, 2010: p29), and to give the scope to ask follow up probing questions. Prior to any data being collected, ethical approval for the study was granted through Swansea University College of Human and Health Science Ethics Committee. All participants in the research were sent an information letter outlining the research purpose and to gain informed consent. The information letter set out the rationale for the research relating to the Play Sufficiency Assessment and that participation was voluntary and all responses would be anonymous. Although the Play Sufficiency Assessment is a statutory requirement, it was emphasised both in the information letter and at the start of each interview that participation in this study was not compulsory. All six participants agreed to participate in the research study and for the interviews to be recorded. The letter also explained the right to withdraw at any point prior to or during the interview.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in the first two weeks of October 2015 at the council offices of the Local Authority. The Play Team's work can be defined in three aspects: practitioner, management and strategic. One of the participants covered all three aspects, two had management and practitioner roles and three were practitioners only. The interviews involved both retrospective and perspective approaches to data collection as it enabled both reflection and prediction on their perceptions of play and playwork in their Local Authority area. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. The questions were devised to reflect the diverse work of the Play Team, the different roles of the interviewees and also a

consideration for the next Play Sufficiency Assessment that would be undertaken in three years' time. Although each interviewee was asked the same question, the semi-structured interview approach enabled flexibility to probe and expand on any of the responses. Prior to the interviews, the interview questions were developed with the Play Manager (who was also interviewed) to ensure they reflected the requirement of the Play Sufficiency Assessment.

The questions were:

- Please describe your role
- What was your main motivation for entering playwork?
- What role do you feel that playwork practitioners have in supporting play?
- Do you feel that your work is having the impact you believe it should? If so, how can you tell?
- Do you feel the role of the playwork practitioner is becoming more or less essential, and why?
- Do you feel the role of the playwork practitioner is recognised and valued?
- Are you sufficiently supported and have your training needs met?
- Do you feel that children in this local authority have sufficient opportunities to play?
- What do you think more can be done by playwork practitioners and others to improve play opportunities locally?
- As this assessment is completed every three years – what are your hopes and fears for how play will look in 2019?

Data Analysis

The data analysis used a thematic analysis process as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) to ‘look for regularities’ (Bernard & Ryan, 2010: p3) and exemplars (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) within the interview responses, that is the initial codes and themes that emerge from all the interviews. This thematic analysis process consists of five phases:

- Phase 1: familiarising yourself with your data
- Phase 2: generating initial codes
- Phase 3: searching for themes
- Phase 4: reviewing themes
- Phase 5: defining and naming themes

Braun & Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis approach involves the immersion of the data in phase 1 which they define as “repeated reading of the data, and reading the data in an active way – searching for meanings, patterns and so on” (p17). Phase 2 “involves the production of initial codes from the data” (p18), phase 3 is “sorting the different codes into potential themes” (p19), phase 4 involves “the refinement of those themes” (p20) leading into phase 5 which defines and refines the themes to ‘essence’ of what each theme is about” (p21).

All the interviews were recorded using an Endirol Mp3 recorder and were later transcribed into the NVivo computer package for thematic analysis. When

undertaking research it is important to minimise researcher bias which was an important factor to consider. One member of the research team had experience and knowledge of working in playwork, and the other member of the team had no experience or knowledge. To reduce potential bias, the member of the research team who had no prior knowledge or experience of playwork completed each interview and transcribed each recording. Once each interview had been completed and transcribed, both members of the research team independently read through each transcript and using Braun & Clarke's (2006) five phase approach, began to generate initial codes. There was no limit to the number of initial codes to be generated.

To check trustworthiness of the thematic analysis process, after the first interview transcript had been read by each researcher, a discussion took place to compare the initial codes being generated to compare similarities and differences for the initial codes being generated. From this comparison of initial coding there was a positive agreement between the two independent coding exercises of over 90% agreement of the initial codes being generated which suggests a high inter-rater reliability. This process of independently coding and comparing codes continued for each of the six interviews which maintained a 90% or more agreement in the initial codes being generated.

Once all the interviews had been transcribed and independently analysed for initial codes, phase 3, 4 and 5 were undertaken. This involved through discussion between the two members of the research team, the collapsing of data (Lichtman, 2010) of the initial codes into themes, sub-themes and key points was undertaken using the

NVivo computer software. The themes, sub-themes and key points were put into a thematic table and the number and content of themes were discussed and agreed between the research team. This table was then used to re-read each interview to ensure accuracy and that nothing had been missed or omitted. To further enhance the trustworthiness of the themes, a meeting with the Play Team was arranged for them to provide feedback on the accuracy of the themes. The feedback from the Play Team was that the themes, sub-themes and key points did reflect their comments and thoughts from the interviews undertaken.

Results

Lester and Russell's (2013) analysis using Amin's (2006) four registers made the point that each register could not be considered in isolation from the others.

Although not using Amin's registers, the same stance was adopted during the analysis of the responses from the interviews for this study. From the primary coding, over fifty different codes were developed from the six interviews. Through the process of data collapsing three main codes were eventually identified which were: diverse and inclusive practice; funding concerns and make a difference. Each of these main themes was subdivided into sub themes and specific points. These are shown in the table below:

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Key Points
Diverse and Inclusive Practice	Advocate for Play	Professional Role Model Accidental and Rewarding
	Facilitator	Strategic Planning, delivery and analysis
	Safety	Danger Risk
Funding Concerns	Stretched	Isolated Lack of Staff and high turnover of staff

	Uncertainty	Limited Playwork Specific Training and Continual Professional Development
	Meeting Targets	Ignored and Misunderstood Short Term Plans
		Limited Impact Considered Luxury provision
Make A Difference	Partnership Working	Deliver Training to other professions Provide Advice and pass on Knowledge Providing Services
	Community Cohesion and Ownership	Children's Holistic Development Families Support Parenting
	The Future	More Professional Recognition Long Term Objectives Secure Funding and sustainability

Table 1: Themes, sub-themes and key points from six semi-structured interviews of the Play Team.

The next section explains the themes, sub-themes and key points in turn. However the order of themes does not indicate that one theme is more important than the other.

Theme 1: Diverse and Inclusive Practice

Throughout each interview, all the participants made reference to how flexible a playwork practitioner has to be in relation to their role as play advocates and facilitators for children to be able to play. What was evident was how most became playwork practitioners by 'accident' but also made clear reference to the rewarding nature of playwork:

“So it’s a brilliant role. It’s no day is the same” (Interview 1)

Another common aspect is the recognition from team members at both practitioner and strategic levels of the need for planning, delivery and analysis, and how everybody has a role in this which involves analysis and reflection:

“Also that’s also collecting of the data for the court to lead reports for the funders – Welsh Government, Families First funding” (Interview 2)

The aspect of safety reflects both the importance of facilitating a safe environment to play, but also the need for children to take risk in their play:

“providing for provision for children that is safe but also challenge them and give them opportunities for appropriate risk” (Interview 5)

This theme captured the diversity of the work of the Play Team, but with a clear focus on being advocates for play and ensuring play was not dictated by the play practitioners.

Theme 2: Funding Concerns

Funding was a common theme that emerged throughout each interview. Funding concerns meant that the team were over-stretched due to the large geographical area that needed to be covered and also to having a small team with a high turnover of staff.

“It’s a massive difficulty putting together a timetable, putting a staff timetable together, because you can’t, there’s no consistency” (Interview 3)

This aspect of the work meant that at times staff felt isolated. A lack of playwork specific training and continuous professional development also contributed to this

feeling of isolation. The issue of funding has led to uncertainty and a feeling that playwork is ignored and misunderstood by many people. A sense of being undervalued was also created by the short-term nature of the planning due to the lack of secure funding:

“So it’s a kind of, you know, it’s a very skilled job and to the untrained eye it can be kind of undermined and not valued” (Interview 6)

The need to meet targets was also a common concern:

“And my role stayed ... but had a change to it so it was more focussed on families and hitting the targets of that funding”

But a feeling of having a limited impact as many areas were targeted and a perception that the play service was a ‘luxury’ provision rather than a necessary one:

“I think people see it as a great little luxury perhaps, their children come for free, it doesn’t cost anything” (interview 1)

The theme of funding was a real concern for the Play Team. Although there is a statutory duty to ensure enough play opportunities ‘as far as reasonably practicable’ (WG, 2010: p), this does not imply that any Local Authority has to have a team of dedicated play practitioners to deliver a play service, which is a concern in relation to job availability and job security.

Theme 3: Make a Difference

As with theme 1, theme 3 was very positive in that all the interviewees felt their work did make a difference, even if it was not universally recognised. Three subthemes were around partnership working, community cohesion and hopes for the future. Partnership working involved sharing knowledge and skills both directly and indirectly to other professions and organisations:

“The biggest thing for me is about the education of people because I think that would hit a lot of the values, you know, would hit a lot of things it was an essential element” (Interview 6)

The importance of playwork within the community was mentioned throughout all the interviews. As well as providing services where children utilise the play provision, other aspects such as supporting families and parenting was identified.

“So we're always leading from it, leading by example: we are always talking about why we did things and showing to parents that there's a different way. Because the sad thing is that we are a product of our parents and some parents don't know how to play.

The provision itself and the other aspects of family and parental support were regarded as supporting children's holistic development:

“Sometimes parents need support in how to play with their children. So that is always quite important and working with other organisations as well. Making sure that they know how important play is” (Interview 5)

Although funding (see theme 2) was seen as both a short term and long term concern. However, there were still some hopes of the future to maintain playwork practitioners, to raise the profile of playwork as a profession and to be included in more longer term objectives, rather than short term:

“I want more people to understand that play cuts across what they do”

(Interview 4)

“I’m reasonably hopeful that we have shown that play can contribute a lot of things. I’m reasonably hopeful that if we can get into schools, I think that will make a real difference” (Interview 4)

“That’s what I hope for, that people take, you know, the importance that we’re saying, you know the importance of play, taking the message and doing stuff about it” (Interview 3)

This theme showed the passion and commitment the Play Team had for their work. Despite the worries and frustration of short term planning and funding, the difference that play can make for children, families and the communities was clearly expressed.

The Wider Context in Wales to the United Kingdom

The three main themes and the nine sub-themes reflect the analysis and results from Lester and Russell (2014) that were specific to playwork practitioners of partnership working; workforce development; community engagement and funding. These themes and sub-themes also reflect the three areas for development within

Wrexham's first Play Sufficiency Assessment for a need of policy development, continual play development and professional development for playwork (Barclay & Tawil, 2015).

As with the findings from the first Play Sufficiency Assessment (Lester and Russell, 2014), the views of the Play Team clearly have a far reaching link with the United Kingdom. King's (2015) thematic analysis on the Possible Futures for Playwork Project (2008) identified five themes that were considered to be important for playwork linked to contextual factors of the time: uniqueness of playwork and the Playwork Principles (PPSG, 2005); professionalism of playwork and Every Child Matters (2003); community based aspect of playwork and BIG Lottery Funding (2006), relationship to the 'wider world' and Workforce Development (CWDC, 2008) and threats to playwork. The themes identified from 2008 are echoed within the interviews carried out for this study with regards to playwork perception of play, community involvement, partnership working and professionalism. However the contextual factors that influenced playwork in 2008 are different compared to the current situation for playwork in Wales and only one contextual factor, the Playwork Principles, still remains the same from the 2008 study. These changes in these contextual factors are now discussed in more depth.

Funding

In 2008 the BIG Lottery was providing funding streams to support play across both England and Wales. In Wales there was £13 million pounds to support play infrastructure and play projects across the twenty two Local Authorities (Play Wales, 2008). Prior to this funding stream, the Welsh Government had provided a total of

£1 million for play between each Local Authority in 2000 through the Play Grant (Mannello and Statham, 2000), and then through the funding stream 'Cymorth' (Welsh for support) (WAG, 2003). In 2006, prior to the Welsh Government's national election, £1 million was released for Local Authorities to support play for disabled children (Play Wales, 2008). Between 2000 and 2008 was a golden age for funding to support play. Now in 2015, the BIG lottery money has been spent and no more play specific money is available. Cymorth was replaced by Families First (WG, 2011) funding which has no specific remit for play, and with the pressure for Local Authorities to save money, funding for play in Wales is now lacking. The lack of funding was reflected very much in the Play Team's comments as both a worry and a frustration.

The Welsh Government play policy, along with the Children and Families (Wales) Measures 2010 continue to support children's play, and thus playwork on a strategic level, however it is the funding at both strategic and practitioner level that is still a major cause for concern. This issue of funding was brought to a head in Wales when Play Wales, the national organisation in Wales supporting play, were unsuccessful to secure funding from the Welsh Government Children and Families Delivery Grant (CFDG) (Play Wales, 2014). Although the Welsh Government has provided funding for Play Wales to support Local authorities to undertake the latest Play Sufficiency Assessment, this is only short term and the funding issue in Wales is a real worry.

Workforce Development

From the interviews, it was clear the opportunities for workforce development and training were very limited and were confined to statutory requirements such as safeguarding. The lack of training opportunities experienced by the Play Team reflected the Play Wales Workforce Survey undertaken in 2008 (Melyn Consulting, 2008). The survey found that Level 3 qualifications in a variety of areas such as playwork or children's learning and development was the common qualification (which was the minimum requirement for somebody who was in charge of a play or childcare related setting) (WAG, 2016) and that assessing training was difficult for playworkers. Within the Play Policy Implementation Plan (WAG, 2006) under theme 5, 'A Playwork Profession', an action point states:

“Action: The Assembly Government will continue to work with Play Wales and other partners to seek to ensure that there are appropriate training opportunities at all levels for play workers” (p 13).

The Welsh Government has provided support for appropriate training opportunities, for example providing core funding for Play Wales which includes developing training. Play Wales has developed its Level 2 and Level 3 P3 courses (Play Wales, 2016), which, along with some Further Education colleges offering NVQ at level 2 and 3, means that there are opportunities for playworkers to gain a playwork qualification. However the aspect of training being available “at all levels for play practitioners” (WAG, 2006: p13) was an issue in 2008, and also a concern voiced by the Playwork Team. Although there is statutory requirement to undertake a Play Sufficiency Assessment, there is no statutory requirement for specific playwork qualifications, unlike in Youth Work. Playwork-specific education and training is

therefore undertaken, and often funded, by the individual rather than the organisation.

The varied role, rewarding nature of the work and commitment of the Play Team were key points identified separately by the Play Wales Workforce Survey in 2008 (Meyln Consultancy, 2008). Despite the worrying and frustrating lack of assurance of funding, the Play Team was still very positive about the importance and the uniqueness of their profession. The lack of funding could be an additional threat to playwork (King, 2015)

Every Child Matters

Whilst in England the playwork profession in 2008 had to consider the five outcomes of Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003), Wales had a their own policy *Children and Young People: Rights to Action* (WAG, 2004), where under core aim 4, Local Authorities need to ensure that children and young people have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities. In 2010, the change in the United Kingdom government to a coalition government resulted in many of the previous Labour government's policies being abandoned. Every Child Matters was one of these policies and the English Play Strategy (2009) was another casualty of this change of policy (Voce, 2015). However, in Wales, the *Rights to Action* policy document, along with the Play Policy for Wales (2002) and Play Policy Implementation Plan (2006) remain. Although none of these policies offer funding, they and the Play Sufficiency Assessment still provide a rationale and purpose for Local Authorities to meet their statutory duty for play sufficiency. The Play Team was aware of the Play Policy for Wales (2002) and the statutory requirement within the Play Sufficiency Duty. This

shows the importance of having statutory legislation and government policies and strategies on play to raise the awareness of play (and in turn playwork) and provide the rationale and justification for play and playwork.

Playwork Principles

The Playwork Principles (PPSG, 2005), now 10 years old, currently still underpin playwork education, training and professional practice. Unlike the ending of specific BIG Lottery money to support children's play and the demise in England of Every Child Matters (DCMS/DFMS, 2008), the Playwork Principles are very much in existence and the eight Playwork Principles are reflected in the Play Team's interviews in supporting the play process; supporting children's freely-chosen play rather than planning play to meet a designated outcome (Howard & King, 2015), facilitating play provision, reflective practice, balancing risk versus its benefits and being an advocate for children's play. It is clear the team's work takes in the beliefs and values of playwork which underpin the Playwork Principles (PPSG, 2005).

Although the only shared contextual factor relevant to playwork practitioners in 2008 and 2016 was the Playwork Principles, there is a clear cross-over between the themes and sub-themes from the Possible Futures for Playwork Project (King, 2015) and the themes, sub-themes and key points from this study.

Discussion

The Play Sufficiency Assessment is a statutory duty that all Local Authorities in Wales have to undertake every three years and comprises of nine sections, or Matters. The first was undertaken in 2013, and the Local Authority where this

current study was undertaken identified four main areas of importance: better and more accessible information about what is available and where; recognising the importance of safe space to play; helping people understand the importance of play, and giving ideas on play for families and more access to schools and their grounds for play (source from Local Authority website). Two aspects that have a direct relationship to the Play Team within the Play Sufficiency Assessment are Matters D, (supervised provision) and G (securing and developing the playwork workforce).

From the 2013 Play Sufficiency Report, the general comment for Matter D stated “The LA (Local Authority) aims to provide a rich play environment by offering children the opportunity to experience many different play types and conducts annual Quality Assurance reviews” (p58) and for Matter G, “The LA play development workers conduct training with many partner organisations which enable play training to be disseminated to providers, parents, and volunteers. The LA offers opportunities and funding to enable the playwork workforce to gain further qualifications” (p78). From the interviews undertaken with the Play Team, it is clear that rich play environments and training with partner organisations has continued and is reflected in the themes of Diverse and Inclusive Practice and Make a Difference. The diverse nature of play and playwork reflected the different strands of the work of the play team: community-based playwork on the ‘doorstep’; family support and partnership working. The community-based aspect of playwork, from its roots in the adventure playground movement (Hurtwood, 1968) through to the modern day playranger (Wavehill, 2013) was a strong feature of the work, again reflecting the views of playwork in 2008 (King, 2015). The Playwork Team genuinely felt their work makes a difference not only to children and young people, but also to the families and

community as well as offering support other professionals. This aspect of 'making a difference' provided satisfaction in the work which enabled the practitioners to think of the future, despite the funding concerns.

There was a clear awareness at all levels of planning, delivery and analysis at both practice and at a strategic level. This reflected the clear policy drive of the Welsh Government since 2002 to raise the importance of play and provide a statutory basis within Local Authorities. What was clearly evident was the knowledge and awareness of the Play Policy for Wales (WAG, 2002) by everyone, as well as an understanding of the Play Sufficiency Assessment within the Children and Families (Wales) Measures 2010. However, there were frustration and concerns around funding for play and playwork. In the Play Policy Implementation Plan (2006), theme 5 is focused on a Playwork Profession and the need to develop a workforce, an area that is addressed as Matter G in the Play Sufficiency Assessment framework.

Nearly ten years since the Play Policy Implementation Plan there is still the issues of the work of playwork still being misunderstood and ignored, and the need for playwork-specific development and training, which were also identified as important aspects to develop the future for playwork in 2008 (King, 2015). Although there was a major drive to develop a national playwork education and training centre by Play Wales in 2008, the lack of funding to support this initiative eventually stopped any progress (Play Wales, 2011).

The 2013 Play Sufficiency Assessment also identified a number of shortfalls (Local Authority 2013 Play Sufficiency Assessment). These were: the lack of identity of the playworker, the part-time nature of the employment and the reduction in budget.

This lack of identity was highlighted in 2008 (King, 2015) as well as within this current study. The diversity of the Play Team's work was an important factor. However concerns about the small size of the team, the short-term targeted work and an uncertain future emerged throughout each interview. Although there was a clear understanding of why funding was restricted, the lack of recognition of the value of their work to children, families, communities and other professions and the frustration of playwork being ignored or misunderstood made the lack of funding even more frustrating. The team spoke highly of the importance of teamwork and this needs to be maintained and developed from practice level, through management to strategic to support more long term planning rather than simply working to targeted short term plans.

Wales has been fortunate in the past that the Welsh Government has provided funding to support the work of Play Wales and that the BIG Lottery's (2008) funding of £13 million pounds enabled children's play to be supported, particularly during the 'credit crunch' years (Voce, 2015). However this money has now been used and a change in focus with the introduction of Families First to replace Cymorth has seen a reduction in funding for localised play services by local authorities. Whilst Play Wales were unsuccessful in obtaining funding from the Welsh Government Children and Families Delivery Grant (CFDG) (Play Wales, 2014), Groundwork Wales in partnership with SNAP Cymru were successful, and secured funding to deliver outdoor play opportunities for children aged 0-18 across the country on their Sustainable Play programme. The Sustainable Play Programme is aimed at working with communities to provides free open access play, a very similar approach to the funding that was provided by the BIG Lottery in 2008, and to the work that the Play

Team in this Local Authority has been doing both before and after the Lottery funding.

Conclusion

Lester and Russell's (2014) analysis of the first round of Play Sufficiency Assessment considered each of the nine 'matters' not as individual variables to measure but to identify common themes that link them together. A holistic approach was also used by Barclay and Tawil (2015) on obtaining practitioner's views of play for the Play Sufficiency Assessment being undertaken in Wrexham. The aim of this research was to research playwork practitioners views on play in a Local Authority in South Wales and the results would be feed into the second Play Sufficiency Assessment for March 2016.

This study provides the views of the Play Team of a local authority in South Wales. The thematic analysis identified three main themes: diverse and inclusive practice; funding concerns and make a difference. These themes were developed through the Play Team's views on local play provision in this local authority area and reflect both local and national perspectives on how play can support children, families and communities, as well as other professionals involved in working with children and young people. Although the Play Team clearly enjoy their varying roles within playwork and there is a feeling of making a difference, the worry of funding is very evident for both short term and long term support of play in this local authority area. Funding concerns are relevant at both a strategic and practitioner level as a lack of funding will affect the local authority's ability to deliver sufficient play opportunities for

children and young people and also have a negative impact on playwork education and training.

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