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Barnardo's
Cymru

Response from Barnardo's Cymru to

'Children and Young People's Committee inquiry into Safe Places to Play and Hang Out'

Submitted by:

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A. INTRODUCTION

Barnardo's Cymru has been working with children, young people and families in Wales for over 100 years and is one of the largest children's charities working in the country. We currently run 41 diverse services across Wales, working in partnership with 18 of the 22 local authorities, supporting over 8,000 children, young people and families in the last year.

Barnardo's Cymru services in Wales include: care leavers and youth homelessness projects, young carers schemes, specialist fostering and adoption schemes, family centres and family support, parenting support, community development projects, short breaks and inclusive services for disabled children and young people, assessment and treatment for young people who exhibit sexually harmful or concerning behaviour and specialist services for children and young people at risk of, or abused through, child sexual exploitation.

Every Barnardo's Cymru service is different but each believes that every child and young person deserves the best start in life, no matter who they are, what they have done or what they have been through. We use the knowledge gained from our direct work with children to campaign for better childcare policy and to champion the rights of every child. We believe that with the right help, committed support and a little belief, even the most vulnerable children can turn their lives around.

In common with the WAG and NAfW, Barnardo's Cymru is committed to supporting the reality of Human Rights in Wales through the implementation of international mechanisms such as the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

B   BARNARDO'S CYMRU, PLAY SERVICES, LEISURE PROVISION AND COMMUNITY WORK

1. **Service evidence**

   We have a number of services across Wales that deliver play and leisure services and that undertake community development. Our community development services have regular contact with, and therefore in-depth knowledge about, the Communities First programme, community focussed schools, Homezones and community safety initiatives such as PACT. Barnardo's Cymru also has a wide range of play and leisure services across the country for children and young people, from pre-school years through to 16 plus and for children and young people in specific circumstances.

2. **Research evidence**

   Barnardo's Cymru has a Policy, Research and Development Unit that has undertaken the following research projects within Wales that are relevant to this enquiry:

   Stop Look Listen, children talk about the volume and speed of traffic.

Research work conducted in Newtown Powys and Ely Cardiff with 58 children aged between 8 and 11 examining the volume of traffic its speed and the affect this has on outside play opportunities.

Generation 2020. This work was conducted in Swansea with 64 children aged between 6 and 11 examining their perception of their participation in local services.

Homezone Feasibility Study was a partnership project with Sylfaen Cynefin working with a community in central Swansea to establish the feasibility of a homezone area.

Emotional well being. Research in two areas of Cardiff with 40 children aged between 6 and 8, exploring children's understanding of their own emotional well being.

'Young people's experience of, and solutions to, identity related bullying' Was the result of work with 77 young people, aged 10 to 18, in the Riverside, Grangetown and Butetown areas of Cardiff finding out their experiences of and attitudes towards identity related bullying.

Impact Evaluation of the City and County of Newport's single plan. This is progressing across a broad cross section of provision in Newport including play settings with 26 children aged between 5 and 11 and nursery children aged 3- 5 years, on the effectiveness of the single plan from their perspective.

The knowledge and evidence that has formed this written response comes from both our service delivery and research work with children, young people and their families. Our Policy, Research and Development Unit is linked to Barnardo's researchers in the other nations with whom we work to undertake UK wide research. Our UK-wide research is referenced in this document where applicable.

C   RESPONSE TO THE INQUIRY QUESTION:
THE PLAY EXPERIENCES OF SPECIFIC GROUPS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Children and young people living in rural areas
Our research regarding traffic in Powys, our two UK wide research projects entitled ' Wish you were here', and 'Food Poverty in the School Holidays' coupled with the experiences of our rural services highlight 5 main issues with regards to children and young people in rural areas having safe places to play and hang out:

- Sparse provision and use of open spaces- Whilst younger children enjoy the 'free play' that open spaces in predominantly rural areas have to offer they still report that they need other spaces to play and other things to do. We also hear this call for more leisure and play services from older children and young people living in rural areas. There are many barriers that inhibit children and young people from accessing play and leisure services but the provision of services is often more sparse and harder to get to in rural areas.

Generally, whilst children will go and play outside without any service provision, it is dependent upon having friends to go with, feeling safe and having a variety of play opportunities to choose from.

- Rural poverty- The image of the rural idyll is far from the reality for families facing poverty who live in rural areas. The cost and accessibility of transport are issues for many children and young people, but for those living in rural areas there is the additional problem of availability of any transport. For those families without cars, public transport or cycling are the only options. Traffic on main roads in rural areas travels too fast for children and young people to feel safe cycling and bus services are usually very limited. In many parts of Wales there are fantastic outdoor activities that tourists come to enjoy, but often children and young people living in those areas cannot enjoy these natural resources (e.g. surfing, rock climbing, hill walking) as the activities cost too much to do and there's no transport to them.

- Transport- Younger children tend not to travel independently and therefore are reliant upon a parent or other adult for lifts to and from any activities. In isolated communities this can have a large impact upon being able to meet up with friends. Older children and young people can travel independently but often a scarcity of bus routes and irregular times, coupled with cost, inhibit children and young people from reaching play schemes, youth clubs and using facilities such as swimming pools and cinemas. Transport is a particular issue for families in rural areas which cannot afford cars.

- Traffic- in rural areas there is less traffic but the speed of cars is a worry to parents and children. Children and young people feel intimidated by the speed at which cars travel, particularly on main trunk roads, and this acts as a barrier to playing outside, independent travel and feeling safe. The impact of the volume of traffic varies seasonally in rural tourist areas, with traffic being at its heaviest when children want to play outside in the summer months.

- Perception of stranger danger- parents and children across the country worry about the possibility of a stranger harming children. This is not reduced in rural areas, and in some cases is enhanced because there is not the potential for safety in numbers that urban areas afford. Many rural areas are also tourist areas so they experience a seasonal influx of strangers which can add to this concern.

2. Children and young people living in disadvantaged areas and in low income households

- Costs- All children living in poverty face cost as a barrier to accessing any activity. Even a pound per day for children in a large low income household can inhibit being able to join a youth club, access a play scheme etc. The cost of transport, where reliable transport is available, also acts as a barrier for children and young people to go out and do things. Younger children will not travel alone and therefore they will not access many play opportunities without being taken by a parent or other adult. Two of our UK wide research projects 'Below the Breadline' and 'Food Poverty in the school Holidays' highlight the difficulty in meeting costs of play and leisure

particularly during the holiday periods.

- Environmental poverty- In urban and post-industrial deprived areas children and young people face environmental poverty whereby the physical environment is either uninviting for play or is too dangerous for play. This can be for a variety reasons. For example, children in an estate community in central Swansea cited seagulls, fly tipping and rats as a reason for not playing outside whilst in other areas children worry about empty crumbling buildings, and post industrial landscapes. Children and young people also comment on the upkeep of their communities often commenting upon rubbish, dog mess and the lack of maintenance of play areas and open spaces.

- Street play- There is some evidence that children living in poverty engage in more street play than children living in more affluent areas. Generally this will depend upon the street architecture, which is discussed further below in relation to planning. Street play is often perceived negatively by adults, fuelled by media terms such as 'feral children'. Once children get older, street play and hanging out is perceived as anti social and young people are moved on by police and over vigilant adults in the belief that they are preventing crime. Groups of young people are more present in estate communities because street play occurs more often in those communities. To the children and young people involved, it is just part of growing up and continuing to meet and be together in the community that they have always played in. Being able to hang out together is an important part of their social life as there are few other places they can meet.

- Provision for the over 14's- Young people report that there is nowhere they can go as youth provision is patchy and generally not populated by young people over 14 because it does not focus upon the needs of post 14 year olds. Cost becomes more of a barrier as children get older because more affluent peers are able to afford bus fares and pay for activities such as cinemas, bowling etc.

- After school clubs- Children in larger families or with lone parents often find it difficult to attend breakfast clubs and after school clubs. Younger children are reliant upon parents to accompany them to clubs and activities. Parents living on low incomes can frequently only afford to make one journey to collect all their children, making it harder for each sibling to undertake their own activities. When families have pre-school children, the practicalities of limited nursery provision and managing family life inhibit being able to attend activities of choice. When a family owns a car these kinds of issues are greatly reduced.

3. **Disabled children and young people**
   - Many parents of disabled children do not send their children to generic provision because of concerns regarding 'open access' rules. Disabled children may need support to stay safe at play schemes and youth clubs and parents worry that open access rules mean their child will leave the scheme without support to do it safely.
   - Transport is a particular issue for disabled children and young people.

Disabled children and young people with sensory impairments or mobility difficulties may find it hard to access public transport, making them rely heavily on accessible taxis or parents with cars. When families do not have a car it can be virtually impossible for a mobility impaired child or young person to get to play or leisure provision.

- In areas where there is support for disabled children to attend a play scheme or club, the support is often inadequate. Parents worry that the training provided for play and youth workers does not have enough focus upon disability and that therefore workers do not have the skills for successful, inclusive support or to provide personal care. Until parents' fears are listened to and parents are reassured regarding staff skills, many disabled children will not attend generic or inclusive play schemes or clubs.

- After school clubs and play orientated childcare- The Disabled Children Matter Wales campaign has found that childcare for disabled children costs five times as much as for non disabled children (research entitled 'Between a rock and a hard place' 2003) and provision in specialist childcare is very limited. This results in many disabled children missing out on after school clubs and activities.

- Street play- disabled children and young people do not get the chance to 'hang out'. Issues of accessibility and need for personal support are usually the inhibitors for street play. This means disabled children and young people miss out on free play resulting in limited experience of risk taking, lower practice at social skills, increased isolation and larger segregation from the non disabled community.

- Bullying- disabled children and young people are at risk of identity related bullying. Bullying happens in all spheres of life, and is therefore an issue that needs to be addressed within community and play arenas. Bullying will happen in both segregated and inclusive settings.

- Problems with outreach provision- Many councils operate non-building based, open access outreach play schemes. These exclude disabled children for the following reasons. Firstly, disabled children and young people often need supported toileting or changing spaces and cannot get home quickly to use their own house. Secondly, disabled children and young people often need support to help keep themselves safe and parents worry that there is a risk in their children wandering off with open access schemes, particularly when they are outside. Lastly, many outside spaces are not accessible for children and young people who have mobility difficulties.

- Older young people- Whilst most youth clubs do welcome disabled young people, parents worry that workers will not have the skills to offer the support required to meet their child's specific needs. There is a lack of youth clubs for over 14's in all circumstances, but socialising opportunities for disabled young people of this age are particularly scarce. This is because disabled young people may need some support and so may not be able to travel independently to meet up with friends or just hang out in communities. This results in very few opportunities to socialise outside of school. There are a few examples of good inclusive provision for older young people, for

example, Circus Eruption in Swansea. There is also some good segregated provision, but most provision is provided by the voluntary sector and varies between communities.

- Poverty- Families that include a disabled child or young person tend to have less income to live on. Reasons for this include more transport costs, more costs associated with health, higher possibility of living in lone parent households, one wage families with one parent, usually the mother, being unable to work due to caring responsibilities and very high costs of childcare. This means that the comments written for low income households are often also applicable to disabled children and young people. Our UK wide research 'Postcards from Home' highlights some of these issues.

4. **Children and young people from the Gypsy Traveller community**
   - We do not have enough evidence to comment fully upon the experiences of gypsy traveller children and young people's experiences of safe places to play and hang out. However, anecdotally we know that this group of children and young people rarely access mainstream services.
   - The Gypsy Traveller community has strong cultural traditions that revolve around gender. It is therefore likely that gender should be taken into account when services are being planned for this community. Further research may be needed before it is known how differentiated gender roles affect play provision.
   - It should be noted that during her visit, Lucy Smith (UN committee rapporteur) visited the traveller site on Rover Way, Cardiff. Visiting this site had an obvious visible effect on her. Later she related how shocked she was at the living conditions and in particular the play opportunities afforded to this group.

5. **Concluding remarks regarding children in specific circumstances**

   All children and young people need to congregate, be kept safe and have opportunities for meaningful play experiences.

   There are many other children in specific circumstances that we have not commented upon and any list would not be exhaustive. We have not commented here upon children and young people in care, younger children, young carers, black and minority ethnic children or gender differentiations in play and attitudes to leisure. Any generic provision must consider all children and young people, aiming for universal accessibility by thinking through issues of personal support, transport costs, providing for a variety of ages and recognising gender and cultural differences. Although there are children and young people living in specific circumstances, many of these circumstances will cut across each other requiring careful planning and implementation of any service.

   Targeted provision may be required for certain groups. Disabled children and young people may want more provision to socialise or discuss common circumstances. Muslim girls and gypsy traveller girls may need a females- only

space to meet in. Play and leisure should not a stark choice between targeted and universal provision, but a mix of both. To ensure a balanced mix of play and leisure services local provision should be based upon an analysis of community demographics, the needs of parents and, most importantly, the voices of children and young people.

The opportunity and ability to congregate and play are supported within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Not only does the convention make specific reference to activities such as meeting together (Art. 15) and play (Art. 31) but the ability to play and learn informally are recognised as significant contributors to children and young people accessing their human rights of survival, development, protection and participation, firstly as children and then as adults.

D   RESPONSE TO THE INQUIRY QUESTION:
THE ISSUES RELEVANT TO EXISTING PROVISION

1   Consistency and quality of provision

Provision of play and leisure services varies widely both between different types of provision, within types of provision and between local authority areas. What is available and its quality is dependent upon the following factors- living within a Communities First area; the attitude of the local school; whether there is a community centre nearby; and whether voluntary sector agencies are funded to operate within a community. Some children and young people have choice in play provision and leisure activities whilst others have very little choice and very little provision.

Local interpretation of how 'freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated' play is implemented in services has led to varied provision and quality. This variation is in relation to what activities should be offered, how much adults should intervene and what participation means. In some areas play workers will provide some structured activities whilst in others they do not offer any activities because it is thought that children will create their own play and workers don't wish to interfere with children's free play experience. Anecdotally we know a few play and youth workers have said that anti bullying is an adult agenda and so do not intervene to stop bullying, whereas in other areas play workers build children's awareness of bullying issues and their capacity to deal with bullying.

Participation in all services needs to be developed. The national participation standards may help to support improving participative practice. With regards to participation in one local authority 'basket making' was cited as a good example of participative practice whilst in other services good participative practice means children are involved in planning and service development, such as the recruitment of sessional workers.

We have broken down some of the more widely used types of provision in order to comment further.

1. After school clubs and play clubs for childcare- The play value of after school clubs varies widely. In some instances they are holding areas within schools until parents can pick children up whilst in other instances they provide a valuable space for children to explore themselves and social relationships, invent and learn through play. For parents this type of provision is crucial and so they will often pay for what is available rather than seeking quality because of paucity of provision. Finding good after school play clubs gets harder the older a child is, with a distinct lack of provision for 11 – 13 year olds.

2. Play schemes- The style of play schemes varies widely according to community and local authority area. Some areas insist that everyone is welcome to a scheme but provide no extra support for disabled children to be able to attend. Some local authorities offer mainly outreach provision, others focus upon building based, or static, provision whilst other counties offer a mix of both. Some local authorities offer provision every holiday and half term, whilst others only offer provision during the summer holidays.

3. Swimming pools, cinema, bowling centres and leisure centres etc- We have included these because they are important activities from children and young people's perspectives. Generally large commercial cinemas and leisure centres such as Swansea's LC2 are very costly and perceived as a treat in most instances. Such provision is very hard to access in rural areas. Therefore although such places give older young people safe places to go together and interesting things to do there are many young people who cannot access them. There are a few examples of innovative practice which, if replicated and expanded upon, could fill some of the gap in providing safe places to go and hang out for older young people.

Community cinemas: There are two models of community cinemas. Firstly, mobile cinemas which are mobile digital units that take films to isolated communities serving families, children and young people. There are such projects in the west of Scotland which may be replicable for rural parts of Wales. (See www.screenmachine.co.uk). Secondly, in some parts of Wales there are community cinemas and film clubs run in local halls. Currently these tend to focus upon films for young children or families or art house. However, young people's nights could be developed in these kinds of venues, maybe with a link into film making.

Community swimming pools: Brynamman has a community outdoor lido linked into communities first and staffed by local community volunteers during the summer holidays. Where pools currently exist (either old lidos or in schools) this model may help to bridge a gap in provision.

Access to community arts events- Some local arts venues enable under 16's

to attend live music and drama performances if the content is not of an adult nature. The Pontadawe arts centre in Neath Port Talbot charges £1 for child admissions under an accessible arts scheme. Such schemes could be explored further and encouraged as young people enjoy live music and the arts but are often excluded from them. Community venues are more accessible than commercial venues in towns and cities and use of very localised halls could be encouraged to enable more rural communities and young people to access arts events.

4. Youth clubs and 14+ provision- youth club provision varies widely across the country and between communities. Generally they cater for under 14's and the quality of the work done can be variable. We would welcome the development of more schemes like Rhyl's youth café for 10 to 17 year olds, with some consideration of making it a mobile resource such as a bus, in order to reach communities, benefitting young people living in poverty, and those in rural areas. It should be noted that any sport based provision will tend to be used by boys more than girls and that boys and girls may have different needs.

There are a large number of different provisions that can be included within the phrase 'safe places to play and hang out'. From a parent's perspective this would need to be coupled with 'safe childcare' during holidays and after school. Whilst children and young people need a variety of play and social opportunities working parents' primary concern will be finding suitable and reliable provision. Outreach schemes are in parks and other gathering places in communities and so are not accessed by children who are not old enough to be left alone and whose parents work. Whilst play in itself is intrinsically important, if we ignore the pragmatic elements of how families operate, many children will not be able to attend schemes or use current provision.

2 **What can be done to make the play and leisure facilities that do exist in communities to be safer and feel safer**
The key issues with regards to 'safe places to play and hang out' are about accessing current provision, gaps in current provision and variation in provision. However, the following issues of safety do need to be addressed:

- Bullying- this is commented upon below with regard to barriers to play and leisure.
- Perceptions of stranger danger- parents, children and young people worry about the risk posed by strangers. Messages regarding how to avoid contact with strangers seem to be understood by children. However, it would be helpful if safeguarding was taken to a community level with adults running PACT groups, Neighbourhood Watch, community centre volunteers and local shopkeepers being aware of how to spot bullying and establishing local 'safe points' (for example local shop, community centre) for children to go to if they're scared about a stranger or lost in a community. Local safe points may reduce parents and children and young people's fears.

- Negative stereotypes of children and young people- this is discussed further below in relation to barriers to play and leisure.
- Planning- This is commented upon further below in relation to planning policy and Homezones. Planning and street design has a big impact upon the safety of children and young people.

3 The costs of accessing provision, including transport costs
Throughout this evidence we have commented on cost in relevant sections as it is a generic issue.

E RESPONSE TO THE INQUIRY QUESTION:
REVIEWING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CURRENT POLICY AND INITIATIVES IN PROVIDING SAFE PLACES TO PLAY AND HANG OUT

1. **Welsh Assembly government play policy and play implementation plan**
   There are a few points we wish to make in relation to the play implementation plan. Whilst we welcome its focus, there are some gaps, or unintended consequences, which need to be addressed:
   - The stress on adventure play- We understand the benefits of adventure play but adventure playgrounds are only located in certain communities. Whilst a fantastic resource, they are only accessible to certain young people. For children and young people who do not live in the immediate vicinity there is a reliance on parents to take them to the play ground or a need to find the money for bus fares. Anecdotally it seems some local authorities have diverted funds to adventure play, reducing funds available for other, more localised play, which has an adverse effect on children who cannot access the adventure playground. However the way the implementation plan challenges traditional views on play is welcome.
   - It does not give enough consideration to the fact that younger children live in micro communities. Children under 10 generally socialise in 5 to 6 streets that surround their house. Therefore if play opportunities are not very localised, children are reliant on parents to accompany them there which adversely affects children living in poverty, disabled children and other specific groups.
   - There is little consideration of children and young people in specific circumstances, particularly disabled children and young people. This has resulted in little guidance regarding inclusive settings that meet individual need and in some instances, inaccessible adventure play.
   - Many schools are struggling with gaining a community focus. This is discussed in more detail below.
   - There is not a sufficient regard to bullying in community settings. This is discussed further below.
   - Planning processes do not include children and young people so Homezones are not looking at children's need. This is discussed further below.

2. **Potential impact of Children and Families (Wales) Measure**

    If we accept that the use of the word sufficient may not be specific enough to ensure perceptions of adequate and appropriate are met the measures placing of the duty of assessment on local authorities possibly has the greatest potential impact on play provision.

    Not only does the measure and explanatory memorandum call for assessment, review and publication of its findings around sufficiency (Chapter 2 section 11) but places a duty to facilitate the involvement of children in the decisions of the local authority which might effect them (Chapter 2 section 12). It is possible that there might have been greater benefit if the measure had directly linked this duty of involvement to the National Participation Standards.

    It is easy to see the logic of involvement in decisions about provided play provision however the wording of section 12, sub section 1 is also important placing that duty when Local Authorities are making decisions that are not so evidently about play such as planning applications, change of use or transport and highways.

3. **Existing youth and leisure services**
    This is mainly covered above in our comments regarding the quality and consistency of provision, but we wish to stress the following points.
    *   Provision varies widely between counties. Generally there is scant provision for the older age group (14+) and a lack of focus upon how to support the needs of specific groups within generic provision. A good example of reaching older young people exists within the Butetown Youth Pavilion in Cardiff. Using funding from health and the police, youth workers attract young people, mainly boys who are known to have some involvement with gangs, to undertake sport activities and experience healthy eating with a view to supporting them to not become involved further in crime.
    *   There is not enough focus upon anti bullying initiatives in play and leisure settings. Examples of how this could be improved upon are given below in the section about bullying under the heading impact of specific barriers.
    *   There should be more support from the Arts Council for Wales in encouraging schemes for young people to access art events and in providing more community based art opportunities (projects and events) in rural and deprived areas.
    *   There is a lack of participation in current youth and leisure services. Whilst there are opportunities for involvement at youth council levels or in consultations; there is little sustained participation in, for example, recruitment, planning services, delivery of services, decision making etc.

4. **Planning policy and its implementation**
   - Street play is less likely to occur in Victorian terraced streets than in estate communities simply because there is more space on pavements and less nose-to-tail parked cars. This makes it feel safer for children and offers more space.
   - Planning consultation processes are not accessible to all people within a community, particularly children and young people. This means their views are not heard. If their views are heard they are often placed below adult opinions in the belief that adults know best.
   - Communities are not homogeneous. There are power hierarchies in most communities with some people having more 'voice' and others being sidelined. This occurs within the adult population of communities, but also between adults and children and young people. This has an impact upon planning consultations, Homezones and many circumstances where the community is 'consulted'.
   - Planning processes often focus upon road safety rather than pedestrian and community need. This means that Homezone principles are not implemented, but diluted to just be focused upon road issues like 20 mph speed limits.
   - Negative stereotypes of children and young people affect planning consultations. Adults will often not want benches or play spaces because they will encourage young people to congregate.

5. **Welsh Assembly Government Communities First programme**
   - In some areas Communities First has been a fantastic programme with many real benefits being experienced by the whole community. However, these successes vary regionally according to tensions within the local community, local power relations, and local authority support and interventions.
   - The participation of young people within Communities First programmes has varied greatly. Children under 10 have not had the opportunities to participate as much as young people have.

6. **Role of schools and specifically community focused schools**
   - Many schools are struggling with embracing the community. In some areas schools are seen as institutions and often not respected or accessible to some adults in the vicinity. This means that some members of the community will not use school facilities. Some adults within schools (e.g. governors) are hostile towards children who attend different schools but live in the vicinity.
   - Schools face practical problems in gaining a community focus. Schools we have worked with have looked at opening their premises outside of school hours but faced very real difficulties. To an extent these difficulties will depend upon the communities which the schools serve but in our experiences have included needles and broken bottles being left in yards, changes to insurance for damage when no caretaker is present, and a worry of vandalism (based upon previous experiences). When schools enable

community members to enter the premises they have to consider child protection issues, employment issues and insurance. These can act as real barriers.

- Community focused schools tend to be more concentrated at the primary level and so where they have worked there is still less opportunities for children and young people of secondary school age.

7. **Homezones**
- Communities are not homogeneous and therefore the comments made above in relation to planning policy and implementation are applicable to the development of Homezones. In our feasibility study, in Swansea, many adults did not want street planning to be changed and did not have the information needed to make informed judgements.
- Community spaces are often not viewed as welcoming but as scary and hostile places. This can be fuelled by the need for some communities to highlight problems within the neighbourhood in order to attract funding and extra resources. Media information can also create negative reputations for communities. Negative reputations create myths about the 'badness' of an area without the reputation being grounded in fact. This can result in negative attitudes towards communal use of space.
- Static play areas- In recent years there has been a move away from maintaining static play areas. There are theoretical and practical reasons behind this, but children enjoy being able to go to their local park and regularly tell us that the equipment is broken or is aimed at a younger age group and so there is nothing they can play on. Children should not be confined to one space to play in and so we do need developments away from the traditional form of static provision. Proper implementation of Homezones principles could make a real difference in offering children safe places to play within their micro communities, with slow traffic and interesting play opportunities. To date there are only a few isolated examples of these kinds of Homezone principles being implemented in Wales.
- New build schemes seem to have profit and adult concerns as their main agendas. This means that car parks, roads and play space are designed according to profit margins and adult use rather than the needs of children and young people. Adult negative stereotypes often mean that areas for children and young people to congregate and play in are not encouraged.

8. **Community safety initiatives such as Police And Communities Together (PACT)**
- There tends to be an adult orientated agenda with regards to community safety and often children and young people are demonised and viewed as a problem. This results in children and young people being excluded from safety schemes and their safety issues are not heard or considered.
- Cardiff Against Bullying has a good pilot project that involves children and young people in a PACT group. This has used the police as mediators between young people and adults in the PACT group and has highlighted

issues of bullying within the community.

9. **Getting it Right - 5 year rolling action plan for Wales. Key priorities and actions in response to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding Observations 2008.**

- In this document the WAG laid out its **16** priorities and associated action plan to achieve positive change in Children's Rights in Wales. Although it is helpful to view the priorities together as a broad strategic approach, several relate specifically to this inquiry.
    - o Priority 2 – To deliver positive outcomes for the most vulnerable children, young people and families.
    - o Priority 3 – To reduce the gap between policy and outcomes for children and young people.
    - o Priority 5 – To improve learning achievement for all children and young people.
    - o Priority 6 – To support emotional well being for all children and young people.
    - o Priority 7 – To improve opportunities for all children and young people to play safely.
    - o Priority 8 – To increase opportunities for all children and young people in Wales to participate in decision-making on issues that affect them.
    - o Priority 9 – To work to eliminate discrimination against children and young people with disabilities, improving their access to services and support.
    - o Priority 11 – To work to eliminate bullying including homophobic bullying.

F   RESPONSE TO THE INQUIRY QUESTION:
EXAMINE THE IMPACT OF SPECIFIC BARRIERS TO SAFE PLACES TO PLAY AND HANG OUT

1   Bullying
- Where bullying happens in the community- Bullying happens outside gathering places like shops and leisure centres, in deserted places like lanes and industrial estates, and in parks, particularly where there is no play equipment. In some areas bullying happens outside the home if there are on-going neighbourly disputes.
- Who bullies in the community- Children and young people report high levels of bullying by adults who do not know them. Evidence suggests that this is more pronounced if the child or young person is black. Racism from unknown adults is reported by many BME children in different areas and cities. Anecdotally the few disabled children that have participated in our research also report bullying by adults because of their disability. Some children get bullied by neighbours, shop keepers and other adults known to

the child for three main reasons. Firstly, the adult has a negative view of children and sees them as potentially anti social, secondly because of racism or other discriminatory beliefs, and lastly because of neighbour disputes. Older children and young people were reported to bully, regardless of age. For example 7 year olds reported bullying by 12 years, who reported bullying by 16 year olds who reported bullying by young adults of 20.

- Linking school and community- Bullies within the school will also bully within the community. Children who are bullied in school often get bullied within their community by the same person/ group of people. This results in the target of the bullying having no social opportunities.

- Cyber bullying- The growth of cyber bullying has meant that children and young people can now feel unsafe from bullies at school because they can receive threats within their home at any time of the day or night. This has a devastating affect on the target of the bullying.

- Affects of bullying- Some children and young people are scared to go out if they are experiencing bullying in a different environment, usually school. Children and young people of all ages will avoid certain areas for fear of being bullied and so the fear of bullying impacts on play and movement in the community.

- Combating bullying in the community- there is little focus upon bullying outside of schools. In addition to the Cardiff scheme mentioned above, Andover in England is adapting the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Awards for community settings with a view to implementation using a whole community approach.

2 **Negative stereotypes of children and young people/ perceptions of anti social behaviour**

- There are large numbers of adults who hold negative stereotypes of children and young people. This is fuelled by a tendency for our society to demonise children and young people and be intolerant of their presence within community settings; expressed through media articles and some actions designed to combat anti social behaviour.

- Negative stereo-types lead to children and young people feeling that they are bullied by adults in the community, that they are disrespected, and that they are not heard within the community. The suggestions above, such as safe points, involvement in community safety initiatives and rights respecting communities may help to address this. Positive media stories about children and young people would have an impact on changing the demonising culture.

- There should be more focus upon adult anti social behaviour in some communities. We have heard of racism towards children, excessive street drinking, and open use of drugs in three cities in South Wales, all perpetrated by older adults, mainly men. Accurate reporting of anti social behaviour may help to realign attitudes towards children and young people. Children in areas where there are high incidents of adult anti social behaviour do not feel safe to go out in the street and often play in the house with friends.

3 Traffic and road safety issues

Traffic has a huge impact upon children and young people's ability to safely play and hang out. We have commented upon traffic where possible in different sections of this document but wish to stress the following:

- 20 mph zones near schools- These work well when they are policed properly. The increase in residents-only parking has served to make school entrances more congested and led to difficulties in parking safely near school gates. This is a particular concern for primary schools.
- Parked cars- lines of parked cars cause difficulties for children under the age of 10 because they can't see around them and are then scared to walk into the road to cross a street. Children say that they find it easier to cross streets if there is slanted parking.
- Rural traffic- the speed of cars is a problem in rural areas. In rural tourist areas there is a problem of too much traffic on small roads during tourist seasons.
- Crossing patrols- children like having zebra crossings and lollipop people because they find it safer. They have asked for lollipop people to be present outside of school hours or by community buildings on activity nights.
- To reduce traffic around schools the safe routes to school initiative could be developed further. Children would like to travel to school independently and use alternative methods of transport where traffic systems allow. One primary school we worked with in Powys had sheds for bicycles and space for skate boards, roller skates, and scooters, encouraging the children to get to school without needing their parents to give them a lift. Such schemes rely on space to store alternative travel methods, cycle paths and community understanding of the need for children to use pavements. Where traffic systems do not allow children to travel independently to school it is likely that the school run will continue as taking a child to school is often combined with getting to and from work.