

# Play In Monmouthshire

## MonLife Summer 2022 Play Report

*“Children need the freedom and the time to play; play is not a luxury play is a necessity.” - Kay Redfield Jamison, phycologist.*



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## **What is play?**

“Play encompasses 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”. Welsh Government Play Policy (2002).

Play is vital in children’s lives, for both its recreational value and for the part that it plays in children’s physical, social and emotional health, and well-being and in their personal development. Play deprivation in children can lead to low self-esteem, impaired emotional development, isolation, depression and poor resilience.

Children have a right in law to play and to ensure this is met, the Local Authority must assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area; and must secure sufficient play opportunities for children, so far as reasonably practicable. This is known as a Play Sufficiency assessment (PSA) and needs to be completed every three years with annual reviews. The overall aim of this is to ensure that there are more children playing - more often and that they are given time, space, and permission to do so.

MonLife provides free community play opportunities for children and young people through a mixture of inclusive programmes in partnership with Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association, Community and Town Councils as well as wider partner services.





## **Executive Summary**

Summer 2022 saw the children, young people and families of Monmouthshire being able to access a wide range of inclusive opportunities to participate in play, sport and learning while engaging in physical, social and cultural activity.

More than 11,000 individuals have accessed these opportunities with 10,120 hours of time available to children and young people to support their play needs and preferences. With the hours of play lost to children over the course of the pandemic and the negative effect this had on their development, mental health, and overall wellbeing this goes a long way to bringing a sense of normality for them as well as complying with their right to play under article 31 of the UNCRC.

Through a combination of funding streams both targeted and open access programmes were delivered. These included the Food and Fun programme, a Welsh Government initiative for targeted education and health support to provide children with activities to develop their knowledge of healthy eating and healthy bodies, as well as fun ways to be active.

MonLife play also ran active play sessions. A programme where children can attend 2 hours of staffed open access play which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. These sessions also saw children given a free packed lunch as part of the provision. It was noted that parents were very appreciative of this and given the times of austerity this greatly supported all families not just those targeted as low income. This was also done in a way that didn't feel like a handout, but rather as something part of a package minimising stigma. Similar sessions were also delivered into communities of local towns and supporting our rural communities.

The Monmouthshire Games ran again in full for the first summer since Covid and saw a 22% increase in occupancy. TMG is a paid for programme at a low cost to parents and allows children to access a suite of sports activities including daily swimming. This year we were able to provide 66 vulnerable children with 10 free sessions at TMG including children from Ukraine.

***“The support for Ukrainian families this summer has been fantastic, and it has given my children a fantastic summer” – Parent***

The leisure centres also played a key role in supporting families with additional needs. Monmouth Leisure Centre held respite sessions for parents allowing them time to access the facilities while their children were cared for in the soft play centre, which was closed to the public during this time to ensure the children's needs could be met. Caldicot Leisure Centre worked with local Autism Charity 'Ready Steady Go' and offered 4 weeks of guided swimming sessions for Young People with Autism and their families. These sessions provided a swimming instructor, but they could also freely swim dependent on the needs of the individual children.

Building upon our offer for children and families with diverse needs we worked closely with Building Bridges, Action for Children and the Outdoor Partnership to provide a host of opportunities for children and young people with additional needs. Including play scheme type sessions for those with complex needs with trained professionals to provide the children with opportunities to play in the way they chose with the support they needed. Building Bridges and

Quest Busters were able to provide children with additional needs the chance to take part in a host of activities that would otherwise be difficult for them to access including surfing, horse riding and arial dancing. 484 children accessed these experiences over the course of the summer making memories that will last a lifetime. The feedback was unanimous, it was needed and greatly appreciated and helped the children's confidence to no end.

To support Welsh language, and to contribute towards the Welsh Government's vision of creating a million Welsh speakers by 2050, Menter Iaith held 3 projects throughout the summer. The projects were open for individuals from aged 7 all the way to 25 with the chance to participate in activities pertaining to music, design, performance, and history. It was fed back that there needs to be more opportunities like this to participate in the language of Welsh.

MonLife and Monmouthshire Early years and Childcare team have always worked closely to ensure the needs of families are met and through the 'Summer of Fun' MonLife provided the EYCC team with funding for settings to offer unique experiences for the children they provide for. It was fed back that parents were grateful for these as with the cost-of-living crisis they are struggling to afford to take their children on trips. This funding allowed the children to have these experiences while elevating some of the parental guilt all parents feel.

Before the summer Monmouthshire Museums and Castles conducted a playful spaces audit creating a detailed action plan to develop their sites to allow children freedom to play in the attractions. During the summer their actions were implemented, and resources and play prompts were included. Family engagement sessions took place throughout Abergavenny Museum and Castle, Shire Hall Monmouth, Chepstow Museum, Caldicot Castle and Old Station, Tintern. Session themes were Medieval Mayhem with Toys and Games from the Past. Alongside craft activity were opportunities for loose parts play and object handling.

***"Wouldn't usually go to XXXXXXXX museum as it's not been family friendly when I've been previously - I'll definitely go back now there is stuff for children. It's a relief that children can make noise, play and enjoy themselves". Parent***

All of those that worked on providing the summer provision went above and beyond, the results were so positive for the children and families of Monmouthshire and while these are planned and promoted in line with meeting the matters of the PSA the projects met many other important agendas. It supported families struggling with the cost of living. It gave opportunities for those with diverse and vulnerable needs to have fulfilled experiences. The amount of sport children could access increased tremendously supporting the overall health and wellbeing agenda.

Going forward the relationships built across services are continuing. Our vision is to further develop the play opportunities within castles and museums with the view to holding active play sessions here as well as enhancing community settings, such as our spaces for play and education settings. This will also be enhanced by the development of play at Gilwern Outdoor Adventure Centre which will bring play and education together to provide a holistic experience for the children. We will also continue our work with Action for Children and Building Bridges to continue to build upon our offer for children and families with additional needs.

In times where budget restraints are tight, it is important that we find sustainable ways to continue to offer a complete programme for the children and families of Monmouthshire. We hope that with the continuation of collaborative working, the sharing of resources and accessing future funding streams we can continue this excellent work throughout the 2023 calendar year and years to come.

## Headline Figures

### Monmouthshire Wide

Monmouthshire Wide	
Meals served	<b>4,296</b>
Number of children and young people supported	<b>11,599</b>
The Monmouthshire Games Attendances	<b>3,431</b>
Number of hours of provision	<b>10,120</b>
Number of children supported with diverse needs	<b>620</b>
Employment opportunity	<b>80 positions</b>
Hours of Welsh medium provision	<b>11</b>
How many projects were delivered?	<b>21</b>

### Abergavenny Headline Data

Abergavenny	
Meals served	<b>880</b>
Number of children and young people supported	<b>2,475</b>
The Monmouthshire Games Attendances	<b>741</b>
Number of hours of provision	<b>2,500</b>
Number of children supported with diverse needs	<b>155</b>
Employment opportunity	<b>20 positions (average)</b>
Hours of Welsh medium provision	<b>7</b>
How many projects were delivered?	<b>21</b>

### Caldicot Headline Data

Caldicot	
Meals served	<b>843</b>
Number of children and young people supported	<b>3,338</b>
The Monmouthshire Games Attendances	<b>859</b>
Number of hours of provision	<b>2,500</b>
Number of children supported with diverse needs	<b>158</b>
Employment opportunity	<b>20 positions (average)</b>
Hours of Welsh medium provision	<b>4.5</b>
How many projects were delivered?	<b>21</b>



### Chepstow Headline Data

Chepstow	
Meals served	<b>773</b>
Number of children and young people supported	<b>2,968</b>
The Monmouthshire Games Attendances	<b>734</b>
Number of hours of provision	<b>2,500</b>
Number of children supported with diverse needs	<b>148</b>
Employment opportunity	<b>20 positions (average)</b>
How many projects were delivered?	<b>21</b>

### Monmouth Headline Data

Monmouth	
Meals served	<b>773</b>
Number of children and young people supported	<b>2,968</b>
The Monmouthshire Games Attendances	<b>734</b>
Number of hours of provision	<b>2,500</b>
Number of children supported with diverse needs	<b>148</b>
Employment opportunity	<b>20 positions (average)</b>
How many projects were delivered?	<b>21</b>

### Magor and Undy Headline Data

Magor and Undy	
Number of children and young people supported	<b>81</b>
The Monmouthshire Games Attendances	<b>110</b>
Number of Children supported with Free Access to The Monmouthshire Games	<b>11</b>
Number of hours of provision	<b>120</b>
Employment opportunity	<b>Included in the Caldicot total, 5 young people employed from Magor and Undy</b>
Number of Families attending local Stay and Play Sessions	<b>37</b>

## Summer 2022 – Project Summary

### Active Play Sessions

249 children have benefited from active play sessions which have taken place at Kymin View, Overmonnow, Thornwell, Deri View and Dewstow with sessions 1 hour and 55 minutes in duration. To provide these sessions staff took part in a comprehensive training programme to include the importance of playwork as well as some training in supporting challenging behaviour.

These sessions encompassed the playwork principles as highlighted in 'Wales - A Play Friendly Country Policy'. The playwork principles state that the play process for children is freely chosen, intrinsically motivated and personally directed. This is how the active play sessions operated. The children were given the opportunity to choose from a variety of resources and activities that supported their physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and creative development. They also allowed children to participate in risky play, that with the implementation of a risk benefit analysis. Children were not expected to join in any set activity and could simply sit and "hang out" with their friends if they wanted to. Most children were keen to join in the organised games and the parachute was very popular. A lot of the children were interested in the variety of craft available. They could choose to make a set project idea but were also free to create in any way they wanted to. The playworkers used intervention styles applicable to the playwork ethos which ensured that the play was fully directed by the children.

Children were provided with a nutritious packed lunch prepared by the schools catering team to take away at the end of each session to support with tackling food poverty.

### **Impact**

Parents that fed back to staff were extremely complimentary of the programme.

*"This is a great opportunity, it's so good that they have this chance to meet up with their friends in the holidays."*

*"It's nice to have something locally that they can come to"*

*"My children have loved this, thank you"*

When the children were asked most fed back that they *"liked everything!"* with one child adding *"especially the staff!"*

The opportunity to be provided with a lunch pack very much highlighted there were families that really needed this support. On many occasions families would ask staff if there were any food bags not claimed could they "take them off their hands". There were also many occasions where children were off sick, but parents would pop over to inform staff and ask if they could still take their lunch pack, demonstrating the importance of this. It was noted that the programme, with the addition of food was an indirect way of supporting with food poverty without highlighting any stigma.



## **Monmouthshire Inclusive Adventure Summer Programme**

Facilitated by The Outdoor Partnership, and delivered in partnership with MonLife Outdoor Adventure, this programme provided opportunities for canoeing, orienteering, and biking for children with mobility limitations, disabilities, and neurodiversity conditions. Sessions ran at Gilwern Outdoor Adventure Centre, Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal, Bargain Wood, Tintern, Trellech Common and Wentwood Forest. Over a two-week period, a total of 5 activity days were delivered, some of which had multiple session opportunities. 42 children and young people aged 5-25 benefited from the programme.

### **Impact**

*“It was amazing! I loved jumping off.” – Young Person, Inclusive Paddling session feedback*

*“Thank you so much - your activity this morning was a BIG hit! Really appreciate you offering the chance to join the session. Your team were amazing with the children today.” – Parent, Inclusive Canoeing session feedback*

*“Thanks so much for this opportunity. We all had a great time” – Young Person, Inclusive Canoeing session feedback*

*“I was delighted to see your summer of fun activity schedule and especially watching first-hand the accessible canoeing session yesterday. Keep up the good work, what you are doing is life changing.” – Hannah Cubie, Canal & River Trust*



### **Evaluation from MonLife Outdoor Adventure**

The overall offer of an Inclusive Adventure Programme in Monmouthshire was a success. The programme gave many children and young people the opportunity to participate in quality, local outdoor experiences. Thank you for supporting our vision of enhancing lives through outdoor activities.

## **Local Community Outdoor Family Engagement Sessions**

These sessions ran for 2 hours within local communities. The sessions were advertised, and families were encouraged to show up with no booking necessary. This positively supported engagement as it allowed families who were not confident with technology to attend without needing to be put off with using any booking system. There was no lower or upper age limit on the children who could attend meaning a wide range of participants could be reached

In keeping with the ethos of playwork that play is freely chosen families were able to choose from sports activities, craft, archery, construction, and games.

Although numbers were not as high as anticipated those that attended all enjoyed these sessions. It is hoped that with a combination of further marketing and the power of word of mouth these will build up over time, delivered in partnership with key partners and stakeholders to identify localised need.

## **Building Bridges and Quest Busters**

MonLife supported Building Bridges this summer to provide an enhanced programme of activities for children and young people aged 6-25 with additional needs. Building Bridges are a charity based Monmouth that support young people across the whole of Monmouthshire to engage with their community, building their social experiences and confidence and to allow them to establish friendships. An extension of Building Bridges is the Quest Busters project which expands to younger children to provide opportunities and experiences to try new things and access activities which are otherwise difficult for them. With funding support from MonLife the project delivered a plethora of experiences to 484 children over the summer holidays including;

- Horse Riding in the North and the South of the county,
- Gilwern Activity Day – Gorge walking, archery, high ropes, caving and mountain biking
- Canoeing down the Wye
- Aerial Bungee Dance
- Skateboarding
- Bush Craft
- Screen printing and Graffiti workshop
- Night-time Bat Walk
- Surfing lessons
- Inflatable Park visits
- Biscuit decorating
- Pottery Painting
- West midlands safari park trip

### **Impact**

*'We have been fortunate to be part of QB for 3 years, my 11-year-old used to attend a special DLD unit in Newport so struggled to know children locally, QB has provided him with the opportunity to try new skills, build on his confidence, mingle with children that have similar difficulties and always allowing him to adjust at his own pace! This has been a*

*phenomenal opportunity for him and as a family, they have welcomed his younger brother and cousin to different events, there is often a stigma to 'quiet or relaxed' events, my son's disability is invisible, the general public would often not recognise the difficulties he faces, these sessions/projects/opportunities have opened a whole new world of activities he can try, thank you!' – QB Parent*

*"I can be myself here, it's the only place I feel I can be myself" BB young person*



## **Action for Children**

Action for Children are a leading charity whose vision is “that every child and young person has a safe and happy childhood, and the foundations they need to thrive.” With funding support from MonLife Play, Action for Children were able to expand upon their play scheme provision which provides a safe, quality environment for children with diverse needs to access high play value experiences.

Across the summer they were able to offer two, four hours sessions a week for 4 weeks across all four of their sites in Monmouthshire. These were situated at Bulwark Community Centre, Abergavenny Community Centre, Dewstow Primary School and the Ty Price Centre Monmouth. The sessions had a weekly theme, and these were chosen by the children through consultations. The themes selected included role play focusing on Disney, Marvel and Superheroes, Forest Fun, Sport and Sensory. The activities were catered to the children's abilities so each sites activities would have a variation to ensure they were fully enjoyed by the children. There were sports day competitions, an exceptionally large water fight, plenty of fancy dress costumes and increased they were able to build their resource bank so that children could play music, draw, and colour, build structures with loose parts and materials and so much more!

Over the four sites 62 children aged 5-17 benefited from the quality programme.



## Impact

*“It gave my child some routine and something to look forward to during the school holidays. Having special needs often means she is unable to go out and play with other children her age so it was lovely for her to still be able to play with others and have the same opportunities as other children.” Parent feedback.*

*“Excellent service for ALN children. It gives them a chance to be with their friends. Helps with separation and gives every one respite for a few hours. My son loved it. The staff were great.” Parent Feedback.*

*“For my son the routine and safe play was massively helpful. We struggle to go out due to 2 kids with ALN and parent with disabilities. He really enjoyed it. It gave me a chance to catch up on essential tasks which I can't do with both kids home” Parent Feedback.*

*“The local AFC provision has been so beneficial for development of independence and supervised social interaction opportunities which are not otherwise available or accessible, especially for those unable to travel easily.” Parent Feedback.*

## Early Years and Childcare

MonLife and Monmouthshire Early Years and Childcare team work collaboratively throughout the year to support each other to ensure the families of Monmouthshire have access to opportunities to enhance their lives and wellbeing. Childcare is important to the foundational economy, and it is imperative families can access this affordably and the children attending receive a quality provision to support their mental health and development. MonLife supported the Early Years and Childcare team to be able to offer funding to childcare providers to allow them to take the children on day trips throughout the summer holidays or to have services come into settings to offer a unique experience. The cost-of-living crisis has also affected these businesses who are also still trying to recover from COVID. These businesses need to try to keep their costs to parents low and with rising costs this means there is less funds available to provide enhanced experiences.

35 childcare businesses including childminders, full day care and after school clubs received funding. The range of trips, visits and experiences were extensive and included: zoos, beaches, woodlands, wetlands, railways, aquariums, super worm, farm parks, lakes, castles, museum, swimming, kayaking, golf, rugby, yoga, dance, music, pottery painting, craft, animal experiences and circus skills. A total of 345 children aged 0-11 benefited from these experiences.

## Impact

*“I like the lizards the best, my dad said we can't have one but I think he may change his mind” Dylan aged 6*

*“We went to the beach and the woods, I liked the woods best, it was so much fun, and we had a picnic” Elodie, aged 4*

*“The standout moment for me was the pure excitement and joy of a mother when I discussed the trips I was planning. As a low income, single parent family who don't have*

*access to a car, the trips may not have been something they could have experienced as a family. It was just wonderful being able to provide these experiences and create memories.”*  
Setting leader

## **Menter Iaith BGTM**

The commitment to providing opportunities to use the Welsh language outside the classroom is a vital part of Monmouthshire County Council’s new 5 Year Welsh Language Strategy and is also mentioned under Outcome 5 of MCC’s Welsh in Education Strategic Plan which aims to contribute towards the Welsh Government’s vision of creating a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

Menter Iaith BGTM was established in 2007 with the aim of promoting and increasing the use of the Welsh language in three counties –Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and Monmouthshire. They arrange a variety of events for people of all ages, background and linguistic ability to enjoy and socialise in Welsh including parents, families, children and young people, adults and new Welsh speakers (2019, Menter Iaith, <http://www.menterbgtm.cymru/home> Accessed 26/10/22).

With support from MonLife play, Menter Iaith provided three projects to provide children and young people creative experiences through the medium of Welsh. These included “In Character” a Welsh Production company that provided shows on Welsh historical characters. These acted as a stimulus for further study and each character came with an activity pack that supported literacy and numeracy within the Welsh Curriculum.

The second was a textile session where the children were taught sewing skills and were able to design and create their own piece of clothing. The final session was a youth forum gig. This allowed them to provide a gig with several Welsh language rock bands for members of the Welsh Youth Forum.

## **Impact**

*“Good to see Welsh language events in Abergavenny, the children at Ysgol y Fenni need more things like this outside school.” Parent feedback, In character event*

*“I would like to see more events like the Textile workshop again please, the Summer of Fun programme has been excellent.” Parent feedback.*

The number of attendees for the gig was significantly lower than expected as there was a need to re-arrange the gig from early to late September (on a rainy night) as a member of the band was ill with Covid 19 – meaning that several Youth Forum members were unable to attend as they were getting ready to leave home for university. Marketing could also have been better targeted. The experience was very positive for members of the forum who gained experience via volunteering as part of the organisation and promotion of the gig and are willing to work with us on further Welsh language community events in the future. This is still positive impact as the event has allowed momentum for Welsh speakers to support in the future opportunities for events in Welsh language to be possible.

## **Museums, Castles and Attractions**

Monmouthshire as an Authority is steeped in heritage, known for its castles, historical monuments, and idyllic countryside. It is well placed to provide opportunities for children to have unique experiences to play and engage with history and nature. Before the summer holidays MonLife commissioned an audit on playful spaces and using the results of this audit our museums, castles and attractions have worked to make their venues more playful for children and to promote these spaces as places for them to visit, hang out and play.

Museums and castles have resourced their spaces with prompts to play to allow the children visiting to feel they have permission to play in these attractions without being told to walk, be quiet, look but don't touch!

A youth committee has been established throughout the summer with resources bought such as sofas to develop space in Shire Hall where youths can come and hang out with their friends. The intention being to allow them to feel that this is a space they are welcome in. They can just sit and talk with their friends in the warm while being surrounded by the rich history and heritage.

Family engagement sessions took place throughout Abergavenny Museum and Castle, Shire Hall Monmouth, Chepstow Museum, Caldicot Castle and Old Station, Tintern. Session themes were Medieval Mayhem and Toys and Games from the Past. Alongside craft activity were opportunities for loose parts play and object handling.

Craft activities included making Medieval Clay tiles, Hobby horses, jointed knights and illuminated manuscript painting, peg dolls, rocking parrots, cup and ball and thaumatropes.

Children also had the opportunity to dress in medieval costume, play with toys and games from Victorian times through to the 1970's and explore medieval objects including mail, archery equipment and pee pots! Outside of the set activities available children were given permission to play in these spaces freely. If they wanted to play hide and seek in the courthouse they could. If they wanted to ride the hobby horse around the grounds that was fine.

The development of these spaces to ensure they are playful and accessible to children continues with more engagement session planned to continue throughout the rest of the year.

At Caldicot Castle and Country Park a Summer of Fun Little Explorer's Club Nature Trail took place. This involved a supervised educational 'bug hunt' in and around the grounds of Caldicot Castle. Groups consist of up to 10 children, accompanied by a parent/guardian, with one CCCP staff member leading the group.

Children were given a bug hunt checklist to tick off various insects as they discovered them and given a certificate (Expert Bug Hunter) and insect sticker sheet at the end of each session.

Children were loaned 'bug hunter' clothing and equipment for the duration of the bug hunt, which was returned at the end of each session. This allows for these sessions to take place at other holidays throughout the year.

The sessions are intended to increase the children's appreciation of nature, to stimulate their curiosity, to be educational and increase their knowledge of insects, and to see insects as useful and important parts of the environment, to be something appreciated and liked rather than feared

## Impact

*“Activities were VERY family friendly and accessible to both children” Parent feedback.*

*“It was good to have something free and fun to do” Parent feedback.*

*“Great simple fun to prolong a visit, giving the parents/ adults a chance to read the displays.” Parent feedback.*

*“A brilliant activity providing opportunities for our children to ‘make’ and be creative. [We’re] regular visitors to the castle but having an activity like this has helped keep the children engaged” Parent feedback.*

*“I attended the Little Explorers Bug Hunt session this morning with my two children and my friend and her two children. We had a lovely time and just wanted to say a big thank you to Taylor who delivered the session. He was engaging and v knowledgeable about the area, the castle and the nature. He was also very natural with the children and was approachable, chatty and friendly with us adults. It really was a great session and we look forward to any more similar sessions that are put on!” Parent feedback.*

The use of funding to develop these spaces for children is far reaching. Putting yourself in the shoes of a child you can imagine the joy felt to be allowed to play in a real-life castle in a way you want to play not in a way that adults want you to learn something (they will be learning regardless!) As one parent fed back “Wouldn’t usually go to XXXXXXXX museum as it’s not been family friendly when I’ve been previously - I’ll definitely go back now there is stuff for children. It’s a relief that children can make noise, play and enjoy themselves.”

Not only does this have the benefit of providing high play value for children it makes the museums, castles and attractions more appealing to a larger demographic increasing footfall and supporting the wider impact of our heritage settings.



## **Summer of Fun Leisure Services**

Working collaboratively with MonLife Play and Sports team the four leisure centre's provided sessions over the summer that allowed children to access opportunities to engage in sports that they would ordinarily struggle to access or afford. These included free gym spin and swim sessions. This allowed the young people to access the new spin studio and gym where they might otherwise not be able to afford to use these. It encouraged participation and fitness while taking away any poverty stigma. They were also able to access the swimming pool free of charge.

Those who had a MonLife card could also access areas such as tennis, badminton, basketball, and the sports hall for a £1 where they could play for extended periods at a significantly reduced cost. These areas usually cost more to hire so this again allowed for participation while reducing the barrier of affordability.

One of the leisure centres worked with local Autism Charity 'Ready Steady Go' and offered 4 weeks of Guided swimming sessions for Young People with Autism and their families.

Although a teacher was on poolside for the entire session, families had the opportunity to engage with the lesson or do their own thing dependant on the young person's needs.

Another leisure centre offered respite sessions for parents with children with additional needs. This enabled parents to have an hour using the facilities while the children were supervised in the soft play centre which was closed to the public for this time. This allowed them to provide play for the children while meeting their individual needs while also allowing the parents time to engage in physical activity. This is so important for mental health and with the challenges that come with being a parent of a child with additional needs this is vital but not always an option. This is also going to run in subsequent holidays with a hope that, funding permitting, this can be an ongoing project.

### Impact

*"Thank you so much for supporting us and taking the time to help our families. This really will be such a life changing skill for our children". - Parent attending the autistic swimming sessions*

*"Mum couldn't afford for us to do lots of activities so being able to use the facilities during the week for free was great and I can keep fit and see my friends daily." Young person feedback.*

*"I couldn't afford to pay for the sports hall as a group of 4 of us playing basketball but the £1.00 a play has allowed us to access the hall and also the outside areas when its nice weather." Young person feedback.*

*"It gave me something to do at the weekends and I wasn't bored just playing on my Xbox at home by myself." Young person feedback.*

### Summer of Fun Youth Service

Monmouthshire's Youth Service work with young people aged 11-25 through a variety of methods, such as Youth Centre, clubs, outreach, events and trips, in order to best in engage with a wider demographic of young people. Additionally, the design of the Youth Service offers a wide range of support to young people who require it, again through Youth Work approaches and done informally and in ways young people want.

Across 4 youth centres and 8 outreach locations across the authority a total of 678 young people aged 10-19 benefited from a variety of clubs and trips and the opportunity to meet, hang out and have their ideas and feelings listened to.



## Food and Fun

This programme provided a targeted approach where consultations took place with head teachers and the education department. This programme is education based and included taught sessions on food and nutrition, as per the requirements of the scheme. The programme is designed and monitored through Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. It operated from 5 schools within the Local Authority with the capacity to take a cohort of 40 children at each school. The programme ran 5 days a week for 4 weeks. As part of the scheme children were provided with breakfast and lunch each day, as well as 5 hours of activities. Delivery was managed through MonLife who also worked closely with Social Services and head teachers to ensure the needs of the children were met.

Alongside the taught sessions the children also benefited from opportunities to partake in physical activity, creative activities, and play. 289 children benefited from the programme and families attended once a week to partake in an activity and receive a meal together. Between 5-10 families came to these events each week reaching approximately 100 families in total.



## **Impact**

The sessions were well received from all the children. The daily mile was something nearly all the children looked forward to. Parents fed back to staff that the children were enjoying the programme and the fact that they received nutritious meals was fantastic.

ABUHB dietetics did reviews and assessments of the session and provided extremely positive feedback. They were very pleased that all the children were eating the meals provided with a lot asking for seconds. The objective of the programme is to allow children the opportunity to access food that falls into the Eatwell guide as to support in tackling childhood obesity so the fact that the children were eating the meals and not being served any high sugar or salt refreshments would positively impact the health of the children.

They also fed back that the staff were fantastic, so engaging with the children and very knowledgeable ensuring that those healthy messages that the programme was intended to promote was reaching those children thanks to the high-quality staff employed.

Officers involved in the coordination of the scheme have been asked to feedback on a national level to colleagues across Wales based on the impact the scheme has had and how it has been delivered in Monmouthshire.





## **Future Ambitions**

Statutory play duties including the completion and review of current and future Play Sufficiency assessments have now been handed over to leisure services to ensure an integrated approach to services for children and young people. MonLife has recently employed a Play Development Lead who will oversee and manage the actions of the PSA. As per the actions and gaps identified within the PSA and building upon the summer delivery, we intend to implement the following.

- Expand our active play sessions to take place in other holidays; as well as providing free family engagement sessions where families can freely choose from a variety of resources, staffed by our experienced playworkers.
- Look at scope to expand these active play sessions into parks and open spaces to reach more areas of the County (using data obtained from the headline figures)
- Implement the First Claims Audit, a quality tool created and endorsed by Play Wales to review current provision and to plan improvements.
- Work with partners within the local authority including leisure centres, attractions, Action for Children and Building Bridges to increase opportunities for those with diverse needs to access quality play opportunities.
- Build upon the relationships we have made with schools to work collaboratively to provide more play opportunities using school sites.
- Given the current cost of living climate we will work on expanding upon family engagement sessions and opportunities for families to access at little to no cost. We endeavour to work with partners across all services to implement this.
- Continue to offer and build upon the Food and Fun programme with a view to service further schools and to use these sessions to support children with transition to comprehensive schools.
- Develop adventure play at Gilwern including Monmouthshire Wild play, a model of TMG to include outdoor adventure learning such as fire building, rock climbing orienteering. Using DofE volunteers to support delivery.
- Introduction of Loose parts play pods at Gilwern, community spaces and schools
- Work to ensure that play is a priority when services are planning and implementing policy changes.
- Reinstate the play strategy group to ensure play is a priority on agendas across services and to draw upon expertise across the authority.
- Liaise with colleagues building and improving fixed parks to ensure children are consulted in the process and that the parks are sustainable, supportive of nature and offer high play value.
- Raise the profile of partners and key stakeholder engagement / funding support in public facing information.

Since the completion of the summer programme, we have already held some family stay and play session during the October half term. In line with actions identified within the PSA to support play in rural areas we identified some areas to hold these that are noted as rural to allow families to access these without a need to travel into the main times.

We held 6 stay and play sessions at Magor tennis courts, Castle Dell, Usk Island, Raglan MUGA, Bailey Park and Gilwern playing fields. Parents fed back that this was a really good

opportunity to be able to access, in particular one commented that the ability to access local opportunities for their children to play that was free was really beneficial and given the cost of living crisis it is important that we try to continue these to support the families of Monmouthshire. Although the attendees were not as high as we would have liked to have seen our evaluations concluded that the weather played a part in this and that there is a need to expand upon opportunities to market these events. This is an action within the PSA and we have begun plans to increase this.

Using the resources and development of venues during the summer of fun, museums and attractions also held opportunities for children to access stay and play sessions. There were sessions at Abergavenny Museum, Chepstow Museum and Shire Hall. These were well attended by communities and children really enjoyed these sessions. A young persons open day was held at Shire Hall where local young people met during half term to consult on how they can use Shire Hall for a place for them. There were some great ideas and positive feedback from these children, it is paving the way for this venue to be a space for them. This will also support as a warm place for the young people to access during the rising cost of energy.

Plans are now underway to offer a mixture of both Active Play sessions over the Christmas period to include opportunities for children with diverse needs. These sessions will also include a packed lunch for each child that books on. We will also run more stay and play sessions, providing families with an opportunity to socialise in their local community. We will then start planning to offer these in February half term alongside some continued development training for our workforce to continue to build upon the quality we offer.

All future communication with regards to play provision, activities and future opportunities that can be developed on a local level can be sent back to [play@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:play@monmouthshire.gov.uk). Officers would welcome a conversation as to how we can continue to develop a partnership approach with all key stakeholders.

### **A note of thanks...**

The fantastic opportunities that have been provided over the summer, and that we are able to plan for the rest of the year, would not be possible without the support of the following organisations and partners. We would like to take this opportunity to extend our thanks to the following:

Welsh Government

Welsh Local Government Association

Caldicot Town Council

Chepstow Town Council

Abergavenny Town Council

Monmouth Town Council

Caerwent Community Council

Crucorney Community Council

Llanfoist Fawr Community Council

Llanover Community Council

Magor with Undy Town Council

Mitchel Troy United Community Council

Portskewett Community Council

Rogiet Community Council

Trellech United Community Council

**Thank you to the following partners who have helped facilitate inspirational play opportunities, as identified in this report;**

Quest Busters

Building Bridges

Menter Laith

Action For Children

Outdoor Partnership

Kymin View Primary School

Deri View Primary School

Dewstow Primary School

Overmonnow Primary School

Thornwell Primary School