



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Proposals to reopen outdoor playgrounds and indoor play centres: integrated impact assessment

How reopening play settings following their closure due to coronavirus will impact on a number of areas.

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What action is the Welsh Government considering and why?

This Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) assesses the impact of proposals to reopen outdoor playgrounds and indoor play centres following their closure as part of the initial response to coronavirus. Whilst the IIA was prepared in 2020 to inform decisions taken by Ministers, publication has been delayed due to the pressures of the pandemic.

Issue

The Childcare, Play and Early Years Division responded quickly to the urgent public health situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. From 20 March 2020, children's playgrounds and indoor play areas were all required to close as part of the wider response to COVID-19. We worked with staff from across the Welsh Government, the childcare and play sector, Social Care Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales, local authorities and others to manage the impacts of the pandemic on children, families, childcare and playwork services.

An IIA on the Childcare, Play and Early Years Division response to COVID-19 was published on 21 August 2020:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-08/childcare-play-and-early-years-division-response-to-covid-19-integrated-impact-assessment.pdf>

The IIA did not explicitly cover the closure of playgrounds or indoor play centres, with those decisions included in wider considerations around the broad restrictions on social interactions taken in March 2020. However, this IIA, which encompasses the information used to inform a series of decisions initially made between July and August 2020, concerns the following proposals:

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- Reopening children's playgrounds;
- Reopening indoor play areas.

As the response to COVID-19 has continued to evolve, it has been revisited with each iteration of the Coronavirus Control Plan and changes to the overarching emergency Regulations and guidance to ensure operations can continue as intended.

Children's playgrounds and indoor play centres closed from 20 March 2020.

All restrictions, including the closure of parks and indoor play centres, had an impact on children's ability to play, both positive and negative:

- Positive: Children had more free time to play, less organised activities, less school time, less travel
- Negative: Children could not play with their friends, outdoor playing was limited as parks were closed (particularly for those without gardens), children were not able to attend playschemes, schools or childcare settings or indoor play centres where they would normally play

The negative impacts could be considered 'socioeconomic and other social harm' from the 4 direct harms from coronavirus identified in [Leading Wales out of the coronavirus pandemic: a framework for recovery](#), April 2020

- Direct harm to individuals from SARS-CoV2 infection and complications including for those who develop severe disease and in some cases sadly die as a result;
- indirect harm caused to individuals if services including the NHS became overwhelmed due to any sudden large spike in demand from patients with COVID-19 on hospitals, critical care facilities and other key services;
- harms from non-COVID illness, for example if individuals do not seek medical attention for their illness early and their condition worsens, or more

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broadly from the necessary changes in NHS service delivery made during the pandemic in Wales to pause non-essential activity; and

- socioeconomic and other societal harms such as the economic impact on certain socioeconomic groups of not being able to work, impacts on businesses of being closed or facing falling customer demand, psychological harms to the public of social distancing and many others.

During the lockdown period, a number of actions were taken across central and local government and by public sector bodies and the third sector to encourage and support children's play:

1. Registered childcare settings remained open for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children, and schools supported these children in hubs across local authorities. Many local authorities used playwork staff to run school-based hubs. Childcare included an element of play.
2. Many local authorities distributed play packs to vulnerable children who may have had difficulty playing at home.
3. Play Wales and other organisations (Urdd, Children's Commissioner, Mentrau Iaith) shared play ideas on social media.

Decisions taken

As rates of infections decreased and the position on outdoor transmission and transmission between children became clearer, the following decisions were taken to support children's play opportunities:

1. On 10 July 2020, the **First Minister announced** as part of the 21 day review that from 20 July 2020 playgrounds will be able to reopen gradually over the following weeks as and when safety checks and mitigations are put in place.
2. On 7 August 2020, the **First Minister announced** as part of the 21 day review that it was agreed that indoor play areas could prepare to re-open from 10 August 2020, and the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions)

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(No 2) (Wales) Regulations 2020/725 were amended to list indoor play areas as open premises.

Advice for these proposals was prepared by the Childcare, Play and Early Years Division due to its alignment with play policy. The IIAs for these proposals have been presented together as they are closely aligned. At the time the proposals were made, evidence was assessed to look at the impact of the proposals and presented to Ministers alongside advice. As time has passed, additional information has been added to this IIA to assess the impacts of the decisions made and to reflect subsequent changes to coronavirus restrictions.

The Division also prepared the following IIAs:

Response to Covid-19: Integrated Impact Assessment covering the initial response including requesting childcare and play settings to reduce access to vulnerable children and children of critical workers

- Re-start and recovery of the childcare and play sector
- Funding the Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme and the reopening of the Childcare Offer for Wales
- Pause, refocus and restart: Childcare, Early Years and Play Workforce and Support Programmes
- Childcare Provider Grant and its impact on Childcare and Play settings

Evidence assessed at proposal

Outdoor transmission

A review carried out for SAGE in April 2020 looked at **the evidence for the importance of outdoor transmission and of indoor transmission of COVID-19**, and concluded that there is an absence of evidence on transmission

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in outdoor settings but most transmission can be traced back to community transmission across a range of mainly indoor settings.

The vast majority of case reports show transmission via family clusters/people living and eating together; however, there is also evidence of wider community transmission in a range of settings: shopping centres, aeroplanes, restaurants, conferences, churches/temples, tour groups, air travel. There is emerging evidence on the possibility of coughs and sneezes travelling much further than previously thought, therefore caution about the risk of outdoor transmission is warranted.

Scientific advice suggests that the virus can survive for up to several days on some hard surfaces, particularly when indoors. These risks are reduced when outdoors, where surfaces may be subject to UV light and/or rain.

Transmission between children

The latest scientific advice is that the risk to children of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 is very low. The Welsh Technical Advisory Group, which provides scientific and technical advice to Government during emergencies, has reviewed the current evidence that suggests that where children are infected with the virus, it takes a milder course than in adults. Children generally present with mild symptoms or are asymptomatic. Very few develop severe symptoms or life threatening levels of infection.

Furthermore, the Technical Advisory Group report that transmissibility in children under the age of 12 seems to be particularly low with emerging evidence showing limited child-to-child transmission. It is for these reasons that the Technical Advisory Group has concluded children can be 'COVID secure' using a broad range of measures. This evidence supported the return of schools to full operation from September, but it also assesses the evidence on children in general and is therefore also relevant to the childcare and play sector and

children's play more generally in the community.

The importance of 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”

The Welsh Government places great value on play and its importance in the lives of children in our society. We believe that children have a fundamental right to be able to play, and that play is central to their enjoyment of life and contributes to their well-being. We also believe that play is essential for the growth in children’s cognitive; physical; social and emotional development. There is much evidence to support this belief and an increasing understanding of play’s contribution not only to children’s lives, but also to the well-being of their families and the wider community.

Children’s right to play is enshrined in Article 31 of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**. The Welsh Government formally adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2004, and we are committed to making the principles of the UNCRC a reality for all children and young people.

Article 31 (Leisure, play and culture) states: Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.

General Comment No17 on article 31 seeks to enhance the understanding of the importance of article 31 for children’s well-being and development; to ensure respect for and strengthen the application of the rights under article 31.

Proposal 1: Re-opening of playgrounds

The recommendation to re-open playgrounds was based on the low risk of outdoor transmission, low risk to children of transmitting the virus and low risk to children of experiencing severe symptoms of the disease versus the positive benefits that outdoor and active play provide. The decision was timed to coincide with the start of the school summer holidays when there would be a demand for parks and playgrounds.

While the Regulations do not define what constitutes a playground, in general terms they are recognised to be places where children can play, utilising a range of play equipment. This can include outdoor structures designed for children to play in or on. They may also include equipment such as slides, monkey bars, climbing frames, activity towers, swings, spring rockers, see saws and sandpits. The guidance defines playgrounds in these terms, recognising that their exact nature will vary. Splash parks are outdoor facilities, equipped with sprinklers, fountains, nozzles, and other devices that spray water for children to play in.

Owners or operators are defined as those responsible for the management of a playground, including assessment of compliance with any relevant legislation or guidelines. This includes, but is not limited to, local authorities, housing associations, private landowners, retail businesses, pubs and restaurants and school governing bodies.

Owners and operators responsible for playgrounds were given discretion over when they considered it safe to open for activity permitted by legislation. It was recognised that owners and operators may require time to prepare for the safe re-opening of playgrounds and they could open later than the permitted date of 20 July 2020, if additional preparation time was required.

Across Wales there was a variation in re-opening dates. Some local authorities re-opened all playgrounds on 20 July 2020, others phased their parks' re-

opening over the summer, prioritising those in areas where children were less likely to have gardens to play in.

Guidance on reopening children's playgrounds and outdoor play areas: Coronavirus was prepared once the decision was made to re-open and published on 20 July 2020. The guidance required that all owners and operators carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment which helps them decide whether the playground should open and what measures should be in place.

Prior to the recommendation to re-open playgrounds, we shared the guidance in relation to England with key stakeholders, seeking their views on what additional information, if any, they would require. Local Authorities made a number of suggestions and we developed the Welsh guidance in line with that feedback with additional contributions from Play Wales. Further consultation with the WLGA and local authorities on this guidance was positive in terms of practicality and accessibility.

The draft guidance was also shared with: the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Natural Resources Wales, National Trust, Social Partnership Council, Fields in Trust Cymru, One Voice Wales, the CWLWM childcare partnership, Sports Wales and the Welsh Sports Association for comment.

The operation of children's playgrounds has remained under review since the decision to initially allow them to reopen. From September 2020, parts of Wales were subject to local lockdowns, and in November 2020 there was a short two week Firebreak. Outdoor playgrounds remained open in all these instances. In December 2020, Wales returned to a national lockdown, in line with the Alert Levels set out in the **Coronavirus Control Plan for Wales**. Informed by the enhanced understanding of the transmission routes for COVID-19, and balanced against the wider socio-economic harms, it was decided that outdoor playgrounds could remain open even at Alert Level 4, though social distancing was required between households when visiting them. Guidance and FAQs were provided as part of the national alert level information.

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There has been no requirement to close outdoor playgrounds since they were able to reopen in July 2020. Some operators have chosen to close or restrict access at certain times, and where the wider business hosting the playground has been required to close, (e.g. hospitality businesses or tourist attractions) then access will have been restricted. However, no national closures have been mandated. Specific guidance was removed when Wales moved to Covid Stable within the terms of the Coronavirus Control Plan. This was not reinstated during the brief period at Alert Level 2 from December 2021.

Proposal 2. Re-opening of indoor play areas

Indoor play areas, also sometimes known as indoor play centres, are indoor playgrounds. They are specifically designed for children to play in, with structures and play equipment often padded to absorb the impact when children fall or bounce around. As well as specific centres created for the purpose of indoor play, facilities such as these are often found in a range of buildings and services used by parents including pubs, shopping centres and some of the larger tourist attractions. Indoor play areas were required to close under Paragraph 13 of Schedule 2 to the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No 2) (Wales) Regulations 2020 until it was agreed that indoor play areas could prepare to open from 10 August 2020 and the regulations were amended to list Indoor Play Areas as open premises.

Guidance for re-opening **Children's soft play and indoor play areas, including parties: coronavirus** was developed once the decision was taken and published on 8 August 2020 and updated on 18 September 2020 to clarify that children's parties where children are not a part of the same household, are not allowed.

The guidance requires all owners and operators carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment which helps them decide whether the play area should open and what measures should be in place. Measures to mitigate risks include:

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- signage to set maximum numbers of users for the facility or individual pieces of equipment;
- maximum play times during busy periods;
- limiting use of some apparatus to facilitate social distancing;
- increased cleaning for all equipment and facilities;
- Some equipment may not be able to be used even with stringent measures. This includes ball pits and soft foam pits, which are harder to clean.

Indoor play areas operate as businesses. They are supported by the British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions (BALPPA). BALPPA represents 180 play areas out of 1,100, and reports that the sector employs over 30,000 people across the UK. This may underreport the size of the workforce, as indoor play areas also operate as a part of a wider indoor or tourist attraction. There is no specific breakdown at a Wales level, but they report the majority of dedicated indoor play areas across Wales are SMEs, running as individual entities. They support local supply chains and contribute to the local and national economy.

Specific risks associated with indoor play areas relate to the shared surfaces involved, and the potential for people to mix without social distancing and doing higher respiratory activity. They are also indoors, and the evidence suggests that the virus survives longer inside. However, a wide range of indoor attractions have been able to open in recent weeks, subject to relevant health and safety measures.

The transmission risk within indoor play areas would be mitigated by a risk assessment for each play area and assurances that measures would be put in place to adhere to the public health guidance on social distancing, hygiene and sanitisation. They would also be subject to the regulation and guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Persons responsible for indoor play areas will also need to comply with the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No.2) (Wales) Regulations 2020, which provide a duty to take reasonable measures to minimize the risk of exposure to coronavirus.

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The operation of indoor play areas has remained under review since the decision to initially allow them to reopen. From September 2020, parts of Wales were subject to local lockdowns, and in November 2020 there was a short two week Firebreak, each of which brought some restrictions on the numbers able to attend. Some indoor play areas closed for the duration of these measures.

In December 2020, Wales returned to a national lockdown, in line with the Alert Levels set out in the Coronavirus Control Plan for Wales. Indoor play areas, like other indoor attractions, are required to close at Alert Levels 3 and 4, but have been able to remain open from the point Wales moved to Alert Level 2 in the spring of 2021. This was reviewed as Wales moved back to Alert Level 2 in December 2021, but it was felt that subject to following the guidance and regulations around reasonable measures, they could remain open.

There has been no requirement to close indoor play areas since Spring 2021. Some operators have chosen to close or restrict access at certain times. Specific guidance was removed when Wales moved to Covid Stable within the terms of the Coronavirus Control Plan. This was not reinstated during the brief period at Alert Level 2 from December 2021, though an Action Card was available.

Conclusion

How have people most likely to be affected by the proposal been involved in developing it?

Following the proposal, we worked with local authorities to develop a practical and accessible set of guidelines in which outdoor parks could re-open before a decision was made.

We shared the guidance on indoor play centres with the British Association of

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Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions (BALPPA).

We input into a joint project with the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Children in Wales and the Youth Parliament on the **Coronavirus and me** survey. We are using the results of the survey to understand the impact on children of the coronavirus, both positive and negative, so that we can take this forward in supporting children's right to play.

We have received numerous queries from stakeholders, including parents, local authorities, settings and parents via Ministerial correspondence, queries to the Welsh Government or direct to divisional mailboxes. These informed Ministers' decision making and frequently asked questions (FAQs).

What are the most significant impacts, positive and negative?

Playing is an essential activity for children. It is fundamental to their well-being, resilience and development and it is mostly how they exercise. Outside play is important as it encourages a high level of activity and is identified by Public Health Wales as a step towards a healthy weight for children. Re-opening parks and playgrounds is likely to have a significant positive impact on the well-being of children and their parents / carers. It is likely to have minimal negative impact on the transmission of the virus due to what we understand about outdoor transmission and transmission between children.

Children will benefit from increased access to indoor play areas, particularly over the summer period. They are often a feature of wider tourist attractions which families attend on holidays, and dedicated indoor play areas provide a valuable resource for families on days when the weather is poor. Consequently there would be clear physical, developmental and wellbeing benefits for children and young people from increased opportunities to be in indoor play areas. This is particularly so for those without access to gardens or larger spaces to play. As these settings are indoors, it is important that risk assessments and mitigating

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actions are carried out to mitigate the increased risk of transmission from playing indoors.

In addition, increased opportunities to play could support children's recovery from the implications of social distancing – possible isolation, low activity levels and poor physical and mental well-being.

Opportunities for children to play also benefit their parents and carers who understand the value of play for their children and want to provide quality play opportunities. Parents and carers may also get some respite whilst children play independently, even when supervision is required, for example for younger children. Parents will also have the opportunity to socialise with other parents whilst children play (although this must be within social distancing guidelines) which leads to parents supporting each other and improved well-being.

In light of the impacts identified, how will the proposal:

- maximise contribution to our well-being objectives and the seven well-being goals; and/or,
- avoid, reduce or mitigate any negative impacts?

Now that health threats associated with the pandemic have been reduced (although not removed and possibly now increasing once again), economic and social harms caused by direct and indirect consequences of the virus are now a major public policy concern. Re-opening parks and indoor play centres provide increased opportunities for children to play and be active.

The decisions outlined above play an important part in supporting the general principle of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which is about making positive interventions now in order to benefit people living their lives in Wales in the future.

The policy contributes towards the Act's Well-being goals, in particular:

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- A prosperous Wales
 - Supports the indoor play sector to maintain employment and contribute to the economy.
 - Supports the local community surrounding parks, as families visit.
- A healthier Wales
 - Promotes good health and well-being for children and their families.
 - Improves physical activity levels in children.
 - Improves social and cognitive skills.
- A more equal Wales
 - Re-opening outdoor play areas ensures all children can access outdoor play regardless of their housing situation or family income, which reduces the gap between the least and most deprived in our communities.
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
 - Allowing children to meet together and communicate and play, sharing cultural experiences and learning from each other.

We are mindful of the social, developmental and well-being impacts of extended periods of isolation on children, which are likely to be mitigated by access to play areas.

How will the impact of the proposal be monitored and evaluated as it progresses and when it concludes?

Below outlines the data we are collecting to inform decisions around our response, and to monitor and evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of our actions.

1. **Coronavirus and me survey** run by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

In May 2020, the Children's Commissioner worked with the Welsh Government, the Welsh Youth Parliament and Children in Wales to launch a

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‘Coronavirus and me’ survey to find out about the experiences of children and young people in Wales. Results are being published in stages on the Children’s Commissioner’s website.

2. We are in continual discussions with local authorities and Play Wales, who feed back information on how the guidance has been implemented across Wales.
3. The Welsh Government monitors mainstream and social media to understand public views and to inform guidance and frequently asked questions.

Children’s Rights Impact Assessment

1. Describe and explain the impact of the proposal on children and young people.

How will the proposal affect the lives of children, positively and negatively?

Now that health threats associated with the pandemic have been reduced (although not removed and possibly now increasing once again), economic and social harms caused by direct and indirect consequences of the virus are now a major public policy concern. Re-opening parks and indoor play centres provide increased opportunities for children to play and be active.

Playing is an essential activity for children. It is fundamental to their well-being, resilience and development and it is mostly how they exercise. Outside play is important as it encourages a high level of activity and is identified by Public Health Wales as a step towards a healthy weight for children. Parks and playgrounds are a fundamental part of playing outdoors for children, parents see them as ‘safe’ places to play. When given the opportunity to play outdoors,

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children are likely to be physically active by running, jumping, dancing, climbing, digging, lifting, pushing and pulling. Playing outdoors contributes towards agility, balance, creativity and concentration. Children place great value on having good places to play and often regard parks and playgrounds as focal points within their communities. Outdoor mixing is thought to be lower risk than indoor, therefore outdoor play provides children with the benefits of play at minimal risk. Re-opening parks and playgrounds is likely to have a significant positive impact on the well-being of children and their parents / carers. It is likely to have minimal negative impact on the transmission of the virus due to what we understand about outdoor transmission and transmission between children.

Children will benefit from increased access to indoor play areas, particularly over the summer period. They are often a feature of wider tourist attractions which families attend on holidays, and dedicated indoor play areas provide a valuable resource for families on days when the weather is poor. Consequently there would be clear physical, developmental and wellbeing benefits for children and young people from increased opportunities to be in indoor play areas. This is particularly so for those without access to gardens or larger spaces to play. As these settings are indoors, it is important that risk assessments and mitigating actions are carried out to mitigate the increased risk of transmission from playing indoors.

In addition, increased opportunities to play could support children's recovery from the implications of social distancing – possible isolation, low activity levels and poor physical and mental well-being.

Opportunities for children to play also benefit their parents and carers who understand the value of play for their children and want to provide quality play opportunities. Parents and carers may also get some respite whilst children play independently, even when supervision is required, for example for younger children. Parents will also have the opportunity to socialise with other parents whilst children play (although this must be within social distancing guidelines) which leads to parents supporting each other and improved well-being.

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Research by the Play Safety Forum **Covid 19 and Children's Play research report** (first published on 17 June and updated on 9 September 2020) includes the following which suggests re-opening play facilities would greatly benefit children:

- 'evidence on the risks posed by play deprivation is growing and should be of concern
- depending on personal circumstances, children are affected in differing degrees by COVID- 19 restrictions
- risks posed by outdoor play have received little direct attention
- the risk in schools to pupils and teachers is said to be low and it can reasonably be projected that the risk of outdoor play will be much lower still'.

Following the decision and implementation, the following reports confirm the decision:

A report by the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition (**CYPMHC**) **Annual Report 2020** (September 2020) shares information on the importance of outdoor play for children's health and well-being and explores how play has changed during the coronavirus pandemic, with research showing a decrease in peer-play and play in playgrounds in England.

A UNICEF report shows strong links between children's happiness and the frequency of playing outside. **The Worlds of Influence: Understanding What Shapes Child Well-being in Rich Countries** report states that children who live in neighbourhoods with places to play tend to be happier than those who do not.

The **Coronavirus and me survey** run by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, reported in September 2020 that whilst the restrictions affected everyone, children had widely different experiences. Some have experienced bereavement, distress and worry. Many have missed their friends, their families and feel they are missing out on their education. At the same time, many children describe how they have valued a chance to spend more time with their

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family, to play and relax more, or to learn in a different way. Many report pleasure of enjoying the outdoors in gardens and during daily exercise. Over half of children report playing more than usual (53%) with a wide range of online and offline play described including outdoor play, imaginary play, playing with toys or games, sports and creative play. Children also reported to be relaxing more.

A supplementary report **Coronavirus and Me: Experiences of children from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds** reported that children from BAME backgrounds were more likely than children from non-BAME backgrounds to have negative experiences of lockdown. They were more likely to say they were playing less, less likely to be exercising outside and more likely to say they wanted help to eat healthy food and stay active.

How will the proposal affect different groups of children (e.g. children who have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), children living in poverty, children with a disability, children living in Welsh speaking households and children in Welsh medium education etc.)

The evidence suggests children from disadvantaged backgrounds have been more negatively affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Re-opening playgrounds, particularly outdoor playgrounds that are free to access, will particularly benefit disadvantaged children: children in poverty, children from black and ethnic minority backgrounds, children who do not access to a garden. It will also benefit only children, who may not have had much face-to-face interaction with other children during the lockdown.

Following the decision, in September 2020, the **Coronavirus and me survey** run by the Children's Commissioner for Wales reports that whilst the restrictions affected everyone, children had widely different experiences. Some have experienced bereavement, distress and worry. Many have missed their friends, their families and feel they are missing out on their education. At the same time, many children describe how they have valued a chance to spend more time with their family, to play and relax more, or to learn in a different way. Many report

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pleasure of enjoying the outdoors in gardens and during daily exercise. Over half of children report playing more than usual (53%) with a wide range of online and offline play described, including outdoor play, imaginary play, playing with toys or games, sports and creative play. Children also reported to be relaxing more.

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2. What evidence have you used to inform your assessment, including evidence from children or their representatives?

Below outlines the data we are monitoring to inform decisions around our response, and to monitor and evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of our actions.

Assessed at proposal

1. We are in continual discussions with local authorities and Play Wales who feed back information on how the guidance has been implemented across Wales.
2. The Welsh Government monitors mainstream and social media to understand public views and to inform guidance and frequently asked questions.
3. Play Safety Forum **Covid 19 and Children's Play research report** (June 2020)

Assessed following implementation

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4. **Coronavirus and me survey** run by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

In May 2020 the Children's Commissioner worked with the Welsh Government, the Welsh Youth Parliament and Children in Wales to launch a 'Coronavirus and me' survey to find out about the experiences of children and young people in Wales. Results are being published in stages on the Children's Commissioner's website.

5. Research and articles on the effect of coronavirus on children's ability to play
 - a. Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition (CYPMHC) shares information on the importance of **outdoor play for children's health and well-being** in its Annual Report 2020.
 - b. A UNICEF report shows strong links between children's happiness and the frequency of playing outside. **The Worlds of Influence: Understanding What Shapes Child Well-being in Rich Countries**
 - c. **Are the kids alright? Social isolation can take a toll, but play can help** Australia (The Conversation – Pasi Sahlberg and Sharon Goldfeld)

3. How have you consulted with children and young people? If you haven't, please explain why.

We did not consult with children and young people on the re-opening of parks and indoor play centres as the benefits are widely accepted.

Following the decision, **children and young people were consulted through the Coronavirus and me survey** run by the Children's Commissioner for Wales. In May 2020, the Children's Commissioner worked with the Welsh Government, the Welsh Youth Parliament and Children in Wales to launch a 'Coronavirus and me' survey to find out about the experiences of children and young people in Wales. See 1 and 2 above.

4. What other evidence would inform the assessment?

We are keeping in touch with Welsh Government Knowledge and Analytical Services colleagues who are coordinating COVID-19 related research and analysis, to ensure relevant evidence informs policy and our assessments on an on-going basis. We are also regularly in touch with government analysts via the UK and Ireland Cross Government Early Years Analytical Group, and are regularly keeping in touch with leading funders of research (eg. Nuffield Foundation) and academics to seek their views (eg. David Dallimore, Luke Sibieta, etc) and ensure relevant evidence in the evolving impact of the pandemic is fully exploited and informs our plans.

5. Explain how the proposal is likely to impact on children's rights

Below is a table of the UNCRC articles that are most relevant to the above decisions.

Article Number	Description	Links to decisions
2	The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.	Outdoor and indoor playgrounds re-opened to benefit all children. Outdoor playgrounds are particularly beneficial to children from low income families who are more likely to be from minority groups.

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Article Number	Description	Links to decisions
3	The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.	All decisions focussed on allowing all children to access play areas as soon as possible, minimising risk but acknowledging the well-being benefits of play.
	Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.	Play allows children to develop to their full potential.
15	Children and young people have the human right to freedom of association.	Parks and playgrounds are places where children meet and associate with each other
23	A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all they can to support disabled children and their families.	Many outdoor playgrounds have accessible areas and equipment for disabled children. Re-opening these provides valuable play opportunities for disabled children.
24	Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy.	Access to play areas improves children's physical and mental health and well-being.

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Article Number	Description	Links to decisions
31	Every child has the right to engage in play and recreational activities	Re-opening outdoor and indoor play areas provides facilities for all children. This is particularly important for those who do not have access to gardens.

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