



A career  
as a  
playworker?

Find out more ...



Want to know more about playwork? Please visit:

[www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk) or  
[www.playworkwales.org.uk](http://www.playworkwales.org.uk)

## What does a playworker do?

We work to support children by:

- Making opportunities for them to create new and different spaces for playing; places big and small, inside or out, that are attractive and offer freedom to play
- Providing or making available all kinds of every day 'stuff' that children might use in playing
- Watching and learning from children about play and how to better support it
- Being around if needed

Playworkers also listen to children, build relationships with them, foster their self-esteem, encourage independence, help them when they ask and stand up for them. We also deal with injuries and illness, assess and manage all kinds of risks, liaise with parents and with other professionals, and advocate for children's right to play in their community.

## What is playwork?

Playwork is a relatively new profession that exists because children tend not to have the freedom to go out and roam and play in the ways they used to. There is a growing number of play spaces staffed by playworkers – inside and out – that give children the freedoms and opportunities to play they wouldn't otherwise have.

Playworkers provide for all children and young people of school age (0018) whatever their background or ability. What makes playwork different from other jobs is that we give all children a space to be themselves and to play in the ways they want and need.

It's not as easy as it sounds! Playwork is a demanding, exciting and innovative occupation that is different every day and full of surprises and challenges.



“What does it take to be a playworker? Patience, having a sense of fun, being easy-going”  
Mel, Play Development Worker,  
Wrexham



Want to know more about why play is so important?  
Please visit:

[www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk)

## Why is play so important?

Play is essential for children; we need to ensure they have sufficient time, space and freedom to enjoy it. Research shows that playing is very necessary for children's survival and wellbeing.

It is through playing that children - at any age - explore and discover their world, themselves and each other. In playing, children experiment, negotiate, take risks, make decisions, solve problems; they laugh and they cry, they take knocks and they achieve, they fail and they conquer, they invent and they dream.

What is essential is that they do it in their own way – it is not something that can be taught or controlled by adults!

Even the Welsh Assembly recognises the importance of play and has a play policy – it was the first country in the UK to adopt one.

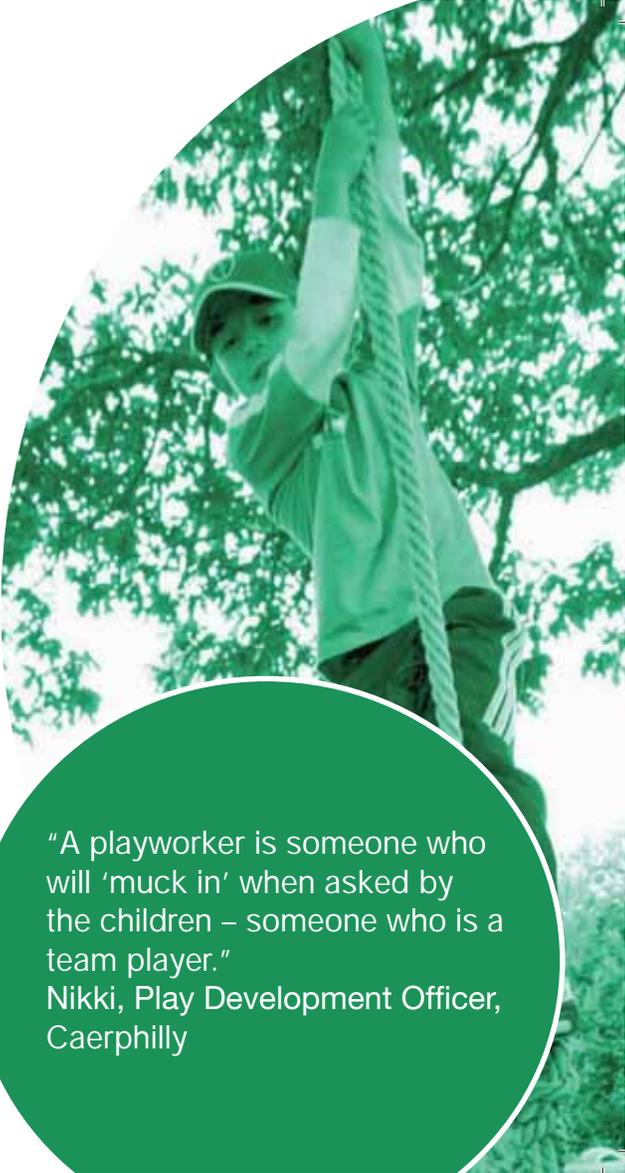
## Where does playwork happen?

Playwork happens in:

after-school clubs, peripatetic playwork projects\*, staffed adventure playgrounds, playschemes, children's centres and mobile projects (like play buses).

\*Peripatetic playworkers take play projects to the places where children can access them – places like parks, open spaces, streets or recreation grounds – to encourage children to have confidence to play out and to reclaim public space for play.

“The best thing about being a playworker is that you make a change and a difference – create a bigger voice for children. You get to work with children who are unique, funny, exceptional, unpredictable, embarrassing and surprising!” Lisa, Playwork Trainer, Caerphilly



“A playworker is someone who will ‘muck in’ when asked by the children – someone who is a team player.”

Nikki, Play Development Officer,  
Caerphilly



## Can I be a playworker?

Almost anyone can be a playworker – whatever age, ability or background you have. What really matters is whether you like and respect children and whether you can learn from them - see the world through their eyes. You also need to be able to think about what you are doing (and not doing!) and learn as you go along.

It also helps if you are honest, brave, curious, playful and hard-working!

All kinds of people are playworkers and we each bring our own unique blend of knowledge, skills and experience with us to support and enrich children's play.

Want to know more? Please visit:

[www.skillsactive.com/  
careers/downloads/job\\_  
profiles/P\\_Playworker.pdf](http://www.skillsactive.com/careers/downloads/job_profiles/P_Playworker.pdf)

## What skills do I need?

The most important thing about playworkers is our positive attitude towards children and our willingness to learn. We can develop many useful skills along the way:

FROM	TO
Listening	Building structures
Communicating	Creative use of materials
Conflict management	Book-keeping
Risk assessment	Staff management
Diplomacy	Networking
Advocacy	First aid
Reflection	

No matter how experienced we are, there is always the opportunity to learn new things.



"I started as a volunteer until I gained a post within the Creative Play Team." Toni, Playworker, Caerphilly

"I was the cleaner, until asked to help out for a few hours..." Alyson, Playworker, Caerphilly



## How do I get started?

There is a number of ways:

- Volunteer to work in a play project near you
- Apply for vacancies locally (it will help if you have some related experience)
- Apply for an induction playwork training course which involves a voluntary placement in a play project.

Before we start to work or volunteer with children in a play setting we are required to complete a form providing our personal details and giving information about any criminal convictions we may have. This is called a Disclosure and is standard procedure for protecting children from those who might harm them.

Want to know more?  
Please visit:

[www.crb.org.uk](http://www.crb.org.uk)

## Will I be trained?

You will probably need to take part in some basic training and before too long you may have the opportunity to undertake an introductory qualification. If you decide you want to progress in playwork you will be expected to gain a qualification at some point.

Depending on the funding available at the time, you may get help towards the cost of training, or your employer may be able to pay.

Careers Wales provides careers guidance and information services free to anyone living and working in Wales, and they provide advice on playwork as a career and playwork training courses. [www.careerswales.com](http://www.careerswales.com)

**“No longer do I shake when I attend a course – I enjoy it!” Alyson, Playworker, Caerphilly**





## What qualifications do playworkers need?

Although you may be able to start without a qualification you will be expected to gain one eventually.

Most playwork qualifications require learning through practical experience in a play setting, combined with some teaching/study. Some written work will be required.

There are now nationally recognised qualifications approved by the Department for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning and Skills, Wales, which are listed on the National Database of Accredited Qualifications.

Want to know more about qualifications? Please visit:

[www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk](http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk)

## What levels of qualifications are there?

Different levels of qualification are required depending on the job we do and the level of responsibility we take. As a rough guide:

Level 2 qualifications are for people who work under supervision

Level 3 qualifications are for people who work on their own initiative, plan and organise their work and supervise others

Level 4 qualifications are for experienced practitioners who are expected to manage or develop a complex setting or a number of settings across an area.

Want to know more about what levels are required? Please visit:

[www.cssiw.org.uk](http://www.cssiw.org.uk)



"I only thought I'd be around for three years until my university course ended, another three years later and I'm still in the profession."  
Nikki, Play Development Officer, Caerphilly



Want to know more about qualifications? Please visit: [www.skillsactive.com/training/standards](http://www.skillsactive.com/training/standards) or go to the training pages on: [www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk)

## What kinds of qualifications are there?

There are different kinds of qualifications and different ways of achieving them.

### **Occupational Qualifications**

National Occupational Qualifications mainly test our skills and knowledge while we are working. We may also need to attend a training course. We do not have to take a formal exam. An assessor watches us at work to check we are competent.

In Wales there are National Minimal Standards for Day-Care Services for Children under Eight. The minimum standard for staffing is that at least half of all childcare staff must hold a Level 2 qualification appropriate to the post and the age of the children; the person in charge of the setting must hold a Level 3 qualification. The Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) is responsible for making sure the Standards are maintained.

## **Vocational qualifications**

These assess what we know and understand. We usually attend a course of study and either sit an exam or produce an assignment. Sometimes we are assessed in our workplace.

There is a set of brand new qualifications on the National Database of Accredited Qualifications which have been developed by Play Wales for playworkers in Wales – Playwork: Principles into Practice (P<sup>3</sup>). These courses provide knowledge and understanding which supports competent playwork practice. The full P<sup>3</sup> qualification at Level 2 is available through the medium of Welsh or English and has been completed by hundreds of playworkers. It is offered as a series of three separate ‘bite-size’ qualifications, the Award, Certificate and Diploma, which build up to a full qualification at Level 2. And a Level 3 P<sup>3</sup> qualification is planned.

## **Higher Education qualifications**

There are opportunities for playworkers to access Higher Education (HE) courses too. These range from a Diploma right through to a Masters degree or a Doctorate in Playwork.





## What might I earn?

Pay rates vary, but here is a rough idea of what you might expect:

- Casual and unqualified playworkers can earn around £7 per hour
- Qualified playworkers (working around 30 hours per week) can earn between £14,000 to £16,000 per year
- A Senior Playworker can earn around £8 per hour or £16,000 to £20,000 per year
- Play development workers and senior posts can earn from around £21,000 to £24,000 per year

NB. Information gathered from GAVO, Caerphilly Creative Play Project (correct at January 2009).

## Who funds playwork?

Local authorities, private, voluntary and charitable organisations all fund playwork. They pay for the staff, the equipment and the buildings and outside spaces that are used.

Levels of pay for playworkers are dependent on the requirements of the post. Some local authorities follow pay scales agreed by the Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth and Community Workers. Playwork salaries depend on the nature of the employing organisation.





Want to know more from the  
Union for playworkers?  
Please visit:

[www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk) or  
[www.cywu.org.uk](http://www.cywu.org.uk)

## Working hours

Many playworkers are part-time and paid hourly or for a session. A session can be 2 - 3 hours per week and up to 20 hours depending on the project. Playworkers working full time would be expected to work between 35 and 37 hours a week, often with working hours to suit children's free time.

## Holiday/Annual leave

In addition to paid bank holidays playworkers who are employed are entitled to a number of paid holiday days per year. This depends on the organisation and whether playworkers are employed full or part-time. We are entitled to a legal minimum of days leave set by the UK government.

# What is the children's workforce?

How does playwork fit in?

The children's workforce includes teachers, teaching assistants, social workers, youth workers, nurses, youth justice, community artists, family workers, early years workers, foster carers, childminders and playworkers - everyone who works with children, young people and their families.

At a government level the children's workforce is represented by the Children and Young People's Workforce Development Network, Wales. The Care Council for Wales facilitates the Network to ensure that children's services in Wales are provided by a skilled and effective workforce.

Playwork is one occupation within the Children's Workforce. In the Children and Young People's Workforce Development Network it is represented by SkillsActive and Play Wales, who ensure playworkers have the skills and knowledge to do their job well and that they have access to career pathways. Want to know more?

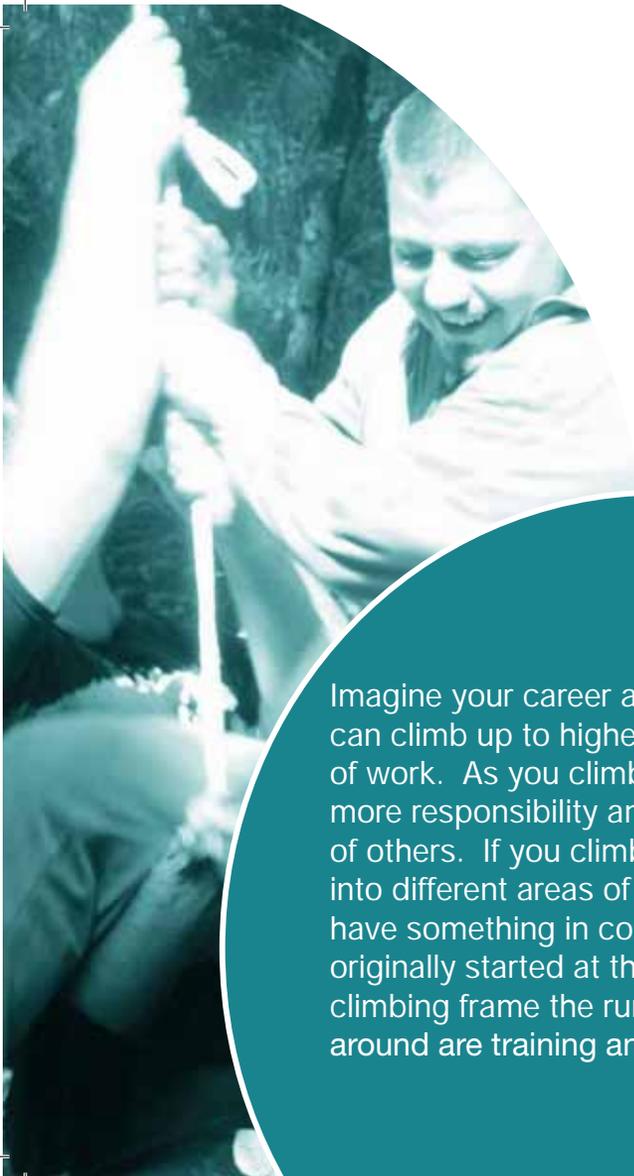
[www.skillsactive.com](http://www.skillsactive.com)

[www.playwales.com](http://www.playwales.com)

People may have more than one job in different sections of the children's workforce. They are sometimes called 'portfolio workers'. If you are an early years worker it is now possible to undertake a short qualification to become a playworker.

Want to know more? Please visit:

[www.skillsactive.com](http://www.skillsactive.com)



In Wales, the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills has developed a framework for training and qualifications for the different occupations involved with children, young people and their families. Within this framework it is now possible to qualify so that it is easier to move from one part of the children's workforce to another.

Imagine your career as a climbing frame. You can climb up to higher levels in the same type of work. As you climb up the work will involve more responsibility and perhaps supervision of others. If you climb sideways you move into different areas of work with children that have something in common with the work you originally started at the same level. In this climbing frame the rungs that help you move around are training and qualifications.

Want to know more?  
Please visit:

[www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

'Would I recommend this job to others? Yes, if you like children and don't mind getting dirty.' Mel

'I've gained enthusiasm, confidence and developed my sense of humour.' Lisa

'What's the best thing about being a playworker? Being out there with the children - watching them play and explore new ideas with the resources we provide.' Nikki

'Hard work, enthusiasm, a passion for working and being around children. We need to be flexible, approachable, understanding – and to remember how we played.' Lisa

'I'd highly recommend it.' Gary

'I like my work with kids.' Emma



**Play Wales is the national organisation for children's play**, an independent charity funded by Welsh Assembly Government to uphold children's right to play and to provide advice and guidance to all those with an interest in children's play.

Playwork Wales is the National Centre for Playwork Education and Training in Wales, hosted by Play Wales.

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RCT Play Association  
Swansea Play Team  
The Venture, Wrexham  
Wrexham Play Development Team

