

## Play Activities 2021-22

Please find attached an overview report of the play activities that we have delivered in 2021, together with details of those that we intend to deliver for the remainder of this financial year.

This year has seen a significant increase in the number and type of activities that we have been able to promote. It has also been a year of unprecedented challenge, with us discontinuing to commission services through Torfaen Play and bringing the organisation and delivery of all supervised play provision back in-house within MonLife.

In addition to taking on nearly 100 new part time staff to deliver activities, we have had to chart our way through a constantly changing raft of Covid regulations, with advice being updated on a weekly and sometimes daily basis. For example, the end of term activities that we delivered over the Easter period this year had to be risk assessed and planned right down to the last detail in anticipation of the legislation changing to allow us to deliver what had been planned. Fortunately, we received clearance on the Thursday (26<sup>th</sup>), which allowed us to contact over 170 families and begin delivery on the following Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> March.

Whilst the additional funding provided by the Welsh Government for the Summer of Fun and the Winter of Well-Being is welcome, there is no guarantee that this will be repeated next year so there is some uncertainty regarding the full programme of activities that we would like to deliver.

With the continued help of your council we are confident that in 2022 we will be able to deliver the Monmouthshire Games, the SHEP programme, half term play in the park sessions and a range of disability provisions – we would also like to continue producing activity packs for the summer and autumn terms. If further funding is allocated to allow us to deliver more activities then we will of course let you know.

Just before Christmas, I posted a copy of the autumn activity pack to you for you to have a look at and share with your members. The autumn packs were developed by a small team of officers in MonLife, led by our Learning Manager Karin Molson, and they are centred around a new character called Harri the Hedgehog. Other members of the team included officers from Biodiversity, Ecology and Well-Being. In total we produced 1,250 packs. Just over 1,000 were delivered to Monmouthshire's primary schools immediately before the October half term break, so there was one pack specifically for every Year 4 pupil and a few spares for use in the classroom.

I hope that the attached report gives you enough information about the range of activities that we have delivered in 2021 to date and gives you the confidence that we can continue to deliver some meaningful play provisions for the children and young people of Monmouthshire in the next financial year – but if you need any more information or clarification please just let me know.

I'll arrange to forward you an invoice shortly for your council's contribution to this year's play activities and at the same time can I ask if your council is able to continue to support the play provisions in Monmouthshire in 2022 at the same level as this year please?

With sincere thanks and best wishes for a safe, happy and playful new year,

Community Infrastructure Coordinator  
MonLife – Monmouthshire County Council

## **MONMOUTHSHIRE PLAY ACTIVITIES 2021**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This year the range of play activities has increased considerably on that which we have been able to deliver in previous years. Set out below is a summary of the activities that we have (and will be) undertaken in this financial year.

#### **1. Easter 2021 (29<sup>th</sup> March to 9<sup>th</sup> April)**

This year started by providing free outdoor open access play sessions on four leisure centre sites over the Easter period, against a difficult background of restrictions due to the pandemic. Final approval to deliver organised children's activities with effect from 27<sup>th</sup> March was only confirmed by Welsh Govt. on 26<sup>th</sup> March, and activities in Monmouthshire commenced on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> March. As a result of the guidance and advice received, this provision was limited to 30 places per site per day to ensure that the sessions were fully compliant with individual site risk assessments and with Covid regulations.

#### **2. SHEP – Summer 2021 (2<sup>nd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> August)**

The SHEP (School Holiday Enrichment Programme) sessions were delivered in five schools in summer 2021 over a period of 20 days. The sessions ran from 9.30am until 2.30pm daily and each child attending received a free healthy breakfast and lunch every day.

When we ran the SHEP scheme at two schools in 2019 (pre-Covid), the main focus was on children in receipt of free school meals (FSM) but this year the Welsh Government emphasis changed to vulnerable children and, as a result, referrals into the scheme were made by the appropriate headteachers in the first instance. The capacity at four schools was for 80 children per day and 40 children per day at the fifth school (Kymin View, Wyesham) – a daily capacity of 360 children per day, or 7,200 places over the four week period.

To deliver the SHEP sessions we employed 75 seasonal staff, in addition to the 26 existing catering staff that worked on the scheme to prepare and deliver the breakfasts and lunches in line with the School Catering Regulations 2013.

Although every place on the SHEP scheme was pre-booked, the actual attendances reduced in percentage terms to 50.2% of full capacity this year, compared to 76% when the scheme ran at two schools back in 2019. However, analysis of the attendances over the summer confirmed that 70% of vulnerable children referred by the respective headteachers did attend the scheme.

The SHEP scheme at Thornwell School in Chepstow was the focus of a news article by BBC Wales on 26<sup>th</sup> August and the item was broadcast on national TV on the BBC Wales lunchtime news that day. Please follow this a link to the article published by the BBC: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-58332312> . The photographs in the article are of staff and pupils at the Thornwell SHEP scheme.

### **3. The Monmouthshire Games 2021 (TMG) (26<sup>th</sup> July to 27<sup>th</sup> August)**

The Monmouthshire Games took place at the four leisure centres offering a full programme of sports activities from 8.00am to 5.00pm over 25 days of the summer, with experience provided for participants in over 30 different sports. Although there is a charge for attending TMG sessions, we were able to support 36 vulnerable children, who each had ten days free access to the games. 899 children took part in the scheme with 4,131 attendances recorded over the 5 week period (total occupancy of 88%).

### **4. Summer of Fun 2021 (1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> September)**

With additional Welsh Government funding, we ran an extensive Summer of Fun programme over a number of sites, including the following free activities:

Early Years (ages 0-4) trips & visits involving over 100 children and their families

Two additional hubs to provide activities specifically for children with disabilities and other support needs, involving in total 50 children aged 5 - 18 yrs. at three community venues

Thirty six additional youth sessions for children & young people aged 11 – 18 yrs. held at a number of different venues across the county.

Five family days held at five venues (Abergavenny Castle and Museum, Chepstow Museum, Monmouth Shire Hall, Caldicot Castle and Country Park and Tintern Old Station), generating 500 participants taking part in craft activities and self-guided walks.

Four rugby camps held at the four leisure centres in partnership with the Gwent Dragons, with 200 participants aged 8 – 13 yrs.

Delivery of children's activities on the Monmouthshire stand at the Usk Show on 11<sup>th</sup> September with attendance by over 150 children and young people.

A skate jam at the Monmouth Skatepark on 26<sup>th</sup> September involving 110 children and young people aged 8 – 25 yrs.

### **5. Autumn Half Term Activities 2021 (26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> October)**

During the autumn school half term holidays, we delivered twenty play in the park sessions at the following six community venues:

Bailey Park, Abergavenny	Gilwern Playing Field
Kymin View School Monmouth	Monmouth Chippenham Village Green
Castle Dell, Chepstow	Thornwell Playing Field, Chepstow
Newport Road, Caldicot	Magor Multi-Use Tennis Courts

In addition to these sessions, we produced Autumn Activity Packs that were delivered to every Year 4 pupil in Monmouthshire's primary schools, a total of 904 children, the week before the autumn half term break began. A copy of the pack,

centred around a new character called Harri the Hedgehog, has been sent to all participating town and community councils.

## HEADLINES AND FEEDBACK TO DATE

<b>Programme: SHEP (School Holiday Enrichment Programme)</b>	
<b>5</b>	delivery sites
<b>360</b>	places available every day
<b>423</b>	children registered for the programme
<b>3,620</b>	attendances over four weeks
<b>7,240</b>	free healthy meals provided over the four weeks of the scheme
<b>500</b>	hours of support provided for vulnerable children
<b>95%</b>	of children said they had met a new friend during SHEP
<b>89%</b>	of children said they tried a new activity that they hadn't before
<b>9.74</b>	(out of 10) rating for how friendly the staff were
<b>9.64</b>	(out of 10) rating for how much fun the child had

*(above ratings based on 225 responses received from children)*

<b>Programme: MONMOUTHSHIRE GAMES (TMG)</b>	
<b>899</b>	children took part in TMG in summer 2021
<b>4,131</b>	attendances at TMG through the five weeks of the programme
<b>25</b>	days duration, delivering sessions in over 30 different sports
<b>900</b>	hours support provided throughout the summer
<b>4,409</b>	swimming session participations during TMG in the summer
<b>93%</b>	of children said they had met a new friend during TMG
<b>71%</b>	of children said they tried a new sport that they hadn't before
<b>99%</b>	of children said they would come back to TMG again
<b>9.59</b>	(out of 10) rating for how friendly the staff were
<b>9.50</b>	(out of 10) rating for how much fun the child had

*(above ratings based on 206 responses received from children)*

<b>Programme: SUMMER OF SWIMMING</b>	
<b>1,368</b>	Attendances at free Under 5s free swimming classes
<b>24</b>	Under 16s free swimming sessions
<b>24</b>	Over 60s free swimming sessions
<b>400</b>	children received water safety sessions and swimming kit bags
<b>300</b>	attended supporting swimming Masterclasses
<b>1,500</b>	children continued to learn to swim at the four leisure centres
<b>12</b>	learners were supported through their Level 1 swimming course

### Staffing:

To deliver these play programmes over the summer and October half term periods, we employed 98 new staff – most of these were young people from Monmouthshire and many of these staff have followed an employment pathway starting with their early involvement with the school ambassador's initiative. Every year our Sport Development Team train all year 5 pupils in a 6 hour Sport Leadership Course, currently all year 5 through to year 9 pupils have received this training. This is the

start of our leadership pathway and volunteering opportunities through secondary school, creating a pathway from age 10 in to post 16 employment opportunities.

## **6. Winter of Well-Being (December 2021 – end March 2022)**

Utilising additional Welsh Government funding we are delivering a programme of activities for children & young people aged 0 – 25yrs. Between January and the end of March 2022 we aim to engage with 2,123 children, providing 6,063 participant places. Of these we anticipate providing activities for 132 vulnerable children, providing at least 468 participant places. In addition to this we will be engaging with a further 60 children with disabilities providing 112 participant places at four community venues.

Some of these activities took place in the two weeks immediately prior to Christmas, with the Youth Service taking groups of young people to the Winter of Wonderland in Cardiff and Action for Children delivering festive party sessions for 52 disabled children at three venues in the week before Christmas.

Below is a brief summary of the activities we will be delivering as part of the Winter of Well-Being programme:

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Provision</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>
11 - 25	Additional activities, trips and visits for young people, including provisions for Young Carers and the LGBT+ community	Dec 2021 To end March 2022	Youth Service Manager
	Bridges QB provision – family activities for disabled children & young people with more complex needs from across the county	Jan to end March 2022	Bridges Community Centre Manager
3 - 11	Family activity sessions at five heritage sites	Jan to end March 2022	Learning Manager
3 - 11	Purchase of play resources and themed costumes for one site		
	Heritage sites (5) – Playful Assets Audit		
	Play training for Heritage Sites staff		
5 – 11	Resources for early years family play at Tintern Old Station	Feb 2022	Learning Manager
5 – 11	Purchase of spaces at TMG sessions	Dec 2021 Feb 2022	Youth Sport & Active Travel Manager
0 - 16	Free Leisure Centre Children's Activities	Jan to end March 2022	Leisure Centre Managers
All Year 3 Pupils	Spring Activity Packs to be distributed before Easter break	Complete by end Mar 22	Learning, Countryside and GI Teams
5 - 11	Ten play in the park sessions in rural communities	February 22 Half Term	Sport and Community Development Officer

A full report on the Winter of Well-Being activities will be provided when delivery of the programme has been completed.

## **PLANS FOR 2022**

It's difficult to plan with any certainty in advance without knowing the total amount of funding that is going to be available to deliver play activities in the following financial year.

The partnership funding from the town and community councils that contribute towards the supervised play provisions in the county is the starting point for us to begin planning what we are likely to be able to deliver.

Welsh Government's budget for SHEP (the summer holiday Food and Fun activities) and for the Holiday Playworks Scheme (which we used this year for activities over the half term periods) has been confirmed and Families First funding will also be available to cover the cost of some of the activities that we deliver for disabled children and those with other support needs.

We will again deliver the Monmouthshire Games sessions at the leisure centres over all school holiday periods, as these sessions are largely self-financing.

The additional resources allocated by the Welsh Government this year for the Summer of Fun and the Winter of Well-Being activities is welcome but much of this is short term funding, notified with little advance notice, which makes the pre-planning of activities particularly difficult.

We will of course provide updates as and when any funding is confirmed.

One other significant development is that we no longer commission the Torfaen Play Service to deliver sessions on our behalf. Other than the disability play sessions which are commissioned by the Children with Disabilities Team and delivered by Action for Children (AfC), all of the activities in 2021 have been delivered by staff employed directly by the county council. The vast majority of these staff live in Monmouthshire and many of them have come through an employment pathway starting with the young ambassadors' programme.

2022 is also the year in which we have to undertake a full Play Sufficiency Audit, which has to be produced by all local authorities in Wales every three years. This is an important opportunity to set the "direction of travel" for play provision in Monmouthshire for the period 2022 to 2025. The PSA this year has to be completed and delivered to Welsh Government by the end of June.

In conclusion and, as always, we are really grateful for the generous financial support provided by the town and community councils in Monmouthshire, without which many of these activities would not be possible.

**January 2022**