

## QUALITY OF CARE REVIEW

### Self-evaluation template for providers of childcare and play services

Mae'r ffurflen gais hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg / This template is also available in Welsh

#### Your self-evaluation

Self-evaluation is important in helping you to consider how best to create, maintain and improve your service so that it:

- Meets the highest standards of safe, quality childcare and play;
- Offers the best experience for children; and
- Contributes to children's well-being outcomes.

Your service's Quality of Care Review also fulfils your legal duty under regulation 16 of the Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations 2010.

#### When to use this template

You can use this template annually to record your Quality of Care Review. The template can be downloaded and saved to your personal computer and/or other portable devices such as tablets.

Your Quality of Care Review should be made available at inspection or when requested by your inspector.

This Review of Quality of Care (QoC) template is available to assist you when formatting your QoC report. If you use an alternative format, it must be compliant with the Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations 2010.

You do not need to send us a copy of your review unless specifically required to do so by your inspector. For those services due to receive a joint inspection by CIW and Estyn, you may use the template and cover all themes in the joint inspection framework, or use an alternative method.

## About the self-evaluation template

The template is in two parts:

**Part A** tells us what those who use the service think of the quality of the provision you offer.

**Part B** gives you an opportunity to evaluate your provision and judge how well you view your service is doing.

Questions you will wish to consider in your evaluation:

- What do you do well?
- How do you know?
- What is the benefit to children?
- What is it you want to improve?
- How will you measure improvements?

## **Part A: Service details and views of those who use the service**

This part of your self-evaluation must record:

- The views of the children who attend your service and those of their parents or carers;
- The views of other professionals who may work with you, such as local authority advisers/ development workers for Flying Start or Foundation phase education, Family Information Services health professionals; children's centre staff and any other childcare provision; and
- Details of any quality assurance scheme you participate in.

Please include examples of the ways in which you seek views, the numbers involved, a summary of the responses, and any action you have taken to improve as a result of those views.



## Methods of collecting views

(Maximum 500 words)

The quality of our play environment and playwork practice is guided by The First Claim, a framework for self-assessing playwork quality and also staff regularly self assess their practice through the basis Quality Assessment Framework.

Because our service is open access, children and young people's very attendance is evidence of their satisfaction as they chose to come of their own volition. Our consistently high numbers of attendees (on average 886 different children have attend between April 2023 to March 2024) demonstrate that the children and young people themselves deem our service to be of a high quality.

The Venture also uses more formal methods of involving children and young people and giving them a voice. Amongst these methods we utilise consultations and/or workshops along with conversation with children which works particularly well. These workshops, run by the play workers in small groups of 5 to 10 children and young people focus on specific themes such as how they feel, how challenging behaviour should be dealt with or what new or improved equipment/structures they would like. Such workshops can produce general over-riding feelings or specific requests such as more and smaller swings. The staff team use these workshop findings around twice a year to gain an overall feeling from the users of the playground and work both in the short term and long term to achieve their requests.

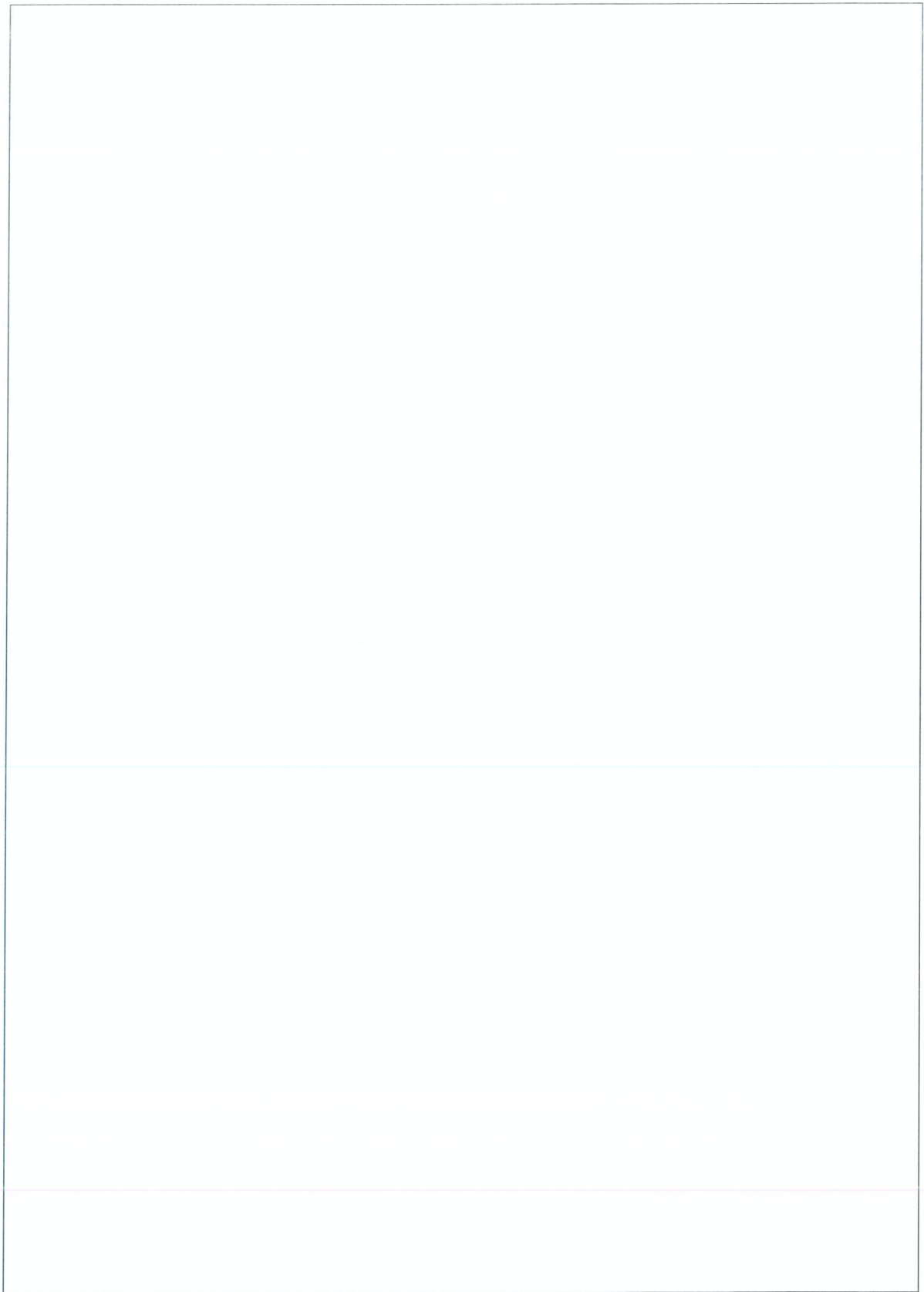
Throughout the year children, young people, parents/carers and relevant professionals are given evaluation forms to give any feedback on the quality of the service.

We have a strong relationship both with parents/carers and the wider community who are regularly visiting the site for informal chats or to seek support with certain issues. The ongoing informal dialogue between staff and parents results in any feedback being noted and action taken immediately if necessary.

The Venture recognises that in order to gain the most from a play environment the child or young person must have control over the space and be given constant opportunities to shape and influence it. In the first instance, the strong, equal relationships held by playworkers with the children and young people accessing the playground means that there is a constant dialogue of development and wishes between the staff and users. This involvement in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the service is organic and works particularly well. An open dialogue between playworker and child results in ongoing and spontaneous evaluations and often instant responses to suggestions. Indeed this has always been a very strong feature of the Venture since its inception and generations of children and young people have grown up with the automatic expectation that their voices will always be heard and that their opinions are always valued and taken into account.

Professional's views are sought via evaluation forms emailed to them or hard copies delivered. Reflections of playwork offer insights into the experiences of children at the setting through observations of play. These reflections are discussed in the daily de brief at the end of sessions and in the fortnightly staff meetings.





## Numbers of children, parents, carers and professionals providing feedback

(Maximum 500 words)

Between April 2023 and February 2024, 31 adult evaluation forms and 51 children's evaluation forms were completed. 3 professional evaluation forms were returned.

The following figures demonstrate the percentage of children rating The Venture as good, very good or excellent against the questions:

What do you think about the Venture 100%

How useful has this service been to your family 93%

I feel happier 94%

I have more friends 83%

I have more freedom 94%

How well do you feel you have been treated by staff 100%

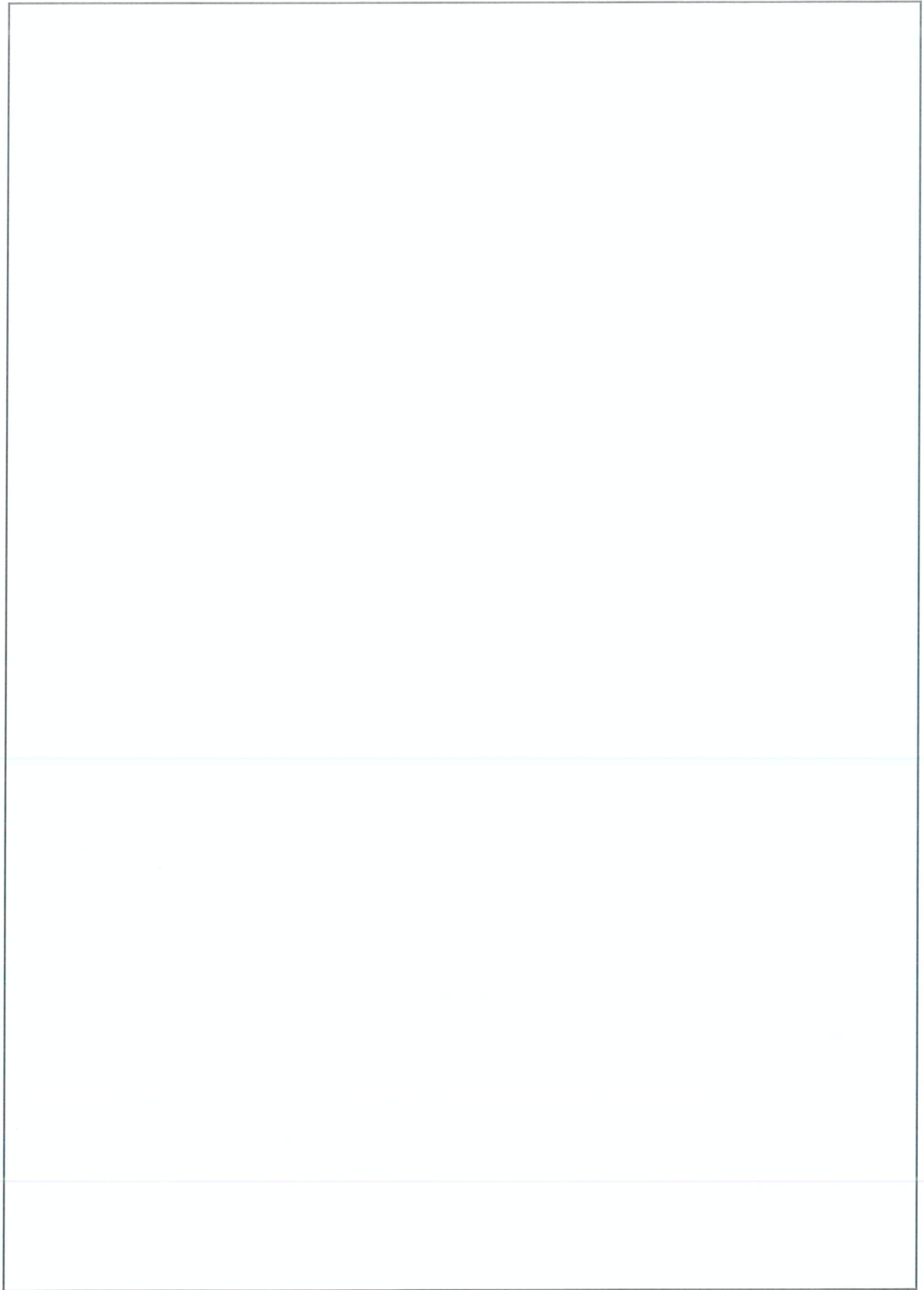
The following figures demonstrate the percentage of adults rating The Venture as either very good or excellent against the questions.

How would you rate the Venture 100%

Do you feel you have met more people and feel less isolated 97%

Do you feel more active in the community 90%

The following are comments made on the professionals' evaluation forms:





## Summary of responses

(Maximum 500 words)

### Summary of Responses

The Venture has close, trusting relationships with both children and their parents. Parents view the Venture as somewhere safe and positive for their children to visit but also as somewhere where they too can gain advice or support if and when needed. Children see the Venture as a fun and challenging play space. We support children to explore, challenge themselves, and experience a wide range of play opportunities. We are also good at identifying when children need additional support and putting this in place, as a result children and young people feel able to seek support or guidance from staff when they need it. The Venture takes a holistic approach to supporting families and children experience warmth and care but also independence and a sense of value.

The questionnaires and evaluations given to the children provide evidence for their positive experiences of the service, with 98% rating the service either good or excellent.

The questionnaires also ask both children and parents if they have an opinion of ways the Venture could improve, these comments are discussed with management and the staff team and implemented where appropriate. Further to this, the quotes and anecdotal evidence collated by playworkers in reflection give abundant examples of the positive and happy experiences provided by The Venture.

Professionals often talk about the benefits to children of attending the Venture:

"One of the most important outcomes has been the development of ambition and self-belief. This has led to what appears to be a quite dramatic change in direction for many of our students on the project.... Working with the Venture appears to have made a very significant difference, with often life changing results". Head Teacher of Rhosnesni High School

"There is always a lovely atmosphere in the place as all staff help in whatever way they can. They have a real feel for the children and youth of the area and work to their utmost in achieving amazing results". Head: Wrexham Behaviour Support Service.

"It was brilliant to visit The Venture and see the fantastic work they're doing to support children and young people. I was pleased to hear about The Venture's Holiday Hunger Project, which plays a vital role in ensuring children don't go without food". Jeremy Miles MS - Minister for Education, Training and Children's Services.

"I remain in awe at everything that has been achieved over the 40 years that the Venture has been an integral part of the life of Caia Park and the life of Wrexham - Mark Drakeford MS - First Minister of Wales.

The vast majority of the children we work with come from the most economically deprived area in Wales. Inevitably we have a high percentage of children who suffer from A.C.E's (Adverse childhood Experiences). The Venture is a haven where they can come to play out or escape the concerns of home or school, they can seek emotional warmth and care from staff and they can

receive help such as food, informal counselling, or homework support. The benefit to the children is manifest in their responses to the questionnaires, 93% say they feel happier when attending the Venture and 88% say they feel better about themselves.

We know that the Venture offers a rich and varied play space with lots of opportunities for play. Children's freely chosen, intrinsically motivated, personally directed play improves both their physical and mental health.

## **‘Improvements you will make, or have made, as a result of feedback’**

(Maximum 500 words)

Children and parents/carers evaluations ask 'how we can improve the Venture?' In response to this, the play team discuss and evaluate their opinions and attempt to fulfil their wishes where possible .

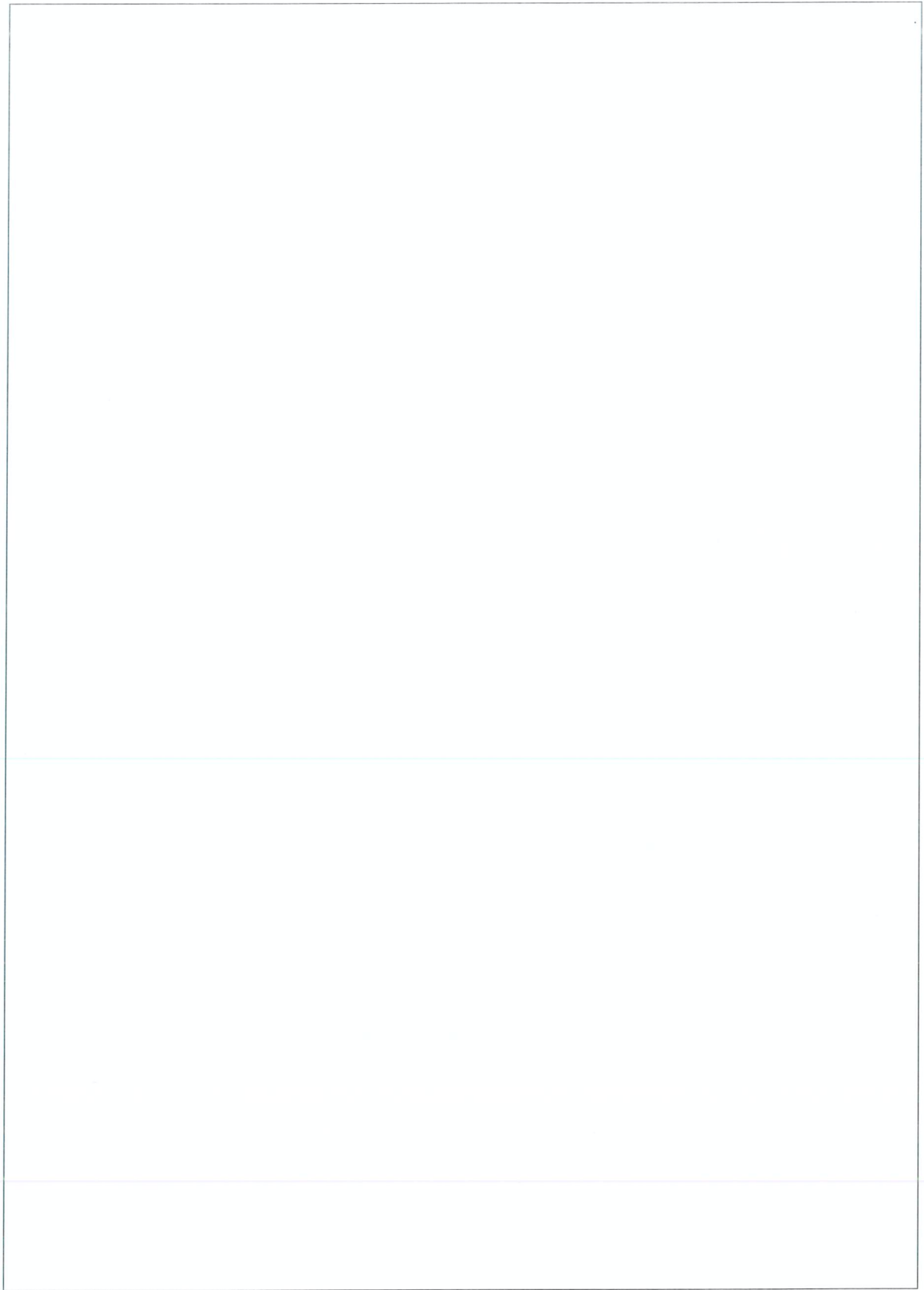
We are frequently asked for the playground to be open on Sundays . We recognised that there once was no provision for children and young people across the estate on Sunday . Although we are not in a position financially to open The Venture Playground on Sunday (as it was previously for 40 years) we worked collaboratively with The Wrexham Youth and Play Partnership (WYPP) and began discussions about securing funding for another play project within the local community. This has now reached its conclusion and as a result Sunday play sessions are now available for children and young people to access as our sister adventure playground, Gwenfro Valley at the other end of the estate.

Children requested more sand for the main area of the playground. During the summer the sand from National Playday in Wrexham was kindly donated to the Venture playground .

Some children wanted an extension of the Holiday Hunger project during term time. The new refurbished kitchen is now complete, inspected by the Food Standard Agency and a member of staff has been employed to provide hot meals 4 times a week throughout term time.

During half terms a team of volunteers distribute Holiday Hunger food to between 50 and 100 children per day, we do recognise that during such difficult times in terms of the financial crisis there is an increased demand for this service. Having extended the holiday hunger provision to term time, the number of meals distributed to children carers who attend the playground have increased dramatically.





## Part B: The quality and standard of provision

This part of the template covers service evaluation and self-assessment rating.

**Service evaluation** – this is where you set out:

- Your strengths
- Any areas for improvement
- The actions you propose and how you will tackle them
- How they will be monitored and
- How you will measure success.

**Self-assessment rating** – it is important to include your own judgement to rate how well you are doing in the areas of:

- Well-being
- Care and development
- Environment
- Leadership and management

Please see the four ratings below that are used by us to inform your assessment of your practice.

**Excellent:** These are services with many strengths that are committed to ongoing improvement, including significant examples of sector leading practice and innovation. These services deliver high quality care and support and are able to demonstrate that they make a strong contribution to improving children's well-being.

**Good:** These are services with strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement. They consistently exceed basic requirements, delivering positive outcomes for children and actively promote their well-being.

**Adequate:** These are services where strengths outweigh areas for improvement. They are safe and meet basic requirements but improvements are required to promote well-being and improve outcomes for children.

**Poor:** These are services where important areas for improvements outweigh strengths and there are significant examples of non-compliance that impact negatively on children's well-being.

## 1. Well-being

This is about the progress different groups of children are making, taking into account their age, development and needs. It is about how your service is contributing to children's well-being, helping them to have a voice, develop their skills and become independent and confident.

### Service evaluation

Questions you will wish to consider:

- What do you do well?
- How do you know?
- What is the benefit to children?

(Maximum 500 words)

Our organisation works to the playwork principles which recognise all children's innate drive to play and socialise. Children expect to be able to play and relax at The Venture and the staff do everything within their powers to facilitate this. Not only do we meet expectations, we often expand horizons and show the service users new activities or new places, thus allowing them to aim higher, both as individuals and as part of The Venture. "The Venture proves you can be successful no matter where you come from." A member of the community who played here as a child.

All staff know and adhere to the UN convention of rights for the child and it is prominently displayed in the working environment. We also have a strong equality policy which all staff follow. This clearly states, 'access to services and activities are open to children and young people and families in the community regardless of sex/gender; marital status; race; sexual orientation; religion or disability'. The ethos and teaching of playwork also supports children's rights to being treated with dignity and respect and our staff team acknowledge, support and facilitate play for every child regardless of age, race, gender or disability. Furthermore, all staff are safeguarding trained, enabling them to deal appropriately with any information children wish to pass on and to help them support that child in doing so.

The aim that children and families are healthy, safe and enjoy well-being is evident in everything the Venture as an organisation does as well as at the core of the playwork on the playground. Every provision is made to ensure the play we provide does not expose children to unnecessary or extreme risks and our comprehensive risk benefit assessments ensure that every hazard is balanced with its play value. The playground plays a crucial role in ensuring children have opportunities to learn, be active and lead happy lives. 'Play has an essential role in building children's resilience across adaptive systems – pleasure, emotion regulation, stress response systems, learning and creativity.'

Staff create an environment that encourages children of all ages to play together, thus enabling positive relationships between peers. The opportunity to mix with different ages is valued by the children and often results in young people helping younger children and different ages playing together. This interaction between such different age groups (5 to 17) is nowadays sadly extremely



rare, this almost unique aspect of our work restores community family relationships which were once the foundation of most societies around the world.

Through our various workshops and alternative learning programmes we can cater for a wide variety of different interests, including, joinery, art and cooking skills, bike repair, gardening, fire safety and sexual health etc.

Staff are amiable and fun and playful with the children, often engaging in fast paced games such as a paint fight, tag, tug of war games. Playworkers always allow children to initiate play and intervene only when necessary in accordance with the playwork principles. This style of working enables children to extend their own play and have a more equal and respecting relationship with the staff who are often invited to join in games or crawl into dens when children take great delight in including in their play.

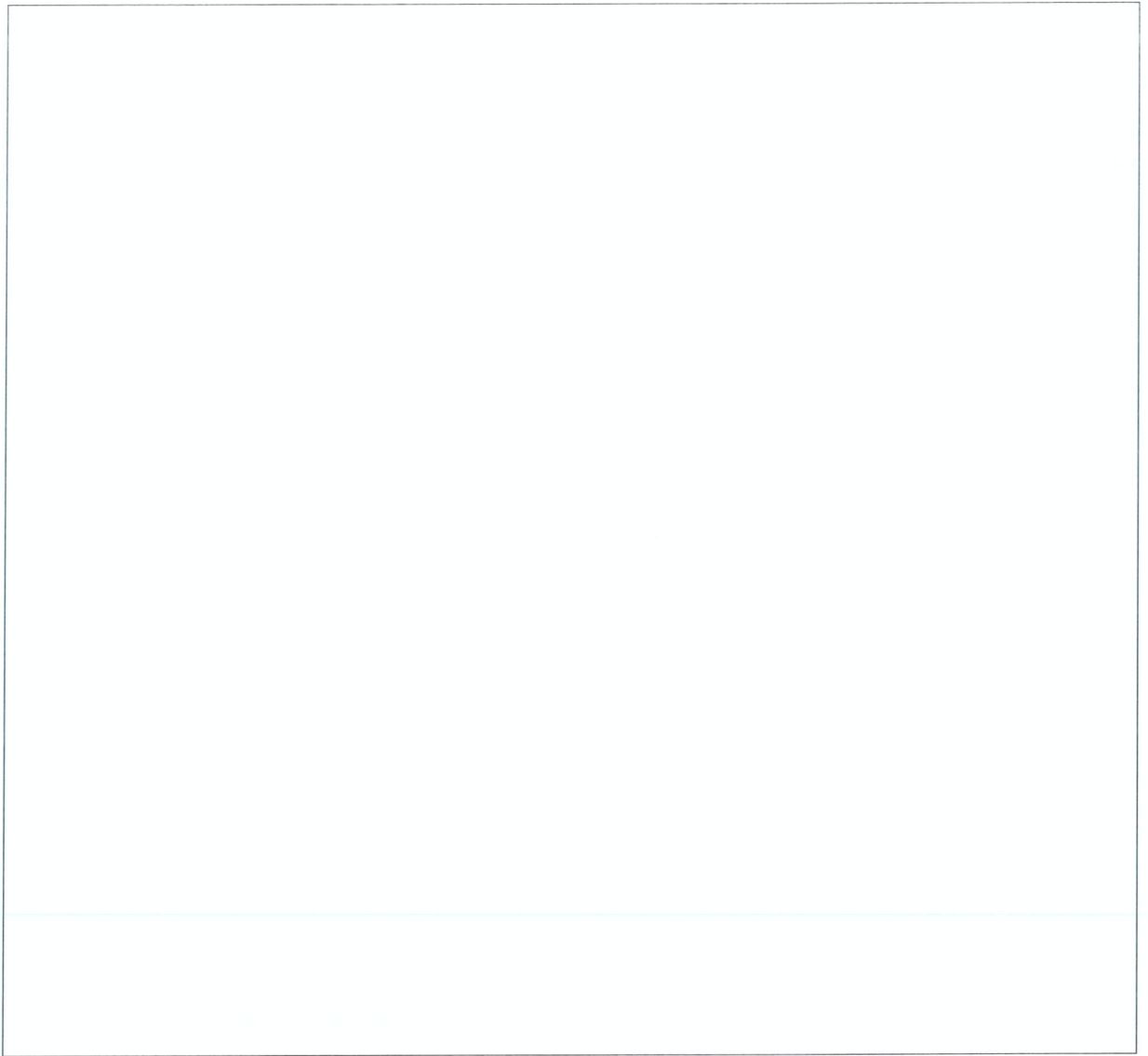
The Venture offers an opportunity for staff to provide a safe space for all service users to discuss and learn about personal hygiene, keeping safe in the community and are made aware of access to our period poverty campaign which provides free sanitary products and any other advice we may be able to sign post them to.

We offer C Card service which provide advice and education on sexual health and distribute condoms to our young men and women. We have recently been recognised as one of the largest distribution centres for the C card scheme users.

We organise trips for young people which provides an opportunity for children to leave the estate for a short time and enjoy something a little different. Our Volunteers provide several hundred hours per year of support for the service we offer.

We hold session for referred young people who are identified as potentially being not in education, employment or training (NEET) when they leave school. We have recorded great success stories with young people progressing on to further education or employment.

Recycling is an area we were keen to keep improve on. This is being achieved by better labelling of bins adding recycling bags in the play space and including children in recycling waste in the Integrated Children's Centre on a daily and weekly basis.



## Your priorities for improvement

Questions you will wish to consider:

- What is it you want to improve?
- How will you measure improvements?

(Maximum 500 words)

Objective: 1. To improve attendance recording and safeguarding outdoors during open access play session staff have discussed during de brief that it would be beneficial for some form of electronic tablet devise to be accessible during sessions. This will allow staff to record attendance and have young people's health and safety information readily available if needed e.g. contact details, allergies and disabilities etc.

Action: Install relevant details onto the recently purchased IPad for use on the playground..

Objective: 2. Install directional signage to the Venture to enable local and the wider community to locate the setting.

Objective: 3. Key fob to be installed on the main entrance gate to enable access when site is closed.

Objective:4 Create a digital news letter which can be linked to staff emails to provide corresponding professionals the information with regard to the Venture's services.

Objective 5: Developing a no photography policy for playground service users to safeguard to minimis risks to children.

Objective 6: Provide access to a translated registration form in Polish to support the language barrier on registration.

Objective 7: Provide an online tour of the Venture playground to enable potential service users the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the facility.

Objective 8: Provide further seating to enable food to be served undercover throughout the playground.

Measuring Improvements:

1. Staff to give feed back on how the new system is working
2. Feed back from local and wider community and staff.
3. Feed back from services needing access out of hours
4. Feed back from professionals.
5. Feed back from service users and their families and staff.
6. Feedback from our Polish service users.



7. Feedback from new and existing service users and their families.

8. Feedback from service users.

## Your assessment of well-being

My practice is (select one box only):

<b>Excellent:</b> my practice is exemplary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Good:</b> my practice is strong	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Adequate:</b> my practice requires improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Poor:</b> my practice requires significant improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 2. Care and development

This is about how responsive practitioners are in meeting children's needs – how they help children feel emotionally secure and ensure children are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy. It is also about ensuring that children are being developed and build relationships with other children, become self-aware, confident and are achieve well-being.

### Service evaluation

Questions you will wish to consider:

- What do you do well?
- How do you know?
- What is the benefit to children?

(Maximum 500 words)

All users of the service experience warmth and welcome from the staff team who are quick to invite new users to the playground and include them in activities.

Children have choice and influence in our setting. There is a long list of activities and children can freely choose which activities to do as well as when to do them and how long they wish to engage with them for. These activities can be extremely free and fluid, for example a child might ask for some cardboard and paint, be supplied with it and make a sword. They might then ask for dressing up clothes which will be provided. This in turn may spark some imaginative play which playworkers enter into if invited or observe if not.

One of the main areas promoted throughout The Venture is a healthy lifestyle. Within our open access play the children, young people and adults are encouraged to develop and maintain healthy choices. Whether it's participating with sports and games, joining in the cooking sessions or creating their own games. The Venture has numerous activities and clubs that the children and young people can participate in which supports their overall health and well-being. Children create healthy meals communally, often on the fire, such as jacket potatoes and home-made soups, spaghetti, stews, fruit kebabs and wraps, to name a few.

The Venture works with every child who wishes to engage in any or all of its services. We work closely with various agencies to offer play opportunities to those that might otherwise suffer from play deprivation as well as working with the wider community to pin point individuals in need of support.

The staff team work sensitively to ensure that the child takes the playground at their own pace and engages in whatever play they choose. Most children engage with staff and their peers readily and begin to direct play as soon as their confidence rises. However, for a few this can be more difficult. At this point staff are able to signpost children and parents onto other services such as TAC which can help with issues of self-confidence and challenging behaviour and aid the child to extend his or her play with support. The Venture makes a point of engaging with those children and young people who may otherwise be excluded from society and have very positive feedback and

experiences. “The most challenging children and young people of their era have become the hard-core element of continuing support and involvement that underpins the Venture’s success” (Brown 2007: 35).

Venture Playworkers realise that many children do not want to engage all the time and thus offer a range of different equipment and loose parts but do not force children to ‘join in’. Playworkers develop playful and fun relationships with children whilst maintaining a deeper understanding of their emotions and needs. Such a relationship often leads to a continuing engagement from the child in whatever the playground is currently offering. Be it reshaping the structures, building new dens, tying a rope course, having a paint fight or sitting quietly in a cardboard box, the close relationship between playworker and child fosters trust and a mutual respect as well as ongoing engagement.

Playworkers are consistently giving praise to encouraging the development of children and young people's self esteem, self worth and value.

## **Your priorities for improvement**

Questions you will wish to consider:

- What is it you want to improve?
- How will you measure improvements?

(Maximum 500 words)

Objective : To identify and address a wide range of issues arising with young people such as Confidence , Self-esteem , Bullying , Racism , Sexual Health , Drug and alcohol/substance misuse , Fire safety , Relationship issues, online safety etc..

Action : To develop and schedule regular informative workshops which children and young people can access when needed, both internally or externally .

How will you manage improvements : Staff observe behaviours , engage in conversations and are regularly approached by children and young people about a range of issues they may be dealing with and require some advice and guidance . Staff will discuss this at daily debrief sessions and will be committed to address these through the delivery of informative workshops and informal counselling but also through play.

We will ask children and young people how they feel their well being has improved as a result of their engagement with the Venture, as well as how they feel we can improve our service still further.



**Your assessment of care and development**

My practice is (select one box only):

<b>Excellent:</b> my practice is exemplary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Good:</b> my practice is strong	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Adequate:</b> my practice requires improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Poor:</b> my practice requires significant improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>



### 3. Environment

This section is how you ensure that the physical environment you provide is of good quality and meets the needs of the children using your service.

#### Service evaluation

Questions you will wish to consider:

- What do you do well?
- How do you know?
- What is the benefit to children?

(Maximum 500 words)

The Venture is an open access outdoor play provision which is constantly developing, aiming to offer the most stimulating environment possible for play. The Venture was described some years ago by a leading author and expert on play as having "the most comprehensive play environment in the UK". Having expanded several times in its 45 year history it now occupies around 2 acres. It is still the holder of the best adventure playground award and was adopted in England by the department of Children and Education as its model for adventure playgrounds in England.

Service users have access to a varied environment including a sandpit, nature area, multi use games area (MUGA), extensive wooden structures and a wide variety of loose parts. Proof of the inspiration children and young people gain from the playground can be found in the huge variety of play frames they create on the playground. For example, in the space of an hour the sandpit can be a wrestling ring, the beach, a material for model making, a water fight arena and a place where pirates buried treasure.

The Venture is subject to weather conditions as it is an outdoor space, however, playworkers treat the changing weather conditions as elements for play. It is clear from the children's play recorded by playworkers that they find the outdoor space offered invigorating and uplifting (this can very simply be evidenced by the noises of woops, yells and laughter heard on the playground everyday).

The involvement of the children in developing the playground adds greatly to their connection with the site and with their loyalty toward it. Children are involved in building the large structures and the dens which can be found all over the playground are built and maintained by children and young people. Many children and young people are aware of their parents and grandparents and sometimes now their great grandparents involvement with the Venture, in particular which bit they had been building many years before. Other features such as the graffiti boards and displays of artwork add to the children's sense of identity and belonging to the playground and their peer group.

The playground offers a varied landscape where children and young people can find privacy and quiet spaces to play as well as offering scope for loud and fast play and large group play. Parents naturally gravitate towards the fire pit provided at the centre of the playground or the stage, giving them a good viewpoint of the whole playground. The design of the playground is such which draws children in and invites them to explore, test and engage in all play types.

Most of the play service provided occurs outside, on the playground. However, we also have inside facilities where smaller group work can be carried out. Here we may offer arts and crafts, themed projects, cooking, training, reading and are greatly enjoyed by the children and young people as a different experience to the freely chosen play on the playground.

Materials and equipment are given out when children ask for them and there are always fresh and varied loose parts available for children on the playground. Children are free to use, manipulate and adapt the play setting however they see fit. Such freedom with equipment such as hammers and saws, arts and crafts, dressing up, gardening tools, wood, cardboard boxes, curtains, sports equipment and much more affords children and young people choice and agency.

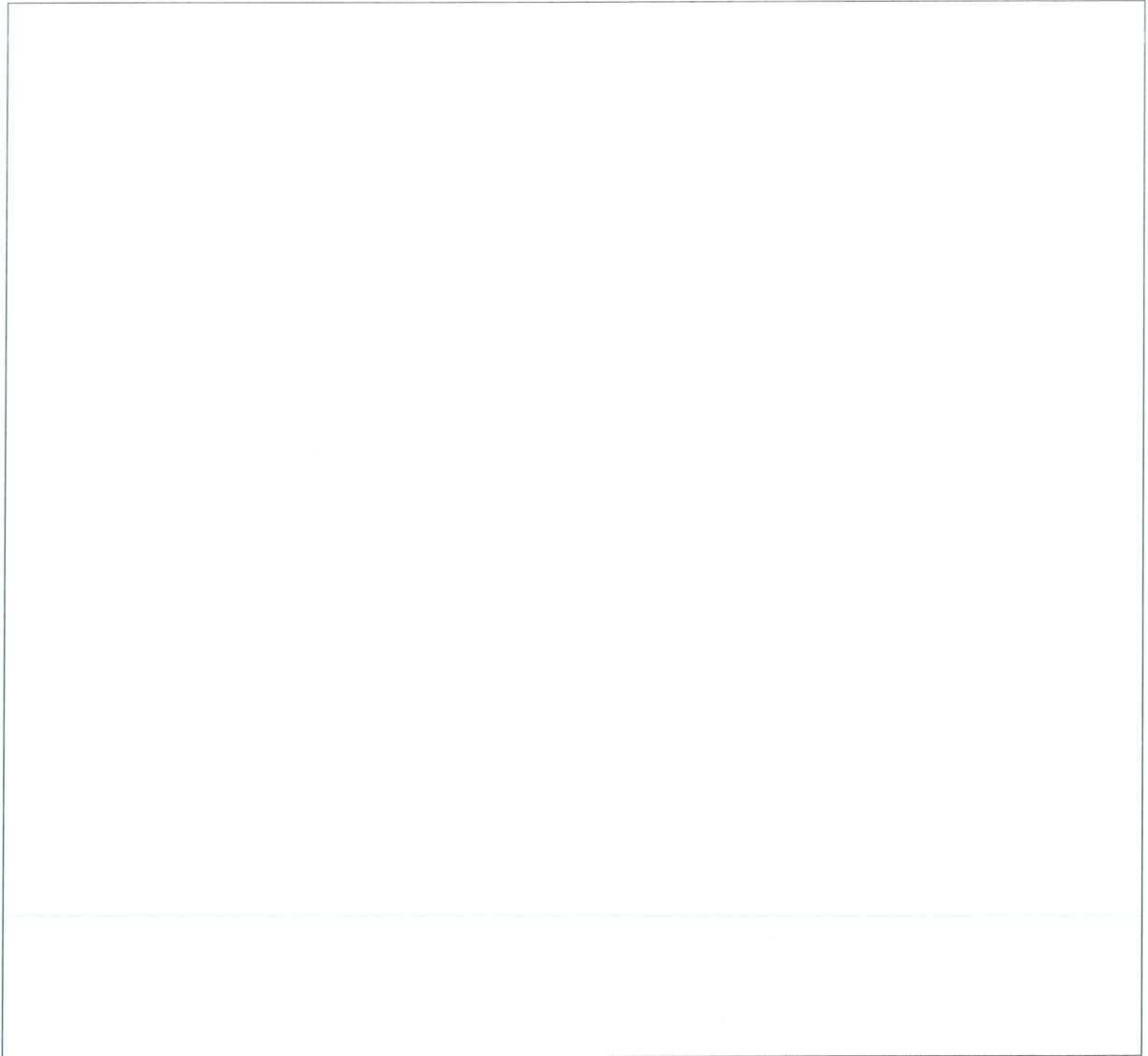
The Venture uses the first claim self-assessment process. Staff complete daily and weekly reflections to assess the play opportunities provided and respond to the developing needs of the service users. We also complete daily, weekly and monthly health and safety (H&S) site checks, which are recorded to ensure all equipment is reliable and safe. If additional needs are noted in these reflections we work hard to cater for them.

These H & S checks are supplemented by an annual H & S inspection carried out by an independent professionally qualified H & S inspector UK based. Although there is not a legal requirement for an independent inspection we strongly believe it is necessary to ensure we are doing all we can to make the playground as safe as we can.

#### Continual Site Development

A new building close to the centre of the playground is in the final stage of completion which will provide undercover play facilities and an operational space for play staff giving immediate access to a first aid treatment facility. We have also developed a sensory area for children on the Autistic spectrum within a refurbished container and invested in new crash mats. Many of the structures and different play areas are being continually renewed and adapted with new features which extend children's play often in response by children and young people themselves, and often constructed with them or their parents, or young people undertaking woodwork and construction classes at the Venture.





## **Your priorities for improvement**

Questions you will wish to consider:

- What is it you want to improve?
- How will you measure improvements?

(Maximum 500 words)

Objective1 : To complete the multi use sheltered space that meets the needs of children and young people attending the playground and create an operational space for staff on the sight itself.

1. When completed we will ask children , young people and parents what impact they feel it has had from the services we offer and how well the building performs - design, natural light, accessibility, support for activities etc.

Improvement : This will allow for children and young people to escape bad weather and access opportunities such as art and craft , board games and books in a sheltered warm environment and allow them time to relax away from the busy playground .

Objective 2: Create a log storage area to prevent wood for the open fire becoming damp and wet and to enable wood to be stored safely.

2. Feed back from staff and service users

**Your assessment of environment**

My practice is (select one box only):

<b>Excellent:</b> my practice is exemplary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Good:</b> my practice is strong	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Adequate:</b> my practice requires improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Poor:</b> my practice requires significant improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>





## 4. Leadership and management

This section is about the effectiveness of your leadership and management; or if you are a child minder how well you organise your service. It covers:

- Meeting the requirements of the Welsh Government 'National Minimum Standards'<sup>1</sup> and other government requirements e.g. 'Building for a Brighter Future'<sup>2</sup>
- Self-evaluation and improvement planning
- Performance management and professional development
- Safeguarding
- Developing children and contributing to their well-being
- Your vision for the service
- Management and development of practitioners and
- Partnership working.

### Service evaluation

Questions you will wish to consider:

- What do you do well?
- How do you know?
- What is the benefit to children?

(Maximum 500 words)

Research shows that leadership is the most important single factor that influences the success of the organisation. Leadership starts at the top but should exist throughout the organisation. The values of the organisation should be clear and evident at every level and express its actions by all its staff and others representing the organisation. This occurs throughout the Venture, from patrons to young children helping to run every day activities. Its Patrons include the former Children's Commissioner for Wales and the former Children's Minister for Wales. The Responsible Person has chaired the Children's Committees for Local Government Associations and Police Authorities in England and Wales and played a leading part in developing professional practice across the UK in the fields of play, youth justice and child protection. The current Deputy Manager (Person in Charge) follows a long line of exceptional playworkers in that post over the last 45 years and has become recognised in Wales as one of its most outstanding Playwork Managers and, of equal importance, the leading figure within the local community. The Venture itself has been described in Parliament by the former Secretary of State for Wales as "one of the best children's organisations in the country if

<sup>1</sup> For National Minimum Standards see: <https://careinspectorate.wales/regulations-and-national-minimum-standards-day-care-and-play>

<sup>2</sup> Building for a Brighter Future: <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/130716-building-brighter-future-en.pdf>

not in Europe" and studied and praised by six universities and five national children's organisations and adopted as a model for children's services in Wales, Scotland and England.

#### Operational Leadership

The Duty Play Leader (DPL) and under 12's playworker is clearly displayed each day so parents know who is responsible each day and who to raise any concerns with. However, parents and children are aware that they can also contact the chief officer if they have concerns and have access to complaint forms which will be dealt with in accordance with the complaints procedure policy.

We regularly review our service at team meetings. Staff are expected to use reflective practice in their playwork and are trained to do so. Time is given to reflect together as a team after each session in order to improve practice.

#### Performance management and professional development:

Staff are given CPD opportunities in accordance with their interests and skills. Staff also attend the Playworker's Forum which provides time for reflection as a team and learning new skills. Staff's performance is managed through supervision sessions and annual appraisals

#### Safeguarding

All staff are trained in safeguarding and aware of our safeguarding policy. Where appropriate, concerns are shared in staff meetings and always with the police or social services through the normal referral processes. Any safeguarding concerns are shared with the safeguarding lead and the chief officer in accordance with our safeguarding policies.

Parents are regularly contacted if a child has a minor injury and staff are diligent in checking on injuries sustained on the premises. All staff are first aid trained and regularly update the training.

#### Developing children and contributing to their well-being :

The main indicator of the confidence of parents and children in the care they receive is the numbers who come to ask for support from us and no other organisation. Both children and adults vote with their feet and their decision to come to ask for advice or purely to use our services is testament to the trust they have in the organisation. The play team is C Card trained and is fully committed to period poverty which is actively used by young people through the confidence and trusting relationship with staff.

We are registered as a foodbank referral outlet along with a local holiday hunger project providing healthy meals throughout school holidays.

People regularly experience excellent communication and engagement with staff, whether it be light hearted water fighting, sitting and chatting over an arts and crafts session or an old user of the



playground coming down for a cup of tea and a chat, staff are open to communicating with all members of the community and are quick to involve all users of the playground.

Your vision for the service :

The over riding aim of the Venture is to help everyone who uses our services, and particularly children and young people, to achieve their true potential. Providing a safe and stimulating environment encouraging all children and young people to feel happy and confident through free play activities plays a key part in that aim. For many years the most common observation of visitors to the Venture is "what confident kids!". It is what we are most proud of.

#### Management and development of practitioners

Staff, volunteers and outside agencies who provide sessions at the Venture are trained in a variety of areas over a broad range of needs, including playwork, youth work, sport, speech therapy, child development, education and child mental health . Staff also hold a wealth of experience amongst them working in different capacities and settings with different ages and groups of children. Thus, they are well equipped to understand individual preferences and provide care to people with a very wide range of needs.

Some of the staff team come from the ward covered by the organisation meaning they are well known and respected in the community. The staff team is small and close and as a result works well together.

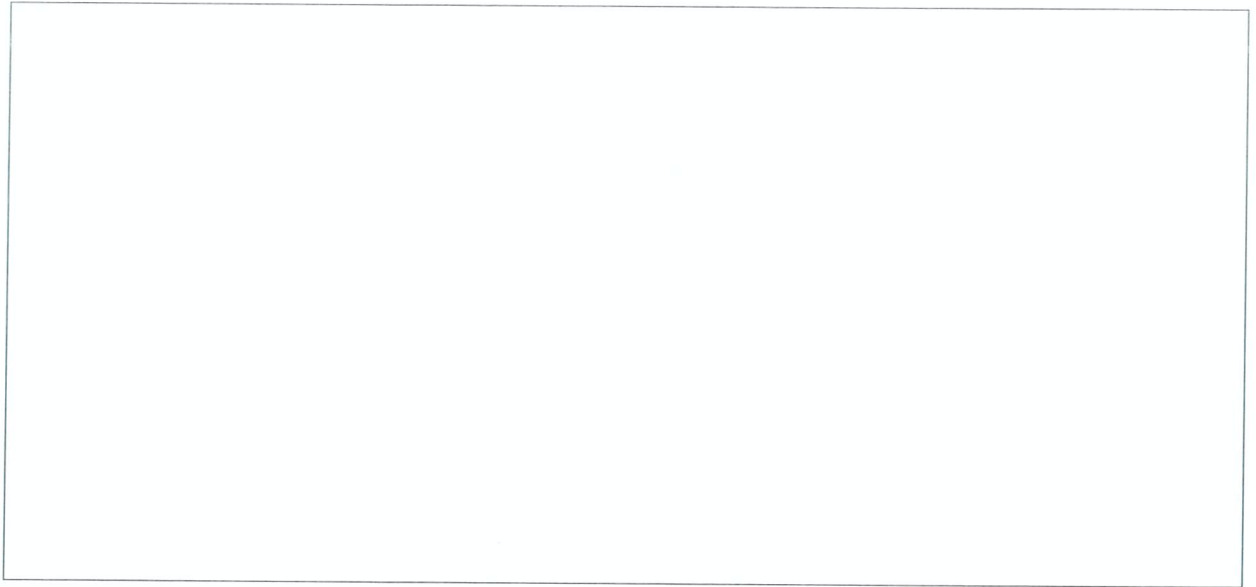
#### Partnership working

The staff team liaise regularly with other organisations to ensure a linked up and responsive approach to the service users' diverse range of needs and issues. Organisations we work with include Social Service, TAC, local primary and secondary schools, the Wrexham Council Play and Youth Support team, other play organisations, The Caia Park Partnership, AVOW, Wrexham Food Bank, St Mark's Church, Glyndwr University, North Wales Police and many others.

In January 2022, The Venture coordinated 'Cyfoeth o Chwarae Wrecsam Capital of Play' - a virtual conference to communicate the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional benefits of play, the socioeconomic benefits of play-friendly places, and Wrecsam's ambition to be a UK Capital of Play. The conference was aimed at politicians, stakeholders, practitioners, and the general public, and was opened by the Prime Minister of Wales, Mark Drakeford MS. The conference was in aid of the Wrecsam's bid to become City of Culture 2025 - a UK-wide competition run by the UK Government's Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) - which had "play" as one of 7 main pillars of the bid.

Managers are currently working alongside Wrexham Children Services to improve collaborative working.





## Your priorities for improvement

Questions you will wish to consider:

- What is it you want to improve?
- How will you measure improvements?

(Maximum 500 words)

Continue to strengthen governance

Objective: Increase the number of Trustees and update exsisting Trustees' profile on our website to inform potential funders and service users.

Improvement: Increase the number of Trustees to enhance the dynamics of the Venture Board of Trustees. By include a short introduction of our Trustees this will inform people who visit the website of the Governance of the organisation .

Objective: Continue to improve communication by taking advantage of improved IT using varies platforms.

Improve communication

The appointment of a communication manager has improved our communications considerably in a host of directions, especially through social media but also at seminars, conferences, training events, our website and printed leaflets, posters and articles. Meetings with local residents and supporters has also increased considerably and many volunteers have also been recruited.

**Your assessment of leadership and management**

My practice is (select one box only):

<b>Excellent:</b> my practice is exemplary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Good:</b> my practice is strong	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Adequate:</b> my practice requires improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Poor:</b> my practice requires significant improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>



Please use the box below if there are any further comments you wish to include

(Maximum 500 words)

The Venture is an open access playground and as such offers play opportunities to any child or young person wishing to engage in the service. Due to the nature of the service we provide we cannot register every visitor to the setting immediately (although a register of the children and young people is completed each day as well as noting adult visitors). However, staff always greet newcomers to the playground, be they children or adults and explain the playground and give a registration form for the setting. Through this welcome staff are able to ascertain the purpose of the visit and track the whereabouts of visitors to the setting. In the case of a threat to security or the children and young people staff can lock the gates leading onto the playground, thus making the premises more secure.

All personal details are kept in locked offices or on a password protected data base in accordance with our data protection policy.

Staff regularly carry out fire drills and are experienced in directing service users in the event of an emergency. All staff are fully briefed with emergency procedures in their induction into the organisation.

#### Key Achievements

"What is so special about the Venture? Some of the answers might lie in its wide age range from babies to grandparents; the extensive activities it carries out; its ownership by the community; the scarcity of vandalism, theft or graffiti; the fact that it is uncompromising in its health and safety measures; its full consultation with children; an extensive communication network with other organisations and agencies and a balanced philosophy with an holistic view of children and their lives. Furthermore, juvenile crime appears to have been drastically reduced in the locality since the Venture began - National Children's Bureau.

"The Venture is a gem of a project." - The Guardian.

Youth Crime: Youth crime in Caia Park fell by 28% in the first year of the Venture's life and by 54% in the first 6 years, falling steadily since. Working very closely with key partners the Venture has delivered a range of direct services, and has continually supported other agencies to provide practical, focused interventions. In most parts of the estate youth crime has been reduced to very low levels. In 2008 North Wales Police said "Recently the Wynnstay ward had an entire month of zero crime and not a single call to police of anti social behaviour. For an area tarred with so many brushes in the past, this is an incredible achievement by anybody's standard".

Family Support: The establishment of the Venture Early Years Centre in 1988 provided the foundation to enable support and intervention at a much earlier stage. Health, education and personal growth programmes are woven into the daily life of the centre, with life changing results for many families. "From modest beginnings, the Venture has grown into a large and thriving hub, serving and being served by the community from which it draws its vitality. Although its prime function is to provide a safe and fun place for children to play and to explore their potential, it also provides an arena within which potential problems for children and families can be picked up on



and worked with. The long-term commitment of skilled staff members facilitates the development of relationships of trust with parents and children and this, undoubtedly greatly eases the process of intervention.” Professor M. Barnard, Glasgow University (2001).

**A Maturing Community:** The Venture has played a leading role in developing most of the main community organisations in Caia Park, with many younger and older residents, closely associated with the Venture, taking up positions of responsibility and becoming role models for others to follow. This success is predominantly based on the continuity of support and encouragement we have provided for over 4 decades.

“In my 10 years of working for a voluntary sector organisation I have never seen such a relationship between a youth centre and the local community” The manager of Prince’s Trust Cymru

**Child Poverty:** The disastrous effects of child poverty on the health and well-being of children has been well documented. The Venture strives to limit this detrimental impact, providing opportunities and hope for the future, aiming to reverse the effects of bleak, unfulfilled lives.

Over the last 45 years the Venture has changed many lives and has grown to become a cornerstone of Caia Park's social fabric, achieving notable impact in many areas, including:

- Helping to cut juvenile crime from one of the highest in Wales to one of the lowest;

- Exposing institutional child abuse and playing a key role in supporting victims during the North Wales child abuse scandal, Police investigations and subsequent judicial enquiry.

- Leading local community development and has helped many organisations to start, develop and thrive;

- Adopted as a national model for Integrated Children's Centres in Wales, working with substance abusing families in Scotland and developing new adventure playgrounds in England;

- Established a national and international reputation for integrated multi-disciplinary services.

- Insuring inclusivity by providing closed session for young people living with neurodevelopmental conditions.

"It is fair to say that the Venture has earned for itself an international reputation as a beacon of best practice in the provision of children's play. It has successfully used this core provision - designed and led by the children themselves - as a spring board for understanding and then responding to specific needs of children and young people within a very deprived community". Head of BBC Children in Need in Wales.