

11.30 am

'Is it illegal to play football on the street?'

For generations play was a word synonymous with muddy knees, dens and scuffed shoes. But childhood is changing. And play is changing.

Long gone are the days of carefree, outdoor playing. Instead, children are now likely to be labelled anti-social for meeting up with friends outside the local shop, associate computer games with downtime and often ask: 'Is it illegal to play football on the street?'

However, against this backdrop of change, there seems to be an acknowledgment here in Wales, within the Welsh Government, that play, and childhood, needs to be protected. This leaves us with a problem: policy intent is not necessarily translating into positive change for Wales' children and young people.

Whilst it may seem to some like a romantic vision, the Children's Commissioner for Wales has a burning ambition to protect children's childhoods.

Although independent of government, the children's commissioner has commended recent government developments including the Children and Families (Wales) Measure and its action plan *Getting it Right* – both believed to have the potential to positively influence childhoods in Wales. As well as

highlighting these and other policy developments, he will also use the opportunity to champion the views and experiences of children and young people from across Wales.

Using various methods, the commissioner will provide an insight into the 'cotton wool generation', with tales from rural and urban Wales. He will draw attention to the barriers children and young people face, from societal attitudes towards their generation to the access issues for disabled children and young people and young carers. He will also encourage planners and policy makers to listen to the views of children and young people, stressing the importance of involving children and young people in creating child friendly communities.

Above all he will call for a return to providing children with the freedom and opportunities to play. Giving every child an opportunity to play through childhood.

www.childcomwales.org.uk

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Biography

Keith Towler

**Children's
Commissioner for
Wales**

Keith Towler was born in London and came to Wales as a young child when the family moved to Cardiff.

Keith graduated from Exeter University with a degree in Fine Arts and then became a social work assistant with South Glamorgan County Council.

His career path has given him a strong background in youth work, youth justice and children's rights. Keith joined NACRO (the crime reduction charity) in 1998 as Head of NACRO Cymru and became NACRO Director of Crime Reduction (England and Wales) in 2001.

Prior to taking up the post of Children's Commissioner for Wales in March 2008, Keith was programme director for the Wales Programme of Save the Children for two years and chair of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Monitoring Group for Wales.

