

What about the Men Folk?

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It's fair to say that Wales PPA was, in large part, run by women: mothers, wives, partners and interested female helpers and supporters. We were often asked, 'Where are the men in the organisation?' This attempts to answer that question.

Given that most of the women had come into PPA from a desire to provide early learning through play for their children, it's fair to ask where were the children during the Committee meetings and the other multitude of actions which brought a large organisation into being? Most of us, who did not have grandparents or close friends to look after them, would admit that the men in our lives were the baby-sitters. And this was no mean task. As well as regular day and evening meetings, there were overnight, weekend gatherings. How can an all Wales organisation be nurtured and developed without getting to know and trust people from other areas? There are a number of true accounts of getting stuck in the snow, of car break downs, and late trains. During all this we relied on our men folk to hold the fort. These were, dare I say, real learning experiences for us all. We, the women, had to compile endless lists of things to do, and it showed us how complex our duties were, while our baby-sitters became convinced of those responsibilities, and found out that they could undertake them.

In another way, Wales PPA benefited from the advice, skills and experience of our men-folk. We had educators, social workers, doctors, bankers, solicitors, local councillors, architects, as well as those in touch with their communities who knew how to affect policies at different levels. You name a background and we had it. There were, of course some men who could not be bothered with what their women were up to, and a very small minority who were against the corporate action which marked Wales PPA as a lively body. But, in the main, the men supported them and allowed them to spend a fair amount of the household budget on what came to be an enduring commitment.

I recently met a bank clerk in my local bank, who asked me how Wales PPA was getting on. I had no idea that he knew anything about us, but he told me that his wife had really enjoyed her time with us in PPA, and that he had become interested too.

Finally, we can attest that the vast majority of our men-folk supported us during the difficult times. There were many. Times when plans were overturned, requests for grants turned down, people left in a huff and we were disappointed. If we were not encouraged to carry on or to adopt a different plan, then Wales PPA would not have survived and the lives of children, parents and their communities the poorer for it. We should acknowledge the contribution of all who supported us, of whom our men-folk played a special part.