

**Play
England**

Making space for play

A photograph of three children in a park. On the left, a girl in a red hoodie and blue jeans points towards the camera with a wide smile. In the center, a boy in a white t-shirt with a graphic and blue jeans also points towards the camera. On the right, a girl in a pink long-sleeved shirt and a floral skirt points towards the camera. They are standing in front of a stone wall with trees and a blue sky in the background.

A manifesto for children's play

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What do you remember best about growing up? Your favourite games? Best friends? The sense of freedom and adventure you got from playing in the outdoor world?

Children today do not have the same freedom.

Play is fundamental to children's enjoyment of childhood and the key to how they learn about the world. It is essential to their health, well-being and development.

But traffic, crime, poor planning and a perception that the outdoor world is a hostile place for them, means that many children's lives are mostly spent inside, fearful of the world around them or protected from it by anxious parents – with serious consequences for their health and happiness.

Whilst children's play is instinctive and natural – best enjoyed with as little adult intervention as possible – addressing the barriers to play is very much a task for government. Policy on planning, parks, traffic and housing as well as schools and childcare each have a direct bearing on children's opportunity to play.

Play England and partners are calling for policy makers to make play a priority.

We are asking the government, MPs, councillors – as well as individuals and organisations – to make three simple pledges for all children and young people to have the freedom and space to play enjoyed by previous generations.



1

To make all residential neighbourhoods child-friendly places where children can play outside

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We need:

- to be able to walk or cycle somewhere nearby to have fun, like a park or exciting play space
- to feel safe playing outside with our friends, and for our families to feel confident to let us
- to be welcome where we live and feel part of our community. ”

This will become a reality when:

- Planning and regeneration takes account of children's play – protecting play areas and building new ones, and ensuring that children have safe routes to them and to local green spaces
- Roads in all residential areas have a 20mph maximum speed limit and there are more pedestrian zones
- Public space is designed, managed and supervised with a better understanding of children and their need to play
- All places where children live offer genuinely inclusive play opportunities

‘I'm only allowed to play in the house or next door – Mum and Dad don't want to lose me, the cars will follow me.’

71% of adults used to play near their home everyday when they were a child compared to only 21% of children today.

(ICM opinion poll for Playday 2007)

2 To give all children the time and opportunity to play throughout childhood

“ We need:

- the time and space to run around and let off steam, when we're at home and at school
- adults to value the time we spend playing, and people who work with us to understand why play is important, helping us to be happy and healthy
- welcoming places to play and unwind if we spend time in places like hospital, or visiting prisons, or if we are looked-after. ”

This will become a reality when:

- Policies for housing, education, childcare, health, arts, the environment and sport – nationally and locally – recognise and respond to the importance of children's play
- Parents are listened to and given information about what play provision is available locally
- Schools are required to protect playtime for play and to provide good outdoor play areas
- People who work and volunteer with children and young people are encouraged to understand and support the benefits of play

‘Our park is great because it keeps us out of trouble.’

Letting children go out to play is one of the best things that parents can do for their children's health.

(Making children's lives more active, University College London, 2004)

3 To give all children somewhere to play – in freedom and safety – after school and in the holidays

“ We need:

- our parents to feel confident about leaving us with other adults
- people to understand that sometimes we need playworkers around to help us if we need them
- to make our own mistakes and learn about the world around us, without being wrapped in cotton wool. ”

This will become a reality when:

- More children have access to staffed play services
- There is more support for volunteering in play
- All group childcare and after school clubs can access training in playwork and good outdoor play areas
- After-school clubs and holiday schemes have quality standards for play provision as well as safety and wellbeing

‘They come home absolutely plastered in wet and mud with a grin from ear to ear.’

Having more places where they can go to spend time with their friends, is the main thing that children and young people (42%) say would make their lives better.

(Tell Us 4 Survey, 2010)

Get involved!

Visit www.playengland.org.uk to:

- Endorse this manifesto
- Campaign for play in your local area
- Find out how Play England can help you
- Find out what you can do to make this manifesto a reality
- See what others are doing to support play

Together, we can ensure that all children and young people have the freedom and space to play.

Teenagers need equal support to enjoy their right to free time. The opportunity to interact with each other and spend time doing their own thing, is crucial for young people's developing confidence and independence.

'Fun and exciting opportunities to play are at the heart of a happy, healthy and enjoyable childhood. Better outdoor play opportunities are good for children, good for families and good for communities.'

Ed Balls, 2010

'Today just one in five children regularly play outside in their neighbourhood. The rest are denied the chance to get out of the house and have the everyday adventures that – to people of my generation – are what childhood is all about.'

David Cameron, 2009

'For too many British children, childhood has become a time of stress, anxiety and insecurity... When it should be a time of discovery, learning and adventure.'

Nick Clegg, 2010



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The UK is currently bottom of an international league table for child well-being across 21 industrialised countries.

(UNICEF, Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries)

