

play today

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News

Playday 2008: biggest and best ever
Final awards from BIG Children's Play initiative

3-7

Play England

Adventure playground tour for play pathfinders
Neighbourhood Play Toolkit to be revised

8-9

Features

Adventure playgrounds
Design for Play
Quality in Play

10-15

Play training

SkillsActive leads training provider and skills broker events

16-17

Resources

Book reviews

18-19

What are you playing at?

Gainsborough Adventure Playground Association

20

Check out the
PLAYDAY
supplement with
this issue

Contents

News

- 3 Playday 2008: biggest and best ever
- 4 Demos studies staffed play provision
Final awards from BIG Children's
Play initiative
- 5 E-petition to Prime Minister calls for
statutory play services
Heavy traffic 'curtails children's
independence' says researchers
Government playwork training
initiative oversubscribed
- 6 Disabled children miss out on
childhood
Somerset Grove wins London
adventure playground award

Play England

- 8 Adventure playground tour for play
pathfinders
Play England welcomes new staff
- 9 'Play in school time is valuable to
children', says survey
Neighbourhood Play Toolkit to
be revised
Policy brief

Features

- 10 Back to the future for adventure
playgrounds?
- 12 Putting play value first: Design
for Play
- 14 New Quality in Play scheme
takes shape

Play training

- 16 SkillsActive leads training provider
and skills broker events

Resources

- 18 Book reviews
What's new at the Children's Play
Information Service?

What are you playing at?

- 20 Gainsborough Adventure
Playground Association

Editorial

Some of our recent dialogue with the play equipment industries reveal some concerns about the current play policy.

Firstly, manufacturers are worried that the playbuilder capital-spending programme is a big challenge to local authorities' procurement processes, putting pressure on the need to deliver on time. It is true that this programme, even more than the lottery one, has had to hit the ground running and that everyone's work is cut out to meet the time constraints. Naturally, the government wants some quick wins from its investment, as well as the longer-term sustainable changes set out in *Fair Play*. Play England is working closely with playbuilder authorities, with the manufacturers and with the government to help strike this balance.

The second issue is an approach that some see excluding the use of equipment. The design principles contained in *Design for Play* (see page 12), which we have jointly published with the government, is broad guidance rather than strict criteria. We make no apologies that it attempts to set a benchmark that does better justice to the rich domain and endless possibilities of children playing than is too often found at present. The negative stereotype of the KFC (Kit, Fence and Carpet) playground in the corner of a park is one that we want to see consigned to the past. But there is nothing in the guidance that rules out play equipment. We are simply advocating that play spaces should be conceived as places that receive and respond to children, rather than simply give them a limited set of things to do. We recognise the innovation and creativity within much of the play equipment industry and have welcomed its input to our work. The challenge for all of us is to create public play space that we can all be proud of and that, most importantly, offers the fullest range of experiences to the optimum number of children.

Finally, some indoor play suppliers have complained about the emphasis on outdoor play. We stand for the *Charter for Children's Play* which advocates for play opportunities wherever children are to be found, indoors and out. The policy emphasis is (although not exclusively) on outdoor provision, we believe, because the evidence is that children have become increasingly excluded from the outdoor world as a place to play. Children need space in which to play and they – and their communities – are seriously worse off as a result of this trend. A play policy that leads with challenging this deprivation will be of greatest benefit to children.

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play
today

Playday 2008: biggest and best ever

This year's Playday celebrations were more popular than ever with a record number of events taking place on 6 August.

Playday is the annual celebration of children's right to play, and this year's campaign theme *Give us a go!* called for children to be allowed more challenging and adventurous play opportunities with the aim of shaking off the 'cotton wool' culture that can limit children's play.

Over 500 events took place UK-wide, more than double last year's total. Playday's success was down to the network of event organisers who put on small local celebrations to large flagship events taking place in parks and city centres. Events even took place in hospital wards and prison visitor centres so children visiting relatives or those receiving care could enjoy the fun too. The campaign received support from a range of national organisations and government departments including Department for Children,

Schools and Families, Department for Culture Media and Sport and the Department of Health.

There was also strong media interest in this year's campaign theme and opinion poll research, which revealed that half of children aged between 7 and 12 years are not allowed to climb trees without adult supervision. The campaign featured on BBC News, GMTV, and BBC Newsround; radio coverage included BBC Radio 4's Today programme, Radio 5 Live; and The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, The Times, The Mirror and Daily Mail all ran stories.

Playday also received interest from the commercial sector this year with support from Persil as part of their 'Every child has the right' campaign, which was backed up by a major television advertising campaign.

▶ More coverage on Playday 2008 can be found in this issue's special supplement, or visit the Playday website www.playday.org.uk ▶



Demos conducts staffed play provision study



The policy and research organisation Demos is conducting research to evaluate the role and impact of staffed play provision on children and the communities where they live.

Demos have been working with children, parents and staff at projects in six urban and rural locations. The case studies include of a mix of play rangers, adventure playgrounds and play centres. The researchers have attempted to establish the impacts of staffed provision on the children's well-being as well as impacts on families and the wider community.

They have also examined how local authorities and other local stakeholders see staffed play provision fitting with other policies regarding children and young people, community cohesion and local well-being.

The research, commissioned by Play England, will provide a detailed social analysis of the benefits of staffed play provision to see how these can link with wider policy priorities of local and central government.

Final awards from BIG Children's Play initiative

The final awards from the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) £155m funding initiative for children's play were made in August. The investment programme included just over £123m awarded to local authority areas in England - with these final announcements drawing the award-giving stage of the initiative to a close.

This final round of the Children's Play programme strand of the initiative sees just over £3.6m being shared by 13 local authority areas, with Wirral Council's play partnership receiving the largest sum at just over £881,000. The money will be spent on seven new play projects, including an extensive play ranger project that will operate in parks and open spaces throughout the borough.

Commenting on these final awards, Sanjay Dighe, Chair of the Big Lottery Fund England Committee said: 'BIG has given out over £135 million through the Children's Play and Playful Ideas programmes. They are both deserving programmes which invest in our future. They are helping every region of England to provide quality play provisions for millions of children and highlight the positive effects that play can have on the physical, emotional and social development of our children.'

The Children's Play Initiative

The Children's Play initiative was launched by BIG in 2006 and has three components:

- The Children's Play programme, allocating funding to local authorities for free play opportunities in the areas of greatest need
- The Playful Ideas programme to support innovation
- Play England, established to provide regional support for planning, development and sustainability and to make the case for play nationally.

Where the money went

- £123m was awarded to local authority areas in England via the £126m Children's Play programme
- 351 local authorities were successful in applying for funding, two local authorities were unsuccessful, and one didn't apply
- £12m was awarded to voluntary sector organisations as part of the £16m Playful Ideas funding stream
- £15m was awarded to NCB to establish Play England.

E-petition to Prime Minister calls for statutory play services

A petition calling for the statutory provision of play services by local authorities in the UK has been set up on the Prime Minister's website.

The petition has been influenced by the Welsh Assembly's vote to make play provision a statutory service for local authorities in Wales. The petition's creator, Peter Cunningham, is urging the Prime Minister to 'roll this out to the rest of the UK'. Cunningham says on the petition webpage: 'Doing this will ensure that local authorities throughout Britain emulate those in Wales and provide a good play service for children and young people. It ensures investment in the next generation, and will help to combat the looming obesity crisis.'

⚡ Those wishing to support the petition have until 4 March 2009 to add their name. www.petitions.number10.gov.uk/Play-Right ⚡

Heavy traffic 'curtails children's independence' says researchers

A report by the University of West England says that residents living in streets with heavy vehicle traffic are experiencing deterioration in their social lives.

The study conducted in north Bristol looked at three streets with light, medium and heavy traffic flows. The findings show that those residents living in streets with high traffic have less than one quarter the number of local friends than their counterparts living on quieter streets.

According to the study, growing traffic levels has forced residents to make major adjustments to their lives. Many residents questioned said that they curtail the independence of their children due to concerns about road safety and rising pollution levels.

Researchers say that with an additional 5.7m cars expected on UK roads by 2031, the government urgently needs to provide healthy residential environments and stem traffic growth by investing in public transport, cycling and walking.

⚡ www.uwe.ac.uk ⚡

Government playwork training initiative oversubscribed

Phase one of the government funded initiative to professionalise the playwork sector has been a resounding success with 2,000 places made available to those wishing to obtain an NVQ Level 3 in Playwork from September 2008.

The commitment to upskill the workforce, which is part of The Children's Plan, will see a further 2,000 places made available in phase two, where employers can register to ensure their staff can benefit from the Level 3 funding. The Department for Children, Schools and Families appointed the Children's Workforce Development Council to manage the programme, working with SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council for active leisure and learning.

According to SkillsActive, the play workforce has traditionally contained a high proportion of volunteers and part-time workers who have unique skills and training needs. The Level 3 qualification will enable playworkers to manage play environments such as play schemes, after school clubs and youth centres. Commenting on the initiative's success, Paul Bonel, Director of the Playwork Unit at SkillsActive, said: 'The first phase had an exceptional response, with applications exceeding the number of funded places available within a couple of months of the initiative being advertised. This shows a real commitment from employers to provide the best opportunities to improve training standards.'

Bonel believes that it is crucial for playworkers to be sufficiently skilled in order to deliver the play elements of The Children's Plan, and that the Level 3 initiative will go a long way in ensuring that these skills development needs are met. He is urging employers to register as quickly as possible to ensure that their teams can benefit.

⚡ Find out more and how to apply for the NVQ Level 3 training initiative at: www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/areas/playwork or visit www.skillsactive.com/playwork ⚡



Disabled children miss out on childhood

A report from the campaign group Every Disabled Child Matters (EDCM) claims that disabled children routinely miss out on the everyday activities such as playing that most children take for granted.

The *Going Places!* report, launched at the EDCM's Labour Party conference fringe event, highlights disabled children and young people's views on the changes needed to ensure that they have better places to go and things to do and lead independent lives as they grow up.

Commenting on the report, Christine Lenehan, EDCM Board member and Director of the Council for Disabled Children, said: 'Our *Going Places!* report shows that disabled children just want the same chance as other children to play, go out, and be with their friends. Good practice examples across the country show that this is not too much to ask. We urge the government and all play and youth workers, to have high expectations for disabled children to enjoy the same childhood and teenage experiences as their non-disabled peers.'

《 *Going Places!* is available online at www.edcm.org.uk 》

Somerford Grove wins London adventure playground award

London Play's annual award that recognises the valuable contribution adventure playgrounds make to the capital's children and young people went to Somerford Grove Adventure Playground in Tottenham.

The award was presented to children from the playground at a special awards ceremony held in the Unicorn Theatre, Southwark in October. Nick Jackson, director of Haringey Play Association who manages the playground, said: 'We are thrilled and excited to have been chosen as this year's winner. Even though we believe that the best playground for children is the one that is closest to them, we feel this award endorses our ethos of putting children and young people at the heart of the project. They have been involved in the design and construction of the playground from the very beginning, and continue to adapt, change and influence the playground environment on a daily basis.'

Children who use last year's award-winning playground, Glamis Road in Tower Hamlets, formed the panel of judges who visited this year's short-listed playgrounds. The judging proved to be a challenge with strong competition from runners-up Honor Oak Adventure Playground in Brockley and Slade Gardens Adventure Playground in Brixton.

Commenting on the award, Ute Navidi, London Play's Chief Executive, said: 'Adventure playgrounds are quality spaces to play in which children can call their own. They give children a taste for nature and wild spaces and provide opportunities for imaginative play.' The award was sponsored by 95.8 Capital FM's Help a London Child and eibe play.

《 www.londonplay.org.uk 》



Nick Jackson and children from Somerford Grove accept their award

Play for a Change

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Adventure playground tour for play pathfinders

Play England's London team organised an adventure playground tour in September for pathfinder local authorities across England and those applying for Wave 2 of the government's *Fair Play* funding programme.

The tour included visits to four very different examples of staffed playgrounds: Somerford Grove (Tottenham), Markfield Project (South Tottenham), Evergreen (Hackney) and Glamis Road (Tower Hamlets).

Participants came from as far away as Kirklees, Stockton-on-Tees and Bristol to see some of the best examples of adventure playgrounds in the capital and get an understanding of the ethos behind adventure play. Those on the tour got a chance to talk to playground staff, network with other pathfinder authorities and of course use the swings.

The coach also doubled up as a useful seminar venue during the travel time between playgrounds. London Play's Alan Sutton delivered a briefing on getting started; Barbara Zajac shared her knowledge on adventure playgrounds and inclusion; and Play England's Mick Conway outlined the support available from Play England.

Jemma Williamson, Senior Play Development Officer from Wolverhampton, found the day useful. She was impressed at how London adventure playgrounds use space: 'So many structures are multi-levelled, they use every bit of space, which is something we could learn from'. Jemma has welcomed the opportunities that the play pathfinder programme have provided and is determined to think creatively and work strategically, 'we want to be innovative; to build around the playing child rather than an equipment catalogue'.

Play England has produced a short briefing on adventure playgrounds setting out the main principles and essential elements of this unique form of play provision, as defined within the play pathfinder programme. www.playengland.org.uk/resources

Play England welcomes new staff



As a result of Play England's contract to support the government's play pathfinder and playbuilder programme, several new faces have joined the organisation.

Catherine Prisk has joined Play England in a new post as Assistant Director of Policy and Practice. Catherine brings a broad range of experience both working with children and young people, and working on national and regional policy, research and major projects supporting young people and adults.

Mick Conway has been appointed in a new role as National Practice Manager; Mick will also manage Quality in Play, the quality assurance scheme for staffed play providers which has just been updated (see page 10 for more information). Paul Durr will take over his old role as programme and development manager for the London region. He will also be joined by Angelique Brorrson, who has been appointed as Regional Development Officer.

Elsewhere, four new regional development officers have also been appointed: Catherine Lissaman (Midlands), Carolyn Port (South East), Steve Chown (South West) and Oliver Forrester (North West). Play England also welcomed Adrian Calvo-Valderrama, as Performance Monitoring Officer.

These new appointments strengthen Play England's ability to deliver its three-part DCSF contract, which includes: support and challenge role for the play pathfinder and playbuilder programmes; supporting community engagement in the play pathfinder and playbuilder programmes; and mainstreaming inclusive play provision for disabled children.

'Play in school time is valuable to children', says survey

A survey by the Teacher Support Network and Play England has found that teachers generally support play in schools.

Fifty-four respondents from across the UK completed the on-line survey. The small sample group uncovered some interesting findings about teachers' perceptions of play. Fifty respondents saw play in school-time as being valuable to children, and a further 44 respondents stated that it was valuable to teachers as well.

However, the findings show that a variety of factors, such as lack of facilities, managerial support and time constraints mean that opportunities for play in schools are limited. For example, over half of the participants reported that play facilities in their school were poor, compared with only 15 respondents who said that facilities in their school were good.

According to the findings, school workers found that play can have positive implications on learning, with 44 believing that concentration in class would improve if children could 'let off steam' during play times. Forty-one respondents also believed that that play could improve pupil's behaviour, as they will not be bored during break times.

▶ The full report will be available on the Play England website. ▶

Neighbourhood Play Toolkit to be revised

Play England has appointed Play Association Tower Hamlets (PATH) to revise the *Neighbourhood Play Toolkit*.

The toolkit was first published in 2006 by the former Children's Play Council as a CD-ROM providing information, advice and resources to people and groups interested in developing play provision in their neighbourhoods. The toolkit follows the stages involved in creating a project from conception to sustaining a project once established.

As part of Play England's current work with DCSF, the toolkit will be reviewed to ensure that all the elements of high quality play and community development and design are considered throughout the project development process. The work will be lead by Chris Taylor, an experienced writer and trainer on play and playwork. Play England intends to publish the revised toolkit as a free web-based resource in 2009.

Policy brief

Early Years Foundation Stage – The DCSF has published an *Early Years Foundation Stage – Everything you need to know* resource containing detailed information and case studies. Part of the government's wider scheme in *The Children's Plan* and *Every Child Matters*, the Early Years Foundation Stage is a play-based framework, which provides support to those working with young children, schools, nurseries and childminders.

www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/eyfs/

Ofsted childcare registration – The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) has published a factsheet explaining the types of childcare that do not require registration with Ofsted. The Childcare Act 2006 defines childcare as any form of care for a child, including education or any other supervised activity.

www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-forms-and-guidance-by/Title-A-to-Z/Registration-not-required

Department of Transport – The National Travel Survey report presents the results from the interview element of the 2007 survey. It includes: 14 per cent of respondents aged five and over said they cycled at least once a week; 85 per cent were usually accompanied to school by an adult in 2007, a slight increase from 81 per cent in 2003; and the proportion of 7- to 10-year-olds usually allowed to cross roads alone has fallen from 19 per cent to 13 per cent over the same period.

www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/personal/mainresults/nts20071/

Back to the future for adventure playgrounds?

These are exciting times for adventure playgrounds as the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) and government Fair Play programmes invest serious money in a model of play provision that gives children the widest possible range of play opportunities and experiences at the heart of their communities. Play England National Practice Manager Mick Conway looks at the background to a growing policy interest in adventure play, and outlines his hopes for the future.

From the birth of the junk playground idea in Copenhagen in 1943 to the growth of adventure playgrounds across the UK in the post-war decades, key features of successful playgrounds have emerged:

- Rooted in their communities, generations of families have championed them through thick and thin, often because they had been users themselves as children.
- Staffed by multi-skilled workers who put supporting children's play at the centre of everything they did, they pioneered a 'high response, low intervention' model of playwork.
- Children voted with their feet because the playgrounds were free of charge, open access, inclusive and welcoming to all children and offered a wide range of play opportunities and choices.
- While large scale challenging structures became a characteristic feature, they stayed true to the original concept of enabling children to make and remake their play spaces.
- Recycling and reusing materials in innovative ways, they constantly redrew the map of what was possible in a play space.



Play England has been working with partners across the play sector and beyond to build the evidence base and make the policy case for investment in adventure play. For example, over the last two years we organised a series of adventure play tours in London and the regions for BIG policy and grants officers, government officials and local play portfolio managers. Seeing a range of different approaches and talking to playworkers gave them a real insight into the richness and diversity.

A recent tour of London adventure playgrounds for play pathfinders

The £24m play pathfinder funding for 30 new adventure playgrounds or play parks alongside BIG support for adventure play is an indicator of the extent to which we have succeeded. It's not often that a cabinet minister agrees to be photographed on a rope swing as part of the launch of a major policy and spending programme!



Since then the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has created a slide pack on expectations of play pathfinders in developing their adventure playgrounds and Play England has published a briefing on essential elements to complement and expand on the pack. Both can be found on the resources section of the Play England website.

The investment in new provision is very welcome, but Play England also wants to make sure that the 190 or so existing adventure playgrounds in England continue to be supported and sustained. We know that some have struggled to survive, for example because local and national revenue spending priorities have changed and land values have rocketed over the last few decades.

A part of my new role at Play England as National Practice Manager is to help develop an adventure playground network for both existing and the new adventure playgrounds created through the play pathfinder and BIG funding programmes. There is a huge amount of collective experience to share

with each other, ranging from how the long-standing playgrounds were initially started and then sustained themselves over the decades, to how the newer ones came out of local community consultation and play strategy analysis of needs in the BIG and DCSF funding programmes.

The play sector has talked about how to do this ever since I started out in adventure play 30 years ago, and while play organisations like Play Wales and London Play have tried and tested the conference model, this doesn't work for everyone in the front line of adventure play delivery.

The network will probably start out as an email group to build up an online community, but it will develop in whatever way best supports adventure playground staff and managers in the real world. Play England intends that the network will be owned and driven by the members, and our role will be to support and host it.

Another element of national support will be to look at the possibility of setting up one or more training and practice bases on adventure playgrounds. This is an idea that has also been around for a while and is worth exploring again given the new interest in adventure play. Play England will be talking to SkillsActive and KIDS about protocols and logistics and then circulate a discussion paper for comment by the sector.



▶ The briefing paper on adventure playgrounds and more information about the play pathfinder and playbuilder programmes can be found online at: www.playengland.org.uk/resources ▶

Putting play value first: *Design for Play*

Play England, with the two government departments responsible for play, has published innovative guidance that aims to help providers to move away from limiting playground stereotypes. It sets out an approach to playground design that responds to children's need for a sense of place, as well as fully reflecting the richness of their play. Ken Ryan gives an overview of the new guide and introduces one of the first playgrounds to adopt its principles.

About the authors

Four experts were involved in the writing of the guide:

Aileen Shackell, a landscape architect with 15 years experience of working with parks and open spaces; Nicola Butler, director of the Free Play Network and co-author of the influential online photo exhibition, Places of Woe: Places of Possibility; Phil Doyle, with 30 years practical experience of developing play opportunities, has a detailed understanding of the development, design and maintenance of public play areas; and David Ball, Professor

of Risk Management at Middlesex University, has experience of child safety issues going back to the mid 1980s when he worked at the former GLC.



Design for Play, researched and authored for Play England by the Free Play Network and published jointly, in September, with the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Culture, Media

and Sport, is the benchmark for the government's playbuilder capital programme which allocates around £1m to every top tier authority in England. It should help these 'playbuilders' – and all those involved in commissioning and designing children's play areas – to put play value at the heart of provision. The new approach tackles some current myths, and challenges providers to think more laterally and creatively about children and young people in public space.

The stereotype

Nicola Butler of the Free Play Network, one of the guide's authors, believes that many UK playgrounds look remarkably similar. She says that: 'The design process can be dominated by a limiting stereotype: that a playground must be a flat, fenced area with some equipment set in rubber "safer" surfacing'. Such a design approach, often referred to as KFC or kit, fence and carpet, has been criticised as it does not provide for the complexity of children's needs: it only caters for a narrow range of play experiences and has limited appeal to older children.

A design-led approach

Design for Play calls for an imaginative new design-led approach based on ten principles that can be summed-up in one golden rule:

‘A successful play space is a place in its own right, specially designed for its location, in such a way as to provide as much play value as possible.’

Inspiring places to play can be developed by applying the ten design principles that underline this design-led approach. Those involved in the development of the play space need to be able to imagine a play space:

- designed to enhance its setting
- located in the best possible place
- close to nature
- where children play in different ways
- where disabled and non-disabled children play together
- loved by the community
- where children of all ages play together
- where children can stretch and challenge themselves in every way
- maintained for play value and environmental sustainability
- that evolves as children grow.

The guide includes an impressive range of real examples and case studies to highlight how this design-led approach has been used in existing play spaces.

Application

Neil Coleman, Green Space Improvements Team Leader from Wycombe District Council, was part of a panel that commented on early drafts of the guidance. He has recently used this design-led approach in the development of The Rye, a new play area built by The Children’s Playground Company Ltd. Neil explained that consultation with children as part of their application to the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) Children’s Play programme revealed that: ‘The children wanted to get out and play, experience something new, with ropes and timber and grassy mounds and, above all else, have fun’. This idea formed the corner stone of the council’s application to BIG in 2007. Further changes and additional play features will probably appear with time.

Neil explained that as the design proposal developed into a reality, the design principles in *Design for Play* were at the core of what was being developed. The play area at The Rye was:

- bespoke, being designed to fit with and enhance the setting (principle 1)
- located in the best possible place for access, safety and for maximising the play experience (principle 2)
- designed to offer choice and challenge in a natural



feeling environment, providing sustainability in the long-term and ensuring that there is space for the area to evolve and grow over time (principles 3, 6, 8, 9, 10)

- fully accessible to all abilities and ages but not in an obvious way (principles 4, 5, 7).

Design for Play introduces the concept of a ‘design cycle’ showing the six key stages that make up the cycle. The guide advocates that good play spaces require careful planning, continuing care and maintenance, as opposed to simply ‘ordering from a catalogue, put in the ground and left’. Neil has certainly applied this to The Rye, where due to the way the site is being used, how the children interact and move about the area, and also how the adults gather and use the site, some small but important changes and adaptations in the layout, the landscape and the equipment have been carried out. Further changes and additional play features will probably appear with time with all local children being able to develop a sense of ‘ownership’, especially with those features identified or introduced by the children themselves.

The new play area has been a spectacular success, children from every background use the space: different age ranges, minority ethnic children and disabled children and young people have all been enjoying the new space. And with the support of the council’s cabinet member and play champion the future looks good for Wycombe children. Commenting on the new play area, Cllr Tony Green, play champion and cabinet member, said: ‘The play facility has a lot of settling in to do and there will no doubt be further changes and adaptations but already we know from speaking to children and adults that we have a huge success on our hands. It will be wonderful to see how this site will grow and develop in the years to come.’

◀ *Design for Play* is available free of charge from www.publications.teachernet.gov.uk or it can be downloaded from the Play England website www.playengland.org.uk/resources.

For more information about The Rye, contact Wycombe District Council’s Communications Department on **01494 421207**. ▶



QUALITY
IN PLAY

Quality assurance
for play providers

New Quality in Play scheme takes shape

Quality in Play, a quality assurance system designed for play providers has been refreshed by Play England with the aim of rolling it out as the leading nationally recognised quality assurance scheme for play providers.

The scheme was originally developed by Hackney Play Association a decade ago and has been run in the capital by London Play since 2001. The new look Quality in Play programme will be delivered by Play England through a new programme of national dissemination, training and support.

Quality in Play is designed to help supervised play and childcare providers in the voluntary, public and private sectors to improve their policy and practice in supporting play for school-aged children. The system takes providers through a process of self-assessment of every aspect of quality play provision, with external assessment and accreditation leading to a national quality award.

To coincide with the new Quality in Play scheme, and its wider reach to play providers nationally, a new logo and identity has been developed to complement the changes that have taken place to enhance the programme.

Meet the team

Mick Conway: National Practice Manager

Mick has been working in play for just over 30 years, initially at Bermondsey Adventure Playground, Hackney Play Association where he was Director until moving to London Play to manage the Quality in Play programme and work on play policy. Until recently taking up his new post, Mick was Play England's London Regional Manager. As one of the original authors of Quality in Play he is pleased to be overseeing the next phase of national development.



Sue Coates: Programme Manager

Sue has been working in play for nearly 30 years, starting out in Crawley before moving to London where she worked for many years on Hornimans Adventure Playground. She then worked at London Play as a development worker and finally the Quality in Play co-ordinator. She was recruited by Play England in autumn 2007 when the scheme was transferred to Play England.

Annie Hunter-Wade: Programme Coordinator

Annie is new to the play sector and brings a variety of experience with her. Originally from New York, Annie has taught art and English in community schools and also worked as a respite care provider in the United States. Since moving to London she has coordinated projects for several charities, including the National Deaf Children's Society. She also helped to implement the Quality and Outcomes Framework for Camden Primary Care Trust.

Manual and resources

The new look Quality in Play manual and a range of supporting materials will be launched this autumn. The manual has been radically rewritten to reflect developments in play policy and practice and the lessons learned over the last 10 years. A focus group of Quality in Play mentors, assessors, play providers who have used the system and members of the accreditation panel have been consulted on the changes, along with national partners such as SkillsActive and KIDS.

As a result, the system has been simplified. There are now a total of eleven quality areas grouped in three sections that support the playing child. This is based on the Manchester Circles model developed by Stuart Lester and Wendy Russell and used with kind permission of Manchester City Council.



Quality areas

The play environment	Children's freedom and control
	The physical play environment
	The human play environment
The organisational framework	Reflective playwork practice
	Workforce development
	The law and regulation
	Resource management
The wider context	Clear play aims and values
	Communicating effectively
	Working with the community
	The bigger picture



The new manual will be launched at the Play England annual members meeting, with training sessions and a range of supporting materials following as part of the national roll-out programme.

The Quality in Play team is based at Play England's main office.

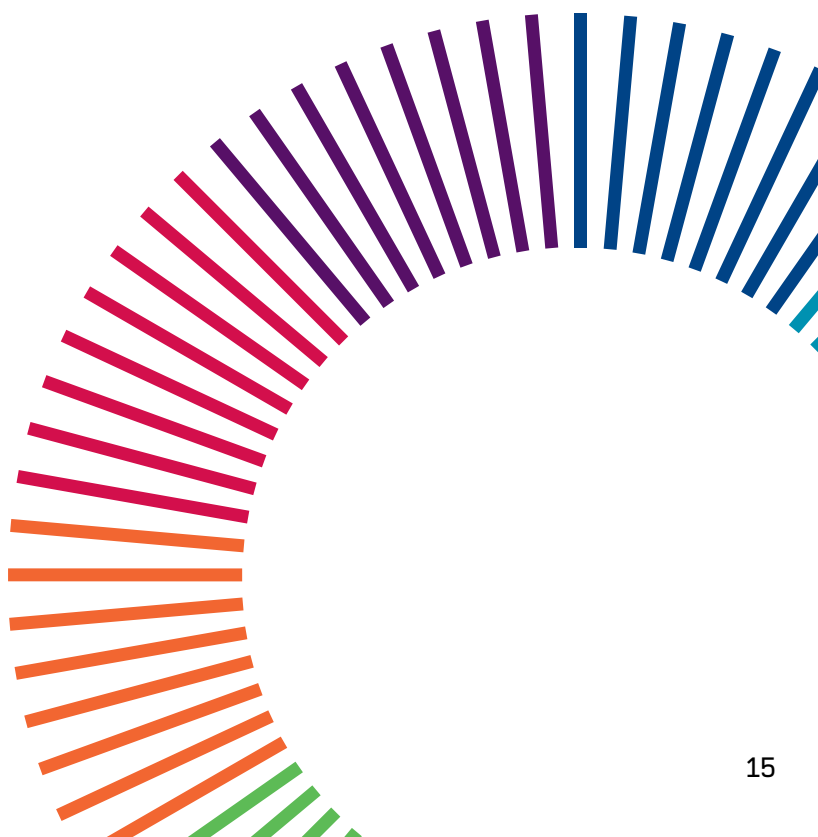
Play England

8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE

Tel 020 7833 6838 (from October)

Email qip@ncb.org.uk

www.playengland.org.uk/quality



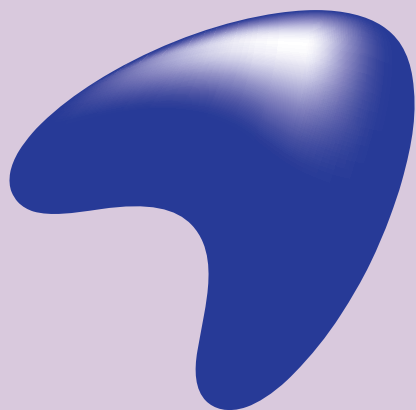
Play training

SkillsActive leads training provider and skills broker events

As the Sector Skills Council covering playwork, SkillsActive is continuing to work closely with the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) to ensure that the next stage of the government's scheme to train 4,000 playworkers is a success.

As part of this process SkillsActive is leading the nine regional events for skills brokers and training providers. The first event took place in the West Midlands, led jointly by the Learning and Skills Council and SkillsActive, with over 50 people attending. The purpose of the events are to inform skills brokers and training providers about the Level 3 Initiative, how it will support the professionalisation of the sector, and to provide an introduction to the playwork sector, the SkillsActive Code of Practice and barriers to the up take of training. Employers across the country will begin to be contacted by skills brokers following the regional events.

Paul Bonel, Playwork Director at SkillsActive, says: 'It is crucial that playworkers are sufficiently skilled to deliver the play element of *The Children's Plan*. This initiative will go a long way to ensuring that the playwork workforce is qualified and equipped to deliver the government's targets to improve play provision in the UK. We urge employers to register quickly to ensure their teams are put forward for the next phase of funding.'



activepassport™
for playwork

Strategy toolkit for local authorities

SkillsActive is currently developing a guidance document for local authorities to ensure that the play workforce is incorporated into the development of the children's workforce strategies.

The guidance will be straightforward and clear, with pictures, flow charts and diagrams that are easy to read and understand and offer genuine solutions. It will be targeted at local authority workers who have responsibility for writing workforce development strategies, and we will be liaising to ensure that the information included is the information they need.

How is SkillsActive working to make this possible?

SkillsActive bring in over £1m per year from grants and project contracts, which enables us to not only run a network, but also to engage a vast number of employers, trainers and practitioners. These colleagues advise and help us to ensure playwork stays at the leading edge of skills development and improve the quality of play for children and young people.

We meet and lobby government to address issues such as funding for playwork training through the Learning and Skills Council; Ofsted recognition of playwork qualifications – an ongoing issue with a long way to go; and clarifying responsibilities of playwork settings for example with the Early Years Foundation Stage.

We are also active members of the Children's Workforce Network and are working closely with our colleagues in early years, youth, care, health, justice, teaching and the creative industries.

National playwork skills conference in Wales

On 7 December, SkillsActive and Play Wales will be holding a joint conference looking at skills issues in this vibrant sector of the Welsh economy.

As well as speeches from Keith Towler, Children's Commissioner for Wales and John Griffiths,

Deputy Minister for Skills at the Welsh Assembly, the conference will include a series of workshops covering a wide variety of topics, including playwork research and qualifications, Skills Passports, interactive learning and information on the moves towards a graduate playwork workforce.

There will also be a presentation of certificates to the first learners undertaking the new Welsh Playwork Qualification: Principles into Practice, by Paul Gallacher from the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

For more information on the event, which takes place at the Millennium Centre in Cardiff, please call: 029 2048 6050.

Early Years Foundation Stage briefing paper

SkillsActive is preparing to publish a briefing paper on the implications of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for playworkers and playwork employers. The paper will outline how, if a setting is underpinned by the Playwork Principles, it will meet EYFS requirements as a playwork setting is very unlikely to be the primary care setting for child in the EYFS. Whilst there will be an expectation for playworkers to observe and record this it will be within the context of playwork ethos and practice. Playworkers won't be expected to complete the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile which will be the responsibility of the primary setting.

Playwork External Verifiers Standardisation Day

Representatives of City and Guilds, Scottish Qualifications Authority, SkillsActive and CACHE (the specialist awarding body in early years, education and Playwork) met recently at SkillsActive's London office to discuss a variety of topics and share good practice through feedback and further research of the important issues that affect playwork. Issues included assessor qualifications, EYFS, career pathways for playwork and Playwork National Occupational Standards .



Playwork graduate research

Work is continuing on SkillsActive's graduate research. Focus groups have been organised for each of England's nine regions and will include employers and employees in the playwork sector and from other parts of the children's workforce.

Activepassport for playwork

SkillsActive has continued to roll out the activepassport for playwork across the UK, with over 144,000 being taken up in the playwork sector. The activepassport creates an accessible system of recording and verifying qualifications and continued professional development which in turn assists employers and practitioners in developing skills and knowledge and identifying skills gaps. We have started discussions and are working closely with the Community and Youth Workers Union and Lifelong Learning UK to look at their sector.

« To find out more about the Playwork Unit at SkillsActive visit: www.skillsactive.com/playwork »

SkillsActive

Shaping Skills for the Future

Resources and events

Book review

Play for a Change – Play, Policy and Practice: A Review of Contemporary Perspectives
Stuart Lester and Wendy Russell
(2008)

**London: Play England
(National Children's Bureau)**
270pp. ISBN: 1-905818-40-8

The last few years have seen an enormous growth of interest in play with considerable basic and applied research of great diversity. The UK has been advanced and proactive in professionally incorporating play into the lives of children from



toddlers through high school, and this report should lead to further advances. This excellent compendium of the latest theory and findings about play is organised into five chapters, going from the basic context of play in national and local discourse; through the latest research on the role of play in children's lives, the way children play in numerous settings; and policy prescriptions to implement this latest research.

The bibliography is large, almost 40 pages, and while representative and balanced, is far from exhaustive of research over the last five years, attesting to the active interest in play by neuroscientists and ethologists as well as psychologists, developmentalists, sociologists, and those professionally engaged in playwork.

Perhaps the main theme permeating the report is that the traditional view that play should be encouraged and supported primarily to reach defined educational, recreational, and social ends is too restrictive and ignores the broader reasons to support play. Rather than viewing play as a means to attain sharply delineated instrumental goals,

play should be supported as a intrinsically motivated group of behaviors that are sought out and pleasurable, are diverse and often unpredictable, and may lead to the ability to respond to changing environments and unexpected events with flexible and adaptive responses. Such changes are mediated through the brain, and thus some neuroscience is mentioned, though not in detail. This book should be a fine source for policy-makers generally, but perhaps more so for those preparing proposals to schools, governments at all levels, and other institutions on the best ways to facilitate play.

As a report there is some redundancy across chapters, but this is useful for planners who cannot take the time to read all the chapters, though the 60 page summary report should be very useful as well.

Reviewer:

Prof Gordon M. Burghardt
Departments of Psychology and Ecology & Evolutionary Biology - University of Tennessee

Available from Central Books

Tel: 0845 458 9910
Email: ncb@centralbooks.com
www.ncb.org.uk/books

What's new at the Children's Play Information Service?

Abstracts are available for reference at CPIS. These publications are not for sale from CPIS. Photocopies of journal articles may be provided at a cost of £4 per article, subject to copyright restrictions. Please contact CPIS for further information.

Adventure play

The Venture: a case study of an adventure playground

Brown, F
Cardiff: Play Wales, 2007
Examines the success of The Venture, an adventure playground in North Wales.

Based on conversations with the founder and current manager, and a recent playworker, the book looks at the history, funding, philosophy and practice of the project. Available from Play Wales. www.playwales.org.uk

Out of school care

Listening to children about childcare

Daycare Trust
London: Daycare Trust, 2008.
Part of the Listening to Families research funded by the DCSF. This interim paper presents the views of children aged between 6 and 12 years on childcare, such as after school clubs and holiday clubs. Making friends and opportunities for new activities were seen as the most important benefits, and bullying and feeling unsafe when walking home were the main negative aspects mentioned.
www.daycaretrust.org.uk

Play – general

'Fun and freedom': What children say about play in a sample of play strategy consultations

11 Million and Play England
London: 11 Million and Play England, 2008.
Reports on an analysis of a sample of local authority play strategy consultations. Findings showed that freedom, physical activity and areas that encourage children to socialise were seen as essential elements of good play provision, as were opportunities for active outdoor play. The most common barrier to play was identified as physical distance.
www.playengland.org.uk/resources

Investigating play in the 21st century (Play and culture studies 7)

Sluss, D and Jarrett, O (eds)
New York: University Press of America, 2007
Presents current theoretical and empirical research on play and culture from a variety of disciplines, including psychology, education and sociology. Main topics covered are: different perspectives of play, comparative and cross-cultural research; play, creativity and science; play,

communication and literacy; toy libraries; cheating during play; play and culture. Available from bookshops

Play theory: A personal journey and new thoughts

Sutton-Smith, B
Article in American Journal of Play, vol.1, no.1, 2008, pp80-123. The author reviews a lifetime devoted to the study of play in a recounting of his career and some of its autobiographical roots. Covers the development of his three major theories of play and points to some new areas of inquiry on the subject.

Design

Planning and design for outdoor sport and play

Fields in Trust
London: Fields in Trust, 2008.
Provides a framework of the issues relating to quantity, quality and accessibility of outdoor facilities for play and sport and the value of local assessments and standards. Upholds the original National Playing Fields Association recommendation of 6 acres recreational space per 1,000 people. Available from Fields in Trust - Email: publications@fieldsintrust.org

Public space

Place mapping with teenagers: Locating their territories and documenting their experience of the public realm

Travlou, P and others
Article in Children's Geographies, vol.6, no.3 (Aug), 2008, pp309-326.
(Analyses and critically evaluates a research method, place mapping, used to document and understand teenagers' experience, use and perception of public space. Researchers in two case study sites, Edinburgh and Sacramento, used street maps as a basis for eliciting and recording young people's spatial experiences.

Risk and challenge

The buskers guide to risk

Newstead, S
Eastleigh: Common Threads Publications, 2008
Discusses the need and right of children to play in a way that involves physical, social and emotional risk, and encourages playworkers and other adults to balance the need to protect children with the benefits of challenging play. Available from Common Threads.
www.commonthreads.org.uk

Risk and safety outdoors

Williams-Siegfriedsen, J
Article in Ip-Dip, no.4 (Jul-Aug), 2008 pp20-22.
Discusses the dilemma of how to provide safe but challenging outdoor environments for play and learning while at the same time confronting parents' fears about their children's safety.

The Children's Play Information Service

The Children's Play Information Service (CPIS) is the national library and information service on children's play. CPIS has a large reference collection of materials on children's play, and provides a number of services, including an enquiry service.

CPIS forms part of the National Children's Bureau Library and Information Service, and is funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Big Lottery Fund through Play England.

CPIS is open for enquiries and visitors on Monday to Friday 10am–5pm. Visits are by appointment only.

Please contact:

Children's Play Information Service,
National Children's Bureau,
8 Wakley Street,
London EC1V 7QE

Tel: 020 7843 6303/6026
Email: cpis@ncb.org.uk
Web: www.ncb.org.uk/cpis

What are you playing at!

There is only one open access adventure playground in Lincolnshire: Gainsborough Adventure Playground Association (GAPA). Play England's Suzanne Hoare visited and asked two children who play there what they think about it.

Savannah (age 10)

I've been coming here for ages, since I was about seven. I come every day after school and in the school holidays. I'm allowed to play out on the street or in the park too, but I would rather come here. My friends all come here. I'm allowed to come to GAPA on my own, or with my brothers. I can come and go when I want to. The best thing is building dens; I like climbing trees too. I stay inside when it is raining though. There is stuff to do inside if it is raining, crafts and things.

Yesterday we dug a hole and filled it with water, it was really, really muddy. Some grown ups think you shouldn't get messy, but I think you should, it's fun. It would be good if we could keep it like that; have a pond with fish and frogs. Today we are going to bury our terracotta army in the hole (friend: 'yeah,

we are burying them so they will protect GAPA'). The staff are all kind. If they had all the money in the world I'd like them to build a swimming pool.

Ross (age 10)

I've been coming here, well, my whole life really. Since I was tiny. There is not really anywhere else to go. If GAPA wasn't here the children would be on the streets and it can be dangerous because of stabbings and stuff like that, it's not good for them.

It's really good here, there's nothing I don't like. Yesterday we made piñatas, that was really good fun. The best thing is when we do stuff outside, even when it rains. The staff are really good and all the other kids are friendly. Yesterday everybody joined in when we made a waterslide, it was really good fun. I like the sculpture (pictured), it's a sea monster. An artist came and helped us make it. If we had some more money I'd like another one.

I like climbing trees; it's good fun and nobody stops you doing that here. It can be a bit dangerous if it is wet and slippery though. It is good if a grown-up is nearby just in case you do fall. When we build dens we sometimes use tools. They can be dangerous if you are not careful so we have a grown up around. It's really good fun though, it's one of my favourite things.

About Gainsborough Adventure Playground Association

GAPA opened in 1973. The playground is an open access site, there is no charge and children from the age of five upwards are free to come and go as they please. GAPA provides a wide range of play activities such as arts, crafts, sporting activities and adventurous play. There is some fixed outdoor play equipment with a separate area for the under fives. They also offer outreach services around the community, including singing, dance, story telling and cookery.

During term time there are three evening sessions every weekday and a daytime session on Saturday. There is also a playgroup for children aged between two and five years. During the school holidays free holiday play schemes are run at GAPA and outreach venues around Gainsborough.

In 1999, GAPA were awarded £350,000 from the Big Lottery Fund for a new building which was opened in 2000.

