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Editorial

Although the premature end of the Play Strategy is no surprise, it needs to be said that millions of children will be worse off because the government has not replaced it with a play policy of its own. This must be an abiding goal for those who believe that the child's right to play is still, in Lloyd-George's famous words, 'the citizen's first claim on the community'.

The Play Strategy was always going to be a target for a government aiming to reduce the role of the state and minimise centralised planning. Nevertheless, the Conservatives' child policy review of 2008 highlighted play as a major theme, and since then figures like David Willetts, Tim Loughton and even David Cameron have spoken of children needing 'everyday adventures' and the 'free-range-childhoods' now increasingly denied to them. Last June, Nick Clegg announced a children's taskforce, prioritising play. This was followed by a new contract to Play England to deliver the Engaging Communities in Play programme (see page 6), which has worked successfully with local groups to sustain much needed play projects in the era of 'Big Society'.

Ministers have shown no interest; the taskforce is an enigma. Those in the Treasury and elsewhere who have argued that austerity measures can only include children's play as something to be cut have evidently won the day. Add to this the narrower focus of the Department for Education under Michael Gove and a perfect storm has left the national play sector decimated, just at the time when local communities most need support as the axe falls on play provision across the country.

And so it is a time to return to our roots. Support for play development will now, more than ever, need to be generated locally. For many of us, this is where we began. The play movement was, and is primarily a response by communities to the needs of their own children. Inspired by the sheer energy and beauty of children at play and a belief in the sanctity of space for that, this movement is deep and enduring. In the long run, it will be barely affected by this current squall.

Adrian Voce

Director, Play England

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today



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Government abandons Play Strategy and ends national contracts

As widely anticipated, the Conservative-led coalition government has not renewed any national contracts for children's play. The Department for Education (DfE) has closed down its play unit and removed the Play Strategy and supporting materials from its website.

In addition to ending Play Strategy contracts awarded in 2008, the DfE has also terminated contracts previously awarded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport since the 80s. Play England (formerly the Children's Play Council) and SkillsActive, who have held the contracts with various partners since 1998-99, have each undergone major restructuring to accommodate the cuts and will be delivering much reduced national services to support and promote children's play in the new era.

Director of Play England, Adrian Voce said: 'We have always accepted that play should not be exempt from cuts, but this scorched earth policy at a national level sends a very negative message to local authorities and their communities who are

all struggling to protect services, and who need our support more than ever. After the rhetoric about "battery-reared children, playable spaces and everyday adventures" that we have heard from this government, this move represents cynical short-termism at best. Many will see it as a betrayal of childhood and children, who perennially rate their play and recreational lives as a top priority, second only to their families.'

Consultations and Bills

Opportunities for play sector in new government proposals

Play England pushed for resources and support for the voluntary sector in the government consultation on the 'Community Right to Challenge'. Published by the Department for Communities, the consultation proposed that communities have the right to bid to take over the running of local authority services. Whilst this provides opportunities for the play sector, Sally Cole, Play England policy lead said: 'We need to ensure that these proposals include resources and support for the sector.' The consultation closed on 3 May 2011. <http://bit.ly/eCx2k>

Paul Bonel 1947-2011



Paul Bonel, who has died of cancer aged 64, was a key figure in the UK movement to promote children's right to play, and especially to achieve recognition for professional playwork.

After more than 40 years in a career that took in playwork on adventure playgrounds in London, field work and training for the London Adventure Playgrounds Association (LAPA) and, most prominently, more than ten formative years at the helm of SkillsActive's Playwork Unit, Paul was well known throughout the play sector.

Adrian Voce, Director, Play England said: 'Paul was one of playwork's real pioneers, passionately committed to achieving the recognition that playwork deserves. His achievements in leading the development of training and qualifications frameworks will stand the test of time.'

Mick Conway, who founded Playday with Paul said: 'He was a true champion of children's play and has left a lasting legacy, just one part of which is Playday. In typical unassuming fashion he never took his due credit as a founding member. He was a rock on the steering group for years, stepping down only when we could assure him that the rest of us would keep Playday in safe hands. Twenty-three years on, around a million children all over the UK are part of Playday, a campaign that has been incredibly influential with governments and the media.'

The huge turnout at his funeral was a moving tribute to how much Paul was loved and will be missed by the play movement. The sympathy and respect of the whole sector go out to his wife Felicity and their children Rachel and Finn .

[Mick Conway](#)



Promoting excellent free play opportunities for all children and young people

Mick Conway wins Lifetime Achievement Award



We are pleased to announce that Mick Conway, Programme Development Manager at Play England has been awarded the accolade of 'Lifetime in Play in London Award'. The award is in its sixth year, and is operated by London Play.

Starting out in 1978 as a senior playworker at Bermondsey Adventure Playground, Mick has spent over 30 years in play, and is still going strong! He moved on from Bermondsey to become the Director of Hackney Play Association, followed by roles as Programmes Manager and Chair of London Play for over two years. Mick finally moved to Play England, co-securing £15m of funding to establish Play England as the national body for play.

Mick has had several roles at Play England most recently as Programme Development Manager, authoring many influential guidance and policy documents. However, it is in his role as National Practice Manager that Mick has been able to feed his strongest passion – that of Adventure Play. His influence nationally on adventure play should not be underestimated and it was largely down to Mick that £1m of funding was secured for third sector adventure playgrounds.

Mick has done more for play than he would ever admit and was also one of the original co-creators of Playday. We congratulate him on his 'Lifetime Achievement Award'. Well done Mick!

Ashley Rogers

Got five minutes? Do some good!



Under the banner of Love Outdoor Play, Play England is delighted to have partnered with The Geography Collective and Orange to be part of the new Do Some Good iPhone app, which lets people map where's good (or not so good) to play.

Play England will use the data collected to add to an Outdoor Play Map, launched later in year, and hope that mapping these places will help children and families find good places to play more easily, and also build a picture of where is great to play and where needs to be better.

Download the app at
<http://dosomegood.orange.co.uk>.
For more information visit
www.playengland.org.uk/loveoutdoorplay



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Early years get active

Developed and delivered by Play England, and funded by Public Health North East, the Early Years Active Play and Movement Programme aimed to evaluate and support the increase of physically active play opportunities within early years settings.



The programme started by researching the evidence base for active play, which clearly demonstrated the need to embed physically active play in Children's Centre services. For example, while children overwhelmingly told us that they love to play actively outdoors, our review of current practice in a range of early years settings showed that children spent 61 per cent of their time engaged in non-physically active or sedentary activity.

The research findings informed the development of active play in early years training, which was designed to enhance knowledge, skills, and attitudes amongst staff. The ultimate aim of the training was to increase awareness of the benefits and delivery of active play, in order to increase levels of physical activity. The training package was successfully piloted with professionals and families in three settings, and evaluation showed positive changes in attitude and practice: with 67 per cent of participants saying they had increased confidence with regard to providing physically active play opportunities after the training.

🔗 The programme report will be available on the Play England website shortly:

www.playengland.org.uk/activeplay 🔗

Creating playful communities

The Engaging Communities in Play programme, developed by Play England, provided inspiration and resources to enable local people and community groups to develop, manage and sustain the places where their children play.

Play England offered a mix of consultancy support, Play Shaper training and bespoke workshops for local groups and organisations in 20 targeted areas. Play England have supported the play service in Southwark to develop opportunities for volunteers, helped business planning for voluntary sector adventure playgrounds in Liverpool, helped start up a play association in Richmond and assisted in the development of a play strategy and support for parish councils in Kent.

Feedback from Play Shaper training has been positive with

many participants drawing up action plans to look at ways to improve play opportunities in their areas. At recent Play Shaper events, councillors and local government officers were invited to make pledges about what they would do to support children's play. A cabinet member pledged to look at the rationalisation of play areas and equipment with a view to having fewer but far better areas. A head of Strategic Planning, Partnerships and Democratic Services pledged to 'champion play in Children's Trust plans and promote it as a priority to county councillors to consider for their budgets'.

Steven Chown manager of the Engaging Communities in Play programme said: 'There is huge enthusiasm for play at a local level. More and more people want to get involved but this cannot be achieved without a partnership between public bodies, local authorities, voluntary organisations and community groups.'

Adrian Voce, Director of Play England added: 'The government should ensure that its Big Society programme builds up community spirit and harnesses the desire that most people have for more playable, child-friendly neighbourhoods by providing the planning framework and support for local people to make the changes they so clearly want.'

Although the Engaging Communities in Play contract with the Department for Education came to an end on 31 March 2011, Play England will continue to offer support and training that will encourage community involvement in play.

🔗 For further information about the Engaging Communities in Play programme visit www.playengland.org.uk/communityplay or visit our dedicated website www.playfulcommunities.org.uk which provides information about how communities can be involved in supporting local play spaces. 🔗

Five local playgrounds awarded £15,000 bursaries

Five playgrounds have beaten more than 1000 entries, to become the winners of the Robinsons Fruit Shoots' Parents for Playgrounds campaign. The campaign is supported by Play England and celebrity mum Patsy Kensit, and has seen parents from across the country nominating local playgrounds for a chance of winning one of five renovation bursaries of up to £15,000.

Local parents in 20 shortlisted areas spent last month canvassing for as many votes for their playground as possible. The five playgrounds that received the most votes have been announced on the Ready for Ten website. With help from Play

England they will now be renovated throughout May, June and July, so they're ready for play at the beginning of the summer holidays.

Play England is delighted to have partnered with Robinsons Fruit Shoots to make sure more children and young people have great places to play. Amy Little, Campaigns Manager, said: 'We hope that Parents for Playgrounds has inspired local parents and wider communities to rally behind the places where their children play, to sustain them into the future. We're looking forward to working with the five winning communities in the coming months.'

« For a full list of the winning playgrounds and to find out more about the renovations, visit www.readyforten.com »

Quality in Play

Quality in Play (QiP) is a quality assurance programme for staffed, school-aged play and childcare provision. Delivered by Play England as a national programme, it sets standards that play providers should meet.

Publications

A Journey, not a destination, the evaluation of Quality in Play written by Ludemos for Play England is now available to download from the Play England website, and in a limited run of hard copies.

At the request of our users, we have also produced a briefing on how Quality in Play can be used as part of fundraising efforts. *Using quality assurance for funding success* is intended to help play providers to use QiP to meet the requirements of commissioners and funders, by showing the need for a quality play offer for children and evidencing how they are meeting this need. The briefing has been piloted at workshops at the National Playwork Conference and at Play England's recent adventure play seminar, with the result a resounding thumbs-up. The final document is now available to download from the Play England website at www.playengland.org.uk/resources

Forthcoming assessments

The next QiP assessments will be taking place in May. Application forms and guidance are available on the Play England website.



**QUALITY
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Quality assurance
for play providers

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www.playengland.org.uk/quality

Rural play counts

Where was your favourite place to play? For the vast majority of us, this was usually somewhere outdoors in nature. Yet, children today are increasingly denied access to such places; with potentially harmful consequences. This presents an urgent challenge, and one which faces rural communities just as much as overcrowded inner cities.

It is true that playing is instinctive behaviour for children, requiring little or no adult intervention for it to be both enjoyable and beneficial for them. But the increasingly substantial research in this area suggests very strongly that children need space for play, and the more natural the space, the richer the benefits. The trouble is that this natural space, as far as children are concerned, is becoming just as scarce in villages as it is in our suburbs and inner cities.

For many decades now, unlike much of Western Europe, children's play in England has been largely taken for granted. The pervading attitude seems to have been that in this green and pleasant land children have surely always had access to an abundance of open space and the freedom to use it. But families know all too well today that much of the countryside close to villages can be out of bounds to children, with busy main roads, railway lines, private property, even many village greens all presenting barriers to the few places where play might naturally happen. Added to this, there can also be increased concern and constraint from parents because they are unfamiliar with the local environment. This happens more and more as families have become more socially mobile. Parents no longer live where they themselves played when young, and have lost the confidence they once had.

Even where a recognised play space does exist in a village or country town, it's usually in an isolated field at the far end of the village, a long way from where most of the local children live. These play spaces often have a handful of unimaginative, unchallenging pieces of equipment that are typically two or three times older than the children that want to play there. The equipment may well be in serviceable order but that doesn't mean it still offers all that they need. Remember that when the equipment was new, children had far more freedom to supplement equipped play experiences with natural spaces for

playing too, and it is the balance of experiences, and the opportunity to choose, that makes play what it is for all children. Is the play space where children want it, or did adults choose the site, to fit in with 'keeping an eye on them', or to avoid sports pitches and make for easier maintenance?



For many decades now, unlike much of Western Europe, children's play in England has been largely taken for granted.



Often it is the natural area outside of the play space that offers the fun and challenge that children still seek: just as we did when we were young. How often these days do you see the fallen tree in the recreation ground covered with laughing children whilst the expensive play equipment nearby lies empty? Choice is everything and on different days children will need and choose to play in different ways.

If you need evidence, then recent research commissioned by Play England shows the scale of the problem: an ICM poll for Playday 2010 revealed that 90 per cent of adults played outside as children whereas today, one in three children say they don't play outside at all.¹ These findings suggest that well over three million

children across England spend virtually all their free time in their own home. Around one in four children are now classed as clinically obeseⁱⁱ in this country, over £1billion is spent every year by the NHS on treating obesity related illness and yet unsupervised free play is the best possible regular calorie burner for children.ⁱⁱⁱ Whatever happened to 'Prevention is better than the cure'?

The same ICM research also found that 47 per cent of adults think it is now unsafe for children to play out without supervision, and that one in three (37 per cent) of parents are concerned they will be judged by their neighbours if they let their children play out unsupervised.

Just over £230m, has been invested in the hugely successful national playbuilder programme, where more than 3000 play spaces (out of an estimated 30,000 sites, around one-third of which are in need of replacement right now according to local authorities) have been improved and the numbers of children using them have increased, many times over in most cases.

So the demand is still there if we want it, and the Natural England research Childhood and Nature^{iv} supports this. 81 per cent children would like to play out more but nearly half say they are not allowed to play out unsupervised.

“
Ninety per cent of adults played outside as children whereas today, one in three children say they don't play outside at all.
”

Those councils across England that have already embraced Play England's highly influential guidance, *Design for Play* and *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide*^v, have quickly transformed their play spaces from being cold, square and sanitised places into more interesting and challenging spaces that children want to revisit regularly. And they can be sustainable too if produced by people who understand what play is really all about. It's never been about simply getting rid of fences or swings; it's been about getting the whole design right from the start, identifying the real risks and benefits, and only spending money on the things that children will actually gain true benefits from. Play England has its main website www.playengland.org.uk and the special Playful Communities website www.playfulcommunities.org.uk available for parish and town councils to access for more information, and offers a range of training to those that want to learn more.

Most important of all, support from rural community leaders is needed to drive home the message that children need tolerance from adults, and freedom to play in natural places, just as we did when we were their age.

We need to make sure children access natural play sites, but we also need to be aware of the barriers. We need to ask what children and the whole community think about what would make their village or their parish a better place to play.

Today's children are as much entitled to enjoy the fields, meadows, woodlands, streams and muddy ditches as we did when we were young. Whether discovering buttercups, bees and grasshoppers, building dens in the woods or just laying back in warm grass making shapes from the clouds, playing outside in nature is the essence of a good childhood. Its loss diminishes us all.

Neil Coleman, Project Officer, Play England

i) ICM opinion poll for Playday 2010, available from www.playday.org.uk/playday_campaigns/2010_our_place/playday_2010_research.aspx

ii) National Centre for Social Research (revised Jan 2007).

iii) *Children's Physical Activity: The Contribution of Playing and Walking*, Roger Makett and James Paskins, *Children and Society* (2008).

iv) available from www.naturalengland.org.uk/gettinginvolved/default.aspx

v) available from www.playengland.org.uk/resources



'Children seeing their playground reborn have taken it upon themselves to continue the renovations. It really is an example of an investment in the community reaping benefits and value that are double or triple the actual amount invested.'
 Volunteer treasurer, Triangle Adventure Playground, London



THE ROAD TO THE PLAY STRATEGY

2006-7
 Play England publications, research and media activity along with the success of lottery programmes and growth of Playday, each help build the case and for government action

18

19

20

2008
 Children's Secretary, Ed Balls launches £235m national Play Strategy and appoints Play England as lead delivery partner

21

2010
 New coalition government announces immediate reduction of Play Strategy revenue, and removal of ring-fencing for playbuilder capital funding

30

17

16

2006-9
 352 local play strategies provide framework for £124m investment in free play and formation of play partnerships across England

15

14

2006
 Big Lottery Fund £155m Children's Plan including £15m grant to establish Play England Planning for Play based on London

11

ad p pl

1987
 First Playday - Hackney, London

1

2

1989
 Children's Play Council (CPC) formed

3

1991
 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified by the government

'A good play strategy will develop more and better play spaces and opportunities, a more child-friendly public realm and greater recognition of the importance of play'
 Planning for Play, Children's Play Council / Big Lottery Fund

AND BEYOND...

2010-11

Spending review signals abandonment of Play Strategy by the coalition government. Many local authorities target play services for cuts in face of budget reductions. Save Children's Play Campaign launched. Play England and play movement regroups...

33

34

32

70% OF ADULTS THINK THAT CHILDREN PLAYING OUTSIDE MAKES AN AREA MORE DESIRABLE TO LIVE IN

2010

SkillsActive recruited over 4,000 playworkers for level 3 playwork qualifications

29

28

1 IN 4 CHILDREN SAY THAT WHEN THEY ARE PLAYING ADULTS THINK THEY ARE UP TO NO GOOD

27

26

2009

Play England, with Playwork Partnerships and SkillsActive, launch Play Shaper programme for cross-cutting local play partnerships

2008

More than 3000 new play areas and 30 staffed adventure playgrounds/play parks constructed under playbuilder and pathfinder programmes

23

24

25

'Play is incredibly important for young children's development. It has health benefits and it helps them to learn about themselves and the world around them.'

Maggie Atkinson,
Children's Commissioner for England.

2005

Mayor of London launches play policy and play strategy guidance for London Boroughs

12

11

2004

Frank Dobson MP publishes national play review and calls for lottery funding to be used strategically

10

2001

CPC's Making the Case for Play calls for national Play Strategy. Chris Smith promises £200m of lottery funding for play in the UK

9

1992

The first national occupational standards and NVQs for Playwork developed

5

6

1998

National Strategy for Playwork Education and Training published, endorsed by Margaret Hodge and Chris Smith

7

2000

SPRITO contracted by Dept. Culture, Media and Sport to co-ordinate development of standards for Playwork

8

Roman Road's unique partnership

Roman Road Adventure in Tower Hamlets officially opened its doors in February 2011. Developed by a partnership between Tower Hamlets Council, Old Ford Housing Association and Play Association Tower Hamlets (PATH), supported by Play England, it is the first adventure playground to have revenue funding sponsored by a social landlord.



Old Ford, part of the Circle Anglia group, has committed revenue funding for two years from 2011 and sees the adventure playground as a key asset.

The playground is proving to be a massive hit with local children and already has over 100 on the register. The local neighbourhood is home to a number of different communities and the playground brings boys and girls across ethnic groups to play together.

Danny aged 13 explains: 'The reason I come to the adventure playground is because I have a good time playing with my mates and I enjoy making and building stuff with wood and other materials.'

June Morton, Old Ford Managing Director said: 'This is one of the best adventure playgrounds I have ever seen. To have this facility right in the middle of our housing estate is just brilliant. It is a place where young people can really enjoy the outdoors, experiment with equipment and let off steam.'

The fully accessible playground building features a 'living roof' that is already home to bees that will help to pollinate the flowers and vegetables grown by children in the playground planters.

There are plans to use the building as a community hub for local people and a borough-wide training facility for staff, play-workers and volunteers to help with sustainability and maximise its use when not open to children.

Wasif Khan, Tower Hamlets project manager, emphasised the importance of partnership working. 'The project was not without its challenges as it involved transforming an area that had previously been a magnet for anti-social behaviour. In order to deliver the best possible outcome it was necessary to have a strong and wide-ranging set of expertise in the project team.'

Old Ford contractors Apollo, architects AK Design, play consultant Phil Doyle and Grant Lambie from Free Play led on the design and build elements, while Eleanor Image from PATH and Old Ford play champion Rohney Malik ran an outreach programme for local children, schools and residents to help design and build the playground.

Some neighbours were originally unsure or even resistant, but the outreach work and consultation programme reduced their worries and helped them understand the adventure play concept. As one local parent said: 'It's a great playground and it's really wonderful to see the kids have so much freedom. All the playworkers are friendly and approachable.'



Old Ford Housing Association's commitment to sustaining the playground is a shining example of a social landlord taking a 'whole-family' approach by creating a great place for children to play. They understand that creating excellent play opportunities builds community cohesion – firstly among the children who play there, and then across the community over generations.

Photos: Old Ford Housing Association.

Swings and roundabouts in Whitehall

These are tough times for those trying to guarantee the grounds of play for children, young people, adults and communities. Michael Gove's drastic reduction of the playground building programme last year came as no surprise to those familiar with his general educational philosophy, all history and latin lessons. In the light of this, it's worth remembering just what an unlikely triumph the programme was for the previous administration.

It is true that when the then Children's Secretary Ed Balls announced close to Christmas in 2007 that over £200 million was to be earmarked to build 3500 playgrounds, advocates of play were pinching themselves.

New Labour, with various invocations of a renewed work-ethic and a notoriously exacting measurement culture in education, did not seem the most propitious sponsor of the value and benefits of play; oblique, messy and experimental as play is. Ed Balls did not join up his thinking when he rejected the Cambridge Primary Review in 2009, which showed that an extended period of play-based learning is the best developmental start for school children.

But there it was; alongside play initiatives from the lottery fund and echoed throughout the devolved parliaments, a commitment to building playgrounds as a step towards rethinking how we regard the activity of children in our public spaces, towns and cities. It's tempting to say that similar to shifts on climate change, the scientific consensus on the health, the cognitive and social benefits of more play in our lives – both for children and adults – was becoming indisputable.

But the coalition has made sure it will not let a crisis go to waste, taking the opportunity to brutally shrink the state to pre-new-Labour levels. As a result, the 30-year history of investment in children's play goes in its entirety.

If you wanted to find 'an inch in which to live' (as the great 60s play advocate Richard Neville put it) between the Tories and Labour – and for that matter, any of the left-leaning devolved polities – a play policy for children would be that inch. Enabling good conditions of play is an investment in the ultimate long-term health and capacities of future citizens, a crucial and dynamic element of the 'sure' start promised to children in the UK after the harshness of the Tory years.

Of course, play policy extends beyond childhood to teenage-dom and adulthood. There is too much evidence – ably pulled together by Daniel Pink in his new book *Drive* – that the most creative and profitable modern organisations ensure 'play' time for their employees. A small zone of self-determination increases overall productivity and effectiveness by considerable degrees.



There might be some wriggle-room for play advocacy in the coalition's big idea of the Big Society. According to one of its theorists, Jesse Norman, the 'active, creative self ... fizzing with possibility' is at the core of its vision – a citizen aspiring towards 'mastery, autonomy and purpose', and expressing that through free voluntary activity. Yet this glowing civic vision runs into the wall of a brutal deficits-justified contraction in public sector budgets. And as any playworker would tell you, the anxiety and fear which mass redundancy will generate are the least likely circumstances for such a playful, active self to flourish.

The last government managed to join up the dots between play, well-being, health and employment. Facing the contradictions and confusions of the current government, play advocates must take a deep breath and restate the case for the power and potential of play. The game, as they say, is worth the candle.

Pat Kane

▶ Pat Kane is the author of *The Play Ethic*, and one half of the 80s pop group, Hue And Cry. To find out more visit his website: www.theplayethic.com ▶

Play rangers

Play rangers bring fun to school lunch breaks

A project to make school lunchtimes more fun has really taken off in West Sussex, thanks to an innovative play ranger scheme.

Launched in September, the project to encourage youngsters to think creatively and to learn from play, has gone from strength to strength and there is now a waiting list for the play rangers' services.

The activities for children to try include den building, woodwork, messy play, arts and crafts, water play, play barrels, playing with fire, making tree swings using tyres, and building assault courses.

Tim Loughton, Conservative MP for East Worthing and Shoreham and parliamentary under-secretary for children and families, visited a school last Friday to see the children taking part in the lunchtime play session to promote play in schools.

Mr Loughton said: 'This is a fantastic way of getting children out playing in schools and it's great to see children involved in rough and tumble play.'

The play ranger scheme began life in Arun District Council's parks and open spaces over two years ago, before recently moving into schools.

Jason Ward, who heads the play ranger scheme, said: 'We knew it would not be possible to cover all of the schools in West Sussex in one year as we are a small team so we decided to start with just the local schools and any other schools that contacted us.'

'The new scheme means break times have never been so enjoyable for the kids as the sessions allow youngsters to do things for themselves with no adult agenda.'

He added: 'Free play is a powerful tool for learning that encourages the development of both specific and generic life skills such as imagination, role-play and learning about risk. Providing for free play helps ensure that the school setting attends to the social and emotional needs of children as well as to their cognitive development.'



Tim Loughton, Children's Minister
at St John The Baptist School

Play Gloucestershire launch new short film on YouTube

A two-minute film showing Gloucestershire play rangers playing outdoors can be found on their website and YouTube channel. Centred on Play Gloucestershire's annual 'Play at the Park' event the film showcases the work that the play ranger teams do within Gloucestershire. This includes a range of activities, including 'Trashion' (scrap fashion), cooking with the play ranger chef in their outdoor kitchen, den building, using wild toys and active games as well as Play Gloucestershire's smoothie bike. All of the activities encourage

children, young people and their families to be active outdoors, to get out and play!

The event saw a combination of regular and new users from across the county, and a variety of professionals working within the county; watch the film to see what users and professionals think of the work done by Play Gloucestershire.

For more information visit
www.playgloucestershire.org.uk or
www.youtube.com/user/playglos

Urban Play Rangers – the success of play rangers in Reading

A pioneering evaluation report, conducted by Brunel University, which highlights the fantastic work of play rangers in Reading has been instrumental in saving crucial play services at a time of increasing cuts to non-essential services.

The Urban Play Rangers offer a wide variety of free play activities across Reading for all ages, and have been running for over three years. The Urban Play Rangers are widely recognised as one of the most groundbreaking within the South East region and this report is the first of its kind.

The play rangers service in Reading was specifically set up to address the needs of children in urban communities. While other services in more rural areas address issues such as isolation and a lack of accessible structured play provision, the

urban context presents different challenges. Children in urban communities face barriers to accessing outdoor provision such as poor facilities, traffic risks and perceived stranger-danger.

Conversations with the Urban Play Rangers staff in Reading uncovered specific needs they had identified in the Reading area. These included few children choosing to access outdoor play spaces, and the presence of children perceived to be 'badly behaved' in these spaces.

The value of the service to children, parents and communities across Reading was highlighted in the evaluation report and this proved crucial in persuading Reading Borough Council to continue to support the Urban Play Rangers. The result is that Reading Borough Council has confirmed three permanently

funded posts for the service beyond the end of its current Big Lottery funding contract.

The evaluation reports that the service attracted a total of 2164 registered attendees for 2010 which shows a substantial increase (65 per cent) from the previous year. This is an impressive reach given that a very small staff team runs the service and demonstrates excellent value for money. In addition, between June and September 2010, the Urban Play Rangers were able to ensure an average of 12 'play hours' per day (Monday –Friday) across the borough. Over 100 users rated the service with almost 9 out of 10 (87 per cent) rating it as 'very good'.

◀ For further details on the service and to read the full evaluation report visit www.readingplay.co.uk ▶



The Urban Play Rangers at work in Reading

Campaigning to save children's play

Playday needs you

Playday is the national day for play in the UK. A day to celebrate children's right to play and an opportunity to campaign to protect and champion that right.

To celebrate Playday 2011 on Wednesday 3 August, thousands of children, young people and their families will get out and play at hundreds of community-run play events across the UK. Whilst children having fun is the primary focus of each and every Playday event, collectively they also form the cornerstone of a wider national campaign to demonstrate that play is an essential part of childhood.

Conceived by a group of playworkers back in 1986 in response to rumours of cuts to play in London, Playday has grown year on year. From just a couple of events in 1987, to around a dozen in London by 1989, Playday went national in 1991 and is now the biggest celebration of children's play in the UK, if not Europe. A record-breaking 850 events were held to celebrate Playday 2010.

From small-scale events to thousands of children taking over town and city centres – Playday is celebrated by individual communities in the way that suits them. Getting involved is easy and doesn't have to cost the earth. Some of the most successful Playdays have been run on less than £500 and you can even hold a fantastic event for no money at all with a bit of imagination – think cardboard boxes, scrap materials, straw bales and freebies from local companies. Whatever

you decide to do, what's really important is that children and young people get the opportunity to exercise their right to play, helping to show the positive effects that play can have on children, families and whole communities at the same time.

If you've never run a Playday event or you just need a little guidance, help is at hand! As well as a published guide, and a dedicated website, promotional resources such as posters and postcards are also available. On the website you can also download a comprehensive body of research, including some powerful statistics that can help you show local decision-makers why children's play needs to be a priority in your community.

« So, whether you've got kids, you work with kids, or you're a big kid yourself, Playday needs you! Get involved at www.playday.org.uk »



New campaign supports communities to stand up for play

In the climate of massive spending cuts, the play sector faces its most difficult challenge since the recession of the 1980s. Local authorities are facing tough decisions on spending and children's play is being hit hard. Sadly, once we start seeing the impact of the cuts – play sites falling into disrepair, play schemes closing and play services making staff redundant – it will be too late. The millions of children who rely on public play facilities will lose out for a generation.

Local campaigners have already risen to the challenge and started demanding that play be made a priority in their area. In the London Borough of Camden, demonstrators recently rallied to protest at cuts to local services, including a large play contingent armed with space-hoppers, balloons and hula-hoops. This is but one example of where play is

under threat; similar stories are hitting the news almost daily. In response, Play England has launched a new campaign resource, seeking to support communities to Save Children's Play where they live.

Starting a campaign can sometimes seem daunting, but Save Children's Play aims to show how, with a little advice, and a lot of passion, a small movement can make a big change. As well as a campaign Action Pack, Play England has also set up a dedicated Facebook page (www.facebook.com/savechildrensplay) where you can post your opinions, photos and local activity, seek advice, and gain inspiration from other campaigners.

« For more information, visit www.playengland.org.uk/savechildrensplay »

Save Our Woods campaign mobilised to protect public forests



Building on its success in challenging the government's proposed forest sell-off, the Save Our Woods team continues to campaign to ensure that the public forest estate remains in public ownership and to protect our woodlands for future generations.

Save Our Woods (SOW) is a grassroots organisation set up in January this year to campaign for the removal of the forestry clauses from the Public Bodies Bill. Hen from SOW said: 'We were finding it hard to understand the government's proposed forest sell-off. It was impossible to find out the facts. The thought that our public forest estate could be sold off filled us with so much instinctive horror, we decided to find out more and start to campaign against the proposals.'

From the outset, the campaign set out to connect with the public, allowing others to share their fears about the sell-off and help to lobby for

change. The Save Our Woods team used their knowledge of social media and internet-based resources to make accurate information available to all. A website, forum and Twitter account were established and quickly gained momentum. This social media focus helped the campaign to direct thousands of people to their main petition website, share up-to-date information and encourage people to start their own grassroots campaigns.

As well as mobilising public support, another key to the campaign's success was securing expert advice and supporters. Reflecting on their successes Hen said: 'Little did we know at the start of the campaign that we would end up with contributors to the site ranging from Dr Oliver Rackham, Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Professor Peter Howard from the Landscape Research Group and Rod Leslie from the Forestry Commission.' Building up a team of experts has

helped the campaign understand the technical forestry and conservation issues, the political processes and government structures.

On 17 February, Environment Secretary, Caroline Spelman, confirmed that the consultation on the future management of the Public Forest Estate had been halted and all forestry clauses in the Public Bodies Bill would be removed. Ms Spelman also announced that an independent panel of experts will examine forestry policy in England and report back to her in the autumn. Ms Spelman said: 'If there is one clear message from this experience, it is that people cherish their forests and woodland and the benefits they bring.'

Save Our Woods continues to build up a body of expert evidence and document public passions in preparation for the independent panel. Support the campaign by visiting www.saveourwoods.co.uk

Resources and events



Book review

Too Safe For Their Own Good? Helping children learn about risk and life skills

Second Edition

Jennie Lindon

NCB: 2011

ISBN: 978 1 907969 14 0

Too Safe For Their Own Good? is a great book for anyone who seeks to enable children to move towards being competent and confident adults. The

first edition made a huge contribution to the debate around children and risk and over ten years later, this timely new edition assesses recent developments and re-examines the issues of the first edition.

The book is written for every practitioner who is involved with children on a daily basis. It includes up-to-date examples showing how thoughtful practice can create a genuinely interesting learning environment in which children can be safe enough to take manageable risks.

The book looks at: how children learn to take care of themselves; putting risk into perspective; physical play and exploration; how to support children after accidents and avoiding preventable accidents; how adults can share their own skills with children to promote their understanding of safety and working in partnership with parents.

Looking at the role of the media in influencing adult fears and then discussing our increasingly risk averse society, Jennie advocates that parents and practitioners need to enable children to learn to judge situations for themselves. The section about keeping children safe without endangering them through over-protection is thoroughly updated and new perspectives such as risk-benefit analysis and a proportionate response to possible dangers are welcome additions. The new edition also covers the increased professional awareness of the importance of outdoor and natural world experiences, which is of particular relevance to playworkers.

This second edition will support practitioners to offer enough challenge to benefit children, while avoiding the extremes of over-protection or careless practice.

Reviewed by Ingrid Duffin

What's new at CPIS

Compiled by Anna Kassman-McKerrell

New CPIS Factsheet!

The benefits of school playtime – Newstead, S. (CPIS factsheet, 15) London: NCB, 2010.

This factsheet gives an overview of some of the research on the benefits of playtime, focusing on primary schools. It discusses how children and schools can benefit from playful playtimes.

<http://bit.ly/gHDm3v>

Play – general

A Timely Truth – Louv, R. Article in *National Trust Magazine*, (Spring), 2011, pp34–37.

The author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, reflects on how the debate on children and nature has resulted in a growing movement to connect children with nature.

Children's right to play: an examination of the importance of play in the lives of children worldwide – Lester, S. and Russell, W. The Hague: Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2010 (Working papers in early childhood development, 57).

This paper looks at children's play as a discrete element of Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNCRC). It draws on contemporary research on the nature and benefits of children's play to demonstrate that it is essential to the health and well-being of children, and therefore should be recognised as a right and respected by state parties and adults in general. <http://bit.ly/gqACWe>

Virtual playgrounds? Assessing the playfulness of massively multiplayer online role-playing games – Graham, K.L. Article in *American Journal of Play*, vol.3, no.1 (Summer), 2010, pp106–125.

Multiplayer online role-playing games are becoming increasingly popular among both

adults and children and young people. This paper examines the phenomenon of online gaming and compares it with several common characteristics and criteria of play behaviour.

The Oxford Handbook of the Development of Play – Pellegrini, A. (ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

This edited collection of papers investigates the development of children's play through a multidisciplinary approach. Chapters from scholars in psychology, anthropology, and evolutionary biology consider various aspects of play and together make a case for the benefits of play.

Play in schools

Adventurous play - Learning Through Landscapes (Playnotes). Winchester: LTL, 2011.

Looks at how schools can enable adventurous play, balance risk and challenge, and the role of the adult.

It's only natural... - Seaman, A. Article in *Children in Scotland*. (Feb.), 2011, pp16-17.

Escalating violent behaviour in school playgrounds in Berlin twenty years ago resulted in a transformation of playgrounds, from tarmac yards

to green natural areas. The author asks if the same could happen to school playgrounds in Scotland.

Public space

Children and young people's spaces: developing practice - Foley, P. and Leverett, S. (eds). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

This collection of papers examines the places and spaces of children and young people's lives and how these are negotiated, produced and experienced by them. It offers guidance on how practitioners can use spaces productively to form and maintain working relationships with children and young people.

Risk and challenge

Individual differences in children's risk perception and appraisals in outdoor play environments

- Little, H. and Wyer, S. Article in *International Journal of Early Years Education*, vol.18, no.4 (Dec.), 2010, pp297-314.

This study used interviews and picture questionnaires to investigate four to five-year-old children's perceptions of playground risks. Findings showed that the children were aware of the risks inherent in their activities and were able to select challenging activities without exposing themselves to undue risk.

Events

8 June 2011, Leeds, The Nature of Play Conference

This one-day conference is being held by GreenSpace in partnership with Play England. The day will consist of a variety of presentations and workshops surrounding play in parks and green spaces.

Contact Caroline Carsey on: 01189 469068
carolinec@green-space.org.uk

30 June & 1 July 2011, Bristol Field of Dreams & Head to Head events

South Gloucestershire Council in association with Play England and Learning through Landscapes are hosting the Fields of Dreams (30 June) - a field study tour of six wonderful places to play including primary schools, public parks and early years settings - and the Play in Primary Schools Head

to Head (1 July) - a conference bringing together experts in education, research and play with head teachers who have first-hand experience of developing play opportunities in schools. For all information and booking details visit www.ltl.org.uk

2 July 2011, Coram's Fields, London Street Play Finale

A free celebration of London Play's award-winning BIG Lottery funded Street Play project, this event will combine a conference, launch of the Street Play book and a street party.
www.londonplay.org.uk/file/1595.pdf

4-7 July 2011, Cardiff Playing into the Future - surviving and thriving: the 50th anniversary world conference of the International Play Association (IPA)

A line-up of speakers from around the world, including Dr Brian Sutton-Smith, Bob Hughes, Wendy Russell, Stuart Lester, Dr Sudeshna Chatterjee, Professor Marc Bekoff and Professor Lothar Krappmann.
www.playwales.org.uk
www.ipa2011.org/

26-30 July 2011, Bursa, Turkey Toys and Learning in Different Cultures: 6th ITRA World Congress

The overarching theme of the conference is the relationship between toys and learning in different cultures.
www.toyscongress2011.org

3 August 2011, nationwide Playday 2011

Join the fun on Playday, the national day for play.
www.playday.org.uk

What are you playing at!

The Hut – Withernsea Adventure Playground

Withernsea Adventure Playground, known locally as The Hut, opened in 2010 as part of the pathfinder and playbuilder scheme. The Hut will be celebrating its first-year anniversary with a family day in April.

An outdoor adventure space with play equipment designed and built by local children and staff, The Hut includes a large sand pit, a vegetable garden and space for games, den building and exploring. There is also a new building with room to play, cook, create and relax.

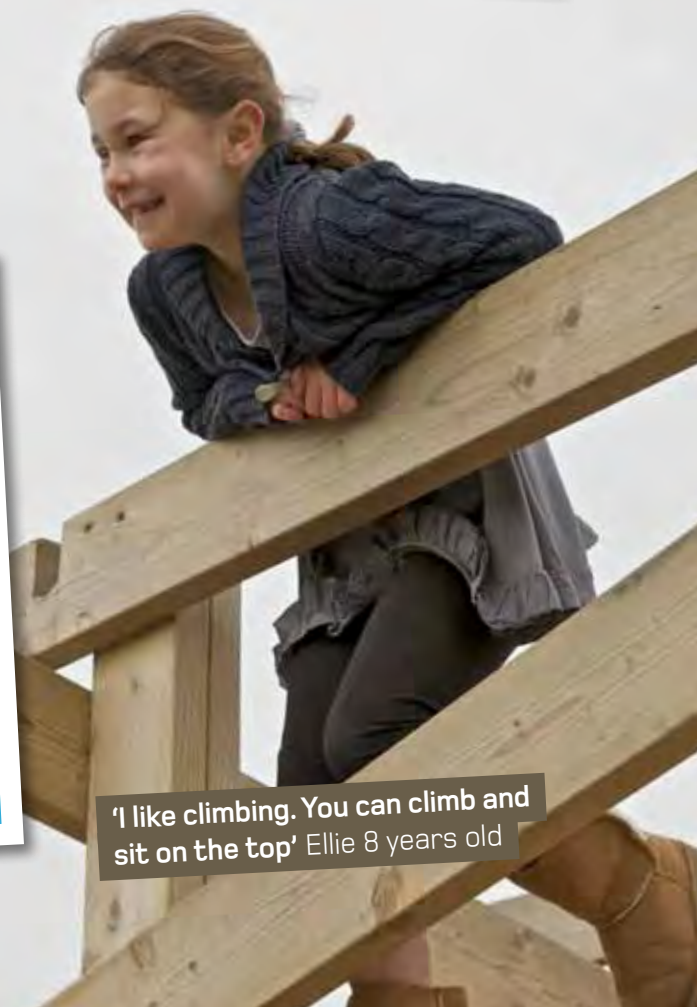
Over the last year The Hut has seen huge changes in the children and young people who visit the centre on a daily basis; they have respect for themselves as well as each other and take pride in their play space.

The Hut is staffed with experienced play workers and is open after school until 6.30pm, and from 10.00am to 3.30pm on Saturdays and school holidays. The Hut has more than 40 visitors on most evenings, and the children come and go as they please as it is a free facility.

« For more information contact
**Bernie Clarke, Play & Early Years
Pathfinder Project Officer**
bernice.clarke@eastriding.gov.uk »



'I like the sand because it's cold and shivery and I like making sandcastles' Harriet 5 years old



'I like climbing. You can climb and sit on the top' Ellie 8 years old



'I like the big donut because it makes me feel sick' Harry 7 years old