

Playworker honoured by government minister

London's oldest playworker received London Play's inaugural Lifetime in Play in London Award from the youngest government minister on 19 April 2006. Culture minister David Lammy MP gave Janet Dalglish MBE, aged 87, her award at a parliamentary reception hosted by Tom Brake MP.



Janet recalled how she would take a suitcase full of cardboard and scraps of material to the local primary school bomb site for children to play with – sites which evolved into London's adventure playgrounds. Among Janet's countless achievements was her contribution to setting up the International Play Association.

The ceremony, described by play veteran Bob Hughes as an 'historic gathering', was sponsored by Sutcliffe Play. London Play created the award to honour the contribution made by the capital's playworkers to the well-being of children, and hopes it will become an annual event.

'Extended schools sideline play', says Barnardo's report

Play is being squeezed out of extended schools, a Barnardo's report launched on 22 May 2006 has found. The report, *More School: Less Play?* compares after school clubs in England and Denmark, and their experiences of providing play within extended schools. The report concludes that British extended schools are lagging far behind in providing time and space for children to play.

The research highlighted that, at present, good play opportunities in UK after-school provision depended on highly motivated play-experienced individuals. Where no such person was employed, provision tended towards controlled activities and was more school-like.

After school clubs in Danish schools often offer more outdoor and 'risky' play opportunities, such as roller-skating, unicycling and den-building, than clubs in English schools.

Barnardo's is concerned that extended schools should provide different ways to include the most

disadvantaged children who are often alienated from formal education at an early age. Self-directed play can boost self-esteem and social skills that are vital to educational engagement.

Danish and UK contributors to the debate stressed the importance of trained playworkers

and children's right to free play, as well as access to stimulating activities, in their out-of-school hours, even when this time is spent within the school setting.

To download the 'More School: Less Play?' briefing go to www.barnardos.org.uk/resources

CPC launches Sustainable Play Guide

Between April 2004 and April 2005, the Children's Play Council (CPC) undertook research for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to identify ways in which the play sector could become more financially sustainable.

As a result, the CPC has developed two publications, a research report for DCMS and a guide for play providers based on the information provided by the ten case study projects.

Based on the research, the report to DCMS concludes that if children are to be able to play freely and free of charge in their own neighbourhoods, there must be public provision for this and significant, secure funding has to

come from the public purse – either central or local government. It further concludes that it is unrealistic to expect local play projects to raise sufficient funds from other means to cover all their expenses and to provide the type of quality provision, both staffed and unstaffed, that children of differing ages, interests and abilities need.

However, the report also identifies that there are

steps that local play providers can take to help them in generating income from different funding sources in the public, charity and private sectors. These involve looking closely at the way their services are run and developing their skills in fundraising, management, staff development, partnership working and internal monitoring. Above all they must be, and be seen to be, meeting the expressed needs of local children and young people and their families. Case studies for the guide included a play service from Spelthorne, near Twickenham.

Developing Models for Sustainable Play Provision: Report to Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Children's Play Council, NCB 2006. www.ncb.org.uk/cpc

Playing On: Sustaining play provision in changing times. I Cole-Hamilton (July 2006) London: National Children's Bureau.



Play England hits the road

The Children's Play Council's Play England project, awarded £15m from the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) in February, has been launched. A new website and good practice guidance, *Planning for Play*, were published in March to coincide with the full launch of BIG's Children's Play initiative.

In May, Play England went on the road with nine regional seminars aimed at assisting local play strategy work. The free seminars, which include workshops from Kids, SkillsActive and CABESpace, are expected to draw as many as 800 local authority officers and

voluntary sector play strategy partners to hear about the principles and methodology set out in *Planning for Play*, as well as hearing directly from the Big Lottery Fund about the Children's Play programmes. *See page 4 for more details.*

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Editorial

The latest statistics from the British Medical Association (BMA) show that there are around one million obese children in Britain, while a study by the British Dietetic Association, suggests that young people spend 20 per cent of their day on electronic entertainments, in addition to computer time in school. Yet we know from our own research that, given the choice, most children would prefer to be playing out.

Anyone who understands the fundamental importance of children's play will realise that the problem of obesity and its longer term health risks are only the most obvious signs of the damage being done to a whole generation of children for whom the outdoors is increasingly out-of-bounds. The social and emotional development only afforded by free play is being impaired every bit as much as children's physical fitness, with even more serious implications.

The BMA recommends that the government should increase funding and improve access to recreational facilities not just within schools but also in the community, and that more should be done to protect the status of playing fields.

The government's response to the long reported decline of play opportunities has been to set up a group to pull together the activities of different government departments and develop 'a more strategic, cross-departmental approach to play policy'. This group will report in the summer, but culture minister David Lammy has already said that 'a national play strategy is not the direction of travel'. Perhaps not, but the question is getting louder and louder: without a strategy for play, how will the government address the problem?

If the current lottery money for play is to take root, local authorities need to know that the investment they are planning can be sustained. As our research published this month shows (see front page), this will require a commitment of mainstream public funding.

Adrian Voce
Director
Children's Play Council

News

Scottish parliament debates play

The long awaited debate on the importance of play took place at the Scottish Parliament on 15 March 2006.

Kenneth MacIntosh MSP's motion, welcoming calls from Play Scotland and Barnardo's for a Scottish play strategy, attracted an unprecedented amount of support, with 81 MSPs signing up to it prior to the debate.

Opening the debate, MacIntosh promoted the importance of play in children's development. He highlighted a range of play issues, including its role in tackling obesity and anti-social behaviour, the distinction between play and PE, the need for unstructured play, and its role in developing resilience and self-confidence. MacIntosh

flagged up Play Scotland and Barnardo's work in demonstrating how to develop a play strategy, and suggested that the overwhelming support given to the motion by MSPs shows widespread support and urgency.

Adam Ingram MSP (SNP) noted that more things to do topped the list of priorities for Scottish children and that in failing to listen to them, Scotland was falling behind other nations.

A further six MSPs from across the political spectrum added their comments about other side effects of a lack of play opportunities, such

as impairment to motor skills, emotional stress, behavioural problems and the reduced ability to manage risk. The lack of quality outdoor space and safety issues, both road safety and parental fears regarding abduction, were noted as barriers to children's play.

Robert Brown MSP, the Deputy Minister for Education and Young People, said that the Executive would continue to engage with Play Scotland and others as they consider options for taking matters forward.

The full minutes can be viewed on the Scottish Parliament website. For further information please email sharonforrester@playscotland.org

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CPC national events

The Children's Play Council (CPC) is organising two national conferences this year.

Time for Play, in Birmingham on 11 July 2006, will promote policy, planning and practice for play within integrated children's services. Speakers at the event, organised with 4Children, include David Lammy, Minister for Culture, and

Sharon McHale, Team Leader for Extended Schools in the Department for Education and Skills.

CPC's autumn conference, on 11 October 2006, will promote the Play England agenda of planning for play, and will build

on the regional events currently underway. The October event has been arranged to coincide with the SkillsActive national event the following day, to enable participants from across the country to make a single combined conference visit to the capital.

See the events listings on page 8 for more information.

Policy Digest

Compiled by Issy Cole-Hamilton, principal policy and research officer at the Children's Play Council.

Every Child Matters latest guidance

DfES has published a number of new guidance documents to support the implementation of Every Child Matters. These include *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, guidance that sets out how individuals and organisations should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The guidance is addressed to all practitioners and front-line managers who have particular responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and to senior and operational managers in organisations that are responsible for commissioning or providing services to

children, young people, parents and carers. *Guides on*

- Integrated working for lead professionals
- Information sharing for practitioners
- Common Assessment Framework: guides for practitioners and lead professionals

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/workingtogether

Lottery Funding website

The Lottery Funding website www.lotteryfunding.org.uk was launched on 11 April. It contains information on all current opportunities for funding through the lottery good cause virtual doorway. The National Lottery provides good cause money ranging from £300 local community awards to multi-million

pound grants that can transform communities. All open schemes operated by the 14 lottery funding distributors can be accessed through the new portal.

For more information visit: www.lotteryfunding.org.uk

Exercise and environment

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) is currently developing national public health guidance on what works to help people to become more active. This is the first of a programme of guidance that NICE will be producing to help everyone with an interest in promoting good health and preventing ill-health to do so in the most effective way, and will look at the role of play, amongst other activities for children.

<http://www.nice.org.uk/page.aspx?o=300202>

Playing fields associations awarded development grant

The National Playing Fields Association (NPFAs) and the County Playing Fields Associations (CPFAs) have succeeded in securing a grant of over £400,000 under the Big Lottery Fund's Strategic Grants Programme.

The grant will support the development of the work of CPFAs in England over the next three years. The project will focus on the work of CPFAs in helping local communities, particularly in rural areas, to develop outdoor play, recreational and sporting facilities, with a particular brief for children and young people.

The successful application followed an independent report entitled 'A Study of the Existing and Future Roles of the County Playing Fields Associations in England' by Leisure and the Environment, and Bennett Leisure and Planning Consultants. The report and subsequent grant recognise the need for support services for children and play in the non-metropolitan areas

of the country, and the important role that can be provided by CPFAs.

The report and grant also address the lack of funding and robustness that can make it difficult for CPFAs to provide the necessary assistance. The project will seek to provide practical help, such as improving information and communications, exploring training opportunities and pulling together advice on funding streams and the possibilities of greater future financial stability.

For further information contact the NPFAs Fields Office, 8 Mercia Business Village, Torwood Close, Coventry CV4 8HX, telephone 02476 465800, or email fields@npfa.org

Criminal Records Bureau

New regulations came into effect in April 2006 aimed at enhancing the quality of the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) service, and to move forward with the recommendations of the Bichard report to ensure that CRB checks are used responsibly.

<http://www.crb.gov.uk>

Regional advisers

Within their Children and Learners Teams, Directors of Children and Learners will be supported by Children's Services Advisers (CSAs). Most CSAs took up their posts in April. Their role is to provide expert support and challenge to local authorities, Primary Care Trusts and their delivery partners on integrated children's services. They replace the Children's Services Improvement Advisers and Regional Change Advisers, and have an explicit

responsibility to bring greater coordination and coherence to local authority children's services.

More information can be found on each government office website.

ODPM changes name

Following the government changes in early May, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), which has responsibility for local government, planning, housing and open space development, has changed its name to the Department for Communities and Local Government. The new Secretary of State is Ruth Kelly, who was previously at the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The letter from the Prime Minister outlines the priorities for the department can be found at:

<http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1165650>

Southampton scores high as a city of adventure

Three adventure playgrounds in Southampton have been given 'good' ratings by the watchdog Ofsted, and have passed the quality assurance scheme, Quality in Play.



Coxford Adventure Playground, the Zoe Braithwaite Play Centre and the Newtown Adventure Playground all offer a range of open-air and undercover play experiences free of charge, including climbing frames, aerial runways and kick-about areas, all with disabled access.

Director of Children's Services, Clive Webster said: 'All three of the city's adventure playgrounds provide excellent quality play facilities for families to enjoy.'

'Staff should be congratulated for maintaining the high standards that parents and carers have come to expect.'

Kids awarded funding for Playwork Inclusion Project

Kids, the national service provider for disabled children, young people and their families, has been awarded a three-year strategic grant of £790,000 to further develop the work of the Playwork Inclusion Project (PIP). Kids National Development Division (NDD) has run PIP since 2001, with funding from the Sure Start Unit of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

The new funding, which comes under the DfES Children, Young People and Families grant scheme, was announced by the Minister for Children, Young People and Families, the Rt Hon Beverley Hughes MP, at a recent Kids conference to celebrate the successes of PIP.

The minister outlined a vision of the inclusion of disabled children being commonplace throughout the childcare, early years and play sector, and said that the needs of disabled children would be taken into account in the forthcoming government publication on play, due to be launched in the summer.

'The inter-departmental group on play will be producing a new publication that will set out what the government is already doing on play, and how it intends to take the work forward. I am very pleased that the DfES will not only be contributing to this work, but will also be ensuring that the particular needs

of disabled children are covered in this publication.'

As well as the minister's keynote speech, 150 delegates from a wide

range of settings heard presentations on inclusive practice and the difference that PIP has made to specific projects and services from around

the country. They also attended workshops on topics such as 'Making your Play Strategy Inclusive' and 'The Bridging Role' – also the subject matter of two new briefings produced by Kids.

To receive copies of the briefings, please email Publications.ndd@kids.org.uk

Young People's Inclusion Network

Kids' Young People's Inclusion Network is helping disabled young people explore and speak out about what they need to participate fully in leisure activities.

The project provides opportunities for disabled young people to meet with each other and create a vibrant online community, which will serve as a platform for exploring interests and communicating opinions.

Barriers

The network will combat barriers preventing disabled young people from accessing leisure facilities. Kids held a full consultation with young people to establish exactly

what these barriers are. Barriers include physical obstacles, lack of time, difficulty with friends and relationships and a lack of independence.

Opportunities

A strong, supportive community will help overcome barriers imposed by a lack of confidence; lobbying will help overcome barriers imposed by a lack of accessibility. Where barriers cannot be removed, the network aims to help young people find ways around them.

Young people are involved in shaping the project from start to finish and at every level, from recruiting staff to designing the websites. Over the coming months

young people will be building their community, meeting together and using film, photography and other media to create a showcase of their experiences.

In the third and final year of the project, young people will turn their showcases and private community into a public site, complete with their detailed recommendations for what they need in order to be fully included in leisure activities.

For more information about the Young People's Inclusion Network, please contact [Dave Titmas](mailto:Dave.Titmas@kids.org.uk), Communications Manager, on 020 7520 0411 or by email david.titmas@kids.org.uk

Dr George Torkildsen memorial trust

A memorial trust fund has been established to recognise the late Dr George Torkildsen's outstanding contribution to leisure management.



George died last year aged 70. His pioneering work in leisure and education as a manager, consultant, writer and teacher was recognised throughout the UK and abroad. He travelled widely in his early career, communicating his knowledge and learning in the leisure industry to thousands of others. George also volunteered for the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) for over 30 years as both an Honorary Consultant

and a Trustee. His book Leisure and Recreation Management is in its fifth edition, and the 1996 Torkildsen Report led to the establishment of the charity London Play.

George benefited greatly from travel and study in the early part of his career and so the Torkildsen family have established a trust to support others to do the same. The fund is administered by the NPFA.

Please make donations payable to 'George Torkildsen Memorial Fund' c/o Alison Moore-Gwyn, at the NPFA London Office, Stanley House, St Chad's Place, London WC1X 9HH.

Surprise donation for oldest playground in London

Coram's Fields, London's oldest playground, has been awarded US\$100,000 (approximately £55,000) by Community TeamWorks.

The award celebrates the 10th anniversary of the Community TeamWorks programme, and was given to the charitable playground in recognition that it was one of the founding Community TeamWorks partners.

Coram's Fields has been part of Community TeamWorks since 1997, during which time over 500 volunteers have signed up to carry out a variety of projects. Sandy Wynn, the energetic and tireless administrator, said: 'We are absolutely thrilled and delighted by the award, which was completely unexpected. We have never before had this kind of surprise. We celebrate Coram's Fields 70th anniversary in July this year so we will now be able to mark the event with something very, very special. We have a very long 'to do' list so we will take our time to choose

which one is at the top of the list for such a generous sum.'

Sandy added that the major achievements by Community TeamWorks volunteers include: painting every inch of the buildings inside and out at least once; emptying then refilling the giant sand pit with 40 tonnes of sand three times; creating a wild life garden; cleaning out and painting a disused building from top to bottom to create a new space for children's IT and art projects; painting a mural wall in the nursery; and topping up the safety surfaces under the play equipment with 50 square metres of play bark.

Coram's Fields occupies the site of the Foundling hospital, established by Captain Thomas Coram, in the 1740s, to provide a home for destitute and abandoned children.

In brief

Play England team grows

In May, Play England appointed Stuart Douglas, formerly of Stoke-on-Trent play service, as the new Assistant Director. Stuart, based in Birmingham, will be leading the regional teams, currently being recruited. Also recruited in May were Becky McLaughlan, Communications and Campaigns Manager (formerly of London Play), Ute Meyer zu Hollen, Finance and Programmes Manager (RNID), and Pat Thomas, Administrator (NCB Early Childhood Unit). Alan Sutton, from London Play, is working part-time on the Play England advice line.

Play quality indicator pilots

Continuing the work started in autumn, the Children's Play Council is piloting four key indicators to measure local authority performance in meeting children and young people's play needs. The indicators are being piloted in five local authorities over the summer. The indicators include participation (how much children play out and how often) and access (how far do they have to go to find good play places, quality and satisfaction). At the same time, the Children's Play Council is hoping to develop an assessment tool to help local authorities evaluate the quality of the play spaces and facilities available to children in their areas.

New play association for Yorkshire

Yorkshire Play, a new play association for Yorkshire, was launched early this year. The strategic organisation aims to deliver a real service on the ground for the benefit of play and playworkers. The play association hopes to work with SkillsActive to deliver playwork training support and development. Establishing and developing Yorkshire Play involved different departments of local authorities and the voluntary sector, combining playwork and play in parks. This partnership work added depth to the discussions about training and play strategies.

Why we should be Planning for Play

The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) has invited local authorities to produce cross-cutting play strategies as the basis for applications to its Children's Play Programme. In these adapted extracts from CPC's good practice guidance, *Planning for Play* (published by BIG in March) **Adrian Voce** sets out the case for developing a local play strategy, regardless of lottery funding.

One of the key recommendations of Frank Dobson's Play Review (*Getting Serious About Play*, DCMS, 2004) was that local authorities needed to take the lead in planning for play across their area. They would be best placed, the review concluded, to maximise the impact of any new investment, add to it over time and ensure it is sustained.

The need to improve the provision that is made for children to play is acknowledged in a range of national policy areas, from planning, open spaces and transport to health, education and childcare. Local authorities in England have a statutory duty, under the Children Act (2004), to cooperate in their provision for the enjoyment of play and recreation as part the five key outcomes for all children.

Play is of fundamental importance for children and young people's health and well-being, their relationships, their development and their learning. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) gives all children the right 'to rest and leisure; to engage in age-appropriate play and recreational activities.' There is increasingly strong evidence, however, that children's opportunities to play are limited by factors outside their control: the dominance of the car in residential roads; lack of tolerance for children and young people; lack of access to and conflicts over use of local spaces in both rural and urban areas; fears for safety; increased focus on academic learning and structured activities outside school hours; the effects of disability, poverty and other social conditions; commercial pressures; and more.



While the decline in play opportunities affects children generally, the impact is disproportionately greater on disabled children and children living with other forms of social or economic disadvantage, for whom access to free and enjoyable play spaces is especially important. Play is crucial to health and development throughout childhood, contributing to social, physical, intellectual, cultural, emotional and

psychological development. The physical activity involved in energetic play provides children and young people with a significant amount of their regular exercise. School-aged children and young people get as much exercise in free play as they do from more structured activities.

Good play opportunities promote good social, mental and emotional health, giving children and young people the chance to try out and experience a range of emotions in a 'safe' way. It allows them to learn and develop emotionally by promoting resilience and fostering self-esteem.

The chief medical officer advises that 'children and young people should achieve a total of at least 60 minutes of at least moderate-intensity physical activity each day'. There is growing research evidence that increased opportunity for free play is the most effective way to ensure this for children, and that a range of increasing health problems are associated with the decline in play opportunities. The government White Paper *Choosing Health* (2004), noted that 'many children appear to have less time being physically active ... because of the increase in car use and heightened concern about the potential risks of unsupervised play outdoors.'

In parallel with concerns about the physical health of our children and the rise in childhood obesity and related disorders, there is also evidence to show a sharp increase in mental illness. The Mental Health Foundation estimates that at any time 20 per cent of children and young people experience psychological problems. Their report, *Bright Futures*, states that the opportunities for risk taking in unsupervised play helps children build self-confidence and resilience, key protective factors for mental health. Given the decrease in opportunities for playing out unsupervised, the report also recognises the importance of supervised opportunities for play and the role of these services in supporting children's mental health.

Children and young people themselves express considerable concern about the restrictions on their independent activity, their enjoyment of public space and about the lack of provision for regular and enjoyable exercise. They commonly identify many barriers to play, recreation and their enjoyment of public space. These include: fears for their safety, from traffic and bullying; dirty, boring or run-down play areas and parks; lack of choice; and lack of access.

Parents and the wider community strongly believe that children today have fewer opportunities to play than they did as children, and are spending too much time watching television or using computers. A 2001 MORI poll cited activities for teenagers as people's top priority for local improvement, ahead of crime reduction, road repairs and better transport. More and better facilities for younger children were next.

For disabled children, negative attitudes and inaccessible environments compound the general problems experienced by most children, creating enormous social and physical barriers to the enjoyment of their right to play independently. There is evidence that disabled children do

Essential elements of a successful play strategy

- ▶ **Cross-cutting** – developed with commitment from relevant local authorities departments and the community, voluntary and faith sectors.
- ▶ **Strong leadership** – named and properly resourced and supported lead officer.
- ▶ **High level support** – named 'champions' at senior officer and member level.
- ▶ **Sound basis** – based on comprehensive review and audit.
- ▶ **Participative** – active participation of children and young people, parents and community members.
- ▶ **Inclusive** – addresses the needs and wishes of all local groups of children and young people.
- ▶ **Commitment** – includes commitments and a timetabled action plan.
- ▶ **Resourced** – explicit commitment to resourcing and sustainability.
- ▶ **Learning** – has regular monitoring, review and reflective practice built in.

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not enjoy equality of access to play and leisure activities. A recent survey of 1,000 parents of disabled children demonstrated how their children were excluded from ordinary leisure opportunities. Parks and playgrounds were the least user-friendly, with few facilities for disabled people. Other studies have shown that disabled children and young people can often feel threatened in open spaces and that the design of play equipment often limits their access.

Neither the identification of children's need for play, the definitions of play itself, nor the description of its objectives, actually tell us what constitutes good play provision. What they do tell us is that play is about much more than swings and roundabouts in the park. Fixed equipment playgrounds have their place. But a good play strategy will take a much broader view of where and how often children need access to the space and opportunity to run, climb, skip, hide, play with ropes, jump, practise cartwheels, throw and kick balls, make friends, fall out, build fires, grow things, tell stories, climb trees, take risks, get wet, explore nature, build dens, get dirty, dress up, pretend, keep animals, dig holes, swing on tyres, shout, fight, invent games, make things, paint pictures, talk with their friends or just sit. Many of these activities lend themselves more suitably to supervised play provision.

A good play strategy will address all these issues by developing more and better play spaces and opportunities, and also a more child-friendly public realm and greater recognition of the importance of play across the range of policy areas that have an influence on children's lives.

Copies of the guidance can be downloaded from www.playengland.org.uk

Playing naturally: celebrating the playfulness of nature

The theme for this year's Playday is *Play, Naturally* – a double-whammy of celebrating children's natural playfulness and acknowledging the variety and stimulation which natural spaces and elements offer for play.

Children have an irrepressible, internal drive to play – it's in their nature. Children also have inborn connections, fascinations and affinities with nature. Provided with suitable opportunities, children play instinctively with natural elements: digging in earth; splashing in puddles; picking flowers; catching bugs; and a host of other natural childhood activities. This instinctiveness helps us as adults remember that children are the experts in environmental play.

Just as children's basic underlying natures are enduring, so too natural spaces continue to be excellent playgrounds: varied; multisensory; flexible; and resilient. The wildness of natural settings also confers another appealing property for children – they are relatively free from obvious adult design and therefore more open to the possibilities and intent of their play. Such diverse playfulness of nature for children is well illustrated by the iconic example of trees:

'Trees can be climbed and hidden behind; they can become forts or bases; they become dens and little houses; they provide shelter, landmarks and privacy; fallen, they become part of an obstacle course; near them you find birds, little animals, conkers, fallen leaves, mud, fir cones and winged seeds; they provide a backdrop for every conceivable game of the imagination.'

Colin Ward (*The Child in the Countryside*)

Despite such rich potential, opportunities for children to access, experience and play with nature have seriously diminished within a generation or so. Children's physical, mental and emotional health are all suffering, yet growing evidence suggests they are maintained, enhanced or restored through opportunities for free play in natural environments. More is needed. In the playwork sector and beyond, there has been a mushrooming of enthusiasm and ideas around environmental play, alongside a readiness to learn



Despite such rich potential, opportunities for children to access, experience and play with nature have seriously diminished

more and share experiences. One such networking opportunity is *Wild & Away*, the second UK-wide conference in environmental play (see page 6).

Visits to expansive natural sites, such as nature reserves, woodlands and environmental centres, provide valuable and influential play experiences for children. One of the highlights in environmental playwork has been the productive joint working between environmental settings and play providers. Many of environmental play projects that were funded through *Better Play* are testimony to this.

However, organised trips to wild spaces alone aren't accessible, regular or instant enough. Children also need everyday experiences of nearby nature, gardens, parks, school grounds and public spaces where pockets of wildness can be allowed to flourish and children can be encouraged to interact with it. In play settings where nature cannot thrive by itself, opportunities for environmental play can be created and adapted, including water tubs for bugs to colonise, earth for digging in, potted plants and campfire sites.

All children enjoy and need opportunities to play with natural elements. If this is to be realised then the role falls to all adults within play provision, not just a few specialists. Supportive training and resources are increasingly available, such as those highlighted here. However, the most effective way for adults to prepare for environmental play is to have a go first. There's no substitute for direct experience to build confidence and provide a balanced perspective of the benefits, opportunities and potential hazards of any outdoor activity.

This year, before Playday, perhaps all of us could make a list of environmental play activities to try out ourselves before undertaking them with children. Examples might include building

a fire, going pond dipping, foraging for wild food or climbing a tree. Adapt the list to your own circumstances. Hopefully doing this will help enthuse and empower us to make sure that today's children continue to have the same range of opportunities.

Children also need champions for their rights to play with nature. Recent research, for instance, suggests that a high proportion of children are worried about playing outside because of getting dirty and their parent's reactions. Play providers can start to turn this around by helping children to celebrate the evidence of successful environmental play – muddy shoes, grass stained jeans, dirty faces and smoky hair – what Stuart Lester calls 'badges of honour'. Let's hope there are lots of these on display on Playday 2006.

Back to trees to end with; those rooted symbols of past natural childhoods and, who knows, maybe continuing features of children's play...

Every time I climb a tree

I scrape a leg or skin a knee –

And every time I climb a tree

I find some ants

Or dodge a bee,

And get the ants

All over me;

And every time I climb a tree

Where have you been?

They say to me –

But don't they know that I am free?

Every time I climb a tree.

(David McCord)

Environmental play resources

***Nature's Playground* by Fiona Danks and Jo Schofield (Frances Lincoln, 2005)**

Having recently bought a copy, I realise that I've been longing for just such a book turn up. It is both inspirational and practical, and offers rich encouragement for tempting children outside with bountiful ideas for weeks' worth of environmental play. The book is sumptuously photographed throughout – a real highlight – and being organised through the four seasons allows activity browsing to suit any occasion. The book is a product of two parents who clearly share a love of playing outdoors and are able to offer some down to earth advice to other parents: *'Mud is just good clean soil, easily washed off and harmless...'*

Playing on the Wildside, Playwork Partnerships

A comprehensive practitioners guide to environmental playwork, reviewed on page 7. Ordering information available from www.playwork.co.uk/wildaboutplay

The WildPlay Kitbag, Herefordshire Nature Trust

One of the shining beacons of environmental play over the last few years, the *WildPlay* project has documented its work on a DVD/CD-Rom. Complete with film footage of activities, insightful children's comments and downloadable resources, the kitbag is full of the energy, expertise and enthusiasm that characterises this environmental play project.

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SkillsActive set to launch the first UK wide play strategy

SkillsActive is leading the launch of the sector's first UK strategy for playwork education, training and qualifications. The strategy, which is being delivered at the All Party Parliamentary Group on Play on the 14 June 2006, aims to improve the quality and range of play opportunities for children and young people.

The strategy has a ten-year vision with a coherent five-year plan, developed jointly across the four nations, whilst recognising the diverse needs of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It aims to maximise these partnerships by identifying shared goals, common themes and mutual objectives.

SkillsActive's director of playwork, Paul Bonel said: 'The new playwork education, training and

qualifications strategy represents a unique opportunity for the four nations to work together on what we want to achieve for the playwork sector over the next five years.'

The key ambition that underpins the strategy is to build a professional workforce that embraces the views, needs and demands of children and their families. SkillsActive has identified a number of aims at the heart of the strategy, it needs to:

- address the increasing demand for quality playwork
- raise awareness of the importance of play and trained staff in supervised settings
- professionalise and up-skill the workforce
- gain recognition for the value of playworkers in the children's workforce
- increase the supply of skilled playworkers

- support the development of playwork
- promote collaboration across agencies and allied sectors
- attract resources to provide long term support
- improve career opportunities and mobility for the play workforce.

The overall long-term vision of the strategy aspires to a highly trained and qualified workforce across all children's services.

SkillsActive will be launching the sector's first UK strategy for playwork at the new All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on play on the 14 June 2006. For more information on the playwork strategy, contact paul.bonel@skillsactive.com

Scottish consultation on registration of workforce

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) has issued a consultation paper on the timetable for the registration of early education and childcare workers. The paper provides key information for playworkers, such as the level of fees for registration and the level of post-registration training and learning requirements.

SkillsActive has welcomed the consultation and the proportionate approach to both registration and the

level of fees. It is proposed that managers and lead practitioners registration will begin in October 2006, with a proposed fee of £30 per year. Practitioners' registration will begin in March 2007, with a proposed fee of £20 per year. Support workers' registration will begin in October 2008, with a proposed fee of £15 per year.

The main area of contention is likely to be around the required post-registration training

and learning requirements (PRTL). It is proposed that playwork staff undertake 10 days (60 Hours) of post-registration training and learning requirements over a five-year period. SkillsActive Scotland is seeking views from the Scottish Playwork Sector Group and will respond to the SSSC before the closing date of 19 June 2006.

The consultation documents can be obtained online: www.sssc.uk.com

SkillsActive annual conference

SkillsActive is currently planning this year's playwork conference. Expanding Playwork will bring playwork practitioners, employers, trainers and development workers together with delegates from related professions to discuss common issues, ways

of working together and government initiatives that impact on all those working with children and young people.

The conference will explore the expanding nature of children's services, the children's workforce and the role that playwork can play in

the coming months and years.

The conference will be on Thursday, 12 October 2006 at the Congress Centre in London. The cost will be £150 per delegate. See the website for future updates on this event www.skillsactive.com

The Quanta verifier programme

In 2003, SkillsActive were funded by the European Equal Project to research the importance of quality play, and to reveal what systems should be implemented to monitor and support the delivery of playwork training in the future.

The project was completed in 2004 and as a result, bi-annual Quanta quality assurance visits will take place as an additional quality assurance tool.

The Quanta verifier programme has been established to develop the SkillsActive playwork unit quality assurance systems, by providing a means of monitoring and verifying the delivery of

playwork education and training.

Verifying would be conducted against criteria laid down and applied by the playwork sector. This will provide further evidence to parents, carers, employers, playworkers, statutory bodies and the general public that the education and training offered to the people who work with children in play is of the highest standard.

The Quanta quality assurance visits will be up and running by September 2006. For more information contact Kiran Sahota at SkillsActive on 0207 632 2021.

Wild and Away 21st – 23rd July 2006

Green and Away Outdoor Conference Centre, Gloucestershire

SkillsActive is pleased to support the Wild and Away conference, which aims to draw together, celebrate and promote the growing enthusiasm for environmental playwork in the UK. It is a fantastic opportunity to network, share experiences, pick up skills, debate issues, take part in activities and play outdoors for playworkers, park rangers, early years workers, environmental organisations, community projects and anyone else interested facilitating children's play in natural spaces.

As well as hands-on workshops led by experienced practitioners, there will also be informal discussion groups exploring past experiences, current issues and future directions for environmental play. Throughout the weekend, there will be plenty of opportunities for playful interactions with others who work with children outdoors.

The Wild and Away conference will be held at Green and Away, a unique outdoor conference centre based on a small organic farm in Gloucestershire's beautiful rolling countryside. Green and Away is designed to be a showcase of low impact technologies, with electricity from the wind and sun, wood-burning and solar showers, meeting spaces made of coppiced hazel and recycled canvas, art and craft activities and composting toilets. The camp is built around a traditional village green where all activities take place. There is an atmosphere of close community, making the event genial whether you come alone or with friends or colleagues.

For further information and to download a booking form visit www.playwork.co.uk/wildaboutplay/fevents.htm or email etaylorallee@glos.ac.uk or tel 01242 532949.

Playwork in extended schools

Two brief guides have been released on playwork in extended school services.

The first leaflet is aimed at strategic planners, introducing the benefits of play and playwork to the school community and play's contributions to the core extended schools offer. The guide highlights the differences between educational and playwork approaches, and emphasises the importance of free play. Links are also made to Every Child Matters, Ofsted inspections, and other current strategies.

The second guide is aimed at advisors and headteachers. This guide looks at incorporating playwork skills and philosophy into the school context and provides a tool to identify appropriate training and qualifications. It highlights how schools already offer play opportunities, and that many staff employ playwork skills unwittingly. Different opportunities for play during the extended school day are considered

and a framework is provided for identifying the roles of different staff members. It details required qualifications as well as signposting relevant training. The different types of qualifications are summarised along with suitability for access by staff and volunteers.

The guide is directed at those new to play, and includes a brief look at how the term is currently understood within the school community, based on work in the *Play in Educational Settings* paper (www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk). It looks at essential playwork skills, and emphasises its complexity and difference from an educational outcomes-based approach.

The leaflets are designed to be a practical starting point to help make the case for play at a strategic level, while assisting schools to build an essential playwork base. They can both be downloaded from www.skillsactive.com

Children's Workforce diploma

SkillsActive is leading a task group of the Children's Workforce Network on the potential for an integrated programme of learning for 14-19 year olds alongside strands for health, social care and justice. A key challenge for the playwork sector, as well as Early Years and Childcare, is engaging young people in the early stages of their qualifying education. The 14-19 Specialised Diploma will offer a grounding in skills and knowledge and an insight into a career in the children's workforce.

In this first phase, to end of June 2006, SkillsActive will work closely with Skills for Health, Care

and Justice to explore the feasibility of an integrated programme that would cover all the sectors. This would incorporate learning on generic subject areas and sector specific areas in three levels of study.

The accompanying documents will give background information on the project, and SkillsActive invite participation in the consultation process.

Documents can be downloaded from the SkillsActive website www.skillsactive.com. Alternatively, contact the project consultant Elaine Sauve on 01525 404252 or by email Elaine.sauve@btinternet.com

Playing on the wildside

Edited by Martin Maudsley

Published by Playwork Partnerships, University of Gloucestershire

Price £30

Reviewed by Tim Gill, www.rethinkingchildhood.com

There's loads of terrific material in this 'how and why to' guide to environmental playwork. It includes sections on the philosophy of environmental play, best practice projects, guidelines (an essential read, full of words of wisdom that should reassure even the most risk-averse amongst us)

and an extensive set of signposts for further information.

But I suspect many readers will head for the activity sheets, which contain some of the best material in the guide. Ten thematically-organised sheets cover natural art, bug hunts, outdoor magic, using the senses,

loose parts, playing with the elements and environmental games. Each sheet is short and sweet – inviting readers to develop the ideas for themselves – and attractively presented. You'll soon be itching to be outside with the kids making camouflage crowns, cooking in cardboard ovens and

playing watcher in the woods.

The publication is peppered with quotes and inspiring photos, so it is a pleasure to browse. Its loose-leaf format makes for easy use and means it should even withstand 'field conditions'.

Some of the content, for example, the 'research' section gives too much space to the project's survey of 104 children; and the publication as a whole could have done with more indexing to help with navigation, but overall the guide justifies its claim to be

'the essential resource for people wishing to enable opportunities for children to play freely in and around natural outdoor environments.' It both fills a gap for practitioners searching for ideas and inspiration about nature play, and adds momentum to what might be called a campaign for a real childhood – the kind of childhood that most readers of *PlayToday* doubtless enjoyed, but which for today's children is in danger of disappearing. Get a copy today, start planning and head for the woods.



children's play information service

This is a specialist library and information service managed by the National Children's Bureau Library and Information Service and funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). CPIS has a large reference collection of materials on children's play, and provides a number of services, including a telephone, letter and email enquiry service, details of organisations working in the field of play, and free factsheets on a number of play topics.

CPIS is open for enquiries and visitors on Tuesdays and Wednesdays 9.30am–2.00pm, Thursdays and Fridays 9.30am–4.30pm. Visits are by appointment only and free of charge.

Please contact:

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

Tel: 020 7843 6303
Fax: 020 7843 6007
Email: cpis@ncb.org.uk
Web: www.ncb.org.uk/library/cpis

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

Compiled by Anna Kassman-McKerrell

Abstracts of new arrivals available for reference at the CPIS. These publications are not for sale from CPIS.

Photocopies of journal articles may be provided at a cost of £4.00 per article, subject to copyright restrictions.

Please contact the CPIS for further information.

Games and activities

The Story Pack

By C. Bennett
Eastleigh: Common Threads Publications, 2006.
ISBN 1904792197. £16.00



Presents 20 interactive activities for creating and telling stories with children.

Available from Common Threads Publications, tel 07000 785215, email info@commonthreads.co.uk

A Pocketful of Games

By E. Isles-Buck and M. Tombs
Eastleigh: Common Threads Publications, 2006.
ISBN 1904792189. £10.00

A collection of 35 cooperative games, including name games, team games, chase games and partner games.

Available from Common Threads Publications, tel 07000 785215, email info@commonthreads.co.uk

Outdoor play

Evaluation Report of Playboard Northern Ireland's 'Out 2 Play' Training Package for Play Scotland

By T. Casey
Edinburgh: Play Scotland, 2005
Describes the evaluation for Play Scotland of the Out 2 Play training

package, which was successfully developed and implemented by PlayBoard in Northern Ireland. The evaluation considered the suitability of the package to promote active outdoor play in Scotland.

Can be downloaded from www.playscotland.org

Creating a Space to Grow: Developing your outdoor learning environment

By G.R. Richardson
London: David Fulton, 2006.
ISBN 1843123045. £16.00
A guide to changing and developing the outdoor environment in early years settings. Looks at the importance and benefits of outdoor play, presents case studies and examples from the Kent Space to Grow project, and gives



a detailed explanation of the approaches used by Learning Through Landscapes. Includes photocopyable prompt sheets to guide practitioners and to encourage the participation of children.

Available from bookshops.

Participation

Play, Participation and Potential: Putting young people at the heart of communities

By Groundwork UK
Birmingham: Groundwork UK, 2006

Three essays on the themes of play, potential and participation, reflecting the principles that underpin Groundwork's activities with young people. Includes case studies that demonstrate how practical projects can help young people develop into active and responsible citizens.

Can be downloaded from www.groundwork.org.uk

Play – general

Child's Play: Dorothy Howard and the folklore of Australian children

By J. Factor and K. Darian-Smith.
Melbourne: Museum Victoria, 2005. ISBN 0957747179. £18.83

A collection of observations and articles by Dorothy Howard, an American scholar who undertook the first nationwide study of Australian children's folklore, including games, rhymes, riddles and jokes.

Also includes reflective essays by the editors and Brian Sutton-Smith.

Available from bookshops.

The Day With No Play (DVD)

By Lambeth Play Association
London: Lambeth Play Association, 2006. £25.00

A collection of short films devised, filmed, acted and directed by over 60 young people from Lambeth's town centre areas, which explore the hidden world of play in Lambeth. Following the film premiere the young people consulted decision makers about how they are planning to implement changes for play in the area.

Available from Lambeth Play Association, tel 020 7733 5718, email admin@lambethplay.co.uk

Play and disability

Abacus: 'Is it Saturday?'

By R. Kilpatrick and J. McClinton
Belfast: Queen's University Belfast, 2004

Reports on Abacus, a pilot project designed to provide play and recreational facilities for children with moderate learning disabilities. The project ran for 10 weeks in 1998 and was attended by children aged 8-12 years.

It Doesn't Just Happen: Inclusive management for inclusive play and childcare (Second edition)

By P. Douch
London: Kids, 2006.
ISBN 0952629569. £12.00 (statutory/commercial agencies); £7.00 (voluntary/individual)

New CPIS factsheet on play and health

A new CPIS factsheet, Play and Health, written by Issy Cole-Hamilton at the Children's Play Council, has just been published. The factsheet outlines the extent to which the government has acknowledged the value of play in children's health and describes some of the underpinning evidence to support these developments.

The factsheet can be downloaded from the CPIS website at www.ncb.org.uk/library/cpis For printed copies, please contact the CPIS on the address given above.

This edition has been extensively revised in the light of new legislation and ongoing development work through Kids Playwork Inclusion Project networks. Covers step-by-step guidance on the process of planning and managing inclusive play, the ethos of inclusion, creating and improving policies and practice. Includes appendices on legislation, useful organisations and publications.

Available from Kids, tel 020 7359 3073, email pip@kids.org.uk

Play 4 All

By Lambeth Play Association
London: Lambeth Play Association, 2006. £20.00 (video); £20.00 (training materials)

This video and training materials form part of the Inclusive Play 4 All project, which enables children with disabilities to access mainstream play provision. The video consists of three chapters that give practical ideas and advice on how playworkers can make their provision more inclusive.

Available from Lambeth Play Association, tel 020 7733 5718, email admin@lambethplay.co.uk

Play provision

Street Sport

By J. Bates
Article in *Leisure Manager*, (May), 2006, pp24-25

Reports on Street Sport, a mobile scheme in Telford and Wrekin that provides opportunities for children and young people to

play organised games and sports in their own area, at key times. The scheme has contributed to a range of issues from social inclusion and crime reduction to health and physical activity.

The Better Play Programme 2000-2005: An evaluation

By P. Youlden and S. Harrison
London: Children's Play Council and Barnardo's, 2006

Presents the results of an evaluation of Better Play, a four-year grant programme funding children's play services across England. The programme was delivered by Barnardo's and the Children's Play Council in partnership with the New Opportunities Fund.

Can be downloaded from www.ncb.org.uk/cpc

Playwork

PlayEd 2005: What is the future for playwork? The proceedings

By PlayEducation
Ely: PlayEducation, 2005. £15.00

The proceedings include the papers presented at PlayEd 2005 conference. Topics covered include the development of playwork, inclusive play, reflective playwork practice, society's view of children, ethics and playwork, and playwork practice.

Available from PlayEducation, email publications@playededucation.com

Dimensions of Holiday Playwork

By SkillsActive Playwork Unit
London: SkillsActive Playwork Unit, 2005

Presents the findings of a six-month survey in England to investigate the characteristics and dimensions of holiday play settings and the training and skills needs of employers and playworkers in the holiday playwork sector.

Can be downloaded from www.playwork.org.uk

Please send details of your events to CPIS, National Children's Bureau, 8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE. Email: CPIS@ncb.org.uk

24 June, 2006, Nottingham

Midday Supervisors Playtime Conference
Organised by Nottinghamshire County Council Play Service, Play in Schools Association and Workforce Development Education Service, this conference aims to share ideas and good practice.
Contact: Jenny Whitmore
Tel: 01159 336486
Email: jenny.whitmore@notscc.gov.uk

A chance to update your theory, engage in debate and explore practical possibilities for playwork, with Dr John McKendrick of Glasgow University giving the keynote speech, 'Beyond Risk and Safety'.
Contact: NE Centre for Playwork Education and Training
Tel: 0191 215 6279
Email: info@playworknortheast.org.uk

27 June, 2006, London
Sure Start Children's Centres, Extended Schools and Childcare – Making it Happen

This conference will focus on the key priorities of the ten-year strategy, and will provide essential strategic focus for all local authorities, partners delivering the plan and key stakeholders.
Contact: 4Children
Tel: 020 7522 6970
Email: events@4children.org.uk
Web: www.4children.org.uk/events

5-7 July, 2006, Bristol
Planning and Designing Healthy Public Outdoor Spaces for Young People in the 21st Century

Organised by the Faculty of the Built Environment, University of the West of England, the conference will explore public outdoor spaces in the 21st century, outdoor play and the role of inclusive design of outdoor spaces as a way of promoting play. Papers and presentations are invited.
Web: <http://environment.uwe.ac.uk/publicspaces/conference/>

29 June, 2006, Medway
First Medway Playwork Conference: Extending Play to School and Beyond

Medway's first playwork conference will explore the benefits of play.
Contact: Sonia Kehoe
Tel: 01634 338535
Email: sonia.kehoe@medway.gov.uk

6 July, 2006, London
Delivering Children's Centres

This conference will focus on the key issues being faced by those in the field each day, showcasing examples of good practice and learning for children's centre deliverers, local authority planners and practitioners to develop effective local partnerships and ensure sustainable services.
Contact: 4Children
Tel: 020 7522 6970
Email: events@4children.org.uk
Web: www.4children.org.uk/events

5 July, 2006, Newcastle on Tyne
Risks and Challenges in Play: NE Centre for Playwork Annual Conference

6-7 July, 2006, Nottingham

Early Childhood in 2006: Reflections on Practice and Policy
Organised by the National Children's Bureau in association with NES Arnold and CACHE, this conference will provide an opportunity for those working in the early years sector to share and learn about the key developments taking place in the sector.
Contact: NCB Conferences & Training
Tel: 020 7843 6441
Email: conferences@ncb.org.uk

11 July 2006, Birmingham

Time to Play: Policy, planning and practice for play within integrated children's services
4Children and Children's Play Council (CPC) have joined forces for a major national conference on play opportunities as part of the integrated offer of children's centres and extended schools.
Contact: 4Children
Tel: 020 7522 6970
Email: events@4children.org.uk
Web: www.4children.org.uk/timetoplay

21-23 July, 2006, Gloucestershire
Wild and Away Conference

The conference will draw together, celebrate and promote the growing enthusiasm for environmental playwork in the UK.
See page 6 for details.

2 August, 2006

Playday
The theme for this year is 'Play, Naturally'.
www.playday.org.uk

7-8 September, 2006, Northampton

New Directions in Children's Geographies: Call for papers
Papers on the following topics are invited: the ethics of children's geographies, participatory research with children, critical approaches to designing environments with children, mobilities and children's geographies, quantitative approaches to childhood research, popular culture and children's geographies, and teaching, learning and children's geographies.
Email abstracts (200 words) to: Faith.tucker@northampton.ac.uk

8-10 September, 2006, Staffordshire

The Beauty of Play Conference – The Elements
The fourth 'conference under canvas' will be a creative mix of workshops and outdoor activities designed to recharge your batteries and develop your understanding of play. This year's theme will be the four elements: earth, air, fire and water.
To register your interest, please email your name, full postal address and telephone number to Perry Else: info.ludemos@virgin.net

12-14 September, 2006, Edinburgh

Parks – a waste of space? ILAM Parks 2006
This year's Parks, Places and Countryside seminar will address issues such as integrating parks provision into the planning process, event management, and sustainability.
Contact: Donna Dixon, ILAM
Tel: 01491 874855
Email: donnadixon@ilam.co.uk



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