

Thinking creatively, working collaboratively



Nicola Butler, Chair of Trustees

Welcome to the second edition of Play Today, our quarterly e-zine.

It is clear that 2016 offers many challenges for Play England and all those in the play sector. Despite the on-going cuts to play provision across the country, judging from the National Play Convention that took place earlier this month, there is a determination to defend children's right to play.

This was also the prevailing mood at Play England's Annual General Meeting, which took place last month. With a good turnout from members, we had a wide-ranging debate on our annual report and strategic direction. Particular thanks go to Wendy Russell for facilitating the Conversation about Play England and Phil Doyle for his presentation on 'Design for Play'.

Access to play has been highlighted by the excellent report from Sense 'The Case for Play'. It reveals that disabled children in England and Wales are missing out on play opportunities that are vital to their development. Play

England welcomes the report and I am absolutely delighted that **Steve Rose from Sense** is our guest blogger for this month.

Finding new ways to share knowledge and building support networks are vital ways to help defend play provision. I hope that this new regular blog will help contribute to the key debates taking place within the play sector. If you would like to contribute, please do let me know.

Having returned from the **Four Nations Play Symposium** at Stormont, hosted by Playboard Northern Ireland, I found it incredibly heartening the very real progress being made in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, and I hope that we can share widely these successes to strengthen political support for play provision in Westminster. All of us at Play England are looking forward to working closely with **PlayBoard Northern Ireland, Play Scotland** and **Play Wales** in future.

It is a great shame that Department of Health funding will not be renewed for Street Play. The project has engaged with 141 local authorities, with 33 councils now supporting regular street closures. Over 350 streets have participated, many in areas of disadvantage, thousands of additional play opportunities for children.

We will continue to support our partners **Playing Out** and **London Play** and would urge members to

champion streetplay in their areas.

With our partners Play Wales, Playboard Northern Ireland and Play Scotland we've launched a new Playday website, and do please look out for the launch of the 2016 theme coming soon!

A significant focus will also be placed on our work for the SAFERPLAY project. Play England has a central role helping create an innovative open-source training for Play across Europe. We will be sharing the learning and best practice from quarterly European conferences and are delighted to be hosting a conference in December.

Finally, I would like to thank you – your support for our campaigns is absolutely vital. Please do encourage friends, colleagues and family to become a member of Play England. It's now much easier to join – **you just sign-up and pay online**. Thank you also, to those who have made generous donations. If you haven't already, you can **make a donation** through our 'Just Giving' page.

I believe that thinking creatively and working collaboratively is the most effective way to build and sustain the movement for children's play. I hope that throughout this year we can develop and strengthen our networks to help us in this task.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Play today and thanks again for all your support.

Disabled children face severe restrictions to play



Steve Rose, Head of Children's Specialist Services at Sense, is this month's guest blogger for Play England.

He argues that play is critical in giving children the best start in life and improving outcomes for children and their families. Unfortunately Sense has found that many families with disabled children across the country face severe restrictions accessing play.

The report 'The Case for Play' was launched in February, the result of a three month inquiry into the provision of play opportunities for disabled children aged 0-5 with multiple needs in England and Wales. The inquiry was established in response to parents' concern that they had fewer opportunities to access play services and settings than families with non-disabled children.

Read Steve's full blog at:
www.playengland.org.uk/disabled-children-face-severe-restrictions-to-play/

SAFERPLAY to create innovative open-source training

Lesli Godfrey, Play England Trustee

The SAFERPLAY Project Partnership comprises organisations across six European countries – Spain, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Spain and Germany – as well as Play England, and has come together with financial support from the EU's Erasmus+ fund.

The Partners had found that the installation and maintenance of play areas, especially in villages and towns in some of these countries, were often carried out by companies and local government staff who had had no specific training in this subject.

SAFERPLAY aims to establish cooperation across these European countries through the development and provision of an innovative, ICT-based open training resource. Universities and training providers, research associations, community organisations, and play experts, as well as the key stakeholders responsible for the design and safety of play spaces, represented mainly by architects and designers, businesses and local authorities will collaborate to develop this open-resource training.

The modules will cover design, installation and maintenance of safe and challenging play areas, customized to the needs of the staff involved and the children who are the end users. The resources will be available in six languages.

In addition to providing appropriate knowledge, this open educational resource will also serve as a platform for exchanging experiences and collaborative learning between all stakeholders involved in play spaces.

Play England will be taking the lead on dissemination for the project, co-ordinating communications between the partner organisations and their audiences. Sophie Bolt, our Communications & Campaigns Officer, will be leading on this work for us. We will also be hosting an event in London in December, to promote the development of an innovative training tool to support the installation and maintenance of play areas.

Anyone with an interest in, or experience of, this area of work is very welcome to attend. As arrangements progress we will keep you informed.

Play Wales launch 'Why make time for play?'

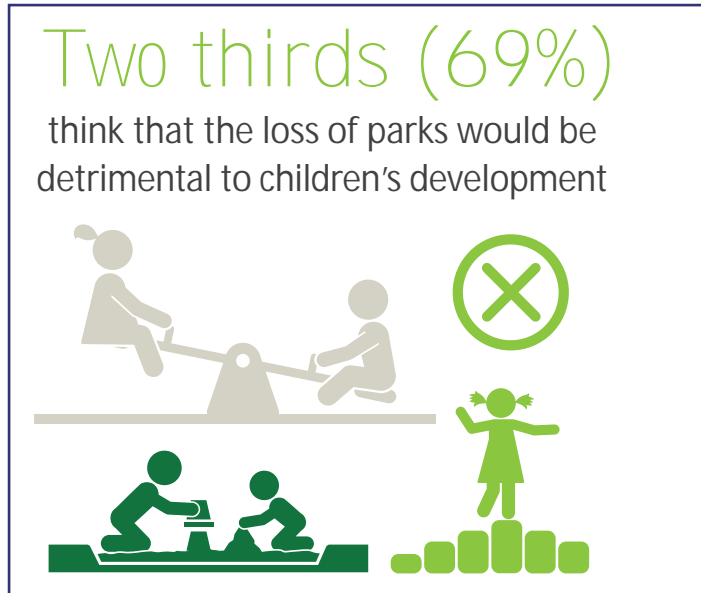
To celebrate St. David's Day Play Wales has published this information sheet which makes the case for play provision. It provides support for play providers to advocate for staffed

play provision and shows why playing is so important and explores the benefits of staffed play provision for children and the wider community. [Click here to download the sheet.](#)

Local public green spaces essential to community

Richard McKeever, Fields in Trust

Nearly one in five people (16 per cent) believe their local park or green space is threatened with being lost or built on.



Fields in Trust is a national charity that operates throughout the UK to safeguard recreational sites and campaigns for better statutory protection for outdoor space. We currently protect over 2,600 sites; a total of 30,000 acres of land including playgrounds, playing fields, and parks across the UK.

According to our survey, 69% of respondents said the loss of parks would damage children's development and half admitted that they would be less active if their local green space was lost. Almost half said using their local park helped them feel healthier (48%), with 70% of 16 to 24 year olds reporting feeling less stressed as a result of having access to green space.

Nearly all (95%) agreed that play areas and parks should be protected from development and 82% felt so strongly that they would be motivated to campaign against a park loss.

Many of those surveyed said much loved parks and green spaces were the places they taught their children or grandchildren to cycle, or reach a personal sporting milestone.

However, with no statutory requirement for councils to provide recreation space, it is increasingly vulnerable to development. People assume their local park will always be there but this isn't necessarily the case. The first step in getting a park protected is often for local people to actively campaign for it.

● **Visit the Fields in Trust website** to find out if your favourite local park is safe.

Click here to see the short video on the findings www.fieldsintrust.org/why_secure.aspx

New-look Playday website launched

The four national play organisations have launched a new-look Playday website.

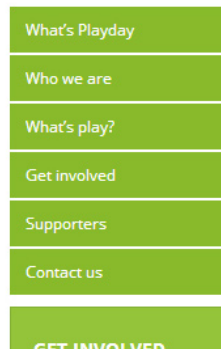
It's still packed full of great tips to help you plan successful and fun Playday activities, with the latest posters and leaflets to help you publicise your 2016 Playday events.

It's really easy to register your event on the website. And now, you can upload a poster or photograph to help grab attention.

This year's Playday campaign theme will be launched soon. Check out the Playday Facebook page for details. Playday on facebook is also the perfect place to share events, news, ideas and get support.



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Determination marks 14th National Play Conference

**Nick Jackson,
Play England Trustee**

Almost 200 people attended the 14th National Playwork Conference in Eastbourne last week, organised by Meynell Games.

This is possibly a few less than in recent years, due perhaps to the decline in play services that have been going on, as local authorities get hit by cuts in funding from central government.

But there was a good mix of play people with plenty of front line Playworkers eager to listen and learn, and to challenge and debate, and some of the old guard giving forth of their experience and wisdom.

In terms of the workshops, a highlight for me was listening to Dr Chris Bateman — the first person in the world to receive a doctorate in the play aesthetics of games — talking about changing face of play over five millennia of

human culture, and the changes to living organisms that facilitated play over the millions of years before that.

It was also interesting to hear from some staff working for Islington Council, on their experiences in trying to set up a 'staff mutual' organisation to take over the running of the adventure playgrounds, an idea that may spread as local authorities look to outsource more services, although not one without its own set of problems.

The Annual Playwork Awards, held in the evening at the auspicious nightclub at the end of the pier, was the usual mix of food, drink, entertainment and dancing. Various

'peckers' were handed out to proud recipients, and it all helped to encourage and affirm the good work that still goes on around the country.

In general, the conference felt quite positive despite the gathering clouds. There was some acknowledgement of the battering we are taking as a result of this government's austerity, which also makes life worse for many of the children and families we work with, but this was coupled with a staunch resolution to keep



Left to right: Jeff Hill, CEO of the Children's Scrapstore, Bristol; Nicola Butler, Play England and Tom Matthews, Yorkshire Play Board Trustee



Skrammellegepladsen in Emdrup has been described as the birthplace of 'modern' playwork. But it is now under threat from similar financial constraints that have closed several much-loved adventure playgrounds in this country like Stonebridge and Battersea.

Read Steven Chown's blog for Love Outdoor Play to find out more about the campaign to save Skrammellegepladsen.



Play Scotland is calling for statutory duty to provide good quality play experiences for children, including access to green and wild spaces. Its call has been backed by community groups who have created wild urban spaces for children where they can build, make mudslides and climb trees. There are several urban wild space projects in Scotland including the Children's Wood, pictured here, in North Kelvin, currently under threat from development. **Visit Play Scotland's website here.**