

**EVALUATION REPORT
of
PLAYBOARD NORTHERN IRELAND'S
'OUT 2 PLAY' TRAINING PACKAGE
for
PLAY SCOTLAND**

Theresa Casey
August 2005



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Evaluation Report of 'Out 2 Play' for Play Scotland

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Purpose of the evaluation

This report 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 Out 2 Play package to promote active outdoor play in Scotland.

Overall, it sought to explore for the Scottish context the suitability of:

- the package and of elements within it - what impact it was likely to have on practice;
- the length of course, content and timing;
- the mode of delivery;
- the package for different professional groups i.e. active school coordinators, those with playground supervision responsibilities, out of school care workers/playworkers.

It sought to identify what changes if any would be required to the package - training, delivery and resources - if it were to be used in Scotland.

And in addition, it was decided to take the opportunity to float the idea of a quality award (following on from Out 2 Play Outdoor Play Project Research Report, March 2005, Andrew Shoolbread).

The evaluation process

Eva Kane of PlayBoard Northern Ireland delivered the Out 2 Play training in the Falkirk area as a pilot for Play Scotland. The training was attended by out of school care workers and Active School Coordinators and was scheduled as 8 half day sessions.

The pilot was evaluated to consider the issues above through:

- session-by-session evaluation forms completed by participants;
- diaries for participants to use between sessions;
- observation of one session;
- review of flipchart contents;
- focus group following the end of training;
- questionnaire regarding the pack and resource box.

All material in the pack and the video was reviewed.

In addition a focus group was arranged to discuss the suitability of the package for playground supervisors and/or schools.

Findings of session-by-session evaluation of pilot

The eight half-days sessions took place on 19/20 April, 17/18 May, 26/27 May and 2/3 June. Participants were six out of school care workers from two settings and seven Active School Coordinators. The majority of the participants attended most of the sessions.

Session 1

Welcome and introduction to course, methodology and training venue
Recapture some play memories

Participants were happy with this introductory session. They found meeting other participants the most useful element of the day as well as:

‘Remembering childhood and realising what children are missing out on.’

There was some familiarity with the activity to remember childhood play from other training/courses undertaken.

They felt the aims of the session were met.

- To feel comfortable and relaxed in the environment (indoors & out)
‘Felt a bit nervous at first but when I got into it I was fine’
- To feel clear about the content and methods of the course
‘I was a bit worried about what it was going to be about but now looking forward to next session’
- To have the opportunity to recapture some play memories.

The venue, a small club room in Callendar Park with access to the woods, was considered fine and the tutor was described as

Excellent, good, well-spoken and clear, very nice, welcoming, friendly

Participants were satisfied with the timing and pace of the session.

Participants’ hopes for the training included:

New games, ideas, skills, resources, places to take children
Share ideas, confidence, new ways to motivate staff
Inclusion - regarding learning difficulties, disabled children
Teaching children about being environmentally aware
Degree to which risk can be taken
Importance of play/benefits
How to structure a session correctly

And fears included:

Rain, mud
That we don’t cover new areas
That there is no planned progression for play on the course
Don’t have resource/time to carry out activities, plans
Children will/won’t like ideas, attitude of children
Relevance to our situations
Parents/teachers fears/objections

Session 2

Discuss & debate what play is & why it is important

Raise basic awareness of play deprivation

Co-operative games & wide games

Introduce quality indicators spiral for children's play behaviour

Most useful about today's session:

- Learning new games - 8 respondents
- Thinking about different ways children play, definition of play -1
- Problem solving -1
- Importance of play -1

The majority of the participants were familiar with some of the games through work or training/college

Since the previous session two participants had tried out something they had learned from Out 2 Play (new games) back at their workplace. One found it reasonably easy to implement though one found space a problem but both were planning to do it again.

The reaction of other workers in the settings was that there were new ideas and games for them too and that it was interesting to try new things

Session 3

Circus play

Clarity on use of quality indicators spiral for children's play behaviour

This was a very popular session and circus skills were considered easy to take back to settings. One participant mentioned that it was easy for everyone to do and good for children with disabilities too.

'Before today 'circus skills' wasn't something I would have considered using in a lesson but now I would!'

'Excellent - could do with school and kids no problem.'

'It is different from anything I have done before. Stuff I have done before is very structured sport. Found it a bit weird how engrossed I got in play.'

The opportunity to go back over the quality indicators spiral from the previous week was appreciated.

Five participants felt familiar with some of the circus skills through Guides, training or books.

Since the previous session eight participants had tried out something they had learned from Out 2 Play back at their workplace - these were mainly games plus there was a mention of the 'spirals' assessment tool and games for playground training.

Most people found the games fairly easy to use in their setting. The children enjoyed them and other workers were in the main positive (although two people worked with the children on their own).

They all intended to use the ideas again.

Session 4

Raise awareness of and introduce quality indicators for play enabling/play disabling environments

Discuss free play vs. structured activities

Introduce the playwork curriculum and the playwork values & principles

Parachute games

The most useful elements of the session were divided between parachute games (7) and finding out more about play (theory about enabling/disabling play; structured play/activities, play types) although two people found learning the difference between play and activities (structured activity/play) the least useful element of the session.

Those elements of the session they were familiar with were games from play and working with children, training/ qualifications /college and a couple were familiar with ideas about play from university and SVQ level 2.

Since the previous session five participants had tried out something they had learned from Out 2 Play ('games and a lot of observing', games and juggling) back at their workplace. Again it was considered fairly easy to implement and received positively by children and other workers.

They plan to do it again, with one person realising that more explanation for other staff would have helped.

Session 5

Introduce the ladder of immersion

Experience immersion

Play in the forest

Clarity on use of quality indicators spiral for play enabling/play disabling environments

In this session participants reporting enjoying the experience of being in the woods:

'getting to know the environment in another sense'

'the artist palette - creative, colourful and thought-provoking'

'walking with a mirror - a different look at the world'.

One person also mentioned learning about immersion as most useful. Another felt the session 'pushed boundaries for some people in the group. This is a good thing.'

A few of the activities were familiar to individual participants from working in an outdoor centre and school experiences.

Since the previous session four participants had tried out something they had learned from Out 2 Play (circus skills and parachute games,) back at their workplace to a favourable reception from children and other workers. One of these spoke at a team meeting about introducing a circus themed day.

Session 6

Further explore the ladder of immersion

Reflect on quality indicators for playwork practice

More play in the forest

A variety of activities were appreciated as well as 'hearing everyone's views on what playworkers do to facilitate physical outdoor play' and 'understanding how to facilitate play with children'

'Great to find myself immersed in play itself'

'I didn't find it (imaginative Viking boat activity) immersed me much but that's probably because I am an adult - can see how I would work for kids.'

Using outdoors as a medium was familiar to two people through being outdoor qualified and involved with BTCV.

Since the previous session one participant had tried out something they had learned from Out 2 Play (games with kids and a cocktail party outside) back at their workplace. Two were planning walks to Callandar Park with the children.

Session 7

Discuss risk and safety in play and playwork

Play traditional games from around the world

New/traditional games were the choice of eight participants as the most useful element of the session. Also:

'Sharing views on how far would let children go in our work environments'

'Rethinking the wording of parents' bumph.'

Unusually there were five comments about an element not being useful:

- Questions re playing with fire - 'not appropriate to active schools' (2)
- Risk discussions (2) - 'it took ages and we were all coming from the same point of view.'
- 'A lot was irrelevant due to my job remit but appreciate the purpose of the questions'

Again some of the games were already familiar to some of the participants through play/work and qualifications

Since the previous session four participants had tried out something they had learned from Out 2 Play (various games) back at their workplace and found them easy to

implement with a good reaction from children and other workers (although one respondent's colleagues' reaction was 'shock/worried.'

Three participants said they would be using them again 'as part of playground games and multi-sports'

Session 8

Barriers and strategies for overcoming them

Initiating change by using quality criteria

Evaluation

The most useful elements of this session were reported by Active School Coordinators as

- Barriers and how to overcome them - 4
- Using the spirals, how to evaluate and make changes to improve upon it - 4

And by Out of School Care Workers as:

- Barriers and how to overcome them - 3
- Planning - 3
- Going over everything - 1

Participants did not feel particularly familiar with much of this session and the only extra comment on the day's session was:

'Spirals are a useful tool but a little time consuming and would have to be done in every playground.'

Findings of overall feedback from the Falkirk pilot

At the end of session 8, participants were asked to think back over all the training sessions.

Overall, what worked best about the training?

Active School Coordinators

- Gaining other people's opinions and ideas on play and physical activity 2
- Mixed group so you could learn from each other 1
- Circus games 3
- All games 1
- Practical sessions 2
- More outdoor 1
- Learning about play behaviour 1
- Barriers to play 1

Out of School Care Workers

- Assessment tools 1
- All new games 2
- New ideas 1
- Coming together with other playworkers 2
- Mixed group 2
- 'Eva (tutor) knows her stuff' 1
- Enjoyed all 1

Overall, what would you change and why?

Active School Coordinators

- Maybe an example on how to conduct playing with real children (instead of us) if possible to see the ideas in action
- Cut down on amount of sessions 2
- More practical over a shorter period (4-5 sessions) 1
- Woodland/nature stuff wasn't relevant to active schools 2
- The session on dressing up (2)
- Get flipchart notes made up into a booklet

Out of School Care Workers

- 'The way my club plans activities as we have no child-involvement, only staff ideas are put forward' 1
- 'More playworkers to give more people a better understanding of play'. 1
- 'Run as a week rather than a couple of days here and there'. 1

Was there anything that should have been included that wasn't?

Active School Coordinators

- To see the ideas in actions 1
- Sample lesson plans 1
- How to structure a block of training to kids rather than one-off sessions 1

Out of School Care Workers -

Did the training raise your awareness of children's needs for physical, outdoor and creative play?

Active School Coordinators **Yes 6 Partly 1 No 1**

'Coming from sports background made me realise the value of play - previously didn't value it much.'

Out of School Care Workers **Yes 4 Partly No 1**

'It showed me how play would improve their lifelong skills in later life if given the opportunity to play more.'

Did it increase your ability to meet those needs? Please explain...

Active School Coordinators **Yes 6 Partly 1 No**

'It has given me a lot to think about and other resources to explore and to take into my role.'

Out of School Care Workers **Yes 3 Partly 1 No 1**

'Feel strongly about play and it increased it'

By the end of the training did you feel you had gained confidence to:

• **facilitate physical play?**

Active School Coordinators **Yes 6 Some 1 No 1**

Out of School Care Workers **Yes 3 Some 1 No 1**

• **facilitate outdoor play all year round?**

Active School Coordinators **Yes 2 Some 4 No1**

Out of School Care Workers **Yes 3 Some 1 No1**

• **facilitate creative play?**

Active School Coordinators **Yes 3 Some 4 No**

Out of School Care Worker **Yes 4 Some No 1**

• **integrate them all as part of free play?**

Active School Coordinators **Yes 5 Some 1 No**

Out of School Care Workers **Yes 4 Some No 1**

Asked which play experiences they would try with the children following the training

Active School Coordinators highlighted:

- Circus skills
- Games
- using resources in playground

and Out of School Care Workers

- All
- Games
- Play in woods

Asked if and how the training would change the way they worked

Active School Coordinators responded:

- As emphasis on our jobs is on structured activities then only partly as I don't feel we have full control over their playing time
- I will leave children to use their imagination more in appropriate environment
- It may open my mind to diverse opportunities. Think outside the box a bit more.
- Not really, we work to quite strict guidelines although the activities that I use may change in some clubs
- It will make me think about what is delivered and training that can be offered
- Yes, new ideas, more knowledge
- Yes, will try to stop telling kids to stop all the time.

Out of School Care Workers responded

- I will now be able to get children involved in planning and assessing activities instead of staff members choosing what to do and what not to do.
- A little because it has given me more understanding of how children should be allowed to take bigger risks within their play.
- Hopefully try and change other peoples work.
- I am more likely to sit back and let the kids run with things instead of controlling play
- I hope to try that kind of session in the summer.

Barriers to implementing the ideas contained in 'Out 2 Play' were identified by

Active School Coordinators as:

- Lack of outdoor resources
- Excursions only happen once/twice a year
- Head teachers, parents and blame culture
- The legislation that govern our role in school
- Which activities are appropriate for the children
- Potential people delivering
- Health and safety

Out of School Care Workers as:

- Play spaces we have access to
- Safety rules within the setting don't allow children to take big risks within their play time
- Different bodies - teachers, other workers etc
- If barriers came up I would ask 'why?' Or ask appropriate people for support.

Overall, participants were happy with the venue for the training and its facilities and were extremely appreciative of the trainer

On timings and pace of the sessions both the playworkers and the active school coordinators tended to feel that start & finish times were 'about right' .

Content of the sessions was about right (as opposed to 'too much' or 'too little').

On the length of the course Active School Coordinators were divided between it being too long and about right. Out of School Care Workers thought it 'about right'.

Asked 'In an ideal world what would be the best time and length of a course like this be for you?' some of the Active School Coordinators suggested shortening the course with variations such as

- Cut out 2 of the sessions
- 10 -2 (half hour lunch) 4 days
- 6 weeks, mornings

Out Of School Care Workers tended to be happy as it was with just one suggestion to run it over a weekend.

Other comments and suggestions on this were:

- Would be great for it to be on-going as I am sure play is always changing for the better
- I liked having the time in-between to digest the information

Evaluation of resource box and pack

The evidence gained for the resource box and pack was less clear. Within the timescale of the evaluation there was limited time for participants to have used either, particularly as the summer holiday period was quickly upon them.

There was a clear indication of an intention on the part of respondents to use both the pack and the box in the future. The Resource Box and Book of Ideas were of more immediate use for playing with - in the same way that participants were more likely to have tried out games and practical activities from the course. The CD Rom and Play(Work) Book were perhaps perceived to be of more medium- to long-term benefit.

Two participants had however put the video to immediate use to share what they had learnt on the course and to lobby for change in the practice of the setting. They found it easy to use and self-explanatory.

Another used the Play(Work) Book for 'planning meeting - it took a while to explain some things but in the end it worked very well.'

Focus group with participants of the pilot

A focus group was held two weeks after the end of the training to explore issues further with participants. Significant points are as follows

Involving children

There was a useful suggestion that it would be helpful to involve children in some of the activities especially for those workers with less play experience. These workers found it harder to visualise how it would actually happen in practice and to understand what role they would take. Involving children and participants in an actual play session would enable the trainer to model playwork for participants.

Video clips could be used as an alternative.

Relevance to Active School Coordinators

The issue of relevance to Active School Coordinators was explored more fully. What emerged was that both structured activity and unstructured play are explicitly part of the remit of Active School Coordinators however play has been dislodged for a number of reasons:

- Lack of experience of play individually or within the whole active schools programme (many coordinators come from sports backgrounds)
- Need for more guidance ('Unless someone came and said here's a great way to do it I don't see how we *could* do it.')
- Lack of examples from colleagues to share and develop. ('It is part of our job, structured and unstructured play, but no-one has ever got down to the root of unstructured play. I have never heard of anyone setting up unstructured play.')
- Uncertainty of enabling free-er activities if they are perceived as riskier. ('We have to fill in a risk assessment for everything and the numbers escalate the more free you make it - show that to a head teacher and they would go through the roof.')

Mix of people on the course

There were mixed views on whether it was useful to have the combination of professions on the course. The positive side was sharing of views, better understanding each others jobs and recognising people who could be in the same school as each other. The negative for some was that some issues were not addressed specifically enough to their particular setting or job remit.

When asked about the possibilities of working together in the future the general feeling was that it would be good to work together but difficult to think how to do it and who would make it happen. They suggested that managers of schemes/clubs, managers of active schools and development workers in childcare partnerships could take it up.

Participants suggested that playground supervisors and teachers would also benefit.

Overall, there was an extremely positive response to the course.

- There was plenty of evidence of people trying things out back in their workplaces between sessions. (Also recorded in diaries)
- Participants tended to try out games and activities rather than other elements such as the quality indicators spirals, immersion process and risk/benefit concept. However it is possible that if the evaluation had a longer timescale it would have been possible to assess whether these had more impact and influenced participants practice. They were clearly an important tool in helping participants reflect on and understand their own work.
- Although some participants were familiar with some elements of the course, there was not enough familiarity for it to be a significant consideration.
- There was evidence of out of school care workers engaging colleagues regarding the experience of Out 2 Play and being aware of reactions from children and colleagues.
- There was evidence that out of school care workers were able to see immediate relevance to their settings and to take ideas back to discuss and implement with their teams. In some cases this meant negotiating or challenging current practice.
- Although the training provided Active School Coordinators with a better understanding of play and with ideas to use, they questioned the relevance to their posts and their ability to implement the ideas within their job remit.
- It emerged that play was clearly part of the Active School Coordinators remit but that it was an area that was generally overlooked and they required more guidance, support and examples in order to fulfil that part of their role (see p12 above).

Playground supervisor's focus group

A focus group was held to consider the suitability of the Out2 play training package for people with playground supervision responsibility. It was attended by

Penny Martin & Aileen Thomas, Grounds for Learning
Susan McIntyre, P.inc/The Yard
Kerry Millar, Inclusion Officer, Edinburgh Childcare Partnership
Jim Balloch, Play Squad, PACE
Susan Duff, Learning Assistant, Abbeyhill Primary School
Pauline Inglis, Mary Borthwick and Liz Ford, Classroom Assistants, St Mary's RC Primary School

The package was explained to the group and they had an opportunity to view all the material and the video.

Background regarding the playground supervisory role

Although the term 'playground supervisors' is used, in reality people with playground supervision responsibility can be classroom assistants, teachers, head teachers, SEN assistants as well as those employed purely as playground supervisors. Who has playground supervision responsibility varies between schools and between local authorities.

'In some authorities playground supervision appears to be included as part of the classroom assistants' remit, rather than as a separate post, while in other authorities it is not.'¹

It is common for classroom assistants and learning assistants to be allocated playground duties and for SEN auxiliaries to spend time supporting children in the playground.

To give an indication of the role of classroom assistants and learning assistants the following is an extract describing the Professional Development Award Classroom Assistant (incorporating PDA Support for Learning Assistants).

'This is a six-unit Professional Development Award that will equip you with the skills to:

- work effectively with the class teacher
- support the pupil
- carry out administrative tasks
- assist with sound classroom organisation and the creation of a positive learning environment.'

(Stevenson College, Edinburgh)

From the most recent statistics (Statistical Publication: Edn/G5/2005/2: Teachers in Scotland, 2004)² it is not possible to say how many playground supervisors there are in Scottish schools. They are placed in the category of 'other non-classroom staff' which includes administrative and clerical staff, bursars, library staff, school nurse or other

¹ 'An extra pair of hands?' 2002 The SCRE Centre, University of Glasgow.

² Statistical Publication: Edn/G5/2005/2: Teachers in Scotland, 2004 contains the latest data on teachers and support staff in publicly funded schools in Scotland, mainly derived from the latest annual staff census which took place in September 2004.

medical, technicians, swimming pool managers, child care workers, etc as well as playground supervisors.

The tables below illustrate however that there are sizable numbers of staff who may undertake playground duties as part of their role as learning, SEN and classroom assistants etc.

Support staff in primary schools, 2004	FTE
SEN auxiliary or care assistant	3,240
classroom assistant	4,366
other non-classroom staff	3,973

Support staff in special schools, 2004(1)	FTE
SEN auxiliary or care assistant	1,008
classroom assistant	128
other classroom staff	437
other non-classroom staff	414

(1) Excludes the 7 grant-aided special schools

Therefore, there are considerable numbers of staff in primary schools and special schools who we can reasonably assume have some playground supervision duties as part of their role (upwards of 9000) in addition to teachers, head teachers and others. However, the main focus of their role is to support the class teacher:

'Play is such a small part of our jobs, helping teachers in the classroom is the main thing as far as the schools are concerned.' (Focus group contribution)

Key findings from the focus group

Content of Out 2 Play and its suitability for schools

The general response to the content of Out 2 Play was very favourable. It was considered to offer practical solutions and good ammunition for convincing people of the need for play.

Participants found the video particularly appealing and felt that:

- It raised interesting issues to discuss further.
- It put across well that you can use what you have to start to improve play without waiting for extra funds or equipment etc.
- The images of children out in different weather were encouraging.
- It illustrated the importance of interesting environments.
- It showed people what free play looks like - not everyone has experienced it.

The fact that everyone in the video had Irish accents and was speaking in the Northern Ireland context was not seen as a problem and the subtitles were appreciated (not because of the accents!)

It was remarked that classroom assistants know all the children and see them both in class and in playground. They have a different relationship with the children from teaching staff.

The playground could be seen as a really valuable opportunity to support children and it could turn things around to see the playground as a positive opportunity instead of a problem.

It was also suggested that the Out 2 Play package would be useful in Early Years and at times of transitions.

However, there was also a comment that it was hard to see how Out 2 Play would translate to a school setting and members of the group suggested that to make it more suitable for schools it should:

- look and feel relevant so some more school images would be valuable;
- have more on Health and Safety, risk assessments and how to deal with that issue positively;
- look at funding;
- include school based examples (examples such as forest schools could be shared);
- look at issues specific to schools (an example was given of children going from a wonderful play area in nursery to the hard concrete one where they can't even climb on a wall, issues of 'zoning' and age-segregation, taking children out during teaching time, addressing adult fears about control);
- consider inclusion issues.

Participants felt it would benefit from linking to current political agendas, such as:

- Health promoting schools
- 'Curriculum for excellence'
- Active Schools ('would provide an approach that would go beyond the structured, adult-led approach observed in the work of Active Schools Coordinators'.)

'The video conveyed that well - the Ideas Book concerned me because it had a strong emphasis on games, and seemed adult-led, so people looking at the Ideas Book might go out and organise games and think they have done that and be quite satisfied, whereas the video really emphasised the underlying values.'

Implementation

The following two findings of the group reflect the dilemma that emerged.

The group felt strongly that the training would be beneficial to people with playground supervision responsibility (it would highlight the importance of play and contribute to that part of the job more being valued more).

However asked if those with playground supervision responsibilities would be in a position to implement it, the answer was a resounding 'no'.

If the training was offered just to those people with playground supervision responsibilities the difficulties they might encounter in implementing the programme would include:

- that rules for the playground tend to be set by teaching staff/heads and playground supervisors aren't in a position to change them;
- playground supervisors could be targeted for the training but they have to go back to the settings where there are restrictions;
- it would difficult for a playground supervisor to find the time and opportunity to feedback to colleagues;
- classroom assistants' time is tightly timetabled.

There was strong agreement with the suggestion of one member of the focus group that to be implemented the training would need to be taken on by the whole school.

- 'It (the training) would need to be at every level for it to be implemented - teachers, head, parents and the whole school community.'
- 'The benefit would be you wouldn't be going back (as an individual worker) after the training and having to convince another section of staff.'
- 'It would help teaching staff to be more aware of the value of play, see how play supports learning and change the attitude that what happens in the classroom is important but the playground isn't really.'
- The key people who could make it happen are heads and deputy head teachers.

Play Inclusive (P.inc) and Grounds for Learning (GfL) were able to contribute experience of offering training to schools.

The P.inc project offered half-day workshops on-site in schools. They offered various options (time, structure) and the school had the flexibility to choose - different solutions were suitable for different schools. P.inc always strongly advocated that the head or the deputy head was there because the staff need their support to implement changes. Some schools have managed, after school, for all the staff to attend for a shorter session.

'It's a reflection of their underlying values and culture, suggests communication, good working relationships - some places playground supervisors role is not valued and there is a lack of communication between them and teaching staff.'

GfL pointed out that they don't have the luxury of doing whole school training so offer training courses and staff from various settings attend. 'I would say whole school training and with everyone buying into it right from the start, rather than one person having to go back and convince the rest of the staff, is a good idea.'

Delivery of the training

Attending a course of eight sessions was considered problematic for those people with playground supervision responsibilities - the number of training sessions and scheduling would affect attendance.

'Even getting people to one day sessions can be really hard - trying to get people for a series of sessions would be a really big commitment'

'Time is an issue'

There were a number of suggestions however to make it more accessible:

- To have time planned in by the school at the beginning of term. ('They would have to block the time in advance - it would be the head teachers who made that decision.')
- (Although it is possible that some head teachers might plan it in, the general consensus was that it would be problematic.)
- Endorsement for Continued Professional Development.
- Play Scotland approaching a few local authorities and asking them to buy into a pilot.
- Play Scotland approaching head teachers via local authorities.
- Flag up at cluster group meetings.
- Condense the training

In-service days are also a collective opportunity for training.

In relation to schools, different sector workers training together was considered very beneficial to cross school community, demonstrating:

- commitment;
- understanding - needs a culture of everyone supporting play.

A learning assistant from the group pointed out that 10% of staff development budget was allocated to non-teaching staff

Quality Award

The group discussed the feasibility of Out 2 Play being part of a linked quality award of some sort. The idea of a more coordinated approach was appreciated.

GfL suggested a model of day courses that they run with a range of additional modules from which people could choose - Out 2 Play (or Play Scotland) could contribute a module.

There was also some discussion about whether there would be confusion in people's minds between Out 2 Play and P.inc because of the similar values base and play orientation. It seemed appropriate to find a way to link the two together.

Susan explained that P.inc and Out 2 Play might appeal to people for different reasons although the results would cross over.

'...with P.inc it is obviously about inclusion and so people who look for P.inc support have children with additional support needs, and that then helps them look more at play and so that becomes more of their way of working; this would appeal to the outdoor aspect.'

Conclusions from focus group

- The message of Out 2 Play was considered an important one and the content useful in terms of supporting improved play opportunities for children.
- The package was not originally designed for schools and the group pointed out that for schools it would be improved by bringing in more school-related images and examples and by more consideration of some issues that were seen as school-specific. (P16 has more suggestions)
- People with playground supervision duties would benefit from and welcome more training and support on play. Targeting people with playground supervision duties however was problematic for two reasons:
 - they are not in a position to implement change;
 - they would find it difficult to access the training.
- In order to support implementation of the ideas the whole school would need to be involved and the head and deputy head would need to give support.
- A number of suggestions were made that could make the package more accessible (see p18 above).
- The idea of a quality award was floated and the idea of a more coordinated approach was welcomed.

Suitability and issues for different professional groups

Taking the findings of the pilot, focus groups and review of materials this section will suggest the suitability of Out 2 Play for each of the professional groups that Play Scotland is interested in supporting.

Playworkers / out of school care workers

The package was originally designed for out of school care workers in Northern Ireland and therefore sat quite easily with this group. It extended the knowledge and skills of the participants and there was sufficient evidence to suggest that there would be a significant impact on their practice. The participants were already taking what they had learned and using it not just with the children but with colleagues. It gave them access to ideas and concepts that are current in the field of playwork but with which they were previously unfamiliar, suggesting that the package does meet a previously unmet need.

The overall design of the package with a combination of theory and practical ideas suited the group well. Crucial to the impact however was the experience and knowledge the trainer brought, enabling her to empathise with their work situations and inspire them with confidence to have a go.

The participants were happy with the length and timing of the course, and some were keen to carry on meeting on an ongoing basis to support each other and develop what they had learned further.

Although there have been some questions over the length of the course, particularly for staff in more rural areas, it would not be possible to shorten it significantly without diminishing the impact. A certain amount of flexibility in setting up the schedule through liaising with local childcare partnerships or umbrella organisations would of course be helpful as would a reasonable lead-in time for arrangements to be made.

As was already mentioned the skills and playwork experience of the trainer were crucial to the success of the course. In order therefore to deliver this successfully in Scotland the development of a training team made up of experienced playworkers seems the most suitable approach. The team:

- would be made up of experienced playworkers;
- undertake a training for trainers course (see Joint National Committee on Training for Playwork or Skills Active for advice);
- could be employed directly by Play Scotland or on an 'associate' freelance basis;
- would need to be supported by a structure for quality assurance;
- would benefit from an induction period with Out 2 Play in Northern Ireland.

For out of school care workers, a few changes are suggested to the package (which would need to be reflected in the training and the resources).

- The introduction of an element on inclusion would complete the package and should be an underlying feature throughout. All good playwork is inclusive so by its nature the Out 2 Play is promoting more inclusive practice but it is still the case that without specific reference it can be a forgotten feature. This would be in line with Play Scotland's aim of ensuring the right to play of all Scotland's children. This should be included in the training itself and the quality indicators, the Play(Work) Book and the Ideas Book. (It can be made with 'light' references throughout.)

- Although the overall aim of the package is to promote free play the resources may not emphasis that strongly enough so some more overt reference would be helpful - particularly in the Ideas Book (how to set up an environment for free play, what does that look like?, adapting a space, for example).
- Pages 39-42 of the Play(Work) Book refer to the Pathways to Excellence. A decision would have to be made regarding whether to leave this out entirely or to replace with reference to other standards or qualifications (e.g. Care Commission Standards, SVQs).

Key conclusions for Out of School Care Workers

- **NEED** - Out 2 Play addresses an unmet need amongst Out of School Care Workers for knowledge and skills regarding outdoor play and current 'best practice' in playwork.
- **SUITABILITY** - The Out 2 Play package is highly suitable for Out of School Workers in Scotland with only minor alterations required.
- **IMPACT** - There is evidence of immediate impact on practice (and so on children's opportunities for active outdoor play) and of the potential for longer term impact on organisation and delivery of services.
- **DELIVERY** - The major question for Play Scotland would be the mode of delivery. Establishing a training team of experienced playworkers to deliver the package is recommended (either on a directly employed or associate basis). A training manual would also need to be developed.

Active school coordinators

The evidence of the pilot was that the package provided Active School Coordinators with new knowledge and understanding of play and suggested to them different ways of approaching their work with children. The difficulty for them was two-fold in that they felt restricted by the perceived constraints of their roles and felt unable to translate what they had learnt into practice.

The course and the evaluation led them to look again at their remits and realise that play was actually a part of it but that it was becoming a forgotten element. In the playground supervisors' focus group a hope was expressed that the package could start to suggest a different way of working for the Active School Coordinators which seems to be emphasising adult-led structured activities over play.

Therefore it seems that training of this type would be extremely important and timely. The Active School Coordinators programme is now bedding in across the country and if play and unstructured activity are not simply to be left by the wayside then Active School Coordinators have to be supported now. As they said, they need some guidance, support and to be shown how to do it (free play).

Whether Out 2 Play is actually the right package is another question. They are looking for support that would help them translate play into the school environment which has its own culture, rules, timetable, constraints and opportunities etc.

It may be that many of the Active School Coordinators felt the course was long because there were only certain elements of it that they felt that they could use easily in their settings.

The intention of the package is that participants can go back to their work setting and pass on what they have learnt. (The Play(Work) Book is specifically designed to facilitate that process.) Active School Coordinators would be in a good position to do that. They would not be the right people to be the primary deliverers of the whole package in Scotland as they do not have the necessary knowledge and experience.

The evaluation has thrown up that play is significantly overlooked in practice despite being a specific element of the Active School Coordinators remit. Therefore it may be necessary for Play Scotland to highlight this issue and to engage sportscotland, the Scottish Executive and Active School Managers in discussion regarding the most appropriate ways to address this deficit.

If a training package was proposed as the appropriate way to address this issue, then Out 2 Play would be a good model from which to start (as would some others) but significant changes would need to be made to increase the likely impact on practice. (Active School Coordinators themselves had some suggestions and other groups around Scotland have experience and courses that would be beneficial e.g. Grounds for Learning, Play Inclusive at the Yard, PACE's Play Squad and others.)

Taking this into account, a course designed specifically for this group and tailored to their needs and to the school-specific situation is recommended.

Key conclusions for Active School Coordinators

- **SUITABILITY** - The Out 2 Play package is a useful model on which to base training for Active School Coordinators. The ideal package may be slightly shorter and relate more closely to school situations to give a stronger direction in how to deliver play opportunities in that particular situation, context and environment.
- **NEED** - The evaluation highlighted a considerable need to address the lack of play in the Active School programme. It showed there was a need for knowledge and understanding of play, the ability and confidence to deliver play opportunities and knowledge and experience to articulate and advocate the benefits of play for children. The emphasis on structured adult-led activity within the current programme was noted by the Coordinators themselves and remarked on by others.
- **IMPACT** - The training brought a rounder understanding of play and children's needs to the participants and they were able to implement some aspects quickly (activities and adjusting their approach). The impact was limited by perceived constraints and misunderstanding of the place of play within the Active School Coordinators remit.
- **DELIVERY** - Play Scotland should highlight this important deficit in the role/remit of Active School Coordinators at the level of sportscotland, the Scottish Executive and Active Schools managers to take this forward as a matter of urgency. A package of training based on the Out 2 Play model but tailored more closely to the context of Active Schools would be extremely beneficial. Given that the evaluation has highlighted the difficulty the Active School programme is experiencing in delivering play, it may be useful to look at a range of methods of inputting understanding of play into the programme (written material, newsletters, conferences, seminars, study visits, exchanges etc) as well as training packages.

Playground supervisors/schools

The discussion of the focus group was reported above (pp12-17). The message of Out 2 Play was considered an important one and the content useful in terms of supporting improved play opportunities for children.

Since the package was not originally designed for schools it would be improved for them by bringing in more school-related images and examples and by more consideration of some of the issues that were seen as school-specific. (See p16 above)

People with playground supervision duties would benefit from and welcome more training and support on play - it was certainly considered necessary - however targeting playground supervisors was problematic for two reasons.

- The first, they are not in a position to implement change.
- Secondly, they would find it difficult to access the training.

In order to support implementation of the ideas the whole school would need to be involved and the head and deputy head would need to give support. This would then require that the training was much shorter and focused more tightly. Once again this suggests that while Out 2 Play has relevance and value to schools it probably is not the right model for them. A number of suggestions were made that could make the package more accessible (see p18 above) however if it were reduced right down to one day or even half a day than it would really become something different altogether.

Again, the experience of other groups in Scotland (Grounds for Learning, Play Inclusive at the Yard³ and others) of offering training and workshops to schools would be beneficial. As was suggested in the focus group, to maximise the benefit, a more coordinated approach between these organisations could be important.

Key conclusions for staff with playground supervision responsibilities

- **NEED** - There are large numbers of staff across Scotland with playground supervision responsibility however this is an area for which there is limited support and training available although there is evidence of demand. Out 2 Play (or similar) would highlight the importance of play and bring more value to that part of the job.
- **SUITABILITY** - The Out 2 Play package was considered unsuitable because of the difficulties in accessing a course of this length and then in implementing the training back in the workplace. More use of school-specific examples would make for a more immediately relevant package.
- **IMPACT** - The messages were considered extremely important and useful to schools who, through break times, do provide regular opportunities for children's play. To have most impact on play opportunities in school, training should be targeted across the school and include senior members of staff.
- **DELIVERY** - Grounds for Learning and Play Inclusive are amongst the organisations who already provide support and training to schools and who would make suitable partners to deliver short training sessions on play. Working collaboratively with such organisations makes sense organisationally (in terms of reaching the target audience most effectively) and also strategically (in terms of building a stronger presence for play).

³ The evaluation of the P.inc Workshops programme (2004-5) illustrates some of the advantages and disadvantages of different models of delivery for short workshops on inclusive play for schools.

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Eva Kane, PlayBoard Northern Ireland

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