



**PLAY SCOTLAND
PLAY AND RISK DEBATE UPDATE
DECEMBER 2010**

Play Scotland Roadshows 2010 and Question Time Event

Too Safe to Play? Seminars

As part of the Scottish Government Play and Risk debate and in partnership with Children in Scotland two seminars were held in May one in Scottish Borders and one in Ayrshire on Play and Risk. The Minister for Children and Early Years, Adam Ingram MSP introduced the Seminar in Ayrshire.

Tim Gill, a leading Play specialist with publications on Risk, led each of these Seminars. The purpose of the Seminars was to engage with local people and providers on the Managing Risk in Play Provision: implementation guide which promotes a risk benefit approach to risk assessment. Delegates were also given the chance to view local projects which demonstrated Good Practice in a wide range of challenging Play opportunities.

Play and Risk Debate Question Time Event, Scottish Parliament

In November as part of the Scottish Government Play and Risk Debate Play Scotland in partnership with Children in Scotland and assisted by colleagues in the Scottish Government held a Question Time Event on Risk and Play. John Scott MSP sponsored the event held in Committee Room 1, which was full to capacity. The event was aimed primarily at parents and providers of play opportunities. The panel consisted of: John Scott MSP; Christina McKelvie MSP; Robin Harper MSP; Robert Brown MSP; Ken McIntosh MSP and Author Sue Palmer.

A question and answer document from this event will be posted on the Play Scotland website www.playscotland.org Politicians involved felt the event went well and they would have liked more time for informal discussion at the end with the audience. Some Politicians have fed back that members of the audience have been in email contact regarding their responses. Play Scotland will be pursuing a number of points arising with the political parties in advance of the election in May 2011.

Gathering Support for the Risk-Benefit Approach to Play

Curriculum for Excellence for Outdoor Learning

Play Scotland was delighted to work in partnership with Learning Teaching Scotland on the Curriculum for Excellence for Outdoor Learning. "Outdoor learning experiences are often remembered for a lifetime. Integrating learning and outdoor experiences, whether through play in the school grounds or adventures further afield, provides relevance and depth to the curriculum in ways that are difficult to achieve indoors.

Learning outdoors can be enjoyable, creative, challenging and adventurous. It helps children and young people learn by experience and grow as confident and responsible citizens who value and appreciate the spectacular landscapes, natural heritage and culture of Scotland.

Risk was included in the one of the main points of the Curriculum:

Safer and stronger – Outdoor learning activities span social divisions and can help build stronger communities. Some organisations have therapeutic programmes where outdoor learning plays a central role. Children and young people have opportunities to develop skills to assess and manage risk when making

decisions.”

The risk benefit approach to risk assessment was also incorporated within the guide. Play Scotland is pleased to be part of the Learning Teaching Scotland National Network for Outdoor Learning.

Playday 2010

Play Scotland promoted this year's theme *Our place* which aimed to show the restrictions faced by children wanting to play outside where they live, and highlighted the role of communities in shaping childhood.

In an ICM survey it showed:

- 90% of adults played out regularly in their street as children.
- 73% of children said they would like to spend more time playing or hanging out outside where they live.
- 47% of adults think it is unsafe for children to play outside without an adult.
- 94% of adults believe that there was freedom for children to go and explore when they were growing up, but only 40% think this is true for today's children.
- 90% of adults believe that children of their generation mostly played outdoors rather than *indoors, whereas only 33% perceive this to be true for children today.*
- *79% of adults believe that community spirit has weakened since they were a child*
- 54% of parents only feel confident letting their children play outside if other children are playing out too.

Media

There was good media coverage of Playday across Scotland and Marguerite Hunter Blair was interviewed on Play Today on Real Radio and full page article in The Herald.

Scottish Government endorsement on the Managing Risk in Play Provision: implementation guide

Play Scotland is a member of the UK Play Safety Forum which developed the Managing Risk in Play Provision: implementation guide. This guide promotes a risk benefit approach to risk assessment. The guide has been endorsed by the UK Health and Safety Executive and Play Scotland felt it was important to have Scottish Government recognition of the importance of the guide. The Minister of Children and Early Years Adam Ingram MSP has endorsed the guide on behalf of the Scottish Government (September 2010):

“This is an exciting and innovating time for the play sector and for Scotland as a whole to showcase our potential and the impact that play can make on our children and communities. The value of these opportunities cannot be overstated or overlooked as we are all well aware that the importance of play within the community setting is central to how children learn, both in terms of developing physical health, and in developing social skills, resilience and wellbeing.

But at the same time, we must make sure that our children are not living in a cotton wool culture and become 'barbed-wire bairns' as they have come to be known. All too often, people's perceptions, the media and bureaucracy have caused parents and practitioners to question the play opportunities that were normal to us as children. Over time, activities such as playing conkers, swinging on a rope and even playing in the streets are being frowned upon and a mantra of risk aversion is something that is becoming more and more common. Through the debate on risk and in order for play to be truly accepted by our communities, we have a responsibility to ensure that practitioners, parents and even the children themselves know the benefits that play and risk can bring to their education and wellbeing - we all have a part to play in promoting risk management rather than risk aversion. I recognise and value the long-term benefits of play and exposure to risk - both in terms of physical health and in developing resilience and mental wellbeing. Play is central to how children learn, both in terms of cognitive skills and softer skills around relating to other people. Through improving play opportunities and addressing barriers to play our children will gain the essential skills, motivation and capabilities that make lifelong learning easier and each and every community will reap the benefits.

I am pleased to endorse Play Scotland's efforts in promoting this guide within the Scottish context.”

‘Common Sense, Common Safety’

In November Lord Young, the Prime Minister’s adviser on health and safety law and practice, published his report *Common Sense, Common Safety*.

The report follows a Whitehall-wide review of the operation of health and safety laws and the growth of the compensation culture. The recommendations will also apply in Scotland.

The UK Prime Minister and the Cabinet have accepted all of the recommendations put forward by Lord Young, who will continue to work across departments to ensure his recommendations are carried through.

Common Sense, Common Safety puts forward a series of policies for improving the perception of health and safety.

Welcoming the report, the Prime Minister said:

“Good health and safety is vitally important. But all too often good, straightforward legislation designed to protect people from major hazards has been extended inappropriately to cover every walk of life, no matter how low risk.

A damaging compensation culture has arisen, as if people can absolve themselves from any personal responsibility for their own actions, with the spectre of lawyers only too willing to pounce with a claim for damages on the slightest pretext.

We simply cannot go on like this. That’s why I asked Lord Young to do this review and put some common sense back into health and safety. And that’s exactly what he has done.”

Of particular significance to the Play Sector is Lord Young’s proposal to shift from a system of risk assessment to a system of risk-benefit assessment with consideration given to reviewing the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, to separate out play and leisure from the workplace context.

The proposal to replace the current system of risk assessment with one of "risk-benefit assessment", will allow the positive impacts of adventurous play equipment to be weighed up against potential risks, and will make for more stimulating play experiences for children and young people.

The report highlights that too often Health & Safety Laws are misinterpreted when designing play areas, making them *“uninspiring play spaces that do not enable children to experience risk. Such play is vital for a child’s development and should not be sacrificed to the cause of overzealous and disproportionate risk.”*

[Read the full report \[pdf, 688 kb\]](#)

Play Scotland as part of the UK Play Safety Forum continue to work with the Department of Education (England) regarding the potential review of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Scottish Government Safety Management Committee

Play Scotland is a member of this Committee.

Useful Resource

'Unwrapping Cotton Wool Kids in North Lanarkshire' DVD

A new training DVD has been launched in North Lanarkshire. The resource is aimed at people who work with children and young people and highlights the importance of outdoor play. For further information please visit www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk

Play Scotland Manifesto

Play Scotland launched their Manifesto for Play 2011 in September. We are calling for:

A Statutory Duty for Play

WHY? – to ensure that Local Authorities are committed to providing sufficient and satisfying play opportunities for children of all ages and abilities.

HOW? – a Universal Play Fund to support play services could remove the barriers to access and increase quality play opportunities throughout all of Scotland.

Scotland delivers “Improved children’s outcomes and quality of life through play” (Early Years Framework 2008)

The Creation of Child-Friendly Communities

WHY? – to deliver the Child’s Right to Play, increase physical activity and improve children’s health and well being.

- child-friendly spaces promote social interaction and strengthen community spirit between children and adults, while making areas more desirable places to live.

HOW? – designate all public space a potential play space
(unless otherwise categorised)

Scotland builds “strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect

The Inclusion of Children and Young People in the Planning and Provision of Play Space

WHY? – children have the right to play and participate.

(Article 31 and Article 12, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).

HOW? – by giving children a role in Community Planning and School Playground usage and design appropriate to their ages and stages of development.

Scotland creates “well designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need”

(National Outcomes 2008)

A Highly Skilled Play Workforce

WHY? – play is essential for children’s development and an integral part of a good childhood. This requires skilled adults trained in the Playwork Principles (available through Play Scotland/SkillsActive)

HOW? – by working with Sector Skills Councils, in particular SkillsActive, and accredited trainers to develop a proficient workforce.

Scotland’s Children deserve “Quality at the heart of service delivery” (Early Years Framework 2008)

Marguerite Hunter Blair, Chair of the Play and Risk Debate
December 2010