

Inaugural Meeting of the Scottish Play Policy Forum
29th of May 2008 at Dynamic Earth

Minutes

Present

Stephanie Bruce (Care and Learning Alliance), Jean Carwood-Edwards (Learning and Teaching Scotland), Paula Evans (Children in Scotland), Lesley Fox (National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries), Maureen Fraser (Barnado's Scotland), Gwen Garner (Scottish Pre-School Play Association), Faye Gatenby (Capability Scotland), Ronnie Hill (Care Commission), Irene Hogg (The International Play Association Scotland Branch), Marguerite Hunter Blair (Play Scotland), Marie McCormack (SCCYP), Maureen McKissock (Scottish Out of School Care Network), Don McGillivray (Scottish Government), Susan McIntyre (Play Scotland), Eric Mitchell (Capability Scotland), Jane Crawford (Scottish Childminding Association), Sue Palmer (Author & Chairperson of SPPF), Lesley Paterson (The National Playbus Association), Laura Powrie (Scottish Government), Ishbel Proctor (National Association of Hospital Play Specialists), Julie Proctor (Greenspace Scotland), Colin Rennie (Fields in Trust Scotland), Margaret Westwood (Chair of Play Scotland/City of Edinburgh Council)

Apologies

Ellenor Anwyl (Contact a Family Scotland), Kevin Lafferty (Forestry Commission Scotland), Frances Scott (Scottish Social Services Council)

Welcome

Sue Palmer welcomed everyone.

Introduction to SPPF – Marguerite Hunter Blair

Setting up the SPPF has been an aspiration for Play Scotland. There has been a UK wide Children's Play Policy Forum since 1994. The SPPF will feed into this forum and also develop as a strong body for supporting play in Scotland.

The SPPF has been set up with a small reference group of organisations which, in accordance with their funding bids to the Scottish Government, meet to discuss and coordinate work on play: Play Scotland (secretariat), National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries, Scottish Pre-School Play Association, National Playbus Association Scotland, Scottish Childminding Association and the Scottish Out of School Care Network. SOSCN currently do not have the capacity to participate in the reference group and are thanked for their contribution to date. They will continue to attend the SPPF.

Sue Palmer is the Chairperson, for this first year. It is anticipated that the Forum will meet four times per year.

Terms of Reference

The proposed mission statement of the forum is *"to discuss and when relevant coordinate work at a policy level in Scotland, in order to support the development of quality play opportunities for all children"*.

'What's happened to play' – Sue Palmer

Sue gave a presentation to set a context for the forum and stimulate thinking on topics for the forum to look at.

- Emphasis on the need to increase the independent mobility of children
- Quoted survey results which found that adults now believe that children should not be allowed out unaccompanied until age 14.
- Children spend an average of 5hrs 20mins a day on screen based entertainment.
- Children are becoming frightened of the outside world and reluctant to play outdoors.
- For research, when children were asked what the most important thing adults could do for them is, children said 'keep us safe'.

Play Policy Context - Donald McGillivray

The key purpose of this Government is defined as 'to focus Government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth' under which there are five strategic objectives. This is part of the National Performance Framework, with outcomes and indicators

All Government policy must clearly and coherently support the expressed purpose of the Government. Expressing the benefits of play in terms of skill development would relate directly to this purpose. Play makes a strong link with at least half of the national outcomes

There is a need to think about what a play indicator would look like. As part of the Early Years Framework, the Government are looking at 'identifying specific measures that would improve the physical and social environment for young children, including arts, culture, creativity and a strategic approach to play.'

Probably around 85% of priorities around play are the same for a 5yr old as an 11yr old and therefore are within the framework, but ministers have said that they won't limit their approach to play to the early years, which is for 0-8 years.

Discussion time – points arising

General

- People interpret that promoting play means more playgrounds – not the case
- Measure of progress
 - Could use how many children you see on the street
 - Outcome is that children are more visible and welcome in public space

- Different aspects of play that people would like to see included in work of SPPF were discussed:
 - Outdoors – independent mobility
 - Early years and interaction with parents
 - Young people need 'play' and access to public space too
 - Community attitudes on the issue
 - Building of resilience important too and schools have a role to play in that
 - Therapeutic value of play and specialist help with e.g. health where needed
- How is play defined? How is the age range defined? (Could follow lead from UNCRC)

Comments on the mission statement of SPPF

- This could include reference to awareness of what play is and why it is important
- Reference to community and there are benefits to the community from making a better environment for everyone
- Focus on outcomes from play
- Play for play's sake is an important message too
- But you have to sell play. Play Wales achieved a commitment to play by the Welsh Assembly adopting a statement that simply said 'play contributes to child's development.'
- In aims, reference is made to 'all' children – but want to see specific reference to disabled children
- Or other groups e.g. children with chaotic upbringings
- Set what we do in a universal context but within that extra effort may have to be made to ensure some groups have opportunity for play
- Need to watch that we don't shift all of our attention just now onto the early years
- Other aspects of play discussed could be referred to
- Have to keep the mission statement brief
- Need a vision of what we are trying to achieve, creating synergy – not try to do everything but specific to what this forum can achieve
- Aiming for two things – awareness raising and influencing policy
- Also unpacking what play is about – evaluation of NOF found that the Lottery needed a better definition of play

Taking SPPF forward

- The forum will meet four times a year
- Minutes could be circulated more widely, through people's networks
- Everyone to consider if there are other organisations which should join
- The forum could develop a newsletter to share information
- Next step is for the reference group to meet again to reflect on the inaugural meeting