

## 4 Nations Play Symposium Report 2016



*Junior Ministers Jennifer McCann and Emma Pengelly pictured with Koualla Yiasouma (NI Children's Commissioner), Jacqueline O'Loughlin (PlayBoard Chief Executive) and Theresa Casey (President of the International Play Association) at the 4 Nations Play Symposium at Cultra Manor.*

**A report on the proceedings of the 4 Nations Play  
Symposium 2016 which took place on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016 at  
Cultra Manor, Belfast.**

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## Introduction

The Four Nations Play Symposium takes place on a biennial basis rotating between each of the four home nations. The first event took place in Northern Ireland in 2008 with subsequent events taking place in England (2010), Wales (2012) and Scotland (2014).

On 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016, the Office of the First and deputy First Minister hosted the fifth biennial Four Nations Play Symposium with the support of PlayBoard NI at Cultra Manor, Belfast in Northern Ireland.

The symposium marks a significant and important event within the play sector calendar with this year's event bringing together delegations and experts across Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, including senior government officials with a responsibility for play.

The aim of the 4 Nations Play Symposium is to provide an opportunity for play professionals, experts and decision makers to discuss and debate the development and implementation of play policies, strategies and opportunities that will benefit children in each of the four nations.

Through participation in the Play Symposium, attendees are able to share knowledge; learning and best practice in play and play provision. The Symposium further provides a forum for showcasing achievements within the world of play; expanding professionals and government officials understanding of play and play provision; highlights difficulties faced

within each of the nations in terms of play policy and delivery; and seeks to provide possible remedies or solutions aimed at mitigating such difficulties at present or in the future.

NI Commissioner for Children and Young People Koulla Yiasouma, who chaired the event said: *"I am delighted to be chairing today's Symposium. Play and having things to do is an issue that children and young people consistently raise with us. The right to play is a non-negotiable right and therefore I look forward to seeing how this will be made a reality for children of all ages whatever their circumstances, across Northern Ireland."*

Highlighting the significant opportunity the symposium presents to put children and young people's play on the policy agenda of the Northern Ireland Executive, Jacqueline O'Loughlin, PlayBoard's Chief Executive said:

*"Play is an essential and integral aspect of childhood, essential to our cognitive, emotional, social and physical development. As the Northern Ireland Executive seeks to develop its new Children and Young People's Strategy, this symposium presents a tangible opportunity to share best practice and learn from colleagues across the four Nations, thus ensuring play is appropriately embedded into new and emerging social policy frameworks".*

## **Northern Ireland Junior Ministers Update**

Emma Pengelly MLA and Jennifer McCann MLA Junior

Ministers of the Northern Ireland Executive



Office of the  
First Minister and  
Deputy First Minister  
[www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk](http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk)

Opening symposium proceedings, Junior Ministers Jennifer McCann and Emma Pengelly highlighted the critical importance of play to the lives of children, young people and wider society.

In emphasising the value of play, the Junior Ministers highlighted its central role in supporting healthy growth and development; in the development and enhancement of social connections; in improving wellbeing and in enhancing learning and the development of essential skills. *Importantly the Junior Ministers highlighted that play is of particular value to children because it is fun.*

Focusing on the child's right to play, Junior Minister McCann stated: *"The right of children and young people to play throughout their childhood cannot be taken lightly. Without opportunity and quality of play, our children and young people's childhood is diminished and their development suffers. Their right to play is as important as their right to education; it should not be dismissed as a luxury."*

Junior Minister McCann emphasised the importance of all aspects of society working together in order to deliver more playful communities stating *"Collectively we have a responsibility to actively support our young in imaginative and innovative play. With the opportunity to play, we give them the ability to flourish now and the skills to succeed in the future."*

Highlighting the Executive's ongoing commitment to play, Junior Minister Pengelly outlined: *"The Northern Ireland Executive is currently developing the next Strategy for Children and Young People in which play will be a key topic. Forums, such as todays will help develop this Strategy by enabling us to learn from the experts, hearing what has worked in the other administrations and by sharing information and research."*

In closing Junior Minister Pengelly again emphasised the importance of play to the lives of children and young people stating *"Play is essential to children. It is their first opportunity to learn, improves their physical and mental development and is an issue that children and young people are passionate about."*

# **PlayBoard's Manifesto for Play 2016**

Jacqueline O'Loughlin, PlayBoard CEO



Following the opening address PlayBoard Chief Executive Officer, Jacqueline O'Loughlin expressed her thanks to both Junior Ministers and to the Office of the First and deputy First Minister (OFMdfM) for hosting the fifth Four Nations Play Symposium.

Welcoming delegates to the event, Jacqueline highlighted that, with the upcoming NI Assembly elections in May 2016 the Play Symposium provided an excellent platform for PlayBoard to launch its 2016 Manifesto for Play which calls upon all political parties to make play an election priority.

## **Why develop a Manifesto for Play?**

Jacqueline highlighted that a number of significant changes were taking place at a policy level within Northern Ireland, all of which had the potential to impact either positively or negatively on the play sector.

Changes included the transfer of responsibility for Play and children's issues to the Department of Education from OFMdfM; the establishment of the Children's Service Co-operation Bill and the development of a new Children and Young People's Strategy which highlights Play as a central pillar.

With a view to achieving political influence at this critical time of change, PlayBoard has developed a number of key asks for politicians across a number of key areas:

### **Key Ask 1: Formal and Informal Education**

We ask that play be prioritised during both curricular and non-curricular time, in formal and informal education with:

- Mandated time for play during the school day.
- Playwork training for all staff who have supervisory responsibilities during school recess periods.
- Recognition and appreciation of the importance of play within and beyond the curriculum.
- Established quality criteria for play as part of the ETI Inspection framework.
- Full utilisation of the school estates for community use.
- Embedding children's voices and an ethos of participation in all schools and wider children and young people's services i.e. Early years and youth services.

### **Key Ask 2: Health and Wellbeing**

We ask that play be embedded within the Public Health commissioning framework to maximise the health and wellbeing outcomes associated with play:

- Increasing awareness of the benefits of play across society.
- Providing guidance on how best to enable and facilitate active play within communities and within the home.
- Providing play services and opportunities that allow children to test, explore and challenge their capabilities whilst developing risk management skills, resilience and self-reliance.
- Supporting parents, carers and community groups to encourage children to play more on their streets and in their communities.

### **Key Ask 3: Open & Recreational Space, Parks & Public Spaces**

We ask that play be embedded within the emerging community planning structure:

- Ensuring adequate provision for play in new residential developments and enhancing professionals understanding of play and how to plan, design and manage it within the public realm.
- Ensuring that children with disabilities are always included and integrated in play.
- Giving children and young people a voice on how they want to play and a say in the design of play facilities.
- Supporting the development of natural play areas and initiatives designed to enable older children to play out and engage in recreational activities.

### **Key Ask 4: Wider Child/Social Policy Agenda**

We ask all political parties and MLAs to drive the play agenda, ensuring Executive commitments are fulfilled:

- Using the Children's Services Cooperation Act to prioritise and deliver outcomes for play within regional and local government.
- Ensuring Play & Leisure is a high level outcome within the emerging Children and Young People's strategy and a firm commitment in the Programme for Government.
- Ensuring the lead department for the Children and Young People's strategy is fully engaged & supportive in delivering outcomes for Play.
- Fulfilling resource commitments and ensuring that all commitments are fulfilled to provide innovative and novel play and leisure opportunities.



# UNCRC General Comment 17 (2013)

Theresa Casey, President of International Play Association



Theresa opened by highlighting that play is a fundamental and vital dimension of the pleasure of childhood, as well as an essential component of physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development.

In 2013 the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child published General Comment no. 17 on Article 31 focusing on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts.

Core objectives for the General Comment were:

- To enhance understanding of article 31 for children's wellbeing and development
- To respect and strengthen the application of article 31 rights
- To elaborate on the obligations of governments, responsibilities of the private sector and to provide guidelines for all those working with children or young people.

General Comment 17 affirmed the importance of the right to play, highlighting that play is:

*"essential to the health and well-being of children and young people; the development of creativity, imagination, self-confidence, self-efficacy and physical, social cognitive and emotional strength and skills."*

The General Comment highlights the need to respect, protect & fulfil the right to play for every child – but how can we achieve this?

- Through legislation and planning to ensure that every child has sufficient time and space in their life for their article 31 rights
- Through disaggregated data collection and research
- Through the development of cross-departmental collaboration in national and municipal government
- Through a review of budgets and financial resource allocations
- Through investment in universal design.

A priority must be placed on the creation of environments which promote the wellbeing of the child, environments which offer:

- Freedom from stress
- Freedom to play
- Spaces that are accessible for all
- Spaces that are free from adult control
- A genuine understanding and commitment to ensuring the right to play is delivered by adults
- Resources to support and encourage free play within environments.

General comment 17 provides us with a starting point, but we must continue to collectively press for full realisation of the right to play across UK and global society. In seeking to progress the debate, as part of the upcoming UNCRC Day of General Discussion on “Children’s Rights and the Environment” which takes place on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2016, IPA will be highlighting the importance of play and the right to play in providing a natural mechanism for children to interact with and understand the natural environment.

### **Access to Play in Crisis**

In closing Theresa asked the question: *‘how can we respond to play in times of austerity?’*

- The UN reporting cycle and concluding observations offer an opportunity for all with an interest in play to advocate the critical importance of government and duty bearers delivering against their obligations.
- Training and capacity building on the right to play, what it means for duty bearers and how we can deliver it is required.
- An obligation to deliver – we could make it a requirement of legislation and planning (e.g. Play Sufficiency in Wales).

In closing, an IPA film about the General Comment entitled *‘Play is absolutely fundamental (not optional) to children’s physical, social, mental and emotional development’* was showcased. The film is available for viewing at the IPA website – [www.IPAworld.org](http://www.IPAworld.org).



## Scottish Government Update

Aileen Campbell, Minister for Children and Families (via videolink)



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

“Two years ago, in Scotland we launched our play strategy and we had a recent event which allowed us to reflect on the distance travelled as a country to promote play. It also gave us an opportunity to consider the challenges that we still have in Scotland to make play and playful opportunities a reality for children in Scotland. So while we’ve come a long way, we’ve still got a journey to go but I know that there is a really enthused play movement in Scotland that are wanting to ensure that play as a right is enjoyed by all is felt across the length and breadth of our land.”

“The opportunity I also had at the event was to launch the ‘Play this way’ book. It’s a great resource but more importantly it takes those key messages that we had within the play strategy and makes it come alive for children. Play is their right, it is an absolute critical part of their development, and it’s also about them having fun. We need to take those messages to the people who aren’t aware of the importance of their work in creating play spaces for our children.”

Following on from the Ministers input, Deborah Gallagher, Play Policy Lead in the Scottish Government, set out the policies and strategies that have helped to shape the landscape for play in Scotland over recent years:

- Early Years Framework (2008)
- GoPlay & Go2Play (2009)
- Early Years Taskforce (2011)
- Early Years Collaborative (2013)
- Play Strategy (2013)
- Children and Young People (Scot) Act (2014)
- Play Key Change (2015)
- National Play Strategy
  - Play Strategy Group
  - Year 2 interim report
  - Play This Way
  - Long term plan – Legacy

In 2013, the United Nations issued General Comment 17 on Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

General Comment 17 clarifies the obligations governments have in relation to the need to 'respect, protect and fulfil' the child's right to play by means of appropriate 'legislation, planning and budgets'.

Wherever they live, children and young people of all ages, abilities and interests, should be able to play in a variety of ways, in high quality spaces, within sight of their homes or within easy walking distance, where they feel safe whether or not they are accompanied by adults' (Getting it Right for Play).

Marguerite's presentation focused on the role of Community Planning Partnerships (CPP's) in Scotland in supporting play in communities. With a view to supporting CPP's to build consideration of play into their strategic plans *'Play Map: A Resource for Community Planning Partnerships – Valuing Play Every Day'* was recently published under Scotland's Play Strategy.

The 'Play Map' outlines 3 key actions that CPP's can take in order to support their commitment to play:

## Action 1 Uphold Principles underpinning a commitment to play

- Explicit commitment to Article 31 of the UNCRC
- Review their play provision and assess it using the Community Learning and Development principles
- Ensure all aspects of play are inclusive

## Action 2 Undertake Mapping of Play Provision and Opportunities in Communities

- Ensure children and young people have access to play opportunities
- Children, young people and families participate in the development of play priorities
- CPP's take account of the benefits as well as risks of play

## Action 3 Embed play in CPP activities

- Develop a strategic statement on play
- Identify CPP play Champions
- Undertake regular review of play delivery linked to CPP outcomes

# Play in Scotland – Inequalities in Play

Tracey Black, Director Jeely Piece Club and  
Rachel Cowper, Go2Play Inspiring Scotland



Go2Play is all about improving the lives of Scotland's most disadvantaged children and families through play. Go Play and Go2Play is funded by the Scottish Government who recognised the need to invest in play with funding coming from Health and Early year's budget.

## **Learning through Investment**

Inspiring Scotland's approach is to support each funded venture to develop and grow. This includes providing support and skills development opportunities for staff to enable them to better articulate the impact their work is having on the communities they deliver in.

By adopting such an approach the aim is to encourage and support each funded venture to deliver more and better play opportunities for all.

## **The Play Ranger Model**

One clearly identified success for Scotland has been the play ranger model which underpins the ongoing work of the Jeely Piece Club in Govanhill, Glasgow.

## **Case Study, Govanhill Play Collaboration:**

The focus for the initiative is on building friendships and supporting the development of improved health, wellbeing and resilience through play.



Govanhill is one of Scotland's most ethnically diverse community with:

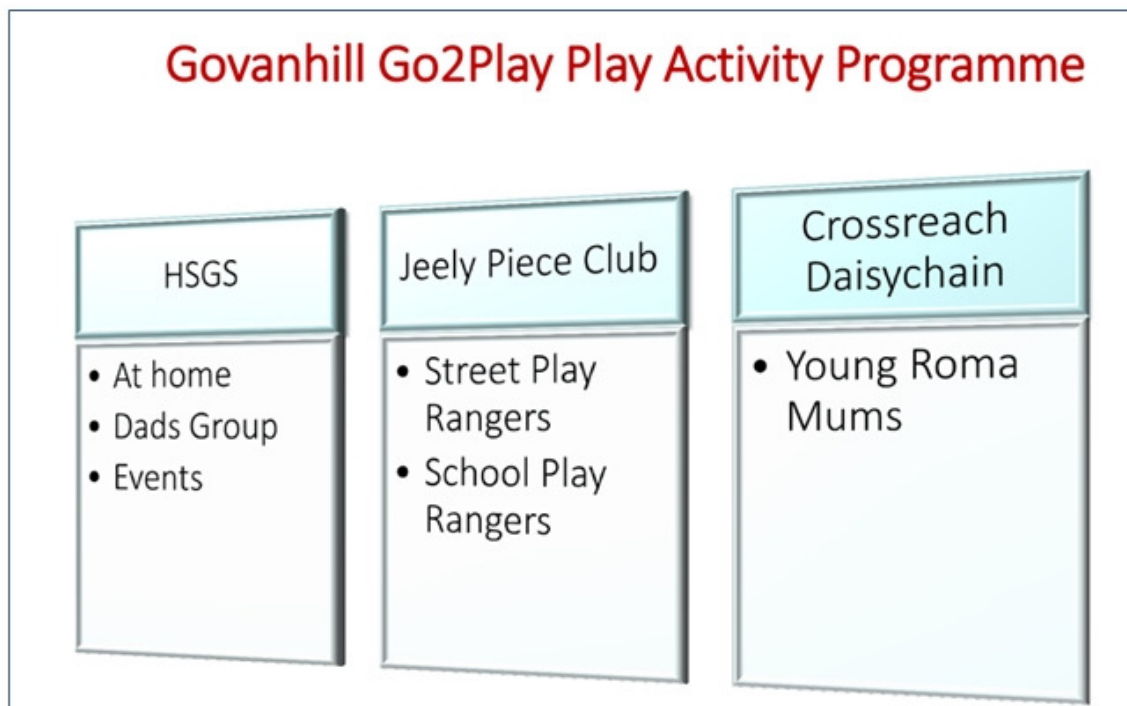
- A rich history of migration
- Approximately 15,000 residents
- 40% of local residents from ethnic minorities
- 46 languages spoken in 13 tenement blocks
- 4 Primary Schools with a high percentage of cultures
- Tenement living
- Population forecasts indicate a continued increase in the percentage of ethnic minorities.

For the residents, living in Govanhill provides a wide array of challenges including cultural challenges; challenges associated with social integration; the transient aspect of the part of the community; underlying high rates of poverty and media sensationalism.

## The Govanhill Play Model



Through Go2play three organisations (The Jeely Piece Club, Daisychain and Homestart Glasgow South) seek to address some of these challenges through the Play Activity Programme. Together the three organisations represent 80 years of experience working with vulnerable children and families in diverse and disadvantaged communities.



### Children's Play

Since July 2015, Govanhill Play partners have delivered a range of programmes aimed at enhancing access to essential play opportunities including:

- Holiday Programme (94 children)

- Schools (469 children)
- Clubs (167 children)
- Homestart (116 families)

The overarching aim of the approach is to achieve a number of shared outcomes which include:

- Improved attachment
- Improved health and well being
- Improved social skills
- Increased confidence in parents and children
- Reduced barriers to community integration
- Better relationships and new friendships

Govanhill is only one small community within Glasgow. Our **shared** wealth of knowledge, experience and evidence is changing lives for the better. This model is replicable and impactful however:

- It takes time!
- Community consultation is key
- Long term investment is required
- Building trust and achieving a high level of local visibility is essential
- There must be a willingness to collaborate across all stakeholders.

## England Update

Robin Sutcliffe, Children's Play Policy Forum Chairman



In opening Robin sought to highlight the difficulties faced by play advocates living and operating within England in securing government recognition for play and the importance of play in the lives of children, young people and communities.

In spite of the fact that England represents the largest body of population within the UK with 20,065 schools (compared to 5,175 across the devolved nations) only 3 delegates to the symposium were English based compared to 42 from the rest of the UK.

Country	Primary	Secondary	Total	Delegates attending symposium
Scotland	2099	372	2471	15
Wales	1435	222	1657	12
Northern Ireland	832	215	1047	15
<b>Devolved Nations</b>	<b>4366</b>	<b>809</b>	<b>5175</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>16784</b>	<b>3281</b>	<b>20065</b>	<b>3</b>

Despite lobbying by a wide array of play advocate organisations and individuals play has disappeared off the government agenda within England. Robin highlighted just a number of indications of how play is no longer viewed as a priority:

- Michael Gove in his role as Secretary of State for Education forbade the use of the word "Play" in the Department for Education
- No Government Department has designated responsibility for Play
- There has been little or no interest or engagement with UNCRC regarding General Comment 17
- Fields in Trust no longer has an active interest in Play
- National Children's Bureau no longer has an active interest in play

*This is the first time such disengagement has occurred for 30 years*

The implications of the current situation for children and young people are significant with the lack of interest and support for play leading to a loss of:

- Self-discovery and potential
- Resilience to deal with the unknown



- Capacity to enjoy and manage risk
- Physical Health and fitness
- Emotional wellbeing and maturity
- Development and learning
- Entry to the Arts and Sport

### **Where do we go from here?**

Across England play activists have been deeply impressed by the commitment to play that exists in the three devolved Nations and are grateful for the support they have received over the past three years from counterparts in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. At a time of grave adversity for the play sector in England we are delighted that relationships across the play sector in the UK have continued to develop - we in England need your support more than ever before, the children of England need and deserve that support too.

Despite the difficulties we face there are some green shoots of recovery. Opportunities to build new alliances are presenting themselves, alliances with organisations that have discovered the benefits and the importance of Play, organisations like the National Trust; Forestry Commission and the All Party Political Group for Child fitness and wellbeing to name but a few.

The well-being of all children and young people in the UK rest in our hands. It is through our cooperating and supporting each other that we stand the best chance of success. That is my appeal to you today and always has been!

# Play England – PLAY for Social Action

Nicola Butler, Chair of Play England



Following on from Robins input, Nicola Butler the current chair of Play England outlined some of the initiatives rolled out in recent years.

## Play Pathfinder and Playbuilder

Funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCFS) the Play Pathfinder and Playbuilder initiatives were instrumental in the development of new play spaces across England. Investment in play was supported by the Big Lottery Fund and resulted not only in new play spaces being developed but also the development of key documents, guidance and research.

## 'Get Involved in Play'

Between 2011 and 2013 the Cabinet Office provided funding for 'Get Involved in Play' which resulted in the creation of:

- 40,000 new volunteers
- 50,000 other social action opportunities
- 350,000 supporters
- 1,000,000 play opportunities
- The establishment of the Free Time Consortium

## Street Play

In 2013 the Department of Health provided support for street play initiatives, culminating in 350 streets participating in street play activities with the support of 3500 volunteers. In all 10,000 children participated in the programme with approximately 64,000 play opportunities created.

## **Learning from projects**

Through delivery of play initiatives a significant body of evidence has been collated highlighting:

- An increasing body of evidence highlighting that play is vital for children's health & wellbeing
- The importance of partnership working
- The need to provide more disadvantaged communities and those in greater need with an increased level of support
- A clear link between voluntary action and play
- That volunteering and play both need skilled support
- The importance of sustainability

### **Social Action for Play: Play England in 2016**

Despite the lack of recognition of play at government level, it has never been clearer just how important play is in the lives of children, young people and communities. There is still a high level of interest in play from parents and the general public – evidenced by the continued popularity of Play Day which runs successfully across the UK each August.

There remains a continued high demand for Play England's information and services and the Trustees are determined to continue to support play development with a focus on a number of core roles – communications, advocacy and partnership development.

# Wales Update

Owain Lloyd, Deputy Director, Childcare and Play Division  
Welsh Government



There is across the Welsh Government a recognition of the importance of play as outlined with Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Play is critical to children and young people from the perspective of its role in supporting:

- Physical and mental health
- Learning and experimenting
- Social development
- Making friends and having fun
- Building resilience
- Understanding of themselves, their communities and environment

Within Wales there are four key pieces of legislation impacting on play:

- Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010
- Children and Young People's Rights Measure 2011
- Play Sufficiency Assessments (Wales) Regulations 2012
- Wales – a Play Friendly Country – Statutory Guidance 2015

## **The Play Sufficiency Assessment (2013 & 2016)**

The play sufficiency assessment takes into account a number of key considerations including:

- Population
- Diversity of needs
- Spaces & play provision
- Community organisations
- Other policy areas impacting on play
- The play workforce

Local Authorities are required to comply with the Play Sufficiency duty with the support of Play Wales, who provide strategic support to government and other stakeholders, and Groundwork Wales who help to deliver play opportunities.

The focus is on a wide range of approaches to meeting play need ranging from holistic play, play in Schools, outdoor play, inclusive play and play within summer play schemes.

## **The Play Workforce**

A draft 10 Year Plan for the early years, childcare and play workforces in Wales is in the process of being developed with a key focus on the implications of the extension of registration for provision for children up to the age of 12 years and the findings of a Qualifications Wales Survey on the early years, childcare and play workforce.

**Working across the UK nations**

The Welsh government recognise the benefits of working in a collaborative approach with stakeholders from across the UK on a range of issues including:

- Workforce development
- The sharing of good practice and achieving excellence
- The development of collaborative and partnership working arrangements
- Opportunities for joint projects and exchange experiences.

# Play Wales – PLAY Sufficiency – the Journey so far – Lessons Learnt

Mike Greenaway, Play Wales



In Wales we have been on a journey. Since before devolution in 1999 it had been a vision of Play Wales' that Wales needed legislation intended explicitly to impact on children's play. As others have internationally we recognised that children and their play was the Cinderella of local authority services. Our underpinning rationale supporting the argument for explicit legislation being that all governments already legislate in a manner that impacts on play. However it is not a direct intention, it is a side effect with often unanticipated and unintended consequences and usually to the detriment of play. Planning, environment and education legislation for example has often had an impact on play, serving to restrict children's space and time; not intentionally but inadvertently.

## **Opportunity to influence policy**

Early in the life of the Welsh Government, in 2001 we were provided with an opportunity to have some influence on the direction of policy development. Play Wales was commissioned to draft the basis of a national Play Policy. We recognised that it was important that the policy was succinct, to the point, and that it really needed to be future proofed for at least 10 years. It was worth reflecting that this was at a time when there were a range of definitions in use and play as a concept had not really been pinned down. However we did know that children's play space was being encroached upon and that we needed to incorporate the principle of compensation to make up for what was being lost. We had assumed that our starting point would have been other government play policies, but it soon became apparent that this assumption was not based on fact. At that time no national government had adopted a play policy.

Play Wales was subsequently commissioned to act as the secretariat of the Play Policy Implementation Group that had been tasked by the then Minister to draft recommendations for a play strategy. Within those recommendations two stood out. The need for a programme of public education and the need for legislation. In its response and production of the Play Policy Implementation plan in 2006, the Government did not actually address either of these recommendation but the seed of the idea had been planted.

## **Generational differences**

We had realised early on the journey that most people if not all, sub-consciously see themselves as experts in play; they are correct, they are experts in their own play and when talking about play they will naturally internally refer to their own play experiences. However possibly more-so than ever before there are significant generational differences in those experiences. The experience of older members of our society is significantly different from that of their children and even more-so their grandchildren. This range of experience has the capacity to contribute to a



cognitive dissonance that, if we don't take account of it, has the potential to trip us at the start.

### **Established paradigm view of providing for children's play**

We are also working in a world with an established paradigm of how we as a society provide for children's play; that is to say generally with manufactured fixed equipment playgrounds with impact attenuating surfaces, surrounded by fences. Like it or not we have well intentionally created an environment where we have ghettoised play. That is not to say that playground equipment is all wrong, just that there is a time and place and surfacing and fencing may not be necessarily represent best value for money when providing for children playing.

### **Terminology**

In spring 2008 when scope of what became the Children and Families Measure the legislation which includes the Play Sufficiency Duty was being considered, we were asked to suggest how it might be best worded to ensure that it was meaningful rather than tokenistic. We argued strongly that it was important to use wording that could accommodate changing values. As with the development of the play policy we were considering how it may be as far as possible, future proofed. The terminology used in the Measure is in part reflective of the understanding, knowledge and context at the time of drafting.

For example we recognised that the environment in which children played in the 50s might for many in the 00s, represent an unknown and hazardous place. That is to say, most children in the 50s played outside away from adult supervision; this was not the experience of most children raised in the 00s. We also recognised that given this context something that may be considered sufficient today, with further informed knowledge and experience, tomorrow may be regarded as less than sufficient. That is to say we needed wording that accommodated incremental development of understanding. We believed that the language of the 1944 Education Act provided the necessary degree of ambiguity for the Measure; embodying as it did, the principle of adequacy or sufficiency, as had more recent childcare legislation.

There were some concerns amongst the lawyers that play was, I paraphrase, harder to quantify compared with childcare places, but fortunately the principle of sufficiency embracing both quality and quantity was incorporated into the Measure. One area where ambiguity has genuinely caused confusion has been in the use of terminology around play and recreation. A year or two before the drafting of the Children and Families Measure, the Westminster Government in the face of questions in the House of Lords had stated that recreation was deemed to encompass play. However in the Welsh Measure it was determined that 'play includes any recreational activity' and with that by implication sport. Neither of these models really work and when the Duty to Assess Sufficiency was commenced it became apparent that the incorporation of recreation within play was seen as problematic by the local authorities upon whom the duty had been placed.

## **General Comment 17, UNCRC**

Subsequently the General Comment 17, supporting Article 31 of the UNCRC adopted in 2013 by the UNCRC Committee provided definitions of play, recreation and leisure which clarify the position considerably and should the time come for the Measure to be reviewed we would argue that the UNCRC definitions should be used to inform any revision. It is also worth mentioning that principle of play sufficiency was referenced in General Comment 17.

## **Responsibilities in providing play**

And it is worth mentioning that we had not anticipated the degree to which what has become known correctly or incorrectly as the obesity epidemic would impact. It was only in the last few days of the public consultation on the Measure that we realised that it is not only local authorities that have a role to play in contributing to sufficiency but also the health boards and police authorities. Something else to be considered should the opportunity to revisit the legislation arise.

When we were considering the principle of sufficiency, we were aware that when many consider play in the context of play provision, they consider it as a noun rather than a verb; a thing rather than a doing. Arguably this thinking has probably informed the paradigm of play provision since the first world war. This is problematic because it is at odds with the way children approach play. They play. They don't for example, walk through the environment to go to a playground, they play their way through the environment. Anything that provides novelty or a disturbance on their journey is a reason to play.

## **Rotterdam**

Fortunately this principle is more widely recognised in many of the northern mainland European countries. The Municipality of Rotterdam epitomised this when the council adopted the Rotterdam Norm, a local city statute which in effect designated all public open space as children's play space; unless a reason could be made for not doing so. It is useful to imagine what that looks like compared in a park or street in Wales. The city is not completely dominated by car drivers and rather than play equipment all being fenced in, it appears on pavements and randomly in parks and public places where children are encouraged to play. In Rotterdam children play everywhere it is safe to, and some times where it might not be so safe. Whereas in Wales, children have been, shall we say, encouraged to play in their designated play areas. I know I am using generalisations but it does provide a perspective.

## **Play Sufficiency Toolkit**

Once the principle of sufficiency had been established Statutory Guidance was produced. This in turn was supported by a Play Sufficiency Toolkit, developed by Play Wales that provided a guide for those involved in assessing play sufficiency. Whilst the focus was understandably on space it has become increasing apparent from what children tell us, that it isn't just about space. Many children feel that they don't have enough time to play and many don't feel they have the permission they need to play . . . that playing outside is seen as an antisocial behaviour.

## **Play Sufficiency implementation**

At the time of Commencement and implementation of the two duties, to assess and latterly secure sufficiency of play, in 2013 and then 2014 the University Of Gloucestershire published two short research studies.

(The first Leopard Skin Wellies, a Top Hat and a Vacuum Cleaner Hose: An analysis of Wales' Play Sufficiency Assessment duty and latterly Towards Securing Sufficient Play Opportunities: A short study into the preparation undertaken for the commencement of the second part of the Welsh Government's Play Sufficiency Duty to secure sufficient play opportunities.)

It is probably best at this point to paraphrase the authors.

The writers state: *the relationship between social policy and play is not straight forward. Play is not only an activity that takes place in discrete spaces and at prescribed times; it is not something that can simply be 'provided' by adults, but is an act of co-creation that emerges opportunistically from an assemblage of interdependent and interrelated factors.*

This is the nub of our challenge, well summed up. It is complex. Play which seems so trivial . . . of course nothing is as simple as child's play . . . could not be more complex.

And in respect of the local authorities undertaking to develop annual action plans, they go on to say: *Action plans had been developed on a 'low cost/no cost' basis, as it was recognised that there was no additional funding at that stage. Generally, there was enthusiasm about the difference the PSA process and the action plans had made, particularly in terms of developing a broader, cross-departmental awareness of children's play. Yet there were also tensions regarding funding, not only because of the lack of identified budgets to support implementation of actions that did require funding, but also because the Play Sufficiency Duty was being brought in at a time of unprecedented public spending cuts in local authorities.*

This reflects our understanding, in many local authorities, generally the Duty has strengthened existing partnerships both within the authority and also with other key stakeholders, particularly the voluntary sector. It has brought together local authority departments who traditionally may have been perceived to have little in common with regards to children's play, most notably planning and local development, transport and highways, and environment. We have seen relationships develop and continue and in some respects this might be determined to be, to date, this is the most significant legacy of the Measure.

Continuing they say: *Partnership working therefore becomes a cornerstone at local, regional and national levels. The Welsh Government and key national organisations, notably Play Wales and the WLGA, have a significant role to play in this process; they are not detached bodies but are active and important elements within the entangled relationships among local authorities, local communities and children's everyday experiences.*

They also say: *The challenge presented by the Play Sufficiency Duty is to develop relationships that counter forms of marginalisation and disconnection in order to create and promote spaces in which different needs can co-exist rather than privilege the needs of one group (adults) over another (children).*

It may be pertinent at this point to reflect on the funding received by both art and sport, respectively through Arts Wales and Sport Wales and compare it to play. Whilst we recognise that both do some work with children the primary and significant focus on adults. Their historic level of funding has brought a policy security, for want of a better phrase. Whilst cuts to budgets may happen it would be fair to conjecture that the policy position for art and sport is relatively secure. Against this play (for children) is very fragile.

They continue finally reflecting on the commitment of national and local partners conclude: *The continuous development of collective wisdom will be vital in the next period. This is not a predictable, uniform, linear and consensual process; collective wisdom, in this sense, implies developing approaches that are open, experimental and responsive to ever-changing conditions.* This is challenging at the best of times . . . . attention needs to be paid to continued support for the growth of partnership working at national, regional and local level and the accompanying development of national and local intelligences. . . . the gains made to date through multiple and interwoven networks of practice must, as far as possible, be protected and strengthened.

To conclude, the developments towards play sufficiency have been slow and considered. To be honest, to mix two metaphors I firmly believe that procrastination has been the mother of invention. Had developments taken place faster than they have I do not believe we would have been able to incorporate such a nuanced approach.

However, these developments are fragile. In the run up to the forthcoming election we have at least one party saying that they will be reviewing all legislation passed by the current administration. . . and looking at the English experience, there but for the grace of God . . . .

On balance I think we have made the strides forward because of a unique mixture of features, including as the academics conclude in the latter years Welsh Gov., the WLGA and Play Wales working together. The collective wisdom they refer to is just that . . . collective. . . it has been a strength but we should also recognise its fragility.

# PlayBoard NI: Policy and Strategy – Where next for PLAY?

Alan Herron, Director of Service Delivery and Development,  
PlayBoard N.I.



Alan began by providing an overview of the demographic context for play in Northern Ireland. According to the 2011 census the population of Northern Ireland stood at 1,810,900 with approximately 25% of the population falling into the 0 to 18 age group.

Age Group	Resident Population
0 to 4	124,382
5 to 9	111,287
10 to 14	119,034
15 to 18	101,356
TOTAL	456,059

Analysis of figures at local council level highlights some variation in the percentage of children and young people aged 0 to 18 years as compared to the rest of the population from a low of 18% up to a high of 26%.

## The Challenge We Face

Play is critical to children and young people's lives contributing to the development of health and wellbeing; supporting learning and skills development and providing a natural means for children to interact and engage with wider society, build friendships and establish social connections.

A review of statistics highlights a number of disturbing trends that highlight the declining opportunities our children and young people have to engage in developmentally important play activities:

### Within Northern Ireland:

- Almost 20% of children in are overweight or obese before they start primary school
- 24% are obese by 11 – higher than across the rest of the UK (23% in Wales, 20% in England and 19% in Scotland)
- 28% of children are overweight (21%) or as obese (7%) by age 15

#### Across the UK:

- 59% of children never leave their garden to play unsupervised
- 99.8% of parents see play as beneficial & important BUT 50% won't let their children play outside unsupervised.

And yet when we engage with children and young people the majority (81%) tell us that they prefer playing outdoors to being indoors watching TV or playing with technology. Further 67% tell us that they prefer unstructured, free play.

### **Policy Context in Northern Ireland**

There are in Northern Ireland a number of key policies that impact directly on the ability of children and young people to engage in and access play opportunities. These include:

#### **NI Play & Leisure Policy (2011)**

- Places and Space for Play and Leisure
- Championing Play and Leisure
- Access to Play and Leisure
- Play Workforce Development

#### **Children's Services Co-operation Bill (2015)**

- Received Royal Assent in December 2015
- Places a statutory duty on regional and local government to Co-operate, Integrate, Plan and Deliver 7 specified outcomes including the enjoyment of play and leisure

#### **Children & YP Strategic Plan (2016)**

- Current Strategy in place for 10 year period (2006 to 2016).
- Emerging strategy underpinned by the UNCRC.
- Proposes introduction of 'The Right to Enjoyment of Play and Leisure; as one of the 6 key pillars.
- Timetabled for completion by end of 2016

### **Introduction of Community Planning**

In addition to NI Executive policies, the reform of local government and the amalgamation in April 2015 of 26 councils into 11 saw the introduction of community planning to Northern Ireland.

Community planning aims to provide an opportunity for communities to have a real

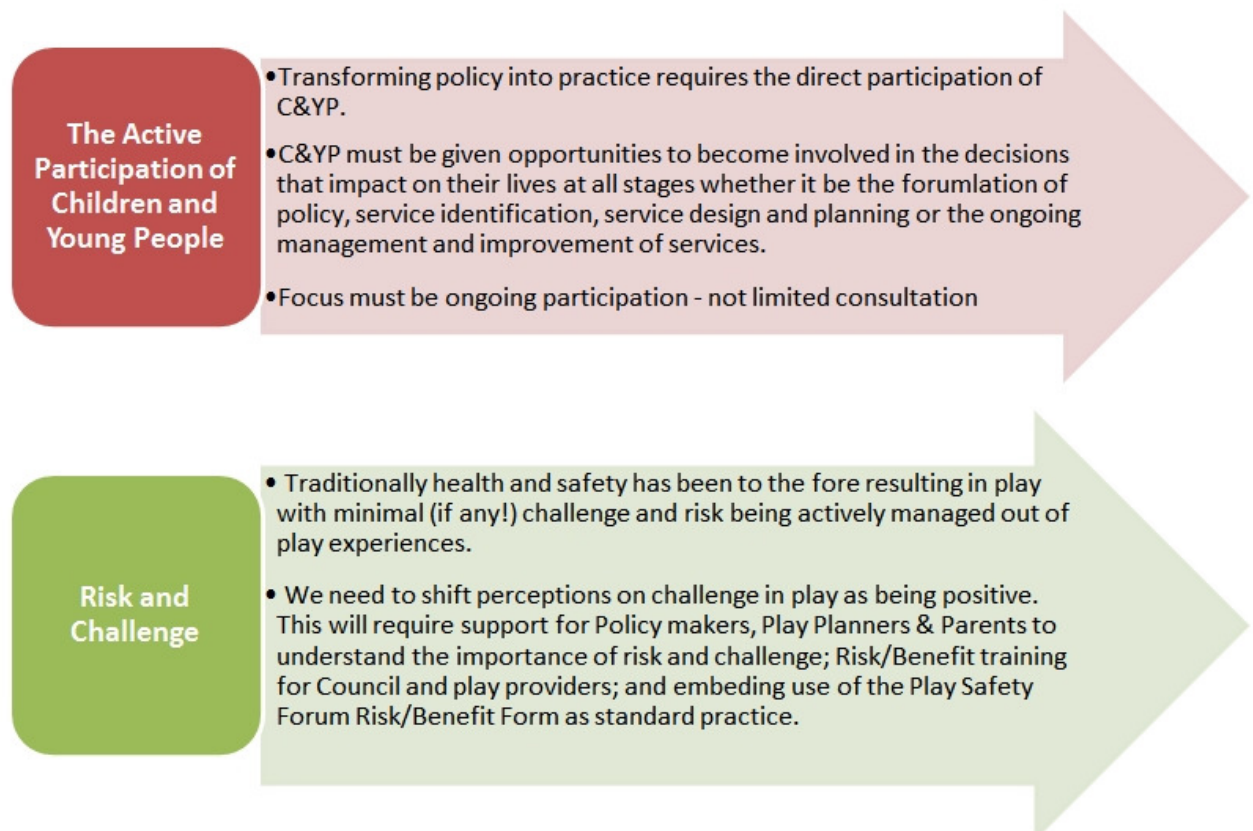


say in how services are planned and delivered, offering an opportunity to place play at the heart of the local policy and decision-making. As part of the process Councils must (as Community Planning Partnership lead:

- Ensure children and young people are recognised as a priority group within the process
- Ensure that partnerships prioritise play and meeting play need at the core of system
- Utilise partnerships to broaden understanding of play and enhance local capacity to meet play need

### **Changing the Landscape for Play**

In reviewing the landscape, a number of key issues need to be addressed if we are to successfully achieve the progress required to open up opportunities for play across our community.



## Mixed Approaches to Meeting Play Need

- Play is all too often viewed as a 'fixed' issue
- Fixed play has a role - particularly in urban residential areas and for younger age groups HOWEVER is not economically viable in rural areas and all too often offers limited play value
- Need to open up alternatives to fixed play - Mobile Play Worker Teams, Community Play Volunteers, Community Play Pods etc.

## Youth Provision

- There remains a lack of play/recreation provision that caters for older children and teenagers
- Young Life and Times survey of 16 yr olds found 97% believe teenagers should have access to play spaces, 64% disagreed that playing was just for younger children, 66% reported being 'moved on' whilst with friends
- Need to recognise and cater for the play needs of older children by creating more social 'play' and recreational spaces for teens and better utilising the public realm

## The Impact Measurement Challenge

As the focus of government and funders fixes more squarely on measuring the impact of the interventions and programmes we in the play sector are faced with a challenge. We can, and always have measured levels of activity, but how do we make the jump to measure programme impact at overarching population level?

We know that play and the outcomes of engaging in play are often hard to measure, can be hard to define and are often hard to disaggregate from other interventions.

As a play sector we need to ask ourselves a number of key questions:

- Do the datasets currently exist to allow us to measure change through play?
- If not, how do we go about creating them?
- More fundamentally, if play is a right (as enshrined in UNCRC Article 31 and we know instinctively that play is good for children health and wellbeing, learning and social development do we really need to – and more pertinently should we be required to measure it?

How much did we do?		How well did we do it?	
# Customers served (by customer characteristic)		% Common measures Workload ratio, staff turnover rate, staff morale, percent of staff fully trained, worker safety, unit cost, customer satisfaction: <i>Did we treat you well?</i>	
# Activities (by type of activity)		% Activity-specific measures Percent of actions timely and correct, percent clients completing activity, percent of actions meeting standards	
Is Anyone Better Off?			
# Skills / Knowledge		% Skills / Knowledge	
# Attitude / Opinion		% Attitude / Opinion including customer satisfaction: <i>Did we help you with your problems?</i>	
# Behavior		% Behavior	
# Circumstance		% Circumstance	

# Play Symposium Evaluation

This section reports on attendee's experiences and perspectives of the event and demonstrates the benefits in engaging in Play Symposium events. An electronic questionnaire invitation was sent to those who had attended the 2016 Play Symposium. From the 50 delegates who attended, 19 responded to the survey which is a response rate of 38%.

## 1. General Arrangements of the Play Symposium

Delegates were asked how they rated the general arrangements of the event. Overall the results suggest that the event was a great success and that delegates were happy with the general arrangements as well as the learning that they took from it.

In terms of the arrangements prior to the event, 94% of delegates rated the arrangements as good or excellent, while 6% rated them as satisfactory. When asked about the networking dinner, 89% rated the networking dinner as good or excellent, while 11% said it didn't apply to them.

All delegates who responded rated the venue as excellent. 94% of delegates rated the content of the presentations as good or excellent, while 6% said it wasn't applicable to them.

## 2. Agenda

We also asked delegates whether there was anything that they would have liked to see incorporated into the day. The majority of delegates who responded to the survey noted that felt there nothing was omitted from the agenda and was well balanced.

*"The agenda was well balanced with presentations and opportunities for full conference discussions and informal sharing of information and ideas".*

However a small number of delegates noted some suggestions that they would have liked to have seen such as having more focus on play for vulnerable children, more opportunity for further discussion time and that it would have been interesting to have heard from a funder around their priorities for play.

*"More focus on play for vulnerable children, especially disabled children."*

*"Would have appreciated more opportunity to discuss and address some of the issues that came together at the end of the day. Maybe the mornings for presentations but then break off into smaller groups to focus on specific issues with a plenary to pull it together."*

*"More discussion on outcomes and how we can link data across the nations".*

### 3. Benefits of the Play Symposium

Delegates were asked what they thought the benefits were in attending a 4 nation Play Symposium. The following areas were highlighted as being the most beneficial for them:

- Sharing of information, knowledge and practice
- Networking and building relationships and partnerships
- Find out what's happening and direction being taken in the other nations
- Gather broader perspectives and reflection
- Discuss policy and engage with government officials
- Providing support
- Sparking innovation

These factors are provided the key reasons for why delegates come to the event. The following are some quotes from delegates:

*"Sharing good practice; providing support to each other; increasing networks; sparking innovation and partnership working."*

*"The opportunity to find out what's happening in other nations and really influence government officials."*

*"Highlighting the overall direction being taken in each of the four countries, how that changes over time and gathering broader perspective on challenges at policy level."*

*"It is so beneficial to meet key staff and personnel from the 4 nations in order for us to have thought provoking presentations and compare and contrast practice."*

*"It was fantastic for England to hear what is happening in the other Nations, inform others of the dire situation in England and obtain their support, both moral and active."*

*"Helps everyone keep a sense of perspective of the distance already achieved and find out how others have done it better."*

*"Opportunity to share learning and experience between nations as well as it being a 'protected time' to discuss and take stock of the priorities and focus of each nation considering how we can work better and stronger together."*

*"Bringing all 4 nations together to share practice, see where we are in comparison and inspire us to keep moving forward."*

*"Sharing experiences across the UK - both the positives and the challenges we face."*

#### 4. Play Symposium is Beneficial in Providing Awareness and Learning

We asked delegates whether they thought the Play Symposium was beneficial in providing awareness and learning on a number of key areas.

82% of delegates felt that the Symposium was beneficial, while 18% (n=3) said it was not beneficial in this regard. It could be argued that some of the attendees at the event are experts in play in their own right and thus they would already be aware of the benefits of play, whilst others attending not as much so.

94% of attendees said that the Play Symposium was beneficial in providing awareness of the key issues facing policy makers in relation to play and leisure, 6% (n=1) said it wasn't beneficial.

All respondents said that the Play Symposium was beneficial in terms of understanding activities and policy development in other nations and that learning could be applied to their own work areas.

This highlights that awareness of policy, policy developments and applying learning to their work is the most beneficial areas that delegates take away from the event.

#### 5. Key Messages and Learning from Play Symposium

The key themes that delegates highlighted as benefits and learning at the Symposium were around working together; policy direction, importance of play policy and strategy and government commitments. Also keeping abreast of changes and positivity in relation to Nations progress being made were highlighted.

Delegates highlighted the importance of the four nations working together and of the great networking and partnerships that exist within and across the play sector and wider officials. Some highlighted the need to work together more closely at times and the strength and support that comes in working together for the common good.

*"Able to benefit from the materials provided on the date by the range of presenters"*

The theme highlighted the most by delegates was with regards to policy direction, play policies, play strategies and the commitment of government.

Delegates highlighted the importance of national support for policy and strategy in recognising and securing play in legislation and government strategies:

*"The national political support for policy and strategy is more important for all children than a funding pot – although funding for projects does assist implementation, it tends to be 'postcode', so not universal."*

*"The importance of the national governments having a strong commitment to play and working closely with their local authorities and play organisations to provide play opportunities for the children and young people in their countries; and also sharing their experience with other nations."*

*"That our progress in Play can be fragile (England's situation) and that we need to embed play so that it is not vulnerable to being overlooked or deleted from the children's services / rights agenda."*

*"The positive developments in 3 nations and how they might inform development elsewhere and reflecting on the English experience, quite how fragile play policy is and how the momentary actions of the unsympathetic administration can undo decades of development."*

*"The power of the Play agenda and the need to persuade and explain to others, especially those in power, of the long term benefits of Play."*

Delegates highlighted the need to keep abreast of any changes that they may require to consider if being ahead of the game:

*"Need to keep our eye on the ball! Even when the policy direction for play seems good, there can be swift changes which allow play to drop down or even off the agenda."*

*"The need to keep focus on the ever changing play environment."*

Delegates were also positive and noted that great progress is being made to ensuring the realisation of children's play rights across the 4 nations:

*"It's tough out there but it's good to see some committed organisations having a real impact at strategic, policy level and supporting developments on the ground."*

*"Other than despair at the situation in England, it was good to learn more about how important play is for children of all adults."*

*"Despite the varying challenges that each nation faces, we continue to make great inroads to ensuring the progressive realisation of children's play rights across the 4 nations."*

## **6. Critical Issues for Children's Play**

Delegates were asked what they thought the three most critical issues for children's play which need to be addressed over the next two years. The main issues highlighted were around education and learning; commitment to play, cross departmental working and raising government awareness; the importance of outdoor play and providing support to parents and carers and empowering the community; support and communications; strengthening and embedding play in



policies and plans; funding and reducing barriers for disabled children. Quotes from delegates are highlighted below:

#### Education

- *'Play within educational systems and settings.'*
- *'Play as integral to learning. With Raising Attainment in Scotland we are hearing from schools that literacy and numeracy are the focus, and learning through play is being forced into a back seat.'*

#### Awareness and Commitment to play

- *'Serious commitment to play which goes beyond current levels in any of the 4 countries encompassing cross-departmental approaches.'*
- *'UK Government awareness of play creating partnerships with new organisations that have an interest in play.'*
- *'Ensuring there are high profile champions of play recognition of play within all early years policy areas balanced with safeguarding children.'*
- *'Raising the awareness, importance and benefits of play to strategic planners within local government, planning and departments not traditionally concerned with play that have the potential to significantly, positively, champion access to play.'*
- *'Maintaining political understanding and support.'*
- *'Continuing to influence governments - especially for our colleagues in England!'*
- *'Keeping the importance of play on national agendas - having flexible and innovative delivery of play.'*
- *'Cross Department Support for play.'*
- *'How we mainstream the play agenda into the wider policy making of governments, local authorities and other public bodies.'*
- *'Increasing other professions understanding of the value of play in it's own right - not as a tool to meet other agenda.'*

#### Importance of outdoor play

- *'Tackling the importance of outdoor play and how this will support the obesity agenda.'*
- *'Implementation of UNCRC Article 31 for all UK Policy 4 Nations Strategy.'*
- *'Public health: and the lazy assumption that sport is the answer to getting inactive children active.'*

#### Parents and carers

- *'Knowledge and support for parents / carers as the home learning environment is crucial as research informs us.'*
- *'Benefits of low cost /no cost resources and very fancy gadgets.'*

#### Support and Communication

- *'Maintaining the support and communication between Nations.'*

#### Strengthening and embedding play in policy and plans

- *'Embedding Play in Children's service plans.'*

- *'Each Nation needs a Play Policy.'*
- *'Planning Developing/extending research around physical benefits of active play.'*
- *'Promoting and embedding knowledge of play across other policy and delivery areas and other relevant professional workforces.'*

#### Funding

- *'Funding specifically for play - it doesn't need to be huge amounts but a commitment of funding over 5 years would really help.'*
- *'Funding: . . . with little evidence that austerity measures have had any impact other than deplete the public sector it will remain an issue, both for those delivering services and possibly for the national organisations providing strategic support.'*
- *'Funding - addressing England situation and capitalise on other opportunities'*
- *'Financial and resource pressures across the nations.'*
- *'The squeeze on Local Authority budgets and the risk that poses for the play agenda.'*
- *'Maintaining funding levels for the respective Play bodies.'*

#### Reducing barriers for disabled children

- *'Reducing the barrier to play faced by disabled children.'*
- *'Issues around equality of opportunities / social justice.'*

#### Empowering the community

- *'Empowering communities to support the formal and informal development of play.'*
- *'Strengthening the awareness of Children's Right to play in community.'*

### **7. Key Actions over the Next Two Years**

Delegates were asked to identify key actions to be taken forward across the 4 Nations over the next two years. Key actions identified are:

#### Collaboration, solidarity and to support continued improvement across all four countries.

- *'Collaborative working on the promotion of the importance of play.'*
- *'Improve public perception of play as a right.'*
- *'It remains the case that there are a range of perceptions of what constitutes play. We need to continue to make the argument.'*
- *'Continued publicity / advocacy for play and its benefits for children on a UK basis'*
- *'Demonstrating and persuading decision makers across the 4 Nations of why play matters in the face of decreasing budgets and its importance in terms of prevention and resilience.'*
- *'Finding innovative ways to support play across four nations Joint PR plan for Play in UK.'*
- *'Event stronger collaboration across nations.'*

- *'Shared policy development.'*
- *'Sharing Innovation.'*
- *'Sharing resources.'*

Further commitment to play as a rights issue, by using General Comment 17 as it was intended by the UNCRC Committee, to better help an understanding of what play is etc.

- *'The involvement of Children's Commissioners in the issue of play at a UK Government level Supporting Play England in its fight for survival.'*
- *'Continuing the invaluable support of the CPPF.'*
- *'Strengthening policy officer links at Government level.'*

#### Qualifications and workforce

- *'Qualifications developments that allow for mobility and ensure quality with occupationally competent tutors and assessors.'*
- *'Further alignment of workforce development and qualifications together with opportunities for practice experience exchange.'*

#### Equality

- *'A 4 nations approach to playing with quality and equality to ensure the most vulnerable children and young people are involved, included and empowered to play every day alongside their peers.'*
- *'Ensure that the agenda for all children is inclusive and supported by all nations.'*

#### Measuring outcomes

- *'Measuring outcomes, developing a statutory duty similar to Wales and continue to develop networks.'*

### **8. Particular action to take forward - specific to one of the nations**

- *'Improving information on article 31 in Scotland.'*
- *'Lobby the Welsh Commissioner to raise the issue of play with the England Commissioner and keep it on their Agenda!'*
- *'Importance of play in learning in schools at all ages. (Scotland- particularly with the secondary age group. This is probably true across all the 4 nations though).'*
- *'Making the case for play relevant to England again.'*
- *'Championing the play rights of disabled children (as per 'Playing with Quality and Equality; a review of inclusive play', Scottish Government).'*
- *'England and the Westminster Government. There but for the grace go the rest of us. We need to support reengagement with the next if not the current government.'*
- *'Continued pressure for increased recognition of and support for play by the English administration.'*
- *'Develop a play sufficiency in Northern Ireland and develop links with the new government department officials. Identify what the next three years*

*might look like and set a plan to get there and identify funding possibilities to ensure this becomes a reality.'*

- *'Focus play into the Public Health Agenda.'*

## 9. Children's Play Policy Forum Annual Meeting

The Children's Play Policy Forum highlighted the possibility of hosting an annual meeting with government officials from across the 4 Nations. The focus would be on government updating and reporting.

All delegates who responded to the survey felt that this level of engagement would be helpful, with 47% (n=7) indicating that it would be extremely helpful and 53% (n=8) indicating that it would be very helpful. No respondents indicated that it wasn't helpful.

## 10. Challenges of measuring play outcomes and impact at population levels.

Delegates provided a number of comments or suggestions on how we can better measure the impact of play and the right to play at population level and across the 4 nations.

Possible funding sources for 4 Nations research and more academic research as an evidence base

- *Go2Play's logic model for play is useful. However more academic research to give evidence is important. The best evidence would come from play related longitudinal studies similar to GUS (Growing up in Scotland).*
- *Commission a piece of research with parents and providers. We have just done some research in Scotland with parents of 8-12 year olds with really good results. It is worth paying a research company to do this. Perhaps a joint funding application to Esmée Fairburn or Joseph Rowntree?*
- *Give an organisation a role in each nation the responsibility to measure impact.*
- *Outcomes framework.*

Hard to measure and relate empirically to play

- *I think that it is impossible at a reductive level...but...mental health and well-being are perhaps the most important indicators, but impossible to relate empirically to children's play.*
- *We need to continue to make the argument that if play as a child's right is essential for healthy development then all that matters is whether children have opportunities to play . . . the process of playing is so personal and of the minute for every child, the complexity defies moment to moment description and analysis. It is a pointless exercise. The academic developments currently underway might provide some evidence for accountants but the reality transcends the mundanity of 'outcomes'. The outcome is that if a child plays they will be healthier and have an increased sense of wellbeing . . if they don't play their lives will be less fulfilled: that is the implication of the statement that play is essential for children's development.*

- *We need to find better ways of asking children what they feel and think. Too often, we ask parents rather than children their views in terms of play opportunities.*

#### Best practice

- *There is some good work being done in Wales around play sufficiency and measuring of children's subjective satisfaction with their play opportunities. This is beginning to be used by a number of areas and could be considered across the 4 nations.*
- *Further developing the Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan process to incorporate learning on change and measuring impact of play, to share across policy and implementation areas.*
- *Are there any other models in other nations that could be looked at... best practice? Even if outside of the sector.*

#### Population measures

- *A 'play' related question included in (Scottish) Household Survey and same question/measure in similar surveys across other nations.*

### **11. Additional comments**

- *Regarding the Children's Play Policy Forum hosting an annual meeting with government officials from across the 4 Nations, very helpful if it could be made to happen but I imagine there would be challenges in getting consistent representation from all four countries – worth a try though!*
- *Thank you for inviting me to a very informative day*
- *Found this a fascinating conference. Great to meet up with others across the board and share ideas.*
- *Really enjoyed the event and so did all who came from Scotland. Huge thanks to all the organisers and for a warm welcome and super weather!*
- *It was a really great event. Would love to see it happen every two years.*
- *Thanks to Lisa for helping organise my place in the final few days leading up to the symposium in what was I'm sure an extremely busy time!*
- *The Symposium was useful and very enjoyable. Everyone was really well informed, committed to play, helpful and great company, and the visit to Ballymacash Primary School play time was a joy.*



Office of the  
**First Minister and  
Deputy First Minister**  
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## **PROGRAMME**

### **4 Nations Play Symposium, Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

#### **Symposium Chair:**

**Ms Koulla Yiasouma (Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People)**

09.00	<b>Registration</b>
09.30	<b>Northern Ireland Junior Ministers</b> Emma Pengelly MLA and Jennifer McCann MLA
	<b>Welcome</b> – Koulla Yiasouma
10.00	<b>Launch of PlayBoard's Manifesto for Play 2016</b> Jacqueline O'Loughlin, PlayBoard Chief Executive Officer
10.20	<b>Theresa Casey</b> – President of International Play Association
10.40	<b>Tea/Coffee Break</b>
11.00	<b>Scotland update</b> Aileen Campbell Minister for children and families (video link) Deborah Gallagher, Scottish Government and Marguerite Hunter Blair, Play Scotland Chief Executive Officer
11.30	<b>England update</b> Robin Sutcliffe, Children's Play Policy Forum
12.00	<b>Wales update</b> Owain Lloyd – Welsh Government
12.30	<b>Lunch</b>
13.00	<b>Welcome Back</b> Koulla Yiasouma Joe Loughlin – The Gathering Drum
13.30	<b>Play Scotland – Inequalities in PLAY</b> Tracey Black, Jeely Piece Club and Rachel Cowper, Inspiring Scotland

13.45	<b>Play England – PLAY for Social Action</b> Nicola Butler, Chair of Play England
14.00	<b>Play Wales – PLAY Sufficiency – the journey so far – lessons learnt</b> Mike Greenaway, Play Wales
14.15	<b>PlayBoard N.I. – Policy and Strategy – Where next for PLAY</b> Alan Herron, Director of PlayBoard N.I.
14.30	<b>Tea/Coffee in main room</b> <b>Traditional Games Session (Weather Permitting)</b>
15.00	<b>Plenary</b>
15.45	<b>Next Steps/Way Forward</b>
16.00	<b>CLOSE</b>

*We trust you have enjoyed your time in Belfast*

*Thank you for your attendance – we wish you a safe journey home*

## 4 Nations Play Symposium, Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016

### Delegate List

Northern Ireland	
Name	Organisation
Jacqueline O'Loughlin	CEO PlayBoard N.I.
Lisa O'Connor	PlayBoard N.I.
Alan Herron	PlayBoard N.I.
Ian McAvoy	PlayBoard N.I. Chair
Margaret Rose	OFMDFM
June Wilkinson	OFMDFM
Peter Hutchinson	OFMDFM
Pamela Baxter	OFMDFM
Koulla Yiasouma	NICCY
Ian McClure	DHSSPS
Jennifer McCann MLA	Junior Minister
Emma Pengelly MLA	Junior Minister
Aine McCabe	Special Advisor
	Special Advisor
Deirdre Webb	PHA
Pauline Leeson	CINI
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Patricia Lewsley-Mooney	
Peter Crory	YouthNet
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Jenny Adair	Northern Childcare Partnership
Linda Drysdale	DENI
Claire Bradley	NILGA
Aongus O'Keefe	Inspiring Impact N.I.
Scotland	
Marguerite Hunter Blaire	Play Scotland
Sharon McCluskie	Play Scotland (Dinner only)
Cherie Morgan	Play Scotland
Harry Harbottle	Play Scotland Chair
Lesley Fox	Smart Play Network
Alison Motion	Grounds For Learning
Theresa Casey	International Play Association
Fraser Falconer	BBC Scotland Children in Need
Jane Brompton	Early Years Scotland
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Megan Farr	Policy Officer for Children Commissioner
Margaret Westwood	Scotland's Play Council
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Eric Mitchell	Capability Scotland
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Nicola Butler	Play England Chair
Robin Sutcliffe	Children's Play Policy Forum
Juno Hollyhock	Learning Through Landscapes
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Mary Nicholls	Children, Young People and Families Division
Owain Lloyd	Welsh Government
Steve Cushan	Welsh Government
Richard Tobutt	SkillActive
Mike Shooter	Play Wales Chair
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Gillian Wilde	YMCA Wales Community College

# Thanks

PlayBoard would like to thank all those who contributed to the Four Nations Play Symposium 2016 including speakers and delegates from across the Four Nations.



## About PlayBoard NI

Established in 1985 PlayBoard is an independent charity and the lead organisation for the development and promotion of children and young people's play in Northern Ireland.

PlayBoard is committed to supporting Article 31 (the child's right to play) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). We do this through a combination of: service delivery, service development; campaigning, lobbying; awareness raising and working in partnership with others to put play on the agenda of policy makers and resource providers. The organisation takes great pride in promoting best practice in Play, Playwork and play based School Age Childcare services.

PlayBoard's mission is to drive the play agenda, ensuring that at every level of decision making across society, the child's right to play is not only recognised but is made a reality within the lives of children, young people, families and communities. Children and young people's views, aspirations and perceptions of themselves and the environment in which they live, are at the heart of PlayBoard's work. Our vision is of a society where the right to play is realised.