



Annual Report

Jan 2025 – March 2026

Biggest wins for play!



We worked with over 100 schools and settings



2,893 educators and practitioners



5 new resources and reports



impacting over 59,000 children!

Letter from the Chair

Paul Liddell

I am pleased to report another **exceptional year** for Play Scotland. From launching our **Getting it Right for Play guidance** for local authorities, to the celebrating the new Scottish Government **Vision Statement and Action Plan**, to further work to develop the **National Occupational Standard for Playwork**, we have taken real steps forward to embed play as a right in policy at a local and national level.



Our **Play Pedagogy Award**, **Outdoor Play and Learning Award**, and comprehensive **training programme** have grown to ensure we are supporting the best possible practice to enact this policy.

We continued to create and share evidence about the power of play, including the launch of our **School Grounds Survey**, and starting our new BlueSky account.

We joined in UK-wide **Playday** celebrations, supporting events across Scotland and hosting a flagship event in Aberdeen.

Play Scotland staff are in constant demand to share their knowledge and experiences about all things play and we are delighted to offer our support to visiting students and academics.

A big thank you to our incredibly hard working:

- Board of Directors
- Staff team
- Partners
- Funders
- And most of all, our wonderful members

We couldn't increase and improve children's play opportunities and experiences without you!

Letter from our CEO

Mary Ramsay

This has been a year of transition and renewal for the organisation. After 20 years of leadership, Marguerite Hunter Blair OBE stepped down, leaving a legacy of advocacy, growth, and impact. It is both a privilege and a responsibility to build on these strong foundations as I take on the role of CEO. This moment marks not only a change in leadership, but the beginning of a new era – one where we evolve, strengthen our voice, and expand our impact for children and young people as **we continue to champion every child's right to play across Scotland.**



This year, we strengthened our role in research and policy, collaborating with national and international experts and contributing to Scotland's **Play Vision Statement and Action Plan 2025–2030**. This ensured that children and young people's voices remain central to the country's long-term commitment to play.

Our influence extended across the UK through the **Playwork National Occupational Standards Consortium** and wider advisory groups, helping keep Scotland at the forefront of play advocacy, safety, and standards.

Improving play spaces remained a priority. Our updated **Getting it Right for Play** toolkit—accessed thousands of times—supports communities with practical guidance, while our work with the Scottish Government's £60 million **Play Park Renewal Fund** continues to shape national approaches and gather family insights.

Letter from our CEO

At a community level, we delivered **outdoor play sessions** and initiatives like **Litter Pick and Play**, demonstrating the wider benefits of play for children, families, and communities. In education, our programmes **Play Pedagogy Award** and **OPAL** are expanding their reach, supporting **thousands of staff** and embedding play in school life.

We strengthened our evidence base through research including the **School Grounds Survey**, while promoting play through events like **Playday** and the **International Day of Play**. Increased digital engagement and campaigns such as Made to Move are further amplifying our impact.

Thanks to our partners, staff, and communities, we continue to build a Scotland where every child has the freedom to play. In the coming year, we will drive this vision forward with ambition, evidence, and collaboration and look forward to seeing you at the launch of our 5 year strategy on 28th October 2026.

Staff

Mary Ramsay - Chief Executive

Cherie Morgan - Director of Projects

Alex Wallis - Learning & Development Officer

Fiona Kirkland - Project Officer (Play Pedagogy)

Jenny Lester - Engagement, Participation & Events Officer

Laura Paterson - Project Officer (OPAL)

Mollie Nijam - Communication & Information Officer

Simon Knight - Project Officer (OPAL)

Zoe Sills - Project Officer (OPAL)



We bid farewell to Cherie Morgan, our Director of Projects, after 12 amazing years at Play Scotland. We gathered together to celebrate Cherie's time and achievements and to wish her well in her next challenge.

Board

Paul Liddell - Chair of the Board
John Cleary - Treasurer
Kevin Kane - Secretary
Heather Armstrong
Liane Bauer
Calum Duncan
Phill Mathis
Susan McGhee
Mark McLeod
Donna Nicoll
Ewajesu Okewumi
Lizzie Treacy

We welcomed Mark McLeod to our Board as our new treasurer in September 2025 and bid farewell to John Cleary, our treasurer for 20 years.

We also said farewell to dedicated board members Sukanya Krishnamurthy and Joyce Leslie, who stepped down in September 2025 and March 2026, respectively.

We welcomed three new co-opted board members, Susan McGhee, Ewajesu Okewumi, & Phill Mathis in February 2026.

Volunteers & Researchers

We hosted researchers from the Centre for Young Lives as part of The Raising the Nation Play Commission.

We hosted researchers and volunteers Dr Beth Myers as part of her Fulbright Scholarship, Faith Breads from the University of Wyoming, and Grace Mai Clark a recent University of Edinburgh graduate.

We also were delighted to be assisted by the Scottish Tech Army to match us with volunteers Hari Kowshick Lakshmanan, Wiktor Gancarz, and Saranya Seethalekshmi who supported us to update our website and develop a new website for our Play Pedagogy Award.

Policy and Research

Launch of Scotland's Play Vision Statement and Action Plan

First Minister, John Swinney and Deputy First Minister, Kate Forbes launched Scotland's [Play Vision Statement and Action Plan 2025-2030](#) in March 2025. We showcased our work with children and young people to co-create the [children's version](#) of the plan.

'Playing is key to a child's [healthy development](#), and by enabling councils to invest in [outdoor play parks](#), we will ensure families can access a safe, high-quality place to play within their communities.

This is all part of my driving mission to [eradicate child poverty](#).'

- First Minister, John Swinney



Policy and Research

UK Playwork NOS Consortium

Play Scotland remains an active partner in the [UK Playwork NOS Consortium](#). On behalf of the Consortium, Play Scotland hosted a [webinar](#) to promote [consultation](#) from stakeholders in Scotland alongside the other four nations. UK-wide consultation on the draft National Occupational Standards covering updated roles, a revised functional map and glossary concludes on May 1st 2026. Next steps include analysing consultation feedback, refining the draft standards and glossary, and preparing the finalised NOS for submission to the Standards and Frameworks Panel.

Policy Committees

Play Scotland continues to be involved in a number of important committees including administration of the Play Council, Play Council Strategic Group and Playwork Scotland. Play Scotland is the vice Chair of the UK Children's Play Policy Forum (CPPF) and the UK Play Safety Forum (PSF). We are a member of Fields in Trust, the Cross Party Group for Accident Prevention and SW/65 - BSI committee for children's playgrounds' standards (EN 1176 series).

Place for Play

Launch of Getting it Right for Play

We launched our updated play space assessment toolkit, [Getting it Right for Play](#), on Wednesday 6 August to celebrate Playday.

Shaped by extensive engagement with families and informed by recent legislation, our guidance supports the implementation of our world-leading framework for children's right to play in Scotland.

Cherie Morgan, Director of Projects, 'As part of the review, Play Scotland **engaged widely with families** and groups. We listened especially to children and young people with **additional support needs**, to **girls**, and to those in **rural areas**. Their voices helped us shape the new assessment tools, making sure the Toolkit reflects a wide range of experiences.'

Since it was launched, it has been read over **5,000 times**!



Place for Play

Play Parks in Scotland

We continued to support the Scottish Government with their Play Park Renewal Fund which saw £60 million given to local authorities over four years to develop their play spaces. Following on from the initial research we conducted on play parks we developed the National Principles for Play Park Renewal Programme. We contributed to network meetings with representatives from every local authority and surveyed families across Scotland on their local play park.



Play in the community

Outdoor Community Play in Dundee

With funding from Inspiring Scotland, we worked with ScrapAntics to provide high-quality outdoor play opportunities to children and families in SIMD 1 Areas in Dundee. In 2024/2025, we delivered **68 hours** of play to **616 children**.

“One boy was a bit frightened of the wind and rain so got creative and sheltered in a barrel with a tarp over the top saying "I feel safer in here than I do out there!" and he was delighted when he emerged and the clouds had parted and sun was shining!

From a young mum of 5 "After speaking to you the last time I'm now on the children's panel and social work have put me forward as a childrens advocate" . Great outcome for a parent attending play sessions who is care experienced and has so much to give.



Play in the community

Litter Pick and Play

We partnered with Keep Scotland Beautiful's Spring Clean for our annual Litter Pick and Play project. We designed activities and promoted every child's right to play.

34 groups joined in and cleared over **800 bags of litter!**



Workforce and Practice

Play Pedagogy Award

The Play Pedagogy Award, developed working closely with Education Scotland, offers a structured and supportive way for Scottish primary schools to embed play pedagogy as a whole-school approach.

We had **40 new schools** join our programme, supporting 618 staff members to enhance learning and play for over **10,000 children**.

‘We see the Play Pedagogy Award as a way to bring consistency across the school and strengthen our shared understanding of play.’

‘We’re really excited to be part of the Play Pedagogy Award and to develop this further as a whole school.’



Workforce and Practice

Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL)

OPAL is an award-winning school improvement programme that focuses on non-curricular play. **14 schools** joined our OPAL programme, so we are now working closely with **1,197 staff** across **50 schools**, to support **9,425 children**.

‘OPAL is **the best thing** we have done! The impact on the behaviour and the readiness to learn of our pupils ... **joy** and laughter coming from the playground ... **pupil voice** and ownership of their playground has just **been amazing**. It has transformed our playground and our school. We could not go back to being a non OPAL school.’
- Elaine Thornton, Head Teacher, Southesk Primary School



Workforce and Practice

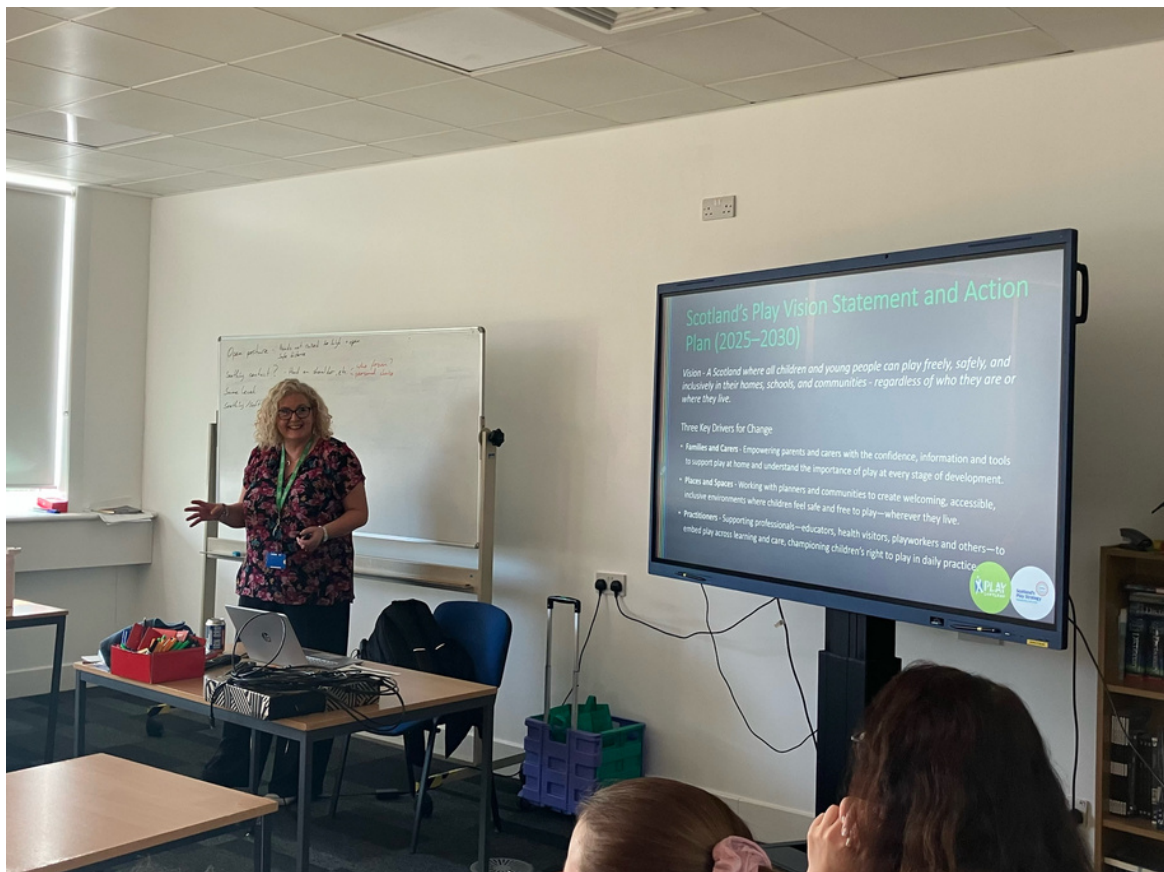
Learning and Practice

We delivered 42 training courses to over **1,000 practitioners**, impacting over **40,000 children**.

We delivered 11 guest lectures at colleges and universities to 500 student teachers and trainee practitioners.

We delivered a presentation at Qualifications Scotland about play to an audience of **80 senior leaders in education**, including lecturers, module leaders, and assessors.

We published 13 podcasts that were listened to over **4,600 times**.



Sharing Evidence

School Grounds Survey

We partnered with Learning Through Landscapes and NatureScot to survey over **1,000 schools** across all 32 local authority areas about how they are using their grounds.

Their responses showed that:

- 📉 15% of schools have lost outdoor space in recent years.
- 🔴 Nearly half of schools consider their grounds as ‘low utility’ for supporting learning, play, and sport.
- 🌳 38% of schools have fewer than five trees, limiting opportunities for nature connection.
- 🌡️ Climate change is already affecting school grounds: schools are reporting increased flooding, overheating, and high winds that restrict outdoor use.

Read the [full report](#).



Sharing Evidence

Playday

Playday is the national day for play, celebrated each year across the UK on the first Wednesday in August.

In 2025, there were over 30 Playday events across the UK with over **12,000 children** out to play.

Play Scotland organised a flagship event in Duthie Park in Aberdeen with over 500 people celebrating!



Sharing Evidence

International Day of Play

Play Pedagogy Awards Schools took part in our International Day of Play Challenge

Playful Learning Evening held by Baltasound Junior High School – a brilliant way to involve families and the wider community in celebrating the power of play.

Eyemouth Primary's P5–7 classes, who took the opportunity to dream big and design a brand new playground as part of their celebrations.

Made to Move Campaign

We're proud to be a founding partner of the Active Uniform Alliance (AUA) and the Made to Move campaign.

We are calling for every UK primary school to adopt a uniform that enables children to move, play and learn all day.

Sharing our message

We published two new play ideas resources, both focusing on low and no cost play. They were downloaded over **3,000 times!**

We gained **3,000 followers** across our social media channels, with over 240,000 impressions – hello!

We gained 100 new subscribers to our monthly newsletter, and it was read over **10,000 times!**

We had over **270,488** visitors to our website.



Accounts Summary

PLAY SCOTLAND
(A company limited by guarantee)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2025 (Including an Income and Expenditure account)

	Note	Unrestricted Funds 2025 £	Restricted Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2025 £	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Total Funds 2024 £
Income and endowments from:							
Donations and legacies	4	229,557	15,091	244,648	212,225	15,091	227,316
Other income	5	101,037	-	101,037	51,284	-	51,284
Total Income		330,594	15,091	345,685	263,509	15,091	278,600
Expenditure on:							
Charitable activities	7	327,470	15,091	342,561	352,261	22,462	374,723
Total Expenditure		327,470	15,091	342,561	352,261	22,462	374,723
Net income /(expenditure)		3,124	-	3,124	(88,752)	(7,371)	(96,123)
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds		3,124	-	3,124	(88,752)	(7,371)	(96,123)
Funds' reconciliation							
Total Funds brought forward	15	22,590	-	22,590	111,342	7,371	118,713
Total Funds carried forward	15	25,714	-	25,714	22,590	-	22,590

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

Diary dates for 2026

Thursday 11th June

UN International Day of Play

Wednesday 5th August

UK Playday

Wednesday 28th October

Play Scotland AGM and
Strategy Launch

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Play Scotland is a registered charity

Company Number:
SC197785

Scottish Charity Number: SC029167

