

Organising Community Play



Why are community play events important?

Play is an essential part of every child's life. It is vital for the enjoyment of childhood as well as for social, emotional, intellectual and physical development. Every child has a right to play.

Children play outside less than their parents and grandparents. This creates problems around independence and sedentary behaviour.

Community play events help everyone to celebrate the power of play!
Let's all get out, moving and having fun.

Who can organise a community play event?

Anyone!

Whether you work at a local council, you are in a community group or look after children, or you just want to plan a small event at your local park and invite other parents – you can get children out to play in your community.



How to organise a community play event

1

Pick a venue

2

Plan the play

3

Things to consider

4

Funding options

5

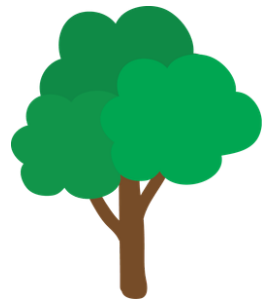
Get the word out

1

Pick the venue

Where should you hold your event?

Community play events can be held in parks, commons, community centres, churches, town centres, estates, local landmarks, beaches, forests, you name it!



Check if you need any permissions to hold an event in a public space with your local council. To check if you need licenses or if you want to close a street see [this guide](#) from the UK Government.

2

Plan the play

We have lots of ideas of fun activities and play provocations you can offer but! It is always best to **ask children what they would like to do** and let them lead.

Beware of overly structured activities – instead, leave things **open-ended** and give children the space and permission to enjoy the simple pleasure of playing.

This could look like a table of arts and crafts materials vs. a specific end product in mind e.g. make this butterfly



Music, Art, and Mess!

Music and Drama

Pots and Pans and wooden spoons and other noise makers to make an orchestra of playful sound.

Use old clothes and curtains for dressing up and pretend games

Get Messy and Creative

Use shaving foam, clay, cornflour and water, eggs, slime and gunge to fill paddling pools, pits, buckets and baths.

Use chalk to draw on pavements and walls

Build and Move!

Get Active

Construct obstacle courses, have skipping games, organise a treasure hunt and race shopping trolleys.

Make sure there are open spaces to run, play tag, ride bikes or play with balls and frisbees and hula hoops.

Get building

Use straw bales, tyres, shoeboxes, newspapers and junk to build dens, towers, bridges, go-karts and monsters.

Contact your local authority's recycling department and ask for cardboard to create giant structures!



Nature and the elements!

Earth and trees

Build a leaf or mud pit, make rope swings and climb trees

Fire and light

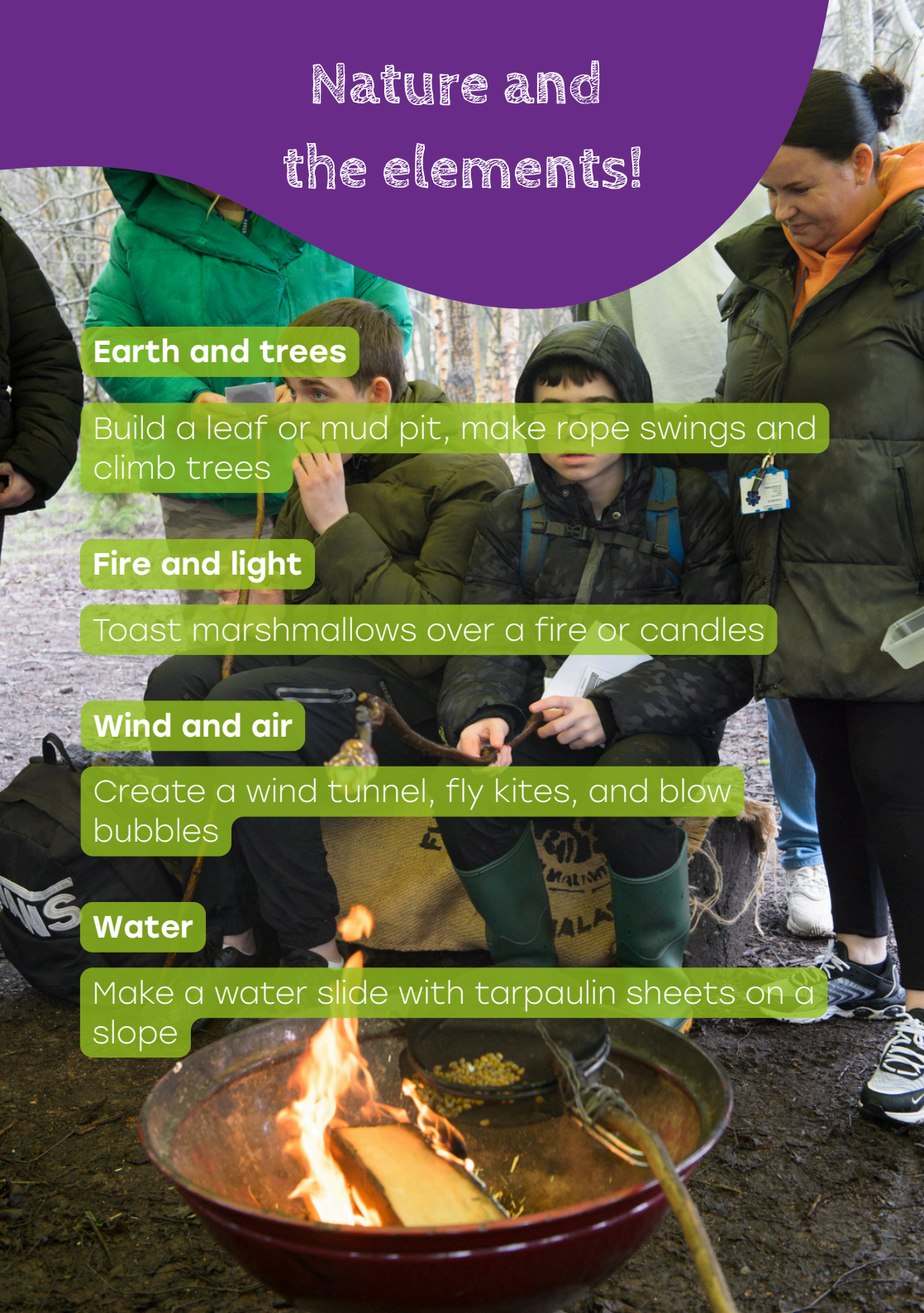
Toast marshmallows over a fire or candles

Wind and air

Create a wind tunnel, fly kites, and blow bubbles

Water

Make a water slide with tarpaulin sheets on a slope



3

Things to consider: Inclusion

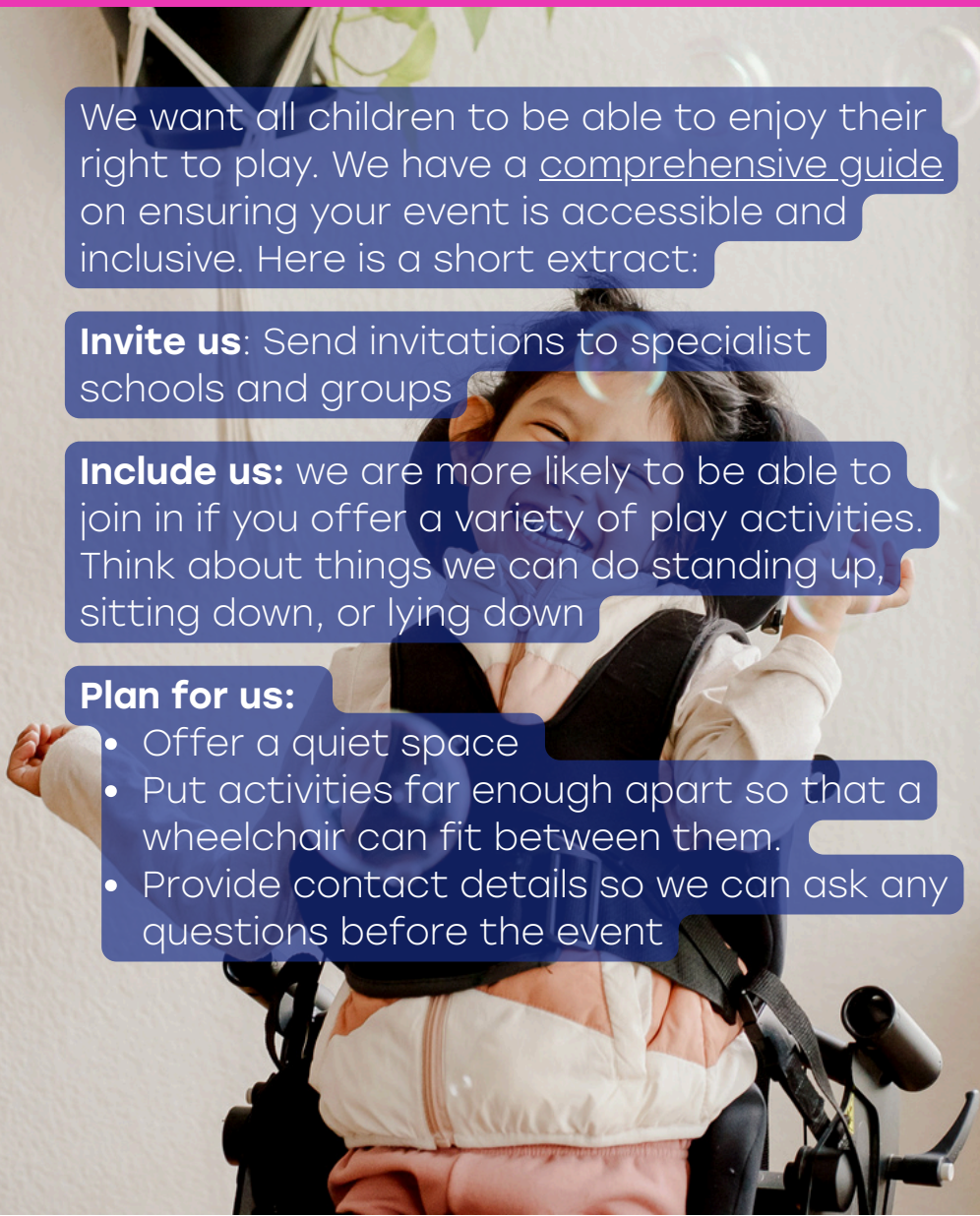
We want all children to be able to enjoy their right to play. We have a comprehensive guide on ensuring your event is accessible and inclusive. Here is a short extract:

Invite us: Send invitations to specialist schools and groups

Include us: we are more likely to be able to join in if you offer a variety of play activities. Think about things we can do standing up, sitting down, or lying down

Plan for us:

- Offer a quiet space
- Put activities far enough apart so that a wheelchair can fit between them.
- Provide contact details so we can ask any questions before the event



3

Things to consider: Weather

Play can be fun all weathers!

Be prepared with overhead covering to create shade or shelter from the rain

Paperweights can be useful in the wind

Ask people coming along to bring sun cream, shades, warm layers, and wellies accordingly!



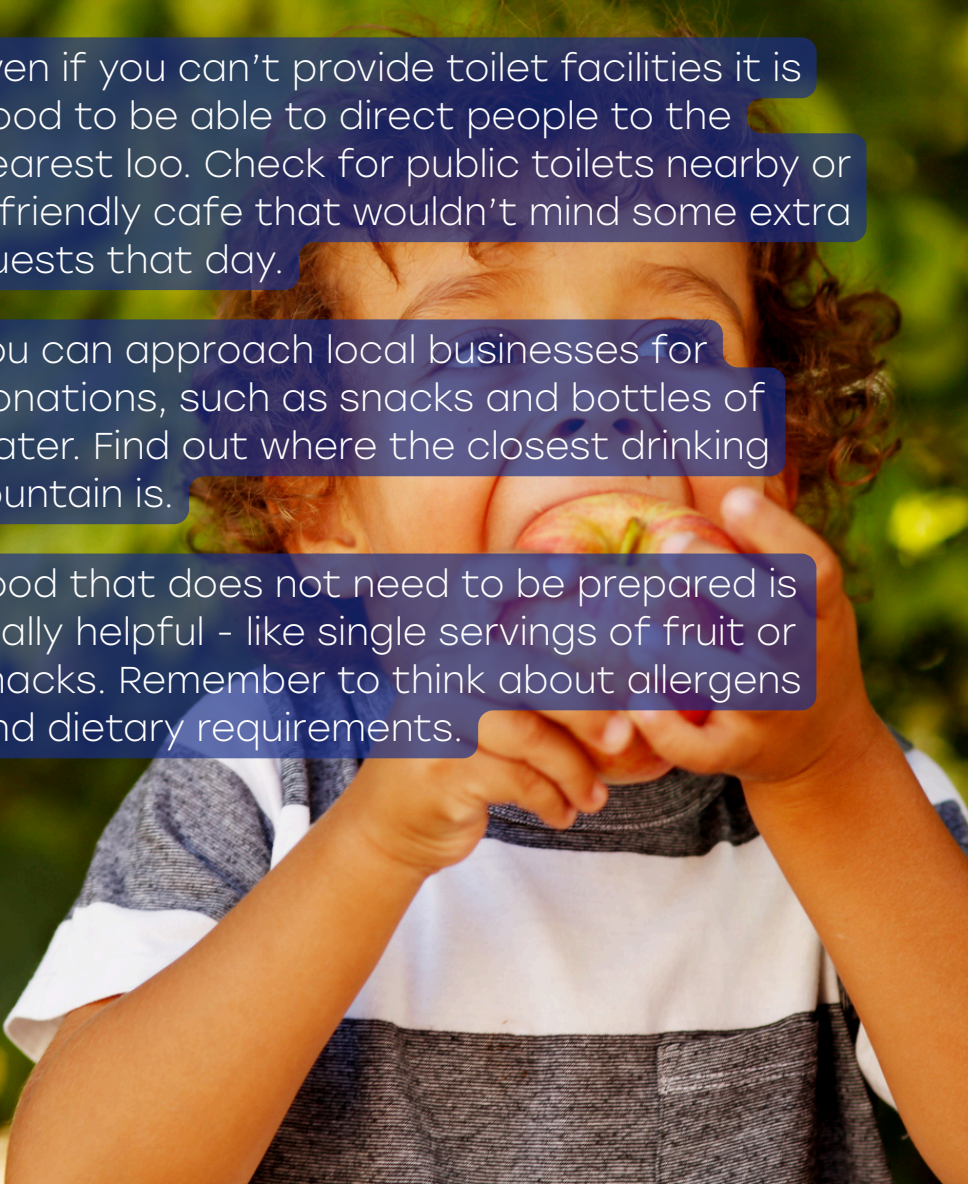
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Things to consider: Toilets, food, and drink

Even if you can't provide toilet facilities it is good to be able to direct people to the nearest loo. Check for public toilets nearby or a friendly cafe that wouldn't mind some extra guests that day.

You can approach local businesses for donations, such as snacks and bottles of water. Find out where the closest drinking fountain is.

Food that does not need to be prepared is really helpful - like single servings of fruit or snacks. Remember to think about allergens and dietary requirements.



3

Benefit Risk & photo consents

Writing a Benefit-Risk Assessment doesn't have to be scary or lots of work.

Walk around your venue and think about what could happen on the day. Identify what you can do to minimise the risks, while balancing this with the importance of play. Think about first aid provision.

If you want to take photos at your event:

- Display signs prominently at your event, stating that photographs are being taken
- Use our template consent form to ensure you have permission to photograph individual children
- You can use a sticker system to identify children who should not be photographed
- Consider staging photos with children who you have consent forms for

4

Funding

Your event doesn't have to cost a thing!

It is normally free to hold an event in a public space, and there is plenty of fun to be had without buying or using equipment or expensive toys.

If you do want to raise funds or donations then we would recommend:

- Asking local businesses to sponsor the event or for donations in kind – like hay bales from a local farmer which are always lots of fun!
- Apply to local trusts or your local authority.
- Fundraise on the day by having a tombola or a raffle.

Don't be afraid to ask; as the old saying goes, if you don't ask, you don't get!

5

Get the word out

Online

Create an online event page on Facebook, Eventbrite, or other site so people can find your information in one place

Offline

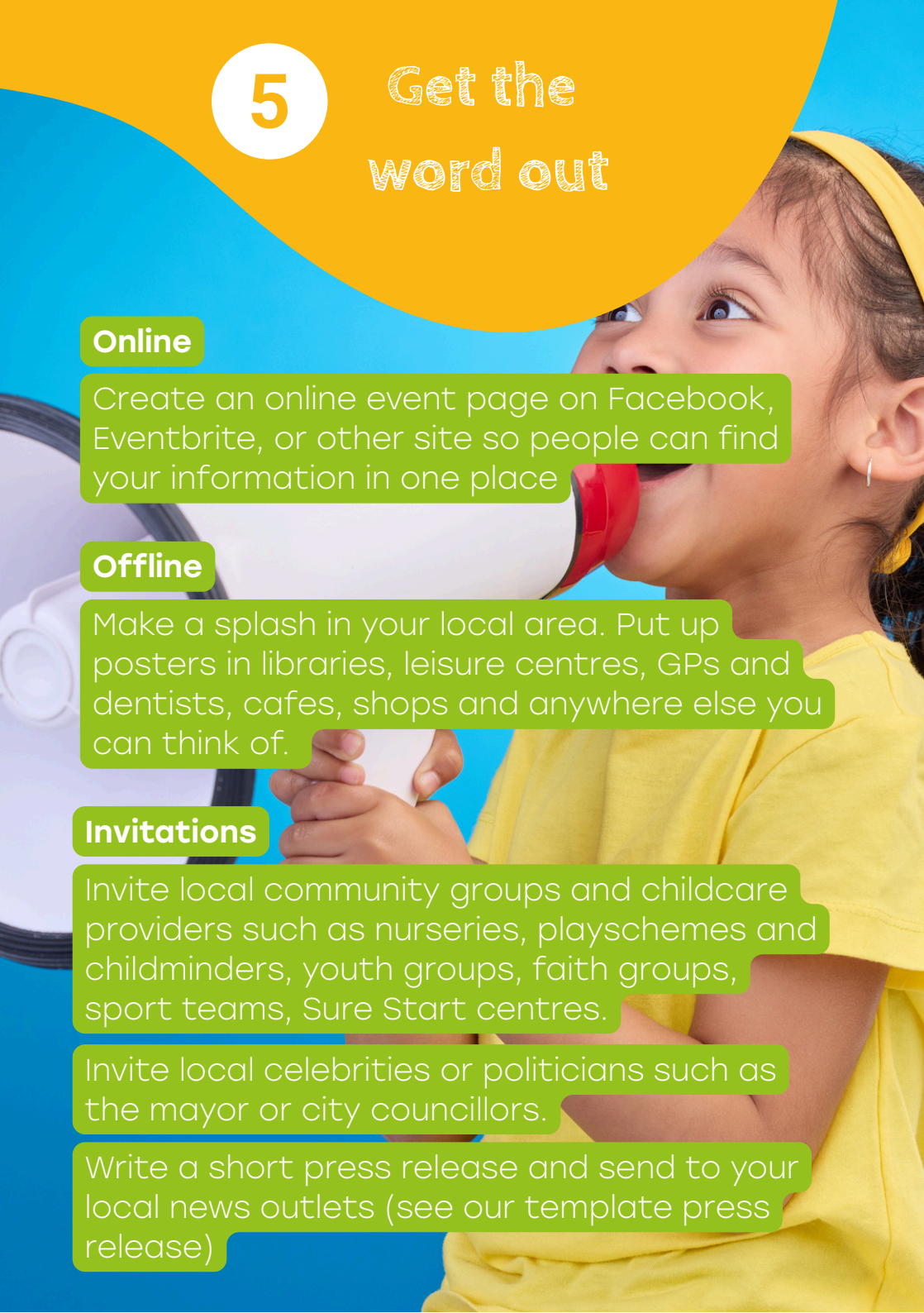
Make a splash in your local area. Put up posters in libraries, leisure centres, GPs and dentists, cafes, shops and anywhere else you can think of.

Invitations

Invite local community groups and childcare providers such as nurseries, playschemes and childminders, youth groups, faith groups, sport teams, Sure Start centres.

Invite local celebrities or politicians such as the mayor or city councillors.

Write a short press release and send to your local news outlets (see our template press release)



Celebrating Play

A background image showing children playing in a sandpit. In the foreground, a child's hands are visible, using a yellow bucket to dig in the sand. Other children are partially visible in the background, some wearing white and green clothing.

You can organise a community play even at any time during the year! If you want to line up with UK wide and global events you could organise your community play event to line up with play celebration days.

Playday is the national day for play, celebrated on the **first Wednesday in August**. The Playday campaign is coordinated by Play Scotland, Play England, PlayBoard Northern Ireland, and Play Wales

International Day of Play is on the **11th of June**, and is the UN International Day for Play. Every year, thousands of people around the world come together to celebrate.

If you are running an event for Playday or the International Day of Play, check out our website for extra resources, registering your event, and prize draws.

Campaigning



Community play events can be an opportunity to develop a longer-term campaign to increase play in your local community.

You could campaign for any change that would increase play. Some ideas:

- Remove “No Ball Games” Sign
- Improve a local play space
- School grounds to be opened for out of hours use

You could use your event to start a survey or petition to gather opinions or signatures that you can use in your campaigning.

Template Press Release

For Immediate Release

Local children and families celebrate the power of play in [AREA NAME]

Children and families in [AREA NAME] are invited to take part in a free, fun-filled play event on [DATE], organised by [GROUP NAME].

The event will take place at [VENUE / LOCATION] from [TIME], and will offer a range of play activities, including [LIST A FEW EXAMPLES – den building, messy play, etc].

Mary Ramsay, CEO of Play Scotland said, “Children play outside in their local area less than their parents and grandparents. This creates problems around independence and sedentary behaviour. Play is essential for children’s health, wellbeing and development, and local play events remind us all how important it is to protect and create spaces where children can play freely, safely and close to home.”

[QUOTE – optional] “It is a great opportunity to come together and enjoy play in the local area,” said [NAME] from [GROUP]. “We’re looking forward to welcoming the community and celebrating how important play is for children of all ages.”

The event is [FREE / LOW COST] and open to [AGE RANGE / ‘children of all ages’]. Families are encouraged to [BRING – e.g. suitable clothing, water bottles, snacks].

For more information about community play, visit Play Scotland’s website.

Ends

For further information, please contact: Name: [CONTACT NAME], Organisation:[GROUP NAME], Email: [EMAIL ADDRESS], Phone: [PHONE NUMBER]

Checklist

Before the day

- ☐ Pick a venue
- ☐ Check permissions needed from venue and local authority
- ☐ Plan the play activities
- ☐ Make sure you plan for inclusion
- ☐ Plan for all weathers
- ☐ Plan toilets, food, and drink
- ☐ Do Benefit-Risk Assessment
- ☐ Consider First aid
- ☐ Share your event online
- ☐ Put up posters in your local area
- ☐ Invite local groups and families
- ☐ Invite local politicians, celebrities, and the press

Extras

- ☐ Plan photography and plan consent process
- ☐ Look for funding from trusts and local authority
- ☐ Approach local businesses for sponsorship or gifts
- ☐ Consider campaign goals

After the event

- ☐ Send a thank you to any people who helped out
- ☐ Start planning your next event!



Play Scotland

Play Scotland is the national expert in play for parents, policymakers and the play workforce.

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