

INITIATIVES TO CONSIDER

Home Zones

Traffic calming

Play Rangers

Mobile community play services

Removal of 'no ball games' signs

Community ownership of space for play

Guidance on environments for children's play needs
(nature, flexibility, 'loose parts')

Meaningful involvement of children in planning,
developing and evaluating play

Inclusion

Help parents balance real risk versus perceived risk

Towards a philosophy of resilience

Cross-professional training

Improve the pay and conditions of Playworkers

Improve school playgrounds

Promote outdoor nurseries

Child-friendly communities

Play enriched curriculum

Raise awareness of the value of play

It is essential that the Government creates the vision and a wide range of stakeholders play their part to make the child's right to play a reality in Scotland

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Raising the Bar Findings of the Scottish Play Commission

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Play Scotland

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The Minister for Children and Early Years stated at the launch of the Scottish Play Commission, December 2007 “Having the chance to play and interact with others is great fun for children but it also teaches them vital life skills. Learning about relationships and risk is a key part of children’s emotional and physical development and we want to help all of our young people get the best start in life. That’s why we’re looking at how best to support play and welcome different views on the most effective way forward.”

FOREWORD

Children’s play is one of those things we take for granted. It’s only when it starts to disappear that we realise how important it is. Because it’s when they’re out to play that children develop independence, learn how to make risk assessments and grow in self-confidence and self-esteem. It’s where they learn to get along with other children, developing the social skills to be neither bully nor victim in the future. It’s how they become physically fit and develop the coordination and control that allows them to sit and learn in a classroom. And it’s also where they learn, through first hand experience, about the world they live in – the common-sense understanding that underpins the lessons they learn at school.

Over the past 20 years or so the freedoms and opportunities to play that many of us enjoyed (and endured!) have disappeared as society has become increasingly risk averse and restrictive. Many parents have severely limited options to consider when encouraging their children to play and are often too scared to let them out. For those who do the choices can be stark and the risks all too real. (“I would rather my son was out the back with the rats than on waste ground with the needles. It worries me.” Gillian/Marie, parents, North Glasgow.)

But there has never been a better time to reclaim and reinstate the child’s right to play in Scotland. In 2006 the To Play or Not To Play parents group in North Glasgow lodged petition PE913 at the Scottish Parliament calling for a ‘Play Strategy that recognises the right of all children in Scotland to a safe, accessible and challenging play environment’. In March 2006 history was made at the Scottish Parliament when 81 MSPs signed a motion endorsing the Importance of Play.

The Scottish Government has also made a manifesto commitment to a National Play Strategy and is currently examining a strategic approach to play in the Early Years Framework.

As a result of this, the Scottish Play Commission, funded by the Big Lottery, was set up in November 2007 by Play Scotland. As Chair of the Commission I welcome the findings and heartily support the recommendations outlined below.

Sue Palmer, Chairperson, Scottish Play Commission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Play Scotland received lottery funding in October 2007 to establish the Scottish Play Commission. The Scottish Play Commission, chaired by the author Sue Palmer, examined the ‘state of play’ in Scotland and heard evidence from leading academics and play specialists from around the world.

The structure of the Commission was designed to allow for maximum participation from the children’s sector, parents, planners and service providers in local authorities, health, the private sector and voluntary sector. A number of key events were held in Edinburgh, Inverness and Glasgow with smaller workshops and focus groups held locally throughout Scotland. The ‘Developing Play in Scotland’ survey (Play Scotland 2008) also informed the findings of The Scottish Play Commission.

An online discussion forum was set up for 6 months, accessed through the Play Scotland website and linked to the UK World Café discussion forum on the Future of Playwork.

The findings led the Scottish Play Commission to recommend to the Scottish Government that they

- 1. Develop a National Play Strategy, 0-18 years, in consultation with children and young people, which will inform local play strategies and address the themes identified**
- 2. Create a national Play indicator, with minimum actions and standards, national monitoring and resources to support its implementation across all local authorities**
- 3. Promote the critical role of Play in child development and raise public awareness of the value of Play**
- 4. Build the capacity of communities to support a wide range of Play opportunities and monitor the benefits**
- 5. Support the Playwork Profession to develop as a valued Workforce**