



Scotland's Play Strategy

Valuing play, every day

Play Strategy for Scotland:

Progress Report

November 2015

VISION

We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. A nation which values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all our children and young people.

Principles

- We should **value** all children and young people
- We should enable all children and young people to realise their **right** to play
- All children and young people should have sufficient **space** and **time** to play

Domains:



Play Strategy for Scotland:

Our Action Plan sets out actions that take us forward in realising the vision for play.

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Introduction

For children and young people in Scotland, play is a fundamental rightⁱ and one which is essential to their healthy development and well-being.

In June 2013, the Scottish Government published the first national *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision*.ⁱⁱ

"We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. A nation which values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all our children and young people; in their homes, early learning and childcare settingsⁱⁱⁱ, schools and communities."

Aileen Campbell, Minister for Children and Young People, (2013)

In October 2013 the publication of the accompanying *Play Strategy Action Plan* identified a set of activities which taken together, have the potential to significantly improve children and young people's daily lives and help them to realise their right to play.

This report sets out the progress made over the last two years in implementing that *Action Plan* and identifies some themes and priorities for further action.

It has been produced by the Scottish Government in conjunction with the Play Strategy Implementation Group (PSIG). The PSIG, led by the Scottish Government and made up of representatives of statutory bodies, local authorities, third sector organisations, play providers and funders, was established in November 2013 to oversee the implementation of the *Action Plan* and to monitor progress.

The Scottish Government would like to thank them for all the hard work, commitment and expertise they have contributed over the past two years. We wish also to extend our thanks to all those who have participated in the various working groups and consultations, particularly the children, young people, parents and carers who have so generously shared their experiences.

Play Strategy Implementation Group (PSIG): Role & Membership

Role

The role of the PSIG is to provide strategic leadership and direction to the implementation of Scotland's national Play Strategy Vision and Action Plan, and to ensure effective links are made between play and other relevant national policies, across Government and through supporting local partners.

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Current members:

Fraser Falconer, Chair, Nancy Ovens Trust

Theresa Casey, Vice-Chair, Independent Consultant

Erica Clarkson, Scottish Government (Early Years Division)

Deborah Gallagher, Scottish Government (Early Years Division)

Alison MacDonald, NHS Health Scotland

Ali Motion, Grounds for Learning

Andrew Shoolbread, Scottish Out of School Care Network

Anne Condie, Scottish Childminding Association

Eric Mitchell, Capability Scotland

Irene Miller, NHS Health Scotland

Jean Carwood-Edwards, Early Years Scotland

Julia Abel, Inspiring Scotland

Lesley Fox, Smart Play Network

Margaret Westwood, IPA Scotland

Marguerite Hunter Blair, Play Scotland

Richard Davison, Scottish Natural Heritage

Sian Neil, Education Scotland

Attending: Deborah Hay, National Play Strategy Coordinator (seconded); Dave Gorman, Scottish Government

All members bring considerable knowledge and expertise, and 'reach' into a diverse range of organisations, members, sectors and interests.

The Chair is a member of the Early Years Taskforce which enables effective strategic linkages between the National Play Strategy and other key strategies and policies across Government.

The National Play Strategy Coordinator is responsible for providing secretariat support to the group and under their strategic direction, raising awareness of the national strategy; engaging a wider group of organisations in its work; making links between the play sector and Government and overseeing the delivery of a significant programme of work.

Overview

We all share a responsibility to ensure that Scotland's children and young people can fully realise their rights to play:

As professionals – we must actively prioritise play in the decisions we take which impact on children and young people's opportunities for play, both directly and indirectly.

As parents and carers – we can ensure a lifetime of fun, creativity and optimum development for our children and young people, by supporting them to enjoy a wide range of play experiences (with and without us)

As friends, neighbours and members of our communities - we can champion our local areas as great places to live and play in, by taking an active part in shaping them and respecting children's right to play in them.

We recognise that implementing the *Action Plan* could never be sufficient on its own to transform children and young people's day-to-day experience of play. Nonetheless, we firmly believe it can positively support that broader cultural shift.

The Scottish Government has made a significant contribution to supporting play. This includes investing in the infrastructure of the sector alongside specific projects with significant potential to demonstrate 'what works' or scaling up proven approaches.

Examples include:

- Investment of £7m in the Go2Play Funds over the last five years, administered by Inspiring Scotland, supporting direct play provision for children and young people in disadvantaged communities as well as building capacity (e.g. Play Rangers, Active Play, or work with fathers).
- Supporting over thirty Key Tests of Change incorporating play through the flagship Early Years Collaborative improvement programme.
- Core and project funding for a wide range of organisations helping children and young people realise their potential (including through play)^{iv}.
- Creating a dedicated National Play Strategy Coordinator post to support the PSIG, hosted by Play Scotland and funded until June 2016 (filled by secondment).
- Direct investment in a number of key, national campaigns, designed to support parents, families and carers to play with their children, as well as encouraging early learning and positive attachment – e.g. Bookbug (£1.7m in

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2015/16) and PlayTalkRead (£1m in 2015/16)

- Investment in 'Playful Families': an innovative new project, delivered by Play Scotland, harnessing multimedia to stimulate more play, every day in families and communities across Scotland (due 2016)

What have we done so far?

The Play Strategy Implementation Group meet regularly to agree priorities and associated implementation plans for progressing the *Action Plan*.

A full list of all the Actions within the *Action Plan* and the progress made against each one can be found in the accompanying Action Plan Progress report (Annex A).

In summary, the Play Strategy Implementation Group has:

- established six working groups to take forward six different *Actions* and undertaken a number of standalone reviews;
- undertaken the research for, and published, ***Play in the Home*** (March, 2015) reviewing good practice in reaching all parents and carers with clear messages and guidance on cost effective resources (all ages and stages);
- completed a comprehensive review of play training available within a wide range of qualification pathways (from SVQs to post graduate level) - ***Learning about Play***;
- undertaken a survey of local authorities to assess the level of community access to school playgrounds outwith school hours;
- collated case study experiences, practical tools and templates and shared good practice on play provision in school playgrounds outwith school hours, publishing ***Play Outside Hours!*** (November, 2015);
- developed and published a ***Play Map resource*** to support Community Planning partnerships integrate play into local policy and planning (November, 2015);
- mapped the links between the Play Strategy and other key policy documents and initiatives such as physical activity, health strategies, place-making, parenting, reducing inequality and anti-poverty strategies;
- published a dynamic infographic showing those linkages, ***Policy Mapping*** (November, 2015);
- developed and published a **logic model for Play, mapped to the SHANNARI indicators**, to highlight where investment in play can support well-

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being in children, based on an evidence and literature review (October, 2015);

- undertaken and published the Inclusive Play review, ***Playing with Quality and Equality*** review (October, 2015), including a comprehensive literature review;
- contributed to the development of a **renewed Place Standard Tool**, to enable individuals and communities to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their local areas;
- established, through Play Scotland, Scotland's **Play Council** a new collaborative body to support the play sector to share good practice, and develop collective capacity to positively influence policy and practice at both local and national levels; and
- held regular meetings of the Play Strategy Implementation Group to build sector knowledge, agree priorities and offer strategic direction to the delivery of the *Action Plan*.

What impact have we had?

The PSIG determined that a number of foundational pieces of work identified in the *Action Plan* should be prioritised and these have been successfully completed.

These reports (published and available on the Scottish Government website) are significant pieces of work in their own right, and are intended to support improvements in play by providing practical resources as well as specific findings and recommendations.

We will be sharing these reports widely to encourage discussion and given the nature of the resources and recommendations, would hope to engage a wide cross section of colleagues across a range of specialisms, not just those involved in play.

We will also be considering the recommendations carefully in the light of our current commitments and plans, to determine whether there is more we can do, or support others to do, to drive further improvements for children and young people.

Overall, we have made positive progress not only in addressing individual actions but also in making connections between the Play Strategy and other key Scottish Government policies, which can support the broader cultural change we are looking to stimulate:

- the inclusion of play as a Key Change area for the Early Years Collaborative is an important milestone in building effective practice and planning for play into local structures and enabling us to replicate effective practice more widely;

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- we can identify over thirty local Key Tests of Change projects which feature play as an essential element, but which also support other relevant outcomes, such as enhancing attachment or achieving developmental milestones;
- we can see in other initiatives that implementing playful approaches while not strictly 'play', complements our strategy with a focus on improved health;
- we have seen examples of local collaborations pro-actively signalling their commitment to local culture change – and commend Aberdeen City local authority and its partners on their decision to remove all 'No Ball Games' signs by August 2016;
- the refreshed Place Standard Tool has a clear focus on play and should enable communities to assess the sufficiency and quality of play for all children and young people, against other relevant aspects (access to green space, transport, design, housing, etc.), and
- the *Learning About Play* report has already informed and influenced a number of other reviews, such as Professor Siraj's Workforce Review (2015) earlier this year, and the on-going SkillsActive review of the National Occupational Standards for Playwork.

Themes and priorities

"Poor recognition of their significance [Article 31Rights] results in [a] lack of investment in appropriate provision, weak protective legislation and the invisibility of children in national and local level planning.

In general, where investment is made, this is in the provision of structured and organised activities but equally important is the need to create time and space for children to engage in [free] play and to promote societal attitudes that support and encourage such activity"

Committee on the Rights of the Child (2005) *General Comment No.17 Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood*. Geneva: United Nations^v

Notwithstanding that our reports have been published only recently, our research and consultations to date have reinforced our commitment to the following:

- The need to prioritise actions which drive improvements for those groups of children and young people who 'require particular attention to realise their rights under article 31'.

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This includes girls, disabled children and young people, children living in poverty, children and young people in residential or institutional care (such as hospital, detention centres or schools), and children from minority communities.

- The need to enhance the support available to local Planning Partners about how and why to embed play throughout their local strategic planning and commissioning processes by offering practical support, tools, knowledge, contacts/ case studies and demonstrating impact on national outcomes relating to children and young people.
- The need to support children and young people to participate in and drive national and local level planning for play – including identifying innovative ways to build more time and space for playing freely and widely, and having influence over local investment
- The need to work in partnership to improve the baseline data we capture about children and young people's play experiences, and to use appropriate indicators to track progress to achieving the Vision for Play.

What's next?

1 A national conference, with the theme ***Playful Places***, will be held on the 18th November 2015 in Edinburgh to share the findings of the recommendations in the reviews we have undertaken so far and to explore place based approaches to supporting play.

2 A series of regional events will be held to share the messages of the Play Strategy more widely and to showcase key investments, share expertise and encourage networking.

3 Thematic seminars will be held, with partners, to explore what else can be done to reduce barriers and enhance access to high quality play opportunities for all our children and young people.

Get involved

We are always keen to hear from organisations whose work impacts on the National Play Strategy and who would like to get involved.

For further information, contact the National Play Strategy Coordinator in the first instance on Deborahhay@playscotland.org

References

ⁱ UNCRC, Article 31 – the right to rest, leisure, play and culture

ⁱⁱ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2013/06/5675>

ⁱⁱⁱ We have updated the vision statement to refer to 'early learning and childcare' in place of the original text which referred to nurseries. We use 'early learning and childcare' to cover all pre-school care and/or education settings including nurseries, but also childminders, and Gaelic medium settings, across private, local authority or third sector providers.

^{iv} Grant programmes include, but are not limited to Third Sector Early Intervention Fund; Strategic Funding Partnerships; Young Start; Cashback for Communities; Communities and Families Fund

^v Source:

http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fGC%2f17&Lang=en



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