



Play Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to '**Scottish Planning Policy 11: *Physical Activity and Open Space***' Consultation

About PlayScotland

- ◆ Formed in 1998 to support the Child's Right to Play and make children's play rights a reality in Scotland
- ◆ Membership organisation and registered charity funded by the Scottish Executive

Priorities for Play Scotland

- ◆ Political Lobbying for a Play Policy and a Strategic Approach to Play in Scotland
- ◆ Developing Strategic Resources to support the Play Sector in Scotland
- ◆ Workforce Development of the Playwork Sector
- ◆ Research into Play Provision in Scotland (space to play, time to play, funding for play)

What is the Problem?

- ◆ Lack of Play Space and Mobility
- ◆ Childhood Obesity, Mental Health Problems and Bullying
- ◆ Young People Unable to Assess and Manage Risk
- ◆ Young People with Poor Social Skills and lack of Ability to handle Conflict and Cultural Difference

Play is Part of the Solution

The benefits to children and young people and the community from a strategic approach to play are profound. Children will:

- ❖ *Enjoy better physical, emotional and mental health*
- ❖ *Develop social skills and responsibility*
- ❖ *Appreciate the environment*

- ❖ *Understand risk and challenge*
- ❖ *Grow identity and self esteem*
- ❖ *Participate in sports, arts and culture*
- ❖ *Be less likely to offend and engage in anti-social behaviour*

What is play?

Play is what children do when they themselves decide what to do, when to do it and how to do it⁽¹⁾ Children's play does not have a specified goal or outcome⁽²⁾

Why is play important?

- ✦ Play is fundamental to a healthy and happy childhood⁽³⁾
- ✦ Play challenges and informs our understanding of children, because it views the child as a competent, confident being⁽⁴⁾
- ✦ Play is essential for the survival of the species, if it was not important we would have stopped doing it a long time ago⁽⁵⁾
- ✦ Play facilitates children's holistic development incorporating areas such as physical literacy, cognitive skills and creativity⁽⁶⁾
- ✦ Play is crucial to physical and mental health⁽⁷⁾
- ✦ Play is important for the development of brain capacity⁽⁸⁾
- ✦ Play supports a connection with nature and the environment⁽⁹⁾
- ✦ Play allows children time to relax and to be in control of what they do⁽¹⁰⁾
- ✦ Play is significant for cultural development and society⁽¹¹⁾
- ✦ Play provides opportunities for children and young people to assess and manage risk for themselves⁽¹²⁾
- ✦ Play is adaptable variability⁽¹³⁾, and as such a mechanism to prepare us for constant change.

Context for play

Play is a child's right enshrined in the UN Convention of the Right of the Child Article 31.

Play supports many of the priority areas for local authorities and the Scottish Executive. It is a cross cutting theme in the way that it supports children and young people's health and well-being and their learning and physical literacy.

The Welsh Assembly has developed a Play Policy as well as an implementation strategy. In England the Big Lottery has invested in infrastructure, development for play as well as support for local projects. Northern Ireland is working on a two-stage project to develop an overall play policy for children aged eleven years and under and a Recreation/leisure policy for children and young people aged twelve to eighteen years. Northern Ireland Play Policy was launched for Public Consultation on Tuesday 24 October 2006. See www.playboard.org.uk for more information.

The Republic of Ireland has recently launched a play policy. In Sweden, Government and Local Councils have been required since 1999 to do child

consequence analysis ("Child proofing") on policies and physical developments and this has a positive impact on children's play.

Current Position

In terms of developing a sustainable Scotland, investing in our children's play health is a top priority giving current demographic trends which suggest that the future population of Scotland will be an unwell elderly one supported by a small and largely unhealthy younger population suffering from obesity related illnesses.

- Between June 1996 and March 2003 143 Playing Fields were sold off by Local Authorities for Property and Retail Development.
- City of Edinburgh Council has sold off more than 23 hectares of land across sites at 15 schools in the City.
- Less than one third of Scotland's Local Authorities have drawn up strategies to stop a decade-long decline in the number of playing fields. In 2001, SportScotland encouraged all Local Authorities to develop a Playing Field Plan to establish the stock of pitches available and ensure their protection. Only 9 have done so.
- Scotland currently has the fatter children in the UK (*Scottish Executive April 05*) who watch the most television in the UK (*Ofcom findings May 06*) and 22 out of the top 25 unhealthy neighbourhoods in the UK are in Scotland.
- A new study from the market analysts TNS (June 06) has shown that across Britain more people are responding to the 5 portions a day health message except in Scotland. A separate report from the Food Standard Agency in Scotland (to be published later this year) reveals that there has been no improvement in the diet despite 10 years of Government targets and millions of pounds spent on encouraging healthy eating. Targets set by the Scottish Office in 1996 have not been met. Scots are eating more sugar, the same level of saturated fats and there is no improvement in the intake of fruit and vegetables, oil-rich fish, bread and breakfast cereals.
- More people die young from heart disease in Scotland than any other part of the UK (*British Heart Foundation May 06*). Despite this there has been a reduction in heart deaths in Scotland, but this will be reversed when today's generation of obese children become adults. There is almost epidemic proportions of children with type 2 Diabetes, which is a major risk factor for Heart Disease. It is currently estimated that more than 1 in 7 adults are living with some form of Heart or Circulatory disease. Play Scotland echoes the British Heart Foundation call to the Scottish Executive to make 'brave and innovative' moves to improve public health.
- A report by the British Medical Association Board of Science published in June 2006 said one in 10 children between the ages of 1 and 15 has a mental health disorder ranging from sleep problems to excessive temper tantrums and depression. Poor diet and unhealthy lifestyles increase the risk of mental disorders. Healthcare professionals are realising just how important diet and physical exercise are and it is vital more research is

carried out. Avis Johns of Young Minds the Mental Health charity said "the majority of adults with mental illness are able to trace their symptoms back to childhood. It is essential that we act now to prevent generations of children being blighted." The report, *Child and Adolescent Mental Health - A Guide for Healthcare Professionals*, revealed that wealth and privilege are no defence against mental disorders but poverty and deprivation increase the risks. More research is required to find out for certain how important diet is in preventing and controlling mental disorders. Anecdotally, teachers and parents talk of how behaviour and concentration improves with a balanced diet and exercise and how it deteriorates with processed sugary food and restricted break times and play opportunities.

1. British Medical Journal (*BMJ vol 322*) research confirms that children burn more calories "just playing" than they do in PE or sport.
2. One third of twelve year olds in Scotland are obese or over weight (*The Lancet vol 363 Total energy expenditure and physical activity in young Scottish children 2004*)
3. It is predicted that 1 in 3 children born in the year 2000 will die from obesity-related illness (*UCL Making Children's Lives More Active in 2004*).

Further compelling evidence

"Opportunities for spontaneous play may be the only requirement that young children need to increase their physical activity." (*BMJ Editorial, 10th Feb 2001*)

See three attachments relating to Children's Play Council memoranda of evidence.

Appendix 1: *CPC Evidence to Health Select Committee*
Appendix 2: *Choosing Activity CPC Response*
Appendix 3: *CPIS Factsheet*

Political Context:

A Play strategy for Scotland. Play Scotland is heartened by the commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified in the UK in 1991. Play Scotland is interested to note the assertion that the convention has been adopted in Scotland as central to policy development. There is currently no statutory requirement for play provision as per article 31 and no policy commitment for play in Scotland. Nevertheless there is currently broad based cross-party support for a play strategy for Scotland:

S2M-3890 Mr Kenneth Macintosh: The Importance of Play—*That the Parliament welcomes calls from Play Scotland and Barnardo's for a play strategy that recognises the right of all children in East Renfrewshire and across Scotland to a safe, challenging and accessible play environment; is aware of the public and political concerns over levels of obesity, mental health problems and anti-social behaviour amongst children and young people; notes that lack of opportunity to play is a contributing factor to these*

problems; is concerned that traffic growth, loss of open space and fears over safety are further restricting play opportunities, and therefore believes that play should be supported with a vigour that reflects its importance.

Historically, 81 MSP's signed this motion and there was a well-informed debate in Parliament on 15th March. 86 MSP's subsequently signed a Play Scotland statement calling for Scotland to be designated a child friendly country under pinned by a play strategy.

Formal Response to SPP11 Consultation

Play Scotland welcomes the opportunity to have its views on SPP11 taken into account.

Play Scotland's Concerns include:

1. The low profile of Play in the document. There needs to be a wider policy context which would recognise the benefits of outdoor play opportunities for children.
2. That pitches are valued as pitches only, whereas they often double up as play areas, informal activity areas, jogging areas, walking areas, and often provide the only community green space.
3. The absence of quality standards and commitment to accessibility. A fit for purpose clause must be added and accessible should be defined.
4. A parallel consultation process is required to that of SportScotland (sports areas), for informal free access play areas (NPF/Play Scotland could be the Consultee).
5. There must be a timeline for audits and open space strategies.
6. SPP11 should include Scotland's school estate.

Play Scotland would welcome further discussions on these issues.

Further contact

Please do not hesitate to contact Marguerite Hunter Blair, Director at Play Scotland for further information.

Play Scotland, Midlothian Innovation Centre, Pentlandfield, Roslin EH25 9RE
Tel: 0131 440 9070 Email: info@playscotland.org Web: www.playscotland.org

References

¹ Department for Culture Media and Sports (2002) *Getting Serious About Play, A Review of Children's Play*

² Bjorklund D & Pellegrini A (2000) Child Development and Evolutionary Psychology. *Child Development* Vol 71, No 6, 1687-1708

³ Bruce, T. (2001) *Helping Young Child to Play*, Hodder & Stroughton, Bristol

⁴ Abbot, L. & Langston, A. (2005) *Birth to Three Matters* O.U.P, Berkshire

⁵ Hughes, B. (2001) *Evolutionary Playwork and Reflective Analytic Practice*, London, Routledge

⁶ Prout, A. (2005) *The Future of Childhood*, Abington Routledge Falmer

- ⁷.Physical – Children's Play Council (2004) *Children's exercise and play A Children's Play Council Briefing March 2004* London; Children Play Council. Mental – Winnicott, D.W. (1971) *Playing and Reality*, Hammondsworth Penguin
- ⁸.Sutton-Smith, B. (1997) *The Ambiguity of Play*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- ⁹.Cobb, E. (1993) *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood*, Dallas: Spring Publications
- ¹⁰.Scarlett, W.G. Nadeau, S. Salonlue-Pastemak.D.T. & Ponte, I (2006) *Children's Play*. London: Sage
- ¹¹.Drummond, M.J. (2002) *Assessing Children's Learning*, David Fulton, London
- ¹².Play Safety Forum (2002) *Risk and Safety Managing risk in play provision: a provision statement* (on-line) Available from: http://www.ncb.org.uk/resources/cpc_manrisk_2002.pdf
- ¹³.Sutton-Smith, B. (2003) Play as a Parody of Emotional Vulnerability, In Lytle.D.E. *Play and Educational Theory and Practice*, London:Presger

Essential Reading

Getting Serious About Play *A review of children's play* by Frank Dobson (copy available from Email: Tiffany. Denny@culture.gsi.gov.uk)

Play in Wales, The Assembly Government's Play Policy Implementation Plan (copy available from Play Scotland)

Play England, Planning for Play (copy available from www.playengland.org.uk)

SkillsActive, The Benefits of Play (copy available from Play Scotland)

Physician Heal Thyself - Being and becoming through play as healing. For the journal of holistic nursing by Gordon Sturrock (copy available from Play Scotland)

Play, Naturally by Stuart Lester and Martin Maudsley, Playwork Partnernships (to be published Wednesday 2nd August 2006 www.playday.org.uk)

2 November 2006