



Annual Report 2004/05

Fair Play for Children

Making progress for the Child's Right to Play

In the year past, perhaps the most pressing issue for Fair Play for Children, with its core commitment to promoting the Child's Right to Play, as set out in Article 31 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child, has been the lack of debate about the effect on our children of all the powers now handed out to the Police and Local Government etc to curb anti-social behaviour.

We have tried to engage with the key local authority in this matter, the London Borough whose initiative in Acceptable Behaviour Contracts led to its being cited as a model for this kind of approach. Yet we have yet to have a full response on what we see as clear breaches of the European Convention on Human Rights, especially around Article 6.1 which guarantees an independent tribunal where someone's rights and obligations are being determined. The use of co-ercian and implied threat of prosecution is not, in our view, a fair or sensible way to approach such matters. We joined **ASBO Concern** on its launch after this new alliance agreed to take ABCs on board as part of their remit. The debate about use of ASBOs is hotting up in Britain at this time, and especially their wide use with children and young people. Fair Play expects to maintain its involvement in the coming year in these issues particularly as Dispersal Orders under the new ASB Act are put into effect by Police forces. The High Court Judgement on a challenge by a young resident of Richmond-on-Thames will have a major effect on the future use of these orders.



The issues for us are whether blanket curfew/dispersal and restrictions on assembly are justified when applied to young people simply on the grounds of their age. We will be making contact with the relevant government departments but it is safe to say that one of the issues we will raise is the sense of vastly greater investment in play provision as a preventative measure. In a letter to **The Times** in July 2005, Jan Cosgrove, Secretary of Fair Play, calculated that that estimates for the cost of implementing a few hundred ASBOs on young people could have funded over 40,000 two hour play sessions of a local play project typical of many across the country. The emphasis on palliative, 'post-horse-bolting' measures as opposed to such investment is a tendency well-enough known in successive governments, which is all the more reason Fair Play and its allies should build pressure for change. The future arrangements for funding identified for Play from the new Big Lottery and other Lottery providers will be a key test of the level of understanding in government and elsewhere as per this issue.

Child Protection in Play

This Programme is perhaps the one by which Fair Play has become most widely-known in the past ten years, due to our pioneering work at a time when the general level of debate was not anywhere as good as it needed to be. Much progress has been made in the past year or so. We now have at least 250 organisations using our Criminal Records Checks Service within the Programme and we have seen incremental improvements in our efficiency. An audit by the CRB within the year showed that we were well up to standard in matters of compliance with the CRB Code of Contact.



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New editions of the Responsible Officers' manual, used by member organisation's key people to help operate the scheme, were published. We processed 929 CRB checks in the review period almost all of them at the Enhanced Level. The range of organisations and posts (paid and voluntary) was impressive - playschemes, religious groups, youth clubs, youth information organisations, junior sports organisations, women's groups, child care organisations, domestic violence projects, Councils for Voluntary Service, Teacher Recruitment bodies, Theatre and Dance organisations, Disability groups, ethnic minority and community bodies, parenting groups, skate projects, Sure-Start and Home-Start groups etc. We provided our free advisory and information service to many enquirers, both member and public. During the year, the case of David Lawrence (a junior soccer referee and coach imprisoned for serious offences over many years whom we identified through police soft intelligence in 1997 to a member junior soccer league before his conviction (and which resulted in his removal from access to children), emerged again when it was reported to us by a relation of a child victim that he had been allowed to join another (non-member) junior league on his release from prison. The Football Association and others had acted on finding this out and a court order obtained to bar him, and he has since been convicted of further offences committed in the Isle of Man as far back as 1976. Our contact with the brother of the now-adult victim underlines to Fair Play that much work has yet to be done before there is a satisfactory situation as regards checks. As this Report is published a joint inspectorates' report has been published and highlights similar concerns that more needs to be done. During the year, Fair Play has been involved in the Voluntary Sector Working Party which advises the CRB, and also in the Bichard Implementation Project set up in the wake of the Bichard Report into the Soham Murders. Fair Play was not successful, unfortunately, in securing the DfES contract to run the new Childcare Approval Service, aimed at unregistered childminders and projects, but we were carefully considered and put forward a very persuasive bid given our small size. One area where we see a glaring need is in the fact that freelance workers such as children's entertainers etc cannot access CRB checks, depriving parents and organisations of assurance about the past of self-employed people they may be hiring. Our move towards co-operative charitable status should provide a way forward on this important neglected front.



Information and publications

Fair Play's most important publication is **PlayAction** which continues to attract much favourable comment because of its breadth and its refusal to duck issues. In the past year, the four printed editions (now complemented by a free, downloadable, full-colour version on our web site) have covered topics such as ASBOs and ABCs, Child Protection and Safety, Youth provision, Child Care, Children's Rights, Play Parliament and Government, Children's Health, Funding for Play, Child Labour, Play in Disaster Situations, Child Poverty, and much else. We also have started to run an On-Line PlayAction with additional stories. In the past five years, Fair Play has been in a partnership with a commercial participator which has resulted in a high quality publication, and we must now consider whether a renewal is the correct path for the next period.

Our **PlayAction Guides** have also continued to prove popular - these full-colour productions are published with PlayAction and also on the web and in downloadable PDF format. To date there are twenty titles, and we aim to produce more in the year ahead. These guides are used by a range of professionals and organisations.



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Our other major information project is the Fair Play web site, now registering nearly 30,000 hits.



It is true that in the past year we have found it hard to meet all demands and possibilities for this site as we would have wished, due to shortage of staff time. However, we are committed to doing more in this year ahead, and the site should improve even further on its breadth and its depth of information. A new direct donation facility is now in place enabling contributions by credit card etc and thus from all over the world. The coming year will see a dedicated child protection aspect on the site, bringing together all the resources we are able to offer for free.

During 2005/2006 a new Child Protection auditing resource will be published, available in multi-formats. We also aim to publish a simple resource on the Children's Rights aspects of various devices such as ASBOs, ABCs and Dispersal Orders.

Staffing and Management

Our Lottery Grant from the Community Fund ended in July 2004, bringing to an end a development project running over the past three years. We set ourselves a number of targets, especially the development of the Child Protection Programme with its training, CRB and information aspects. **Andy Cosgrove's** work in setting this programme rolling enabled many members to benefit from the service and he became the 'voice' of Fair Play for many. **Fred Brown** undertook the Positive Play Partnerships development work, mainly in the north, and it is perhaps our greatest regret that we were not able to continue this promising work which centres on children's voices being heard when their play and leisure needs are being discussed. The proposed play funding from Lottery sources ought, in our view, to be distributed in play partnerships at local level. It is good to see Fred taking up an exciting role in Leeds where we hope Fair Play can work with him and Leeds Play Network to take such ideas forward. **Yelena O'Connell** left us and went to work for Merseyside Development Foundation, whilst **Liz Allen** took over Andy's work on top of her admin. side, so we owe her, for the time she has put in during the aftermath of the ending of the Lottery grant, to keep things going. Of course, **Jan Cosgrove**, who resumed his voluntary Honorary Secretary role after the Community Funded post of National Organiser was made redundant, along with the other people/posts above, somehow manages to keep his end of things going. You don't have to be mad to work here, but it sure helps We have been able to welcome **Nigel Warren** to the national office team where he is taking on managing the appeals side as well as a lot of day-to-day admin. It would be entirely remiss not to mention the ever-sterling work by **Ethel Swann** as a network co-ordinator in the East Midlands, and we would like to thank all retiring management members as appropriate for their work and support. If we single out our President, **Janet Dalglish**, we're sure everyone will appreciate our wish to highlight the many years she has stayed loyal, calm and dedicated, to Fair Play, and to Children.

Membership and management

It is clear from the past two or more years, that Fair Play needs to develop a new membership and management structure, and that is a task which is being tackled at this time. Our members do not find much time, over and above their existing work commitments, to dedicate to being members of managements such as Fair Play for Children, or indeed attending national meetings, a fact not unknown to many national and regional voluntary bodies these days.



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During the past two years, a survey of membership was conducted to find out what they most value about Fair Play for Children. High on the list came our view of the worth of play and our independence from government and other non-play influences. Members also valued our work in Child Protection and our publications. These findings have influenced our work and we also surveyed members in the past year about the kind of Fair Play structure which they felt would most reflect their needs. At present there are two Fair Plays, one a charitable trust and the other a non-charitable unincorporated association. It is the latter members join, and they become members of the charitable company (limited by guarantee) automatically. This structure was adopted in 1984 for a number of then-relevant reasons. The existence of two Fair Plays has meant extra administration and accounting. However, the main finding of our survey is that our members seem to feel that the current management structure does not allow staff to be properly included in decision-



making, so a recent ballot of members proposed a move from the two current linked bodies to a single charitable co-operative - legally, an Industrial and Provident Society regime, with representation for members, volunteers and staff and which is able to apply to become an exempt charity. That is, a body recognised as charitable in nature but is not required to register with the Charity Commission. The progress towards this status has reached the stage of a draft consultation with members who have approved the proposed document. The current

steps are to register the new organisation with the Registrar of Friendly Societies, and then to apply to Inland Revenue for the recognition that it is charitable in intent, and thus to achieve its required status. At the end of the process, we will see the existing two bodies close and the new organisation will carry Fair Play's name and programme forward. We will also have a management structure more appropriate to the pressures and demands of the future, able to respond to children's needs and to the demands of members and public.

Finances and funding

During the past year, our Community Fund 3 year grant ended. This has meant major adjustment to the way we are able to work. However, we have maintained a decent level of service through membership fees, CRB fees, donations and earnings. It's our aim to increase our self-sufficiency through fees (membership and services) and to use funding (trusts etc) for identified programmes and activities which have a specified life span. We've moved quite a way towards that objective, the new co-operative structure will help recruitment in new areas. The full report for the year ending 31st March 2004 is available from Fair Play on request.

| <u>Incoming Resources</u> | <u>£</u> | <u>Direct Charitable Expenditure</u> | <u>£</u> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Donations | 3,697 | Establishment Cost | 10,315 |
| Charitable trading | 40,849 | Management and admin | 25,644 |
| Loan | 5,800 | Staff salaries | 79,075 |
| Community Fund | 66,125 | Fund-raising and publicity | 4,843 |
| <u>TOTAL</u> | <u>116,471</u> | <u>TOTAL</u> | <u>119,847</u> |
| Net movement in funds | (£3,376) | Current balance | (£1,172) |

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