



PLAYACTION NEW YEAR 2000!

WHERE THERE ARE CHILDREN THERE IS PLAY

Imagine Tomorrow suddenly without warning, some Force or Power removed every artefact of Civilisation from the World, all mankind's sophisticated means of going about its business? Who would have the first clue as to "what do we do next"?

Can we suggest a radical answer: whilst every adult stood around (even panicking a bit) can we suggest it's the children who would know what to do next Play! This Millennium Edition is dedicated to a Simple Proposition: "Play is the Natural Business of The Child"

Children NEED to Play - it's a fundamental part of every child's nature. Children who know how to play and have opportunity, they thrive, do well in life and as well-rounded individuals. Play is the parent of creativity, co-operative-ness, and leadership. Children whose play is denied or restricted fail to thrive. Their spirit dies, their potential is denied they may even perish physically.

Around the world, with its millions of children, we are conscious that so many children are denied this most basic heritage and Right. [For it is a Right, proclaimed by the United Nations.] How can the child of Kosovo play in the refugee camps? Or the child on the garbage heaps of Mexico City? Or the Street Children of Romania, or Sao Paulo? The ones who beg on the streets of Moscow? What price Play for the silently abused children of local authority homes in Britain? Or, how can a child have an assured freedom to play if s/he fears a classmate may mow everyone in the class down with an easily obtained gun?

Many adults spend a lot of time wondering how to "keep children occupied", how to keep them from 'just playing around'? Yet this is a basic and healthy requirement for every child, to be free to spend time doing what every child knows best how to do - to Play.

Play requires opportunity, environment, resources and respect - many landscapes (physical, social, cultural, environmental, spiritual and economic) in today's World miserably fail our Children.

Fair Play for Children starts from a UK perspective - Fair Play for Children has been campaigning here for 25 years for a better Play environment and understanding. But our work and this site has taught us, from your comments and from the links it has brought, just how Universal is this need. A Child is a Child, anywhere in the World.

Maybe it's Time to stop making children mould to our requirements, agendas, and politics. To achieve that aim means doing whatever it is that has to be done to create such a world - nothing less than a complete change to human society - its politics, its relationships, its attitudes on environment, equality, justice, and fundamental rights for all.

Please support Fair Play for Children's Millennium resolution:

**A WORLD FIT FOR ALL OUR CHILDREN
TO PLAY IN - SOMEWHERE NEAR
PARADISE**



in this edition

This is the Tenth Anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child ... and, oh yes, something else seems to be on people's minds

We look at:

Let Children Play! from The Guardian
Brutal Delays - Cheap Justice*

The Plight of Street Children

Out of School Initiative Study

Consulting Children* New Fact Sheet

Volunteering - The Challenge to Include

Rights in the UK and Northern Ireland*

Minority Ethnic Disability Study*

* part of [Child Rights - 10](#) looking at the Child's World Ten Years On.

plus other news items: Letters (more PLEASE!), Digest, Events, and **the BACK PAGE**

Cover: from Kolja, a play-working friend who, with friends from his City Farm project in Bonn, built the raft you see them putting through its paces. "Its most important part was a set of tractor tires donated by a rural mechanic. Of course we needed some logs which we chopped ourselves in the nearby forest. They were dragged home by our horses. The life jackets we were able to borrow so the only thing we had to buy was 50 metres of rope ..."

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FREEDOM TO PLAY!

LET CHILDREN PLAY!

Patrick Bateson and Paul Martin writing in *The Guardian* August 31, 1999

Play is a form of behaviour observed in the young of most species of mammal. Its most elusive characteristic is that it seems to have no immediate biological use. What is play for? Why do young animals, including young humans, engage in this strange and seemingly futile behaviour?

The belief that play has a serious purpose - that of acquiring skills and experience needed in adulthood - is an old one. Modern science supports this belief.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

One of the most important messages to emerge from biological research is that individuals are active agents in their own development - seeking out and acquiring experiences, sensations and skills that they will need later in life. Darwinian evolution has equipped animals with a set of behavioural characteristics - collectively labelled "play" - that enables them to do this. Humans are "designed" to play when young.

Human play comes in many different forms, such as social, rough-and-tumble, solitary, manipulative, constructional, verbal, symbolic and imaginary. Play applies, therefore, to patterns of thought, as well as physical movements. What the various forms all have in common is the jumbling together of apparently unrelated patterns without regard to their immediate usefulness.

AN EFFECTIVE MECHANISM FACILITATING INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

Play is an effective mechanism for facilitating innovation and creativity. Playfully rearranging disparate thoughts and ideas into novel combinations - most of which will turn out to be useless - is increasingly used by adults as a powerful means of gaining new insights and opening up possibilities that had not previously been recognised. In adults, its value in seminars and brain-storming sessions is well known.

The view that play has important long-term benefits calls into question some



NO PROGRESS ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS COMMISSIONER FOR ENGLAND

The proposal to establish a Children's commissioner for Wales now has all party support and the Welsh Assembly will be examining the proposals over the next few months.

Yet, no such comparable commitment exists for England. Frank Dobson, when launching the White Paper. *"Modernising Social Services"*, stated that the Government had considered the comparable advantages of national and regional bodies for children, and concluded that regional children's rights officers within the proposed Commission for Care Standards were the right way forward.

The **Children's Rights Alliance for England** believes however that the way forward is statutory children's rights commissioner with the responsibility for promoting and monitoring the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Such regional commissioners whilst avoiding the tendency towards centralisation may lack the necessary resources and clout that a national commission would have.

The Government's reluctance to press forward with this proposal seems, as previous administrations before them, to be fudging the issue.

Progress in the efforts to establish an Office of Children's Rights Commissioner for London has been ongoing. The office would be a non-statutory body, which would work to promote children and young people's participation in London communities and to ensure that their perspective is acknowledged in policies affecting them in London.

A significant amount of money necessary for the office has already been raised, and a decision is currently being awaited from the Lotteries Board. If the application is successful then the process of establishing the London Commissioner will begin within the year.



ISN'T IT TIME YOU JOINED FAIR PLAY FOR CHILDREN?

phone 01243-869922



FREEDOM TO PLAY!

current trends in British society. Ambitious parents increasingly sense advantage in pressuring their children to become literate and numerate at the earliest possible age. The government has recently extended the remit of Ofsted to monitor standards in pre-schools. Once at school, children's free time for play is under pressure from an expanding formal curriculum and competitive league tables.

WORRY ABOUT CURTAILING CHILDHOOD

The critics of such trends - such as the pressure group Let The Children Play - are right to worry about the potential effects of curtailing childhood. Starting academic lessons too young may be harmful in the long run, especially for those individuals who are put off education for life. The High Scope project in the US suggested that while all pre-school education has some value, the authoritarian approach has subtle adverse effects which are not found in nursery schools providing greater opportunities for play.

And starting formal education at four or five actually seems to have no compensating benefits. Other European countries start at six or seven, yet many have higher literacy and numeracy rates. Many children may not be ready, in terms of their biological and psychological development, to acquire reading and writing skills at the age of three or four.

TENDENCY TO OVER PROTECT

The tendency of many parents to over-protect their offspring also has worrying implications. Once-normal activities such as roaming freely about with friends, or even simply walking unescorted to and from school, are becoming increasingly rare. The incidence of child abduction and murder has remained low in the majority of developed countries in peace time. In the UK, for example, the risk that a young child will be killed by a stranger is less than one in a million and has actually fallen over the past decade. Nevertheless, the activities of many children are monitored and constrained to ensure that they come to no harm. They also take less exercise, becoming fat and unfit.

In their ambition or anxiety, some parents underestimate the importance of the seemingly pointless aspects of childhood - the time when children can play, roam freely with friends and discover things in their own way and at their own pace. Children who are pushed too hard academically, and who consequently advance temporarily beyond their peers, may ultimately pay a price in terms of lost opportunities for development.

Childhood is, amongst other things, a period of intense socialisation. Without the right experiences, some individuals will end up with narrower lives and may find it harder to cope with conflict or to cooperate with others. The long-term effects on their social, emotional and intellectual development may result in poorer attainment later in life, as well as personal unhappiness.

NOT MINIATURE ADULTS

Children are not miniature adults. Some of their behaviour is like scaffolding - a specialised structure used in the process of building the adult, which loses its use once this task is completed. Play is an important example of such developmental scaffolding, and without it the adult is more difficult to build. Childhood has important biological functions, and a faster, narrower development is not a recipe for success as an adult.

Patrick Bateson is provost of Kings College, Cambridge. Design for a Life by Patrick Bateson and Paul Martin, is to be published by Cape.

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IPA pleas for play.

IPA, the International Association for the Child's Right to Play, used the 10th anniversary of the UN-Convention of the Child's Right to Play to reflect on the situation of children's play in the world. Collecting the information from all over the world, IPA observed that many children don't have the opportunity to play because of a lack of health, because of unsafe environments (war, traffic, criminality, pollution), because of economic reasons (a lot of children have to work) or because of educational reasons (many children have too much work for school) etc.

Children's play mostly is considered as the surplus activity that can be thought of when basic life qualities are realised. Children's play is from the children's viewpoint, a very essential dimension of life, it's their way to experience life. Where children have the opportunity to play, their approach of life is respected, their values are taken into account within the context of the adult's values. Respect for children's play is strongly related to children's dignity. And that is the central objective of the UN-convention: the dignity of all the children, just as they are: children.

1. IPA's plea for play is arguing for children's play integrated in the whole society. IPA is arguing that children's playfulness, is a very important contribution to social life even in the segments where adults have other objectives. All children should have this opportunity to social participation (art. 12, art. 31).

2. IPA's plea for play is arguing that taking the best interest of children into account (art. 3), children's play should be taken into account. Because as far as children's opinions are concerned, to play is a characteristic of to live.

3. IPA's plea for play is pleading for the integral development of children. Children at play are developing social, motorial, emotional, cognitive capacities. They are integrating them into a personal project related to their environment. This integration is the missing link in very much educational programs and this integration can only be realised by the child himself.

IPA's plea for play stresses the idea that play is an essential dimension of children's life. Every organisation trying to realise the UN-convention on the right of the child, should integrate this idea in their programs.

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BRUTAL DELAYS - CHEAP JUSTICE

In March 1990 whilst inhaling glue to keep away the hunger and the cold Nahaman Carmona Lopez, a 13 years old refugee from El Salvador, was brutally kicked to death by four uniformed National Policeman on the Streets of Guatemala city. Before he was kicked to death he had the glue that he had been sniffing, poured into his eyes. He was then kicked so savagely that he received bruising to 60% of his body, six broken ribs, and a ruptured liver - he died of these injuries in hospital, ten days later.

The policemen who carried out his murder are said to have done it, in order to teach him a "lesson" about inhaling glue. This year a minor victory for the abused and murdered street children of Guatemala and other South American countries was achieved, when the Guatemalan Government agreed to pay his mother 52,000 Quetzales, approximately \$6,700 in compensation. It should be remembered though that his murderers only received a 12-year sentence and barely served 1/2 of that time. Justice is very cheap in Guatemala, and even cheaper still if you are a Street Child.

ONLY ONE OF SO MANY

The murder of Nahaman is only one of many such instances carried out by the police, vigilantes or private 'death squads', most often off-duty policeman, or security services. The life of a street child is dangerous, short, and nasty in the extreme. Where addiction to drugs and solvents are commonplace. Where rape and sexual assaults are a daily occurrence, and where you can go missing then turn up on the side of the road shot through the head.

These children never had the chance to have a childhood. It has been taken from them in the worst possible way, and whilst we in the West can sit in our comfort and debate such issues as TV violence, and when is it suitable to send our children to school these children do not have that luxury. They do not even have the most basic of human rights. These are countries, which have signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet, children are still being murdered in these countries even today.

UK AND US COMPLICITY

Our Governments and companies have to take some of the blame for this situation, we have supplied these people with the tools and the techniques for their trade even when it was clear that blatant human rights abuses have been, and still are taking place. The United States has for years run the School of the Americas, an innocuous sounding name, until you realise that this is no ordinary school but a facility in Florida run by the US Military, and Intelligence agencies from Fort Benning in Georgia.

It is here that some of the most notorious abusers of Human Rights across South and Latin America have been trained. Recent documents declassified under the Freedom of Information Act in America reveal that techniques taught there have included torture, counter terrorism, and assassination amongst others.

VICTIMS OF PARANOIA

The Street Children are the latest in a long line of victims of some of the graduates of this school and the result of foreign policy decisions which put anti communist paranoia and the profits of large multinational companies, and the needs

SNUB ON FUNDAMENTAL CHILD RIGHT TO LIFE

Supreme Court's refusal to consider the international ban on the death penalty against children: 1 November 1999

"It is extraordinary that at the end of the 20th Century, the USA is still clinging to this punishment for {children}," Amnesty International said on 1st November, as the US Supreme Court refused to consider whether US states are forbidden by international law from {executing} people for crimes committed as children.

"The Supreme Court has missed a golden opportunity to bring the USA into line with the rest of the world on this fundamental human rights issue."

"Instead it will have deepened the perception that the USA is a country which proclaims itself the world's most progressive force for human rights, yet picks and chooses its way through international human rights standards to suit itself."

The Court's ruling came in the case of Domingues v Nevada. Michael Domingues is on death row in Nevada for capital murder committed when he was 16. His lawyers have challenged his death sentence on the grounds that it violates US obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and customary international law. The Court ruled that it will not consider that appeal.

The Court's decision comes less than a month after the US government filed an appeal with the Court urging it not to examine the Domingues claim. The Court last looked at the issue of the minimum age for the death penalty in 1989, when it ruled that US "standards of decency" allowed the execution of 16- and 17-year-old offenders.

The USA has carried out the only four known executions of child offenders - prisoners convicted of crimes committed when they were under 18 - in the past two years. In the past decade the USA has executed more child offenders than the rest of the world combined. There are some 70 such prisoners on death row in 16 US states.

OVER TO YOU!!!!

Readers seem to like the cutting-edge of PlayAction's approach to the world of children's play. BUT, it would be great if more of you could translate your views, through letters, articles, reports, pics etc, to items we can use.

Send all contributions to the address on page 1.



of the free market before human rights. The cold war may be over here, but in South and Latin America the effects can still be seen, and it is the street children who are bearing the brunt.

The individual Policemen and 'others', may not have been trained there, but somewhere down the line a superior officer is likely to have received training there. Britain has not been free of guilt on this issue, as recent as 1995 questions were asked in the European Parliament about continued EEC training of Guatemala's military and paramilitary forces, one of countries responsible for this training was Great Britain. Of course, not all-street children die at the hands of the police, or death squads. Some die of AIDS, often contracted as a result of sexual abuse or prostitution, others die of hunger and cold, some are murdered by other street children and some die because of drug and solvent abuse.

A CHILLING SITUATION

The Murder of Nahaman is only the tip of the iceberg, for a truly chilling read, try the Street Children Memorial Page. This chronicles a number of deaths of Street Children from as far back as November 1981 to August 1999. The Document is a list of names of children, who they were, how old they were, and how they died. In a world of 24-hour news coverage, where all the horrors of the world can be delivered direct to our front rooms. This document has the power to shock and shake us out of our comfortable sensibilities and to remind us that for a large number of the worlds children existence is fraught with danger. Probably the most chilling is the report on a ten-year old boy found shot dead in Guatemala City in September 1996. The report is as follows.

"The body of a unidentified 10 year old boy was found close to the Mateo Flores Football Stadium. The little boy had been shot through the head and through the neck. The child's body was buried as "XX" (unknown) in the general cemetery. Nobody went to his funeral. No investigation has been undertaken by the authorities. "

Time and time again, the same organisations are implicated in these atrocities, in Honduras, it is the FUSEP, the Honduran military police, and in Guatemala, it is the National Guard. FUSEP are a military force, who in the 1980's were responsible for over 180 'disappearances' of political opponents, also during this time Honduras was used by US backed 'Contra's' in their campaign of insurgency against neighbouring Nicaragua.

The damage that this continuing instability has caused across South and Latin America is hard to calculate, but it has left the region both politically and economically prone to forces of reaction with a very undemocratic agenda. It seems now that FUSEP have turned their attentions to the Street Children, who are now the victims of their terror.

Guatemala has for a long time been a country where abuses of human rights have been commonplace. Its recent brutal history began as far back as 1954, when the CIA backed a military coup to oust a democratically elected Government. The Government had promise land reform and this would have meant a loss for the united Fruit company, a large American agricultural conglomerate. After the Coup, the military began a campaign of terror which led to the deaths of over 200,000 people, the Guatemalan National Guard were often implicated in this wave of killings and brutality. Like FUSEP in Honduras, the National Guard have been implicated in the deaths and torture of street children.

EXECUTION-STYLE MURDERS

To the police of these countries children like Nahaman are seen as lower than animals, they are in the eyes of these people merely a problem to be dealt with. The number of cases from the Street Children Memorial pages where children have been shot, execution style in the back of the head is large indeed. This would suggest that a pattern is emerging here, especially when many of the

ULSTER CHILD RIGHTS CHALLENGED

Government is not Getting it Right for Young People in Northern Ireland

October 21, 1999 saw the publication of **Getting it Right?** by the Children's Law Centre and Save the Children in Belfast. The report is the culmination of a research project undertaken by the two agencies into the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Northern Ireland over the last five years.

It discusses issues such as education, youth justice, ethnicity, disability, health, children in Care and support for parents against the backdrop of the changing political situation in Northern Ireland. Written primarily for the voluntary and community sectors in the area, **Getting it Right?** is an account of the state of children's rights in Northern Ireland at the end of the 20th Century.

KEY FEATURE AND ISSUES OF CONCERN

A key feature of the report is the way in which young people's voices are heard throughout. Approximately 400 young people from all over Northern Ireland participated in the research, either through questionnaires or by way of group discussions.

As well as this professionals working on a daily basis with young people provided verbal or written submissions, detailing the numerous incidences where young people's rights are not upheld.

Although Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, it does not automatically follow that our laws and policies here are identical to those in the rest of the UK. The following are just a few examples that are highlighted in the report: - Northern Ireland is the only jurisdiction within the UK to retain the Transfer Test (11+).

This, the two-tier system of second level education and the introduction of league tables means that there is an increasing emphasis on academic performance within education. This runs contrary to the holistic vision of education espoused in the Convention.

Although the Children Order was introduced to Northern Ireland in 1995, 17 year olds in the criminal justice system are treated as adults and can be incarcerated with adults. Some young women who require secure accommodation are also held in an adult prison.

The existence of Emergency Legislation in Northern Ireland means that a child as young



victims had been taken into police custody only a few hours prior to their death.

The pattern for many of the victims seems to be this. They are arrested taken to a police station and then a few hours later turn up on waste ground bearing signs of torture, their deaths are often due to gunshot to the head or neck in what appears to be execution style killings. Very often, the finger of suspicion points at the police, or military and more often than not the perpetrators get away with it. It is believed that local traders who fear that street children will drive away tourists and therefore cause a loss of business pay for many of the killings.

THE WEAKEST ARE THE VICTIMS

It is worth noting that many of the world's children live their lives in poverty, exploitation, and danger. It is then even more sickening when it is the forces of the state, who are supposed to protect the weak are the ones who are carrying out the most sickening acts of violence on the weakest and most vulnerable members of society.

As Playworkers we have a responsibility to raise our voices and make them heard, to put aside national boundaries and speak with an international voice, to be controversial if need be and to form alliances with other groups and causes. Our task as Playworkers for the new millennium should be to give these children and all children a voice, we should remind ourselves that this is what we are about, not accreditations, play awards, and Government schemes nice as they may be.

The work of Casa Alianza should be noted and supported, without this group of people, the atrocities visited upon the street children would remain in the dark. This group acts as advocates and educators for Street Children. They aim to give them a better life and, campaign to bring to justice those responsible for these brutalities.

Casa Alianza scored a recent victory when the inter American court on Human Rights base in San Jose, Costa Rica condemned the state of Guatemala for violating the American Convention of Human Rights when uniformed agents of the State brutally tortured and murdered five street children in July 1990. The ruling brings to an end, a decade long legal battle fought by Casa Alianza on behalf of the Children.

CHILDREN STILL PLAY

Despite the horrors that many of the worlds children have visited on them, as a result of adult agendas, they still manage to find time to play, a recent BBC report from a refugee camp on the Chechnyan border demonstrated this. In amongst the squalor and filth, the bombs and the shelling a group of girls was playing a simple skipping game. They had been driven from their homes by the military might of a superpower.

Yet they still found time and space to play, just as the Street Children of Latin America do in amongst the glue the death squads and the waste of human lives in order to satisfy businessmen and politicians thousands of miles away. As Playworkers we need to raise our voices, so that there are no more victims like Nahaman, and so that, children do not end up on rubbish grounds, with a bullet in the head and no name. If we create a world that is fit for our children, for all children to play in then we will have beaten the death squads and their odious apologists in the corridors of power.

For more information on the work of Casa Alianza visit their web site on <http://www.casaalianza.org>, and for information on a campaign to close the now notorious School of the

as 10 years can be held, without charge, for up to 7 days.

Kerb crawling is not an offence in Northern Ireland, so adults who solicit young people are not prosecuted. Young people selling sex are likely to be treated as criminals rather than children who are being abused.

Some issues, which caused considerable concern among the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, have still not been resolved. For instance, despite the introduction of the Race Relations Order in 1997, Travellers continue to be discriminated against and experience disadvantage in almost every area of their lives.

A Traveller child under 10 years is 10 times more likely to die than a child from the settled population. Travellers have a life expectancy 10-15 years below that of the rest of the population. Although segregation on the basis of race is outlawed under the Race Relations legislation the Department of Education continues to fund a school for Travellers in Belfast.

While most young people (68%) have never heard of the Convention, they demonstrated through their participation in the group discussions that they were very aware of how the many provisions of the Convention are not always adhered to.

RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD MAKE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION

Getting it Right? makes a number of recommendations which, if acted upon, would make a significant contribution towards the implementation of the UNCRC. Among these recommendations is the call for the appointment of a Minister for Children in the NI Assembly and an independent Commissioner for Children.

The report and its recommendations have been endorsed by over 60 other organisations, representing childcare, trade union, legal, education, family support, social work and youth work sectors in Northern Ireland.

A full copy of the report, which costs £5 is available from either: The Children's Law Centre, Tel: +44 28 90 245704 or Save the Children, Tel:+44 28 90 431123 Free multi-lingual summaries are also available for both young people and adults from either agency.

If you would like to know more about this project please contact: Teresa Geraghty, Research and Development Worker at the Children's Law Centre, Philip House, 123-137 York St, Belfast BT15 1AB. E-mail: teresa.geraghty@childrenslawcentre.org.



PLAY AROUND!

OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDCARE INITIATIVE STUDY

The Social Survey Division of The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, together with the Institute for Employment Studies, were commissioned by what was then the Department of Employment to undertake an evaluation of the Out of School Childcare Grant Initiative in England and Wales. This followed an interim evaluation of the first, pilot phase of the Initiative by the Policy Research Unit at Leeds Metropolitan University.

The aim of the Initiative is to improve the quantity and quality of out-of-school childcare in order to facilitate increased labour market participation, among those who wish to combine work with family life, by parents of school-aged children. The grant is intended to assist with the start-up costs of new schemes caring for children out of school hours, or support the creation of new places at existing schemes. Its purpose is to cover initial capital costs and support operating costs for a maximum of one year.

During the first year of the Initiative, 1993-94, 40 Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) in England, along with five in Wales, were selected to deliver the grant on a pilot basis. At the end of this period the remaining 35 English TECs, together with the remaining two in Wales, were brought into the Initiative. The Scottish Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) began development work in 1993, and the main phase of the Initiative began there in 1994.

The objectives of this research were to assess the extent of additional provision created by the Initiative and to evaluate the extent to which parents of school aged children had been enabled to participate more fully in the labour market. Other aims were to establish how far the schemes had achieved long term financial viability, to assess the quality of the care provided, and to establish the extent to which schemes had helped meet childcare needs in different labour markets and for different sections of the population. It also aimed to estimate the costs and benefits to the exchequer of the Initiative.

The research was undertaken between October 1994 and April 1995. A postal survey of all 82 English and Welsh TECs was undertaken, along with personal, structured interviews with the managers of a sample of schemes in the initial 40 English TEC areas. The study also included structured interviews with a sample of parents whose children attended the schemes, and an in-depth case study of schemes in eight TEC areas, involving interviews with representatives of the TECs and their key partners, with scheme managers and workers, and with other relevant informants from local and national institutions.

Childcare supported by the Initiative

TECs varied considerably in the speed at which they had developed the Initiative and the organisational structures they had adopted for doing so. By early 1995, almost 11,000 after-school places, just under 4,000 before-school places and around 8,000 holiday places had been provided, the majority of which were still being funded under the Initiative. One TEC had yet to fund any schemes, five TECs had developed only one scheme each, while the highest number of schemes developed in any TEC area was 36. In addition, 220 schemes, planning to provide over 8,000 places, had been approved, and over 500 further schemes were under discussion, potentially providing at least 13,000 further places. **The study shows that the Initiative has considerably increased the provision of out-of-school childcare places across the country as a whole.**

SIXTY SIX THOUSAND NEW CHILDCARE PLACES EXCEEDS TARGET

Employment and Equal Opportunities Minister Margaret Hodge announced that 66,000 new childcare places have been created in England since the launch of the Government's National Childcare Strategy one year ago. This exceeds the target set by 6,000 places.

Mrs Hodge said: "This is excellent news and shows that our childcare strategy is having a real impact. More childcare places have been created in the last two years than were created in the previous 18. We are well on course to meeting our target of providing places for one million children over the next five years.

"Across the country, local authorities and their partners in the voluntary and private sectors, Training and Enterprise Councils, employers, and Further Education colleges are working together to deliver the places their communities need. We are also making good progress in other areas of the strategy:

There are now 17 **Early Excellence Centres** developing models of integrated high quality education and daycare for young children, supporting families, and extending adult education and opportunities for the wider community.

In April the first 21 **Surestart** trailblazer projects got the go ahead to establish programmes later this year to provide a 'one-stop shop' to help families with young children.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority are leading an initiative to build a qualifications and training framework for the childcare sector which will be launched later this year.

£11 MILLION FOR CHILDCARE

We have given TECs £11 million to provide more childcare training and business support for childcare providers.

This is in addition to the TECs' main training programmes and the £100 million which the FE sector invests in childcare training. We have also given LEAs £21 million to help train people working in early education.

Almost all Partnerships have signed up to the Childcare Information Systems Development Project. It will link local databases to a national website holding core childcare information and details of childcare providers across England. The website will be launched later this year."

SOME OF THE PROJECTS



PLAY AROUND!

Just over half of TECs had retained direct responsibility for the day to day management of the Initiative, while around a quarter managed it in partnership with other organisations, and the remainder used sub-contractors. The schemes themselves were operated by a variety of types of organisations. Almost a quarter were set up as profit-making small businesses, with one in ten being non-profit making small businesses. Around a quarter were being run by voluntary organisations and a fifth by committees of parents. The balance were managed by schools, employers and local authorities.

There was no indication from the data that some types of organisational approaches adopted by TECs were more successful than others. **Most TECs had little or no experience of Childcare provision before the Initiative, and lacked the networks and other types of expertise important to the Initiative.** For these TECs, partnership arrangements were an obvious way of overcoming their lack of experience and providing an effective approach to meeting local needs. On the other hand, tensions could emerge between the child-oriented approach of the partners and the business orientation of the TEC.

It was clear that for the successful establishment of schemes, the importance of contacts with a range of organisations, and the ability to mobilise a variety of resources and networks, could not be underestimated. TECs have an important contribution to make, particularly in the areas of training and business advice and support. However, other organisations have a longer tradition of involvement with childcare; organisations such as Kids Club Network, for example, and Local Authority Social Services and Education Departments also have a crucial role to play.

Many schemes were found to have substantial need for advice, information and support, in addition to financial support during the first years of development. Areas such as day to day management, attracting parents and appointing staff were sometimes new to those involved in setting up schemes. The difficulties of meeting statutory requirements, finding suitable premises, carrying out necessary administrative work and publicity and appointing staff, for example, took considerable personal commitment and time. In some cases there was a high level of involvement of people with little or no experience of the areas of either childcare or business. This meant that TEC development officers and others were putting considerable effort beyond that which they had anticipated into the schemes.

The labour market impact of the Initiative

Overall, at least two-fifths of respondents to the parents' survey had seen some improvement in their labour market position since they began using the scheme, so the Initiative has already had a measurable impact on the labour market position of many users. **There was an increase of nine per cent in the proportion of parents in paid employment since they began using the scheme, one in five respondents had increased their hours of work and one in ten were earning higher wages.** Seven per cent of parents were unemployed but had been able, because of the schemes, to attend college or begin training courses. There had so far been little involvement or practical support from employers in the Initiative, beyond some initial expression of interest.

For parents already in employment when they began using the schemes, the main benefits appear to be from the peace of mind the schemes granted. They reported an increased ability to do the job and higher commitment to it, as well as having greater job satisfaction and fewer unplanned absences. Overall, over half of working parents reported one or more of these improvements.

They had been of particular benefit among parents from lower social classes, female carers, lone parents and those using schemes in inner city areas. In addition, some parents were able, because of the schemes, to work longer hours or travel further to work than they had before.

The evidence suggests that the proportion of parents experiencing beneficial labour market changes increases over time. Among parents who had

In Birmingham **Turves Green Out of School Club** opened in September last year with a £4000 grant, providing 30 places all year round. All the staff are undergoing training focusing on the value of play work.

Address: Turves Green Primary School, Northfield, Birmingham B31. Contact: Paula Mellin 0121 477 9701.

Kings Out of School Club in Birmingham also received £4000 and opened in January this year providing 30 year round places. Local parents are delighted with the facility which offers a wide range of activities and outings for the children.

Address: Wilson Road, Birmingham, B19 1LY. Contact: Ammerill Buchanan 0121 551 6365.

In Hampshire **Mengham Infants Out of School Club** on Hayling Island opened in September with a £9000 grant. The staff have all achieved Kids Club Network Quality Assurance accreditation and local parents are delighted with the facility. The club also has its own Internet website: www.sbudd.belan.co.uk

Address: St Mary's Road, Hayling Island, PO11 9BD. Contact: Teresa Newman 01705 462 470.

In Ryde **Cheeky Chimps Out of School Club** started in June this year and already numbers are building up. They will continue to grow as the Club has bought transport which enables them to collect children from neighbouring schools.

Address: C/O SEB Sports & Social Club, Monkton St. Ryde, Isle of Wight. Contact: Ricky Larbelestrer 0498 636 772

In Skipton the **Greatwood Out of School Fun Club** received a £10,000 grant to provide 24 places in an area of social deprivation with no other provision. The local headteacher is completely committed to the development of the club and sees it as fundamental to supporting adult learning initiatives.

Address: Greatwood County Primary School, Pinhaw Road, Skipton, BD23 2SJ. Contact: Denize Judd 01756 793 609.

In Yorkshire the **Pitstop Breakfast Club** received £9000 from OSCI to set up a facility at Thorpe Willoughby School in response to demand from local parents. It also offers outreach services to support families in the local community.

Address: Thorpe Willoughby Childcare Centre, Lonsbrough Grove, Thorpe Willoughby, YO8 ONX. Contacts: Diane Hewitt/Tracy Madison 01757 291 186.

In Nottingham **St Augustine's Out of School Club** started last year with just nine children but attendance is now up to 30. The club is run in partnership with the school staff and parents.



PLAY AROUND!

been using schemes for less than three months, 28 per cent reported improvements in their labour market position, compared with 44 per cent among those who had been using the schemes for over twelve months. It is probable, therefore, that the full labour market impact of the Initiative is yet to emerge.

The quality of childcare

It was a requirement of all TECs that schemes given support under the Initiative achieve registration under the 1989 Children Act, and in general schemes looking for support had been successful in achieving this. Despite difficulties experienced in some areas over obtaining suitable premises at an affordable cost, almost all surveyed schemes had obtained premises which were considered by the manager to be at least adequate for their purpose, and in most cases were considered to be well suited.

Parents expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the quality of care, the activities offered, and the safety and security of children while they were attending the schemes. Parents of older children tended to be less satisfied than those of younger ones, which supports points made in the interim report relating to the quality of provision for older children.

Schemes had apparently invested considerable resources in staff training. All schemes had staff with childcare qualifications or training, although shortage of resources or a lack of suitable local courses had forced some schemes to do less in this area than they would have liked. Difficulties were often experienced, however, in recruiting and retaining suitable staff. This was generally attributed to the short and inconvenient hours on offer and the inability of schemes to offer a level of wages which would be attractive to potential suitable applicants.

Future viability of schemes

TECs put considerable emphasis on long term viability in selecting schemes for funding, and the support they provided was often focused on business training and advice. **Despite this, many schemes had experienced difficulty in securing funding for the future, and, in particular, had failed to generate interest among employers to the extent of providing significant financial support.** Nearly two fifths of schemes had sources of income other than the TEC grant and revenue from fees paid by parents. The most frequent sources of additional funding were Local Authorities and charitable trusts.

Parents' fees were providing the majority of scheme income, particularly in the longer established schemes. However, demand had built up slowly in some schemes, and this meant that revenue from fees might be lower than anticipated by schemes and TECs, in the early years at least. In addition, many schemes offered concessions of some kind to parents on low incomes, for example. In areas where there was a high proportion of such parents, there was concern about ever achieving viability from fees alone. While there was a recognition that fees might have to be increased once grant funding ran out, the survey of parents indicated that even a moderate increase in fees would be likely to have some adverse affect on demand for places, and increases beyond ten per cent might affect demand substantially.

The case studies demonstrated that some schemes were experiencing great difficulty in securing sufficient funding, and were highly reliant on the personal and voluntary efforts of scheme staff and others involved in establishing the schemes to survive financially.

While there are a number of examples (both from the case studies and the survey of managers) of schemes which were approaching viability or had already achieved it, for many the uncertainty remained. There was a general feeling among informants in the case study exercise that, particularly in the less affluent areas, some schemes would never achieve viability on the basis of parents' fees alone and would need continued financial support from other sources.



Address: St Augustine Primary School, Park Avenue, Mapperley, Notts. NG3 4JS. Contact: Donna Marston 0115 978 1673

In the North West the **Stanah County Primary School** opened in 1997/98 and has gone from strength to strength since. Originally providing 16 places it quickly expanded to 30 after school places during the course of the year. This year it has expanded further creating another 24 places. The club has now split into a junior and a senior club with children at Key Stage 2 age having their own space and activity programme.

Address: Lambs Road, Thornton, FY5, SJR. Contact: Tony Ford.

FAIR PLAY PUBLICATIONS

We have a range of **Fact Sheets** on play-related topics: e.g. play-ground safety, equal opportunities, city farms, special needs, local play policies, right of assembly etc. The latest are on Adventure Play, Child Protection, Mobile Play, and on Consultation.

We also publish packs and guides such as **Aids and Playwork, Playground Safety Checklist, Child Protection in a Playwork Setting** etc.

For full list ask for our Publications leaflet by contacting:
Freepost, Fair Play for Children, Bognor Regis PO21 1YZ, Tel: 01243-869922, Fax 01243-862072 e-mail: fairplay@arunet.co.uk



PLAY AROUND!

Costs of the scheme and returns to the Treasury

The scheme is likely to bring financial returns to the Treasury to offset the costs of the scheme, estimated at £730 per place. These returns arise from increased tax receipts when parents have found new jobs or increased their hours of work, and when new jobs have been directly created by the schemes. There are also benefit savings when previously unemployed parents are no longer in receipt of benefits, or are receiving reduced benefits. **The savings have so far been minimal, particularly if it is assumed that the majority of jobs taken by scheme users would have been otherwise taken by someone else.** However, the longer parents have been using the schemes, the higher the per capita return to the Treasury; the return in the financial year 1994/95 from parents who have been using the scheme for over twelve months was more than double that from parents who have been using the scheme for less than three months. As the returns are continuing, they should continue to accrue while the parent remains in employment, and beyond, should another parent benefit from a vacated place.

The Out-of-school Childcare Grant Initiative, M'Brien, S Dench. DfEE Research Studies RES13, July 1996. ISBN 0 11 270942 7. £25.95 HMSO. Available from: The Stationery Office, PO Box 276, London SW8 5DT. Tel.: 020 7873 9090

The Playworkers Association and Fair Play for Children.

Ken McCormick, Vice-Chair of Fair Play writes: It is great that Playworkers want to get together and voice their concerns, views etc, as well as promoting and campaigning for play, together with good practice and training. The draft proposal for a Playworkers association has many similarities with Fair Play's aims and objectives, and its practices.

The Playworkers Association (draft proposal) run by Playworkers, for Playworkers. The Playworkers Association will exist:

- * To actively promote play, playwork and play provision
- * To encourage good practice in playwork.
- * To enable the views of Playworkers at all levels to be represented on regional and national structures.
- * To support individual Playworkers by encouraging contact, co-operation, information exchange and networking.
- * To promote equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice in playwork.
- * To promote education, training and qualifications for Playworkers. The proposed Association believes:
- * That children have a right to a range of high quality play opportunities.
- * That play is fundamental to children's development and survival.
- * That it is necessary to confront racism, sexism, and other forms of forms of discrimination both within ourselves and within society.
- * That Playworkers have a right to recognition, appropriate pay and conditions, support and training.

Then again, Fair Play already exists to promote these very aims! It is open to individual membership and directed by the members, mainly through the regional/local co ordinators. The structure is open and democratic, and has representation on most national bodies, and beyond. Fair Plays greatest strength is its independent voice. However if people want a totally separate organisation, then in the spirit of democracy, fine! Hopefully it will work alongside Fair Play. **Then again; why re-invent the wheel?**

CHILD PROTECTION IN A PLAYWORK SETTING



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* Pack, same title: 60 pages with advice about policy formation, checks (police and others), what to do if ..., with examples, appendices, reading lists, more contacts, checklist: £10 [£7 Members]

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* Advisory and Information Service, free

* Training Events, Joint Training ventures etc (costs negotiable)

* Model Child Protection Policy - now published

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THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO PLAY.

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**Freepost, Fair Play for Children,
Bognor Regis PO21 1YZ, Tel**
01243-869922, e-mail: fairplay@arunet.co.uk

Web site:



CONSULTING CHILDREN

A new Fact Sheet from Fair Play

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC], adopted in 1989, sets out internationally-agreed standards concerning the needs of children and the responsibilities of individuals, communities and nations which care for them.

The UNCRC also covers every other important aspect of a child's life, so no single Article can be viewed in isolation from others. Taking The Right to Play, at one extreme it is hardly possible for the child under assault from a sniper's weapon in a zone of 'ethnic cleansing' to enjoy that right - the rights to life and to protection from the ravages of war [not excluding the right not to suffer discrimination] impinge centrally upon that right.

THE RIGHT TO BE CONSULTED

One major issue concerning Play, and its importance to children, revolves around autonomy and the consequential issues of negotiation, communication, and decision-making. Underlying these issues is that of the subject of Article 12: **CONSULTATION.**

"States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with age and maturity of the child.

"For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law."

The implications of this Article are far-reaching indeed. Nations, like the UK, which signed up to the UNCRC, are expected to implement this at all levels of their society.

POOR EXAMPLE OF NON-CONSULTATION OVER CHILD CURFEWS

At the national level, given the serious implications of Sections 14 and 15 of the Crime & Disorder Act (Child Curfew powers for local authorities, to be decided by the political machinery of each council, and approved by the Home Secretary), it would seem that the UK Government ought to have ensured consultation of children about this legislative power. All the Act suggests is that the communities affected be consulted, but there is no specific direction to ensure the implementation of Article 12 by local councils.

Nor did the Government actually consult children in any way about this power at the Bill's consultation stage. [The fact that no machinery exists for this process is a point to consider given that it is ten years since the UK signed up to the UNCRC.]

MIXED LOCAL AUTHORITY PRACTICE

The experience of local authorities in consulting children is a very mixed one - evidence is scant, and there is perhaps a need to reflect and promote good practice more widely. But a case study based on a Fair Play member project may be useful.

A mobile project whose sites included a well-used (by a wide age range) town centre play area with a paddling pool, and some poorly-maintained (dare one

HEARING THE VOICES OF CHILDREN

Select Committee of Young People on Child Rights, UK The Foreign Office had never seen anything like it. An audience of adults and young people trooped through to the Locarno Room in the early afternoon of Wednesday 24 November for the first ever Children's Select Committee (CSC) Hearing. After weeks of preparation, including last minute public speaking lessons, the Committee of 16 young people finally sat down to put their findings to high-level representatives of the Governmental, Business and Non-Governmental sectors.

Olara Otunnu, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, gave some background on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in his opening remarks.

CHILD SOLDIERS

The CSC then introduced their first topic: Child Soldiers. After reading testimonies of children from countries like Colombia and Uganda, the Committee asked Olara Otunnu and other experts for their views as witnesses. Having looked at the particular situations in Sierra Leone and Uganda, and touched on the role of the UN, the Committee turned to the panel. Anab Nur from London pressed Peter Hain on the Age of Recruitment, while Sean McGrath of Sheffield expressed his concerns about arms brokering.

CHILD LABOUR

The other half of the CSC then came forward to present the second issue: Child Labour. Starting with a video of children working in mines in Burkina Faso, and using evidence they had been sent from children in India and Zimbabwe, the Committee questioned experts. Rahim Sattar of Leicester led the questions to the panel, asking why it so often seemed that money came before children's rights.

DRAMATIC

After a break for drinks, the Brighton Youth Theatre opened the second half with their dramatic poem Babes in the Wood. This was followed by a slide-show put together by Committee members Jimmy Digby and Laura MacLennan both from Middlesex.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The third issue was Children's Rights and the Environment. In her introduction, Heather



say it, neglected) equipment, in an area of under-provision of public space, faced the problem that the local authority wanted the space for a car park. They offered a space nearby one third of the area and restricted to under-12's.

There was a considerable public protest - the area had a lot of sentimental significance in the town - and an action committee formed. One of the local play project's issues was consultation of children which the action group felt was best handled by the project as the group having most contact with the children using the site. The project sounded children out about their views and then discussed how best to take the issues forward so that as many children as possible would be able to make their views known.

The local authority's response to questions about consultation was to point to an exhibition at the Town Hall outlining the plans, and enabling the children to choose on important aspects - "which colours do you want the swing seats?" but not, do you want to lose the old area?

The action group discovered a little-promoted provision of the UK's 1972 Local Government Act, the power of electors to call Parish Meetings and thence a Parish Poll, at public expense - this applies only in areas which are parished. [The action group went on to become a group which later called another poll, on whether the local authority ought to exist at all] Such polls are not binding, but they are a very potent means of putting an electorate's views to local politicians and officials.

"WHY NOT OUR OWN POLL?"

When children learnt that there was to be a poll, they asked at the play project why they could not take part. This was duly explained and one of them asked "Why can't we have our own children's poll?"

Hence an idea was born which the play project, with the children's input, developed. The questions were framed with reference to those on the adult poll (to ensure some points of contact between both polls), and to enable the wide age range of understanding to be included. There were careful discussions about ensuring children had access to all sides of the issue and to inform them about the exhibition.

The children's poll was called on the same day as the adult one - the mobile project proved an ideal polling station, on the site. The poll was promoted with the adult one in the local press. The hours were chosen to reflect the adult poll (afternoon/evening) and school time (after-school).

No one knew what to expect - the Town Hall opened its doors and a steady stream came to register their votes. The children's poll was manned by project staff who had strict guidelines about briefing children. Their poll paper had simple questions on it which were choices - the project staffs' role was to show them how to complete the form in private (not what to put down) and then how to record their vote.

"MASSIVE TURNOUT"

Over 400 children came to vote within 3 hours, many with their parents who had gone to vote at the Town Hall - one of the parents said "we want our children to see we care enough about this to vote, and then to be able to do the same if they want to".

The result was heavily in favour of an option to retain the larger site and to invest in its improvement. On both polls.

Predictably, the local authority rubbished the result of the children's poll claiming it was rigged or 'led' (without evidence) but then went on to rely on its own consultation about the colour of seats etc. The children, incidentally, had been made fully aware that the Council did not have to heed their views, so the result was even more remarkable, in terms of turnout and option chosen. [Of course,

Cooper asked why there was no clause in the UNCRC explicitly relating to environmental issues. The Committee then focussed on the Greenhouse Effect, interviewing witnesses from Shell International and Greenpeace. Mike Aaronson of SCF-UK then had to explain why Save the Children did not place more emphasis on these areas.

RESPECT, STRUCTURES AND ACCESS

Finally, the CSC presented its recommendations regarding child participation under the headings Respect, Structures and Access. This began with a video especially made for the Hearing by SCF's office in Burundi, in which a boy spoke about the importance of children having a say. Emma Lloyd from North Wales read a speech composed entirely of young people's jargon and asked the panel to respond. They were stumped. "Now you know how we feel" said Emma. Mark Fried of Buckinghamshire spoke of the importance of using modern technology, but only if everyone has access to it.

NOT A ONE-OFF EVENT?

In their summing-up both Peter Hain and Mike Aaronson made unscripted commitments to ensuring that the Hearing was not a one-off event but would be taken forward in the New Year. Brighton Youth Theatre then performed a loud percussive number that rocked the Foreign Office to its foundations, leaving Mekdes Alemayehu to sum up for the Committee. It is good to hold these sectors to account, she said, but instead of just blaming business and government, we should use our own power to make a difference for children across the world.

The Children's Select Committee Report on Child Rights will be published in mid-January 2000. For further information please contact: *Jonathan Glennie, Save the Children, 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD, Tel: +44 20 7703 5400, Fax: +44 20 7793 7630, Email: j.glennie@scfuk.org.uk*

~~Study finds minority ethnic families with disabled children 'living on the edge'~~

Families from ethnic minority groups experience even greater disadvantage and difficulties in caring for a severely disabled child than their white counterparts, according to research funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

The groundbreaking study, based on interviews with 600 ethnic minority parents of severely



the Council got its way, but that is not the point - which was about proper consultation.]

VIDEO YOUR OWN RESPONSE

The foregoing is one way which has been tried, on a large scale issue. However, there are many other mechanisms, which vary with circumstances, as to their appropriateness. Another tested idea - a group of skaters in their early-mid teens wanted a skate ramp. The local youth leader encouraged them to come in, found some space, and they touted round for some money and donated materials from local businesses to self-build. Their ways and those of the leader soon clashed - eventually some of them went to a local play project which still opened its facilities to them (including a skaters-only session on Sunday afternoons) and where they enjoyed long-term rapport.

Their claims were that the leader charged them 50p a session to skate on what they had built and funded by their own efforts, excluded them from the main centre facilities and yet charged the users of the centre 30p a session. They had also been told that the leader had approached a skate-facility operator in a nearby town to offer the ramp ... The club management had refused to meet a delegation of them to discuss their complaints. The play workers discussed the issues and what the skaters wanted, which was to get their views across.

The play project provided a room where they could meet, and also use of a video camera to record all contributions. The meeting was opportunity for the issues to be rehearsed and discussed - and for debate on 'what next'. They appointed three of their number to view the tape and to draw up a list of points from this process which they could discuss to go to the club management.

The second meeting agreed the points proposed after discussion and a printed list of ten points was agreed and then sent: to the leader, the chairman of the management, and the county youth officer for the area, together with copies of the video tape. The project's role was to provide equipment, word-processing facility and advice, when asked, on who might be appropriate to receive the package.

The result in this case was interesting:

- The leader: the skaters had misunderstood the situation [it is clear enough they had not]
- The management [after meeting the delegation of three]: we affirm our belief in our leader and that everyone pays the same, whether they skate or use the centre in more traditional ways, and the ramp will not be sold
- Youth officer [in lead-up to the above management meeting]: very interesting package, I'll consult quickly and see what can be done. Of course the youth service listens.

A GOOD PLAY PROJECT SHOULD GAIN CHILDREN'S CONFIDENCE

This example illustrates that a good play project can gain the confidence of children (and of the young people they become) to be entrusted with such processes simply by dint of the work undertaken with children, and that the request can be initiated by the children/young people themselves. The issue here is one of response.

Another example - children borrowing video equipment from a play project to show (rather literally!) the problems of dog mess on their informal play areas and space. They used the tape to pass round one another to show to parents whom they wanted to take action - result, a dog bin on site from the local council.

ADULTS NEED LISTENING SKILLS

disabled children, was carried out jointly by researchers at the University of Bradford and the University of York. It found that needs and circumstances varied across different groups. But a range of measures - including household income, support from members of the extended family and unmet care needs - revealed many more problems than a previous national survey of family carers who were mostly white.

Most families had net incomes below £200 a week. Those experiencing the greatest economic disadvantage were lone parent families - a group that included two out of three Black African / Caribbean families. Pakistani and Bangladeshi two-parent families had lower incomes than Black African / Caribbean and Indian two-parent families.

Levels of employment were low, including three out of four mothers who had no work. Black African / Caribbean and Indian mothers were more likely to be in work or say they wanted employment than Pakistani or Bangladeshi mothers. Fewer parents were receiving Disability Living Allowance or Invalid Care Allowance compared with white families previously surveyed. Although all the ethnic minority parents interviewed were caring for a child with severe disabilities, they were less likely to have been awarded benefit at the higher rates.

Parents who understood English well had much higher levels of benefit take-up than those with a limited understanding. Among one in three Asian parents who said they needed translation help when talking to health and social care professionals, a large minority had not been provided with an interpreter.

There was little evidence to support stereotypes suggesting that ethnic minority families generally benefit from extended family support. Fewer mothers received practical and emotional support from partners than white counterparts. Black African / Caribbean and Indian families were especially vulnerable to low levels of extended family support. The most cited reason was that no relatives lived nearby.

Ethnic minority parents reported that their disabled children had many more unmet needs than white families in the earlier survey. Half identified seven or more areas where they needed more support than currently provided. This included help with their child's learning, communication and physical abilities, access to leisure opportunities and learning about culture and religion.

Twice as many ethnic minority parents reported ten or more unmet needs of their own compared with white parents. These included lack of guidance about services and opportunities to acquire skills that could help meet their needs. Many



From this, the role of the adult as enabler and advocate arises for discussion. This need not be a play project's workers - such people, however, perhaps ought to have the listening skills required for such a role as a consequence of the demands of their work. But youth workers, community workers, elected councillors, community activists, and others can take on this role.

It's worth noting that arts projects and facilities can serve children's needs of expression very effectively.

WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES CAN BE CONSULTED UPON

The issue of consultation affects not only play facilities and leisure matters. The UNCRC Article 12 provides for consultation on an unspecified range of issues, and that it be appropriate to the child's level of understanding. So, this will include many crucial issues of national, regional and local government and community. A few (only) suggest themselves:

- the child curfew issue
- imposition of e.g. 'no ball game' rules on local green areas (usually after a minority complaint)
- local plan consultations about planning policy - e.g. provision of open space, play areas etc
- the length of the academic day and the loss of play time in and beyond school hours
- the homework burden
- the state of playgrounds
- the need for traffic calming and home zones
- the location, activities and hours of youth and children's facilities - and threats to these due to cuts
- play in the neighbourhood when complaints come from neighbours

and much, much else

THE AGE QUESTION

Are children too young at a certain age to be asked their views, or to be expected to put them forward without prompting? Any parent encountering a self-willed child (which of them aren't) will have the answer. One may then ask why so many institutions, including those which are there 'for' children find this difficult to answer? The debate may more properly revolve around the relative levels of children's understanding, and, inevitably, of what notice/credence should be attached to their views?

In every respect, in terms of good practice as it relates to children's development, it is acknowledged that the earlier adult society attempts to demonstrate to children the value of responsible and articulate expression of opinion, the better not just for the child as it grows to adulthood to take 'a citizen's role' but also for the whole of a democratic society.

It is interesting perhaps to observe that the general consensus amongst e.g. schools, local authorities etc is that 'youth' needs to be consulted but there is far less recognition, or consideration even, of the possibility of consulting younger children. There are a variety of types of Youth Council in operation around the country, mostly based on one or more schools (which does beg some questions about those excluded from education who may be the young people the community might most need to consult. There is also the perennial question of whether school-based machinery can divorce itself from hierarchical and directive practices inherent in the education system?)

Can this concern for youth consultation be due to adult perception of 'youth' being viewed as potential 'Trouble', or in need of 'diversion' and 'civic education' rather than the value of consultation in its own right? Of course, any good play-

parents said they did not get a break from looking after their child as often as they needed, yet only one in four had access to short breaks.

Professor Waqar Ahmad, now at the University of Leeds, co-author of the report, said: "We know from the previous national survey that financial difficulties, unmet needs and inadequate support networks are common problems among families who care for severely disabled children.

"But this research reveals that there is an added depth and intensity to the problems faced by ethnic minority families which policy makers must take on board as a matter of urgency. Poor communication with professional care services, lack of recognition of parents' needs, as well as lack of support and high levels of economic disadvantage, have left too many of these families living 'on the edge'".

"On the edge: minority ethnic families caring for a severely disabled child" by Rampaul Chamba, Waqar Ahmad, Michael Hirst, Dot Lawton & Bryony Beresford is published by The Policy Press in association with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and obtainable from Biblios Publishers Distribution Services, Star Road, Partridge Green, West Sussex RH12 8LD (01403 710851), price £12.95 plus £2 p&p.

A summary of findings is available, free of charge, from JRF at The Homestead, 40 Water End, York YO30 6WP, or from the JRF Web site here. The needs of disabled children and their families, findings from a previous national survey of families caring for severely disabled children by Bryony Beresford, were published in 1995 and can be found on the Foundation's web site.

For further information, contact: Prof. Waqar Ahmad (author) 0113 233 4835
Bryony Beresford (author) 01904 433596
Michael Hirst (author) 0161-736 2169

The charity HAPA changed its name to Kidsactive on 15

November 1999. This was done in order to reflect the national scope of its activities, and to emphasise the need to include all children in play opportunities.

Graham Powell, the director of Kidsactive had this to say. "The new name sums up our ethos and signals much more clearly what we are about. We like the way the new name doesn't single out 'disability', and instead focuses on activity, play and opportunity for all children."

Playlink has recently been running a



worker will understand that, if young people are going to be 'Trouble', quite often the roots were laid down when younger. Whatever the merits of this debate, children's councils are not promoted - this Fact Sheet does not advocate or oppose them, but points out the lack of any parallel initiatives.

ADULT MODEL MECHANISMS MAY NOT BE APPROPRIATE

It may be that such adult-modelled mechanisms may not be appropriate to the age and understanding of many children. The question then becomes as to what are appropriate means. Only a few have been mentioned, and there are probably as many ways as there are situations requiring consultation of children. The challenge for those working with children and who wish to help them get their views across to those who need to hear them is to find ways acceptable to children and which also will be heeded (but not necessarily agreed) by those who need to understand the importance of such consultation.

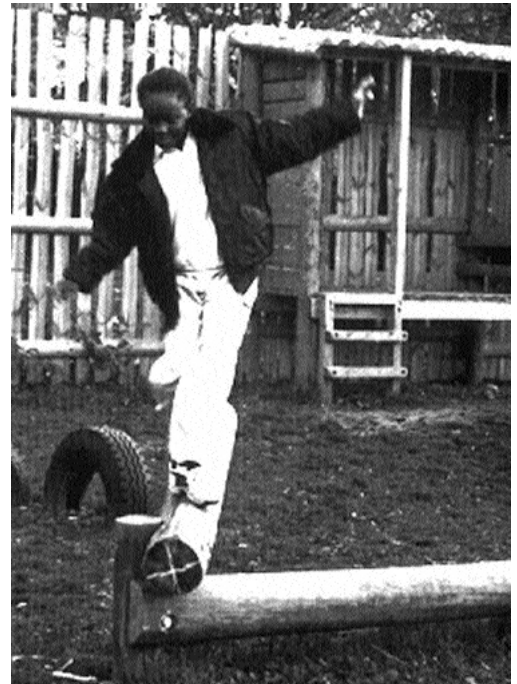
THE INPUT OF PLAY

The current debate about 'social exclusion' may benefit from an input from the direction of children's play. Through play, children constantly experience the necessity to consult, be consulted and to take issues forward within their own circles. From the perspective of play, the promise may be about fostering 'inclusion' at an early age. The central role of the principles of Article 12 must rise to the surface of this debate.

There is a national Article 12 organisation whose aims are to promote children's and young people's right to expression and to be consulted. It is an organisation run by them, and it is working to fulfil its aims across the country. Details from: Article 12, 8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE, Tel: 020 7843 6026, Fax: 020 278 9512, web site: <http://www.article12.uk.com>

Finally, it is important that there is networking and communication around this issue, and Fair Play for Children invites expressions of interest from play workers, youth workers, councillors, MP's, community workers and many others whose interests and work reaches or affect children and young people, especially in the context of their access to their neighbourhoods, the quality of life, the built environment etc.

This Fact Sheet can be obtained from Fair Play for Children at the address on page 1 of this edition, or by viewing it at our Web Site: <http://www.arunet.co.uk/fairplay/> or it can be reproduced with acknowledgement to Fair Play for Children.



series of seminars based around the idea of risk assessment in play settings. The aim is to create connect the risk assessment procedure with the best possible play practice. Much of the workshop/seminar is dedicated to establishing common understanding around key concepts such as reasonableness, risk, children, and play. In addition, by the end of the day each participant will have undertaken a practice risk assessment.

The cost is £450 plus travel expenses. 15-20 maximum for any one session.

Contact Bernard Spiegel at: The Co-op centre. Unit 5 upper 11 Mowll Street London SW9 6BG. Telephone 020 7820 3800. Fax: 020 7735 8709

Visit Fair Play for Children's Web Site.

This wide-ranging and attractive resource is gaining the reputation of being one of the best such sites around. You can read our **Fact Sheets**, Look up **PlayNet Database**, surf the **Web Play Forum** (links to all over the world), read **PlayAction On-Line**, **Join Fair Play!**, Make an **on-line Donation**, **Order publications**, leave your **Childhood Memories of Play**, send an **e-mail to us!**

Web address:

<http://www.arunet.co.uk/fairplay/>

WE ARE LOOKING FOR VOLUNTARY NETWORK CO-ORDINATORS

*in various parts of the country, to work with the National Co-ordinator to develop networking, skills exchange, inclusive play, child protection awareness, internet project and membership growth: North London, London West and Home Counties, South (Hampshire, Surrey, non-coastal areas of East and West Sussex etc), West Midlands, North (Cumbria, North Lancs etc). We are also seeking voluntary County Co-ordinators to work within existing Fair Play regional network areas with priority for: Greater Manchester, Birmingham, South Yorkshire, Hampshire, Cheshire (but any other offers equally welcome). Expenses are payable. The area and commitment are entirely negotiable. The person can work from home or as part of a Fair Play member project willing to host. **Contact: National Co-ordinator at the address on Page 1.***



VOLUNTEERING IN PLAY

VOLUNTEERING - THE CHALLENGE TO INCLUDE

[This article appeared in a recent edition of 'Volunteering' also]

The current, fashionable newspeak which banishes the phrase 'social exclusion' around so freely leads me to beg a simple question for Volunteering:

How do we at one and the same time ensure volunteering is inclusive and not exploitative, e.g. in terms of coercing people to conform to agendas which "are good for them".

If one is 'included', the access to opportunities for freely chosen voluntary action is taken for granted. A secure lifestyle of employment, income, relationships, family stability, community recognition and 'place' - this will militate in your favour. The 'gift relationship' implicit in volunteering can operate in its true, mutual expression: I am recognised to have something to give (talents, time, skills, experience, 'respectability' etc), and I also benefit (further recognition including additions to those elements).

ELEMENTS OF INCLUSION

By dwelling on the elements of inclusion, perhaps we can look at what creates exclusion - without the included, there would be no excluded. It comes down, very fundamentally, to attitude. A simple illustration from my 'portfolio'. Some years ago, the mobile play project where I am a volunteer was asked by parents and the local council to run a Saturday Club on a 'challenged' estate. [In passing, let me observe that residing on a 'back-end' estate in an otherwise very affluent area is one of the worst forms of exclusion - for example, what I think is very likely to be the poorest estate in the whole County has only ever had one community resource regularly inputting over 15 years - the same mobile play project - yet housing, social services and education know full well the extent of low income, family stress, single parentage especially amongst the young, unemployment, under-employment, low skills and low self-image.]

The local authority provided premises in a wooden hut, with a ramp, but little else by way of disability access. Like most children's community projects, we had to operate in a situation not really ideal (British understatement at work). Yet, we soon found a ready clientele of children from estate families, and not least a surprising number of parents of children with a range of disabilities. Their constant story was: no one will take our children. "We're used to the excuses - staff numbers, unsuitable accommodation, lack of facilities and equipment - and we have serious doubts about the habit of lumping all disabled children into one huge summer scheme as if there is one state, disability, rather than many, varied conditions." Yet we somehow managed to fully include a number of children with special needs - six out of twenty regular attenders.

ATTITUDE AND EMPATHY - THE KEY

The key in my experience was attitude, which starts with being able to empathise with the parents as well as the children. Getting inside someone else's situation and perspective.

If this sounds glib, believe me, I suggest it is far from simple, and to be successful, such an attitude has to be based in some realism about how other people live, how they have to live.

Two years or so back, I attended a local government councillors conference so that we could be blessed and briefed by the great and the good. Ministers wanted us on board their new vision for the New Deal. In a seminar, with the traditional image of the excluded firmly before us - young, or long-term male

PLAYWORK EVENTS AND TRAINING

The following are Fair Play for Children and member organisation activities undertaken in association with or on behalf of Fair Play:

Ongoing - **Child Protection in a Playwork Setting Training events** organised by Fair Play, often in partnership with local authorities, play forums etc. The format can be varied, and tailored to audience needs. Major themes include Definition of Ownership of the Issue, Creating child protection awareness and policy, defining support for playworkers, listening to children, special needs requirements, case studies. Contact Fair Play at our main address.

Ongoing - **The Leisure Centre** Unit 107 Camberwell Commercial Centre, 99-103 Lomond Grove, London SE5 7HN Tel 0171 701 2611. Janet runs various skills training courses including Australian Arts & Crafts, Banners & Posters and String Games and Knotting. Recent/forthcoming activities include Hands-On, Round the World Board and Hand Games, Celtic Arts. Advice on Resources, leaflets on aspects of Play - recently, Rural Play.

Ongoing- **Ethel Swann**, 4 Church Close, Daybrook, Nottingham NG5 6HZ. Tel 0115 926 7150. A workshop and skill share for adults working with children. Covers a whole range of issues from arts and crafts activities to exchanging ideas for play and working with volunteers. Prices £25 per session of voluntary groups excluding travel and some materials. Local Authorities and Full-time funded projects - negotiable

FEBRUARY 2000

Play 2000 1-2 February 2000, Sheffield. ILAM Services Events Team, ILAM House, Lower Basildon, Reading RG8 9NE, Tel: 01491-874854, Fax: 01491-874801, e-mail: events@ilam.co.uk

From Awareness to action 1st February 2000, Barbican Centre, London. Children abused through prostitution - children who are abused through prostitution need the same protection and rights as any other children. The aim is to bring together representatives from a wide range of disciplines and sectors to consider implementation of new Government guidelines. £100+VAT. Contact: **Barnardos**, Tanners Lane, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1QG. Tel: 020-8550 8822, Fax: 020-8550 0429, e-mail: barnardos_conferences@compuserve.com, web site: www.barnardos.org.uk

Spell One Workshop 16th February 2000, Chester. Training Programme introduced by National Autistic Society to maximise life and learning opportunities for children and adults with autism/Asperger syndrome. £80 professional, £60 Parents. **National Autistic Society**, 4th Floor, Castle Heights, 72 Maid Marion Way, Nottingham NG1 6BJ, Tel: 0115-911 3363, Fax: 0115-911 3362, e-mail: training@nas.org.uk



VOLUNTEERING IN PLAY

unemployed, kicking around doing sweet FA and drawing benefit - we were assured the New Deal was a new way forward. The old dispensation was to be swept away - we all know the story I attempted to engage the Minister about the role of voluntary action in this new schema, based on my own period of unemployment and observation of how the system treats those who are excluded and having to seek benefit.

COMPULSION IS NOT VOLUNTEERING

Was compulsion, in the sense of threat of suspension of benefit, compatible with true volunteering - i.e. a freely chosen decision to become involved? How would this work with the ones least likely to volunteer, and most excluded? Supposing - that is the word - that such government programmes had the effect of chasing a large proportion of the most excluded from the dole queue - whether to employment or just 'off' we won't dwell on. Are these the people whom we expect to volunteer in the future?

It is true, many people have benefited from various employment and voluntary action initiatives - I still have a soft spot for Community Action and Opportunities for Volunteering has surely proven its worth. But until attitudes of the included towards the excluded alter we are not going to see any radical change in the profile of the volunteer.

Some years back, my project recruited under a government programme's funding for an employed position. We had a range of candidates with the expected variety of skills and experience. One young guy turned up with a bright pink mohican, several earrings to the ear, and a quite obvious inability to relate to the interview committee. The usual questions were fired, the blank response, and 'the looks on the faces'. For some reason - instinct I guess - I thought there was 'something there', and that it was what the children would like rather than what the worthy felt suitable. At a very strained moment, I said "Paul, tell us about the things which really interest you - not work necessarily". His response was immediate and very interesting - enough to make a core of us stand firm that he was what we needed - give him a chance. "Parents will be alarmed about having such a person". "I'm sure he's very nice really, but there is image." "What sort of message are we going to send to the children."

Well, I can't think of anyone who was better loved by the children. The lesson we learnt, as applicable to volunteers as employed, was all about the image we gave off when someone came to seek work with us, paid or not. Also, as with Ade, whom everyone called 'Hippy' (who preceded Paul on the Young Ones), the recognition that, whilst the Department of Employment might dearly wish he worked and was not a burden on the exchequer, this ongoing relationship with Her Majesty's civil servants had no bearing on his place as a volunteer. His skills, outlook, life style etc were only of interest in so far as he related to the kids for whom we exist as a project. Maybe he worked 'on the side', maybe some people though him shiftless and idle. Yet we found him 'memorable' and valued. His exploits were legendary.

Take Simon - a very troubled young man, introduced to us by one of the myriad job training agencies which sprang up in the Thatcher Years of Quangos: the Teach You To Walk and Talk At the Same Time Syndrome. [I remember one compulsory course: you have to be here, for certain hours; we have to go through this process and programme as laid down; it has to last so many days - but we could all do this within two days.] Simon had seen them all - he was at the end of the line. He walked from so many placements - they found him irascible, impatient, angry, unco-operative. Yet the agency's placement officer had a gut feeling that Simon had talents which could not only benefit himself (her main concern) but could be of value in the community.

We won't go into Simon's personal life - well, suffice it to say that, when we talk about social exclusion, we might well lay much at the door of family life and relationships, as well as community expectation. Come to think of it - wouldn't you be angry if you were Simon? So often, volunteering is seen by the voluntary organisation as "what can we get from the volunteer". As with Paul, the lesson

MARCH 2000

New Playwork, New Thinking? 2nd Theoretical Playwork Meeting Maltings Conference Centre, Ely, UK. Cutting edge discussions. Details: *PlayEducation, 13 Castlehythe, Ely, Cambs CB7 4BU, Tel/Fax: [00 44] [0]1353 661294 e-mail: played@dial.pipex.com*

Resourcing Play Friday 24th March 2000, Hayes Conference Centre, Swawick Hayes, Alfreton, Derbys. Conferences for childcare providers and others committed to providing play activities and opportunities in the East Midlands. Organised by East Midlands Fair Play for Children and North Derbyshire Childcare Clubs Network. £15 childcare worker rate, £100 statutory agency rate. *Details: Jane Galloway, NDCCN, Manor College, Ashgate Road, Chesterfield, Derbys S40 4AA, Fax: 01246-558180. Creche on 1st come 1st served basis.*

JUNE 2000

World Congress on Child and Play Therapy. 19, 20, 21 June 2000. Trinity College Dublin

Major Conference on Play 13-14 June 1999, NEC, Birmingham Nature of Play, importance in children's development, play deprivation and its consequences, play in the curriculum, play for children with disabilities, resources for play, right to a place to play, sport for all children, play therapy etc. Also Exhibition. *Contact: Association Child Psychology and Psychiatry, St Saviours House, 39/41 Union Street, London SE1 1SD, Tel: 0171-403 7458, Fax: 0171-403 7081*

JULY 2000

NPA Millennium Big Bash! July 3-8. *Details: National Playbus Association, [above]*

AUGUST 2000

World Forum 2000: Children First in the new Millennium 7-11 August 2000. hosted by the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) and the Child & Family Welfare Association of Australia (CAFWAA) in Novotel, Brighton Beach, Sydney *Contact: Sharon Low, World Forum 2000 Organiser at Tel: 61 2 4572 3079, Fax: 61 2 4572 3972, e-mail: sharyn@acwa.asn.au, web site: <http://acwa.asn.au/wf2000/HomePage.html>*

SERIES

TRAINING EVENTS ORGANISED BY ILAM - The Institute of Leisure and Amenity Managers *To obtain full details contact: Carolyn Lewis ILAM Press Office Tel: 01491 874800 or Fax: 01491 874801 Or go to: <http://www.ilam.co.uk>*

January 2000

12 Introduction to new European Standards Venue: Portsmouth This one-day course looks at EN1176 and EN1177. It explains the legal implications of the changes which have occurred.



VOLUNTEERING IN PLAY

was to engage Simon about his own aspirations and interests. To say that we found an incipient computer nerd would be (more) understatement. His willingness to respond to a regime which asked him to develop not only as a computer consultant to the agency but as a social being was the defining issue of his placement. He went onto a very good job in the IT industry, is now married (which is something else I suspect he feared he would fail at), and has much to look forward to.

A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

The lessons? The volunteer experience is a unique opportunity for all of us to value people for what they can really give, and to be valued likewise. The relationship with the volunteer is not 'unpaid employee'. Nor is it 'agent of the government to help reduce dole queues'. The ability to give of oneself in the community, and to be enabled to do so, is one of the key defining issues of a fully inclusive society. That is why Volunteering needs its Capital Letter, and its clear independence from other agendas.



DIGEST

The battery children. *Valentine Low.* - *The Evening Standard*, 2/9/99. [1/W10]. The growing concern about children being kept indoors and not interacting with others. Studies have shown that children are healthier, wealthier and better educated than before but some are concerned at the pressures being put on children to succeed at school. The article also looks at the growing gap between children of two parent families who are in full time employment and those

children from single parent families with low paid or no work. According to the Mental Health Foundation the number of children with mental illness has risen to one in five.

'There is always hope working with children'. *Melanie McDonagh.* *The Times*, 27/7/99. [2/W10]. The work of Dr Lynne Jones a psychiatrist working with the child victims of Kosovo. She has great experience in treating children's mental scars caused through conflict and before Kosovo she worked in Bosnia with a small British aid agency, Child Advocacy International. One child's experience makes for a horrifying read, Esad is just over 17 and was witness to a massacre by Serb police of upto 150 men and boys from the ages of 14 to 70. "The police surrounded us and took the people under the age of 40, and put us in a building with just a roof. They were laughing at us. There were in my group about 100 people. They separated us in tens. I heard shooting. I heard men being executed. They made us stand in a line. I was in the middle and they started shooting at the ends of the line. I was hit in the shoulder and the leg, and I fell. I couldn't feel my arm. They killed us one by one. Everyone was killed except me."

Drunken thug in headbutt assault on girl, 4. *Stuart Griffiths.* *The Daily Record*, 16/10/99. [3/W10]. A sickening attack, in which a drunk headbutted a girl of four, has led to calls for children to be given the same level of protection under the law as adults. The assault by 26 year old Jason McDermid took place in July at the Macdonald's restaurant in Queensway, East Kilbride. A spokeswoman for Children First said. "Children must have the same protection from assault as adults. It is never appropriate to hit children."

School at four cuts children's chances. *Martin Bright.* *The Observer*, undated. [4/W10]. New research from America is likely to add more fuel to the debate

It looks in detail at new requirements for both equipment and management. A practical on-site visit will look at implications to typical existing items.

February 2000

1-2 *Play 2000* Venue: Sheffield The second year of ILAM's national seminar dedicated to children's play issues, which will be held at the Ponds Forge International Sports Centre in Sheffield. The conference programme will consider the latest issues affecting the play sector and will be supported by an exhibition of the latest products and developments in children's play.

8 *Inspecting Children's Playgrounds* Venue: Slough This practical course provides the necessary skills required to understand and undertake inspections of children's outdoor playground equipment.

22 *Risk Assessment for Children's Playgrounds* Venue: Manchester Risk assessment is a statutory requirement of the Management of the Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1992). ILAM, in conjunction with RoSPA, are arranging training to enable managers to prepare their risk assessments to embrace all aspects of this requirement. The training covers site design, site environment, ancillary items, nearby hazards, play equipment and safer surfacing, the variation between the new European Standards (BS EN 1176 and BS EN 1177) and the replaced Standards (BS 5696, BS 7188 and DIN 7926).

YOUNG MINDS SEMINARS 2000

26 January *Working Together on the Front Line* To increase understanding of how to promote mental health in children and young people and to support those suffering mental health problems. London

9 February *Looking after the mental health of looked-after children* Exploring the background to the behavioural difficulties and emotional distress of looked-after children, and the development of multi-agency services to tackle these issues. Birmingham.

29 February *Adolescent turmoil: is it normal?* Focusing on child development in the adolescent years, the difficulties encountered and possible interventions. Leeds

8 March *Coping with Aggression and Challenging Behaviour* In depth look at how to avoid or defuse/diffuse potentially difficult situations. Manchester

22nd March *Separate lives: the impact of divorce on the emotional life of children* Looks at the potential impact of divorce on children, the problems of the child's perspective, ways of coping and recognising what adults can do to help. Manchester

4th April *Looking after the mental health of looked-after children* see 9th February Bristol

13th April *Coping with Aggression and Challenging Behaviour* see 8th March.



EVENTS & DIGEST

between those who believe in early formal education, and those who adopt a more play based approach. A study, carried out by the High Scope Foundation, a Michigan based charity. Found that children who had come from backgrounds where they were pushed into formal education at four or five, were more likely to have high crime levels, and that as adults they were more likely to stay unmarried, and to have difficulty holding down jobs.

Children of divorces held back by guilt. *Richard Reeves. The Observer, 4/7/99. [5/WIO].* New research carried out by the National Stepfamily Association, (NSA), has shown that although children are becoming increasingly relaxed about divorce, and remarriage. They are still being held back by parental guilt and shame. This is often due to the fact that adults have built a 'wall of silence', around this issue.

Abusers facing jail if they work with children. *Alexandra Frean. The Times, 28/7/99. [6/WIO].* A new government initiative means that child abusers could face up to five years in jail if they apply for or take up jobs working with children. Employers who take on somebody they know to be banned from working with children could also be prosecuted under the new measures. They would also be subject to a maximum of five years in prison, an unlimited fine, or both. The category of people banned from working with children will be extended to anyone who has been jailed for more than a year for serious offences against children. Bans on such people would be reviewed after ten years and would only be lifted if the offender could demonstrate, "exceptional circumstances".

Bullying fears spoil holidays. *Dr Thomas Stuttaford. The Times, 5/8/99. [7/WIO].* Recent research has revealed that two of the greatest fears children experience on transferring from primary to secondary schools is the fear of getting lost, and the fear of bullying. The University of Edinburgh's faculty of education has begun an anti bullying network, together with an anti-bullying information line, the line is funded by the Scottish Executive, and will be open on weekdays from, 9.30am to 12.30pm and 2pm to 4.30 pm.

Dome bars under-16s without an adult. *Mark Henderson. The Times, 22/9/99. [8/WIO]* In a move sure to anger many, children under 16 have been banned from visiting the millennium dome, unless accompanied by an adult. The main reason for this decision is the fear that 'gangs' of unsupervised teenagers could run around causing trouble and spoil other peoples day, (as if). Commenting on this decision Gerison Landsdown of the Children's Rights Office said that this decision was the latest example of how younger teenagers were treated as second class citizens. "Nobody wants 14 and 15 year olds. They are among the most stigmatised and demonised groups in society, which is very depressing. Nobody wants them hanging around in public spaces, but there is nowhere much else for them to go."

Surgeon's disgust at beatings culture. *18/9/99. Christopher Walker. The Times, [9/WIO].* A disturbing piece, which looks at the practice of punishment beatings, carried out by paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland. The senior consultant surgeon for the accident and emergency department of Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital, Lawrence Rocke has treated scores of, if not hundreds of children who have been attacked by the paramilitaries. The favoured weapon for these groups is a club studded with nails, closely followed by baseball bats and pickaxe handles, the damage these weapons can cause is severe and can be permanent. Since this piece was written Sinn Fein has condemned punishment beatings.

States target ten-year olds as hunters. *Ben Macintyre. The Times, 20/11/99. [10/WIO].* In a move to attract more people into gun ownership, the National Rifle Association (NRA), have begun working with officials in a number of American states, to encourage children as young as ten to hunt and kill. The NRA is providing resources for state wildlife programmes to promote youth programmes for hunting pheasant, rabbit, deer, ducks, and even wild pigs. According to the anti gun group Handgun control, around 5,000 American children are killed by guns, with four more wounded for every child killed. In Britain by comparison, guns claim the lives of fewer than 20 children.

London

10th May *Working Together on the Front Line*
see 26th January Birmingham

25th May *Working Together on the Front Line*
see 26th January Leeds

14th June *Adolescent turmoil: is it normal?*
see 29th February Manchester

28th June *Separate lives: the impact of divorce on the emotional liife of children* see
22nd March Birmingham

5th July *Looking after the mental health of looked-after children* see 9th February
London

11th October *Working Together on the Front Line* see 26th January Cardiff

31st October *Coping with Aggression and Challenging Behaviour* see 8th March.
Birmingham

8th November *Separate lives: the impact of divorce on the emotional liife of children* see
22nd March. Leeds

23rd November *Working Together on the Front Line* see 26th January Manchester

13th December *Adolescent turmoil: is it normal?* see 8th March. London

*Information from Young Minds Training Service,
102-108 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1M
5SA. Tel: 020-7336 8445, Fax: 020-7336
8446, e-mail: training@youngminds.org.uk*

WHAT IS A CENTRE FOR CURIOSITY & IMAGINATION: HOW TO SET UP UP IN YOUR LOCAL AREA

12th January Sheffield

2nd February Birmingham

14th March Newcastle

*Details from: Alison Coles, KCN, Bellerive House, 3 Muirfield Crescent, London E14 9SZ.
Tel: 020 7522 6919, Fax: 020 7512 2020,
e-mail: Alison.Coles@kidsclubs.co.uk*

HAVING YOUR SAY ON PLAYWORK EDUCATION AND TRAINING: REGIONAL EVENTS

"*Having Your Say on Playwork Education and Training*" is a series of regional events taking place across England organised by the Joint National Committee on Training for Playwork in partnership with the SPRITO Playwork Unit and other local partners.

North West: 13th January Deanne Allen 0161 227 9737, **North East:** 25th Jan Jackie Martin 0191 215 6238, **Yorkshire and Humber:** 24th January Mark Gladwin 01904 628896, **West Midlands:** 19th Jan Haki Kapasi 0121 429 3202, **East Midlands:** TBA Wendy Russell 0115 841 2387, **East:** 28th January Heather Hunter 01844 290937, **South East:** 7th Feb Meynell 01323 738380, **Greater London:** TBA Gill Gibson 0181 800 4134, **South West:** 26th Jan Paul Dielhenn 0117 954 2128



The tribal wisdom of the Dakota Indians, passed on from one generation to the next, says that when you discover that you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount. But in modern business, because heavy investment factors are taken into consideration, other strategies are often tried with dead horses, including the following:

1. Buying a stronger whip.
2. Changing riders.
3. Threatening the horse with termination.
4. Appointing a committee to study the horse.
5. Arranging to visit other sites to see how they ride dead horses.
6. Lowering the standards so that dead horses can be included.
7. Reclassifying the dead horse as "living-impaired".
8. Hiring outside contractors to ride the dead horse.
9. Harnessing several dead horses together to increase speed.
10. Providing additional funding and/or training to increase the dead horse's performance.
11. Doing a productivity study to see if lighter riders would improve the dead horse's performance.
12. Declaring that the dead horse carries lower overhead and therefore contributes more to the bottom line than some other horses.
13. Rewriting the expected performance requirements for all horses.
14. Promoting the dead horse to a supervisory position.

Don't call us

FROM DAWN PRIMAROLO'S OFFICE

"I am writing as Dawn Primarolo MP regularly receives the PlayAction newsletter. Regrettably, at the present time, Ms Primarolo has no need of this information for her constituency work, and any information she needs for her Ministerial duties she will get through private office. If she needs a briefing from you in the future, she will contact you. In the interests of savings resources, staff time and the cost of postage, I would be grateful if you could remove her details from your circulation list. Thank you very much indeed."

OPEN REPLY - done through this medium to save extra staff time, postage etc

Dear Ms Primarolo's Assistant,

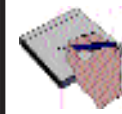
It is not so much a case of what the Honourable Minister thinks she needs, so much as what she may actually need to know. Selective Democracy is fine for those who want to filter what's convenient to hear, but, alas, Fair Play has not yet cottoned on to this New form of New Representative Democracy. Who knows, if she reads it, she may find out some things she might not, for all her wisdom, know yet. Forgive us if we dare to send more editions unbidden.

.... we'll be calling YOU

The Times, 7th September 1999



Letters



In the summer issue of Play Action 99, there was an article in the Freedom to Play section on the "loss of innocence". Following from that I noticed an article in The Observer (Sunday 1st August 99), entitled "Tag your child" plan launched, the title almost speaks for itself.

Whilst preventing abduction is something we are all concerned with, how far can you go without damaging children's social and psychological well being in terms of anxiety? As Jennie Lindon in "Too safe for their own good?" points out, there is a very low statistical risk of your child being grabbed or abducted."

A recent report from a mental health foundation found that one in five children were suffering from some form of depression attributed this to fear projected on to them by their parents. Researchers have discovered, after an intensive two-year study on adolescents and children that those kept indoors were more susceptible to eating disorders and psychotic illness.

Of course saying to the parents of Jamie Bulger that children should be given more freedom would naturally be upsetting and against their personal experience, but most attacks and abuse are carried out by those known to the children, and so a siege mentality has to be argued against. However, some measures have to be put in to place, of course by far the best one would be to have safe and secure open access provision readily available throughout the country, which would also tackle a lot of other problems, but failing that.

Society as a whole should have a greater sense of community awareness and be more supportive, instead of intolerant, of children playing in open spaces. As well, we should be more willing to challenge or keep an eye open for those acting inappropriately around children. There are no easy answers, and unfortunately, there will probably always be attacks and abductions, but with the right measures and a change in adult attitudes, the situation will hopefully improve.

Ken McCormick

We welcome Letters to PlayAction. Please send them by Post, e-mail (love this method!), Fax, Pony Express etc to the contacts in the credits box on Page One. All communications must bear the Name, address and Tel No of the writer.