



PlayAction Autumn 2001

Child Curfews: the Slippery Slope Just Got Steeper

With the coming into force of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001, Britain has taken a further step in the restriction of the liberties of a section of its population simply on grounds of age. The new Act amends sections 14 and 15 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 whose provisions allow local authorities to introduce curfews on children aged 10 and under, subject to the agreement of the Home Secretary. The new amended version (sections 48 and 49 of the 2001 Act) raises the age of children who can be curfewed to 15 years and under, and also enables 'a chief officer of police' to make such a scheme, again with the Home Secretary's say-so.

PlayAction has obtained a copy of 'Local Child Curfews Guidance Document Working Draft' which sets out how and why such schemes can be implemented. It is an alarming and damning document - it shows an unimaginative, oppressive and all-children-are-potential-offenders mentality.

Consultation ... and non-consultation

The guidance states that it has been prepared following a consultation exercise with representatives of local authority Chief Executives, Chief Officers of Police, Directors of Social Services, the Local Government Association and a range of organisations 'with an interest' in children and young people. These are not listed - Fair Play was not one of them, needless to say. In these days, those who oppose Government laws being introduced seemingly find themselves simply overlooked.

But one section of the community, of the nation not consulted in any way, shape or form are the very people [people in case we forget] who are the proposed subjects of these curfew powers now being handed out to councils and the police. Yet, Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (signed up to by Britain with all the usual self-congratulation) states as follows (so there is no chance we can be accused of mirespresenting what the UK is pledged to do):

"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 the age and maturity of the child."

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

There is nothing ambiguous about it, and there has been no exercise to fulfil Article 12's requirements by this illiberal Government. Further tests of its commitment to the Convention's requirement will be at the stage when a council or a police force seeks to introduce a curfew in a given locality. The guidance gives no indication at all that children and young people should be consulted in a meaningful way. A list of typical consultees is given - the 'usual suspects' such as: social services, education, youth offending teams, health authority, probation, youth service and voluntary organisations with an interest in children's issues and community safety. Also other individuals or groups who have a useful contribution to make - it says "In Hamilton - in Scotland where a curfew-style scheme was introduced without a specific curfew power - young people were consulted fully [from what age?] and a questionnaire sent to local schools, parents, youth organisations and representatives of young people" but it does not specify what happens when young people object to their liberty being curbed when they have not committed an offence. The guidance does suggest



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that "Consultation should not be simply as a precursor to a possible curfew scheme. It is an essential part of the process of engaging the local community, including children and young people, in the ownership and resolution of local problems".

Doubly-Mystifying Miserable Legislation

One is inclined to ask how the framers of this whole miserable legislation believe that they can engage children and young people in these terms by a process which will lead to them being arbitrarily restricted from freedom of movement and association from anytime from 9pm onwards - for periods up to 90 days, renewable - whether or not they have committed an offence. It is doubly-mystifying as the guidance reminds readers that "for individuals under 10 who are particularly at risk, the Child Safety Order remains an option. For those aged 10 and over Anti Social Behaviour Orders are available".

What this says effectively is: if there is a real case against individual children and young people, there is a legal process which will enable their bad behaviour to be tackled. Where there isn't (and maybe hard evidence sufficient for one or other of these types of Order is lacking), then the curfew becomes a catch-all, designed to "sweep the streets". After all, if individual offending children cannot be nabbed, getting all the little darlin's off the street is another way, isn't it?

True Motivation Revealed: "Sweep the Streets"

The true motivation of the curfew legislation is shown in the guidance's question and answer "What is a local child curfew scheme designed to do?" "It has a dual purpose:

* it aims to protect the community from alarm and distress caused by groups of young people involved in anti-social behaviour at night

* it also aims to protect children and young people from risks of being unaccompanied on the streets late at night - risks of older peers encouraging them into criminal activities, or from adults such as pimps and drug dealers."

So, the first purpose is the "sweep the streets" motivation. When consultation to start such a scheme in any area begins, it will be because there is a perceived problem. But, whose perception will be liable to have to greater weight? The residents, or sometimes a minority of residents, who object to children and young people 'hanging around', maybe making a noise, and often in an ongoing conflict with young people - or the young people who see their wish to 'hang around' being no problem? When incidents are exaggerated - this writer has seen quite blatant lying by some people to the police, for example, to get them to act under existing powers - who will be believed?

What will be regarded as anti social behaviour? There is no legal definition so it will be subjective and arbitrary. And, if it is anti social behaviour, why not use the measures already available, as the guidance reminds us? Could it be that this might be a mite inconvenient for those determined to see kids effectively under house restriction but who cannot prove their case? It is a truism that securing restrictions on people's liberty has to be accompanied by solid proof of wrong doing in any civilised society - or, it used to be the case in Britain until this squalid law was framed and passed by a Government playing to the gallery.

The second justification is equally bizarre and unfair - lock up the victim to protect him from the people who cause risk, in case he becomes an offender in turn. What kind of jurisprudence can run on that basis? Granny becomes a mugger?

The conclusion one draws is that this law is there because the Government, the Police, local government and everyone else cannot find means to tackle the problems of youth crime and offending, so a "round 'em all up" law is brought in.

Remember When?

Close your eyes and go back in time...

Before the internet or the Apple Mac.

Before semi-automatics, joyriders and crack...

Before SEGA or Super Nintendo...

Way back.....

I'm talking about Hide and Seek in the park.

The corner shop.

Hopscotch.

Butterscotch.

Skipping.

Handstands.

Football with an old can.

Fingerbobs.

Beano, Twinkle.

Roly Poly,

Hula Hoops, jumping the stream, building dams.

The smell of the sun and fresh cut grass.

Bazooka Joe Bubble gum.

An ice cream cone on a warm summer night from the van that plays a tune -

Chocolate or vanilla or strawberry or maybe Neapolitan,

perhaps a screwball.

Wait.....

Watching Saturday morning cartoons...

short commercials, The Double Deckers,

Road Runner, He-Man, Tiswas or Swapshop?,

and Why Don't You

or staying up for Star Trek.

When around the corner seemed far away and going in town seemed like going somewhere.

Earwigs, wasps and bee stings.

Sticky fingers.

Cops and Robbers, Cowboys and Indians, and Zorro.

Climbing trees.

Building igloos out of snow banks.

Walking to school, no matter what the weather.

Running till you were out of breath, laughing so hard that your stomach hurt.

Jumping on the bed. Pillow fights.

Spinning around, getting dizzy and falling down was cause for giggles.

Being tired from playing...remember that?

The worst embarrassment was being picked last for a team.

Water balloons were the ultimate weapon.

Football cards in the spokes transformed any bike into a motorcycle.

Choppers and Grifters.

I'm not finished just yet...

Eating raw jelly. Orange squash ice pops.

Remember when...

There were two types of trainers - girls and



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It is no use the Government justifying its enactment by reference to Hamilton - there it is claimed that "78% of 1,200 schoolchildren from the Hamilton area contacted believed the objectives and initiatives were sound". An unjust, illiberal law remains that whatever you do to justify it.

It is very revealing that the guidance also admits that "in the first six months 200 children were removed from the streets. Only four were charged with a criminal offence." (It doesn't say whether they would have been charged or not without such an initiative.) Nor does the guidance reveal the history of Hamilton - that in its first year, with a heavy-handed approach, the initiative caused confrontation between youths and police. Only when a new approach was adopted - that of providing the quality facilities the kids needed in their community - were the police able to divert to more acceptable behaviours.

Further justification that crime and disorder complaints (justified or otherwise) fell by 23% and 22% respectively and crimes particularly associated with juveniles by 49% does not elucidate how many children and young people NOT engaged in such activities were denied their liberty and freedom of association.

Human Rights? What on earth do you mean, kids have Human Rights?

The guidance has a paragraph dealing with the issue of human rights and admits a curfew scheme would place restrictions on children's liberty, freedom of association and assembly and right to privacy. The Government must be conscious of the obligations it has under the European Convention on Human Rights, now incorporated into our law (50 years after we signed up to it) in the Human Rights Act.

In the Convention, there are absolute rights and also conditional rights. The former are straightforward - these rights are without any question or modification. One of these is the right to liberty and security (Article 5) which says "No one shall be deprived of his liberty save in the following cases and in accordance with a procedure prescribed by law" and lists 5 such cases: such as lawful detention after conviction by a court; lawful arrest or detention of a person to bring him before a court on suspicion of having committed an offence or to prevent his committing an offence or fleeing after having done so; detention of a minor for educational supervision or to bring him before the competent legal authority; detention to prevent spread of disease, or of persons of unsound mind, alcoholics, drug addicts or vagrants; and arrest to prevent unauthorised entry into the country. It also says that those arrested on suspicion of an offence should be brought before a judge, and that anyone deprived of his liberty by arrest or detention shall be entitled to take proceedings by which the lawfulness of the detention shall be decided speedily, and compensation shall be payable if detained in contravention of this provision.

But the guidance itself makes clear that, although the scheme gives police clear powers to take any child in breach of a local child curfew and who they believe to be at risk, home to their parents, there is no criminal penalty! Thus, any child detained under a curfew has a right to be told how this is compliant with Article 5. This daft, oppressive law enables the police to take a child off the streets in contravention of that Article.

Conditional Rights - what is "necessary"

Articles 8 and 11 deal with Rights to Respect for Private and Family Life and with Freedom of Assembly and Association respectively. Article 8 says there is a right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence. This will surely include a child's right that his comings and goings are a matter for his parents and himself, and in this regard one wonders what has happened to parents concerns as regards Article 8? Where is the respect for family life?

Article 11 is clearly in question for a curfew must run counter to the right to free-

boys, and Dunlop Green Flash - and the only time you wore them at school was for P.E.

You knew everyone in your street - and so did your parents.

It wasn't odd to have two or three "best" friends.

You didn't sleep a wink on Christmas eve.

When nobody owned a pure-bred dog.

When 25p was decent pocket money.

When you'd reach into a muddy gutter for a penny.

When nearly everyone's mum was at home when the kids got there.

It was magic when dad would "remove" his thumb.

When it was considered a great privilege to be taken out to dinner at a real restaurant with your parents.

When being sent to the head's office was nothing compared to the fate that awaited a misbehaving student at home. We didn't fear for our lives because of drive-by-shootings, drugs, gangs, etc.

Our parents and grandparents were the biggest threat!

And some of us are still afraid of them!!

Didn't that feel good?

Just to go back and say, Yeah, I remember that!

Remember when...

Decisions were made by going "Ip Dip Dog Ship." (yeah I know)

"Race issue" meant arguing about who ran the fastest.

Money issues were handled by whoever was the banker in "Monopoly".

The worst thing you could catch from the opposite sex was germs.

And the worst thing in your day was having to sit next to one.

It was unbelievable that British Balldog wasn't an Olympic event.

Having a weapon in school, meant being caught with a catapult.

Nobody was prettier than Mum.

Scrapes and bruises were kissed and made better.

Taking drugs meant orange-flavoured chewable aspirin.

Ice cream was considered a basic food group.

Getting a foot of snow was a dream come true.

Older siblings were the worst tormentors, but also the fiercest protectors.

If you can remember most or all of these, then you have LIVED.

Pass this on to anyone who may need a break from the "grown up" life...

I DOUBLE-DARE YOU.

This poem was found on the internet - I hope



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dom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association.

Both of these Rights are subject to caveats that no restrictions or interference by a public authority with their exercise except as allowed by law and are "necessary in a democratic society" in the interests of national security or safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights of others. The guidance indeed has a Convention Check List which asks some pertinent questions such as "Am I interfering with a Convention Right?", "Could what you are doing touch on one of the Convention Rights?", "Is there a victim?", "Are there circumstances when the right can legitimately be limited or interfered with?"

The guidance says such restrictions must be necessary to pursue a legitimate aim and must be proportionate - that is, they should go only to the extent necessary to achieve that aim. Is that what the exceptions to Articles 8 and 11 actually say? "Necessary" must mean that it is **essential**, without question, that such a restriction **must** be imposed. That will mean that it is necessary to restrict the liberty of children and young people who are not committing crime or themselves breaching the Convention Rights of others in order e.g. to prevent crime and disorder. **The argument about 'proportionate' measures appears to this writer to be very dubious indeed - something is 'necessary' or it isn't. Our Government appears to have confused 'necessary' with 'convenient'.**

But here's a Right you missed

Through The Man of Straw's zeal to play to the Crime and Disorder Gallery, in which we now have a law which can effect a 90 day curfew on the young, and whose repeat can be effected by a Council or the Police without further recourse to the Home Secretary, the Home Office lawyers appear to have overlooked one other absolute right under the European Convention. Article 14 says that the rights in the Convention shall be "secured without discrimination on any grounds such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status". How about age?

Imagine, if you will, the furor were we to suggest that, in order to protect them from being victims of crime, that people aged 65 and over should have to be in by, say, 7pm at night. The curfew scheme tackles the wrong people, those who are innocent of any crime or disorder, who are going about their legitimate business, but who are committing the offence of being young. NO OTHER GROUP WOULD BE SUBJECTED TO SUCH A MEASURE IN ORDER TO PREVENT A MINORITY OF THEM COMMITTING CRIME.

The guidance has one other worrying aspect (well, there are many others) - it states that the "overriding aim must be to prevent children from drifting into a life of crime in the first place" and quotes the 1998/99 Youth Lifestyles Survey that the factors most strongly associated with serious and/or persistent offending included family, school and lifestyles choices. In particular, boys who are less supervised by parents are more at risk and having friends who have been in trouble with the police is also highly predictive of serious and persistent offending. Also boys who hang round in public places are more likely to be offenders than those who don't. So, if you're a girl, you could be included in a curfew area ban even if it's the boys who are "causing all the problems". Or, if you are a boy "keeping bad company" or if you are the bad company, that area is more likely to be curfewed - even though the boy in question may have served some penalty for his previous misdeeds. In effect, guilt - and punishment -by association or even double sentence for one offence.... Teach them respect for the law!

Curfew Watch: Your Chance to Help Defend the Rights of our Children

Fair Play for Children instituted Curfew Watch when the original 1998 Act came into effect. But we had nothing to do as NOT ONE COUNCIL WANTED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SCHEME. They all saw there were better ways to

FAIR PLAY FOR CHILDREN



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and promote
THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO
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children!



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tackle the issues, that the under-10's crime scare was little more than Jack Straw's fevered imagination abetted by media elements, and that they would be illiberal and counterproductive. Since this *debacle*, the Government has been pushing this extension and enabling the Police to bring in schemes almost certainly will mean they will be attempted, and that there will be a campaign to justify them with "I like My Curfew" stories, lurid exaggerations of many situations and the effective labelling of whole populations of young people in areas where the problems are caused by individuals not representative of the majority. How convenient it might seem to the powers-that-be that we can stop the problems without having to actually prove there is a crime or convict someone on hard evidence. How handy for Dr and Mrs Nimby who, in my experience, lie through their bloody teeth to exaggerate the behaviour of the young so they can have a quiet life free from "scum" (that's what they called kids with whom I have worked for years, born in the town and simply using a skate area).

Fair Play is therefore re-energising Curfew watch. We ask all readers, Members of Fair Play, supporters of children's rights to take the following steps:

1. Monitor your press, local radio, Council minutes etc for news of proposals to bring in a curfew in your area
2. Inform Fair Play promptly by post, fax, phone or e-mail of such a scheme proposal and send us as much detail as possible, especially names and addresses of key Chief Officers of Police, Council officers or elected Councillors
3. Put any children or young people or their parents who have concerns for the rights being infringed by a curfew scheme in touch with Fair Play
4. Send us any articles, opinions, news etc dealing with curfews and human rights issues
5. Send Fair Play any news of schemes which tackle effectively the issues which curfews are meant to tackle but which do so imaginatively, with consent of children and young people, and without the need to impose restrictions on Articles 5, 8, 11 and 14 of the European Convention
6. Write to your Council and your Chief Officer of Police calling on them to agree that they will not seek to impose such curfews because of concerns about breaches of human rights obligations.

Perhaps we need Curfew FREE areas declared all over Britain? Fair Play wants to see children and young people properly represented in any legal challenge concerning the validity of these measures as measured by compliance with the European Convention - so we would welcome contact from any legal or human rights organisations. So far, we regret to say, we have had no other organisation come on board this concern.

As usual, children's rights in Britain are ignored, even by the 'rights' organisations which usually take up a position. Can it be they are seduced by the Government's law and order claims, by the 'Act of convenience' approach, or are they scared for their "good names" when it comes to a genuine call to oppose a restrictive and illiberal measure? Where are you, Liberty? Children's Rights Alliance? Children's Play Council? National Children's Bureau? National youth organisations? Churches?

Our children's right to play is inextricably tied into this whole issue - freedom of assembly and association, right to privacy, right to liberty and right to be treated equally. Take these from children and What Price the Right to Play?

FAIR PLAY FOR CHILDREN

SOUTHERN AREA CONFERENCE
Saturday 26th October 2001, Chichester

Workshops on Street Games, Child Protect, Health & Safety at Play,
Inclusive Play and much more
PHONE: 01243-869922 or e-mail: fairplay@arunet.co.uk

Open Access Play Good Practice Guide

Help sought

Common Threads Consultancy has been appointed by **PLAYLINK** to produce a good practice guide which will enable open access play providers to meet the new OFSTED requirements. This work is part of the OARS project and is funded by DfES.

They are currently researching examples of good practice and would be grateful for any contacts or ideas of where we could find good open access provision that may be included in the publication. Please could you send any info you think might be useful to info@commonthreads.co.uk - they have a very short deadline (of course!) so any ideas would be gratefully received!

Anybody who wants to know more about the project is welcome to contact them by email or telephone - 07000 785215 (office no.).

Play Work Job Club

Michael Tombs, Fair Play member, has created a UKplayworkers Jobs club at

<http://uk.clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/ukplayworkersjobs>

This club will provide details of individual jobs and will be complemented by the soon to be re-launched UKplayworkers Vacancy Digest.

Contact: Michael Tombs
ukplayworkers.mtombs@tesco.net
Host of UKplayworkers Virtual Community
Host of UKpre-schoolgroups &
UKtoddlergroups Internet Mailing Lists
Fair Play for Children's County Co-ordinator
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Send them - order of preference:

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Computer Games 'Hinder Teen Brain Development'

ACCORDING to a controversial new study computer games are creating a dumbed-down generation of children, who are far more predisposed to violence than their parents generation.

The heightening of aggression levels is not thought to be the tendency to lose control because children absorb the aggression in the computer game itself as previous researchers had thought, but rather to the damage done by stunting the developing mind.



The level of brain activity, using the most sophisticated technology available, was measured in hundreds of teenagers playing a computer game and then compared to brain scans of other students doing a simple, repetitive arithmetical exercise. Brain-mapping expert **Professor Ryuta Kawashima** and his team, at Tohoku University in Japan, were surprised to discover that the computer game only stimulated activity in the brain associated with movement and vision.

Arithmetic exercise, in contrast, stimulated brain activity in both the left and right hemispheres of the frontal lobe - the area of the brain most associated with memory, emotion and learning. What is most concerning and worrying of all is that the frontal lobe, which continues to develop in humans until the age of about 20, plays an important role in keeping an individual's behaviour in check. When you stop yourself from lashing out or doing something you should not, the frontal lobe is hard at work.

Often, children misbehave, do something they shouldn't, because their frontal lobes are under-developed. The more work done to thicken the fibres connecting the neurons to in this part of the brain, the child will have a better ability to control their behaviour. Through stimulating this area, the more the fibres will thicken.

Kawashima said "The importance of this discovery cannot be underestimated; there is a problem we will have with a new generation of children - who play computer games - that we have never seen before. The implications are very serious for an increasingly violent society and these students will be doing more and more bad things if they are playing games and not doing other things like reading aloud or learning arithmetic."

Originally, the idea behind the research was meant to reassure parents that there are hidden benefits to the increasing number of hours children devote to computer games. Kawashima was startled by what he has discovered. He compared brain activity in children playing a Nintendo game with those doing an exercise called the Kraepelin test, which involves adding single-digit numbers continuously for 30 minutes. The students were given very small doses of a radioactive pharmaceutical via an intravenous drip which allows a computer to map a complex picture of the brain at work. Another study was conducted using magnetic resonance imaging.

Both studies found that the high level of brain activity involved in carrying out addition and subtraction was particularly pronounced in the frontal lobe, in both left and right hemispheres. It is often assumed that only the left hemisphere is active for mathematical work and the right for stimulating creative thinking, yet the professor found arithmetic produced high levels in both hemispheres. Reading out loud also proved to be a very effective method of activating frontal lobe activity.

At an annual private learning programme **Kumon Educational UK**, Kawashima

Are Computer Games Damaging Our Youngsters? A Playworker's Perspective

Professor Kawahima's research has some very startling results with regards to potential damage that can be done to youngsters who play computer games.

Should parents panic and ban their children from computer gaming? As with most things, there needs to be a balance struck; too often when a finding like this is made, people tend to go over the top with their reactions. All or nothing. In any case, we are dealing with a massive industry and its marketing power amongst the young.

I have lived all my life with computers, well from about the age of six, when in our house we had a basic Atari 2000 console (you know the one that had that break-out game where you knocked blocks off with a bouncing ball). My friends and I would play it quite often, but it was not the only thing that we did. We were not that sad.

The best thing about my childhood was playing outside with my friends: building camps, playing football, being the only one to stand on the top of the tallest tree as my brother looked up with complete horror - just a few of things I got up to.

The problem for us in today's society is the lack of play the adult world encourages in our children. It is much easier in a world that puts such pressures on adults, in terms of pace of life, for us to find a 'convenient' activity for children to do. Computers provide a cheap baby-sitter.

There's nothing wrong with a child playing computer games *per se*, but it's how much time they spend and in what context. They should be able to play outside, and they should be able to play safely in stimulating environments that have different activities.

When I did face-to-face play work at a regular half-term playscheme at a teachers' training college we often had a computer console there. The first thing the children would do in the morning on arrival was group around the machine for the first ten minutes gossiping to each other about what they did the night before, whose team won etc - a bit like people in an office or a facto-



Play Around

sent a clear message to parents. "Children need to be encouraged to learn basic reading and writing, of course, **but the other thing is to ask them to play outside with other children and interact and communicate with others as much as possible.** This is how they will develop, retain their creativity and become good people."

Playing Computer alone Study

In another study commissioned by the utility company Power-gen, after an unexpected increase in domestic electricity and telephone bills during the past few summers, researchers found a quarter of 1,000 children aged 7 to 12, who completed the questionnaire listed "playing computer games alone" as their principal summer activity. A fifth listed watching television alone and 4 per cent listed reading. Only a mere 13 per cent said that they spent most of their holiday time playing with their friends.

Aric Sigman, psychologist and author, who compiled the research, stated that the increasing isolation of children during their free-time could have deeply negative effects on an entire generation. One reason for the change, Dr Sigman said, was the reluctance of parents to allow their children to go out on their own. "This is a very recent but real problem. The fear of the dangers posed by paedophiles and traffic is very high, even if the risks are actually lower."

On the return to school after the summer holiday, children are finding it harder to cope. This is due to spending too much time alone. The attraction of computer games, coupled with parental fear about allowing them to play outside unsupervised, mean they are having to relearn basic social skills when they return to the classroom.

This results is an increase in disruptive and anti-social behaviour during the first few weeks of term - Headteachers believe that children's ability to socialise and play has deteriorated in recent years.

Fair Play concern at serious implications

Jan Cosgrove, National Organiser of Fair Play for Children, said that the Tohoku University findings must give all those working with children and their play and leisure great concern. "We suggested some years back that prolonged and concentrated exposure to games machines etc might produce results suggesting changes in aptitude and behaviours, but this is far more serious than anyone would have expected. Indeed, Kawashima expected a positive outcome. More research is needed, more findings as to the long-term personal developmental and social implications of these studies, both of which point very firmly to the conclusion that, as a society, we are allowing ourselves to escape from our responsibilities for our children's healthy play.

"The pressures of the market place are in danger of smothering our children's freedom of expression to play in the way which is most beneficial for them. Our Government, more interested in league tables, academic performance and child curfews, needs to wake up to what is happening to our children - it may be nothing less than the death of childhood, that recognisable state of exploration, creativity, learning about relationships, testing boundaries.

"We have a National Childcare Strategy - directed at child-farming so more adults can be got into the workplace. We need urgently to be working on a **National Children's Play Strategy**, which would ensure that our children lived in environments and had access to the resources which would optimise their play experience. It is time for playworkers and organisations to become more pro-active in this regard. Kawashima has sounded a serious warning."

ry when they get to work! After about 10-20 minutes they lost interest and went and did other things. That's because the other things were more interesting to do. As playworkers, we made sure we provided them with a great range and scope of different activities.

Yes, there were a couple of kids who may have tended to stay on the machine too long, mainly because they found it harder to integrate with the other children. But we kept our eye on this and they were encouraged to join in the other activities with the other children, which they did. So, the games machine was kept in its place as an occasional activity, one among many.

The most important point that Kawashima makes is that children should be playing outside with their friends.

If there is concern about violence being caused by over-use of computer games in the young, we should take an equally urgent look at the misuse of alcohol and its availability in terms of creating an environment for violence to thrive.

Couple that with a nationwide lack of decent play facilities and we will see an increase in violent acts amongst our younger members of society. I see teenagers of my community regularly hanging around the streets with cheap bottles of white-cider.

There *have* been times when this leads to them being aggressive with other members of public. Most of the time, though, when they're intoxicated any trouble that goes on is normally between themselves. The fact is they have been brought up in a culture where alcohol has been almost put on to a pedestal. That it is supposedly "part of growing up". The advertising of alcohol, in my view, encourages them to think it's for the young.

Computer games may hinder children's development, but not as much as Society does. We need a major re-think on how we treat the society of tomorrow, because the increase in violence was coming long before computer games were about, or before Professor Kawashima carried out his research.

The parallel with alcohol, of course, is that there is a huge amount of money tied up in promoting and purveying these consumables, and both industries see the young as a major part of their marketing targets.



Play Safe

Playground Surfaces controversy in the U.S.

The Palm Crest PTA in La Canada has been researching playground surfaces for the last three years. We have found some disturbing information and are hoping you may be able to help. I have been in contact with representatives from the Consumer Product Safety Commission (the government agency who sets the guidelines for playground safety), who is now proposing a study on this

topic in 2003, and the Program for Playground Safety. I am alarmed that there aren't more stringent reporting and analysis of school injuries than there are. It seems that employees have many more systems in place to protect them in case of accidents. Children should have the same protection.

I think it would also make it easier for organizations that monitor child safety to analyse data if there was such a procedure in place. Below please find a portion of the research I have compiled to date, which has been looked at by Jean Kennedy of the Consumer Product Safety Commission. I can provide readers with other information if any are interested. Thank you in advance for your attention to this very important child safety issue.

Each year in the United States approximately 205,850 children are treated in hospitals from playground related accidents according to the Consumer Product

Safety Commission (CSPC). The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons numbers are much higher at around 565,000 injuries annually, with 9 out of 10 being falls to the surface. According to CPSC, fractures were the most commonly reported injury, accounting for 39% of all injuries.

The current standard criteria for testing playground materials (put out by the ASTM and recommended by the CSPC) addresses only the prevention of brain injury by limiting head impact to 200g. Rubber surfaces (60mm thick surfaces of shredded old tires which have been bonded with an adhesive and poured into a mould or plastic mats using injection moulding techniques using polyurethane materials) have performed adequately for head impact, whereas, fine wood chips (200mm depth of pine mulch from cut up pine which has been passed through a hammer mill to reduce the particle size) have given the best performance (Mech Test, Adelaide University's Department of Mechanical Engineering). There is no testing criteria for long bone breaks (arms and legs), yet. Although there is a serious concern in the industry over broken bones, there is currently no way to test for the possibility. The CPSC is being lobbied by different organizations to put this type of testing in place. Unfortunately, due to lack of funding and other competing studies this may not happen for a couple of years.

Our own elementary school's past history with a poured in place surface gives us reason to question its effectiveness in preventing severe and compound fractures, with 16 broken arms in less than 2 1/2 years [children on vacation for nearly six months brings the "use time" to about 2 years]. The breaks these children are sustaining are severe, including compound fractures resulting required and permanent disfigurement. Orthopaedic surgeons we have spoken to have said the breaks they were seeing from our school were some of the worst they have ever seen, equating them to injuries sustained by professional football players on Astro Turf. They do not believe that 2 1/4" of any surface on top of cement is enough to protect children against broken bones. Cement should not be under any cushioning surface. Children deserve to have more than adequate protection, they deserve to have the absolute safest possible environment we can provide for them.

A manufacturer's representative from a company that sells poured in place rubber told us that even if we went to a thicker surface (from 2 1/4" to 3") we would still have broken bones because the guidelines the surface meets are for head injury prevention and not broken arms. He went on to say that the thicker the



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Play Safe

surface the faster it would break down because there is more movement in the surface. The pre-eminent question for us is: Shouldn't there be movement in a surface that is being fallen upon? Protecting children against head injury should be our first consideration, since it can be a fatal injury, but it is not acceptable for children to suffer severe, compound fractures if there is an alternative.

Many public playgrounds are looking at unitary materials (generally rubber mats or a combination of rubber-like materials held in place by a binder that may be poured in place at a playground site and then cured to form a unitary "shock" absorbing surface) because they have lower maintenance requirements and their conformity to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. What is alarming is that with millions of dollars in state monies available to schools for modernization currently, many districts may opt to go for the lower maintenance option which may be posing a serious risk of severe and permanently disfiguring fractures to children. As an ancillary consideration, will schools incur greater liability for these more severe fractures, in their effort to save money?

The alternative to the unitary materials are "loose fill" (sand, wood chips, shredded rubber and pea gravel). Some of these loose fill materials are ADA complaint while some are not. They all require maintenance. But with safety as the primary consideration, "Loose-fill" surfacing allows for more displacement when a user falls. This displacement allows for a "continuation of motion", possibly providing the extra "give" to prevent a broken arm or to prevent the severest fractures.

I am hoping that someone will seriously consider this topic, since more and more children could be exposed to unitary surfaces in the future. Poured in place rubber surfacing is the "choice" of the industry today, because it is easy to maintain. But just like many years ago when the tobacco industry said there was no scientific data to indicate that smoking caused cancer, we are saying the "darling" of the industry isn't so darling. Since there is no current data to back up the statistics, bringing this topic to the public's attention may be thought provoking enough to make school administrators give serious consideration to safety before changing their playground surfacing.

In the 1940's asphalt was the playground surface of choice because it was thought to be softer than concrete and it too was easy to maintain! Sixty plus years later, we know how bad of a recommendation that was.

*LA Times - Foothill Leader Saturday, June 23, 2001
News from La Canada Flintridge in the Times Community Newspapers*

Play time can hurt

PTA, school district butt heads about playground surface at Palm Crest Elementary School. By MARSHALL ALLEN

LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE — At 11:52 a.m. Wednesday, in the cafeteria of Palm Crest Elementary school, the blood pressure of 40 mothers rose simultaneously. Lorie Gonia, superintendent of the La Canada Unified School District, had just lectured the PTA on healthy conflict resolution in the middle of an emotional debate. The mothers did not appear to consider it a teachable moment. Gonia and the assembled parents were having a sharp difference of opinion about the playground surface at Palm Crest.

Fifteen children in the past three years have sustained broken bones from falling on the poured-in-place rubber surface, according to the PTA. Most of the injuries occurred beneath the horizontal ladder structure. The poured-in-place surface has recently cracked and been torn up. It's under warranty, so the district wants to replace it. Gonia also said the horizontal ladder would be lowered. PTA members — the moms — are against replacing the surface because they fear more children will be injured on it.

Play Safe Letter to Tony Blair

For the last thirty years, campaigners like myself have campaigned to have hard and dangerous surfaces removed from children's play areas, sadly without success. As I explained to the then Sports Minister **Kate Hoey**, I lost my son in a playground accident in 1992 when he fractured his skull on a concrete surface. From that day I formed the Keep Our Children Safe Campaign with **Esther Rantzen** as patron. She also has highlighted accidents in play areas on **That's Life** and now she does the same on **That's Esther**.

When I was invited to meet her at the BBC, she was absolutely horrified that accidents such as this were still happening. She actually believed that there had been a change in the law, making it mandatory for play providers to install impact absorbing surfaces. I explained to her that new guidelines were being put in to place by the EU, but these guidelines were not enforceable, so therefore play providers were only expected to what was reasonably practicable as you quoted to **Dari Taylor MP** of the 13th of May.

For example in the case of my son, as I explained to Kate Hoey when she was Minister for Sport, Renfrew District Council got off with a 'ticking off' because the HSE did not decide to recommend further action. The reason for this was that because Renfrew had a maintenance system in place and also a rolling programme for refurbishment, they decided that this was 'reasonably practicable in the circumstances' as the council did not have the funds at that time. I wish you could have seen the concrete surface that was instrumental in ending the life of my son - it was a scandal beyond belief.

Another area that concerns me deeply is the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The law is all encompassing covering adults in the workplace and children whilst at play. I believe that we as adults have the ability to foresee danger and take preventative measures but surely we can not put children in this category. I believe that the law should be separated making one for adults and one for children.

Last Friday I took the time out to visit Andrea Graham at Thornaby on Tees, who tragically lost her daughter Shannon in a playground accident last August. She showed me her sympathetic letter you personally wrote to her.



Play Safe

They would like to see Fibar, a shredded wood product surface made by Fibar Inc., on the playground, and are willing to help pay for it. Some tests show Fibar is safer to fall on than poured-in-place surfaces. Fibar allows for displacement when children fall, said Donna Thompson, director of the National Program for Playground Safety at the University of Northern Iowa. The program is funded by the Centers for Disease Control. Thompson said no study exists that compares bone-break data between Fibar and poured-in-place surfaces, but that she thought Fibar would offer better protection. "If they would seriously consider putting one foot of Fibar under there, and maintaining it, then their injuries would go down," Thompson said.

At the PTA meeting, Gonia said children need to be safe and that the district needs to have liability coverage. The district can't maintain Fibar to the standards required for liability coverage, Gonia said. Neither Thompson nor officials at Fibar Inc. said Fibar is difficult to maintain. Gonia said there must be more than anecdotal proof that the surface is unsafe. The PTA moved Wednesday to pay to have the playground equipment dismantled rather than pour the new surface. On Thursday, Gonia said the district plans to go ahead with pouring a



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We spoke at length regarding the accident and I felt for her deeply and could fully understand the grief she was enduring and would for many years to come. We visited the park where the accident occurred and other play areas in the town. What I saw was a damn disgrace with not one play area in Thornaby having a safety surface and the overall state of equipment and surrounding area was a damning indictment of a council not willing to prioritise the safety of children. As I stated earlier in this letter, local authorities have been aware for years of the potential dangers inherent in play areas. Mrs Graham will now join my campaign and continue to lobby local and central government until we get what our children deserve. We owe this to our deceased children so they do not become just another statistic.

I have been working recently with a Mrs Christine Mather at Basingstoke since her daughter was badly injured in a playground accident. The local authority involved has now been found guilty of failing to follow safety rules and not reporting accidents under regulations set out under Riddor. This case was to have far reaching implications nationwide as the regulations were being wrongly interpreted by HSE and local authorities alike. I believe that the regulations will now be re-written because of the obvious confusion.

Resulting from these accidents, the HSE commissioned research to be undertaken by a Professor Ball of Middlesex University regarding the safety of children in play areas and impact absorbing surfaces were on the agenda. On learning of this, I contacted an influential figure in the industry who forewarned me that Professor Ball had always been anti impact absorbing surfaces on economic grounds and no doubt would not change his stance. I have just heard that he has completed his report and my contact was not far wrong, he has not changed his stance. His report will make interesting reading.

How on earth can we balance a child's life against the financial restraints of a council? This is the year 2001 and I find it unbelievable that this is still happening. We have asked for years to be taken seriously but sadly this and previous governments have turned a blind eye. Robert Maclennan Lib Dem MP became involved in this a few years ago and pointed out to Tony Banks that there was a gaping hole in the legislation as it stood, though Mr Banks believed that we should have put the whole situation into perspective as far more children are killed on the roads each year. This state-



Play is Green

GOVERNMENT PLEDGES £30 MILLION FOR HOME ZONES

Home Zone projects to improve the quality of life in residential streets in England will receive £30 million over the next three years. The cash will allow local authorities to design streets as places for people, not just for traffic. Home Zones could include play areas for children and street furniture for older people.



Tony Blair announced the funding during a speech where he addressed the quality of life for people in urban areas. He said: "Home Zones are areas where priority is given to walking and cycling over traffic. This helps reduce road casualties and creates high quality street environments. The DETR is currently monitoring nine pilot Home Zones and a number of local authorities are planning Home Zones as part of their Local Transport Plans. We want to go further and so I can announce today that the Government will provide a further £30 million challenge fund for new Home Zone schemes."

Transport and Environment Minister Lord Whitty said: "Home Zones can drastically change the quality of urban life - and save lives. The pilot home zone schemes I launched in August 1999 have generated an enormous amount of interest from local authorities, residents and developers. Measures such as traffic calming, planting, reorganisation of parking and the introduction of play equipment and seating should see the domination of residential streets by cars greatly reduced, and bring about an improvement in environmental conditions for local residents."

He added: "It was clear from the Local Transport Plans submitted last July, that many local authorities are interested in launching home zone schemes. The £30 million is intended as pump-priming for a long-term programme within the Ten Year Transport plan. It will allow the benefits of home zones to be brought quickly to many more people."

Under the Capital Modernisation Fund, £2.5 million will be available in 2001-02, £12.5 million in 2002-03 and £15 million in 2003-04.

Home zones are residential street in which the use of road space is shared between motor vehicles and other road users, with the wider needs of residents, including pedestrians, children, and cyclists being accommodated for the first time. The aim is to improve the quality of life in residential streets by making them places for people, not just traffic. Home Zones can, for example, include areas for children to play, or provide environmental improvements and facilities such as seats for older residents and parents to meet.

The original concept, derived from experience in Holland, Germany and elsewhere, was first published by Fair Play for Children on the initiative of its Freedom to Play Co-ordinator, Rob Wheway, back in 1993.

Local authorities are piloting nine home zones in England and Wales supported by the Department. The Department has commissioned TRL Ltd to monitor the pilot schemes and establish how they are meeting home zone objectives. Information being collected includes traffic volume, speed and displacement, environmental improvement, street activity and changing attitudes. The local

ment caused me and other parents much distress and was thoughtless.

I agree that fatalities in play areas are rare but there are still thousands of children injured each year. I believe that the potential for severe injury is extremely high and it is just a waiting game for the next death and destruction of yet another family unit.

I urge you Prime Minister as a father of a new child to become personally involved in what affects families nationwide. I believe it is the child's fundamental right to be able to play in relative safety. Many local authorities are not allowing this to take place. From letters and calls I receive through the media and television, it is what parents want to secure the safety of their children.

I hope to hear from you soon and hopefully with a positive response.

Yours sincerely
Ian Burks

Ian is Fair Play's 'Safe Play' Co-ordinator

£200 Million Lottery funding for play areas announced by Chris Smith

JUST before the General Election, the ex-Culture Secretary **Chris Smith** announced a huge boost in funding for 'the UK's biggest building programme to provide play facilities.

The cash, from Round Four of the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) will create 2000 new safe play areas across the UK.

Although the new Secretary for Culture, Media and Sport, **Tessa Jowell**, has not yet ratified the announcement, senior officials in her department expect this to happen - but NOF Round 4 funding is not likely to come before 2006 at the earliest. This is due, in part, to a drop in National Lottery sales.

Commercial estimates based on existing experience cost each playground at around £100,000. Local consultation would decide allocation between facilities, staffing etc.

Chris Smith justified the programme: "Hundreds of thousands of children use this facility every day but too often it is run down, the fencing is broken and the site has seen better days. Again and again, parents raise their concern that there are too few



Play is Green

authorities are using a range of approaches to implement home zones.

The pilot schemes are in Ealing, Lambeth, Leeds, Manchester, Monmouthshire, Nottingham, Peterborough, Plymouth and Sittingbourne. The pilot schemes are expected to be implemented towards the end of 2001. DETR has made no direct financial contribution to local authorities for the schemes other than paying for the monitoring study. The local authorities are funding the works from existing allocations.

The Government's commitment to the development of home zones was reflected in provisions in the Transport Act 2000 which came into force on 1 February 2001. Legal recognition has been given to home zones, and local traffic authorities in England and Wales now have specific power to designate home zones in their area. In due course they will also be able to make orders about how the roads in a home zone can be used, and how low traffic speeds will be achieved, subject to regulations to be made by the Secretary of State (in England) or the National Assembly for Wales.

Use orders have the potential to make improvements to the quality of life of home zone residents. The orders will permit the use of the road for purposes other than passage. The activities should reflect the wishes of local residents and could include children's play, or providing benches for older residents to meet. They would be subject to requirements not to obstruct the lawful use of the road by others, or to deny reasonable access to premises.

Speed orders would enable local traffic authorities to make measures with a view to reducing the speed of vehicles and cycles. The scope of the orders is not limited to traffic calming, and local authorities will have to specify the speed below which they intend to hold the traffic. Speed orders will not, by themselves, impose speed limits at this level - these will still need to be set for individual roads. Local speed limits below 20mph will continue to require consent of the Secretary of State.

Whilst welcoming the general tenor of the Government's initiative, **Jan Cosgrove**, speaking for Fair Play for Children, expressed disappointment that the new schemes are still without a firm legislative basis in terms of reducing speed limits below 20 mph. "The Government and Minister know full well that huge benefits follow the reduction of speed - from 30 mph to 20 mph took long enough to be recognised in terms of legal power of local authorities to bring in the lower limit. Whilst the benefits of 20mph are dramatic enough, it is clear that a 10 mph limit in many residential areas, for example, as part of a Home Zone scheme, could far outweigh even that. I wonder also why the Government has not pointed to the existing Road Traffic legislation which allowed the establishment of **Play Streets** - that is still in effect, I understand, and would be a logical cover for a Home Zone scheme."

Capital Modernisation Fund

The Capital Modernisation Fund was set up in the Comprehensive Spending Review to support capital investment to improve public services. The Fund is allocated on a competitive basis and on the following criteria:

- a. the extent the project applies genuinely innovative approaches to service delivery;
- b. the quality and strength of the economic appraisal of the project;
- c. the impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the service;
- d. how far the project contributes to the department's objectives;
- e. how far the project is genuinely additional;
- and
- f. the robustness of arrangements for delivering, managing, accounting, monitoring and evaluating the project.



places for their children to play safely with their friends and where their parents can relax with them.. Every study shows that children benefit from stimulating interactive group play. What parents want is safe and imaginatively designed play areas and the knowledge that their children are in secure environments that enhance their neighbourhoods. In over a year we will be consulting the public but I want local councils now to start consultation with their communities at how they could use these funds to improve their local facilities. Whether it's revamping the corrugated iron hut that served as a rainy day play hut since the war, or the victorian swing park or creating new facilities, we want to early proposals on how these funds can be deployed to benefit all our children."

Jan Cosgrove, for Fair Play for Children, viewed this announcement with mixed feelings. "Obviously, this new amount of money is welcome in order to improve the existing stock of fixed-equipment play areas. However, our first question has to be: Is the fixed equipment approach the best or only way to satisfy children's play needs? We may well ask what proportion of their time do children actually spend in such areas? I am also aware of the high cost of commercial play equipment, and the fact that we can see all over Britain today the same range of items wherever one goes. I hope Tessa Jowell will look at the most exciting range of options and that, first and foremost, children will be consulted, not shown an equipment wish-list. For example, there's self-build under the guidance of experienced community arts play site builders - there are some excellent examples of children designing and helping to build their own, the process helping build a sense of ownership and pride.

"But above all there is the issue that staffed play facilities led by imaginative adults are the best option for the objecties set by Chris Smith. For too long, local authorities under-spent on their obligation to provide children with such facilities by recourse to the unstaffed, basic maintenance play area."

CURFEW WATCH

Fair Play will be keeping careful watch on the way in which any local youth curfews are implemented. You can help by keeping us informed! Phone Fair Play on 01243-869922, Fax on 01243-862072 or e-mail to: fair-play@arunet.co.uk



Listening to Children

Count us in!

Children, young people and neighbourhood renewal

by Bill Badham, Programme Manager, Children in Communities,
The Children's Society

A version of this paper was published in childRIGHT, March 2001.

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out the rights of children to express their views freely in all matters affecting them and that these views shall be taken seriously. Their streets and neighbourhoods, community safety, traffic, parks and play areas, rubbish, transport, training and jobs - these all affect them.

They tell us so. The Children's Society's *My Vote Counts Too!* internet survey of over 600 children and young people. This survey, using Priority Search research methodology, used questions designed by children and young people themselves and aimed to establish their priorities to help make where they live a better place. The overwhelming conclusion was that they sought safer communities through reduction of violence, racism, drugs and robbery; they wanted improvements to their physical environment and greater access to facilities. They wanted to be involved in making where they live a better place.

The reality is, therefore, in stark contrast to the rhetoric. **Professor Alan Prout**, Director of the ESRC, Children 5-16 Research Programme, summarises the situation like this: "When it comes to the representation or inclusion of children per se in wider decision making in community or school affairs, initiatives have remained local, scattered, ad hoc, fragile and experimental".

Consultation and community participation must be at the heart of neighbourhood renewal, but how often are children and young people listened and responded to in decision making about their own neighbourhoods and communities? they told us. The findings of the *Its Not Fair!* consultation described children's own reality: they are often not listened to and treated with disrespect, with limited knowledge of the UNCRC. The authors indicated their "concern at the lack of participation in key decisions at home, in their communities and within local and national politics".

The politics of neighbourhood renewal are moving very fast. Our vision is for all regeneration partnerships to systematically include children and young people in the renewal of their neighbourhoods and communities. But, given the low starting point, what are the threats and opportunities these developments afford children and young people's active participation in helping make where they live a better place?

NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL IN ENGLAND

The Draft Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal from the Social Exclusion Unit went out for consultation in April last year. There were 4 areas for consultation:

- * Reviving local economies
- * Reviving communities
- * Ensuring of decent services
- * Leadership and joint working

There was hardly any mention of children and young people, despite their key message at the Urban Forum and Children's Society national conference where they told government ministers and SEU officials to "Count Us In!" Young people from Rotherham told the Regional Government Office that the strategy "wasn't that bad considering it was a government paper", but that it won't work



Letters

Request from Belgium

Dear colleague,

Jan Van Gils from IPA asked me to make an international state of the art of scientific research about children and play. Main themes are safety, social tolerance, play at school, play in childcare, toy-libraries, play-fullness in libraries, doctor-waitingrooms, play equipment, play policy, urban planning, time planning, streettoys, etc. So I'm making a report on what we know about these topics upto now.

Knowing you're working on these topics, I hope you can send me any interesting studies, references, papers, publications or projects you know. In exchange, I will send you my report at the end of the month when it's finished. Thank you in advance.

Leen schillemans
Child & Society research center
Nieuwelaan 63, 1860 Meise, Belgium

Greetings from Oz

Dear PlayAction

We really enjoy receiving your newsletter Play Action down in OZ. Thanks for all the interesting news on play. Like so many other countries play provision isn't a high priority for Government and people in general here. We're using some excerpts from your recent article on the Global Movement for Children in our current issue of our newspaper Network News. Keep up the good work

Judy Finlason
Co-ordinator
Network of Community Activities.



Listening to Children

“unless young people are involved and the people that are involved are local people.” “Young people are the longest term stakeholders in this neighbourhood renewal... so where is the investment in us as the future leaders?”

By November 2000, £800 million had been allocated through the Comprehensive Spending Review, plans for the Neighbourhood Renewal Centre and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) were in place. On 15 January this year, the Cabinet Office issued The New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: National Strategy Action Plan for England iv. It identified problems to be tackled in neighbourhoods of worklessness, crime, poor education and poor health services. The vision is that “within 10 to 20 years, no one should lose out because of where they live.” The Action Plan sets out two key strategies to achieve these goals: establishing LSPs as the gateway for many or most initiatives, including the Children’s Fund and Neighbourhood Management.

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)

The creation of LSPs in England are seen as the overarching framework in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors: “so that different initiatives and services support rather than contradict each other.” In England there will be an initial 88 LSPs, with access to the £800 million Neighbourhood Renewal Fund over three years, with an additional £45 million being spent on Neighbourhood Management pathfinders. Communities in these districts will receive £400,000 each to help involvement in LSPs through the Community Empowerment Fund (over £35 million in total) and “Community Chests worth £50 million in total to fund local small grant schemes so communities can run their own projects.”

Targets to be addressed through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund include housing, school standards, crime and health. Proposals must demonstrate a response to Best Value, the existence of an LSP and Local Neighbourhood Strategy and action in the most disadvantaged areas. The links between the local, regional and national structures for neighbourhood renewal are:

The Children’s Fund

The Children and Young People’s Unit, established within the DfEE, manages the Children’s Fund. Worth £450 million in England over 3 years, £380 million will be targeted on preventative work and £70 million will be distributed to local community groups as grants.

At the end of January 2001, 40 areas in England were nominated to apply for the first round of funding for preventative services. Part 1 of the Guidance focuses on the need to develop local partnerships which will map local services, identify gaps and produce plans for preventative services. These will be based on existing partnerships, with the voluntary and community sectors supposed to be equal partners with the local authorities. The Guidance also links the Children’s Fund to other initiatives designed to tackle social exclusion, including Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies, local Children’s Services Plan and Quality Protects. £20,000 for each Partnership is available to ensure a robust consultation process that includes children and young people. Partnerships were expected to begin delivering services from July. Initially the Children’s Fund will be available to the 40 areas identified with the highest levels of disadvantage and accessible across England by April 2004.

Four points within the Framework for Partnership need to be considered as LSPs are developed in England.

- 1 It is based upon and hails the UNCRC as the defining framework for children and young people.
- 2 It validates the need and role of an independent, statutory empowered Children’s Commissioner for all children in Wales.
- 3 It insists on the systematic participation of children and young people in the regeneration of their communities and the services that affect them.
- 4 It proposes one integrated funding stream called the Children and Young People’s Support Fund.

THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN INVOLVING

FREEPLAY NETWORK LAUNCH

PLAYLINK’s new national Free Play Network project will be up and running from October 2001. The project is funded by a three-year grant from the Community Fund and is designed to address the problems of isolation faced by local play service providers by offering advice, information and mutual support. **Adebayo Bankole** will be in post from 4 September and, as Information/ Administration Officer, will be first point of contact. **Nicola Butler** will come into post on 10 October as Project Manager.

The first task will be to develop the FPN website as an accessible means to obtain information, join in discussion and forge links between practitioners. This will be launched later in the year. As its name implies, a major aim of the project is to assert the child’s right to play freely, to increase understanding of the principles and concepts of free play and to build confidence in the sector in creating appropriate play environments.

A second PLAYLINK project will start in September. ‘Open Access Registration Support’ (OARS) is funded by the Department for Education & Skills. It will provide an ‘open access’ helpline to advise providers on how to meet the new national standards and to write guidance on good practice to inform both service providers and OFSTED inspectors.

For further information contact info@playlink.org.uk

New Fair Play Development Project Staff

In the meantime, Fair Play for Children has been appointing staff under its three year Community Fund award. **John Field** has been appointed as **Southern Development Worker**. John served as temporary development worker until last November and undertook much of the work on the Fair



Listening to Children

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The new Strategic Partnerships in England and Wales are crucial areas of influence in promoting children and young people's participation in the regeneration of their communities for two reasons:

- * to ensure the direct representation of children and young people and their interests, as otherwise, particularly in England, they will be sidelined and
- * to influence funding opportunities for community and voluntary sector groups and the partnerships and schemes for which the LSPs will become gatekeepers: SRB, Sure Start, Health Action Zone. "Experience shows there are some basic and essential guidelines for effective involvement". Peter Beresford's checklist applies all the more to a community's younger citizens:
 - * involvement from the beginning
 - * bottom up
 - * equal access
 - * support for independent local organisations
 - * grassroots training
 - * local people involved in setting the intended outcomes of regeneration.

Money where it matters

The danger with The Children's Fund is that we will end up with £380 million worth of casework reacting to statutory services' priorities and £70 million increasing short term dependency, not long term capacity. As Bob Holman says, "this merely perpetuates the charity system of the privileged deciding what the deprived can do." He argues that both funds should be combined and allocated to projects which are genuinely controlled by local residents. Voluntary organisations, with a commitment to promoting capacity building with local community groups, could help distribute and manage these funds, enabling, children and young people to be heard.

There are models to draw upon, such as The Children and Neighbourhoods Project in London, which champions the children's voice, facilitates children and young people's involvement and the promotion of their issues and concerns. It is actively engaged in capacity building with small local groups, translating this into wider fields of influence across 6 London Boroughs and within the Greater London Authority and London Development Agency. Key elements are:

- * enabling socially excluded children and young people to find solutions to the challenges they face;
- * providing a consistent strategy across different agencies and community groups;
- * offering financial accountability without the bureaucratic processes that usually make it difficult for community groups to access resources;
- * building community capacity to provide long term solutions.

Structures that work for children

Research by Purdue *et al* indicates the crucial role of community leadership in regeneration. But often "partners attempt to put the spotlight on community leaders in order to deflect attention away from their own inability to address particular problems". And there may be questions of legitimacy. The research identified four models of partnership working within regeneration:

- * one single partnership answerable to the local authority and linking to a community forum;
- * multiple partnerships answerable to the local authority, linking to a range of community forums;
- * several schemes answerable to a multi sectoral partnership board and
- * community based co-ordination of partnerships.

In all cases studies, reporting back mechanisms to the local community were very poor. The new emerging structures may exacerbate this, with local authorities usurping the role of community leaders themselves. In Leeds, there are concerns at the new structure of 16 Community Involvement Teams leading to the imposing of a more centralised and autocratic model of accountability, as in the first model above.



Play

John Field settling into his new post!

Safe Play Project whose culmination was the Conference for junior football leagues at Leicester City Football Club's grounds last December. John is joined in the national office by **Andy Cosgrove** who will be working on the Fair Play **Child Protection in Playwork Project**, mainly on criminal records checks and on information. Andy has been undertaking some of this work already - but still had to apply for the post and go through the procedures to ensure fair competition! Both Andy and John have paid and volunteer playwork experience.

Yelena Mikhaylova-O'Connell is the administrative worker based in Fair Play's office in Liverpool. She will be working with the new Northern development worker when appointed in the early autumn. She has been working with Fair Play member organisation Merseyside Development Foundation.

The Community Fund assisted Project is aimed to help Fair Play's membership to expand and its services to develop so that, for example, there are more training events, the Web Site is kept updated, and Fair Play better meets the needs of the field.

Fair Play members will be hearing from the new team in due course. One of John's first tasks is to help ensure a wide representation of play projects at the **Southern Area Fair Play Conference** on Saturday 20th October 2001, at Chichester

For more details about Fair Play's new

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Listening to Children

In the backroom of the offices of the Partnership Council in **Nottingham** there is a toy sitting on the windowsill. It is a series of cogs in a case, with a crank that makes them whirl round. Joe Robinson of the Partnership Council explains its role as the small one in the middle. As the cogs twirl, it is this one that connects the large imposing ones at the top with those at the bottom of the pile. Joe sees this as their symbol. Through the Partnership Council, many disparate and often competing groups and views in the community are brought together to influence each other and the big players. The Children's forum is only one of eight, but with equal status to the resident, business, voluntary and public sector and city area committees. The PC has created an ability for "honest conversations" and joint working among these groups, as evidenced by being the means of delivering £5.4 million of European grants to the local community. Its vision now is to link with the overlapping New Deal for Communities area to deliver its community consultation strategy with children and young people and to help establish "a formal mechanism through which children can be actively involved and influence, the regeneration of their local community."

In **Liverpool**, after many years of effective neighbourhood work with children, research indicates the need for an overarching structure to redress the problem of children's voices heard but rarely acted upon systematically. This model of a Children's Bureau has support from an influential and cross cutting Partnership Group, but so far not the money. It is rooted in the UNCRC and requires an independent children's champion. This role would complement a Children and Young People's Participation Partnership and Standing Conference. Key components envisaged are independence, partnership, adequate resources, active involvement of children and young people throughout and the ability to influence policy and practice as affects children across the city.

Capacity building

But whatever the structure, none will work unless the skills of children and adults are built up to be influential players in the local community. A recent study, Neighbourhood Regeneration, emphasised the need to resource community involvement, redressing inequalities of power and control from local authorities and other professionals that result in professional dominance with little transparency or accountability to the neighbourhood, limited direct access to funding and imposed expectations and outcomes. Effective capacity building requires shared community vision that includes children and should be demonstrated in community run projects. It requires a written contract between community and agencies, community representatives on the regeneration board, consultation and capacity building identified and led by the community itself. Young people will be training the officers, with direct access to funds.

This vision is being translated into practical measures in some areas. The research noted that about 50% of SRB bids approved in July 1999 by the DETR had capacity building in their delivery plans. In **Partington, Trafford**, The Children's Society and partners are building on the involvement of children and young people over many years through SRB and HAZ to enable them to develop their skills and confidence to become key players in the emerging brave new world of LSPs. Maybe for the first time this will help bring the voice and the priorities of children and young people themselves to bend mainstream resources to the benefit of those who are meant to be principle beneficiaries.

Too often trust is lacking and money is wrapped up in protectionist bureaucracy. In Partington however, HAZ is putting its money where its mouth is. A Youth Bank is being established with an initial £50,000 at the disposal of young people themselves according to pre-agreed criteria. £5,500 of this is for capacity building with the young people to be undertaken by the Participation in Education Group. Meanwhile, the borough Youth Service is providing training with and to young people on, for example, recruitment and selection, to provide concrete skills as they take up the new challenges in their communities. But in Partington they are able to build on years of effective involvement with children and young people. Where there is no such foundation, it is going to be much harder.

Measures of success

Regeneration initiatives need clear objectives, but these need to be influenced

TASP 2002 Conference

February 20-24, 2002 La Fonda Hotel
Santa Fe, New Mexico

TASP (The Association for the Study of Play) is a multidisciplinary organization whose purpose is to promote the study of play, to support and cooperate with other organizations having similar purposes, and to organize meetings and publications that facilitate the sharing and dissemination of information related to the study of play.

TASP publishes a regular, extensive newsletter that includes book reviews, research updates in different disciplines, and other information. TASP also publishes Play and Culture Studies on a regular basis.

TASP's broad focus includes many disciplines and scholarly interests, including animal behavior, anthropology, the arts and humanities, biology, communication, cultural studies, education, folklore, history, kinesiology, musicology, occupational science, philosophy, psychology, recreation, and sociology.

TASP's 2002 Conference will coincide with the annual meeting of the Society for Cross-Cultural Research.

The conference will take place at the La Fonda Hotel at 100 E. San Francisco, Santa Fe, NM, 87501.

Special housing rates have been arranged with the conference hotel. Reservations may be arranged by calling toll-free at 1-800-523-5002. You can call the hotel directly at 505-982-5511.

Be sure to mention the TASP conference or the Society for Cross-Cultural Research conference in order to receive the special room rates:

\$139.00 per night + tax for a single room,
\$149.00 per night + tax for a double room.

For information about registration, TASP membership, or submission of a proposal, contact: Dr. Jim Christie, 2002 TASP Conference, Curriculum and Instruction, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-1411. Phone: 480-965-2314, Fax: 480-727-7991, E-mail: jchristie@asu.edu



Listening to Children

by the communities themselves. "There are no better judges of what people want and whether they are getting it than the people themselves" (Beresford, 1998). Yet research indicates that "residents felt too often regeneration agendas are set in advance of community participation." In the Hull New Deal for Communities area, for example, the excellent consultation with children and young people through a citizens' jury surfaced concerns about crime, bullying, lack of play space and recreational facilities, the environment and access to training and jobs. Yet, except for more play areas, all the other delivery plan's outcomes to measure progress related specifically and only to school attainment. Something seems to have got lost in translation. Outcome indicators need to cover, not only results, but also participative processes, like consultation with and the participation of excluded children and young people, as well as data about training and employment.

The UNCRC can be used as an overarching tool nationally or locally, as modelled in the Wessex Children's Society project for monitoring and evaluating local authority commitment to partnership. More detailed tools are also needed, such as **The Young People's Charter of Participation**. Developed as a set of principles and standards by young people and workers in Rotherham, it has proved effective as a stand alone checklist or as a training tool for agencies keen to improve their structures and processes to value and include young people.

Active Partners, from Yorkshire Forward, makes significant progress in giving guidance for "benchmarking community participation in regeneration". But there is a need to show how such benchmarking tools can be effective, flexible and inclusive of children and young people. This is currently being undertaken by the authors, in conjunction with JRF and The Children's Society. A revised document is expected in March 2002.

THE WAY FORWARD

In conclusion, there are four elements to promoting the effective involvement of children and young people in neighbourhood renewal. First, the active inclusion of children and young people will only occur systematically through wholesale change in attitudes towards children. Children are citizens now. Second, adults need to address and respond to issues of power. As Arnstein says, "Participation without the redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows policy holders to claim that all sides were considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit. It maintains the status quo."

Third, the way forward requires an understanding of why children's involvement is so essential. It is their right to have a voice and an influence. It improves accountability, structures and responses. It promotes children and young people as creators - active participants, rather than passive consumers. It enables personal development and active citizenship.

Fourth, our practice needs to be founded on a children's rights perspective. Article 12 of the UNCRC is the keystone, without which all the protection and provision rights fall down. **It indicates that it is through children's active participation that the full implementation of all their rights is achieved.** Carolyne Willow suggests the following principles.

Principles for effective participation: making a reality of Article 12 of the UNCRC

- * All children have a right to be involved in decisions that affect them
 - * They can express themselves in different ways
 - * They should wherever possible be able to choose when, where and how they take part in decision-making
 - * The way they are seen and treated affects how much they participate
 - * Children and childhood are just as important as adults and adulthood
 - * Never assume that decisions are too small or too big for them
 - * Making space for children and young people benefits everyone
 - * They have a right to take part today, tomorrow and every day
- Children and young people have much to say and often want the chance to speak out and be heard. The full inclusion of children and young people as full

Kidsactive

Kidsactive, the national charity for the promotion and provision of adventurous play for disabled children, has appointed **Dominic Fox** as its new Chief Executive to spearhead the organisation as it moves towards its Millennium Mission of 'ensuring that opportunities for adventurous play and leisure are made available to disabled children and young people throughout England and Wales'.

Dominic, who has a wide range of experience in the voluntary sector, takes up his post at Kidsactive in September, moving from the National Homeless Alliance where he was undertaking the role of Director.

Kidsactive are delighted to have someone of Dominic's experience on board at a time when the charity is looking to widen its development work nationally. His appointment coincides with a substantial award to Kidsactive by the Department of Education and Skills to promote its new mission by developing a nationally recognised training course and qualification in Inclusive Play and Childcare.

CHILD ABUSE: World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse - 19 November

The World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse, an initiative of the Women's World Summit Foundation, will take place on 19 November 2001. This day was created to focus attention on the role of women in protecting children from abuse. The Day will signal a first commitment of "Women of the World" in this key area, and will take the important issue of child abuse to the international stage.

*For more information, contact: Women's World Summit Foundation, P.O. Box 2001, 1211 Geneva 1, Switzerland. Tel: 00 41 22 738 6619; Fax: 00 41 22 738 8248; Email: dignity@vtxnet.ch
resources impoverishes families.'*



Digest

members of these neighbourhoods and communities is essential to fulfil their dreams of making where they live a better place.

WWF 'Putting Kids IN Peril': Unauthored, Daily Star (13/08/2001) (1/AG/2001)

SAFETY watchdogs are braced for an epidemic of ultra-violent WWF wrestling-style bouts in Britains playgrounds.

They fear children will be battering each other with tables and chairs as they attempt to emulate American grapple hereos who antics are screened on TV. The Royal Society For The Prevention Of Accidents fears kids will be seriously hurt in underground contests.

Too young to vote, old enough to be executed: Julian Borger, *The Guardian* (01/08/2001) (2/AG/2001)

Amnesty International has accused the United States of "contempt for international law and common standards of decency" for intending to execute a convict murderer who was 17 at the time of his crime. Napoleon Beazley admitted shooting dead an elderly man while stealing a car in 1994. John Luttig, 63, was shot twice in the head in front of his wife at their home in Tyler, Texas.

Police fear for lives of tramsurfing teens: Helen Carter, *The Guardian* (01/08/2001) (3/AG/2001)

Police in Greater Manchester warned of the spread of a dangerous craze for "tramsurfing" after a teenager suffered serious head injuries. Officers said there had been a number of incidents over 18 months whereby youths illegally cling on to the backs of the Metrolink modern trams serving the city. Several have been prosecuted. The latest incident involved a 17-year-old found with head injuries on the line near Besses station. The youth was taken to a hospital in Salford, where his condition was described as serious.

Children shown mortuary photos to deter carrying of knives: Nick Hopkins, (Undated) (4/AG/2001)

Children as young as 10 caught in possession of knives are being shown photographs of stab victims and corpses on mortuary slabs, in a police campaign to try to stop young people carrying potentially lethal weapons. The hour long presentation, thought to be the first of its kind in Britain, has had a huge impact, reducing the number of those who have seen it going on to reoffend to 2%, compared to the normal 20% figure for reoffending. So far no parents have objected to the scheme, which was devised in east London, to persuade children aged 10 to 17 they are "dicing with death" if they carry knives.

£12,400 child labour fine on McDonald's: Steve Morris, *The Guardian* (01/08/2001) (5/AG/2001)

Two McDonald's restaurants in one of Britain's wealthiest areas have been heavily fined for exploiting child workers. Ten schoolchildren, including a girl who worked 16 hours on a Saturday and another who worked until 2am on a school day, were found to be illegally employed at a McDonald's in Camberley, Surrey. The company that holds the franchises for the restaurants, Ikhya Enterprises, was fined £12,400 by north-west Surrey magistrates, after admitting 20 offences of illegally employing Schoolchildren. The fine have been welcomed by child employment experts as evidence that the courts are beginning to take such offences more seriously.

When grief is not enough: Dina Rabinovitch, *The Times* (01/08/2001) (6/AG/2001)

The promise of swallow and amazon days has been clouded by news headlines: Amanda and Gareth Edwards found guilty of the manslaughter of their daughter and her daughter's friend who died on the railway tracks while the grown-ups picnicked nearby. The picnic spot was near a railway track. Sophie and Kymberley were killed by a train as they played face down on the tracks throwing stones into the river below. Legal professionals agree that such a prosecution is extremely rare: a case where it is the mother on trial whose child has died and there was clearly no intention to cause harm to the children. Such a case will always be tragic; it will not very often come to court. Now Amanda and Gareth Edwards have been found guilty of these deaths. Their marriage has broken down. They may face going to jail.

Teacher accused of sex assaults: *Evening Standard* (20/06/2001) (7/AG/2001)

A WOMAN teacher has appeared in court charged with sex offences against pupils from her school. Amy Gehring, 25, is accused of five counts of indecently assaulting boys and one of indecently assaulting a girl. The alleged victims are under 16. At a brief hearing in Woking, magistrates banned the naming of the school and identification of the pupils. Gehring, from Hampton, was remanded on bail.

Damages for extra cost of bringing up disabled child: *Court of Appeal* (11/04/2001) (8/AG/2001)

A Mother who had undergone a negligently performed sterilisation was entitled to recover damages for the costs of providing for the special needs and extra expenses of her son who was born with significant disabilities. LORD JUSTICE BROOKE said that in 1993 the mother, at her own request underwent a laparoscopic sterilisation at St James' Hospital Leeds. It was admitted that the procedure was performed negligently. She conceived her fifth child ten months later and was warned that it might be born with a disability. The conception and birth were catastrophic events in her life, her husband leaving home before the birth and child having severe communication and behaviour problems. The health authority have admitted he should not be treated as a "healthy" child.

'Damilola looked at me twice, a lovely full vision, then faded out': *Indira Das-Gupta, Evening Standard* (21/08/2001) (9/AG/2001)

THE MAN who held 10-year-old Damilola Taylor as he bled to death on a London stairwell last November has spoken for the first time about the Boy's final moments. Anthony Elliott, 38, believes the boy actually died on the stairwell before he was rushed to hospital. Mr Elliott said: "The first thing that caught my eye was the amount of blood on the stairwell. I then focused directly on this person's face and, to my astonishment, it was a little boy - young Dami. We didn't know if he'd been shot or stabbed. Dami looked at me a couple of times - a lovely full vision - then faded out." Mr Elliot, who has been offered counselling to help him get over Damilola's death, told Trevor McDonald that he has taken comfort from the fact because he and a number of his colleagues were there to help, Damilola did not

Bullies, traffic danger stop children's fun

A new survey published by **The Children's Society** and the **Children's Play Council** shows that over a quarter of children surveyed cite bullying from older children as one of the main reasons they feel unable to play outside. The survey of 800 children aged between 4 and 16, revealed that although many children (65%) say there are enough spaces for them to play outside, over six in ten (61%) find things which prevent them doing so. More than two thirds (67%) said this was because of fear of bullying from older children, danger from traffic, dirty play areas or parents' fear of strangers.

The main reasons children feel unable to play outside are:

- Fear of bullying from older children (25%)
- Danger from traffic (17%)
- Parents' fear of strangers (15%)
- Dirty play areas eg. dog excrement (10%)

Other reasons include drug dealers (8%), children's fear of strangers (7%) and playgrounds being too far from home (6%). Parks and play parks are the favourite places for children's play (38%), although children actually play more in the street or the garden (both 27%, compared to 22% in parks).

Ian Sparks, Chief Executive of The Children's Society said: 'Play is vital for children's development - it's the way children develop social understanding, explore their creativity and learn about the world around them. 'But children are being crowded out of their neighbourhoods - by cars, by bullying and by parents' fears about strangers. They are not so much couch potatoes as couch prisoners, and the impact on their health and well-being could be disastrous'.

In some of the areas included in the children's survey, their play workers suggested that the amount of children's play space had decreased over the last five years. Reasons given for this included neighbours not wanting children playing near their homes and older children taking over playgrounds.

The Children's Society and the Children's Play Council are calling for:

- More funding to create and improve play spaces
- More park wardens to ensure parks are safe and clean
- Local authorities to create safe routes to parks, using traffic calming and public awareness to make it safer and easier for children to travel to play spaces
- Local authorities to consult with children when



die alone: "Damilola died with a group of loving people who also have children. He died with friends - he made friends that night. In a very sad way, when he died, I'd like to say each one of us died a bit that night as well, I personally did. I just hope that, wherever he is now, he's resting happy."

Concern Over Playground: *Julie Martin, Times (Undated) (10/AG/2001)*

SURFACES at play parks in a Teeside town have been condemned as among the worst in the Country by a group campaigning for improvements. The condemnation of equipment in Thornaby came after a meeting between Ian Burks, Chairman of the national Keep Our Children Safe Campaign, and grieving mum Andrea Graham. Andrea's 12-year-old daughter, Shannon, died after an accident at the town's Littleboy Park in August last year. The youngster was playing with friends when it is believed she fell from a swing and hit her head.

Children aged five smuggling tobacco: *David Williams, Motoring Editor (Undated) (11/AG/2001)*

CHILDREN as young as five are being used by ruthless Cross-Channel smuggling gangs. The youngsters believe they are on a fun day out but are in fact carrying up to £300 worth of contraband tobacco in their backpacks. Customs and Excise officials described the trade as a "sickening development". About 10 children a day are being intercepted but it is believed dozens more are being used as "mules" by smugglers trying to evade new security measures at ports.

New playground on course: *Sarah Wood, Local Campaigner (Undated) (12/AG/2001)*

CAERPHILLY'S children are set to get new, safe playground equipment. The work started at Morgan Jones Park, one of 30 playgrounds to be installed in the area. Now similar work will happen at Llanbradach and Cefn Hengoed Parks. Last year 95 playgrounds were closed last year after being found dangerous following a RoSPA inspection.

Five men are arrested over 12-year-old's pregnancy: *Patrick Sawyer, Evening Standard (10/05/2001) (13/AG/2001)*

DNA tests have been carried out on five men to find out which of them made a 12-year-old girl pregnant. The five were arrested after the girl told the police she had sex with them but couldn't be sure who was the father. DNA samples were taken from all five, whose ages range from 16 to 26. All have been released on bail, with the threat of rape charges hanging over them. The girl, whose baby is due in the autumn, intends to keep the child.

Aidan, 2, Starved and froze to death. Did Police bungle the investigation?: *Jane Mackenzie, The Big Issue (30/05/2001) (14/AG/2001)*

POLICE who hunted for a missing toddler while he slowly starved and froze to death at his father's home are being quizzed over their alleged failure to search the house where he died. Sponford Green, his father has been sentenced to four year imprisonment after admitting manslaughter. Aidan was found lying on a dirty mattress with no blankets in a squalid room wearing only a pyjama top and socks in a house with no heating. He was found by house-breakers in April 2000, in Walsall, in the West Midlands, up to five days after he died from hypothermia and malnutrition. Aidan went missing for more than two months after his mother, Dorett White, reported him kidnapped by his estranged father who had been baby sitting.

Stop or go: *Maria McHale, Guardian (29/08/2001) (15/AG/2001)*

EFFORTS to curb youngster making trouble by anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) have met with mixed results across the U.K. Yet a simpler and cheaper alternative, started in Islington, north London, has proven to be finding better results than other areas, and they are keen to follow it methods. The scheme is based on acceptable behaviour contracts (ABCs), agreements which bind troublesome youngsters to comply with a set of rules, with the penalty that their families could face eviction from their council house, housing association property or privately owned home for any breach. The success of ABCs have now been recognised by the Home Office with a £50,000 grant to establish the UK's first anti-social behaviour unit.

Local child curfew scheme extended: *Ceri Edwards, First things first (undated) (16/AG/2001)*

NEW legislation giving councils across England and Wales the power to place curfew orders on children up to the age of 15 has come into force. The new law, designed to protect communities from anti-social behaviour and protect children themselves from the risk of being on the streets at night, will also see the police able to apply similar orders. Local Councils believe that extending the age range will enable them and the police to have the flexibility they need to use the orders to provide better protection from communities as well as young people themselves.

Giving children the rights of enjoyable play: *Jan Cosgrove, Local Council Review, (July/2001) (17/AG/2001)*

NATIONAL-ORGANISER, Jan Cosgrove writing in Local Council Review, outlining Fair Play for children's mission.

Levels of illiteracy among young is above that of 1912: *Tracy McVeigh, The Observer (19/08/2001) (18/AG/2001)*

ACCORDING to recent research, the reading and writing skills of Britain's young people are worse than they were before the First World War. Despite the Government's efforts to improve the nation's literacy skills, the study found that 15 per cent of people aged 15 to 21 are 'functionally illiterate'. Compared to 1912, where school inspectors found that only 2 per cent of young people were unable to read or write.

How to cope with a drunk for a parent: *Simon Crompton, The Times (01/05/2001) (20/AG/2001)*

JOE is ten, and you might expect him to be reticent about his mother's drinking problem. If he isn't, it is because for nearly half his life it seemed normal to have a mother who frequently got upset, shouted, stayed in bed in the morning and wasn't around in the evening. Now that his mother has stopped drinking for 21 months, Joe can see how his life has improved. "When she was drinking she used to smack me sometimes," he said. "She used to go out a lot and I didn't know why. If there was something wrong, and she was upset, I'd look after her. She has improved a lot. She calmer and stopped shouting, and don't have to look after her so much." His mother, Anna, is less forgiving about herself. "When I'd had a drink I'd start shouting and blaming Joe for things he hadn't done," she says. Anna, a marketing

planning play spaces



These are from a book called *Disorder in the Court*. These are things people actually said in court, word for word, taken down and published by court reporters - who had the torment of staying calm while these exchanges were actually taking place.

Q: What is your date of birth? **A:** July fifteenth. **Q:** What year? **A:** Every year.

Q: What gear were you in at the moment of the impact? **A:** Gucci sweats and Reeboks.

Q: This myasthenia gravis, does it affect your memory at all? **A:** Yes. **Q:** And in what ways does it affect your memory? **A:** I forget. **Q:** You forget. Can you give us an example of something you've forgotten.

Q: How old is your son, the one living with you? **A:** Thirty-eight or thirty-five, I can't remember which. **Q:** How long has he lived with you? **A:** Forty-five years.

Q: What was the first thing your husband said to you when he woke up that morning? **A:** He said, "Where am I, Cathy?" **Q:** And why did that upset you? **A:** My name is Susan.

Q: Do you know if your daughter has ever been involved in voodoo or the occult? **A:** We both do. **Q:** Voodoo? **A:** We do. **Q:** You do? **A:** Yes, voodoo.

Q: Now doctor, isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep he doesn't know about it until the next morning?

Q: The youngest son, the twenty-year old, how old is he?

Q: Were you present when your picture was taken?

Q: So the date of conception (of the baby) was August 8th? **A:** Yes. **Q:** And what were you doing at the time?

Q: She had three children, right? **A:** Yes. **Q:** How many were boys? **A:** None. **Q:** Were there any girls?

Q: How was your first marriage terminated? **A:** By death. **Q:** And by whose death was it terminated?

Q: Can you describe the individual? **A:** He was about medium height and had a beard. **Q:** Was this a male, or a female?

Q: Is your appearance here this morning pursuant to deposition notice which I sent to your attorney? **A:** No, this how I dress when I go to work.

Q: All your responses must be oral, OK? What school did you go to? **A:** Oral.

Q: Do you recall the time that you examined the body? **A:** The autopsy started around 8:30p.m. **Q:** And Mr. Dennington was dead at the time? **A:** No, he was sitting on table wondering why I was doing an autopsy.

Q: Are you qualified to give a urine sample?

Q: Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse? **A:** No. **Q:** Did you check for blood pressure? **A:** No. **Q:** Did you check for breathing? **A:** No. **Q:** So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy? **A:** No. **Q:** How can you be so sure, Doctor? **A:** Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar. **Q:** But could the patient have still been alive, never the less? **A:** Yes, it is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law somewhere.

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES IN THE UK 'AT THE CROSSROADS'

After four years of initiatives in childcare and early years, the British Government is urged to take stock and reflect on what kind of services, childhood and future we want for our children. A major new report on early childhood services across Europe poses critical questions for the UK in developing an integrated and inclusive system of early childhood services that matches the best elsewhere.

'The UK at the crossroads: towards an early years European partnership' by **Peter Moss**, Professor of Early Childhood Provision at the Institute of Education University of London, is published by the national childcare charity *Daycare Trust*. It is the second in a new series of Daycare Trust 'Facing the Future' policy papers. The report contrasts demographics, employment and policies across the 15 member states of the European Union and summarises care and education services for pre-school age children. A detailed account is also given of two well established but contrasting early childhood systems in France and Sweden. Key differences that the analysis reveals include:

1. statutory parental leaves in the UK are among the weakest in Europe
2. early education provision in the UK is moving towards two years part-time provision while most European countries seek three years full-time
3. most childcare services are provided by the private sector in the UK
4. funding in the UK favours demand subsidy over supply subsidy
5. the UK has the highest level of child poverty in Europe, British fathers work particularly long hours, there is a high proportion of lone parents in the UK and a high level of part-time working by women with children
6. the difference between women's and men's earnings is relatively high in the UK.

'The UK at the crossroads' argues that Britain should now review issues about the age range of early childhood and the school starting age, staffing, funding, entitlement, types of provision and providers. It also poses fundamental questions about the image of the child and value placed on early childhood services in the UK:

- should the school starting age be raised to six in line with other European countries?
- is a childcare workforce based on poorly educated, trained and paid women sustainable?