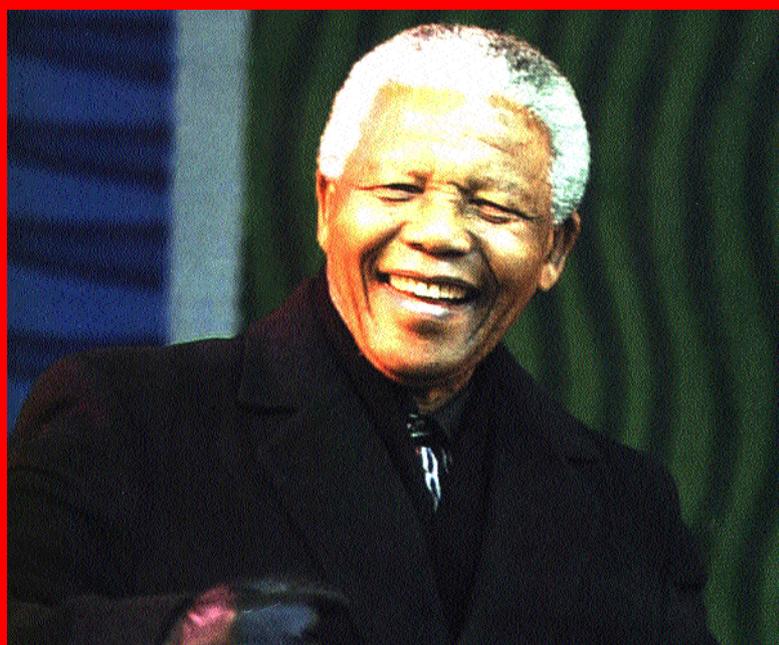


PLAY ACTION



FAIR PLAY FOR CHILDREN



**The Global
movement for
children**

Worldwide Campaign Launched by Nelson Mandela

Summer 2001

Incorporating Fair Play's PlayAction Guide



FAIR PLAY TO BECOME CRIMINAL CHECKS UMBRELLA AGENCY



The Criminal Records Bureau comes online for 'enhanced level' criminal records checks in August. Recent seminars and other briefings around the country in the past weeks have been the opportunity for those who are interested in the proposed workings of the new Bureau to find out some detail of what will be involved.

The CRB has been set up under the Police Act 1997 to enable a wider range of organisations and individuals to access a new, computer-based national record of criminal convictions. There will be three levels of checks, each one aimed at different levels of disclosure justification.

The first level, BASIC, will be one which any individual person can apply for, on submission of a form and a standard fee (not yet set). This will list convictions except those exempted by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Acts as having become 'spent'. The disclosure (that is, the print out from CRB) will be sent direct to the person concerned.

The second level, STANDARD, will only be available if the request is countersigned by the appointed 'countersignatory' of a registered body. This level will give the CRB's information on that person including all offences which are usually exempted under the Rehabilitation of Offenders legislation. This level of disclosure is aimed at people who wish to work with children and other vulnerable groups. The disclosure by CRB will be sent to the person concerned and also the registered body. A fee will be payable, technically by the applicant, but the registered body could make it on their behalf. [But see below re: volunteer positions.]

The third level, ENHANCED, will have to be countersigned, as per the Standard, and the disclosure will go also to both the applicant and the registered body. The Enhanced Level checks will be aimed at those working in the most sensitive posts with children and other vulnerable groups. This level will also contain local, 'soft' information from the applicant's local Police Force, if any. A fee will be payable, as per the above other levels. [But also see below re: Volunteer positions.] Disclosures will go to the applicant and the registered body.

A recent announcement by CRB has confirmed that, after much lobbying, it has been conceded that there will be no charge under Standard and Enhanced Levels for Volunteer positions. The full story is on page 2 of this edition.

The turn-round period for Basic and Standards is aimed to be ONE WEEK, and for Enhanced, THREE. This is the aim but it is almost certain that in the initial phase this will not be likely to be easily achieved, especially for Enhanced checks which have to go to local Police Forces.

The priority of CRB is to bring in the Enhanced Checks for Child-related situations in August 2001. The intent is the CRB should be a 'one stop shop' so that any checks which should also be undertaken against the Education 'List99' and also the Department of Health 'POCAList' [see last edition] will be carried out at the same time. During one of the seminars, Jan Cosgrove from Fair Play for Children, raised the issue of whether information held by Social Services departments would be included in all cases in this process - the CRB director said that where a person was referred from a job situation, this would happen but was intrigued by our suggestion that, for example, refusal or removal of registration as a childminder or child care provider might be of relevance, or some-

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one having a child put in their care removed from them etc. Fair Play, whose Child Protection in Playwork Pack recommends such issues being explored with applicants for jobs, and checks being made, is to take up this issue with CRB and the Association of Directors of Social Services.

In order to become a Registered Body to make Standard and Enhanced Disclosure requests, any organisation will need to agree a Code of Conduct being created by CRB - currently under consultation - and also appoint a Lead Countersignatory and other Countersignatories as required. There will be a Registration Fee of £300. CRB has recognised that many smaller bodies will not wish to go through the detailed registration process of CRB, and the obligations imposed under the Code of Conduct. Therefore, Umbrella Bodies will be registered, where registration will be on behalf a number of smaller bodies attached to the Umbrella Body.

Fair Play for Children is registering as one of these Umbrella Bodies. Jan Cosgrove: "We have been running criminal records checks for several years under the VOCS 'pilot' and we have just over 100 Fair Play Member bodies using this system. Much of what we have been developing in the past few years will translate perfectly into the new CRB context, and we are delighted that our foresight has been wholly justified. It is also excellent news for all our Members, because until now we could only check for staff and volunteers of members who are voluntary sector bodies. Now we will be able to extend our service to commercial and statutory bodies who do not wish to register themselves. Fair Play is already partially geared to undertake this service which will be a major development of our Child Protection in Playwork Programme. We can only say we are also delighted if this new system speeds up the time it takes to turn round an application for disclosure. This is good news for child protection."

Fair Play already has a number of resources within its Programme, as well as Criminal Records Checks. An online and printed Fact Sheet on Child Protection, a Model Child Protection Policy (printed and on disc, with plans to put a downloadable version on its web site). The next objective will be to update and develop the current Pack (printed form, £10 and £7 to FP Members), almost certainly as an Online, downloadable resource.

Details: from Fair Play, address, tel number etc on first editorial page of this edition.

FREE CRB CHECKS FOR VOLUNTEERS CONCESSION

Volunteers will be given free criminal record checks, Home Office Minister Charles Clarke announced recently. Mr Clarke made this announcement in response to a Parliamentary Question from Derek Wyatt MP (Sittingbourne and Sheppey). Any employer or voluntary organisation will be able to ask a person seeking a job or a position to apply for a certificate from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). Employers and voluntary organisations, many of whom will be able to access such information for the first time, will be able to take this information into account in judging people's suitability for posts.

The CRB, which will open later this year, will strengthen safeguards for the protection of children and vulnerable adults by providing employers with much wider access to criminal records information. The Criminal Records Bureau will be established under Part V of the Police Act 1997 which, for the first time, will allow employers to ask prospective employees or volunteers to apply for a criminal record check. There are, three different levels of criminal record check and related certificates under the Act. They are:

A criminal conviction certificate (or basic disclosure) will be issued only to individuals who will be able to choose whether to show it to employers. The certificate will show all convictions held at national level which are not 'spent' under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 but will not show 'spent' convictions or cautions;



CHILD PROTECTION IN A PLAYWORK SETTING

Fair Play's Programme aimed at raising awareness, improving procedures and good practice in play organisations, after-school clubs, sports organisations, arts projects, youth groups, nurseries

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Freepost, Fair Play for Children,
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A criminal record certificate (or standard disclosure) will be available to people working in positions exempted under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. It would be available to people who have regular contact with the under-18s, the elderly, sick or handicapped people; those involved in the administration of the law (e.g. police officers); and others employed in other sensitive areas and professions. The certificate will include details of convictions, including convictions 'spent' under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act" and cautions, reprimands and warnings held at national level. In addition, where the post involves working with children or vulnerable adults, a check will be made of lists maintained by the Department of Health and the Department for Education and Employment of persons considered unsuitable for such positions ;

An enhanced criminal record certificate (or enhanced disclosure) will be available for those applying for positions which involve regular caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of under 18s, or vulnerable adults, for certain statutory licensing purposes (e.g. gaming and lotteries licences) and for those being considered for judicial appointments. In addition to the range of information available under the criminal record certificate, an enhanced certificate will include information from local police records including relevant non-conviction information .

Mr Clarke said: "I am pleased to announce that the Government will be making available the resources needed to enable volunteers in sensitive positions - including working with children and with vulnerable adults - to have free checks from the Criminal Records Bureau. We have consulted widely and have considered very carefully the representations made to us. We feel that it is right for volunteers to be able to access this service free of charge. It is important that the Government extends this support to volunteers throughout the country who play a vital role in helping, some of the most vulnerable people in our society ."

At present, criminal record checks are carried out by the police and mostly limited to the employees of statutory bodies, for example, health and local authorities, schools and probation services, who work with those under 18.

Liz Atkins, NSPCC Head of Policy and Public Affairs, commented on the concession: "This is a great victory for child protection. It provides greater protection for children involved in community activities and gives parents peace of mind that their children are not in the care of known offenders. We know that sex offenders are cunning in gaining access to children. Today's announcement makes it far more difficult for paedophiles to infiltrate voluntary organisations."

Jan Cosgrove, Fair Play for Children's National Organiser, also welcomed the announcement as being 'helpful' although he stated that "Fair Play's experience of carrying out many such checks is that a small charge is not as much of a deterrent to individual volunteering as has been claimed in some quarters. This is because, in all cases we have come across (probably two-thirds of the 3,000 or more checks we have carried out being on volunteers), the per-person fee we have had to charge in order to finance our operation has been paid by the organisation for whom they hope to work. For most such groups, this did not amount to a great deal each year, as each small, local provider (these being the vast majority) perhaps only has 5-10 volunteers, and a turnover of less than that annually. It is large organisations like the Scouts who had the most to fear. They have not been able to access criminal records checks so the prospect of paying, at their estimate, around £500,000 each year would have been daunting. The original idea was to levy the fee whether or not one was a paid employee - but even here, the fee would have been paid as a matter of good practice by the organisation not the individual, even if the latter was technically going to have been responsible for payment. In the new CRB situation, however, it has to be recognised that those registered bodies which undertake such enquiries will have to levy their own charges to cover costs of processing, unless they can find the money from elsewhere. Fair Play has found from the present limited system of checks that the vast majority of organisations do not resent paying such an administrative levy which for many will amount to perhaps between £50 and £100 extra per annum in costs."

Children's Play Information Service

The Children's Play Information Service (CPIS), funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and run by the National Children's Bureau Library and Information Service, is now open. The collection contains over 10,000 items on many aspects of play. Its resources include books, journals, pamphlets, articles and videos, as well as commercial play resource brochures and information on organisations working in the field of play. Subjects covered within the collection include: theories of play, play value, play education and training, play therapy, playwork, playgrounds, play schemes, and play safety.

CPIS is open for enquiries and visitors on Wednesdays 9.30AM-12.30PM, Thursdays and Fridays 9.30AM-5PM. Visits are by appointment only and free of charge. Requests for information may be made by telephone, letter or e-mail. *Please contact:*

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8 Wakley Street
London EC1V 7QE
Tel: 020 7843 6303
Fax: 020 7843 6007
E-mail: CPIS@ncb.org.uk*

Services available from CPIS
include:

- * **specific subject searches** on request
- * **details of organisations** working in the field of play
- * **fact sheets** on a number of play-related topics are available free on receipt of a large SA.

Please note: we still have a number of publications available for sale. Please contact CPIS for a complete list. A leaflet describing the full range of services provided by the Children's Play Information Service will be available shortly. Please contact CPIS if you would like to receive one.



In Russia, Military Helps Orphaned Boys Soldier On

Adoption: Youths surrender their childhood to army regiment in return for a chance at success.

By ROBYN DIXON, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

KINESHMA, Russia—They are 19 lost boys, orphaned, abandoned or sent away. Blank-faced, they march like windup toy soldiers around the snowy parade ground at the military unit that is home. But the smallest pair of boots is out of step.

With a pathos that could melt icy hearts, the youngest boy, 12-year-old Boris Vorobyov, skips to regain the pace, his face rigid with determination. He soon falls out of step again, battling to fit in. His struggle to thrust aside the frailties of childhood is painfully obvious, but the Russian military machine, adoptive father to the boys, does not soften for anyone. In the army, boys have to be men.

Dmitri Belukhin, 16, was 8 years old when he watched his father bashed to death in a garage. Sergei Legoshin, 16, impassively explains that his father is imprisoned for stabbing his mother to death. And Boris was sent here four months ago by his mother, who had divorced and decided that she could not afford to keep him.

The military life has but one answer to all the confusion and tragedy of their young lives: discipline. It is the rope of life. Its coils, heavy and unyielding now, will ultimately haul them up to a better life, or so the theory goes here at the Kineshma Chemical and Radiation Defense Regiment, stationed 220 miles northeast of Moscow. "You're allowed to laugh," according to Boris, "but not too loudly."

For most of these boys in uniform, ages 12 to 17, the alternative is life in a state orphanage where the staff of mainly women would turn them into effeminate and infantile delinquents. Or so says the boys' commander and mentor, Maj. Yevgeny Afonin. "Here they learn to be manly," Afonin said. "No one licks them clean, and no one pities them. Regardless of their age, they're treated as grown-up men, not as boys of their mental and psychological level of development."

Regimental Adoptions Began During WWII The tradition of the syn polka, or "son of the regiment," goes back to World War II, when orphaned boys fought with soldiers against the Nazis. It continues today, with many regiments adopting one or two boys. The Kineshma regiment is unusual because it adopted so many orphans and wards of the state. The boys have few options, other than to return to a state orphanage.

Military life is defined in slogans. In the boys' barracks here hangs a poster of a frog halfway down the throat of a greedy stork, with the words: "Don't ever give up." Two and a half years ago, when most of the boys joined the unit, they were soft, liable to cry if hurt or troubled. "I'd bring them here and make them look at the slogan and shout it out," Afonin said. "Don't ever give up! No matter how painful it is, no matter how tough and difficult, don't ever give up." A poster near the parade ground proclaims "There is no greater honor than wearing a Russian uniform." But there are other, more dubious honors here, like cleaning the latrines, time and time again, for punishment.

"The worst thing was cleaning the toilet," said Marat Chatuyev, 14, who lasted 15 months in the unit before quitting and moving to an orphanage. "You just can't get used to it no matter how often you have to do it. And I did it so often that I lost count. I am not blaming anyone for it. It was all my fault."



NSPCC CALLS FOR ACTION TO BUILD SAFER COMMUNITIES FOR CHILDREN

The NSPCC is calling on the government and local authority partnerships to prioritise the increased safety of children and young people in local crime reduction strategies.

In a report published 19th February, Building Safer Communities for Children, the NSPCC finds that many local strategies produced by local authorities in partnership with the police – concentrate on children and young people as potential offenders and troublemakers. But they fail to adequately address the vulnerability of children and young people.

NSPCC Director and Chief Executive **Mary Marsh** says: "The tragic killing of ten-year-old Damilola Taylor has exposed the chronic level of violence and victimisation which many children and young people face in their communities. This remains largely hidden from official statistics while threatening acts against vulnerable children are under-reported and often trivialised.

"This report shows that the government's crime and disorder strategies aren't doing enough to ensure the safety of children and young people in their communities. Much more needs to be done. Unless action is taken now to protect children many will remain at risk of violence and there is a danger that there will be more tragic deaths in the future."

The NSPCC carried out the audit on 89 Crime and Disorder Strategies in 1999 and analysed to what extent they focused on children's safety. The report found: ' In spite of the fact that young people are disproportionately represented as victims of crime, fewer than half (48%) of the strategies refer to child pro-



Armed with guns, flame-throwers and smoke screens, the Radiation and Chemical Defense Regiment is trained for combat and recovery efforts in the event of gas, chemical or nuclear attacks. The idea for adopting so many children here came from the local government, which initially provided funding. The money stopped, leaving the regiment and Defense Ministry burdened with the cost. The real problem is not providing uniforms or food but extras such as civilian clothing.

The boys attend a civilian school. They tend to stand out in their uniforms, said school director Svetlana Moshkova, so teachers notice small infractions that would go unnoticed if committed by a civilian student.

“These people came here with distorted souls and no notion of honor and decency,” Moshkova primly said. “We report every little misdemeanor, feeling sure that we are doing them good.” “They know they can’t avoid punishment if they do anything wrong,” Afonin said. “The teacher telephones the regiment, and the severe and manly military collective swings into action.”

The boys with poor grades lose free weekend time and must study instead. Those who commit misdeeds—such as smoking, talking back or kicking chairs—are given extra chores. Some boys slip into a cycle of low morale as their punishments pile up.



For Sergei Legoshin, it all got to be too much. “School was terrible. I was getting one punishment after another. So you feel bitter about it, and you start arguing with the commander about it, and you get more work orders and punishment,” Sergei said, his glance sliding sideways, never meeting eyes. “When I ran away, I was angry at everything.”

Dmitri Fedulov, 16, considered quitting six months ago because of the heavy load of punishment and studies. “There was no freedom,” he said. “I was depressed. But I’m taking it now. I’m trying to bear it.”

In the end, these two boys and several others who ran away or tried to quit were persuaded by Afonin to come back. In the lottery of life in post-Soviet Russia, the regiment buys them a better ticket than would the orphanage. “I just don’t have any other option,” Sergei said. “What is there for me to do in civilian life? Nothing.”

Two others have left the unit and not returned; a third was expelled for violence. The boys generally stay with the unit until they gain entry into college or a trade school. Afonin likens the boys to hardened steel but says they all get depressed at times. He calls it metal fatigue.

Some boys seem to visibly thrive on the tough regime. But while young Boris’ mother, Marina Vorobyov, is sure he’s doing well, the officers are concerned. Vorobyov, a 43-year-old secretary who used to work for the ultranationalist Liberal Democratic Party, is happy that her son has become neater, more disciplined and more mature. Boris too is sure the tough disciplinary regime will make him “a more closed person. I’ll be more self-sufficient and independent. I’ll be quicker on the uptake.”

12-Year-Old’s Only Friend is Mascot Dog

But after four months in the regiment, he looks lost. His one friend is the unit’s mascot, a chow chow puppy named Jackie. He confides in no one. “I don’t think about anything. I don’t do anything,” he said. He seemed close to tears

tection or victim support services.’

Fewer than half (42%) prioritise the increased safety of children and young people. Only half (51%) of the partnerships provided clear evidence that they had consulted with young people.

While nearly four fifths (80%) provide information on personal safety, health or citizenship information for children and young people, many concentrate exclusively on preventing young offending without addressing the vulnerability of children and young people – drug education being the most common initiative mentioned.

Young people are seen more as perpetrators of crime rather than victims of it. Only eleven per cent in the survey made provision for tackling young people’s fear of crime.

While a significant number propose strategies for tackling domestic violence, most concentrate on adult women as the sole victims of domestic violence and only 36% make clear that children are often the direct (and indirect) victims of this type of crime.

Twenty one per cent of the strategies have recognised a need to improve relations between young people and older people and ensure that adults have a better understanding of young people. (Stockport discovered a pronounced distrust of the police among young people.)

Building Safer Communities contains important recommendations to local authority partnerships and central government. Mary Marsh adds: “In the report we recommend how we think the strategies could be improved in the future including a call to government to ensure that future crime statistics include data on crimes against children and young people and the age of victims.

As well as looking at this at a strategic level, the NSPCC is also addressing these issues in a practical way. Through the **FULL STOP** campaign they are funding **Child Community Safety Workers** to work with communities in high crime areas to increase children’s safety.

Through these projects NSPPC workers aim to bring parents together to make local communities safer for children as well as listening to children to find out what they want for their own safety and helping them to develop strategies to keep themselves safe.



when he said he missed his family. Yevgeny Gruzlov, 29, the regiment's education officer and psychologist, described Boris as a tight child having a tough time adapting. "There are people who are not meant to be military men, and he's one of them," he said. "But perhaps he'll get used to it after a year or two."

Afonin said the aim is to keep the boys occupied "so they don't have any bad, crazy ideas in their heads." In Soviet times, youth organizations such as the Pioneers and Komsomol performed that function, as well as dosing the young with politics. When those groups collapsed with the fall of communism, nothing was created to replace them.

"But the vacuum was quickly filled with drugs, alcohol or sex," Afonin said. "We have to keep kids busy." Hence the boys are up at 6:30 a.m., and after school they study until their homework is done, with lights out at 10.30 p.m. They have military training three nights a week and on Saturdays. Those who are not being punished can go to a Sunday night disco. Like soldiers, they sew on their buttons and do their laundry. "A man who cannot wash his socks is not a real man," Afonin said. He imparts many other masculine secrets to the boys: sex education, how to court a girl and how to avoid the pitfalls of foolish romantic love. His advice is to find a girl whose parents have money.

Demand for a spot in the unit is enormous. Every day, Afonin gets calls from mothers and grandmothers eager to place their boys, but the unit has no more room. Despite the enthusiastic demand among Russian parents and grandparents, there are no plans for other units to take on so many boys.

The boys' barracks at the Kineshma regiment are strangely quiet, considering that this is home to 19 boys. The residents lack the chaotic, spirited ebullience typical of children their age. The price these boys pay for the boost in life is to surrender their childhood. But perhaps, for many of them, life's tragedies already stole that.

Sergei Kalugin, 17, cannot remember anything before he was 7 years old. He knew he had a brother and sisters, but not who or where they were. Then, a few months ago, the past opened up when his father came to visit. "I saw a man. I knew he was my father. I felt indifferent," he recalled. His father, released after serving a prison term for murder, reintroduced Sergei to his siblings. The teen learned from his older sister that as children they were left alone in the house while their parents went drinking.

Later, his father wrote some letters to him, Sergei said, "and had no choice but to love him and forgive him."

'I Don't Love Her,' Teen Says of Mother

But when 16-year-old Dmitri Pavlikov's mother turned up at the military unit more than two years ago and offered to take him home, he refused. He said that as a child he was left for days at a time without food when she went on drinking sprees.

"I don't love her. I felt love for her a long time ago, when I was in the third grade." There was a long, painful silence when he was asked whom he does love. Finally, he named a woman in his neighborhood during his early childhood. "When my mother was drunk, she'd take me in and put me up. She's the only person I love in the world. Alla, Auntie Alli." He never sees her now.

The officers here do their best with their troubled charges. Their aim is to give the boys a better chance in life than they would have in an orphanage or a broken family. But they can only offer manly comradeship, not love. "Even the older ones want their mothers," said Gruzlov, the education officer. "They all want family warmth. Whatever we do and however hard we try, we can't provide them with family warmth." *Yakov Ryzhak and Alexei V. Kuznetsov of The LA Times' Moscow Bureau contributed to this report. Copyright 2001 Los Angeles Times*



Scots' Call to keep under-18s out of custody

The age of criminal responsibility is to be increased in Scotland

An influential group of offenders' organisations is pressing for the age of criminal responsibility to be increased to 18 in Scotland. The country currently has the lowest age limit in Europe. The Scottish Executive has already announced plans to raise it from eight to 12 years of age.

However, the controversial call has been dismissed by Conservative justice spokesman **Phil Gallie, MSP**, who said society had to be protected.

Last year the Scottish Executive unveiled its proposal to increase the age of criminal responsibility from eight to 12.

It was part of a package of youth crime proposals which also included a pilot project to take 16 and 17-year-olds out of the adult court system and get them to confront their crimes.

However, the consortium which includes community safety charity Sacro and the Howard League for penal reform, wants to see it increased further to stop 16 and 17-year-olds being locked up and raise the level to 18. Consortium member **Susan Matheson**, the chief executive of Sacro, said there was a "great deal of logic" in suggesting that age.

Under supervision

"The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child says that you are a child under the age of 18," she told BBC Scotland's Newsnight programme. "It would also bring us more into line with other countries in Europe."



TOBACCO FIRMS TARGET YOUNG GIRLS

Parallels seen between AIDS and tobacco use

Girls are being intensely targeted by tobacco companies, causing long-term damage to their health, according to the *World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)*. Speaking on behalf of WAGGGS at a briefing recently, 15 year-old **Resham Patel**, a Girl Scout from New Jersey, described how WAGGGS is encouraging its Girl Scouts to learn about the dangers of tobacco use and pass this information on to their peers.

The panel also heard that there are parallels between smoking and the AIDS epidemic, both of which threaten teenagers worldwide. People engage in high-risk behavior at vulnerable periods of their life, and few periods are as unsettling as the teenage years. Teenagers want to act like adults, but they lack the information and confidence to protect themselves.

Although smoking is decreasing overall in the United States, it is on the increase among young people-especially girls. Girls in the US - and for that matter, around the world- are particularly susceptible to tobacco advertising. **Patti Repetto**, from the *New York City Department of Health*, pointed out that while tobacco companies are forbidden to target children, they advertise to people in the 18 to 24-year-old age group. These are the people that children want to emulate.

Speakers noted that from an early age children see images of happy and healthy people smoking. Cigarette lighters are designed to appeal to children, school book covers subliminally advertise cigarettes, and tobacco products are sold next to candy. These tactics are effective in enticing vulnerable young people to smoke. As **Joey Koldare** (*Mothers and Daughters Race Against Teen Smoking*) explained, girls who are taking the critical step of 'emergence' from childhood latch onto symbols of maturity. Cigarettes are one such symbol. Likewise, girls in traditional cultures may be trying to adopt elements of modern culture, and smoking can be a means for them to assert their independence from old-fashioned ways.

WAGGGS, one of the world's largest organizations for girls and young women, has come up with powerful methods to counteract the tobacco companies' deadly campaign - by using its network of scout troops. Ms. Patel said that Girl Scouts earn promotions by studying tobacco issues and transmitting what they have learned to other troops.

'Now I have a background in tobacco, and I can go talk to younger girls. Girls can teach each other to say no. Girls are being advocates of our own issues, which improves our self-esteem, gives us a voice of our own,' said Ms. Patel. She added that peer training enhances girls' self-confidence and leadership capabilities. This in turn provides a sense of pride that can be an alternative to smoking.

Describing the parallels between the spread of HIV/AIDS and tobacco use, **Ms. Soon-Young Noon**, New York Liaison for the *Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids*, called the use of tobacco a 'preventable epidemic that is spiraling out of control.' She noted that with both AIDS and tobacco use, the long period that passes between exposure and disease makes it seem that 'you can't see the risk.'

Ms. Noon cautions that women, children, and the poor are the most at risk from tobacco, because they have less access to health care. 'Diseases from tobacco are going to be the leading burden of disease in developing countries in the next ten years,' she said.

She added that the children's hearing system could already deal with people up to that age, keeping them under supervision and reviewing their behaviour.

"The courts may sentence them to a brief sentence in custody or a fine, and that's the end of it," she said. "The children's hearings can keep tabs on them and require that they go on programmes."

Campaigners believe that locking up young people almost guarantees they will commit further crimes, as they say 80% go on to re-offend.

Dr David Colvin, the vice chairman of the Scottish Consortium on Crime and Criminal Justice, said community programmes were more effective than residential care or prison.

The consortium's proposals would mean that 16 and 17-year-olds were not suddenly thrown into adult courts.

It is argued that more teenagers could be guided away from a life of crime - as long as the system is given the resources to cope.

Offenders aged under 16 are dealt with by children's hearings, a system where the emphasis is on welfare and diverting them from crime.

'Hard line offenders'

Campaigners also insist that those under 18 would not get off without some repercussions.

However, Mr Gallie opposed increasing the age of consent to 18. "Most of these youngsters have been hard line offenders for many years," he said. "They have been through the panel system, between 16 and 18 perhaps their crimes become more vicious. We have got to remember that as well as looking after the interests of these youngsters, we have got to look after the interests of society as a whole."

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Safety Work Begins on Play Area Branded a Potential 'Death Trap'

from the Basingstoke Observer written by Kate Hammond Thursday Feb 22 01

An OBSERVER-BACKED campaign for safer playgrounds has exposed a major flaw in national safety laws, which meant Basingstoke council did not report a serious accident to the health and safety authorities.

Although the borough council is adamant it did not need to report five-year-old **Rachel Mather's** fall from a swing at the Radford Gardens play facility last July to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) the organisation has told the Observer this is not the case.

The admission has serious implications for councils across the country, many of whom are thought to be interpreting RIDDOR (the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations) in the same way as Basingstoke and Deane. The HSE has confirmed the borough has reported no accidents at their play areas within the last five years.

Now Rachel's mother, **Christine Mather**, of Cranbourne Lane, has lodged a formal complaint against the council with the HSE, who are looking into the accident and the authorities handling of it.

The enquiry may also end up examining other cases, as Mrs Mather, who is leading a campaign for concrete to be removed from council play areas, says that at least two other sets of parents are willing to give full statements to the HSE about their children's accidents.

Mrs Mather has spent weeks in Basingstoke library studying health and safety legislation to gather the evidence needed to prove the council did have a duty to report her daughter's accident.

She told the Observer, "It seemed very clear to me they should have reported Rachel's fall. I let them know about it the day after it happened and it was then their duty to tell the HSE about it.

Peter Heseltine, *Playground Safety Advisor for the Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents*, agreed, saying: "As far as we are concerned this accident should have been reported. It is the responsibility of the owners and managers of play areas to report serious accidents to the HSE when they hear about them" However, events of the last week have highlighted deep confusion within the HSE over the role of councils in reporting accidents, with conflicting views being given by different HSE departments.

Two days ago, **Alison Barnes**, spokeswoman for the *HSE's Home Counties Regional Office*, which covers Basingstoke, finally admitted: "Yes the council should have reported the accident."

But on the same day, a Basingstoke council spokesman said the authority was also told by one of the HSE's principal inspectors it did not have to report it, although the same inspector also told the council he had passed matters surrounding the accident back to the local inspector.

Basingstoke MP Andrew Hunter plans to take up the issue with Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott. He said, "I understand there are several accidents that may not have been reported. I'm sure this is not deliberate because by and large, Basingstoke is a responsible local authority. However, I am concerned that the Riddor regulations appear to be being interpreted in different ways by

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councils and different departments within the HSE itself and it may be that new government guidance needs to be issued to clarify matters."

Two Views

The Riddor regulations are part of the Health and Safety Act 1995 covering the management of leisure and work facilities. The borough council's interpretation of Riddor is that the authority is not required to report an accident "relating to a council work activity - for example, if a piece of equipment has not been replaced by us following an act of vandalism and an accident occurs as a result." But **Peter Heseltine of ROSPA**, said: "This is a very narrow and legalistic interpretation, which avoids the spirit of Riddor and the Health and Safety Act."



Ian Burks: Fair Play's 'Play Safe' Co-ordinator: I have got to agree entirely with Peter Heseltine on this issue, although in my opinion, as a layman in such matters, the Riddor regulations were unambiguous. It does not take a genius to know that when a child is severely injured in no matter what circumstances, this should be reported immediately. I have said for sometime that HSE law should be separated and not all-encompassing, covering adults in the workplace and children at play.

"We as adults have the capacity to foresee danger and take preventative measures - children I suggest have not. We are letting our children down I believe and we should be doing much more. It is time for government to become seriously involved where the safety of children is at stake."

Left to right Ian Burks, Diana Wallis MEP, for Yorks and Humberside, David Hall-Matthews PPC for North Leeds Lib Dem and Councillor David Pratt inspecting in Leeds playground that was stripped of equipment and left desolate after new European guidelines came out.

From the Health & Safety Executive

The reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR), Regulation 3, require the responsible person to report to the relevant enforcing authority when any person not at work suffers an injury as a result of an accident arising out of or in connection with work and that person is taken from the site of the accident to a hospital for treatment in respect of that injury.

In the case of a local authority playground, an accident to a child which arises out of or in connection with the local authority's work and results in the child being taken to hospital for treatment would be reportable to HSE.

More detailed guidance on the reportability of injuries to people not at work may be found in the HSE publication L73 (A Guide to the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995), or leaflet HSE31(rev1).

Under this provision, accidents such as the one suffered above, would be investigated by the HSE, a report made, and a decision on action taken accordingly.

Childminders get right to smack

CHILDMINDERS will be allowed to smack children and smoke near them with the consent of parents, the Government has announced.

The decision follows consultation with parents which showed overwhelming support for the right to choose. But both smoking and smacking will be banned in daycare settings, such as nurseries and out-of-school clubs, under new standards to be enforced by Ofsted. It is the first time that any government has attempted to set national minimum standards for the care of pre-school children. **Margaret Hodge**, the employment and equal opportunities minister, said the consultation had confirmed "our instincts" that such matters should be decided through private, written agreements between parents and childminders. Nursery nurses reacted angrily to the announcement and claimed that the survey sample was not representative.

Patricia Pritchard, professional officer of the *Professional Association of Nursery Nurses*, said: "How representative are these parents? It depends on who you ask and how you ask it. I don't take anything from these findings - all it demonstrates is that the Government is hell-bent on ignoring the childminding profession."



“WONDERLAND” -

- TIME FOR A RETHINK?

The bizarre and frightening world of child pornography came briefly, albeit in headlines, in the national media in recent weeks. There has been universal hostile reaction to the sentences, considered by many to be too lenient by far, although the convicted defendants benefitted because the new, tougher sentencing for possession and distribution of child pornography had not yet come into force.

Typical of the reactions of the voluntary children's organisations was the comment from NSPCC Director and Chief Executive **Mary Marsh**: “The hideous crimes committed against these children have sentenced them to a life of misery. They show why we need the deterrent of much tougher sentencing and greater punishment. Child pornography is serious child abuse and it must be stopped. We must crack down hard on the men who use the internet for their abhorrent gratification.”

In the wake of the sentencing of the seven British men found guilty in the Wonderland case, seven leading UK children's charities expressed concern at the leniency of their sentences. The men were arrested following a huge international police initiative called Operation Cathedral. Police involved in the case seized 750,000 images of child pornography and 1800 hours of video footage depicting child pornography, some of which involved children of less than two years of age. *NCH Internet Consultant John Carr*, speaking on behalf of a coalition of UK children's charities consisting of *Barnardo's, Childline, NCB, NCH, NCVCCO, NSPCC* and *The Children's Society*: “Behind each pornographic image are real children who will have been severely damaged and traumatised by their experiences. Child sex abuse is always a serious issue, but this sentencing sends out a contrary message to child sex offenders who use the Internet. The charities had drawn hope from new legislation introduced last year authorising maximum sentences of 10 years, rather than three years, for offences relating to possession of child pornography. We viewed the change in the law as a recognition that these offences pose a very serious threat to the safety of children. That is why we are so deeply disappointed at this decision. Harsher sentencing can only prove to be a deterrent if it is implemented. The leniency displayed seems to say that this type of child sex abuse will be tolerated by today's society. It is completely unacceptable. British police are committing more, and better, resources to tackle Internet crime and the prevention of child sex abuse is now amongst their highest priorities. However if this isn't reflected in sentencing then child sex abuse will continue to thrive on the Internet. The charities remain committed to heightening public awareness of a number of issues relating to the Internet and children's safety. They are also lobbying government and the Internet industry to encourage them to do more to protect children by providing and promoting opportunities for children to use the Internet safely.”

NSPCC: Increasing Maximum Penalties for Possession and Distribution of Child Pornography: Amendments were agreed to increase the maximum sentence under the Protection of Children Act 1978 for taking, making, distributing, showing and possessing with a view to distribution, indecent photographs of children under sixteen from 3 years imprisonment, or a fine, or both, to a term not exceeding 10 years, or a fine, or both. In addition the simple possession of indecent images of children under 16 is to be made an either way offence and the maximum penalty available under section 160 of the Criminal Justice Act 1998, is to be increased from 6 months imprisonment, or a fine, or both, to a term not exceeding 5 years imprisonment, or a fine, or both.

In a rather broader vein, **Ken McCormick**, *Vice-Chair of Fair Play for Children*, gave this view: “The sentence given to the Wonderland Gang seems to many to reflect the low importance given to child protection and attitudes of children

“It's harder and harder to have ‘playtime’ in my classroom.

Diane E. Levin, Ph.D., is professor of education at Wheelock College in Boston, Massachusetts. She is the author of Remote Control Childhood? Combating the Hazards of Media Culture and co-author of Who's Calling the Shots? How to Respond Effectively to Children's Fascination with War Play, War Toys, & Violent TV. She has written and lectured widely on children's play.

Some children roam around dabbling with this or that. There are many conflicts. I've stopped putting out some of the more traditional play materials, like play dough. Children don't do much with it. And then, there is so much pressure to teach the 'basics' that there's not much time left for play anyway.”

—Kindergarten teacher

“I keep hearing from my children's teachers that play's important. But I just don't see it. My kids don't seem to want to play much. When I tell them to 'go play,' they get into fights or play video games. Or they say they're bored and put on the TV set. And anyway, there's a lot to learn in this world and that's what schools should focus on—teaching kids what they need to know, not play.”

—Parent of a 5- and 7-year-old

Educators and child development experts have long emphasized the importance of play in childhood. But, as illustrated by the two voices above, many parents and teachers are expressing increasing concern and confusion about the role of play in the lives of children growing up today.

Why is play so important for children?

Has something changed in society and childhood in recent years that is affecting play? Is there really cause for concern and, if so, what can the adults who care for children do about it? Why is play important? Play is vital to most aspects of children's social, emotional, and intellectual development and academic learning. It is one of the most powerful vehicles children have for trying out and mastering new skills, concepts, and experiences. Play can help children develop the knowledge they need to connect in meaningful ways to the challenges they encounter in school—for instance, learning literacy, math, and science, as well as how to interact positively with others. Play also contributes to how children view themselves as learners. As



and young people in general. If they had committed a crime involving property the sentence would probably have been much longer. A person recently received a 15 months jail sentence for 'handling' one of Victoria Beckham's stolen dresses."

Negative attitudes to children common

"Negative attitudes, intolerance, exploitation and demonisation of children and young people are, on the other hand, common place. Even more usual is discrimination against children and young people. It seems that the only time society bothers about them, other than when it's one's own kids or it's pity for a murdered or abused child highlighted in the media, is when they impact to the supposed detriment (or maybe inconvenience) of adults. When children are seen as a nuisance, all the stops are pulled out to control the activity or behaviour that offends in some (supposed) way. Talk about being reactive and 'cracking nuts with sledgehammers' (viz curfews, boycotts, 'Connexions', more informed 'education', cautions et al) ... these are put in place without much if any consultation with children and young people. If we adopted the same, draconian stance towards adult 'perpetrators' who offend against children (abusers, pornographers, drunken drivers ...), what a 'lovely and convenient' world we might have. Lock the problem away, hide it from sight."

One of the striking things emerging from the case was the willingness of some of the accused to stand, unshielded, in front of TV cameras and appear to suggest that what they had been doing was not particularly dangerous to children. Typically one of them suggested that access to the Wonderland Club offered him friendship, communication, and esteem (presumably for being able to comply with Wonderland's membership access condition of a minimum of 10,000 images of children. Before Operation Cathedral the maximum images seized from one computer was around 2,000.) "I don't actually get involved in paedophilia" was his seeming viewpoint, "I just watch the images". One also detected in him the claim of some paedophiles that there is nothing wrong with having sex with children - they are just people either 'ahead of their time' or 'misunderstood' and they care especially for children. Etc.

The character of the Internet makes it easy for them to carry on their activities with relative impunity against the laws of national states - and they are able to benefit from strong encryption devices. A not-too deep survey, using a search engine or two, will show that it is quite simple to access e.g. paedophile support/link groups in several countries, plus individuals who set up sites to promote their interest and to make links. There are also, mainly in the States, anti-paedophile and paedophile 'watch' groups whose activities include 'outing' (with photos) and campaigning - some of it is strong stuff. The paedophile sites consist of information, links to other sites, "galleries" (which carefully avoid pornography and nudity in the main), and much railing against a world they see as not understanding them. Some even state: "We are not child molesters".

It's interesting to note that, from attending a conference on child protection some months back, where Operation Cathedral (the UK police operation against Wonderland Members here) officers spoke, one found out informally that not all the images were obscene as such - one officer explained that the paedophile looked at children through a different perspective, so that images we might all regard as 'cute' or 'impish' etc might be 'collected' by the paedophile pornographer along with much more explicit material. This is chilling to the ordinary person. *What* goes through their heads, we all ask? and, *why*? Or we should.

One thing did clearly alarm some of the officers and that was the proposal at one stage to put onto the internet 1200 pictures of children who had not been traced in terms of photos/images seized worldwide. One's immediate reaction was "this could be dangerous for any child in those images, maybe even a death sentence" (though the chilling implication from all of this is that some children already will have met their deaths to ensure their silence). Fortunately, one gathers that the 1200 images are being exchanged between police forces directly world wide - although that doesn't reduce the risk to zero given that it is certain somewhere in the world, there will be high-level officers and members of the

they play, they resolve confusing and disturbing social, emotional, and intellectual issues. They come up with new solutions and ideas and experience the sense of power that comes from being in control and figuring things out on their own (something children often do not get to do in real life). This helps develop a positive attitude toward learning—about how to find interesting problems to work on and how to solve them in creative ways. Play is a dynamic and endlessly diverse process.

Every individual child's play evolves and changes over time as children mature and gain experience and skill. Play also varies among children based on age [See box below.], their experiences (which provide them with the content they bring to their play), family background and cultural group, and individual disposition.

All play is not the same

Not all play is equally valuable; the degree to which it promotes growth is affected by how and what children play. The more play is a creation of children's own imaginations, abilities, experiences, and needs and the more they are in control of what happens as they play—as scriptwriters, actors, prop people, producers, and directors—the more likely they are to get the full benefits.

Alternatively, the more children flit from activity to activity and from toy to toy and their play involves mimicking and imitating someone else's behaviors and scripts, the less likely they are to develop the full range of positive skills and attitudes that creative play can provide.

Changing times

Many factors in the environment influence how children play—how much time they have for play, the experiences they have that provide the content for their play, the attitudes of adults toward their play and what adults do to promote it, the role of television and other media in their lives, AND the nature of the toys they use in their play.

Many of the changes in childhood that have occurred in recent years are undermining the quality of many children's play. "Playtime" is being shortchanged in school as more emphasis is being placed on teaching "the basics" at younger and younger ages and on high stakes testing. Many children and parents have busy lives so there is less free time for play out of school. For safety and economic reasons, the neighborhood play culture that existed in many communities is becoming a thing of the past.



judiciary involved in such activities [look at our own abuse in care scandals]. One American site does list photos of children who are missing, and claims to have located some, but the unease must remain.

Harrowing Task for Police Officers

Obviously, for police officers and others involved in Wonderland, this has been a terrible and stressful time. Having to view image upon image, many of them grossly obscene, requires that those involved have respite and counselling. It's a job that must be done, but it must count as one of the world's hardest jobs.

Apart from the personal impact on those working on the case, there is frustration, no doubt, some of it stemming from the lenient sentencing (but the Court's hands were tied to some extent by the law as it is). But this was an international case, and Cathedral worked on the premise of very close exchange, co-operation and co-ordination with many countries. We were told that some police forces co-operated but then had to pull out for a variety of reasons, often constitutional. The alleged ringleader in the States, we gather went to ground. There were rumours of someone being highly placed in the US military ... the web was far wider than the eventual trawl.

The Wonderland Ring exposed one critical truth, undermining the notion that to watch child pornography was somehow less dangerous to the child than to take part in actual unlawful acts. The images of children being subjected to all manner of degrading abuse must surely haunt all those who had to view them in order to pursue the case. Many images are staged in order to fulfil the demands of those who, like the Wonderland network, seek out such things - children were abused, initiated into activities etc in order to satisfy the market demand. That demand, therefore, creates abuse and so the argument of that by just viewing they do no harm is fatuous and, at the very least, self-delusional.

The role of the InterNet

Does the Internet enable such people to contact children and draw them into the paedophile's world? The furor about child pornography chat rooms suggests the fear is well-enough founded. Various techniques are used to 'hook' children - pretending to be another child, playing on the fears and curiosity of older kids about their own sexuality - there are genuine sites dealing with e.g. being teenage and gay - but others arouse the suspicion of a hidden, very adult agenda, and it's hard for an adult to distinguish let alone a child or young person. The truth is that the Net can be misused like any other media - and easily.

Need to start a realistic debate

It's in this whole context of concern about the extent and yet hidden nature of paedophilia that perhaps we need to start a careful, prolonged and realistic debate about the issues. Public revulsion and episodes such as Paulsgrove, whatever one thinks about that, almost certainly do nothing to help towards a long-term coping with the issues. Experience seems to suggest that the paedophile's own unrealistic justification of what s/he feels or does is one of the major barriers. The current situation is that paedophilic activity is simply a criminal act. If caught, one gets tried and punished according to the vagaries of the law, and public sentiment, prevailing at the time. The result is that too often the convicted paedophile is imprisoned, applies for Rule 43 (isolation from other prisoners, also used by those who attack women and corrupt police officers). These are the lowest of the low in the prison population, lower even than the many inadequate, mentally-ill, abused, once-in-care, no self-image people who make up so many of those increasingly incarcerated. There is little or no rehabilitation in too many institutions, and so often those who emerge come out having spent their sentence consorting mainly with their own kind, exchanging unrealities, fantasies, self-justifications and, inevitably, addresses of children.

Rehabilitation is not an easy issue when dealing with many paedophiles in jail.

When children do have time to play, they often choose to watch television instead—an average of four hours a day—not to mention the additional time they spend watching videotapes or playing video games. But of all the factors affecting play today, few have had a more worrisome impact than changes in toys in the past decade or so.

Changes in toys

Toys have a very big influence on play. Some toys tend to promote higher quality play than others. Multi-purpose and unstructured toys, like clay, blocks, generic toy figures and baby dolls, encourage play that children can control and shape to meet their individual needs over time. Highly structured or realistic toys, like action figures based on TV programs and/or movies, as well as many video games, can have the opposite effect. They "tell" children how to play and can channel them into playing particular themes in particular ways—merely using the toys to try to imitate what they see on the TV or movie screen. Most of today's best-selling toys fit the highly-structured, media-linked side of things.

This phenomenon of media-linked toys arose very dramatically in 1984 when children's television was deregulated by the Federal Communications Commission. Deregulation made it legal to market toys to children through TV programs for the first time. Almost immediately, and ever since, whole toy lines of realistic replicas of what children see on the screen have appeared. Television shows, and increasingly movies too, are made to sell toys and other products to children. Often, what is frustrating to parents and children alike is that while the age recommendation on the toy box is for children as young as ages 4 or 5, the show connected to the toy has a rating for much older children.

To the extent children's toy shelves become dominated by these highly-structured toys, their play and learning can suffer. Still worse, because many of the most popular shows linked to toys have violent themes, like the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers, World Wrestling Federation, and Star Wars, what children are often channeled into imitating is violence.

Changes in play

When children become dependent on toys that tell them what to play and show them how to do it, they use their playtime to imitate other people's scripts. As a result, their imagination, creativity, and ability to find interesting problems to explore and solve—the very foundation that contributes to children's success in school—can all be undermined.



It takes a great deal of effort, skill and time to ensure the paedophile faces what he is. It requires true professional detachment. And we remember that it is only those who are detected, convicted and imprisoned who are the ones society has under temporary custody, however long or short the sentence. For the legal system provides just that - sentences for defined periods for defined offences.

Does the current law hinder protection?

The current legal situation may be one which may hinder what we must all seek - the reduction of risk to children from paedophiles. It is a criminal justice approach which relies on a crime coming to light - but we all know that, for every convicted, or known paedophile, there are more undetected. The extent of non-detection is a matter for controversy and debate - but if one takes any crime, the facts are that: many cases are not 'cleared up', any many more never reported.

Good child protection practices can help reduce risk to children in many settings, including play work. **One lesson Fair Play wishes to share is that paedophiles are often very opportunistic, and so removing opportunity is a clear priority.** Also, checks undertaken on prospective and existing workers (paid and unpaid) act as a deterrent including rechecks. Fair Play has processed perhaps in excess of 3,000 criminal records checks. No Schedule One offender has come to light in all of these - only David Lawrence showed up as 'soft intelligence' (though he was subsequently convicted) - but this does not at all mean we can conclude that checks are not much use. On the contrary, this may just as well suggest a heavy deterrent effect. The way in which offenders have targeted "unprotected" organisations gives this standpoint credence.

But, as often pointed out, this does not stop people with paedophile feelings from being involved in work with children, and this brings us to a real issue. Many such people may not directly exploit their proximity to children to engage in activity. Some may exercise self-restraint, others may be satisfied with fantasies (perhaps abetted by use of child pornography), some may sublimate their desires in 'good works' etc. Paedophiles, like other people, make no doubt, come in every shape and size. They do not glow purple nor do they wear, in the main, dirty macs.

The current approach to dealing with them betrays no strategy at all, no understanding of what we are dealing with. The criminal detection approach simply results in: hiding their feelings and activities, and in the self-deceit so characteristic of them. There is no incentive at all for any paedophile to come forward for help. Society hardly wants to think about what makes the paedophile tick, public reaction stops at revulsion and anger. Successes like "Wonderland" almost certainly mask the reality of no progress on the broader scale of things.

Need to Study WHY

It is time that we started thinking more about prevention and about studying carefully what it is that makes some have such desires which are, for most people, anathema. Also, that not all paedophiles present the same degree of risk? There are those, perhaps many, who do sublimate their feelings or suppress them - self-recognition that they cannot pursue their desires. For such people, they will face an unhappy and challenging life. For the sake of children's safety, because there is always the 'succumbed to impulse' situation, and for their better adjustment, we need to develop a public recognition that this is not simply an unlawful act, it is symptomatic of, to say the very least, a troubled personality and, in many cases, a very troubled history.

We need, therefore, a climate such that at least some paedophiles can feel confident to seek help and to face the reality of what they are, if not why. The criminal law needs to remain for those who give way or who actively seek out children to exploit. But even here, there are degrees of risk. Some offenders will be able to resume life in the community, but only if there is the support they need to avoid returning to their former path. Which is what we all must want.

Over time, children can become increasingly dependent on toys to show them how to play and have a harder time creating their own play or using open-ended toys, which they can control. Many children quickly become bored when they do not have things that show them what and how to play. They also turn to television and video games more and more as a way to deal with their boredom.

What parents and other adults can do to promote play

Parents and schools can do much to help children develop play that supports their social, emotional, and intellectual development. Here are some suggestions to help parents and caregivers facilitate a healthy sense of play in children. Pick and choose those tips that seem the most appropriate. Some efforts may work better than others. Try to remember that the goal is to build upon and enhance the play, not to take control of it away from the child.

Encourage and value play that is appropriate to the age and individual interests and needs of the children.

Help children bring content from their own direct experience into their play.

Children's play is usually more creative and less imitative when it grows out of their daily experience. For instance, providing empty food cartons and a simple toy cash register after a trip to the supermarket can help children get started recreating their experience in play.

Watch children as they play to see what they are working on and what interests them. This can help provide ideas about what play materials and other input might help further develop the play.

Choose new toys carefully. Toys that can be used in many ways usually promote the most valuable play. They give children many opportunities to invent new uses for them over time. Too many toys or a constant barrage of new ones can prevent children from doing this.

Find ways to interact regularly (but not always) with children as they play. Getting involved with children as they play, as long as it is not so heavy handed as to interrupt or take over, can provide a gentle way to facilitate the play. It can also show children that adults value play.

Try to have regular, uninterrupted play-time in a child's life. Whether play time is



Even more radically, whilst such activity will and must remain unlawful, should the only option open to the Courts be a time-defined sentence? This is not to suggest that paedophiles should always be imprisoned without release. It does not even suggest traditional imprisonment, for that has no prospect of reform, change or even, at its starkest, much guarantee of protection of children. If we look at paedophilia, regardless of what fantasy the paedophile constructs to justify his feelings, it is not regarded by the rest of Society as normal. Therefore, it is an abnormal pattern, and that must suggest a treatment-based approach. Prison almost certainly works against that possibility for most.

Recognise different levels of risk

Assessment of risk of a paedophile must recognise the different levels of risk posed by differing people. Perhaps many, under a court-based, medically-supported direction, can live in the community under appropriate degrees of supervision. For those who voluntarily come forward for help, their realism should not be betrayed or sacrificed to the altar of the Sun or the like. There will be those, highly predatory, ruthless and infinitely opportunistic, who represent 'a present danger' at all times to children. They are unlikely to come forward, and they seek out the 'weakest link' - viz, children's homes, other places where children are consigned with no means of being heeded, often those children already most betrayed by Society. Such paedophiles are recognised to constitute an ever-present risk. For them, a non-criminal custody, entirely secure, medically-justified, may be vital until and unless that risk can be guaranteed to have gone.

Do we need 'quarantine' for the most dangerous paedophiles?

Courts perhaps should have the power, after exhaustive medical and other profiling, to come to the conclusion that a given paedophile should be detained in a secure place for such people, so that they have no contact with children. It would probably be more useful to suppress our own vengeful feelings and replace these with a practical approach which would be justified on the same basis as any other medically-justified quarantine. The regime can be as kind, supportive and as 'soft' as one wishes. After all, if paedophilia is the disorder it surely is, then to punish the paedophile is less the issue than to protect children thereafter.

Those in Play Work have a duty to play their part not only in the observance of good practice but in promoting a healthier public debate about this sad issue. We also need absolute clarity, in all sectors, about what constitutes abuse and in particular paedophilia. For example, the lowering of the age of consent to 16 years for homosexual acts between males now removes the man who has a relationship with a 16 year old boy from prosecution. Is the older male still a paedophile? He was, with the same boy, until the law was changed. He is not, by legal definition now. Yet the man who was with a 16 year old girl was not ever at risk. [The new provision for action against those who have vulnerable people in their care, regardless of age, and who abuse that trust will be interesting in its working out.] But is one 16 year old, irrespective of gender and orientation, the same as another in terms of maturity? Or are some 19 year olds less mature than some at 15 years? The Dutch have embarked, true to their tradition of careful thought, on some interesting ideas to help in this critical age period, but there is no sign of the debate starting here. It needs to.

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three or five times a week, after breakfast or before bedtime, this tells children that play is important and valuable. It also helps them develop the skills they need over time to become involved in meaningful and satisfying play. For children who are heavily dependent on television, develop this routine gradually and help children figure out how to begin their play.

Create and equip environments that help children get started with and sustain meaningful play. Organizing toys so children can easily see what is available, get what they want, and put them away can help them become independent and resourceful players. Put popular toys in clearly marked containers (with pictures) on easily reachable shelves.

Work to counteract the gender, racial, and cultural stereotypes and violence that characterize many toys. Stereotypes limit children from developing their full potential. Children sort out who they are and similarities and differences among people in their play. Keep this in mind when choosing new toys and try openly talking with children about these issues when they come up. When children do engage in violent, imitative play based on TV shows or movies (or use the toys connected to them), help them bring into the play their own ideas, creativity, and imagination. Adults have differing ideas about this kind of play. Some try to ban it; others take a laissez-faire approach. Most kids, especially boys, do try it out in some form. However adults view this kind of play, the more they can help children's play become creative, the less violent it will be.

Make thoughtful choices about the role of media in children's lives. What and how much children see in the media can have an enormous impact on their play. Television time takes time away from play activities. Media content greatly influences the play. So, try to play an active role in managing the media in children's lives; for example, develop rules about screen time and screen content.

Work with other parents, teachers, and the wider community to create an environment for children that supports creative, productive play. While it is unfortunate that in today's world of increased time constraints, parents and teachers need to take a more active and deliberate role in ensuring that children's play meets their needs, in the long run their efforts will pay off. Children will demonstrate increased levels of independence, resourcefulness, and competence as a result of creative play.



TOYS AIN'T US?

New research carried out in both America and in Britain indicates that children who have more toys and parents who spend less time with them do worse than those children who have parents who do not rely solely on toys, but take a more active interest in their children's development. These findings show what many playworkers have seen and known from anecdotal experience, the child with many toys who is unable to use creativity, or imagination or to show simple social skills such as sharing. The research gives a firm foundation to the worry, increasingly shared by many across many disciplines that a generation is being created that is physically unfit, lacking creativity and the ability to interact with others. Of course children still learn to do these things, but a feeling has been growing for sometime that children are too closeted and that the marketplace has become a dominant cultural and mediating force in shaping the social and emotional development of children.

The research was carried out in America by **Claire Lerner**, a childhood development worker with *Zero to Three*, a US government funded programme to run pre-school educational programmes across America, and in this country by Kathy Slyva, professor of educational psychology at Oxford University, whose research was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Both studies reach very similar conclusions that children who have 'too many toys' are at risk of damage to their future development. Claire Lerner says of her findings "Our studies show that giving children too many toys or toys of the wrong type can actually be doing them harm. They get overwhelmed and cannot concentrate on any one thing long enough to learn from it."

Are Children 'Overloaded' with Toys?

This leads to the question, are so many children now in highly developed post-industrial countries simply so overloaded by constant information, social, market and other pressures that we run the risk of creating a seriously damaged both emotionally and psychologically generation? Is the rise in hyperactivity, depression, obesity, anorexia and suicide the first waves of a gathering tide. Is this simply a logical response to a world that seems so out of control? If this is the case then what can Playworkers do, should we seriously re-evaluate the role we are asked to play. As the forces of commercialism and the label culture seem to gather pace. Is the next generation going to fair any better? Perhaps, but only if we can learn to read the warning signs. So much pressure is put on children these days that to retreat from the world into the comfort and the stability offered by toys, whose role and function is defined along strictly linear lines that they create on this surface a bulwark of stability against so much pressure and chaos, as **Myfanwy Alexander** a parent from Powys noted in a recent Sunday Times article. "A dental hygienist Barbie can only work as a dental hygienist. But a cardboard box can become anything. The only limitations are in the child's mind."

It would then seem that toys or certainly too many toys can disrupt development and that overstimulation conversely leads to a lack of reaction to stimulus. This view is shared by **Michael Malone** professor of early childhood education at the University of Cincinnati, whose research has shown that parents should carefully manage their children's access to toys.

More is not necessarily better.

Malone: "This is a myth that needs to be extinguished from western suburban culture. Our work shows that having fewer toys is associated with less solitary play and increased sharing. Conversely too many toys can cause a sense of overload."

We can see toys and play in many ways, they are physical items existing in the

CHILDREN'S CHARITIES CALL ON INTERNET INDUSTRY TO CLEAN UP ITS ACT

The coalition of children's charities for Internet safety is calling for the industry to take immediate action to clean up its act. The Wonderland Club's UK members could have accessed any of the ten thousand images that they needed to join via widely available Internet Newsgroups.(1)

The coalition demands that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) block all Newsgroups that regularly contain child pornography. All members of the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) should be required to implement this decision. The IWF's own statistics say that of the 30,000 Newsgroups currently in existence, 28 of them regularly contain child pornography. 77% of all illegal material reported to the IWF comes from these newsgroups.

Therefore a block on these Newsgroups would make a significant contribution to reducing this illegal activity. The children's charities coalition says: "The Internet industry must clean up its act now. All of the UK's Internet Service Providers (ISPs) should do everything they can to make it as hard as possible for child pornographers to find or distribute this kind of material. Most ISPs do but some still don't. This is a disgrace which must end now."

(1) A Newsgroup is an electronic bulletin board where information can be posted. The children's charity coalition for Internet safety consists of the following organisations: Barnardo's, Childline, NCB (National Children's Bureau), NCH, NCVCCO (National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations), NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty To Children) and The Children's Society.

Want to find out What's On in Children's Play?

Then Visit the Fair Play Web Site, and click onto the **Diary/Events Page**. This lists Conferences, Training, Seminars, Weeks etc. Updated regularly.

www.arunet.co.uk/fairplay/



here and now, real to the touch and existing at a certain point in space and time. They are also cultural indicators and representations of internal and external forces within the child's life and mind. If too many toys, as the research seems to indicate, limits the child's development by forcing it into narrow prepackaged lines then those children will develop without the ability to express themselves in a creative and socially adept way these issues and conflicts that all children share, and this could be seen as potentially very damaging. Those children whose parents spent more time with them playing, singing and reading seem to do better than those children who have many toys according to research carried out by **Kathy Slyva**, Early Childhood researcher at Oxford. She reached this conclusion from a study of 3000 children aged five to three and has shown a complex relationship between children's progress. The type of toys they are given and the time parents spend on them.

Large number of toys a distraction

She said. "When they have a large number of toys there seems to be a distraction element and when children are distracted they do not learn or play as well". I indicated earlier that toys and play in general as well as having a representation in a physical sense also work on a much deeper level leading to roles of identity. This goes beyond the simple arguments of race and gender. Does letting little girls play with Barbie and boys with Action Man lead to gender stereotyping? Most likely. These are important points but ones well-enough rehearsed. What I mean in this case is that toys and play can act in the sense of externalising forces in a child's psyche and bringing them out. The child who plays with a certain toy often imagines him/herself as taking on the qualities of that toy, or the role that toy is associated with. Thus a child playing with a fire engine is 'becoming' a fireman, he or she is no longer simply playing with it. In a sense very real to the child, he or she has assumed the roles that the toy defines. This is where toys and play differ on a fundamental level. Play is about mediating identities blurring boundaries and in a sense can be seen as a process of question and answer. Toys on the other hand have an agenda built into them. They offer a narrow set of guidelines, they do not blur boundaries and do not invite questions. That is why a Barbie can always be only a Barbie, but a cardboard box can be a spaceship, a racing car in fact anything you want it too be - imagination is the limit. So then play is about imagination, toys, or to be precise, the Toy Industry, are about taking that imagination packaging it and reselling it, at a price.

Toys are not either good things or bad things, but allied to growing concerns that children are becoming increasingly 'battery reared' and that pressures growing on them from all angles (the pressure of too many toys, too many defined and structured roles) may just be one more factor in their evident growing levels of stress. Of course, there is also the massive level of commercialism which toys expose children to. The toy industry in Britain alone is huge: an estimated £1.67 billion a year is spent on toys - these figures do not include the advertising and marketing spent on toys and their promotion. *But*, it has to be the *right* toy. I can remember as a playworker trying to console a child who had bought a pokemon card, but it was the *wrong* one. I tried to explain that maybe next time he would get the card he wanted, what made it worse is that his friend had just bought the card he needed and would not swap if for anything. Indeed, they fell out big time over the affair. Both were around 7 years old.

Manufacturers create sense of need

Toy manufacturers create a sense of need amongst parents and children. The implicit message to parents is "if you do not buy our product you are letting your kids down", and the message to children "is if you don't have this product, or this accessory then you are somehow inadequate, the cool kids have this and only the geeks and dweebs don't and do you want to be a dweeb?" Christmas is especially bad. String after string of adverts with adorable children, often in middle class settings, unless they are trying to sell some outdoor toy in which case a loveable streetwise urchin will be trotted out complete with backward baseball cap baggy jeans and a loud techno soundtrack, playing together with

The Journal of Environmental Psychology plans a special issue on children and their environment.

There is much research activity in a variety of disciplines which would fall broadly under this heading: from the social sciences and education through to the planning disciplines; and, within psychology, many developmental, social and environmental psychologists have contributed to our knowledge. Yet, ironically, not much of this research has been reported in the main journals of environmental psychology. We therefore invite people working in this broad field to contact the editors of this special issue (details below) with proposals for articles, reviews and research reports which they might be able to offer for this special issue. From these initial expressions of interest, we would hope to build an issue which reflects something of the range of current activity. Topics that potential contributors to this special issue might include, for example, Children's place attachment and their growing sense of self, Environmental cognition and the changing freedoms of the child to experience their locale, The roles of media and of formal education children's understanding of distant places, Rural versus urban children's experiences, Development in the understanding of the grammars of place, Facilitating children's participation in planning, Children and safety in the environment, Children's wayfinding and cognitive maps, Design of environments for children, Cross cultural studies of children's environmental cognition. These and many other foci would constitute worthwhile contributions to such a special issue. So too would literature reviews which gave thoughtful consideration to the approaches of (narrowly defined) environmental psychology and those aforementioned other disciplines which have also been researching children and their environments. Authors should remember the willingness of JEP to include good quality black and white photographs and other relevant illustrations. Please send ideas for submissions to the issue editors, Christopher Spencer and Mark Blades, at the Department of Psychology, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, S10 2TN. Email addresses: C.P.Spencer@Sheffield.ac.uk M.Blades@Sheffield.ac.uk Full papers to reach the issue editors no later than May 31 2001 *Dr Christopher Spencer, Department of Psychology, University of Sheffield, Sheffield S10 2TN* Direct phone 0114 222 6556 Departmental Fax 0114 276 6515 <http://www2.shef.ac.uk/psychology/staff/spencer.shtml>



their friends surrounded by all their lovely toys. Parents are hardly ever seen, and everyone is playing so nicely together. Too often the reality is that too many toys create children who do not know how to share and are overstimulated to the point of shut down. Play is not about that - toys stifle imagination: in the marketing world view, they are used to sell a brand image of a lifestyle.

So what then in the face of this branding consumer culture can we do, tell the children no you can't have so many toys, tell them that too many are bad for them? Children are not going to see that, they will think that you are being unfair. How can we as Playworkers combat the toy manufacturers who have billions at their disposal? One of the most underrated skills of Playwork and Playworkers is their ability to listen. It is this which allows us as playworkers to explore the child's world with them. Children with too many toys are being given too many choices in one sense but only very limited choice in another. Playworkers should and do allow the child to explore their world both internal and external in a safe manner. One of the debates currently is about how children are over protected. Toys fit into this pattern - the rationale is that if their child can not go out because of traffic, drugs, perverts and all the other modern horrors the media tell us lurk just outside our front doors buy them toys to compensate the more toys the more compensation. However this does not work and the research has shown it.

Experts currently hesitate to put a figure on the number of toys children should have, but many believe that two dozen is around enough for children of pre-school age. Most exclude books from this as research has linked reading with improved academic performance and self-esteem. As one expert said: "The more books, the better" This goes back to a central point of this article that toys limit because they are one dimensional in terms of imagination, they have only surface and lack any depth. Toys have bland label consumer certainties. Identity is repackaged and resold as a product. Books and play don't do this, they engage the participant in a dialogue with others and with ideas. Toys you do not participate with you simply use. Books and play have depth, they operate on many levels. Toys take away choice replacing it with commercial illusion.

Overstimulating children to point of breakdown?

Back at the start I posed a question - are we now moving so fast that we are overstimulating children to the point of breakdown? More exams, the right clothes, the right toy - got to have it all. Playworkers need to be vigilant, we need to say to those who would turn our children into miniature versions of overstressed over anxious little adults to step back, please allow them time to be children, these pressures will come anyway. Playworkers and others should avail themselves at every opportunity to study the research that backs up our claims. Children do not play as much as they need, and we should say that buying too many toys is not the answer. Sure, there are risks out there, but they are small and the long term damage done in not allowing children to play is all too real. On a positive note the toy manufacturers do not have it all their own way. One researcher from Colchester Essex, **Orhan Ismail**, noted the response after his 10 month old son was given a "deluge", of toys for Christmas. Ismail said "If there are too many toys in front of him he will just keep flitting around them and then end up going off and finding something like a slipper to play with."

The point is that for all the sophistication of their marketing, for all the cynical know how the toy manufacturers could not hold the attention of a 10 month old baby and that ultimately a slipper was much more interesting.

This article was (over?)stimulated by an article in Sunday Times, 25/2/2001: Children Play Less the More Toys They Get? (Jonathan Leake and Deborah Collcutt.

CHANCELLOR LEADS WAY TO 'FAMILY FRIENDLY' BRITAIN

Children and parents, particularly families on lower incomes, are the winners in the Budget, said Daycare Trust. The national childcare charity hailed the Budget as a key step to creating a more family friendly Britain and further cutting child poverty.

Daycare Trust particularly welcomed the substantial increase in the childcare tax credit - childcare costs covered have increased from £100 to £135 a week for one child and £150 to £200 a week for two children. The childcare tax credit in Working Families Tax Credit is the most important help paying for childcare available to parents.

The expansion in childcare will also be boosted by Budget initiatives to support small businesses, regeneration in disadvantaged areas and skills training.

Stephen Burke, Director of Daycare Trust, said: "Many more parents on low incomes will now be able to access quality childcare. The Chancellor has recognised the real costs of childcare as shown in Daycare Trust's recent survey and made major improvements in the childcare tax credit. More parents will be able to work in the knowledge that their children are benefiting from quality childcare.

"Child poverty - particularly in the crucial first year of a child's life - will be tackled by the new children's tax credit and improvement in maternity pay."

Daycare Trust is a national childcare charity. It promotes quality affordable childcare for all and advises parents, providers, employers, trade unions and policymakers on childcare issues. Daycare Trust runs a childcare helpline for parents (020 7739 2866), open or calls Monday-Friday, 10am-5pm. Parents can also visit www.daycaretrust.org.uk

National Childcare Week 2001

takes place on 20-27 May and is organised by Daycare Trust. Its theme of 'childcare voices, childcare choices' aims to highlight the importance of listening to children and parents as childcare services expand.



TV tots take on Blunkett: *Martin Bright, The Observer (12:09:99) (1/MA/2001)*

WATCHING THE Teletubbies or its follow-up the Tweenies is better for young children's education than the strict programme of formal learning being proposed by Education Secretary David Blunkett. A panel of experts consulted by the BBC has said that playing with water and sand, painting, drawing and the other 'make and do' exercises encouraged by

these programmes aid learning more effectively than a strict diet of the 'three Rs'. The findings of the panel chimed with an ICM poll of parents commissioned by the BBC which makes Tweenies and Teletubbies. Ninety-nine per cent believed young children needed time set aside for play, and 60 per cent thought it was crucial to the development of children's concentration and creativity. Child psychologist Dirk Flower, a member of the BBC panel, said: 'These activities are vital for a child's development. Research shows that it increases language development. Children who aren't exposed to learning through play are unlikely to reach their optimum level of development'.

Where lost kids find they have a future: *Paul Harris, The Observer (17:12:00) (2/MA/2001)*

SUZANNE knows exactly what Keeping Kids Company has meant to her young life. 'This place makes me free. Without it I think I would be dead.' She is not exaggerating. Suzanne's life has been an unrelenting litany of suffering as she grew up on one of Peckham's toughest estates amid the drugs and violence that blight so many lives in this deprived area of south London. Her parents are heroin addicts, and by the age of 12 she had dropped out of school to look after her three siblings, sometimes being forced to scavenge for food in bins. Suzanne lives in a care home but now knows what it means to have a future. Kids Co provided her with education courses, people to talk and a job. She works as a classroom assistant in a local primary school and wants to become a teacher. 'I love it here. I come every day,' she said. Though the murder of Damiola Taylor just a mile away threw a media spotlight on the area's problems, Kids Co had already been here for years, battling with the conditions that bred such an awful crime.

Straw declares all-out war on job culture: *Richard Ford, The Times (07:12:00) (3/MA/2001)*

Jack Straw set a 10pm deadline for children under 13 to be on the streets unsupervised as the Government unveiled a package of tough measures to curb yobbish behaviour by drunks and young teenagers. The Home Secretary rounded on parents who allowed children under 13 to be hanging around the streets without supervision. He said no child should be on the streets unsupervised after 10pm. However, the move was condemned by penal reform groups and met a lukewarm response from the police concerned at the practicality of curfews and whether there is adequate police manpower to implement the plan.

Attack on plan to let carers smack children: *Elizabeth Judge, The Times (12:01:01) (4/MA/2001)*

GOVERNMENT proposals to allow childminders to smack children and to smoke in front of them with the consent of parents has been condemned by an all-party group of MPs. The view of the Education Select Committee will dismay Margaret Hodge, the Employment and Equal Opportunities Minister, who announced in December the decision to include the proposal set of national standards. In a report, the select committee says that smacking is "totally unacceptable in any setting but particularly where the carer is working in isolation."

Too much school too soon spoils the child: *Glen Owen, The Times (12:01:01) (5/MA/2001)*

CHILDREN are being forced into formal education too early in a way that may be damaging their development, a report by the Commons Education Committee has said. The findings of the report draw on evidence submitted to the committee by Kathy Sylva, Professor of Educational Psychology at Oxford University. Her research found that children who attended less academic nurseries were more likely to be successful, socially and professionally, later in life.

Pupils just want to be 'cool': *Elizabeth Judge, The Times (12:01:01)*

(6/MA/2001)

ENGLISH schoolchildren are among Europe's least enthusiastic about learning, research has shown. A study by the Economic and Social Research Council compared the attitudes to schooling of 1,800 secondary school children in England, France and Denmark. It reveals that English pupils are much more concerned about being 'cool' than learning. They feel school gets in their lives and want to leave as soon as possible. The keenest pupils are Danish. They love to learn and have a much greater admiration for their teachers than their European counterparts. The research was carried out by the University of Bristol Graduate Education School with researchers in Denmark and France. English children are more concerned about their social identities. They put each other in three groups: boffins, swots and keepers who work hard: those who mess around in the class; and those who do both.

'They were smart and they: *Amelia Hill, The Observer (17:12:00) (7/MA/2001)*

FAYEMI was slumped in the back of the car. She had injected herself with a shot of heroin shortly before we met last week and was finishing smoking a rock of crack-cocaine to get a fresh high. She had not eaten for days, but she did not care. Fayemi is 14. She has already seen and done things no one should ever have to experience. She has wide, dark eyes and childishly translucent skin. But the life she has been forced to lead has aged her, causing wrinkles round her eyes more often found in a much older woman. Six months ago, Fayemi's father sold her to two men who visited their village in Nigeria. She saw the men speak to her father and hand him money, but she had no idea what it was about until she was bundled into a car. When they reached Lagos airport, Fayemi was handed to a woman who already had two other girls trailing behind her. At Gatwick, the group was met by two men. Dazed and drained Fayemi didn't resist when one of them took her away. The man took her to a flat in London. There were five other girls. The oldest was about 18; the youngest, Maria, was just six.

Church knew Oratory priest was HIV-positive: *Ian Cobain and Steve Bird, The Times (06:12:00) (8/MA/2001)*

A PRIEST at the centre of a sex abuse investigation at one of Britain's leading Roman Catholic schools was known to be HIV-positive before he was ordained. Father David Martin was then allowed to become a governor and appointed chaplain at the London Oratory School. Several children at the school now say they were abused by Father Martin before his death from an Aids-related illness two years ago, at the age of 44. At least two boys have told the children's charity Child-Line that the fear they could have contracted the HIV virus as a result. One has written to the charity alleging the Fr Martin met at least six pupils in his room at the Brompton Oratory Church, more than a mile from the school. Another, from a boy claiming to be a former pupil at fee paying Stoneyhurst College in Lancashire, accuses the authorities of failing to conduct a full investigation.

Curfews and fines won't stop youth crimes: *Alice Miles, The Times (Undated) (9/MA/2001)*

"I am glad I am neither a youth or yob today, in the crime-blitzed, anti-teenager, cracked down, curfewed, fixed-penalty fine culture heralded by the Queen's Speech. One wonders what the Government would have done if crime were actually increasing. The British Crime Survey, the most authoritative guide to crime figures, reported in October that crime in England and Wales fell by 10 per cent between 1997 and 1999, although there was a 14 per cent rise in robbery and a 4 per cent rise in theft from the person. The Government's "yob culture" initiatives will do little to combat these rises. Jack Straw is targeting a hotchpotch of offenders from kerb-crawlers to drug-traffickers, car thieves to money launderers, wheel-clampers, nightclub bouncers, the under 16s - and of course 'yobs'"

Human Rights act bans filming at nativity play: *Shirley English and Glen Owen, The Times (15:12:00) (10/MA/2001)*

PARENTS been banned from filming their children's performance in the school nativity play after a local council decided it would leave the authority open to a challenge under the Human Rights Act. The edict from Perth and Kinross Council, citing the Act's "right to respect for privacy", in effect bars cameras from all performances in its 77 primary schools, and affects nearly 11,000 pupils. It is understood that a small group of parents feared that the film might fall into the hands of pae-



dophiles and contacted the council to complain. The ban - the result of a swift assessment by the council's legal department - reflects the growing confusion being caused by the Act in schools and other public bodies. The council now accepts that its judgement was "hasty".

Girl, 8, was beaten with chain, murder trial told: *Craig Clarke, The Times (21:12:2000) (11/MA/2001)*

A GIRL aged eight died of hypothermia after being subjected to months of abuse and neglect which police and social services failed to detect. The Old Bailey heard that Anna Climbie had been beaten with a bicycle chain and forced to sleep for days tied up in the bath. A post-mortem examination found 128 scars, including burn marks, on the child's body, which had been deformed by her confinement to the bath. The girl's aunt, Marie Kouao, 44, and her boyfriend Carl Manning, 28, both of Tottenham, North London, deny murdering Anna in February.

Schools get code to tackle racism: *Roland Watson, ?Guardian? (Undated) (12/MA/2001)*

SCHOOLS, health authorities and local libraries will be given new duties to combat racism under guidelines issued by the Home Office. The initiative allows victims to report low-level abuse or harassment without going to the police as recommended by the Macpherson report into the death of Stephen Lawrence. The new code, which will provide local authorities, housing associations, community groups and schools with a common definition of a racist incidents, hopes to tackle the under-reporting of such cases.

Age limit on child curfews may rise: *Richard Ford, ?Guardian? (Undated) (13/MA/2001)*

JACK STRAW is considering increasing the upper age at which child curfew orders can be imposed in an attempt to encourage local authorities to use them to keep unruly children off the streets. The Home Secretary is conducting an urgent review of the scheme after the failure of any local authority in England and Wales to apply for an order since they came into operation in 1998. Under the scheme councils can apply to impose a curfew banning children under 10 from specified public places between 9pm and 6am.

£100,000 scout sex case offer rejected: *David Millward, The Times (22:01:01) (14/MA/2001)*

ELEVEN families, whose boys were sexually abused by a cub pack leader, have turned down a total of £100,000 compensation because of a gagging clause in the agreement. One family has accepted the money offered by the Scout Association after the conviction of Clive Mucklow, 42, who was jailed for six years in 1996 for abusing cubs and their friends, some as young as eight, when he lured them back to a scout hut. The 12 families, who said the association had been warned about Mucklow in 1992, took legal action. The offer of compensation ranges from £6,000 to £15,000. One parent said: "My child was offered £15,000, but we have refused because of a gagging clause."

Child abuse makes a mockery of justice: *Libby Purves, The Times (18:11:00) (15/MA/2001)*

THERE is something uniquely revolting about a sexual predator. The crime combines assault with a kind of theft: of the victim's peace, identity, self-respect, and ability to trust. It blights lives. And if all rape is vile, the rape of children is worse: that the adult abuser does this destructive thing merely to steal a fleeting pleasure for himself is almost too appalling to contemplate. This rare concentration of horror gives the crime of child sexual abuse a kind of awful power: it mesmerises and enrages us. But the power works both ways. Not only does the plight of the victim cry out to heaven for vengeance, so does the plight of the falsely accused. Imagine it: a man who has never done anything improper is pitchforked into a world without mercy. The legal system which he thought was his safeguard bears down on him with savage force: his home is invaded, his friends and family questioned and brought under suspicion, his children kept from him, his work suspended. Unconvicted, he is on the front page of the local newspaper so that horrified strangers may scan his features for signs of depravity.

£1,000 For Machete Heroine's Horrific Injuries: *Tom Newton Dunn, The Mirror (07:02:01) (16/MA/2001)*

IT TOOK 90 seconds to read out the horrifying list of injuries Lisa Potts suffered under the machete blade of paranoid schizophrenic Horrett

Campbell. The violent onslaught in her Wolverhampton school playground in 1996 scarred the former nursery nurse's body and mind for life. In shielding a class of four-year olds from the rain of frenzied blows, the career she had dreamt of from the age of 13 was also destroyed. But, after a long wait of four and half years, Lisa learnt that all the Government will give her in compensation for her disabling physical injuries is just £1,000.

Ritalin sold in playgrounds: *James Bone, ?The Times? (18:11:00) (17/MA/2001)*

A BLACK market has grown up in American playgrounds for the attention-deficit drug Ritalin as children trade the pastel-coloured prescription pills they call "Smarties". Legitimate use of the stimulants has surged seven-fold in the past decade and it is now taken by almost two million children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. That growth has been accompanied by soaring abuse. Teenagers say that the drug, also known as methylphenidate, can be popped, snorted and even dissolved and injected for a high comparable with a caffeine-jolt or even a slower acting form of cocaine. Selling for \$2 (about £1.40) to \$20 a pill on the black market, it is "as easy to get as candy".

Diocese orders child abuse check on priests: *Victoria Combe, The Daily Telegraph (16:01:01) (18/MA/2001)*

A ROMAN CATHOLIC diocese has conducted police checks on its bishop and all its priests and volunteers following child abuse scandals in the Church. East Anglia diocese paid Norwich police to screen 85 clergy and some 275 choir leaders, Sunday school teachers, adult altar servers, organists and youth leaders. Following the result, two volunteers, have been removed from their position because of criminal records involving violent or sexual offences.

Test-bed for new schools: *Lewis Smith, The Times (19:10:00) (19/MA/2001)*

When William Hague launched his plan for "free schools", he could hardly have expected a model to have emerged within months, sponsored by a political opponent. Yet an attempt to set up a new school in Southwark, South London, run by parents rather than bureaucrats, may turn out to be the test-bed the Tories have been seeking. Kate Southion, a 54-year old grandmother, prefers the label of "self-help" school. The Tory plans would allow all schools to set their own admission policies, freeing them from local authority control. But an important element of the system would be encouragement for parents to set up their own classes, along the lines of American charter schools.

Ministry of Fun is Axed: *Daily Mirror, 4th March (20/MA/2001)*

According to this report Tony Blair is set to scrap the Department of Culture Media and Sport after the next General Election. The DCMS is under threat because of a number of high profile cases in which they "got it wrong" The most glaringly obvious: the farce over the millennium dome and the Wembley sell off. If this is true then it begs the question where does play go? What department will it be tacked onto now? Play is 'tacked onto Sport' and as the latter would go into the Department of Education, doubtless Play would be "bundled" in with it, which holds with it the prospect for more erosion into children's play and hordes of Ofsted inspectors making league tables for playworkers. PlayAction suggests a much more radical solution - why not give it to the Ministry of Defence (!) since play has been passed around from department to department (and it's been to Education anyway who didn't want it). It must get to MoD eventually (via MAFF?). "Right then you 'orrible little playworkers, did I say to get that Lego out? Wait for it ..." So the Question is, DfEE/Ofsted or MoD? Or, which is the more Fun Prospect, a Regimental Sergeant Major or an Ofsted Play Inspector? Mail your replies to D. Blunkett Esq.

If you wish to view any of the above articles, please contact Fair Play at the address on the first page of this edition, and quote the reference by the particular article. Please send 4 first class stamps with each request, plus a self-addressed C\$ envelope (stamps NOT attached) which will a) cover the cost of copying b) pay for the return postage and c) avoid silly sum cheques and cash in the post.

Please also feel free to send any relevant press cuttings about Play, Leisure, Children's Rights - PLEASE ensure we have details of Paper, Date and Author.



5th and 6th grade responses to science questions on tests:

There are 26 vitamins in all, but some of the letters are yet to be discovered.

Genetics explains why you look like your father, and if you don't, why you should. *[Hmmm.]*

Vacuums are nothings. We only mention them to let them know we know they're there.

The cause of perfume disappearing is evaporation. Evaporation gets blamed for a lot of things people forget to put the top on.

Water vapor gets together in a cloud. When it is big enough to be called a drop, it does.

Mushrooms always grow in damp places, which is why they look like umbrellas.

Momentum is something you give a person when they go away.

A monsoon is a French gentleman.

The word trousers is an uncommon noun because it is singular at the top and plural at the bottom.

When planets run around and around in circles, we say they are orbiting. When people do it, we say they are crazy.

For asphyxiation, apply artificial respiration until the patient is dead.

Thunder is a rich source of loudness.

One of the main causes of dust is janitors. *[I DO like that. ED.]*

FAIR PLAY FOR CHILDREN One-Day Yorkshire & Co Conference Thursday 10th May 2001, YORK

at the Council for Voluntary Service, Priory Street

Play Standards, Practical Activities, Child Protection,
Networking with PlayWorkers etc. Bring own lunch.

10am to 3.30pm £5 [covers our costs]

Details/Booking: Ken McCormick, NE Co-ordinator Fair Play,
Tel: 0191-273 9127, Inner West Team, Mill Lane Youth
Centre, Sceptre Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE4 6PR

OPINION

UNDEMOCRATIC, UNETHICAL AND IMMORAL

Ken McCormick

Vice Chair, FAIR PLAY FOR CHILDREN

Curfews are arguably ineffective (see Play Action Winter 2000) and discriminatory. They are also reactionary and do not get to the root cause of the problems. Also curfews are undemocratic, unethical and immoral. They criminalise children and young people who are removed from the streets in uneasily similar pattern as in some South American Countries. When police can't "get their own way" they circumvent the intended legislation to achieve what *they* feel is a just state of affairs; they almost literally take the law into their own hands by various methods such as "special operations". Though applauded by some for getting rid of 'nuisance behaviour', the effects are very shortsighted and instill resentment within young people and some families.

Whilst those who are anti-social and criminal should be punished and/or helped to change the usual tactics are to clean the streets and force young people into homes that are for some hostile and/or violent, or into secluded spaces where they are more at risk. It has been noted that the official line for police involvement and/or action is only when there are incidents, complaints or direct evidence (usually CCTV). However, it is known that individual officers do move on young people on the pretext of acting under the recent legislation stating that groups are not allowed to gather and can be taken home. This type of action can be dangerous and can backfire. On the other hand, this has been said when it is not true. Zero tolerance on its own is not the best option but we do recognise that violent and/or criminal behaviour has to be stopped.

To summarise; curfews do not work on their own and be a step towards discriminative and undemocratic systems. Generally, people need to be more tolerant of young people but violent and/or criminal behaviour is untenable.

Play and youth work, together with family support where needed, can make much more of an impact and be far more proactive, positive, effective economic and less disruptive. Put even a tenth of the budget spent on the justice system into play and youth work and we could virtually guarantee that there would be fairly instantaneous results!

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: fairplay@arunet.co.uk