

# **PLAY ACTION**



**FAIR PLAY FOR CHILDREN**



**Children traumatised by war, oppression  
and hunger have the right to asylum -  
are we treating these children in a  
humane manner?**

***Summer 2003***

pdf file version



## HUGE HIKE IN CRB CHILD PROTECTION FEES

### Huge increase causes anger

The Criminal Records Bureau has announced, in its Corporate and Business Plan for 2003-04, a huge hike in the cost of Enhanced and Standard Disclosures - these are the checks carried out on people wishing to work with children and also vulnerable adults.

As from 1st July, the Enhanced Disclosure fee for paid employees rises from £12 to £29, a rise of 141% whilst Standard Disclosures go up by 100% to £24. The rate for volunteers remains zero. The CRB cites an increase in its overall operating costs as being the reason and that there was a higher than anticipated demand for the paper application channel (telephone applications are also allowed from registered bodies and a new electronic route is being developed); they also say that a higher than anticipated proportion of applications have been at the Enhanced level. A high number of applications have had to be returned to customers for correction.

"This increase in costs has been further exacerbated by the lower than anticipated volume of Disclosure applications and has affected our ability to operate as a self-funding Agency at current fee levels."

### Local Government Fury

Reaction has been hostile - the Local Government Association representing local authorities in England, has condemned the move. In a letter to Home Secretary David Blunkett, the Leader of the LGA, Sir Jeremy Beecham criticised the move: "At a time when we are trying to find solutions to funding problems in schools, this decision will add £15 million a year to hard-pressed budgets. The worsen-



### in this Edition ....

**CRB Fee Rise Anger**

**New Children Minister**

**Harassed at Play**

**Free Swim in Wales**

**Asylum Children -  
Britain's Shame?**

**Disability Project Folds**

**Ban Smacking Call**

**Play & Citizenship**

plus Digest, News on Play,  
and of course  
**THE bACK pAGE**

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# Child Protection in Play

ing of the performance standards will be a further blow to what little confidence there is left in the CRB. Any such consequences will not help improve safe recruitment for schools and social services." He urged Blunkett to consider alternatives to the rise: "If the economics mean that charges have to be increased, then we need the decision deferred so that it can be built into the financial planning cycle to take accounts of budgets next year. This will allow discussions on the share of this spending that should be taken by central government to fund this discredited operation."

The Home Office has tried to justify this rise by claiming that without this extra money, the Government and ultimately the tax payer would have to fund a £48 million deficit, but with the rise the cost to central government will be around £19 million, with the potential for the CRB to break even in two years.

## Fair Play Condemns Rise - "no consultation"

Fair Play for Children is an Umbrella Body under the CRB scheme. Its charges will have to rise to £35 (from £18) for Enhanced Checks for Employees. Jan Cosgrove, its National Organiser and also Lead Countersignatory for the Umbrella Body operation, is scathing about the rise in charges and the way this has been achieved:

"Had any of the Councils represented by the LGA put up their Council Tax this year by 141% the Government would have intervened. Someone hasn't done their homework very well, either in the Home Office and/or CRB. This situation is unacceptable - not one word of warning in advance, no consultation whatsoever, and we are just dumped with this situation. We now have to pass on that obscene increase to our Members using the scheme - mainly small projects on already stretched budgets, many under threat of cut backs in local authority grants. I am writing to David Blunkett on their behalf to say just what I think of the way this has been done. We agree with the LGA - defer the increase - and also consult with those who are using the service.

## "Lousy pre-planning" over CRB

"It seems to me that we, as customers, are entitled to demand an answer as to how this situation arose. We have

## Reform of children's services: Margaret Hodge appointed Minister of State for Children



To provide integrated leadership and responsibility for children's services and family policy across Whitehall, the Prime Minister has appointed **Margaret Hodge** as the first Minister of State for Children in the Department for Education and Skills.

Under the direction of Charles Clarke as Secretary of State, she takes responsibility for children's services, childcare and provision for under-fives, family policy (including parenting support and family law), and for the reform agenda to be set out in the forthcoming Green Paper on children 'at risk'.

Responsibility for children's social services and the Teenage Pregnancy Unit will be transferred from the Department of Health to the Department for Education and Skills. The Family Policy Unit will be transferred from the Home Office to the



# Child Protection in Play

claims that more Enhanced Disclosures and paper applications were used than anticipated - that suggest lousy pre-planning, to arrive at a £49 million loss on those grounds. I find it incredible for CRB to also claim that they had LESS applications than projected. At one time, we were always reading about the huge number of applications causing delays in the processing - we all remember the stories of applications having to be sent to India for processing etc.

"What I have to ask is whether the Government is truly serious about using this system, as part of a national endeavour to improve our children's personal safety, which is why, in the wake of real tragedies to children, the CRB system was developed? Mr Blunkett trots out the usual "ultimate taxpayer" nonsense. The CRB and perhaps the Home Office got things seriously wrong, that's the fact, and we say they should pay. Mr and Mrs Tax Payer, if asked, will not begrudge that cost."

## Fears that Child Protection will suffer

Fair Play fears that this hike in CRB fees will add substantially to the operating costs of many small Play Projects, Youth Clubs, Children's Rights and Youth Information Projects, Youth Sports and Arts schemes.

"Most groups get little enough funding from the Government for children's play without heaping this extra burden on us. I fear that it will make some operators reluctant, where there is no statutory requirement to have checks done, to pay for them at this absurdly-increased level. We also fear that, as a result of the extra charge for Enhanced Checks, there may be some checks submitted at less-than-safest levels. Is the Home Office saying too many people are being checked at this level? If so, on what grounds?"

"We need to be encouraging operators to go down the route of getting checks done. Our experience in Fair Play suggests that those seeking harm to children seek organisations where the level of awareness, including checks, is low or where checking is made difficult to access. This is poor child protection good practice by the Home Office. It is a retrograde move." Fair Play, which receives no government funding, is not adding to the £6 processing fee it levies for all applications. Its charges will be £35 for Enhanced Level Employees, £30 for Standard Level Employees and remain £6 for Volunteers Enhanced or Standard.

DfES, and family law policy from the Lord Chancellor's Department.

Specific responsibilities of the new minister will include oversight of: Sure Start, Early Years, Childcare, Connexions, LEA Special Education Needs, and the Youth Service; The Children and Young People's Unit; Children's Social Services and the Teenage Pregnancy Unit, which will transfer from Department of Health; Responsibilities for family and parenting law and support (transferred from the Lord Chancellor's Department); The Family Policy Unit (transferred from Home Office)

The integration of children's policy into DfES will create a single departmental focus for children, including disadvantaged, improved co-ordination within children's services (including family and parenting support), and between these services and mainstream schools and education policy.

Lord Laming's inquiry into the Victoria Climbié tragedy highlighted the need for better co-ordination. The changes foreshadow further reforms to be announced in the forthcoming Children's Green Paper, which will incorporate a full response to the Laming report. It will be published before the summer recess.

Fair Play for Children is seeking to clarify the role of the new Minister with regard to Children's Play provision. Until now Children's Play has been overseen within the Department for Culture Media



# Childhood under Threat

## Harassed at Play

This e-mail received recently in Fair Play's National Office illustrates the frustration of many parents about neighbourly intolerance towards children, and Police inactivity to protect children going about their lawful business of playing. A lot is heard about children's anti-social behaviour.

PlayAction redresses the balance to say there is adult anti-social behaviour of harassment of children - and that the law often connives with it or refuses to act. The Town is northerly based but we have had such complaints from all over Britain. PlayAction thanks the parent concerned for contacting us - and we are advising on what to do to protect their children's right to play.

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I have lived in a private housing estate in in my town with my wife and three young girls for over 12yrs now. Over the past 4yrs the restrictions and harassment that my young girls have endured / had imposed upon them by a small group of ( 12 ) residents made up of young childless couples, mature parents who's own children have now flown the nest and elderly residents has become unbearable.

The harassment includes an occasion whereby one elderly man stole a shoe belonging to my youngest daughter which slipped of her foot as she was fleeing from outside his house in terror as he chased after her shouting abuse at her , she was about seven at the time. Other occasions have resulted in those same adults swearing obscenities at my children for daring to play near to their properties. One of these obnoxious neighbours even takes photographs of the children each time they go near their property.

I have had the Police round at my door as a result of petty complaints made against my children which included blatant lies being spun by the adults in order to justify calling in the Police, this resulted in my children's names and details being entered into the police officers report book and those of my wife who happened to be in the house at the time of the police visit.

Although the police officer had been somewhat sympathetic towards my children, admitting once that my neighbours were petty in the extreme, the impact that this event had on my very young children (7yr old twins) was quite serious. However the police seem either unwilling or powerless to

## FAIR PLAY FOR CHILDREN



We exist to defend and promote  
**THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO  
PLAY.**

**Fair Play is a growing membership organisation.**

**We are able to link individuals, organisations, local authorities across the country.**

**We offer important Programmes such as Child Protection in a Playwork Setting, Skills Exchange, and Freedom to Play**

**Also Publications, including PlayAction, Fact Sheets etc We lobby Government on a Fair Deal for Our Children.**

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**Fair Play has just about the best Web Site on Children's Play:**  
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# Childhood under Threat

prevent this constant harassment of children some as young as 5yrs, even when this involves the same neighbours taking photographs of the children at play. This small band of neighbours appear to me to extremely paranoid and I am becoming increasingly worried about what they might do next.

I and other parents are very frustrated by the lack of police protection our children receive and I was very very pleased to come across your web-site. Reading your web pages led me to conclude that I was falling victim of my own upbringing and by trying to be far too neighbourly I was in fact allowing my children to be harassed and victimised in order to "keep the peace".

Your web-site has inspired me to take positive action towards reclaiming the rights of my children to play without intimidation and harassment. I would like to thank you sincerely for giving me the wake up call that I needed.

[Parent s name not printed to protect family privacy and safety]

and Sport, as an adjunct to adult leisure. **Jan Cosgrove**, Fair Play's National Organiser, is asking Charles Clarke to consider whether or not Play ought to come under Margaret Hodge's remit in view of the intention to bring under one roof so many child-related functions.

"Would it not make sense for responsibility for Play to also come within the scope of this welcome new appointment? Joined-up government is just what has not happened for Play in these past years. Within the lifetime of this Government there have been so many important child-related initiatives that such a review is urgent."

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## FREE SWIMMING FOR WELSH CHILDREN

The Welsh Local Government Association has welcomed the announcement that the Welsh Assembly Government's free access to leisure centre swimming pools initiative for children and young people is set to roll out to all parts of Wales in time for the school summer holidays.

**WLGA Spokesperson Cllr Jeff Jones:** "Following the successful pilot scheme in Easter, I am certain that its Wales-wide launch this summer will prove to be a great success. Alongside the Assembly, Welsh local government is resolved to promote healthier lifestyles for our children in Wales, particularly in the more deprived areas."

All twenty-two local authorities in Wales have prescribed to this scheme - the first of its kind in Europe. With the Welsh Assembly Government providing funding of £2.5m in the financial year 2003/04 for the pilot project, every child up to 16 in Wales will be able to swim for free in the school holidays this summer.



## Why Don't You Write ?

Send letters, articles etc -  
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# Childhood under Threat

## How Long to a Tragedy?

*"First they came for the Jews and I did not speak out-- because I was not a Jew  
Then they came for the communists and I did not speak out-- because I was not a communist  
Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out-- because I was not a trade unionist  
Then they came for me  
and there was no one left to speak for me*

*Pastor Niemoeller    Victim of the Nazis in Germany*

Thirteen year old **Nevrooz Ay** is allowed to out to play for one hour a day in an open yard surrounded by metal fences and barbed wire. The yard has a yellow line painted on it, if she accidentally crosses the line she is told by the guards to get back into the permitted area. Her only outings are to court hearings in a dark airless van with small windows and at both ends of the journey she will be forced to undergo an intimate body search - inside her mouth and shoes, in her her and clothes.

This treatment violates her right under the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child and the European Convention on Human Rights not to be treated in an inhumane or degrading manner. **Nevrooz Ay has committed no crime, neither is does she live in some far off dictatorship. No she is a child of Kurdish refugees seeking asylum in the UK.**

### What's in a (change of) name ...?

Nevrooz Ay's "home" is in Dungavel, a former prison that is an immigration detention centre, recently renamed as 'removal centres'. These have the same equivalence as a category B prison and the living conditions are appalling with Newroz, her mother, two sisters and her brother confined to a small cramped room.

Between 1999 and 2002 the children had a normal childhood living in freedom in Gravesend, Kent, whilst waiting for their application for asylum to be processed. Then detention



## Pledge over child asylum seekers

Story taken from BBC Scotland's Web Site, 23rd June 2003

Scotland's education minister has promised to listen to concerns about the plight of asylum seekers' children held at the Dungavel detention centre.

Liberal Democrat MSP **Robert Brown** has condemned the treatment of youngsters at the facility, insisting that the situation should not be tolerated in a civilised society.

Education Minister **Peter Peacock** has now agreed to meet Mr Brown to discuss the issue.

Mr Brown, who is the Scottish Parliament's education committee convenor, intervened in the debate over the treatment of



# Childhood under Threat

and deportation procedures kicked in last summer and they were moved to the 'removal centre' in Dungavel. Since then Nevrooz has been diagnosed with clinical depression and her hair falls out in clumps. She is sad and finds it difficult to eat. She repeats over and over: "Can you help us?"

Nevrooz's parents are Kurds fleeing oppression in Turkey. They first of all fled to Germany but then moved onto the UK after the German authorities threatened to deport them back to Turkey, a country with appalling human rights abuses against the Kurdish minority. Ironically Nevrooz and the other Children knew nothing of the persecution and oppression which drove their parents from their home as they were born in Germany. The oppression and persecution that they have suffered has been in this country.



## "A state of invisibility"

Nevrooz has been reduced to a state of invisibility, she and other children of asylum seekers have committed no crime, received no trial and yet under current the current law she and others can be detained **alongside adults for an arbitrary unfixed, period of time. The Home Office refuses to release figures for the number of children of asylum seekers currently being held in immigration detention centres, nor will they publish the length of time these children are incarcerated.** The only figures the Home Office release are of the number of children being held on any one given day and this figure normally hovers around the 50 mark and conceals the true extent of detention.

The Ay's children have now been held in detention for 11 months. When children commit a crime there is, quite rightly, a rigorous and transparent process to protect them if they are incarcerated - this does not apply to Nevrooz and

asylum seekers' children after learning of the plight of a 14-year-old girl.



## Nevrooz and Beriwan Ay

Beriwan Ay, a 14-year-old Kurd from northern Iraq, her 11-year-old brother Dilovan and sisters Nevrooz, 12, and Medya, seven, have been in Dungavel since last summer.

The family lived in Kent for four years before being transferred to Dungavel.

Mr Brown said it was wrong that children in their position were being isolated from the outside world and he has appealed for them to be given access to mainstream education.

He said: "I fail to see that there is a very convincing argument with regard to the children.

"They've been through enough, apart from any other considerations, to spend a good part of their teenage life behind bars, which is pretty much the position they are in at the moment."

Mr Peacock has stressed that immigration remains a matter reserved to Westminster but



# Childhood under Threat

other children of those seeking asylum in the UK.

## "An affront to all of us"

Regarding this disturbing and unjust case, Fair Play for Children will be contacting the Home office concerning the provision of adequate play and recreation facilities for such children. **Jan Cosgrove**, National Organiser of Fair Play for Children had this to say regarding this case: "The conditions described by Diane Taylor in her recent Guardian article are an affront to all of us whose concern is for the welfare of children, regardless of their parents' origins.

"There are so many breaches of the UN Convention on The Rights of The Child in this situation, even the fundamental article that in all civil and legal proceedings affecting a child that the child's welfare is paramount. **Where is the right to be heard, the right to be consulted, to free assembly, to protection from cruel and degrading treatment, let alone the right to play? This case alone demonstrates the need for a Children's Rights Act to incorporate the UN convention into our UK domestic law.**"

Nevrooz Ay's case and others like her is the end result of a policy which panders to the ugly racist and xenophobic views peddled by certain sections of the British media and too often supported by certain sections of the British public. Nevrooz Ay is not guilty of any crime, she is suffering from depression and not eating. Nevrooz and others like her have become, in Orwellian terms, 'non persons' - or, even worse, 'non-children'. If they can do this to children, Pastor Niemoeller's warning may have resonance for all of us.

What does this all say to children like Nevrooz? What message of democracy, freedom and respect for the rule of law? And what comfort does it give to those who seek to recruit to terror and intolerance? What will it take to make this Government stop pandering to a viewpoint based on ignorance, bigotry and racism? Perhaps the death or serious self harm of a child like Nevrooz being held in one of these 'removal centres'? It is not a question of if it will happen only a case of when. For all we know this may have happened - are we sure we would be told?

*Diane Taylor's story, on which this article is partly based, appeared in The Guardian Friday 27th June 2003 - our ref: June 2003-Asylum. Grateful acknowledgement to Boyle for free use of his cartoon.*

promised that if there are any legitimate concerns the Scottish Executive will look at how it can take the issue forward with the Home Office.



The centre has come under fire on many occasions.

**Sally Daghlian**, of the Scottish Refugee Council, condemned the detention of the children. "In Scotland, you're not allowed to lock somebody up who, for example, has committed murder, for more than 150 days without bringing them to trial and this family have been locked up for almost twice that length of time."

The UK Government has always stressed that children are only detained where there is a risk that their parents will abscond rather than face deportation.

**Home Office Minister Lord Filkin** rejected criticism of the Dungavel regime.

He said: "The issue really is, if families choose to protract every single effort to remove them, unfortunately the families have to be held in detention whilst that goes forward."



## Play Around

### SAD LOSS OF DISABILITY PLAY PROJECT

**Children attending ReACTivity's fun filled Easter play scheme in Redbridge released 100 balloons on Thursday 17th April to commemorate the final moments of this charity.**

**ReACTivity** has provided services for children and young people with disabilities who live in Redbridge for many years. Its closure will result in a significant gap in services locally. ReACTivity's chairperson had this to say regarding the closure.

"We have struggled with this decision for the last 18 months - 2 years as we have faced an increasing amount of difficulty in maintaining ReACTivity's services. Increasing legislation and regulation, not having easy access to suitable and adequate premises, the problems of recruiting appropriately trained staff and restrictions in the way volunteers can be use are just some of the problems we have faced over the years. **Insecurity of funding - and the lack of adequate funding - to tackle these issues whilst also maintaining services has also contributed to ReACTivity's impending closure.**"

Originally formed from a body of parents of young children with disabilities, ReACTivity, formerly known as Respite has in the past provided holiday play schemes, activity days, a sitting and befriending services, and a residential holiday. As a result of the closure the impact on the services in the local borough cannot be understated.

The following are some of the losses that will occur. There will be a diminishment in local social provision for children and young people with disabilities, a loss of respite for families caring for children and young people with disabilities, particularly during the Easter and Summer holiday periods.

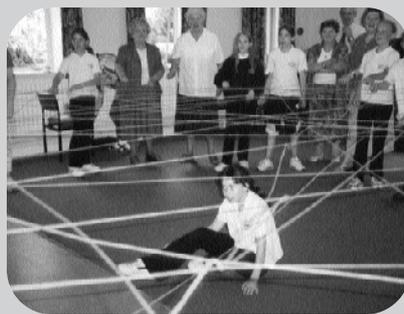
The closure will also contribute to a loss of volunteering opportunities in the area, particularly for young people looking to develop and enhance their community experience. It will also cause a potential loss to the local area of highly skilled and committed young people who formed ReACTivity's holiday scheme sessional staff team.

**Jan Cosgrove**, the National Organiser of Fair Play Children,

Dungavel was opened as a detention centre for asylum seekers in September 2001.

It is thought that about a quarter of the 80 people currently detained at the facility near Strathaven, in Lanarkshire, are children.

### Fair Play Training



Fair Play offers training events and activities in a wide range of practical disciplines such as Games, Health and Safety, Child Protection, Music, Crafts etc. Events are usually organised in partnership with others.

**Contact: 0845-330 7635**  
or email:  
[fairplay@arunet.co.uk](mailto:fairplay@arunet.co.uk)



## Play Around

has written to ReACTivity to express our sadness that such a well established scheme has felt it had to close.

"This is yet another example of the fragility of too many play projects and of the loss of a huge amount of irreplaceable experience. We need more, secure funding for children's play. What is the local authority thinking of letting such a resource go? We have a new Minister for Children - perhaps one of her urgent tasks is to find out just what good quality provision is at risk, or has been lost, due to inadequate resourcing by local and central government."

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## Save the Children Demands Immediate Smacking Ban

Save the Children has called on the Government to act immediately on the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Human Rights report on the Government's record in implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Last year the Government ducked away from dealing with parts of the UK law, which allow parents to hit children. Namely the defence of 'reasonable chastisement'. This defence was found to be contrary to the European Convention on Human rights, after a 14-year-old boy who was caned by his stepfather took his case to Strasbourg.

The court ruled that the boys right under article 3 of the Convention, "No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" had been breached. This overturned a UK courts ruling that the punishment was "reasonable chastisement". Since this ruling the British Government, despite many calls, has refused to drop this loophole and to change the law to ban smacking.

Since this case there been other instances where adult violence against children has gone unpunished. In one case in 2001 a father who hit his daughter so hard that her jaw swelled up had his actions described in a Skye Court as "wholly justifiable" by the Sheriff.

By continuing to accept the defence of "reasonable chastisement" the British Government is in breach of its interna-

## CHILD-MINDER SMACKING BAN

The Professional standards of childminding have recently been given a shake up. From May Childminders were brought into line with other registered childcare providers to help build a higher quality service and promote a more flexible workforce.

The national childminding and daycare services are currently being reviewed so that children receive a higher standard of care and that parents are more confident that their children are safe. Childcare providers will also be supported with simplified procedures are professional standards.

A Childminder is defined as someone who looks after children under the age of 8 for reward on domestic premises (but not the child's home). The review is applicable only to England.

The review will mean:

- Childminders will not be able to smack children in their care, or smoke in front of them.
- Childminders will be able to look after more than one child under a year old if they have the appropriate levels of training,
- Childcare in independent and maintained schools will be registered and inspected by Ofsted, as is all other childcare provision.



# Play Around

tional obligations.

Save the Children spokesperson **Kate Harper** said. "This Government talks a lot about standing up for human rights abroad so now it is time for them to act in their own backyard. If they are truly committed to human rights they must ensure that our children have the same protection from violence under the law as adults, as they are entitled to under international human rights law. What we are calling for is simple - change the law to protect children from violence and support parents in finding alternatives to smacking."

Fair Play supports the call for a total ban on smacking. **Jan Cosgrove**, National Organiser of Fair Play for Children said "'Reasonable chastisement' enables subjective assessment by parents and indeed courts to be pleaded as a basis for justification, a poor basis for legislation.

"In reality, in the home few parents ever impose smacking as part of a considered regime. Mostly, smacking occurs as an expression of parental frustration or anger. In that respect, children deserve the equal right not to be hit. However, legislation alone cannot stop smacking, nor is a punitive approach any use as a sole method of curbing smacking. What could help is far better play provision and also education for parents in how to play and how to enhance their children's play.

"One of the reasons advanced against a total smacking ban is that this would intrude into home life, into family privacy, and parental choice. No one would ever argue such a case about e.g. murder. Murder is illegal, yet having a law against it doesn't stop murder, in the home even - but that is no justification not to have that law. A ban on smacking says that this is not acceptable in this society, and that alternative methods to smacking are to be employed.

"Our reason for advancing play-based approaches as an alternative is that they do work, they involve children in more positive behaviour than that which drives parents to smack, and can help build better relationships between parents and children, not to mention better community relations between adults and children".

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

The consultation document states (para. 3.7): " Smacking is currently banned in all childcare settings, including childminding, except where both the childminder and the parent have an agreement that smacking can be used as a punishment.

"We intend to change the criteria to make it clear that it is not acceptable in any circumstances for childminders to use corporal punishment or the threat of corporal punishment, in recognition that most childminders want to be seen as professionals on an equal footing as childcare workers in other day care settings.

"We further propose to incorporate this ban on corporal punishment in regulations so that it has statutory force in the same way as in schools."

In 2001 professional standards were introduced into daycare. Although smacking was banned in all daycare settings there was a get out clause which allowed a childminder to smack a child providing they had written consent from parents.

When the national standards were published the Government made a commitment to review them within two years. The new standards are the result of discussions with childminding associations and parents. In addition to this the Sure Start unit will continue to work with Ofsted to improve and simplify the regulation of daycare and childminding.

**Catherine Ashton**, the Sure



# PLAY CAN BOOST ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP



The Home office announced on the 11th June an agenda to boost reforms and to empower communities and promote active citizenship, whilst delivering the Edith Khan Memorial Lecture to the Community Service Volunteers (CSV). **Home Secretary David Blunkett** had this to say:

"How we work with communities to renew themselves and improve local services must be fundamental to the next stage of the government's reform agenda. Our aim should be nothing less than a society in which individuals and their families are empowered, enabled and supported by government to take part as active citizens in what happens in their community, and to lead self determined, fulfilling lives."

He also highlighted potential ways to strengthen and clarify accountability and community engagement. These might include:

- Wider dissemination of meaningful performance data;
- More work to promote and better use the services of community and voluntary groups involved in crime reduction work, Neighbourhood Watch, Victim Support, tenants organisations and development trusts;
- Increasing the visibility locally of police leaders and others for tackling crime and disorder;
- Exploring further the empowerment of local police (Basic Command Unit) commanders through increased delegation. Also extending local consultative arrangements, such as neighbourhood panels.

The Home Secretary also announced that £1 million would be available to set up a new Centre for Active Citizenship, which would operate as a consortium of organisations, university departments and think tanks - developing new ideas,

Start Minister said. "We are reviewing the childminding and daycare standards to ensure children are supported with high quality childcare, parents feel confident that they can entrust their children in the safest hands and childminders are supported with professional standards. Having listened to parents and childminders associations, we have decided to bring the standards for childminders into line with other childcare professionals."

She added. "It is important that we acknowledge the professionalism of childminders who do such a valuable job in supporting our children by giving them standards equal to those of other childcare professionals. This will raise the status of childminders, which in turn will help us recruit more and help parents access good quality childcare. "

The review also makes no immediate plans for the registration of nannies, however Catherine Asthon did state that she was considering proposals which balance a commitment to quality and safety with parental control over private childcare arrangements.



# Play Around

best practice and leading edge research.

Whilst initiatives to promote more participation in communities and a greater sense of citizenship are welcome the Government needs to understand that communities need to engage with children from an early age, and that neighbourhood-based play initiatives are a sound way not only to provide 'diversionary' activities but also to ensure consultation in child-friendly ways.

From a Fair Play perspective-funding play in local communities is a way forward to better citizenship. If from an early age the community shows that it cares and values its children, that the community and civil society at large is prepared to engage in dialogue with children and young people and to work in partnership with them, a central facet of play, instead of seeing them as either a threat to be protected against, or victims, then children and young people will respond positively.

Either perspective, children as nuisance, or children as victims lead to restriction, which does not lead to dialogue and active participation. If we want healthy happy well-rounded citizens then the government could do a lot worse than to properly fund children's play provisions in the UK. However this will need investment, (as opposed to the under investment of decades) over a long period ahead.

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## Letters

Dear Colleagues

I'm doing some research about children's perceptions of risk in play, and would be grateful for any good ideas on this. My starting point is the work of Bob Hughes, Cath Gordon and others who have suggested that children's need to engage in conscious risk-taking is a fundamental play behaviour and is part of what makes playwork distinctive as a profession.

I'm interested in how far children's own beliefs, feelings and actions seem to bear out this viewpoint. It seems fairly straightforward to relate risk-seeking to arousal theories of play. Cath Gordon writes about the mixture of exhilaration

### NEW LOTTERY MERGER - GOOD FOR PLAY?

The Community Fund Board recently welcomed the creation of a new lottery distributor. The decision was taken after the positive response from the Secretary of State to the guarantees that the Community Fund had sought on principles of funding levels for the voluntary and community sector, as well as independent decision making, additionality and devolution.

The Board had previously refused to support the creation of a new distributor because of these concerns, which reflected a range of issues raised by voluntary and community organisations.

The Secretary of State had also responded favourably to a joint vision paper for the new distributor prepared by the Community Fund and the New Opportunities Fund. The Key Proposals in the joint vision paper are expected to be incorporated in a white paper on lottery distribution, which will be published by the Government in July 2003. This will be subject to a formal consultation period.

Speaking after the meeting **Diana Brittan**, Chair of the Community Fund, said: "We are looking forward to working with the Secretary of State, the New Opportunities Fund and the voluntary and community sector during the consultation period. It is the work of grant applicants which makes the difference to



# Play Around

and terror that adults sometimes recall about their own childhood risk-taking. But how far does this "buzz factor" account for children's risky behaviour?

Children certainly do things that seem risky to adults, either through physical danger or otherwise. But they might do these things (a) without realising they are dangerous, (b) out of rational calculation (whether accurate or not doesn't matter) that the likely benefits outweigh the possible costs, (c) under some kind of pressure or duress. None of these motives (and I'm sure there are others too) seems to me to add up to Bob Hughes' concept of "deep play".

Conversely, children may do things that to adults seem harmless, yet are high in exhilaration and terror for the children concerned.

If risk-taking in play is psychologically important for individuals, as Hughes contends, then what individuals think and feel about risk is crucial. So I am interested in finding out, in the context of a small sample of 8-11 year olds, something about these questions:

1. Are there kinds of play behaviour that children believe to be risky, and if so, what are they?
2. What feelings do children have about these behaviours?
3. What motives do children claim for doing play they think is risky?
4. Do their actions seem to confirm their beliefs and feelings about risk, or contradict them?
5. Is it possible to identify aspects of either the child or the situation that seem related to children's risk-orientation - eg age, gender, personality, environment, presence or absence of peers or adults? (I don't want to assume that anything at all is obvious).

I'm hoping to use a combination of observation and interviews to shed light on these questions. I would welcome any good ideas on theoretical understandings, fruitful questions, or effective methods of study. In particular I would welcome suggestions about how one might assess the "risk-iness" of different sorts of play behaviour. Eg Is there such a thing as risky painting? How can you tell it from non-risky painting? Thanks in anticipation, and best wishes

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improving quality of life for individuals and communities, not the act of grant giving itself. The consultation period will ensure that those working in our communities to improve quality of life fore so many will get a chance to have their say."

A joint Board committee will be set up by the Community Fund and the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) to do the detailed planning for the creation of the new distributor and to work with the Secretary of State on the Consultation period, which will follow the publication of the White Paper.

**Ken McCormick, Chair of Fair Play for Children**, expressed concern that any new arrangements should retain the ability to be relevant to local play needs. "We especially want the new board to support the creation of genuine local play partnerships where children's voices are heard.

"The Community Fund has been crucial in resourcing many play projects, but its involvement demonstrates the level of insecurity around the funding of play nationwide. We need a new funding culture around Play which recognises it for its crucial potential in the lives of our children"

Fair Play has recently proposed that the £200 millions NOF funding designated for Play be distributed through a network of Local Play Partnerships, to be set up in areas by children, parents, organisations, councils etc.



## "Sixties Kids Revelation Horror Shock Probe"

*We give this page to A Point of View even if a bit on the "when we were kids" angle!*

According to today's regulators and bureaucrats, those of us who were kids in the 50's, 60's, and 70's should not have survived:

Our baby cots were covered with brightly coloured lead-based paint, which was promptly chewed and licked.

We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, or latches on doors or cabinets and it was fine to play with pans.

When we rode our bikes, we wore no helmets, just flip flops and fluorescent 'clackers' on our wheels.

As children, we would ride in cars with no seat belts or air bags.

Riding in the passenger seat was a treat.

We drank water from the garden hose and not from a bottle - tasted the same.

We ate dripping sandwiches, bread and butter pudding and drank fizzy pop with sugar in it, but we were never overweight **because we were always outside playing.**

We shared one drink with four friends, from one bottle or can and no one actually died from this.

We would spend hours building go-carts out of scraps and then went top speed down the hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes.

After running into stinging nettles a few times, we learned to solve the problem.

We would leave home in the morning **and play all day, as long as we were back before it got dark.** *[Some of us AFTER dark. We also knew what it was to get into bother with mum and dad for wandering in after sunset. Ed]*

No one was able to reach us all day and no one minded.



## CHILD PROTECTION IN PLAY

**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

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

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# Play Around

We did not have Playstations or X-Boxes, no video games at all. No 99 channels on TV, no videotape movies, no surround sound, no mobile phones, no personal computers, no Internet chat rooms. We had friends - **we went outside and found them.** *I think kids have friends now... Ed]*

We played street tennis, roller skate hockey and rounders, and sometimes that ball really hurt.

We fell out of trees, got cut and broke bones and teeth, and there were no lawsuits. They were accidents.

We had fights, threw half house bricks at one another and punched each other hard. We bled and got black and blue - and we learned to get over it.

We walked to friends' homes.

We made up games with sticks and tennis balls and ate live stuff, and although we were told it would happen, we did not have very many eyes out, nor did the live stuff live inside us forever. *[Er, what exactly did you eat ...?]*

We rode bikes in packs of 7 and wore our coats by only the hood. Our actions were our own. Consequences were expected.

The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke a law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law. Imagine that!

This generation has produced some of the best risk-takers and problem solvers and inventors, ever. The past 50 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas. We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned how to deal with it all.

And you're one of them. Congratulations!*[If you survived!]*

## **Child Curfews - A Waste of Space, Mr Blunkett**

**Now who not try something more useful - like intervention through properly-funded Neighbourhood Play - starting when they're 4, 5, 6 years old. Why wait until trouble has started? Be creative!!!!**

**It'll be cheaper, more successful - and more Fun for everyone. Just how long does it take politicians to wise up?**



## **'CHILDREN'S CENTRES COME OF AGE' IN DRIVE TO END CHILD POVERTY AND CREATE A FAIRER BRITAIN'**

Children's centres are an idea whose time has come, **Stephen Burke**, Director of Daycare Trust, told a national conference in May.

The Government's pledge to bring together childcare, early education, health and family support services in children's centres will soon become a reality. It provides an unprecedented opportunity to change lives for children and families and create a better Britain.

The "Growing Children's Centres" conference in Leeds was organised by Daycare Trust and the National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations.

Opening the conference, Stephen Burke said: "Children's centres are a big idea whose time really has arrived. In the next few weeks, local authorities across the country will hear whether their bids to set up the first children's centres have been successful.



**New Cash for holiday schemes for vulnerable children:** *Amy Taylor: Communitycare.co.uk (30 Jan 2003) [03/FEB/2003]*

THE government has announced funding for a national network of activity programmes for vulnerable children to take place during the school holidays. **Ian**

**Lewis**, parliamentary under secretary of state for adult learning and skills, made the announcement at a conference on reducing young offending organised by the Youth Justice Board. The scheme is set to launch in May.

**Minister in Scotland promise to consider Laming report:** *Nicola Barry: Communitycare.co.uk (03 Feb 2003) [02/FEB/2003]*

MINISTERS in Scotland have pledged to give careful consideration to the recommendations of the Laming report into the death of Victoria Climbié. Minister for young people **Cathy Jamieson** said: "I am keen to ensure the lessons learned from the case are taken into account in our own programme of reform for child protection." The resulting report, **'It's Everyone's Job to Make Sure I'm Alright'**, found staff and agencies responsible for safeguarding children had not done enough to protect those in their care who subsequently died. Children remained at risk of significant harm from abuse, even when their plight was known to child protection services, the report said. Social workers rarely took out emergency protection measures and were reluctant to apply for a protection order in case they were cross-examined in a court.

**Sex Records check office 'is in chaos':** *Ian Kirby, News of the World [4MAY/03]*

A dossier recently published shows that the Criminal Record Bureau is 'a shambles'. The C.R.B. was supposed to check 3.3 million people last year, but in fact only checked 1.4 million on time. Ministers have been forced to admit that checks on about 700,000 people, including thousands of care home workers have had to be postponed and that the price of checks is set to 'rocket' as the CRB has a £110 million shortfall. Lib Dem Home Affairs spokesman **Paul Burstow** carried out the research. He claims the delays were caused because the CRB was opened before it was properly set up. "It has put lives at risk," he said.

**Children 'prefer park to watching TV'** *Associated Press 2003.*

Children would rather spend a sunny day in the park than

"The new centres will bring together a range of services for children and families - from early education and childcare to health and family support. By making it easier for parents to access services for their children and themselves, the centres will help more families benefit in the critical, early years of their children's lives.

"The Government has pledged to set up a children's centre in every one of the 20% most disadvantaged areas. It aims to ensure that 650,000 children will gain from what's on offer in children's centres by 2006.

"Beyond the disadvantaged areas, many others are planning to set up children's centres. It is an idea that has captured the imagination of agencies at a time when they are being urged to join up.

**"Integration of services** is not a new concept but we know that it works. The challenge is to make integration exciting so that key players get involved and to make it effective so that children and families really benefit.

"Integration doesn't necessarily cost huge sums. It's about a different way of working - building on the best of services that are already there, from local Sure Start programmes to neighbourhood nurseries.

"Of course, it will require new resources where services don't exist. Creating much more affordable childcare is crucial to enable



watch TV, according to a study commissioned for the Heritage Lottery Fund shows that youngsters may not necessarily be couch potatoes. Eighty-six per cent of parents with children aged 11 or under say that on a warm day their children would rather go to the park. There was overwhelming public support for lottery spending on public parks and 30 million people in England alone use their local parks, making two billion visits each year.

### **Dirty air tortures our Children's Lungs:** - *Portsmouth Today. [JUN0703]*

Research carried out over a period of 13 months tracking a group of 114 asthmatic children aged between seven months and 11 years old found that youngsters exposed to pollution, specifically nitrogen dioxide which is found in traffic fumes were more likely to suffer a severe attack one week after catching a virus. **Doctor Anoop Chauhan**, a respiratory researcher at St Mary's Hospital, in Milton Portsmouth, headed the research. The news comes just days after Portsmouth engineers warned that traffic in the city was crawling towards gridlock and there was no room for any more cars.

### **How Art Deco matters to disadvantaged youth:** - *Alexandra Frea. The Times [MAY0503]*

A piece examining a project that aims to give young people from disadvantaged backgrounds key life skills through the use of Art Deco painting. The Life Matters Project is run by the NCH and funded by Earnest and Young the sponsors of the Art Deco exhibition. It aims to celebrate the creative talents of disadvantaged young people, while teaching them to develop skills, self awareness and self discipline.

**A Million girls try to bend it like Beckham:** - *Duncan Begg. The Evening Standard [MAY0803]* Nearly one and a half million girls take to the football pitch on a regular basis in England. Research carried out by the F.A. found that 1.4 million girls aged between 7 and 15 took part in some form of footballing activity. Women's football is now the most popular female sport in England, overtaking netball.

### **Pioneering Children's Centre finds its Saviour.** *Patrick Sawyer- Evening Standard [08MAY03]*

A project for troubled youngsters has found a new home after being threatened with eviction. **Kids Company** faced being without a base for the 400 children it cares for after school each day- because it was in breach of planning regulations. The project was saved after it's landlord, Network Rail, stepped in with an offer of new premises in Peckham.

parents to work and lift their families out of poverty.

"There are models for children's centres available - many of the early excellence centres already show how full-time daycare can be provided alongside drop-in services for parents and toddlers and specialist support for families. They show how to bring together staff from different professional backgrounds.

"Children's centres also have to be seen in the context of the changing world of children's services. A Government Green Paper on services for children at risk is expected shortly along with announcements about the first children's trusts.

**"These will join up education, social services and health across local authority areas to better commission and provide services for vulnerable children** - and avoid the glaring lapses highlighted by the Laming inquiry.

"Children's centres have a key role to play in delivering these new agendas. They will be the ultimate in preventative services and should stop many children falling through the net.

"Three key questions remain. **First, resources - will the Government extend investment in children's centres beyond the 20% most disadvantaged**



Katy Burns of Network Rail said, "we have always supported Kids Company because of the great work they do with youngsters." At the end of last month Kids Company was ordered to leave its current premises, after the High Court backed a ruling made by Southwark Council that Kids Company were in breach of planning law. That followed complaints from local residents that youths using the centre were making their lives a misery. The scheme had won support from Prince Charles and from Cherie Blair. Evening Standard readers raised £50,000 in a Christmas appeal. In September Southwark council refused to give the centre retrospective planning permission after complaints by some residents regarding noise and criminal behaviour. The centre lost its appeals but refused to close despite warnings to its trustees, including its chairman, BBC director of drama Alan Yentob- that they faced "substantial damages" in a legal action. Network Rail's property arm Spacia has agreed to let Kids Company move into empty Victorian buildings at Peckham Rye Station, which are further from local residents. It can stay rent free as long as money can be found to refurbish the site, It will also need planning permission from Southwark. Much criticism has been levelled at a local labour councillor **Tony Ritchie** for encouraging residents to complain. The founder of Kids Company **Camila Batmanghelidjh** said. "Network Rail has been great. They stuck by the kids and that has been an unpopular choice for many round here. Nobody else has thought about the children caught up in this. The council certainly wasn't looking after [children's] interests and they are the vulnerable ones. Councillors used the planning process to trample on these children." In reply Mr Ritchie said. "I am not judging Kids Company. It's about whether A narrow terrace which receives a large influx of young people, it the best location for residents and clients."

**The forgotten children:** *Mary Riddell, The Observer (02 Feb 2003) [08/FEB/2003]*

EACH time a child is murdered by a carer, a utilitarian test gets applied. Will that child have died in vain? This question suggests the banal notion that public horror can be assuaged if a victim's torture is sublimated into some formula to serve the greater good. The monument of the Laming report is built on the grave of Victoria Climbié, with its 400 pages and 108 recommendations. It is questionable whether that long epitaph can alchemise individual agony into useful death. It is the habit of Britain to treat such inquiries as cathartic exercises enshrining repentance rather than remedy. Such exercises prove, if nothing else, that we treat dead children better than living ones.

**wards and create a universal publicly funded service?** This is critical if children's centres are not to be stigmatised and if children from families in poverty living outside these areas are to benefit.

**"Second, quality - will children be at the centre of children's centres?** A well trained, well paid workforce is key to children's centres giving children the best start in life.

**"Finally, governance - will children's centres be controlled by their local communities and really involve local stakeholders, not least parents?** We have a chance to test out new mutual models which ensure that children's centres meet local needs.

"The answer to all these questions rests in the next twelve months. It's absolutely crucial that the first children's centres demonstrate their value to convince the Government of the case for further investment in the 2004 spending review - investment that goes beyond the disadvantaged areas and investment that provides continuing support to the flagship children's centres.

"Universal children's centres are key to the Government delivering on its ambitious drive to end child poverty and create a better, fairer Britain. This month we have an unprecedented opportunity to start to fulfil that ambition."



WHY DID THE CHICKEN CROSS THE ROAD?

[Part 2] [Part 1 PlayAction Summer 1998]

**SAEED AL SAHAF** - Iraqi Head of Information  
The chicken did not cross the road. This is a complete fabrication. In fact, we do not even

have a chicken. Our chicken will be victorious.

**HANS BLIX** - UN Weapons Inspector

We have reason to believe there may be potential for this chicken's capability, but we have not yet been allowed to have access to the other side of the road. We need more time.

**COLIN POWELL**

Now to the left of the screen, you can clearly see the satellite image of the chicken crossing the road.

**GEORGE W. BUSH**

We don't care why the chicken crossed the road. We just want to know if the chicken is on our side of the road or not. The chicken is either for us or against us. There is no middle ground.

**PETER HOLLINGWORTH** - Ex-Governor-General Australia

I am not aware of any impropriety in the chicken crossing the road. In fact I am led to believe that it was the other way around and the chicken asked for it.

**OPRAH**

Isn't that interesting? After this break, we will be listening to the chicken tell, for the first time, the heart-warming story of how it felt accomplishing its lifelong dream of crossing the road.

**JOHN LENNON**

Imagine all the chickens, crossing all the roads.

You may say I'm a dreamer - but it's not the only hen.

**MICHAEL JACKSON**

There's nothing more wonderful than sharing your bed with a chicken.

**ARSENE WENGER**

What chicken? I did not see it. It wasn't fair.

**SIR ALEX FERGUSON**

The chicken was not drawn to the other side fairly, and Beckham is not bigger than this club. [We've sold the chicken for £25m]

**ARIAL SHARON**

The Israeli nation reserves the right in self defence to take punitive action against any chickens who are crossing the road, or indeed planning to cross the road or who we think just might.

**GENERAL TOMMY FRANKS**

Due to the sensitive nature of operations within the current theatre of engagement I can neither confirm nor deny at this juncture reports that the chicken traversed the highway in a road-crossing manoeuvre.

**ALISTAIR CAMPBELL**

I did not sex up the dossier on the chicken's road crossing capabilities. This matter has been blown out of all proportion by the BBC and I demand a full apology.

**HOMER SIMPSON** Mmmmmmmmm . . . . c h i c k e n

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