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INCLUSIVE PLAY IN SCOTLAND: CONTEXT, CONCEPTS AND CURRENT RESEARCH

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the Scottish Government's Action Plan to achieve its vision of Scotland as 'a nation which values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all your children and young people', Action 9.6 outlines intentions to review inclusive play in Scotland. This literature review is intended as the first stage in achieving this action; the idea is that it will be used to inform the design of primary research into inclusive play in Scotland by setting out the context, reviewing the theory and key terms as well as identifying the research that has already been conducted.

During the first main chapter, the literature on the definitional issues surrounding the concepts of play and inclusive play is reviewed. Here, it was found that play, because of its complex and varied nature, is commonly defined in reference to play as a process: it is an activity that is freely chosen, intrinsically motivated and distinguished by means and not ends. Defining play in such a way makes conducting any sort of research into the topic troublesome, as it means that assessing activities as play or non-play is difficult.

It was also shown that inclusive play is a rather difficult concept to define, and has been interpreted differently by different people in different contexts. Much of the research has a focus upon inclusive play within a service setting, and what inclusive play means to service providers. Inclusive play out-with this setting and the views of children and young people on the matter are largely missing in the literature.

A review of a number of play projects in England shows the numerous ways in which the concept of 'inclusive play' can be interpreted by service providers. While there were a number of interlocking concepts, there were also a number of disparities resulting in different types of services being described as 'inclusive'. A similar picture was found in the definitions of inclusive play proffered by authors in the literature more generally.

In order to move forward with primary research in this field, a succinct definition of inclusive play needs to be decided upon. This definition should draw upon the body of research discussed in this paper, and directly address possible misinterpretations of that definition by taking a stance on the commonly conflicting notions of inclusive play referred to in this report.

During the second main chapter, the empirical research into inclusive play for a number of groups of children identified by the UN as requiring 'special attention in order to realise their rights under article 31' is reviewed, concentrating upon girls, children within in poverty, children with disabilities, children in institutions and children from minority communities. The chapter aimed to identify the possible barriers to inclusion faced by these groups and to review the key research and data into the inclusivity of play in the Scottish context. Throughout, it is highlighted that:

- There has been much research looking at the issue of gender and play on a UK-wide level. In a number of reports, concern is raised about the restrictions placed on the play of girls in comparison to boys and the segregated and gendered nature of play in the service setting. Despite such

a body of research on a UK level, no Scotland specific research was identified.

- Children living in disadvantage in Scotland face significant barriers to play when compared to those from less disadvantaged backgrounds. Such barriers include access to quality public parks and play facilities, access to fields, open spaces and the natural environment as well as access to play in the home.
- Disabled children and young people face barriers to play and inclusive play because of a lack of venues that are close to home; lack of skilled staff; lack of transport options; cost issues; lack of accessibility; and because of various attitudinal issues, whether the fears of parents or a lack of acceptance by peer groups. Moreover, the complexity of aspirations for inclusive play is frequently noted in the research available: although it is argued that play should be open to all, a lot of parents and children still stress the importance of specialist provision.
- No empirical research into the state of play and/or inclusive play for children in hospitals, detention centres, remand homes or refugee centres was identified; however, relevant literature on the topic of children in public care in Scotland was. This literature raises concerns about a culture of risk aversion which is threatening this group of children and young people's ability to play outdoors.
- Research into play, inclusive play and minority communities tended to be either conducted in England or on a UK-wide basis. This body of research expresses concerns about the barriers faced by young Asian women in accessing play, the segregated nature of play between differing communities and access to play for children of gypsy and traveller communities. While there was some research into the play of gypsy and traveller communities in Scotland – stressing the many barriers that this group of children face in accessing quality play opportunities - on the whole the issue of play and minority communities is an extremely under researched area.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 2013, the Scottish Government published the *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision*. This publication sets out the Government's goal of ensuring that Scotland is 'A nation which values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all our children and young people; in their homes, nurseries, schools and communities' (The Scottish Government, 2013a).

As part of the action plan to achieve this vision, Action 9.6 outlines intentions to 'task a working group to commission a review of inclusive play in Scotland to identify context, current practice, barriers and aspirations' so as to build a knowledge base which will inform the implementation of the Play Strategy for all children (The Scottish Government, 2013b). This paper is intended as the first stage of Action 9.6 and will review the literature on inclusive play. The idea is that the review will be used to inform the design of primary research into inclusive play by setting out the context, reviewing the theory and key terms as well as identifying the research that has already been conducted.

The paper has been split into two main chapters following this introductory segment. The first main chapter looks at the definitional issues surrounding play and inclusive play, while the second main chapter turns to review the empirical research into the state of inclusive play for a number of groups of children and young people in Scotland.

It is important to note that this is more of a scoping review than a systematic review of the literature. A systematic review was not a viable option for two reasons: first, because of the nature of the information available, which was very sparse, not always visible to literature searches and often published by government departments and various third sector organisations; and, second, because of the short time period available to complete the review.

In order to identify literature for the review a number of library searches of academic databases were conducted, as well a search of both published grey literature and of internet sources more generally. Finally, the knowledge and resources of a number of members of the Play Strategy Implementation Group were drawn upon as well as the author's own knowledge of the research available.

II. DEFINING PLAY AND INCLUSIVE PLAY

What is play?

Play, despite being easy to recognise, is exceptionally difficult to define. Much of this difficulty derives from the wide variety of activities that we attribute with the label of 'play'.

Gleave and Cole-Hamilton (2012, p.4), for instance, note that there is an 'endless range of play types, which could be active or subdued, imaginative or exploratory, involve others or carried out alone'. Similarly, Cole-Hamilton (2011, p.5) writes that 'Children's play may or may not involve equipment or have an end product. Children play on their own and with others. Their play may be boisterous and energetic or quiet and contemplative, light-hearted or very serious'.

Because of this variety, some, such as Cohen (1987, p.6), have questioned whether 'it is possible to get a perfect definition of play'. Moreover, Coulter and Taylor (2001, p.2), in their major review of the academic literature on play, state that 'It is generally accepted that a single definition [of play] is neither necessary nor sufficient [...] such a definition seems almost impossible to achieve [...] such difficulties relate to the complex and diverse nature of play and the variety of contexts in which it can take place'.

Since 1989, a child's right to play has been enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 31 states that:

'State parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts'.

The General Comment on Article 31 (2013, p.3) defines play in accordance with processes in this way:

'Children's play is any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled and structured by children themselves; it takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise. Caregivers may contribute to the creation of environments in which play takes place, but play itself is non-compulsory, driven by intrinsic motivation and undertaken for its own sake, rather than as a means to an end'

The Scottish Government's Play Strategy (2013b, p.10) defines play in a similar way:

'Play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward'.

This is the definition of play that will be used throughout this paper. Before moving on, however, it is necessary to outline a few caveats here for the sake of clarity.

First, because play is often defined in reference to processes, difficulties can arise when we try to assess certain activities as play or non-play. These difficulties will

occur time and time again during this review. Some reports that will be touched upon later in the paper concern access to inclusive leisure or inclusive games, for instance, and whether or not leisure and games are synonymous with play is difficult to assess.

Second, the literature on play – both in terms of the theory around the concept and the empirical research into its types and benefits – are predominantly concerned with children in the early years. However, both the UNCRC and The Scottish Government's Play Strategy underline that play is a right for children and young people up to the age of 18 (see The Scottish Government, 2013b, p.10). What play is for older children and young people is another difficult question to answer, and one that needs further research and discussion before any research into the inclusivity of play for this group can be considered.

Exclusion and an emphasis on inclusion

In recent years, a large body of research has been generated which shows how important play is for children (see Coulter and Taylor, 2001; Cole-Hamilton et al, 2002; Lester and Russell, 2008; Lester and Russell, 2010; and Whitebread, 2012 for reviews of the evidence on the benefits and outcomes of play).

This body of research shows that in play children deliberately seek out uncertain situations where they can improvise responses (Pellegrini et al., 2007); thus allowing children to sample their environments by responding to uncertain situations with novel behaviours (Lester and Russell, 2008). This develops the child's ability to respond flexibly and adaptably to uncertain situations, which, in turn, assists children to develop the ability to regulate emotions (Lester and Russell, 2008), control stress (Panksepp, 2001) and manage risk (Gleave, 2008). It is argued that this adaptability and flexibility provides an essential platform for cognitive development (Lester and Russell, 2012) and elevates levels of plasticity in the brain (Pellis and Pellis, 2009). Play is thought to contribute to language development (Levy, 1984), to the development of the ability to build strong attachment relationships (Booth-LaForce et al., 2005) and, when active and energetic, to provide an effective form of physical activity (Pulsen and Ziviani, 2004).

Perhaps most importantly, however, children and young people benefit from play due to the fact that it is enjoyable, fun and promotes positive feelings. As Lester and Russell (2010) argue 'play is primarily behaviour for its own sake, for the pleasure and joy of being able to do it'.

For some children, however, opportunities for play are not present. As Santer et al (2007, pp.52-53) note, 'These are children for whom physical, social or cultural circumstances exclude them, either overtly or covertly, from participating fully in play'.

The Scottish Government (2013a, p.11) have recognised this fact in their Play Strategy, where it is stated that:

'[...] children of all ages, stages and abilities should have the opportunity to realise their right to play without discrimination of any kind. However, many

children face attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers to accessing play opportunities and provision’.

As a result, much of the literature and policy on play places an emphasis on inclusion. The Scottish Government’s Play Strategy (2013a, p.11), for instance, states that ‘pro-active measures are needed to remove the barriers and promote accessibility to, and availabilities of, inclusive opportunities to participate in all these activities’.

Moreover, the General Comment on Article 31 of the UNCRC mentions inclusion in a number of different sections of the document. To quote just a sample of these:

‘Accessible and inclusive environments and facilities must be made available to children with disabilities to enable them to enjoy their rights under article 31’ (UN, 2013, p.5).

‘The Committee also emphasizes that the rights under article 31 are of positive benefit to children’s educational development; inclusive education and inclusive play are mutually reinforcing and should be facilitated during the course of every day throughout early childhood education and care (preschool) as well as primary and secondary school’ (UN, 2013, p.5).

What is inclusive play?

Inclusivity is a word that has become so pervasive that it risks becoming meaningless. As Theresa Casey (2005, p.4) notes:

‘the word “inclusive” has now entered our thinking and pops up in relation to schools, recreation, communities and education. It reflects an aspiration to ensure that everyone can take part, be included, can participate. Inclusion can mean different things to different people in different settings and is perhaps in danger of becoming one of those words that come and go and lose any real meaning’.

Given the ubiquity of the concept of inclusion and the subsequent problem of meaning, combining ‘inclusion’ with ‘play’ leaves us with a very problematic concept indeed.

How do service providers define inclusive play?

In 2005 Barnardo’s published an evaluation report, part of which looked at the way that ‘inclusive play’ was defined by a number of services working with disabled children via (a) a series of questionnaires to all 94 projects and (b) a closer look, qualitative study of 8 of these projects.

The surveys found that a single definition of inclusive play was not present, but rather a ‘range of interlocking concepts and characteristics’ frequently presented themselves, from ‘openness and accessibility, equality of opportunity, participation and a child centred focus. Choice and control [...] the provision of support for

disabled children and interaction between disabled and non-disabled children' (Ludvigsten, 2005, p.02).

During the more in-depth evaluation of eight particular projects, the authors note that many of the services talked about conflicting notions of inclusive play. Some projects, for instance, emphasised both disabled children and non-disabled children playing together as essential for inclusion, while others emphasised the need for equal access to high quality play.

Some projects emphasised that inclusion was not integration – whereby disabled children are 'integrated' into a mainstream service and it is up to the child to adapt, rather than for the service to meet all needs. Other services, however, defined precisely this 'integration' as inclusion.

This difference in interpretation resulted in three different approaches to 'inclusive' provision:

- Whereby provision was offered to disabled children and non-disabled children during the same project session, but without attempting to facilitating the needs of the disabled children or interaction with non-disabled children.
- Whereby provision was offered to disabled children and non-disabled children during the same project session, and where provision was designed and resourced to allow participation by both disabled and non-disabled children.
- Whereby disabled children had the same play opportunities as non-disabled children, but either at a different times or in a different place to non-disabled children.

This research illustrates that the concept of 'inclusive play' can and has been interpreted in a number of ways and the resultant consequences of such differing interpretations. Although the study focuses specifically on disabled children, it is easy to see how such a range of interpretations could apply to inclusive play for any specific group – whether ethnic minorities or disadvantaged children and young people, for instance.

A study by Murray (2002) paints a similar picture. Murray uses a variety of methods (from semi-structured interviews, group discussions and peer interviews to observation and attending meetings, amongst others) in order to study disabled teenagers' experience of access to inclusive leisure. 'Leisure' is loosely defined by the author as any chosen activity when not engaging with school, college or paid employment – and so the focus of this study is wider in scope than inclusive play alone, but useful nonetheless.

The author found that there was confusion between projects providing leisure opportunities for disabled young people, where the term 'inclusive' leisure was taken to mean things from *'disabled young people participating, as a group or individually, in mainstream leisure activities and facilities'* to *'providing one-to-one support for young disabled people to take part in activities of their choice and their community'* (Murray, 2002, p.17).

How do children and young people define inclusive play?

While reviewing the literature on inclusive play it became clear that much of it is unduly weighted towards play as a service, and how inclusion is interpreted by service providers. The problem with this focus is two-fold:

First, play can take place in a variety of different contexts - The Scottish Government's play strategy, for instance, places an emphasis upon Scotland as a nation which values play in the home, school, nursery and community – and there is a distinction between play as a service and play as simply something that children and young people do wherever and whenever they can. There is a distinct gap in the literature on what inclusive play means out-with the service setting.

Second, there is a lack of research on the views of children and young people. Murray's (2002) project breaks from this pattern briefly and explores the views of disabled children and young people, where it was found that:

'Inclusive leisure is not something that takes place in a particular building, or a particular time, with particular people, inclusive leisure is viewed as a process through which we all belong in whatever setting we happen to be in [...] in this definition, inclusive leisure is not confined to one particular place; rather, it is seen as a natural process through which all of us can go to the places we want to, with the people we want to be with. Such a definition carries within it the potential for the breakdown of all exclusive barriers – impairment, age, gender, race, ethnicity, class and religion' (Murray, 2002, p.19).

This suggests that defining inclusion solely in the context of play in a service setting may be at odds with how inclusion is defined by children and young people - this is an area that is in need of further research.

How has inclusive play been defined in the literature more generally?

A number of authors have proffered their own definitions of inclusive play:

- *'Inclusive play stresses the importance of including all children [...] by fostering an environment where diversity is respected and valued. At its best, inclusion enables all children – of all abilities, ethnic backgrounds, ages and other differences – to play together' (Ludvigsten et al, 2005).*
- *'Inclusive play is primarily about all children and young people having equal access to - and equal participation in - local play, childcare and leisure opportunities' (Scott, 2006).*
- *'Inclusion involves adaption of all parts of the community – both people's attitudes and the physical environment – to cater for a wide spectrum of ability and need. This must be an on-going process whose overall aim is to embrace diversity rather than simply tolerate differences' (Ward et al, 2004).*
- *'Inclusive play means that all children and young people have equal access to good quality local play provision. This means that they can play with*

others or alone as they wish in a rich environment that supports their play needs and gives them access to a wide range of play opportunities' (Play Wales, 2013).

- *'Think of inclusion as "fairness" – it's important that you treat each child fairly, according to their needs. This applies to all children – no matter what their illness or disability, where they live or how they communicate'. (North Lanarkshire Council, 2010)*
- *'Although it is a term understood differently by different people in different situations "inclusive play" may suggest an equal right:*
 - *To full, satisfying play in their day-to-day lives;*
 - *To make choices about which, if any, local provision they would like to take part in;*
 - *To play provision which adapts to the changing needs of all the children rather than expecting the children themselves to "fit it".*

'And play provision in which all children:

- *Are equally valued and respected;*
- *Are enabled to make their own choices about how they spend their time, for how long and with whom' (Casey, 2005)*

It becomes apparent, once again, that a single definition of inclusive play does not present itself; however, definitions are frequently based around a number of interlocking concepts: from openness and a positive and response attitude to diversity to playing together, high quality provision for all, choice, inclusion as a process and adaptability.

Some of these definitions come with caveats which attempt to directly tackle the potentially differing interpretations of 'inclusive play' aforementioned. For instance:

- *'The terms "integration" and "inclusion" are often used interchangeably, but they have different meanings. When a child is integrated, there may be specialist support available, but the child has to fit within the existing system. An inclusive system sees diversity as positive and is responsive to this, rather than trying to make everyone fit a pre-determined structure. Consequently, inclusion means offering services tailored to individual needs, which provide children and young people with a real choice' (Ludvigsen et al, 2005; Ward et al, 2004).*
- *'Inclusion means more than simply providing physical access to a mainstream school, nursery or youth club – important as this is. To be inclusive, institutions and the people in them need to change to develop, to provide high-quality services and to meet a range of individual needs' (Ludvigsen et al, 2005; Ward et al, 2004; Scott, 2006).*

While Ludvigsen et al (2005), Ward et al (2004) and Scott's (2006) definitions all have such caveats, the definitions proffered by PlayWales (2013) and North Lanarkshire Council (2010) do not, and thus are open to being interpreted differently.

Conclusions and suggestions for moving forward

During this chapter, I have reviewed the literature on the definitional issues surrounding the concepts of play and inclusive play. It was shown that play, because of its complex and varied nature, is commonly defined in reference to play as process: it is an activity that is freely chosen, intrinsically motivated and distinguished by means and not ends. This has potential problems when conducting any sort of research on the topic, as it makes assessing certain activities as play or non-play difficult.

It was also shown that inclusive play is a rather difficult concept to define, and has been interpreted differently by different people in different contexts. Much of the research has a focus upon inclusive play within a service setting, and what inclusive play means to service providers. Inclusive play out-with this setting and the views of children and young people on the matter are largely missing in the literature.

A review of a number of play projects in England shows the numerous ways in which the concept of 'inclusive play' can be interpreted by service providers. While there were a number of interlocking concepts, there were also a number of disparities resulting in different types of services being described as 'inclusive'. A similar picture was found in the literature around the concept of 'inclusive play' more generally.

In order to move forward with primary research in this field, a succinct definition of inclusive play needs to be decided upon. This definition should draw upon this body of research above discussed, and directly address possible misinterpretations of that definition by citing, for instance, common conflicting notions of inclusion by taking a stance on: whether integration and inclusion are separate concepts and whether inclusion is children playing together or simply equality of opportunity for high quality play whether playing together or not.

III. BARRIERS, ASPIRATIONS AND CURRENT RESEARCH

Childhood is not a singular, universal phenomenon experienced in the same way by all children. As Lester and Russell (2008, p.189) note,

'Age is only one mode of diversity or social division. Children are also boys or girls, they belong to a vast range of cultural and ethnic groups, they are born into a particular social class and lifestyle, and they may or may not be disabled in a variety of ways. Children may live in stable family homes, or with domestic violence, or in the care of the local authority. They may be socially or economically deprived, they may be in hospital or they may be newly arrived in this country as asylum seekers or refugees'.

Whereas the last chapter looked at the theoretical issues surrounding inclusive play, this chapter turns to look at the empirical research. It aims to identify the possible barriers to inclusion faced by particular groups of children and young people, the aspirations of these groups of children and their parents for inclusive play and reviews key research and data into the inclusivity of play in the Scottish context.

As previously discussed, inclusive play is interpreted differently by different people in different circumstances. This section will summarise information pertaining to any of the main interpretations outlined in the above section: whether barriers to access to play in general or barriers to different groups of children playing together, for instance. It is also important to note that much of the research touched upon discusses leisure and recreation rather than 'play' specifically and so a number of further definitional issues creep in.

As the Lester and Russell quote above makes clear, there is a seemingly endless typology of children and young people that may face barriers to inclusive play. In order to make this review manageable, the groups of children identified within the General Comment on Article 31 of the UNCRC as 'requiring particular attention to realize their rights' will be focused upon (UN, 2013, p.8). These groups of children are girls, children living in poverty, children with disabilities, children in institutions and children from indigenous and minority communities.¹

When categorising children in such a way, it is important to recognise, as Lester and Russell (2008, p.198) do, that 'none of these categories is either singly or statically experienced by children, and although some generalisation can be made, children's own experiences of these social categories vary according to context'.

Girls

There is much research on a UK-wide level which looks at the issue of gender and play. In a number of reports, concern is raised about the restrictions placed on the play of girl in comparison to boys and the segregated and gendered nature of play in

¹ The General Comments also mentions children in conflict, humanitarian and natural disasters; however, this group of children will not be touched upon given its irrelevancies to the Scottish context.

the service setting. Despite such a body of UK-wide research, no Scotland specific research was identified.

The General Comment on article 31 of the UNCRC (2013, p.8) states that:

'A combination of significant burdens of domestic responsibilities and sibling and family care, protective concerns on the part of parents, lack of appropriate facilities and cultural assumptions imposing limitations on the expectations and behaviour of girls can serve to diminish their opportunities to enjoy the rights provided for in article 31, particularly in the adolescent years. In addition, gender differentiation in what is considered girls' and boys' play and which is widely reinforced by parents, caregivers, the media and producers/manufacturers of games and toys serve to maintain traditional gender-role divisions in society'.

Lester and Russell (2010, p.33), while reviewing the literature on the topic, write that a pattern emerges whereby boys have more of a chance to play outside and to go further within their communities, while *'girls tend to have restrictions placed on their opportunities to play, for reasons associated with cultural expectations and safety concerns and, more indirectly, through girls' greater responsibility to perform domestic tasks'.*

A similar pattern emerges in the research on a UK level. Mackett et al (2007) report on the findings of fieldwork carried out in two schools in Hertfordshire using questionnaires, activity monitors, GPS monitors and diaries. It was found that a higher proportion of boys were allowed out without an adult than girls at all the age ranges studied.

Consistent with Mackett et al's (2007) findings, Brockman et al (2011), when studying active play on a UK wide level, found that:

'Girls were likely to report that their active play involved playing in gardens with family members. As boys tended to report playing further afield with friends from their local neighbourhood, this may suggest that girls spend more time in environments where adults are in close proximity than boys'.

Finally, Holland (2003, pp.15-16) laments the segregated and gendered nature of play in the service setting:

'our approach to gender relationships in early years settings over the past twenty years has served to harden rather than challenge stereotypical behaviour [...] after twenty to thirty years of concerted attempts to promote equal opportunities between boys and girls one can look around most nursery classrooms and see the same gendered grouping of play preferences: girls in the home corner, boys on the construction carpet'.

Despite this UK-wide research into gender patterns and play, similar Scotland specific research was not identified.

Children living in poverty

In February 2014, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2013, p.2) outlined that 21% of children in Scotland live in poverty (defined as residing in a household with an income, after taxes and housing costs, below 60% of the UK median for that year). Research indicates that disadvantaged children in Scotland face significant barriers to play when compared to those from less disadvantaged backgrounds. Such barriers include access to quality public parks and play facilities, to fields, open spaces and the natural environment as well as to play in the home.

The General Comment on Article 31 of the UNCRC (2013, p.8) states that:

'Lack of access to facilities, inability to afford the costs of participation, dangerous and neglected neighbourhoods, the necessity to work and a sense of powerlessness and marginalization all serve to exclude the poorest children from realizing the rights provided for in article 31'.

In 2008, Griggs and Walker conducted a review of the impact of poverty for individuals in industrialised OECD countries. In terms of play, the review concludes that 'disadvantaged communities are more likely to lack access to play outdoors, thus promoting inactivity and adding to the obesity problem, as well as reducing the opportunity to build peer relationships' (Griggs and Walker, 2008, p.11).

Turning specifically to Scottish context, Ellaway et al (2007) examine the location of outdoor play areas in relation to levels of deprivation in Glasgow. The results of the study indicated that the mean number of play areas were higher in deprived areas compared to more affluent ones. This finding seems to contradict the findings of Griggs and Walker aforementioned. However, it is important to keep in mind that: (a) this piece of research is specific to Glasgow and not the whole of Scotland; and (b), as the authors note:

'we cannot assess from these data whether or not the location of playgrounds in more deprived areas of Glasgow is enough to compensate for the probable relative lack of private gardens in poorer areas; nor does this analysis assess the quality and use of the playgrounds [...] the paradox here is that, although the supply of play areas may be greater in deprived areas, there may be issues with how they are perceived by the local community'.

Day and Wager (2010) explore some of the deficiencies of Ellaway et al's (2007) study by looking qualitatively at children and young people's experience of the local environment and how they spent their time in a city estate, an accessible town and a remote rural area. Overall, the findings of the study indicate that children from more and less deprived areas had different experiences of their environment.

Children in the more deprived areas experienced problems with 'disorder and broken facilities'. For example, 'litter and vandalism [...] reported as worse in the city estate and the more deprived part of the accessible town' (Day and Walker, 2010, p.516). Moreover, relational aspects tended to be more tense and problematic. Bullying, for instance, 'was spoken about a lot [and] featured more in the accounts of those living

in more deprived areas' (Day and Walker, 2010, p.516). Finally, children from more deprived areas tended to be more stigmatised – whether by adults or the police.

In 2012, ScotCen published a paper entitled 'What do we know about play', which outlines relevant findings from the Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) study – a major longitudinal survey which follows the lives of thousands of children across Scotland each year. The GUS findings outlined in this paper indicate that the majority of parents have access to a public park or playground, and this does not significantly differ between areas of deprivation. However, the findings also show that despite having access to a public park or playground, 17% of those in the most deprived areas did not make use of these facilities compared with 5% of those in the least deprived; thus suggesting higher levels of dissatisfaction with local outdoor play facilities in more deprived areas and underlining the findings of Day and Wager (2010) aforementioned.

In the home, the GUS findings suggest that children from less advantaged households looked at books, recited rhymes or sang songs, ran around or played outdoors, did some drawing or painting and played at recognising colours, shapes and numbers less than children from more advantaged backgrounds.

Finally, the paper turns to look briefly at data from the Scottish Household Survey which shows that 23% of households in the most deprived 15% of households have local access to an area of natural environment/wooded area, compared to 45% of those in rest of Scotland. Furthermore, 36% of households in the most deprived 15% of households have access to a field or open space, compared with 48% of households in the rest of Scotland.

Children with disabilities

There is much literature on the possible barriers to play and inclusive play that disabled children may face. It is frequently stated that barriers include a lack of venues that are close to home, lack of skilled staff, lack of transport options, cost issues, lack of accessibility and attitudes - whether the fears of parents or a lack of acceptance by peer groups. The complexity of aspiration for inclusive play is frequently noted in the research available: although it is argued that play should be open to all, a lot of parents and children still stress the importance of specialist provision.

The General Comment on Article 31 (2013, p.8) of the UNCRC states that:

'Multiple barriers impede access by children with disabilities to the rights provided for in article 31 including exclusion from [...] where play and recreation take place; isolation at the home; cultural attitudes and negative stereotypes which are hostile to and rejecting of children with disabilities; physical inaccessibility of, inter alia, public spaces, parks, playgrounds and equipment [...] policies that exclude them from sporting or cultural venues on the grounds of safety; communication barriers and failure to provide interpretation and adaptive technology; lack of accessible transport'.

In 2002, Contact a Family undertook a survey of around 1000 UK parents of disabled children and young people in order to gather their views of the barriers to play and leisure for disabled children and young people. The survey found that the families surveyed faced many barriers – both physical and attitudinal - to the use of many leisure services:

- '73% of parents decide not to go on outings because their child cannot cope with long queues.
- '68% said that they do not use leisure facilities because their family or child is made to feel uncomfortable.
- '55% of the parents said that they had to travel out of the local area to find accessible leisure facilities.
- '46% said that their budget limited their outings
- '25% said that they could not take their children to activities because of lack of transport' (Shelly, 2002, pp. 5-6).

In 2009, Contact a Family reported on the findings of a survey focusing upon the 'social, emotional and practical experiences of raising a child with a disability'. It was found that:

'Dissatisfaction with mainstream play and leisure opportunities centres around lack of accessibility, having to travel long distances to find something suitable, lack of facilities or changing rooms, lack of disability training among staff and disability awareness among other members of the public, lack of suitable transport to facilities and not having enough money to take part in recreational activities'.

From the Scottish context in particular, The Glasgow Council For The Voluntary Sector (GCVS) carried out a number of surveys and focus groups with families with disabled children and/or special educational needs. The research found that the main reason given by parents for their child spontaneously 'going out to play' is attitudinal – a lack of acceptance by their peer group. In staffed play venues, these problems of acceptance can be overcome, however, parents cited the attitudes of reception staff and other parents as further barriers in these settings.

The barriers to accessing recreational venues in general were cited as organised transport (65%), the need for venues to be close to home (52%) or the need for good transport links (41%), the need for specialist trainers (46%) and the need for personal care and assistance. Furthermore, around 48% of respondents identified hidden barriers often faced, including cost implications, parent's work, negative attitudes, other family needs and the motivation/ behaviour of the child.

In 2011, the Long Term Conditions Alliance Scotland commissioned a survey of children and young people (aged 5-18 years) who are disabled and/or living with long-term conditions to determine how far and in what ways they are supported to enjoy a good quality of life and childhood/adolescence. This survey found that the barriers that disabled children faced when accessing play opportunities '*the effect of their impairment, lack of facilities, access issues and demographic factors such as location*'.

Finally, a number of studies have looked at the aspirations of disabled children and their parents in relation to inclusive play. Mason et al (2008) report the results of a literature review on the topic of opportunities for fun and friendship for disabled children and young people. Part of this review looked at aspirations towards targeted or mainstream provision, where it was found that:

'The delivery of segregated or inclusive provision is a complex area. Both segregated and inclusive provision presents opportunities, with children and young people expressing a diverse set of views as to their preferred option and the needs of the child, young person and family will directly affect their preferences' (Mason et al, 2008, p.36).

Action for Leisure and Contact a Family (2003), in their survey of access to leisure in the West Midlands of England, for instance, identify preferences for 'special' and 'mainstream' provision as a contentious issue amongst parents of disabled children. Although the majority of parents and children in their study thought that inclusive provision was important, a substantial minority specify a preference for specialist provision.

Mason et al argue that other consultations confirm these findings: 'in some cases parents feel their child cannot cope with the pressures of inclusion in the mainstream [...] for others previous negative experiences has meant that they do not feel confident that their child will ever be safe or accepted in the mainstream' (2008, p.37).

In the Scottish Context specifically, and in terms of organised play activities, the GCVS found that 94% of the parents surveyed thought that activities should be accessible to all; however, 90% of these same parents also thought that special programmes were necessary.

Children in institutions:

The General Comment on Article 31 of the UNCRC (2013, p.9) states that:

'many children spend all or part of their childhood in institutions, including, inter alia, residential homes and schools, hospitals, detention centres, remand homes and refugee centres, where opportunities for play [...] may be limited or denied'.

No empirical research into the state of play and/or inclusive play for children in hospital, detention centres, remand homes or refugee centres was identified; however, relevant literature on the topic of children in public care in Scotland was identified. This literature raises concerns about a culture of risk aversion which is threatening this group of children and young people's ability to play outdoors.

The National Children's Bureau (2005) states that:

Although play comes naturally to children and young people, they need stimulation, resources and sometimes encouragement to develop their play. Looked after children and young people may not have had the opportunity to

play due to abuse or neglect in their past, difficult and damaging relationships with parents or carers, illness or disability.

In a Scotland specific context, The Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People invited The Scottish Institute for Residential Care to undertake a piece of research in relation to outdoor play and children in residential care following reports from children and staff about the apparently restrictive impact of health and safety policies and procedures on the lives of these children (McGuinness et al, 2007).

Interviews were conducted with both staff and children in a number of facilities in order to 'describe and explain the barriers to, and opportunities for, outdoor play and recreation that exist in residential child care services' (McGuinness et al, 2007, p.6). Here it was found that although staff seemed to recognise the importance of providing opportunities for young people to be involved in outdoor play, they reported 'a general culture of caution and risk aversion' which challenged their abilities to deliver these opportunities effectively (McGuinness, 2007, p.46). This culture of caution and risk aversion ranged from organisational rules which were said to be over-protective, drawing negative attention and further stigmatising the children and young people, to the rigid and frequent requirement to carry out risk assessments before undertaking any such outdoor play activity.

Children from indigenous and minority communities

Research into play, inclusive play and minority communities tended to be either conducted in England or on a UK-wide basis. This body of research expresses concerns about the barriers faced by young Asian women in accessing play, the segregated nature of play between differing communities and access to play for children of gypsy and traveller communities. While there was some research into the play of gypsy and traveller communities in Scotland – stressing the many barriers that this group of children face in accessing quality play opportunities - on the whole the issue of play and minority communities was an extremely under researched area.

The general comment on Article 31 of the UNCRC (2013, p.9) states that:

'Ethnic, religious, racial or caste discrimination can serve to exclude children from realizing their rights under article 31. Hostility, assimilation policies, rejection, violence and discrimination may result in barriers to enjoyment by indigenous and minority children of their own cultural practices, rituals and celebrations, as well as to their participation in sports, games, cultural activities, play and recreation alongside other children'

Cole-Hamilton et al (2002, p.36) in their review of the literature on play, for instance, concede that 'A number of studies focused on ethnic minority groups, indicating that their use of public space and their use of play and recreational facilities is more restricted than for other groups'. The authors cite the work of Jones (1998) and Kapasi (2001) which both outline findings that young Asian women in England experience considerable restrictions on their access to public recreation and play facilities due to fear of unaccompanied travel, rape and attack.

Lester and Russell (2008) cite a further two English studies: Kapasi's (2002) study of children in London, which found that the majority of users of play services were mainly white and black British children, with few Asian children participating despite a large Asian population in the area; and Cregan et al's (2004) evaluation of 10 Children's Fund projects in Tower Hamlets which outlines that while some play projects were used exclusively by Bengali or Somali children, other were more mixed – although sometimes with children from different groups playing in 'parallel' rather than together. Lester and Russell (2008, p.205) also argue that 'one cultural group that is often omitted from discussions on racism are the roma Gypsy and Traveller communities'.

In 2009, Cemlyn et al carried out a review of the evidence around the inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities in the UK. The authors note that the children of such communities are frequently deprived of play opportunities:

'There is a lack of safe play facilities on roadside sites and indeed, they can be exposed to extreme danger from passing traffic or from pollutants, as well as from vigilante attack [...] Public sites can also be situated in dangerous environments close to major roads or motorways, and with minimal or non-existent facilities for children [...] Such sites are often remote from public provision of playgrounds or other facilities, and public transport can be almost non-existent'. (Cemlyn et al, 2009, p.112).

It is noted that Gypsy and Traveller communities are often subject to eviction from where they live, and for the communities open to this threat the situation is worse:

'The disruption, instability, stress and highly problematic condition in which families have to live, not only drastically restrict play [...] but they prevent any consistent early years service being provided' (Cemlyn et al, 2009, p.112).

While most of this research into play and minority communities was either specifically English or UK-wide in focus, the only Scotland specific research that was identified was concerned with gypsy and traveller communities.

In 2013, The Scottish Government's Equal Opportunities Committee published a report after MSPs visited traveller sites in Edinburgh, Dalkeith, Perth, Pitlochry, Oban and Lochgilphead. In terms of play facilities, it was found that in one site a lack of public transport meant that the only way for non-driving families in the community to access play facilities was a two mile walk along a muddy, unlit path. Another site was noted for 'prowers in the woods which provided the only place for children to play' (The Scottish Parliament, 2013).

Conclusions

During this chapter, the empirical research into play and inclusive play for a number of groups of children identified by the UN as requiring 'special attention in order to realise their rights under article 31' has been reviewed. The chapter aimed to identify the possible barriers to inclusion faced by these groups and to review the key research and data into the inclusivity of play in the Scottish context. Throughout, it was highlighted that:

- There has been much research looking at the issue of gender and play on a UK-wide level. In a number of reports, concern is raised about the restrictions placed on the play of girls in comparison to boys and the segregated and gendered nature of play in the service setting. Despite such a body of research on a UK level, no Scotland specific research was identified.
- Children living in disadvantage in Scotland face significant barriers to play when compared to those from less disadvantaged backgrounds. Such barriers include access to quality public parks and play facilities, access to fields, open spaces and the natural environment as well as access to play in the home.
- Disabled children and young people face barriers to play and inclusive play because of a lack of venues that are close to home; lack of skilled staff; lack of transport options; cost issues; lack of accessibility; and because of various attitudinal issues, whether the fears of parents or a lack of acceptance by peer groups. Moreover, the complexity of aspirations for inclusive play is frequently noted in the research available: although it is argued that play should be open to all, a lot of parents and children still stress the importance of specialist provision.
- No empirical research into the state of play and/or inclusive play for children in hospital, detention centres, remand homes or refugee centres was identified; however, relevant literature on the topic of children in public care in Scotland was. This literature raises concerns about a culture of risk aversion which is threatening this group of children and young people's ability to play outdoors.
- Research into play, inclusive play and minority communities tended to be either conducted in England or on a UK-wide basis. This body of research expresses concerns about the barriers faced by young Asian women in accessing play, the segregated nature of play between differing communities and access to play for children of gypsy and traveller communities. While there was some research into the play of gypsy and traveller communities in Scotland – stressing the many barriers that this group of children face in accessing quality play opportunities - on the whole the issue of play and minority communities is an extremely under researched area.

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