



# Scotland's Play Strategy

Valuing play, every day

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## Playing with quality and equality: a review of inclusive play in Scotland

### Action 9.6: Positive Support for Play

The Play Strategy Implementation Group  
March 2015



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The Play Strategy Implementation Group is led by the Scottish Government and made up of representatives of statutory bodies, local authorities, third sector organisations and funders. The PSIG works together to support and monitor the implementation of the Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0043/00437132.pdf>

The full report and accompanying case studies can be found at: [www.gov.scot/play-strategy](http://www.gov.scot/play-strategy)

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The views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and do not necessarily represent those of the Scottish Government or Scottish Ministers.

**March 2015**



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# Foreword

The importance of the right to play is widely acknowledged by the international community, but it often fails to gain the prominence that it deserves. One of the things that I hear about most often from disabled children and young people and their families and carers is the lack of access to social, leisure and recreational opportunities and the negative impact that this has on their daily lives. This report echoes those experiences and in it we hear about the effects of social exclusion on disabled and disadvantaged children and young people leading to feelings of loneliness or alienation.

This review is a significant step towards both identifying where the barriers are to accessing play and beginning to address them in a meaningful way. It highlights the value of “low-key, every day actions” that make a difference. At a time when financial pressures are high it is important to ensure that the conversation to improve access to inclusive play does not solely focus on resources—although we must also work to properly resource the delivery of services—but that we look at small changes in order to make a larger impact.

It gives clear recommendations to help Scottish Government, local authorities and those involved in community planning rise to the challenge of ensuring equal access to inclusive play services across Scotland. We must continue the work to raise awareness of the way in which play and recreation is essential to the overall health and wellbeing of children to promote the development of creativity, imagination, self-confidence, self-efficacy and physical, social, cognitive and emotional strength and skills.<sup>1</sup>

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) clearly sets out the right of all children to be able to freely to take part in leisure and play, cultural life and the arts and to rest and relaxation.

And we must not forget that it is our duty under Article 12 of the UNCRC, to listen to what children and young people tell us about matters that affect them, and to take their views into account. Children and young people are telling us they are serious about play and we need to get serious along with them.

We must ensure that play opportunities are of the *quality* that this reports talks of, by building confidence and raising awareness around the value of play and giving practitioners the time they need to develop their skills; whilst ensuring that there is that crucial *equality* in play opportunities that are accessible to all children and young people.

**Tam Baillie, Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People**  
January 2015



<sup>1</sup> General Comment No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (art 31), United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child

# Executive Summary

## Playing with quality and equality: a review of inclusive play in Scotland

Play Strategy Action Plan - Action 9.6: A Review of inclusive play in Scotland to identify context, current practices, barriers and aspirations and to build the knowledge base which will inform implementation of the Play Strategy for all children

### Introduction

The Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (Scottish Government, 2013) draws particular attention to the play rights of disabled children and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The principle of inclusion runs as a thread throughout the Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan. It is well documented however that there are children and young people, individually or in groups, who are excluded or hindered from participating fully in play due to physical, social or cultural circumstances and it is with these children and young people in mind that the Inclusive Play Review was undertaken.

### Emergent Themes

In the course of the survey and consultations, a number of themes began to emerge. These themes were examined more closely in the events that were held with children, young people and adults in different parts of the country.

The themes themselves interlink. A connected approach to quality and equality in play would attempt to reduce the negative factors which hold back high quality play opportunities while really trying to build on positive practice and examples which exist.

It was continually emphasised that quality matters.

#### Summary of themes that emerged in the course of the review

Disabled and disadvantaged children and young people in Scotland face **multiple barriers** to being able to play at home, at nursery, school, early learning and childcare and in the community

Significantly more attention should be given to **coordination** across services and geographic areas to achieve inclusive opportunities

**Low-key, every day actions** make a big difference

The **time** available to practitioners is a significant factor in their ability to put into practice inclusive actions and approaches

The quality of **physical environments** makes a hugely significant difference to the quality of children and young people's experience and opportunities for play

The application (and misapplication) of **rules and regulations** negatively impacts on the quality opportunities for play



Building **confidence and awareness** around the value of play would support inclusive play opportunities for all children.

Addressing a gap in **training and ongoing support** for practitioners and professionals in a number of disciplines would help to ensure all our children and young people have the play opportunities to which they have a right.

## Review Process and Methodology

A Review of Literature, *Inclusive play in Scotland: context, concepts and current research*, Scottish Government (2015), established the existing evidence available as a basis for the Review as a whole. As well as the Literature Review, some key ideas had already been established in the Play Strategy Action Plan which helped to provide a common language and understanding on which to base the review.

The Review Team went on to gather information in five ways: inviting submission of existing information, online surveys for adults and for children and young people, interviews and conversations to consult on the topic, consultation packs provided to children's groups, and four review events to test preliminary findings.

### Summary of participation in the review

Online survey:

- There were 594 respondents to the adults' survey, with respondents from every local authority area in Scotland.
- There were 79 respondents to the children and young people's survey, with respondents from 19 of Scotland's 32 local authority areas

Direct consultations were carried out with 12 groups and 16 individuals

Consultation packs: 19 packs were returned, involving 161 children and young people

Events: 66 children, young people and adults participated

## Working Definitions: a Revised Set of Propositions

The Review of Literature indicated that Inclusive Play – although a term commonly used - is a difficult concept to define and has been interpreted differently by different people in different contexts. A set of Working Definitions was presented for scrutiny within the review. They received an extremely high level of agreement as descriptions or narratives of inclusive opportunities in play however the idea of 'inclusive play' as a discrete concept remained problematic.

As a result, the Review proposes that the more concrete concepts of quality and equality should be brought to the fore.

Further, provision for play, play environments and support to play opportunities in whatever form (infrastructure, training, advice, campaigns, service provision, policies) should locate non-discrimination, equality of opportunity and participation as standing principles in every action, programme or measure.

## Key findings

The review considered play in the four domains of the Play Strategy from the perspectives of children and young people, parents and carers, professionals and other interested individuals.

Key findings from across the review were summarised in one of the themes that emerged:

**Disabled and disadvantaged children and young people in Scotland face multiple barriers to being able to play at home, at nursery, school, early learning and childcare and in the community, as part of their everyday lives. Many of these barriers are faced by children and young people across the board and are amplified by the intersections between poverty, disadvantage, disability and environment.**

The review began from a position that very many children and young people in Scotland face barriers to play. Given the extent of responses to the review and depth of feeling expressed it is appropriate to re-state that this is indeed the current situation for children and young people in Scotland.

The barriers faced by many children and young people impact on their rights in relation to health and wellbeing, optimum development, inclusion in society and their right to enjoy their childhood. Positive play experiences are now well understood to have long term benefits and to nourish us as adults. The impact of negative experiences – in our local neighbourhoods, communities, schools – also remains with us and can provoke powerful memories and feelings which impact on the way we see ourselves. Both being left out and being ‘forced’ to join in seem to have a lingering negative impact when recalled by young people we spoke to.

**“It's very lonely and alienating seeing all the 'mainstream' kids playing out or taking part in organised activities when your own child can't.”**

**“...for children to play freely is still a long way off without them feeling continuously vulnerable.”**

The complexity of feelings around inclusion in provision and opportunities for play was highlighted in the Literature Review. It indicated that while the large majority of parents (of disabled children) thought that activities should be accessible to all, almost as many of the same parents also thought that special programmes were necessary.

This situation was illustrated by observations made by participants in the review.

**“The group provides separate services which are used as a stepping stone and practice for entering mainstream (if appropriate). Most of the children say that they have no friends and have experienced bullying. Most have tried mainstream groups and it hasn't worked. They feel safe at the group.”**

Throughout the review this tension has been apparent but positive examples were also offered.

**“Through our outreach work we discovered a gap in facilities for children and young people with autism and Asperger’s... We then sought funding allowing us to employ qualified staff to run an evening club to suit the age and needs of the individual children, through attending this club parents now feel more confident for them to join various sessions within our park and indoor facility.”**

It is acknowledged that this can be a complicated topic and since everyone is different no one service, opportunity or style of play provision can meet the needs of every individual. However, there are many positive examples of inclusion in practice which work really well. The degrees of complexity involved should not mask the underlying principles of non-discrimination, equality of opportunity and participation, so that children and young people report feeling safe and welcome in mainstream provision rather than the opposite.

## This is the vision

**“We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. 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.”** *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013) Scottish Government.*

### In order to achieve this, it would help if:

- In every Local Authority/Community Planning Partnership area Play Policies, Strategies and accompanying Action Plans were developed which include explicit aims, objectives and actions to make tangible progress towards inclusive practices, programmes and environments.
- Further and long term investment was made in capacity building models of support to play providers in order to include disabled children and young people.
- Indicators for children and young people’s play rights under Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child were fully taken into account in the new duties to report on progress on children’s rights and wellbeing included parts 1 and 3 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- There was a large scale, properly resourced campaign undertaken to promote the importance of play to parents and carers, and to those who work with them (taking into account of quality and equality in play, and therefore the play rights of disabled children and young people).
- A central Online Hub of information was developed to support inclusive practice in relation to play and to provide information about specific skills, knowledge and practices which can be utilised in mainstream, inclusive children’s settings. This should be easily accessible to all those who work for or with children with input from children and young people, third sector play and disability organisations.
- Equality training was undertaken by all the members of school communities – adults, children and young people.
- A strong high-level lead was given by the Scottish Government and Community Planning Partnerships to implementing the Risk-Benefit Assessment approach to play in all settings in which children spend time, encompassing clear support for the Risk-Benefit approach to disabled children’s play opportunities.
- A positive lead was given by the Play Strategy Implementation Group to development of a network of “play champions” underpinned by the principles set out in the Play Strategy for Scotland and the UN Convention article 31, with explicit reference to progress on inclusion – non-discrimination, equality of opportunity, participation – as integral to the role.
- Established play principles and the principles of Universal Design (2 ) were promoted and implemented when creating spaces to play.
- The Place Standard was taken into account in reporting on the new duties to report on progress on children’s rights and wellbeing included parts 1 and 3 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- A set of “Test Questions” was developed and introduced for play programmes, practice and environments which encourage progressive action and accountability on quality and equality.

<sup>2</sup> See UN General Comment no. 17: The term "universal design" was coined by Ronald Mace to describe the concept of designing all products and the built environment to be aesthetic and usable to the greatest extent possible by everyone, regardless of their age, ability or status in life; see also art. 4, para. 1 (f) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

# 1. Introduction

**“We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. 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.”** *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013)*  
Scottish Government.

In 2013, the Scottish Government published the ***Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan*** in order to support implementation of its Vision for play. A review of ‘Inclusive Play’ was quickly highlighted as a priority within the Plan underpinning as it does the principles set out in the Plan.

**Principles:** In the home, at nursery and school and in every community:

- We should value all children and young people
- We should enable all children and young people to realise their right to play
- All children and young people should have space and time to play (*The Sufficiency Principle*)

The Play Strategy draws particular attention to the play rights of disabled children and those from disadvantaged backgrounds; the principle of inclusion runs as a thread throughout the Strategy and Plan. It is well documented however that there are children and young people, individually or in groups, who are excluded or hindered from participating fully in play due to physical, social or cultural circumstances and it is with these children and young people in mind that the Inclusive Play Review was undertaken.

The purpose of the review, commissioned in July 2014, was to investigate ‘inclusive play’ in Scotland in order to identify context, current practices, barriers and aspirations. The review was asked to set out recommendations and the stated intention is for the findings to inform implementation of the Play Strategy more broadly.

The **National Play Strategy Vision** and **Action Plan** place play within four ‘domains’:

- In the home
- At nursery and school
- In the community
- Positive support and environment

The scope of each domain is suggested in the desired outcomes for each, which are that:

- Our **homes and family environments** are places where all children and young people enjoy plentiful play opportunities, appropriate to their age, stage, needs and preferences.
- All children and young people enjoy high quality play opportunities, particularly outdoor free play in stimulating spaces with access to nature, on a daily basis in **school, nursery and early learning and childcare**.

- All children have **sufficient time and space** (physical and social) for playing within their community and have contact with nature in their everyday lives. Play is valued, encouraged and supported in communities, as are **providers of community play such as out of school care, playgroups, therapeutic and specialist settings and community champions of play**
- Scotland provides a positive environment for play through: a professional workforce, strong and visionary leadership, a well-resourced third sector and infrastructure, and a supportive and informed media.

*Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan (2013) Scottish Government*

While recognising that children's experience of play in these domains overlaps and interlinks, the domains structure and the outcomes helped to shape the implementation of the review.

The review was carried out by Theresa Casey Consultancy and Play First (Scotland) Ltd over July, August and September 2014 with support from Grefintec for the survey. The Literature Review which preceded it was carried out by the Scottish Government, in May and June 2014. The Review was overseen by Capability Scotland on behalf of the Play Strategy Implementation Group (PSIG).

## 2. Review Process & Methodology

### Literature Review

The Review of Literature, *Inclusive play in Scotland: context, concepts and current research*, (Scottish Government, 2015) established the existing evidence base. The Executive Summary can be found in Appendix 1.

The Literature Review first considered definitional issues surrounding the concepts of play and inclusive play. It was found that play, because of its complex and varied nature, is commonly defined in reference to play as a process: an activity that is freely chosen, intrinsically motivated and distinguished by means and not ends. While there were a number of interlocking concepts in the ways in which 'inclusive play' was described, it was found that there were also a number of disparities resulting in different types of services being described as 'inclusive'. The author proposed that in order to move forward with primary research in this field, a succinct definition of inclusive play needed to be decided upon. This should draw upon the body of research discussed in the Literature Review and directly address possible misinterpretations of that definition by taking a stance on the commonly conflicting notions of inclusive play.

The question of definitions was tackled in the review with the development of 'Working Definitions' for each of the four domains of the Play Strategy. Whether it is possible or even desirable to arrive at a definition was an emergent theme of the review, echoing the 'troublesome' aspect of researching play as described in the Literature Review. This resulted in an attempt at an overarching concept encapsulated in Quality and Equality, which was elaborated upon in relation to the four domains. This aimed to articulate the aspirations for play opportunities which are inclusive in nature, more fully than could be captured in a simple sentence. (See Section 3 below)

The Literature Review went on to review the empirical research into 'inclusive play' for a number of groups of children identified by the United Nations as requiring 'special attention in order to realise their rights under article 31 (*General Comment no. 17 on the right of the child to rest leisure, play, cultural life and the arts. (2013) UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*). It concentrated therefore upon girls, children living in poverty, disabled children, children in institutions and children from minority communities. It aimed to identify the possible barriers to inclusion in play faced by these groups and to review the key research and data into the inclusivity of play in the Scottish context.

The implications of these findings were discussed at the first meeting of the Inclusive Play Review Reference Group. The Reference Group was made up of members of the Play Strategy Implementation Group (PSIG), for Scotland's Disabled Children (fSDC) and Parenting Across Scotland (PAS) and met at three points in the project.

### Review process

As well as the Literature Review, some key ideas and themes had already been established in the Play Strategy Action Plan. These included descriptions of what was meant by various terms and desired outcomes for the four domains of the play strategy. These helped to

provide a common language and understanding on which to base the review. For the purposes of the review, particularly useful were the descriptions of:

- What do we mean by play?
- What do we mean by all children?
- What do we mean by high quality play opportunities?

## What do we mean by play?

Children play in lots of different places and circumstances. Play can happen indoors or outdoors, with or without the oversight of adults, in everyday spaces, in environments designed for play and in places chosen by children and young people.

Playing is described as having characteristics of fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity (that is it doesn't need an end result or 'product').

Play theorists describe play as children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. This means it isn't performed for a particular goal set by someone else or for a reward. There is much agreement that play is a fundamental part of healthy development.

## What do we mean by all children?

Our Vision for play is for all our children and young people in Scotland. 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. Pro-active measures are needed to remove the barriers and promote accessibility to, and availability of, inclusive opportunities to participate.

## What do we mean by high quality play opportunities?

'High quality play opportunities' will look and feel different in different circumstances and locations. However, in terms of the provision of play opportunities and environments, in general we might expect 'high quality opportunities' to happen when:

- the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are put into practice
- the environment provides stimulus for play to flourish
- if adults are involved, they work to established ethical and professional standards.

Children do have 'high quality' play experiences outwith the view of adults and in circumstances and locations that were not intended for play.

*Play Strategy: Our Action Plan (2013) Scottish Government*

For full text see: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/10/9424>

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## Gathering information

The Review Team gathered information in five ways:

- **Existing information** was invited in the form of recent surveys, local consultations or reports.
- **Online surveys** for adults and for children and young people were launched on the 15th July 2014, closing at midnight on the 27th August 2014. The children and young people's survey allowed respondents to answer either of a parallel set of questions – the first was suitable for children and young people describing their activities as play or playing. The second was generally more suitable for older children and used terms such as free time and leisure and was informed by the Working Definition for Play for Older Children and Young People. (See Appendix 2). The surveys were delivered through SurveyMonkey. There were 79 responses to the children and young people's survey and 594 to the adults' survey (12 of which were responses from a child or young person).
- **Interviews and conversations** took place individually and in groups, in person and by email and phone to consult on the topic.
- **Consultation packs** were made available to children's groups so that they could organise their own consultations using the review questions. The packs included guidance, questions, A3-sized sketchbooks and visual 'icons' for the domains of the play strategy. In total nineteen packs were returned.
- **Review events:** four events were held towards the end of the review period to discuss preliminary findings and to test emerging themes and conclusions. These were held in:
  - **Dundee** with a focus on the Play Sector
  - **Glasgow** with a focus on Public Space, the Built Environment and Inclusive Play
  - **Dingwall** with a multi-disciplinary focus (e.g. health, community, planning, play, care etc.) in Highland area/rural communities
  - **Inzievar Primary School, Oakley, Fife**, with Primary 5 pupils who had been already been involved in the consultation process.

## Summary of participation in the review

### Survey:

- There were 594 respondents to the adults' survey, with respondents from every local authority area in Scotland.
- There were 79 respondents to the children and young people's survey, with respondents from 19 of Scotland's 32 local authority areas

Direct consultations were carried out with 12 Groups and 16 Individuals

Consultation packs were returned from 10 organisations or groups (a total of 19 packs), involving 161 children and young people

Review events involved 66 children, young people and adults

The Review Reference Group was drawn from members of the Play Strategy Implementation Group, for Scotland's Disabled Children (fSDC) and Parenting Across Scotland.

In order to monitor and adjust if necessary to achieve acceptable level of reach in the review, data was recorded to indicate: locations of participants as Dense Urban, Urban, Rural or Remote Rural; the age groups with which participants were most concerned; and the groups of children and young people with whom the participants were most concerned.

The Review of Inclusive Play in Scotland was not conceived of as an audit rather as an opportunity to gather information and evidence of the current context from a number of different perspectives. The review took place largely over the summer holiday period in Scotland which presented some challenges in reaching children, families and professionals. Pro-active strategies to reach out as widely as possible were used and there was a high degree of support from a number of organisations and individuals in publicising and participating in the review. Where strong evidence was already available, as suggested in the Literature Review, the review team tried to avoid duplicating this so as to concentrate on investigating areas about which less is known.

### 3. Working Definitions – a revised set of propositions

The *Review of Literature* indicated that Inclusive Play – although a term commonly used - is a difficult concept to define and has been interpreted differently by different people in different contexts. In addition, much of the research has a focus upon what the concept might mean within a service setting and to service providers, while views from outwith service settings and the views of children and young people on the matter are largely missing.

Despite, the basis provided by descriptions of key ideas in the *Play Strategy Action Plan*, and bearing in mind the findings of the *Literature Review*, it was identified early on that Working Definitions of 'Inclusive Play' should be developed. Without these, it was considered difficult to gather views based on a shared understanding.

The first set of Working Definitions was presented for scrutiny within the adults' online survey, re-examined in the light of the consultations and probed further in the events. There was an extremely high level of agreement with the definitions as descriptions or narratives of inclusive opportunities in play (88 % - 94% of respondents 'broadly' agreed with each, fewer than 4% in each disagreed) however the idea of 'inclusive play' as a discrete concept remained problematic.

To provide a small flavour of discussions:

- When disabled children and young people were asked what they liked to play and who they liked to play with – as one might expect – they wanted the same as other children wanted. When questions were asked about barriers to play, the responses were the same (but amplified) as those that we have come to anticipate asking about play generally. When asking about environments for play the problems and dissatisfaction echoed those problems which are voiced repeatedly about environments for children and communities generally.
- Attempting to describe inclusive play as something that was 'for' particular groups of children, quickly caused the concept to become unstuck. It put some children – as individuals or groups – into the category of 'other'.
- It was strongly suggesting that to identify inclusive play as something different from, or in addition to, good quality play opportunities is unhelpful.

As a result, the Review proposes that the more concrete concepts of quality and equality should be brought to the fore.

Further, it was proposed that provision for play, play environments and support to play opportunities in whatever form (infrastructure, training, advice, campaigns, service provision, policies) should locate non-discrimination, equality of opportunity and participation as standing principles in every action, programme or measure.

As a result, the working definitions on inclusive play were revised to re-align with this view and are presented as narrative descriptions in each of the Play Strategy domains



## Equality and quality in play

<p><b>Play opportunities in the home and family environment</b></p> <p>Within families, children’s play needs and preferences vary and also change over time. Parents and carers own experience of play varies enormously and their attitude to play is influenced by many factors.</p> <p>In this context the right to play means that each child is entitled to be able to play in their own way and, if required, with the type and level of support which enables this to happen. Support may be from within or outwith the family. Playing as fully as possible supports children’s wellbeing and development. The immediate physical environment (in homes, gardens and common areas) need to be child-friendly and play-friendly in order that children can play fully and freely.</p> <p>Children and families are entitled to be able to make choices about where they play together without facing discriminatory or disabling barriers, whether these are attitudinal, social, physical or organisational.</p> <p><b>“Our homes and family environments should be places where all children and young people enjoy plentiful play opportunities, indoors and out, appropriate to their age, stage, ability and preferences.”</b>  <i>Play Strategy Action Plan (2013) Scottish Government.</i></p>	<p><b>Play in school, nursery and early learning and childcare</b></p> <p>Play in school, nursery and early learning and childcare is about all children and young people experiencing high quality play opportunities on a daily basis. This encompasses UNCRC principles, play environments and standards of adult practice.</p> <p>Each setting has a responsibility to assess and take action to remove discriminatory or disabling barriers which hinder access to play and full participation, with particular attention paid to disabled or disadvantaged children. Each setting’s programmes and practices should be designed and resourced with an understanding that among the children in the community of the setting, play needs, preferences and need for support both vary between individuals and change over time.</p> <p><b>“All children and young people should enjoy high quality play opportunities, particularly outdoor free play in stimulating spaces with access to nature, on a daily basis in school, nursery and early learning and childcare. “</b>  <i>Play Strategy Action Plan (2013) Scottish Government.</i></p>
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(cont)

<h2>Play in the Community</h2> <p>All children and young people should be able to play safely in their community without meeting barriers such as bullying, sectarianism or discrimination on grounds of impairment, culture or background. Where these problems exist proactive measures should be taken to tackle them. Careful consideration should be given to planning and designing public spaces and play provision (including principles of Access for All and Universal Design) so that all children and young people can safely and freely use them for play.</p> <p><b>“All children should have sufficient time and space (physical and social) for playing within their community and have contact with nature in their everyday lives.”</b></p> <p><i>Play Strategy Action Plan (2013) Scottish Government.</i></p>	<h2>Play in relation to Positive Support for Play</h2> <p>This Play Strategy domain is broad and encompasses providing a positive environment for play through: a professional workforce, strong and visionary leadership, a well-resourced third sector and infrastructure and a supportive and informed media.</p> <p>The UN General Comment on article 31 provides the guidance on implementation of play rights to government and all those working for or with children, and those whose work impacts on children’s play</p> <p>All programmes and actions should be driven by the underpinning principles of equality, non-discrimination and participation and the need to respect, protect and fulfil children’s right to play.</p>
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Examples of barriers to inclusive opportunities include:

- the physical environment being inaccessible or unwelcoming due to poor design, uneven surfaces, hazards created by poor traffic management etc.;
- social factors such as racism, gender stereotyping, poverty, discriminatory attitudes towards disabled people;
- organisational and institutional barriers come in the form of inflexible rules, procedures and practices which exclude particular children and young people even if unintentionally, such as upper age limits which exclude children who might still benefit;
- culturally ingrained attitudes such as low expectations for, or aspirations of, particular groups or stereotyping of girls and boys.

## 4. Survey Respondents

Following the Literature Review, the online survey began to explore barriers and aspirations and to find out about examples of things that work well - approaches, tools, practice and strategies.

In a period of six weeks there were 594 responses to the survey for adults with respondents from every local authority area in Scotland, and 79 to the survey designed for children and young people, with respondents from 19 of Scotland's 32 local authority areas. The following graphs illustrate the make-up of respondents.

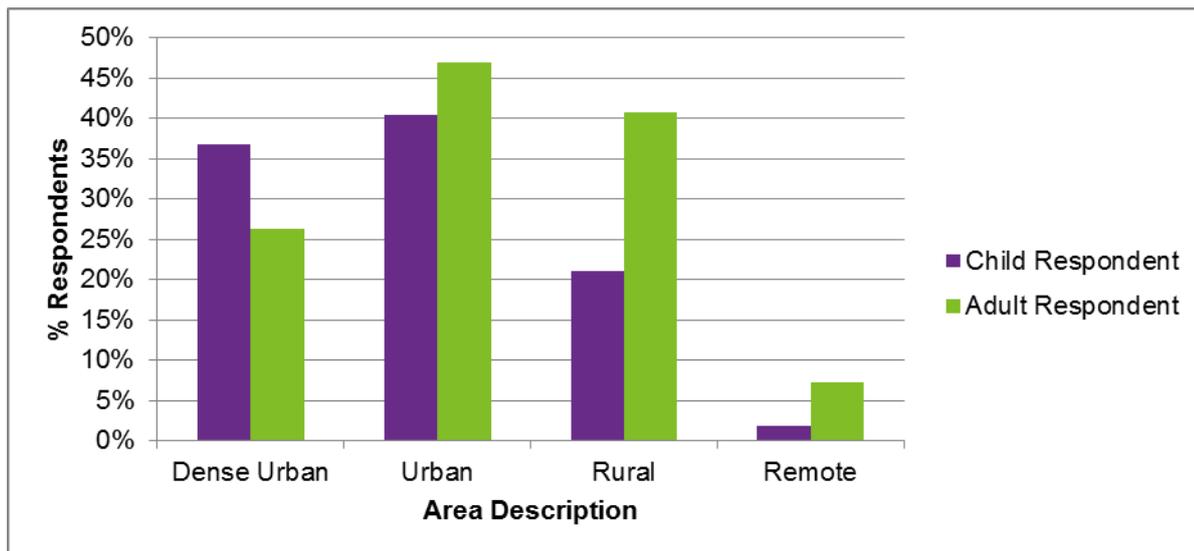


Figure 1 Location of survey respondents

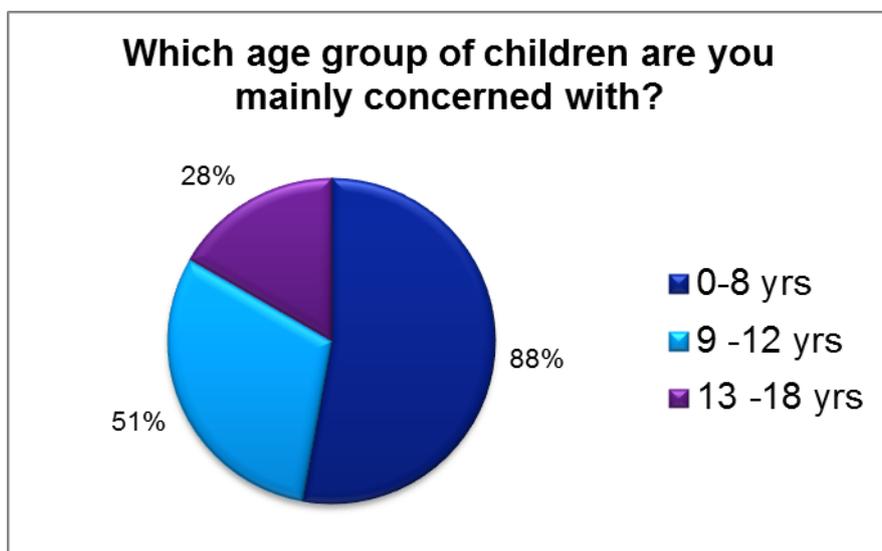


Figure 2 Adults' survey

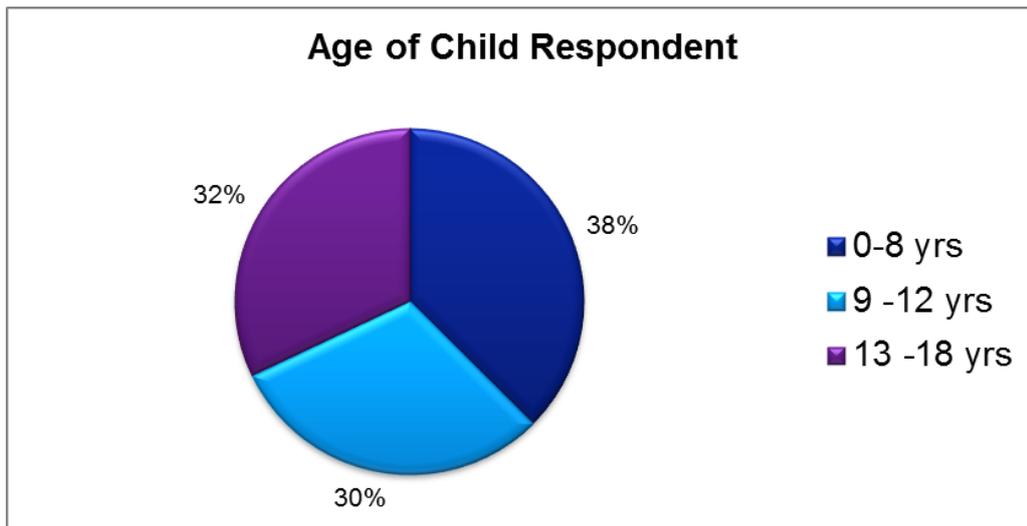


Figure 3 Children and young people's survey

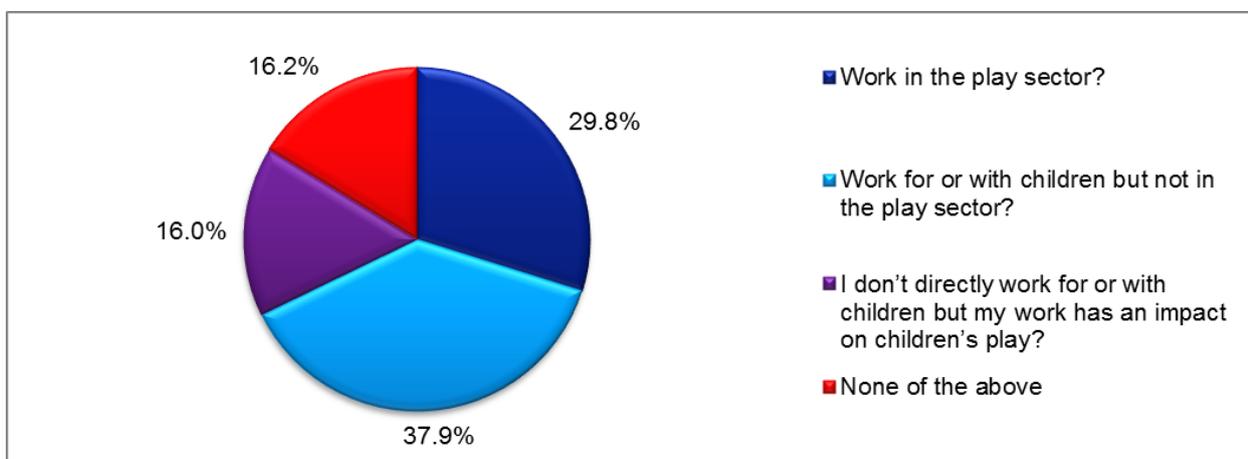


Figure 4 Adults' survey respondents: area of work

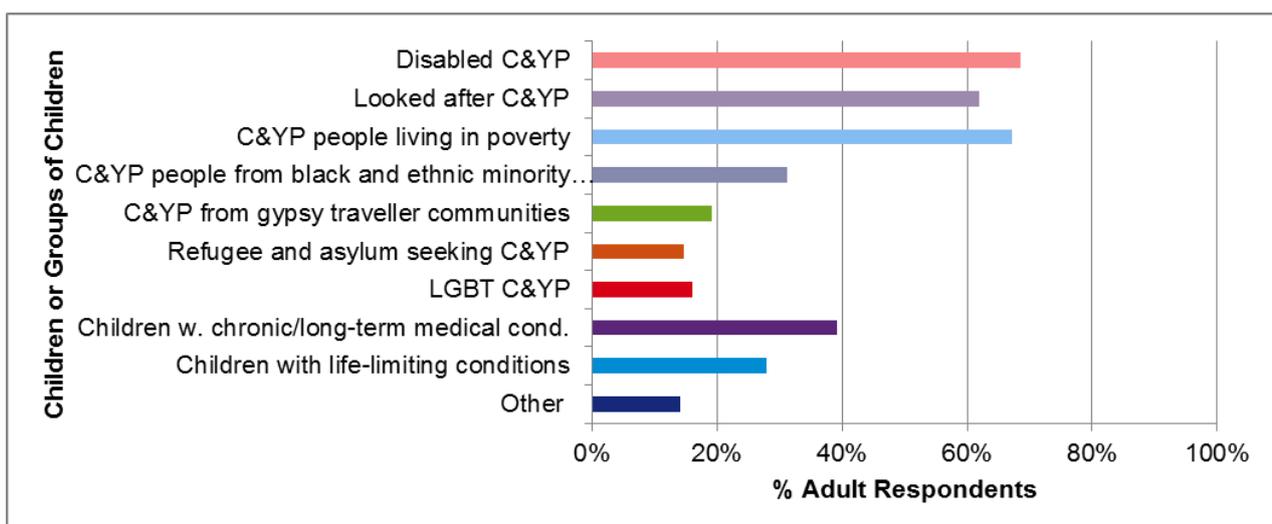


Figure 5 Adults' survey respondents: groups of children and young people respondents were mainly concerned with

The analysis of the children and young people's survey is followed by that for the adults' survey, both reflecting the structure of the Play Strategy Domains.



## 5. Children and young people: survey and consultation packs

The children and young people's survey allowed respondents to answer either of a parallel set of questions – the first was suitable for children and young people describing their activities as play or playing. The second was generally more suitable for older children and used terms such as free time and leisure and was informed by the *Working Definition for Play for Older Children and Young People* (see Appendix 2). 49 children chose to respond about playing and 29 about how they spend their free time for fun and enjoyment. Respondents were told it was fine to have someone help them with the survey and 27 children and young people told us that someone in their family or another person was helping them.

It was recognised that the quantity of responses was relatively low and a number of surveys were only partially completed, so a certain caution is required in interpreting the responses. The questions asked in the survey were subsequently explored through the consultation packs completed by children and young people's groups. Relevant information from the consultation packs is therefore included below. Quotes in this section are from children and young people's survey responses unless otherwise stated.

### What do you really like to play at home?

Technology featured highly amongst a broad range of playful experiences and current favourites such as Loom Bands and Minecraft.

**“climbing on my play garage, looking at picture books and putting Duplo in the washing machine”**

**“computer games, drawing, X- box, Lego”**

**“dolls, drawing, reading, playing Frozen, games, hide and seek, gymnastics, gardening”**

**“I've got a 'thing' that used to be something else, it went on the window, and I use it as a toy. I just imagine stuff and make up games with it.” (Consultation Pack Response)**

## Who do you like to play with there?

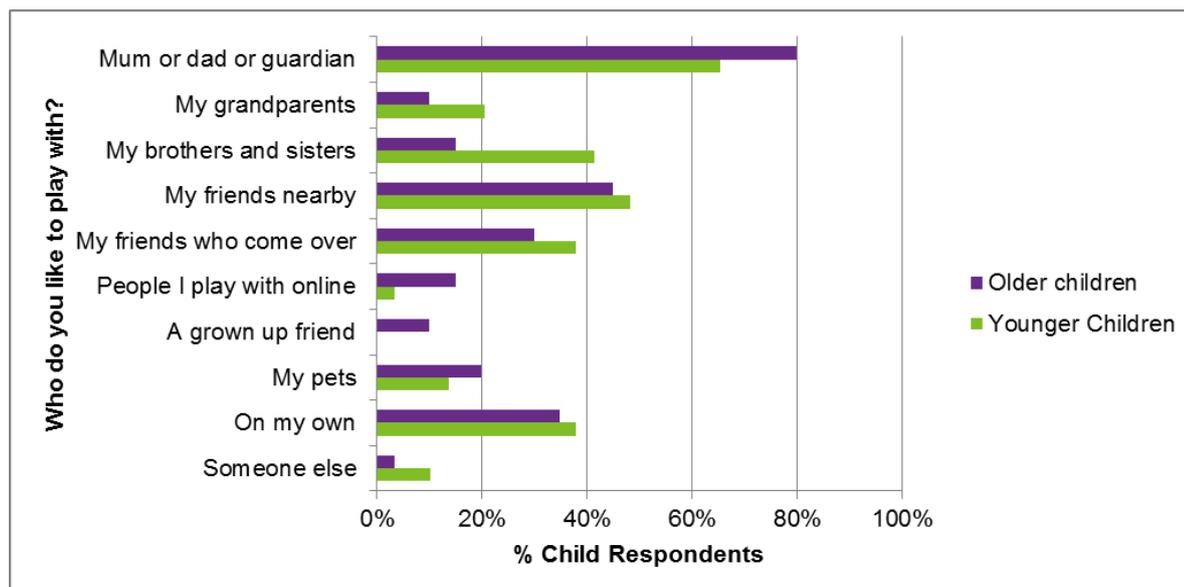


Figure 6 Children and young people's surveys

## Do you have any of these places to play in near where you live?

All the children who responded had their own garden to play in, and also commonly reported playgrounds (62%), parks (69%), and other people's gardens (55%). Natural spaces such as beaches, woods and rivers were also a feature of children's play landscape and in addition "a loch", "my daddy's farm" and "fields" were mentioned.

## Is there anything that stops you playing in any of them?

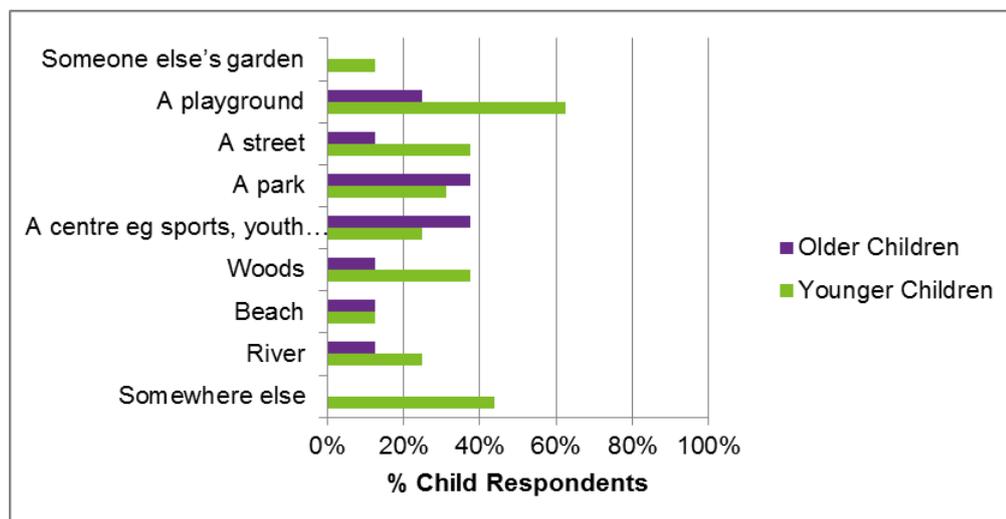


Figure 7 Children and young people's surveys

Half of the children said that there was something that stopped them playing in at least one of the places. A playground (swing park) was the most commonly reported. The reasons for this are consistent with the messages coming through from the consultation packs which related to general cleanliness and upkeep, dogs, dog fouling (vividly illustrated for us in the consultation packs!), bullying, fear of older children, and anti-social behaviour in play areas. The consultation packs also commonly described play areas as 'boring'.

**“No wheelchair access” (Consultation Pack Response)****“No disabled toilets” (Consultation Pack Response)**

The play needs and behaviour of children is sometimes at odds with parents and carers understandable wish to keep children safe from harm.

**“No physical boundaries to keep me safe...park has too many exits and wide open spaces, as does local primary school playground. I can only play in my own back garden which is securely fenced and bolted gates.” (Parent/carer responding with their child to the survey)**

Also consistent with the consultation packs is the need for need for adults to support or accompany children:

**“somebody else has to come with me. Sometimes they are too busy to take me.”**

**“not allowed on my own” (Consultation Pack Response)**

Children often reported not feeling welcome or safe in the area around their homes:

**“Neighbours not wanting you to play around house” (Consultation Pack Response)**

**“Neighbours complaint about playing in the street. They also complain about building the MUGA (multi use games area). But if that was built I wouldn't be playing in the street I would be playing in the MUGA” (Consultation Pack Response)**

**“Traffic all the time in my street.”**

Home isn't always a safe place for children.

**“I used to be scared to go outside to play when my family were fighting.”**

**What do you really like to play at school or nursery or out of school club?**

Again children described a wide range of play activities they enjoyed:

**“sand pit, painting, playing outside, reading”.**

**“I go to a childminder, this means I can do things I would normally enjoy at home like going out on my bike or going down the river to throw stones in” (Parent/carer responding with their child to the survey)**

In response to this question in the survey, there was less of an emphasis on technology than in response to the same question about playing at home. In the consultation packs Minecraft, Xbox, phones etc. featured heavily in activities enjoyed especially in out of school care where a wide range of indoor and outdoor play were reported.

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**“out of school club - cards, loom bands, football, tig, dodge ball”**

There were many examples given of outdoor play such as adventure trails, football, informal sports such as dodge ball, tig, mud kitchens, and trips to beach, parks and country parks.

In the consultation packs there were many reports of barriers to playing in this context including rules about games children could or could not play, particularly rough and tumble type play such as ‘play fighting’ but even running around.

**“In the MUGA tig is banned because teachers are worried in case kids fall over.”**

**Who do you like to play with there?**

Children often mentioned family members, friends, ‘leaders’ (in this context this seems to mean play leaders/playworkers in out of school care), and ‘other autistic people’. Children also played on their own.

**Do you usually get enough time to play?**

Consistent with the consultation packs, most children (21 of the 29 who answered this question) said they usually get enough time to play; seven of the 29 ‘only sometimes’ and one ‘never’. Children and young people often said they had enough time to play in one setting but not in another (most often nursery and school).

**“At home yes but not at school.”**

**“I like playing at OOSC because it’s really good fun.”**

**“Nursery is over very quick. I want to play more there with my friends. “**

**“I play lots at home, but not at nursery school. Sometimes my legs get too sore to play. “**

**“Not in school, but we get enough time in After School. “**

**“Would like more breaks in the school day to play, better stuff in the playground (Consultation Pack Response)**

**If you need it, do you usually get enough help to play in the way you'd like to?**

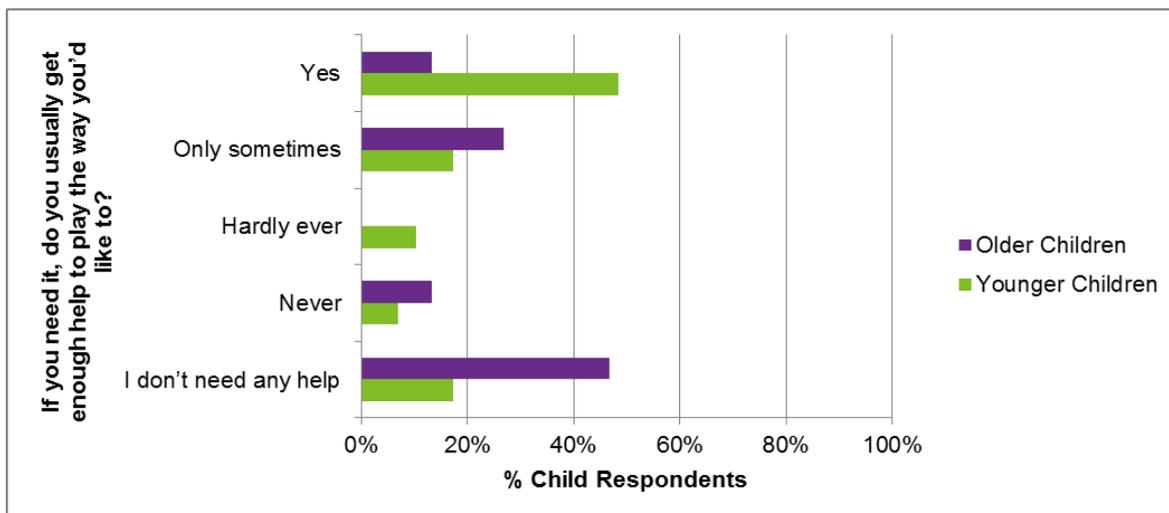


Figure 8 Children and young people's surveys

Again, consistent with the consultation packs, most children said they got the help they need. Of the 29 who answered this question, five 'only sometimes' got the help they need, three 'hardly ever' and two 'never'.

Comments attached to this question were largely from parents/carers advocating on behalf of their children and these particularly related to the need for an adult to support and supervise when doing things like going out to play on a bike, to facilitate communication or simply to pay enough attention.

**“The After School ladies are busy on the phone and making snack or waiting for people to come in (like mums and dads). In school at play time the ladies are standing watching people are not getting hurt or being bad.”**

**Do you usually get to play with who you want to?**

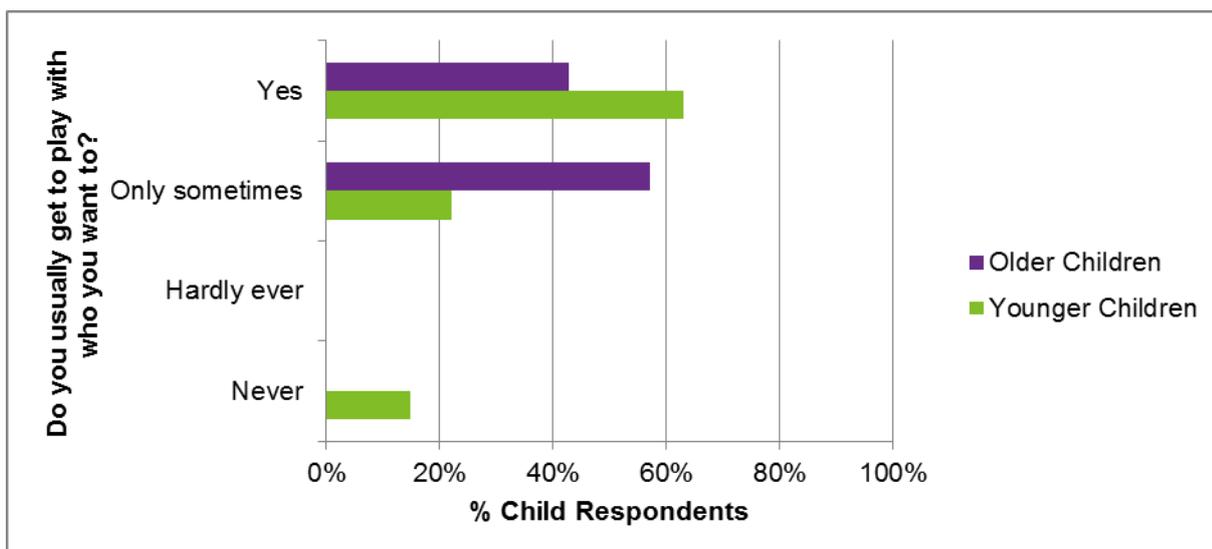


Figure 9 Children and young people's surveys

Of the 27 children who answered this question, most said yes they did get to play with who they wanted to, six 'only sometimes' and four 'never'.

**“Yes, apart from the playground is split up into ages so don't always get to play with who I want to” (Consultation Pack Response)**

**“If my friends are on their bikes on the road I am not allowed to go without an adult because I wobble. If they are running I can't keep up so I get left behind sometimes.”**

**“Sometimes they are playing with someone else. Every time they are playing tig I can't play because I'm the slowest runner of all the boys. One girl is faster than me. I've caught up with her a lot and got past her.”**

**“It would be better if they had more stuff outside the school, because all there is is that Adventure Trail, but we're getting new things. That's good! I don't know what we are getting. Our Head Teacher told us we are getting more stuff.”**

Parents and carers responding on behalf of children also suggested sessions with smaller numbers of children, quieter play times and alternative activities that were easier or less frightening to join in with.

**Is there anything that would make any of this easier and more fun for you? If you had a magic wand what would you wish for to help you play in the way that you want?**

**“Mum and Dad play with me lots but it would be good if they could have a bit more time”**

**“We would like an outside play area at our OOSC.”**

**“term time play time can be short!! in school if weather wet etc. they won't let us out to play!!!”**

**“I would want an aeroplane or an air balloon so I could fly. I would want a kite thing that I could go on, then would fly back down. I would want more time to play.”**

Parents and carers advocating on behalf of children also suggested groups specifically for children with autistic spectrum disorders, 'buddies' to provide support in social situations, more support to communication, improvements to outdoor play areas.

**“Three breaks instead of two” (Consultation Pack Response)**

**“Parks closer to houses” (Consultation Pack Response)**

**“Making parks easier to walk to” (Consultation Pack Response)**

There were frequent suggestions from children for adults to be around:

**“Parks should have equipment you can borrow and an adult in charge of those things” (Consultation Pack Response)**

**“More adults to let us play and keep us safe” (Consultation Pack Response)**

### **How do you spend your free time for fun and enjoyment?**

This set of questions was offered as an alternative to questions about play and playing, with older children and young people in mind, but it follows the same pattern.

### **What do you really like to do for fun around your home and with your family when you have free time to use as you choose?**

Young people answering this question gave a flavour of the range of activities they like to take part in:

**“playing outside in my sandpit, climbing frame and toys. Playing inside with my train set, reading books. Going walks”**

**“I like to hang out with family and friends. I like looking after young children and gaining experience on handling children who are hyper. I like to interact with different ages of people who have different interests.”**

Many of the young people mentioned outdoor activities, and some also enjoyed Facebook, watching TV and movies, and playing video games.

### **Who do you like to spend your free time with at home?**

See Figure 6 above

### **Do you have any of these to hang out in near where you live?**

Of the 20 respondents, parks, own garden and local sports centre, youth club or community centre were most frequently reported.

### **Is there anything that stops you hanging out in any of them?**

See Figure 7 above

Own garden, park and local sports centre, youth club or community centre were equally likely to be reported in response to this question however the numbers of respondents is low. There were few mentions of local sports centre, youth club or community centres in the consultation packs with which to compare.

### **What stops you from hanging out there?**

**“I am different or people think I am. It is easier if I just do not go.”**

**“It's scary going alone however do go with my cousins on our bikes”**

“Lack of people my age in area. My friends don't live near me so I go out other places. (When I can actually get a bus!! They are a rare thing round here!!)”

“don't like my garden. not allowed in the park”

### What do you really like to do when you have free time at school, college or clubs?

“I like to do the same things as other people my age. Going out, making friends and playing sports”

“I like to chill and hang with friends if I don't have any work to do.”

“Musical Theatre, Scouts, Shopping, Hang out with friends, Cinema.”

“art, drama, flour fights, trips out of city”

### Who do you like to spend time with there?

Friends have really taken over as the most favoured people to spend time with where younger children talked more about family members and also workers.

### Do you usually get enough free time for fun stuff?

10 of the 15 children felt they usually did get enough free time and the remaining five ‘only sometimes’.

“I am dyslexic and home work takes a long time therefore time with my friends is less. I also do swimming club which takes up two nights where I cannot meet my friends.”

“I always seem to have something to do! It would be easier if it didn't take forever to get places by bus.”

“Too much free time”

### If you need assistance, do you usually get the assistance you need to spend free time the way you'd like to?

See Figure 8 above

Four young people responded with “only sometimes”, two “never”, and four “yes” while the others didn't need help

### Do you usually get to hang out with who you want to?

See Figure 9 above

Six young people said ‘Yes’ and eight ‘only sometimes’

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**Is there anything that would make any of this easier and more fun for you?**

**“Have more stuff to do where I live for my age group. Everything seems to be far away, or make it easier to get buses that turn up and run later so I can go out after 6.10pm!!!”**

**“More play time at school.”**

**“Less homework”**

**If you had a magic wand what would you wish for to help you spend your free time in the way that you want?**

**“More activities to do stuff with friends.”**

**“Choice to spend it the way I want. With people like me that understand me instead of trying to get included when it doesn't really work.”**

**“being able to opt in and out of things. Not having to spend 10 weeks doing this and that. I can't cope with too much rules as I find them difficult to follow”**

In summary, this section of the review was trying to gain a better understanding of the experiences of children and young people from their point of view and to start to look for indications of what would help take us closer to the Play Strategy's Vision for play for all children, from where we are now.

## This is the vision

**“We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. 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.”** *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013)*  
Scottish Government.

### These are some of the things that could help achieve this.

It would help if:

- Within a more coordinated approach, more care was taken to understand children and young people’s daily experience of play: that is, to try to understand play in the pattern of a child’s whole day and broader experience, taking into account time to play, space to play and suitable support to play in all of the settings the child spends time in.
- Design and management of play spaces, particularly in schools, was improved; spaces conducive to different ways of playing were included, and areas with a feeling of calm, security and quiet were available to children who choose them. (See also sections 6, 7, 8 and 15 for comments and recommendations on physical environments).
- Designated play spaces were looked after better, and children and young people were involved in decisions about them.
- Resources were directed to shared, playable spaces where children and young people could find inclusive opportunities to play particularly in their local neighbourhood environment.
- There were greater opportunities for participation of children and young people in decisions which impact directly and indirectly on their opportunities to play.
- Informed support to play was available in settings where children and young people spend their time.

## 6. In the home and family environment – adults’ survey

In the context of home and family environment, what do you feel are the barriers to being able participate fully in play?

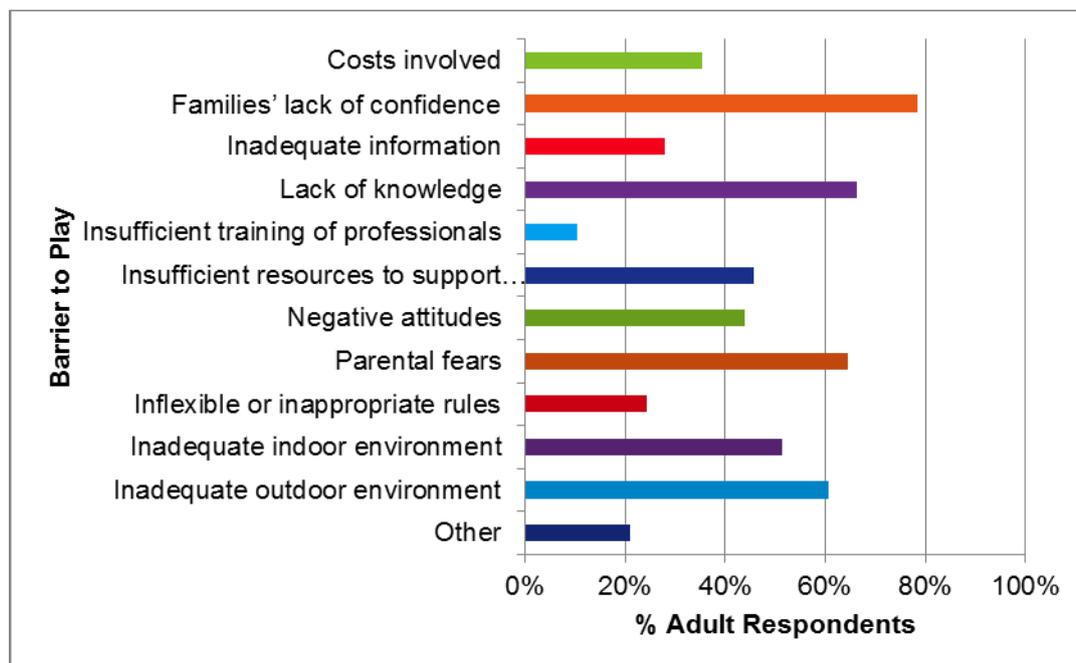


Figure 10 Adults' survey

The survey responses highlighted families' lack of confidence, parental fears, lack of knowledge, inadequate outdoor environments and time constraints amongst the factors that hinder inclusive play opportunities.

In addition to identifying barriers, we received 22 further comments regarding this question.

Many of these remarked on lack of confidence or knowledge. This was not generally seen to be as a result of lack of information, but rather lack of confidence to access information or put it into practice, in some cases resulting from of a lack of role models.

**“Some parents have not had positive play experiences themselves so do not have the skills and knowledge to interact with their children and create an appropriate learning/play environment for them”**

Others remarked on the physical and social environment that made playing at home and in the family environment more challenging or less appealing, and the constraints caused by work patterns.

**“Families housed in homes without gardens, housing schemes with no designated play area... I feel some parents are preoccupied with the working week and forget to enjoy their time with their children on a daily basis”**

**“Many children living in social housing do not have access to safe outdoor play areas, and often live in homes with limited physical space to allow active play.”**

The concern about the quality of outdoor environments is a recurrent theme throughout the survey responses, in all domains:

**“I feel that LAs (Local Authorities) and others providing play equipment provide too much that is 'off the shelf' with most parks the same as each other. They need to provide more opportunities for open ended, creative, imaginative play (e.g. dens, stages, tunnels etc.). I also feel they are too 'sterile' with no contact with natural materials (tarmac and that squidgy rubbery stuff).”**

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was concern voiced about the prominence of screens (TV, tablets and computer games) in many homes, and concern that there is a

**“lack of knowledge about the adverse effects of excessive screen-time on children's health and development, and lack of knowledge of the importance of play and social interaction.”**

**In the context of home and family environment do you wish or hope for play experiences that are different in some way from the way they are currently? In what way?**

This question provoked rich responses which followed through from the areas of concern reported above - confidence, physical and social environments - with positive suggestions. The following gives a flavour of typical responses:

**“that parents are supported to be playful with ideas and conversation. They need to feel relaxed, looked after themselves and valued in order to do this.”**

**“People need to learn that 'play' does not need a lot of resources. Play can be achieved with simple and inexpensive means. However people may not know how to do that anymore.”**

**“children should be allowed safe areas to enjoy free play and parents should have the confidence that they are safe from harm”**

**“I wish my children could climb trees like I used to. The trees in the woods where I grew up have had branches chopped off for health and safety so they can't be climbed. The woods are overgrown with long grass preventing children playing in them. They used to be well kept and a great environment for children to play and explore safely.”**

**“Space to kick a ball”**

**“I wish parents were less focussed on providing their children with structured activities such as dance, drama, sports, music etc. classes; filling every minute. I wish children were allowed to get bored and just potter, doing nothing in particular, in all weathers outdoors.”**

**In the context of home and family environment, can you give us any examples of when things were set up really well, support was provided in a way that really helped, or children and young people's wishes were genuinely respected in a way that helped them feel included?**

Responses to this question, ranged from suggestions about supporting families to engage in everyday experiences with little or no costs, to services to encourage parents and foster their skills, through to those with a more specialist remit.

Throughout the survey, when we asked about good examples, we found a strong trend towards commenting on what we described as 'everyday, low key' actions. These were often examples of excellent practice and positive interactions at the right level for the family and children involved.

**“CAMHS OT (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Occupational Therapist) input has meant we have re-organised our living room (my son's play room) so that it is set up with low frustration items so that he can calm down after nursery. This has really helped us.”**

**“Practitioners modelling play with parents. This is undertaken after assessment of difficulties and identification of what is needed alongside the parent.**

**“We are fortunate to have access to a community nursery nurse and she works with a number of families to support the parents with play and ideas for play. The families she visits have felt and feel a huge benefit from her input. However many of them can sustain the level of play/interaction for a short time on their own and inevitably the nursery nurse has to revisit them again to reinforce the key messages around play”**

**“I have loaned a family some special lighting for them to try with their child to gauge what sensory items she might like of her own as they want to invest in a sensory room specific for her needs. So they are communicating her wishes from her reactions to various ideas. (This is all very costly equipment and very specialised).”**

However, it should be noted that a number of respondents said that they could think of no good examples and others pointed to the distance between the aspiration and how they viewed their own experience.

**“At home, we encourage our child to go out to play. We support sporting activities by taking him to football clubs, anchor boys, swimming etc. but in terms of opportunities outwith the family i.e. via our local community trust then no I cannot think of an example where they set things up really well, provided support, respected the wishes of young people that made them feel included - I am almost laughing at the thought of how far away from this this Trust is.”**

## This is the outcome we are aiming for

**“Our homes and family environments are places where all children and young people enjoy plentiful play opportunities, appropriate to their age, stage, needs and preferences.”** *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013) Scottish Government.*

### These are things that could help achieve this

It would help if:

- There was a large scale, properly resourced campaign undertaken to promote the importance of play to parents and carers, and to those who work with them (taking into account of quality and equality in play, therefore children’s play rights including the play rights of disabled children and young people).
- The value of play was understood by professionals and organisations working for, or with, children and those whose work has an impact on children’s play.
- A coordinated approach was taken between third sector, government and public agencies to ensure ‘reach’ of the key messages.
- There was coordinated work to improve the child- and play-friendly design of interior and exterior spaces at the earliest stages in development of housing stock.
- Support around play was available to families of disabled children at the earliest stages of the child’s life through both universal provision and the third sector services.

See also ‘Emergent Themes’.

## 7. At nursery, school, early learning and childcare adults' survey

In the context of school, nursery and early learning and childcare, what do you feel are barriers to children and young people being able to participate fully in play?

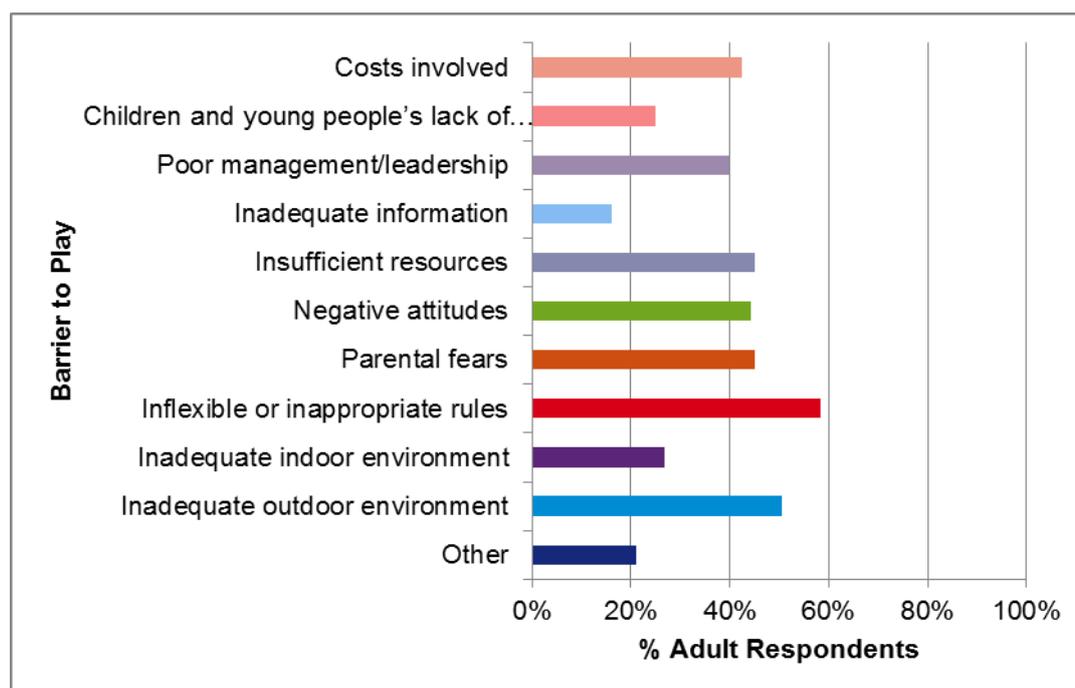


Figure 11 Adults' survey

Amongst a range of factors, the survey responses suggested inflexible or inappropriate rules (e.g. interpretation of Health and Safety, Inspections) along with inadequate outdoor environments have an impact on the inclusive quality of play.

**“We have found that we continually have to use the high level statement by the HSE (Health and Safety Executive) about risk and challenge in play to local authorities. On more than one occasion, we have had directly contradictory statements made by the council(s) regarding their adherence to this, along the lines of "ah, yes but, we'll get sued/criticised/etc."**

**“Poorly qualified teaching assistants who fail to understand rules. Also, overly strict rules for wet play and accidents (such as a child being hit with a ball) that lead to children being told off - for playing!”**

**“Don't think the rules are inflexible but the interpretation of them can vary to suit the individual!”**

**“...most school settings that I have come across certainly don't have stimulating spaces and the stimulating spaces that they do have are too often under used**

due to unsubstantiated health and safety risks and lack of training for both teachers and playground assistants. As far as nature is concerned, a lot of the schools that I know, often don't allow the children out at play time if it is raining and the playgrounds are mainly tarmac which is not ideal.”

There were also other interlocking issues highlighted including time constraints, costs, resources, management and leadership, negative attitudes and parental fears.

“Untrained staff. Unqualified staff. Play staff emulating teachers. School settings being used as Play settings. Not enough staff/funding for reduced staff: child ratios.”

“Children who have additional support needs are not given enough support to participate positively in playground activities and this can often lead to them being kept indoors at break times or forced in to situations they can't cope with which leads to incidents where they may be excluded from school or bullied.”

In the context of school, nursery and early learning and childcare, do you feel there is anything that stops staff being able to facilitate/support inclusive play opportunities in a way that responds to children and young people's play needs and wishes.

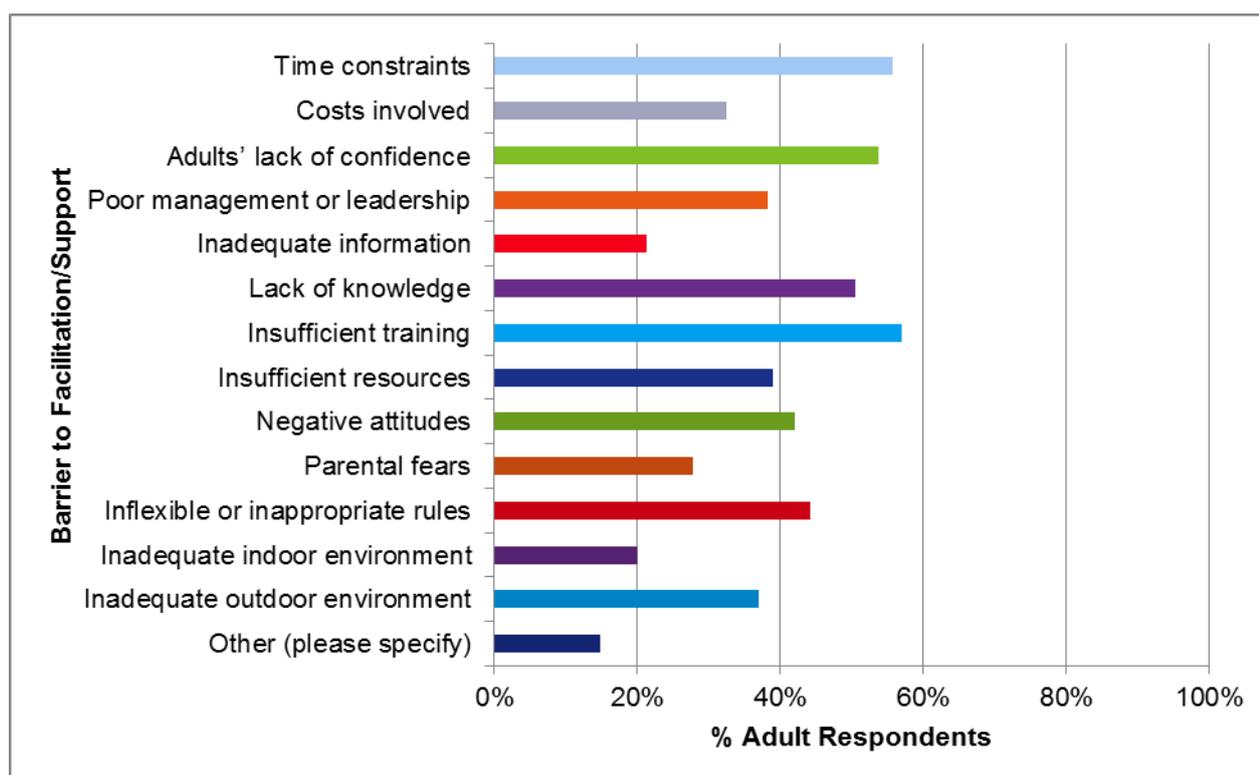


Figure 12 Adults' survey

Three barriers were particularly highlighted: insufficient training, time constraints and adults' lack of confidence.

“For myself I feel that I cannot fully play with the children in my care as much of my time is filled up with paperwork. I feel I spend more time planning, evidencing and evaluating activities than I actually do taking part and enjoying the activity with the children.”

**“Staff team don't seem to know what play is themselves! The generation coming into the work force don't have the knowledge from their own childhood and this is proving difficult because no matter how much training you give them they are adults - generally scared of the experience and have difficulty in changing.”**

A number of responses illustrated different professional perspectives on play. In a school setting in particular, these perspectives sometimes result in mutual learning and benefit and sometimes clash. A number of respondents suggested the need to open up to shared learning. It was noted that power and status differentials between different professions (teaching staff, playworkers, playground assistants etc.) sometimes hindered dialogue.

**“The challenge is shifting mindset and therefore priorities within schools. This is combined with the additional challenge in primary schools of thinking we know more about play than we actually do in combination with a critical play sector who forgets that a lot of play does happen in schools. Just perhaps not in the way the play sector would like.”**

**In the context of school, nursery and early learning and childcare, would you suggest play opportunities should be facilitated or supported differently in any way from the way they are currently?**

This question generated 103 individual comments. Key themes amongst these were: training, developing a better understanding of play in schools including play time and access to resources.

**“All staff should be fully qualified and there should be a mixture of experience amongst the staff so that less experienced staff can learn from those who have more experience. Training is often completed but not implemented appropriately.”**

**“More resources given to the nursery so they can provide the staff necessary for 1-2-1 support if required and extra training given to help the staff. It's great that most children are going to mainstream facilities despite having additional needs but the mainstream facility staff need additional training to help them cope and to bring out the best in the child.”**

**“Disappointed that active schools programme cannot influence more play options.....physical activity options needs to be offered in a spectrum but disjointed services create perceptions of sport only attitudes.”**

**“There should be every encouragement by inspectors to encourage improved usage of any indoor/outdoor space, risks should be dealt with from a benefit perspectives, outdoor/indoor space can be utilised by letting children play with free natural resources”**

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“There is often a lack of expertise/experience of what free play means, with staff scared to intervene or contribute to the play, worrying that they will stifle or inhibit the experience rather than appreciating that they might enrich it. A more skilled and balanced approach across settings would improve play experiences in my local area.”

In the context of school, nursery and early learning and childcare, can you give us any examples of times when things were set up really well, support was offered in such a way that really helped, or in which children and young people’s wishes were genuinely respected in a way that helped them feel included?

The following is a small section from the many positive examples offered.

“There was a fantastic example of inclusion with a recent low key 'sports day' facilitated in a local nursery by a student from the High School. There were a great selection of sporting events presented for the children to participate in, in teams, with necessary adjustments made for the children with additional support needs to ensure they were fully included at all times. When a young child chose not to participate, this wish was supported and he was still made to feel part of the team and not once made to feel emotionally/physically isolated as a result of his choice to watch.”

“We have also recently run a pilot project in conjunction... in Fife offering a Friendship and Storytelling Club on a Saturday during the summer holidays when many children and young people can become quite isolated as there is no school where they can mingle with their peers. This has been a huge success.”

“at my little ones mainstream school they have been fantastic in supporting play, through more 1:1 support, involving us as parents to ensure he can be included but supported to his best ability and through using the guidance of also PE staff and active schools. However if family support was not available there may have been many times where the school would have done their best given their current resources but my little one would have struggled to enjoy play and be supported at his level to challenge new ideas and abilities.”

“We redeveloped our outdoor play area. With advice and support, we consulted with parents and ensured that as many areas of the garden were as accessible as possible to all children. Paths were made wide enough for all children to access and fixed raised tables were put in place a various locations around the sandpit.”

“Having the right equipment for children with additional needs - e.g. an adapted bike enabled a child we had with cerebral palsy to be as mobile within the group as the other children and they loved him cycling with them as an equal. One child commented that 'on his bike A is the same as us - we don't have to help him anymore.’”

## This is the outcome we are aiming for

**“All children and young people enjoy high quality play opportunities, particularly outdoor free play in stimulating spaces with access to nature, on a daily basis in school, nursery and early learning and childcare.”** *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013) Scottish Government.*

## These are things that would help achieve this

It would help if:

- Equality training was undertaken by all the members of the school community – adults, children and young people.
- There was a serious examination at national level of what quality play provision for all children would look like in schools, including dialogue about the nature of ‘free play’.
- There was play training in teaching qualifications (Initial Teacher Education onwards).
- The skills of play workforce were utilised in schools.
- Attention was given to playtime and lunchtime in schools taking into account the need for appropriate resources, design of outdoor spaces and management of outdoor spaces including in Granted Aided Special Schools and Special Schools.
- Principles of Access for All and Universal Design <sup>3</sup> were promoted for the design and development of play spaces in nursery, school, early learning and childcare.
- The role and job descriptions of staff with responsibility for playground supervision were developed reflecting play principles, and with suitable training available to support this.
- There was ready access to practical information and advice to assist with meeting the needs of individual children. (See Online Hub, Positive Support for Play)
- A strong high-level lead was given by the Scottish Government and Community Planning Partnerships to implementing the Risk-Benefit Assessment approach to play in all settings in which children spend time encompassing clear support for the Risk-Benefit approach to disabled children’s play opportunities (see also Section 16)
- Work was done with parents through nursery, school, early learning and childcare, to increase understanding of the value of play.
- The role of Playgroups, Toddler Groups and Childminders, often the first play settings outside the family for very young children, was recognised (though support, training, etc.) as having particular importance to supporting inclusion in the very early years.

<sup>3</sup> See UN General Comment no. 17: The term "universal design" was coined by Ronald Mace to describe the concept of designing all products and the built environment to be aesthetic and usable to the greatest extent possible by everyone, regardless of their age, ability or status in life; see also art. 4, para. 1 (f) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

## 8. In the community - adults' survey

In the context of the 'In the community', what do you feel are barriers to being able to participate fully in play?

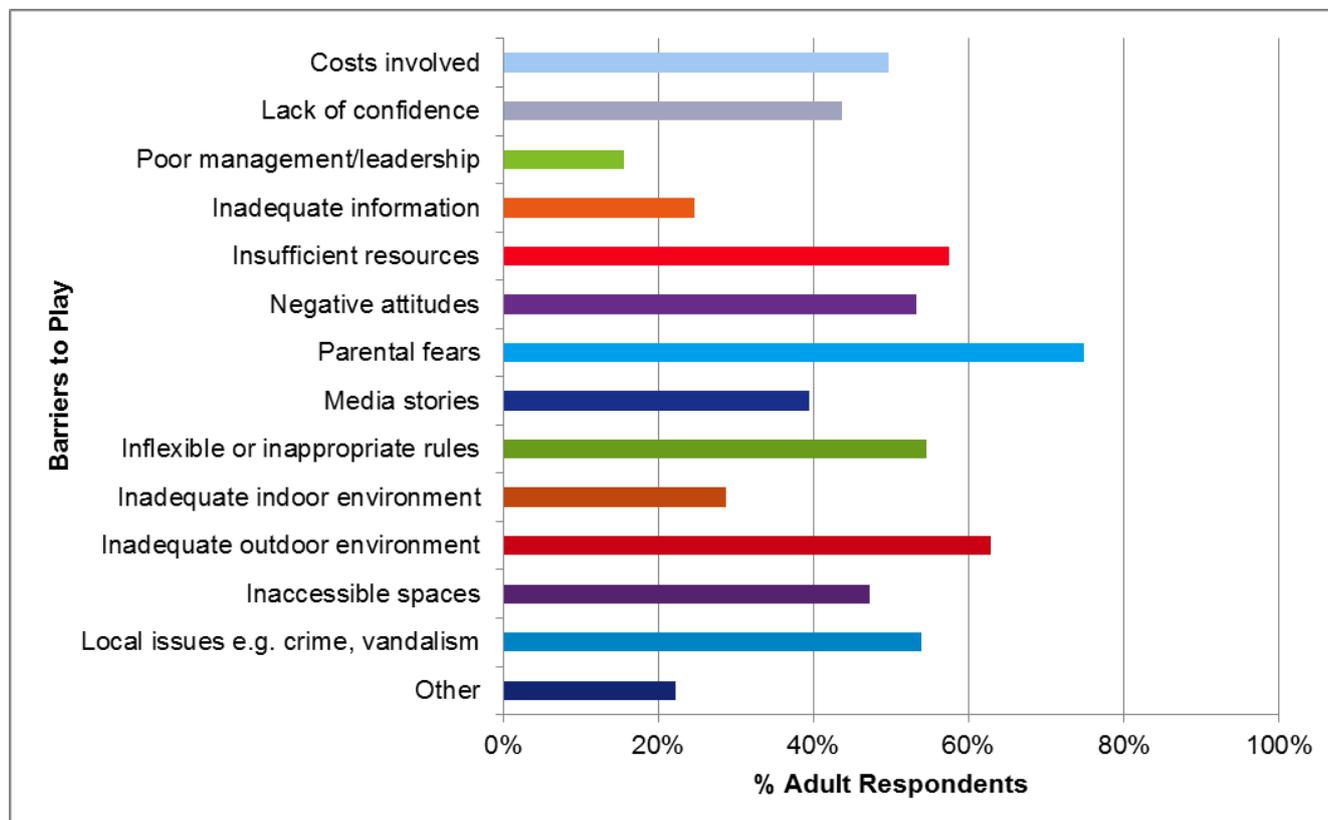


Figure 13 Adults' survey

The graph above illustrates the range of barriers considered to be a barrier to inclusive play opportunities in the community particularly, parental fears, inadequate outdoor spaces, insufficient resources, inappropriate rules (e.g. no balls signs), and negative attitudes.

**“Distance to adequate play areas is a worrying factor. Children usually want to go alone as they get older, but if the distance is too great, there is fear amongst parents re the safety of their children.”**

**“I think bullying is an issue in play parks / open spaces and how can this be managed? It absolutely discourages children from going to a local play park or playing in a local bit of grass.”**

**“There are a number of new play spaces / play parks (in the local authority area), having visited most of them I am always sad to see how little there is for children who are less able or in wheel chairs”**

**“Some great facilities in our area (e.g. schools), but only for use during school hours, and fees for evening and weekend use make them unaffordable.”**

“Having tried pushing wheelchairs and buggies up forestry paths is akin to ploughing through custard with a dodgy shopping trolley!! (...) These free places on our doorstep definitely need to be more accessible (...) very little info is available for parents of disabled children regarding this, surfacing can be extremely painful to wheelchair users & NHS does not provide off road wheelchairs to the disabled”

“Where we live there are no ball game signs on every available free space and neighbours complain of children chalking pictures on the ground etc. The planning of a new primary school has the neighbouring houses up in arms regarding the mess and noise of children playing...The best play schemes and equipment are all in vain whilst these attitudes exist. Seeing and listening to children at play should be a joy not a bugbear.”

This question also prompted responses which indicated a need for different types of support.

“There is a lack of support for parents with learning disabilities to find new places for our kids to go to. There is a lack of easy read information about clubs and resources.”

“Being an extremely rural area children who have a visual impairment are unable to access certain things in their home and local community. They might have to travel huge distances for support groups or access to indoor soft play and there is a lack of sensory play rooms available outwith the main hub of Inverness-shire. Many parents (... ) feel socially excluded, attending the local parent and tot groups they often feel excluded with nobody talking to them (this is the parents views), my professional views are that they feel their little ones are not the same, they see the other 'sighted' children reaching milestones which their child is many many months behind and this is sad and upsetting (...) Specialist support groups really work well here but they are not accessible for people living in the rural (and very far away) areas due to such small numbers.”

“wish there were more supported 'clubs' available for children to attend from an early age - like youth clubs but supported by staff across ages - much like cubs/brownies/church groups but without the uniform/religion - just a safe place for children to play with their friends - and learn to take risks”

In the context of inclusive play 'In the community', do you feel there is anything that stops us being able to facilitate, support or promote play opportunities that respond to children and young people's play needs and wishes?

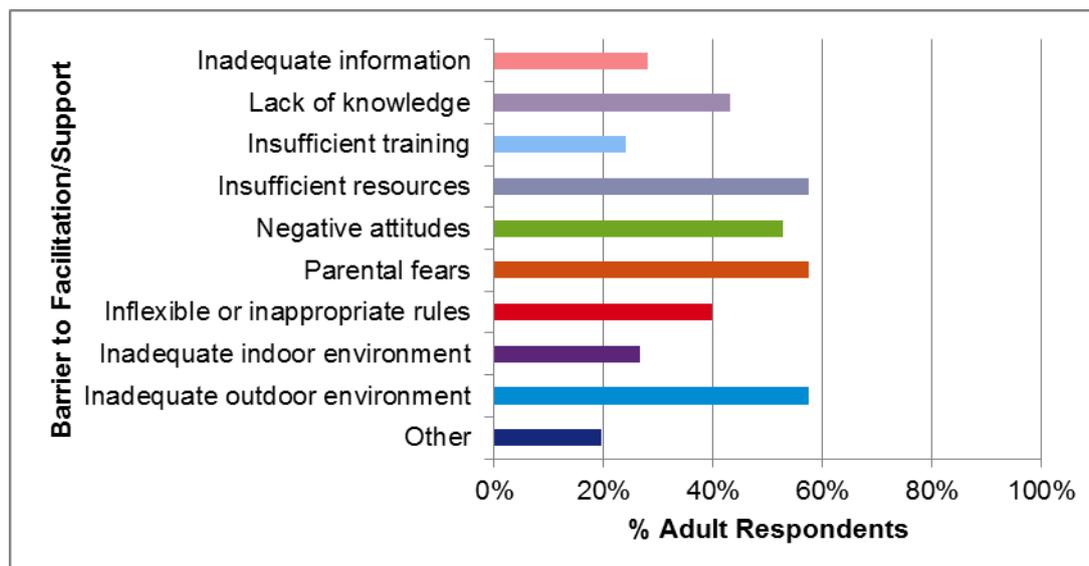


Figure 14 Adults' survey

A similar range of barriers was identified here: inadequate outdoor environment, insufficient resources, negative attitudes, parental fears.

“Cost is a likely factor, but, for example, I have observed at length, boys at skate parks and it is incredible that kids of various ages (10 - 18+) get on so well, allow each other to take centre stage, make way for different equipment (skates, BMX bikes, scooters, skateboards). Money is well spent on such play areas where things run very smoothly.”

“Not enough CLD (Community Learning and Development) staff to coordinate appropriate community action, too many tokenistic short term projects for a long term / permanent issue”

“Our culture is a long way from integrating disabled and non-disabled children, we need to move on from 'special' provision and support children to be integrated in a mixed environment.”

“I work with the population of children who have social, emotional and behavioural needs in addition to the ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorder and other health needs which impact on behaviour. This all gets lumped into 'bad behaviour' “

## In the context of inclusive play 'In the community', would you suggest play opportunities should be supported differently in some way from the way they are currently?

This question prompted 101 comments. The following illustrate the main themes and practical suggestions. These relate to a number of levels at which a difference might be made from local community levels and schools to planning, local authorities and Scottish Government levels.

“I would like to see a provision for local residents for indoor play (particularly during the wet/cold weather). The closest soft play is 30 minutes by car and 1 hour by public transport. There is nothing within walking distance for the local community. This would support a wide cross-section of the children in inclusive play. And local parent/children consultation for changes/improvements to the outdoor parks would be wonderful, to ensure we are meeting the needs of a larger selection of the local children. And please, can we just have one of these wild play/junk yards for free outdoor play for the slightly older children, free from unnecessary rules and regulations?”

“Thinking of school grounds as a "community resource" Raising play opportunities up the agenda of community councils”

“Given there are problems in a limited number of open spaces it would be good if this was facilitated by community officers who have a level of authority. Facilities should be monitored in the evening and weekends as well as daytime. There is a lack of indoor/covered play facilities for the dark nights/poor weather throughout the country.”

“Inclusive play should form part of local planning guidance in new developments and where regeneration of town centres are being planned”

“Responsibility to get children into play has to be delegated back to parents. Infrastructure has to improve to ensure that area's where people live become 'living areas' rather than parking spaces and traffic funnels. Play has to return to the street, to create a 'living street'.”

“if this is so important to the Scottish Government they should fund it but also make it easier for groups to get the ground for play equipment”

## In the context of 'In the community', can you give us any examples of times when things were set up really well, support was offered in such a way that really helped, or in which children and young people's wishes were genuinely respected in a way that helped them feel included?

“The most memorable examples are when there is some degree of facilitation from an organisation or community presence to encourage and support the young people as well as provide a form for advocacy so the young people can have their voices heard through the community council for example.”

“Pop up Play; Mud Day events where activities were set out for children of all ages; stages of development and abilities.”

## This is the outcome we are aiming for

**“All children have sufficient time and space (physical and social) for playing within their community and have contact with nature in their everyday lives. Play is valued, encouraged and supported in communities, as are providers of community play providers such as out of school care, playgroups, therapeutic and specialist settings and community champions of play”** *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013) Scottish Government.*

## These are things that would help achieve this

It would help if:

- The Risk-Benefit Assessment approach was firmly embedded and implemented consistently. (See also Section 7 above)
- Schemes such as Play Rangers / Community Playworkers were extended so that there is visible support to play in play spaces, parks and neighbourhood spaces.
- In every Local Authority/Community Planning Partnership area Play Policies, Strategies and accompanying Action Plans were developed which include explicit aims, objectives and actions to make tangible progress towards inclusive practices, programmes and environments.
- Communities were invited to contribute and engage in local programmes and activities.
- A positive lead was given by the Play Strategy Implementation Group to development of a network of “play champions” underpinned by the principles set out in the Play Strategy and the UN Convention article 31; with explicit reference to progress on inclusion – non-discrimination, equality of opportunity, participation – as integral to the role.

## 9. Positive support for play - adults' survey

As this domain is broad we asked respondents which aspect they were particularly concerned with: 59% of respondents were concerned with workforce, 42% leadership, 44% third sector and infrastructure, 11% media (Total respondents 114)

**In the context of Positive Support for Play, what do you feel are barriers to being able to support and promote children and young people's participation in play?**

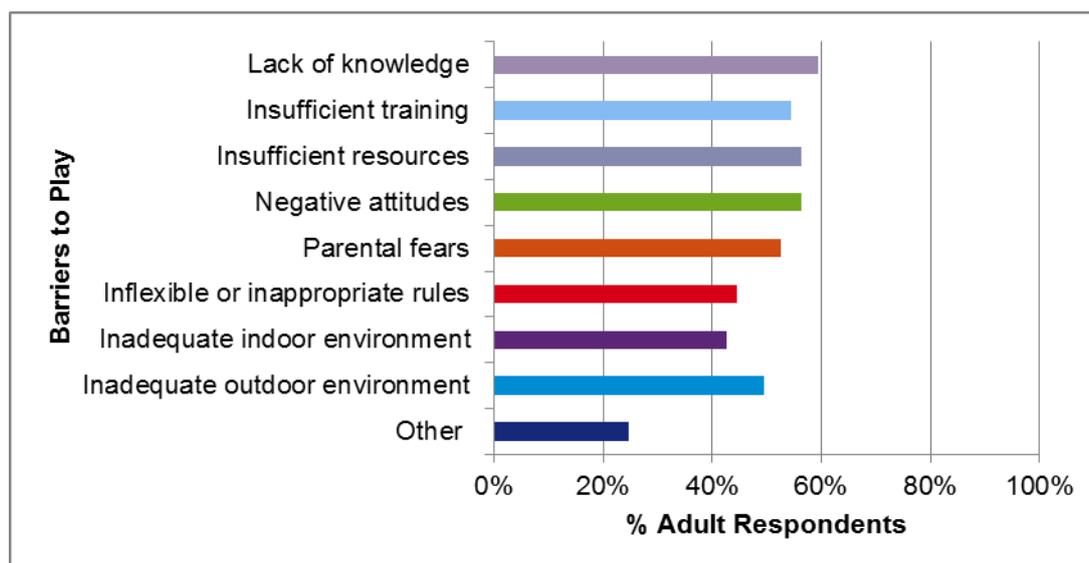


Figure 15 Adults' survey response

In relation Positive Support for Play, perhaps reflecting the range this domain covers, there was a fairly even spread across the barriers identified as having an impact.

Again, training was commented on by many respondents:

**“I think we are at a turning point with up-skilling the workforce - new degree, new HNs & VQs I think it is time to take stock not of the content per say but of the delivery of the qualifications underpinning the degree “**

**“I think the training we receive allows for knowledge, but knowledge alone cannot change attitudes. I think training should work toward increasing our empathy.”**

It is evident that not every play worker needs to be trained in every skill which potentially helps any child who might be part of their service. However, it was suggested that every service (and groups of services in the same area) should be able to build levels of skills and experience over time, to be able to brush up skills when needed, and to be able to access information and support etc.

**In this context, would you suggest play opportunities should be supported and promoted in a way that is different in some way to the way it is currently?**

“Play should be encouraged more in older children (secondary school age) as much as the younger children. It can be called other things - e.g. fun activities/creative pursuits - but it should essentially be playful.”

“More support and training for staff with additional support in place from the beginning.”

“Stronger leadership from Scottish Government is required in order to move play up the political agenda”

“With regard to the media, there is a great deal of work to be done to end gender stereotyping in children's TV and films. The media should promote a more equal and inclusive vision of play than is currently offered to children, and does not promote active play as something mainly undertaken by boys.”

“Positive promotion of inclusive, risky outdoor play in a similar vein to the PlayTalkRead campaign.”

“Local papers let you know what activities you have missed. A central accurate information source of leisure activities - probably on-line, which all families can access”

“Services which support play opportunities should be financially supported by local authorities. The lack of sufficient funding available to ensure the long term sustainability of these vital children's services is a huge barrier to the development and understanding of the sector”

**In this context, can you give us any examples of times when things were set up really well, support was offered in such a way that really helped, or in which children and young people's wishes were genuinely respected in a way that helped them feel included?**

“There were some pro-social behaviour pilots carried out in 2010 in partnership with Young Scot and Local Authorities through Cashback funding. Aberdeenshire organised meetings which brought the community together to present young people in a more realistic and positive light than those sent out by the media. There were a number of opportunities for the young people to shape the opportunities that were available to them, such as hang out shelters which were covered spaces that they felt safe to meet up but were unsupervised as they wanted a sense of freedom. These spaces would be separate to play parks for younger children so parents and younger children would not feel threatened when going out to play.”

“I had long meetings and many calls to assist a child with specific needs throughout the summer holidays, it was very difficult to get funding to cover staffing, in the end the child came to us and Mum and Dad out of their social work fund paid for staff wages and we gave free childcare so as to give the child valuable play and integration opportunities as well as giving Mum and Dad respite. Staff went on a course to learn sign language also. The benefits were great for all involved and especially the child. She loved her time with us and we got positive feedback from parents.”

## This is the outcome we are aiming for

**“Scotland provides a positive environment for play through: a professional workforce, strong and visionary leadership, a well-resourced third sector and infrastructure, and a supportive and informed media”** *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013) Scottish Government.*

## These are things that would help to achieve this

It would help if:

- In keeping with the United Nation’s General Comment on article 31, all professionals working with or for children, or whose work impacts on children, received systematic and ongoing training on the human rights of children, including article 31 (which encompasses the right to play).
- Coverage of key elements of play training was introduced or increased for all those whose work has an impact, indirectly and directly, on children’s play.
- A central Online Hub of information was developed to support inclusive practice in relation to play and to provide information about specific skills, knowledge and practices which can be utilised in mainstream, inclusive children’s settings. This should be easily accessible to all those who work for or with children with input from children and young people, third sector play and disability organisations and should make use of specialist expertise that already exists in Scotland and elsewhere.
- Further and long term investment was made in capacity building models of support to play providers in order to include disabled children and young people. This not only ensures the inclusion of disabled children and young people in play provision but builds the skills, knowledge and confidence of the play workforce ensuring sustainability.
- Provision for play, play environments and support to play opportunities in whatever form (infrastructure, training, advice, campaigns, service provision, policies) located non-discrimination, equality of opportunity and participation as *standing principles* in every action, programme or measure.
- A set of “Test Questions” was developed and introduced for play programmes, practice and environments which encourage progressive action and accountability.

## 10. Emergent themes

In the course of the survey and consultations, a number of themes began to emerge. These themes were examined more closely in the events that were held with children, young people and adults in different parts of the country.

The themes themselves interlink. A combined approach would attempt to reduce the negative factors which hold back high quality play opportunities while really trying to build on positive practice and examples which exist.

It was continually emphasised that quality matters.

Disabled and disadvantaged children and young people in Scotland face **multiple barriers** to being able to play at home, at nursery, school, early learning and childcare and in the community

Significantly more attention should be given to **coordination** across services and geographic areas to achieve inclusive opportunities

**Low-key, everyday actions** make a big difference

The **time** available to practitioners is a significant factor in their ability to put into practice inclusive actions and approaches

The quality of **physical environments** makes a hugely significant difference to the quality of children and young people's experience and opportunities for play

The application (and misapplication) of **rules and regulations** negatively impacts on the quality opportunities for play

Building **confidence and awareness** around the value of play would support inclusive play opportunities for all children.

Addressing a gap in **training and ongoing support** for practitioners and professionals in a number of disciplines would help to ensure all our children and young people have the play opportunities to which they have a right.

The quotes in the following sections are from the review surveys, consultations and events.

# 11. Multiple Barriers

**Disabled and disadvantaged children and young people in Scotland face multiple barriers to being able to play at home, at nursery, school, early learning and childcare and in the community, as part of their everyday lives. Many of these barriers are faced by children and young people across the board and are amplified by the intersections between poverty, disadvantage, disability and environment.**

**“We have worked hard to support our little one to have inclusive play with his siblings at home and on a daily basis within our street alongside his peers. However this requires lots of time, money for equipment and also the constant challenge from others (parents/families) who do not understand needs, abilities and behaviours. At no point have we ever been offered any support with play at home for any external organisation.”**

The review began from a position that very many children and young people in Scotland face barriers to play. The reality of that position has been confirmed through the review. Given the extent of responses to the review and depth of feeling expressed it is appropriate to re-state that this is the current situation for children and young people in Scotland.

The barriers faced by many children and young people impact on their rights in relation to health and wellbeing, optimum development, inclusion in society and their right to enjoy their childhood. Positive play experiences are now well understood to have long term benefits and to nourish us as adults. The impact of negative experiences – in our local neighbourhoods, communities, schools – also remains with us and can provoke powerful memories and feelings which impact on the way we see ourselves. Both being left out and being ‘forced’ to join in seem to have a lingering negative impact when recalled by young people we spoke to.

One young woman described how the discrimination she encountered as a child at school blocked her ability to play so that in the end:

**“I just ending up strolling around at play time eating my snack”.**

She told us that:

**“I strive for optimum play time. Because I didn’t have the best time playing when I was younger, though I am older now, I could play and play.”**

Other adults commented:

**“It's very lonely and alienating seeing all the 'mainstream' kids playing out or taking part in organised activities when your own child can't.”**

**“...for children to play freely is still a long way off without them feeling continuously vulnerable.”**

**“Wheelchair access can be a problem for our children, it is sometimes very difficult for the chairs to get over uneven ground in playgrounds, forests and countryside which stops them being able to play. In towns and cities they are not allowed to play ball games or have any appropriate and safe environments to play outside. When I asked the children they said that is why they spend most time in the house as there is nowhere else to go.”**

Families affected by disability can often find themselves in the ‘poverty trap’. Research demonstrates a strong relationship between low income, social exclusion and disability among families in Scotland. Families with disabled children remain disproportionately likely to be in poverty. (Kemp P. et. al. (2004), *Routes out of poverty*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation)

Growing Up in Scotland findings have also shown that children from disadvantaged backgrounds have less play at home and less perceived access to safe outdoor play space. (Scottish Government, 2012)

The complexity of feelings around inclusion in provision and opportunities for play was highlighted in the Literature Review. It quoted Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector research which found that 94% of the parents (of disabled children) surveyed thought that activities should be accessible to all; however, 90% of these same parents also thought that special programmes were necessary.

This situation was illustrated by observations made by participants in the review.

**“The group provides separate services which are used as a stepping stone and practice for entering mainstream (if appropriate). Most of the children say that they have no friends and have experienced bullying. Most have tried mainstream groups and it hasn’t worked. They feel safe at the group.”**

Throughout the review this tension has been apparent but positive examples were also offered.

**“Through our outreach work we discovered a gap in facilities for children and young people with autism and Asperger’s through dialogue with children and parents. We then sought funding allowing us to employ qualified staff to run an evening club to suit the age and needs of the individual children, through attending this club parents now feel more confident for them to join various sessions within our park and indoor facility.”**

The review served to highlight a number of number propositions which can be summarised as follows.

- It is acknowledged that all this can be complicated and since everyone is different no one service, opportunity or style of play provision can meet the needs of every individual. However, there are many positives examples of inclusion in practice which work really well.
- The degrees of complexity involved should not mask the underlying principles of non-discrimination, equality of opportunity and participation.

- We need to think about what we can do so that children and young people feel safe and welcome in mainstream provision rather than the opposite.
- For many disabled children and their families trying something new can feel (and be) very risky on many levels: emotionally, financially, physically, or a risk to established arrangements and sense of hard-found equilibrium. It's very important that this sense of risk is understood properly in approaching the development of play opportunities.
- These multiple barriers were responded to seriously – play is a fundamental part of childhood, and significant number of children in Scotland not able to exercise their right to play.

## This is the vision

**“We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. 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.”** *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013) Scottish Government.*

## These are some of the things that could help achieve this.

It would help if:

- The ‘stepping stone’ effect was examined more carefully to find ways to ensure it is as effective as it can be in practice – are there lessons to learn? How can we services learn from each other?
- There was consideration of what quality play provision look like in schools. (See also section 7) Children and young people spend much of their time in school and many everyday opportunities for inclusion in and through play arise in schools.
- There was a high profile campaign about play with an explicitly inclusive approach as has been called for throughout the review (see also Section 6)

## 12. Co-ordination

### Significantly more attention should be given to coordination across services and geographic areas to achieve inclusive opportunities

A recent report from Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (Stalker, K., 2013) observed that:

**“There is a need for far more social and recreational opportunities for disabled children and young people, including those with life-limiting conditions. Local area co-ordinators, who have a capacity building remit, could support mainstream organisations to include disabled children and young people.”**

There was little reporting of coordinated approaches across an area, neighbourhood or local authority to support inclusive approaches to children's play. While there were excellent examples of partnerships for projects, and cooperation for the same children for activities other than play, we received no reports of thoroughly comprehensive approaches which put children and young people's play at the centre.

There was some reporting of opposing directions taken within the same local authority for example where inclusion was emphasised on a practice level while the overall direction maintained the status quo.

**“(there is a) question around what inclusion is. There are social and financial, transport and access issues. Gaps in provision for children with disabilities. Services are separate not inclusive and this is values driven”**

Indeed, it was noted that there is a lack of baseline information:

**“Taking childcare as an example, the current inadequacy of provision for disabled children in Scotland is extremely troubling. There is currently no legal duty on Local Authorities to undertake any childcare sufficiency analysis and some 40% of local authorities in Scotland do not know if they have sufficient childcare for working parents and only 18% say that they have sufficient childcare for disabled children. This is further compounded by the difficulties in reaching parents of disabled children with little or no availability of data on disabled children living in local authority areas.” (Source: Lugton, D. Rutter, J., (2014) *Out of School, out of mind?*, Family and Childcare Trust)**

One respondent felt that:

**“the (out of school care) clubs having been so competitive have only just started to network with each other”.**

He felt they were making tentative steps towards this and that could only be a good thing in relation to inclusion: with dialogue and sharing of information and specialism, children with additional needs were more likely to get the club that was most suited to their needs.

Another respondent suggested:

**“It would be good to be able to work alongside trained play leaders who have experience of working with children with complex additional support needs. This would help to ensure we are offering fully inclusive programmes.”**

Where examples were given of local partnerships and particularly of local Play Associations and Play Forums, they seemed to be more effective in bringing about inclusive opportunities.

More coordinated approaches may also be helpful in addressing the frequently reported problem of meeting the needs of all children in a family (in various circumstances).

**“non-disabled children who have a brother or sister with a disability can find it hard to access play opportunities because their parents are not able to take them out or to clubs etc. because they need to stay in with the disabled child.”**

**“bring in community input for leaving/creating space - by community I mean departments of local authority, e.g. planning, environment, housing, people who live in a specific area, schools, nurseries, childcare facilities, sporting clubs, church, social work, NHS, police. Joined up working e.g. new housing areas create 'open space' that is within view of homes, park cars away from homes, light up, open space doesn't mean green space that local authority has to cut, but a places where the community can claim ownership for play, conversation, engagement.”**

In answer to the question: **How effective are current commissioning practices in ensuring inclusive opportunities are available?**

**“With personalisation and SDS (Self Directed Support), people have, in theory, more choice regarding the services they access. However, in practice this is hindered by whether the budget they are given allows them to afford the specialist support their children need, and the process of assessment is currently very slow in some local authorities. Appropriate services also need to be available in their area.”**

**If you could design inclusive services from start to be just the way you would like them to be, what would that be like?**

**“Purpose built, spacious. Quiet space, info sessions for everyone. Free at point of delivery, accessible transport available (and built in to the service)”**

**“The involvement and consideration of disabled children and young people is crucial from the outset”**

**“Staff and resources that can be adapted to meet the needs of all children, putting thought into how to adapt them for individual children's physical, sensory and communication needs.”**

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### These are some of the things that could help achieve this.

It would help if:

- Coordinated approaches were put in place so that the services offered in local area were properly mapped, assessed and coordinated.
- Exercises to map services, skills and opportunities were carried out regularly.
- Local Authority Play Strategies were developed to underpin such an approach and support given to Local Play Associations or Forum (see also Section 8).
- The ‘play sufficiency’ model was investigated in order to apply lessons learnt in Scotland. (Section 11 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 places a duty on local authorities to assess and secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their area.)
- Across a geographic area or group of settings, systems were established to support ‘banks’ of skills, information and expertise with regard to specific skills and understanding that support inclusion in play.
- Increased support was available to those organisations which have contact with disabled children and their families very early on in the child’s life.

# 13. Low-Key, Everyday Actions

## Low-key, everyday actions might make a big difference

When we have asked about examples of what works, a very large number of responses are examples of actions and practices that are quite low-key and everyday in nature.

For example: **“Woman's Aid worker sat cross legged on the floor, the same as the child and talked.”**

The proposition emerged that for more children and young people to experience inclusive play opportunities we need to greater emphasis on improving the quality of everyday practice (empathy, adult child interactions, listening, etc.)

**“At the summer holiday club (...) there is space for her chair, and everything is on one level. From the first time I met her, I was impressed at how the staff interacted with her, and included her in play. For example, during tig, staff push her (she loves going fast), and she tigs others. I think this encourages other children, too. For example, while working with her outside I was pushing her around an "obstacle course" (made up of balls etc. that were just lying on the ground), and another child joined in - this turned into a game of 'find the child' who hid behind me while I span the child around as we tried to find her. Children pick up our attitudes. One asked me the other day "how do you know what she's saying?" which I thought was a great chance to teach him that it just takes time and patience (and asking colleagues for help!) and showed an increased empathy for him (he does not usually play with other children)”.**

The following points are taken from the discussion by play sector participants at the review event in Dundee.

- Staff need to behave appropriately right from the start i.e. eye contact, listening, cuddling a child - interpersonal skills make all the difference
- Key is to engage the parent - small kindnesses can be a building blocks for change
- Listen to the child, see the world through their eyes, let them take the lead
- Important that development is child led. Too much emphasis on age related milestones. Needs to be more flexibility so that children only do things when they are ready

In this respect, the emphasis really was that quality matters.

It's easy to see how in a rushed situation specific needs can be overlooked or windows of opportunity missed. It's just harder to stop, listen and think. These low-key actions are intertwined with other themes – particularly time and training, however it is in everyday low-key actions, that inclusion happens - inclusion is played out through small actions, compassion, empathy and respect. Apparently small omissions or ill-judged actions could have a significantly detrimental effect over all.

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### These are some of the things that could help achieve this.

It would help if:

- Training and ongoing support emphasised the importance of everyday low-key actions as a dimension of quality.
- This dimension of quality was reflected in how play provision is (self-) monitored and evaluated.
- Everyday low-key actions are recognised and celebrated at practice, management levels and inspection levels.

# 14. Time

## The time available to practitioners is a significant factor in their ability to put into practice inclusive actions and approaches

When we have asked about barriers to supporting/ facilitating play opportunities in the way people would like to, lack of time seemed to underlie a number of the issues.

Managers and practitioners reported lack of time to plan, to seek advice or meet specialists. They felt that this had knocked on into a lack of time to put specialist advice into action. Time is required to find funds for improvements or appropriate resources and equipment.

Generally the number of paid hours available to staff within a service was felt not to meet the hours required to do what they know is needed. (Many staff seem to put in significant levels of unpaid hours).

**“Childcare sector still relies on staff goodwill”**

**“It takes time to change attitudes”**

**“Limited time means children who are not accessing groups/play opportunities are not being encouraged to play”**

**“Had a good system in place but with the 600 hours (new childcare policy) over 90% of the time will be with the face to face contact with the children, need to have more time to reflect and plan.”**

In relation to coordination required to support inclusive opportunities, this also takes time and is key to ensuring that children have good experiences when they take part in play opportunities.

**“Key issue is preparation and awareness raising if children and young people are to go into mainstream services and whole group needs to be on board.”**

**“Time is so limited that staff have to focus on own service and little or no time to engage with other services, thus limited the service provided”**

## This is the vision

**“We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. 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.”** *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013) Scottish Government.*

### These are some of the things that could help achieve this.

It would help if:

- Play, childcare and other services where play happens were adequately resourced.
- Local Play Associations and Forums, and Play Development Officers (Local Authorities and third sector) are supported so that they can develop support, coordinate and pool resources for shared use and benefit
- Capacity building and models such as cascade training are more widely available and delivered throughout Scotland (see also Section 9)

# 15. Physical Environment

**The quality of physical environments makes a hugely significant difference to the quality of children and young people's experience and opportunities for play**

When we asked about barriers to inclusive play, the quality of physical environment (indoor and out) emerged as a frequent sources of dissatisfaction, both from children and young people and from adults. This theme emerged across all of the Play Strategy domains encompassing homes, gardens, community spaces, school grounds, playgrounds/play parks, streets.

**“Play space designers are very distant from play specialists in terms of how they approach things e.g. designers of a park in North Glasgow gave the children a catalogue and asked them to choose the equipment they would like from it.”**

A 'Wish List' from four children using CHAS (Children's Hospice Association Scotland) services included;

- “Better parks – more equipment for wheelchairs. The child said they can't use any park in the area as he depends on his chair and can't transfer to play equipment.
- Access to technology
- More places inside for when it's raining
- Places to play that are free”

We chose to focus one of the Review events on Public Space and the Built Environment, targeting invitations to individuals and groups with a specific interest or role – architecture, planning, arts, sustainable transport, play space design, parents. There were numerous points to be made in this regard and the following gives a flavour of discussions.

**“Planning is for housing and car parks, not for children. The environment needs to be adapted to provide play space. In this context a street which is a thoroughfare is not play space.”**

**“Private developers are interested in maximising profit, not in creating rich play environments. It isn't their job. The result is that play parks or areas in new private developments tend to be tokenistic.”**

**“Some planners are more aware than others. This is about not just building houses but about creating liveable/living areas.”**

**“Housing can be an issue for all families but especially where there is a child with a disability. Local authority housing can be in closes without lifts so equipment and children need to be juggled. Gardens are communal and not necessarily well fenced or safe (...) In an ideal world families would have better and easier access to their accommodation and there would be better access to safe enclosed outdoor garden spaces and/or more play parks which are available to families on their doorstep so to speak. Opportunities to promote wet weather play venues would also be helpful.” (Survey respondent)**

Planning Aid Scotland and Sustrans were cited in interesting examples from the survey.

**“Children and young people were consulted and engaged on re-designing a key route to the local school. They helped with the design of pavement feature which they (and adults) could use for play en route to and from school. Sustrans commissioned an artist to work with schoolchildren to design a map of their local area/community including the routes that they take to school. This map is displayed in a waiting shelter for parents who are collecting their children from school and has also been printed and distributed locally. Planning Aid for Scotland facilitated a workshop with some Norwegian professionals who always engage with children when planning new developments - the children are asked to describe and map where in the area they play and travel.”**

It was suggested that inclusive approaches now in practice in other types of environments could usefully be applied to parks, playgrounds, play parks, play days etc. such as:

- The idea of autism-friendly viewings in cinema and theatres could be translated to autism-friendly sessions in park settings (limiting noise and numbers, for example, and accommodating need for structure and predictability).
- The idea of “someone in playparks like a lifeguard at a swimming pool” could translate to people in play spaces such as Play Rangers - and it should be said there can be few reviews and consultations into play which have not called for people in parks and play spaces regardless of any focus on inclusion.
- The desirability of break out spaces to be incorporated, whether indoors or outdoors, which can be achieved through use of good design and sense of place (quiet seating areas, meditative gardens, gardening clubs - smaller, quieter, calmer spaces which allow children and young people to take some time out and manage stress levels as needed without needing to completely opt out).
- “places you don’t have to socialise in an unstructured way”

Questions arose over prioritising the upkeep of large central parks at the expense of smaller more localised spaces, and it was suggested that accessible local spaces should be a higher priority than “pretty parks”.

The idea of inclusive spaces for children and young people to play was not seen as mutually exclusive with good ‘shared space’ for all members of a community to use – indeed there were many potential benefits suggested in finding a new way to look at organisation of public space.

It was interesting that in the course of the review examples of really good places to play were often offered with a degree of hesitancy because they weren’t specifically labelled as ‘inclusive’ or in some way ‘for’ disabled children and young people. And yet, they were places that were really enjoyed for play and created satisfying opportunities where children didn’t feel different. It might be surmised that sometimes this was as a result of an underlying ethos and intent, and sometimes by happy meeting of good design and playful people.

- Many examples of really good places to play which were seen and felt to be inclusive weren’t those that had been labelled as such (and some weren’t intended primarily for play).

- 
- It is strongly suggested (from practical examples, children’s feedback and projects) that the better design of play spaces in school could have a positive impact on inclusion and yet there appears to be a lack of research, explicit design advice or case studies. Again, principles of Universal Design should feature.
  - Similarly, and despite the efforts of both children and adults to make the best of what they have, a significant number settings for children’s services of all kinds in Scotland would appear from the feedback in this review to have physical environments which are not conducive to play, never mind to inclusive opportunities.
  - In all settings, there is an interplay between physical and social environments which has a huge impact on inclusion, as demonstrated by comments throughout this report.

It is not within the scope of this review to enter into a more detailed discussion of the numerous dimensions of this aspect of inclusion but it is clearly a topic of huge importance in relation to inclusion, communities and play.

In carrying out this review and coming to conclusions, much was found to be in common with *Good Places Better Health for Scotland’s Children (Scottish Government, 2011)*.

**“We would encourage all professions and interested parties involved in ‘placemaking’, health, children’s services and community work to share our vision and use our recommendations along with their own ideas to deliver healthier places for the children of Scotland to grow up in. It is only in people taking true ownership of a shared vision that we can achieve the change we need to see in Scotland.” (p9)**

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### These are some of the things that could help achieve this.

It would help if:

- With regard to public space and the built environment, principles of Universal Design<sup>4</sup> were taken into account.
- Pro-active measures were taken to improve the day-to-day play environments offered by schools. It was acknowledged that improvements are arising due to input from organisations such as Grounds for Learning, some local authorities and by the efforts and fundraising of individual schools however play environments in schools were widely remarked upon.
- Within qualifications for people working for or with children including teachers and playworkers, the Qualification Authority and providers addressed the knowledge and skills gap in creating and sustaining the physical environment for play and inclusion.(See also 18)
- Community Planning Partnerships and communities used the Place Standard (in development at the time of writing this report<sup>5</sup>) to improve the quality of places and support the Play Strategy vision.
- The Place Standard was into account in reporting on the new duties to report on progress on children’s rights and wellbeing included parts 1 and 3 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.healthscotland.com/resources/cpps/local/placestandard.aspx>

# 16. Rules and Regulations

## The application (and misapplication) of rules and regulations negatively impacts on the quality of opportunities for play

Inflexible or inappropriate rules and regulations (or the application of them) emerged as one of the biggest barriers identified in the survey section on nursery, school, early learning and childcare.

We wondered if this is a problem regarding play opportunities and services in a general sense, or does it have specific implications in relation to inclusion. We went on to explore this further in the events and asked questions such as why rules and regulations were considered such a barrier. We considered examples and the implications for inclusion and play.

There is a concern that schools often have unnecessarily restrictive rules for no apparent or unsurmountable reason, for example, rules about when children have access to grass, are allowed to climb, run, hide, play tig, rules about children's use of diverse spaces in school grounds (often the most interesting spaces seemed to be out of bounds) and use of play spaces throughout the school day. Rather than appropriate framework for play time having been thought through together by staff and children, rules seemed to develop in an ad hoc fashion such as one individual in a school or service setting laying down rules (e.g. the janitor or the playground supervisor), imposition of a static set of rules or tokenistic involvement of children.

There was a perception that rules are often imposed due to fear rather than with a positive focus on the benefits of play. These arguments are well rehearsed in the literature on play: fear of legal action, fear of being considered negligent, fear of disorder or loss of control. In addition it was suggested that rules are sometimes simply "made up" to make people's jobs easier.

The 'myth or reality' debate also played itself out in the review with many examples given of participants doubting the basis on which a decision was made, for example children in school not being allowed to use tools because the "Health and Safety Officer would say no".

Again, in community settings the issues about fear, social cohesion and attitudes to children and young people are well rehearsed elsewhere. The continued prevalence of "no ball games" signs is a visible signal of discouragement to play and an underlying intolerance of children and young people in public and community spaces. Parents fear being judged negligent for allowing their children to play outside or to be wearing scruffy or dirty clothes. It was again noted that perception of risk from strangers is magnified many times by tragic but isolated cases and media attention. Traffic is continually reported by adults and children as a barrier to playing outside.

There was a concern that while some out of school services and schools have productive and mutually beneficial relationships, others feel that the relationship is uneasy due to the different ethos of each while sharing the same space. Their approaches to negotiating rules, use of space, understanding of play types and assessing risk and benefit did not sit easily together under one roof.

In the home environment, perceptions of the impact of rules and regulations related more to parents' level of understanding of the benefits of different types of play and ability to accommodate them at home, however reference was also made to rules in social housing that made creating a playful environment for children more difficult.

This review was not able to pin down specific dimensions of rules and regulations which impact on inclusion in and through play (which is not to say that they don't exist). The review does however strongly suggest that the application of rules and regulations do have a significant impact on the quality of play experiences available to children in all types of settings on an everyday basis. And, as the review has highlighted quality matters to the achievement of inclusion.

This review therefore recommends that a major effort be made to embed a Risk-Benefit approach to children's play.

This approach was outlined by Lord Young in his 2010 report *Common Sense, Common Safety* (Cabinet Office, 2010), in the Health and Safety Executive High Level Statement on *Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach* (2012), in the Play Safety Forum's *Managing Risk in Play Provision* (National Children's Bureau, 2012), and supported in *Good Places Better Health* (Scottish Government 2011).

## This is the vision

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### These are some of the things that could help achieve this.

It would help if:

- The Risk- Benefit approach, were firmly embedded and consistently implemented throughout the hierarchy of structures within which children's play opportunities happen on a daily basis. That is, consistently implemented and integrated through all levels – practice, management, training, development and support, communications, strategy, policy, inspection, legislation (see also Section 7).

# 17. Confidence and Awareness

**Building confidence and awareness around the value of play would support inclusive play opportunities for all children.**

**“Parents who do not constantly set up activities give their children more free time, but this is at odds with the perception that “good play” is “paid for play”. All parents want to do the best for their children regardless of income levels, but nowadays there is a belief/culture that good parenting requires “managing” your child, ferrying them to activities. This may take away their independent development.”**

As highlighted above (see Section 6), there is a concern that parents and carers – surrounded by conflicting messages and pressures – may lack confidence in supporting children’s play. A widely aired concern was that there is a lack of understanding of the benefits of play and the value of free play (child-led, play structured by children not adults).

It wasn’t widely felt that information about play was lacking but rather that it was difficult for some parents and carers to access it or, by implication, put it in context and act on it confidently. Concurrent with this review, a study was undertaken to consider information, messages and resources available to parents and carers in Scotland for cost effective play in the home (Roshdy, F., Stringer, E. (2015). A wide range of advice and activity information for a variety of family groups was found to be available. Whilst the information was generally universal and could be applied to all families and in most cases adapted to a child’s individual needs there were also examples of resources developed specifically for a target segment. The authors noted that the majority of resources are in written format and can be found online. They point out that this “introduces a risk to more vulnerable segments of society without access to the Internet or with low reading skills to be excluded. However there is evidence that access to this information is often provided by a support or health worker provided by a public or third sector organisation such as Children 1st, NHS Scotland, Sure Start etc.”

Key gaps were highlighted: no resources were found that are directly targeted to kinship families on the subject of play in the home and similarly for other non-standard family types; the 14-18 year old group are not being served in a positive fashion with the majority of resources relating to this group being around stopping or preventing negative behaviour; there was limited usage of video and audio resources found relating to the topic of play in the home; and, there are 14 council areas where information on play in the home could not be found on a local level.

Within the Inclusive Play Review, the Scottish Government’s PlayTalkRead and Book Bugs were frequently mentioned as examples to emulate in reaching more parents and a carers with information and support for play.

As in the theme of Rules and Regulations, above, it was difficult to identify in the review aspects of this theme which related specifically to inclusion as, again, there was a strong sense in which this was a more universal issue in Scotland and, if addressed universally, would have an effect of supporting inclusion in a broader way.

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**“We need a major campaign explaining/educating everyone about play”**

However well-prepared, most parents and carers feel themselves to be learning all the time as they raise their children, working through new issues, facing tricky personal and practical challenges and encountering new experiences as they go along. Thinking about contemporary issues that relate to play, brain science and scientific evidence of the benefits of play are all there in the mix. Parents and carers of children with additional support needs have all that and more.

It is important, however, that the value of playing is understood by parents and carers of disabled or disadvantaged children and young people, and by the professionals they have contact with. The opportunity to enjoy play and friendship with family and peers is a basic need.

**In this section we would reiterate the recommendations made in Section 6 (Play at Home and in the Family Environment)**

# 18. Training and Ongoing Support

**Addressing a gap in training and ongoing support for practitioners and professionals in a number of disciplines would help to ensure all our children and young people have the play opportunities to which they have a right.**

This theme was succinctly summarised by participants in one of the review events.

“There is a lack of knowledge/understanding of:

- What play is
- Why it matters
- The benefits of play
- How it can affect parents and children”

**“Play training should be seen as integral in the skillset of all workers involved with children and should be part of a more creative, practical and robust professional qualification framework that supports and promotes the quality play practitioner within this country.”**

In exploring questions around how to improve inclusion, capacity building was a common theme:

**“My view has always been that disabled children and young people should always be considered in every setting/eventuality/circumstance, and that staff training is the biggest barrier to this not happening. This is where I see the capacity building remit being focused.”**

**“Often mainstream groups that intend to be inclusive and open to all cannot support the needs of the children we work with because they do not have staff that have the skills to communicate with them (e.g. if the child uses sign language, or perhaps has no formal language), or enough staff to provide the level of support needed. Other barriers are staff not being trained or insured to administer medication children need, e.g. for epilepsy. Or the service may have changing beds but they’re not height adjustable and have no sides so they are not suitable to keeping the young person safe. Children and young people therefore need specialist provision and this can be very limited, or non-existent, especially in more rural areas.”**

**“To have a professional workforce you need to support their learning and development and then reward accordingly. The majority of my staff earn £7.50 per hour - they would earn more on a till in a supermarket. The managers of the service would also have a higher salary if they managed a store. If the government really believed in the value of play then it would recognise this and staff would be paid on par with teachers”.**

## How has your organisation tried to overcome barriers to inclusive play opportunities?

“Training - workshops - partnering up with different organisations - some focused work, project work and some that is open and free for all”

“We brought in an outside provider for a staff training day on holding our session in local woodland. We now have the confidence and building experience of taking our children out to the woodland on a regular basis. The children get so much enjoyment from these sessions and you can see the less confident bloom in different surroundings.”

“I would think that consideration should be given to more of a focus on ‘inclusive play’ through the SQA (Scottish Qualification Authority) qualifications for Playworkers.”

Children need to be able to play in their own way. A note of caution was sounded that we may need to be alert to promoting particular types of play as the ‘ideal’ when for some children and young people they simply would not be what they would choose freely or find satisfying. For example it was suggested that social, messy, outdoor or unstructured play is often portrayed as if it is inherently ‘better’ for all children, regardless of the child’s own disposition.

### This is the vision

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### These are some of the things that could help achieve this.

It would help if:

- There was more practical facilitation of play in all qualifications
- Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), Care Inspectorate and Scottish Governments agendas were better linked and updated in relation to each other
- Care Inspectorate were to be involved in progression on the Play Strategy

In this section we would reiterate the recommendations made in Section 7 (Nursery, School, Early Learning and Childcare) and Section 9 (Positive Support for Play). We would also like to make reference to the forthcoming Play Strategy Implementation Group’s *Review of Current Levels of Play Training provided to School and Nursery Staff* which was taking place concurrently with this review.

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- Juliet Robertson and Mile End Primary School, Aberdeen

# Appendix 1

## Literature Review Executive Summary

*Inclusive play in Scotland: context, concepts and current research (Scottish Government, 2015)*

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:

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- 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.

# Appendix 2

## Working Definition: Play for older children and young people

The literature on play is 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. This review will not attempt to answer what play is for older children and young people or how they would describe it themselves, however our Working Definition is lifted straight from the UN General Comment on article 31 which we feel is as compatible with how play is experienced for older children and young people as it is for young children (even if they don't call it play).

**“Play is any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled and structured by children themselves; it takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise (...) play itself is non-compulsory, driven by intrinsic motivation and undertaken for its own sake, rather than as a means to an end. Play involves the exercise of autonomy, physical, mental or emotional activity, and has the potential to take infinite forms, either in groups or alone. These forms will change and be adapted throughout the course of childhood.”**

*General comment No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (art. 31), United Nations, 2013.*

Leisure is described in the UN General Comment as time in which play or recreation can take place - that is, free or unobligated time that does not involve formal education, work, home responsibilities, etc. and is largely discretionary to be used as the child or young person chooses.

Therefore, our proposed Working Definition of play for older children and young people is what children and young people do for fun and enjoyment when they have free time to use as they choose.

# Appendix 3

## Table of recommendations: section by section

### This is the vision

**“We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. 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.”** *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013) Scottish Government.*

In order to achieve this, it would help if the following actions were undertaken.

### 5. Children and Young People: Survey and Consultation Packs

It would help if:

- Within a more coordinated approach, more care was taken to understand children and young people’s daily experience of play: that is, to try to understand play in the pattern of a child’s whole day and broader experience, taking into account time to play, space to play and suitable support to play in all of the settings the child spends time in.
- Design and management of play spaces, particularly in schools, was improved; spaces conducive to different ways of playing were included, and areas with a feeling of calm, security and quiet were available to children who choose them. (See also sections 6, 7, 8 and 15 for comments and recommendations on physical environments).
- Designated play spaces were looked after better, and children and young people were involved in decisions about them.
- Resources were directed to shared, playable spaces where children and young people could find inclusive opportunities to play particularly in their local neighbourhood environment.
- There were greater opportunities for participation of children and young people in decisions which impact directly and indirectly on their opportunities to play.
- Informed support to play was available in settings where children and young people spend their time.

### 6. In the Home and Family Environment

It would help if:

- There was a large scale, properly resourced campaign undertaken to promote the importance of play to parents and carers, and to those who work with them (taking into account of quality and equality in play, therefore children’s play rights including the play rights of disabled children and young people).
- The value of play was understood by professionals and organisations working for, or with, children and those whose work has an impact on children’s play.
- A coordinated approach was taken between third sector, government and public agencies to ensure ‘reach’ of the key messages.
- There was coordinated work to improve the child- and play-friendly design of interior and exterior spaces at the earliest stages in development of housing stock.
- Support around play was available to families of disabled children at the earliest stages of the child’s life through both universal provision and the third sector services.

See also Emergent Themes

## 7. At Nursery, School, Early Learning and Childcare

It would help if:

- Equality training was undertaken by all the members of the school community – adults, children and young people.
- There was a serious examination at national level of what quality play provision for all children would look like in schools, including dialogue about the nature of ‘free play’.
- There was play training in teaching qualifications (Initial Teacher Education onwards).
- The skills of play workforce were utilised in schools.
- Attention was given to playtime and lunchtime in schools taking into account the need for appropriate resources, design of outdoor spaces and management of outdoor spaces including in Granted Aided Special Schools and Special Schools.
- Principles of Access for All and Universal Design<sup>6</sup> were promoted for the design and development of play spaces in nursery, school, early learning and childcare.
- The role and job descriptions of staff with responsibility for playground supervision were developed reflecting play principles, and with suitable training available to support this.
- There was ready access to practical information and advice to assist with meeting the needs of individual children. (See Online Hub, Positive Support for Play)
- A strong high-level lead was given by the Scottish Government and Community Planning Partnerships to implementing the Risk-Benefit Assessment approach to play in all settings in which children spend time encompassing clear support for the Risk-Benefit approach to disabled children’s play opportunities (see also Section 16)
- Work was done with parents through nursery, school, early learning and childcare, to increase understanding of the value of play.
- The role of Playgroups, Toddler Groups and Childminders, often the first play settings outside the family for very young children, was recognised (though support, training, etc.) as having particular importance to supporting inclusion in the very early years.

## 8. In the Community

It would help if:

- The Risk-Benefit Assessment approach was firmly embedded and implemented consistently. (See also Section 7 above)
- Schemes such as Play Rangers / Community Playworkers were extended so that there is visible support to play in play spaces, parks and neighbourhood spaces.
- In every Local Authority/Community Planning Partnership area Play Policies, Strategies and accompanying Action Plans were developed which include explicit aims, objectives and actions to make tangible progress towards inclusive practices, programmes and environments.
- Communities were invited to contribute and engage in local programmes and activities.
- A positive lead was given by the Play Strategy Implementation Group to development of a network of “play champions” underpinned by the principles set out in the Play Strategy and the UN Convention article 31; with explicit reference to progress on inclusion – non-discrimination, equality of opportunity, participation – as integral to the role.

<sup>6</sup> See UN General Comment no. 17: The term “universal design” was coined by Ronald Mace to describe the concept of designing all products and the built environment to be aesthetic and usable to the greatest extent possible by everyone, regardless of their age, ability or status in life; see also art. 4, para. 1 (f) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

## 9. Positive Support for Play

It would help if:

- In keeping with the United Nation's General Comment on article 31, all professionals working with or for children, or whose work impacts on children, received systematic and ongoing training on the human rights of children, including article 31 (which encompasses the right to play).
- Coverage of key elements of play training was introduced or increased for all those whose work has an impact, indirectly and directly, on children's play.
- A central Online Hub of information was developed to support inclusive practice in relation to play and to provide information about specific skills, knowledge and practices which can be utilised in mainstream, inclusive children's settings. This should be easily accessible to all those who work for or with children with input from children and young people, third sector play and disability organisations and should make use of specialist expertise that already exists in Scotland and elsewhere.
- Further and long term investment was made in capacity building models of support to play providers in order to include disabled children and young people. This not only ensures the inclusion of disabled children and young people in play provision but builds the skills, knowledge and confidence of the play workforce ensuring sustainability.
- Provision for play, play environments and support to play opportunities in whatever form (infrastructure, training, advice, campaigns, service provision, policies) located non-discrimination, equality of opportunity and participation as standing principles in every action, programme or measure.
- A set of "Test Questions" was developed and introduced for play programmes, practice and environments which encourage progressive action and accountability.

## 11. Multiple Barriers

**Disabled and disadvantaged children and young people in Scotland face multiple barriers to being able to play at home, at nursery, school, early learning and childcare and in the community**

It would help if:

- The 'stepping stone' effect was examined more carefully to find ways to ensure it is as effective as it can be in practice – are there lessons to learn? How can we services learn from each other?
- There was consideration of what quality play provision look like in schools. (See also section 7) Children and young people spend much of their time in school and many everyday opportunities for inclusion in and through play arise in schools.
- There was a high profile campaign about play with an explicitly inclusive approach as has been called for throughout the review (see also Section 6)

## 12. Coordination

**Significantly more attention should be given to coordination across services and geographic areas to achieve inclusive opportunities**

It would help if:

- Coordinated approaches were put in place so that the services offered in local area were properly mapped, assessed and coordinated.
- Exercises to map services, skills and opportunities were carried out regularly.

- Local Authority Play Strategies were developed to underpin such an approach and support given to Local Play Associations or Forum (see also Section 8).
- The 'play sufficiency' model was investigated in order to apply lessons learnt in Scotland. (Section 11 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 places a duty on local authorities to assess and secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their area.)
- Across a geographic area or group of settings, systems were established to support 'banks' of skills, information and expertise with regard to specific skills and understanding that support inclusion in play.
- Increased support was available to those organisations which have contact with disabled children and their families very early on in the child's life.

### 13. Low-Key, Everyday Actions

#### Low-key, everyday actions might make a big difference

It would help if:

- Training and ongoing support emphasised the importance of everyday low-key actions as a dimension of quality.
- This dimension of quality was reflected in how play provision is (self-) monitored and evaluated.
- Everyday low-key actions are recognised and celebrated at practice, management levels and inspection levels.

### 14. Time

#### The time available to practitioners is a significant factor in their ability to put into practice inclusive actions and approaches

It would help if:

- Play, childcare and other services where play happens were adequately resourced.
- Local Play Associations and Forums, and Play Development Officers (Local Authorities and third sector) are supported so that they can develop support, coordinate and pool resources for shared use and benefit
- Capacity building and models such as cascade training are more widely available and delivered throughout Scotland (see also Section 9)

### 15. Physical Environments

#### The quality of physical environments makes a hugely significant difference to the quality of children and young people's experience and opportunities for play

It would help if:

- With regard to public space and the built environment, principles of Universal Design<sup>7</sup> were taken into account.
- Pro-active measures were taken to improve the day-to-day play environments offered by schools. It was acknowledged that improvements are arising due to input from organisations such as Grounds for Learning, some local authorities and by the efforts and fundraising of individual schools however play environments in schools were widely remarked upon.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

- Within qualifications for people working for or with children including teachers and playworkers, the Qualification Authority and providers addressed the knowledge and skills gap in creating and sustaining the physical environment for play and inclusion. (See also 18)
- Community Planning Partnerships and communities used the Place Standard (in development at the time of writing this report <sup>8</sup>) to improve the quality of places and support the Play Strategy vision.
- The Place Standard was into account in reporting on the new duties to report on progress on children's rights and wellbeing included parts 1 and 3 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

## 16. Rules and Regulations

**The application (and misapplication) of rules and regulations negatively impacts on the quality of opportunities for play**

It would help if:

- The Risk- Benefit approach, were firmly embedded and consistently implemented throughout the hierarchy of structures within which children's play opportunities happen on a daily basis. That is, consistently implemented and integrated through all levels – practice, management, training, development and support, communications, strategy, policy, inspection, legislation (see also Section 7).

## 17. Confidence and Awareness

**Building confidence and awareness around the value of play would support inclusive play opportunities for all children.**

In this section we would reiterate the recommendations made in Section 6 (Play at Home and in the Family Environment)

## 18. Training and Ongoing Support

**Practitioners and professionals in a number of disciplines are not sufficiently equipped by training and ongoing support to ensure all our children and young people have the play opportunities to which they have a right.**

It would help if:

- There was more practical facilitation of play in all qualifications
- Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), Care Inspectorate and Scottish Governments agendas were better linked and updated in relation to each other
- Care Inspectorate were to be involved in progression on the Play Strategy

In this section we would reiterate the recommendations made in Section 7 (Nursery, School, Early Learning and Childcare) and Section 9 (Positive Support for Play). We would also like to make reference to the forthcoming Play Strategy Implementation Group's *Review of Current Levels of Play Training provided to School and Nursery Staff* which was taking place concurrently with this review.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.healthscotland.com/resources/cpps/local/placestandard.aspx>

## Play Strategy for Scotland:

Our Action Plan sets out actions that take us forward in realising the vision for play.

### Vision:

**“We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. 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.”**

*Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013) Scottish Government.*

### Principles:

- We should **value all** children and young people
- We should enable all children and young people to realise their right to play
- All children and young people should have sufficient space and time to play

### Domains:





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