

Four asks

for play, for health,
for children, for everyone

Every parent knows that playing is good for children.
And there is a growing body of solid evidence of the long-term benefits.
Studies show that play projects:

- Are just as effective as sport and PE programmes in boosting physical activity levels and hence helping to tackle child obesity;
- Support children to become more resilient through the development of their emotional and social self-management skills;
- Provide powerful opportunities for children to engage positively with their school and the wider community, and with nature and the environment;
- Encourage neighbourliness, volunteering and social action, and improve community cohesion.

The Children's Play Policy Forum is calling on all political parties to support the following set of initiatives:

1 In schools: Recognition by UK Government and regulatory authorities – and their equivalents in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland – for the need for play before school, during play/break times and after school hours. This would involve playtime support including training and awareness-raising for school staff and parents, coupled with the provision of suitable equipment and materials for active, creative play.

2 In streets: development of existing Dept of Health-funded programme in England supporting regular sessional road closures in residential streets – extended to every major city in the UK, with an additional focus on streets around schools, and linked to active travel policies. Support parents and residents by reducing red-tape around traffic regulations, consultation, insurance etc.

3 In parks and public play space: Investment programme focusing on disadvantaged communities to encourage appropriate play in public space, while reducing neighbourhood conflict and the resulting pressure on police time. Delivered through a partnership of local authorities, play providers, crime prevention agencies and neighbourhood mediation services.

4 In staffed play services: Support for staffed provision to test social prescription models with health agencies. Develop 'Parents 4 Play' programme in partnership with registered social landlords so that play projects in disadvantaged areas can run practical ideas sessions on active, creative play for local parents to encourage volunteering, social action and asset-based community development.

Based on the evidence, decision makers can be confident that investing in these asks will result in improvements in children's health and well being, and hence a reduction in the pressures on the National Health Service and the public purse. What is more, the level of investment needed would be modest and cost-effective.

About the Children's Play Policy Forum

The Children's Play Policy Forum works to advocate for, promote and increase the understanding of the importance of children's play and quality, inclusive play provision by working with devolved, national and local government; and the voluntary, public and private sectors throughout the United Kingdom.

Members of the Forum include:



References

Beunderman, J./Demos (2010) *People Make Play*. London: Published for Play England by National Children's Bureau.

Gill, T. (2014) *The Play Return: A review of the wider impact of play initiatives*. Children's Play Policy Forum.

Lester, S. and Russell, W. (2008) *Play for a Change: Play, Policy and Practice: A review of contemporary perspectives*. London: National Children's Bureau.