



# Progress review of Scotland's Play Strategy 2020

## 24 steps for play

Play Scotland and  
Scotland's Play Council  
and Strategy Group

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# 1. Executive Summary

**1.1** The Scottish Government's Play Strategy for Scotland and its Action Plan were launched in 2013. The Scottish Government commissioned a progress review on the Play Strategy and Action Plan in 2019 from Play Scotland.

**1.2** The opportunity to review the Play Strategy was warmly welcomed. Overall, Play Council members wanted to see a refresh, rather than a total revision, of the Play Strategy and Action Plan.

**1.3** The Play Strategy and Action Plan have had a positive impact on the provision and development of play according to participants. There was now a greater awareness of play across services and sectors with many examples of effective practice in communities and at national level. A wide range of resources have been produced.

**1.4** There were areas where the Play Strategy and Action Plan have been less effective. Many participants stated that the initial activity and leadership by the Scottish Government had not been sustained over the period since 2013. There was a lack of consistency in how play was supported and implemented across Scotland. Not all Scotland's children and young people and their families had access to the same play facilities, resources, supportive staff or opportunities. Children and young people could be excluded from play opportunities because of where they lived, disability, poverty, family circumstances or age.



**1.5** The four domains of the Play Strategy were seen to work well. Most progress had been made in the domain of 'Early years learning and childcare and school' (previously Nursery and School), and the 'Community' domain. Participants were emphatic that this work needed to be developed and sustained to achieve its outcomes.

**1.6** It was recognised that the 'Home' domain was challenging to take forward and to evaluate and measure impact. Much of the work in the Home domain intersected with other domains – Early years learning and childcare (ELC) and Schools, and Communities. There have been successful developments in the domain 'Positive support for play' but there needed to be further actions, particularly around risk and play. More training and CPD was needed for those in play roles or with a connection to play.

**1.7** Participants noted that there had been more attention to outdoor play in ELC, schools and community settings. Approaches which had been widely used included the development of loose parts play, the use of school playgrounds for out of school play opportunities, resources to support outdoor play such as Play Scotland's Play Types toolkit and those produced by Learning through Landscapes, the establishment of Play Rangers projects funded by the Inspiring Scotland programme and a growth in outdoor and forest school provision.

**1.8** There was greater knowledge of play and its benefits although negative attitudes to play remained. This was shown by the continued existence of 'no ball games' signs although some local authorities had removed such signage. There had been insufficient attention to the availability of play for older children and young people. Instead young people could be stigmatised and their activities regarded as anti-social.

**1.9** A perceived weakness was that the Play Strategy was not communicated or used sufficiently by those outside the play sector who had a responsibility or interest in play. The importance of leadership at a senior level in local authorities and other bodies was seen as crucial in taking forward play.

**1.10** Participants thought that effective practice could be shared more widely although there were a range of networks and organisations which provide opportunities to explore play nationally and locally.

**1.11** There had been useful evaluations undertaken as part of Inspiring Scotland's programme and a progress evaluation of Play Scotland's Getting it Right for Play programme as well as evaluations of projects and programmes. There had been insufficient attention, according to participants, to the monitoring and evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the Play Strategy and the Action Plan.

**1.12** Participants were extremely concerned about levels of funding for play. Inspiring Scotland's programme of funding had been much appreciated but this fund was now smaller. There was an issue about sustainability of projects and posts which have been previously funded by this programme and other funders. The evaluation of the Getting

it Right for Play Programme developed by Play Scotland found that local authorities could use resources in creative ways. Overall, organisations were concerned that local authority support was financially constrained and this situation was getting worse. Play was not regarded as a priority for funding.

**1.13** Participants wanted the existing domains to be used in a refresh of the Action Plan. Current strands of work should continue to be taken forward and reflected in an updated strategy. Extensive work was still required across the domains. This needed to take into account recent and future policy developments.

**1.14** Discussions identified the following issues and themes which should be reflected in an updated strategy: the meaningful participation of children and young people in play; developments around children's human rights including the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); a continued and extended focus on inclusion, specifically around disability and poverty; more attention to the right to play of older children and young people and its connections with other policy areas; play and its benefits in supporting mental health; the use of digital devices and online media and how these relate to play; the importance of place, planning and the built environment; opportunities around the Play Sufficiency Assessments provided by the new Planning Act; and the implications for play of widespread development of new housing and public spaces.

## 1.15 Summary of recommendations - 24 steps for play

### Play Strategy and national leadership on play

**1.15.1** A refreshed Play Strategy and Action Plan should be informed by the Progress Review's findings and policy developments. The existing domains should continue to be used with updated outcomes and a simplified Action Plan.

**1.15.2** The Scottish Government should review and reinstate its annual Ministerial Round Table event on play to bring together national interests and organisations.

**1.15.3** There should be consideration of the implications for the proposed incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law for play.

**1.15.4** Children and young people should participate in future discussions on a Play Strategy and be involved as co-producers and contributors to national and local play policies and provision.

**1.15.5** Policy should reflect cross sectoral and inter professional approaches to play.

**1.15.6** There should be a review of national funding for play with the aim of sustaining and growing funding.

### Monitoring, reporting and sharing practice

**1.15.7** The Scottish Government should consider ways to regularly monitor and evaluate the Play Strategy.

**1.15.8** An annual or bi-annual State of Children's Play report should be produced to analyse progress. An online Play Hub should be established with resources and examples of effective practice.

**1.15.9** The Scottish Play Council should review its vision and forward plan when the Play Strategy and its actions are updated.

**1.15.10** National and local leaders should be supported to take forward play, building on the Play Scotland's Getting it Right for Play programme with local authorities.

### Play across the Play Strategy domains

**1.15.11** The relationship between universally available resources and targeted support for parents and carers should be reflected in the Play Strategy.

**1.15.12** The Play Strategy should include approaches to strengthen the role of play in the curriculum. A model of Play-friendly schools should be explored and developed.

**1.15.13** The Play Strategy should continue to highlight local strategic approaches including community planning and area-wide approaches. Play Scotland's Getting it Right for Play programme should extend its work with local authorities.

**1.15.14** Supporting positive attitudes to play should continue to be at the heart of the Play Strategy with more sharing of evidence on the benefits of play.

### Specific areas for consideration

**1.15.15** There should be a continuing focus on the relationship between risk and play.

**1.15.16** There should be an ongoing emphasis on outdoor play, taking into account Scotland's Coalition for Outdoor Play and Learning's position statement.

**1.15.17** There should be more attention to the inclusion of all children and young people in play, specifically around disability and the impact of poverty and low income.

**1.15.18** Greater emphasis should be given to play for older young people. The Play Strategy should link with the developing National Youth Work Strategy.

**1.15.19** There should be an exploration of the benefits and challenges of digital media and its relationship to play.

**1.15.20** The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 requirements, specifically Local Development Plans and Play Sufficiency Assessments, should be reflected in the Play Strategy

**1.15.21** Consideration should be given to the relationship between transport policy and children's access to play with links to the Active Travel Plan and the next National Planning Framework (NPF4).

**1.15.22** The links between environment and play should be further explored.

**1.15.23** There should be a focus on physical activity and play with links to the Active Scotland Delivery Plan, the Public Health Reform Agenda and sportscotland's strategy.

**1.15.24** The benefits of play in supporting mental health and wellbeing and trauma informed practice should be profiled.





## 2. Introduction

This report is a progress review of the Play Strategy and its associated Action Plan which was launched in 2013.

The Play Strategy for Scotland outlined the importance of play as well as the obligations to support and protect children's right to play. It aimed to improve children and young people's play experiences, regardless of their circumstances. The strategy highlighted the collective responsibility of parents and carers, policymakers, planners and practitioners, communities and society to support children and young people's play.

The Scottish Government's vision in the Play Strategy was:

**'We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. A nation which values play as a life-enhancing experience for all our children and young people, in their homes, nurseries, schools and communities.'**

The Play Strategy identified four domains where play happens and is supported:

- **In the home**
- **At nursery and school (now identified as 'Early years learning and childcare and school')**
- **In the community**
- **Positive support for play.**

The Play Strategy was accompanied by an Action Plan which identified a series of tasks and activities that were to take place in order to support the implementation of the strategy. Since 2013, a range of resources have been produced along with strategic programmes on play such as Inspiring Scotland's funded programmes and Play Scotland's Getting it Right for Play programme, which works with local authorities. These have been complemented by other programmes and activities at national and local level across Scotland.

## 3. Progress Review of the Play Strategy

In March 2019, the Scottish Government commissioned a progress review on Scotland's Play Strategy from Play Scotland. This work was undertaken by Dr Susan Elsley and Play Scotland between May and September 2019.

The aim of the review was to explore progress since the launch of the Play Strategy and Action Plan, what was still relevant and what are the gaps and opportunities for future play policy. The progress review was to take account of steps that might promote and further the rights of children and young people, consistent with the requirements of the UNCRC.

The Play Strategy and programmes and initiatives on play emphasise that there is no one set of policies, services or sectors which 'own' play. The very nature of play requires co-ordinated and inter-related policies and services across sectors, departments and services. Planning, roads and transport, early learning and childcare, schools, environmental policies, community services, youth work, leisure and recreation all have an essential role in supporting play.

There have been significant developments in children's human rights since 2013. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 contains national and local duties relating to children's rights and wellbeing. The government's commitment to children's rights has been taken forward by the action plan for 2018-21 on Progressing Human Rights of

Children in Scotland. The action plan outlines a commitment to raising awareness of children's rights. This will reaffirm and strengthen children's rights as set out in the Play Strategy action plan.

Public Authorities have a children's rights reporting duty under Part 1 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The first set of reports are due after March 2020 and should detail how a public authority has secured better or given further effect to the requirements of the UNCRC, including a child's right to play.

The proposal to legislate on the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law will embed children's human rights in law. These developments support and take forward the government's commitment to the UNCRC's Article 31, a child's right to play, which underpins the Play Strategy.

Other policy developments have had an impact on, or implications for, play. The Scottish Attainment Challenge, launched in 2015, and the associated Pupil Equity Fund, have supported the development of play-based learning in schools. The government's commitment to communities in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 supports better community engagement and participation. The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 introduced Scottish targets for reducing the number of children living in poverty.



## 4. Approach to undertaking the Progress Review

The importance of play is firmly embedded in the Scottish Government's early learning and childcare commitments. All three - and four-year olds and eligible two-year olds are currently entitled to 600 hours a year of funded early learning and childcare. This entitlement will almost double to 1140 hours a year from August 2020. The Scottish Government has funded Inspiring Scotland to promote outdoor play and learning as part of the ELC expansion.

Scotland's Coalition for Outdoor Play and Learning position statement was launched by the Minister for Children and Young People Maree Todd in 2018. The Scottish Government published 'Out to Play' in 2018 which provides step-by-step guidance and practical advice for early learning and childcare settings and practitioners on how to access outdoor spaces.

The Scottish Government published a Draft Framework for Out of School Care in Scotland for consultation in 2019.

This highlights the importance of OSC for both children's and parents' outcomes - including play, learning and socialisation benefits. A £3 million Access to Childcare fund for supporting childcare provision and activities which are based in local communities will be delivered over a two-year period from April 2020.

The inclusion of 'Play and Recreation', as one of the 14 core themes of the widely used Place Standard tool, supports mainstreaming of consideration of play within local authority community planning, and spatial planning processes and community-led uses.

The new Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduces a Play Sufficiency Assessment duty which requires planning authorities to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in their area for children to inform their local development plan.

Regulations on Play Sufficiency Assessments will be brought forward alongside those on local development plans.



The progress review gathered input by approaching members of the Play Council which was established after the Play Strategy was produced and is supported by Play Scotland. The review included a sample of local authorities who are strategically planning for play as well as other national organisations. These contributors were invited to attend a consultation day in June 2019. A total of 35 participants attended the full day event. Organisations which were invited but were not able to attend the event were invited to engage through telephone or formal written contributions.

The progress review also considered reports and evaluations produced between 2013 and 2019 and updated activity to date around the Play Strategy's Action Plan (see Appendix 1). Since the Strategy and Plan were published, a range of resources on play have been commissioned and produced.

Participants at the consultation day explored the following questions using the four domains as a structure for discussion.

- What worked well in this domain?
- What did not work well in this domain?
- What are the gaps and opportunities in this domain?

Participants also considered themes and issues that should be included in future policy.

The progress review was not able to extend its scope to include children and young people's views due to time and resources available. This report however strongly recommends that children and young people should be invited to contribute to further work on the review. This could be undertaken by organisations and projects with experience of supporting children and young people's participation in play.

The four sections of the report consider the findings from discussions on each of the domains. It is followed by a section on what should be included in an updated Play Strategy and finally recommendations for a revised Play Strategy. An appendix is included which summarises tasks taken forward in the existing Play Strategy's Action Plan to date.



## 5. Play in the home

### 5.1 Outcomes

The following outcomes for Play in the Home were identified in the Play Strategy Action Plan:

**‘Our homes and family environments are places where children and young people enjoy plentiful play opportunities, indoors and out, appropriate to their age, stage, ability and preferences.’**

### 5.2 What has worked well?

Participants identified positive approaches which had been used in supporting play in the home. Information and resources were available to parents and carers from ELC, schools, voluntary organisations and from national agencies.

Initiatives supporting play in the home included online resources as well as practical support. The Parent Club has an accessible site which includes materials from Play Talk Read and is framed around parents’ interests. Baby boxes provide an opportunity to highlight play to parents which could be further developed. Smart Play Network provides support to play services and providers. Play Scotland has information on play ideas and resources on its website. Play @ Home resources produced by NHS Health Scotland are a useful resource although not digitalised. Bookbug is a universal programme which is available to parents and carers with local delivery.

In addition, sportscotland’s new corporate strategy includes physical competence from an early age. Parental engagement is one area sportscotland will be considering for development and may provide new opportunities. The Natural Health Award is directed at childminders and has the potential to work with parents and carers. Parental engagement is recognised in the Scottish Government’s National Improvement Framework.

### 5.3 What has not worked well?

It has been difficult to measure the effectiveness of approaches to support play in the home. This includes play which takes place in a child’s home as well as play supervised and facilitated by parents and carers outside the home.

Participants noted that there had not been a significant change in parents’ perceptions of the benefits and opportunities for play outside the home. Instead, free play outside the home could be limited to play in commercial play centres. Play outside the home appeared to be perceived as too risky for many parents and carers. Stranger danger, working hours and traffic were viewed as barriers. Poor public transport and a lack of prioritisation of walking and cycling routes impacted on families. Participants stated that there had not been sufficient progress in ensuring that children play outdoors in local parks and play areas. Some families had to travel a long way to find accessible play.

Participants stated that there was a danger that play at home became associated solely with support and services for early years children. Support for play with older children at home was not generally available. There was a need for places where parents and carers could access support for play.

Some parents and carers needed targeted support from professionals. This support is important to families who might not engage in services. Support is available from health professionals or from voluntary organisations. However, there are limited numbers of professionals who work with parents and carers in the home. Health visitors provide a key universal service, but professionals are not able spend significant amounts of time supporting parents at home. The Play @ Home programme run by the NHS has not been consistently delivered. The lack of staff and temporary work positions has had an impact on supporting play at home.

A lack of funding and difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff makes support to families difficult. The need for support extends beyond areas which have significant Pupil Equity Funding and areas of multiple deprivation.

### 5.4 Is Play in the Home still relevant?

Participants stated that play at home was still relevant as a distinct domain although it was difficult to monitor delivery and impact. Organisations delivering services were generally local. It was therefore important that there was a strong relationship between national play policy and how it was delivered in a community and local context. National and local play networks could be more effectively joined up. The role of local play associations was crucial as trusted organisations.

Information about play and older young people and its benefits for health, learning and wellbeing would be helpful as well as resources and activities which can develop the confidence of parents and carers. Social media should be used to share messages about the positive benefits of play with a move away from paper-based information.

There should be more effective planning for outdoor play space in residential areas. This does not have to be traditional fixed equipment.

There should also be access to woods and green spaces with play corridors to enable children to get from home to play areas.

There should be home zones with a balance between car and pedestrian space so that there are playable streets as described in the Rotterdam norms for outdoor play spaces . Outdoor play needs to be poverty proofed around local access, transport, clothing and food.

More positive messages should be shared with parents and carers about the benefits for children from playing outside. Outdoor play should be treated as a way of supporting health and wellbeing. Public information and messages on physical activity and screen time should be provided to parents and carers to help increase children’s physical activity.

Digital media could be used as a resource to share information, recognising that all parents and carers did not have equal access to the internet due to poverty, lack of digital literacy or the necessary technology.

### 5.5 Examples of effective practice

**The Learning Together through Play programme run by Early Years Scotland has successfully connected parents who are in prison and provided opportunities which includes supporting play.**

**Save the Children’s Families Connect programme supports and coaches parents and carers in play experiences.**

**The City of Edinburgh Council has piloted using local outdoor community spaces for an outdoor kindergarten at Cramond Primary School.**

**Play Scotland has produced the Parents’ Play Pack for parents and carers of 8-12-year olds.**

**The PlayTalkRead national roadshow and Parent Club website give parents the confidence to play more with their children.**



## 6. Play in Early Years Learning and Childcare (ELC) and School

### 6.1 Outcomes

The following outcomes for Play in the ELC and school are identified in the Play Strategy Action Plan:

**‘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 early learning and childcare, nursery and school.’**

### 6.2 What has worked well?

There have been significant increases in the use of play in ELC and schools. This culture change has been influenced by different factors including the Curriculum for Excellence. This has included: the availability of resources through the Pupil Equity Fund; the input of expert play and play-related organisations such as Learning through Landscapes (previously Grounds for Learning) ; and resources such as Play Scotland’s Play Types Toolkit which maps play to the Curriculum for Excellence and SHANARRI.

Schools adopting a whole school approach to play and which built in risk and challenge were seen to be more effective. Participants stated that all teachers needed to know about play and how to implement play-based learning in their classrooms and schools.

There was considerable interest in embedding play in learning. Schools were more likely to build in play if they were aware of effective practice happening in other schools. The support of headteachers and senior education officers in local authorities was viewed as essential as well as support from teaching staff.

The benefits of play for learning were increasingly known. In Dundee, for example, Pupil Equity Funding supported city-wide work in schools with the support of Smart Play Network and the outdoor learning tool ‘Messy Maths’.

More schools open their playgrounds out of school hours than previously. Learning through Landscapes has developed resources to bring about change in out of school hours use of playgrounds and develop landscapes which support cultural change. Stirling Council has opened all school grounds. Perth and Kinross Council is providing keys to play pods for the local community to use outside school hours.

Loose parts play was seen as an effective way of getting play into schools. It is a discrete and easy concept which can be used to initiate other play activities. There was an increased awareness of the importance of this type of play for children with loose parts play increasingly used in some schools such as the programme in East Lothian. Inspectors from the Care Inspectorate signpost good practice and the benefits to children when loose parts resources are available.

Incorporating play into everyday opportunities has been most effective. Some schools have active play as part of the school day, particularly for children in Primaries 1, 2 and 3. The Care Inspectorate notes that there has been a significant increase of outdoor play

opportunities provided to children attending nursery and ELC as well as those in Out of School Care provision. It found that most services were providing children with outdoor play on a daily basis. There was greater encouragement of children directing their own play and being supported in making choices according to the Care Inspectorate. The Health and Social Care Standards have a rights-based approach and include references to play (see HSCS 1.31 and 1.32). The Care Inspectorate inspects against the standards as well as supporting services to explore the importance and impact of high-quality play experiences.

Active Schools support physical activity and sport before school, during lunchtime and after the school day. Outdoor play professionals model good quality outdoor play with some schools incorporating work with Play Rangers. The Thrive Outdoors programme funded partners to support schools with Active Play. Smart Play Network delivered additional activities from this programme with very positive feedback from teachers and children on the impact on physical literacy, fitness levels and social skills.

The Care Inspectorate worked in partnership with Play Scotland in 2015 in order to raise awareness of the Play Strategy and the new guidance on ‘risky’ play. This was an opportunity to have dialogue with local authorities and providers around their policies on risky play opportunities.

### 6.3 What has not worked well?

Participants stated that play-based learning was not used across all schools. Some services were at different points in implementing play. Awareness of the benefits of play-based learning was inconsistent from school to school and from teacher to teacher. There needed to be much greater consistency in the availability of play in ELC and schools, supported by sharing of effective practice and resources as well as access to training.



Participants highlighted that play challenge and learning-free play was being squeezed out. There was pressure on the school day. In some secondary schools, lunch breaks were being cut. This has impacted on play opportunities. Withdrawal of play was sometimes used as both punishment and reward when in fact it is a child’s right to play.

Participants stated that teachers, senior school staff and headteachers needed to have more knowledge of active play, physical activity and physical literacy. There was a lack of headteacher support for outdoor activities that were perceived as risky. Schools should provide more resources and tools to foster and support child-led play. More loose parts and active play should be provided during the school day.

The benefits of learning in local greenspaces were not widely known by school staff. Poorer communities can have less usable space in playgrounds and in the immediate area. The move towards opening school playgrounds outside school hours has not been universally or consistently implemented and pressure on space will increase with the expansion in ELC.

Maintenance of school grounds could be a barrier to using spaces for play. More schools and local authorities needed to know more about how to ensure high quality provision in school grounds. The use of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schools for play was still problematic. Risk-benefit assessment needed to be properly implemented within local authority systems.

Programmes will be unable to sustain delivery when the Pupil Equity Fund and Inspiring Scotland funding ends. In some local authorities it had not been possible to utilise the Pupil Equity Fund for play with the procurement process making this more difficult. PFI schools and associated systems regularly restricted play opportunities.

Participants stated that children and young people's skills in playing could be underestimated. There was a need to focus more on older children as there were still gaps in provision for this age group. Funding for play with older children and young people was harder to secure.

## 6.4 Is Play in ELC and school still relevant?

Participants strongly supported the continuation of work across this domain. They identified that education services across Scotland needed to be fully aware of the benefits that accrue from delivering the curriculum through play-based learning. The support of senior school staff and local authorities is essential. This should be complemented by a national commitment to play with support provided to schools by Education Scotland. The development of Play Friendly Schools, similar to and complementing Active Schools, Eco Schools and Rights Respecting Schools, would provide a way of profiling the place of play in schools.



The increase in hours in early years provision is an opportunity for children's play outdoors to be extended and to provide positive messages to parents and carers about the benefits of outdoor play.

A play-based approach should be used across transitions from nursery, to P1 and P2 and then beyond throughout primary and secondary education. ELC and school services should support parents and carers in exploring how play-based approaches can be used at home to support children's learning and development. Currently there is not enough research and evaluation exploring what works in schools. A Play Hub which brings effective practice together would be helpful.

There should be more opportunities for teachers to extend and develop their learning about play and to be playful themselves. Teacher training courses do not currently contain significant content about play and its impact on learning and development. Teachers should be supported through Continuous Professional Learning and Development, and opportunities for sharing practice and peer support. The links between play and curriculum outcomes should be better understood and measured.

At a more senior level, headteachers should have support in their leadership role from senior education officers including Directors of Education as well as from parents and carers, school staff and the play sector. Teachers and headteachers should be aware of the benefits of youth work, which has its roots in the Playwork Principles, in supporting young people in education. It was important that men were involved in delivering play in ELC and in schools.

There continues to be issues about the inclusion of all children and young people in play in ELC and schools. Children with additional support needs should be supported in their participation in play. Teachers need support to facilitate play for all children.

School grounds were now better used but headteachers and school staff needed guidance to make this happen. Outdoor learning and loose parts play should be brought into the first years of primary school and benefits should be more widely known. School premises regulations should be enforced to ensure children have sufficient space for play.

## 6.5 Examples of effective practice

**Learning through Landscapes** has supported the development of school grounds with resources and information.

**Dundee City Council** undertook an audit of school playgrounds and opened 15 school playgrounds with signage and interventions where required. A new school is being built and the playground is being designed in consultation with the community. They have introduced "Messy Maths" CPLD for class teachers.

**Stirling** have opened all school grounds.

**Perth & Kinross** have given the keys to play pods to the community to support play outside hours.

**Play Scotland** is developing a Play Friendly quality award for schools in Scotland in areas who have completed Getting it Right for Play programme for local authorities.

**The Scottish Government, Care Inspectorate and Inspiring Scotland** worked together to produce 'Out to Play' which supports regulated care services for children develop a range of outdoor play activities.

**Smart Play Network** has supported the use of playground games and identified play champions.

**Play pedagogy in the early years of primary school** is being researched by the University of Strathclyde.

**Midlothian Schools** are working in clusters to develop play-based learning in Primary 1 and 2 using #powerofpartnership as a sharing tool. The developments are based on Froebel with staff encouraged to undertake research before developing their spaces.

**West Lothian College** has opened a forest outdoor training area so that ELC students will have outdoor play and learning embedded within their training.



# 7. Play in the community

## 7.1 Outcomes

The following outcomes for Play in the Community are identified in the Play Strategy Action Plan:

**‘All children and young people have sufficient time and space (physical and social) for playing within their community and play is valued, encouraged and supported in communities.’**

## 7.2 What has worked well?

There was wider commitment to play in the community since the publication of the Play Strategy with more confidence in the play sector. Voluntary organisations and community-led groups were delivering quality play in communities. Many partnerships in local authorities have worked effectively in supporting community-led initiatives.

The Getting it Right for Play programme run by Play Scotland has worked with local authorities to develop play policies and strategies since it was established. This has included supporting local initiatives to enable community play. A programme evaluation in its first year found that the programme had been highly effective.

The Scottish Government has provided funding for Inspiring Scotland’s programmes to support play since 2010. This has been welcomed by the play sector although participants were concerned about reductions in this funding. On the whole, funders had a better knowledge of play-based programmes since the publication of the Play Strategy.

There is considerable guidance and resources available for organisations, produced by organisations such as Play Scotland, Inspiring Scotland and Smart Play Network. Scotland’s Coalition for Outdoor Play and Learning has produced a position statement with signatories committed to embedding playing and learning outdoors as everyday activities. Organisations were aware of the concept of placemaking but have not been involved in a substantial way in taking this forward to date.

Play streets have been successful in promoting play in communities. However, these initiatives were not widely implemented. Play Rangers working in communities have had an impact in increasing the confidence of children and their families in outdoors play. There was more awareness of how play helped children develop skills in risk taking and building resilience. Neighbourhoods needed to be playable with opportunities for shared and independent mobility for children and young people.

## 7.3 What has not worked well?

There remain conflicting agendas around outdoor play with discussions about risky play often negative. It was essential to build support and identify key representatives and officers who can take outdoor play forward. Stakeholders include the local authority, residents, community groups, children and young people and private sector interests.

Some communities do not have the same resources as more affluent communities. Poorer communities might not have the same access to green spaces, parks, leisure spaces or streets that can become places for play. Play Rangers and street play models were not happening on a wide enough scale and were increasingly difficult to fund in spite of their positive impact, especially

in areas of deprivation. Government funding, through Inspiring Scotland has contributed hugely to supporting the Play Ranger movement, but it takes many years to instil confidence in communities who are used to services parachuting in and out when funding stops.

Some communities dreaded summer holidays with families highlighting that children and young people could have nothing to do and community concerns about holiday hunger. Community-led initiatives were difficult to sustain if volunteers or paid staff moved on.

Although there was wider knowledge of what play is, negative attitudes to play remained. ‘No ball games’ signage still existed in some areas. Aberdeen City Council and Dundee City Council had been proactive in removing such signage with no negative consequences.

The application of standards for greenspace were not the same across all local authorities. Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) states that local development plans should seek to enhance existing and promote the creation of a new green infrastructure. It requires local development plans to identify and protect open space identified as valued and functional or capable of being brought into use to meet local needs.

Participants were concerned about the impact of tightening of financial resources and a lack of public space. New build developments did not consistently provide spaces for children and young people. There was an expectation that the Play Sufficiency Assessment duty in the new Planning Act might help to change the current position.

## 7.4 Is Play in the Community still relevant?

The Community domain continues to be relevant and important. There was a need to make links between play and outcomes clearer and to gather evidence on what has worked in communities. The Policy Tree infographic, published to show policy connections with play, needs to be updated. Examples of effective practice would be useful.

There should be a greater focus on the play of older children and young people. This should build on the discussions from Play Scotland and Youthlink’s seminar in 2016. Intergenerational approaches to supporting play should be explored and further developed.

Sport clubs and outdoor education services have a role in providing young people with opportunities to play although these approaches were seen to be more structured than child or young person-led play.

Generally, space is needed for children and young people to play in their communities. This needs to be informed by children and young people’s voices and experiences. Undertaking community audits would identify where there is not space for play.

There should be more examples of what is high-quality in relation to use of community space and more access to free play opportunities. Streets and school grounds should be opened up. Some areas, such as ELC gardens, may need to be protected. Communities need to be involved in developing school grounds, so they are invested in these spaces. This should involve older generations as well as children and young people.



There are opportunities to have more play streets which are closed to traffic at specific times. The availability of local spaces should be linked to environmental policies. There needs to be more engagement with other services such as housing, community learning and development and Fire Services as well as links to anti-poverty strategies. All these approaches could help to create cultural change around attitudes to play.

## 7.5 Examples of effective practice

Play Scotland's Getting it Right for Play programme has worked with local authorities across Scotland developing play policies and strategies.

PEEK provides play opportunities for children and young people in streets, parks and open spaces in Glasgow.

Growing Up Wild Programme run by South Lanarkshire Ranger Service uses green spaces for play and is led by Play Rangers.

Stay Play and Learn sessions are run by Early Years Scotland in Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire.

There is a 'Wet Wednesday' holiday play scheme in Broxburn where parents and adults also come along.

Dunfermline Central Community Council has created positive signage in parks.

'Free to Play: A guide to creating accessible and inclusive public play' produced by Inspiring Scotland, Nancy Ovens Trust and Play Scotland.

Play Together on Pedals encourages families to enjoying cycling together (currently Glasgow and Edinburgh).

Achieve More Scotland runs play opportunities with food provided in Glasgow for children during school holidays.

North Lanarkshire is upgrading play and youth space at a very local level (Rennie Road Community Alliance).

Aberdeen City Council has taken down 'No Ball Games' signs.

Perth and Kinross has promoted intergenerational approach to developing play.

Link up workers in Fife have set up loose parts play in communities as well as cycling activities with a focus on inclusion and accessibility.

# 8. Positive support for play

## 8.1 Outcomes

The following outcomes for the domain Positive support for play are identified in the Play Strategy Action Plan:

**'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.'**

## 8.2 What's worked well?

Participants stated that play was more visible. This has generated commitment to play across Scotland. High-level support for play from government ministers and for the Play Strategy across portfolios has been warmly welcomed. Local authorities' ongoing commitment to play has been appreciated although it has been impacted on by financial constraints.

The role of local authorities in play is crucial as is community planning. This was recognised in the Play Strategy's Action Plan. As a result, a number of targeted actions have been taken forward to support local authorities including the development of the Play Map which provides a practical resource to support community planning around play.

The development of local policies and strategies has been important to developing and maintaining momentum given by the Play Strategy. A growing number of local authorities have developed policies and strategies around play as a result of participating in Play Scotland's Getting it Right for Play programme. This has led to more partnership working. Inter departmental and sectoral groups have worked well, such as those established by Dundee City Council.

The Play Council was established with Play Scotland providing support. This has been effective, although participants thought that the Play Council and its Play Council Strategy Group could have more focus on its longer-term vision and outputs.

The Nancy Oven Play Awards have given value and recognition to the play sector. Resources produced by Play Scotland, Inspiring Scotland, Smart Play Network, Learning through Landscapes and many other organisations have been invaluable to the play workforce. The Scottish Government's provision of funding through Inspiring Scotland was much appreciated. The Care Inspectorate has provided a helpful lead in its role and in developing guidance and resources.

More training was available for the play sector than previously through SVQs in playwork and Play Scotland's CPD qualification, the PDA: Strategic Planning for Play which was designed to promote and improve play opportunities and spaces.

A network of Play Champions has been established and have signed up to the Play Charter. This network was seen to have a valuable role in profiling play, in bringing together interests and for recognising the relevance of play across sectors and services.





### 8.3 What has not worked well?

Although there had been significant progress, the role of play in children's development was not always fully acknowledged. There had not been the systematic change that was required.

Participants stated that there had been less Scottish Government focus on the Play Strategy in recent years. Previous high-profile events such as the Ministerial Round Table, last held in March 2016, had achieved a focus on play around specific themes. This momentum had not been sustained. There was not sufficient accountability at local or national level about the development and delivery of play.

Play as an intrinsic part of childhood experience and wellbeing was not reflected across all sectors. Play was not as prominent in the education of health staff including health visitors. More attention on play education and the cognitive development of babies would be helpful. It would be useful to do a health inequality impact assessment in combination with play.

There was a lack of financial resources for play provision with uncertainty over future funding. There were fewer people working in play, especially in local authorities, due to financial cutbacks. There was a need for well-resourced and supported national and local play strategies. The play sector needed to be supported to ensure that high quality play for children was sustained and developed. It was important to value staff who work in play otherwise their expertise and experience will be lost to the sector.



Positive support was needed for risk in play which continued to be a significant and central issue. Concern about the impact of negative attitudes to risk and play were reflected across all the domains.

Participants stated that the views and experiences of children and young people were not reflected in the existing Play Strategy or Action Plan. This was seen as a significant gap.

### 8.4 Is Positive Support for Play still relevant?

Participants wanted to see more cross sectoral and inter professional commitment to play which was led by government and national agencies.

There needed to be more linkages made between play and policy areas such as mental health, poverty, trauma-informed practice, transport and other policy areas which impact on children and young people and their families. Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIA) at national level should ensure play is reflected in developing policy.

There was an opportunity to develop more partnership work with third sector organisations. Local authorities have developed good initiatives and have positive partnerships with the third sector. However, local authorities do not always have the capacity to develop and implement programmes and their practice was not consistently of high quality.

There needed to be better underpinning and widely shared knowledge of play and play theories. There is a gap in training and professional development for the play workforce and for other professional groups such as teachers and health visitors.

Children and young people should be involved as active participants in informing and developing play. Older children and young people should be provided with opportunities to identify their play needs, recognising that 'play' as a term and concept was not necessarily used by young people. Younger children should also be able to participate. This engagement needs to build on intergenerational work in order to build healthy, positive communities which support play.

### 8.5 Examples of effective practice

**The Scottish Government, through Inspiring Scotland has provided significant funding for play in communities and services since 2010.**

**Play Scotland's Getting it Right for Play Programme provides small pots of money for play developments led by local authorities and partners.**

**West Lothian Annual Conference on Play provides an opportunity to bring those working in play together and share practice.**

**Play Scotland held a national conference, Nurturing Nature Play in Scotland, in Edinburgh.**

**The Children's Parliament works with children to ensure their voices are heard in a wide range of ongoing projects in schools and communities.**

**Youthlink has established the Participative Democracy Certificate.**



# 9. Going forward: areas for the Play Strategy

## 9.1 Introduction

Participants were asked ‘what were the gaps and opportunities for the Play Strategy over the next five years?’

Four different themes were identified for participants to consider:

- **Children’s human rights**
- **Inclusion**
- **Policy: health and digital media**
- **Place, planning and built environment**

Participants had the opportunity to participate in all discussions. The following is a summary of key points.

## 9.2 Children’s human rights

### The UNCRC and children’s human rights

Participants welcomed the significant steps that the Scottish Government has taken to progress children’s human rights. There is wider awareness of the UNCRC’s Article 31, a child’s right to play, partly due to the Play Strategy and the work of organisations such as the International Play Association Scotland and Play Scotland.

The government’s proposal to incorporate the UNCRC in Scots Law was warmly welcomed. Many participants viewed incorporation as an opportunity to extend and develop awareness and actions relating to children and young people’s right to play at national and local level.

## Children and young people’s participation

Participants wanted to ensure that children and young people could meaningfully participate in play at national and local level. This should include contributing to play policy, identifying play needs, the delivery of services and evaluation of play programmes. Effective participation practice should draw on play sector experience and other initiatives.

Children and young people should be empowered as co-producers in community play. Schools should encourage children and young people to participate and influence school play culture. Children’s participation should be facilitated in sports, dance and other activities that relate to play. Children and young people should be seen as Play Champions in line with Inspiring Scotland’s Play Champions toolkit.

Education and play professionals should explore approaches which can support children and young people’s participation, recognising that meaningful participation can take time. Language around play should be child and young person friendly. Young children’s voices should be supported through engagement with families and carers as well as professionals. The third sector can contribute its skills and experience in accessing hard to reach children and young people.

## 9.3 Inclusion

Understanding of inclusion in play has progressed. However, participants highlighted that a refresh of the Play Strategy needs a more focused approach with updated outcomes around inclusion.

There has been significant work around inclusion of disabled children in play. There needed to be further consideration of what makes play in different environments inclusive. The attitudes of professionals such as teachers, and parents and carers, to inclusion were crucial. There needed to be support, training and resources for teachers and other staff.

It was suggested that Play Scotland and other play-focused organisations could work with other equality groups to support inclusion. There was a need to capture success stories to share examples of effective practice.

There were also age-based issues. Young people have missed out as play is generally associated with younger children. The language around play excludes older young people and their activities. There is a stigma about older children and young people hanging round, particularly if they are male with their presence being seen as anti-social. Older children and young people should be consulted about what they want to support their play.

Outdoor play, free play and loose parts play break down barriers to inclusion. Changes in attitudes should be underpinned by acceptance of the different ways in which children and young people use space across the age range.

Having signs which give permission to play, as opposed to having signs which forbid play, would signal positive attitudes to play. There needed to be variety, adaptability and flexibility in play environments which nurtures skills and positively reinforces the benefits of play for children and young people.

Participants wanted to see more focus on mitigating the impact of poverty on play. This should include access to play spaces, transport and provision in holidays. There needs to be a balance between universal and targeted programmes.



## 9.4 Policy areas: health and digital media

Participants stated that an understanding of the benefits and attributes of play needs to inform policies around physical and mental health and as well as those on the use of digital media.

## Physical and mental health

Participants stated that there should be a whole system approach to play and its contribution to areas of health policy such as physical and mental health and physical activity.

The Active Scotland Outcomes Framework and Public Health Reform Agenda provides an opportunity to influence organisations, bringing together people, systems, environment and active communities. Physical activity and the benefits of active play is not mentioned in the Play Strategy.

The review of children and young people's mental health offers an opportunity to ensure play is represented in any future mental health strategy. Sportscotland's consultation on corporate strategy identified parental engagement as an area for development and provides opportunities for further exploration.

There is a need for the Scottish Government to ensure play is considered and taken into account in the range of national agencies and strategies which impact on play such as Our Natural Health Service.

## Digital media

There have been significant changes in digital use since the Play Strategy was produced. Play policy and practice needs to be responsive with an updated Play Strategy reflecting these changes.

Participants acknowledged that there were benefits and challenges in digital media. There was concern that online games and a lack of free time challenges children and young people's participation in outdoor play. Screen time could be seen as passive, but it also provides opportunities for creative play. Online games can support children and young people's interaction with peers they may not meet out of school.

Parents were sometimes more comfortable with their children engaging in digital activities rather than playing outdoors. There was a dilemma if digital play was freely chosen by children and young people. This was more likely to be the case if other forms of play were not available.

Digital media has benefits for those working in play and for parents and carers. It provides an accessible way of providing information and resources. It can provide access to eLearning.

Parents and carers needed support and advice to mediate their children's engagement with digital media and to encourage healthy digital habits. Parents and carers should be supported to use the building blocks for healthy play, specifically with young children. This support could be available from Health Visitors and from ELC provision.

There were different perspectives on digital play and how it should be reflected in a refreshed Play Strategy. On one hand, digital play cannot be assumed to be a negative form of play. Conversely, a focus on digital play in the Play Strategy could undermine highly valued forms of play such as playing outdoors.

## 9.5 Place principle and standards, planning, built environment

Participants wanted to see greater attention to place, planning and the built environment. Planning was seen to be one of the most under recognised tools to deliver children's rights. The Scottish Government's proposal to incorporate the UNCRC in Scots law was seen to have positive implications for place, planning and the built environment.

Children and young people should be involved as co-producers in the design of play spaces. Participants pointed that decision-making processes and places that are good for young people are also good for everyone. High quality and accessible public spaces help support community cohesion.

The new Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 makes requirements on planning authorities to undertake Play Sufficiency Assessments and increase the participation of children and young people in the preparation of Local Development Plans. The development of regulations and guidance around Play Sufficiency will take account of evidence, best practice and stakeholder engagement. The Place Principle creates a commitment for all sectors to work towards better place-based outcomes.

The planning system should protect, enhance and promote green infrastructure and ensure that greenspace is provided as part of a place-making approach. Green and blue infrastructure should be treated as an integral element in how the proposal responds to local circumstances, including being well-integrated into the overall design layout and multi-functional, including play opportunities where appropriate.

School playgrounds should be improved with a view as to how they can contribute positively to the curriculum. School developments need to be accountable to communities. Sportscotland plays an important role in providing planning support to help strengthen local infrastructure for sport and physical activity. Further work with local authorities and sportscotland is needed to ensure local infrastructure strengthens opportunities for play.

The speed restriction 'Twenty's plenty' should be widely implemented. Closing streets around schools would provide a safe and playable space for children to and from school. There needs to be simpler mechanisms which local authorities can use which protects land for play.





# 10. Recommendations - 24 steps for play

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the Progress Review.

## Play Strategy and national leadership on play

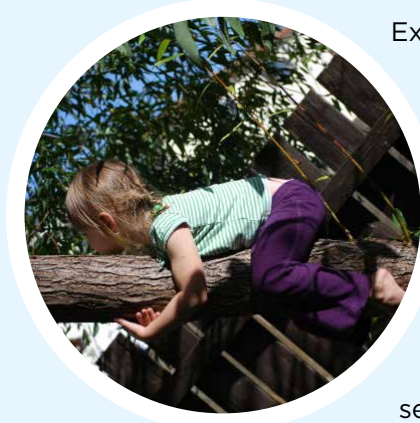
**10.1** There should be a refresh of the Play Strategy and Action Plan. This should be informed by the findings of the Progress Review and take account of policy developments. The existing domains should continue to be used with updated outcomes. A simplified Action Plan should be produced. The Play Strategy should include universal as well as targeted actions.

**10.2** The Scottish Government should review and reinstate its annual Ministerial Round Table event on play in order to bring together national interests and organisations on a regular basis.

**10.3** There should be a consideration of the implication of The Scottish Government's proposal to incorporate the UNCRC into Scots law, which provides an opportunity to support Article 31. The proposal for incorporation, along with existing human rights duties, should take account of play at national and local level.

**10.4** Children and young people should be invited to participate in any further discussions on the content of a refreshed Play Strategy. This should be undertaken with the support of existing play organisations.

Children and young people should be involved as co-producers and active contributors to play policies and programmes at national and local level. This should include children and young people across the age range up to 18 years, and specifically early years children and older children and young people, and children with diverse needs.



Examples of effective participation practice should be shared in order to support organisations develop their own participation approaches. These could be disseminated through a Play Hub.

**10.5** Policy connections to play should be identified to ensure co-ordinated, cross sectoral and inter professional approaches to play. The Scottish Government should ensure that Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIA) and other impact assessments take account of play.

**10.6** There should be a review of national funding available to support play with the overarching aim to sustain and grow the availability of funding.

## Monitoring, reporting and sharing practice

**10.7** The Scottish Government should consider ways of regularly monitoring and evaluating the Play Strategy. This would provide evidence of the impact of the strategy and provide a baseline for reviewing progress.

**10.8** An annual or bi-annual State of Children's Play report (similar to Together's State of Children's Rights report) should be produced to analyse progress by drawing on evidence, effective practice and children and young people's views. This could contribute to reporting on children's human rights. Ways of sharing practice should be considered. An online Play Hub should be established which brings together resources and examples of effective practice.

**10.9** Scotland's Play Council, established in 2014, should review its vision and forward plan when the Play Strategy and its actions are updated.

**10.10** National and local leaders in play, children's services and other areas relating to play should be supported to take forward policies, strategies and programmes in play. This should build on Play Scotland's Getting it Right for Play programme which works with local authorities.

## Play across the Play Strategy domains

Existing strands of activity in the Play Strategy should be reflected in an updated strategy and action plan.

### 10.11 Play at Home

Play at home should continue to be an area of focus. There is a need to explore the relationship between universally available resources and support (such as Baby Boxes) and targeted support for parents and carers who need more support.

The role of national programmes such as Bookbug and organisations and services which provide support to families should be acknowledged and reflected in the Play Strategy.

### 10.12 Early years learning and childcare and schools

The ELC and schools' domain should be further developed and extended. The Play Strategy should include approaches to strengthen the role of play in the curriculum.

A model of Play-friendly schools, similar to Eco-schools and Rights-respecting schools, should be explored and developed. This should emphasise a whole school approach to play.

There should be more play content in initial teacher training. More professional development opportunities and support should be available to teachers.



### 10.13 Play in the community

The Play Strategy should continue its commitment to local strategic approaches. This should include community planning and local authority area-wide approaches. The Play Scotland Getting it Right for Play programme should continue and extend its work across more local authorities.

The Play Strategy should include the new role of Play Sufficiency Assessments in strategic planning.

### 10.14 Positive support for play

Changing and supporting positive attitudes to play should continue to be at the heart of the Play Strategy. The proposal to incorporate the UNCRC offers an opportunity to provide awareness raising, training and resources to senior officers at local and national level in line with any proposed duties.

There should be more sharing of evidence on the benefits of play for the wellbeing of children and young people, families and communities. The central role of play in supporting children and young people's development should be acknowledged.

There is a need for high-quality core play training for the play workforce and those whose work impacts on play.

### Specific areas for consideration

The following themes were raised as areas to continue to explore or to develop new activity around.

### 10.15 Risk and play

There should be a specific focus in the Play Strategy on the relationship between risk and play in order to address a continuing imbalance in parents and carers' and professionals' views on the appropriate level of risk in play.

### 10.16 Outdoor play

There should continue to be focused attention on the availability, quality and resources needed to support outdoor play. This should take into account and utilise the work of Scotland's Coalition for Outdoor Play and Learning and its position statement.

### 10.17 Inclusion

There should be more focus on the inclusion of all children and young people in play with a specific focus on disability and the impact of poverty and low income. Effective practice should be shared.

Training should be widely available to support professionals.

### 10.18 Older children and young people

Greater attention should be given to play for older young people. This should focus on a better understanding of what play means for young people; their views and experiences; terms and definitions; and positive community attitudes to play for young people.

Links and connections with the developing National Youth Work Strategy and any other relevant policy and practice developments should be built into the Play Strategy.

### 10.19 Digital devices and media

The Play Strategy should consider the use of social media, online gaming and other digital applications as they relate to play. This should include an exploration of the possible risks and challenges as well as potential benefits of digital play and wider digital use. It should take into account children and young people's views and experiences as well as family practices.

### 10.20 Place, planning and built environment

The Play Strategy should make reference to, and explore the possibilities, of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. This includes the requirement to increase participation of children and young people in Local Development Plan preparation and the introduction of Play Sufficiency Assessments. Secondary legislation and guidance for the Planning Act should take the proposals for UNCRC incorporation into account.

### 10.21 Transport

Transport should be included in the Play Strategy. This focus should be on the impact of transport on children's access to play; walking routes and play corridors; safety; and local streets being used as play streets. The Play Strategy should identify links to related policy areas such as the Active Travel Plan and the next National Planning Framework (NPF4).

### 10.22 Environmental impact

The relationship between play and the environment should be explicit in the Play Strategy. This should include: how play contributes to positive environmental benefits through children and young people's active engagement in outdoor spaces; championing environmental neutral toys and play equipment to children, young people and families; and the development of community play spaces which are close to children's homes.

### 10.23 Physical activity

There should be a focus on physical activity and its relationship to play. The Active Scotland Delivery Plan and Public Health Reform Agenda provides an opportunity to influence organisations who are using a whole system approach. Sportscotland's corporate strategy may provide opportunities around parental engagement.

### 10.24 Mental health and trauma informed practice

There are opportunities to link with other policy interests such as mental health and trauma-informed practice. This should include sharing the benefits of play in supporting mental health and wellbeing and trauma informed practice. Evidence of the benefits and therapeutic value of play should be profiled in the Play Strategy and associated policy and strategy documents.



## 11. Conclusion

**This report is a progress review of the Scottish Government's Play Strategy for Scotland and its Action Plan launched in 2013.**

Participants wanted to see a refresh of the Play Strategy and Action Plan. They stated that the Play Strategy has had a positive impact on play with greater awareness of play across services and sectors and many examples of effective practice. The four domains of the Play Strategy had worked well with most progress in the 'ELC and schools', and the 'Community' domains. Progress in the Home domain had been more challenging to take forward. Although there had been successful developments in 'Positive support for play', more action was needed.

Participants highlighted that the initial activity following the launch of the Play Strategy and Action Plan had not been sustained with leadership from the Scottish Government. There remained a lack of consistent play opportunities across Scotland for children and young people regardless of their circumstances.

Participants were concerned about the sustainability of programmes, specifically the financial resources needed to support play. They stated that more could be done to secure senior support across authorities and organisations and to build links between play and other sectors and interests. Thorny issues remained such as the balance between risk and play and how that was perceived by parents and carers, schools and communities.

A range of issues and themes were identified to be included in an updated Play Strategy. One of the most prominent was ensuring the active and meaningful participation of children and young people in policy developments and the delivery of play.

Policy developments on children's human rights were seen as positive. Participants wanted to see other areas taken forward including: a continued focus on inclusion, specifically around disability and poverty; more attention to the right to play of older children and young people; the benefits of play in supporting mental health; the use of digital devices and online media; the importance of place, planning and the built environment; opportunities around the Play Sufficiency Assessment; and the development of new housing and public spaces and the implications for play.

## 12. Appendix 1 Summary of progress to date on Action Plan

This is a summary of activities which relate to actions in the 2013 Action Plan. Please note it may not include the details of all actions.

ACTION	NOTES ON PROGRESS
<b>Section 6: In the Home</b>	
<b>6.1</b> Review current levels of play training to recommend how elements of play rights, theory and practice and their impact on outcomes for children could be incorporated in both initial and continuous professional development.	Report completed led by SOSCN. Recommendations from SOSCN at 7.1 not progressed.
<b>6.2</b> Develop a joint plan in order to embed training on current universal resources - play@home and Bookbug - in initial and career-long professional learning, to widen the reach of those resources.	Not completed.
<b>6.3</b> Investigate and review good practice in reaching all parents and carers with clear messages and guidance on cost effective resources and suggestions for play suitable for children of all ages, stages and abilities.	Smart Play Network and Play Scotland report about how parents access information. Actions not progressed. Parents Hub in place.
<b>6.4</b> Develop user friendly guidance for parents and carers on how to access cost effective resources for play e.g. natural materials, household items and toy libraries - suitable for children of all ages, stages and abilities.	Loose Parts Toolkit and other resource leaflets produced for parents. Play Scotland has Playful Families theme on website with resources and ideas.
<b>6.5</b> Provide information on learning through play on Parentzone, the national education website for parents.	Parentzone Scotland website run by Education Scotland. The Parent Club website continues to be developed.
<b>6.6</b> Task a working group to investigate ways to promote positive approaches and strategies to support young people's use of leisure time in the home and family environment, including a balanced approach to use of communication technologies and screen-based activities.	Play Scotland and Youthlink had joint event and produced a report. Actions not progressed.  Play Scotland's digital project Boredom Busters app completed in 2016.
<b>6.7</b> Initiate a joint approach to developing and promoting a "play-friendly home" scheme, making use of existing materials.	As 6.4.
<b>6.8</b> Promote the findings of "Good Places Better Health" with particular regard to recommendations for flexible space within homes and family environments which meet the play needs of children, young people and families.	No information on progress.

Section 7: At Nursery and School	
<b>7.1</b> Task a working group to review current levels of play training provided to school and nursery staff and to recommend how elements of play rights, theory and practice could be incorporated in both the initial professional training and career long professional learning and leadership.	SOSCN report as 6.1. Actions not progressed.
<b>7.2</b> Commission and publish an evidence/literature review on links between play and children's attainment, achievement, wellbeing and learning across all ages, stages and abilities.	Play Scotland's Play Types Toolkit maps types of play to Curriculum for Excellence.
<b>7.3</b> Develop and disseminate good practice guidance, in line with Curriculum for Excellence, on play provision in schools (primary, secondary and special schools and units) and nurseries during and out of school hours for all children and young people, and on the way to and from school.	Play Types Toolkit covers some areas but more needs to be done around free play and play pedagogy in schools in the early stages. Play Scotland started project with Living Streets to develop resource on children playing their way to school.
<b>7.4</b> Identify ways in which early years and school staff can support parents', carers' and families' understanding of play, and how it can be supported at home.	Care Inspectorate guidance may cover some of this.
<b>7.5</b> Audit current levels of community access to school grounds (including the wider school environment of streets and routes to school) and identify key influencing factors. Consider options for increasing community access to school playgrounds out of school hours. Put forward recommendations for piloting, evaluating and sharing good practice.	Audit was not fully done but picture is mixed throughout Scotland. 'Out of Hours' Toolkit was produced adapted from Play Wales version, led by Learning through Landscapes.
<b>7.6</b> Work with Local Authorities to achieve high quality school grounds in new build schools which are consistent with the 'Good School Playground Guide'.	Work on this has not been consistently progressed.
<b>7.7</b> Build and showcase a Scotland-wide network of real-life examples of effective play practice across all school sectors, nurseries and childcare settings in order to stimulate further change.	There is a Care Inspectorate hub of effective practice. This covers more than play. Play Scotland's Getting it Right for Play programme has examples.
<b>7.8</b> Publish a resource and deliver training to raise awareness of the UNCRC children's rights within the education sector.	IPA training about Article 31 delivered to practitioners throughout Scotland. Information and resource on UNCRC available from Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights).

Section 8: In the Community	
<b>8.1</b> Task a working group with mapping the links between the Play Strategy and the Physical Activity Implementation Plan, Good Places Better Health, Planning, Placemaking, Designing Streets, Learning for Sustainability and other related Government and Public Sector plans including Single Outcome Agreements.	The Policy Tree developed by NHS Health Scotland to illustrate links. Needs updating.
<b>8.2</b> Develop and disseminate a short guide for Community Planning Partnerships highlighting the types of decisions that should be informed by children's right to play by using resources like the Go Play Outcome and Evaluation Logic Model for Play, UNICEF Indicators, and Professional Development Award in Strategic Planning for Play as a basis.	Play Map developed and disseminated.
<b>8.3</b> Task a working group to identify steps to ensure play services (out of school care/other play services) are included as part of the local mapping of services by Community Planning Partnerships.	Play Map and Play Scotland's Getting it Right for Play programme.
<b>8.4</b> Promote and support the implementation of existing materials for outdoor play audits (Getting It Right for Play).	Play Map and Play Scotland's Getting it Right for Play Programme.
<b>8.5</b> Promote the use of existing tools to support Local Authorities (including early learning and childcare services, schools, routes to school, indoor and other community-based play provision) in audits of play provision e.g. Design for Play (Play England).	Play Map and Play Scotland's Getting it Right for Play Programme.
<b>8.6</b> Ensure that play is properly addressed within the development of a national Place Standard, a commitment within the Creating Places policy. The Place Standard will be the hallmark of well-designed places and should ensure that opportunities for play are promoted in safe, formal and informal ways.	The Place Standard Tool (PST) was launched in 2015 and use has been widespread across Scotland. Alongside the current PST improvement programme, the Scottish Government (on behalf of the Place Standard Implementation partners) has commissioned a consortium (Play Scotland with A Place in Childhood) to develop versions of the PST for children and young people through a co-production process.  Also supported by Play Scotland's Getting it Right for Play programme.



<b>8.7</b> Explore with Community Planning Partnerships, Community Safety Partnerships and Community Councils how child friendly community assessment processes and indicators (see UNICEF <a href="http://childfriendlycities.org/research/final-toolkit-2011/">http://childfriendlycities.org/research/final-toolkit-2011/</a> ) can be incorporated into existing practice.	Play Map and Play Scotland's Getting it Right for Play Programme. Aberdeen City is working towards Child Friendly City status so this could be case studied.
<b>8.8</b> Identify and showcase case studies in which positive engagement with children and young people, parents and carers and community-based play providers has been used to good effect in the planning, design and management of play spaces and opportunities.	Lots of effective practice examples in published documents e.g. Free to Play.
<b>8.9</b> Develop and disseminate an infographic illustrating how the design and implementation of play provision in the community extends to positive influence on play in the home and family environment.	Not undertaken.
<b>Section 9: Positive Support for Play</b>	
<b>9.1</b> Deliver the Professional Development award – Strategic Planning for Play Award in five Scottish Local Authority areas in the first year.	First cohort of PDA due in September 2019, 5 authorities will be represented.
<b>9.2</b> Promote the Play Strategy: Our Vision to Universities delivering the B.Ed.and M.Ed. Childhood Practice.	Some universities deliver modules on play, but not consistent.
<b>9.3</b> Task a working group to identify steps to support the development of a Play Policy in every Local Authority including references to the six priorities of Single Outcome Agreements.	SOAs overtaken by LOIPs but this work is covered by Play Map work. Currently in 13 local authorities.
<b>9.4</b> Promote the implementation of Play Strategy Action Plans in every local authority by engaging with existing networks.	Play Map work provides structure by which LAs and partners can develop an action plan. There are examples but Play Scotland is not funded for this work.
<b>9.5</b> Provide a guest lecture programme to input into professional training courses beyond the immediate play sector.	Play Conventions, seminars and events. No strategic programme of professional training.
<b>9.6</b> Task a working group to commission a review of inclusive play in Scotland to identify context, current practices, barriers and aspirations.	Playing with Quality and Equality Reports. Recommendations not progressed.

<b>9.7</b> Develop the Play Leadership Forum and National Play Forum, and support a range of capacity building opportunities, making use of virtual network options where appropriate.	Play Council, Play Council Strategic Group. Groups need to be reviewed and re-formed with new terms of reference and purpose.
<b>9.8</b> Investigate how the skills of the play workforce could be utilised more widely to develop the quality of play opportunities in a range of other settings.	This may have been done by the Scottish Government as part of Early years and After School reviews.
<b>9.9</b> Map career long professional learning opportunities available to play workforce across Scotland to identify gaps and ensure quality.	This may have been done by the Scottish Government as part of Early Years and After School Reviews.
<b>9.10</b> Promote and disseminate the High-Level Statement: Children's Play and Leisure-Promoting A Balanced Approach (Health and Safety Executive 2012) and other guidance which challenges risk-averse practices.	Training available on managing risk from a wide variety of providers, including Play Scotland, Learning through Landscapes and Smart Play Network, as well as local trainers. Also, have worked with Care Inspectorate to produce their statement and guidance.
<b>9.11</b> Promote the use of the Play Safety Forum 'Benefit Risk Assessment Guidance' in career long learning for all practitioners.	Guidance available on Play Scotland website, Training available as 9.10. Play Scotland attends Cross Party Group on Accident Prevention. Chief Executive spoken at CPG on challenge.
<b>9.12</b> Identify and showcase the impact of play to potential funding bodies and local authorities.	Inspiring Scotland presented to Funders Forum in partnership with Play Scotland and Learning through Landscapes. Children in Need representative on Play Scotland Board. However, more work needs to be done to highlight importance of play to funders.
<b>9.13</b> Task a working group to develop a Communications Plan for the Plan and Strategy which includes effective use of social media and opportunities for children and young people to represent themselves in the media and promote play.	Not progressed. Some work done locally but not nationally. Play Scotland in partnership with other three nations produced 'Play Builds Children' and other messages.
<b>9.14</b> Develop media toolkits and training for play practitioners, organisations and children and young people.	Not progressed.
<b>9.15</b> Task a working group to identify and develop a network of Play Champions throughout Scotland.	Play Charter developed to sign up Play Champions (currently 1000+). Next stage is how to progress. Inspiring Scotland has produced Play Champions Toolkit (for children).

## Committed to PLAY



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## Taic do Chluiche



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