

goplay

Baseline Report



Inspiring
Scotland

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Foreword



Providing opportunities for children to play isn't just a nice thing to do.

The right of children to play is recognised in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a fundamental part of their lives. It is seen as a basic part of their rights as human beings, and a fundamental building block towards developing the social skills to participate fully in all stages of later life.

Childhood should be a time of joy, exploration and learning. For too many children in Scotland this simply isn't the case and they grow up with no real sense of fun or happiness. Yet play makes a tremendous contribution to children having a happy and healthy childhood. In turn this makes them much more likely to grow up into happy and healthy adults who can make the most of their lives. Not only does this enable people to use their talents and make positive choices about their lives, it also helps them make a significant contribution to society.

This report is the starting point for Inspiring Scotland's response to the issue. It sets out the current situation and thinking around play in Scotland and highlights ways to improve the opportunities for Scotland's children to play.

Go Play is an important step in addressing the need to allow children in Scotland to play. This two year programme is funded by the Scottish Government and we are delighted to be working in partnership with them to deliver this important work. We are proud to be contributing to improving the futures of these youngsters through targeted investment in the voluntary sector. This will be exciting, and we believe that there is great scope to widen the impact of the innovative work already being delivered and to stimulate new approaches.

It is recognised that the reasons why children and young people struggle in Scotland today are complex. Since its launch in 2008 Inspiring Scotland has been investing in life-changing work that helps 14 to 19 year olds who are struggling to make a successful transition from school to the next stage of their lives. We are confident that through **Go Play** we can restore the vital connection between play and a better future for 5 to 13 year olds, and in doing so look forward to Scotland's children making ever more positive contributions to society in the future.

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Muirhead', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Andrew Muirhead
Chief Executive

Summary

The challenge

Play is how children learn about the world and about themselves and each other. What adults often dismiss as ‘just play’ – tree-climbing, den-building, hide-and-seek, make-believe – is an important part of a healthy childhood. By playing, children develop physically and mentally, improve their social skills, and have fun. Play helps them grow into confident and well-rounded adults.

There are over 500,000 children in Scotland between the ages of 5 and 13, all of whom have a right to play. But there is a fear that opportunities for play are in decline. For some children, particularly those in deprived areas, play is severely restricted by a lack of good places to go and by parents’ fears about the risks from strangers or accidents. Studies show that a lack of play opportunities adversely affects children’s immediate well-being and future development.

The situation now

There are many committed individuals and organisations – both charities and local authorities – providing resources for children’s play. Across Scotland, there are thousands of playgrounds, holiday play schemes and other play projects, giving children a source of happiness and joy in their daily lives. Too often, though, they are short of funds and lack the skills and resources they need to develop.

Play is emerging as an issue in government policy. Most recently, a commitment to ‘improving the quality of children’s life through play’ is contained in the Scottish Government’s Early Years Framework.

What Inspiring Scotland could do

Inspiring Scotland’s aim is to change people’s lives for the better through long-term funding and development support for charities. The purpose of a fund investing in play should be to increase the quality and availability of play for children. Inspiring Scotland could have the greatest impact by designing a programme which would: (1) support the play sector to create a more robust infrastructure; (2) make play services better in areas of greatest need; (3) make community spaces more play-friendly; and (4) explore new and creative approaches to play.

Results that are sustained

Inspiring Scotland’s commitment to measuring the impact of its work could be a valuable and challenging addition to the play sector, which struggles to demonstrate its benefit. Helping play organisations to develop more robust and reliable evidence will put those organisations in a stronger position to approach other funders, including government, and potentially secure support for play beyond the lifetime of any funding.

By investing in play, Inspiring Scotland could improve the lives of all children in Scotland, provide timely influence and create lasting social change. With Inspiring Scotland’s help – and with the energy and enthusiasm of independent funders, grant-makers, government and private donors – they could have a better chance to play.

Introduction



Our childhood memories of play stay with us all our lives. We can all think of a moment when an ordinary, everyday experience turned into a memory that we have treasured since: discovering an out-of-the-way place that becomes an outlaws' den, building an elaborate sandcastle on the beach only to find it gone in the morning, or being told off for playing a game of 'house golf'.

Play is a fundamental part of our lives, of growing up, and of learning about and understanding the world. It is our first experience of what it feels like to be free, be scared, get dirty, test our friendships and really be ourselves. Play is not trivial: it is an essential part of our development.¹

Freedom is essential to good play, but over the last twenty years children's freedom of movement has been dramatically restricted. A recent survey found that 60% of parents say that their children play outdoors less than they did themselves at the same age, and more than one in four 10 year olds has never played outside without an adult watching them.¹ Perversely, as Scotland becomes more economically and culturally global, children's worlds are shrinking.

In the context of these changes, it is important that play retains a central place in growing up for *all* children in Scotland.

The purpose of this report

This report has been commissioned by Inspiring Scotland to explore the potential for investing in play. It is also intended to be useful for both prospective investors and organisations already involved in play. It describes the play sector, suggests what a fund investing in play might hope to achieve and identifies four kinds of investment which could have the greatest impact. For investors, it aims to establish a coherent and practical case for investing in play, based on a limited evidence base. This relies on a combination of considered judgement as well as proven facts. For play organisations, it provides an indication of what Inspiring Scotland may look for from future applicants.

Structure of the report

This report is divided into four main sections:

- The first chapter addresses the question, 'What is play?' It looks at the benefits of play for children, families and the community, and provides a background for the rest of the report.
- The second chapter describes the history and structure of the play sector and looks at the work of organisations supporting play at a national level. It investigates how play has featured in government policy since devolution.
- The third chapter looks at play opportunities available for children in Scotland.
- The fourth chapter identifies four broad areas where Inspiring Scotland could target investment. It outlines what is needed for better play opportunities for children and young people.

The organisations mentioned in this report are used for illustrative purposes only and provide no indication of an intention or otherwise of Inspiring Scotland to invest.

Chapter 1: Why play?

This chapter looks at what play is and why it is important to children's development.

It evaluates the evidence for the benefits of play, examines the growing concern about the decline of play opportunities, and identifies a main focus for Inspiring Scotland: 'free play' for children aged between about 5 and 13 years.

What is play?

Play is activity done freely by children for their own interest and enjoyment.* In its widest sense, this includes whatever children do because they want to – from riding a bicycle or climbing a tree to building a den or drawing a picture. Children can play indoors or out, alone or with others. Play can be physical, imaginative, creative, tactical or imaginative, and may be undirected or follow rules.²

Play implies some aspect of freedom. Children cannot be made to play, although if left alone play is something that will usually happen spontaneously. For example, a gap under a hedge might become the gateway to a foreign land, a rolled up piece of card and tennis ball might become the equipment for a new Olympic sport, or a piece of broken glass might become the tool that creates a beautiful wood carving. This form of 'free play' can be distinguished from more structured activities, such as a game of football or playing on the computer, as it has no prior rules and leaves children to create their own imaginative worlds.

Why focus on play?

Play is not just about having fun. When children play they are developing their physical fitness and coordination, their abilities to reason and solve problems, and their social skills. They are also forming relationships, learning about the world around them, taking on new challenges and having new experiences. In short, play is beneficial for children's development.

Despite increasing acknowledgement of these benefits, and although rising affluence has created types of play (such as computer gaming) and play environments (such as theme parks) that did not exist a generation ago, there is widespread concern that children's freedom to play is declining. Across the UK as a whole, recent studies have found that a third of parents do not allow children aged 8-15 out to play outside the home on their own or with friends, and only 15% of children play outside on their street.^{3,4} A 1997 survey in Scotland found that 60% of parents think their children play outdoors less than they did themselves at the same age.⁵

A decline of play opportunities affects different children differently. Similar to many areas of our social and cultural life, opportunities for play vary according to children's backgrounds. For example, in less affluent areas, parents and community groups often complain that children have to play in run-down, even dangerous places. In better-off areas, by contrast, parents are often less willing to let their children out to explore the surrounding area on their own.⁶

Fewer opportunities to play and unequal access to these opportunities could have a harmful impact on our children, and on Scotland's prospects in the future. The rest of this chapter explores these issues.

* The most popular definition of play, used widely across the playwork profession, was written by Bob Hughes of PlayEducation in 1982. It describes play as behaviour which is 'freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated, i.e. performed for no external goal or reward'.

How do children play?

Although all children play, play at the age of two is different from play at the age of 16. The changes are gradual as children learn more about the world, as their tastes and preferences evolve, and as they begin to take on more responsibilities. Professional playworkers identify many distinct types of play which develop at different stages in childhood, such as imaginative play, play with objects, or rough and tumble play. It is possible to observe some broad patterns in the ways in which children of different ages play.

Age 0 to 2: Playing and learning with parents

From birth until about the age of two, play is how children explore the world around them. 'Play' describes almost everything they do when they are awake.⁷ They learn about colour, shape, texture, temperature, sound, distance and weight through their senses. They also learn how their bodies work – how to move around, pick things up, form words, walk, run and climb – and in doing so build muscular strength and motor skills.⁸

Most play in the first few years of children's lives is supervised or directed by their parents or carers, and is part of the process of developing strong relationships with the important people in their lives. Play happens mainly in the home environment.⁹

Age 2 to 5: Starting to play with others

As children get older, they begin to play with other children. At first, this play is usually organised and supervised by parents – at mother and toddler groups or playgroups, or in each other's homes. However, at this stage parents tend to step back from being directly involved in play.

When children begin to play together, they start learning how to form relationships, how to share, how to behave around others, and a whole range of important social skills.¹⁰

Age 5 to 14: Playing out with others

As children begin school, they do most of their playing with other children. Play increasingly takes place away from home: in the street, in parks and other green spaces, and in settings specially designed for children such as playgrounds, play centres, and after-school and holiday clubs. Much of this play is physically active and exploratory – building dens, creating make-believe environments, or digging in sandpits, for example.¹¹

At this stage, play is all about taking on new challenges and exploring new environments. Sometimes challenges – like climbing a tall tree or rolling down a hill – can be risky. Play is a way for children to learn about risk and to test their own limits, and this can lead to cuts and bruises. Some of the fears that parents and children have about the risks of free play are discussed later in this chapter.

Later on, children begin to spend more of their spare time doing structured activities. Many children participate in clubs or activities such as swimming classes or football practice.¹²

Age 14 and beyond: Moving on from free play

As children move into adolescence, their patterns of activity start to reflect more closely those of adults. They appear to spend less time playing freely. Research for the Scottish Government in 2005 asked young people age 11 to 16 how they spent their spare time.¹³ The top activities were watching TV, videos and DVDs (87%), listening to music (87%) and going to friends' houses (84%).

The survey also showed a marked difference between the activities of boys and girls. Girls were more than twice as likely to spend their spare time shopping, while boys are almost twice as likely to play computer games. Girls are also more likely to spend more time on the telephone and reading books and magazines.¹⁴ Teenagers also often engage in free recreational activity in public places, such as in public parks or shopping malls. These freely-chosen activities are usually perceived as socialising or 'hanging around', and often associated (fairly or not) with troublemaking and antisocial behaviour. It is perhaps more helpful to see them as mid-way between children's social play behaviour and adult socialising behaviour.

Worryingly, the natural decline in free play appears to coincide with a decline in physical activity, particularly among girls. Box 1 looks at this issue in more detail.

Box 1: Young people and physical activity

Not all of Scotland's children are getting enough physical activity. Research by the World Health Organisation has shown that only 40% of 11 year old boys and 25% of 11 year old girls do the recommended minimum amount of physical activity each day. By the time they are 15, only 28% of boys and 9% of girls are getting enough exercise.¹⁵

One consequence of inactivity is poor physical health. The most recent Scottish Health Survey found that 35% of boys and 30% of girls in Scotland are overweight or obese.¹⁶ It is a sad fact that Scotland's overall level of obesity is the second highest in the developed world.¹⁷

The problem of lack of physical activity is particularly acute among girls. Two out of three girls in the UK drop out of Physical Education lessons altogether in secondary school. This reflects a general decline in their rates of physical activity above the age of 11.¹⁸ A major survey of sports clubs in Scotland reported a perceived decline in membership among young girls over the last decade.¹⁹

What are the benefits of play?

Play has always been a part of growing up.²⁰ For thousands of years, parents have encouraged their children to play, backed by the received wisdom that it is 'good for them'. Today, a lot of claims are made about the benefits of play.

For individual children, we can say that play may benefit **physical, cognitive and social development, and well-being**. For society as a whole, we can say that improved play provision can help communities feel safer and help children become more included in society. We discuss the evidence for these benefits below.

Physical benefits

For young children, active play is how children train their bodies to meet the demands of everyday life. It is important for developing bone and muscle strength, regulating fat levels in the body, controlling weight, and maintaining blood pressure at healthy levels.²¹

As children get older, free play continues to be a major source of exercise. Research shows that children aged 10-13 burn more calories in 'free play' than almost any other activity, including structured ball games. Free play accounted for the second highest average calorie burn, with only PE lessons giving children more exercise.²²

Play can make a significant contribution to the one hour of physical activity recommended for children every day, and help prevent health problems in the future.²³ There is also evidence that people who are active early in life remain active later in life, suggesting that play can be an important first step in establishing a routine of physical activity.²⁴

Cognitive benefits

Studies in child development have shown how playful activities in the first few years of life are important for brain development. As is discussed above, play is how children in the first five years of life explore the world and their place in it. Play develops memory, and teaches observation skills and how to solve problems.²⁵ Children also use play to develop and test theories about the world (for example, how fast objects fall when dropped) and theories about themselves and others (for example, imagining oneself in another person's shoes, which is believed to help children develop empathy).²⁶ There is less hard evidence for the impact of play on the cognitive abilities of older children, although many of the same arguments are frequently cited.

For older children the main vehicle for learning is formal education, and progress can be measured through regular testing. Very little testing has been done to see whether play aids learning. There is some evidence that longer playtimes in the middle of the day improve attention and test performance among children of primary school

age, but it is not clear whether this should be attributed to the act of play or simply to taking a break from work.²⁷

Social skills and emotional resilience

Research in the United States has found that children who got most involved in free play activities in pre-school were least likely to be aggressive, inattentive, shy or withdrawn when starting school.²⁸ There have been few other detailed studies on the long-term benefits of play for children's social skills. Anecdotal evidence from playworkers suggests that children who regularly go out and interact with other children develop better social skills than those who do not.²⁹ The most cited benefits are the ability to share and negotiate, to cooperate, and to understand and deal with other people's feelings, needs and wishes.

Some educational and occupational psychologists have suggested that play improves emotional resilience by allowing children to experience challenges and difficulties in a safe environment.³⁰ There is not yet enough hard evidence to establish this.

Well-being and resilience

Having fun is an important part of life. Play can contribute to feelings of happiness and contentment, and provide moments of excitement in everyday life. Friendships that last a lifetime are made through childhood play, and it can be a source of common experience among family members and neighbours.

Play can also help to build resilience: it can be used for escapism and as a coping mechanism, particularly if a child experiences difficulty in their life.³¹ Play therapy is increasingly used to help young people who have been abused, who have lost loved ones, or who lack support from within the home.³² There is also some evidence that the physical activity associated with free play can provide a short-term boost to self-esteem.³³

Good play provision might also be useful at preventing negative outcomes. Play areas designed with safe access routes that avoid main roads, for example, are likely to reduce the possibility of children being killed on the roads, and maintenance of safe playgrounds will reduce the risk of accidents caused by hazards such as broken glass which may be common elsewhere.

Benefits for communities

Since youth crime and antisocial behaviour are often attributed to a lack of things for young people to do with their spare time, providing spaces and activities for young people is often seen as an important way of preventing them from getting into trouble. A research study on a summer activity scheme run for 10 to 16 year olds on an estate in Bristol showed a 29% fall in overall crime over the months when it ran, including a 68% drop in motor

vehicle theft.³⁴ Similar results have been found in studies in London and Ottawa, Canada, where a 75% drop in juvenile crime was attributed to the work of an after-school youth group.³⁵ However, there are few conclusive evaluations of this kind, and none have provided significant data showing a long-term impact on youth crime and antisocial behaviour.

Outdoor play is also credited with getting children more involved with their local areas and communities. More free play opportunities may help to bring families out of their homes and give them opportunities to meet other people and interact.

Are opportunities for play declining?

Children's lives have changed markedly over the last generation. Many of the experiences enjoyed thirty years ago - for example playing in the road - are no longer available. But today's young people also have many opportunities that their parents did not have. Does this amount to a decline in play opportunities?

There is no doubt that some spaces have become less conducive to play over the last few decades. In particular, the greater volumes of cars on the road mean that most children can no longer play out in the street. Additionally, although we do not have accurate records, there is some evidence of decline in playing pitches and green space in urban areas.³⁶

But the most significant trend over the last generation is change in the **perception of risk** among parents. In 1971 80% of seven and eight years olds walked to school alone, but by 1990 this had reduced to less than 10%. Research by Barnardo's estimates that children are now allowed to wander only one-seventh as far from home as they were in 1970 and one child in three in Scotland is not allowed to play in the street without an adult present.³⁷

Parents are most worried about the dangers to their children from strangers, anti-social behaviour by teenagers, and road traffic. This is despite the fact that the numbers of children killed in road accidents has fallen and the number of child abductions has barely changed since the 1950s.³⁸

Given this trend, any efforts to increase play opportunities must seek to make parents more confident letting their children out to play.

What are the effects of 'play deprivation'?

Play deprivation might be described as the lack of access to play opportunities. But does this cause harm to children?

Given the benefits for play cited above, we might expect play deprivation to have physical, cognitive and social repercussions for children. This idea is widely accepted, although the evidence for it is limited, and it is difficult to make definitive statements.

Anecdotal and circumstantial evidence points to a link between fewer opportunities to play and poor outcomes. In 1970 15% of 13 to 15 year olds were overweight, but by 2003 this had risen to 34%.³⁹ This period is associated with a decline in children's opportunities for active play. A study in the US has also linked play deprivation to incidents of juvenile violence, drawing a link between more limited spaces in which to play to aggression among children.⁴⁰

There is an established base of research into the effects of social deprivation in animals, which suggests the importance of early social interaction.⁴¹

Is there inequality in play opportunities?

The experience of every child is different. However, there is also evidence of significant differences between access to play opportunities depending on a child's background and circumstances.

Children from relatively affluent households, with larger houses and gardens, are more likely to have an easily accessible safe place to play than young people from deprived households, particularly those who live in high-rise blocks or run-down tenements. This does not mean that children from affluent households play more (as noted above, their parents are more likely to be risk-averse) but it does suggest that public play spaces are likely to be more important in deprived areas, where there are fewer private alternatives. However, these are also the areas where parents are least satisfied with public play provision, and where the local environment is often least conducive to play. A recent study of play areas in Glasgow showed that, although there were more playgrounds in disadvantaged areas, there were greater concerns about the quality of these spaces.⁴² Children in high-rise buildings in run-down areas are the least likely to be allowed out to play on their own because of safety concerns.⁴³ Box 2 looks at the evidence from surveys on what children and parents think about outdoor play.

The distinction between play opportunities available in rural and urban areas is poorly understood. The countryside is not necessarily more 'playful' than the town, as is often assumed. Indeed, as one parent told us, it is possible to be surrounded by countryside but have 'nowhere to play'. Chapter 4 discusses how Inspiring Scotland could target its investments to address play inequality.

Box 2: What children and parents think about outdoor play

Several recent surveys have investigated where children in the UK play outdoors, what they want from play and what they get out of it, and what prevents them from playing.

The majority of children surveyed say that they like to play in parks and green spaces, as well as in wild places such as fields and woodland. They also often play in the streets near their homes, though they are more likely to complain that there is little to do there.⁴⁴ The other important places for play are schools, holiday play schemes and after-school clubs.⁴⁵

Exciting, adventurous and physically active play was most often cited as the type of play that children enjoy. In particular, they like free play as opposed to organised physical activity such as football. Children report that they enjoy taking risks and seeking out challenges while playing – in the words of one parent, ‘Climbing up a tree, falling out and hurting yourself is part of growing up’.⁴⁶ Importantly, though, they like to feel that they are in a safe environment while doing so.

Children’s biggest worry is having accidents. They also worry about other people, especially older children and teenagers invading their play spaces – children in one survey were afraid of ‘15 year olds hanging around’ in their local playground, or that ‘you might get captured, someone might kill you’.⁴⁷ The most commonly cited barrier to outdoor play is a lack of interesting, well-maintained and accessible places to go – one child ‘would like people to clean all the rubbish and graffiti off of the skate park’.

Parents are most worried about the dangers to their children from strangers, anti-social behaviour by children and teenagers, and traffic. These perceptions rub off on children: many said their parents’ fears prevented them from playing away from home, while some complained about hostility by adults towards young people.

The case for play

This chapter has described the value of play. Overall, the message is clear: as part of a healthy and balanced childhood, young people need play opportunities.

From the discussion in this chapter, a number of elements emerge:

- **Children and young people need time for ‘free play’.** Many of the benefits come from free play, where children create their own rules, rather than more structured activities.
- **A healthy childhood involves active, outdoor play.** Amid concerns that children’s levels of fitness are declining, play contributes to physical activity.
- **As children leave infancy, they need more varied opportunities for play.** In the early years of life, most of children’s play experiences involve their parents. As they grow up, they need more exciting and stimulating environments where they can play with other children. This applies particularly between the ages of around 5 and 13.
- **Not all children have the same opportunities to play.** Tackling ‘play inequality’ must be part of any strategy to improve play opportunities in Scotland.

The next two chapters look at the structure of the play sector in Scotland.

Chapter 2: Play in a national context

This chapter describes the history and the structure of the play sector and looks at the work of organisations supporting play at a national level.

It investigates how play has featured in government policy since devolution.

Play before Scottish devolution

For more than a century, public money has been used to provide places for children to play. Although this has never been a responsibility written into law, local authorities and developers have realised that investment in playgrounds, supervised play facilities and green spaces is needed to create high-quality living environments.

However, play has traditionally suffered from being an afterthought in the planning process. It has always been seen as something that is needed but little energy has been given to understanding its purpose or how it could contribute to other social goals. Overall, the result has been a rather perfunctory offer: thousands of playgrounds, whose design did not significantly change in decades.

This attitude started to change in the late 1970s and early 1980s with millions of pounds of public money invested in adventure playgrounds and holiday play schemes. With growing unemployment and the riots of the early 1980s in England fresh in the mind, policies promoting play became an attempt to regenerate inner cities and address public concerns around crime and antisocial behaviour.

The 1990s saw play emerge as a policy issue in its own right. The lessons of the previous decades and the expanding body of research led to a greater appreciation of the wider benefits of play and the importance of free play in childhood development. The UK-wide Children's Play Council (which later became Play England) began to commission research, advocate the benefits of play and campaign at the Westminster parliament. At the same time, the issue of play was finding favour with a new generation of adults who were concerned that the experiences they treasured were vanishing from their own children's lives.

Play since devolution

The rise of play as a serious policy issue coincided with Scottish devolution. The touch paper was lit in Westminster just as the new parliament at Holyrood became the focus for policy-making. Senior ministers in London pledged their support for play in England which, by April 2008, had resulted in £390m of extra public funding and the promise of a national play strategy. Play in Wales was even more advanced, with the Welsh Assembly's unequivocal statement of commitment and the publication of a play policy in 2002.⁴⁸

In Scotland, campaigning around play has not yielded the same results. Figure 1 shows a timeline of the key events in play between 1998 and today. Unlike in England and Wales, Scotland saw no dedicated funding from the lottery or central government.

Figure 1: Key events in play since devolution

1998

Play Scotland is formed. Its aim is to make sure that children's right to play, enshrined in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, is supported in Scotland.

2001

Chris Smith MP (Culture, Media and Sport) makes a pre-election commitment to give £200m from the Lottery's New Opportunities Fund (NOF) to support play, with £20m to go to Scotland. The play sector spends the next two years lobbying the new Culture Secretary, Tessa Jowell, to honour the commitment.

2003

Scottish Executive runs a consultation on how to fund play. However, NOF never receives directions to create a ring-fenced play fund. (The NOF and the Communities Fund merge into the Big Lottery Fund for Scotland, which does not have ring-fenced funds.)

2005

Play Scotland and Barnardo's begin lobbying political parties to secure manifesto commitments on play. Barnardo's supports a Glasgow community organisation to put a petition (PE913) through the Scottish Parliament demanding a national play strategy. Campaigning leads to a debate on play in Parliament, and to 80 MSPs announcing their support for a national play strategy.

2006

The Big Lottery Fund launches its Investing in Communities programme: £257m over three years. Unlike in England and Wales, there are no ring-fenced funds, but play projects could be funded under the 'Supporting 21st Century Life' strand, and infrastructure development under the 'Dynamic, Inclusive Communities' strand. Only a few play projects have been funded so far.

2007

SNP, Labour and Liberal Democrat manifestos all contain commitments to a play strategy. SNP forms a minority government in Scotland. The relationship between central government and local authorities changes: government sets Single Outcome Agreements based on the National Performance Framework. Local Authorities are freer to determine their spending plans, but have to work to achieve national outcomes. Play is not explicitly mentioned in the National Performance Framework.

2008

Scottish Government published Equally Well, a joint national and local government strategy for tackling health inequality. Play is mentioned, though not extensively, but several of the framework's objectives could be met by play provision (including children's physical health and access to green space).

Scottish Government publishes its Early Years Framework. This involves significant consultation with the play sector, and includes play as one of its 'elements of transformational change', signalling renewed importance for play on the policy agenda.

State of play today

Recognition of the importance of play is growing in national debate. Policy-makers and budget holders are realising that play in Scotland lags behind the rest of the UK. But is Scotland ready for investment in play? How is the 'play sector' structured? What are the main organisations supporting play in Scotland?

Figure 2 describes the national support structure for play in Scotland. The Scottish Government sets the policy framework and distributes budgets to local authorities, who are the main funders of play. The charity Play Scotland provides a support structure to play organisations and campaigns for greater recognition for the importance of play. The UK-government-funded agency SkillsActive is responsible for ensuring the play workforce has the appropriate skills and training opportunities. We describe the roles of each of these organisations in more detail below.

The vast majority of activity around children's play occurs within communities, organised by local people, quite removed from the influence of government policy or any central direction. This activity - play in communities - is the subject of the next chapter.

The Scottish Government

The Scottish Government has overall responsibility for public expenditure in Scotland. It focuses on providing strategic direction whilst giving local authorities freedom to make decisions about spending in their areas. The Scottish Government's priorities are outlined in the 2007 National Performance Framework.

Play is an increasingly familiar word within the Scottish Government. Most notably, a commitment to play is an underlying theme in the Early Years Framework, published in December 2008.⁴⁹ 'Improving outcomes and children's quality of life through play' is one of the Strategy's ten 'elements of transformational change' and includes promises to lead a debate on understanding risk in play, develop green space and support outdoor play. Before this, play featured only sporadically in policy discussion and tended to be considered in very narrow terms, for example as a way to enrich the school curriculum. Box 3 outlines how play features in recent policy documents.

The Early Years Framework is the first recognition of play as a cross-cutting theme. Understanding that play can contribute to several of the Scottish Government's objectives is an important part of making the case for play. Box 4 looks at how play fits into the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework.

Figure 2: The national support structure for play in Scotland



Box 3: Play in recent policy documents

Early Years Framework (December 2008)

Play features as the eighth 'element of transformational change', the strongest statement yet of the Scottish Government's commitment to play.⁵⁰ The Framework recognises that 'play is central to how children learn, both in terms of cognitive skills and softer skills around relating to other people. It is a fundamental part of children's quality of life.'

Equally Well and Equally Well Implementation Plan (June and December 2008)

Published in June 2008, Equally Well outlines the Scottish Government's approach to tackling health inequalities. The report states that to tackle inequality there need to be 'opportunities for play, outdoor play and physical activity'.⁵¹ The subsequent Implementation Plan describes how the aims of Equally Well will be met. A commitment to play is reflected in one of eleven 'early years outcomes': 'children have more active lifestyles, access to green space and opportunities for play'.⁵²

Curriculum for Excellence, Building the Curriculum 2: active learning in the early years (2007)

Recognises play as an integral part of early years education. It states that 'all areas of the curriculum can be enriched and developed through play'.⁵³

SNP manifesto (2005)

Commits to developing a 'play strategy' for Scotland. This was also a manifesto commitment of the Scottish Labour Party and Scottish Liberal Democrats.

Let's make Scotland more active: a strategy for physical activity (2003)

Play features as one of the six elements of the strategy, alongside active living, recreational activity, sport, exercise and dance.⁵⁴ However, despite a strong statement, the strategy failed to resolve the question of whose responsibility play was and up to now has had limited impact in promoting play or releasing funding.

Local authorities

Local authorities are the largest providers of play opportunities and contribute the vast majority of funding for play. Local authorities' roles include:

- Building and maintaining playgrounds, parks and local open spaces;
- Running play projects within children's centres and community centres; and
- Supporting local play organisations which are run by the charitable sector or community groups.

Despite the importance of local authorities, providing opportunities for play is not a statutory duty and the enthusiasm among councils varies. A survey in 2006 by Play Scotland found that although 68% of councils perceived play to be a priority, only 31% had a play strategy and only 41% had a strategic play development officer.⁵⁵ Like other non-statutory duties, the attention given to play often depends on whether there is a strong advocate, such as a councillor or local play association.

It will take time for the recent commitment to play shown by the Scottish Government to have an impact at local authority level. Play does not feature prominently in any of the first round of Single Outcome Agreements. Instead, there is some evidence that local authorities' investment in play is being cut. For example, in Edinburgh a play team of nine two years ago has been reduced to just three. Highland Council and Aberdeen City Councils have both recently cut the post of their play development workers. Despite this, during the research for this report, we found optimism among local authority play officers that there is momentum building for change. We were also impressed by the dedication, enthusiasm and expertise of play staff in local authorities.

Play Scotland

Play Scotland is a national charity that works to promote the importance of play for all children and young people, and campaigns to create increased play opportunities. It was established in 1998, shortly after devolution.⁵⁷

Over the last two years, Play Scotland has focused on raising the profile of play within the Scottish Government. In December 2007, it set up the Scottish Play Commission to produce recommendations towards a National Play Strategy. Play Scotland's research into play, for example its 2006 survey of local authorities and its 2008 Play in Scotland survey, is used to provide evidence to support its campaigns. It also runs events, including an annual conference, and provides information, training and professional support to its network of 116 members, most of whom are playworkers or play staff from local authorities.

Play Scotland is a registered charity based just outside Edinburgh. It receives most of its funding from the Scottish Government.

SkillsActive and playwork training

SkillsActive is the sector skills council for the 'active leisure and learning industry' for the whole of the UK.⁵⁸ Funded by the UK government, it supports the training requirements of staff in the sport and recreation, health and fitness, and playwork industries and provides employers and training providers with information and advice on skills development. The recognised professional qualification in playwork is the SVQ, which is taught by 65 colleges and private training institutions in Scotland. Trainee playworkers take modules on the theory and practice of playwork, health and safety, child protection, teamwork and children's rights.

According to SkillsActive, there are around 11,200 professional playworkers in Scotland. The exact work they do varies according to the setting where they work, which we discuss in more detail in Chapter 3. Slightly more than half of these playworkers have an SVQ qualification.⁵⁹

Box 4: Play in the context of the National Performance Framework

Despite the increasing profile of play as a policy issue, it has yet to be articulated in the context of the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework.⁵⁶

The framework describes the purpose and goals of government over the next ten years and aims to articulate a coherent vision for Scotland. It outlines five overarching strategic objectives: to make Scotland **Wealthier and Fairer, Healthier, Smarter, Safer and Stronger, and Greener.**

Fifteen 'national outcomes' outline the government's vision in more detail. Although play is not explicitly mentioned in the strategy, there are seven outcomes that relate to play:

- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. (Outcome 4)
- Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed. (Outcome 5)
- We live longer, healthier lives. (Outcome 6)
- We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society. (Outcome 7)
- We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk. (Outcome 8)
- We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger. (Outcome 9)
- We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the services and amenities we need. (Outcome 10)

The Scottish Government maintains accountability by insisting that local authorities deliver on a series of 'national indicators and targets' designed to show progress against the 15 outcomes. Each local authority negotiates its own **Single Outcome Agreement**, which is published alongside their spending plans for the year. The agreements cover all local government services and show the contribution that the local authority will make towards the overall success of Scotland. 2007-8 was the first year of Single Outcome Agreements.

Public funding for play

The vast majority of funding for play comes from the public sector, through the budgets of local authorities. Responsibility for play is often divided between council departments, which makes it difficult to produce an authoritative figure on the overall expenditure.

A 2006 survey for Play Scotland asked local authorities what they spent on 'direct play provision'.⁶⁰ The 19 respondents reported a total expenditure of £7.8m. However, the authors of the survey express caution at interpreting this figure due to the uncertainties in how it is composed. For example, the survey return for Glasgow explained that the figure provided did not include the costs of building and maintaining outdoor playgrounds, which comes from the budget of the Land Services division rather than Play Services.

In 2006, the Scottish Government made £8m available for early years, childcare and play capital projects. From this fund, £2.4m was spent on play projects. Most of the money was spent by local authorities building new playgrounds. It has also invested around £1m in play@home, a set of three books with advice for parents on physical play with infants and young children.

Through its Supporting Twenty-First Century Life fund, the Big Lottery Fund in Scotland has spent £2.5m on play projects between 2006 and 2008. In general, play organisations have not fared well in competition with other organisations. There is also a feeling that the lack of a dedicated play fund has left play short of funding. Based on allocations to play in England and Wales, an equivalent play fund in Scotland would have totalled around £20m.⁶¹

Independent funders and play

Scotland's independent trusts and foundations make few grants to play projects. Within the grant-making community, play and playwork are not well understood, and the play sector has not cultivated strong relationships with grant-makers. Play Scotland's recent conference in November 2008 had only one representative from a grant-making trust.⁶²

Our research suggests that play organisations lack the time, skills and knowledge to apply for major grants. Grant-makers often complain that funding bids are poor and, as competition for grants is fierce, the play sector tends to miss out. This has been particularly noticeable in the case of the Lottery's programmes, despite a willingness to fund play activities (see Box 5).

The sector has lacked the skills and tools to articulate the importance of 'free play' to grant-makers who are increasingly focused on measuring outcomes. Major grant-makers also concentrate on making substantial grants. Small, volunteer-led play organisations, by contrast, tend to apply for small grants from local councils or from small award programmes such as the Big Lottery Fund's Awards for All.

Finally, it is not clear how many applications grant-makers receive from the play sector, or how much ambition and desire for growth there is among individual play organisations.

Private funding and play

Private funding forms a small part of the economy of the play sector. A few private firms run play centres, funded by fees paid by children that attend. Small amounts of cash are also collected in fees from children attending playschemes or out of school clubs.

Box 5: The play sector and government funding in England

The play sector is more developed in England than in Scotland.⁶³ This is the result of greater success translating the momentum around play that has built over the last decade into financial commitment from government.

Lottery funding

In 2001, the Culture Secretary Chris Smith MP pledged a £155m investment from the lottery to improve children's play opportunities in England. This was to build on the Better Play programme, which involved £10.8m of lottery money over four years from 2000, managed by the Children's Play Council and Barnardo's.⁶⁴ Following this, a national play review led by Frank Dobson MP was launched to determine how this money should be used.

The Dobson review recommended that the money be used to 'develop free, open-access play provision in areas of greatest need'. The majority of the money was to be channelled through local authorities working in partnership with district and town councils, the charitable sector and community groups. Local authorities were seen as key partners as, for the most part, they were the custodians of existing play provision and were the most likely future funders of play facilities.

The £155m fund was divided into three parts:

- £124m was distributed to projects through local authorities. Half of the money was to be used for investment in capital, such as building new playgrounds, and half was used for revenue funding, such as the salaries of playworkers. Local authorities could also use part of the money to fund a post to manage the grant. Grants ranged from £200,000 to £3.3m. Local authorities had to produce a coherent 'play strategy' for integrating play within their responsibilities to the communities they serve.
- £16m was to be spent investing in new ideas. Grants ranged between £10,000 and £250,000. Local authorities and charities were eligible to apply.

- £15m was granted to Play England (formerly the Children's Play Council) to support the delivery of the fund. In practice this meant helping local authorities to write their play strategies.

Almost all local authorities wrote a strategy and received money. The act of writing the strategy focused the minds of local authorities and helped them to recognise the value of play in communities. Around a third of grants went to charities and two thirds to projects run by local authorities. Money was spent on various kinds of project, from play ranger schemes to adventure playgrounds.

Central government investment

In April 2008 the Department for Children, Schools and Families announced Fair Play, a national play strategy based on the commitments made in the Children's Plan (December 2007), and pledged £235m of government investment for play opportunities over three years from 2009. Again, the investment will be channelled through local authorities. The emphasis is on places to play with investment for public play areas, maintaining sites and creating new adventure playgrounds in deprived areas.

Overall, the rise of play in England over the last decade has been a story of it becoming a public policy issue. The commitment of the lottery kick-started the play sector, particularly with its requirement for councils to write a play strategy. Political commitment and advocates within ministerial positions have been crucial to secure the sustained commitment of local authorities and the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Thanks to the lottery investment England is now firmly signed up to the benefits of play.

Chapter 3: Play in a local context

This chapter looks at play opportunities with communities. It focuses on what is available for young people between the ages of around 5 to 13.

It outlines how play is organised and briefly describes the different types of services - from public playgrounds to staffed children's centres.

The information in this chapter brings together various sources to provide as accurate a picture as possible. These include the annual Scottish Survey of Childcare, Play Scotland's 2006 survey of local authorities and information provided by the Out of School Care Network and Youth Scotland.

Play opportunities

Figure 3 describes the main play opportunities available to children and young people in Scotland.

Responsibility for play provision is shared unevenly between the public, charitable and, to a more limited extent, private sectors. The distinction between different providers is not clear cut. A service that is run by the council in one local authority may be run by a charity in another.

The diagram does not give a sense of local variations. The play sector is not a coherent and neatly functioning system but can be more accurately thought of as a patchwork of loosely connected activities varying between areas and communities.

This chapter describes each of the play opportunities in Figure 3 using examples.

Playgrounds and public parks

Playgrounds are outdoor areas set aside for play. They usually contain an assortment of fixed equipment, such as swings, slides or see-saws, and are generally open to the public all day. Box 6 describes an example of a playground in Stirling. Using Play Scotland's estimate of 'at least' 4,156 playgrounds, this means that there is one per 122 children age 5 to 13.⁷¹ Almost all public playgrounds in Scotland are paid for and maintained by local authorities. Many schools also have a play area of some kind, though these are usually closed outside the school day.

Playgrounds are often within parks or recreation grounds. These usually combine open space and managed vegetation. Parks are usually open to everyone in the community and are home to many different activities including walking dogs, jogging and Sunday League football. They are also spaces where children can kick a football around with friends or climb trees.

Playgrounds and parks may or may not be well used by children and young people. In some cases, playgrounds may be perceived as unsafe as they can attract teenagers hanging around and can get vandalised, or parents may be worried that their children will be injured by the equipment or by broken glass or needles, or exposed to unhygienic litter or dog mess.

Figure 3: Play opportunities in the community



Table 1: Approximate number of play providers in Scotland by type

Type of provision	No. of providers	Source
Outdoor play areas	At least 4,156	Play Scotland 2006 ⁶⁵
Holiday play schemes	3,133	The Scottish Government 2008 ⁶⁶
Out-of-school clubs	770	The Scottish Government 2008 ⁶⁷
Public/charitable sector play centres	1,105	The Scottish Government 2008 ⁶⁸
Private sector soft play areas	9	NPC/Play Scotland informal survey, November 2008
Youth clubs	57	softplayareas.co.uk ⁶⁹
Play associations	8,778	YouthLink Scotland 2003 ⁷⁰
Play forums	4	NPC/Play Scotland informal survey, November 2008
Other spaces	8	NPC/Play Scotland informal survey, November 2008
	Unknown	

‘Play rangers’

Some local authorities and play organisations employ ‘play rangers’ – playworkers who go to local parks and open spaces and supervise children’s play. They advertise the times they will be in an area and wear high-visibility clothing or uniforms so that they can easily be identified.

Play rangers may organise games and activities, and bring play equipment with them. There is anecdotal evidence that parents are more confident sending their children out to play freely when play rangers are present, and even reports of children supervised by play rangers being able to ‘reclaim’ open spaces that have been taken over by teenagers or vandalised.

Box 6: Darnley Park, Stirling

The vast majority of playgrounds are very similar: enclosed areas with fixed equipment. Stirling Council has been praised for its innovative approach to playgrounds and investment in design. One example of this is Darnley Park, a site close to Stirling city centre with views over the town, adjacent to a high rise estate.

The play area includes equipment including a slide, a rope walk, a sandpit and a structure made from logs for children to climb. There is also a ball court and a small area of woodland.

Local residents first raised the need for the park in 2001, and were involved with the planning process until its completion in 2004. Today, the community has a playground that it is proud of. The space is well used by local children and their parents and the council runs regular events within the park. The overall cost of building the park was £280,000.

Play schemes

Play schemes are daytime clubs for children aged between around 4 and 14. They are run during the school holidays and provide activities and a safe place for parents to leave their children. Activities tend to be a mixture of structured activities (such as sports) and time for children to play freely.

Play schemes are based in parks, playgrounds or community venues such as village halls, church halls or schools. They are often staffed by local volunteers, although some are businesses employing qualified playworkers. Box 7 describes Zest, a programme of play schemes run by Glasgow Council, in partnership with community groups.

Funding for play schemes typically comes from small grants from local authorities and fees paid by parents. The costs of play schemes vary. The Scottish Out of School Care Network quotes the typical weekly cost of a summer play scheme as just over £76, but some are offered free of charge or at a nominal rate.⁷² Many run on a budget of a few hundred pounds, which pays for the hire of premises, occasional events or to buy equipment. There are around 770 registered holiday play schemes in Scotland.⁷³

Box 7: Zest in Glasgow and Buddies Club play scheme

Zest is the brand for the whole range of local authority-funded services for children and young people in Glasgow, covering everything from activity centres and youth clubs to libraries and museums. Through the leisure trust, Culture and Sport Glasgow, the local authorities provides grants and training to holiday play schemes, of which there are around 40.

Buddies Club is a holiday play scheme for children aged from 5 to 12 with special needs in North and West Glasgow. It was set up in 1985 by Jane Hook, a mother who was concerned at the lack of holiday childcare and play opportunities for her daughter, who was born with special needs. As well as the holiday play scheme, which provides a variety of creative and imaginative activities for children, it runs after-school and Sunday clubs, and a group for teenagers. Buddies Club receives funding from Glasgow City Council: around £1,600 for 2008-9.

Out of school clubs

Out of school clubs are places for children to go after the school day has finished. They may offer a range of playful activities, such as painting or games, or they may be focused around schoolwork, such as homework clubs.

According to the Scottish Care Commission, there are over 1,100 out-of-school clubs in Scotland.⁷⁴ Like holiday play schemes, some are run by volunteers, but others by paid staff as businesses. Most collect fees from children, which may be as little as a couple of pounds, and may also receive grants from local authorities. Most meet in schools or other community buildings. The major cost is for hiring premises and paying any staff. They also have occasional expenses for equipment or events. Box 8 describes the work of an out of school care project run by Pulteneytown People's Project in Wick in the Highlands.

Box 8: Pulteneytown People's Project, Wick

Pulteneytown People's Project (PPP) is a small community organisation in Wick in the Highlands. The aim of the charity is to provide education and employment opportunities to adults and children, including giving local young people opportunities to participate in activities after school and during school holidays. It serves a disadvantaged community which has a lot of low-income families and high unemployment.

PPP works closely with the local high school where it runs activities, including free art and music classes, for young people from low-income households who are referred by social services. The clubs give young people the opportunity to develop their talents and also provide an affordable substitute for childcare while their parents are at work.

Dedicated play centres

There are a small number of dedicated 'play centres' in Scotland, where children can go in the evenings or during school holidays to play. Play centres have their own fixed indoor or outdoor play facilities, and are staffed by paid workers, many of whom have early years, childcare or playwork qualifications.

Play centres may be run by charities, local authorities, or private companies. Two examples - Parent Action for Safe Play and Cranhill Beacon - are described in Box 9. In total, we found nine play centres operated by charities or local authorities.⁷⁵ In addition, there are around 57 'soft play centres' run by private companies, which include ball pits and soft play equipment. Income comes from entrance fees, usually around £4-5 per hour. Centres often include cafés for parents.

Play projects may also be provided within community centres. Some community organisations run play activities for children and families as just a small part of their work.

Adventure playgrounds

Adventure playgrounds are play spaces designed to allow children to experience challenge and risk whilst having fun. Adventure playgrounds are usually staffed by playworkers, and contain equipment and materials that most public playgrounds do not, such as rope swings, climbing walls and aerial slides. Many adventure playgrounds have loose materials as well as fixed equipment, which can be used by children to make dens and tree houses. They often include unplanned areas, where pits can be dug and campfires lit.

There is no clear figure for the number of adventure playgrounds in Scotland, but they are thought to have declined since the 1970s and 1980s. They are a relatively small part of the play offering in Scotland, and children tend to travel to them with their families, often by car, rather than having them on hand in the areas where they live.

Box 9. Play centres

Parent Action for Safe Play

Parent Action for Safe Play runs a children's play centre in the deprived Kirkshaws area of Coatbridge in North Lanarkshire. The centre consists of a large outdoor play area full of brightly-coloured playground equipment, a multi-sports area, a shelter and a large portable building containing a soft play area, seating, meeting rooms and kitchen facilities. The building is open from 9am until 9pm Monday to Friday, and the play area is accessible even when the centre is shut. Around 65 children and young people come to play at the centre every day after school. The centre also functions as a café and drop-in centre for parents and the whole community, and events and workshops for adults are run out of the building in the evenings.

Local parents are the driving force behind Parent Action for Safe Play, in particular its Chair, Mary Fagan, who has put her time and energy into building up the centre over the last decade. Opened in 1999 by Kirkshaws residents who were worried that local children had nowhere safe to go, the outdoor play area was funded by grants totalling £400,000 from private funders, including Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland.

The building was funded by a similar grant in 2006. The centre now has three posts paid for by North Lanarkshire Council, but is still reliant on grants to pay playworkers' fees, and on the goodwill and hard work of dedicated individuals. The Council maintains the play equipment free of charge as part of its duty to the community.

The big challenge for Parent Action for Safe Play is to secure sustainable funding. The charity's annual expenditure is around £137,000, and it has no financial reserves so constantly fights for small grants to keep going.

Cranhill Beacon Play Centre

Cranhill Beacon is a play centre funded by Glasgow City Council on the Cranhill estate in east Glasgow. It is made up of a large outdoor play space including standard playground equipment, a multi-sports pitch, a skate park and wooded areas, and a building containing a soft play facility, a sports hall, a library and an arts and crafts room.

Children aged between five and 12 come to the centre, often arriving straight after school and not going home until the evening. The centre provides a valuable free childcare resource, but also a place for mums and dads to socialise. The staff are keen to encourage parents to participate more in the life of the Beacon, and to stay when they bring their children to play.

The Beacon is one of three staffed play centres run by Culture and Sport Glasgow, the leisure trust responsible for play provision in the city. It was opened in 1997 at a cost of £2m, and now costs around £250,000 a year to run. It is staffed by qualified playworkers.

Youth groups

Youth groups are associations that meet regularly and provide activities for young people. These often involve socialising around a centre or youth club, participating in outdoor activities or enhancing skills by organising events. The term 'youth work' tends to refer to services for young people over the age of 12.

Youth workers do not tend to see themselves as being involved with play. This is partly because of the perception that play is something for younger children. However, while some youth work providers focus on helping young people improve their skills or get into work, others simply offer them somewhere to meet and socialise after school or during the holidays. This freedom could be likened to play.

The youth work sector is larger and better organised than the play sector. There are around 9,000 youth clubs in Scotland, around one third of them run by local authorities and the rest by voluntary organisations.⁷⁶ The largest youth work providers are the uniformed organisations: the Scouts, Guides, and Boys' and Girls' Brigades.⁷⁷ The national umbrella body, Youth Scotland, has 550 additional members and works with a further 175 affiliated groups. Box 10 describes an example of the Hot Chocolate Trust, a youth group in Dundee.

Box 10. Hot Chocolate Trust, Dundee

Hot Chocolate Trust is a youth centre based in the Steeple Church in Dundee. It began as a place for the young people who hung around outside the church to go for a hot drink and a chat. It has now expanded its facilities and runs courses and more organised activities for young people aged 11 to 21, including outdoor pursuits and art and music classes. However, there is still a playful ethos at the core. There are drop-in sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday nights and Saturday afternoons, when young people can come to use the centre's sports hall, play pool and table tennis, or just relax in the lounge area. There are also activity programmes during the Easter and summer holidays. For one girl who is a regular at the centre, it is 'somewhere to go rather than the streets'.

Hot Chocolate Trust is run by four paid staff members and a large team of volunteer youth workers. It costs around £124,000 per year to run, with salaries being the major cost. Most of its income is from grant-makers. It is one of the organisations in Inspiring Scotland's 14:19 Fund portfolio. Inspiring Scotland's investment will help support work to develop the soft skills of young people visiting the centre.

Other spaces

Children and young people do not restrict their play to the dedicated areas listed above, but also use other spaces such as scraps of ground, streets, or the natural environment. Figure 4 shows the Play Place Grid, which describes the many different areas where play can happen.

Some of the most innovative play projects are those which make existing spaces more accessible or appealing for children to play in. For example, the Scottish Government has funded evaluation of a number of 'home zones', making streets safer for children to play and bringing communities together.⁷⁹ There is also a movement towards using Scotland's natural assets, such as forests and woods, to encourage children's play. Chapter 4 gives an example of a nursery school set up to exploit learning in the outdoors.

Supporting the play sector: Play associations and play forums

As the discussion above demonstrates, the play sector is a disparate mix of organisations operating locally within communities. Most play organisations are run by volunteers, and what they do depends strongly on what is needed in each different place.

In some areas of Scotland, play associations and play forums have been established to support these local groups. **Play associations** provide practical help to the play sector, including advice on insurance and child protection. They may help local organisations to buy materials or run events such as sports tournaments or exchange trips. They tend to be small and rely on volunteers, though some employ part-time staff. Because of their reliance on volunteers, and because of the difficulty of finding sustainable funding, they are fragile. The Edinburgh play association, PACE, closed its doors in 2007. NPC's research has identified four play associations operating in Scotland.⁸⁰ For an example, see box 11.

Play forums perform a more limited role, providing a place for local play providers and play services staff from local authorities to talk to each other, make contacts and share ideas. Play forums are much less formal than play associations and tend to be unconstituted. NPC's research indicates that there are play forums in at least eight local authorities.⁸¹

Figure 4: The play place grid, adapted from Play England⁷⁸

	Supervised/semi-supervised	No formal supervision
Designated places for play and informal recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open access play centres • Adventure playgrounds • Play ranger and outreach play projects • School playgrounds (out of school hours) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playgrounds/play areas • Bike, skate and skateboard facilities • Ball courts • Multi-use games areas • Hangout/youth shelters
Non-designated places for play and informal recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks with rangers and gardeners • Streets with wardens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streets • Neighbourhood open spaces • Parks and green spaces • Beaches, rivers and lakes • Routes to school and play areas • Playing fields/recreation grounds • Waste ground/other informal space

Play associations and play forums seem to have a low profile. A 2008 survey of playworkers found that half did not know whether there was a play forum or association in their area.⁸²

Box 11. Glasgow Playschemes Association

Glasgow Playschemes Association supports voluntary holiday play schemes in Glasgow, in particular by providing arts and crafts materials and reusable scrap materials. It is housed in a warehouse in the Govanhill area of the city, and staffed by a small team of volunteers.

The Association exists as a resource where people who run play schemes can come and buy good-quality materials at a low cost. The arts and crafts store is based on an economy-of-scale model: it is cheaper and easier for the Association to buy materials in bulk than for the individual play schemes to spend time and money getting them from the high street. The scrap store relies on the Association's volunteers being able to get hold of odds and ends that factories and shops would otherwise throw away, from fairy lights out of a window display to industrial plastic moulds that children can use to make models.

Other practical help is provided. One of the volunteers is qualified to run criminal records checks, meaning that the Association can help play schemes navigate the otherwise daunting process of disclosure for their staff.

Glasgow Playschemes Association is entirely dependent on the energy and enthusiasm of its volunteers, many of whom have been out of work for a long time, and find working at the store a valuable way of gaining skills and experience. Income from sales does not cover the cost of the store and the Association relies on fundraising events and grants from the council. Funding comes very irregularly and money is tight, especially at the end of the year when balancing income and expenditure, even on basics like rent of the premises, is a real challenge.

Inclusive play

Some children struggle to make the most of play experiences, are left out, or find themselves in environments that they cannot make the best use of. This applies particularly to disabled children, who often find it difficult to access places to play, or may find the equipment or activities on offer hard to use.

Children and young people may be excluded from play for other reasons. They may be the victims of bullying or discrimination by other children on the grounds of gender,

race, sexual orientation, religion or any number of other factors. In some areas, would-be play spaces can be 'no-go' areas for children because they are hot-spots for drinking or drug-taking, or because local territoriality, often associated with gang activity, mean there are streets that children or their parents cannot go down for fear of violence.

Inclusive play involves 'enabling each child to play and express themselves in their own way and supporting children to play together when they wish to'.⁸³ In practice this means making sure that there are opportunities for everyone to play. For disabled children, play provision should be designed so that they can participate, regardless of whether they are in a wheelchair, have a sensory impairment or have communication difficulties. In areas where children avoid play opportunities because they feel threatened, work by local community groups and police, or the presence of playworkers, can reduce the feelings of threat and reclaim play spaces. Box 12 gives an example of a play project in Edinburgh designed to accommodate all disabled children.

Box 12: The Yard

The Yard is an adventure play centre in the middle of Edinburgh which specialises in providing for children with disabilities and additional support needs. It opened in 1986 in response to a lack of suitable facilities for disabled children.

The centre, which is staffed by ten qualified playworkers, consists of outdoor and indoor play areas. It contains very little traditional play equipment. Instead, it is full of unusual spaces (a sand pit, a stream and a wooded area) and interesting and attractive materials (from old musical instruments to brightly-painted car tyres) which children can use when playing. The playworkers rearrange the environment every day according to the needs and abilities of the children who are visiting. Children usually come in groups, either from special schools or on days allocated for families to visit.

The Yard's playworkers take children's progress in play seriously. They keep diaries on individual children and design personal achievement plans to expose them to play experiences that will help them to learn and to develop social skills. Playworkers also provide training to schools and local authorities on how to include disabled children in play.

The Yard is almost entirely funded by grants. It receives only a small amount from local authorities and some fees income for its training, though it is keen to grow this. Its annual expenditure is around £300,000, a cost of £8 per child per visit.

How do play services differ by area?

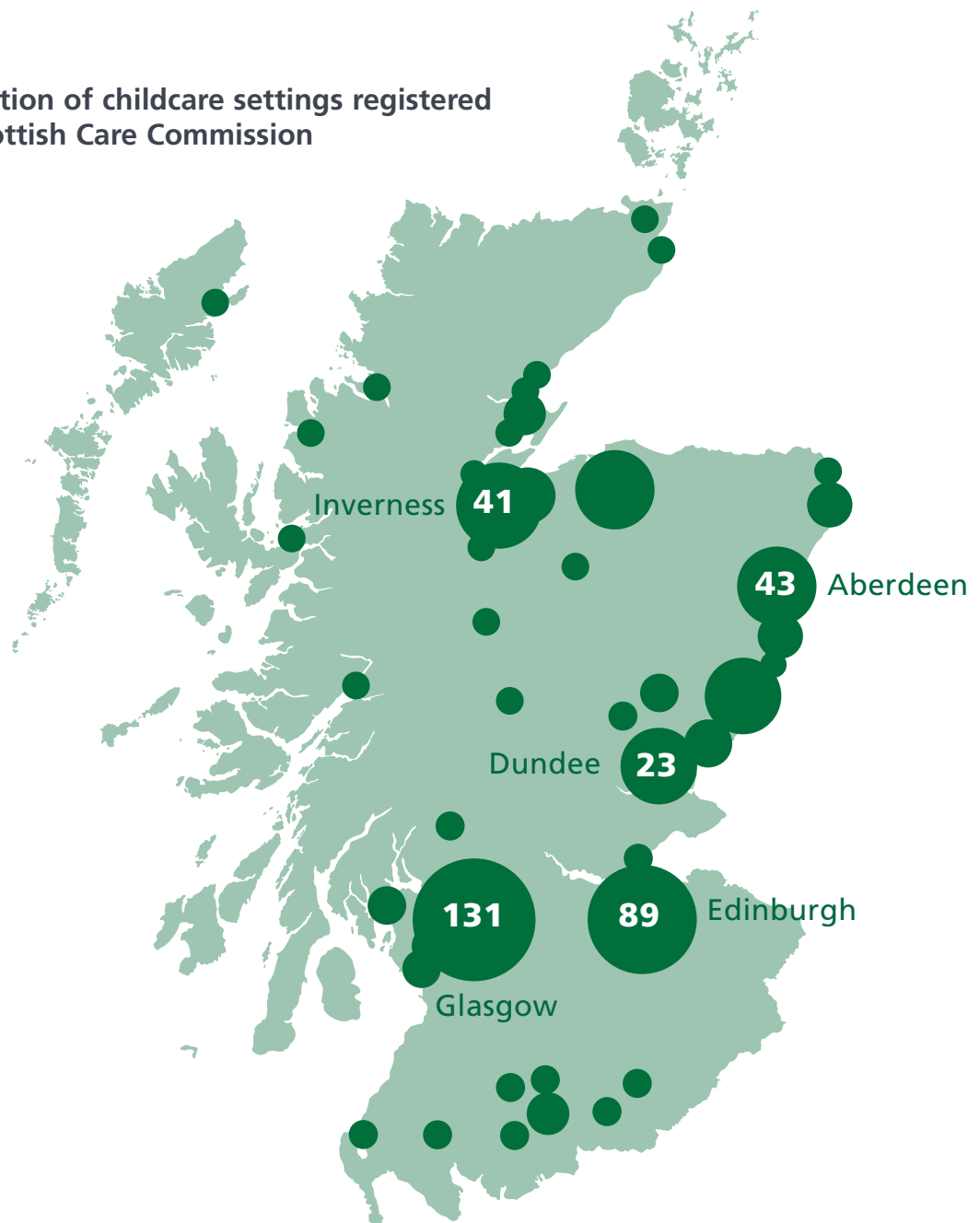
Local play services vary greatly. Reliable data exists on the distribution of holiday play schemes, out of school care organisations and the concentration of playgrounds. We also know the location of the 12 play association and play schemes, and Play Scotland's 93 members.

Unsurprisingly, the majority of out of school care organisations and members of Play Scotland are located in the central belt between Edinburgh and Glasgow. There are also 'hotspots' around Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness. Figure 5 maps the distribution of out of school care clubs registered with the Scottish Care Commission. This gives a broad indication of the distribution of staffed play provision in Scotland.

Statistics on registered childcare settings indicate that the concentration of outdoor playgrounds varies from approximately one per 100 children in the Orkneys and Shetland Isles to one per 250 in East Renfrewshire.⁸⁴ Although this gives an indication of how well catered for neighbourhoods are, it gives no idea of the quality of provision.

Outside Scotland's major towns, in remote areas of the Highlands and Islands, the play sector is largely indistinct from other services for children and young people, including the youth work sector. Promoting playwork within remote rural areas will need to take account of these local variations.

Figure 5: The distribution of childcare settings registered with the Scottish Care Commission



What can we learn from these approaches?

From our discussion of the approaches to providing play opportunities and the examples given, we can learn a number of lessons about what makes a good play project:

- **Success is rooted in communities**
 Good projects have strong local support. The best projects come from local people taking a lead. For example, building a playground in the middle of an estate without consulting residents is unlikely to be as successful as a project that begins with asking families what they want. Play England's guidance says that a good play place is one 'loved by the community'.⁸⁵ Finding local people with the motivation, enthusiasm and respect to champion such projects is perhaps the largest challenge for Inspiring Scotland.
- **Good projects rely on skilled and committed workers**
 During the research we met lots of enthusiastic and committed playworkers, willing to work outside their contracted hours, to listen to children and to daub themselves with face-paint.
- **Many projects rely on volunteers**
 Many play projects depend on the knowledge and goodwill of local people, many of whom give their time for free. Particularly where organisations are dependent on volunteers, Inspiring Scotland must be careful not to undermine them with its investments. Experience in other areas shows that paying staff can destroy the culture of volunteering as people are no longer willing to give their time for free.
- **Projects must take account of parents' safety concerns**
 The last two decades have seen a rise in parents' anxiety about letting their children play outside. Successful approaches to promoting play take heed of this. One obvious answer is staffed services, for example play rangers who oversee activities in public play spaces. Play spaces also need to be adult-friendly: for example, having places where mums and dads can sit and talk.
- **Projects must take a balanced approach to risk management**
 Much of the reported 'decline in play' has been attributed to parents' changing attitudes. Good play projects take a sensible approach to risk management and avoid mollycoddling young people. They should encourage children to explore without putting them in danger.

The next chapter looks at the challenges to better play and investigates what Inspiring Scotland could focus on.

Chapter 4: Opportunities and challenges

This chapter identifies four kinds of investment that could have the biggest impact on the play sector.

It looks at what would lead to better play opportunities for children and young people and outlines some potential difficulties that would need to be overcome.

A new challenge for Inspiring Scotland

Inspiring Scotland's aim is to change people's lives for the better through significant long-term funding and development support for charities. It aims to have a role as a strategic funder, helping to create a strong and capable charitable sector, as well as supporting individual organisations. Inspiring Scotland's first fund, the 14:19 Fund, focuses on working with vulnerable young people between the ages of 14 and 19, in order to help them find positive futures in education, work or training. It is supporting a portfolio of 24 organisations with initial investments of between £538,000 and £5.7m.

The characteristics and structures of organisations supporting children's play are very different from those of organisations working with vulnerable young people aged 14 to 19. These factors would pose a new challenge to Inspiring Scotland and its approach to funding.

Where could investment make the most difference?

Given the characteristics of the play sector, it is not easy to know how or where to invest. The lesson from grant-making in other areas is that, to reach into communities, it is necessary to use the structures that are already there. To be successful, Inspiring Scotland will have to work closely with community groups and local government.

NPC has identified four kinds of investment which could make a significant difference to play in Scotland. These are: supporting the play sector by creating a more robust infrastructure; making play services better in areas of greatest need; making community spaces more 'playable'; and exploring new and creative approaches. We deal with each in turn below.

1. Supporting play organisations by creating a more robust infrastructure

Most of the organisations that provide children's play opportunities are very small. They are typically volunteer-led, survive on a shoe-string budget and rely on the energy of dedicated individuals.

Many play organisations have a short lifespan. They may exist for only a few years before closing or handing on the baton to new leaders. Practical difficulties, such as insurance or child protection policy, can act as barriers preventing would-be organisations from establishing.

Where organisations are successful and have the potential to do more, there is no obvious means to grow. Most rely on small grants from local authorities and fee income. They often do not have the knowledge, network or skills to apply for other sources of funding.

Existing and would-be play organisations need more support to create an environment where play organisations can thrive. They need help with applying for grants, negotiating with local authorities and training and recruiting staff and volunteers, and with practical needs such as insurance. Where an organisation has the ambition to expand, they may require help to develop a business plan.

As we described in Chapter 3, there are a small number of play associations that support organisations. Creating a more robust infrastructure to support play may require investing in these organisations, or creating new ones where they do not exist. Another option might be to investigate the possibility of expanding the role of support organisations in allied sectors, such as the youth associations or Volunteer Centres. To be successful, this would require not just money but a lot of non-financial support, such as management coaching, training in fundraising and marketing support.

2. Making play services better in areas of greatest need

Play is a necessary part of a healthy childhood. Although there is no national indicator for measuring the amount or quality of play that children enjoy, we know that not everyone has the same experiences and opportunities.

We can use a range of data to suggest the areas that would benefit most from investment in play provision – areas where children are most ‘at risk’ from the consequences of play deprivation. Table 2 compares information for the 32 local authorities in Scotland on measures of low income, poor housing, obesity, school performance and number of play areas per head of child population. It shows those local authorities scoring in the bottom five on at least two of the five indicators (highlighted).

Four local authorities scored in the bottom five in three of the six indicators: **Dundee City, East Ayrshire, Glasgow City and North Ayrshire**. Inspiring Scotland could target its investment on these areas to provide more play opportunities. Inspiring Scotland may of course wish to use additional markers for ‘play deprivation’ in selecting the areas in which they wish to work.

What is required in one of these areas is unlikely to be the same as in another. Investments should be organised around the needs and wants of the communities they serve. This might include funding for new dedicated play centres, grants to enable existing play organisations to grow and develop, or investment in local green spaces.

Other options would be to target funding at groups who are typically excluded from existing play opportunities – for example, to improve play services for children with disabilities – or to investigate ways of making play spaces more resilient against territorial behaviour, bullying or vandalism. This last option would require a case-by-case understanding of problems preventing children using local play facilities, and the involvement of communities to design solutions.

Table 2: Indicators for areas most at risk from play deprivation

Local Authority	% children living in low-income households ⁸⁶	Number of areas in Scotland's most deprived 15% for housing ⁸⁷	% adult obesity ⁸⁸	SCQF attainment - percentage of S4 achieving 5+ Awards at SCQF level 4 2007/2008 ⁸⁹	Average number of children aged 5-13 per outdoor play area ⁹⁰
Aberdeen City	34	41	23	71	123
Dundee City	54	86	22	64	186
East Ayrshire	52	0	26	70	241
Glasgow City	58	495	23	65	193
North Ayrshire	54	3	26	68	203
West Dunbartonshire	54	15	23	75	217
MEAN	44	n/a	24	76	163

Sources: Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2006; Scottish Health Survey 2003; Scottish Government qualifications data 2007/2008; Scottish Government childcare statistics and General Register Office for Scotland census data.

3. Making community space more 'playable'

Surveys have shown that it is not access to play space that is a problem, it is access to high quality play space.⁹¹ Playgrounds are often poorly maintained or children find them boring. Community spaces are full of 'no ball games' signs and young people are often frowned upon in public spaces.

Experience has shown that play spaces work best when they are places that are loved by the whole community. Although this report has focused on the benefits to children, the quality and availability of accessible local green space has also been shown to have positive outcomes for adults' health, increasing participation in physical activity and reducing the health impacts of income inequality.⁹² A high-quality and accessible public space can contribute to wider community outcomes such as reducing the fear of crime and increasing community cohesion.⁹³ Investment in public spaces may help reassure parents and encourage them to allow their children more freedom. This would complement the national debate on risk that the Early Years Framework is seeking to introduce.

Well-designed community spaces are of potential benefit to communities as a whole, not just children. Playable spaces need to include elements for all members of the community, perhaps including a garden and allotment, cycle paths, a playground, and benches and youth shelters. They should be child-friendly public spaces, not isolated 'child ghettos'.

Much local space renovation is done by community groups, often with support or advice from local authorities. Projects vary from the improvement of local parks (see Box 13) to the renovation of whole residential areas under home zone schemes.

Box 13: Beardmore Park regeneration, Glasgow

Beardmore Park is a green space opened in the East End of Glasgow in 2005, on the site of a former engineering works. The project turned an abandoned wasteland into an area which is accessible, safe and enjoyable for the whole community for a total cost of £800,000. The planning and execution of the project was organised by locals, housing associations and charities, including Greenspace Scotland, in collaboration with Glasgow City Council and Land Engineering Ltd, a private company.

Local residents were involved in the project from the beginning and the different parts of the park reflect the community that made it. There is a space specifically for parents and toddlers, a large play area with interesting and unusual equipment, a 'youth shelter' for older children and teenagers, a skate park, and a terrace for sporting events, as well as quiet patches of green space. Old pieces of industrial machinery, repainted in bright colours, are dotted around.

Following the completion of the park, a residents' association, 'Friends of Beardmore Park', was formed to help with the upkeep of the park. The park was handed over to the local community at an opening party in December 2005. The local MSP, who opened the park, called it 'an excellent example of what can be achieved when local people are involved in creating a community space'.

4. Exploring new and creative approaches

The structure of the play sector and its funding makes it difficult for new ideas to get off the ground. Energy and enthusiasm need to be accompanied by money and skills.

Play projects find it hard to compete with other charities for sources of funding. The play sector also lacks skills in some areas, especially around growing organisations. Without support - both financial and non-financial - opportunities can be lost and good ideas can fade rather than flourish.

There is scope to invest in innovative and new ideas, with a view to learning what works. In England, grants from the Big Lottery Fund's 'Playful Ideas' programme have funded a wide range of new projects. These include: a narrow boat that travels up and down a canal taking equipment to communities in Milton Keynes, Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire; overnight camps for children in the Preston Road estate in Hull; and a playground in Exeter equipped with a wheelchair-accessible see-saw and roundabout.⁹⁴

One area where there is potential is the small but growing outdoor education movement in Scotland.⁹⁵ Drawing inspiration from ‘forest schools’ developed in Germany and Scandinavia, it is based on the idea that children can benefit from being in woodland and wild areas to learn about the natural environment and participate in outdoor activities. An example of a project is the Secret Garden nursery in Fife (see Box 14).

Box 14: The Secret Garden, Fife

The Secret Garden is an outdoor nursery in the woodlands near Letham in Fife. It was established in September 2008 as a non-profit company and is open 49 weeks of the year on weekdays between 8.30am and 5pm. It is attended by around 15 children from local towns and villages.

The Secret Garden believes that outdoor play and nature are important for the development and well-being of pre-school children. It has developed a nursery curriculum based on the idea of ‘Nature as Teacher’: by learning more about the natural world – making dens, playing with animals, jumping in puddles, building campfires, etc. – children develop their own abilities and confidence, and are more willing to take on new challenges.

The Secret Garden relies on the energy and passion of its founder, former teacher Cathy Bache, who has run an outdoor childminding service for several years, and three other part-time staff. It was started with a £17,000 grant from the National Lottery’s Awards for All programme, a £20,000 donation, and a £45,000 loan. Its main income is from Local Authority childcare vouchers but it also receives some income from running training courses.

Lessons for investment

If investment in play is to have an impact, there are a number of lessons that must be heeded:

Non-financial support is as important as financial support

Money alone will not improve play opportunities for children and young people in Scotland. Play schemes, out of school clubs and play associations require help individually and collectively to create a sector that is able to sustain itself. This support could include help to develop business plans or to make strong funding applications.

Most play organisations are not used to receiving large amounts of money and do not have the financial structures in place to deal with it. Large amounts of money also risk undermining the voluntary ethic that underpins much of the play sector, as described above. Inspiring Scotland would have to consider carefully the size of any grants and what would be most appropriate.

Local authorities are key investment partners

Local authorities are the major funders of play, and are likely to remain so in the future. Any new facilities or organisations created by investment will, at least in part, rely on the financial support of local authorities to sustain them. Local authorities also have the skills to maintain playgrounds and public areas.

Investments must have the support of the community

Successful projects have the full backing of the local community, through parents, schools and residents’ associations. Experience suggests that this backing, by creating a sense of ownership among local people, means that play areas are more likely to be used and less likely to suffer vandalism.⁹⁶

Measuring success

Measuring the impact of charities’ work is crucial. Understanding what works and what does not means that successes can be repeated and failures prevented, leading to better outcomes for charities, investors and, ultimately, the people they help.

Ask a child to explain why play is good and he or she will reply that it is fun, interesting and exciting. However, showing the value of activities promoting play presents a challenge to funders. Most organisations do not attempt to measure the results of their work in a systematic way and there is no established tool for capturing the benefits of play. In particular, the notion of ‘free play’ presents difficulties as the activity takes place with no clear goals except for children to enjoy themselves.

The lack of measurement makes it difficult to determine what is a successful organisation, even where data exists. For example, if we find that 40% of children become physically fitter, how do we know that this is a good outcome? What if other projects achieve 60%? Until we have more data, this problem will remain.

Table 3: Measuring the benefits of play

	Outcomes	Potential measures
Physical benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved physical fitness • Reduced obesity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures of participation in physical activity in general (compared with existing data from the World Health Organisation and the NHS) • Measures of participation through membership of sports clubs, walking groups, etc. • Measures of body mass index within a given area or population (currently measured at the level of NHS health authority)
Cognitive benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved coordination • Improved problem-solving skills • Higher educational performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-report of coordination skills • Reports of coordination skills by parents, teachers and other adults • Measures of performance in school examinations, eg, Scottish Standard Grades or SVQs
Social and emotional resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better communication skills and ability to form relationships • Higher self-confidence • Greater resilience and ability to cope with stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports of social skills by teachers, parents and other adults • Standard measures of self-esteem and coping skills, such as the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
Well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater happiness and well-being • Greater perceived safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's 'well-being scores' on standard indices, e.g. NPC's well-being questionnaire⁹⁷ • Reported feelings of safety among parents and children • Self-harm and attempted suicide statistics for children and young people
Benefits for society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better community cohesion • Increased satisfaction with local area • Improved child safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures of residents' satisfaction with their communities • Measures of perceived crime in an area • Measures of crime rate, e.g. motor vehicle theft • Accident statistics and rates of admission to Accident and Emergency

Direct measures

Table 3 lists the potential benefits of play for children and suggests some measures and sources of evidence that might be used to determine whether or not an activity is successful at conferring these benefits.

Indirect indicators

Measuring benefits directly is difficult. If Inspiring Scotland were to invest in play, it could also look for indirect indicators. Whilst indirect indicators cannot demonstrate success or failure on their own, they provide a useful proxy for inferring benefits

Play England has produced four indirect indicators for assessing overall play opportunities in a particular area.⁹⁸ They are aimed at local authorities seeking to understand the quality of play in their jurisdictions. They could provide a model for a similar set of indicators for Scotland. The indicators are:

- Participation – the percentage of all children and young people who play out for at least four hours each week. (Measured by household survey.)
- Access to a variety of facilities and spaces – percentage of young people that have access to at least three different types of spaces. (Measured with an annual audit of spaces.)
- Quality of facilities and spaces – the proportion of facilities and spaces that have been assessed using Play England's Quality Assessment Tool.
- Satisfaction – what young people think. (Measured with a school survey.)

Another approach would be to look at the quality of the inputs into play projects. This is based on the principle that a high-quality environment and trained staff are more likely to lead to good outcomes. This approach has been used in other areas of work. For example, in examining the quality of childcare, the University of Oxford and Bath has developed the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised ed. (ECERS-R).⁹⁹ This scale uses indicators, such as the amount of space and qualifications of staff, to rate nurseries. It is based on a demonstrated link between these factors and outcomes, including performance in English and Maths at primary school.¹⁰⁰

Better measurement

Better evidence would help play organisations to develop a greater understanding of their work and how they can improve. It will benefit the whole sector as it seeks to make its case to government and other funders in Scotland.

In isolation, indirect approaches to measuring results can only provide a limited indication of how successful a project is likely to be. Where possible, they should be combined with more direct measures, such as those suggested in Table 3. Inspiring Scotland could explore the possibility of developing a framework for measuring results which combines these approaches. Helping to improve the evidence base could be one lasting legacy of Inspiring Scotland's funding.

Conclusion

This report has examined the importance of play in children's lives.

It has described the opportunities for play that exist today and identified a need for more investment for children aged between 5 and 13. It outlines how Inspiring Scotland might contribute to improving play in Scotland in four areas:

- supporting the play sector by creating a more robust infrastructure;
- making play services better in areas of greatest need;
- making community spaces more 'playable'; and
- exploring new and creative approaches.

Leading the way

By investing in play, Inspiring Scotland could improve the lives of all children in Scotland: by giving them the chance to learn about the world at their own pace, and develop the resilience that comes with getting dirty, falling over and facing their fears.

There are benefits to play that children do not notice, but that academics, public health professionals and children's workers are beginning to realise are essential to young people's development, happiness and future prospects. By investing in play, Inspiring Scotland has the opportunity to provide timely influence and create lasting social change.

Investing in play will not be easy, and will involve failures as well as successes, but through its funding and support Inspiring Scotland could have an enormous impact on an under-developed sector.

Partnership

Inspiring Scotland's aim is to change people's lives for the better through long-term funding and development support for charities. Its commitment to partnership puts it in a unique position. Because supporting children's play is not child's play, success would require working closely with local government and communities, as well as the charitable sector.

There are over 500,000 children and young people between the ages of 5 and 13 in Scotland. With Inspiring Scotland's help – and with the energy and enthusiasm of independent funders, grant-makers, government and private donors – they could all have a better chance to play.

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- ⁴³ Valentine, G., and McKendrick, J. (1997) *Children's Outdoor Play: Exploring Parental Concerns About Children's Safety and the Changing Nature of Childhood.* *Geoforum*, 28(2): p. 219-35.
- ⁴⁴ Henshall, A., and Lacey, L., (2007) *Word on the street: Children and young people's views on using local streets for play and informal recreation. Playday.*
- ⁴⁵ **11 Million/Play England (2008) Fun and Freedom: What children say about play in a sample of Play Strategy consultations.**
- ⁴⁶ **Boyland, M. (2007) Attitudes Towards Street Play. ICM/Playday.**
- ⁴⁷ **11 Million/Play England (2008) Fun and Freedom: What children say about play in a sample of Play Strategy consultations.**

- ⁴⁸ The Welsh Play Policy was announced in a plenary session of the Welsh Assembly Government on 22 October 2002 by Jane Hutt, Minister for Children. In her statement to the Assembly she said that 'the Assembly Government is committed to ensuring that all children have access to rich, stimulating play experiences, with safeguards from inappropriate risk, but full of challenge, offering them the opportunity to explore, through freely chosen play, both themselves and the world.' See <http://www.playwales.org.uk/page.asp?id=60>
- ⁴⁹ **Scottish Government (2008)** *The early years framework* <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/254013/0075251.pdf>.
- ⁵⁰ **Scottish Government (2008)** *The early years framework* <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/254013/0075251.pdf>.
- ⁵¹ **Scottish Government (2008)** *Equally Well: report on the ministerial taskforce on health inequalities – Volume 2, p.141*
- ⁵² **Scottish Government (2008)** *Equally Well Implementation Plan.* <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/254248/0075274.pdf>
- ⁵³ **A Curriculum for Excellence Building the Curriculum 2: active learning in the early years (2007), p.5.** http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/images/Building%20the%20Curriculum%202_tcm4-408069.pdf
- ⁵⁴ **Scottish Executive (2003)** *Let's make Scotland more active: a strategy for physical activity.*
- ⁵⁵ **Play Scotland (2007)** *Local Authority Play Provision in Scotland 2006.*
- ⁵⁶ **Scottish Government (2007)** *Scottish Budget Spending Review 2007. See chapter 8: A national performance framework.* <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/11/13092240/9>
- ⁵⁷ See www.playscotland.org.
- ⁵⁸ See <http://www.skillsactive.com/arounduk/scotland/playwork>.
- ⁵⁹ SkillsActive audit of Scottish playwork sector 2004, figures published on the SkillsActive website <http://www.skillsactive.com/arounduk/scotland/playwork>.
- ⁶⁰ **Play Scotland (2007)** *Local Authority Play Provision in Scotland 2006.*
- ⁶¹ This figure is arrived at by adjusting the allocations to England and Wales for the number of children and young people in Scotland. It is therefore not a particularly sensitive calculation.
- ⁶² The grant-maker was a representative from Inspiring Scotland.
- ⁶³ According to SkillsActive, there are 110,330 playworkers in England and 11,210 in Scotland. SkillsActive audit of Scottish playwork sector 2004, figures published on the SkillsActive website <http://www.skillsactive.com/arounduk/scotland/playwork>.
- ⁶⁴ **Youlden, P., and Harrison, S. (2006)** *The Better Play programme 2000-2005 An evaluation.*
- ⁶⁵ **Play Scotland (2007)** *Local Authority Play Provision in Scotland 2006.*
- ⁶⁶ This figure is the outdoor play areas recorded by the Scottish Childcare commission's survey of childcare settings, defined as 'any area out of doors available to the children attending the centre which may also be shared with others or available to the wider community. See The Scottish Government (2008) *The National Statistics Publication for Scotland: pre-school and childcare statistics 2008* (17 September 2008).
- ⁶⁷ **The Scottish Government (2008)** *The National Statistics Publication for Scotland: pre-school and childcare statistics 2008* (17 September 2008).
- ⁶⁸ **The Scottish Government (2008)** *The National Statistics Publication for Scotland: pre-school and childcare statistics 2008* (17 September 2008).
- ⁶⁹ www.softplayareas.co.uk (accessed on 1 December 2008)
- ⁷⁰ **YouthLink Scotland (2003)** *Mapping the Youth Work Sector in Scotland: A quantitative assessment.*
- ⁷¹ According to the General Register Office for Scotland, there are 505,526 young people aged 5 to 13 in Scotland. Using Play Scotland's estimate of 4,156 play areas this equates to one play area per 122 children.

- ⁷² www.daycaretrust.org.uk/article.php?op=Print&sid=315 (accessed 20 December 2008)
- ⁷³ All play schemes that provide more than two hours of childcare per day on six or more days per year in Scotland are regulated by the Care Commission. See The Scottish Government (2008) *The National Statistics Publication for Scotland: pre-school and childcare statistics 2008* (17 September 2008).
- ⁷⁴ **The Scottish Government (2008)** *The National Statistics Publication for Scotland: pre-school and childcare statistics 2008* (17 September 2008).
- ⁷⁵ The nine play centre identified in our research are: Parent Action for Safe Play (North Lanarkshire), Pather Community Action Group (North Lanarkshire), Caldercruix Youth and Community Project (North Lanarkshire), Lauder Parent and Child Club (Borders), Bruce Family Centre (Shetland), Cranhill Beacon (Glasgow), Lynn Park Adventure Playground (Glasgow), the Jeely Piece Club (Glasgow) and Scotland Yard (Edinburgh).
- ⁷⁶ **YouthLink Scotland (2003)** *Mapping the Youth Work Sector in Scotland: A quantitative assessment*.
- ⁷⁷ According to data from Youth Scotland 2008, there are around 1,222 uniformed youth work groups in Scotland. This includes 1,984 scout troops, 3,155 girlguide groups, 262 girls brigades, 560 boys brigades and 151 Clubs for Young People.
- ⁷⁸ **Play England with Ashley Godfrey Associates (2008)** *Local play indicators, update: 6 August 2008*
- ⁷⁹ **Scottish Executive Social Research (2007)** *Home Zones in Scotland Evaluation Report. Land Use Consultants FaberMaunsell, Small Town and Rural Development Group University of Edinburgh*
- ⁸⁰ The four play associations identified in our research are: Glasgow Play Association, Midlothian Association for Play, West of Scotland Playschemes Association, and Pre-school Play Ltd in Shetland Isles. There are a number of organisations not included that do similar work but have a wider remit. These include Lothian Association of Youth Clubs in Edinburgh and Falkirk Out of School Care Network.
- ⁸¹ The eight local authorities with play forums are: Aberdeen City, Edinburgh City, South Ayrshire, Dundee, Glasgow City (five), South Lanarkshire, East Ayrshire and North Lanarkshire.
- ⁸² **McKendrick, J. and Callaghan, M. (2008)** *Developing Play in Scotland. Scottish Poverty Information Unit/Play Scotland*.
- ⁸³ **McIntyre, S. (2007)** *People play together more. A dhandbook for supporting inclusive play. (P.inc) Play Inclusive*.
- ⁸⁴ Using the Scottish Government's figures for outdoor play areas registered with the Care Commission and statistics for the number of children age 5 to 13, the number of children per play are: Shetland 90, Orkneys 94, East Renfrewshire 254, Glasgow City 193 and Edinburgh City 130. The Scottish Government (2008) *The National Statistics Publication for Scotland: pre-school and childcare statistics 2008* (17 September 2008).
- ⁸⁵ **Shackell, N., Bulter, N., Doyle, P. and Ball, D. (2008)** *Design for Play: a guide to creating successful play spaces. Play England*
- ⁸⁶ There is a correlation between low-income areas and adults' perception that there is not enough provision for play. See Greenspace Scotland/Progressive Partnership (2007) Omnibus Survey: Final Report. Indicator of low income is number and proportion of children living in households that are dependent on out of work benefits OR Child Tax Credit more than the family element. Data from the Scottish Government 2006/2007 www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/1135/0067424.xls.
- ⁸⁷ Poor quality housing is linked to poor play opportunities – partly through its connection to general area deprivation, and partly because it limits the places where children can play. Indicator of poor housing is the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2006 number of areas in 15% most deprived category for housing. See <http://openscotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/151578/0040731.pdf>
- ⁸⁸ Free play is a good source of exercise, so areas with obesity rates may be among those that benefit most from better play opportunities. Indicator is the prevalence of obesity in those aged 16 and over by local NHS Board areas from the Scottish Health Survey 2003 www.scotpho.org.uk/home/Clinicalriskfactors/Obesity/obesity_data/obesity_nhsboard.asp. Health boards have been matched to corresponding local authorities.

- ⁸⁹ Play is important for children's cognitive development. Better play provision may be most useful in areas where educational attainment is low. Indicator is the percentage of S4 children achieving 5+ Awards at SCQF level 4 2007/2008. Statistics Publication Notice Education Series: SQA Examination Results in Scottish Schools, 2007/08. Table 6: S4 Attainment, by education authority www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/09/10154841/10.
- ⁹⁰ Indicator is the average number of children aged 5-13 per play area. Combines data on population from General Register for Scotland Mid-2007 Population estimates www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/publications-and-data/population-estimates/mid-2007-population-estimates-scotland/list-of-tables.html, and outdoor play areas at registered childcare settings The Scottish Government (2008) The National Statistics Publication for Scotland: pre-school and childcare statistics 2008 (17 September 2008).
- ⁹¹ **Greenspace Scotland/Progressive Partnership (2007)** *Omnibus Survey: Final Report*.
- ⁹² **Mitchell, R., and Popham, F. (2008)** *Effect of exposure to natural environment on health inequalities: an observational population study. The Lancet 372:9650, 1655-60.*
- ⁹³ **Greenspace Scotland (2008)** *greenspace scotlandresearch report greenspace and quality of life: a critical literature review (August 2008).* http://www.openspace.eca.ac.uk/pdf/greenspace_and_quality_of_life_literature_review_aug2008.pdf
- ⁹⁴ See examples of grants made by the Big Lottery Fund to playful ideas in England, see www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_playful_ideas?tab=4&.
- ⁹⁵ For example, see the work of the Forest Education Initiative www.foresteducation.org, and the Forestry Commission's Woodlands for Learning www.forestry.gov.uk/website/fchomepages.nsf/hp/gbwfl
- ⁹⁶ **Carr, S. (1992)** *Public Space. Cambridge University Press.*
- ⁹⁷ NPC's well-being questionnaire is being developed by NPC's Tools Team. For more information see www.philanthropycapital.org/research/research_reports/other/wellbeing.aspx. The final tool is expected to be produced by October 2009.
- ⁹⁸ **Play England with Ashley Godfrey Associates (2008)** *Local play indicators, update: 6 August 2008*
- ⁹⁹ ECERS-R has been developed by the Child Care Quality Team at the Universities of Oxford and Bath. The team concede that the scale is an 'imperfect but useful' measure.
- ¹⁰⁰ For more information on the approach and evidence of the link between inputs and later outcomes, see <http://www.niesr.ac.uk/event/Conference%20Measuring%20the%20Quality%20of%20Early%20Years%20Provision/Kathy%20Sylva,%20NIESR,%2010%20Oct%202008.ppt> (accessed 22 December 2008).



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