

PE1440/D

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David Stewart MSP  
Convener  
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Dear David,

## CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1440

Thank you for your letter of 8 October regarding Petition PE1440 lodged by Play Scotland regarding plans for play within the forthcoming Children and Young People Bill. You asked two questions and I will answer each in turn, if I may.

**What is your view on the suggestion that there should be a statutory requirement for public services to support the whole wellbeing of children and that a child's right to play should be explicit in the duties of public bodies?**

We are proposing a statutory duty on local authorities and health boards to plan around the design and delivery of services to improve the well-being of children and young people. Play is a critical part of a child's well-being, and we are keen to see play embedded within the design and delivery of children's services. All consultation responses are currently being considered and will help determine the development of the Bill.

**It has been suggested that at the national level there is support for a social policy commitment to play but that this does not necessarily filter down to all local areas. Do you agree and if so what more could be done to improve the situation?**

The *Early Years Framework* is very clear about the importance of positive parenting in the early years and our *National Parenting Strategy* which was published on 3 October clearly emphasises to parents and practitioners the benefits of play, from stimulating our babies from day one, to creating opportunities for children and young people to explore and enjoy learning throughout their lives. We are committed to encouraging and enabling play throughout childhood, as is a child's right under UNCRC Article 31.



The Scottish Government supports play at a national level through a variety of ways including direct funding of activities and initiatives as well as support and close liaison with Play Scotland. Through increased funding to £1m per year on our *PlayTalkRead* campaign supports parents to give their children the best start in life and is delivered in the hearts of communities throughout all of Scotland's local authorities. We also support multi-agency working with initiatives such as the play@home programme.

Our two-year £4 million *Go Play* fund aimed to build the capacity of the play sector in Scotland, offering more chances for children aged five to 13 years to participate in free play. Key to the *Go Play* programme was building capacity and sustainability in the sector and Inspiring Scotland, with Evaluation Support Scotland, created the *Outcomes and Evaluations Framework*. The subsequent logic model and play framework has been rolled out across a number of events nationwide. Through the *Go Play* fund Play Scotland created their *Getting It Right for Play* toolkit and we are facilitating the transition of this resource into a CPD resource which is intended to be used to assess play sufficiency at a local level.

Our ongoing commitment to promoting the benefits of free play opportunities and quality play spaces for children is being strengthened by a £3m funding package over three years from 2012/13 through the *Go2Play* fund which builds on the two most positive results from *Go Play* at a local level - the development of quality play spaces and the provision of play rangers.

We join the play sector in a shared vision to see the value of play recognised throughout society working with local authorities, communities and professionals in health, education and planning locally. Like them, we are keen to achieve a shift in attitudes to play and raise awareness of the cognitive, social and behavioural skills developed through playing. We have established the Early Years Taskforce Play/Culture sub group to focus on wider culture change through play. The sub group is co-chaired by Tam Baillie, Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, and Sue Palmer who is on the board of Play Scotland.

Further, the Health and Safety Executive recently issued a high level statement about our society's obsession with health and safety and the myths surrounding existing advice and I was pleased to endorse this statement as a step towards a better understanding and balanced common-sense approach towards children's play and leisure in Scotland.

I am keen to bring all of these individual strands of work together and see a clear alignment with our three social frameworks – *Early Years Framework*, *Equally Well* and *Achieving Our Potential* as well as our *National Parenting Strategy* and the recently announced *Youth Sport Strategy* which will ensure that the crucial skills learned through play develop a child's physical literacy.

That is why I am developing Scotland's first national Play Strategy. This will set out our vision for play and the action we will take to achieve this with a key aim being to embed play within children's services through the forthcoming Children and Young People's Bill.

**AILEEN CAMPBELL**