



Play Matters

Building happy, healthy children



Play Matters

Children are born with a natural desire to play. Whether playing alone, with a parent/caregiver, or with another child, play is not only a legitimate activity for children, it is vital for their growth, development and well-being.

The importance of play has been underlined through research which has shown play's positive contribution to children's physical and mental health, self-confidence and sense of self-worth, social skills, and their ability to better understand and engage with the world around them. Providing access to different play opportunities actively supports this growth and development.

Play matters, because play is the most natural way for children to learn, grow, develop, and make sense of the world and their place within it.

The Right to Play

The basic principle underlying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is that children and young people (18 years or under) are born with the same fundamental set of rights as all humans, alongside a number of additional rights which arise from their vulnerability.

Comprised of 54 articles in total, article 31 of the UNCRC reads: "States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts."¹

A recent progress report from the UN Child Rights Committee on the UK's implementation of the UNCRC included recommendations that children should have greater access to free outdoor play, and have sufficient time in school to engage in play and recreational activities that are inclusive and age-appropriate.²

Play in Schools

Play has a critical role in schools – offering an outlet for expending energy during break times, enhancing concentration levels within the classroom, and as a means of contributing to learning through the curriculum.

For many children and young people, the school playground represents the only open, accessible space that allows them to engage in physically challenging and socially developmental outdoor play.

Through offering quality play time and experiences, schools play a significant role in the healthy development of children and young people.

Playing and learning outdoors, children encounter many opportunities to grow, develop and learn including:

- Improving physical fitness
- Letting off steam
- Developing co-ordination, strength, agility, and stamina
- Building self-confidence, communication and independence
- Engaging with others, fostering social connections and peer friendships
- Solving problems and increasing resilience
- Risk assessment
- Boosting creativity and imagination.

Play for Professionals

PlayBoard offers professional play development and training to a range of stakeholders who directly or indirectly influence play, aimed at helping participants understand the importance of play and leisure and their role in creating child-friendly and play-friendly communities. We work with schools and the wider community to enhance the play offer within primary schools.

Play for Parents

This programme aims to provide parents with the skills, knowledge and confidence to meaningfully play with their children and gain an understanding of the many benefits of play in relation to their child's development. Delivered through play specific training for those professionals who work directly with parents, and play awareness programmes for groups of parents.

Get in touch to discuss your training needs.

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¹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, (2023). *Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, p.18.

² UN General Assembly, (1998). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.