

Play Policy



Children and Families
Early Years
Play Development

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Play in Partnership: a Play Strategy for the city of Edinburgh (2014)

International and National perspectives

Freedom to play is every child's right under article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2013 the UN published General Comment number 17 on article 31, which expands and describes what the UNCRC means by the right to play. In response the Scottish Government launched the national *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision*, and *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan*. *Play in Partnership: a Play Strategy for the city of Edinburgh* reflects these principles.

What is Play?

Play is fundamental to children's quality of life, and it is the way that they enjoy their childhood. It is often described as 'what children and young people do when not being told what to do by adults'. Play is fun, but it can also be challenging and make children's hearts beat faster! It can be lively or relaxed, noisy or quiet, solitary or with friends. Play can happen with or without equipment, indoors or outside. It can be light hearted or very, very serious!



Why Play?

Play is essential for children's healthy physical and emotional growth, to acquire social and behavioural skills and for their educational development. Children need freedom to play to practise skills, explore the world around them and develop understanding in their own way and in their own time. The essence of play is that it comes from children's innate need to express themselves, to explore, learn about and make sense of their world.

Edinburgh's Vision

Edinburgh aims to be a play friendly city where all children and young people can enjoy their childhood. They will have access to play opportunities in a range of different settings which offer variety, adventure and challenge. They will be able to play freely and safely and make choices about where, how and when they play.



Edinburgh's Playday, Grassmarket

Edinburgh's Play Values

1. Play is a fundamental right for every child.*
2. Play is an activity which is valuable in its own right. It is about the fun and satisfaction of the participant and benefits children, young people, families and communities.
3. Play is a valued activity through which children and young people can express and manage their feelings, make new friends, acquire new skills, and gain an understanding of the world around them, supporting them to achieve the best start in life.
4. Play in Edinburgh values the benefit of risk and challenge based on risk benefit assessment. Every child and young person in Edinburgh should be able to play freely and safely while learning to manage risks, and make choices about where, how and when they play according to their age, stage, ability and preference.
5. Children and young people in Edinburgh have the right to well maintained, quality play environments which provide stimulation and challenges relevant to their age and ability.
6. The views, opinions and experiences of children and young people should be a central consideration in the development of play policies and especially in the planning and design of the environments in which they play.
7. Edinburgh values play as a life-enhancing experience in the home, at nursery and school and in the community.

**Article 31 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*

The Playwork Principles

1. All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well being of individuals and communities.
2. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
3. The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
4. For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agencies.
5. The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
6. The playworker`s response to children and young people playing is based on a sound and up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
7. Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people`s play on the playworker.
8. Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworkers intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.

Outcomes for Edinburgh's Play Strategy

Outcome 1

Children are more active, confident, socially and emotionally resilient, and are able to experience, judge and manage risk.

Outcome 2

The importance and value of play is understood and recognised by parents and carers, staff, residents and communities city wide.

Outcome 3

Good quality and varied play places and spaces are widely available to children and young people in Edinburgh.

Outcome 4

Play experiences for children and young people are facilitated by staff who have relevant competences and training opportunities, and who adhere to the Principles of Playwork.

