**Playday 2013 opinion poll summary**

This summary presents opinion poll findings conducted to inform and support the Playday 2013 *Playful places* campaign.

**Playday**

Playday is the annual celebration of children’s right to play, a national day highlighting the importance of play in children’s lives, which traditionally takes place on the first Wednesday in August. Playday 2013 is on Wednesday 7 August.

The *Playful places* campaign is calling on everyone to help make sure that the places where children play and hang out are great places to play. The campaign recognises that:

* Children should feel welcomed where they live and feel part of their communities.
* Parents want their children to be able to play outside.
* Public space should be designed and managed with children's play in mind.
* Children and young people need to be involved in planning the places and spaces where they play.

Playday is coordinated by Play England, Play Scotland, Play Wales and PlayBoard Northern Ireland.

**The opinion poll**

The Playday opinion poll was conducted by One Poll in July 2013, with 1,000 children between 5 and 16 years old, 1,000 parents of children between 5 and 16 years old and 1,000 adults, all sampled throughout the UK.

**The findings**

**Overview**

Views from the 3,000 children, parents and adults surveyed as part of this opinion poll show a positive attitude towards children’s play outside. In addition to children and young people wanting to play outside, many adults also recognise the wider benefits to community and family life, such as creating a sense of community spirit and allowing families to get to know each other.

However, the findings highlight how children’s freedom to play outside is substantially reduced compared to that experienced by previous generations.

The adults surveyed believe that children are experiencing a childhood vastly different to their own, with less time, space and freedom to explore their local area. Reflecting this, the majority of children aged 5-11 would like to be able to play out more than they currently do, and whilst 12-16 year olds are happier with their freedom to spend time with friends outside, a significant minority of this age group would also like more opportunity to do so.

Key barriers to children playing out more, mentioned by both children and adults surveyed, include concerns for children’s safety; especially relating to danger from traffic, but also fears about potential harm from strangers. Reflecting this, children tell us that the changes they need to enable them to play more include: less danger from traffic and less parked cars; having more time to play; having more of their friends living near them; having more areas to play; parents and carers giving them more permission to do so, and having more adult supervision available.

**Do children have freedom to play where they live?**

Most children surveyed say they are able to play outside at least once a week, either in their own garden or further afield. However, significant proportions of children say they would like to play outside more than they are currently able to. This is especially the case among the younger children surveyed aged 5-11 whose participation in outdoor play is less frequent than older children’s and tends to be closer to home.

* Children aged 5-16 go outside to see or play with their friends around four times a week on average and almost three in ten (29%) say they play on the street regularly. However, whilst almost half (48%) say they play outside as much as they would like to, two in five (40%) would like to play outside more.
* Frequency of participation in outdoor play is lowest among 5-7 year olds (average of 3.9 times per week, compared with an average of 4.81 times per week among 12-14 year olds). When not in their homes, this younger age group most commonly plays in their garden (46%), followed by in parks (20%), in street (10%) and in playgrounds (6%).
* Over half of 5-11 year olds surveyed would like to play outside more than they currently do (53%) with just two in five (40%) saying they are able to play outside as much as they would like.
* A majority of 12-16 year olds surveyed are happy with the amount of time they can spend outside (59%) but a significant proportion would like to spend more time outside than they currently do (21%). This age group most commonly spends time in parks (26%) followed by at a friend’s house (18%).

**What stops children playing out where they live?**

A number of barriers to children playing more outside in their area have been highlighted by children and adults surveyed in this opinion poll.

The top issue mentioned by both children (across all age groups as a whole) and adults is danger from traffic (35% and 53% respectively).

Concerns around potential “stranger danger” and restrictions arising from parents’ general concerns about children’s safety are also mentioned among those surveyed as playing a particular role in preventing younger children from playing in the street.

* Around a fifth of 5-11 year olds feel their parents’ fears prevent them from playing in the street (21%); over a third of adults also say this is a significant factor for children generally (35%).
* Almost one in six 5-7 year olds (16%) say a fear of strangers/paedophiles also prevents their play. When asked what would encourage children to play outside, one young person commented, “Nothing, its not safe. My garden is safe for my brother and I.” Two in five adults also see stranger danger/paedophiles as a key barrier (40%).
* Over a third of adults (35%) also believe it is generally not safe for children to play outside without an adult.

Restrictions arising from parental concerns, and worries about stranger danger/paedophiles, are less commonly mentioned as a barrier by older groups aged 12-16 years; instead the main barriers mentioned by those surveyed in this group are: a lack of friends living nearby (19%, compared with 16% among 5-11 year olds) and negative/intolerant attitudes of adults (14%). Negative/intolerant attitudes of adults also are also mentioned by some 8-11 year olds (15%), but this is less common among 5-7 year olds (4%).

Furthermore, around one in ten children surveyed believe adults tend to disapprove of children playing outside where they live (13%) and that when they’re with their friends adults think they are up to no good (10%).

Over a quarter of adults surveyed also recognise that negative and intolerant attitudes are a barrier to children playing out (28%). Similarly, lack of community spirit is considered to be an important factor by adults, with 23% feeling it prevents children from playing out in their area. This is in contrast to children, with only 5% picking it out to be important.

**What would help children play out more where they live?**

Reflecting the perceived barriers outlined above, having less danger from traffic is the aspect most mentioned by the children surveyed as important to allow them to play out more often in the street or area (26%). This is also felt by the adults surveyed, with 40% believing this would need to improve for children to play out more in their area.

A fifth of the children (20%) feel having more friends nearby would make them play outside more as well as having more space and areas to play (20%). Over three in ten adults also mention both the need for more space and areas for children to play (32%) and for the streets to be made more play-friendly (31%).

The adults surveyed additionally feel there needs to be a greater sense of community spirit (26%) and more adult supervision (25%) in their area if children are to play outside more often. This mirrors children’s thoughts, with 17% feeling they need their parent’s permission and 15% feeling more adult supervision would be important.

**Do parents have concerns about letting their children play out?**

Among those surveyed, as previously shown, younger children especially feel the views and fears of their parents are an important factor which prevents them from playing outside in their street or nearby.

As part of this opinion poll 1,000 parents were asked about the circumstances under which they allow their own children to play outside, whether they have any concerns and what these may be.

* While almost half of parents agree that they allow their child to play outside without an adult (48%), over a quarter disagree this is the case (28%).
* A culture of children playing outside in the local area seems to be an important factor when parents decide to let their children play out; the majority of parents (59%) agree that they only feel confident in letting their children do so if others are playing outside also (18% disagree). Likewise adults also tend to agree that seeing children playing outside will give other parents the confidence to let their children play outside, with 39% believing so.

The parents surveyed are found to have mixed views about their neighbours in this context. Whilst six in ten agree they know their neighbours well (62%), views are split with regards to whether they can trust them (49% agree, but 35% disagree). Reflecting this, whilst just over half of those surveyed agree that neighbours will look out for their children when they’re playing nearby (51%), over two in five either disagree or are ambivalent about whether this would be the case (18% and 31% respectively).

Some of the parents surveyed also agree they are concerned about whether the activities of their children may upset neighbours, including among other things: when children make a noise outside (36%); when children are playing ball games (32%); when they are sitting on a neighbour’s wall (24%), and when they are hanging out in groups (23%).

Parent’s views are mixed when considering whether they feel neighbours will judge them for letting their children play outside unsupervised. A little over a third of those surveyed feel they wouldn’t (34%) while 28% feel they would.

**What effect does children playing outside have on a community?**

When adults were asked what effect children playing outside has on a community, they tended to pick out more positive aspects than negative.

* 45% of the adults say that children playing outside can help families get to know each other and 41% agree it can help to improve community spirit; 14% say is makes an area a more desirable place to live.
* Annoyance for local residents was selected by 23%, and 14% say they perceive that children playing outside can increase anti-social behaviour.

**What’s changed for children growing up now?**

The adults surveyed can recall a childhood playing outside more often and with more confidence than the children surveyed.

* 82% of the adults recall having played in their street regularly as a child, and feel that, on average, they played outside 7 times a week. This is higher than among the children surveyed who report they play 4 times a week on average.
* Patterns of outdoor play have also changed. Adults said that when they were children, the most common places they spent time was playing in the street (33%), followed by the garden (21%), and in fields or woods (17%); fewer went to parks or playgrounds (12% and 5% respectively).
* Among the children surveyed, the most common places they say they spend their time when not in the home, is now in the garden (28%); followed by parks and playgrounds (22% and 7% respectively); this does not necessarily make up for the lower numbers mentioning playing in the street or in fields and woods (12% and 4% respectively).
* Reflecting this, whilst six in ten adults believe they had freedom to explore their area as children (59%); just 17% of children say this now.

The adults surveyed likewise feel that children are experiencing a different childhood to their generation.

* Over a third (35%) feel that children are not safe outside without an adult, whereas only 4% feel it was not safe without an adult when they were children.
* Similarly, one in four adults (25%) feel adults now disapprove of children playing outside where they live, whereas only 8% say this was the case in their own childhoods.
* Comparing their own experiences and those of children today, over half of the adults surveyed (58%) feel they had more time to play than children do today.

**Notes**

This opinion poll was commissioned to support the Playday 2013 *Playful places* campaign.

1. One Poll conducted an internet based poll with 3,000 adults, children and parents in July 2013. Participants are members of the One Poll panel. For more information visit <http://www.onepoll.com/>

2. For more information about Playday and the *Playful places* campaign, visit [www.playday.org.uk](http://www.playday.org.uk) or contact NCB media on 020 7843 6045/6047 or [media@ncb.org.uk](mailto:media@ncb.org.uk) for press enquiries.

3. Playday is the national day for play, coordinated by Play England, Play Wales, Play Scotland and PlayBoard Northern Ireland. Play England is a registered charity, no. 1150216, and is hosted by the National Children’s Bureau.

4. Play England campaigns for all children to have the freedom and space to play throughout childhood. As the national organisation for children’s play, Play England works with all those who have an impact on children's lives to support and champion play as an essential part of childhood. For further information or to talk to a spokesperson, call 020 7843 6300 or visit [www.playengland.org.uk](http://www.playengland.org.uk).

5. Play Wales is the national charity for children's play in Wales. We provide advice, support and guidance for all those in Wales who have a concern or responsibility for any environment where children and young people might play. Play Wales upholds children's right to play. All children are entitled to quality play provision within their communities and we work strategically to achieve this goal on their behalf. For further information visit [www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk) .

6. Play Scotland was formed in 1998 to make the child’s right to play a reality in Scotland. The work of Play Scotland is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and in particular Article 31: “States Parties recognise 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.” Play Scotland’s mission is:To increase awareness of the importance of play to the development of children and young people in Scotland; To ensure that all children and young people in Scotland have equal access to diverse and quality play opportunities that meet their individual need**.**  For further information on Play Scotland visit [www.playscotland.org](http://www.playscotland.org)  Email: [info@playscotland.org](mailto:info@playscotland.org).

7. PlayBoard is the leading agency for the development and promotion of children and young people's play in Northern Ireland. To this end, the organisation provides a range of innovative services designed to strengthen service delivery through advice, support, training and tailored provision. PlayBoard's work is concentrated and prioritised within a framework of 'equity, diversity and interdependence' (EDI), and is consistent with the ethos of human rights, social justice and social inclusion. For further information on PlayBoard visit [www.playboard.org](http://www.playboard.org) or Email: [lisa.oconnor@playboard.co.uk](mailto:lisa.oconnor@playboard.co.uk).

8. The National Children's Bureau (NCB) is a leading charity that for 50 years has been improving the lives of children and young people, especially the most vulnerable. We work with children and for children, to influence government policy, be a strong voice for young people and practitioners, and provide creative solutions on a range of social issues. For more information visit [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk).