

1 What's Playday?

4 August is Playday - the annual celebration of children's right to play. On Playday and throughout the summer, thousands of children, young people and communities will get out and play at hundreds of locally organised Playday events across the UK. This summer, join in the fun and celebrate Playday where you live.



What happens on Playday?

Hundreds of communities celebrate Playday by holding events around the country. In 2009, over 834 events took place across the UK, making last year's Playday the biggest on record! Playday celebrations range from small neighbourhood gatherings to large public events organised by local authorities and national organisations. Previous years have seen children taking over Trafalgar Square, jubilee style street parties, and large-scale mud pie and den building in parks and on village greens.

Playday is traditionally held on the first Wednesday of every August. Play England coordinates the campaign in partnership with a national steering group, which includes representatives from Play Wales, Play Scotland and PlayBoard Northern Ireland as well as other national and regional organisations.

Each year, we publish a comprehensive body of research to support the Playday campaign, and lobby nationally and locally to raise awareness of the issues. We support Playday event organisers with resources and advice on delivering a successful day including: this guide, seminars, a dedicated website, and materials to help with events, including posters, promotional items and template media releases.

Each year Playday achieves high profile nationwide media coverage and we expect 2010 to be bigger and better than ever. In 2009, we received a massive amount of support from government departments, national charities and professional bodies. Nationally, Playday receives high profile support and media coverage, but it's the local events and local supporters that make it a truly successful campaign. As well as celebrating children's play, Playday also forms the backbone of a wider campaign by play organisations to move play up local and national agendas.

Who can organise a Playday event?

Anyone can organise a Playday event. Big or small, there are lots of different ways to celebrate Playday. Whether it's a large community-wide event or a get-together with friends and family – find the way that suits you!

Playday events are often organised by play associations, local authorities, holiday playschemes, extended schools, children's centres, nurseries, preschool playgroups, residents' associations, community development workers, childminders, or simply someone who lives in locally and wants to give children and young people a special opportunity to play for the day.

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The Playday campaign team at Play England is on hand to offer help and advice, as well as the Play England regional teams around the country. Resources and advice available include event organiser seminars, a dedicated website, telephone helpline, online event registration and further materials to help with your event, including posters, promotional items and template media releases.

It's easy to celebrate Playday and support children's right to play, so go on, what's stopping you?



Playday 2010 campaign

As well as being a great opportunity for children and young people to get out and play for the day, Playday provides an opportunity to raise awareness about some serious issues affecting children's play. Each year Play England coordinates a campaign alongside Playday. The Playday 2010 campaign is *Our place*. *Our place* puts children at the heart of our communities, and asks everyone, young and old, to help create better places for all of us to live and play.

The campaign promotes children as valued members of our communities. We're asking for children's needs to be prioritised in all community spaces to support children to develop their own independence and freedom to play outdoors where they live. The campaign recognises the benefits of being part of a community that embraces children's play, and is encouraging opportunities for communities to get to know each other, across the generations.

Today's children do not have the same freedom and space to play as their parents and grandparents before them. Traffic, wider safety concerns, and public spaces designed

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from an adult viewpoint, limit the opportunities for children to play outside in their own communities. Spaces and facilities where children and their families feel confident enough to engage in unsupervised outdoor play are also increasingly hard to find for many.

These changes have had detrimental consequences for children, families and communities. Children lose out on the enjoyment, freedom, confidence and developing independence that free play brings; parents and carers are concerned that their children are not safe and not benefiting from the experiences free play offers them; and communities lack the positive experience of seeing children and young people playing in public spaces.

In addition to the decline in children's freedom and space to roam, recent years have also seen a rapid growth in electronic, indoor, and sedentary forms of play. The internet has brought a surge in popularity for social networking and the creation of 'online communities' – yet children still tell us they are most happy when playing freely outside. The creation and

sustainability of child-friendly communities is crucial, or we risk a future in which virtual communities offer more opportunity for fun and friendship for children than the communities outside their front door.

This year, we're calling for everyone across the UK to help make their communities the best possible places for everyone to live and play. Improving opportunities for children and young people to play freely in their communities and transforming neighbourhoods into trusted places where everyone feels welcome can start with Playday! If everyone makes a small change to help improve opportunities for children to play in their local area, communities across the UK can be happier and better places to be.

Although Playday traditionally takes place on the first Wednesday of August, children and young people should benefit from being able to play freely all year round. Consider planning your own local *Our place* campaign to ensure that children can play in your community. Refer to the *Developing a campaign* section in this guide to help you.



Why play is important for children and young people

The Playday campaign is an opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of play. Play is an essential part of every child's life and is vital to their development. Through play, children learn about themselves and the world around them. Play helps children develop confidence, self-esteem and creativity. Every child and young person deserves the chance to play, and good play opportunities are everyone's responsibility.

The value of play

Playing is fun: it is how children enjoy themselves, each other and their families.

Play can promote children's development, learning, imagination, creativity and independence.

Play can help to keep children healthy and active.

Play allows children to experience and encounter boundaries, learning to assess and manage risk in their lives; both physical and social.

Play helps children to understand the people and places in their lives, learn about their environment and develop their sense of community.

Play allows children to find out about themselves, their abilities, their interests and the contribution they can make.

Play can be therapeutic. It helps children to deal with difficult or painful circumstances such as emotional stress or medical treatment.

Play can be a way of building and maintaining important relationships with friends, carers and family members.

Source: *Charter for Children's Play*, Play England, 2007

The bigger picture

Children's right to play, as set out under Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, is becoming increasingly embedded in policy across the UK. In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government has adopted a national play policy and implementation plan based on agreed principles for children's play. In England, the government has published a 10-year play strategy outlining their long-term vision and actions to deliver more and better play provision and play space for the country's children.

In Scotland, there are three interlinked policy frameworks which support play: the Early Years Framework, Equally Well and Achieving Our Potential. While Play Scotland is extremely pleased that the Scottish Government has recognised the importance of play for the development and well being of all children and young people there is still a long way to go to make the child's right to play a reality in Scotland.

Anyone can organise a Playday event. So go on, what's stopping you?

In Northern Ireland, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister have agreed a regional Play and Leisure Policy statement and work has commenced on the development of two implementation plans for children from birth to 11 years and 11 to 18 years.

The profile of play and its importance has been significantly raised in the UK in recent years but there is still a long way to go before children and young people have the time and space they need to play freely, in a society that supports play.

The right to play

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all children and young people have the right to relax and play, and join in a wide range of activities.