

PLAYWORK ASSUMPTIONS & VALUES

Before the Playwork Principles were established as the professional and ethical framework in 2005, playwork was guided by a set of assumptions and values.

While it's important to emphasise that the Playwork Principles supersede these earlier foundations, the assumptions and values remain a valuable historical reference, offering playworkers an opportunity to reflect on the evolution of playwork practice.

As Playwork continues to evolve, these foundations serve as a reminder that playwork practice is not rigid – it adapts to the changing needs and understanding of children.

ASSUMPTIONS

1

The first assumption is that...

...children's play is freely chosen, personally directed behaviour motivated from within; through play the child explores the world and their relationship with it, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter; by playing the child learns and develops as an individual.

2

The second assumption is that...

...whereas children may play without encouragement or help, adults can, through the provision of an appropriate human and physical environment, significantly enhance opportunities for the child to play creatively and thus develop through play.

In this way the competent playworker always aims to provide opportunities for the individual child to achieve their full potential while being careful not to control the child's direction or choice.



VALUES

Play opportunities are provided in a number of settings (for example Local Authority, voluntary or commercial) for children with a variety of needs, in a complex society diverse in culture and belief; nevertheless, competent Playwork always has the following underlying values:

- 1** The child must be at the centre of the process; the opportunities provided and the organisation which supports, coordinates and manages these should always start with the child's needs and offer sufficient flexibility to meet these.
- 2** Play should empower children, affirm and support their right to make choices, discover their own solutions, to play and develop at their own pace and in their own way.
- 3** Whereas play may sometimes be enriched by the playworker's participation, adults should always be sensitive to children's needs and never try to control a child's play so long as it remains within safe and acceptable boundaries.
- 4** Every child has a right to a play environment which stimulates and provides opportunities for risk, challenge and the growth of confidence and self-esteem.
- 5** The contemporary environment in which many children grow up does not lend itself to safe and creative play; all children have the right to a play environment which is free from hazard, one which ensures physical and personal safety, a setting within which the child ultimately feels physically and personally safe.
- 6** Every child is an individual and has the right to be respected as such; each child should feel confident that individuality and diversity are valued by the adults who work and play with them.
- 7** A considerate and caring attitude to individual children and their families is essential to competent playwork and should be displayed at all times.
- 8** Prejudice against people with disabilities or who experience social and economic disadvantage, racism and sexism have no place in an environment which seeks to enhance development through play; adults involved in play should always promote equality of opportunity and access for all children, and seek to develop anti-discriminatory practice and positive attitudes to those who are put at a disadvantage.

If Value 8 were written today, we assume it would encompass all Protected Characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, including gender identity, sexual orientation, neurodiversity, and religious or ethnic diversity.

9

Play should offer the child opportunities to extend their exploration and understanding of the wider world and therefore physical, social and cultural settings beyond their immediate experience.

10

Play is essentially a cooperative activity for children both individually and in groups. Playworkers should always encourage children to be sensitive to the needs of others; in providing play opportunities, they should always seek to work together with children, their parents, colleagues and other professionals and where possible, make their own expertise available to the wider community.

11

Play opportunities should always be provided within the legislative framework relevant to children's rights, health, safety and well-being.

12

Every child has a right to an environment for play, and such environments must be made accessible to children.



Source: The text of the Assumptions and Values above is closely adapted from the *NVQ/SVQ and CACHE Playwork Level 2 Candidate Handbook* (© Tina Farrow, Valerie Stevens, and Susan Stanley, 2003), which itself cites the Assumptions and Values text as being “based on material from the *CACHE, NVQ in Playwork Level 2 Candidate Handbook*”.

The original Assumptions and Values are widely referenced as being part of the *SPRITO (1992) National Occupational Standards for Playwork*. As such, It is assumed that this information is not subject to copyright restrictions or limitations on distribution.

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Minor revisions have been made to enhance inclusivity in line with modern expectations while preserving the original intent and meaning as much as possible.