

THE PLAYWORK PRINCIPLES

The Playwork Principles are the ethical and professional framework on which modern playwork practice is founded and, as such, should be taken as a whole.

They describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people.

They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.



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 wellbeing 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 agendas.

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 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 playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.

Please note: The Playwork Principles are held in trust for the playwork profession by the Scrutiny Group that acted as an honest broker, overseeing the consultations through which they were developed.

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At 20 years old, some in the playwork sector believe the Playwork Principles to be in need of an update. A common exercise during playwork training is to try and summarise and truncate each of the principles whilst ensuring none of the key messages are lost or weakened. Similarly, many believe that the principles are not specific enough and leave room for misinterpretation.

One such clarification is where it states "all children" – The Playwork Foundation assumes this to include disabled* children, children from global majority and seldom-heard communities, and children wherever they are in the world.

*Social model of disability

Playworkers and playwork trainers from across Great Britain and Northern Ireland contributed to the development of the Playwork Principles. The process was administered by Play Wales, who list those involved at the time in 2004 as:

- Tony Chilton (Play Wales (North))
- Steve Chown (Torbay Children's Fund Devon)
- Sue Coates (London Play)
- Doug Cole (Cardiff Children's Play Services)
- Mick Conway (London Play)
- Perry Else (Ludemos Sheffield)
- Lesli Godfrey (SkillsActive Newcastle)
- Mike Greenaway (Play Wales)
- Jackie Jeffrey (London)
- Eva Kane (PlayBoard Northern Ireland)
- Stuart Lester (Manchester)
- Fiona Lovely (Belfast Traveller Support Group)
- Marianne Mannello (Play Wales)
- Jess Milne (Hackney Play Association)
- Maureen Palmer (Islington Children's Services)
- Wendy Russell (University of Gloucestershire)
- Penny Wilson (KIDS London)

The group also originally included Elena Stevenson from Scotland, Bob Hughes and Elke Schwarzer.

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