

The Pocket Guide to Playwork



Play isn't really play if it's dictated by an adult, although adults – playworkers – are essential if children are to get the most out of their play.

What is play?

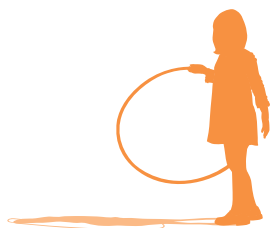
Play is what children do, when they want to do it.

Through play children develop social and interaction skills, whilst also supporting their physical and emotional development. Play allows them to discover the world around them, learn about each other and start to understand themselves. By playing, children try new things, negotiate with each other, make decisions, learn to cooperate, to pick themselves up and to try again if things don't work out the first time. Play is essential to the development of a healthy child. It should be freely chosen and offer a balance of risk and challenge.

What are playwork and playworkers?

Playwork is a method of working with children and young people. Playworkers help to create the right space, leaving children free to direct their own play in a safe, but not a restrictive, environment.

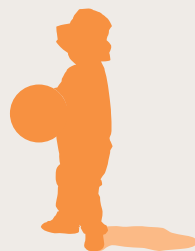
Playworkers observe children at play, note children's interests and play behaviours, prepare opportunities for children to extend their play and take up new challenges, if they wish, and they listen to children too.



Where do play and playwork take place?

Play can take place anywhere – at home, in schools, fixed playgrounds or hospitals – and in many forms.

Play settings are most often recognised as out-of-school clubs, holiday clubs, playschemes, play ranger schemes, adventure playgrounds, play centres and therapeutic play in hospitals.



Playwork as a career

Playwork is an exciting and rewarding career option, with many different job roles and training and qualifications from entry level to degree level.

Some playworkers are volunteers, others work part-time or seasonally, combining playwork with other jobs. Many playwork settings will have a mix of full-time, part-time and volunteer staff.

You can build a career in playwork, whether by working as a playworker or play leader in an out-of-school club, as a play therapist in a hospital, as a play ranger on play projects such as adventure playgrounds, or working for a local authority as a play development officer or manager.




Playwork Principles


These principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork, 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.







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.




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.



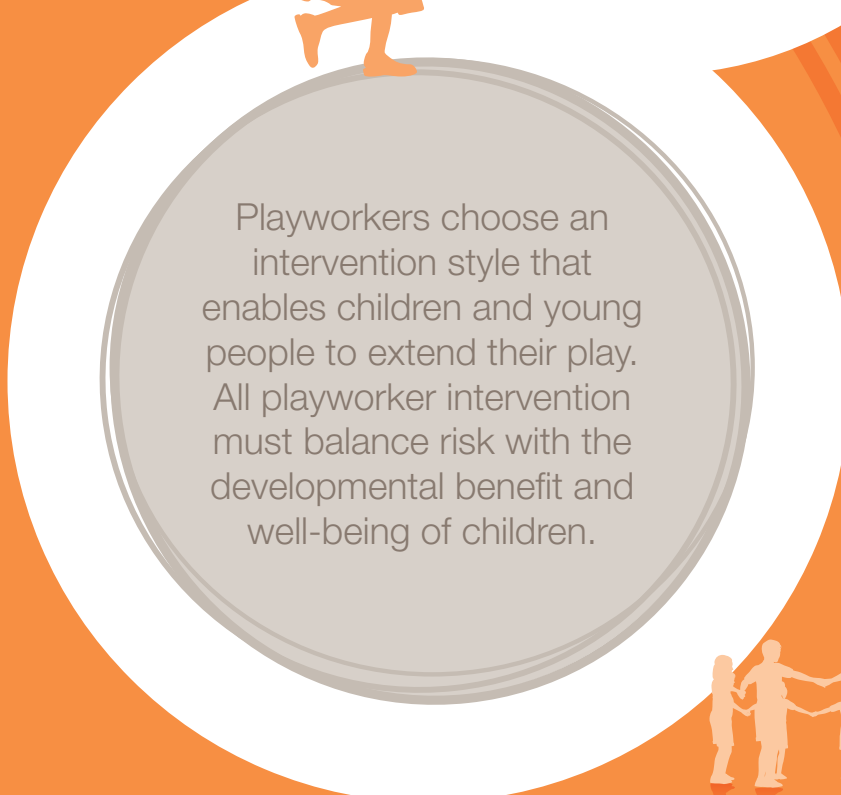
Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.



For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.

A child in a dress is blowing bubbles into a large grey circle. The bubbles are small orange spheres. The background is orange with white curved lines.

The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.

A child in a dress is standing on top of a large grey circle. The background is orange with white curved lines.

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.





Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.

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.

Playwork Principles
Scrutiny Group,
Cardiff 2005.





More People, Better Skilled, Better Qualified

SkillsActive is here to help you in your career in playwork.

SkillsActive is licensed by government as the Sector Skills Council for Active Leisure, Learning and Well-being. Led by employers, SkillsActive works across the sport, fitness, outdoors, playwork, and caravan industries, to increase the demand for, the quality and the supply of skills provision, and to lobby funding agencies and policy makers for improvements to the sector.



We have a dedicated playwork unit that links playwork employers with training providers, policy makers and playworkers themselves to ensure that playworkers have the right skills and qualifications to make the playwork industry even better.

The SkillsActive playwork unit provides information and advice to playworkers and their employers, it monitors training and qualifications to ensure they are just what the industry needs, and it undertakes research to get a really clear picture of playwork today.

For further information and contact details
visit www.skillsactive.com
Or call **020 7632 2000**

