

Media Release

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Risk aversion is the problem – seminar outlines

While children today may have greater technological freedom, their lives have become more restricted, as a risk-averse society is ever more fearful of predators and danger. But the need to expose children to some risk, in order to develop resilience and life skills, will be the focus of discussion at the ‘Too Safe To Play?’ seminar, held by Children in Scotland and Play Scotland.

At a successful conference held at the end of last year, which looked at similar themes, Ronnie Hill, Director of Children’s Services Regulation, Care Commission told delegates that, “The importance of appropriate risk-taking in children’s physical and emotional development is crucial. All activities will have some degree of risk associated with them. We want to encourage good risk management, not risk aversion.”

With rising demand from educators and providers to support the implementation of a Managing Risk ethos in learning and play provision, the two new seminars will follow on from the original conference, examining how best to keep young people safe, but also armed with the skills to make decisions for themselves.

Highlighting the Scottish Government’s commitment to supporting the agenda, Minister for Children and Early Years, Adam Ingram, will speak at event. Attendees will also hear from Tim Gill, specialist on childhood and children's play and author of *No Fear: Growing up in a risk averse society*.

Speaking ahead of the event, Tim Gill said: “Everyone agrees that we've all become too anxious and fearful about children, and that they are losing out as a result. The time has come to move on from unhelpful debates about the so-called ‘blame’ culture, and to take some practical steps that will support a more balanced approach.”

“Risk-benefit assessment does just that. It is a thoughtful, commonsense method that will help councils, schools and other services overcome their fears and give children more adventurous, challenging play opportunities.”

Minister for Children and Early Years, Adam Ingram said: “Evidence shows that play makes a significant contribution to children's physical, social and emotional development. It promotes their well being, builds their self confidence and promotes resilience. That's why our Early Years

Framework and Equally Well - the Health Inequalities Framework, included a commitment to increase opportunities for play. Unfortunately, in recent years, many of us have lost sight of the importance of play for individual children and the sense of wellbeing that this brings to communities. Indeed, society has become increasingly risk-averse which has had an impact on children's play."

"This seminar and events like it can help play organisations across Scotland work together to promote play and tackle this cotton wool culture so that children can enjoy this important part of their childhood."

Marguerite Hunter Blair, Chief Executive of Play Scotland, said: "Promoting a risk benefit approach to risk management enables play providers to develop a wide range of challenging play opportunities that boost children and young people's self esteem and well being".

Notes for Editors –

1. The 'Too Safe To Play?' seminar is taking place in Ayr on 25 May. For further information visit, www.childreninscotland.org.uk/safe
2. **Children in Scotland** is the longstanding national agency for the whole of the children's sector, reaching over 250,000 individuals through our extensive membership of more than 450 statutory agencies, voluntary sector organisations, professional associations and community groups. For further information visit www.childreninscotland.org.uk.
3. **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

The priorities for Play Scotland are:

- Political lobbying for a play policy and a strategic approach to play in Scotland
- Developing strategic resources to support the play sector in Scotland
- Workforce development of the playwork sector
- Research into play provision in Scotland (space to play, time to play, funding for play)

For further information visit www.playscotland.org

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