

## Create playwork settings that support freely chosen self-directed play

### Overview

This standard is about working with children and young people to create inclusive and diverse play spaces to support freely chosen, self-directed play. The play spaces within each playwork setting should stimulate them and provide opportunities for play that allows risk, challenge and personal growth.

#### **The main outcomes of this standard are:**

1. plan and prepare an inclusive playwork setting
2. support freely chosen, self-directed play for all children and young people

This standard is for a playworker working directly with children and young people in a playwork setting whose main purpose is to provide children and young people with opportunities for freely chosen, self-directed play. This standard is for staff that do not have full responsibility for the playwork setting but make a significant contribution to supporting play.

**This standard is underpinned by the Playwork Principles and playworkers must be familiar with these and, where possible, demonstrate them through their practice and reflection.**

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## Performance criteria

You must be able to: **Plan and prepare an inclusive playwork setting**

1. plan a playwork setting
2. collect and make available **materials and resources**
3. reflect on how children and young people are using the playwork setting and the **materials and resources** within it
4. work alongside children and young people to make changes to the playwork setting
5. make changes to meet children and young people's play needs and support their ownership of the playwork setting
6. respond to children and young people's requests and self-expression

### **Support freely chosen, self-directed play for all children and young people**

7. reflect on how children and young people are playing
8. reflect on play cues and returns in order to better support play
9. choose an intervention style that supports children and young people's play
10. take part in play only when invited by children and young people through their play cues
11. intervene in children and young people's play according to your assessment of the balance between risk and benefit, stage of development and wellbeing of the child or young person
12. engage with colleagues in **reflection** on play and playwork practice
13. enable play to end in a way that is appropriate to the children and young people, their level of involvement and the requirements of your organisation

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### Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

#### Plan and prepare an inclusive playwork setting

1. the Playwork Principles within the professional and ethical framework for playwork and how each of the principles can be applied within your own role
2. the types of **play space** within a playwork setting
3. your organisational policies and procedures for creating the playwork setting
4. the importance of having an ever changing, wide range of resources and materials
5. the theory of loose parts and how it applies to children and young people's play
6. ways of sourcing, collecting and making available novel resources and materials
7. how to work alongside children and young people to alter and develop the playwork setting
8. the difference between children and young people's play needs and play preferences
9. when and how to make changes to the **play space** within the playwork setting that will meet children and young people's play preferences
10. how to create a **play space** within the playwork setting that actively encourages and values children and young people's requests and self-expression
11. the importance of considering inclusivity and diversity when establishing a playwork setting
12. barriers to inclusion when creating playwork settings for all children and young people to play

#### Support freely chosen, self-directed play for all children and young people

13. why children and young people's play should be freely chosen and self-directed
14. the importance of recognising and advocating all children and young people's rights to play
15. how to reflect, through observation and listening, to how children and young people use the playwork setting and the resources and materials within it
16. the use of playwork's commonly accepted play types in evaluating and resourcing a playwork setting
17. the main stages of the play cycle

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18. play cues, returns and play frames
19. the considerations when creating playwork settings that will meet children and young people's play needs
20. what is inclusive play provision and what is its relative value compared to 'separate', 'segregated' and or 'integrated' play provision
21. how to support all children and young people's exploration of the **play space**
22. how to support play in a way that does not undermine the children and young people's personal control and involvement
23. intervention styles and how they may support children and young people's play
24. when to take part in play
25. when to intervene in children and young people's play
26. how to enable play to end in a way that takes account of the children and young people, their level of involvement and the requirements of your organisation
27. the organisational and professional procedures you need to follow during and after a play session

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**Scope/range related Materials and resources**

**to performance criteria**

- 1. loose parts
- 2. equipment
- 3. facilities

**Reflection**

- 1. continuous
- 2. unobtrusive
- 3. obvious

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**Scope/range related Play space(s)**

**to knowledge and  
understanding**

- 1. physical
- 2. affective
- 3. permanent
- 4. transient
- 5. cyber

## Values

The Playwork practitioners involved in writing this standard, in conjunction with SkillsActive, have agreed to adopt the following as the set of values prescribed for all of those working within the playwork sector:

### Playwork Principles

These Principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork and as such must be regarded 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 wellbeing of children.

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

## Glossary

### **Inclusive provision**

Provision that is open and accessible to all, and takes positive action in removing barriers, so that all children and young people can participate

### **Integrated play provision**

The intermixing of people previously segregated by impairment alone. Non-disabled people tend to take the lead regarding the when, where, how and who

### **Intervention styles**

A range of methods the playworker can use in the playwork setting. These may range from complete non-involvement through to specific intervention and may include: waiting to be invited to play; enabling uninterrupted play; enabling children and young people to explore their own values; leaving children and young people to improve their own performance; leaving the content and or intent of play to the children and young people; letting the children and young people decide why they play; enabling the children and young people to decide what is appropriate behaviour; and only organising when children and young people want you to

### **Loose parts**

Items that can be moved from place to place, carried, rolled, lifted, piled one on top of the other or combined to create new structures or experiences

### **Observation**

The purpose of observation in a playwork setting is to observe children and young people's play behaviours and the response of adults to ensure the playwork setting continues to provide effective play spaces. These observations may include play types, cues and returns and playworkers' interventions. These observations are not for the purpose of

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monitoring children's development, planning activities or a curriculum; observations may or may not be recorded

### **Ownership**

Children and young people are encouraged to take ownership of their created play space through having freedom to be, freedom to use, freedom to change, a sense of control and having a say

### **Play cues**

Facial expressions, language or body language that communicate the child or young person's wish to play or invite others to play

### **Play cycle**

The full flow of play from the first play cue from the child, its return from the outside world, the child's response to the return and the further development of play to the point where play is complete. The cycle includes the metadude, the cue, the return, the frame, adulteration, annihilation and display

### **Play frames**

A material or non-material boundary that keeps the play intact

### **Play needs**

What individual children and young people have to have in order to be able to play, but are not always able to have for a variety of reasons; for example, lack of access, overprotective adults, lack of outdoor environments, etc.

### **Play process**

There is much ongoing debate about what The Play Process is and individuals will continue to discuss and come to their own conclusions. However, for the purposes of this glossary, in the simplest terms, the Play Process is what the child goes through and what they experience and what they feel whilst they are engaged in playing

### **Play provision**

Adult created places where children and young people can play

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### **Play space**

A place formed by children and young people playing. It can be physical, affective, permanent, transient or cyber

### **Playwork setting**

Somewhere children and young people have the opportunity to play that is staffed by playworkers

### **Play returns**

The response from the outside world – usually from other children or adults – to the child's play cue

### **Play types**

Broad categories that describe the way children and young people play. Current research suggests there are fifteen or sixteen play types but these may change in the light of ongoing research. Commonly agreed play types include: symbolic, rough and tumble, socio-dramatic, social, creative, communication, dramatic, deep, exploratory, fantasy, imaginative, locomotor, mastery, object, recapulative and role play

### **Segregated play provision**

The setting aside of disabled people, based on a professional's view of impairments and lack of ability to 'fit in'. Non-disabled professionals have total control

### **Separate play provision**

Groups of disabled people who choose to meet and develop their own agenda, similar to other minority groups

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