



Outdoor Play

Pre-School Learning Alliance

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International Play Association
Vice President, Europe



- created 1998 by London Borough Grants Committee – fore-runner of London Councils
- based on commissioned research (Torkildsen Report 1996)
- Second Tier Support – Promoting Play across London
- innovative demonstration play projects
- rated A*, ‘excellent’ and ‘successful’ in all quality areas by London Councils
- www.londonplay.org.uk



Play is the way children explore the world around them and develop and practise skills. It is essential for physical and emotional growth, for intellectual and educational development, and for acquiring social and behavioural skills.

“Play is what I do
when everyone else has
stopped telling me
what to do.”





“The right to play is a child’s first claim on the community. Play is nature’s training for life. No community can infringe that right without doing enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens.”

David Lloyd George



UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Article 31

“children have the right to play and recreation”

- all = from birth to 18

International Play Association key driver behind inclusion of Article 31

all = including disabled children

A recent consultation with over 4000 children and young people carried out by Dudley play pathfinder revealed that disabled children are disproportionately susceptible to bullying and therefore least likely to use outdoor play spaces.

KIDS, I have a right to play out too!
Celebrating outdoor play for disabled children, 2009





Play is enabling children to be children, let off steam and have fun and excitement **for its own sake**

“We know that outdoor play is crucial to reach activity targets”

A Manifesto for Physical Activity – The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, Asthma UK and Cancer Research UK 2005

Why play is important



... but most children's lives are **over-structured**

Children's lives = convicts' lives?

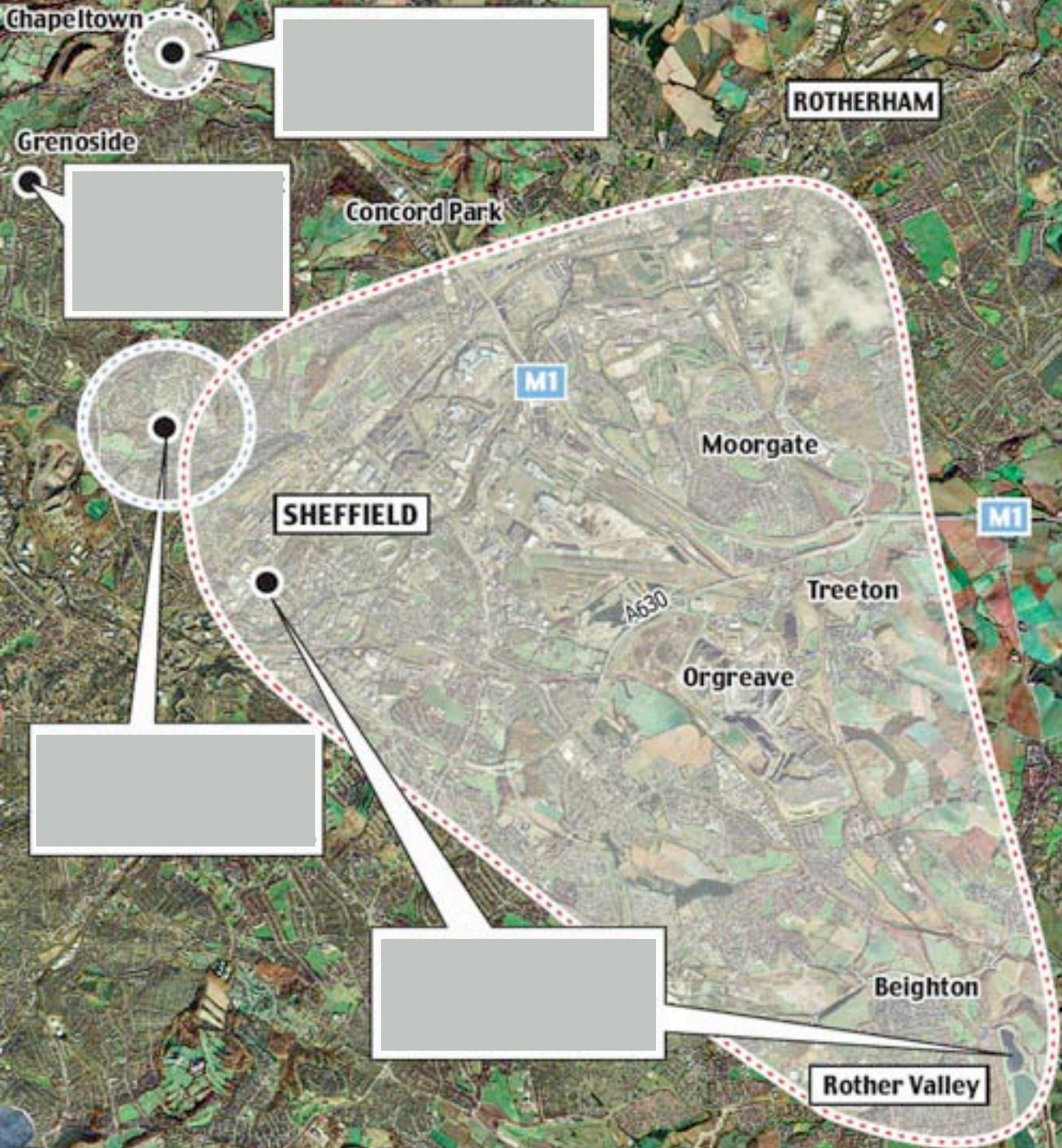


Parental fears – traffic, bullying, ‘stranger danger’

‘Helicopter parenting’

‘Cotton wool culture’

Parental peer pressure



Four generations of the Thomas family

(Natural England, 2007)

16 play types identified

(see Bob Hughes, 2006, Play types speculations and possibilities)

Unless children are allowed and enabled to express a comprehensive range of play behaviours... then we risk serious harm to their neurological development



Literally!

The street

Derelict sites

Parks and other open spaces

- **Is your local environment fit for children to play in?
(how do you know?)**



“They got their tails and they’re swimming now. Soon they get back legs, then front legs – and then they turn into something like a frog. They come out and go boing, boing, boing!”

Robert, aged 3





And what is going on in their minds?

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Play Priority Areas

Countering the
'No ball games'
culture



Open spaces account for 30% of the London area

“The old cluttered back yard has been replaced in our newer housing areas by stretches of grass. From the point of view of hygiene, the gain has been enormous. But children, when they are playing, do not think of tidiness or hygiene. To them, so much tidiness often means dullness and at once children feel that the enchantment of an area has vanished.”

Arvid Bengtsson (1974), *The Child's Right to Play*, International Play Association

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Fact
Less than half of 7-14
year olds in London say they
play mostly outdoors – but
86 per cent say they would
prefer to do so

‘Sentimental myth’ of the country child

“[Country children] from poorer working class families – usually the indigenous villagers, ironically – are more culturally isolated and deprived of services than children from inner city ghettos. Yet even the better-off children suffer another kind of deprivation: sent to school in the towns and excluded from playing in the woods and fields by parents’ nervousness or the fences and sprays of the new agriculture, their experiences are scarcely distinguishable from those of urban children.”

Richard Mabey in Colin Wood (1988) *The Child in the Country*



What is an
adventure
playground?

London has ca 90 –
but concentrated
in a few boroughs

Lewisham?



London Play adventure
playground awards 2012



Play is not a frivolous extra – it should be a fundamental and valued part of school life

Open up school playground for out-of-hours play

Home Zones for London

(London Play pilot
projects, funded
by London
Councils 2003/4 –
2008)



Street Play

Three-year 'Playful Ideas'
project funded by BIG
Lottery 2008-11

Ended with street play event
in London July 2011



“It’s too dangerous to let them out – they might get kidnapped, hurt themselves or get bullied. We can’t afford to take the risk”

Parent

- 1:5 chance of becoming obese
- 1:7 chance of contracting asthma
- 1:20 chance of suffering from coronary heart disease
- 1:20 chance of suffering from diabetes
- 1: 610 chance of burn at home
- 1: 16,800 road traffic accident
- 1: 18,700,000 lightning strike
- 1: 30,000,000 fatality in the playground**

(Health and Safety Executive)



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‘In the playground at the back of our house there have been some changes:

They said, “the climbing frame’s not safe”, so they sawed it down.

They said, “the paddling pool’s not safe”, so they drained it.

They said, “the see-saw’s not safe”, so they took it away.

They said, “the sand pit’s not safe”, so they fenced it in.

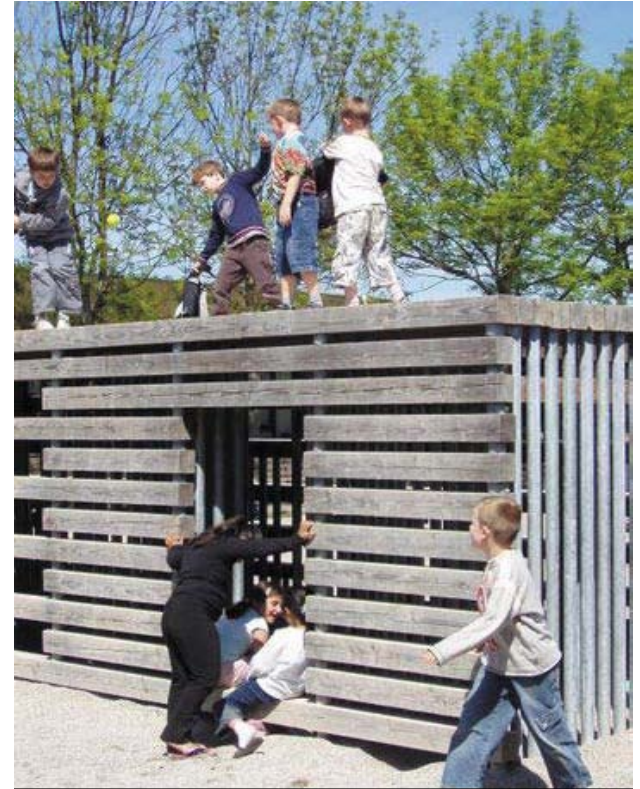
They said, “the playground’s not safe”, so they locked it up.

Sawn down, drained dry, taken away, fenced in, locked up.

How do you feel? Safe?”







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What you can do:

- Help spread the awareness of the benefits of play for all
- Think and act inclusion: who is missing from the playground?
- Ask your local authority about play provision
- Become a member of London Play – and join our London Alliance for Play!
- Volunteer for your local playground and Friends of Park group – your skills are needed **and valued**



What else can you do?

- **Go Play Outdoors!**





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International Play Association

