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| <i>item:</i>   | 9        |
| <i>report:</i> | CYP46/08 |

## **PLAY DEVELOPMENT – THE WAY FORWARD**

### **By Graham Watson**

#### **Summary**

This report recommends actions to ensure the delivery and further development of the Play in Highland. It emphasises that play is important for children and families and that Highland Council and NHS Highland have an important role in supporting play, and particularly in supporting communities in Highland to take forward play projects.

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 Play is important to the development of young children, both in terms of their physical development, encouraging active lifestyles, and in their mental development, where it encourages exploration and enquiry, independence, self expression and better interaction with others. It is important that children have the opportunity for structured and unstructured play at home and in pre-school and school.

#### **2. Supporting Play Development**

- 2.1 The JCCYP adopted a strategy for Play in 2006. The actions from this strategy can be divided into three types:

- training and raising awareness of the benefits of play
- providing specialist advice in play issues
- the delivery of a number of specific projects

- 2.2 At its meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 2008, Highland Council identified a number of further actions for its staff to take forward in order deliver the key elements of the Play Strategy:

a) the production of a straightforward and plain English “How To” guide for communities and others in how to develop play opportunities and play areas

b) an annual meeting to provide practical support and information on Play Development for communities, elected members, partner organisations and officers which would seek to address a number of issues through lectures, seminars, workshops and demonstrations by suppliers:

- Seminars on best practice
- Training for officers across agencies who have play as part of their responsibilities
- A workshop where communities can get together with grant aid providers to receive advice on specific projects

c) that three Active School Co-ordinators, one in each Highland Council area, take on a lead role of awareness and dissemination of play developments and information as part of their current contracts and that sport staff attend the Early Years Partnerships in each of the Council's Areas to assist in the development of both play and active lifestyles for the very young and their families

### **3. Further Steps to Take Play Development Forward**

- 3.1 It has been suggested, although no formal or informal announcement has been made, that funding may be made available by the Scottish Government for improving play areas and play environments. If such an announcement is made, it is likely that the funding would be available to communities, on a competitive bidding basis.
- 3.2 A number of Highland communities have been successful in being awarded lottery and other grants to support the development of play. It is likely that these funds will continue to be available however it needs to be considered whether all communities in Highland have the capacity and skills available to them to take such an approach.
- 3.3 If Highland is to maximise the opportunities available through existing and future funding, it is important that mechanisms for supporting communities are identified. Building community capacity is an approach that is currently being undertaken by staff across Highland Council and NHS Highland. An additional approach might be to support a body that could provide specialist expertise, coordinate funding bids to ensure maximum impact and, in time perhaps bid for funds and undertake project work itself.
- 3.4 To date, Play Highland has been an unconstituted informal body, acting as a forum for advice and discussion on play issues. Were Play Highland or a similar body be constituted and supported it could play an important coordination role to ensure that Highland communities are able to attract the maximum in funds for Highland play projects.

### **4. Budget Implications**

- 4.1 There are no direct budget implications as a result of the proposals in this paper, although staff time will need to be committed to supporting the proposed organisation. In time some existing budgets currently managed directly may be channelled through the proposed organisation in order to maximise grant opportunities.

## **5. Programme for Administration**

- 5.1 The Programme for Administration has the following statement: "We will give a high priority to Highland's children being healthy and active and implement the Highland Play Strategy". Developing play for young people is an important contribution to their development and well-being.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that:

- a) Members note the steps being taken to take forward the Highland Play Strategy
- b) Members agree to staff resources being committed to support Play Highland or a similar organisation to constitute itself to act as a coordinating body to maximise the opportunities for Highland communities to attract grant aid for Play projects
- c) That should an announce be made on funding for Play by the Scottish Government, a report is brought to a future meeting recommending how this body could best be supporting to ensure that the Highlands can have the maximum benefit from the initiative

**Graham Watson**

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