

**News Release: Embargoed until 00.01 on 12 November 2004**



**\*\*\*NEWS RELEASE\*\*\***

**PARENTS URGE GOVERNMENT TO KEEP PROMISE ON PLAY**

**Thousands of parents across the country are lobbying the Government to keep a pre-election promise to give an extra £200 million Lottery money to children's play.**

The money was promised before the 2001 general election by Chris Smith, the former Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport but is now under threat from reforms to the way Lottery money is distributed.

The funds were originally ring fenced for the next round of the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) to create 2,000 new safe play areas throughout the UK. This dedicated fund for play is now set to be absorbed into the new Big Lottery Fund which does not allow ring fencing of any kind.

Play organisations across the UK are concerned that the additional money will now be lost, and that small projects in deprived areas will have to compete against much larger and better equipped organisations for the remaining funds.

Steve Derby, Senior Play Coordinator of St. John's Wood Adventure Playground said, "This funding is vital to our work. We provide vital play opportunities for the children of asylum seekers and refugees. This sort of work will be in jeopardy without it."

However in an article in Play Today, Estelle Morris, Minister for the Arts defended the Government and insisted that they are still committed to play. She said:

"We remain committed to supporting play and are convinced of the benefits it can bring. We need to balance this commitment with the new approaches to managing the Lottery and we will respond to the play review in due course."

SkillsActive has written to Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, for an explanation of how the Government intends to ensure that Lottery funding for play is allocated strategically and according to need, as recommended in *Getting Serious About Play*, Frank Dobson's review of play.

**Concerned about the £200 million Lottery funding for play? Email [keepyourpromise@skillsactive.com](mailto:keepyourpromise@skillsactive.com) to register your concern about the issue.**

**The Big Lottery Fund is still consulting on the broad themes and outcomes that will shape the Fund's work go to [www.biglotteryfundconsultationforum.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfundconsultationforum.org.uk) to have your say.**

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**Photo opportunity:**

**3.15pm, Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2004. Angry parents can be photographed completing their protest cards at St John's Wood Adventure Playground, 51 – 56 St John's Wood Terrace, London NW8 6LP. Their contact number is: 020 7586 1884.**

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. SkillsActive is the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for Sport and Recreation, Health and Fitness, Playwork, The Outdoors and the Caravan industries.
2. SkillsActive is responsible for developing National Occupational Standards for the Fitness Industry. The National Occupational Standards are vital for the development of the industry and the recognition of the achievements of those who work in it. The Standards define the knowledge and skills needed to work in the industry and define best practice.
3. SkillsActive's mission statement is: "To ensure best quality, best business and best value within the Sector to achieve its economic and social potential."
4. SSCs are employer-led organisations that aim to tackle the skills and productivity needs of their sector throughout the UK. SSCs provide employers with the opportunity to provide leadership to meet their sector's skills and business needs. In return they receive substantial public investment and greater dialogue with government departments across the UK.
5. For more information about SkillsActive, please visit our website @ [www.skillsactive.com](http://www.skillsactive.com)