

**Press Release: Date: 3, March 2005: For Immediate Use.**



**\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\***

## **£155m GUARANTEED FOR PLAY IN ENGLAND**

**Today, The Big Lottery Fund guaranteed £155m funding for children's play in England.**

The money – a total of £200m – was originally ring fenced in a pre-election promise made by Chris Smith, the former Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, in 2001, to 'create 2,000 new children's safe play areas throughout the UK'.

This funding came under threat last year when a reform to the way Lottery money was distributed was announced.

This new funding announcement follows a period of intense campaigning by SkillsActive and The Children's Play Council.

SkillsActive ran a 'keep Your Promise' campaign across the play sector encouraging parents up and down the country to lobby the Government to keep their pre-election promise; as well as sponsoring Paddy Tipping MP (Lab, Sherwood) to initiate an adjournment debate with Lottery Minister Estelle Morris.

Paul Bonel, Director of the Playwork Unit in SkillsActive said "This is great news. I thought at one time that we had lost this battle. This money will be used to provide more free local play services.

"I want to thank all our colleagues who we were able to work with us on the campaign including the many parents and children who returned their 'Keep your promise' cards. Could this be an indicator that government is really 'getting serious about play'?"

SkillsActive now looks forward to the announcement about play funding for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

**-ENDS-**

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**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's mission statement is: "To ensure best quality, best business and best value within the Sector to achieve its economic and social potential."
3. 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.
4. For more information about SkillsActive, please visit our website @ [www.skillsactive.com](http://www.skillsactive.com)
5. SkillsActive is currently developing a Sector Skills Agreement for the Active Leisure and Learning Sector which will define the Sector's skills needs and ultimately form an agreement between employers, Government and funding partners to shape the workforce for the next ten years.