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*****NEWS RELEASE*****

Parents urge Government to keep promise on play

Parents across the country are urging the Government to keep a pre election promise to give an extra £200 million Lottery money to Children's Play.

The money, originally promised by Chris Smith before the 2001 general election, is under threat from reforms to the way lottery money is distributed and is now set to be absorbed into the general funds within the Big Lottery Fund.

Play organisations across the UK are concerned that the additional money will now be lost; meaning local play groups and facilities will lose out.

The money was originally ring fenced in a pre-election promise made by Chris Smith in 2001 to " earmark £200 million for the next round of the New Opportunities Fund to create 2,000 new children's 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.

This means that the money will no longer be additional, but that £200 million will go to Play altogether from across all the lottery distributors over time.

The Play sector is concerned that this will ultimately mean significantly less goes to Play and that small projects in deprived areas will have to compete for the funds that remain against much larger and better equipped organisations.

In an article in Play Today, Estelle Morris, Minister for the Arts, insisted the Government is 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 the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport for an explanation of how the Government intend to ensure that lottery funding for Play is allocated strategically and primarily according to need, as recommended in Frank Dobson's review of Play.

Concerned about the £200 lottery funding for Play? Email playlottery@skillsactive.com to register your concern about the issue with SkillsActive.

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 to have your say.

For more information please contact:

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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 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