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

## **CHILDREN'S WORKFORCE PLANS UNVEILED**

**The Children's Workforce Strategy has been published for consultation by the Government.**

SkillsActive supports moves to improve the qualifications of those working with children and young people, and looks forward to working through the Children's Workforce Network to build cross public sector skills pathways.

Recruitment and retention are some of the biggest problems faced by employers in our sector and to help address this SkillsActive calls for a greater focus on the issue of pay and conditions across the entire children's workforce. SkillsActive would support further investigation into the concept of national pay scales for the children's workforce to bring parity with other professionals working with children and young people.

Although the strategy recognises play, sport and leisure as one of the principle services used by children and young people, it chooses to focus instead on what the Government defines as sectoral priorities; early years, social care, foster care, schools, health and the voluntary and community sector.

SkillsActive would argue that the needs of the Active Leisure and Learning workforce are equally demanding as those in the early years sector. We are working with employers to identify key issues within the workforce and ensure our members needs are integrated with the strategy to ensure that the skills of those working in our sector can be properly recognised and developed. We would urge the Government to consider our sector as a priority sector and extend the scope of the strategy, including adequate resourcing, to reflect this.

Paul Bonel, SkillsActive's director of playwork said, "SkillsActive is committed to working with Government, employers, practitioners and training providers to develop a highly trained and professional children's workforce. However, it is unclear exactly where our work sits within this strategy – what of the thousands of playworkers, adventure activity leaders, sports coaches and lifeguards who work with children across the UK day in day out? Our sector needs the recognition it deserves in the children's workforce and we will engage with our sector colleagues to inform our response to the DfES on these matters. There will, without doubt, be a very lively debate between now and July."

SkillsActive will be consulting with our Playwork Education and Training Council, as well as with the wider sector, and responding to the consultation which runs until 22

July 2005. SkillsActive's members and partners are urged to read and respond to the consultation document to ensure their voice is heard in the development of a world-class workforce for children. The consultation can be found at:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations>

**-ENDS-**

**For more information or a SkillsActive briefing on the consultation 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'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.