

Press Release: Date: 15 December 2005. For immediate use.



*****PRESS RELEASE*****

PARLIAMENTARIANS GET SERIOUS ABOUT PLAY

A new backbench group of parliamentarians met for the first time this week, to take action on issues affecting children's play.

Taking place in Westminster, the inaugural meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Play elected officers to the new group and heard a presentation on play from the Children's Play Council.

Over forty Parliamentarians have already joined the new group sponsored by SkillsActive, who is providing the administrative and research support. The group intends to meet quarterly to focus on hot issues affecting children's play. The mission statement agreed by the group at its inaugural meeting states that the group will "meet to consider, and take action on, current issues affecting the right of every child to play freely."

In his presentation to the group, Adrian Voce, director of the Children's Play Council, highlighted the need for Parliamentarians to help guarantee that play is a priority for government, especially given the diminished opportunities in today's society for children and young people to play freely.

Helen Goodman MP, elected as chair to the group, went on to suggest potential themes for future meetings, including extended schools and play, learning from the Welsh experience of play policy, planning for play space in new housing developments, and the children's workforce. Helen stressed the importance of the group being an action group to move forward issues having a negative impact on children's access to play.

She said: "Play is essential to a good childhood. I am delighted that so many colleagues from across the political spectrum agree that we must act to protect children's opportunities for play."

-ENDS-

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The All Party Parliamentary Group on Play held its inaugural meeting on 13th December 2005.
2. The group's terms of reference are: "To meet as often as necessary to consider, and take action on, current issues affecting the right of every child to play freely."
3. Helen Goodman MP (Lab, Bishop Auckland) was elected as chair of the group, with Andrew Gwynne (Lab, Denton and Reddish) elected as vice chair.
4. Paddy Tipping MP (Lab, Sherwood), Julian Brazier MP (Con, Canterbury), and Lady Walmsley (Lib Dem) were elected as officers to the group.
5. For a full list of the group's members, please contact Jilly Evans, Public Affairs Officer at SkillsActive.
6. SkillsActive is providing free administrative support to the group.
7. Following the inaugural meeting, the group will be registered on the Approved List with the Register of All Party groups.
8. The group's next meeting will consider the role of play in extended schools and is likely to take place in early spring.
9. SkillsActive is the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for Sport and Recreation, Health and Fitness, Playwork, The Outdoors and the Caravan industries.
10. SkillsActive's mission statement is: "To ensure best quality, best business and best value within the Sector to achieve its economic and social potential."
11. 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.
12. For more information about SkillsActive, please visit our website @ www.skillsactive.com
13. 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.