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

SKILLSACTIVE LAUNCHES UK'S FIRST PLAYWORK STRATEGY

Wednesday 14 June sees the launch of the first UK Strategy for Playwork Education, Training and Qualifications: Quality Training, Quality Play 2006-2011 at the All Party Parliamentary Group on Play at The House of Commons, Westminster, London.

SkillsActive is leading the launch of the sector strategy which aims to improve the quality and range of play opportunities for children and young people.

The strategy is founded on the principle of Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, recognising play as being fundamental to children's quality of life and has a ten year vision with a coherent five year plan, developed jointly across the four nations, whilst recognising the diverse needs of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

It aims to maximise partnerships amongst the nations by identifying shared goals, common themes and mutual objectives. It is crucial that playwork employers establish a shared vision which will provide a foundation that allows them to work together within a strategic framework. Central to the development of the strategy is a UK focus.

"This is a very exciting time for us" said Paul Bonel SkillsActive's director of playwork, "The new playwork education and training strategy represents a unique opportunity for the four nations to work together on what we want to achieve for the playwork sector over the next five years."

Paul continues; "There are serious consequence if this strategy is not implemented: the impact of unqualified practitioners facilitating children's play and childcare; a reduction in the positive links that play can make to good physical and mental health; and a diminishing public understanding of the importance of play in children's lives."

Currently there are no statutory obligations in England for local authorities to make provision for play in the services they offer. Furthermore, there is no statutory obligation for planners to include space for children to play in new housing developments. Given these diminished opportunities for children and young people, it is time that play was more visible on political agendas.

SkillsActive vision anticipates that by 2015 playwork will be a profession acknowledged as central to provision for children and young people and the fulfilment of their individual potential.

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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
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.
6. SkillsActive is *Shaping Skills for the Future*, through...
 - PEOPLE...
...ensuring all people in the sector are appropriately trained and qualified.
 - PRODUCTIVITY...
...ensuring better performance through the professional development of the sector.
 - PROVISION...
...ensuring the sector has accessible, relevant and funded training across the UK.
 - PROMOTION...
...ensuring the contributions of the sector are recognised at a governmental level.