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

SKILLSACTIVE WELCOMES NEW GOVERNMENT FOCUS ON PLAY

SkillsActive have welcomed the news that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) is to take a leading role in government policy on children's play.

The announcement was made to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Play by the group's outgoing Chair, Helen Goodman MP who will be relinquishing her role following her appointment as Deputy Leader of the House of Commons.

Children's play as a policy area has been at the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) as part of its work on cultural education and social policy for children but i.

SkillsActive works

Welcoming the news, SkillsActive Playwork Director, Paul Bonel said:

"The announcement that the new Department for Children, Schools and Families is to take a lead role in the government's policy work around play

: 'This is very good news indeed. DCMS has been a good home for children's play but it would be anomalous for there to be a Secretary of State for Children without specific responsibility for play policy. Play and recreation repeatedly come out as top priorities for children and young people themselves and has a central role in their quality of life, contributing to all the outcomes.

We hope to retain strong links with the DCMS as play is a cross cutting issue, but are looking forward to working closely with the DCSF to ensure that play provision is a more serious part of the Every Child Matters / Change for Children programme. We also hope that the new government will seriously consider the policy areas beyond children's services – planning, traffic and green spaces for example – that impact on children's freedom to play out'

In 2005 Secretary of State Tessa Jowell promised a 'strategic, cross-departmental approach to play policy in response to the national Play Review chaired by Frank Dobson MP, whose report, 'Getting Serious About Play' also led to the Big Lottery Fund's £155m Children's Play Initiative, launched in 2006.

-ENDS-

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. SkillsActive is the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for the sport and fitness, playwork, the outdoors and caravan industries – known as the active leisure and learning sector.
2. SSCs are UK-wide, employer-led organisations that aim to tackle the skills and productivity needs of their sector. Twenty five SSCs make up the Skills for Business Network. The Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) underpins the network and is responsible for funding, supporting and monitoring the SSCs.
3. SkillsActive's Sector Skills Agreement defines the sector's skills needs and forms an agreement between employers, government and funding partners to shape the workforce for the next ten years. Priorities identified as a result of the SSA process are: improve the quality and range of services; improve recruitment and retention; professionalise and upskill the existing workforce; match supply to demand; redirect funding for training; increase sector investment in our people.
4. 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.
5. For more information about SkillsActive, please visit our website @ www.skillsactive.com