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

SKILLSACTIVE WELCOMES NEW CHAIR OF ALL PARTY GROUP ON PLAY

SkillsActive have welcomed Janet Dean, MP for Burton, as the new chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Play

The group's previous chair, Helen Goodman MP, is relinquishing her role following her appointment as Deputy Leader of the House of Commons, but Janet has agreed to head up the group.

Janet said: "I am looking forward to working with SkillsActive and relishing this opportunity to bring the message of play to a wider parliamentary audience. The positive benefits of play are clear and it is essential that the issue remains high on the government's agenda"

SkillsActive are working to highlight the children's workforce and importance of training and skills to Parliamentarians of all parties by working as secretariat of the All Party Group. The group has MPs and Peers from across the political spectrum as members, all with a joint interest in children's play and playwork. Past meetings have included presentations from David Lammy MP and the Big Lottery Fund and future debates will include extended schools and the children's workforce.

SkillsActive also launched the ten year strategy, Quality Training, Quality Play 2006-2011, at a meeting last year recognising play as central to children's quality of life.

Welcoming the new chair, Paul Bonel head of SkillsActive's playwork unit said:

"We are in no doubt that the All Party Group on Play will continue to go from strength to strength under Janet's stewardship. SkillsActive have worked with the group since its inception and are very grateful to Helen's good work over the last few years. We wish her all the best in her new role"

In her final role as Chair of the group, Helen Goodman announced at a meeting of the group in Parliament yesterday that the new Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) will be taking a lead role in government policy on play.

The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) had previously focused on children's play as part of its work on education and social policy for children but the newly created department with a focus on children will now take on a more hands on role in policy development.

SkillsActive Playwork Director, Paul Bonel said:

“The announcement that the new DCSF is to take a lead role in the government’s work around play is one which SkillsActive and employers in the playwork sector welcome. Whilst we will continue to work with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, we look forward to working with the DCSF to ensure that play provision, skills and training and workforce development in the sector remain key areas of focus”

-ENDS-

For more information please contact:

Will Pickering
Tel: 020 7632 2000
Email: william.pickering@skillsactive.com

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