



Play England - The Charter for Children's Play

Playing is integral to children's enjoyment of their lives, their health and their development. Children and young people - disabled and non-disabled - whatever their age, culture, ethnicity or social and economic background, need and want to play, indoors and out, in whatever way they can. Through playing, children are creating their own culture, developing their abilities, exploring their creativity and learning about themselves, other people and the world around them.

Children need and want to stretch and challenge themselves when they play. Play provision and play space that is stimulating and exciting allows children to encounter and learn about risk. This helps them to build confidence, learn skills and develop resilience at their own pace.

The Charter for Children's Play sets out a vision for play and aims to be a catalyst for individuals and organisations to examine, review and improve their provision for children and young people's play and informal recreation

Play is the fundamental way that children enjoy their childhood. It is essential to their quality of life as children.

- Playing is fun: it is how children enjoy themselves.
- Play promotes children's development, learning, imagination, creativity and independence.
- Play can help to keep children healthy and active.
- Play allows children to experience and encounter boundaries, learning to assess and manage risk in their lives; both physical and social.
- Play helps children to understand the people and places in their lives learn about their environment and develop their sense of community.
- Play allows children to find out about themselves, their abilities, their interests and the contribution they can make.
- Play can be therapeutic. It helps children to deal with difficult or painful circumstances such as emotional stress or medical treatment.
- Play can be a way of building and maintaining important relationships with friends, carers and family members.

The charter is underpinned by some key understandings:

- Play is an essential part of every child's life - vital to his or her development. It is the way that children explore for themselves the world around them; the way that they naturally develop understanding and practise skills.
- Play is essential for healthy physical and emotional growth, for intellectual and educational development, and for acquiring social and behavioural skills.
- Play may or may not involve equipment or have an end product. Children play on their own and with others. Their play may be boisterous and energetic or quiet and contemplative, light-hearted or very serious.
- Children's own culture is created and lived through their play.

'Play is what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons.' (DCMS, 2004)