

Play is generally agreed to be something that children & young people do quite naturally.

Children need to **PLAY** to
BE ADAPTABLE
CONSTRUCT KNOWLEDGE
PROBLEM SOLVE
LEARN EMOTIONS
CREATE
INTERNALISE EXPERIENCES
DISCOVER
CHALLENGE
BE HEALTHY THEMSELVES
LAUGH & HAVE FUN
LEARN TO WORK TOGETHER
IMAGINE
LEARN TO LEAD
EXPRESS IDEAS
EXPLORE
SPEAK
DEVELOP AN INQUIRING MIND
READ
MANAGE STRESS
WRITE
COUNT
Because **PLAY** matters.

Play Matters

MAKE TIME FOR PLAY
(EVERYDAY)

Play Matters

Time to play: simply put – children and young people need time to play. Free play is as important for children and young people as lessons, homework or structured activities. Playing is important for children’s health and wellbeing.

Time Out: most children love to play outdoors. Time playing outdoors in the natural environment with friends is good for children’s physical, mental and social development.

Screen time: today’s children are spending more and more time using digital technology and devices. We need to set limits and encourage children to limit their screen time and play more.

Play resources: play does not need to be costly or expensive. Children love to play with natural resources such as cardboard boxes, materials, chinks, old clothes etc.

Play Opportunities: bring back some traditional play opportunities like building dens, playing hopscotch, climbing trees and street games.

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Funded through the Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP) the Children and Young People's Strategy Team in the Department of

Education are excited to be taking forward a Play and Leisure Project aptly titled 'Play Matters'.



Play Matters aims to ensure that policy makers, practitioners and parents understand that play is a vital

part of childhood and is necessary for children and young people's overall healthy development. The key beneficiaries of the project will include children and young people, parents, families and wider communities.



One of the best ways for children to stay both physically and mentally healthy is through access to a variety of unstructured play opportunities. Play Matters promotes the concept of play which is freely chosen and self-directed by children.

Play Matters

has three core elements:

Play Shaper Programme:

a programme of professional play development, training and guidance for a range of stakeholders who directly or indirectly influence play (policy makers, councils, Departments, service deliverers, planning officers, PSNI, community representatives, health professionals etc.) This play development programme aims to help professionals understand the importance of play and leisure and their role in creating child-friendly and/or play-friendly communities.

Parents Programme:

aimed at providing parents with the skills, knowledge and confidence to meaningfully play with their children and an understanding of the many benefits of play in relation to children's development. Delivered through play specific training for professionals who work directly with parents/Play Awareness Sessions for parents/ and Play Modelling Sessions for children and parents together.



Play Messaging Campaign:

which is aimed at distilling a number of key play messages to parents; including the importance of playing outdoors, limiting screen time and ensuring older children have time for play and leisure.

Children's Right to Play

The importance of play in children and young people's lives has long been recognised. In 1989, 140 countries signed up to a convention that sets out children's rights. Known as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) it grants over forty rights including the right to play, leisure and recreation (Article 31).

Article 31

Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

Article 31 was ratified by the UK government in 1991. The government has a duty under this convention to protect and promote play opportunities for all children and young people.

