



Leading city professional urges Nottingham not to forget the vital role of play and to work together to protect children from the cuts

“Over the past four years, Nottingham has been a national trailblazer when it comes to play.

We’ve had a major programme of parks being developed and improved for example and have won a lot of external funding for play projects throughout the city.

Now I’m calling on everyone involved with play in Nottingham to come together and make sure we continue to build on our achievements, despite the challenges we face, such as cuts to public sector funding.

The alternative is to risk forgetting the huge importance of play - which is vital to the health, wellbeing, education and development of our children, as well as to our communities.”

The warning comes from Liz Asher, Senior Manager at Playworks, and Chair of the Nottingham Play Partnership a partnership made up of many different city organisations involved in play.

Now, that Partnership is aiming to ensure that the whole city understands and becomes involved in protecting play, by launching a refreshed Play Strategy for Nottingham on 9th December.

Anyone with an interest in play including schools, nurseries, community groups and volunteers are welcome to go along to the launch, which will take place from 10.30am to 1pm at Playworks, Alfred Street North, Nottingham, NG3 1AE.

The launch will also be a chance for individuals and groups to join the Play Action Network - a network of play professionals, volunteers and those interested in play.

The refreshed strategy will set out Nottingham’s vision for play, building on Nottingham’s trailblazing work in terms of being a ‘playful city’ and the idea that all children should have the right to access a wide range of appropriate, freely chosen, self-directed play opportunities.



It will also explore the crucial role of play in children's physical and mental health; wellbeing; emotional resilience; education and development as well as how play benefits the environment and local communities.

For example, the Strategy will look at how play can help tackle issues such as childhood obesity and anti-social behaviour.

Last but not least, the Strategy will set out how training opportunities and support for parents and carers will help to benefit children and the city as a whole.

Liz Asher explains:

"The refreshed Play Strategy will help us all work together as a city, to provide the best possible opportunities for our children.

In the current economic climate it is more important than ever that we drive forward strategies that will enhance and support the quality of all children and young people's lives.

It's up to us as adults and play providers to protect our children from the affects of issues such as public sector funding cuts.

No child or young person should have to pay the price for challenges in the adult world."

Wendy Russell, a leading national play expert, who'll be a guest speaker at the launch on 9th December agrees:

"There is more to playing than children learning things they will need to do when they're grown up. It's more important than that.

Playing is what makes life worth living and it's good for children now, as well as when they're adults. It's crucial for developing attachments to friends and places, for being able to cope with uncertainty and the unknown and for developing an open mind to the world."

Wendy Russell will be talking about the value and importance of play work at the launch, whilst guest speaker Justine Darke, Service Manager for Youth Strategy at Nottingham City Council, will be discussing youth work.



Councillor Mellen, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services at Nottingham City Council says:

"When a child or young person experiences good play they are better able to meet the challenges the world presents. Play is important to children's development, learning and health and every child or young person has the right to play. Despite the reduction in available resources to all in this sector, together we will bring about the innovation and change to provide the very best play opportunities that will have a positive impact on people's lives in the city."

Liz concludes:

"There has never been a more important time to raise the profile of play in Nottingham.

According to the national organisation Play England, only 40% of children in the UK play outside now, compared to 72% from the last generation.

As a city, we've done a great deal of work to tackle that and we mustn't stop now."

Children's right to play is taken so seriously that it's enshrined in Article 31 of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by the UK government in 1991. That means the government has a duty under this convention to protect and promote play opportunities for all children and young people.

Playworks is Nottingham's leading resource and support centre for the play sector. For example, it provides training for staff and volunteers involved in play and offers resources such as access to affordable arts and crafts materials via its Scrapstore and Art Shop.

To find out more about the launch or to book your free place please call Laura Summers at Playworks on 0115 958 9199 or email laura.summers@playworks.org.uk