



# Scotland's Play Strategy

Valuing play, every day

## LEARNING ABOUT PLAY

### Investigating play through relevant qualifications in Scotland

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## Learning About Play: Audain and Shoolbread Scotland's Play Strategy Implementation Group

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Grounds for Learning



Play Scotland



SCMA

This report relates to Action 7.1 of the Play Strategy Action Plan.

The Play Strategy Implementation Group (PSIG) led by the Scottish Government and made up of representatives of statutory bodies, local authorities, third sector organisations and funders. The PSIG works together to support and monitor the implementation of the Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0043/00437132.pdf> The views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and do not necessarily represent those of the Scottish Government or Scottish Ministers.



Abstract

*On behalf of the Play Strategy Implementation Group, we examined the content of the main qualifications in Scotland, for those working in early learning and childcare, schools, out of school and holiday care services for children. We wanted to discover how much play is included from level 5 to post degree level, and to see if more coverage was needed.*

*We found that play in both the free and planned play sense is covered in every qualification to various levels. However, it depends on the choices the learner makes in terms of qualifications, and the options within them, to really learn about play. We found through interviews and the literature review that play could be better provided in schools, inside and outside the classroom.*

*We made recommendations to improve qualifications, to create better play opportunities in schools, to fund play research, including doctorates, and to address play and risk issues.*

*Key words: Play, Child Development and Play, Learning and Play, Play breaks, Training and Qualifications childcare, play and teachers, Risk in Play, CfE, Play Strategy and Action Plan, Scotland.*

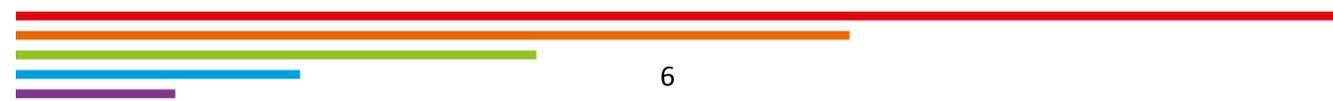
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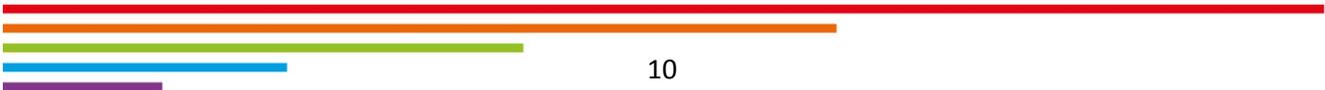
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Scottish Government [National Play Strategy for Scotland](#) – Our Vision was published in June 2013 followed by an associated [National Play Strategy For Scotland – Our Action Plan \(2013a\)](#) in October 2013. In November 2013, the Play Strategy Implementation Group (PSIG) was set up to ensure delivery of actions within the plan. This research report relates primarily to Action 7.1 –

“task a working group to review current levels of play training provided to school and nursery staff and to recommend how elements of play rights, theory and practice could be incorporated in both the initial professional training and career long professional learning and leadership” (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.20). In order: “to ensure that all education manager, school and centre leaders, school staff and early years practitioners are adequately trained on the importance of play and are able to support qualify play opportunities in their setting,” (Scottish Government, 2013a. p.20).

The report also relates to four additional action points from the plan: The literature review for this research *contributes* towards a medium term aim of:

7. 2 “Commission and publish an evidence/literature review on links between play and children’s attainment, achievement, wellbeing and learning across all ages, stages and abilities. – To build knowledge, and increase awareness amongst educators, parents and carers of the impact of outdoor and indoor play and active learning opportunities on children’s learning and development at all stages of education” ” (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.21)

9.2 “Promote the Play Strategy: Our Vision to universities delivering the B.Ed. and M.Ed. and the Childhood Practice Award” (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.29)

9.8 "Investigate how the skills of the play workforce could be utilised more widely to develop quality of play opportunities in a range of other settings." (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.32)

9.9 "Map career long professional learning opportunities available to play workforce across Scotland to identify gaps and ensure quality" (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.32)

It was agreed that the first main action point should be divided into two main strands of work-

The first to look at how, and if, play is included and covered in formal qualifications for all professionals working with children within early years, education and childcare settings in Scotland (an expansion beyond that of the original remit of nursery and school staff). The professional qualifications to be looked at relate to teachers; daycare of children (nursery, playgroup and out of school care) workers; residential childcare workers; pupil support assistants; childminders and playworkers.

The second strand was to compile information on play training providers offering Continuous Professional Development (CPD) play training for professionals, separate to any formal qualifications, and the play training that they offer. (The training section contains a separate discussion of the methodology used for this strand of work).

## **STRUCTURE CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND**

While this report is primarily a rich information resource, there are ideas and recommendations developed through the synthesis of literature, findings and discussions held over the course of this research process.

The main report is divided into executive summary, introduction, context and background, then interviews. The Literature Review follows and develops the evaluation criteria. This is used to analyse the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) regulated workforce qualifications; with a section on Childhood Practice degree level courses and above, as well as a section on SVQs, PDA and NC/HNC level qualifications.

There is a complete section on Play in Education, which includes data on qualifications, providers, Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) (Scottish Executive, 2004) and associated guidance, early learning and childcare guidance, results of the teacher training survey and focus group discussions, and resources from Education Scotland. This is analysed according to the evaluation criteria developed through the literature review.

There is a specific training section, which discusses the training survey, methods, results and concluding points. This information is all brought to the discussion and conclusions final section.

Where this work is a rich information resource is that all of the data compiled on the courses and individual qualifications is set out in a series of tables in the appendices. Many are either hyperlinked to source material directly or with links provided in the extensive references section to the universities or providers of degree level and above courses, relating to childhood practice and teacher training.

There is also an extensive table setting out play training providers with their contacts and throughout the document, relevant agencies, legislation or any information obtainable online is hyperlinked or links are provided in the references section. Therefore, readers of the full report can use the appendix information to find out more, or form their own conclusions. After the publication of the

final draft of this report in March 2015, the Scottish Government website changed from [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk) to [www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot) therefore in June 2015 the relevant links in the references section and the main hyperlinks in the text have been updated to reflect this change.

## **Background and Context**

The introduction immediately addresses the UNCRC (UN, 1989) in terms of the right to play under Article 31, and the related General Comment (UN, 2013), but also brought in other Articles relating to children's rights to education, Articles 28 and 29, as well as participatory rights and freedom of expression, Articles, 12 and 13.

Most services in Scotland, providing play, including free and spontaneous play, as set out in the Playwork Principles (Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group, 2005) are also concerned with children's care, development and learning. This can be in either the specific educational sense (active learning in early learning and childcare and in Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) (Scottish Executive, 2004) or in a broader social and cultural sense (out of school care, playgroups, childminding, parent and toddler groups, play break times).

We found that in investigating the play content of qualifications, for the relevant workforces in Scotland, to focus only on the narrower playwork principles definition of play, as the analytic tool, would miss many other strong dimensions of play within qualifications. Play is a necessary part of child development and learning, and should be covered, in this sense, in workforce training and qualifications. Furthermore, we found that the play environment, children's rights, creativity and curriculum also all relate to the question of discovering how play is covered in qualifications and training.

A background section provides contextual data on the SSSC registered workforce and the GTCS teacher workforce, alongside data of children using services or school pupil numbers. The roles of the regulatory bodies such as the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland, as well as that of relevant Sector Skills Councils (SSSC, SkillsActive) and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), are also covered in this section. The common core for social services qualifications is also described in this section. The Play in Education section includes the role of the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), while the Standard for Childhood Practice (QAA, 2007) is included in the Degree level qualifications and above section.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Initial research was conducted to supplement information on relevant contacts in terms of providers of qualifications, national occupational standards (NOS), and relevant contacts for interviews and online training surveys for play training providers and, later, teaching training surveys. All providers of the main degree level qualifications for the SSSC registered workforce and teacher training providers were contacted, as well as some specialist courses in the UK.

Detailed information was obtained from all but two (Glasgow and Edinburgh which both provided some information) of the childhood practice related degree courses, and this information was analysed and set out in the appendix (tables 1.1 – 8.1) all core modules are covered and relevant identified modules relating to the enquiry are also set out in each table. The references section contains direct links to all course website pages.

There was a poor response from the teacher training providers. This gap was addressed by producing a short online survey, which gained responses from three teacher training providers, holding a focus

group of teachers and primary school assistants, and conducting in depth research into guidance, registration standards and contents relating to CfE, teacher training and early learning and childcare in Scotland. This information is compiled in the Play in Education Section, with hyperlinks to literature, government policies, relevant agencies and information resources. There are also links to all teacher training provider websites in the references section.

For the relevant Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), HNCs and PDAs this data was gathered and reviewed via publicly available online sources, such as the National Occupational Standards (NOS) as it would have been impossible to contact or identify every single college or accredited centre. Over 350 individual units within the 15 qualifications relating to the main SVQs accepted on the SSSC register from levels 5 – 9 were analysed, and the appendix provides hyperlinked tables to demonstrate the core units and those units identified as relevant for the enquiry, for each qualification.

The online play training survey responses are set out in the play training section while again the appendix provides a table of further useful information and contacts for play training. A series of interviews were held (interview section) with key agencies and individuals, including two interviews each with representatives from the Sector Skills Councils (SSSC and SkillsActive), the SSSC and GTCS in their regulatory roles, representatives from universities providing the BA Childhood Practice, national childcare organisations, SVQ qualification providers, playwork researchers and experts, and playwork masters level course providers.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A broad ranging literature review, includes a sketched historical perspective on early philosophies relating to play e.g. Locke (1884), Groos (1898, 1901), Huizinga (1949), Hall, (1904), alongside the child development and early learning pioneers e.g. Rousseau (1762), Froebel (1826), Dewey, (1897), Steiner (2002/1965), Montessori (Pollard, 1990) the McMillan sisters (Steedman, 2004) and Robert Owen's groundbreaking work in Scotland (Donnachie,2003).

The review covers play theorists relating to playwork: e.g. Bonel and Lindon (2009), Hughes (2001, 2006), Brown (2003, 2009) Sturrock and Else (1998), Sutton-Smith (1997), Russell and Lester (2008), Gill (2014), Greave and Cole-Hamilton (2011, 2012) Rogers, Pelletier and Clarke (2009) and, Else, Sexton and Nutall (2010). The Playwork Principles (Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group, 2005) and the role of the playworker are included.

Child development and learning theorists illustrate that play is an integral part of learning and development, in a wide range of views: e.g. Piaget (1955, 1962), Vygotsky (1933/1966, 1978, 1987), Bronfenbrenner (1979), Erikson (1951), Bandura, Ross and Ross, (1961), Ainsworth and Bell (1970), Laevers (1994, 2001) and, Bruner and Ross (1976). The work of socio-cultural researchers, sets out the cultural context, such as Rogoff (2003), Lave and Wenger (1991), James and Prout (2004), and Super and Harkness (1986, 1992).

Recent paradigms, based on children's rights, participation and perceptions, their agency and choice: e.g. Kellett (2005, 2009a & b, 2010), Siraj- Blatchford (2002, 2009) Moss and Petrie (2002) are also considered relevant for the current context for play, and this includes new methodologies in consulting with and acting on children's own views. Bruce (2001) emphasises the importance of play

for young children, Moyles (2010) and Gooch (2008) discuss playful pedagogies and different perspectives on play and learning. Malaguzzi, in Edwards, Gandini, & Forman (2008), affirms the 100 languages of children, and the concept of the rich child in terms of their own creative talents, interests and engagement.

The literature review has two focused sections: one on break/ play time in schools, (Blatchford and Baines (2013) breaktime project, the British Library Opie's related research project (2011), Grounds for Learning reports (Robinson, 2014a, b & c), Lawton, Audain and Shoolbread (2008) lunchtime research). The other is a case study of the Finnish Education system (Sahlberg, 2014a, b & c), including play as process, in a small study of primary schools in Finland (Hyvönen, 2011).

These studies extend thinking about how play can support education, whilst still remaining free play processes for children. They also ensure that the needs of school aged children are covered and to demonstrate the value of play in and out of the classroom, in terms of supporting children's wellbeing and learning needs, and the importance of a supportive environment (political, cultural, social, emotional and physical) for play. The literature review underpins the evaluative framework.

## **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Main themes:

- Play Pedagogies/ Playwork Theory and Practice
- Play, Child Development and Learning

Sub themes

- Children's Rights and International modern/postmodern theory

- Play and Learning Environment
- Play and Learning – Creativity, curriculum, Active Learning / digital learning

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### Research questions:

#### **1: To what extent is play covered in formal qualifications within education, childcare (and play) settings? (Action 7.1)**

We found that more than half the Childhood Practice BA, BA (Hons) MEd, PGDip and PDA level 9 Qualifications covered Play Pedagogies, Playwork related theories and practice in some detail (Table 32), however, most in depth modules were optional. All covered play in terms of child development and learning, included children's rights, the environment, curriculum and some covered creativity. These are mainly management and leadership qualifications, their core modules focus more on this and all are aligned to the Standard for Childhood Practice (QAA, 2007) (see Tables 1.1-8.1).

Apart from one historical support worker qualification (HNC for ASN), the fourteen SVQ or NC/HNC, PDA or progression awards qualifications assessed, contain play in the fundamental playwork sense in either core or optional units. Those with mandatory core units include The National Progression Award in Playwork and Childcare at level 5, the SVQ playwork at levels 6, 7 and 9, the NC (level 6) and HNC (level 7) in Early Education and Childcare, the OU DipHE at level 7, including module E100, accepted for support workers. The SVQ Social Services (CYP) at levels 9, 7 and 6 all covered this only in optional units, as did the SVQ CCLD at levels 9, 7 and 5.

The SVQ CCLD level 9 does not actually mention play but does cover child development and learning, conversely, there is little about child development or learning in the playwork related qualifications.

Most other qualifications covered play in the child development and learning sense. At the lower levels of qualifications, children's rights are mainly about protection rather than participation, while the environment is better covered across all qualifications and a few have specialist units on creativity, while many focus on curriculum related topics. The SVQs Social Services (CYP) all have value statements about child agency and choice and therefore meet rights criteria through this.

### **Play in Education**

Free play is included in the curriculum and is a strong feature of guidance for the youngest children, including reference to the play strategy and playwork principles in [Building the Ambition](#) (Scottish Government, 2014a) and guidelines for the [curriculum in early learning](#) (Scottish Executive, 2007) also mentions free play and active learning.

Child development and learning through play is well understood in a range of guidance materials and especially through using the concept of active learning, which does include spontaneous and free as well as planned play. [Outdoor learning guidance](#) also includes active learning and child agency and choice (Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010a)

Through [teacher registration standards \(GTCS, 2012\)](#) and links to the UNCRC (UN, 1989) and [Getting it Right for Every Child \(GIRFEC\)](#), (Scottish Government, 2008a) , teacher training includes children's rights and agency, as well as their holistic wellbeing needs under GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2008a), which is also reflected in the [Curriculum for Excellence \(CfE\)](#) overarching indicators (Scottish Executive, 2004).

Teacher training providers cover play and child learning and development, with one mentioned this comprised around a third of their course, however, one teacher interviewed in the focus group who had done the PGDE (2011) felt neither play or child development were covered.

The OU courses for education support assistants (Table 15) are very focused on play in both the playwork principles sense and on active learning, creativity, the environment for play and children's rights, as well as curriculum and specific topics.

Teachers and PSAs interviewed in the focus group believed in children having opportunities to play, even take risks, and play in school for this to help make learning fun. They felt that there was not support for this from society, and this was also borne out in early year's curriculum guidance (Scottish Executive, 2007), which noted that it might be hard to convince parents of the value of learning through play in schools, although teachers should try to do so.

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) also can accredit "professional update" courses, and there is an example given of a recent award developed on the topic of outdoor learning.

**Other Courses:** *Table 9: Robert Gordon University of Aberdeen BA Social Pedagogy (Working with Children / Working with Adults) and Table 10: University of Strathclyde: The MSc in Advanced Residential Child Care:* For both courses there was limited information about child development and care, global and contemporary issues are covered while the lifespace relates to the ecological environment.

**2: Are there existing courses or units in qualifications or CPD courses relating to play that could be integrated into other qualifications where there is little/no evidence of play? (Action 7.1)**

This question needed to be changed, as all qualifications did contain play (bar one), to: What additional units or CPD courses could complement the training already in place on play in qualifications?

At the BACP/ PDA degree level (and above) in SSSC registration qualifications, it was demonstrated that at least five courses contained a range of optional in depth materials on play pedagogies, playwork theory and principles.

The (forthcoming) updated Standard for Childhood Practice (QAA, 2007) will likely incorporate Government legislation and guidance as part of the updating process (interviews), therefore, this will include GIRFEC, the National Play Strategy and Associated Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2013b, 2013a) and the Children and Young People Act 2014, with associated guidance. Given that courses must map on to the Standard for Childhood Practice, those that already include play theories, play pedagogy and principles, will not have much to change, however, others might need to develop additional materials in optional modules.

Above BA level, there are opportunities to develop modules covering play in both the widest sense and in the stricter free play sense, which could be applicable to both childhood practice graduates and to teachers looking to work towards master's level. E.g. The University of Strathclyde: *Early Years Pedagogue* (Table 11) contains all of the elements of the criteria developed to analysis the different types of play, play in learning and development, the play environment, children's rights, global and modern theories, children's languages and creativity and curriculum such as Te Whariki.

Play is expected to be part of the learning practice in Primary 1 and Primary 2 through CfE, and this is perhaps an area where qualifications for Pupil Support Assistants provide a bridge across the active

learning, curriculum and playwork, especially where options to cover playwork training are taken up by assistants. The playwork unit, supporting playwork in schools, might be useful here, but again, perhaps this is needed at level 7 as well as level 6 and all Playwork SVQs could be updated to include more knowledge of the curriculum, active learning and child development, which might then equip workers with skills to work in both play and school settings.

In the interviews, it was identified that suitable professional update courses could be accredited by GTCS and a CPD course on play could be developed for teachers, similar to the outdoor learning professional update award.

The Finnish case study, (Hyvönen, 2011) shows, even in a culture and school system where play is highly valued, using such processes are not always simple to understand, deliver or assess. If there is a play professional update developed, it might be better to develop this at a higher academic level, which includes learning how to assess different types of play as processes and in learning and using creative methods (e.g. Reggio Emilia) to measure progress. Some modules from the PDA Childhood Practice could be relevant and useful (interviews).

Although childminders are not required to register or to hold specific qualifications, the phased out SVQ CCLD at level 5, did have a useful unit on caring for children at home. It would be useful for childminders for a successor unit to this to be developed in the Social Services (CYP) level 6 qualifications and/ or a play@home unit as part of playwork, as some childminders do want to take qualifications (interviews).

**3. What potential is there for the playwork-qualified workforce to support play opportunities within more formal education/settings other than their more usual play/childcare settings?**

**(Action point. 9.8)**

As identified in the literature review, and through interviews and focus group discussions, the area that has strong potential for development here is during in the break and play time, as well as in play and childcare, out of school care, breakfast and holiday clubs often co-located in schools.

The Finnish case study (Sahlberg, 2014a, b & c) is of particular relevance in terms of the information about how the school day is broken up with frequent breaks for play, rest and restoration. Overall, Finnish school children spend much less time in the classroom than peers in the USA or UK, yet consistently the Finnish PISA scores are in the top ranking three (Sahlberg, 2014 a, b & c).

Play based learning techniques are used within and outside the classroom, as Hyvönen (2011) demonstrates, while using highly trained, well-respected and autonomous teachers also creates positive outcomes, according to Sahlberg (2014a). Following Teaching Scotland's Future (Scottish Government, 2011) there are moves to make teaching a Masters level occupation in Scotland, (interviews, play in education section), perhaps combining this development with reassessing the structure of the school day might bring in more aspects of the Finnish approach to improve outcomes and everyday wellbeing for children.

As the break time project website information and articles (Blatchford and Baines, 2013) demonstrated, children and young people's time for breaks in schools are getting shorter in the UK, with less time for play, relaxation or eating lunch. However, the Finnish study (Hyvönen, 2011)

suggests, more time for play and/ or short frequent breaks from learning, longer lunch breaks and play based learning can enhance children's educational outcomes as well as their general wellbeing.

Extending children and young people's break time should include extending and improving the environment of the playground, as the recently published grounds for learning studies demonstrate (Robinson, 2014a, 2014b & 2014c).

This is where, in terms of the holistic environment e.g. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 and Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2007), extending the role of playwork trained staff to support play and leisure activities for children and young people, during breaks is an opportunity. Especially if creating or preserving longer lunch breaks and perhaps more frequent play breaks throughout the day, as well as being able to work with many of the same children in the breakfast, out of school and holiday clubs, or indeed the classroom as a support assistant too.

They could work with the children and school management in improving the physical play environment, and how it is used, and they can support and facilitate play using playworker methods, which ensure children's autonomy, choice, balanced risk and the joy and fun of play. This is not entirely new; it is already the case, for example, in Fife council (interviews), where some playwork trained staff might work across schools, nurseries and out of school care services and holiday clubs.

What might be quite radical is in meeting the needs for children to have slightly longer or more frequent breaks, inside and outside the classroom, where both free play, including risky play, and active learning through play processes can support, indeed enhance, learning, development and educational outcomes.

Even if it is not possible to extend the time for breaks, the literature, interviews and survey responses suggested that improved play during break times was highlighted as being the most realistic time free play and risky play opportunities within schools. It was suggested in interviews, that those schools which have focused on play during playtime and in the playgrounds, and where there is a whole school approach in place tend to find greater success (interviews).

Certainly supporting teachers, creating a whole school approach, and utilising the skills of play trained staff during breaks, in the classroom and in wider play activities for children before and after school contributes towards the outcomes set out in the introduction, from the National Play Strategy Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2013a).

*“Outcome: All children and young people enjoy high quality play opportunities, particularly outdoor free play in stimulating spaces with access to nature, on a daily basis in school, nursery and early learning and childcare.*

*Impact: All school staff and early years' practitioners will receive play training, as part of their initial education and career long professional learning. They will have sufficient skills, knowledge and understanding of play to support play opportunities. All schools and settings will have well designed inclusive spaces for play in local communities. Education managers and leaders in school and early years settings demonstrate their commitment to increasing and developing play opportunities and to supporting staff to do so through priorities in the improvement planning cycle, ethos and community life of their establishments and their own professional learning" (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.20).*

Therefore, the use of the school as a site of play in breakfast clubs, breaks, lunchtime, after school and holiday clubs is an essential component of supporting play in the community, while utilising playwork trained staff would help facilitate such opportunities for children.

#### **4. What does the literature tells us about the benefits of play? ( Relating to Action 7.2)**

The literature review tries to synthesis play in the playwork principles sense and in the wider child development and learning sense in order to demonstrate that the processes of free play can be utilised for child development and learning outcomes without taking away the intrinsic motivation and freedom of the child's own personally determined play choices. It also demonstrates that play as a process and the affordance of play, can be justified within learning frameworks, as well as supporting children's wellbeing and happiness on a day-to-day level. The literature also affirms the centrality of social relationships to child development and play is very much part of the process of creating social relationships and learning social skills relevant for their culture and environment.

There is little literature on the play needs of children of school age, in school, which is also why the break time study, grounds for learning and the Finnish case study extend the literature to cover this age range and setting in more detail.

#### **5. Where are the gaps and how can professional development opportunities be extended in studying play ( Relating to Action 9.9)**

Although much relating to this question is covered in the discussion of question 2, the content of other courses such as *Gloucestershire; Professional Studies in Children's Play (Masters)* (Table 12); and *Leeds Beckett University: BA (Hons) Playwork* (Table 13); demonstrate that there are not, at this level, similar specialist playwork courses in Scotland. In the interviews, some respondents believed

that there is not enough knowledge of Playwork at this level amongst those delivering degree level and higher courses. Suggested solutions to address this gap included; Funded play Doctorates (Professional doctorates), Academic play research network and Professional Doctorates and Part-Time PhDs.

The interviews also identified a gap in terms of the promotion of Playwork in Scotland. This is the responsibility of SkillsActive, however, due to cutbacks and personnel changes there have been gaps in their work in Scotland, which they are aware of, and keen to address (interviews). The interviews also brought out that funding has been obtained by SkillsActive to update the Playwork National Occupation Standards later this year; therefore, this is an opportunity to address some of the issues highlighted in this report, and work will begin on this from April 2015.

### **Further discussion points emerging from the research**

#### **Responsibilities and Resources**

In terms of this enquiry, we looked at the contents of qualifications and noted that there are various paths a learner might take in terms of including a great deal, or much less, play focused units or modules at all levels of qualifications. We also noted that, apart from specialist playwork qualifications, and a few others, to cover play in this playwork principles sense required choosing available optional units or modules, which are playwork focused. In addition, it was found that at least three initial teacher training courses do cover play, including free and spontaneous play, but for at least one PGDE course, in the past, it was not covered (focus group).

Given the optional factor of studying play in many courses, this then relates to the point (interviews) that qualifications should be seen to be not the end but the start of an individual's professional

learning journey, which should embrace lifelong learning and Continued Professional Development (CPD). The individual professional should therefore take responsibility for their learning to ensure that their skills and knowledge fit with their role and setting, this if includes changing roles or settings, looking to address any new gaps in learning.

However, the employer must also take responsibility and ensure that employees are provided with the resources and opportunities to allow their employee to meet the gap in their skills or knowledge. Both the roles and responsibilities of the individual and employer are covered by the SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Social Service Employers (SSSC, 2003). While GTCS registration (GTCS, 2012) also includes a requirement to engage in professional updates.

As discussed in the interviews, for employers and individuals to legally be required to engage in lifelong professional development, also has resource implications, in terms of the time of staff involved, and the funding, costs and availability of the CPD resources. Indeed, staff motivation, after a whole career building up experience in the field, with many teaching staff and a high proportion of childcare managers in their fifties (Chart 1, and statistics background section), in taking further CPD, might be also an issue to be addressed.

If the playwork NOS are updated to include more links to play development and learning, and qualifications such as the OU primary school assistant qualifications (Table 15), and others for PSAs are utilised more for school staff, then this does bring in more play-based qualifications to schools. There are also potential opportunities for professional update courses on play to be developed for teachers and PSAs and then accredited by the GTCS for teachers.

There are cost implications for childcare, teaching and PSA staff, as well as for employers across the public, voluntary and private sector, and time implications for all staff. Therefore, we would recommend, in order to meet aspirations for the workforce to be more educated in play and to deliver more play based work with children, then this requires investment in both qualifications and in CPD resources.

**Play, safety and risk:** We have identified that for school age children the play breaks and lunchtimes could both be extended in terms of time and in terms of content of facilitated risky play as well as using play processes within classroom practice.

The approach to risky play in early learning and childcare, and out of school care, holiday care services, especially those with playwork trained staff, has developed over the years to looking at the positive risk benefits to children and young people of extending their skills, judgement and knowledge of risk taking, as well as those related to keeping children safe.

As the literature (Moss and Petrie, 2002, Gill, 2007) also covered, using risk to constrain and control children's play and freedom can be seen as part of wider social attitudes as well as, parental fears and expectations about child safety and "learning not play" (Focus group, Scottish Executive, 2007). As the interviews demonstrated, for childcare providers to move beyond this and extend children's development and enjoyment of risky play through using scooters or skateboards etc., should they choose, has been difficult to do in terms of the strict requirements of insurance companies. While the health and safety executive is quite clear that there should be risk in play (HSE, 2012), insurance companies take a tougher stance.

A head teacher will have overall responsibility for health and safety in their school so it is not necessarily teachers being averse personally to risky play (focus group) if they do not allow certain risky play activities, as they have to manage both legal responsibilities and parental perceptions of how they are keeping children safe.

Therefore, as Bronfenbrenner & Morris (2007) clearly identify, the environment for play, is highly influenced by wider cultural factors; in this case insurance companies (national and internationally influenced by growing litigation cultures) perceptions of risk in play. This issue must be addressed for future development of a play friendly culture in Scotland, indeed the UK.

### **Conclusions and next steps**

In conclusion, we found that play in both the strict playwork principles sense and the wider child development and learning sense is covered, to different degrees, in the whole range of main qualifications assessed, albeit it is often only an optional choice to study play in the stricter sense. We found that it is up to the individual and their employer to ensure that they fill gaps in their learning about play, as required by registration bodies and the needs of their setting.

We found a rich tradition of learning through play and spontaneous play in terms of early learning and childcare guidance in Scotland. We see an opportunity for schools to become better sites of the complementary support to learning, development and wellbeing of children through the provision of play opportunities and processes in both free time and in classroom practice, as well as before and after school and holiday care services. We found some units in some qualifications, need to be updated or clarifications provided and we engaged, in interviews and literature, with a range of

opinions on current practice and ideas for future developments. Through this, we make the following specific recommendations for next steps:

**Specific Recommendations:**

**Qualifications contents**

- Every qualification unit at the SVQs related to playwork could be updated in terms of reference to UNCRC, Article 31 and the UNCRC overall.
- Child development should be a compulsory core, not only an optional unit, in all relevant qualifications.
- If and when playwork NOS/ related qualifications are updated consideration should be given to including play in terms of learning and development topics to make the qualification more useful to a wider range of staff, especially PSAs in Scotland. Creativity could also be a stronger focus.
- The Social Services (CYP) qualifications should be clear about “activities” including planned or free play as defined in some, but not all, relevant units.
- The PDA level 5 in playwork and childcare needs updating especially on child development and children’s rights.
- While there are some specialist units on creativity, there should be more about creativity and creative play techniques, embedded across all qualifications.
- For Childhood Practice degree level courses, in terms of the play principles or play and child development, if these topics are not covered (or where we did not have information), then it

is clear from other course providers than modules can be developed. If the Play Strategy and Action Plan (2013b & 2013a) are included in the updated Standard for Childhood Practice, it is likely they may have to do this in the future, while child development is a crucial element at all levels and should always be a strength of such courses.

### **Qualifications promotion and development**

- SkillsActive have the role to promote Playwork in Scotland and to update the playwork qualifications, which will now have to meet the SSSC NOS standards too.
- The possibility of funding or supporting doctoral level play related qualifications could be investigated.
- There is a possibility that a professional update for teachers on play could be developed and then accredited by GTCS.
- Financial support could be provided to enable access to CPD including paid time for staff to do so.
- It might be worth reminding employers that they have responsibility to support CPD as well as qualifications.

### **Promoting and Extending Play in Schools Practice**

- With CfE and official guidance clear, that play is a learning process, there needs to be more opportunities for teachers to learn and understand techniques to facilitate this type of learning in the classroom and to allow for spontaneous play.

- The literature review demonstrated that play and breaks actually enhance and support children young people's wellbeing in school, and their readiness to learn, therefore we recommend schools find ways to incorporate longer, more frequent breaks during the school day and week, or at least preserve and do not cut what breaks they have now.
- To support the above recommendations we recommend using play trained PSAs across the school, in class, in play and break times and linking with or also working in the before, after school and during holiday out of school childcare services.
- Play training should include how children learn and develop through play, especially in terms of social relationships and skills, which enhance the ability to engage in learning across subjects.
- Taking risks is also part of learning and development therefore there should be opportunities for risky play supported by a whole school approach, trained staff, and understanding risk benefits, including outdoor activities and trips.

### **Further Research**

- Perhaps as part of funded doctorates or Masters level courses, there should be a body of new studies into play as a process and how it supports learning and development in schools, out of school care and holiday services.
- Building the Ambition (Scottish Government, 2014) could be a useful catalyst for new units, courses or research studies relating to younger children in early learning and childcare.

- This research did not cover the play and leisure needs of young people except those in the breaktime and grounds for learning studies, it also did not cover youth and community work, therefore, these are areas for further study.

### **Wider Recommendations**

- Parents should be told more about the benefits of play, especially play and breaks beyond the early years, in school and how this helps, not hinders wellbeing and learning. Therefore, we suggest an awareness campaign similar to *play talk read* but for primary aged children.
- There should be more done on a national UK level to change insurance companies' attitudes to risky play.

# SECTION A: INTRODUCTION, METHODOLOGY & CONTEXT

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to report

The Scottish Government [National Play Strategy for Scotland – Our Vision](#) was published in June 2013 followed by an associated [National Play Strategy For Scotland – Our Action Plan \(2013a\)](#) in October 2013. In November 2013, the Play Strategy Implementation Group (PSIG) was set up to ensure delivery of actions within the plan. This research report relates primarily to Action 7.1 –

“task a working group to review current levels of play training provided to school and nursery staff and to recommend how elements of play rights, theory and practice could be incorporated in both the initial professional training and career long professional learning and leadership” (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.20). In order: “to ensure that all education manager, school and centre leaders, school staff and early years practitioners are adequately trained on the importance of play and are able to support qualify play opportunities in their setting,” (Scottish Government, 2013a. p.20).

However, during the research process it became apparent that the report also relates to four additional action points from the plan. The literature review for this research *contributes* towards a medium term aim of:

7. 2 “Commission and publish an evidence/literature review on links between play and children’s attainment, achievement, wellbeing and learning across all ages, stages and abilities. – To build knowledge, and increase awareness amongst educators, parents and carers of the impact of outdoor and indoor play and active learning opportunities on

children's learning and development at all stages of education" " (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.21)

9.2 "Promote the Play Strategy: Our Vision to universities delivering the B.Ed. and M.Ed. and the Childhood Practice Award" (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.29)

9.8 "Investigate how the skills of the play workforce could be utilised more widely to develop quality of play opportunities in a range of other settings." (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.32)

9.9 "Map career long professional learning opportunities available to play workforce across Scotland to identify gaps and ensure quality" (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.32)

At the first meeting of the PSIG a number of action points, including action 7.1, were identified as requiring immediate action; the Scottish Government was able to provide additional funding to ensure that any actions would be resourced.

A steering group to look at action 7.1 was formed from representative organisations from the group: Grounds for Learning; Play Scotland; Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA); Scottish Government; Early Years Scotland (formerly Scottish Pre-school Association (SPPA)), and was led by the Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN). The group pulled together an initial proposal as to how the work should be undertaken; this was then further discussed with a wider group comprised of additional representatives from Scottish Qualification

Agency (SQA), Edinburgh College and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). SOSCN was awarded the contract to undertake the research, which commenced in March 2014.

## **1.2. Contextual Background – Play, UNCRC and articles 31, 28 and 29 within the context of school and nursery**

Action 7.1 is based within the Play Strategy's school and nursery domain and is specifically looking at how play can be incorporated within these settings. Aileen Campbell MSP, Minister for Children and Young People, in her Ministerial Forward to the Action Plan acknowledges that "play... is an essential part of a healthy, happy childhood, taking place within the home from birth, through formal and informal learning, and in community settings through the use of public spaces and services" (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.4).

The Strategy also acknowledges that play is a "key element in effective learning, thereby developing [children's] physical, cognitive, emotional and social skills" and that children should experience "opportunities ... to explore, be active and enjoy the learning opportunities provided by play throughout their lives" (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.14).

The opportunities for informal and formal learning through play are clear in the play strategy and associated action plan; these documents also highlight that learning environments, such as schools and nurseries, play an integral role in delivering play opportunities not only from an educational perspective but also from a 'free play' perspective.

This report recognises that play is a fundamental right for children under Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:

“Children’s play is any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled and structured by children themselves; it takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise. Caregivers may contribute to the creation of environments in which play takes place, but play itself is non-compulsory, driven by intrinsic motivation and undertaken for its own sake, rather than as a means to an end. Play involves the exercise of autonomy, physical, mental or emotional activity, and has the potential to take infinite forms, either in groups or alone. These forms will change and be adapted throughout the course of childhood. The key characteristics of play are fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity. Together, these factors contribute to the enjoyment it produces and the consequent incentive to continue to play. While play is often considered non-essential, the Committee reaffirms that it is a fundamental and vital dimension of the pleasure of childhood, as well as an essential component of physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development.” (General Comment Article 31, (United Nations, 2013)

When discussing the rights of children, and for the purposes of this report, it should be remembered that Article 28 of the UNCRC (UNCRC, 1989) states children have a right to free primary education and Article 29 states that:

“Children’s education should develop each child’s personality, talents and abilities to the fullest. It should encourage children to respect others, human rights and their own and other cultures. It should also help them learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people. Children have a particular responsibility to respect the rights of their parents, and education should aim to develop respect for the values and culture of their parents” (UNCRC, 1989).

In terms of play being “driven by intrinsic motivation and undertaken for its own sake” with a key characteristic being “non-productivity”, we are arguably met with a dilemma when considering a child’s right to education which does have specific outcomes and is more likely to be structured and led by adults, especially in the primary years and beyond.

This report takes account of the fact that children have the right to daily play opportunities with no specific outcomes and at the same time also have the right to an education with specific outcomes, so when play is looked at in terms of learning environments this dichotomy has to be considered and resolved.

The National Play Strategy in some ways recognises this when it acknowledges that “the greatest potential for free play in schools is outdoors before and after school, during break times and, through out of school care” (Scottish Government 2013b, p.19). Yet that is not to say that play is not within the learning and educational component of a child’s day- Scotland has a long tradition in early learning of learning through play and Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive, 2004) promotes more playful learner-led approaches within the more formal education settings of nursery, primary, secondary and special schools.

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) (Scottish Executive, 2004) promotes a more playful approach to learning, often, through the concepts of active learning and outdoor learning, and whilst they may not adhere wholly to the definition of play as being “non-productive” they are going some way to make “productive” learning a more fun and playful experience. A child-led curriculum should also ensure that children are able to exercise their rights to be

listened to (article 12) (UNCRC, 1989) and right to freedom of expression (Article 13) (UNCRC, 1989) through whatever means they choose.

Therefore, when considering the education and childcare qualifications in Scotland, this report will look at not only free play theories but also learner-led playful learning methods and child-development theories and consider how they are incorporated into education and childcare qualifications; this should ensure a richer understanding of how play is incorporated in education and childcare qualifications.

Later in the literature review, there is a case study which discusses the Finnish education system which places a much greater importance on free-play as part of the school day, and there is also focus on break or play time research studies.

This report also relates to the following aims of the national Play Strategy Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2013a)

“Outcome: All children and young people enjoy high quality play opportunities, particularly outdoor free play in stimulating spaces with access to nature, on a daily basis in school, nursery and early learning and childcare.

Impact: All school staff, and early years practitioners will receive play training, as part of their initial education and career long professional learning. They will have sufficient skills, knowledge and understanding of play to support play opportunities. All schools and settings will have well designed, inclusive spaces for play in local communities. Education managers and leaders in school and early years settings demonstrate their commitment to increasing and developing play opportunities and to supporting staff to do so through priorities in the

improvement planning cycle, ethos and community life of their establishments and their own professional learning" (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.20).

### **Research questions**

Three main research questions framed the research and literature review undertaken:

1. To what extent is play covered in formal qualifications within education, childcare (and play) settings? ( Action 7.1)
2. Are there existing courses or units in qualifications or CPD courses relating to play that could be integrated into other qualifications where there is little/no evidence of play? ( Action 7.1)
3. What potential is there for the playwork qualified workforce to support play opportunities within more formal education/settings other than their more usual play/childcare settings? ( Relating to Action 9.8 )

However, the process and findings of the research also address the following additional questions:

1. What does the literature tells us about the benefits of play? (Relating to Action 7.2)

2. Where are the gaps and how can professional development opportunities be extended in studying play? (Relating to Action 9.9)

## 2. METHODOLOGY

It was agreed that the action point should be divided into two main strands of work- the first to look at how, and if, play is included and covered in formal qualifications for all professionals working with children within early years, education and childcare settings in Scotland (an expansion beyond that of the original remit of nursery and school staff).

The professional qualifications to be looked at in this section relate to teachers; daycare of children (nursery, playgroup and out of school care) workers; residential childcare workers; pupil support assistants; childminders and playworkers.

The second strand was to compile information on play training providers offering Continuous Professional Development (CPD) play training for professionals, separate to any formal qualifications, and the play training that they offer. (The training section contains a separate discussion of the methodology used for this strand of work.)

Internet searches were undertaken for the providers and course content of education and childhood practice degrees, as well as the content of the other non-degree level professional qualifications. Unlike other qualifications looked at over the course of this research, the course content of degrees varies between providers, although they must ultimately fit appropriate guidance. Other qualifications, such as SVQ, NCs and HNCs, often have standard approved units which are delivered by all providers, hence it was not felt necessary, or possible, to contact each individual provider of these qualifications, of which there are many, as they will all be delivering the same units, albeit in slightly different ways.

The time restriction of the research also did not allow us to contact each individual qualification provider.

A list of all primary education qualification and childhood practice degree providers was collated through previously held contacts and online searches, and each was initially contacted by email. The contents of the email provided information about the National Play Strategy and associated Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2013a and 2013b) (with internet links to each), the specific aims of the research relating to action 7.1 and a request for further information about the course content of the qualifications. This initial email was sent in May 2014. Response rates from education qualification providers were low and none were forthcoming with further information and the email was re-sent in June. All childhood practice degree providers engaged with the research and sent relevant information.

To address the low response from the teacher training providers a shorter online survey was produced which gained three responses from the Universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Stirling and these are included in the Play in Education section.

Individual interviews were conducted with a number of key individuals representing General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS), Glasgow College, Play Scotland, SCMA, SkillsActive, Scottish Pre-school Play Association (SPPA), Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), Scottish social Services Council (SSSC) (2 interviews), and the Universities of Caledonia, Dundee and University West of Scotland. Further email correspondence and interviews were conducted

with additional representatives from Creative Star Learning, SkillsActive, the Universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Gloucester, Leeds Metropolitan and Sheffield Hallam.

As the research progressed it became apparent that it would be useful to talk to recently qualified primary teachers as well as PSAs. A focus group was held with three PSAs and two teachers, both of whom had qualified within the past five years (one of whom had graduated with a BA (Hons) in education, and the other had qualified with the PGDE). Both the PSAs and teachers worked in the same primary school in Glasgow. This is in the Play in Education section.

The literature review includes material for a first scene-setting, contextual section. Data relevant to the workforce in childcare and in teaching, is set out, including statistics on the staff and children involved, a description of the regulatory framework, including the role of The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), the Care Inspectorate, and Education Scotland, the role of Sector Skills Councils, including SkillsActive and, again, SSSC in this specific role.

In later sections further literature is included and reviewed, this includes further contextual material on the Standard for Childhood Practice (QAA, 2007) used in the introduction to the analysis of the degree level courses developed to meet this standard in Scotland.

The Section on Play in Education, covers the role of the General Teaching Council for Scotland, lists teacher training courses and discusses a range of relevant literature relating to teaching standards, the curriculum for excellence and early learning and childcare. This

literature, however, is analysed within this section in order to bring out where play is covered within education guidance and standards, and brings in the relevant national policy frameworks.

At the heart of this enquiry is play, therefore, the theoretical literature review covers a brief historical background to the emergence of child development theories and practice relating to play, as well as learning, followed by a brief discussion of the main play theories and theorists, including the role of playworkers and associated principles. Next, there is a focus on break time or playtime, covering examples of literature and resources on play and the playground or street play. There is then a further scoping of child development, play and learning: classic and modern theories and theorists, studies and new emerging paradigms. The review closes with a case study on how teachers support play in and out of the classroom in a Finnish school, within the context of the importance of play within the Finnish educational system. The focus on break time in school and the case study on the Finnish school system are intended to extend thinking beyond an either/or play service or education service, and beyond the early years in looking at the needs of older children.

The purpose of the theoretical review is to provide relevant context and to develop evaluation criteria which goes beyond, for example, simple adherence to the playwork principles as a measure of play content. Given the limited time and resources for the research, the play or child development and learning theories literature review is an indicative scoping exercise, in order to pull out key terms and concepts for the evaluation

criteria, as well as to demonstrate that play is well understood to be integral to child development and learning.

All of the information received on courses from the degree level/ post degree level childhood practice providers are compiled in tables 1.1 – 8.1 in the Appendix. These tables are then the subject of analysis, in the results section using the criteria developed from the research questions and the literature review (there are three specific thematic analysis tables, relating to this section, tables numbered 32 to 34 in the appendices).

For other qualifications for staff working with children and young people and regulated by the SSSC, research was conducted into both the National Occupational Standards (NOS), and course descriptors on the SSSC website or SQA website.

This information was used to compile the tables (16-31) for relevant qualifications and roles, including any units found to be relevant for play, as well as any core or mandatory units. These units are all hyperlinked to source NOS or SQA descriptors. These are then analysed, using the evaluation criteria, in the results section, with further analytical tables numbered (35-48) in the appendices.

Tables 9-15 contain qualifications which do not “fit” into specific categories but which are relevant and they are analysed in the results section.

All of the main points from the above research findings are brought to the final discussion, alongside the findings from the play in education section, the training survey, the interviews, and literature review.

Throughout the document there are hyperlinks to relevant websites or Scottish Government policy papers. The references section includes website links for all of the childhood practice degree level and postgraduate courses, as well as teacher training courses. The appendices can therefore be viewed as an extensive information resource on the content of relevant play and care qualifications in Scotland.

### 3. CONTEXT: WORKFORCE, CHILDREN, SETTINGS AND REGULATION

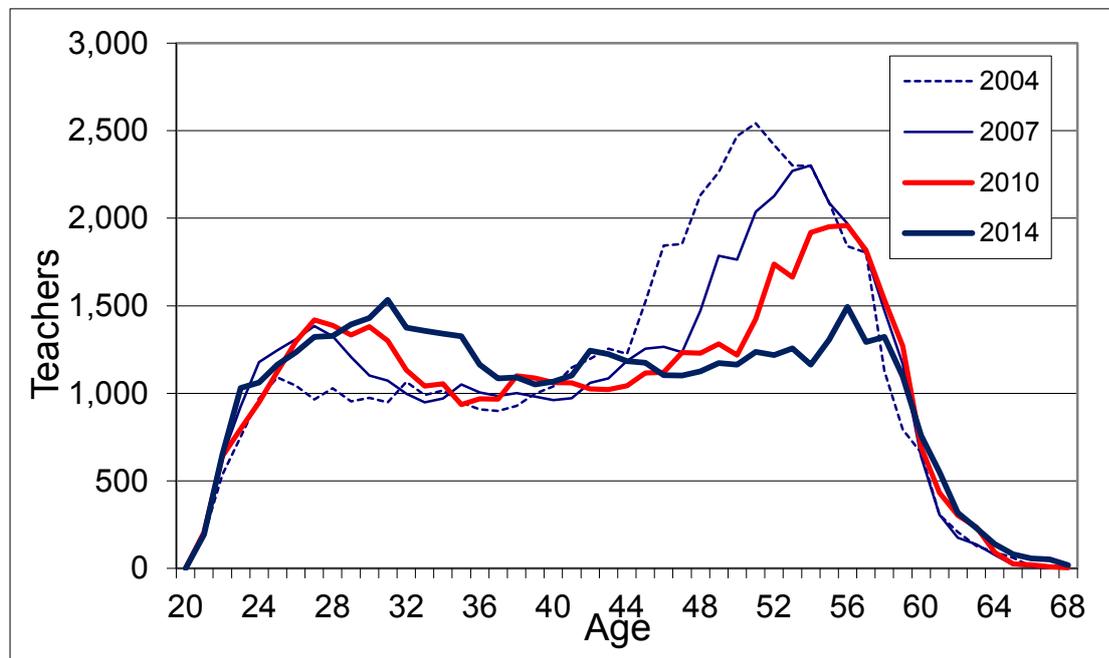
#### Education and Skills General Statistics

Scotland is understood to be one of the most well educated or qualified workforces in the world, so this is the context of the full range of qualifications from SQA level 5 to Master s level, which specifically relate to this inquiry. “In 2013, Scotland had the highest proportion of usual residents aged 16 to 64 with an NVQ Level 4 or equivalent and above qualification (Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma or degree level), at 39.4% (1.3 million)” (ONS, 2014) .

#### Teachers, Schools and Pupils Statistics.

There are over 50,824 FTE teachers in Scotland, with 1,212 specifically pre-school teachers and 23,029 in Primary Schools, 23,695 in Secondary and 2,020 in Special schools (Scottish Government 2014b, Table 1.1. p.6). There are a total of 5,004 schools in Scotland, of which 2,449 are Early Learning Centres (note, this includes partnership centres providing early learning and childcare), 2048 are Primary schools, 362 are Secondary schools and 145 are Special Schools (Scottish Government, 2014b, Table 1.1, p.6). There are 101,463 children in Early Learning and childcare settings, and 676,955 children in all of the other school settings (Scottish Government, 2014b, Table 1.1, p.6).

Scottish Government: Figure 1: Age profile, school based teachers, 2004 to 2014 (Scottish Government, 2014b, p.8).



The age profile for teachers in 2014 shows a peak at age 56, nevertheless the proportion of teachers aged 50+ has reduced in the last ten years and there is also a peak forming now in the early thirties (Scottish Government, Chart 1, 2014b, p.8). The average (mean) age of primary, secondary and special school teachers was 41.6 compared to 42.1 in 2013 (Scottish Government, 2014b, p.10).

**Scottish Government Figure 2: Age profile registered early learning teachers, 2004-2014**

(Scottish Government, 2014b, p.8).

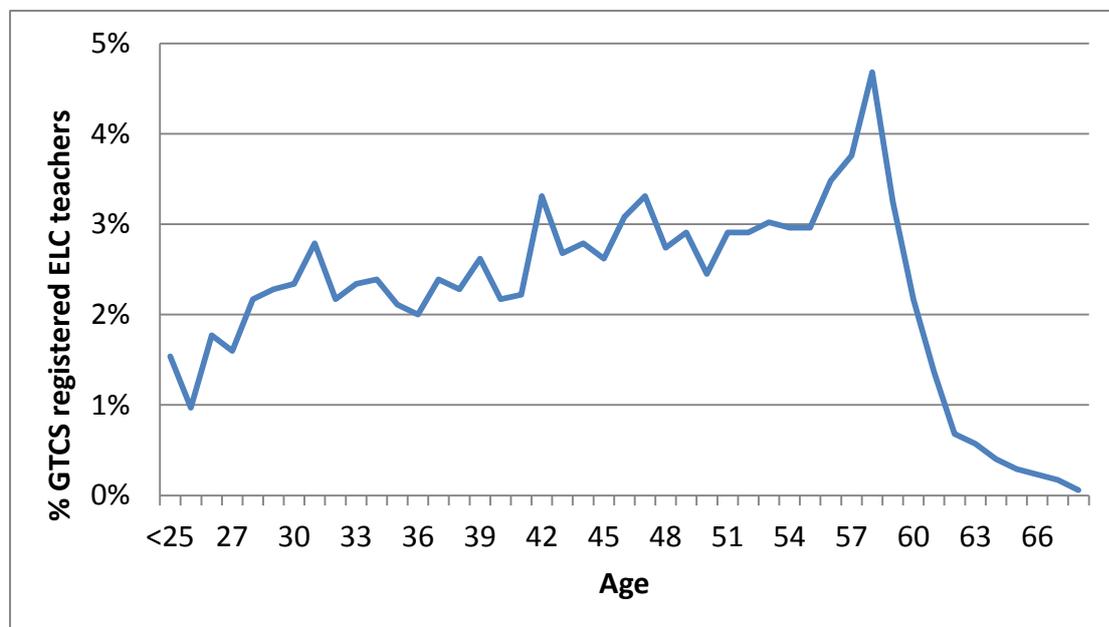


Chart 2 shows the age profile of GTCS registered ELC teachers, where known, as at September 2014, with a peak in the number of ELC teachers aged between 56 and 58 (Scottish Government, 2014b, p.9). Other less high peaks are at age 42 & 48, then again the early 30s.

Men make up 23% of teachers, with 29% in promoted posts and they are in 26% of depute and head posts, however only 4% are in early learning and care posts (Scottish Government, 2014b, p.10). 13.9% of teachers were working part-time, with the rate higher amongst females (16.2%) than males (6.1%) (Scottish Government, 2014c, p.10). In terms of ethnicity, 2% of teachers (no data for ELC) were from an ethnic minority and there was no data on disability.

For children, 88% of pupils were recorded as being White-Scottish or White-other British. The largest other ethnic backgrounds include White-Other (4%), Asian Pakistani (2%) and Mixed (1 %). 140,542 pupils (21% of all pupils) had an additional support need recorded. “This will include pupils in special schools and those in mainstream schools with a Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP), Individualised Education Programme, Child Plan or some other type of support“(Scottish Government, 2014b, p. 15). That figure of over one in five children having an additional support need of some kind recorded, suggests that a great deal of consideration should be paid to issues of inclusion and support, within teacher training.

#### **Education Scotland HM Inspections:**

All early learning and childcare stand-alone centres, primary schools (including those with nursery classes), secondary schools (including community learning and development (CLD) as part of secondary, and aspects of transition), special schools, independent schools and all other schools, are inspected by HM Inspectors through Education Scotland, as set out in the “School inspection framework document”, (Education Scotland and HM Inspectors, 2011).

In early learning and care settings “We evaluate the centre’s capacity to improve and answer the following questions.

- How well do children learn and achieve?
- How well does the centre support children to develop and learn?
- How well does the centre improve the quality of its work?

In providing answers to these questions, inspectors use quality indicators from 'The Child at the Centre' to support evaluations and provide information on how the centre can improve. We also indicate any [continuing engagement](#) activities" (Education Scotland, n. d.)

Education Scotland and the Care inspectorate (see below) also conduct joint inspections within early learning and childcare services.

**The Social Services Workforce Statistics:**

**Table A: Scottish Social Services Council – Breakdown of qualifications held by relevant staff on the register**

Qualification Categories	Registers			Total
	Manager	Pract.	Supt Wk.	
<b>Managers in Day Care of Children Services</b>				
BA Childhood Practice	211	9		220
PDA Childhood Practice	1			1
Post Graduate Diploma Childhood Practice	16	1		17
SVQ 4 playwork	55	0	2	57
SVQ 4 CCLD	278	20	1	299
<b>Practitioners in Day Care of Children Services</b>				
HNC Child Care and Education	336	4148	84	4568
HNC Early Education and Child Care	117	3579	127	3823
SNNEB	268	2671	78	3017
SVQ 3 Children's Care Learning and Development	107	2095	124	2326
SVQ 3 Children's Care Learning and Development with playwork		9		9
SVQ 3 Early Years Care and Education	124	1477	41	1642
SVQ 3 Playwork	97	452	46	595
<b>Support Workers in Day Care of Children Services</b>				
NC Early Education and Child Care	1	5	98	104
SVQ 2 Children's Care Learning and Development		10	174	184
SVQ 2 Early Years Care and Education		6	90	96
SVQ 2 Playwork		8	150	158

HNC Additional Support Needs (Supporting the individual)			15	15
NPA Playwork and childcare			227	227
PDA in Education Support Assistance at SCQF Level 6			42	42
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1611</b>	<b>14490</b>	<b>1300</b>	<b>17401</b>

(Source SSSC, personal email correspondence, January 2015)

This list only includes those people who have met their qualification condition. Also it only shows the highest qualification for an individual- it does not show the total number of people who have that qualification. For example, someone may be registered with a BA in Childhood Practice but also have an SVQ 4 in Playwork- their SVQ4 will not be recognised in the data above. Also, there will be many more people who will have since achieved the qualifications or currently undertaking them but this will only come to light when they have to re-register.

The SSSC reports that there are approximately 1,400 people who may now have the Childhood Practice Award, in all its iterations, but this is not reflected in the figures as this has been achieved during the period of registration with a condition<sup>1</sup>. A condition on registration is when a worker has to achieve, within a set time limit, (up to five years) a SSSC recognised qualification for their role.

Bearing in mind that the true figure, for example, of Childhood Practice degree level qualifications is higher than the 211 managers and 11 practitioners listed above, the table shows that 8391 registrants are qualified at the HNC level, with 4568 qualified in the

<sup>1</sup> Source SSSC, email correspondence, January 2015

previous HNC in Childcare and Education, and 3823 the current HNC in Early education and childcare. There are 2970 registrants with the SNNEB (which has been phased out) and 2326 with the CCLD SVQ Level, which is in the process of being phased out. Playwork, across all categories and levels, comes in at less than 6% of the total, with 1037 related qualifications. Therefore, for the purposes of this research, given the low prevalence of the specifically playwork related qualifications, it will be interesting to see how much play in both the playwork sense and the wider children's development and learning sense is reflected in the HNC and successor qualifications to the CCLD. This is, as well as in courses for the degree level standard in childhood practice and some of the main other currently accepted qualifications.

The above table covering 17,401 registrations without a condition can be looked at alongside the figures for 2012 – 2013 of overall registrations relating to the day care of children and related services, in the workforce statistics set out in 2013 (SSSC, 2013, p.18).

The figures demonstrate that there was 44,500 staff (SSSC, 2013, p. 7) involved in childcare related roles, working in 9830 settings (SSSC, 2013, p.18). These figures, however, include childminders, who are not part of the register and do not have to meet any qualification requirement, therefore, taking out the data on childminders, then in 2012 – 2013 there were 30,250 daycare staff on the SSSC register. Childminders are expected to follow the SSSC [Codes of Practice](#) and are regulated by the Care Inspectorate (see below).

The majority of staff are employed in the day care of children sector (SSSC, 2013 p. 18), while the median age overall is 40.3 in 2013, with the oldest median age in school care accommodation (46) and the youngest in childcare agencies (31.5) (SSSC, 2013, p .22).

The highest proportion of males are in school care accommodation and residential childcare while there are only 3% overall in the day care of children sector and none for childminders (SSSC, 2013 table 8, p. 26).

The largest proportion of managers are in the day care of children sector, with a low proportion of auxiliaries, however 30% of school care accommodation staff are auxiliaries, with a low proportion of managers at 3%.

Less than 2% of the childcare related occupational staff had a disability (SSSC, 2013, p.29) and 1% of daycare of children, childminding, and childcare agencies were Asian (SSSC, 2013, p.28).

### [The Care Inspectorate \(SCSWIS\)](#)

The [Regulation of Care \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#) also established the first Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care and the [Public Services Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) set up the replacement body SCSWIS, more commonly known as the Care Inspectorate. The Care Inspectorate regulates and inspects all social care services to make sure they meet the appropriate standards and carry out joint inspections with other regulators to check how well different organisations in local areas are working to support adults and children. They also ensure social work, including criminal justice social work, meets high standards. It is against the law for care services to operate unless they register with them.

The National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare up to the Age of 16 (Scottish Executive, 2005) form the framework for inspections of the relevant daycare of children

services, including childminders, nurseries, out of school care services, while separate regulations cover childcare agencies and sitter services.

Childcare services are graded 1-6, with 6 at the excellent level and any standard below 3 usually requiring immediate action. The Care Inspectorate has power to close down unacceptable performing care services and set specific requirements for improvements, which must be adhered to. Their inspection reports are available to the public on their website. As the extract below show, the majority of providers are graded good or very good.

**TABLE B: Summary of graded early learning and childcare services by theme as at 31st March 2014**

<b>Daycare of Children services</b>	<b>unsatisfactory</b>	<b>weak</b>	<b>adequate</b>	<b>good</b>	<b>very good</b>	<b>excellent</b>
Quality of care and support	0.1%	0.9%	4.3%	29.1%	57.9%	7.7%
Quality of environment	0.1%	1.0%	4.2%	37.5%	52.9%	4.4%
Quality of staffing	0.1%	1.1%	3.7%	34.6%	54.5%	6.0%
Quality of management and leadership	0.7%	1.9%	6.7%	39.0%	47.3%	4.4%
<b>Childminding services</b>	<b>unsatisfactory</b>	<b>weak</b>	<b>adequate</b>	<b>good</b>	<b>very good</b>	<b>excellent</b>

Care and Support	0.1%	0.4%	4.4%	29.0%	57.0%	9.1%
Environment	0.1%	0.5%	4.1%	36.2%	53.1%	6.0%
Staffing	3.3%	0.5%	4.5%	34.1%	51.3%	6.3%

Source Care Inspectorate (2014). Table 19: Summary of graded early learning and childcare services by theme as at 31st March 2014

Early learning and childcare centres, which are also delivering HM inspected early learning and childcare, have joint inspection arrangements with the Care inspectorate and Education Scotland.

Play services or playschemes with no care function and leisure services for children, for example, swimming clubs or sports clubs are not required to register with the Care inspectorate, as are services operating for less than 2 hours a day. Therefore, some breakfast clubs run by schools or private or voluntary sector providers may not be registered. However, breakfast clubs run by schools will be part of the overall inspection by HM Inspectors from Education Scotland.

The Care inspectorate also produces annual statistics on the day care of children services and the table below is extracted from their 2014 statistical publication.

**TABLE C: Extract: Care Inspectorate 2013 Data- Registered Early learning and Childcare Services**

	Number of services		
	December 2013		
	Total services	Of which:	
Active services		Inactive services	
<b>Childcare services by main service type:</b>			
Childminding	6,185	5,685	500
Children / family centre	139	139	0
Crèche	91	91	0
Holiday play scheme	52	51	1
Nursery	2,442	2,426	16
of which: providing additional childcare e.g. breakfast club	396	395	1
of which: providing no additional childcare services	2,046	2,031	15
Out of school care	691	690	1
of which: providing additional childcare e.g. breakfast club	504	503	1
of which: providing no additional childcare services	187	187	0
Playgroup	324	323	1
Other services	44	44	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,968</b>	<b>9,449</b>	<b>519</b>
<b>Total excluding Childminders</b>	<b>3,783</b>	<b>3,764</b>	<b>19</b>

(Adapted from the Care Inspectorate (2014) Table 1a)

### Additional Services:

The above figures do not tell the whole story, as many early learning and childcare services provide more than one kind of service, e.g. a private nursery might also provide out of school care, or an out of school care service might provide both a breakfast club and a holiday club. "The most common additional type of daycare in 2013 was breakfast club services: 545 services recorded having a breakfast club in addition to their main type of daycare. Of these 545 services, 93% were nurseries and out of school care (41% and 52% respectively)." And "523 services operated a holiday play scheme in addition to their main type of daycare. Of these 523 services, 69% provided out of school care as their main type of daycare." Also "There were 691 services registered with a main type of daycare of out of school care. As well as these services, 280 other services operated out of school care in addition to their main type of daycare." (Care Inspectorate, 2014, p 8).

Table B shows that there are 2426 active nurseries, the Care Inspectorate (2014) Table 2c (not reproduced here) shows that 1479 of nurseries are provided by local authorities, 766 by the private sector and 181 from the not for profit sector. Most of the 323 playgroups are located in the not for profit sector, 279, while 89 out of school care services are run by local authorities, with again most being located in the not for profit sector (Care Inspectorate, 2014, p. 29).

The Care Inspectorate Table 6 (2014, p. 36) gives a breakdown of the number of children attending in census week and for December 2013, split by service type and compared to their population age range. This table shows that **246,850** children were registered with a childcare service.

## **Sector Skills Councils**

Sector Skills Councils are independent, employer led UK wide organisations. They aim to develop high quality skills standards with employers. They do this by developing the national occupational standards (NOS) for specific roles, within the specific fields of employment they cover. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) licences each Skills Sector Council and endorses their NOS by buying their Standards and then making them available to those developing qualifications around the standards.

UKCES is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the [Department for Business, Innovation & Skills](#). It is a publicly funded, industry-led organisation that offers guidance on skills and employment issues in the UK. UKCES is looking to cut the amount of investment in NOS and in changing the NOS statements: "There are plans for a) less dependency on public funding of National Occupational Standards and b) the streamlining of such standards to more generic higher level statements, as a constant criticism of NOS has been about the level of detail. As an example of that streamlining, UKCES has reduced investment in NOS Support from £18 million to £3 million" (UKCES, 2014).

There are two Sector Skills Councils which have relevance to this enquiry: SkillsActive and Skills for Care and Development, delegated to partner Scottish Social Services Council in Scotland.

**SkillsActive** <http://www.skillsactive.com/country/scotland>

SkillsActive is the sector skills council for Playwork qualifications (amongst many others) and developed the current NOS underpinning them. SkillsActive has therefore a duty to develop,

deliver and promote Playwork. The current Playwork NOS and qualifications are due for renewal in 2015; this process will start in April 2015. At present Playwork qualifications are amongst those accepted as other qualifications for registration with the SSSC. However, when these are updated they have to be reassessed for registration purposes, therefore, when this happens, they will be reassessed against the SSSC developed NOS. We were unable to access the Playwork NOS, as a source, at SkillsActive for review. However, we have reviewed all playwork qualifications, which are based on them in Scotland.

SkillsActive employ a National Manager for Scotland and playwork form only one aspect in their portfolio of work. During the research process the National Manager was on maternity leave for much of it, however they returned to work in December 2014. Play Scotland is represented on the [Scottish Executive Committee of SkillsActive](#).

### **Skills for Care and Development**

Skills for Care and Development is a partnership made up of the leading authorities on workforce development and regulation in the UK; in Scotland, the partner is the [Scottish Social Services Council](#) (SSSC). The SSSC reviewed, in partnership with other partner sector skills councils across the UK, the NOS underpinning social care qualifications in 2013. This was done on a UK basis with consultation events involving employers and stakeholders- the NOS are written for the sector by the sector. Therefore, as well as being the regulatory and registration body for the social care workforce in Scotland, it also has a duty as a Sector Skills Council to ensure the NOS continue to be fit for purpose and promote its own qualifications, based on their NOS. SSSC have also indicated that any future recognition of

qualifications for registration purposes will be assessed against the NOS they have developed in consultation with the social services employers and workforce.

SSSC has no role in promoting playwork qualifications as that is the responsibility of their own sector skills council: SkillsActive.

### **Wider Uses of National Occupational Standards (NOS):**

The SSSC website also mentions that the NOS can be used to help develop and evaluate training courses both in terms of sector and individual needs, by providing the intended outcomes. In addition, it is suggested that this is therefore a good way to market training and impart confidence in it to trainees and the wider public, as well as the organisation's investment in training related to the NOS and this could help with things like: Investors in People (IiP) recognition (SSSC, n.d). For further information about NOS please see [SSSC NOS Navigator](#).

### **The Scottish Social Services (SSSC) – Regulatory Role**

The [Regulation of Care \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#) established the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) in order to provide a regulatory body to oversee the standards and professionalism of the social services workforce, as well as protecting people who use social services.

The following points are amongst the principles and functions of the SSSC, which are to:

- create and promote the SSSC Codes of Practice
- maintain a register of social workers, social services workers and social work students

- remove people from the SSSC Register
- approve courses for people who wish to become social workers
- provide grants and allowances for social service workers' training.
- promote high standards of conduct and practice among social service workers and their education and training (SSSC, website, n. d.)

Relevant staff are required to register with the SSSC, unless they are already registered with a recognised equivalent body such as the General Teaching Council of Scotland. This includes workers and managers in daycare of children services, workers in residential childcare services, school hostels, special schools and boarding schools, care at home services and housing support services. Managers in adult day care services are also on the register as are Social Work students and Care Inspectorate Officers. The register opened in 2003 and in 2014 has over 60,000 people on the register (SSSC, website, accessed, October, 2014).

As well as registering people who work in social services the SSSC regulates their education and training, therefore the SSSC sets out what qualifications are recognised and at what level they are required for specific roles. As part of the above aims the SSSC also has a role in promoting the "difference education and training makes to workers and people who use services" (SSSC, website, viewed 2014) and is undertaking the "functions of the Sector Skills Council; Skills for Care and Development, this includes workforce planning and development" (SSSC, website, viewed 2014).

Social care workers must register according to what their job involves and what they do on a day to day basis, not title, under one of three job functions: Lead Practitioner, Practitioner or Support Worker. Workers are required to have a designated qualification appropriate to the job function; if they do not have this, then registration will be granted on the condition that the qualification is achieved within five years. Unconditional registration is for a period of five years, after which an individual must re-register unless they have changed job function in which case they would need to meet the qualification requirements of the other job, at the point they changed jobs.

New workers have six months from their start date to register with the SSSC. Once registered, workers are expected to undertake annual Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL).

Ongoing professional development and learning is at the heart of the [Continuous Learning Framework](#) (SSSC & IRISS, 2008) which is aimed at both organisations and individuals in the social services workforce and illustrates the attributes of a learning and developing organisation and a learning and developing worker.

The SSSC [Codes of Practice](#) (SSSC, 2003) also enshrine the commitment to engage in continuous learning and development, and for organisations to support their staff in doing so.

In addition, the SSSC states that:

“Registration with the SSSC isn’t a one off. Our belief is that continuing registration needs to be based on the ability to keep practice, knowledge and skills and competence up to date

and we will be introducing a new career long development framework for the whole of the social services sector in 2015." (SSSC, 2014, p. 9)

### [Workforce development resources](#)

The SSSC website has a wide range of resources on a number of media platforms to support the professional development of the social services workforce. See SSSC (n. d.) Workforce Solutions: <http://workforcesolutions.sssc.uk.com/new/chp.html>

### [Scottish Qualifications Authority \(SQA\)](#)

SQA, although an arm's length organisation was established through acts of Parliament, takes guidance from Scottish Ministers in developing its corporate plan, and receives funding support from the Scottish Government. SQA accredits qualifications, other than degrees and approves and quality assures awarding bodies which enter people for these qualifications.

SQA is an Awarding Body in its own right, through devising, developing, validating and reviewing qualifications. SQA plays a key role in the arrangements for the assessment process for people taking SQA qualifications, including issuing certificates to candidates. SQA also plays a strong role in quality assuring the establishments, which offer SQA qualifications.

### **Scottish Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Levels and credit points**

The SCQF uses two measures to describe qualifications and learning programmes

- the **level** of the outcomes of learning

- the **volume** of outcomes, described in terms of the number of credits

The volume of an outcome is arrived at by estimating the amount of time required by the 'average' learner, at a particular level, to achieve the outcomes. The number of credits will differ greatly from qualification to qualification, within levels and between levels

### **Levels**

“Each of the 12 SCQF levels can be the location of one or more qualifications. At present these are qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland and those awarded and accredited by SQA.

Level 1 represents outcomes designed for learners with severe and profound learning difficulties, while level 12 contains outcomes associated with doctoral studies. Increases in level of demand relate to factors such as:

- complexity and depth of knowledge and understanding
- links to academic, vocational or professional practice
- the degree of integration, independence and creativity required
- the range and sophistication of application/practice
- the role(s) taken in relation to other learners/workers in carrying out tasks

Each level of the SCQF from two to 12 has a descriptor, known as the level descriptors, which sets out its characteristic general outcomes under five broad headings:

- knowledge and understanding - mainly subject based
- practice (applied knowledge and understanding)

- generic cognitive skills, e.g. evaluation, critical analysis
- communication, numeracy and IT skills
- autonomy, accountability and working with others "(SQA, n .d.)

The level descriptors are designed to allow broad comparisons to be made but are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements of required learning at each level.

Not all should or have **all** of the characteristics set out in the level descriptors.

Qualifications set at the same level are only broadly comparable, and this does not demonstrate equivalence of qualifications, " An example of this is Advanced Higher, HNC, and the Certificate in Higher Education all being on level 7. Although these qualifications are all on the same level, they have quite different forms of delivery and assessment rules" (SQA, n. d.)

Qualifications awarded by Scottish higher education institutions, and those awarded or accredited by the SQA, will all be placed on the levels of the SCQF. The level descriptors are available to download from the [Downloads page](#).

### **Credit points**

One credit point represents the outcomes of learning achieved through a **notional** 10 hours of learning time the average learner might take to achieve this learning Learners might take less or a bit more time but must meet the outcomes set out. The award of credits is made on achievement of the learning outcomes, not on the time spent in doing so.

## Common Core of Skills, Knowledge & Understanding and Values for the “Children’s Workforce” in Scotland

The Common Core describe the skills, knowledge and understanding, and values that everyone working (paid or voluntary) with children and young people, and their families should have. These “essential characteristics” are explicitly cross-referenced with the guiding principles of the UNCRC, and the values are taken from Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC). The Common Core allows children, young people and their families to have an understanding of the minimum expectations from people who work with them.

The Common Core were developed through a public consultation process with input from workers and organisations from the children’s sector in Scotland and multi-disciplinary Working Group.

# SECTION B: LITERATURE REVIEW & EVALUTION CRITERIA



## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

**"We need to change the image of the worker (with children) "from technician to reflective practitioner, researcher, co-constructor of knowledge, culture and identity" (Moss and Petrie, 2002, p. 137).**

Courses under the Standard for Childhood Practice (QAA, 2007), or meeting the requirements for teacher registration in Scotland, (GTCS, 2012) are also intended to prepare students for work in early learning and childcare, as well as services for children and young people of school age. Training and qualifications therefore must prepare students for early learning and childcare settings where they are delivering the Curriculum for Excellence, especially Building the Curriculum 2 (Scottish Executive, 2007) which focuses on early learning through play, in terms of the concept of active learning.

In terms of childhood and indeed teaching practice, theories, research and knowledge about how children learn and develop are essential underpinnings to students' practice. It is argued, therefore, given the centrality of play to children's learning and development, that evidence of such course content is also an indicator of the inclusion of play in the training and qualifications reviewed, and should certainly be a focus of all degree level and postgraduate level courses.

Play has a place in supporting children gain new skills and knowledge, and in enhancing their quality of life, without necessarily always working towards specific instrumental outcomes, even as they are supported through play. Nevertheless, play has a firm place within early education and learning settings, as it is spontaneous and, indeed, purposeful play (from the both child's and adult perspectives) which underpins development and learning.

In order to support children's rights and development, it is essential to understand that play, development and learning often cannot be prised apart, and there are many ways to plan for and facilitate play, even with a purpose, without losing the self-directed agency of the child in their play choices.

The workforce in early learning and care, in particular, in out of school care in Scotland, are amongst the main participants in playwork qualifications, therefore, it is important that there is continued progressive learning and qualifications on play focused theory and practice, up to and beyond degree level. There should also be a rich understanding, for playwork and all practitioners, of how play is central to child development, even with an initial focus on early years, as many theories and theorists are very relevant to those in a play and care setting for any age. Within the briefly outlined historical summary, the shared roots of many of the principles and philosophies of playwork and early child development theories might become quite clear.

In addressing fears that BA level courses in childhood practice are not relevant enough for those with a play sector background, or as being too "early years focused" Davis and colleagues point out "findings indicated that degree level qualifications have a significant impact on private and public sector managers' knowledge of children's rights and play. This finding confronts myths to the contrary put forward by managers who have not studied at degree level and tend to be located in out of school care, and some playgroups"(Davis, Bell and Pearce, 2014, p. 24). They suggest better marketing of the benefits of managers gaining skills in linking theory to practice and self-reflection, in terms of the impact both on the quality of the service and relevance to all sectors. They found only one manager who had

completed a course and found it to be too much about active learning and not enough about play (Davis et al, 2014).

A fundamental understanding of how young children learn and develop through play, and the role of the adult in facilitating this process, can be a foundation of understanding overall child development, while understanding children's rights and agency are also central to this process. Of course, when discussing child development, it should account for the rich diversity of each child's own engagement with their family, community and culture, and their own specific and "rich" range of talents and interests they bring to such engagement (Super and Harkness, 1986, Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2007, Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2008).

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) is a foundation of much policy around children and childhood in Scotland, and includes children's rights to play (Article 31) and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), includes play in measures of wellbeing (Scottish Government, 2008a), therefore content on either or both implicitly, or explicitly, contains play.

### **Brief Historical Perspective**

Throughout history, there have been many different theories about why children play e.g. Plato (429–347 B.C.E.) saw that very young children have a natural propensity to play, while in his view older children should learn through play in terms of their future role in society, e.g. to become a future builder, they must play with bricks (Plato, 1921, 1955). While he connects the play process with both an education and social function, with a priority of the

development of a virtuous, moral character, therefore, older children's play, should not have free play, encouraging subversion, but must be directed to practising their roles.

The concept of children starting as, almost, a "blank slate"; there to be moulded by parents and the "right" type of educators to whatever form is desired, is the well-known empiricist view of John Locke's (1632 – 1704) in which knowledge is derived mainly through the senses and experience. Locke, Like Plato, saw the main purpose of education was to create virtuous characters, but he was interested in harnessing children's own activities, including play, to make the learning process more enjoyable, rather than the more punitive methods of teaching, prevalent in his time and culture. He was amongst the first to point out that early childhood experiences and associations helped shape the future character and warned against nursemaids filling children's heads with negative and frightening associations with stories of "goblins at bedtime". His views were highly influential and contributed towards viewing childhood as a particular stage of human development (Locke, 2004/1735, 2013/1884). Locke's views were taken up by the enlightenment radicals of the time including Rousseau (1712–1778).

In *Émile* (1762), Rousseau set out that the main object of childhood is that children should be happy; therefore, he took an opposite and radical view of play to the prevailing Puritan ethic. He believed that what children learned from each other through play was worth more than any classroom learning, as in the games they play there are always materials for learning, without them even knowing learning is taking place. Play, in Rousseau's view, was an instinct provided by nature to promote growth of the body and development of the

senses, and as play gives children pleasure and contributes towards their happiness, it is the best way for children to learn.

Rousseau's emphasis on nature and the need for the "natural child" to interact with the natural environment can be seen as a precursor of many of the present day warnings about the erosion of children's liberties and restrictions on their free access to nature or roaming outdoors (Louv, 2010, Gill, 2007).

He also believed that children went through distinct stages in their development and that education should be tailored to those stages, rather than the didactic book based teaching of conventional schools. Many others took up Rousseau's recognition of the role of nature and the self-realisation process of education through playful learning, discovery and experiments, but one, in particular, was Friedrich Froebel (1782 – 1852) the creator of the first kindergartens.

Froebel was also inspired by Pestalozzi (1746 – 1827) who first taught the holistic, "head, hands and heart" philosophy of learning, still prevalent in social pedagogy today (Smith, in Info Ed.org n. d.). Ground breaking in the holistic approach to the whole child, and understanding children's need for play and creativity as necessary for child development, in his classic book on childhood education, *The Education of Man* (1826/ 2012), Froebel identified the fundamental principles upon which he based the now widespread kindergarten (children's garden) system.

Froebel espoused "self-activity" and play as essential factors in early learning, maintaining that the teacher's role is not to drill or indoctrinate but to encourage self-expression through play. His method banished mechanical and rote activities in favour of creative play,

fostering the growth of artistic capacity. The wooden geometric and pattern building blocks in playrooms, and their modern variants, can be traced to the Froebel “gifts” of such blocks which he created as playful learning activities to support development. He believed that “Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child's soul” Froebel (1826/ 2012).

At New Lanark in his new model community, Robert Owen ((1771-1858) established the first play based infant schools and the first out of school care in Scotland, as part of a wider social experiment in attending to the needs of workers and their families who worked in the mill. Children had free play and social opportunities in settings with natural materials of interest (not specific toys or books, as they had each other to play with); dancing and singing were also a core part of all children’s education. Owen set out that children were to be happy and learn to be kind, again reflecting Pestalozzi (Donnachie, 2003), as well as Rousseau’s view of childhood as a distinct period of life where their happiness is paramount. Of course, there was also the instrumental aim of having contented and productive current and future workers.

Froebel also influenced John Dewey (1859-1952), who agreed that children should have play and learn through activity by doing practical things, and not through passively absorbing instruction; he demanded better child centred environments for children’s education and established what came to be known as the progressive movement in education.

He saw positive social relationships, as well as being active and involved members of the community, as essential for children’s development (Dewey, 1897). The outdoor garden nurseries developed by Margaret McMillan (1860 – 1931) with her sister Rachael, and their

philosophy of access to nature, use of natural materials, good nutrition and outdoor play, demonstrate that they too were influenced by Froebel (Steedman, 2004). Another early pioneer was Maria Montessori (1870-1952), who created specific child scale environments for learning, indoors and out, planned carefully to develop all of the child's senses, enabling the child to interact and learn through their purposeful activities (although not specifically play).

Influenced by Steiner and Anthroposophy, the Camphill Movement in Scotland (Camphill, website n.d), are communities supporting children and adults with learning and other disabilities, they provide services and support for work, learning and daily living. Hands on experiences such as play and crafts are central to this approach, as is the holistic "head, hands and heart" philosophy, first advocated by Pestalozzi ((1746 – 1827) and core to the Camphill practice. The BA in Social Pedagogy at Robert Gordon University Aberdeen (Table 9 in appendix), is linked to the community.

Waldorf or Steiner schools also emphasise creativity, use of the senses and carefully designed environments where children interact and learn through the arts, play, and other creative focused activities, at their own pace and time. They set out to address the physical, emotional, intellectual, cultural and spiritual needs of each child. Based on the ideas of Rudolph Steiner (1861 – 1925), who founded Anthroposophy, the present day Waldorf schools hold on to the above practice ideas, but have abandoned the commitment to Anthroposophy (Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship (website, n. d.).

## Play as an Evolutionary Process

Play is often assumed to be universal across cultures and history; indeed, it is seen also in young animals, leading to speculations about play as preparation and practice for future essential survival skills. Karl Groos (1861–1946) presented a biological explanation for play in *The Play of Animals* (1898) and *The Play of Man* (1901) Groos argued that play was the expression of an instinct necessary to the survival of the species. The human child, due to its prolonged dependency on adults, did not need the instinct, but still used play to practice and develop future capacities.

Play is at the heart of the evolutionary process as it is through play children learn how to adapt, and play also supports the flexibility and brain plasticity, which is needed to cope with change and is a survival trait both for the species and the individual, according to Sutton–Smith (1997). Another biological evolutionary theory of play has historical antecedents in the work of Baldwin (1894) and Hall (1904) and is more recently taken up by Hughes (2001). The concept of recapitulation is that each individual mind passes through the evolutionary stages that the human race has previously been through. For Hall (1904), therefore, play was the recapitulation of an earlier evolutionary state.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, following Darwin, the idea of race recapitulation was quite pervasive across different disciplines, and indeed the view that children, without adult moral teaching and restraint, would revert to “savage” behaviour is also a thread running through literature such as *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1995, 1954).

Hughes takes the view that children need to be able to go through these successive stages in play, and indeed, he warns if they do not have the opportunities to do so this will lead to

problems in later life. Hughes equates play deprivation as a precursor to adult serious or violent criminal behaviour. Hughes stages are:

- animal - children interacting with the elements
- savage - cruel interaction with other species
- nomad - ranging for mental mapping
- pastoral - mastery play e.g. gardening
- tribal - membership of gangs and clubs (Hughes, 2001)

There are a number of issues with recapitulation theories, not least, in terms of the cultural views of these late 19<sup>th</sup> century biologists and psychologists, who were positing a linear, westernised, worldview of human development, which presumed their own superiority over other models of society and civilisation. They confuse biological stages of human individual development with the stages in the development of society; using a staged theory based only on one model of society.

Hughes' modern take is still highly difficult to prove given that a lack of love and affection, or a cruel environment for a child, could be part of the cause of later stunted adult development or capacity for criminal behaviour, with play deprivation a consequence rather than a cause, in itself.

Brown (2009) also worked on models of play deprivation, with valuable insights into the transformative value of play to the lives of play deprived, Romanian, children, again the positive changes he discovered through planned play interventions, could also have been an

effect of the wider value of human contact and social relationships with caregivers, also previously missing from their lives.

For example, the work of Rutter et al (2001) showed that once adopted into loving adoptive families, many children who experienced severe institutionalised neglect were able to catch up with their UK peers by age six. Nevertheless, Brown's action, with colleagues, undoubtedly, positively changed the lives of the children involved and the play provided would likely have been an essential component of their improved development.

Hughes also made other major contributions to play theory: in his study of the effects of the troubles in Belfast on children's play, from which he produced a concept of "adulterated play", that is play highly influenced by adults and aspects of the negative social environment on children. He also contributed a breakdown of play types in which he lists 16 different kinds of play (Hughes, 2006); these play types are often in the content of playwork based and play linked qualifications.

### **Play is a Precursor to Culture**

Play is a necessary (although not sufficient) condition of culture, according to the work of Huizinga, first published in 1938, *Homo Ludens* or "Man the Player" (alternatively, "Playing Man"). He argues that play always has the following five characteristics:

1. Play is free, is in fact freedom.
2. Play is not "ordinary" or "real" life.
3. Play is distinct from "ordinary" life as to both locality and duration.

4. Play creates order, is order. Play demands order absolute and supreme, e.g.: play has rules
5. Play is connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained from it  
(Huizinga, 1949 pp 7-13 )

Huizinga saw that all creative cultural pursuits, adult as well as children's leisure activities, have their roots in play as a precursor to culture; while culture is a product only of human beings, animals play, but have not developed cultural activities. His all-encompassing definition includes adults playing games, such as the rules for bridge, or cricket, or in rituals across different societies and history.

"Ludic" is the word for play in Latin, and Huizinga was especially interested in the language around play, across different cultures, he especially liked the English word "fun" as clear descriptor of one of the elements of play, although he also understood that play could be deadly serious too (Huizinga, 1949).

Vygotsky (1933/1966, 1978) too understood the seriousness and indeed the "not fun" aspect of play, given the nature of the rules of games, there are often winners and losers, and, as Huizinga pointed out (1949), "spoilsports" are given even more disapprobation than those who may be cheating or deceiving, but are appearing to play the game. Play is not all about joy, it can be the source of inclusion or exclusion, teasing, hazing, bullying and mean behaviour, and indeed, within playwork there are various debates on the scope and scale of adult intervention in such situations.

### Current Play Concepts, Playwork and the Playwork Principles

In the views of leading play theorists a central belief is that in free play, children do what they want to do, and the learning and psychological growth that result are by products, not conscious goals of the activity. Sutton-Smith encapsulated the uncertainties and difficulties in defining play in the title, and subsequent discussions in the “Ambiguity of Play” (1997, p.1) explaining that we all know what it is to experience play and playfulness but when we attempt to define it, we fall into “silliness”. Lester and Russell in their wide-ranging review (2008) suggest that play should be valued as it stands, rather than as any means to particular ends, despite the clear connections between many aspects of child wellbeing and play. Indeed the very process of trying to externally determine and measure the outcomes of play contradicts the inherent quality of children’s play (Lester and Russell, 2008).

In *The Benefits of Play* literature review, Rogers, Pelletier and Clarke (2009), looked at the play needs of middle childhood and they concluded that play benefits children in a number of ways, for example, overall emotional health and social functioning is supported through make believe play and play supports cognitive development. Children’s spatial abilities and physical understanding of the world is facilitated by physical play and it has been demonstrated that children who had a lot of time to play end up as happier adults (Rogers et al, 2009). Cole-Hamilton (2011) provided a range of evidence on play to inform the Play Strategy for Scotland (Scottish Government, 2013b) and Greave and Cole-Hamilton produced another wide ranging review in 2012, *A World without Play*, both of which covered a range of perspectives, studies and cross cutting themes, including addressing issues of inclusive play and disability.

Common to all reviews is the recognition that defining play is not a simple task, and there are difficulties involved in providing the empirical evidence to demonstrate the links between play and the wide range of outcomes, generally asserted in the theoretical literature. Button's review (Scottish Government, 2014b) in scoping out the literature on play to provide an outcomes model and to support the delivery of the national play strategy action plan (Scottish Government, 2013a) warns that there is no direct, linear, causal relationship between play and the potential benefits set out.

However, in summarising the assertions of the first three reviews above, alongside other play and more general evaluation reports, for example, from lottery funded projects, and studies looking at the how physical play addresses obesity, Gill (2014) believes that they do demonstrate the following interconnected benefits of play:

- “Cognitive development (including language skills, problem solving and independent learning skills, self-efficacy, gaining perspective, representational skills, memory and creativity);
- Physical health and development (including physiological, cardiovascular and fine and gross motor skills development as well as increased physical activity);
- Mental health, happiness and emotional well-being (including building confidence, improved child parent attachments, coping with stress, tackling anxieties and phobias, aiding recovery in therapeutic contexts, and alleviating the symptoms of ADHD for some children);

- Social development (including working with others, sharing, negotiating and appreciating others' points of view); and
- Risk management and resilience through experiencing and responding to unexpected, challenging situations" (Gill, 2014 pp 8-9)

"Furthermore, it has been claimed that the benefits of playing can be seen in evidence from brain studies and neuroscience (Cole-Hamilton 2012, Lester and Russell 2008)" (in Gill 2014, pp 8-9).

Gill's 2014 study attempts to bring in this missing empirical evidence to back up some of these assertions, he finds systematic reviews (on physical play and activities) which demonstrate the value of play in addressing childhood obesity. He also discusses the importance and effect of school break time (see break time in focus study), and interventions improving outdoor play facilities and materials in schools.

Case studies of such interventions demonstrated improved classroom performance and lower levels of misdemeanours (Gill, 2014). A small number of examples were provided of after school care services where children have opportunities for free play supported by suitably trained adults, and the wider, positive, effects on community and family in children accessing such services, as well as through the provision of public spaces to play and unsupervised playgrounds (Gill, 2014).

Nevertheless, while he disagrees with Lester and Russell (2008) in terms of the impossibility of empirical verification of the outcomes of play, he does see that there are huge gaps and an overwhelming need for more empirical studies. He too bears in mind that the value of

play in itself and as a right is important, but he explains this has to be balanced with pragmatically seeking out the evidence, which policy makers and funding bodies might require, to justify supporting play interventions (Gill, 2014).

Building on Sutton-Smith's concept of the play cue (1984), and following on from (Huizinga, 1949), Sturrock and Else (1998) created the term Psycholudics to describe therapeutic play processes to assist workers in developing insights into the richness of the play experience provided through the activity, exchange or artefacts in use. They introduced concepts such as the play cycle, the play return and the play frame:

“The **play cycle** consists of the full flow of play from the child's first play cue, the perceived return from the outside world, the child's response to the return, and the further development of play to the point where the play is complete” (Sturrock and Else, 1998 website). Again, they discuss the concept of “adulteration” of children's play processes, which can break a play cycle and lead to what they term “dysplay” – more urgent and perhaps contradictory engagement of the child with the environment as the child's natural play drive is suppressed. Observation is therefore a key skill as is identifying invitations or cues to join in play, or to not disrupt a play cycle in process (Sturrock and Else, 1998).

A further concept of Ludocentric play was developed by Russell, Sturrock and Battram (Russell, 2008) which contrasts over-didactic adult leadership and strict control of the play process and environment with the opposite extreme of neglectful, chaotic and ego-centric provision, which is unsafe and unreliable. In between these two is the ludocentric approach which is about children's play, rather than any adult agenda and this is where the 'edge of recalcitrance' is located. Playworkers need to understand where along the continuum their

practice lies, and to also understand and be aware of their own feelings in balancing this process.

Lester and Russell also developed a model of play interactions loosely based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (1979), which is often termed the "Manchester Circles" in playwork theory (Lester and Russell, 2004, in Else, Sexton and Nuttall, 2010, p. 5).

Brown (2003) has suggested a theory of compound flexibility: the interrelationships between the flexibility and adaptability of the play environments and the development of flexibility and adaptability in children. The role of the playworker is to create such positive environments for play, which are generally lacking in children's lives, linking to the creative use, for example, of loose parts play, rather than fixed, unimaginative, playground equipment.

When considering free play within professional practice it is important to highlight playwork and the playwork principles as the theories, practices and principles, which provide the benchmark for professional practice supporting free play. Although there are specific playwork qualifications, many other childcare qualifications also contain aspects of playwork.

Playwork is the professional movement, which supports and facilitates free play opportunities for children and young people and in the UK; this is underpinned by the playwork principles. The playwork movement is a relatively new one and was only given professional recognition in 1992 (Bonel and Linden, 2009). There is a clear distinction between play and playwork: play is the natural activity of children but playwork relates to the involvement of adults supporting and helping children's play.

Playwork has its modern roots in Danish junk playgrounds started in the 1940s where children were free to make their own constructions from junk, the philosophy behind it being that children would be supported and facilitated, but direct adult intervention would be kept to a minimum. It is acknowledged (Bonel and Linden, 2009; Hughes, 2001) that Lady Allen of Hartwood introduced this concept into Britain and was instrumental in campaigning for the establishment of junk playgrounds resulting in the first adventure playground set up in Camberwell, London in 1948.

In England, adventure playgrounds and stand-alone play services have a stronger tradition than in Scotland where many play services have instead been attached to childcare or early learning services. Bonel and Linden (2009) acknowledge that childcare services which operate on a closed-door basis can prove to be more challenging to run in terms of facilitating the scope and play flexibility provided by open-door play services. It is still possible for good quality services to offer both free play and care for the attending children, e.g. the after school example in Gill (2014).

A playworker's role is one that supports and develops a children's play repertoire by providing new play experiences and opportunities within a safe and stimulating environment yet does not actually direct the child's play (Tassoni, 2003, in Brown et al, 2009). The child's experiences, desires and wants must always be the starting point for playworker interactions, which should be carried out in non-judgmental ways and the worker must suspend all prejudices for playwork to be effective (Brown, 2003). The playworker does not take control, but instead joins in sensitively to where the child is at that

moment, and through this, a strong relationship can be developed (Kaufman 1995, in Brown, 2003).

The playwork principles underpin playwork; the first two principles provide a definition of play; the third principle describes the essence and focus of playwork and the final four principles discuss the role of the playworker.

“These principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork and as such must be regarded as a whole. They describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people.

They are based on the recognition that children and young people’s capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

- “All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and wellbeing of individuals and communities.
- Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
- The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.

- For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.
- The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
- The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
- Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
- Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and wellbeing of children“(Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group, 2005).

Although the playwork principles could be used in more formal education settings, Bonel and Linden say that playworkers “are not attempting to step into the role of children’s teacher who has a responsibility for their education in the context of schooling. Playworkers can support and extend children’s learning but in a different context from school, and with some opportunities that are not available to teachers” (Bonel and Linden, 2009, p. 67).

**Focus on break time:**

Overlapping play research, folklore, educational psychology, health development and learning, is the linking topic of children and young people's break time in school, as well as the games, jokes and culture of the playground and children at play together over time.

Peter Blatchford and Ed Baines led the work of the [Breaktime Research Project](#), which pulls together their key UK research on children's play times, break times or recess in schools, as well as linking to associated US research. The site also includes links to concurrent research on classroom assistants and playground staff. They found that children and young people place a high value on break times, viewed positively for their social relationships and freely chosen play and activities, negatively where bullying behaviour impinged on their breaks. Data shows increasing reduction of break times and lunchtime breaks in schools, and adult's negative perceptions of children's behaviour, with increased adult oversight and control of playgrounds, often due to perceptions about behaviour issues (Blatchford & Baines, 2013).

The various studies also investigate gender and ethnic differences in how children use their free time in school. It is pointed out that while the value of play time is still appreciated for primary school pupils, the needs of young people at secondary school level for breaks and time to be with friends is undervalued. This is why the researchers use the term break time rather than play time. The social activities and the value of this for young people in secondary schools is not always apparent to adults, there are both benefits and issues for 16 year olds consulted for the project, both in having valuable contact with peers and in addressing issues about where to go and what is allowable (Breaktime website).

This is supported by a Scottish study of secondary school pupils (S3 and S4), which investigated why they left school to purchase food at lunchtime, initially focusing on perceptions of school food quality and choice. “Out to Lunch” (Lawton, Audain and Shoolbread, 2008), demonstrated that social factors, being with friends, including friends from other schools, were just as important to them. Having adult like autonomy and choice, opportunities for exercise and a real break from school were also key factors.

Recent research for Grounds for Learning Scotland (Robinson, 2014a, 2014b & 2014c) provided the evidence for the importance of space for play and leisure in schools, especially the design of outdoors spaces, and found that young people experienced issues in terms of the “affordance” of play. This included “confusion over what play is allowed or expected, peer pressure restricts play types and locations, a lack of privacy stifled social play, there is not enough time at lunch, little affordance of risky, different or unusual play, being allowed inside and no play policies” (Robinson, 2014b, p. 5).

Physical space problems included: “A lack of shelter and seating, unattractive (to pupils), large, hard edged spaces dominate, little variation in provision, lack of visual and physical stimulus, pedestrian and pupil entrances less inviting than car and visitor entrances and a lack of engagement with decisions on play and space decisions” (Robinson, 2014b, p. 5).

Examples of solutions suggested are art spaces, with graffiti walls, more planting of greenery, providing space for sports and activities other than football, much more seating, shelters and attractively designed landscapes. Play policies should be in place, including risk, involving young people in developments, as well as staff managing resources, and providing better entrances, exits and linking with the immediate community (Robinson, 2014b, pp 13 -

16). The third report (Robinson, 2014c) offers ideas and suggestions on how to improve school settings and make them more play friendly.

The [Opie Project Group](#) is a collaboration between the Universities of London, Sheffield and East London with the British Library, the project aimed “to develop our understanding of children’s playground games and songs, building on the Opie collection at the British Library. It has added new material, developed a new archive, website, film and computer game prototype, and investigated the connections between the vernacular lore of the playground and children’s media cultures in the digital age” (Centre for the Study of Children Youth and Media, 2011, p.3). The British Library Website has a range of archive and new materials on children’s playground culture – with narration by the former children’s poet laureate Michael Rosen. <http://www.bl.uk/playtimes>

The Centre for the study of Children, Youth and Media, reported that “play was alive and well, more diverse in some respects than ever, and drawing on resources which had both a long historical lineage as well as ones from contemporary media cultures“, Centre for the Study of Children Youth and Media, 2011, p. 3). This wide ranging and in depth project included a two year ethnographic study into contemporary children’s games and lore and they found that children’s playground culture of games, songs, rhythms, jokes is not in quite the major decline that popular media reports.

## **Play, Child Development and Learning**

A typical sample of contents, which would indicate child development and learning theories, which could include play, are topics such as: socio-cultural theory, social constructivism, schemas, equilibrium and disequilibrium, attachment, guided participation, communities of practice, scaffolding, socio-environments, or cultural environment, developmental niche, ecological theory, shared sustained thinking, children's spaces, playful pedagogies, Active Learning, Reggio Emilia and reference to Te Whariki.

Historical and contemporary perspectives, which demonstrate that the role of caregivers in supporting children's need to establish, trust, autonomy, (and to be able to experiment), include e.g. Erikson's stages of development, (1995/ 1951) or aspects of moral development such as Kohlberg (1981, in Wood et al, 2006), and language development (Chomsky, 1995, in Oates and Grayson, 2004). Classic theories such as Behaviourism (Skinner, 1953), imitative social learning, with the (in)famous Bobo doll (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961), Ainsworth's "strange situation" (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970), as well as Freudian developmental perspectives, could also be in foundation courses.

Researchers and theorists on child development and learning, indicating inclusion of play or linked to play environment, include Piaget (1955, 1965), Vygotsky (1933/1966, 1978, 1987), Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2007) and, of course, the classics establishing early learning and childcare nurseries and related principles; such as the McMillians (Steedman, 2004), Froebel (2012), Montessori (Pollard, 1990), Dewey (2012) and Steiner (2002). The work of Laevers (1994, 2001) measuring engagement of children, through focused observation, and Wood, Bruner & Ross (1976) on scaffolding, are all relevant to play. Schaffer (1996) covered child

development in depth, while Woodhead, Faulkner, and Littleton (1998) provided a range of cross-cultural studies, including Trevarthen (1998) on how children need to learn a culture.

Prout and James (2004/1997), Rogoff (2003), Rogoff, Mistry, Göncü & Mosier (1993), Bruner, Lave and Wenger (1991), Super and Harkness (1986, 1992), bring in developments of socio-cultural perspectives, socio-cultural childhood studies and the concept of the developmental niche. Including a Vygotskian perspective, Siraj-Blatchford (2002, 2009) discussed the concept of sustained shared thinking, relating it to concepts such as Mercer's "interthinking" (Siraj- Blatchford, 2009). Bruce (2001) emphasised the importance of play for young children, Moyles (2010) and Gooch (2008) discussed playful pedagogies and different perspectives on play and learning.

Malaguzzi, in Edwards, Gandini, & Forman (2008), affirms the 100 languages of children, and the concept of the rich child in terms of their own talents, interests and engagement, rather than seeing children and childhood via a deficit needs model. Moss and Petrie (2002), argued for children's spaces, including rights perspectives and more child centred policy, while challenging the needs deficit model and the exclusion of children's own perspectives.

Meaningful consultation with children in terms of their participatory rights is relevant for anyone working with children in play, playwork, early learning and childcare and education settings e.g.: Schiller and Einarsdottir (2009) on engaging with children in research, Clarke and Moss (2001), and Clarke (2011) described the Mosaic approach in listening to children. Kellett (2005, 2009a, 2009b and 2010) brought in children as researchers, within an emancipatory rights paradigm. Ethics and methodology of engaging with children in research include Alderson and Morrow (2004) on ethics, using drawings and photography

(Docket and Perry, 2005, Einarsdottir, 2005) and multi-modal literacy (Flewitt, Nind & Payler, 2009). Central to all of these approaches, and socio-cultural theory, is the concept of the child as an active agent in their own right, who has affect on others and their environments.

The social constructivist approach has major influence in the UK, as Piagetian or neo-Piagetian theories have influenced on the design and practice of early learning and childcare settings, with a strong focus on observation of the child, the play environment and play with peers. Young children work through their play in making meaning through interactions with their environment, and Piaget (1955, 1962), introduced an analysis of processes of learning; characterised by concepts such as accommodation, assimilation, equilibrium, disequilibrium and schemas (Piaget, 1962).

A child's schema might be apparent as they become absorbed in performing particular actions in a discovery process, until they have assimilated the associated learning of new information, e.g. learning to use trajectory skills in throwing a ball (which they may repeat many times). Piaget (1955, 1962) argued that it is through the child's experiences manipulating and changing the world that the child acquires knowledge about relations within and between people and objects. His staged theory of development also posits particular stages of development, in a spiral of growing capabilities.

However, Bronfenbrenner's (1978, 2007) socio-cultural and bio-ecological theory of development, showed that the construction of meaning through children's play, learning and interactions within their environments takes place within a complex of network of

interacting cultural forces, therefore, learning does not happen in a vacuum, and circumstances for learning, or play, are not universal across all cultures.

The immediate environment is also variable in terms of the symbols and objects within it, those which draw the child into giving it attention, exploring, manipulating, using opportunities to elaborate and which kindle their imagination. (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2007), while personal characteristics, reciprocal interactions between children and children or adults, are part of the circumstances in which play can happen, alone or in groups.

The key skills of observation and reflection on children's play are central to Piaget's understanding of how children learn, and the views of Piaget and Vygotsky are often compared as opposites, but as Siraj-Blatchford (2009) points out, they have both made a significant contribution in showing that children have *emergent dispositions* to learn. Such emergent dispositions might match the concept in play theory in that the child has *emergent dispositions* to play.

The socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky (1978, 1986, 1966) demonstrates how children learn, through interactions with a more knowledgeable other, and through socio-dramatic, and other forms of play. For Vygotsky, individual development, including higher mental functioning, has its origins in social sources. Much of children's routine activities take place in what Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) calls the zone of proximal development (ZPD); the difference between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can do with help, in order to support development the actual and proximal stages should both be considered. Learners participate in a broad range of joint activities and internalise the effects of working

together, they acquire new strategies and knowledge of the world and culture, the child or novice learns through their interactions with the more knowledgeable other.

Vygotsky was interested in both what more knowledgeable other brought to the interaction, and in what the child brought to the interaction, as well as how the broader cultural and historical setting shaped the interaction. He points out that the child is “always striving to be a head taller” and “The relationship of play to development should be compared to the relationship between instruction and development ... Play is a source of development and creates the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978, p. 74). Therefore, this emergent disposition, this striving, gives the observant adult the opportunity to create the conditions, within their social, historical and cultural relationship, e.g. through play or talk, or the provision of resources, which support development.

This underpins the concept of *scaffolding* (a term Vygotsky did not actually use), developed by others such as Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) to demonstrate how the more knowledgeable other creates the steps or breaks down the task and models the skills. The concept of situated learning in a Community of Practice, developed by Lave and Wenger (1991), also builds on the socio-cultural approach, emphasising the socio-cultural attributes of the setting that the novice must learn, learning how to fit into this community of practice, is through a process of social interaction, activities and engagement.

Trevarthen (1998) reflects on how children need to learn a culture, and within this socio-cultural approach, there has to be an understanding of the child's own agency and affect (Prout and James, 2004/1997), e.g. in what the child brings to their own learning and culture. In particular, the cross cultural perspective e.g. Rogoff, Mistry, Göncü, & Mosier's,

(1993) examination of young children's play demonstrated the differences in their play across cultures and the different roles of parents and other children in play engagement.

The cross-cultural understanding and the socio-cultural perspective all point to the need to understand issues of diversity and inclusion, and warns that developmental theories developed on one form of cultural practice do not necessarily transfer to different cultures with contrasting constructions of the child.

Super and Harkness (1986, 2002) developed the concept of the developmental niche, which encompasses, cultural, historical and social systems, within which children interact, in their play, work and learning, and this can also apply to the particular niche of children with disabilities. Rogoff (2003) also draws attention to differences in themes in pretend play cross-culturally, finding that in communities in which children participate in the 'mature life' of a community, they often play at adult work and social roles. However, if children are segregated from the adult community, their play less commonly reflects 'mature activity': the sources they might emulate are more from television or film, e.g. playing at superheroes (Rogoff, 2003).

As Vygotsky examined different components of play and the way they affect the young child's emerging mental functions he concluded that play 'is not the predominant form of activity, but is, in a certain sense, the leading source of development in preschool years' (p. 6, 1967, in Bodrova, 2008 p 359). Children learn to understand rules in their socio-dramatic play with peers, and this contributes to their cognitive functioning; representational play creates an imaginary situation that permits children to deal with their unrealizable desires

and so promote self-regulation, while such play always contains rules for behaviour (Vygotsky, 1933/1966).

Child agency and the UNCRC (UN: 1989) is the focus of later theory and methods in working with children, for example, the work of Kellett (2005, 2009a, 2009b, 2010) in training and facilitating young researchers to conduct their own action research projects. With the concept of children's spaces, Moss and Petrie (2002) were concerned with creating environments conducive to their wellbeing, creating space for children as equals in communities and valuing the role of their own self-directed play. They state:

"We need to change the image of the worker (with children) "from technician to reflective practitioner, researcher, co-constructor of knowledge, culture and identity" (Moss and Petrie, 2002, p. 137).

They were also critical of the role of the school in social control of children, indeed in educators not viewing children as active strong and engaged citizens in society in their own right. They also, linking to play theory, note the concept of risk, as social control, meeting external non-child centred standards and fears of transgression.

The nature of storying events, co-construction of fantasies and stories, between the practitioner and child in day-to-day practice, is a type of playful pedagogy that Gooch (2008) examines, including the nature of the practice, architecture and play spaces where this occurs. The foundation of playful pedagogies is in understanding that "play is the essential pedagogical strategy to enhance children's deeper learning" (Moyle, 2010, p. 8).

While the Leuven involvement scale for young children Laevers (2011) is a tool to measure the wellbeing of children in an early learning and childcare environment, much of the features of the scale resonate with the intensity, duration, absorption and pleasure children take in their deep engagement with play activities. Children need to be involved in their learning and it has to be real and meaningful to them, the quality of the interactions between the adults and children, and the environment of the setting are all aspects promoting wellbeing (Laevers, 2011).

Also concerned with what works best for children's learning and development through play in early years settings, is the work of Siraj-Blatchford and colleagues, in developing the concept of sustained shared thinking, (2002), she also places the development of this concept within a Vygotskian continuum (Siraj Blatchford, 2009). It is stressed that there must be sensitivity to the child's agency in leading their play, using observation and gentle, timely, conversations and scaffolding interactions to extend their play and understanding, again using a co-constructive approach.

Active Learning is based on the actions of the learner and what they themselves bring to the learning situation, through freely chosen purposeful activities the learner is engaged in a discovery process, where again, taking a Vygotskian perspective, the skills of observation, reflection, and sensitive intervention to extend their thinking is a key part of this process. In early learning and childcare in Scotland, for example, play is the conduit of the active learning process. Guidance on the use of Active Learning (Scottish Executive, 2007), emphasised the role of play (see CfE in the Play in Education section). Settings for early learning and childcare in Scotland, may not find the concept difficult to assimilate, as this

could already be a major feature of their understanding and practice, in how children learn and develop, through play.

A major change through CfE and the 2007 guidance, in particular, for the teachers of the youngest schoolchildren in P1 and P2, is that play is now expected to be part of the children's daily experience of learning. As Martlew, Stephen & Ellis (2011) point out, in their investigation of the introduction of this new pedagogy of play into the classroom, there is a need for teachers to be trained in understanding how valuable different types of play are for children. They suggest, following, Pramling, Samuelsson and Johansson (2006, in Martlew et al, 2011) for teachers to integrate both dimensions of play and learning together and not to see them as entirely "separate entities". They found that teachers had different interpretations of active or play based learning, with variable understanding and delivery, with some play only at the peripheral level, too related to curriculum content and not fully integrated into children' learning activities (Martlew et al, 2011, p. 71).

Teachers also found it difficult to find ways of capturing and recording the learning, taking place through play, although this was addressed, in some cases, by using a method of capturing evidence of the process of learning, through using portfolios, a Reggio Emilia approach, which makes the process visible (Martlew et al, 2011). The portfolios containing photos, artwork, documentation, relating to the child's learning journey. In this approach, through their drawing, sculpting, dramatic play, writing, and painting there is representation of children's development of thinking processes and theories. As children work through problems and ideas, they are encouraged to depict their understanding, using many different representations.

Children are seen as equal partners in child led projects, with their teachers, and parental involvement too, and the environment is considered to be the third teacher, and must be rich with possibilities, included hands on clay materials, art, space and light and nature, or wood and nails, as children work through their activities. According to Lois Malaguzzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilie approach, there are a “hundred languages of children“, all of them rich with possibilities, (Edwards et al, 1998) and children need to be able to use them all in their co-construction of knowledge. Traditional learning approaches can stifle and not listen to the children’s many ways of communicating their ideas; therefore, they need access to creative, cultural tools, which enable expression of such ideas:

*“...So despite everything, it is permissible, to think that creativity or rather learning and the wonder of learning... can serve as the strong point of our work. It is thus our continuing hope that creativity will become a normal traveling companion in our children’s growth and development”* (Mallaguzzi, in Reggiochildren, 2010, p. 8).

The socio-cultural approach has also influenced policy development on children’s learning and development in many other countries, and this includes a curriculum for children aged 0-6 which is explicitly founded on such values in New Zealand; e.g. Te Whāriki: “The early childhood curriculum has been envisaged as a whāriki, or mat, woven from the principles, strands, and goals defined” (New Zealand Government, Ministry of Education, 1996). Taking a Vygotskian approach, and recognising the diversity of the different programmes, environment, local cultural values, which will create their own distinctive patterns of the whāriki. One of the distinctive approaches is in working with Whānau: members of an

extended family and its supporting network who form a context for the care and guidance of a child.

The case study below concludes the review of a sample of relevant literature, as it demonstrates the centrality of children's play, play breaks, and play as processes of playful teaching and playful learning, within educational practice in Finland. This case study has relevance for the examination of teacher training, especially in terms of supporting play in active learning and outdoor learning in schools, and links with the review of play theory and theorists.

### Case Study: Finnish School System: Play as a Process

The work of Pasi Sahlberg, including a number of linked newspaper articles from his blog, gives an overview of the Finnish education system, which is much admired internationally, but has to be seen in the Finnish social and cultural context of how children, childhood and play are viewed, and, especially, in how educators are valued and trusted in their work.

According to Sahlberg, Finland's universities offer world-class academic studies free of tuition fees for all students (including foreign students), and most degree programs are offered in English (Washington Post, 2014). Finnish teachers are recruited from the top students and are expected to be academically trained in teaching to MA level. Teaching has the same social status as, e.g., doctors and lawyers, and they are expected to continue with research on learning, and engage in professional collaboration, throughout their career, and in day to day practice (Pasisahlberg.com, 2014a).

Children do not start school until aged seven, while the school day is broken up into 45 min classroom and *15 minutes recess, each hour*, with additional time for lunch and little or no homework to impinge on children's leisure time after school. School days are also shorter when compared, for example, to the US (Sahlberg, 2014c, our *italics*). There are long summer school holidays to make the most of the summer, and further breaks midwinter and mid-terms. Therefore, Finnish children spend a lot less time in the classroom than their peers in many other countries, yet: "Finnish students consistently score near the top in the Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA, for reading, mathematics and science. The 2012 PISA results tell us that in these three subjects combined Finland ranks third after Korea and Japan" (Sahlberg, 2014c)

Sahlberg (2014a) explains the reasons behind this as being about highly qualified and autonomous, respected and trusted teachers; who have time built in for their professional collaboration with colleagues, leadership of schools by experts from their own sector e.g. primary teachers leading primary schools, where a secondary trained teacher leads a secondary school. The curriculum is flexible to local needs and individual teachers. Children are not subject to standardised tests and there is only one period of testing at the end of high school.

There is social equity in the delivery of the educational system, including, for example, free, nutritionally balanced, hot lunches. The national curriculum focuses on the whole child, and attends to health and wellbeing through free health care, counselling and transport, if needed, as well as providing extra funding and support for children with additional educational needs (Professional Voice, 2014). There is subsidised daycare and early education, free at age six and pre-school at age five, which has an emphasis on play and social education (Smithsonian.org, 2011).

The key to the Finnish educational system is in understanding the *centrality of play* (Sahlberg, 2014b) and children's needs for play and breaks from formal learning.

Investigating how fourteen teachers, in two northern areas of Finland, view and use play in kindergarten and elementary education, (Hyvönen, 2011) found that teachers played the roles of *leader*, *allower* and *afforder* of play. The research identified aspects both of **playful teaching**, in such roles, and an integrated **playful learning process**, especially in the role of *afforder* of play. Whilst this good practice was demonstrated by at least five teachers in the study, Hyvönen (2011) suggests there is still a need for more teacher education on teacher

enabled, but child led process play, and how it aids development and learning, as well as more learning about the value of play in itself for children.

Using grounded theory analysis, Hyvönen identified eight different play types from interviews with the teachers, including identifying some of their unease in using process play techniques. The first three types of play identified are educational, cheering and physical play, driven by the needs of the curriculum, which Hyvönen (2011, p. 71) identifies as instrumental play. Music, songs, memory games, puzzles and board games are all considered educational play within the classroom.

“Cheering play” is used to liven up things or to relax together, at the start or end of a lesson, while physical play, is often used to energise or warm up the class, and to develop: “Important cognitive, social and emotional” competencies, including motor skills (Hyvönen, 2011, p. 72). There was an observed enrichment of the local play culture with teachers and children alike using games developed in the context of their own setting with local games called “the slimy fairy” or “ambulance tag” (Hyvönen, 2011, p. 72).

Teachers reflected on bringing in more creative child led practice, although some were worried they would not achieve (local) curriculum targets, through using different methods, however all realised that teacher led “chalk and talk” approaches were not the only or best way to support learning. Another issue they identified is that sitting in the classroom is stifling for children, as in their free play in the breaks, playing out; they speak out and appear more confident. More attention could be given to outdoor learning processes too, according to Hyvönen (2011, p 73) and there are increasing examples of this approach, see, YouTube video\_“Skogsmulle in Finland” ([Svenska Idrott, 2014](#)) [in Swedish].

In terms of the teacher's role as "allower", this is under the categories of pretend, authentic, traditional and free play. In all four, the goal is not specific educational outcomes but supporting the development of friendships and social skills, and through this; rule construction, creating and breaking boundaries, negotiation, disputes, teasing and conflict, as identified by (Corsaro, 2003; Dunn, 2004, in Hyvönen, 2011, p. 74). *Pretend play* is child led imaginative, creative and role-play, while *Authentic play* is child led in using natural materials such as snow, stones, sticks etc. *Traditional play* includes outdoor games such as: "soccer, ten sticks on the board, dodge ball, cops and robbers, and different types of tag...popular among boys and girls" (Hyvönen, 2011, p. 74). *Free play* is an unstructured child-initiated activity, relaxing with friends and re-energising, indoors or outdoors.

Teacher afforded *process play*, using a *playful learning process*, has distinct phases of orientation, playing and elaboration (Hyvönen, 2011, p. 75). While the teacher designs the overall plan, *process play is a child led, voluntary activity, where process is considered more important than product*, the learner sets the pace, it is highly, and deeply, engaging and therefore helps increase knowledge and understanding (Hyvönen, 2011). Every day play is integrated seamlessly into the curriculum, it is linked to the concept of the play frame (Broström, 1996, in Hyvönen, 2011, p. 76) and emphasises fun and enjoyment for the children and the teacher. Hyvönen does not identify, in this small sample, the five teachers using this method, but it is significant that the kindergarten teachers had a richer understanding of play-based learning.

This summary does not do justice to the theoretical depth of this research, but it demonstrates the different kinds of play valued and available within Finnish school settings,

and local critical reflection on this work. It links closely with issues teachers here might grapple with in terms of delivering more play in schools. Hyvönen (2011) also links her analysis with ideas of leading play theorists, such as Sutton Smith (2001).

## **Conclusion**

The literature review, from specific play and playwork theories, example of historical classical and emerging approaches to child development, especially through socio-cultural theory, child agency and rights, as well as the focus on break time and bringing in the above Finnish study provides the broader context for the research and the evaluation tools used for analysis of the findings.

It is clear from the literature that play, is an integral component of child development, is valued and is intertwined in classical theory as a precursor to both current thinking in child development and the more focused stands addressing play in early learning and care and play in playwork practice. This is extended to also show the value of play and break time within schools for children of school age. The play and learning environment, including the biological, cultural, social and political arenas, and the interactions between them, is also very relevant, and this includes child agency and affect.

In addressing the main question of this enquiry, namely to discover the extent to which play is covered within the training and qualifications of the workforce in Scotland with a role in supporting children's play, this review demonstrates that the evaluation goes beyond simply analysing this in in terms of the specific modern play and playwork theorists.

Where it is possible the analysis of course contents should also reflect the classic theorists of child development and modern and emerging theories, such as the social cultural approach, and UNCRC paradigms, as well as developments within early learning and care and formal education, where play has a focus.

## 2. EVALUATION CRITERIA

In creating categories for analysis to address the core questions, it is acknowledged that the themes overlap, and aspects could be missed, such categories are really there to prove a structural, thematic framework. Accepting that the more in depth playwork theoretical perspectives may be confined to this particular discipline, nevertheless, evidence to varying degrees, (depending on the level and points of the qualification units or qualification courses), contents relating to specific play theorists, concepts, and the playwork principles, form one category for the evaluative purposes in discovering play content.

Classical and contemporary theories and practice, guidance and policy relating to play as central to child development, or learning, is another main evaluative category. This in order to discover where play is included in qualifications which are not as specialist as playwork, but this should be in aspects of play and playwork courses, as well as those covering the developing and learning child.

Three further sub categories are identified from the literature review; the environment for play and learning (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007), as this is recognised as crucial, children's rights and global, modern/post-modern theory, including child agency, and, specific curriculum contents where play enables learning is also included, alongside further evidence of a focus on creativity, and socio-cultural based curriculum guidance.

# SECTION C: SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS

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## 1. SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS

### Themes from Interviews:

Individual interviews were conducted with a number of key individuals representing Caledonia University, General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS), Glasgow Clyde College, Play Scotland, Scottish Child Minding Association (SCMA), SkillsActive, Scottish Pre-school Play Association (SPPA), Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) (2 interviews), the Universities of Dundee and West of Scotland. Both researchers conducted those interviews, which were informal and contained wide ranging discussions about play, education, regulation and roles. Further email correspondence and interviews were conducted with additional representatives from Creative Star Learning, SkillsActive, the Universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Gloucester, Leeds Metropolitan and Sheffield Hallam.

The people interviewed provided valuable insights and views, as well as useful pointers to more in depth information, we are both grateful for their time, and follow up information received.

No individual's views are specifically attributed here, and they are not necessarily the views of the researchers, but the following themes cover most of the issues discussed. It should be clear that there is a wide range of opinions, as well as factual information in this section.

### Is play covered in qualifications or not?

On the fundamental question of whether the main qualifications available to the workforce contain enough about play there were contrasting views; ranging from play underpins every

relevant qualification or NOS, to the view that play is only in qualifications (other than playwork or specialist play modules) in terms of play as instrumental to learning.

There was also a view that the focus on outcomes, often tied to funding, puts pressure on play providers to try to measure and demonstrate results, yet this is contrary to the whole ethos of playwork.

### **Playwork qualifications**

There was agreement, across different organisations, that playwork qualifications are perceived not to be promoted and supported enough in Scotland and the responsibility for that remains with the relevant Sector Skills Council (SkillsActive).

In one view, missing from playwork NOS are elements about protecting vulnerable individuals, observing, assessing, recording and reporting, and there should be more awareness of child development in playwork, and to have differentiated play (appropriate to age and ability) – it always needs to be about the individual.

In another view, child development is in playwork, however, it is to be remembered VQs are training, not learning qualifications, so that would then depend on the knowledge points from the NOS and how this is supported, delivered and assessed by the college or assessor. In discussion with SkillsActive it was learned that the Playwork NOS will be reviewed in 2015.

Units in VQs, given the workplace role, also have to fit within that, it not a matter of picking and choosing units, as the selection must relate to job function.

The playwork, or play, content of higher level qualifications are often delivered by course providers with a background in education, rather than playwork, therefore a gap is identified at the highest levels in terms of the question of who trains the degree course providers in playwork at this level?

Some views expressed said that, at the moment, Universities in Scotland might not have competency to deliver degree-level play qualifications in play in Scotland.

Recommendations to solve this issue could be:

- Funded play Doctorates (Professional doctorates)
- Academic play research network
- Professional Doctorates and Part-Time PhDs

Most Scottish universities will offer these advanced level degree options. Both of these particular qualifications are research-based and lead to the conferring of the title 'Dr' on graduation. Fees for a sample university for 2014/15 are:

M.Phil. part-time - £2050 per year

Ph.D., part-time - £2050 per year

Professional Doctorate - £3160 per year

### **Quality – SVQs route**

SVQs require quality control and for there to be enough properly trained internal and external verifiers. There have been some changes to improve this process, and all must

meet SQA QA standards. External verification of centres is now more robust. In the past if there was a problem you could only put a hold on the entire centre, so it had to stop operating, even if the quality issue was only about one unit. Now delivery of specific units, or specific qualifications etc., can be put on hold, so sanctions are now in place.

Differences in delivery routes can also be an issue. Some people will gain SVQs through a college or other provider and some people will gain SVQs through their own workplace (i.e. workplace is also the provider of qualifications). Those gaining qualifications through their workplace will have little external input- arguably this could be positive or negative, it depends on the quality of provision; this is highly dependent on the quality and knowledge of the deliverer.

### **Childhood Practice level 9 & above qualifications**

Training into practice- this is often dependent on the attitude of the managers- the manager might not allow change although the practitioners and support workers are up for change. This is why below, the skills of critical reflection and change management are in the Standard for Childhood Practice, and qualifications based on this are primarily about leadership and management skills. The Standard for Childhood Practice (QAA, 2007) is also currently being reviewed and it might be expected that recent or new legislation and guidance such as the National Play Strategy and Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2013a) GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2008a) and the Children and Young People Act 2014 will be covered.

### **SSSC National Occupation Standards (NOS)**

It is important to note that all future qualifications, e.g. when playwork NOS/ Qualifications are renewed in 2015, should meet the NOS standards set out by the SSSC to ensure that the qualifications can be used for social care workforce registration purposes with the SSSC.

In some opinions, there should be a common core of qualifications covering the CYP social care workforce, and then specialist units. There are also opportunities to use the NOS as a foundation for the development of training – linking to them helps achieve consistency and credibility. (See more information in the contextual background section).

As a Sector Skills Council, it is the SSSC's role to promote their qualifications and to gather statistical information on them.

### **NOS, lifelong learning and responsibility for individual learning**

As mentioned above, NOS can be used to map gaps in individuals' knowledge and learning either by developing training relating to the NOS, or by undertaking additional units after individuals have become qualified. It was further stated that qualifications should be seen to be not the end but the start of an individual's professional learning journey, which should embrace lifelong learning and Continued Professional Development (CPD).

The individual professional should take responsibility for their learning to ensure that their skills and knowledge fit with their role and setting- if it becomes apparent that there are gaps in knowledge and skills due to a shift in setting or role then the individual should take responsibility to ensure that this is addressed.

However, the employer must also take responsibility and ensure that employees are provided with the resources and opportunities to allow their employee to meet the gap in their skills or knowledge. Both the roles and responsibilities of the individual and employer are covered by the SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Social Service Employers.

Of course, whilst legislation and registration requires this it was also argued that resources (financial and other) must be provided locally and nationally to allow this to happen in practice. It was suggested that without the additional resources to employers, and subsequently individuals, it would be very difficult for this to be implemented; alternatively, childcare providers would have to raise the cost of services, which are already perceived to be high, in order for this to happen.

Whilst the increased professional development and knowledge of the sector was recognised to be a good thing, it was felt that national policy and legislation in terms of qualifications and continued professional development needs to be backed up by appropriate resources.

### **Teaching / Early Learning and Childcare**

The strong view from education background interviews that early learning and childcare settings should still have teachers involved, and one felt there was unwarranted tension between having two different regulatory bodies for managers. It was also noted that qualified teachers are increasingly being moved away from working in early learning and childcare settings, although there will be more Level 9 Childhood Practice qualified managers in place.

Local authorities can also set their own criteria for early learning and childcare staff, some for example, will not accept SVQs but require HNC/D qualifications, although the SSSC point out that now the VQ/ HNC/D units have a common core, thus local authority criteria may have an effect on what qualifications people choose to do, depending on their career progression plans.

It is important to note that teacher education is not supposed to be static, but ongoing. There are moves, since the Donaldson report, (Teaching Scotland's Future, Scottish Government, 2011) for more teachers to be MA qualified, and there are now wider teacher training courses which provide an academic route to MA specialisms (and provide academic communities of practice for teachers). Indeed, it was announced at the end of February 2015 by the Scottish Government that a master's qualification for head teachers will be introduced later in 2015 and will become a mandatory requirement for all new head teachers from 2018/2019.

One reason why it was difficult to get detailed information on courses is that a lot of them are new and at higher academic levels than previously available.

GIRFEC and the UNCRC are also in the standards teachers must meet and their role is wider than delivering learning opportunities, they have to consider the child holistically, and meet their wellbeing and development needs overall. This is a fundamental aspect of a teacher's role and should be reflected in their training.

There was a view that there is not enough about play in teacher education but that there are many ways to address this; however, this raised the question whether teachers would want to have more knowledge about play? If we consider CfE, it does include play

throughout the primary school years, especially in First stages, so it can be argued teachers should learn about play. This however could be done in a variety of ways: for example, it is possible to create (like the outdoor learning awards, see GTS section) professional update resources for teachers which could include a play based award for accreditation.

It was also suggested there are units from a variety of qualifications, teachers (as well as PSAs) could take to improve their knowledge of play e.g. NPA – National Progression Award (Playwork and Childcare) SCQF Level 5- A teacher, wrap around care worker, crèche workers, students working in holiday schemes... could do units from NPA; HNC (L7) – Facilitating Play Unit; PDA Childhood Practice (L8) – Leading & Managing a Playwork Service; PDA Childhood Practice (L9) – Childhood Practice Playwork (Teacher... playwork focus). However it was also highlighted that with the focus for teachers on master-level qualifications, it was doubtful that they would take a lower-level qualification unit.

### **Classroom Assistants/ Out of School Care/ Early Learning and Childcare**

In general, PSAs are not required to register with any regulatory body; however, some local authorities request that PSAs register with the SSSC, if they also work in daycare of children setting. For example, Fife local authority requires PSAs to register with the SSSC as they are also employed to work in local authority-run out of school care services and nurseries; in this way, PSAs are meeting recognised standards and qualifications and can be deployed across settings as needed.

Fife is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest local authority in Scotland in terms of population. Although there is no requirement for PSAs to register with any regulatory body, in Fife Council all PSAs are required to register with the SSSC; the reason behind this is that many PSAs are also

employed within early year's establishments and out of school care services. Fife Council is unusual in that it is the largest sector providing out of school care within the local authority; indeed there are few local authorities which are direct providers of out of school care. From an employability point of view, this provides PSAs with job flexibility and also meets the registration requirements with the SSSC. In terms of the PSAs in Fife, they are potentially play-trained and qualified workers who are able to work in early learning and childcare services as well as out of school care and can also bring these skills and knowledge into the school setting, particularly in terms of children's play times and the use of the playground from a play perspective. Play trained PSAs could also help bring this philosophy into the classroom.

Across Scotland it is not uncommon for out of school care staff to also work as PSAs or in other childcare roles since out of school care offers part-time hours, staff members work in other capacities at other times: there is a real potential/need to apply skills and knowledge learned in one setting to another.

### **Outdoor Learning/ Risky Play**

Every school, indeed every head teacher and teacher involved in outdoor learning, through play and nature-based activities, brings a different perspective and experience: some may be risk-averse and others may be fairly relaxed about children being involved in riskier pursuits, therefore, it is not possible to generalise here.

This an area where, if there is a whole school approach to outdoor learning, it is easier for training to have a wider affect, rather than just inspiring the individually motivated As noted in the Play in Education section, GTS accredits Professional Awards in outdoor learning,

while Education Scotland's website contains a large number of examples, including strong promotion of the work of Grounds for Learning (see training section).

teachers.

In terms of risky and challenging play within schools, it was stated that head teachers have a key role here: as the person with ultimate responsibility for Health and Safety within the school and therefore accountability for any incidents or accidents, they need to have the confidence to deliver risky play. Accountability can understandably make some head teachers wary of providing riskier activities and therefore are risk-averse. However, although the head teacher has ultimate responsibility he/she needs also to be supported by their senior management team and fundamentally there needs to be a whole school approach to supporting risky or more challenging play opportunities.

It was suggested there needs to be greater sharing of good practice between schools: those that are already successfully providing risky play should be enabled to host visits, and provide guidance and advice to those wanting to deliver more challenging play opportunities: risky play is something which people need to see happening in practice and not solely learn about theoretically.

In terms of CPD training courses which cover challenging/risky play it was suggested that a multi-perspective approach should be taken, so not solely a playwork, or a health and safety or an educators' perspective but a mixture of these (and possibly others). It was recognised that each of these perspectives has validity so therefore a more multi-approach model to training would allow a forum where issues and concerns can be more fully discussed and

addressed. It was suggested that delivering risky/challenging play training requires a sensitive and joined-up approach which takes accounts of all the real concerns.

### **Challenging/risky play and Insurance Companies**

Although not specifically related to the research questions, further to the discussion on Health and Safety, several interviewees pointed out that it was not purely an issue of health and safety but one of insurance. It was highlighted that the Health and Safety Executive released a statement in 2012 which promotes the benefit of play and risk: "When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool" (Health and Safety Executive, 2012); this statement also encourages professionals to undertake not just risk assessments but risk benefit assessments in terms of play provision.

In terms of insurance policies it was reported that they might not cover activities perceived to be "higher risk" such as sledging or even riding bicycles and scooters. There was a concern that insurance companies were severely curtailing activity by limiting what would be covered in terms of liability.

In order to provide children with more challenging play opportunities it was also reported that services might ask parents to sign disclaimers acknowledging that children undertaking activities that they are not insured for; this in turn raised concerns about the actual liability of the service should anything happen to children whilst they were participating in risky/challenging play opportunities. There should be further discussion as to how insurance companies incorporate challenging play opportunities into their insurance policies without high additional financial charges.

### **Play in Schools at break time**

Improved plays during break times was highlighted as being the most realistic time for free play and risky play opportunities within schools. It was suggested that those schools which have focused on play during playtime and in the playgrounds, and where there is a whole school approach in place tend to find greater success- playground supervising staff have a clear idea of what they are to do as this will have been clearly discussed and approaches agreed since it will be embedded as part of the play ethos of the school; this then also allows children and parents to understand what to expect.

### **Childminders**

Although childminders have to register with the Care inspectorate, with the majority scoring grades 4 or higher they do not need to obtain qualifications or register with the SSSC, however they must follow the SSSC code of practice as members of the social care workforce in Scotland. Ahead of other services regulated by the Care Inspectorate, childminders are already inspected using GIRFEC and SHANARRI wellbeing indicators.

It was identified that since childminders are not required to undertake qualifications (although some do, including the Childhood practice Award) there is a need for play training. Currently childminders are signposted by SCMA to relevant CPD courses such as, Starcatchers' early year's creative skills training. Furthermore, community childminders do receive specialist training:

- It was reported that Aberdeen City is currently providing £40k of funding for 10 community childminders to undertake SVQ 3 in Social Services (Children and Young People).
- SCMA community childminders need to do 15 hours CPD induction into community childminding; the training includes nurture, attachment, child development and a small bit about play. Must also be at least a grade 4 and they must also attend 2 annual network events.

In terms of CPD training, it was stated that this comes down to the individual but

Care Inspectorate inspectors should check on the CPD of childminders and the inspectors could also suggest training childminders could undertake to improve skills and knowledge.

In terms of the play that can be offered by childminders it was highlighted that childminders, unlike other care services can send children outside (garden) for unsupervised free play, so there is real potential for good quality play opportunities.

### **Childminder training and qualifications- what is there and is there a gap?**

It was stated that there was definitely a gap in terms of training and qualifications: there is no specific childminding qualification in Scotland, although in England and Wales childminders might do a foundation level qualification for childcare.

In the past workforce development funding included childminders, which was used for a mixture of qualifications and CPD training; it was suggested that possibly childminders were better qualified in the past when this funding was available to them.

It was highlighted that there is both a need and demand for specific play training for childminders which focuses on activities and opportunities that can be delivered in the home and garden.

In terms of what is currently available, all SCMA CDOs (Childminding Development Officers) are trained in Bookbug/Play Talk Read and Play @ Home and active children sessions. Also, SCMA is now a branded learning centre and childminders can use ILA accounts to pay for training and they deliver a variety of e-learning courses, although probably only 25% of childminders engage in SCMA training.

## 2. Summary Results – Interview themes

- Conflicting views about the actual play content of qualifications
- Agreement on low profile of Playwork in Scotland
- Need identified for highest level post graduate training, e.g. doctoral opportunities in playwork/ play theories
- Need for future alignment with early years NOS – SSSC – might lead to changes being required in playwork
- Role of teachers wider than teaching and with CfE, GIRFEC and UNCRC – need for more play based training identified, either in initial training or in ongoing professional updates
- Different views about role or need for teachers in early learning and childcare, however, LAs make their own decisions about this and what qualifications are accepted at all levels.

### Potential areas of development include:

- Doctoral level study in playwork related topics
- play trained classroom assistants working across sectors
- further developments of outdoor learning including risky play
- potential to create accredited professional update training

- Some play units in qualifications suitable for teachers
- potential to use early years NOS as foundation for development of training.
- Need to develop multi-theory/perspective approach to delivering risky/challenging play training
- Sharing and support opportunities between schools already providing good play opportunities with schools wanting to develop them
- Recognition there needs to be a whole-school approach to implementing change in terms of play- everyone needs to understand, agree and be comfortable with the play approaches.

**Identified needs/ opinions that more play education and training should be developed for:**

- Teachers
- Childminders
- University staff delivering degree level courses with play content

# SECTION D: EVALUATION & ANALYSIS OF QUALIFICATIONS SUITABLE FOR REGISTRATION WITH SSSC



## QUALIFICATIONS ACCEPTABLE FOR REGISTRATION WITH THE SSSC

### **Manager/lead practitioner of a day care of children service**

Please note: you must hold a practice qualification before you gain one of the following mandatory management qualifications.

- BA Childhood Practice
- BA (Honours) Childhood Practice (Strathclyde University)
- Graduate Diploma Childhood Practice (the University of the West of Scotland)
- SQA Professional Development Award Childhood Practice (360 credits at SCQF Level 9)

### **Upon entry to this qualification you will be expected to hold or be willing to undertake a suitable practice award**

- Postgraduate Diploma in Childhood Practice
- Master of Education Childhood Practice, Glasgow University and Dundee University

### **Practitioner in day care of children service**

The main practice qualifications are:

- SVQ Social Services Children and Young People at SCQF Level 7
- HNC Early Education and Childcare (at SCQF level 6)

The following qualifications are also accepted:

- SVQ 3 Playwork at SCQF Level 7
- BA (Hons) Social Work (or equivalent)

### **Support worker in a day care of children service**

The main national qualifications are:

- Any qualification in the practitioner in day care of children services category

### **One of the following practice qualifications**

- NC in Early Education and Childcare at SCQF Level 6
- SVQ Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF Level 6

The following qualifications are also accepted:

- SVQ 2 Children's Care Learning and Development at SCQF Level 5
- SVQ 2 Playwork at SCQF Level 6
- HNC Additional Support Needs (Supporting the Individual)
- National Progression Award Playwork and Child Care
- The Early Years Developing Practice (The OU module E100)
- PDA in Education Support Assistance at SCQF Level 6

**Table D Evaluation Criteria**

<p><b>Play Pedagogies/ Playwork Theory and Practice ( main)</b></p>	<p>The Playwork Principles</p> <p>Frameworks, workplace values and principles, (linked to the Standard for Childhood Practice 3.2), e.g. the organisation's aims.</p> <p>values and principles including play/ outdoor play</p> <p>UNCRC, including right to play.</p> <p>Bronfenbrenner/environment/ culture for play</p> <p>Scaffolding play, play as a means of learning, observation, identification of play cycles.</p> <p>Play learning theorists such as Vygotsky or Piaget.</p> <p>Play Pedagogy, play as a process, not as an outcome.</p> <p>Risk in play, loose parts and outdoors</p> <p>Material on the key theorists in play and playwork and play theory concepts such as; evolution and recapitulation, adulteration and intervention, First Claim, chaos theory, brain architecture and compound flexibility.</p>
<p><b>Play, Child Development (main)</b></p>	<p>This includes the socio-cultural perspective, in terms of the social, historical and cultural contexts of childhood. Material on key theorists on child development, early learning and childcare;</p>

<p><b>and Learning</b></p>	<p>historical and current, and concepts such as scaffolding, observation and sensitive intervention, sustained shared thinking.</p> <p>The value of free and spontaneous play, as well as guided participation, a playful process and the contribution of play to learning, are all features of play in terms of child development.</p>
<p><b>Sub themes</b></p>	<p>Although generally included in the above two main analysis themes, it is also worth singling out particular examples of the following sub themes in courses, given their importance and relevance.</p>
<p><b>Children's Rights and International modern/postmodern theory</b></p>	<p>Children as bearers of rights, agency and power, including their place in the world in terms of global childhoods and rights based theories around children's space and status in society. Current thinking on, for example, child led research, and research methodology to capture children's perspectives belong in this category.</p>
<p><b>Play and Learning Environment</b></p>	<p>As the literature review brought out, the importance of environmental context, Bronfenbrenner, (also in play and child development), is a thread running across all of the theoretical perspectives. This might also include outdoor play and learning, forest schools etc. and links to concepts such as the child in society – cross cultural perspectives.</p>
<p><b>Play and Learning –</b></p>	<p>This relates to both a broad description of creativity in contents and</p>

<b>Creativity, curriculum,    Active Learning   /   digital learning</b>	in particular, ideas such as the Reggio Emilia approach. Active learning through play, cultural activities and topics such as digital play and learning which have a loose fit with the above categories, but are worth highlighting.
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## **1. Context: The Standard for Childhood Practice**

Published by the QAA (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2007) the Standard was developed in response to the National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce by the Scottish Government (Scottish Executive, 2006). The Scottish Government response included the requirement that the early years and childcare workforce should be led by professionals qualified at level 9 (degree level) of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

Central to the Standard is that it is a work-based award through BA, graduate diploma and other approved level 9 routes. The guidelines within the Standard support the development and delivery of these programmes of learning to ensure that candidates can show that they demonstrate the values, skills and knowledge defined in the Standard for Childhood Practice. In addition, the guidelines support the development of an integrated qualifications and professional development framework in the early years and childcare workforce.

To gain an award at BA level at least 360 credits, with at least 60 credits at level 9 are required. A mix of credits at levels 7,8 and 9 are also included in this programme of learning, and can build on, and include, recognised previous learning at these levels (to an upper limit of not over half of the credits, and each course provider assesses previous experience and learning for each individual entry to their course). A degree or equivalent as an entry qualification followed by at least 120 credits of learning assessed at the minimum of level 9 qualifications is required for the graduate degree (QAA, 2007).

The purpose of the Standard for Childhood Practice is therefore to both set out the requirement of the learning programmes, which also have to be approved by the SSSC, and the skills, abilities, commitment, knowledge and values expected of managers/ lead practitioners in Scotland, who have had to be registered with the SSSC (or equivalent body) since 2011.

The statements within the Standard for Childhood Practice are based on a vision of the manager/ lead practitioner achieving the defined learning and competencies to be able to:

- “Lead and support the provision of high quality and flexible early years and childcare services
- Work in partnership with families and communities and
- Collaborate with other agencies and children’s services” (QAA, 2007, p. 3)

It is very clear here that the Standard for Childhood Practice and therefore the associated learning programmes are more than half based on managerial roles and functions. Nevertheless, also integral to the standard are outcomes relating to the experiences of children, families, as well as the learning needs of the staff team that the manager/ lead practitioner supports. Manager/ lead practitioner childhood practice awards will therefore enable childcare and early years services, covering from birth to age 16, to:

- “Enable children to be successful learners capable of meeting their potential and developing the social skills and attitudes that will stand them in good stead in later life
- Provide the safe and stimulating environment parents and carers want for their children

- Enable parents and carers to take up employment and training opportunities.”  
(QAA,2007, p. 4)

### **National standards**

“3.7 The Standard for Childhood Practice is defined in terms of the descriptors of level 9 in the SCQF but also takes account of the following:

- The National Occupational Standards for Children's Care, Learning and Development
- The National Occupational Standards for Playwork
- The Roles and Responsibilities Framework developed as part of the National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce in Scotland
- The Early Years Professional National Standards of the Children's Workforce Development Council
- The National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare up to the Age of 16 of the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care
- The National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership” (our bold, QAA,2007, p 4)

The benchmark statements which comprise the standards are therefore concerned both with management and leadership attributes but include the assumption that courses developed and prior learning of candidates will cover the knowledge, skills and values relating to children's care, development and learning and the underpinning national occupational standards of playwork. National Care standards also form part of the package of knowledge and good practice required from managers and lead practitioners.

The interrelationship between professional values and personal commitment, professional knowledge and understanding, and professional skills and abilities are emphasised in the Standard for Childhood Practice. The purpose of this research is specifically about play and the contents of qualifications relating to play, aligned to this, of course, is the UNCRC (UN: 1989) and the role of “active learning”, as well as acknowledging that many child development theories and courses emphasis the value of play, at least in the early years.

The remainder of this analysis will be in looking at where the benchmark statements are specific about children's rights, play, care, protection, active learning and child development, all areas where it could *potentially* include freely chosen play.

It should also be acknowledged that the standards relating to supporting staff in professional development also have a bearing in that practitioners and support workers, especially in out of school care services, may be undertaking playwork SVQs and learning programmes based on playwork. In addition, all the standards relating to management, communication and collaboration, being able to undertake evidence based enquiry and present professional reports are all interlinked with the quality of a service, including relationships with parents, fellow professionals and children themselves.

Professional reflection on the practice of self and others is also an integral part of the benchmark statements and a clear aspect of a quality service and programmes nurturing children's care, rights, play, learning and development. Therefore, all of such elements of courses should also be considered when assessing their value in relation to promoting and supporting children's agency and choice in play.

A first and important point is that the national occupational standards for playwork were included in the development of the Standard for Childhood Practice (QAA, 2007, p. 4).

This leads to an expectation that specific statements about play are included in the benchmark statements, or one can assume that the more general statements about child wellbeing also include/ cover such features of play and playwork.

Table 54 (Appendix) covers only the benchmark statements in relation to the care, play, rights and protection of children for further information. All of the statements are applicable to play and playwork, children's development and learning, children's rights, and some apply to the environment and active learning. Analysis of how the benchmark statements and features fit across the categories does show that it is quite possible for the features to be covered in all 4 categories for each benchmark statement area applicable to children's care and development, rights and protection, learning and active learning, and play and playwork. For specific mention of play, or playwork, child development and learning through play, in the benchmark statements, the following are all applicable.

**Under Benchmark 3: Children and Childhood:**

**"3.2 Managers/lead practitioners have a critical understanding of the content of relevant organisational frameworks and statements of principles for supporting and enabling play, learning opportunities and experiences. They:**

- "Demonstrate secure knowledge, understanding and practical skill in relation to the content of a range of organisational frameworks used by the service for supporting play and learning

- Know how to select, prepare, and use a range of resources to engage, support, stimulate and challenge children and to meet/match their needs
- Know how to plan and provide safe and appropriate child lead and adult initiated experiences, activities and play opportunities in indoor, outdoor and out of setting spaces, which enable children to develop and learn
- Have detailed knowledge of how to make effective personalised provision for children taking account of their ages, interests and abilities and of respect for diversity, promoting equality and inclusion
- Can identify the range of influences and transitions within a play space or setting which affect children and their behaviour and link these to appropriate strategies to underpin policy and practice” (QAA, 2007, p. 13)

All of the above features and elements could apply specifically to play and play work, with “statements of principles” relating to the Playwork Principles and in feature three above – “child lead” is mentioned.

The environment is also featured:

**Under Benchmark 4** “Provide environments and play spaces that are comfortable, welcoming and accessible to each child and her/his family and promote children's well-being and development” (QAA, 2007, p. 16)

**Also under benchmark 4.3** “plan, implement and justify balanced and flexible programmes that provide enriching learning experiences and promote children's play, learning and development, using national and local guidelines” (QAA, 2007, p.16)

There is also content in the benchmark statements and underlying features about children's rights, choices, participation and children's involvement in planning, having a say and being listened to. The Standard for Childhood Practice is in the process of being updated (January 2015) therefore, it is expected that changes in national legislation and policies since the standard was first developed, will be incorporated in the future.

## 2. Childhood Practice BA, BA (Hons) MEd, PGDip and Level 9 PDA

### Qualifications

The following qualifications are recognised by the SSSC for managers / lead practitioners, there are also other qualifications accepted if registered with another recognised body such as the General Teaching Council of Scotland (See appendix: list of SSSC qualifications, for details). This section, analyses the specific qualifications developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice, the information for analysis is derived from the corresponding tables in the appendix (**Tables 1.1 to 8.1**), which provide more information on the courses.

#### The qualifications are:

- BA and BA (Hons) Childhood Practice
- MEd Childhood Practice
- Postgraduate Diploma Childhood Practice
- Professional Development Award (PDA) Level 9 Childhood Practice

#### The BA Childhood Practice:

Is available from the following universities:

1. The University of Aberdeen (also BA Hons)
2. The University of Dundee
3. The University of Edinburgh
4. The University of Glasgow
5. The University of Highlands and Islands

6. The University of Strathclyde (also BA Hons)
7. The University of the West of Scotland (also BA Hons)

### **Postgraduate qualifications in Childhood Practice are available from**

The University of Dundee (New) PGDip

The University of Glasgow, MEd & PGDip

The University of the West of Scotland PGDip

### **The PDA at level 9 in Childhood Practice**

This is delivered by a number of training partners; however, they must have accreditation from both SQA and SSSC. Use the following link to find a college or approved centre:

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/47050.html>

### **Course modules not reviewed**

The guaranteed aspects of every course analysed are that each course involves significant work based projects, placements and modules on management, communication, interdisciplinary work, and leadership relevant for supporting other staff and quality. In addition, every course has specific modules on equality, diversity and inclusion, all of which are relevant and expected in terms of the Standard for Childhood Practice (QAA, 2007). The tables 1.1 – 8.1 (appendix) demonstrate this in more detail.

Action research projects are included in all courses, with an increased focus and weighting at honours and postgraduate and Master of Education levels. Play or play related projects could be the research topic at any of these levels. For all of the aspects of play covered in

this review, lead practitioners need the leadership, management and mentoring skills, which are integral to all of the courses. For any childhood practice setting, the value and attitudes towards the importance of play, including freely chosen non- directed play, is highly dependent on the knowledge and skills of the leader.

## Results

### 1. The University of Aberdeen

#### 1.1 The University of Aberdeen: BA Childhood Practice

The University of Aberdeen BACP, through the core, and later, in depth modules cover socio-cultural, social construction and historical approaches to children's development and learning; is including situating the child in the context of the family and wider society.

**Effecting Change in Development and Learning (1.1)** how children learn through play and comparisons with other international play based curriculums, feature here, alongside specific active learning analysis through play on the topic of mathematics, across the age range.

The **UNCRC** is covered, in terms of how children are enabled to participate and are consulted with in terms of provision of play contexts, in **Living, Learning and Teaching in Communities (1.1)**. The play environment is covered e.g. in Bronfenbrenner theory - physical environment, community, including play spaces, and ways in which the student contributes to the creation of a stimulating, inclusive learning environment. This includes e.g. the social construction of childhood / gender roles expressed in play. Theorists including Vygotsky; scaffolding play, Piaget; creative play, Laever's theories of involvement, depth of engagement & emotional wellbeing through observations and comparisons of child-chosen and/or adult-directed activities

**Research and personal reflection (1.1)** topics are based on the student's working environment and choices of in depth study; both of which could be based on play and play

related theories and practice reflection. At optional honours level, of particular interest are the cross- cultural international comparisons of childhood; which again reflects the latest thinking in socio-cultural theories of child development e.g.: **Global Citizenship (1.1)**

The course handbook (1.1) (University of Aberdeen, 2013) further maps each module onto the specific indicators of the Standard for Childhood Practice, e.g.:

**“3.2 Managers/lead practitioners have a critical understanding of the content of relevant organisational frameworks and statements of principles for supporting and enabling play, learning opportunities and experiences. They:**

- “Demonstrate secure knowledge, understanding and practical skill in relation to the content of a range of organisational frameworks used by the service for supporting play and learning... Know how to plan and provide safe and appropriate child lead and adult initiated experiences, activities and play opportunities in indoor, outdoor and out of setting spaces, which enable children to develop and learn” (QAA, 2007, pp. 11 -14, 16-17)

AS 3.2 includes “statements of principles for supporting and enabling play” (QAA, 2007, p 13). By their very clear mapping on to 3.2 Childhood Practice Standards in their course handbook, (in practically all of the above modules), the specific play work principle, for this enquiry, is implicitly included in their course.

## 2. The University of Dundee:

### 2.1 The University of Dundee: BA Childhood Practice

The University of Dundee BACP course unit **Children and Society (2.1)** is well linked to socio-cultural and social constructivist theories as practitioners are required to consider their views on the child as an active participant in social relationships and learning, while: “Childhood practitioners must therefore be knowledgeable about new and postmodern perspectives on childhood. They need to evaluate the impact of society and culture on the child and their own values, attitudes and principles in practice”

**Pedagogical Perspectives (2.1)** examining: “how theory and policy define particular pedagogical approaches, which in turn create learning experiences” includes Active Learning, play and creativity “It explores the implications of changing pedagogies for the curriculum; its content and delivery. It also considers strategies to promote play and creativity”. As well as various forms of play: “Through self-expression in its different forms: imaginative play; role play; dance; drawing; painting and modelling children show their thought processes, their own creativity, their feelings and emotions and their dispositions to learning.” (2.1) and this is also in **Creativity and Self Expression (optional) (2.1)**.

Play is given a place of central importance, linking to valuing children’s play, active learning and child development through play, including over fives: “Practitioners should develop an understanding of the powerful contribution which play can make to children’s development and learning. The ability to identify and extend learning through play is a key skill for practitioners working with children of all ages.” in **Observing Children’s Learning (2.1)**

Children's Rights (UNCRC) are identified "In order to identify and extend learning through play a commitment to inclusion, diversity, social justice, anti-discrimination and protecting and caring for children". While the environment for play and learning is covered; including children's own agency and choice: "The learning environment needs to also be responsive to the child's *interests and dispositions* to support the child. Practitioners will engage with current thinking and debates about environments which promote learning" in **Creating the Child's Learning Environment (2.1)**. There are also **Action Research modules (2.1)** where practitioners could choose to focus on many aspects of play or play rights and practice.

## **2.2 Postgraduate module – extract on Leading Learning through Play**

The module is designed to enable participants to:

- **Develop a critical understanding of play from an historical perspective;**
- Critically analyse current standards, policies and principles in a contemporary context to lead and facilitate enriching learning experiences for children and young people;
- Critically examine leadership within the environment and within the realms of relationships;
- Investigate how to lead and manage with an understanding of national and local standards, frameworks and initiatives;
- Gather data from practice that is based on sound theoretical knowledge and understanding;
- **Evaluate the importance of supporting play in relation to the holistic development of children**

There is a specific unit on **“historical perspectives on play” (2.2)**: “...explore and contextualise play in a contemporary learning environment. Facilitating various types of play, learning opportunities and experiences...” Then a unit on **“Standards, Policies and Principles” (2.2)**: “... explore the range of organisational frameworks currently used to support play. There is a focus on a range of play principles and policies, which influence the way in which play is led and initiated by children”; which clearly relates to the **Playwork Principles**, and the specific principles relating to this enquiry.

The play environment, outdoors and indoors, and how children respond to their learning environment, is covered in the **“Leading Environments and Relationships” (2.2)**. This unit; “expects students to create responsive and dynamic environments for play”. Also a focus of analysis is how play contributes to secure relationships, transitions and the need for observation, communication and listening to children through their play.

Clearly linking with Vygotsky, (and later theorists), the next unit; **“Supporting Children Through Play” (2.2)**, explores how “children’s development can be assessed and scaffolded through play”. There is a clear combination of practical and theoretical learning tasks, including students reflecting on their own beliefs, attitudes and values about play and its role in children’s learning and development, while being encouraged to “to plan, implement and justify balanced and flexible programmes”.

As expected from a module on the topic of learning and the role of play, this example postgraduate module from Dundee University clearly demonstrates full understanding of the playwork principles and practice underpinning the knowledge and skills related to delivering play, with children’s agency, rights and needs supported throughout.

Undoubtedly, the national **Play Strategy** and associated **Action Plan** (Scottish Government, 2013a and 2013b) will be covered under the policies on play section.

### 3.1 The University of Edinburgh BA Childhood Practice

The University of Edinburgh BACP **table 3.1**, while comparatively shorter than the more detailed information received for the other courses, does contain enough information to show that play is covered in their course, albeit at times, quite indirectly inferred from the information. By focusing a whole session on the **Play Strategy For Scotland (3.1)** (Scottish Government, 2013), it does address our key enquiry.

Child development, learning and historical theories, which touch upon play, in **Children and Childhood (3.1)**, include: “how play is conceptualised and has been studied by different theorists (e.g. Froebel, Montessori, McMillan, and the Opies).”

In relation to **Children and the Family (3.1)**, play is included in terms of child development, care, supporting child and family rights, while readings refer to addressing aspects of play under ideas such as “the playground as panopticum, or readings on how play and children’s freedom are restricted through increasing surveillance, control and stranger danger hypotheses”. However, “In class discussions, practical examples of play were more prevalent, especially how different forms of play could be encouraged by practitioners (e.g. in forest schools, through creating children’s spaces etc.)”, therefore, the course is covering the changing place of children in society and students relate this to discussing the environment for play.

On the **Childhood Studies Work-based Learning (3.1)** course, “there is one session on the Play Strategy and students learn about management in play settings”, therefore, this course does, implicitly, include the Playwork Principles and associated play definitions and underpinning research relating to this strategy. Play is also included in the module on children’s health and wellbeing, while children’s rights through the UNCRC are a strong

focus of the course with a specific module on the latest in **Children's Rights (3.1)**, including international comparisons.

As part of **Work Based Organisational Development Studies (3.1)**, students investigate the policies around play in their setting, which, depending on the setting, of course, could be about the playwork principles or relating to how children learn through play. As in other courses, the student's choice for their **research topic** could be a play related topic.

## 4. University of Glasgow

### 4.1 BA Childhood Practice

One of the core modules focuses on the **Standard for Childhood Practice (4.1)** and is used to help with a student's self-evaluation and in creating their learning pathway; this is where previous attainment, skills and knowledge would be mapped on to the Standard, with identification of gaps to be addressed. It is therefore presumed, or implicit in this process, that meeting, e.g. **Childhood Practice Standard 3.2** (QAA, 2007) – which covers play practice and principles, would be addressed by those already trained in playwork staff as contributing to this assessment. Those without such a background, or active learning in other training, would therefore have a gap identified (to be addressed) in their play principles and practice knowledge.

The other core modules weigh heavily towards management, leadership and professional collaboration, as expected to meet the Standard for Childhood Practice, and, like other courses, there are opportunities for **practical placements and student's choices in research topics (4.1)**, which again could focus on play. National policies and strategies are also included; therefore, although not defined here, it is possible the Play Strategy for Scotland (Scottish Government, 2013) would be covered. The **initial E-learning Module (4.1)** in covering the impact of digital technology on childhood and learning, including the students own use of this, might indeed include, for example, children's digital play choices, or the use of Education Scotland "Glow" resources, but the information does not make that clear. The unit on **Taking Action and making an Intervention (4.1)** also links with, for example, the

methodology employed for the Early Years Collaborative, and, therefore, this could be used to gauge play interventions.

Where play and the theoretical context are covered more explicitly, is in one of the *optional* units; **The Social Construction of Childhood (4.1)**, which: “Introduce learners to the study of childhoods as they are constructed and practised in different social, cultural and economic settings. Explore the concepts of the child in society, children's participation in society, children's ways of coping with violence, child play and child labour.” This optional course therefore addresses socio-cultural and construction theory, which includes child agency and choice, children’s participation rights under the UNCRC, and play is included here.

Other optional units on **Global Childhood (4.1)** and on **Key Issues and Debates in Contemporary Childhood (4.1)** could also include the range of theoretical content in terms of socio- cultural theory; rights based practice and indeed play practice. This is not that explicit: e.g. “students' wider world perspective in the study of childhood by exploring the theory, practice and outcomes in provision of childhood services in a range of contexts”, although presumably this would compare children’s environments. While: “contribute creatively and critically to developments within the field of childhood practice such as definitions of quality; additional support needs and inclusion; children's rights; parental involvement; provision for under-threes; integration of children's services; professionalisation of practitioners; cultural diversity; globalisation and so on...” is likely to include play.

Overall, from the information provided on this course, while **children’s rights, relevant theoretical perspectives and child play** are all mentioned, given the course links strongly

with the Standard in Childhood Practice, we would expect again that standard 3.2 underpins the content; this also links with content for the postgraduate diploma.

#### 4.2 The University of Glasgow Postgraduate Diploma in Childhood Practice 2013-14

This includes **research- based units and practice placements (4.2)** which therefore could include aspects of play and play theory. There is a focus on **Children and Childhood within Contemporary Perspective (4.2)**, which places a strong emphasis on children's rights, therefore **the UNCRC**, including the **right to play**, is covered. There is also an opportunity for a **MEd**, with a further year of study and this, again, is **research based** and could include a range of relevant topics, including those related to play.

## 5. The University of Highland and Islands (UHI)

### 5.1 BA Childhood Practice:

As in all BACP courses, students are able to undertake an action research project, where it is presumed this could be based on aspects of play in childhood: **Practitioner Research in Childhood Practice (5.1)**, as well as planning and delivering **Childhood Practice Projects (5.1)**, which could relate to play. There is also a module on **Influences on Curriculum for Excellence (5.1)** 'Building the curriculum' guidelines; active learning; developing the four capacities; progressing from 'pre-Birth to Three'. The Module also covers: The values and principles within Early Years Education and Playwork, Quality provision – the play environment and the adult role – theory into practice within Childhood Practice settings: Quality Assurance, Legislation, National Guidelines and Regulatory Bodies, GIRFEC, Early Years Framework, Curriculum for Excellence, Care Inspectorate, HMIE and SSSC; inspection mechanisms Quality Indicators – Playwork, Child at the Centre.

Child development theories and national policy and guidance are critically examined within the topics of the module on **Coordination, Partnership & Integration in Childhood Practice (5.1)**, while the UNCRC, inclusion and participation feature heavily in the module on Promoting **Children's Rights and Inclusion in Childhood Practice (5.1)**.

The unit 8 on **Managing Quality in Childhood Practice (5.1)** specifically mentions "...focus on current theories of play underpinning 'best practice' and provision in both the Early Years and Playwork sectors..." More in depth information is provided on this module as a **case study, which illustrates just** how play, and play, theory centred, this module is, see following **Table 5.2**.

**Play and Playwork theories (5.2)** – play taxonomies: ‘cycles’ of play and play behaviours; benefits of play and impact of play deprivation; Hughes’ evolutionary view of play, Loose parts, risk and flexibility in play space, Outdoor environments / natural spaces and adult intervention in play (a hierarchy), responsiveness and managing risk.

The level 9 module on **Contemporary Issues in Childhood Practice (5.1)**, again with more detailed information as **a case study (Table 5.2)** includes critical review and analysis on current key policies and initiatives relevant to working with the 0 – 18 age group in use in Scotland today e.g. *Birth to 3, ACE, AifL, Early intervention / Playwork etc.* Students are asked to investigate current research in learning theory relevant to early years and childhood e.g.: learning styles, emotional intelligence and literacy thinking and metacognition, as well as creativity, digital literacy and compound flexibility.

“Investigate theoretical perspectives and current research on Play and Active learning in the early years and childhood e.g.: contemporary theory/ play and culture. Critically review the principles and practice of Play and Active Learning across the age range with reference to current frameworks, the playwork strategy and current qualitative research e.g. play based pedagogy, inclusion and psycholudic / therapeutic playwork. “Investigate European and other perspectives and consider the relevance of ideas in the provision for children Birth to 3 / 3 to 8 / 8 to 18 e.g. Play / children as learners and thinkers / evaluating the Practitioner role/ Relationship between theory and practice” **(Table 5.2)**. There are more topics covered in this unit but these examples demonstrate the links across play, active learning and between theory and practice.

The two module content case studies analysis are possible only because of the amount of detailed information the course provider (**University of the Highlands and Islands, table 5.1 and 5.2**) made available for this analysis. No doubt, if other course providers have shared the same level of detailed information, of course it may be that they too may be covering these topics in as much depth.

The two case studies, and across this course content, demonstrate how the BACP, certainly through **UHI (tables 5.1 and 5.2)** can be richly centred on play theory and practice, alongside the play centred active learning contained in Curriculum for Excellence, and also meet the management, communication, leadership and research outcomes required for the Standard in Childhood Practice.

## 6. The University of Strathclyde

### 6.1 BA (Hons) Childhood Practice

The module on **Academic Literacy, Communication and Professional Values (6.1)**, includes play work in the description of the workforce: e.g. "...context of increasing integration of care and education services, and play work provision, workers are coming into contact with a wider range of professionals", while a sociological exploration of childhood from an ecological perspective, investigating the socially constructed nature of childhood, including topics such as children's rights, is covered in **Contemporary Childhood: a Sociological Exploration (6.1)**.

An exploration of the ecological environment from the perspective of the child **A Child's World: Experiences in Learning Environments (6.1)**, how children learn through play and interaction with their environment, using their own agency and creativity, is a clear focus of this module. "It focuses on children's agency in contributing to their experiences by considering the ways that children can interact with resources and space while using their own creativity to develop playful learning experiences (6.1).

**Playful Pedagogies: Children as Thinkers (6.1)**: "promote students' understanding of playful pedagogies and the impact of these on children as thinkers, including the significance of play to children's thinking and to the development of positive learning dispositions for children of all ages. The ways in which pedagogical practices shape the play experiences of children in a variety of settings will be explored. The influence of culture on play repertoires will be considered, including play experiences in families and communities. **Play is often perceived as an activity which is child-led, spontaneous and intrinsically motivated** while

pedagogy is often defined as the strategies and approaches used by adults to support the processes of teaching and learning. (Rodgers, 2011) and the role of the adult in sensitively supporting and extending children's thinking during play is a crucial aspect to be investigated" (6.1).

**Managing and Supporting Children as Active Learners (6.1)** this module includes Vygotsky's view that play precludes learning and also looks at the theory of sustained shared thinking. The module provides opportunities, through theory, literature and research, to understand current theories on the adult's role in managing and leading play based pedagogy, and current theory in terms of their role in supporting and developing active learning.

As in all other BACP courses, there are opportunities for research training and projects, as well as work based projects on chosen themes and practice e.g. **Exploring Research Methods in Childhood Practice (6.1)**. Again in common with other courses, there are modules on management and leadership, reflection and communication, managing change and here there is also one which includes children's rights and a socio-cultural perspective: **Children's Rights and Working in Multi-Professional Teams (6.1)**.

Together the modules on **Emotional & Social Development: Foundations for learning and health**, and **Children's Emotional and Social Development; Observation and working with children in practice (6.1)** provide a comprehensive account of how children learn and develop. This includes early emotional and social development its importance as foundations for learning and health, and how best to engage with children and their communities to support development.

Finally, for the University of Strathclyde **(6.1)**, the BACP is changing to a **BA (Hons) level**, with an optional further year of study at level 10. This includes more in depth modules on children's development, including middle and later childhood, which is of interest, for example to out of school care lead practitioners, international perspectives and a dissertation – all are in development at this stage **(6.1)**.

This course recognises play and playwork practice, as well as the classic and modern theoretical underpinnings of how children learn and develop through play and active learning. It uses the language of the playwork principles and indeed the focus of the research question in defining play as “**which is child-led, spontaneous and intrinsically motivated**” in **Playful Pedagogies (6.1)**.

## 7. The University of the West of Scotland

### 7.1 BA Childhood Practice, BA (Hons) Childhood Practice & Graduate Diploma Childhood Practice

This is essentially the same two-year part time course for both sets of students, as it is positioned at level 9 throughout. There is also the opportunity to take further level 10 modules to obtain **BA (Hons)**.

As with other BACP courses reflective planning, leadership and management, integrated working and understanding the content and aims of the **Standard for Childhood Practice** are covered in integral modules in the course, as are **Qualitative Research Methods (7.1)**. Later core and optional modules at level 10 for the Honours year give opportunities to look at such topics in greater depth, as well as producing an Honours level Dissertation.

The module on **Leading Learning (7.1)** focuses on the development and learning of children from before birth to six years and examines current Scottish Government guidelines for learning and curriculum. Relevant theories in the concept of the child and childhood are brought in from developmental psychology after examination of the concept of early childhood care and education (ECCE) which is acknowledged in international reports as a holistic approach to service provision, which takes place in the home, the establishment and the community. (7.1).

**Promoting Learning (7.1)** examines wider models of education e.g. out of school learning, community learning, family learning and the role of involving parents in their children's learning. Examination of play work theory of and development and practices such as play frames, psycholudics, the play cycle and the role of out of school care is included here, while

transitions and arrangements between early years and school are covered using examples from Reggio and New Zealand. Policies such as Curriculum for Excellence, Assessment is for Learning is covered, all within the context of development of children 6-16. Examines international and national approaches to statutory education, in school learning, and in particular the historical, economic, cultural, social and political factors, which have shaped policies and the nature of childhood

In the optional Honours year, at level 10, there are three core modules a professional **Honours Dissertation, Supporting Professional Development (7.1)** and one on **Participation and Children's Rights (7.1)**. This latter module focuses on the UNCRC within international and national policies. Students focus on how participation relates to issues of inclusion and how taking account of the voices and views of vulnerable and minority groups is critical. They will investigate and evaluate some of the different methods employed to enable participation of young children, highlighting the central role of play and considering the role of children as active researchers.

It is useful to focus on one of the additional optional modules entitled: **Play and Pedagogy 0-16 (Optional) (7.1)**, with much of the contents reproduced here as a case study, as it is very relevant to the enquiry:

“This module aims to expand the student's understanding of **the impact of playful pedagogies on the child** as an active agent in their learning, motivation and development of positive learning dispositions. Consideration of the heterogeneous nature of children's everyday lives will expand the student's knowledge of children's geographies and the resulting consequences for the development of resilience and wellbeing.

Students will have the opportunity to explore contemporary research and theories in relation to **the importance of play in the development of cognitive and emotional functions**. Lester and Russell (2008) supported the concept of play as a factor in increasing the flexibility of the brain and thus improving potential for learning later in life.

The importance of **play and the child's right to play** is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the module will allow students to critically reflect on how this has directed the development of national policy and frameworks for learning in Scotland, e.g. **Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (2013a) and Early Years Framework (2009)**. The module aims to develop students' critical awareness of the complex nature of the circumstances and environments for children's play and explore the different contexts in which play occurs." (7.1)

Other Optional Modules include **Current Childhood Policy and Practice (Optional) (7.1)**, and this includes reference to, for example, the National Play Strategy (2013), Curriculum for Excellence and good practice such as Outdoor Learning /Forest Schools, Listening to Children and Citizenship. (7.1).

It is clear that the UWS (7.1) has play, and learning through play, as an integral part of their course, including understanding the theoretical and policy frameworks underpinning childhood and the child. The course also brings in rights based practice and child agency, including the more recent perspectives on their rights and skills as co or lead researchers. A particular feature of this course is the opportunity to take what might be one of the few level 10 modules available on play theory and practice through **Play and Pedagogy 0-16 (7.1)**, which covers an age range wider than the early years.

## PDA level 9 Childhood Practice

### 8.1 Professional Development Award: Childhood Practice at SCQF Level 9

“The new Professional Development Award (PDA) in Childhood Practice Award at SCQF level 9 will enable the development of the skills and knowledge required to manage services for children and young people. It is aimed at those who wish to progress into management within the Childcare and Playwork sectors without having to complete a full-time university programme” (SQA, 2014) <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45066.html>

There are 5 core units in the PDA Childhood Practice, all at level 9, with 16 points, except the module on **Childhood Practice: Leadership and Management (Workplace Practice) (8.1)** which has 32 points. (8.1), this covers understanding the benchmarks for the Standard in Childhood Practice and articulating this through work based activities and placements. The other core modules are, similar to the university modules, on **Childhood Practice: Leadership and Management (8.1)**, investigating management and leadership theory and best practice, and **Developing services (8.1)**, in relation to understanding theories and policies around childhood practice. **Participatory Partnerships, working with families (8.1)**, includes understanding children's own agency and how families can be supported in the community.

There is a core module on **Children's Rights: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (8.1)** which covers contemporary ideas and research on Children's rights and evaluates the impact they can have on children and childhood. There is also evaluation and critical analysis of current legislation, policy and ideology on children's rights, the impact that they have on children's rights, different perspectives on diversity and inclusion, the possible impact they have on

the child and childhood and approaches to anti-discriminatory practice and participation (8.1).

Students then choose a further 3 modules all at level 9, but at 8 points, with 2 to be selected from Group A and a further module from group B (8.1).

Within the nine **Group A, modules** of particular interest, in terms of play, are the following:

**Childhood Practice: Playwork (8.1):** Which covers researching implementing and evaluating the key concepts of playwork and: “relate to the playwork theories and concepts with the leadership and management of childhood practice within a playwork setting. The candidate will analyse and manage the implementation of an aspect of play and playwork theory within childhood practice and will evaluate the impact of the aspect of playwork theory on the practice within their setting.” (8.1) The candidate should have the opportunity to research some key theorists in play and playwork...with a list of the relevant theorists, see also **Comparative Play Theories (8.1)** below.

Also “To consider the impact on contribution to the play process through the use of evaluative tools, such as First Claim, Manchester circles, observation, identification of play cycles, building a culture and atmosphere conducive to play; the role of the playworker; models of playwork; adulteration and intervention, risk in play; examination of the organisation's vision, aim, policies and procedures” (8.1). Key concepts are covered, in terms of the play process/ not outcomes, compound flexibility, evolution and recapitulation, chaos theory and play's brain architecture. (8.1).

Play, as well as language and cognitive development is also included in the module choices in **Group A** relating to working with the youngest children in the **Childhood Practice: Development of Children (Pre-birth to Three)** module, and could be a possible research topic in the **Childhood Practice: Independent Study** module. (8.1). **Childhood Practice: Early Learning (8.1)**, includes social, cultural and environmental interaction, evaluation of research policy and practice literature, covering issues like cognition and language development, play, active learning, scaffolding and critical reflection.

In **Group B** the further choice of one module from the five in this group includes:

**Childhood: Comparative Play Theories;** Explores and compares and analyses contemporary views of play across disciplines (such as playwork, early education, psychology, biology and sociology), develops knowledge and understanding of current theories of play and considers in critical detail conflicting concepts of play, which are compared and evaluated. (8.1) Compare and evaluate thinking in and about play – e.g. theorists such as Hughes; Sturrock; Lester; Russell; Maudsley; Else; Bruce; Ouvry; Garvey; Lindon; Brown; Sutton-Smith; Kane; Burghardt; Pellis and Pellis; Frost, Wortham and Reifel; Gill; Goleman. Investigate concepts such as play that is satisfying 'in the moment' as a means of learning, compound flexibility, contribution to brain architecture play as a process, not as an outcome etc. (8.1).

**Childhood: Play in a Social Context:** Here the playwork principles and the policy context for play are studied and the policy context is critically evaluated; this includes relating to the wider social studies of childhood, children and society. Students analyse the overall policy context for play, with critical reference to theory. Students examine one key national policy

document to deconstruct the underpinning paradigm, theories and constructions of children, childhood and play and produce a referenced reflective account. (8.1)

**Childhood: Therapeutic Playwork:** “This will enable development of a specific interpretive and analytic practice based on the key issues of the play cycle, adulteration, unplayed out material and other key concepts that form the basis the working method. It will require the student to self-reflect and to arrive at a perspective on such reflective practice as a distinct therapeutic endeavour. It will set these findings into a distinct field of insight and a recognised professional context, with wider debates around playwork practice versus play therapy and the wider policy landscape pertaining to children in society will be explored and commented upon.” (8.1).

Other units in **Group B** include **Childhood: Families, Culture and Society** and **Childhood: Health, Fitness and Wellbeing**. Therefore, in this range of units there are three explicitly play based units and others, which could include it.

**The PDA in Childhood Practice (8.1)** can be said to be very play centred, with 4 units concentrated on Play and coverage in other units such as those for early learning or development of the youngest children. Children's rights also have two units, one in the Core 16 point modules. The PDA Childhood Practice definitely has a range of choice, and of course, the management, leadership, research, integrated working and communication aspects of the Standard for Childhood Practice are covered. Sometimes it was necessary to dig quite deeply in the unit descriptors and notes to bring out the social, cultural, historical and classic child development theory, such as “scaffolding” in the Early Learning unit, and Active Learning in the same unit.

### 3. Other Lead Practitioner/ Practitioner Qualifications and Support Worker Qualifications

#### Results:

The SVQ CCLD and the SVQ Social Services (CYP) qualifications have large numbers of specialist units covering such topics as inclusion of children with additional needs, supporting parenting skills, supporting language acquisition, specific curriculum units that relate to learning etc. all of which could contain aspects of play although this is not the focus of the unit. The underpinning values of the SVQ Social Services (CYP) across all units are quite clear about child agency, choice and inclusion, as such, they all therefore met the children's rights criteria.

All qualifications reviewed do contain units relating to the fact that candidates need to be able to reflect on their learning and continue to develop their professional skills and knowledge, often within mandatory units.

All units were assessed in full, including guidance and support notes, using publicly available information from the NOS, SQA or website course descriptions. The full descriptive tables and the analysis tables in the appendices provide further information, while all descriptive tables in the appendices have a hyperlink to the original full descriptors for the unit.

### 3.1 Other Lead Practitioner Qualifications

Although the recognised qualification for registration or re-registration as a Lead Practitioner with the SSSC is now the Childhood Practice Award, anyone registered pre-December 2011 will only have had a requirement to reach (within a five year period) an SVQ 4 at SCQF Level 9 possibly in Playwork or Children's Care Learning and Development (CCLD), hence the reason these are being referred to as Lead Practitioner Qualifications, as some Lead Practitioners will still be working to the previous requirement. The SVQ Social Services (Children and Young People) replaces the CCLD and whilst this has never been recognised as a lead practitioner qualification (as this replaced the CCLD after Dec 2011) some practitioners or lead practitioners may use this qualification as a pre-cursor to undertaking the Childhood Practice Award.

<b>SVQ 4 Playwork at SCQF Level 9</b>
<b>SVQ 4 Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF 9</b>
<b>SVQ 4 Children's Care, Learning and Development at SCQF Level 9 phased out January 2013</b>

## SVQ 4 Playwork at SCQF Level 9

In Appendix: Full information Table 16 and Analysis Table 34

Structure: 4 mandatory units; 5 optional units from a choice of 15

This qualification covers organisational skills, leadership within the theme of play, play theorists and playwork principles.

A core unit, **FT59 04** *Work With Colleagues and Other Partners to Develop an Organisational Framework for Play*, includes knowledge statement - *K5 Stages of child development and its implications for playwork practice*, while the optional unit, **FT5K 04**, *Research, Design and Facilitate Possibilities for Self-directed Play*, also brings in general child development knowledge.

Children's rights covered in terms of play rights being mentioned in one unit **FT5M 04**. The play environment is covered across both core and optional units.

Every unit for Playwork is underpinned by the Playwork Principles this applies to the 4 core units (**FT59 04**, **FT5A 04**, **FT5C 04** & **FT4V 04**). For **FT59 04**, **Develop an Organisational Framework for Play**, although the NOS information was not available on the SQA website, the candidate information was obtainable. The table in the appendix (16) provides more details to demonstrate the difference between units.

**FT59 04** covers the environment for play. **FT5A 04**, **Develop, Manage and Review Operational Plans for Play Provision**, although about developing and managing operational plans, again has more playwork related content, especially on spaces and resources for play.

The remaining mandatory units **FT5C 04**, **Establish and Develop Working Relationships** and

**FT4V 04, Reflect on and Develop Practice** are more about working professionally with others and reflective practice, and only the fact that the playwork principles are mentioned as underpinning knowledge justifies their inclusion here.

In the group A of 8 optional units where 3-5 can be completed, again all are committed to the Playwork Principles. **FT5F 04, Obtain the Facilities and Services Required for Play Provision**, is about organising the practical resources needed to create the play environment, while **FT5G 04**, is about managing the play service, again with respect to ensuring safety, inclusion, resources, people and risk management. **FT5H 04** is about working with other organisations and professionals and being an advocate for play, while **FT5J 04** is very much about child protection.

**FT5K 04, Research, Design and Facilitate Possibilities for Self-directed Play**, goes deeply into play theory and brings in general child development knowledge and the play and learning environment. This is the only unit covering child development and learning. As in other suites of qualifications where optional choices mean candidates might not cover much about play and playwork, within playwork qualifications this also applies in terms of child development and learning through play, where candidates might only cover this in one optional unit.

**FT5L 04, Support Others in Accessing the Resources they Need to Provide Play Environments**, again provides play theory and practical play space design.

**FT5M 04, Implement Contemporary Frameworks within a Play Context**, is the only unit for this qualification, which fully fits with the evaluation criteria on children's rights, by mentioning the right to play.

Inclusion of updated underpinning standards on children's rights, including play and the General Comment on Article 31, alongside material on the cross-cultural understanding of the different contexts for play, stronger links with current play and child development theory in practice might be useful in any future revision of the NOS underpinning this qualification.

## SVQ 4 Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF 9

In Appendix: Full information Table 17 and Analysis Table 35

Structure: 4 mandatory units; 4 optional units from a choice of 28

There are not any core or optional units, which cover play in terms of the playwork principles and practice theme.

There is only one core unit with an underpinning knowledge statement relating to child development **H5VT04, Maintain effective communication systems and practice**; and a specific optional unit, **H5W2 04, Lead the physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of children**, which covers child development and learning through play in great detail. A number of further units relate to child development, learning and the curriculum.

Children's rights are covered through underpinning values statements across all units and are also specifically mentioned in the core unit - **H5VX 04, Lead practice that promotes the safeguarding of children and young people**.

The environment for learning and play is covered in terms of health and safety in the core unit, **H5VV 04**, and in some of the 28 optional units, e.g. **H5W6 04, Evaluate the Environment for Children and Families**, which relates to the play environment as well as child development and wellbeing.

The 4 mandatory core units, (**H5VT 04, H5VV 04, H5VW 04 & H5VX 04**) cover communication, health and safety, child protection, and supporting the professional

development of self and others. There is more about leadership and planning across the NOS suite at level 9.

With a choice of 4 from the optional 28 units to complete this qualification, it is apparent that apart from the elements in the core units, candidates could take 4 optional units, which do not mention play at all in their descriptors, but could cover development, learning curriculum and play in some aspects. Where play is specifically mentioned includes; **H5W3 04 support children's communication and H5W4 04 support children's creativity**, where it is recognised in both that play and creative imagination are important elements of development and learning. Similarly, in **H5W5 04 the role of integrated play in practice** is included in supporting the development of mathematical problem solving skills. There is potential in **H5WC 04 for a research project** to cover any or all of the play indicator areas in this evaluation.

Of particular interest is **H5W2 04, Lead the physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of children**, at level 10, where the specific knowledge statements particular to this unit encompass a great deal of the depth and breadth of knowledge identified in the literature review as important in terms of children's learning and development through play. Indeed, it could potentially also cover aspects of play and playwork.

Further optional units are mainly about management, policies, regulation, leadership and information but all refer to children's rights, development or wellbeing in *some* aspects of the standards. There are too many to analyse in full here, but for example, **H5W1 04** refers to *planned purposeful play in the curriculum and child development*, while, **H5W7 04** and **H5W8 04** refer to *additional supports needs in the context of development and wellbeing*.

**Advocacy with and for children and young people, H5WJ 04**, relates to rights of children and young people. **Leading provision for Babies and Children H5W0 04** again relates to development.

## SVQ 4 Children's Care, Learning and Development at SCQF Level 9

In Appendix: Full information Table 18 and Analysis Table 37

Structure: 4 mandatory units; 5 optional units from a choice of 31

This qualification is no longer offered for new candidates- it is in the process of being phased out. There are no specific play focused units, and play, as such, is hardly mentioned. Therefore, units are analysed instead on aspects of child development, learning, care and curriculum.

There is a strong focus on child development across many of the units, with the mandatory core unit **DT1M 04 Support programmes for the promotion of children's development.**

Children's rights, inclusion and protection are in one of the four mandatory core units with **DT1L 04: Support policies, procedures and practice to safeguard children and ensure their inclusion and well-being**, with no optional units specifically on rights.

In optional units **DR6X 04 9 Co-ordinate provision for babies and children under 3 years in partnership with their families**, is about the needs of the youngest children, while **DR8804: Evaluate, assess and support the physical, intellectual, emotional and social development of children**, covers the whole age range 0-16. Also connected to child development and meeting the criteria for creativity, is the unit, **DR8404 Evaluate, support and assess children's creativity**, while **DR82 04 Evaluate, assess and support children's communication**, links to both development and learning.

The environment of the setting has a specific module in **DR80 04 Evaluate and co-ordinate the environment for children and families.** Both **DT1C 04 Support and evaluate the**

curriculum for children's early learning and **DR5V 04: Contribute to the enhancement of early education for children**, are examples of a focus on learning and the curriculum. **DT18 04: Undertake a research project**, can be applicable across themes and there are also specialist units on children with additional support or language needs.

### 3.2 Practitioner Qualifications

<b>HNC in Early Education and Childcare at SCQF level 7</b>
<b>SVQ 3 in Playwork at SCQF Level 7</b>
<b>Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF 7</b>
<b>SVQ 3 In Children's Care learning and Development at SCQF 7</b>
<b>The OU Dip He in Childhood Practice</b>

## HNC in Early Education and Childcare at SCQF level 7

In Appendix: Full information Table 19 and Analysis Table 37

Structure: 7 mandatory units; 6 optional units from a choice of 16

Three of the four core units **DF4Y 34, working in an Early Education and Childcare Setting, F3S9 34, Theoretical Approaches to Development and Learning and F290 34, Early Education and Childcare: Graded Unit 1**, all cover play and playwork theory and the underpinning knowledge of how children learn and develop through play. There is a specific core unit **on children's rights in F3S4 34, Children and Young People's Rights: Provision, Protection and Participation**, while rights are mentioned across all four core units and 7 optional units.

The importance of the play environment, modern and postmodern approaches as well as specific links with creativity and curriculum are also covered in core units.

The leading play theorists and current thinking in child development are covered in these core units, with opportunities in the optional modules to gain knowledge and skills on inclusion, disability and catering for different language needs.

The optional units (6 to be chosen) provide many opportunities to further develop specific play and playwork, children's learning and development, related projects, assessments and studies.

In particular, **DF53 34, Facilitating Playwork Opportunities**, and the units for **working with children 5-8 or 8- 12, DF5C 34 and DF5D 34**, include current thinking in Play and Playwork – Hughes, Sylva, Sturrock, Rennie, Bruce, Else. Pure play, play codes, psycholudics and

evolutionary play views .Play as a process not a product and child centred play as defined by the child leading the play experience, Spontaneous, adventurous, challenging play, risk and UNCRC play rights.

The value of free play is a thread throughout the play and development focused modules as well as in the playwork focused modules. There is also a unit on 0-3 on the needs of babies and toddlers **(DF59 34)**, and observation, responding, attachment theory and communication are all covered. For candidates working in early learning and childcare settings, working to the curriculum for excellence, there are modules specifically to support this work **(F3S3 34)**.

## SVQ 3 in Playwork at SCQF Level 7

In Appendix: Full information Table 20 and Analysis Table 38

Structure: 5 mandatory units; 4 optional units from a choice of 16

The 5 core units start with **FT4M 04, Contribute to an Organisational Framework that Reflects the Needs and Protects the Rights of Children and Young People**, which is about protecting children and their rights to be safeguarded from abuse. The unit covers the different developmental or societal needs children may have, as well as their play rights and a suitable play environment. **Maintain a Healthy, Safe and Secure Environment for Children, FT4P 04**, focuses on a safe and risk assessed environment for play, including the need to balance risk, while **FT4R 04, Develop and Promote Positive Relationships** is focused on a crucial aspect of children's play, care and development, positive relationships. The core work on planning and delivering free play opportunities, with a grounding in the underpinning theory and practice of playwork, is the focus of **FT4T 04, Plan and Support Self-directed Play**, at the higher level 8 with 17 points. Also at this level 8 and 17 points is reflective practice, planning and professional development in **FT4V 04**.

With the wide range of optional units in Group A, **FTSS 04, Carry Out Playwork with Young Children (pre-school)**, in terms of working with young children, is the main unit here, which shows clear links to early child development, including attachment, schemas, and observation and recording skills. **FT55 04** addresses responding to concerns about child abuse while there is another wider link to child development in the **health and wellbeing** optional unit **FT4Y 04**. The inclusion of children with disabilities is covered in unit **FT52 04** at level 8, while other units cover teamwork, administration, engagement with parents, travel,

evaluation and promoting the play service in the community. **FT54 04 and FT53 04**, link specifically to roles in open access and adventure play provision.

Group B units are much to do with moving into supervisory, recruitment and planning roles.

## SVQ 3 Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF 7

In Appendix: Full information Table 21 and Analysis Table 39

Structure: 4 mandatory units; 4 optional units from a choice of 57

The 4 mandatory core units (**H5LC 04**, **H5LD 04**, **H5LE 04** & **H5LF 04**) are about communication, health, safety, and child protection. The first 3 are marked as including children's rights due to the generic values statement, which is part of this suite of qualifications; however, **H5LF 04** specifically mentions children's rights in the context of safeguarding. **H5LD 04** links to the environment for play, through the health and safety aspects of this unit.

There are a further 57 optional units and candidates must choose 4, all units were reviewed here but the 10 discussed below were chosen as they either explicitly or implicitly included play. The full table in the appendix gives further details. All meet the child agency and children's rights aspect through the underpinning values statement.

Of particular interest is **H5LG 04, Promote the development of children and young people**, given the importance of play and child development identified in the literature review, this is an important unit in this qualification. Indeed, it could be recommended that in fact this should be a core unit, as apart from child protection the 4 core units do not pay much attention to the developing child. Similarly, for those working in an early learning and childcare setting, which follow the curriculum, **H5LL 04, Implement Frameworks for Early Education through the Development of Curriculum Planning**, would be an essential unit here.

There is one unit specifically focusing on play, **DR93 04, Plan for and support self-directed play**, and this includes planning, observation and the play environment, and the principle of self-directed play. Other units here, which mention aspects of play, range from supporting parents, again covering child development for babies, including play, supporting language and literacy development, health and wellbeing and using information technology.

## SVQ 3 Children's Care, Learning and Development at SCQF Level 7

In Appendix: Full information Table 22 and Analysis Table 41

Structure: 5 mandatory units; 4 optional units from a choice of 46

This qualification has been phased out from January 2013- no new candidates were able to start this course after this date.

Within the mandatory core units, **DT0D 04: Promote children's development**, is clearly about development. The play and learning environment is covered in **DR77 04: Develop and maintain a healthy, safe and secure environment for children**. Children's Rights, including participation, is covered in **DT4M 04: Protect and promote children's rights**.

Within the 46 optional units the one with most relevance to the play in terms of the playwork principles and practice is **FD5V 04: Plan for and support self-directed play**. Child development examples of units include **DT0F 04: Promote children's wellbeing and resilience** and **DT0H 04: Promote healthy living for children and families**.

There are a number of units relating to the curriculum and specific learning, including additional support needs, English as a second language etc., too many to list here (similarly with the successor SVQ Social Services (CYP) qualifications, however, **DR8M 04: Plan and implement curriculum frameworks for early education**, is an example of curriculum support. **DT1T 04: Use Information and Communication Technology to support children's early learning** is another example linked to the themes for analysis.

The environment for play, learning and care is the focus of the next selected group of units; **DR8Y 04: Plan and organise environments for children and families** and **DR8T 04 Plan and**

**implement positive environments for babies and children under 3 years**, which mentions both spontaneous and planned play. **DR5D 04: Care for children at home**, which is a unit relevant for childminders here.

There is a unit about support for parenting skills, which also includes play skills, and there are specialist units to support children in group living settings, and those who have experienced trauma.

## Open University DipHe in Childhood Practice

### In Appendix: Full information Table 23 and Analysis Table 40

This is accepted at practitioner level, while the E100 unit is accepted at support worker level. The course covers a wide range of play, play and child development theory, children's rights, the play environment curriculum and a work based study topic based on the practitioners chosen topic. **E100** includes the central place of play in children's learning and development. **E105 Block 3**, 'Promoting children's play learning and development'. Play and learning, exploring children as learners – dispositions and characteristics of play, play in practice: heuristic play.

Block 2 'Considering environments for children's care, learning and development' including the setting's environment: opportunities for learning and development, the purpose of space, opportunities to explore and develop, spaces that challenge, playing outside, play and the curriculum.

**E2102:** What is play and how valuable is play? The international perspectives, equity issues, do children need to play and observing play. **E105. Block 4** includes 'Safeguarding children: promoting rights, health and wellbeing'

### 3.3 Support Worker Qualifications

NC in Early Education and Childcare at SCQF Level 6
SVQ 2 Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF Level 6
SVQ 2 Playwork at SCQF Level 6
SVQ 2 Children's Care, Learning and Development at SCQF level 6
HNC Additional Support Needs (Supporting the Individual)
National Progression Award Playwork and Child Care
The Early Years Developing Practice (The OU module E100) - see OU Dip He Childhood Practice
PDA in Education Support Assistance at SCQF Level 6

## NC Early Education and Childcare

In Appendix: Full information Table 24 and Analysis Table 42

Structure: 7 mandatory units; 2or 3 optional units from a choice of 26

The seven core units provide a good broad introduction to child development, including play, rights, the play and learning environment, health and curriculum (**DM3X 12, DM5L 12, DM5M 12, DM3Y 12, DM40 12, DM41 12 & DM42 12**).

**DM3X 12** covers **Child Development: Birth to 12 Years**, **DM3Y 12** covers **Developmental Theory in Early Education and Childcare** and the Optional **F19L 11 Child Development and Health**. Included in this are substantial work placements or projects.

There is a core unit covering the environment for play and learning, with a further 3 optional units, relating to this. **DM41 12 Play in Early Education and Childcare (Higher)** is a core unit, which has the play environment as a specific topic.

The wide range of optional additional units of which between 2 and 3 units can be chosen, give candidates opportunities to do more on **creativity, playwork, ICT, the curriculum and children's rights**. Given the range of options, the NC covers a number of potential roles and routes. There is a strong thread of foundational child development theory throughout. Of particular interest are the options on **creative and aesthetic experiences in the development of children aged 0-12 years (DM5Y 11)** while play in both the playwork sense and within play and learning are well covered. The **children's rights** unit at this level (**DM5J 12) Supporting Children's Rights and Entitlements** emphasises child protection from abuse more than child agency or participation rights, this could therefore be updated.

## SVQ 2 Social Services (Children and Young People) level 6

In Appendix: Full information Table 25 and Analysis Table 43

Structure: 4 mandatory units; 2 optional units from a choice of 8

The four core modules (**H5KP 04**, **H5NB 04**, **H5L4 04**, **H5L5 04**) cover the basics of communication, health and safety, child protection and introducing reflective practice, planning to gain knowledge and skills and ongoing professional development. While a definition of play is provided in the module description, and reflection on practice could be, in theory, on play practice, there is very little indeed in the core on play or child development and learning, while the environment is included in terms of health and safety. Children's rights are ticked through the child protection commitment and the generic values statement on child agency in all units.

This marks a change from the previous CCLD six mandatory core modules which included a child development unit and learning through play unit, which are now optional.

For the remaining 2 out of 8 optional modules, it would be quite possible to complete this award without gaining very much knowledge at all about play, child development and learning. For example, if both **H5PB 04** (team working) & **H5LA 04** and **H5ML 04** are taken, there is only one aspect of child development covered as either the care of babies or the support for language skills. Again if the teamwork module is combined with the inclusion of special needs module, **H5LB 04**, then this course could be completed with play hardly been mentioned – e.g. throughout the inclusion unit there is reference to “activities”, in some units “activities” are defined as including play, but this unit did not include this definition.

**H5L6 04** Support the development of children and young people and **H5L8 04** Support children's learning through play are strong in supporting child development and play, **while DT1E 04** (note at 15 points higher than other units here) is very specifically play and playwork focused. This qualification can be said to focus on play, playwork, play and child development and learning, if specific options are chosen.

## SVQ 2 in Playwork at SCQF Level 6

In Appendix: Full information Table 26 and Analysis Table 44

Structure: 4 mandatory units; 2 optional units from a choice of 9

The four core units (**F376 04**, **F377 04**, **F378 04**, & **F379 04**) are all underpinned by the Playwork Principles while the first three encompass various aspects of play theory, children's rights, relationships and the play environment, balancing risk and ensuring safety.

**F378 04** also considers child development as part of **the Contribute to the Health, Safety, Security and Welfare of Children and Young People Using the Play Environment** unit. The fourth core unit **F379 04**, is about reflective practice and professional development.

The 9 Optional units, of which 2 must be chosen, relate to specific roles, such as serving food, **F37A 04**, escorting children in travel, **F37H 04**, supporting parents, **F37E 04**, supporting administration, **F37G 04**, working within an indoor play centre, **H552 04** and planning play in the community, **F37C 04**. All are underpinned by the Playwork Principles and support the environment for play.

The inclusion of children with disabilities, **F37D 04**, as well as play theory, environment and children's rights, also refers to understanding children's development needs, as does **F37B 04, Facilitate a Specific Play Opportunity at Children or Young People's Request**. There is also a specific module to support playworkers in school setting, working in the play break times with children and young people, again underpinned by play principles, related to play, environment and development and defending their play rights, **F37F 04**.

## SVQ 2 Children's Care, Learning and Development at SCQF Level 5

In Appendix: Full information Table 27 and Analysis Table 45

Structure: 6 mandatory units; 1 optional unit from a choice of 5

This qualification is being phased out, but given it may be still one of the main qualifications held at support worker level, there is a brief analysis here.

**FDR5G 04:** Contribute to positive relationships, includes relationships with children and relates to the holistic environment. **DT1H 04: Support children's development** is self-explanatory, while **DT09 04 Prepare and maintain environments to meet children's needs**, is specifically about the environment and **DT1J 04 Support children's learning through play**, relates to child development, learning and play, including **creative** play. **DT1R 04** is about babies and toddlers needs, therefore about development, while **DT1A 04** is about inclusion. **DT1E 04 Work with children and young people to create play spaces and support freely chosen self-directed play**, is very much about play, playwork principles and practice, and mentions children's rights to play..

## **HNC Additional Support Needs: Supporting the individual**

**In Appendix: Full information Table 28 and Analysis Table 46**

**Structure: 5 mandatory units; 2 or 3 optional units from a choice of 12**

This is a specialist qualification for the support of an individual, child or adult with ASN. The units do cover human development, planning, delivering and evaluating learning opportunities for individuals, as well as understanding issues around disability and relevant policies and practice. This qualification is included as applicable in the role of support worker in early learning and childcare or daycare for older children settings. It is suggested that at least one or two optional units which include the role of play in supporting children with ASN is included in this course as the child, child development, play or children's learning needs do not appear to be covered.

## National Progression Award (NPA) Playwork and Childcare

In Appendix: Full information Table 29 and Analysis Table 47

**Structure: 5 mandatory units; 2 or 3 optional units from a choice of 12**

The mandatory units cover working with children and young people, **F2CN 11, Children's rights and protection, F2CR 11, Play as a process, F2CP 11** and **development and health, F19L 11**. Candidates can then choose one optional unit relating to their role; this could be from a crèche worker, **F2CS 11**, out of school care worker, **F2CV 11**, holiday playscheme worker, **F2CT 11** nanny, **F2CW 11** or supporting children with ASN, **DM65 11**. **F2CT 11**, nanny in a family setting, did not meet any of the criteria even as simplified for this entry level award as it hardly covers play or child development in anything more than having a routine and caring for a sick child if necessary.

This award covers children's rights on a protection basis only and while some units may still be a good introduction to particular concepts, contents do seem out of date.

## Professional Development Award (PDA) in: Education Support Assistance at SCQF level 6

In Appendix: Full information Table 30 and Analysis Table 48

Structure: 5 mandatory units; 2 optional units from a choice of 10

Although designed for a school/classroom setting this award provides a good, general introduction to child development and children's rights. Although less focused on play and more on development, the units **F7HR 12 Supporting, the Development of Children and Young People from Birth to Eighteen Years & F7HS 12, Supporting the Behaviour of Children and Young People** they could be useful to provide this grounding for a range of wider roles. The next three core units **F7HY 12, Supporting Children and Young People in an Educational Setting, F7HT 12, Supporting Children and Young People who require Additional Support for Learning & F7HV 12, Professional practice in an educational setting,** cover children's rights, especially inclusion of children with ASN, related legislation and work placement based projects in terms of educational support work. The two optional units listed include child rights, especially child protection **F7HW 12,** and, of particular interest here the **DM41 12 Play in Early Education and Childcare (Higher),** which meets many aspects of the evaluation criteria at this level.

**TABLE E: SUMMARY RESULTS ANALYSIS Lead Practitioner Qualifications**

Evaluation Criteria	Play Pedagogies/ Playwork Theory and Practice (main)		Play and Child Development (main)		Children's Rights and International modern/postmodern theory (sub section)		Play and Learning Environment (sub section)		Play and Learning – Creativity, curriculum, Active Learning / digital learning sub section	
	Core	Optional	Core	Optional	Core	Optional	Core	Optional	Core	Optional
SVQ 4 Playwork at SCQF Level 9	4	8	1	1	0	1	3	5	0	0
SVQ 4 Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF 9	0	1	1	4	3	6	2	5	0	6
SVQ 4 CCLD at SCQF 9	0	0	1	5	1	0	1	1	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>

Note on table E: the high number of children's rights in the **SVQ 4 Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF 9** is through the generic underpinning values statement about child agency and choice, which is in every NOS unit for this set of qualifications. Children's rights are also specifically mentioned in one optional unit. Overall, the play and learning environment is well covered, as are curriculum in two courses, which also include creativity units. Child development is not well covered in core units but more covered in optional units. Play in the playwork sense is mainly covered in the specific qualification relating to this.

**TABLE F: SUMMARY RESULTS ANALYSIS Practitioner Qualifications**

Evaluation Criteria	Play Pedagogies/ Playwork Theory and Practice ( main)		Play and Child Development (main)		Children's Rights and International modern/postmodern theory (sub section)		Play and Learning Environment ( Sub Section)		Play and Learning – Creativity, curriculum, Active Learning / digital learning sub section	
	Core	Optional	Core	Optional	Core	Optional	Core	Optional	Core	Optional
HNC in Early Education and Childcare at SCQF level 7	3	4	3	5	4	7	3	8	2	6
SVQ 3 in Playwork at SCQF Level 7	5	16	1	2	2	3	3	7	0	2
Social Services (CYP) at SCQF 7	0	1	0	6	4	11	1	3	0	4
CCLD at SCQF 7	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	3	0	4
OU DipHe in Childhood Practice	2	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>

Note on table F (and for table G below): The high number of children's rights in Social Services (CYP) at SCQF 7 or 6 is due to the underpinning value statements across all units on child agency and choice. The NC/ HNC provides good coverage across all themes for analysis. For the CCLD and the Social Services (CYP) at SCQF 7 there are also likely many more units relating to the curriculum, we have included those listed in the appendix tables here only.

**TABLE G: SUMMARY RESULTS ANALYSIS Support Worker Qualifications**

Evaluation Criteria	Play Pedagogies/ Playwork Theory and Practice (main)		Play and Child Development (main)		Children's Rights and International modern/postmodern theory sub section		Play and Learning Environment sub section		Play and Learning – Creativity, curriculum, Active Learning / digital learning sub section	
	Core	Optional	Core	Optional	Core	Optional	Core	Optional	Core	Optional
NC in Early Education and Childcare at SCQF Level 6	3	3	6	2	1	1	1	3	2	6
SVQ Social Services (CYP) at SCQF Level 6	0	1	0	3	4	8	1	3	0	3
SVQ 2 Playwork at SCQF Level 6	4	9	2	2	2	3	3	7	0	0
CCLD at SCQF 5	1	1	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	1
National Progression Award Playwork and Child Care	2	3	2	1	2	1	0	0	0	0
The Early Years Developing Practice (The OU module E100)	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
PDA in Education Support Assistance at SCQF Level 6	0	1	2	1	2	2	0	0	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>

**TABLE H: SUMMARY RESULTS ANALYSIS All - Lead Practitioner, Practitioner, Support Worker Qualifications**

Evaluation Criteria	Play Pedagogies/ Playwork Theory and Practice (main)		Play and Child Development (main)		Children's Rights and International modern/postmodern theory sub section		Play and Learning Environment		Play and Learning – Creativity, curriculum, Active Learning / digital learning sub section	
	Core	Optional	Core	Optional	Core	Optional	Core	Optional	Core	Optional
<b>TOTAL ALL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>38</b>

Notes on Table H: The high number for children's rights needs to be treated with caution as the underpinning value statements of the Social Services (CYP) qualifications all include child agency and choice. There are also likely to be a lot more units relating to CfE in both the CCLD and Social Services (CYP) qualifications, but the enquiry is focused on where play is also linked in some way *in the descriptors* too.

Units may have different weightings and points so this numerical analysis is intended to show patterns rather than totals as such, however, it is interesting to note that there are a good number of units covering the environment for play and learning, and, although concentrated in playwork qualifications, there are 50 optional units on playwork related practice.

A total of 8 qualifications cover play theory in core units, in the playwork related sense, while all others, bar the CCLD at level 9, have at least 1 optional unit on the topic.

What stands out for child development is that there usually a good mix of core and optional units, except for the Social Services (CYP) qualifications which only include this in a wide range of optional units. Although at level 9, there is an underpinning knowledge statement on child development, similar to the SVQ Playwork at level 9, which only had knowledge this in a core unit and mentioned child development in 1 optional unit.

## 4. PLAY IN OTHER RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS

### In Appendix ANALYSIS: OTHER QUALIFICATIONS TABLES 9 - 15

This section pulls together information on 2 further qualifications which meet the standard for childhood practice aimed at residential care workers, and 4 which are not childhood practice related but of interest. Two are Masters level courses, while two are specialist courses relating to playwork or play assessment processes. There is also Table 15, which is the Open University 2 courses for teaching assistants discussed in the Play in Education Section.

**Summary Analysis Results: Table 9: Robert Gordon University: BA Social Pedagogy (Working with Children / Working with Adults) and Table 10: University of Strathclyde: The MSc in Advanced Residential Child Care**

For both courses there was limited information but child development and care, global and contemporary issues are covered. The lifespace relates to the ecological environment. Play in itself is not mentioned in either course descriptor but could be assumed part of both developmental and therapeutic topics.

**Analysis: Tables 11- 15 further non- childhood practice level qualifications**

**Summary Results:**

**Table 11: University of Strathclyde: Early Years Pedagogue:** The course which is open to teachers and advanced childhood practice graduates contains all of the elements of the criteria developed to analysis the different types of play, play in learning and development,

the play environment, children's rights, global and modern theories, children's languages and creativity and curriculum such as Te Whariki. It brings in the concept of risky play, child agency and choice, all relevant for the play and playwork as well as the child development and learning foundation. This course fits the evaluation criteria exactly. Although it does not say it maps on to the Standard for Childhood Practice, it looks as if it could do so very well.

**Table 12: University of Gloucestershire; Professional Studies in Children's Play (Masters)**

As expected this is specialist on the topic of play and playwork, but also covers related fields such as physical activities and creative arts and leisure. The Play, playwork and play environment are well covered, with links to social studies of childhood, and a look at diverse aspects of play and play theory which could also then further link with child development. The Advocacy module brings in the underpinning knowledge of how to influence and this could apply to promoting children's rights to play, and supporting playwork as a profession.

**Table 13: Leeds Beckett University: BA (Hons) Playwork**

Including children's rights, and wider global perspectives, and the play environment, this course is specialist to play and playwork and contains wider elements of child development in terms of linking the topic of children in society, and, of course, how children develop through play. It does not link to formal learning and curriculums but may to creativity (but that was not clear).

**Table 14: Professional Development Award (PDA) in: Strategic Planning for Play at SCQF level 8**

This is a specialist qualification aimed at planners and policy makers in terms of assessing the sufficiency of play and influencing strategic decision making and policy relating to play spaces, including children's own views on play. As such, this is very strong on the play environment (in the ecological sense) and children's rights to play.

**Table 15: Certificate of Higher Education in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools and Diploma of Higher Education in Primary Teaching and Learning**

Although this is a qualification for working in schools the relevant units above are rich in play across all the different criteria, including bringing in play types the difference between a child's self-directed play, or adult-directed, as well as the play and learning environment, including creativity, indoors and outdoors. The importance of play to children's learning and development, including their wellbeing and highlighting the fun, happiness and enjoyment to be obtained from play, is stressed throughout.

# SECTION E: PLAY IN EDUCATION

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## PLAY IN EDUCATION

**"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire" ~W. B. Yeats**

Teachers in Scotland are required to register with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), and follow Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and associated guidance documents. In addition, there has been a recent and thorough revision of all teaching qualifications through the publication of [Teaching Scotland's Future](#) (Scottish Government, 2011), often known as the "Donaldson Report".

Therefore to place teacher training courses in context, while also examining where play is covered in such materials, the first section (Part 1) investigates the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) standards for teacher registration, and other standards and professional development support through the GTCS; and introduces [Teaching Scotland's Future](#) (Scottish Government, 2011). [Curriculum for Excellence](#) (CfE), (Scottish Executive, 2004), with associated in depth guidance documents, is then covered in the next section (Part 2), while Education Scotland and Scottish Government guidance on early learning and childcare are reviewed in Part 3.

In terms of the remit to examine the contents of teacher training to assess how play, especially freely chosen play, is covered in teacher training, the contents of all of the (often very new) initial teacher training courses have been reviewed via the more detailed information on the Universities' respective websites. This information is not reproduced here in full in tables (as per other qualifications), as the review of the course information did not yield any specific references to play or development.

There is a summary table where new teaching qualifications and university providers are set out, and direct hyperlinks to these University website pages are in the references section.

The Universities of Stirling, Aberdeen and Edinburgh, responded to the online survey produced after the initial lack of response from teacher training qualification providers (see methodology). These results, as well as that of a small focus group conducted with teachers and assistants are included in Part 4. This section also provides in-depth information on one Open University module featuring play in training for teaching assistants.

In Part 5, Education Scotland resources and materials, especially on play and active learning (Part 5) (including outdoor learning resources via Ground for Learning), are outlined in the appendices section with hyperlinks as valuable professional development resources for teachers, and indeed, the wider early learning and childcare, and out of school care and play providers.

Part 6 provides an analysis of the findings, which will be summarised for the discussion section.

## 1. General Teaching Council Scotland Registration and Professional standards

Teachers in Scotland register with the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS), which became a fully independent body from government in 2012 (GTCS, interview, Tom Hamilton, 2014), and it is therefore now the arbitrator of registration and professional standards for the teaching workforce in Scotland. Probationary and qualified teachers have to ensure that they know and understand the specific standards set out for their professional conduct, for provisional and thereafter, full registration (GTCS, 2012).

The standards were updated in 2012 and are part of a new overall suite of standards, which include: The Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning and Standards for Leadership and Management (GTCS, 2012). These updates were in response to government guidance associated with [Teaching Scotland's Future](#) (Scottish Government, 2011), however, the registration standards will be reviewed in five years and it will be up to GTCS as an independent body to set them then. It is also important to note that the standards and indeed the curriculum are not only about academic attainment but are about the holistic wellbeing of children and young people.

This framework of the [Standards for Registration](#) underpins the content of teacher training and learning placements for students and probationary teachers and is also: “a baseline standard of professional competence which applies to teachers throughout their careers “(GTCS, 2012, p.3).

The professional values and principles, which underpin all of the student and teacher standards, under social justice, integrity, respect, trust and professional commitment includes:

“Respecting the rights of all learners as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and their entitlement to be included in decisions regarding their learning experiences and have all aspects of their well-being developed and supported” (GTCS, 2012, p. 5).

There are expected commitment to skills, knowledge and values, as set out in the standards for registration, including; knowledge and application of the curriculum, pedagogical theories and practice, planning and engagement with the learning and wider community, research and professional enquiry, professional skills and abilities, teaching and learning, classroom organisation and management, pupil assessment and professional reflection and communication.

Within the standards, there are also links to wider policies such as:

“Have an understanding of current, relevant legislation and guidance such the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act (2000), Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, the Equality Act 2010 and GIRFEC” (GTCS, 2012, p. 10). In terms of their professional responsibilities, which includes [Getting it Right for Every Child \(GIRFEC\). \(Scottish Government, 2008a\)](#).

It is clear it is not just about academic achievement in looking after the holistic needs of children and young people: “Know how to promote and support the cognitive, emotional,

social and physical wellbeing of all learners, and demonstrate a commitment to raising all learners' expectations of themselves" (GTCS, 2012, p. 8).

There is also growing recognition of learning beyond the classroom "Use outdoor learning opportunities, including direct experiences of nature and other learning within and beyond the school boundary" (GTCS, 2012, p. 16).

Another interesting feature of the work of GTS in implementing the recommendations of [Teaching Scotland's Future](#) (Scottish Government, 2011) is the requirement now for engagement in Professional Update for all registered teachers from August 2014. As part of this process, GTCS accredits courses and gives professional recognition awards to teachers achieving recognised standards in the topic. For example, in September 2014, GTCS presented professional recognition in outdoor learning awards to teachers trained and developing good practice in this area (Teaching Scotland, 2014). In our discussions with GTCS about the play research topic, it became clear that this, professional recognition route, is a potentially fruitful area of development, as are the Masters level teaching courses, especially those in faculties also delivering Childhood Practice qualifications, in also perhaps sharing core modules on play related topics.

## 2. [The Curriculum for Excellence \(Scottish Executive, 2004\)](#)

The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), (Scottish Executive, 2004) is the Scottish Curriculum for children and young people aged 3 -18. There are related policies, documents, online materials and constantly evolving sources of learning and teaching materials, with continued professional development resources, to support reflective, evidence-based practice. CfE has a broader scope than specific academic outcomes in that it is concerned with a holistic approach to the learning and development of children and young people aged 3-18 in Scotland. As such, it links closely with other national interrelated policies on children and their families, for example, [Getting it Right for Every Child](#) (GIRFEC), (Scottish Government, 2008a) and [the Early Years Framework](#) (Scottish Government, 2009).

CfE is intended to foster four capacities in all children and young people: as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

CfE covers a broad general education up to the end of S3 followed by a senior phase from S4 to S6. There is an emphasis on inter-disciplinary learning, skills development and encouraging personal achievement.

“Curriculum for Excellence aims to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum from 3 to 18. The curriculum includes the totality of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, wherever they are being educated” (Education Scotland (website), 2014).

In terms of this play training and qualifications investigation, where CfE is relevant is in the fact that this is the framework for learning used in early learning and childcare (what used to be called pre-school or early education), from age three, and then in school, right through the primary and secondary school years, up to age eighteen.

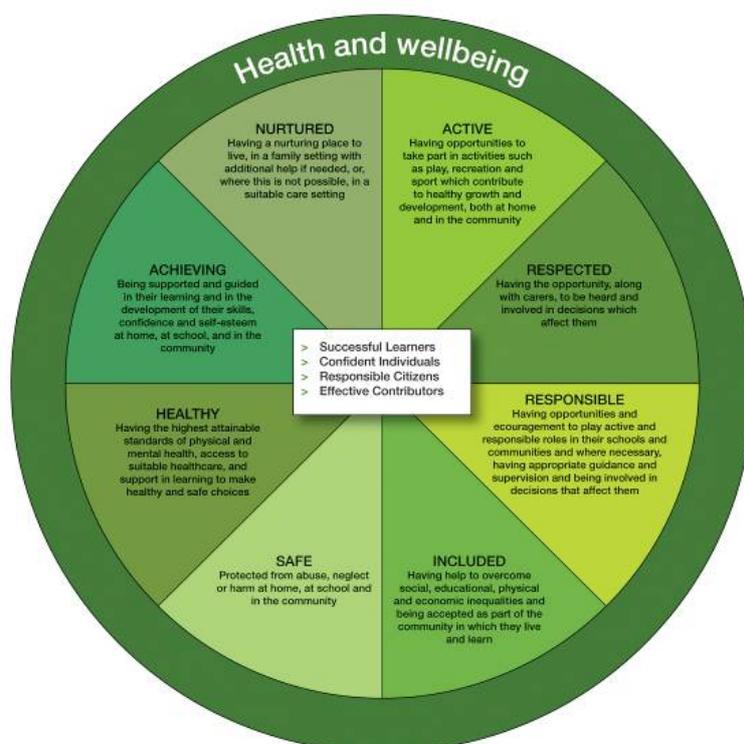
[CfE experience and outcomes indicators: \(Education Scotland website, accessed 2014\)](#)

In CfE, the terms 'experiences and outcomes' recognises the importance of the quality and nature of the learning **experience** in developing attributes and capabilities and in achieving active engagement, motivation and depth of learning. An **outcome** represents what is to be achieved.

The experiences and outcomes are set out in lines of development, which describe progress in learning. They are organised into the eight curriculum area; Expressive arts, Health and wellbeing, Languages, Mathematics, Religious and moral education, Sciences, Social studies and Technologies.

Figure 3: Health and wellbeing across learning: responsibilities of all

Source: Education Scotland: Experiences and Outcomes (undated)



This is the SHANARRI [Wellbeing Wheel](#) Framework for [Getting it Right for Every Child \(GIRFEC\)](#) (Scottish Government, 2008a), where the 4 learning indicators in the centre here are often usually placed in the outer circle. While it can be argued that Play contributes to all of the outcomes in this framework, what is significant here is, as an official CfE indicator, Play is considered under “Active”, so is therefore part of all of the experiences and outcomes for health, which stretch across the curriculum at every age and stage.

Looking across all of the experiences and outcomes indicators under each curriculum area, it is clear that usually play based or active learning is more prevalent in those indicators set

out for either or both the Early Years (3-5) or First, usually P1. CfE does recognise that some children may be at these stages for longer, dependent on their needs.

Right across CfE in the overarching health and wellbeing and the specific subject areas, play is also listed in overarching measures, in terms of active learning in the subjects for all ages.

Examples of approaches are below, with examples from the indicators.

**Overarching principles CfE examples including play:**

**Numeracy:**

A rich and supportive learning environment will support a skilful mix of a variety of approaches, including:

- active learning and planned, purposeful play

Throughout education, effective learning and teaching in literacy and English will involve a skilful mix of appropriate approaches including:

- the use of relevant, real-life and enjoyable contexts which build upon children and young people's own experiences
- a balance of spontaneous play and planned activities
- frequent opportunities to communicate in a wide range of contexts, for relevant purposes and for real audiences within and beyond places of learning

**In the sciences, effective learning and teaching depends upon the skilful use of varied approaches, including:**

- Active learning and planned, purposeful play

**In social studies, effective learning and teaching will draw upon a variety of approaches**

**including:**

- active learning which provides opportunities to observe, explore, experiment and play
- use of relevant contexts and experiences familiar to children and young people  
learning outdoors, field trips, visits and input by external contributors.

(Source, Education Scotland, CfE Experiences and Outcomes, website, n.d.)

### **Indicators with play mentioned in CfE**

Usually in Early or First:

1. In everyday activity and play, I explore and make choices to develop my learning and interests. I am encouraged to use and share my experiences. HWB 0-19a
2. Through taking part in a variety of events and activities, I am learning to recognise my own skills and abilities as well as those of others. HWB 1-19a
3. I am enjoying daily opportunities to participate in different kinds of energetic play, both outdoors and indoors. HWB 0-25a
4. Within and beyond my place of learning I am enjoying daily opportunities to participate in physical activities and sport, making use of available indoor and outdoor space. HWB 1-25a

5. Gaelic: Through daily experiences and play I can listen or watch for interesting or useful information. LGL 0-04a
6. I explore sounds, letters and words, discovering how they work together, and I can use what I learn to help me as I read or write. ENG 0-12a / LIT 0-13a / LIT 0-21a
7. As I play and learn, I enjoy exploring interesting materials for writing and different ways of recording my experiences and feelings, ideas and information. LIT 0-21b
8. As I play and learn, I am developing my understanding of what is fair and unfair and the importance of caring for, sharing and cooperating with others. RME 0-02a
9. As I play and learn, I am developing my understanding of what is fair and unfair and why caring and sharing are important. RME 0-09a
10. I have experienced, used and described a wide range of toys and common appliances. I can say 'what makes it go' and say what they do when they work. SCN 0-04a
11. Through everyday experiences and play with a variety of toys and other objects, I can recognise simple types of forces and describe their effects. SCN 0-07a
12. By investigating forces on toys and other objects, I can predict the effect on the shape or motion of objects. SCN 1-07a
13. Through play, I have explored a variety of ways of making sounds. SCN 0-11a
14. By exploring the forces exerted by magnets on other magnets and magnetic materials, I can contribute to the design of a game. SCN 1-08a
15. Through creative play, I explore different materials and can share my reasoning for selecting materials for different purposes. SCN 0-15a

16. I have explored how people lived in the past and have used imaginative play to show how their lives were different from my own and the people around me. SOC 0-04
17. I make decisions and take responsibility in my everyday experiences and play, showing consideration for others. SOC 0-17a
18. By exploring the ways in which we use and need rules, I can consider the meaning of rights and responsibilities and discuss those relevant to me. SOC 1-17a
19. Within my everyday experiences and play, I make choices about where I work, how I work and who I work with. SOC 0-18a
20. In real-life settings and imaginary play, I explore how local shops and services provide us with what we need in our daily lives. SOC 0-20a
21. I enjoy playing with and exploring technologies to discover what they can do and how they can help us. TCH 0-01a
22. I am developing problem-solving strategies, navigation and co-ordination skills, as I play and learn with electronic games, remote control or programmable toys. TCH 0-09a
23. I am developing problem-solving strategies, navigation and co-ordination skills, as I play and learn with electronic games, remote control or programmable toys. TCH 1-09a
24. Within real and imaginary settings, I am developing my practical skills as I select and work with a range of materials, tools and software. TCH 0-12a
25. I explore materials, tools and software to discover what they can do and how I can use them to help solve problems and construct 3D objects which may have moving parts. TCH 1-12a

Source: Education Scotland, CfE Experiences and Outcomes, website (n. d.)

[Building the Curriculum 2 \(Scottish Executive, 2007\).](#)

There are currently five “Building the Curriculum” papers and related online resources (Education Scotland), such as videos and presentations, all intended to deepen the understanding of CfE. Building the Curriculum is specifically for the early and first (P1) stages and, without a doubt, demonstrates that, in terms of early learning, the focus of CfE is on play.

“In 2004, the Ministerial Response to the Curriculum Review proposed to:

*‘...bring the 3–5 and 5–14 curriculum guidelines together to ensure a smooth transition in what children have learned and also in how they learn. This will mean extending the approaches which are used in pre-school into the early years of primary, emphasising the importance of opportunities for children to learn through purposeful, well-planned play.’*

For the first time, the curriculum for the pre-school sector and the early years of primary will therefore be presented together as one level. This will describe experiences and outcomes for children’s learning in ways which will support a more active approach to learning and teaching in early primary school and encourage better continuity and progression for all children across all settings” (Scottish Executive, 2007 p. 4)

This is also linked to the concept of Active Learning; while this can be wider than play based learning, within all of the related guidance here, and on the Education Scotland website related resources, the focus is very much on play.

“In Scotland, as in many countries throughout the world, active learning is seen as an appropriate way for children to develop vital skills and knowledge and a positive attitude to learning.

Active learning is learning which engages and challenges children’s thinking using real-life and imaginary situations. It takes full advantage of the opportunities for learning presented by:

- spontaneous play
- planned, purposeful play
- investigating and exploring
- events and life experiences
- focused learning and teaching

Supported when necessary through sensitive intervention to support or extend learning (the Scottish Executive, 2007, p. 8).

This paper asserts that play supports all areas of the curriculum and discusses the importance of play for early primary children, supporting transitions, and providing a balance of teaching and free play.

Active learning through play therefore supports the overarching outcomes by:

>“*successful learners* through using their imagination and creativity, tackling new experiences and learning from them, and developing important skills including literacy and numeracy through exploring and investigating while following their own interests

> *confident individuals* through succeeding in their activities, having the satisfaction of a task accomplished, learning about bouncing back from setbacks, and dealing safely with risk

> *responsible citizens* through encountering different ways of seeing the world, learning to share and give and take, learning to respect themselves and others, and taking part in making decisions

> *effective contributors* through playing together in leading or supporting roles, tackling problems, extending communication skills, taking part in sustained talking and thinking, and respecting the opinions of others" (The Scottish Executive, 2007, p. 7).

As in the GTCS registration standards and professional recognition awards, outdoor learning is a specific focus of this curriculum guidance asserting that:

"All aspects of the curriculum can be explored outside. The sights, sounds and smells of the outdoors, the closeness to nature, the excitement most children feel, the wonder and curiosity all serve to enhance and stimulate learning" (Scottish Executive, 2007, p.18).

The design, planning and use of all space indoors and out in creating a positive environment for children is also emphasised (Scottish Executive, 2007, p. 18).

The paper addresses the issue of parental perceptions and expectations of school being a site of formal academic learning, where they expect children get to grip with more challenging work than the play based nursery care they have witnessed:

"In the early years of primary school there may be some difficulty with the word 'play' itself. Parents often need reassurance that their children will learn effectively through play, because of its association with leisure. What is important is that all staff with responsibility

for planning early years learning recognise that active learning, including purposeful play, has a central role in that process and when necessary can demonstrate this to parents” (Scottish Executive, 2007 p. 22).

This was confirmed in the focus group interviews with teachers and assistants who reported that difficulties with parents when they provide play based learning and a lack of understanding of the importance of play in society (see focus group section).

[Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning](#) (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010a)

This guidance covers the importance of integrating outdoor learning into all aspects of the curriculum. Children must be able to explore, learn and experience the benefits of the outdoors, in both planned and spontaneous outdoor learning sessions. Taking a child agency and child rights perspective, where what children themselves bring to their interactions with the outdoor learning experience, this can range from maximising the potential of the immediate school grounds, both for play and for planned outdoor learning opportunities, and utilising the surrounding neighbourhood, or planned day trips and longer residential opportunities, further afield.

It is noted that the same type of experience, e.g. a visit to a farm, can be sequentially built on as children progress through different stages of learning throughout their educational journey e.g. what is relevant to highlight, observe and be of interest, will be quite different between a five or a twelve year old. While the guidance does not often mention outdoor *play* as such, the outdoor environment for play and learning is covered, e.g.:

“My daughter’s favourite thing to do at the moment is forest school, where they take a picnic lunch, they get to play, explore and investigate and even toast marshmallows on a fire. She absolutely loves it and talks about it all the time.’ Parent of a child in a pre-school centre “ (LTS, 2010, p. 15)

The guidance emphasises the enjoyable, challenging and exciting nature of outdoor learning experiences:

“Outdoor learning, used in a range of ways, will enrich the curriculum and make learning fun, meaningful and relevant for children and young people. “ (LTS, 2010 p. 15)

Furthermore:

“Outdoor learning can deliver sustainable development education through initiatives such as working to improve biodiversity in the school grounds, visiting the local woods, exploring and engaging with the local community and developing a school travel plan” (LTS, 2010, p.15).

Outdoor learning in particular also contributes strongly to health and wellbeing aspects of the curriculum, addressing physical activity and obesity issues, supports transitions and gives opportunities for deeper engagement with nature, the landscape and in valuing the richness of the varied natural resources in Scotland. This contributes to wider understanding of local and global environmental issues.

The guidance stresses the importance of both planning and integrating outdoor learning in long and short- term practice and the cognitive benefits and deeper engagement that outdoor learning provides for all children and young people, especially benefiting children

who do not engage so well in the classroom. In addition to team-work, problem solving and inquiry skills, a major component is also in improving and deepening relationships, as essential part of wellbeing and learning, across the curriculum. Enjoyment of nature in terms of wellbeing alongside the physical health benefits of activities outdoors are all also developmental opportunities supported by outdoor learning.

### 3. Education Scotland (formally Learning Teaching Scotland) and Scottish

#### Government: Other Guidance materials

[Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families](#) (Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010) and [Interactive multi-media support materials Pre Birth to Three](#)

The importance of play, including “intrinsically motivated, freely chosen and self-directed play” is very clear in this official guidance on the learning and development needs of the 0-3 year old age range. This is a guide to both good, evidence based practice and professional development, as it sets out the context of the care and development of this age group. , within a set of 4 principles; the Rights of the Child, Relationships, Responsive Care and Respect There are 9 key interrelated features; Role of Staff, Attachments, Transitions, Observation, Assessment and Planning, Partnership Working, Health and Wellbeing, Literacy and Numeracy, Environments and last but not least; Play (Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010, p. 27).

The importance of outdoor play and physical activities and the development of social relationships through the play of babies and toddlers, with each other, caregivers and in their own interactions with their environment are stressed, while the centrality of play to development is confirmed:

“Play and movement are essential for brain development as it is often through play that babies and young children learn about themselves, others and the world around them” (Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010, p. 26).

The work of theorists on play are covered, as well as understanding terms such as “play as process” (Bruce 2001, cited in Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010, p. 73). Further discussion covers assessing and managing risky play, ensuring that children are free to choose their own play, appreciating the intrinsic value of play, as well as developmental outcomes, ensuring access to good indoor and outdoor environments for play, and creating opportunities for heuristic play, such as treasure baskets.

**Building the Ambition: [National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(Scottish Government, 2014a\)](#)**

This national practice guidance sets the context for high quality Early Learning and Childcare as set out in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Published in the autumn of 2014, this guidance seeks to support practitioners in all early learning and childcare settings in Scotland. The guidance explains the use of new terminology to replace the terms pre-school education or early education and childcare.

This new “early learning and childcare” term, encompasses the greater understanding of how children learn within the context of caring, attached relationships, which has led to an acceptance of what most childcare practitioners already know, that there is no actual divide between caring for young children and supporting their learning and development. The move away from using the term “education” is also deliberate as it is stressed, following on from [Building the Curriculum 2:](#) and [Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families](#), that children are active agents in their own learning, through their own relationships and choices, in play and other activities.

“ Early learning and childcare takes account of the assets, which a child brings themselves and also what is gained from interactions with important individuals, namely parents, carers and practitioners” (Scottish Government, 2014a, p. 11)

Covering the policy and research background and linking to GIRFEC, (Scottish Government, 2008a), the Early Years Collaborative (Scottish Government, 2013c), Growing up in Scotland (website, n. d), the guidance goes on to set the context in terms of supporting families, how we view the young child and making a difference. Throughout there are case studies and personal reflection questions for practitioners. Later sections cover attachment theories, discuss the issue of developmental stages and focus closely on what are the characteristics of babies, toddlers and young children, and what they need. The importance of good relationships are highlighted, a section on understanding and using the pedagogy of early learning and a discussion of why settings and staff need to provide high quality services.

Central to this enquiry, is Section 4 of the guidance entitled: “What do we mean by play and learning?” And “4.1 How are play and learning connected?” (Scottish Government, 2014a, pp 30-32)

This section opens with an immediate reference to the [Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision](#) (Scottish Government, 2013b) and uses the following central definition of play to this enquiry:

"Play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward and is a fundamental

and integral part of healthy development which seeks to improve play experiences for all children." (Scottish Government, 2013b, p.14)

There is a brief discussion of the difficulties of defining "play" e.g. play as practising new skills, using imaginary play to cope with reality, trying out ideas, better understanding of thoughts and concepts, all acknowledged to be valid theories on how children learn through play. It is also described as "both a tricky word and a complicated concept to define" (Scottish Government, 2014, p. 30).

There are warnings against seeing play as "just play", seeing it as less important without acknowledging the intrinsic value of children's own play actions and choices in comparison to planned and adult directed play activities. There is a challenge recognised in that practitioners can often over direct play, often because they themselves are uncomfortable with natural play evolving, without interference, or do not appreciate the level of deep engagement in learning enabled through free-flow play, for example, Tina Bruce's description of the twelve features of free flow play.

"For example, in their play children use the first hand experiences they have had in life. Children rehearse their future in their play<sup>[32]</sup>." (Scottish Government, 2014a, p.30)

The work of Christine Stephen in her paper "Pedagogy: The Silent Partner in Early Years Learning<sup>[33]</sup>" (Scottish Government, 2014, p.31) is also brought in to support the argument that play is fundamental to early years learning; including widening children's skills, extending their thinking and consolidation of their learning. The role of the practitioner in understanding the value of play is of critical importance. It is also acknowledged that more needs to be done:

“There is a balance where we need to raise the profile of play and also to deepen an understanding for practitioners in supporting play experiences with children” (Scottish Government, 2014, p. 30)

This section concludes with some ideas on what a practitioner could do to support play, such as:

“Be aware of the immediate environment; be flexible in offering choices and carefully select resources which capture interest to create moments which spark children's play and, have in mind what individual children's current interest may be and provide props and spaces both inside and outside where children can play” (Scottish Government, 2014, p. 31).

There are other examples throughout the document of the value of play, e.g., in supporting wellbeing in young children: “Allow opportunities to play and learn together, to share ideas and interests, to reconcile differences and to begin to develop a sense of fairness. Encourage children to contribute their own ideas and be involved in decision making about their day. Engage children in daily energetic play, which supports and extends their developing physical skills, stamina and strength” (Scottish Government, 2014, p.70)

Also in discussing knowledge about how young children learn, “The knowledge of child development underpins sound practice. The most effective pedagogy combines both “teaching” (in its widest sense) and providing freely chosen yet potentially instructive play activities” (Scottish Government, 2014, p.77).

## 4: Teaching Qualifications and Training

### Context: Teaching Scotland's Future

The publication of [Teaching Scotland's Future](#), often referred to as the Donaldson Report (Scottish Government, 2011), made over 50 recommendations, which has led to widespread changes in both initial teacher education and induction practice and in demanding ongoing and more rigorous professional development throughout their teaching career.

The B.Ed. is being phased out in Scottish Universities (by 2017) to be replaced by BA or MA Education qualifications, in some cases linked to a new potential MA or MEd continuation courses. The PGDE remains in place, both for Primary and Secondary Teaching.

The report also sets out aspirations for teachers to be engaged in higher level academic research and reflective practice, with many in the profession moving towards MA level qualifications, in order to improve their educational practice to the benefit of children and young people.

### Teacher Training Courses in Scotland:

The table below shows the upscaling of courses from the previous B.Ed. across institutions and, as recommended in Teaching Scotland's Future (2012) teaching students are being given access to different courses (not just "education ones") but GTCS do point out that still, "we need a balance between academic and vocational qualifications" (GTCS, Tom Hamilton, interview, 2014).

This is followed by the results from the short online survey of teacher training providers; with Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Stirling Universities responding, and the results of a focus

group discussion with teachers (both trained at Strathclyde University) and primary support assistants from one school.

**Table I: Teacher Training Courses in Scotland**

Institution	BA Education	PGDE (Primary/ Secondary)	MA Education or MEd
University of Aberdeen		PGDE Primary  PGDE Gaelic medium  PGDE Secondary	MA (Hons) Education
University of Dundee		PGDE Primary  PGDE Secondary	MA (Hons) Education  MEd (for teachers)
University of Edinburgh		PGDE Primary  PGDE Secondary	MA(Hons) & chosen field
University of Glasgow	BA Education ( first part of Masters)	PGDE Primary  PGDE Secondary	MA Education
University of Highlands & Islands		PGDE Primary	
University of Stirling	BA(Hons) Education		a research-informed degree in Professional Education with a teaching subject (or subjects) for secondary in four years
University of Strathclyde	BA(Hons) Education & chosen field	PGDE Primary  PGDE Gaelic medium(in progress)  PGDE Secondary	MA Education

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University of West of Scotland	BA Education  BA(Hons) Education with chosen field	PGDE Primary	
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**Table J: Teacher Training Course Provider Survey Results**

Teacher Training Survey				
Scotland's National Play Strategy and Action Plan				
Question 1: <i>Prior to this survey, were you aware of Scotland's National Play Strategy and associated Action Plan?</i>				
Question 2: <i>Would you like to learn more about the National Play Strategy via a meeting with a representative from the National Play Strategy Implementation Group?</i>				
Question 3: <i>Qualifications provided and if Primary and/or Secondary?</i>				
Question numbers	1	2	3	
University of Stirling	Yes	No	BA	Primary & Secondary
University of Aberdeen	Yes	Yes	MA PGDE	Primary & Secondary
University of Edinburgh	No	Yes	BA,BEd,MA, MEd, PGDE	Primary & Secondary

**Comment:**

The first two questions are intended to gauge awareness of the Scotland's National Play Strategy (Scottish Government, 2013b) and associated Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2013a). Only one out of three was not aware of the plan, while two were interested in follow up information. Interestingly, for the third question on what qualifications are delivered, Edinburgh is still running the B.Ed. and the MEd, although this is likely only for current continuing students, as the course information on their current website does not include these two qualifications.

**Table J: Teaching Training Course Provider Survey Results (Cont.)**

Teacher Training Survey		
The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the General Comment on Article 31		
<b>Question 4: <i>Is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) incorporated into your courses?</i></b>		
<b>Question 5: <i>If you answered 'yes', how is this incorporated into your courses?</i></b>		
<b>Question numbers</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>University of Stirling</b>	Yes	Through relevant modules EDU9X6 (Early Years) EDU9E6 (Differences and Diversities)

University of Aberdeen	Yes	Integral part of reading and reflection for a written assessment
University of Edinburgh	Yes	Students cover this in lectures and workshops. On placements they are required to look at how inclusion and Children's' Rights are part of the policy and practice of the workplace.

**Teacher Training Survey**

General Comment on Article 31

**Question 6: *Are you aware of, and know the contents of the UN General Comment on article 31 of the UNCRC, the child's right to culture, leisure, rest and play?***

**Question 7: *Have you incorporated elements of the general comment into your courses?***

**Question 8: *If you answered 'yes' to the previous question, could you describe how you have incorporated the General Comment into your courses?***

Question numbers	6	7	8
University of Stirling	Yes	Yes	In lecture and seminar content in the modules listed above
University of Aberdeen	Yes	No	
University of Edinburgh	Yes	Yes	Through content of lectures on the theory and practice of child development and children's learning, also through pedagogical practice.

**Comment:** As expected, see GTCS and CfE sections, the UNCRC is integral to all courses, with two out of three also including the specific general comment on Article 31.

**Table J: Teaching Training Course Provider Survey Results (Cont.)**

Teacher Training Survey

Free Play		
<b>Question 9: Are the concepts, and delivery, of 'free play' covered in your courses?</b>		
<b>Question 10: If you answered 'yes' to the previous question, could you please describe how these are incorporated into your courses.</b>		
<b>Question numbers</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>University of Stirling</b>	Yes	In the lecture and seminar content of EDU9X6
University of Aberdeen	Yes	included in a lecture and course readings
University of Edinburgh	Yes	Through content of lectures on the theory and practice of child development and children's learning, also through pedagogical practice

Teacher Training Survey		
Early learning		
<b>Question 11: Are there specialist modules on early learning, which include play, and play for those intending to work in early years settings?</b>		
<b>Question 12: If you answered 'yes' to the previous question, please provide details of these</b>		

<i>courses.</i>		
<b>Question numbers</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>University of Stirling</b>	Yes	In EDU9X6 and in modules taken by Early Years Students out with Education in the Nursing modules Child Health and Families and GIRFEC
University of Aberdeen	Yes	In our Masters Qualification
University of Edinburgh	Yes	The PGDE (Primary) Course, for which I am course organisers, dedicated one third of the time to early year's theory and practice. We run workshops and have lectures dedicated to looking at child development, learning, theory and practice. We look at the concept of play, 'free' play, responsive play and structured play.
<b>Question 13: Any other comments?</b>		<b>13</b>
University of Edinburgh	Yes	CfE, and in particular active learning, is a key area of discussion and investigation in our PGDE (Primary) Course. Play is an ongoing area of investigation within the course, spanning all stages (3-12 years), and students look at how teachers can best support effective learning in their workplaces. As an evolving

		area, tutors feel that they are continually having to stay abreast of new ideas and theory.
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**Comment:** It is illuminating to see that play is not only included, but covers the whole primary school age range and is an integral part of early learning modules. The importance of early year's development for all teachers' understanding of children is supported by the weightings given to the share of course content

## The Open University: qualifications for teaching assistants

### Certificate of Higher Education in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools and Diploma of Higher Education in Primary Teaching and Learning

For both qualifications, the introductory course/module is **E111 Supporting Learning in Primary Schools**

**Block 5: Play, creativity and learning Study topic 12 'Environments for learning'** considers the importance of an imaginative and stimulating school physical and social environment to support learning and appropriate behaviour. **Study topic 13 'Play and learning'** highlights the significance of play in the lives of children and adults, and suggests

#### **Extract from: Introduction to Study Topic 13: Play and Learning:**

"The relationship between play and learning has generated much discussion among educationalists over the years. In this study topic we propose that play is a natural and universal activity – for children as well as adults. It is of critical importance to children's development and learning, and fundamental to their health and well-being. We argue that play is an important learning process for children of all ages, although we believe that, it may take on different forms as children grow older. We adopt a very broad view of play and distinguish between 'child-initiated' play, when children play without adult supervision and are in control of what happens, and 'adult-directed' play, when adults influence or lead children's play. We also note the close associations between play and humour, fun, enjoyment and 'playfulness'. All, we believe, have the potential to enhance learning in

schools. We clarify the possibilities for play in schools, given that the purpose of the curriculum is to promote development and learning in a framework which is determined nationally.

In Section 1 we argue for a concept of play that includes everyone, whatever their age. We consider what play means for children, children's right to play, the developmental difficulties that can arise if children don't play, and we look at some examples of provision for children's play, including the playground.

In Section 2 we consider evidence that suggests play is important to learning, and we highlight the benefits of play and the learning processes associated with it. Extending the notion of children's rights, we examine the importance of children's ownership of their experience in school and how this supports positive attitudes towards learning. We consider a range of 'play types' and how these can be represented in the delivery of learning.

In Section 3 we discuss the play-based curriculum and we make a case for the continued use of play as children move through primary school" (Open University, E111 course content, e-mail information, July, 2014)

**Table 15 (Appendix): The Open University: Certificate of Higher Education in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools and Diploma of Higher Education in Primary Teaching and Learning**

Although this is a qualification for working in schools the relevant units above are rich in play across all the different criteria, including bringing in play types the difference between a child's self-directed play, or adult directed, as well as the play and learning environment,

including creativity, indoors and outdoors. The importance of play to children's learning and development, including their wellbeing and highlighting the fun, happiness and enjoyment to be obtained from play, is stressed throughout.

### **Focus Group interview – Teachers and primary school assistants**

Although holding a focus group had not been originally part of the remit of this research, it was felt necessary to gain some insight (albeit it on a very limited scale) from school staff in terms of their qualifications and training with respect to play and child development and how this is supported by practice within the school.

#### **Focus group Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2014, a Glasgow primary school**

A focus group was held with three PSAs (two of whom also work in the out of school care service based within the school, but not run by the school) and two teachers qualified within the past five years. One of the PSAs holds an SVQ3 in Playwork and is registered with the SSSC, one has no qualifications and the other preferred not to say. The other PSA who worked in the out of school care was recently new in post and had yet to register with the SSSC.

One teacher qualified in 2009 with a BA (Hons) in Education and teaches primary 1, and the other graduated with a PGDE in 2011 and teaches primary 3; both studied at the University of Strathclyde.

#### **From your experience and perspective is play and child development in teacher training?**

The BA (Hons) teacher felt that over the 4 years, yes, play types were discussed as was child psychology.

The PgDE teacher felt that the course was tight for time (38 weeks in total) to cover everything and felt there was nothing about active learning nor play and there was not much in terms of child development, although a book "Starting at the child" by Jane Fisher was on the recommended reading list.

### **What play practice is there in school?**

The primary one teacher has implemented 30 minutes free-play on a daily basis for the children; this happens at the start of the day. During this time the children play with a variety of resources and builds on social skills and caring. The teacher said that this did not come directly through knowledge from the qualification but through her own idea; this was fully supported by the head teacher.

### **Do you think there could be more possible opportunities for free play in school?**

In terms of classroom time all staff felt that this was not really possible since there was already felt to be a pressure on time to deliver the curriculum. It was mentioned that P1 – P3 used to have time in a playroom which was semi-structured but now this is facilitated in the classroom.

### **Perspectives on play**

All the staff were asked about their perspectives on play to which all said that playful learning i.e. fun is vital for children to learn.

However staff felt that they have to justify everything they do to parents, in terms of parental expectation, and this includes free play and teaching methods. Parents would

question why children are playing in school, suggesting there is a lack of understanding in society about how children learn through play, yet no-one questioned play in nursery.

**PSAs- work in playground and classroom.**

The PSAs are also playground supervisors at break and lunch times and it was felt that the work in the playground is much more like that of playwork. In terms of working in the classroom, although it's a more formal setting they felt they were also able to bring a more informal and playful element to their work in this situation.

**Any issues about PSAs working in school and after school care?**

One PSA said it could be hard to switch off from school mode, but it was mostly seen to be positive- PSAs know the children and also know if there have been any issues in the school. They felt the children do treat staff differently between the 2 settings – they are more relaxed with them in out of school care service.

**Risky/Challenging Play**

All bar one of the staff stated a nervousness about risky/challenging play- one teacher in particular said she feels very responsible for all her children and as a consequence is very risk averse.

The other teacher said she had worked in a school where a child broke their arm in the playground and the school was sued, yet interestingly she was not risk averse and believed that accidents do just happen. This teacher had also been in a school where she had made fires with a P2 class (under the guidance of an external play training organisation) and the school provided loose parts play, which also decreased disruption in the playground.

The PSAs when working in the playground also felt quite wary of risk.

**Summary: Play content of teacher training/ teaching assistant courses**

In the review of website information on the various teacher training courses, no content was found specifically in relation to play, or indeed, active learning, in what mainly was very short course titles and descriptions. The three survey responses demonstrate however, that play, including free play, and the UNCRC, including the General Comment on Article 31 (two out of three), is included in teaching training courses in Scotland. The content of the teaching assistant training from the Open University shows a detailed understanding of play and the focus group interviews suggest that play is included within teacher training, at least in the longer 4 year BA Hons course, with perhaps the very tight timescale for PGDE not allowing much room for this.

## 5. Education Scotland – Active Learning and Play Resources

This is a large website with a wide range of resources on learning and teaching, including audio-visual materials, themed, interactive learning zones, and a total of 31725 resources listed, for a range of site content results by Sector, Curriculum areas, themes and type. It is a useful training and information resource for those involved in teaching, play, early learning and childcare and community learning and development.

The tables in the Appendix are interactive; therefore clicking on the headings should generate a list of relevant articles or resources on the Education Scotland website. All are copyright to Education Scotland. As they are essentially hyperlinked topics here this will not be included in the references section, but will be reproduced in the appendix of useful tables of information and links.

### 5.1 Glow – interactive online resource

“Glow supports learners to achieve their full potential by unlocking the benefits of the internet and providing a unique nationwide online environment for learning (Education Scotland, 2014)

Glow can be accessed from anywhere at any time – in school, at home or on the move, by anyone who has a password. Access to Glow is password protected; the Glow password is an important feature and automatically connects the user with appropriate materials and resources.

The Glow environment for learning supports Curriculum for Excellence:

For educators:

- A tool to access and develop high quality, relevant learning content
- A space for collaboration and interaction with other educators across Scotland
- A way to access files and materials anywhere, anytime using different devices
- A facility to build learning resources for classes and pupils

For learners:

- A tool to access the benefits of the internet and a range of online resources and services via one log-in
- A space for collaborating with other learners
- A facility to connect with teachers about assignments and learning
- A space to create and innovate as you learn” ( Education Scotland Website, October 2014)

Through Glow children and young people can also access online game based learning, including playing existing games and designing their own games.

. On the website there are articles explaining the importance of using children and young people's skills and interests that they already have e.g.:

“Game based learning resonates with today's learners because games are a key aspect of their digital culture. One of the main theories in this is social constructivism.

This theory argues that educators must be aware of the skills, knowledge and experiences that learners have when they come to school. The educator must see the child in the context of what they can do and what they already know in order to create learning experiences. This will take them further than viewing the child as an 'empty vessel' that needs to be passively filled with knowledge.

This framework requires the active involvement of the children in the construction of their own meaning, understanding and developing skill set. Inherent and fundamental to social constructivism is the idea that we also must appreciate that the learner does not operate in a dry theoretical vacuum but within a complex and dynamic social framework." (Education Scotland, Glow, n.d. accessed, 2014).

## 6. Play in Education Enquiry Results Analysis

### Play Pedagogies, Playwork Theories and Practice:

There are links to play in a general sense across all of the areas of play in education discussed as of course both the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and the GTS teacher Registration standards link with GIRFEC, where play is included in the Wellbeing wheel, both also specifically mention outdoor learning, which also includes play. With the overarching principles across CfE – for example, across Literacy and English, it includes “a balance of spontaneous play and planned activities” (Education Scotland, CfE, n.d).

Within experiences and outcomes indicators for CfE, a sample of five indicators are very specifically about play amongst fourteen which mention play across curriculum areas, usually at the earlier stages e.g. “I am enjoying daily opportunities to participate in different kinds of energetic play, both outdoors and indoors. HWB 0-25a, As I play and learn, I am developing my understanding of what is fair and unfair and the importance of caring for, sharing and cooperating with others. RME 0-02a, through play, I have explored a variety of ways of making sounds. SCN 0-11a, I make decisions and take responsibility in my everyday experiences and play, showing consideration for others. SOC 0-17a, and in real-life settings and imaginary play, I explore how local shops and services provide us with what we need in our daily lives. SOC 0-20a “(Education Scotland, CfE, n.d).

Within particular guidance documents for CfE, [Building the Curriculum 2:](#) (Scottish Executive, 2007), focuses on the early years and makes it clear that spontaneous play is integral to active learning, with a balance of teacher led and child led free play. The

guidance demonstrates how play is useful for transitions as well as meeting the wider Scottish government outcomes framework, and it supports the wider use of outdoor play and learning. This links closely with other Building the Curriculum papers, especially the [Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning \(LTS, 2010a\)](#), which mentions free play in the school grounds as part of wider more focused and planned outdoor learning experiences across the curriculum. Outdoor learning is integral to children's health and wellbeing and as a form of learning which extends and deepens classroom learning, and it is expected to be an integral part of whole school and specific subject curriculum planning. There is an example given of a child enjoying the play and discovery processes involved in taking part in a Forest School.

Where there is a strong focus on play as described in the Playwork Principles, is within both the guidance on [Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families](#) (LTS,2010b) and Building the Ambition: [National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare](#) (Scottish Government, 2014). In the Pre-birth to Three guidance, e.g. "intrinsically motivated, freely chosen and self-directed play" and "Play as process" (Bruce 2001 cited in Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010, p 73). Further discussion covers assessing and managing risky play, ensuring that children are free to choose their own play, ensuring access to good indoor and outdoor environments for play, and creating opportunities for heuristic play.

In Building the Ambition (Scottish Government, 2014) the National Play Strategy is quoted: "play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development which seeks to improve play experiences for all

children." (Scottish Government, 2013b, p. 14) and the value of children's own play actions and choices in comparison to planned and adult directed play activities is discussed.

The guidance states that you should "Encourage children to contribute their own ideas and be involved in decision making about their day. Engage children in daily energetic play, which supports and extends their developing physical skills, stamina and strength" (Scottish Government, 2014, p.70) and ensure that "knowledge of child development underpins sound practice. The most effective pedagogy combines both "teaching" (in its widest sense) and providing freely chosen yet potentially instructive play activities" (Scottish Government, 2014, p.77).

Three teacher training course providers responded to the follow up survey and two were already aware of Scotland's National Play Strategy (Scottish Government,2013b) and associated Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2013a). The UNCRC is integral to all courses, while two also included the UNCRC General comment on Article 31. All three covered the concept of free play in their training, and play in a variety of senses occupies a third of the course content of the Edinburgh PGDE. The results of this small sample does show that play is included and indeed is covered beyond the early years and right across the primary school years.

The Open University Certificate of Higher Education in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools and Diploma of Higher Education in Primary Teaching and Learning states that "... distinguish between 'child-initiated' play, when children play without adult supervision and are in control of what happens, and 'adult-directed' play, when adults influence or lead children's play. We also note the close associations between play and

humour, fun, enjoyment and 'playfulness'" and "Extending the notion of children's rights, we examine the importance of children's ownership of their experience in school and how this supports positive attitudes towards learning. We consider a range of 'play types' and how these can be represented in the delivery of learning" (email correspondence, 2014).

In the small focus group interview with two teachers and three primary school assistants, one teacher, qualified through the BA (Hons), said that play was covered in her training, including play types and in child psychology training, although the other, who had gone the PGDE route, said it was not or barely covered with so much to be crammed in. The BA (Hons) teacher in working with primary 1 children implemented 30 minutes free time play for children, although this was developed from her own discussions with a supportive Head Teacher, rather than from her training.

All interviewed believed in the value of play and playful, fun learning for children. There was a definite sense that teachers have to justify everything they do to parents- this includes free play and teaching methods. They felt there was a distinct lack of understanding in society as no-one questioned play in nursery. PSAs- work in playground and classroom found that their playground work much more like playwork, although included other aspects of support to children, while for one, both working in school and out of school service, found that it benefits children knowing them well. Their views on Risky/Challenging Play showed that all bar one stated a nervousness about risky/challenging play however, one teacher was not risk averse and saw benefits of risky play, loose parts play, fires etc. and positive effect on children's of such opportunities.

Education Scotland Website: Search "Play"; Overall Results: 1001 (26 October 2014)

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk>

For “Play” “Secondary Education” has the most hits (450) – however, this is also because “play” as in drama/literature resources also come up here; reflected in the “Expressive Arts” (107) curriculum areas. Outdoor Learning is the leading theme (43) but leading content is advice and information (189), although there are also substantial learning and teaching resources (144).

### **Play and Child Development and Learning/ Active Learning and Curriculum**

For the evaluation of this section, which is mainly about the training and guidance relating to the curriculum and often where development and learning is supported through active learning, these two categories are brought together.

In terms of the various sets of standards of the GTCS, the professional values and principles, which underpin all of the student and teacher standards, under social justice, integrity, respect, trust and professional commitment includes:

“Respecting the rights of all learners as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and their entitlement to be included in decisions regarding their learning experiences and have all aspects of their well-being developed and supported” (GTCS,2012, p. 5)

“Have an understanding of current, relevant legislation and guidance such the Standards in Scotland’s Schools Act (2000), Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, the Equality Act 2010 and GIRFEC” (GTCS, 2012, p. 10). In terms of their professional responsibilities, which includes [Getting it Right for Every Child \(GIRFEC\)](#) (Scottish Government, 2008a).

It is clear it is not just about academic achievement in looking after the holistic needs of children and young people: “Know how to promote and support the cognitive, emotional, social and physical wellbeing of all learners, and demonstrate a commitment to raising all learners’ expectations of themselves” (GTCS, 2012, p. 8).

CfE has a broader scope than specific academic outcomes in that it is concerned with a holistic approach to the learning and development of children and young people aged 3-18 in Scotland. As such, it links closely with other national interrelated policies on children and their families, for example, [Getting it Right for Every Child](#) (GIRFEC) (Scottish Government, 2008a) and [the Early Years Framework](#) (Scottish Government, 2009).

Looking across all of the experiences and outcomes indicators under each curriculum area, it is clear that usually play based or active learning is more prevalent in those indicators set out for either or both the Early Years (3-5) or First, usually P1 to P2. CfE does recognise that some children may be at these stages for longer, dependent on their needs. Right across CfE in the overarching health and wellbeing and the specific subject areas, play is also listed in overarching measures in terms of active learning in the subjects for all ages. E.g.

In Numeracy and the Sciences learning includes “active learning and planned, purposeful play”, in social studies, effective learning and teaching will draw upon a variety of approaches including: “Active learning which provides opportunities to observe, explore, experiment and play” (Education Scotland, CfE, n.d.), and Literacy and English also include both planned and spontaneous play.

There are also other specific indicators, which are about such active learning, e.g. “I am developing problem-solving strategies, navigation and co-ordination skills, as I play and

learn with electronic games, remote control or programmable toys, TCH 1-09a.” And ...“I explore materials, tools and software to discover what they can do and how I can use them to help solve problems and construct 3D objects which may have moving parts. TCH 1-12a” (Education Scotland, CfE, n.d.).

[Building the Curriculum 2:](#) (Scottish Executive, 2007) is really all about active learning as a method of supporting the development of children in the early years. It brings in concepts such as “sustained shared thinking”. The guidance notes that for the first time, the curriculum for the pre-school sector and the early years of primary are presented together as one level. Therefore, as in CfE, it is expected that P1- P2 children, experience play based active learning as integral to their transition to school and as essential for their development: Active learning is defined as:

“Learning which engages and challenges children’s thinking using real-life and imaginary situations. It takes full advantage of the opportunities for learning presented by:

- spontaneous play
- planned, purposeful play
- investigating and exploring
- events and life experiences
- focused learning and teaching

Supported when necessary through sensitive intervention to support or extend learning (Education Scotland, 2007 p. 8). This paper asserts that play supports all areas of the

curriculum and discusses the importance of play for early primary children, supporting transitions, and providing a balance of teaching and free play.

The paper addresses the issue of parental perceptions and expectations of school being a site of formal academic learning, where they expect children get to grip with more challenging work than the play based nursery care they have witnessed:

“In the early years of primary school there may be some difficulty with the word ‘play’ itself. Parents often need reassurance that their children will learn effectively through play, because of its association with leisure. What is important is that all staff with responsibility for planning early years learning recognise that active learning, including purposeful play, has a central role in that process and when necessary can demonstrate this to parents” ( Education Scotland, 2007 p. 22).

As highlighted in the literature review, there is an awareness of the difficulties early primary teachers may have in adjusting to providing the partly free play based curriculum and this is reflected in the small focus group discussion, both in terms of getting time to offer this, and in getting parents to understand such play supports learning.

[Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning](#) (LTS, 2010a) This guidance covers the importance of integrating outdoor learning into all aspects of the curriculum. Much of outdoor learning can be construed as active learning. “Outdoor learning, used in a range of ways, will enrich the curriculum and make learning fun, meaningful and relevant for children and young people. “ (LTS, 2010a p. 15). Children must be able to explore, learn and experience the benefits of the outdoors, in both planned and spontaneous outdoor learning sessions. This can range from maximising the potential of the immediate school grounds,

both for play and for planned outdoor learning opportunities, and utilising the surrounding neighbourhood, or planned day trips and longer residential opportunities, further afield. Enjoyment of nature in terms of wellbeing alongside the physical health benefits of activities outdoors are all developmental opportunities supported by outdoor learning.

[Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families \(Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010b\)](#)

This is a guide to both good, evidence based practice and professional development, as it sets out the context of the care and development of this age group, within a set of 4 principles; the Rights of the Child, Relationships, Responsive Care and Respect. There are 9 key interrelated features; Role of Staff, Attachments, Transitions, Observation, Assessment and Planning, Partnership Working, Health and Wellbeing, Literacy and Numeracy, Environments and last but not least; Play (Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010b, p27).

The importance of outdoor play and physical activities and the development of social relationships through the play of babies and toddlers, with each other, caregivers and in their own interactions with their environment are stressed, while the centrality of play to development is confirmed:

“Play and movement are essential for brain development as it is often through play that babies and young children learn about themselves, others and the world around them” (Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010b,p 26).

Building the Ambition: [National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare](#) Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Scottish Government, 2014a)

This new “early learning and childcare” term, encompasses the greater understanding of how children learn within the context of caring, attached relationships, which has led to an acceptance of what most childcare practitioners already know, that there is no actual divide between caring for young children and supporting their learning and development. The move away from using the term “education” is also deliberate as it is stressed, following on from [Building the Curriculum 2:](#) (Scottish Executive,2007) and [Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families](#) (Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010b), that children are active agents in their own learning, through their own relationships and choices, in play and other activities. “ Early learning and childcare takes account of the assets, which a child brings themselves and also what is gained from interactions with important individuals, namely parents, carers and practitioners” ( Scottish Government, 2014a, p. 11)

Covering the policy and research background and linking to GIRFEC, (Scottish Government, 2008a), the Early Years Collaborative (Scottish Government, 2013c), Growing up in Scotland (website, n. d), the guidance goes on to set the context in terms of supporting families, how we view the young child and making a difference. Throughout there are case studies and personal reflection questions for practitioners. Later sections cover attachment theories, discuss the issue of developmental stages and focus closely on what are the characteristics of babies, toddlers and young children, and what do they need. The importance of good relationships are highlighted, a section on understanding and using the pedagogy of early learning and a discussion of why settings and staff need to provide high quality services.

This is a useful and practical resource for early learning and childcare providers. Active learning and children's development needs are strong threads throughout the guidance. As mentioned in the play section above, there is also reference to *free, unstructured* play as well as examples of planned purposeful play and using play stimulants such as treasure baskets. There is a discussion of the knowledge and confidence practitioners must bring to not intervening overtly and interrupting the flow of children's working though, for example, their schemas until the child is satisfied with his or her mastery of the process being worked through.

The Teacher Training Survey also asked about:

Question 11: *Are there specialist modules on early learning, which include play, and play for those intending to work in early years settings?*

Replies included:

"In EDU9X6 and in modules taken by Early Years Students outwith Education in the Nursing modules Child Health and Families and GIRFEC "(University of Aberdeen)

"In our Masters Qualification" (University of Stirling)

"The PGDE (Primary) Course, for which I am course organisers, dedicated one third of the time to early year's theory and practice. We run workshops and have lectures dedicated to looking at child development, learning, theory and practice. We look at the concept of play, 'free' play, responsive play and structured play" (University of Edinburgh) and:

"CfE, and in particular active learning, is a key area of discussion and investigation in our PGDE (Primary) Course. Play is an ongoing area of investigation within the course, spanning

all stages (3-12 years), and students look at how teachers can best support effective learning in their workplaces. As an evolving area, tutors feel that they are continually having to stay abreast of new ideas and theory" (University of Edinburgh).

In the Open University Teaching Assistant courses play, learning, development and curriculum are covered: following the play based information in the play section above, "In Section 2 we consider evidence that suggests play is important to learning, and we highlight the benefits of play and the learning processes associated with it. ...we examine the importance of children's ownership of their experience in school and how this supports positive attitudes towards learning. We consider a range of 'play types' and how these can be represented in the delivery of learning. In Section 3 we discuss the play-based curriculum and we make a case for the continued use of play as children move through primary school" (Open University, E111 course content, e-mail information, July, 2014).

Education Scotland Website: Active learning: Overall 2885 results for search "Active Learning" (26 October 2014) <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk>

Interestingly , "Active Learning" has the most "hits" under the secondary school sector (995), Health and Wellbeing in the Curriculum areas (151), Outdoor Learning (174) in themes, and Learning and Teaching Resource (559) in content type.

Of interest for this section is also the digital learning materials available through "Glow", where children can engage in digital game based learning:

"Game based learning resonates with today's learners because games are a key aspect of their digital culture. One of the main theories in this is social constructivism.

This theory argues that educators must be aware of the skills, knowledge and experiences that learners have when they come to school. The educator must see the child in the context of what they can do and what they already know in order to create learning experiences. This will take them further than viewing the child as an 'empty vessel' that needs to be passively filled with knowledge.

This framework requires the active involvement of the children in the construction of their own meaning, understanding and developing skill set. Inherent and fundamental to social constructivism is the idea that we also must appreciate that the learner does not operate in a dry theoretical vacuum but within a complex and dynamic social framework." (Education Scotland, Glow, accessed 2014).

### **Children's Rights/ modern/ postmodern theory**

This is already covered in GCTS Registration standards (2012) and CfE (Scottish Executive 2004) both link to GIRFEC ( Scottish Government 2008a) and UNCRC (UN, 1989), while the teacher training course provider survey responses all said they covered the UNCRC (UN, 1989), with two covering the General Comment on article 31.

As identified in the literature review, the concept of child agency and what children bring themselves to their play, development and learning, is closely associated with a rights based perspective as well as social constructivist theories of child development. Throughout CfE 9 (Scottish Executive, 2004), the concept of active learning, covered in the above section, covers this aspect of child agency. There is particular reference to child rights in Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families (Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010b), as part of the overarching principles of this guidance "...the Rights of the Child,

Relationships, Responsive Care and Respect” (Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010b, p. 27).

While the Curriculum for Outdoor Learning (Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010a) also mentions child rights and agency.

Strong guidance in terms of including both the UNCRC (UN,1989) child rights perspective and what the child themselves brings to their deep engagement in play and learning for development is the guidance on Building the Ambition: [National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare](#) Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Scottish Government, 2014a). This is not surprising as the Act itself has a strong commitment to the UNCRC, alongside other national strategic policies, which also refer to and include children and young people's rights. This includes the National Play Strategy (Scottish Government, 2013b) and associated Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2013a), which is also centred on children's rights.

It is also understood that children are active agents in their own learning, through their own relationships and choices, in play and other activities.

“ Early learning and childcare takes account of the assets, which a child brings themselves and also what is gained from interactions with important individuals, namely parents, carers and practitioners” ( Scottish Government, 2014a, p. 11).

“Young children are a discriminating group of learners. They are able to choose what they want to do, are keen and eager to learn, particularly when their own interests are being acknowledged. They are able to choose who they play with and take enjoyment from everyday experiences. We know from research that the level of involvement a child shows in their play and learning can be a key sign of the quality and effectiveness of what is being

provided and tells us a great deal” (Scottish Government,2014,p. 76). This is in reference to the deeper levels of motivation, involvement and concentration, in meeting children’s intrinsic need to explore, as explained in the [Leuven wellbeing and involvement scales](#) (Scottish Government, 2014a, p. 76).

The digital learning resources from “Glow” (see previous section) again are highly predicated on child agency and choice.

### **The Environment for Play and Learning**

This is demonstrated throughout CfE and associated guidance, especially specific guidance and resources on outdoor learning, but also through setting out the importance of relationships, including engagement between children, their parents, practitioners and teachers themselves.

There is growing recognition of learning beyond the classroom in associated standards from GTS: “Use outdoor learning opportunities, including direct experiences of nature and other learning within and beyond the school boundary” (GTCS, 2012, p 16).

As part of such standards, there is now a strong awareness that there is a continued professional learning need for all teachers, and GTCS are able to accredit specific “Professional updates “. In September 2014, GTCS presented professional recognition in outdoor learning awards to teachers trained and developing good practice in this area (Teaching Scotland, 2014). There are possibilities here to develop other related professional awards, as; of course, part of the overall environment is the need for collaboration and continued professional development of teachers, staff and colleagues. The example of a

supportive head teacher, in the focus group results, where the B.Ed. P1 teacher was able to introduce play based time, is an example of this.

The CfE experiences and outcomes indicators refer to:

“Numeracy; A rich and supportive learning environment will support a skilful mix of a variety of approaches, including: active learning and planned, purposeful play. Including the use of relevant, real-life and enjoyable contexts, which build upon children and young people’s own experiences, frequent opportunities to communicate in a wide range of contexts, for relevant purposes and for real audiences within and beyond places of learning.

In social studies, effective learning and teaching will draw upon a variety of approaches including: use of relevant contexts and experiences familiar to children and young people, learning outdoors, field trips, visits and input by external contributors.” (Scottish Government, CfE, 2004)

In Building the Curriculum 2; “All aspects of the curriculum can be explored outside. The sights, sounds and smells of the outdoors, the closeness to nature, the excitement most children feel, the wonder and curiosity all serve to enhance and stimulate learning” (Scottish Executive, 2007, p. 18). The design, planning and use of all space indoors and out in creating a positive environment for children is also emphasised (Scottish Executive, 2007, p 18).

The [Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning](#) (Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010a): Is all about the outdoor environment both for play and learning and also looks at the broader environmental picture:

“Outdoor learning can deliver sustainable development education through initiatives such as working to improve biodiversity in the school grounds, visiting the local woods, exploring and engaging with the local community and developing a school travel plan” (Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010, p.15).

Children must be able to explore, learn and experience the benefits of the outdoors, in both planned and spontaneous outdoor learning sessions. This can range from maximising the potential of the immediate school grounds, both for play and for planned outdoor learning opportunities, and utilising the surrounding neighbourhood, or planned day trips and longer residential opportunities, further afield.

The guidance also refers to outdoor learning in other Curriculum guidance papers such as *Building the Curriculum 3: A framework for learning and teaching* (Scottish Government, 2008). Outdoor learning is expected to be an integral part of the overall Curriculum a not something just “bolted on” *Building the Curriculum 4: Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work*, (Scottish Government, 2009).

[Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families \(Learning Teaching Scotland, 2010b\)](#)

The importance of outdoor play and physical activities and the development of social relationships through the play of babies and toddlers, with each other, caregivers and in their own interactions with their environment are stressed, while the centrality of play to development is confirmed. Further discussion covers assessing and managing risky play, ensuring that children are free to choose their own play, appreciating the intrinsic value of play, as well as developmental outcomes, ensuring access to good indoor and outdoor

environments for play, and creating opportunities for heuristic play, such as treasure baskets.

Building the Ambition: [National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare](#) Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Scottish Government, 2014a)

“Be aware of the immediate environment; be flexible in offering choices and carefully select resources which capture interest to create moments which spark children's play and, have in mind what individual children's current interest may be and provide props and spaces both inside and outside where children can play” (Scottish Government, 2014a, p. 31). Two case studies, with reflective questions are also provided in this section, one “Jamie’s Nest” and the other “Ella’s story” (Scottish Government, 2014a, pp 31-32)

The Open University Teaching assistant: E111 Supporting Learning in Primary Schools

Includes “Block 5: Play, creativity and learning Study topic 12 ‘Environments for learning’ considers the importance of an imaginative and stimulating school physical and social environment to support learning and appropriate behaviour “ ( Email correspondence, 2014).

Education Scotland – Active Learning and Play Resources in both the example tables outdoor learning was amongst the top theme under play (43) or active learning (174).

# SECTION F: DISCUSSION



## DISCUSSION

### Research Question:

1. To what extent is play covered in formal qualifications within education, childcare (and play) settings? ( Action 7.1)

### SSSC Register Qualifications

Within all of the main qualifications accepted for admittance to the SSSC register in terms of children and young people, routes can be clearly mapped to demonstrate that, even taking the fundamental playwork principles and play theory approach to play, from support worker to practitioner there are choices of eight qualifications, which cover such practice in their core units. This includes Playwork SVQs at levels 9, 7, and 6, The HNC and NC in Early Education and Childcare, the OU DipHE in childhood practice (including E100 accepted for support workers) and the National Progression Award in Playwork and Childcare, at level 5. At the lead practitioner level, at degree level or above, more than half (5 from 8 course providers) of the Childhood Practice BA, BA (Hons) MEd, PGDip and PDA level 9 Qualifications covered this topic in detail, albeit, mainly in optional modules (with also little information on two of the eight qualification providers assessed). In all of the HNC/SVQ routes (bar one), where playwork and play theory is not covered in the core units, there is always at least one optional unit covering play in this fundamental sense. One qualification for support workers the HNC in Additional Support Needs did not meet any play or development and learning criteria, so it was not included in any further analysis.

There is also potential to take a qualifications route where play in this fundamental sense is not covered at all, if not choosing playwork theory as an option, at each level, from support worker level 5 up to and including degree and postgraduate qualifications.

Therefore, in such cases, the question of whether play in the wider child development literature and theory, and the learning through play sense, is in the core of such qualifications becomes more crucial. There is reassurance that the Childhood Practice BA, BA (Hons) MEd, PGDip and PDA level 9 Qualifications (and above) courses do cover all of these aspects of development, often in core as well as optional modules.

In the SVQ CCLD routes at level 5, 7 and 9, (bearing in mind all of these qualifications are phasing out), child development, as such, is covered at levels 9, 7 and 5 in core units, while at level 5, there is also a mandatory core unit on learning through play. Across level 9, play was not mentioned at all.

For the SVQ Social Services (CYP) set of qualifications, child development and learning through play are covered in optional units, there are generally more than one unit covering these topics, especially in terms of active learning and curriculum. Would someone choosing this qualification route, from support worker up to practitioner at SVQ level 9, be able to avoid play in either the fundamental playwork sense or the wider child development and learning sense?

This, although on "paper" a possibility, is highly unlikely given the requirement that workers on the register must take the professional qualifications, and combinations of units within them, relevant for their role, setting and their own learning needs (SSSC & IRSS,2008).

Across many units the Social Services (CYP) provided a definition of “activities” as including play, however, this is not consistently applied across every potentially relevant unit, and it might be worth ensuring that this link to play is applied across all (CYP) units, which include the term “activities” to ensure clarity and consistency.

The PDA Education Support Assistance at SCQF level 6, has one optional unit relating to play and playwork but has two core units and one optional unit, related to child development, learning and the curriculum.

The eight qualifications, which included play in the fundamental playwork principles sense, also covered child development, usually in core units. This aspect was least covered in the NPA in Playwork and Childcare and the Playwork SVQs in terms of core or optional units containing reference to child development. The strongest qualifications in these terms are the NC and HNC in Early Education and Childcare, which also covered play, learning and the curriculum in core and/or optional units.

All of the Childhood Practice BA, BA (Hons) MEd, PGDip and PDA level 9 Qualifications cover children's rights, often in specialist modules, with some mentioning play rights. The Playwork SVQ units across all levels could be updated to include more about the General Comment on Article 31, as indeed should all optional units across other qualifications relating to play rights.

In general terms, at most support worker and some practitioner level qualifications, children's rights are framed much more as child protection, or inclusion, than participation or agency, therefore, most need updating. There is an underpinning value statement about children's *agency and choice* across all of the Social Services (CYP) qualifications, which can

be construed as paying attention to children's rights, and recent theoretical perspectives on child development in terms of child agency, this values statement might be worth including in other qualifications. The SVQ Playwork at level 6 also mentions defending play rights, in one unit. The SVQ CCLD at level 5 does not mention children's rights at all.

The holistic environment for play, development and learning was identified in the literature review as of crucial importance; this is covered well, across the Childhood Practice BA, BA (Hons) MEd, PGDip and PDA level 9 Qualifications and further qualifications, and in the former lead practitioner and current practitioner qualifications. However, at support worker level, this is not covered in The National Progression Award in Playwork and Childcare at level 5 or the PDA Education Support Assistance at SCQF level 6.

The SCQ CCLD level 5 has one unit about caring for a child in the home, while the SVQ Playwork at level 6 has a unit about supporting playwork in a school setting.

Also developed from the literature review, the categories of active learning, curriculum (including digital topics and international comparisons) and creativity, formed the last analytical sub theme.

The analytical discussion in the Play in Education section, demonstrated that when qualifications modules or units relate to the topic of active learning or aspects of CfE, especially in the early and primary years, that play, both planned and spontaneous free play, comes under such headings. All of the Childhood Practice BA, BA (Hons) MEd, PGDip and PDA level 9 Qualifications covered active learning and the CfE, while some had modules on digital or mathematical learning. At least two (Aberdeen and UWS) cover play based international curriculums such as Te Whariki (New Zealand), while some have optional

specialist modules on creativity (e.g. Dundee), playful learning (Strathclyde) and covering Reggio Emilia (UWS).

The SVQs Social Services (CYP) and CCLD at level 9 both have specific optional units on creativity and a number of units relating to learning and the curriculum. The SVQ Playwork at level 9 does not cover active learning, curriculum or creativity. There is perhaps potential, (if and when) this qualification is updated, to include more about creativity and to link to concepts such as active learning, even in terms of debating different approaches to play. All of the other practitioner level qualifications except the SVQ Playwork at level 7, cover active learning and the curriculum, all also touch upon creativity but not in much depth.

In the seven support worker qualifications, the NC covered active learning, curriculum and has a specific optional unit on creativity, all the others cover learning and curriculum, and just touch on creativity, except the National Progression Award in Playwork and Childcare at level 5 and the SVQ Playwork at level 6, which do not cover learning, curriculum or creativity.

Creativity is both an important element of play, child development and active learning, furthermore, some of the processes and materials can provide the means to measure learning without impinging on the natural, spontaneous play processes. Therefore, although this topic has specific units at Childhood practice and above, at SVQ level 9 and occasionally at other levels, it is suggested it is included at all levels in all relevant qualifications, specifically the playwork qualifications could say much more about creativity and play.

A further two qualifications were looked at in terms of the SSSC register they are the:

**Table 9: Robert Gordon University of Aberdeen BA Social Pedagogy (Working with Children / Working with Adults) and**

**Table 10: University of Strathclyde: The MSc in Advanced Residential Child Care**

For both courses there was limited information but child development and care, global and contemporary issues are covered while the lifespace relates to the ecological environment. Play in itself is not mentioned on either course descriptor but might be assumed to be part of both developmental and therapeutic topics. As mentioned in the literature review the Camphill communities (Camphill website. n.d.) take a Waldorf/ Steiner creative approach, and they provide work placements for the BA Social Pedagogy students.

**Play in Education**

Given a lack of in depth material on what are mainly quite new and updated teacher training routes, including moving towards more masters level qualifications, the Play in Education section examined teacher registration standards, curriculum content and a range of specific guidance relating to the curriculum, birth to three, early learning and childcare, outdoor learning, and professional development resources. In addition, three teacher-training providers responded to an online survey and two teachers and three PSAs took part in a focus group. An interview was also held with Tom Hamilton of the General Teaching Council Scotland.

It was found that:

- Free play is included in the curriculum and is a strong feature of guidance for the youngest children, including reference to the play strategy and playwork principles in

Building the Ambition (Scottish Government, 2014a) and guidelines for Birth to Three (Scottish Executive, 2007) also mention a version of the playwork principles.

- Child development and learning through play is well understood in a range of guidance materials and especially through using the concept of active learning, which does include spontaneous free as well as planned play. Outdoor learning guidance also includes active learning and child agency and choice.
- Through registration standards and links to the UNCRC (UN, 1989) and GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2008a), teacher training includes children's rights and agency, as well as their holistic wellbeing needs under GIRFEC, which is also reflecting in the CfE (Scottish Executive, 2004) overarching indicators.
- Teacher training providers cover play and child learning and development, with one mentioned this comprised around a third of their course, however, one teacher interviewed in the focus group who had done the PGDE (2011) felt neither play or child development were covered.
- The OU courses for education support assistants (Table 15) are very focused on play in both the playwork principles sense and on active learning, creativity, the environment for play and children's rights, as well as curriculum and specific topics.
- Teachers and PSAs interviewed in the focus group believed in children having opportunities to play, even take risks, and play in school for this to help make learning fun. They felt that there was not support for this from society, and this was also borne out in early year's curriculum guidance, which noted it, might be hard to convince parents of the value of learning through play in schools, although teachers should try to do so.

From the interviews and in looking at standards, resources and courses, it is clear that teachers are expected, like social service registered workers, to engage in ongoing learning and development beyond their initial training and admittance to the register. GTCS also can accredit “professional update” courses, and there is an example given of a recent award developed on the topic of outdoor learning, which has been taken up by a number of teachers.

Play is included in education in Scotland, especially in recent guidance for early learning and childcare (Scottish Government, 2014a), but also in curriculum guidance and contents, and is, or should be, therefore part of teacher training courses to various levels.

**Research Question 2: Are there existing courses or units in qualifications or CPD courses relating to play that could be integrated into other qualifications where there is little/no evidence of play? (Action 7.1)**

Given that, apart from one historical support worker qualification held by few staff (HNC for ASN), every qualification contains either play in the fundamental playwork sense in core or optional units, and (other than playwork related) definitely play in the wider active learning and child development sense, this question needs to be slightly reframed. What additional units or CPD courses could complement the training already in place on play in qualifications?

At the degree level and above SSSC registration qualifications, it was demonstrated that at least five courses contained a range of optional in depth materials on play pedagogies, playwork theory and principles. It is also expected that the updated Standard for Childhood Practice will incorporate Government legislation and guidance as part of the updating

process (interviews), therefore, it is likely that GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2008a) and the National Play Strategy and Associated Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2013 a&b) and the Children and Young People Act 2014, and associated guidance, will be included.

Given that courses must map on to the Standard for Childhood Practice (QAA, 2007), those that already include play theories, play pedagogy and principles, will not have much to change, however, others might need to develop additional materials or units. The courses, however, retain their core focus on management and leadership; therefore, any additional material may be in optional modules or units.

Above BA level, there are opportunities to develop modules covering play in both the widest sense and in the free play sense, which could be applicable to both childhood practice graduates and to teachers. E.g. The University of Strathclyde: *Early Years Pedagogue* (Table 11) contains all of the elements of the criteria developed to analysis the different types of play, play in learning and development, the play environment, children's rights, global and modern theories, children's languages and creativity and curriculum such as Te Whariki.

Play is expected to be part of the learning practice in P1 and P2, through CfE, and this is perhaps an area where teachers might want new and updated guidance and support from training colleagues in the related early learning and childcare fields. Unless the Playwork SVQs are updated to include more material about active learning and the curriculum, whilst their play experience and expertise might be highly useful, being able to translate this into the teacher's role in classroom practice, and indeed in outdoor learning too, is also needed.

This is an area where qualifications for Pupil Support Assistants provide a bridge across the active learning, curriculum and playwork, especially where options to cover playwork are taken up by assistants. The playwork unit, supporting playwork in schools, might be useful here, but again, perhaps this is needed at level 7 as well as level 6 and could be updated to include more knowledge of the curriculum, active learning and child development.

In the interviews, it was identified that suitable professional update courses could be accredited by GTCS and a CPD course on play could be developed, similar to the outdoor learning professional update award.

It was suggested (interviews) that units from level 5 national progression award might be useful for teachers to learn basic play principles and theory but whether teachers would be willing to go “backwards” to take a lower level qualification is an issue.

Although those covering P1 and P2 (and indeed across primary school) might need further support in creating play based learning in the classroom, as the Finnish case study shows, even in a culture and school system where play is highly valued, such processes are not always simple to understand, deliver or assess. If there is a play professional update developed, it might be better to develop this at a higher academic level, which includes learning how to access different type of play as a process and using creative methods to measure progress. Some modules from the PDA Childhood Practice could be relevant here, e.g. *PDA Childhood Practice (L8) – Leading & Managing a Playwork Service*. Or *PDA Childhood Practice (L0) – Childhood Practice Playwork (Teacher... playwork focus)* (Interviews).

Although childminders are not required to register or to hold specific qualifications, the phased out SVQ CCLD at level 5, did have a useful unit on caring for children at home, therefore, it would be useful for childminders for a successor unit to this to be developed in the Social Services (CYP) level 6 qualifications.

We would mention here one of the limitations of this study was the time constraint in covering the sheer volume of units (we covered over 350 units) for the Social Services (CYP); therefore, there may be such a successor unit we have missed in our analysis.

**Research question 3: What potential is there for the playwork-qualified workforce to support play opportunities within more formal education/settings other than their more usual play/childcare settings? (Action point. 9.8)**

As identified in the literature review, and through interviews and focus group discussions, the area that has strong potential for development here is during in the break and play time, as well as in play and childcare, out of school care, breakfast and holiday clubs often co-located in schools.

The Finnish case study (Sahlberg, 2014a, b & c) is of particular relevance in terms of the information about how the school day is broken up with frequent breaks for play, rest and restoration. Overall, Finnish school children spend much less time in the classroom than peers in the USA or UK, yet consistently the Finnish PISA scores are in the top ranking three (Sahlberg, 2014 a, b & c).

Play based learning techniques are used within and outside the classroom as Hyvönen (2011) demonstrates, and highly trained and highly respected and autonomous teachers have a positive effect, according to Sahlberg (2014a). Following the Donaldson Report

(Scottish Government, 2011) there are moves to make teaching a Masters level occupation in Scotland, (interviews, play in education section), so it will be interesting to see if in the future, this also has a positive effect.

As the break time project website information and articles (Blatchford and Baines,2013) demonstrated, children and young people's time for breaks in schools are getting shorter in the UK, with less time for play, relaxation, eating lunch or the personal time restoration required as a break from learning.

As the Finnish study (Hyvönen,2011) suggests, more time for play and/ or short frequent breaks from learning, longer lunch breaks and play based learning can enhance children's educational outcomes as well as their general wellbeing, as well as giving teachers more time away from the classroom, for professional collaboration and planning work, as well as their own work breaks.

Extending children and young people's break time should include extending and improving the environment of the playground, as the recently published grounds for learning studies demonstrate (Robinson, 2014a, 2014b & 2014c).

This is where, in terms of the holistic environment e.g. (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2007), extending the role of playwork trained staff to support play and leisure activities for children and young people, during breaks is an opportunity. Especially if creating or preserving longer lunch breaks and perhaps more frequent play breaks throughout the day, as well as

being able to work with many of the same children in the breakfast, out of school and holiday clubs, or indeed the classroom as a support assistant too.

They could work with the children and school management in improving the physical play environment, and how it is used, and they can support and facilitate play using playworker methods, which ensure children's autonomy, choice, balanced risk and the joy and fun of play.

This is not entirely new; it is already the case, for example, in Fife council (interviews), where playwork trained staff work across schools, nurseries and out of school care services and holiday clubs.

What might be quite radical is in meeting the needs for children to have slightly longer or more frequent breaks, inside and outside the classroom, where both free play, including risky play, and active learning in terms of using the processes of play can support, indeed enhance, learning, development and educational outcomes.

Even if it is not possible to extend the time for breaks, the literature, interviews and survey responses suggested that improved play during break times was highlighted as being the most realistic time free play and risky play opportunities within schools. It was suggested in interviews, that those schools which have focused on play during playtime and in the playgrounds, and where there is a whole school approach in place tend to find greater success (interviews).

Playground supervising staff have a clear idea of what they are to do, as this will have been clearly discussed and approaches agreed since it will be embedded as part of the play ethos of the school; this then also allows children and parents to understand what to expect.

Certainly supporting teachers, creating a whole school approach, and utilising the skills of play trained staff during breaks, in the classroom and in wider play activities for children before and after school contributes towards the outcomes set out in the introduction, from the National Play Strategy Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2013a).

“Outcome: All children and young people enjoy high quality play opportunities, particularly outdoor free play in stimulating spaces with access to nature, on a daily basis in school, nursery and early learning and childcare.

Impact: All school staff and early years’ practitioners will receive play training, as part of their initial education and career long professional learning. They will have sufficient skills, knowledge and understanding of play to support play opportunities. All schools and settings will have well designed inclusive spaces for play in local communities. Education managers and leaders in school and early years settings demonstrate their commitment to increasing and developing play opportunities and to supporting staff to do so through priorities in the improvement planning cycle, ethos and community life of their establishments and their own professional learning" (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.20).

Therefore, the use of the school as a site of play in breakfast clubs, breaks, lunchtime, after school and holiday clubs is an essential component of supporting play in the community, while utilising playwork trained staff across these settings and times would help facilitate such opportunities for children.

Because of the process and findings of the research, the following additional questions are also partly addressed:

**Research question 4: What does the literature tells us about the benefits of play?  
(Relating to Action 7.2)**

The literature review tries to synthesis play in the playwork principles sense and in the wider child development and learning sense in order to demonstrate that the processes of free play can be utilised for child development and learning outcomes without taking away the intrinsic motivation and freedom of the child's own personally determined play choices. It also demonstrates that play as a process and the affordance of play, can be justified within learning frameworks, as well as supporting children's wellbeing and happiness on a day-to-day level. The literature also affirms the centrality of social relationships to child development and play is very much part of the process of creating social relationships and learning social skills relevant for their culture and environment.

There is little literature on the play needs of children of school age, in school, which is why the break time study, grounds for learning and the Finnish case study extend the literature to cover this age range and setting in more detail.

**Research question 5: Where are the gaps and how can professional development opportunities be extended in studying play (Relating to Action 9.9)**

Although much relating to this question is covered in the discussion of question 2, the content of other courses such as *Gloucestershire; Professional Studies in Children's Play*

(Masters) (Table 12); and Leeds Beckett University: BA (Hons) Playwork (Table 13); demonstrate that there are not, at this level, similar specialist playwork courses in Scotland. In the interviews, some respondents believed that there is not enough knowledge of Playwork at this level amongst those delivering degree level and higher courses. Suggested solutions to address this gap included:

Funded play Doctorates (Professional doctorates)

- Academic play research network

Professional Doctorates and Part-Time PhDs

Most Scottish universities will offer these advanced level degree options. Both of these particular qualifications are research-based and lead to the conferring of the title 'Dr' on graduation. Fees for a sample university for 2014/15 are:

M.Phil. part-time - £2050 per year

Ph.D., part-time - £2050 per year

Professional Doctorate - £3160 per year

The interviews also identified a gap in terms of the promotion of Playwork in Scotland. This is the responsibility of SkillsActive, however, due to cutbacks, personnel changes, and covering staff leave arrangements, there have been gaps in their work in Scotland, which they are aware of and keen to address (interviews).

The interviews also brought out that funding has been obtained to update the Playwork National Occupation Standards later this year; therefore, this is an opportunity to address some of the issues highlighted in this report.

### **Further discussion points emerging from the research**

#### **Responsibilities and Resources**

In terms of this enquiry, we looked at the contents of qualifications and noted in the above discussion of the results that there are various paths a learner might take in terms of including a great deal, or much less, play focused units or modules at difference levels of qualifications. We also noted that, apart from specialist playwork qualifications, to cover play in this playwork principles sense required choosing available optional units or modules, which are playwork focused. In addition, it was found that at least three initial teacher training over longer courses do cover play, including free and spontaneous play, but for at least one other PGDE course, in the past, it was not covered (focus group).

Given the optional factor of studying play in many courses, this then relates to the point (interviews) that qualifications should be seen to be not the end but the start of an individual's professional learning journey, which should embrace lifelong learning and Continued Professional Development (CPD).

The individual professional should therefore take responsibility for their learning to ensure that their skills and knowledge fit with their role and setting, this if includes changing roles or settings, looking to address any new gaps in learning.

However, the employer must also take responsibility and ensure that employees are provided with the resources and opportunities to allow their employee to meet the gap in their skills or knowledge. Both the roles and responsibilities of the individual and employer are covered by the SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Social Service Employers (SSSC, 2003). While GTCS registration (GTCS, 2012) also includes a requirement to engage in professional updates.

As discussed in the interviews, for employers and individuals to legally be required to engage in lifelong professional development, also has resource implications, in terms of the time of staff involved, and the funding, costs and availability of the CPD resources. Indeed, staff motivation, after a whole career building up experience in the field, with many teaching staff and a high proportion of childcare managers in their fifties (Chart 1, and statistics background section), in taking further CPD, might be also an issue to be addressed.

Additional CPD resources to fill gaps therefore need to be to be attractive, accessible and affordable. This requires investment and to attract a wide range of learners, including resources covering different stages in their careers, across the broader children's services workforce.

As we have identified in the discussion, if the playwork NOS are updated to include more links to play development and learning, and qualifications such as the OU primary school assistants qualifications, and others for PSAs are utilised more for school staff, then this does bring in more play-based qualifications to schools. There are also potential opportunities for professional update courses on play to be developed for teachers and PSAs and then accredited by the GTCS for teachers.

There are cost implications for childcare, teaching and PSA staff, as well as for employers across the public, voluntary and private sector, and time implications for all staff. Therefore, we would recommend, in order to meet aspirations for the workforce to more educated in play and to understand delivering more play based work with children, then this requires investment in both qualifications and in CPD resources.

### **Play, safety and risk**

We have identified that for school age children the play breaks and lunchtimes could both be extended in terms of time and in terms of content of facilitated risky play as well as using play processes within classroom practice.

The approach to risky play in early learning and childcare, and out of school care, holiday care services, especially those with playwork trained staff, has developed over the years to looking at the positive risk benefits to children and young people of extending their skills, judgement and knowledge of risk taking, as well as those related to keeping children safe.

As the literature (Moss and Petrie, 2002) also covered, using risk to constrain and control children's play and freedom can be seen as part of wider social attitudes as well as, parental fears and expectations about child safety and "learning not play" (Focus group, Scottish Executive, 2007). As the interviews demonstrated, for childcare providers to move beyond this and extend children's development and enjoyment of risky play through using scooters or skateboard, should they choose, has been difficult to do in terms of the strict requirements of insurance companies. While the health and safety executive is quite clear that there should be risk in play (Health & Safety Executive, 2012), insurance companies take a tougher stance.

A head teacher will have overall responsibility for health and safety in their school so is not necessarily teachers being risky play averse personally (focus group) if they do not allow certain risky play activities, as they have to manage both legal responsibilities and parental perceptions of how they are keeping children safe.

Therefore, as Bronfenbrenner & Morris (2007) clearly identify, the environment for play, as well as for learning and developing through play, is highly influenced by wider cultural factors; in this case insurance companies (national and internationally influenced by growing litigation cultures) perceptions of risk in play. This is an area, therefore, that must be addressed for future development of a play friendly culture in Scotland.

### **Limitations of the research**

There were limitations imposed by not receiving material on course content from teacher training providers, although this is mitigated by the shorter follow up online survey results and the contextual information provided in the play in education section; there is still a gap on information on every course.

For the SVQ qualifications for SSSC registered CYP workforce over 350 individual units were examined for play content. This was time consuming and laborious as while SSSC (CYP) NOS were accessible, the category, for example, of manager of an out of school care service was not available on the NOS Navigator. Various sources had to be used to discover content of units of other qualifications; therefore, it is not always exactly equivalent information on each qualification.

Information received from degree level and beyond childhood practice course providers varied from a great deal to very little. Again, courses usually had a number of optional as well as core modules to sift through and this took up more time than anticipated for this stage of the research. We therefore, especially for information on Glasgow and Edinburgh University childhood practice courses, advise caution in comparing them with the more detailed information provided by others.

Given the sheer numbers of units or degree level course modules we studied, it is perfectly possible we may have missed, within some of the qualifications, any of the more oblique references to play, development and learning, or did not feature similar successor units to the CCLD which are available through the Social Services (CYP) qualifications.

Youth and community work qualifications, or any that voluntary organisations providing play activities within their remit such as cubs and brownies, junior and indeed youth clubs were not covered in this research and neither were the long lists of other professionals such as speech and language therapists who might be able to be part of the SSSC register. Certainly, we would suggest that youth and community worker's role in supporting play warrants further investigation. However in line with this wider field of SSSC registrants, again, perhaps speech therapists might want to use play processes in supporting their work, so this is another potential future area of enquiry.

The literature review is, in the main, not a critical, evaluative review but a scoping review, intended to demonstrate how and why the fields of child development and learning must be included if assessing play content of qualifications and not to restrict this to playwork

principles definition of play. Where it does go further is in discussion of play as a process in and out with the classroom and play as part of children's breaks in school.

We also acknowledge in terms of the presentation of the research and findings, we are constricted by the time limits to look for further discussion points and conclusions, than those outlined here, but we would encourage those further points to be developed.

We have deliberately included a large amount of course materials in the appendices. We have often compressed information for reasons of space, but the references section and table contains direct links to most sources, therefore, we would encourage others to use this as an information resource and as a tool to look for further discussion points.

This is a specialist report, covering the content and structure of qualifications, training and related legislative policy documents, therefore the report uses abbreviations, technical terms and tables, while the literature review uses academic conventions for citations. This might make the report less accessible to the public; however, an easy read version of the executive summary could be produced.

### **Conclusion and next steps**

In conclusion, we found that play in both the strict playwork principles sense and the wider child development and learning sense is covered, to different degrees, in the whole range of main qualifications assessed, albeit it is often only an optional choice to study play in the stricter sense. We found that it is up to the individual and their employer to ensure that they fill gaps in their learning about play, as required by registration bodies and the needs of their setting. We found a rich tradition of learning through play and spontaneous play in

terms of early learning and childcare guidance. We see an opportunity for schools to become better sites of the complementary support to learning, development and wellbeing of children through the provision of play opportunities and processes in both free time and in classroom practice, as well as before and after school and holiday care services.

We found some areas in some qualifications, which need to be updated or clarifications provided and we engaged with a range of opinions on current practice and ideas for future developments.

We make the following specific recommendations for next steps:

### **Qualifications contents**

- Every qualification unit at the SVQs related to playwork could be updated in terms of reference to UNCRC (UN, 1989), especially Article 31 and the UNCRC in general.
- Child development should be a compulsory core, not only an optional unit, in all relevant qualifications.
- If and when playwork NOS/ related qualifications are updated consideration should be given to including play in terms of learning and development topics to make the qualification more useful to a wider range of staff, especially PSAs in Scotland. Creativity could also be a stronger focus.
- The Social Services (CYP) qualifications should be clear about “activities” including planned or free play as defined in some, but not all, relevant units.
- The PDA level 5 in playwork and childcare needs updating especially on child development and children’s rights.

- While there are some specialist units on creativity, there should be more about creativity and creative play techniques, embedded across all qualifications
- For Childhood Practice degree level courses, in terms of the play principles or play and child development, if these topics are not covered (where we did not have information), then it is clear from other course providers that modules can be developed. If the Play Strategy and Action Plan are included in the updated Standard for Childhood Practice, it is likely they may have to do this in the future, while child development is a crucial element at all levels.

### **Qualifications promotion and development**

- SkillsActive have the role to promote Playwork in Scotland and to update the playwork qualifications, which will now have to meet the SSSC NOS standards too.
- The possibility of funding or supporting doctoral level play related qualifications could be investigated
- There is a possibility that a professional update for teachers on play could be developed and then accredited by GTCS.
- Financial support could be provided to enable access to CPD including paid time for staff to do so.
- It might be worth reminding employers that they have responsibility to support CPD as well as qualifications.

### **Promoting and Extending Play in Schools Practice**

- With CfE and official guidance clear, that play is a learning process, there needs to be more opportunities for teachers to learn and understand techniques to facilitate this type of learning in the classroom and to allow for spontaneous play.
- The literature review demonstrated that play and breaks actually enhance and support children young people's wellbeing in school, and their readiness to learn, therefore we recommend schools find ways to incorporate longer, more frequent breaks during the school day and week, or at least preserve and do not cut what breaks they have now.
- To support the above recommendations we recommend using play trained PSAs across the school, in class, in play and break times and linking with or also working in the before, after school and during holiday out of school childcare services.
- Play training should include how children learn and develop through play, especially in terms of social relationships and skills, which enhance the ability to engage in learning across subjects.
- Taking risks is also part of learning and development therefore there should be opportunities for risky play supported by a whole school approach, trained staff, and understanding risk benefits, including outdoor activities and trips.

### **Further Research**

- Perhaps as part of funded doctorates or Masters level courses, there should be a body of new studies into play as a process and how it supports learning and development in schools, out of school care and holiday services.
- Building the Ambition (Scottish Government, 2014) could be useful catalyst for new units, courses or research studies relating to younger children in early learning and

childcare.

- This research did not cover the play and leisure needs of young people except those in the breaktime and grounds for learning studies, it also did not cover youth and community work, therefore, these are areas for further study.

### **Wider Recommendations**

- Parents should be told more about the benefits of play, especially play and breaks beyond the early years, in school and how this helps not hinders wellbeing and learning. learning. Therefore, we suggest an awareness campaign similar to *play talk read* but for primary aged children.
- There should be more done on a national UK level to change insurance companies' attitudes to risky play.

# SECTION G: PLAY TRAINING SURVEY RESULTS



## PLAY TRAINING SURVEY RESULTS

### Play Training Survey

The second element of Action 7.1 was to review current play training available in Scotland; this was specifically training not related to qualifications but Continuous Practice Development (CPD). It was known that such training is provided by a variety of organisations with different geographical remits across the country. In order to capture as much of this information as possible a widely-publicised online survey was used. The survey was publicised through various membership networks and their social media platforms, such as IPA Scotland, Play Scotland, SPPA and SOSCN.

It should be noted that this survey will not have captured all play training providers in Scotland- as it was an optional survey which some organisations may have chosen not to participate and others, despite best attempts, may not have been aware of it. At best, this provides a barometer of the kind of Continuing Professional Development Training that is available in terms of play across Scotland.

The results do provide the contact details, as well as training courses, of many training providers in a geographical spread across the country (west, east, central, north, north east and south east), and an indication of the CPD play training that is currently available.

## **Methodology**

Through consultation with the Action 7.1 steering group an online questionnaire was developed to capture information from play training providers across Scotland. The survey asked respondents for contact information, geographical areas of operation; awareness of the National Play Strategy and associated Action Plan, as well as the UN General Comment on article 31, and if these had affected the content of their training. Respondents were then asked to provide details of all their play training courses provided: course name; duration of training; if it referenced the UNCRC, article 31, General Comment on article 31, the National play strategy, GIRFEC/SHANARRI and inclusive play; whether it was accredited by SQA; a brief description of the course content; the main target audience; whether the course could be of use to others out with the main audience, and why.

A full list of the questions can be found in the appendices.

The survey was available only online and was hosted by freeonlinsurveys.com. The survey was live from July to September 2014. Various member organisations were asked to publicise the survey through their networks: Grounds for Learning; International Play Association (Scotland); Play Scotland; Scottish Out of School Care Network; Scottish Childminding Association and the Scottish Pre-school Play Association. Known contacts within various local authorities were also asked to disseminate the information. Inspiring Scotland also disseminated the information to organisations within its portfolio of play organisations.

A total of 68 responses were logged, however 31 of these proved to be blank or have insufficient data to be of use; 6 organisations also repeated responses. There were also a number of colleges and qualification providers which also completed the survey but these were also discounted, as the purpose of this survey was to map Continuing Professional Development training and not qualifications.

Some training organisations also provided information about training courses which were neither related to play nor physical activity, such as healthy snacks or using floor books, and they have not been included.

A total of 22 unique responses from different play training providers were analysed.

### **Results from Training Provider Survey**

1. Are you restricted to working within specific geographical locations in Scotland?

Yes (6) 24%    No (16) 76%

6 training organisations indicated that they were only able to operate within specific geographical areas; the areas are Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire; South Ayrshire and Scottish Borders. Three organisations indicated they work primarily in specific locations City of Edinburgh; Highlands/Moray and Midlothian although training could be either open to participants from other areas or delivered in other areas.



Yes (22) 100% No (0) 0%

All of the play training providers are aware of the National Play Strategy and associated Action Plan.

4. If you answered 'yes' to the previous question, have you changed your play training to support any aspects of the action plan?

Yes (10) 50% No (10) 50%

There was an even split in terms of whether the training providers had changed their play training to support any aspects of the action plan- some of those who said 'no' indicated that their training already contained aspects of the play strategy anyway, prior to its publication.

5. If you answered 'yes' to the previous question, please can you state how you changed your training? (Below is a selection of comments as to how training has been changed.)

"One of the key elements of our training is supporting play in the community and at home."

"By incorporating the vision of the Scottish Play Strategy and demonstrating how links can be made to the action plan. By promoting Scotland's Play Strategy to those who do not

know about it and providing the links to download it.”

“Although much of our work pre-dates the Play Strategy, we have increased our promotion (and therefore uptake) of our Playtime Revolution and INSET/In-service work to complement changing mindsets and approaches more than physical spaces.”

“Incorporating information re the Play Strategy into the training content and supporting groups with their plans to implement it.”

“Used to evidence need for play, and as to support argument for play.”

“One of the key elements of our training is supporting play in the community and at home.”

6. Are you aware of the UN's General Comment on article 31, the child's right to culture, leisure, rest and play?

Yes (22) 100% No (0)

All training providers are aware of the General Comment on article 31.

7. If you answered 'yes' to the previous question, have you changed your play training to support any aspects of the action plan?

Yes (12) 55% No (10) 45%

Similar to the response above some of those play training providers who said 'no' indicated that their training already contained aspects of the general comment, prior to its publication.

8. If you answered 'yes' to the previous question, can you please state how the training has been changed to reflect the General Comment on article 31?

"Ensure candidate's awareness of the UNCRC and an overview of the relevant articles within this and ensuring that the candidates recognise how they facilitate and promote these within their practice."

"The training now includes a slide to explain Article 31. We discuss Inclusion and what it means, how we can include children with ASN to reach their potential and access activities and play in mainstream settings."

"All play training refers to Article 31 in its entirety. I also include the General comment on Article 31 and indicate how we each need to improve our understanding of this article in order to facilitate play. I also link other articles that naturally present themselves when working alongside children in their playful states."

"The training session focuses on article 31 and the child's right to play."

“In 2011, I changed my approach to working with schools to ensure that we took a sustainable and rights-based approach. I have always ensured that any work is participative and fully involves children, My recent book puts valuing play as one of the golden principles of learning outdoors - so that ideas around play go beyond simply playtimes in schools.”

“Including statements from the general comment and demonstrating how article 31 links naturally to other articles has been well received. Also raising awareness of what a general comment is and how crucial this has been to the play movement.”

The following table summarises the responses from the play training providers in terms of the organisation's name, geographical area of operation, training course title, length of course, current target audience and potential additional target audience.

Full contact details of the organisations as well as training course descriptors and details can be found in the appendices.

TABLE K: Play Training course Providers

Course	Length	Target audience	Additional Target
<b>ABERDEEN PLAY FORUM (Aberdeen City/Aberdeenshire only)</b>			
Positive Play Training	3 days	PSAs	Teachers, childcare practitioners and play workers would benefit.
Introduction to play	2 hours	Childcare practitioners and playworkers	Education staff, and other professionals working with children and young people
Play theories	2 hours	Childcare practitioners and playworkers	Don't know
Loose parts play workshop	1 hour	Childcare practitioners and playworkers	None
Den building workshop	1 hour	Childcare practitioners and playworkers	
<b>ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT (South Ayrshire only)</b>			
Play	1 full day	Modern apprenticeships 16 - 19	Play leaders within ASC
<b>CAPABILITY SCOTLAND (Across Scotland)</b>			
Everybody in – inclusive play training	3 hours	Mainstream childcare workers	None
All together now	4 x 30 min sessions	Pre-school children up to teenagers	Nursery and other childcare staff, possibly even school learning assistants/teachers.
<b>CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL, PLAY DEVELOPMENT (City of Edinburgh, although some events are open to partners in other local authorities)</b>			
Introductory loose parts play	Full day	School staff (head teacher, teachers,	

training		support & janitorial staff), authority wide or in individual schools	
<b>CARE AND LEARNING ALLIANCE (CALA) (Mainly in Highland and Moray- some training now available across Scotland.)</b>			
<b>BHF Active Club</b>	2 hours	Out of school care staff	Don't know
<b>Play into practice</b>	Full day, 1 day per week for 5 weeks	New or unqualified out of school care practitioners.	Unqualified play workers
<b>Risky play</b>	2 hours	Early years and out of school care staff	Don't know
<b>Risk assessment for childcare providers</b>	2 hours	Staff working in childcare 0 – 16.	Don't know
<b>Messy play</b>	2 hours	Parents or practitioners working with children 0 – 5s and 3 - 12 years (adapted to suit)	Don't know
<b>CREATIVE STAR LEARNING COMPANY (Across Scotland)</b>			
<b>Bespoke courses</b>	Twilight/half day/full day	School staff in primary schools and early years & childcare settings. Predominantly during school hours rather than out of school provision.	Don't know
<b>Professional site visits to schools</b>	Half day/ full day	Children, parents, school staff, interested members of the school community	Outdoor educators, rangers, gardeners and others who work with children but may not have considered facilitating play as part of their remit.
<b>Family &amp; Community Development West Lothian (Across Scotland)</b>			

<b>Adventure time</b>	3 hours	Anyone who works where children play	Don't know
<b>Snack Attack</b>	2 hours	Anyone who works where children play.	Don't know
<b>Playing with the Playwork Curriculum</b>	2 hours	Anyone who works where children play.	Don't know
<b>Grounds for Learning (Across Scotland)</b>			
<b>Bespoke training / supported sessions</b>	1 day to 10 days across 14 months	School staff - leadership, teachers and play supervisors.	None
<b>Playtime Revolution</b>	10 sessions of 1hr each	School staff - leadership, teachers and play supervisors.	Don't know
<b>Let Loose</b>	Half to full day	School staff - leadership, teachers and play supervisors.	Don't know
<b>Play Designer Training</b>	1 day	Landscape Architects / Architects.	Local authority staff, especially risk managers, insurance managers and property maintenance managers.
<b>HiMATS (Across Scotland)</b>			
<b>Process of Play, on-line self-study course</b>	Flexible	Childcare workers	The course is suitable for everyone working with children either as an introduction/foundation course or CPD - childminders and summer play scheme staff would find it useful. Workers who have SVQs or HNCs

			would find it useful as a CPD course
<b>Play into Practice</b>	6 days (delivered in partnership with CALA)	Early years and out of school care staff	Childminders and crèche workers would find this useful amongst other childcare workers
<b>Playing Up!</b>	3 full days plus self-study	Experienced childcare workers	All staff who already hold a qualification - including team leaders and managers.
<b>IPA SCOTLAND (Across Scotland)</b>			
<b>Article 31 and the child's right to play</b>	2 hours	Networks of individuals working with children and young people across Scotland.	Anyone working with children, young people and families; parents and carers.
<b>Megan's Specialist Training (Across Scotland)</b>			
<b>Playworkers toolkit</b>	12 hours (delivered by 4 sessions of 3 hours)	Support workers, practitioners, managers in out of school care	Street workers, play rangers, education professionals (teachers/classroom assistants), youth workers
<b>Observing Play</b>	3 hours	Support workers, practitioners, managers in out of school care	As above
<b>Article 31</b>	3 hours	Support workers, practitioners, managers in out of school care	As above
<b>Reviewing Scotland's Play Strategy</b>	6 hours	Support workers, practitioners, managers in out of school care	As above
<b>Midlothian Association of Play (Primarily in Midlothian, but can work with partners in</b>			

other local authorities.)			
<b>Free play</b>	2.5 - 3.5 hours	People who are relatively new to children's play from any sector. It is aimed primarily at those working with children aged 5-12 although elements are applicable to all ages.	Currently most people who book this course are playworkers from after school clubs or playgroups in Midlothian. It would benefit the same people throughout Scotland. It would also benefit anyone working where children play - residential childcare, school staff, youth workers, etc.
<b>Engaging children in developing your play services</b>	2.5 - 3.5 hours	The session is primarily aimed at those working with children aged 5-12 in a play setting, though elements will be relevant to younger age groups.	As above
<b>Creating inclusive play opportunities</b>	2.5 - 3.5 hours	It draws on work with children aged 5-12 although much of it will be relevant to younger age groups.	As above
<b>Developing a play policy</b>	2.5 - 3.5 hours	Anyone working where children play	As above
<b>Playwork intervention approaches</b>	2.5 - 3.5 hours	People with some playwork experience and knowledge who are looking to expand more on this and reflect further on their practice.	As above

<b>Risk and play</b>	2.5 - 3.5 hours	Anyone working where children play, primarily those working with children aged 5 upwards though general principles would be applicable to younger age groups.	As above
<b>PLAY BORDERS (Scottish Borders only)</b>			
<b>Old School Games workshop</b>	2 hours	Staff in child care settings (including early years, schools and out of school clubs)/child minders/parent/carer	Don't know
<b>PLAY FIRST (SCOTLAND) LTD (Across Scotland)</b>			
<b>Playing with Plants</b>	2 – 4 hours	Playworkers	Local authorities additional to ones already working in.
<b>Play with Tools</b>	2 – 4 hours	Playworkers	As above
<b>Float your boat</b>	2 hours	Playworkers	As Above
<b>PEEK – POSSIBILITIES FOR EACH AND EVERY KID (Across Scotland)</b>			
<b>An introduction to Play Theory</b>	Full day/ half day	PSAs, Nursery teachers & Youth Workers	Teachers & Head teachers need to also buy into this training so that in a school environment leaders can better support and understand the staff working in the ground.
<b>Ideas for Free Play Outdoors</b>	Full day/ half day	PSAs, Nursery teachers/youth workers and young volunteers	After school care and parents
<b>Physical Literacy &amp; Active Play</b>	1 or 2 full days	Other play workers / nursery workers/Young	Out of School Cares, Youth Workers, PSAs

		Volunteers	
<b>Cotton Wool Culture and Risk Benefit</b>	Full day/ half day	PSAs, Nursery teachers & Youth Workers	After school care setting; planners & designers; parents
<b>Play Scotland (Across Scotland)</b>			
<b>Play Strategy</b>	4-7 hours	4 hours - all involved with children and wider policies. 7 hours - as above plus practising play workers	Architects, planners and transport should be part of this course. Sometimes they come to the course depending on the local authority.
<b>Managing Risk in Play Provision</b>	4 hours	Playworkers, early years, education, open space, parks,	Teachers and head teachers
<b>PDA Strategic Planning for Play</b>	One day a month for four months.	Local authority planners, architects, education, health, green space, play workers.	Senior managers across departments in local authorities
<b>Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN) (Across Scotland)</b>			
<b>Health and wellbeing – physical activity</b>	2 – 3 hours	Out of school care staff	Other childcare providers and potentially teaching staff.
<b>Achieving Quality Scotland Mentoring Programme</b>	6 x 2 hour sessions	Out of school care services	Other group childcare services
<b>Scottish Pre-school Play Association (SPPA) – soon to become Early Years Scotland (Across Scotland)</b>			
<b>Learning Together Through Play</b>	This varies according to the needs and interests of the	Prison Staff, Prisoners, Prisoners' Partners and children 0-5	There is a range of staff in the voluntary sector, such as family support workers who may well benefit

	particular individuals and groups		from this training. Also support staff linked to contexts such as, hospital, homeless settings, health and social care, residential childcare, fostering, some nursery provision and so forth. In fact, this kind of training would be helpful and relevant for any setting where staff work to support parents and children to improve and strengthen relationships and interactions through shared play.
<b>Stay and Play and Off To a Good Start</b>	The number and duration of sessions vary according to the needs and interests of individuals and particular groups.	Parents of young children 0-5 years	There are probably many parents and young children who would enjoy and benefit from this type of learning, development and experience
<b>Smart Play Network (Across Scotland)</b>			
<b>Introduction to Free Play using Scrap and Loose Parts</b>	1 day (but can be adapted to a half day)	Practitioners working with children and families.	Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs) - although some LAs recognise the need to provide training to PSAs in play, others do not. Social Workers - students and qualified teachers.
<b>Positive Play</b>	1 – 3 days	PSAs	Specific geographical locations - there seems to be an emphasis on play

			training for central belt Authorities, Aberdeen and perhaps Highland, but many others are not accessing this for a number of reasons.
<b>Play on Wheels Workshops (Dundee and Fife)</b>	Varied - 2 hour, four to eight week sessions	Parents and Practitioners	Areas outwith Dundee and Fife
<b>Starcatchers (Across Scotland)</b>			
<b>Creative Skills Programme</b>	24 hours in total- either half days or full days	Early years practitioners and HNC students	Playworkers, childminders and early years practitioners in the third sector
<b>TCV Scotland (The Conservation Volunteers Scotland) (Across Scotland)</b>			
<b>Outdoor play</b>	Full day	Staff who work with children and want to gain skills in outdoor play	Professionals who work with children with disabilities and who would like encourage outdoor play

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

As highlighted in the introduction this section is most relevant as an information gathering tool to ascertain what sort of play training is available in Scotland at present and at best can be seen as a barometer of what is currently available.

### **Questions for further consideration**

1. Why do some local authorities experience a much higher percentage of play training than others- is this due to local availability, population sizes (and therefore increased demand) or some other factor such as a local authority area being more generally supportive of play than others?
2. In areas where there is little or no evidence of additional play training being undertaken, should these be seen to be "target areas" for additional play training?
3. Many of the training providers have identified that their training courses have a specific target audience e.g. out of school care workers, or teaching staff, but equally there are other audiences who could benefit from this training- is there a way of facilitating and encouraging joint training for different target audiences?
4. Is there a need/would it be beneficial for a play training providers forum to discuss issues and also ensure that there is shared guidance and perspectives in terms of what is being delivered, i.e. agreed common core values?

5. Would a national directory of play training providers be of use; if so, how would this operate and who would be responsible for ensuring that it is maintained?

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