



Overview of Responses received during the
Consultation Phase of the Play and
Leisure Implementation Plan

March 2011

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Summary analysis and suggested impact on the draft plan

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Introduction

The play and leisure policy, published in January 2009, has its foundation in the 10 year strategy for children and young people “Our Children – Our Pledge”, 2006 to 2016. The subsequent draft Play and Leisure Implementation Plan received formal approval to issue for consultation by the Northern Ireland Executive on the 2nd December 2010. The consultation period began on the 6th December 2010 and closed on 6th February 2011.

This report provides an overview of the consultation process and highlights key comments made in relation to the core areas and actions in the draft Implementation Plan. To fully appreciate the content this report should be read in conjunction with the draft plan and narrative.

The Consultation Process

There were two key mechanisms used to ensure that consultees had an opportunity to respond:

- Public notification of consultation phase through local media outlets, online at OFMDFM website and through websites associated with community and voluntary based organisations;
- Four focused consultation events held with children and young people in Belfast, Ballymena and Newry. In addition to formalised consultation events, a children and young persons version was developed in order to convey the key aims and objectives of the policy and support understanding. A copy of the children’s version can be found in Annex D.

A questionnaire was provided alongside the consultation document to assist respondents in commenting on the key areas of the plan. Consultees were however invited to respond in any way which best suited their needs.

Analysis of Responses

By the end of the consultation phase a total of 41 written responses had been received from individuals and a range of organisations, both statutory and voluntary/community based. A list of all responding organisations and individuals can be found in Annex C.

Of the 41 responses received 22 were made on the consultation pro-forma response document; 6 government departments replied via their departmental committee while the remainder responded through an individualised consultation document or in letter format.

- *Pro-Forma Responses*
Of the 22 responses received on the consultation pro-forma, overall analysis indicates that 13 strongly agreed with the focus and actions

contained within the Play and Leisure Policy, with 9 indicating that they agreed with the focus and actions contained therein.

Within the responses received, whilst in broad agreement with the overall policy, one local government respondent did highlight concerns regarding the budgetary implications for councils of the roll-out and implementation of the policy, and the maintenance of the play and leisure partnership model.

- *Departmental Responses*

In total, 6 government departments provided a written response, by way of a letter to the departmental Committee. All departments endorsed the policy and the actions contained within it. In its response the Department of Education did indicate its intention to deliver against key actions, however highlighted that this would be reliant on the availability of an appropriate budget line.

- *Remaining Responses*

The remaining responses received were in the form of a letter or individual response report. Analysis of content highlights a broad level of agreement to the key areas and actions identified within the policy and associated implementation plan.

Analysis of responses received during the consultation phase highlight a strong level of agreement that the Play and Leisure Implementation Plan represents a significant opportunity to address the myriad issues which affect children and young people's ability to engage in play and leisure activities here.

The Play and Leisure Implementation Plan has been developed at a time of economic downturn and considerable pressure on the public purse. As a result the actions outlined in it were revised in advance of seeking Executive agreement to issue for public consultation to reflect the changing budgetary situation and ensure a realistic and achievable plan.

Through analysis of the consultation responses a number of suggestions have been identified aimed at building on, and strengthening existing actions contained within the policy and implementation plan. The main areas identified were:

- Children with disabilities;
- Legacy of the Conflict;
- Negative Portrayal;
- Intergenerational Activities; and
- Linkage to other Government Strategies

Additional actions have been included within area 3 – Access to play and leisure and are highlighted in red in the plan. .

Children with disabilities

Respondents did not suggest any specific actions but rather highlighted the fact that the Play and Leisure Policy was intended to deliver for all children and young people including those with disabilities, whereas the implementation plan has no specific actions for these children.

OFMDFM recognises the need to take specific action to promote the play and leisure needs of children and young people with disabilities. An additional target has been included in the plan under access to play to take this forward.

Legacy of the conflict

A number of respondents highlighted the legacy of the conflict and its impact on children's access to play and leisure facilities. Whilst appreciating that this can continue to be an obstacle for some children, more so for older children, we are keen not to dwell on the past and inadvertently re-enforce the issue, rather we want to promote moving towards a shared and better future through planning to meet need.

We are working with local councils to establish strategic partnerships and one of the areas we will focus on is that of local planning meeting local need. This in turn will encourage play services to be based on the needs of the children and families within communities. However, we are aware that the provision of facilities does not, of itself, enable full use by all sections of the community in areas of contested space and that shared spaces cannot reflect the symbolism associated with particular sections of the community particularly when based in one section of the community or the other. We aim to effectively begin to tackle the issue without specifically focusing on it.

Negative Portrayal

A number of respondents felt strongly about the lack of tolerance and respect that can be demonstrated towards young people particularly those who were "hanging around" street corners and perceived to be either involved in or becoming involved in anti-social behaviour. Young people themselves cited many examples of where they were "moved on" either by older people or the PSNI even though they were not causing any disturbance or being disorderly. The Executive has agreed to make tackling negative portrayal of children and young people a priority following comments made within the concluding observations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We are committed to working across the State Party and with each of the four children's commissioners to undertake actions to address this issue.

Intergenerational activities

The consultation responses highlighted the absence of actions focused on intergenerational facilities. We acknowledge specific actions on this have not been built into the action plan at this time; however the underlying theme of the plan is the incorporation of children and young people into communities and broader society – thus implicit within the plan is a need for intergenerational engagement. We also based one of our exemplar projects,

carried out in conjunction with Councils, on an intergenerational theme. In addition the Department has made a commitment within the policy to review and develop key action areas over its lifetime, and as such the inclusion of focused intergenerational actions will be considered as part of the ongoing review process.

Linkage to other Government Strategies

Many consultees's reinforced the need to consider other government strategies in taking forward the play and leisure policy. We fully accept that play cuts across the remit of a number of government policies, particularly around, health, education, poverty and social development. We will therefore continue to identify the linkages and to promote and strengthen a joined up approach as we implement and monitor the plan.

Key Findings from written responses

Responses were analysed according to the 4 priority areas identified within the plan. We asked respondents to indicate a strong agreement, agreement or disagreement with the action areas and impact areas of the plan. With regard to action areas the majority strongly agreed with an equal split between strong agreement and agreement of the impact areas. A synopsis of the main comments is detailed below with statistics being shown at Annex B:

Area 1 - Places and Spaces for Play and Leisure

under *Places and Spaces for Play and Leisure* a number of key impact areas are identified within the plan, namely:

1. Planning and design to promote play and leisure, making it inclusive and accessible to all;
2. Public spaces create a welcoming environment for all children and young people;
3. Influencing professional practice in building and design;
4. Promoting the conversion of unused land into viable play and leisure spaces;

Through analysis of the consultation responses a number of common areas have been identified. These areas have been outlined below alongside indicative comments from consultees.

- The voices of children and young people will be central to the success of the policy. The department must ensure that children and young people have an appropriate means of participating and guiding its roll-out;

“We fully endorse that the plan is underpinned by the active participation of children and young people. The voices of children and young people need to be heard when it comes to play and leisure experiences within communities” (Strabane and District Play Club);

- The community and voluntary sector currently provide a range of places and spaces for play and leisure (including childcare provision) and would welcome the opportunity to support the roll-out of the policy within communities and provide a connection to parents;
- The policy must be backed up by a dedicated play and leisure fund aimed at supporting its embedding within communities and across statutory and voluntary structures;

“Communities and young people must be actively consulted and engaged in the creation, design and implementation of such spaces in

their neighbourhoods. This will require revenue and a dedicated additional funding stream” (Childcare Partnerships);

- Partnership working will be critical in achieving the goals of the policy and implementation plan;

“Partnership working to jointly achieve outcomes will be critical to the achievement and successful implementation of the play and leisure plan” (Camowen Partnership);

- Play and leisure is a cross-cutting issue and it is important that Departments recognise their role in influencing play and leisure through decisions made regarding (by way of example) planning policy, housing, transport were issued that arose consistently in responses;

“We strongly endorse the action area ‘ensure read across to existing and emerging departmental strategies which impact on children and young people’, which is particularly important given that the objectives of the play and leisure policy are complementary to such a broad mix of current and future departmental strategies including Priorities 1 and 3 of the Child Poverty Strategy, the Community Safety strategy, and also the Department of Education’s evolving Priorities for Youth strategy” (Youth Council);

“If the play and leisure strategy is to be successful, all government departments must make a firm commitment to its realisation and therefore need to incorporate its activities within departmental plans” (PlayZone After School Club)

Area 2 - Championing Play and Leisure

under *Championing Play and Leisure* a number of key impact areas are identified within the plan, namely:

1. Implementation of the Play and Leisure Policy across the NI Executive;
2. Engaging and involving children and young people;
3. Promote a greater recognition of the benefits to be gained from play and leisure with parents;
4. Strategic Planning;
5. Promote quality standards in registered provision;
6. Embedding of the Play and Leisure policy within schools and youth provision;
7. Increase the extent to which all children and young people encounter challenge, stimulation and acceptable levels of risk in their experience of play and leisure;

Through analysis of the consultation responses a number of common areas have been identified, including:

- Voluntary and community sectors can have a key role to play in meeting the objectives of the policy and should be involved in any partnership based approaches which emerge;
- There is a need for cross-departmental alignment of play and leisure to relevant policy areas e.g. obesity, child poverty, Community Sharing and Integration etc.;

“We firmly believe that due to the cross-cutting nature of the plan, its success depends on the government making cross-departmental and inter-agency working a priority” (Children’s Law Centre);

“We would advocate the need for multi-agency approaches that embrace prevention and early intervention as the key to ensuring neighbourhoods and communities are safe areas where everyone can feel secure. We would welcome an action point which addresses the need for inter-generational work.” (PSNI);

- There is a need for departments to recognise the importance of play and leisure and acknowledge this recognition through incorporating policy priorities into departmental business and financial planning processes;
- Children and young people, their parents and communities have a key role in championing play and leisure at a local level and must be engaged within the roll-out of the policy;

“It is essential to highlight an action that works with parents on what constitutes quality play and how they can facilitate it” (Larne YMCA)

Area 3 - Access to Play and Leisure

under *Access to Play and Leisure* a number of key impact areas are identified within the plan, namely:

1. Children and young people’s rights;
2. Promoting a greater recognition of the benefits of play and leisure with parents and the wider community;
3. Enable children and young people to travel to, and access their local play and leisure spaces safely;

Through analysis of the consultation responses a number of common areas have been identified, including:

- Access to play and leisure is affected by a broad range of issues including access to transport; traffic levels; and the costs of gaining

entry to play and leisure and as such requires an inter-agency approach;

“Planning and housing, transport and highways have as much impact on the space that children and young people inhabit as those more readily associated with play. In each area an understanding of children’s play needs to be embedded and reflected in a cohesive plan and clear commitments to outcomes for children and young people” (PSNI)

- The play and leisure needs of children with additional needs and those from minority ethnic minority communities should have a clear focus through the policy;

“We feel that all delivery partners need to ensure equality of access to play and leisure for all groups including children with disabilities and their needs should be reflected in the actions and delivery” (Parents Advice Centre);

“It is important that parents recognise the importance of using informal play spaces such as outdoor areas around the home and not just formal spaces such as playgrounds” (Early Years Organisation)

- A number of respondents highlighted the School Estate as a resource for play and leisure, some suggested additional actions in this area;

“More consideration for school/community play sites which are at the heart of the community and are deemed safe” (Armagh City Council);

- Parents and wider community have a key role to play in supporting access to play and leisure and must be engaged throughout the delivery of the policy;

“We would highlight the importance of involving parents in decision making on play and leisure opportunities and listening to their views and opinions. Unless regular consultation takes place which is designed to ensure full participation of parents, children and young people there is a risk that the planning and design of play and leisure services will not meet the needs of parents and children.” (Parents Advice Centre)

- Important to recognise the legacy of the conflict which still acts to reduce access to play and leisure on a geographical and a community basis;

“Recognising and responding to the legacy of the conflict on play and leisure, seen for example in the segregated nature of school and community based provision, and the barriers to children and young people accessing facilities and provision in geographic areas outside their communities” (Camowen Partnership)

“As a parent of three children who are of an age where they to go and enjoy free time I would like them to be able to travel freely and safely to places of their choice and between different communities” (Lisa O’Connor - Parent)

Area 4 - Workforce Development

Under *workforce development* a number of key impact areas are identified within the plan, namely:

1. Appropriate and accessible training/qualification opportunities are available for those working with children and young people within the play and leisure sector;
2. Promote the aims and objectives of the play and leisure policy to those involved directly or indirectly with children and young people;

Through analysis of the consultation responses a number of common areas have been identified, including:

- Community and voluntary sectors have a key role to play within this area and can assist with the fulfilment of key actions, including by way of example, the audit of workforce training needs;

“With respect to the audit of workforce training needs, YCNI chairs and co-ordinates the work of the Youth Work Training Board, and is happy to advise on the proposed audit and relevant youth service developments” (Youth Council for Northern Ireland)

- There is a need as part of the policy roll-out to further define and clarify the scope of the designated workforce;

“Recognition that there is a career path attributed to play, plus there is also a need for continued professional development i.e. play workers, maintenance operatives, landscape architects etc.” (Armagh City Council)

- That the play work force is wider than the children and young person’s sectors, e.g. PSNI, planners and others need to have an appreciation of Play methodology purpose and process.

“In parks, staff/wardens need to be trained in appreciating the difference between young people playing and criminal/anti-social behaviour.” (Childcare Partnerships)

“It is fundamental that workforce development includes training on good relations and conflict resolution” (CRC).

General Comments Received

A number of general comments were received but these were not consistent across the responses and represented the views of individual or a small number of respondents

- There is a need to ensure a robust monitoring of the policy to ensure it is fit for purpose in its delivery;
- A strengthening of children's rights in the document would be welcomed, although it was acknowledged that the policy was underpinned by UNCRC a number of respondents noted the UNCRC reporting process highlighting that the policy could strengthen the process;
- Be careful not to raise expectations, one council indicated concern over budgetary implications for partnership working.
- The Play and Leisure Policy represents a significant opportunity to work towards synergy between potentially competing agendas;
- Partnership working will be the key to ensuring that the policy delivers against its key objectives. It is important that government recognises the potential of the newly established play and leisure partnerships and supports their continued development as a significant delivery vehicle for the policy;
- The policy has the potential to address the demonisation of children and young people and to challenge the often negative perceptions of children and young people across wider society;
- A strong congruence exists between the Play and Leisure Policy, the Strategy for Sport and the recommendations of the CAL committees enquiry into sport and physical activity;
- A number of respondents raised concerns about the lack of specificity around the monitoring and evaluation of the plan.
"It is vital that a performance measurement framework (containing key performance measures) is developed at the outset" (Belfast City Council)
- In addition to general comments, we were pleased to receive communication from the Big Lottery Fund welcoming the publication of the Play and Leisure Policy. The letter referenced the launch of the Space and Place funding programme highlighting that people and communities are better connected by making use of under-used spaces and places, a key underlying theme with the policy.

OFMDFM is keen to ensure that the plan is supported by a monitoring and evaluation framework which is underpinned by an indicator set which will measure effectiveness against the 6 high level outcomes within the Children and Young People's Strategy.

Consultation with Children and Young People

Consultations with children and young people were facilitated by PlayBoard on behalf of the Department. Officials attended and observed at all events, with Junior Ministers attending the event at W5 on 29th January 2011 to hear the views and opinions of the children and young people.

The PlayBoard team have a strong commitment to consulting with children and young people, have a high level of staff expertise and have completed a number of previous consultations with children and young people during the development of the policy.

In total 4 consultations events with children and young people were held as detailed below:

Location	Date	Participant Numbers
W5, Belfast	29 th January 2011	29 children & 15 young people
Artability, Belfast	27 th January 2011	9 Young People
Cul Kids Club, Ballymena	4 th February 2011	40 children
Action for Children, Newry	5 th February 2011	15 young people

The total participant number for the events was 69 children (defined as being aged between 0 to 10 years), and 39 young people (defined as being aged 11 to 18 years).

Following analysis of consultation responses a number of key themes were identified as areas of concern to the children and young people namely:

- The costs associated with both public transport and entrance fees to play and leisure opportunities (e.g. leisure centres, cinema, bowling, ice-skating etc) are often prohibitive and limit opportunities for children and young peoples play;
- The issue of, and fears about safety, particularly in relation to travelling between different areas and communities, can limit the ability to access play and leisure spaces – just because an area is within travelling distance does not mean that children and young people feel able to access it;

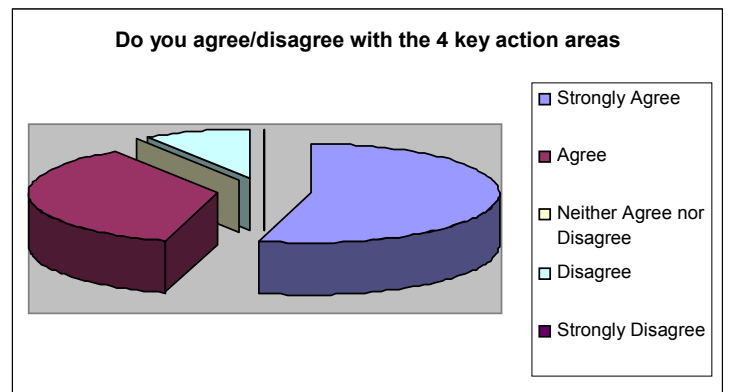
- In many parks the gates are closed at a set time, and high fences and gates are not welcoming to children and young people.

Within many parks, provision tends to be focused on either younger or older children – rarely do they provide play facilities which meet the needs of all age groups and all abilities.

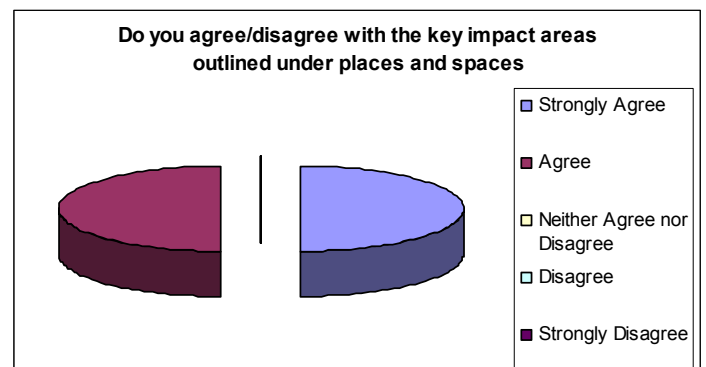
- When young people gather together, adults often assume they are up to no good;

Annex B

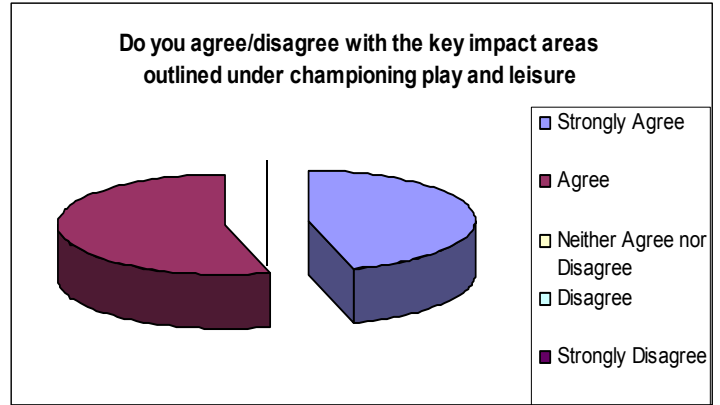
Do you agree/disagree with the 4 key action areas outlined in the draft plan?	
Strongly Agree	12
Agree	8
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	0



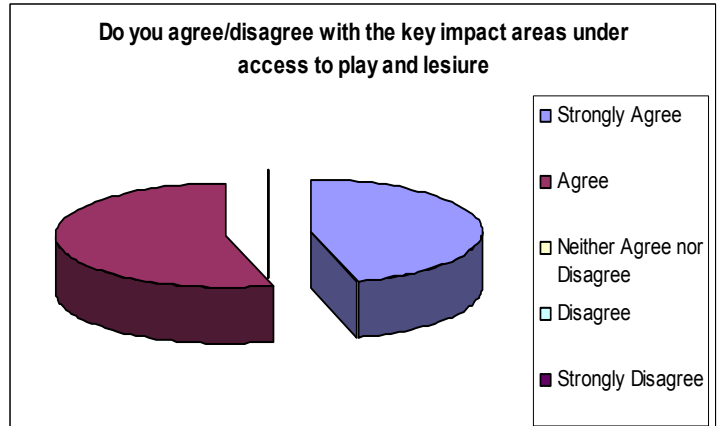
Do you agree/disagree with the key impact areas outlined in the draft plan under places and spaces for play and leisure	
Strongly Agree	11
Agree	11
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0



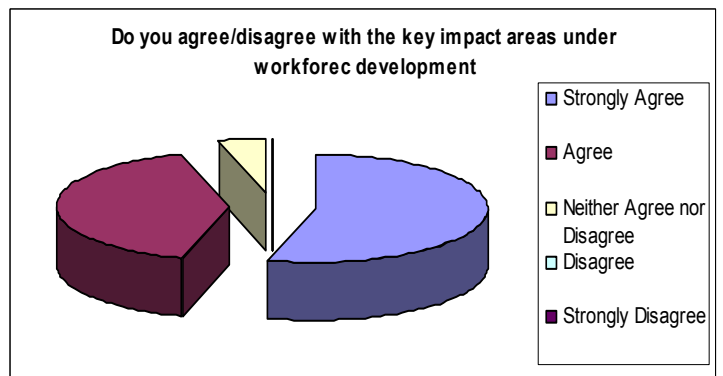
Do you agree/disagree with the key impact areas outlined in the draft plan under championing play and leisure	
Strongly Agree	10
Agree	12
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0



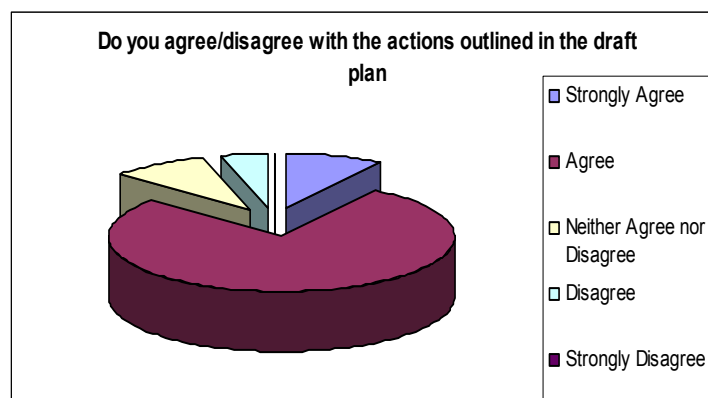
Do you agree/disagree with the key impact areas under access to play and leisure	
Strongly Agree	10
Agree	12
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0



Do you agree/disagree with the key impact areas under workforce development	
Strongly Agree	12
Agree	9
Neither Agree nor Disagree	1
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0



Do you agree/disagree with the actions outlined in the draft plan	
Strongly Agree	2
Agree	17
Neither Agree nor Disagree	2
Disagree	1
Strongly Disagree	0



Annex C

List of Respondees

Response No	Date of response	Name	Organisation
1	23/01/2011	Classroom Assistants/Playworkers	Coolkids
2	02/02/2011	Claire Pollock	Sustrans
3	26/01/2011	Amanda Humphrey	Strabane Play Club
4	05/01/2011	DCAL Committee	
5	05/01/2011	DSD Committee	
6	05/01/2011	DE Committee	
7	05/01/2011	DOJ Committee	
8	05/01/2011	DRD Committee	
9	05/01/2011	DE reponse	
10	05/01/2011	Sports NI	
11	03/02/2011	Gemma Connor	Parents Advice Centre
12	09/02/2011	Mary McCormack	Camowen Partnership Ltd
13	09/02/2011	Kellie McCausland	Playzone After School Club
14	09/02/2011	Dr Jacqueline Witherow	Arts Council NI Castlereagh Borough Council
15	09/02/2011	Catharine McWhirter	
16	09/02/2011	Clare Harvey	Youth Council for NI
17	09/02/2011	Ellen Finlay	Women's Support Network Womens Centres Regional Partnership
18	09/02/2011		
19	09/02/2011	Christine Irvine	Volunteer Now
20	09/02/2011	M. Deevy	
21	09/02/2011	Lisa O'Connor	

22	09/02/2011	Robert Gibson	Fermanagh District Council
23	09/02/2011	Sonya McGuckin	SE Trust District Childcare Partnership
24	09/02/2011	Natalie Whelehan	Children's Law Centre
25	09/02/2011	Lee Russell	PSNI
26	09/02/2011	Elaine Conway	CiNI
27	09/02/2011	Paul Hanna	Armagh City and District Council
28	09/02/2011	Jacqueline O'Loughlin	Playboard
29	09/02/2011		SVP
30	09/02/2011		Belfast Childcare Partnership
31	09/02/2011	Sarah Connor	Big Lottery Fund
32	09/02/2011	David Weir	NIACRO
33	04/02/2011	Archie Walls	Ards Borough Council
34	04/02/2011	Mrs Nadia Dornan	Hollywood Family Trust
35	04/02/2011	Laura Hunter	Larne YMCA
36	09/02/2011	Kevin Fearon	Early Years Community Relations Council
37	10/02/2011	Gemma Attwood	
38	04/02/2011	Jacqueline Melville	NICCY
39	11/02/2011	Lesley Clements	Antrim Borough Council
40	15/02/2011	David Purchase	Belfast City Council
41	11/02/2011	Joanna Monaghan	Belfast Healthy Cities

Children's Version of the Plan

- You will have access to people, places, spaces and opportunities to experience play and leisure;
- Everyone big and small, young and old realises how important play and leisure is to you;
- Access to play and leisure in your local community is what you want, need and can afford;
- All adults understand and involve you and your friends in decisions which affect your play and leisure opportunities;
- Adults respect you and your views more;
- Adults understand how important your time is and how you would like to spend it;
- We find out what is in your area and how we can work with you and others to make it better;

We believe and will work to ensure that:

PRIORITIES

The Government brought together a group of adults that work with Children and Young People and know about play. Using what you had told us previously they started to write a plan about Play and Leisure. The plan is now ready. It explains what needs to happen so you have more play and leisure opportunities. We want you to look at the plan and tell us what you think. The plan is split into four areas and each of those areas have priorities – (important things) that need to be done to improve Play and Leisure. Here is a summary of the priorities.

What... action we took



The Government knows how important play is for you, that is why we are working to introduce a Play and Leisure Plan for Northern Ireland. We want you to have interesting and safe places to play and relax in.

What... we asked you

What... we need to do next
QUESTIONS

We want you to tell us:

1. Have we understood what is important to you and your friends about your play and leisure needs?

2. Have we understood what you and your friends want the government to do to give you better play and leisure opportunities?

3. Is there anything that we have missed out or forgotten to add?

Send your replies to: play@ofmdfmi.gov.uk



A Play and Leisure Implementation Plan
Children and Young People's Version

