

425 Hollywood Road
Belfast
BT4 2GU

Shandwick

Fax

To:	From: Pauline Wylie
Fax:	Pages: 1+2
Phone:	Date: 2 September 1998
Re: Press release	CC:
☐ Urgent ☐ For Review ☐ Please Comment ☐ Please Reply ☐ Please Recycle	
● Message	

Press Release to follow

The Public Relations, Design, Multimedia and Video Specialists

Telephone Number 01232 761007
Fax Number 01232 761012

Shandwick

Press Release

Issued on behalf of PlayBoard

2 September 1998

PlayBoard to welcome Hillary Clinton

PlayBoard, the lead agency for children's play in Northern Ireland, will tomorrow morning welcome the First Lady of the United States, Hillary Clinton and Cherie Booth QC to Lagan Meadows, Stranmillis. They will be joined by the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Cllr David Alderdice, the Deputy Lord Mayor, Cllr Robert Stoker and the Deputy Chairman of the Parks & Amenities sub-committee Cllr Jim Rodgers as well as children from Stranmillis and St. Brides Primary Schools.

During the visit tomorrow they will hear more about the 'Play Space' initiative which enables children to play in a safe environment owned, designed and developed by children, for children. The Lagan Meadows site has been chosen for tomorrow's visit simply because it represents the type of environmental area for which PlayBoard has a vision.

Antoinette McKeown, PlayBoard's Chief Executive speaking about the forthcoming visit said, "We are delighted that the First Lady is demonstrating her support for PlayBoard by showing such a keen interest in play issues facing children in Northern Ireland. We are also thrilled that the First Lady will be accompanied by Cherie Booth, who is already well-acquainted with the aims of PlayBoard, through her role as Vice-President of PlayBoard's sister organisation in England, Kids Club Network.

She continued, "Undoubtedly children are the most adversely affected victims of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. We must not forget that three generations of children have been exposed to traumatic acts of political and sectarian violence within their communities. Children represent our future and play has a crucial role in the healing process."

"The 'Play Space' initiative, seeks to provide an environmental haven for children to play with a series of natural elements such as a waterfall or river and animal life. Staffed by trained playworkers, children will be encouraged to play freely and by experimenting, trying and failing, will learn how to deal with their environment and to understand their abilities and limitations."

PlayBoard has for the last eight years undertaken extensive research and training on the impact of violence and sectarianism on children culminating in the agency's current groundbreaking '*Games not Names*' initiative. The 'Play Space' initiative recognises the therapeutic value of play for children and provides opportunities for children to explore their own identity, giving them the confidence to take ownership of a future peaceful

Shandwick

Northern Ireland. The initiative also allows PlayBoard to continue sharing expertise with all those who work with children in any violent society throughout the world.

As part of this, a new partnership will be announced during tomorrow's visit between PlayBoard and KABOOM!, an American community development organisation. KABOOM! is extremely interested in PlayBoard's work on therapeutic play and using PlayBoard's expertise, wishes to introduce similar play initiatives for children in inner city America. In recognition that PlayBoard has received world-wide acclaim for this work, KABOOM! is committed to leveraging US sponsorship to enable PlayBoard to continue this vital work.

ENDS

For further information please contact Pauline Wylie at Shandwick
Tel. (01232) 761007

Notes to Editors:

- Lagan Meadows is situated on Knightsbridge Road, Stranmillis
- You are cordially invited to cover the event at Lagan Meadows. Please arrive no later than 8.30 a.m. on Thursday 3 September to enable all necessary accreditation to be arranged.



59/65 York Street
 BELFAST BT15 1AA
 Tel: (01232) 560010 Fax: (01232) 560011

FAX TRANSMISSION

TO: KATY Button
 COMPANY: PLAYBOARD
 NO OF PAGES (INC. COVER PAGE): 2

FROM: ANTONETTE
 DATE: 2/9/98
 TIME: 2.55pm

MESSAGE: 01232 236320

KATIE,

Please find attached quotes from children on play and
 key messages for Mrs Clinton.

Also, the names of the children speaking are:
 St. Bride's School - Catholic
 9 or 10

RICHARD WALSH	INTRODUCING	CHERIE BOOTH
HANNAH LINN	"	HILARY CLINTON

Stranmillis - integrated school
 Protestant
 7 or 10

Talk to for best
 for the best
 Antonette

QUOTES FROM CHILDREN ON DEFINITIONS OF PLAY

"My definition of play is to do what you want to do and be who you want to be".

"Play is all about having fun".

"My definition of play is not having any adults telling you what to do".

KEY MESSAGES FOR MRS HILLARY CLINTON

- Child's right to play that is freely chosen, personally driven and intrinsically motivated
- PlayBoard's work on therapeutic play as crucial for children's mental and physical health
- Child-centred approach to building a peaceful future for Northern Ireland



59/65 York Street
BELFAST BT15 1AA
Tel: (01232) 560010 Fax: (01232) 560011

FAX TRANSMISSION

TO: Katy Butcher,
COMPANY:
NO OF PAGES (INC. COVER PAGE): 9

FROM: 21.9.98
DATE:
TIME: 4.07pm

MESSAGE:

Antoinette will phone you later.

Best
Regards
Claire



59/65 York Street
BELFAST BT15 1AA
Tel: (01232) 560010 Fax: (01232) 560011

FAX TRANSMISSION

TO: Katy Button,
COMPANY:
NO OF PAGES (INC. COVER PAGE): 9

FROM: 21/9/98
DATE:
TIME: 14.07pm

MESSAGE:

Antoinette will phone you later.

Best
Regards
Celine

Agendum

KATIE, WE WOULD REALLY APPRECIATE IT IF PLAYBOARD
BOARD MEMBERS COULD BE ALLOCATED FRONT SEATS.

MARK LAMPHAMMER
CONNOR MC GIBBY
CATHY TAYLOR
STEPHEN HUGHES
GAIL HICKIBBEN
LISEITE KROES
MAURICE LEASON
~~HEATH~~

Clinton

02/02/98

Field1	Field2	Field3	Field5	Field4
Peter	Westbury			
Carol	Wheeler	PAC		
Karen	Witherspoon	NIPAC		
Marjorie	Hawkins	PlayBoard		
Mary Ann	Hambly	PlayBoard		
Caroline	Mills	PlayBoard		
Glenys	Tolley	PlayBoard		
Paddy	Kelly	PlayBoard		
Tynan	Rodger	PlayBoard		
Clara	Murray	PlayBoard		
Shereen	Meharg	PlayBoard		
Anna	Logan	PlayBoard		
Joan	McGrath	PlayBoard		
Mona	Gribben	PlayBoard		
Claire	Houston	PlayBoard		
Anfoulette	McKeown	PlayBoard		

Clinton

02/08/98

P.004

Field1	Field2	Field3	Field4	Field5
Maurice	Parkinson	Parks & Leisure BCC		
Claire	Patterson	MBW		
Alan	Poots	Lisburn P&R P'ship		
Walter	Rader	Youthnet		
Joe	Reymolds	DENI		
Mike	Rich	KCN		
Valerie	Richmond	Antrim BC		
Kim	Rodd	Kaboom		
Gerry	Rogan	T & EA		
Eddie	Rooney	DHSS	Project Manager	
Malcolm	Ross	Co-operation North		
Malcolm	Scott	Strabane P'ship		
Malcolm	Scott	Strabane P'ship		
Malcolm	Scott	Dunalastr Estates		
Jackie	Semple	New Deal		
Ronan	Small	Maydown Ebrington		
Peter	Small	Dept Agriculture	Chief Exec	
Marlin	Smith	MP		
Harry	Smith	Cllr (Balmoral)		
Bill	Smith	DHSS	Ass Sec	
Jackie	Snodden	North Down P'ship		
Paul	Steele			
Deldre	Stewart	CBI	Deputy Chief Exec	
Tom	Stewart	Stranmillis School	Head	
Bob	Stoker	Cllr (Balmoral)		
Catherine	Taggart	RDC		
Cathy	Taylor	PlayBoard	European Components	
Jim	Thompson	Youth Service	BELB	
Blanche	Thompson	Belfast City Council		
Mrs	Trimble			
John	Velch	S&E HSST		
Ian	Walters	T & EA	Chief Exec	

Clinton

02/09/98

P.003

Field 1	Field 2	Field 3	Field 4	Field 5
George	Mackey	MBW		
Samuel	Magee	Antrim BC		
Mrs	Mallon			
Geoffrey	Marfin	European Commission		
Pat	McAllister	T & EA		
David	McAvley	T & EA	Director	
Steve	McBride	Cllr (Lagan)		
Jim	McCall			
	McCreesh	Cookstown P'ship		
Adrian	McCresh	Cookstown DC		
Ian	McCullum	Dunastair Estates		
Tony	McCusker	Assembly Advisor		
Alasdair	McDonnell	Cllr (Lagan)		
Karen	McFarland	Strabane P'ship		
John	McFaul	MP		
Michael	McGimpsey	Cllr (Lagan)		
Paddy	McGinn	ADM/PCA		
Liam	McGuckin	Stranmillis School		
Paedar	McKenna	Armagh P'ship		
Gail	McKibbin	PlayBoard	Disability Action	
Barry	McMillen	DOE		
Oliver	McShane	Cookstown DC		
Olive	McShane	Cookstown P'ship		
Ann	McSherry			
Connor	McSherry	PlayBoard	Allied Dunbar	
Jess	Millno	Hackney Play Assoc		
Catherine	Molloy	Cllr (Balmoral)		
Damleh	Murray	St Brides School		
Paul	Nolan	Craigmillar Initiative	Director	
Jack	O'Connor	MBW		
Brian	O'Dwyer	Kaboom		
Jack	Palmer	DENI		

Field 1	Field 2	Field 3	Field 5	Field 4
Mark	Adair	GRC		
David	Alderdlce	Lord Mayor		
Stephen	Baile	Sgt	Community Affairs Branch	
Glenn	Barr	Maydown Ebrington		
William	Beattie	South Tyrone P'ship		
Richard	Black	N & W HSBT	Chief Exec	
Roy	Blair	S AEYC		
Joe	Blake			
Maureen	Boyd	DHSS		
Hilary	Brady	Newtownabbey P'ship		
Sally	Brennan	PAC		
George	Burgoyne	Gralgmillar Out of School	Centre Manager	
Gregory	Butler			
Robert	Buxton	Princess DI Memorial Fund	Playground Chair	
The Chair	c/o David Patterson	Down P'ship		
Joe	Callaghan	Parks Department		
Jean	Campbell			
Hugh	Campbell	PlayBoard		
Paul	Carswell	St Brides	Head	
Jim	Clarke	Cllr (Lagan)		
Margaret	Crooks	Cllr (Balmoral)		
Monica	Culbert	PAC		
Rosaleen	Curran	TWN		
Ivan	Davis	Lisburn P&R P'ship		
Barbara	Dean	NSPCC		
Pat	Donnelly	PROTEUS		
Jim	Dougal	European Commission		
Lord	Dubbs	Environment Minister		
Stephen	Dunmore	New Opps Fund	Chief Executive	
Norman	Dunn	Newtownabbey P'ship		
Thomas	Eldn	Cllr (Balmoral)		
Niall	Fitzduff	RCN		

PLAYING FOR PEACE

THE VALUE OF PLAY

PlayBoard
WORKING FOR THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO PLAY

THE VALUE OF PLAY

The Play Context

Children's play is innate, an inborn and natural activity. Every child needs to play and has the right to play. However, opportunities to play are often limited by external factors such as discrimination, the effects of disability or special needs, insufficient space, environmental and social conditions, and lack of access to play provision.

The situation is not helped by the fact that play is an activity with many differing interpretations and in the way it is defined and perceived. Play is such a complex and multi-faceted phenomena, that finding a universally agreed definition for it has proved elusive. Below are just some of the many definitions that have been offered in an attempt to explain play:

"The right to play is the child's first claim on the community. Play is nature's training for life. No community can infringe that right without doing deep and enduring harm to the bodies and minds of its citizens."

(Lloyd George, 1926)

"Play is to the child work, thought, art and relaxation and cannot be pressed into any single formula. It expresses a child's relation to himself and to his environment and without adequate opportunity for play, normal and satisfactory emotional development is not possible."

(Lowenfield, 1935)

"Play has the greatest value for the child when it is really free and his own."

(Isaacs, 1968)

In summary, the key features of play are that it is freely-chosen, self-directed and intrinsically motivated, (Hughes 1990). It is a process rather than a produce, and most importantly, it is fun. Children do not play because it has educational value, but simply because they enjoy it. Nonetheless, it is exactly for this reason that play is such a valuable tool for learning.

"Play is a process by which children learn and come to terms with the social and physical environments - not the end produce of what they do. The confusion between the means and the end is one of the major impediments in understanding and providing for play . . . children who have the opportunities for good quality play appear to develop a greater creativity, a greater flexibility of approach to problem solving, to have better social skills and to be physically healthier than those children who are deprived of play opportunities. The opportunity to develop through activities which promote the process of play is as essential to the full and healthy development of children as 'taught' learning. Yet it is a form of learning which is largely ignored and unrecognised."

(Heseltine and Holborn, 1987)

Indeed, adults often fail to recognise the value of play, regarding it as trivial and far removed from formal education and learning. However, children are already well developed socially, emotionally and physically before they even enter the classroom. Much of the development, learning and preparation for life has occurred through the medium of play.

Child Development and the Functions of Play:

The above analysis provides evidence that there is a lot more going on when children play than 'meets the eye'. Play clearly plays a fundamental and integral role in healthy development. It is essential for physical and emotional growth, intellectual and educational development, and acquiring social and behavioural skills.

Physical Play

The development of playgrounds and their equipment has a strong physical base - 'a healthy mind in a healthy body'. Children are very adventurous in physical play and push themselves to the limits of their ability, constantly challenging themselves. In this way, they develop motor skills and co-ordination, and learn about space, time and the environment. Some of these motor skills are necessary for intellectual development, for example, to perform the technical task of writing. Such fine-tuning is particularly necessary at the pre-school age, and as gross motor skills may be largely learned by the age of 4 years (Maher, 1982), the importance of physical play for the under 5's cannot be over stressed

Physical play also has direct impact on the health of children. Physical exercise strengthens bones and aids emotional health by helping to release tension and frustration. Northern Ireland is renowned for its particularly high incidence of heart disease and physical play is crucial in improving the efficient function of the cardiovascular system. Further, an inactive child will become an inactive adult, and so the act of participating in regular physical exercise should be encouraged in order that it becomes a habitual life-time practice.

Social and Co-Operative Play

The function of play in the social development of children should not be underestimated. Through play, children acquire the social skills needed for interaction, such as communication and listening skills. Play also involves learning to co-operate with others and therefore learning to develop relationships with others. In turn, interaction with others enables the development of self-esteem and confidence. Appropriate play spaces provide the opportunity for children to meet and interact with one another, and to begin to develop, enact and talk through their social roles.

Creative and Experimental Play

By experimenting, making and doing things, children learn how and why things work. Children absorb information and critically examine the adult world. They achieve this by comparing themselves with others, by observing, modelling and exploring behaviour. Further, by doing, trying, risk-taking and failing, children learn how to deal with their environment and to understand their abilities and limitations.

However, creative play opportunities are arguably the most difficult to provide for and are often most effectively facilitated through the involvement of parents, play workers and other adults. The area of creativity demonstrates the limitations of the fixed equipment playground in providing, on its own, the answer to children's play needs. Playgrounds do have a valuable function, however, such facilities need to be supplemented by alternative materials and activities which more directly address creative needs.

The Environment

The lives of children have changed significantly in recent years. Children tend to be less active, less fit, and to be more solitary and passive in their leisure pursuits. Nonetheless,

children are still the major users of the outdoor environment. At an early age gardens are an important play area, but from the age of 7, more use is made of the wider environment. The average distance travelled to play is 196 metres (alone), 425 metres (with friends) and 1,200 metres (with adults). From the age of about 9, children will play unaccompanied by an adult. Due to its proximity to home, and in the absence of specific play areas, the street tends to be the most popular play area. However, little attention is given to the design of streets and housing developments, and spaces for play have been consumed as traffic takes precedence over children and new housing encroaches on available green space. Recent research funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (undertaken by a PlayBoard PDS Consultant) has found that the child's access to the environment has shrunk ninefold in the past twenty years across the UK. PlayBoard believes this to be even higher in the case of Northern Ireland:-

Play in Northern Ireland takes place in a unique environment in that all aspects of life are impinged on by the political situation in the region. Issues such as play provision tended to be neglected because of pressure on resources or maintaining civil order. Such an environment impacts on children's lives in a number of ways. Increasing urbanisation and the concentration of the troubles in these areas resulted in the children most at risk having least opportunity for safe outdoor play. Consequently, play in Northern Ireland has more than often been provided in a reactive and problem solving way, particularly in areas of identified social need. It is essential to recognise that there should certainly be specialist provision in areas of need, but also that all children engage in play. Any policy or provision should therefore be generalist in nature.

Play For All Children

Children learn from an early age about gender, culture, race, disability, and because of the political history of Northern Ireland, sectarianism. As children grow and develop their attitudes become more concrete and by the age of about 9 years, they will have acquired the values that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. Consequently, negative, stereotypical images of other individuals or groups may also be absorbed. It is therefore essential that play opportunities are designed to include and create positive images of all members of society.

The Impact of Play on Peace and Reconciliation

PlayBoard argues that children have been the most adversely affected victims of thirty years of political and sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. Access to their environment has been shut down for their *physical* safekeeping therefore closing down their ability to interact and learn from the world around them. We have not even assessed the *mental health* impact of the fact that over 70% of 9-11 year olds in Northern Ireland have witnessed a bombing or shooting. No-one will argue the need to invest in children as a means of securing a future for Northern Ireland.

Play has a crucial role to play in a healing process (PlayBoard has identified sectarian behaviour in the play activities of children as young as three) and is the one activity that children will always *choose* as a first preference. It provides for leadership skills vital to future positive politics and prosperity and is the single most successful factor in bringing local communities together in a lobbying role. It has a significant impact therefore not just for bringing children together but also parents working together for our children.

In terms of environment, play provision can enhance the physical environment in local communities and makes an effective contribution to regeneration of deprived communities, another prerequisite for peace.

Provision Of A Range Of Play Services

As more understanding of the value and importance of play has evolved, this has been reflected in the increase in quantity of play provision, particularly for the pre-school age group. However, a similar increase has not been evident in provision for older children. Health and Social Services have a statutory responsibility for provision for children 0-12 and the Youth Service now has a remit for the 4 - 25 age group, but, due to limited resources, continues to focus on provision for the T2+ age group. Consequently, there is a policy and provision vacuum for the 4-12 age group whose play opportunities and experiences are largely limited to physical play offered by Council fixed equipment play areas. In general, inadequate funding and support, insufficient training and employment of paid play workers, and an ad hoc approach to provision has resulted in inadequate levels and variety of play opportunities.

All of this implies that there is not only a need for comprehensive play policies, but also inter-agency and sectoral co-ordination and co-operation. Additionally, different aspects of play will require different types of provision to challenge children in each of the domains of development. In order that the outcomes of play are positive ones, it is essential that a wider range of play opportunities is considered, and where viable, provided. Some of the options include:-

- i) District Parks, Local Parks and Open Spaces
Large open public space, normally managed by Borough Council Parks Department. May include environmental features such as ponds and fixed equipment play areas.
- ii) Communal Play Areas in Residential Areas
Designated space within areas of housing. Usually a short walking distance from home. May simply be grass or could incorporate 'kick-about' areas and some fixed equipment.
- iii) Fixed Equipment Play Areas
A permanent outdoor facility providing age related play equipment and spaces for accompanied or unaccompanied children. Generally located in parks or public spaces.
- iv) School Playgrounds
Available recreation space. Often open, sterile and devoid of play stimulation. Could be utilised more effectively.

Supervised Play

- i) Adventure Playgrounds
Popular in the 1960 / 70's but are now rarely provided due to increased health and safety standards and related litigation. They offer a flexible, relatively secure environment where children create their own environment and play structures using loose materials, and with the assistance of play workers.
- ii) Open Space
Using trained playworkers to create and facilitate play activities in local housing estates and rural areas is extremely versatile, mobile and cost effective. Play activities can be organised at different times out of school hours in different estates and local areas. Playworkers can use materials that are easily transported, structures can easily be erected by children and taken down and collaborative games can be organised. This allows for a more equitable sharing of limited resources in any one district council area.

- iii) Play Centres
Permanent indoor and outdoor facilities which offer a wide range of creative play activities and employ play workers. They cater for different ages of children throughout the day in the form of clubs such as those listed iv) to vii)
- iv) After-School Clubs
Creative play activities run by qualified playworkers a few hours after school. This is open access facility where children have a choice as when they attend. Whilst the club is used as a base, the children spend a great deal of time accessing local parks, forests and other arts, educational and creative community events and venues.
- v) PlayCare Schemes
A structured environment providing play and care for a group of registered children, both prior to and after school hours. The same emphasis is put on quality play activities offered by play workers, but there is also a 'care'. Role and therefore children cannot choose to leave. Children are taken to and picked up from school by play workers, and cared for until their parents collect them after work. This service is to enable and encourage parents to remain in or enter into employment. A PlayCare Initiative for Northern Ireland is currently being implemented by PlayBoard as a Childhood Fund Partner under the PEACE Fund.
- vi) Play Schemes
Provided mostly in the summer months and they tend to be temporary in nature, use whatever space or premises are available, and concentrate on creative activities, sports and day-trips.
- vii) Saturday Clubs
Provide a similar service to the above, specifically on Saturday mornings and on a more permanent basis.
- viii) Mobile Play
Provided by buses or vans which travel to groups of children who have limited or no play provision in their local area. Buses are resourced and staffed like play centres and provide valuable, cost effective play opportunities to children who might otherwise not have access to play.
- ix) Leisure Activities / Sports
Mostly take the form of organised sports clubs in leisure centres.
- x) Play Days / Fetes
One-off 'play-days' which offer fun play activities; often in parks and open to all members of the community.
- xi) Open Farms
A staffed permanent facility. Often working farms are run by members of the local community. They offer educational and play activities and the opportunity to experience / observe animals and other aspects of the natural environment.

Indirect

i) Play Resource Centres

A staffed permanent facility with indoor spaces offering a range of support services to voluntary groups and Council play projects. Services include support, advice and development work, training, information services, specialised play equipment loan services play material scrap bank, transport hire, a play materials shop and meeting space.

The developmental benefits of play can be encapsulated in the acronym SPICE, i.e. Social, Physical, Intellectual, Creative and Emotional. Different forms of play can be assessed for play value. The table overleaf gives some indication of the relative value of types of provision, and is good guidance for planning day services:-

PLAY TYPE	Social	Physical	Intellectual	Creative	Emotional
PlayClubs	High	High	High	High	High
Pre-school Play	High	High	High	High	High
Play Schemes	High	High	Medium	High	High
Play Areas	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Mobile Play	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Children's Events	High	Low	Medium	Medium	High
Swimming Pool	High	High	Low	Medium	Medium
Sports Centres	High	High	Medium	Low	Medium
Libraries	Medium	Low	High	High	Medium
Parks	High	High	Medium	Low	Low

Conclusion

Play is essential for children as an integral part of *learning, through doing, for life*. After thirty years and three generations of children considering violence as a *normal* element in society, PlayBoard believes that current leaders and decision makers have a duty to give children freedom to make choices, explore possibilities and alternatives through play so that they may learn to create a more tolerant and vibrant culture and economy for Northern Ireland's future.

PlayBoard

WORKING FOR THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO PLAY

About PlayBoard....

PlayBoard is the lead play agency for children in Northern Ireland. It works to improve the quality of children's lives by increasing their opportunities to play. From a standpoint that asserts the child's right to play, **PlayBoard** has for the past thirteen years campaigned, lobbied, raised awareness, developed partnerships and created models of excellence in an attempt to put play on the agenda of policy makers and resource providers.



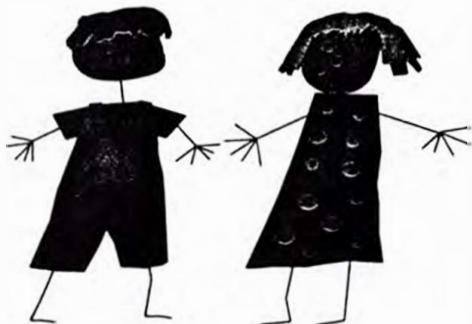
PlayBoard....

- creates quality play environments for children as models of excellence
- develops quality PlayCare in deprived communities, giving children play opportunities while their mothers return to training or work.
- trains playworkers and all those who work with children as highly skilled, valued professionals
- campaigns for a better quality of life for children in Northern Ireland
- has developed the groundbreaking 'Games not Names' initiative, aimed at confronting sectarianism in children's lives
- provides an information hot-line giving advice to people who wish to enhance children's lives in Northern Ireland.
- acts as an adviser to government and the European Commission on the needs of school-age children

About Play....

There is strong evidence to suggest that there is a lot more going on than 'meets the eye'. Play clearly plays a fundamental and integral role in healthy development. It is essential for physical and emotional growth, intellectual and educational development and acquiring social and behavioural skills.

- *Physical play* has a direct impact on fitness, strengthening bones, aiding emotional health and increasing the capacity of the cardiovascular system.
- *Social and co-operative play* enables children to learn communication, negotiation and listening skills, helping them develop self esteem and confidence
- *Creative and experimental play* involves children learning how and why things work. Children absorb information and critically examine the adult world. By doing, risking and failing in play, children learn how to deal with their environment and to understand their abilities and limitations.



North Belfast

- waterworks site too well-developed

South Belfast

- part of environmentally protected area
- next to day care, residential area (middle-class)

- Therapeutic, physical + mental health

Natural challenges - sand, waterfalls, treehouses, creative engineering

- Model for environmental play

- 2 acres

- City will donate land

- Play Board approaching funding sources

- New Opportunities Fund

- ownership of environment by children

- plant tree / release balloons

- wooden / natural construction

- Hazelwood ^{Elem.} School - 1st integrated school in N. Ireland

Primary - 4-12

Elem - 12-18

A QUALITY MODEL IN PLAY

INTRODUCTION

PlayBoard argues that children have probably been the most adversely affected victims of the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland. Over 70% of children between the ages of 9 and 11 years have witnessed a shooting or explosion, which may explain evidence which suggests that children in Northern Ireland are more aggressive than their GB counterparts (Joepard 1991).

If we consider the impact of a violent society on children within a general context, during the last 20 years children's access to the environment across the UK has shrunk ninefold (Rowntree Trust 1997) we begin to grasp the importance of 'planned' space for children.

THE PROPOSAL

PlayBoard wishes to develop a quality environmental playground for children in the greater Belfast area which would serve as a centre of excellence in play provision. The playground would provide children with play which is "freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated" (Hughes 1984) and would facilitate the gearing up of positive stimulation which 30 years of violence has narrowed for children here.

This project will impact on the following objectives:

- development of health living centres - a truly innovative approach
- learning opportunities for children out-of-school hours - "learning through experience"
- 'Well into 2000' strategy for Northern Ireland - healthy nations begin with healthy children
- training resource for playworkers
- rehabilitation of children as a crucial part of the Northern Ireland peace process

THE PLAYGROUND

This playground is intended to be an environmental haven with a series of natural challenges for children. Approximately two acres are required for landscaping to include water (a waterfall or river), sand and natural obstacles.

PlayBoard would obviously undertake a comprehensive consultation exercise in developing appropriate provision and would avail of expertise within the organisation and Play Development Services to undertake the work.

CONCLUSION

Every child has the right to play. Every child needs to play to develop physically, mentally, intellectually and socially. The lack of play opportunities for children, particularly in urban areas, is closing down children's access to play and therefore their ability to learn for life.

Because of children's need to play, children will play anywhere, regardless of safety. This project intends to provide an alternative to what currently exists and will be a demonstration model for future environmental space for children in Northern Ireland.

Playing for Peace - The PlayCare Initiative

The Impact of Play on Peace and Reconciliation

PlayBoard argues that children have been the most adversely affected victims of 30 years of political and sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. Access to their environment has been shut down for their *physical* safekeeping, therefore closing down their ability to interact and learn from the world around them. We have not even assessed the *mental health* impact of the fact that over 70% of 9-11 year olds in Northern Ireland have witnessed a bombing or shooting. No-one will argue the need to invest in children as a means of securing a future for Northern Ireland.

Play has a crucial role to play in a healing process (PlayBoard has identified sectarian behaviour in the play activities of children as young as three), and is the one activity that children will always *choose* as a first preference. It provides for leadership skills vital to future positive policies and prosperity, and is the single most successful factor in bringing local communities together in a lobbying role. It has a significant impact therefore, not just for bringing children together, but also parents working together for our children.

The opportunity to provide for children's play came with the announcement of the European Union Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, a welcome opportunity to improve the quality of life for children, women and other excluded groups in Northern Ireland. In recognition of PlayBoard's standing and expertise in the field of play, the Department of Economic Development commissioned PlayBoard in 1996 to develop an infrastructure for the development of out-of-school PlayClubs across Northern Ireland. The resulting PlayCare Initiative established almost 100 PlayClubs, and places for over 2000 children in priority areas of need throughout the Province, specifically in areas of high deprivation and unemployment and those most adversely affected by twenty-eight years of the 'Troubles'.

The clubs established have the dual purpose of allowing mothers the chance to access training, employment and educational opportunities safe in the knowledge that their children are being cared for in a quality, affordable, safe and structured setting for out-of-school play. The PlayClubs are all locally-based, allowing children to remain and play in the local community. The PlayClubs are also community-led, assisting with the regeneration of often deprived and run-down areas and giving people a sense of pride in their own area. As well as allowing local parents to access employment, education and training opportunities - often for the first time, the establishment of the PlayClubs has also created local employment opportunities for people wishing to work in the PlayCare field. In this way, PlayBoard have been at the forefront of the creation of a playwork industry in Northern Ireland.



Amongst the principles which govern the day-to-day running of the PlayClubs is the commitment to quality. From the outset of the project, the aim was to establish an infrastructure of out-of-school PlayClubs of distinction, with the emphasis on *quality*, not quantity.

Another principle which governs every aspect of the operation of the PlayClubs is a commitment to community relations guidelines and principles of equal opportunities. This is crucial, as twenty-eight years of sectarian violence and hatred has taken its toll on all members of the community in Northern Ireland, including children. PlayBoard's publication '*Games Not Names*' has become the driving force behind community relations work for play providers in Northern Ireland, provides guidelines for those working with children on how to deal with sectarian behaviour which may arise in a play or childcare environment. The PlayClubs have become a model of good community relations practice and provide a haven in this divided society for children of all religions to meet and play together, often for the first time.

The benefits to parents, and particularly mothers, of the PlayCare Initiative are obvious, with women being given equal access to the labour market and peace of mind that their children are being well cared for. The benefits to children are also great, with kids being able to participate in freely-chosen play activities in a safe environment, protected from the problems which urbanisation, increased traffic levels and reduced play space have created.

However, the establishment of PlayClubs has demonstrated further benefits. Earlier this year, PlayBoard conducted an informal evaluation of the PlayCare Initiative to determine whether parents have noticed changes in the educational attainment, behaviour and attitudes of their children since they started attending a PlayClub. The findings were extremely encouraging, as no less than 100% of parents felt that their child had benefited from PlayCare. Specifically, the survey found that parents had noticed marked improvements in their child's academic achievement, concentration, confidence, and general, creative and social behaviour.

The success of the PlayCare Initiative in terms of providing quality play opportunities for children as well as helping parents back to work resulted in PlayBoard being awarded more funds to distribute in the European Union's second tranche, which was announced earlier this year. This gives PlayBoard the opportunity to consolidate funding for existing clubs as well as open another 15 new PlayClubs. Another major challenge for the agency is that of developing links with employers. PlayBoard is actively encouraging employers to review their employment practices in an attempt to help them become more 'family-friendly'. The agency is also working to encourage employers to buy childcare places in PlayClubs for the children of their employees. At the time of writing, we have three key employers pledging their support for the Initiative and PlayBoard is working to develop and strengthen the agency's partnership with these employers.

A QUALITY MODEL IN PLAY

INTRODUCTION

PlayBoard argues that children have probably been the most adversely affected victims of the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland. Over 70% of children between the ages of 9 and 11 years have witnessed a shooting or explosion, which may explain evidence which suggests that children in Northern Ireland are more aggressive than their GB counterparts (Joepard 1991).

Almost thirty years of sectarian violence and hatred has taken its toll on all members of the community in Northern Ireland. However, PlayBoard argues that children have been the most adversely affected victims of political and sectarian violence in Northern Ireland:

- in some areas, extreme polarisation of the two main communities has resulted in physical segregation of the population along religious lines
- access to their environment has been shut down for their physical safety, closing down their ability to interact with others and learn from the world around them
- research has shown that children in the Province have experienced terrorism to an extraordinarily high level, with over 90% of 9-11 year olds having observed a hi-jacked vehicle burning, more than 50% having seen 'people shooting guns' and around 30% having witnessed a bomb explosion (Joepard 1991)
- PlayBoard has identified sectarian behaviour in the play activities of children as young as three years old

Children are our future and play has a crucial role to play in the healing process. By experimenting, making and doing things children learn how and why things work. By doing, trying, risk taking and failing, children how to deal with their environment and to grasp their abilities and limitations.

PlayBoard has for the past eight years undertaken action research and training on the impact of violence and sectarianism on our children as manifest in their play behaviour. The agency has explored the therapeutic value of play as a tool for working with traumatised children and developed a concept of an environmental play space. The play space must **be owned, designed and developed by children for children**. This play space does not aim to de-sectarianise children but to facilitate their ability to play out their negative experiences through play and to work out their own identities.

THE PLAY SPACE

This play space is intended to be an environmental haven with a series of natural challenges for children. Approximately two acres will be designed by children working with specialist playworkers and should include all the natural elements of life (a waterfall or river, sand, animal life etc). The environmental space should reflect the evolutionary process of which play forms an integral part. It will be staffed by trained playworkers who will facilitate the child's natural play instincts.

BENEFITS

This environmental haven for children will ensure that for the first time in Northern Ireland we can effectively observe the therapeutic impact of play on children. Consequently we can develop strategies to facilitate children's own exploration of their identity and to feel truly free to create an environment in which they feel safe, giving them the confidence to take ownership of a future peaceful Northern Ireland. This play space will allow PlayBoard to share expertise with all those who work with children in any violent society throughout the world.

Games Not Names

Reflecting **PlayBoard's**
commitment to anti-discriminatory
practice in children's play

'Games Not Names' is a reflection of PlayBoard's long-standing commitment to eradicating sectarianism in children's lives and to promoting quality play opportunities for all. PlayBoard's experience shows that sectarianism is endemic in society and is polluting the lives of children. Drawing on research which suggests that many children are influenced by sectarianism even before they reach school age, 'Games Not Names' explores the potential dangers of sectarianism in the play of children. The publication also provides guidelines for those working with children on how to deal with sectarian issues and behaviour which may arise.

'Games Not Names' examines issues such as sectarianism, stereotypes, the importance of promoting community relations with primary school-age children, the role of play in combating sectarianism and good policy guidelines for playworkers.

The publication is only one element of PlayBoard's ground breaking initiative in anti-discriminatory practice, which includes training for playworkers and research into the impact of sectarianism on children.

PlayBoard have received many messages of support for the document, including:

"I am delighted to support Games Not Names ... I hope the document is used extensively by all who work with children in Northern Ireland. The guidelines show what every playscheme can do to improve community relations"

*Tony Worthington MP,
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State*

"There can be no doubt that sectarian divisions within our society have a fundamental effect on children. This is a serious issue that must not be ignored. For this reason I warmly welcome the publication of Games Not Names ... this is of immeasurable importance as our future is determined by the children of today"

*Ronnie Flanagan,
Chief Constable RUC*

"I welcome any initiative which helps promote community relations. It holds out the prospect of a new generation free from the tensions which blight our society. PlayBoard and the CRC are to be congratulated on putting in place one of the building blocks for that better future"

Sir George Quigley, NI Economic Council

"Games Not Names reflects the importance which PlayBoard places on positive play environments for children, free from sectarianism and discrimination. I congratulate PlayBoard for its continued work on anti-discriminatory practice ... and recommend the use of this publication for all working with children"

*Geoffrey Martin,
Head of the EC's Representation in the UK*

PlayBoard
WORKING FOR THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO PLAY

For further information on the "Games Not Names" publication, please contact Caroline Mills, Information Officer. For information on associated training, contact Mary Ann Hambly, PDS Co-ordinator on (01232) 560010.

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play and community relations

games not names



A PLAYBOARD AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL PUBLICATION



CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Belfast, Northern Ireland

October 28, 1999.

Italy
File
playBoard

Melanne Verveer
Chief of Staff to the First Lady
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear Melanne:

I am writing as a follow-up to Playboard's Ensac Conference last month, at which the First Lady kindly provided a message of support which I had the privilege to introduce. Antoinette McKeown, Playboard's Chief Executive in Belfast, asked me to pass on her organization's deep appreciation for the First Lady's support of the event. The conference was very well attended, and I met a number of interesting people. Given the caliber of the delegates, the conference should greatly help the development of school age childcare throughout Europe.

Sincerely,

ki

Jane Benton Fort
Consul General

p.s. separate personal note follows. ki

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