

A red brick wall with a silver metal sign. The sign is rectangular and has four screws at the corners. The text on the sign is in a large, bold, black sans-serif font.

# More Ball Games

The Childhood Review

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## About the Childhood Review

The publication of “An Overview of Child Well-Being in Rich Countries” by UNICEF in February 2007 showed Britain is the worst place for children to live in the developed world. Our children are unhappier, have poorer relationships with their friends and family, are unhealthier and are more prone to risky behaviour than in other countries.

In response, David Cameron asked David Willetts to conduct a review into how we can make things better for our children. This publication “More Ball Games” is the second in a series of working papers by the Childhood Review that diagnose the problems children face.

The Childhood Review was helped by the work of Julian Brazier TD MP, Alistair Burt MP, Nick Gibb MP, Tim Loughton MP, Anne McIntosh MP, Maria Miller MP and Baroness Morris.

The Review has been advised by an expert advisory panel, consisting of Sir Richard Bowlby, Baroness Susan Greenfield, Sue Palmer, Tim Gill, Lord Richard Best and Bob Reitemeier. The advisory panel are in no way affiliated with the Conservative Party and neither the panel nor their affiliated bodies have endorsed the findings of the Childhood Review.

The research team for the Childhood Review includes Ryan Shorthouse, Melanie Batley and Christopher Cook.

**This document is not a statement of party policy but a set of recommendations to the Shadow Cabinet.**



## Introduction

In February 2007, UNICEF published a league table ranking the well-being of children in 21 developed countries. It compared children's material, educational and subjective well-being, how healthy and safe they are, their behaviour, and the strength of their family and peer relationships. Shamefully, Britain came bottom. We were judged the worst place to be a child.

These shocking findings prompted a lively debate among experts, commentators and politicians. David Cameron initiated the Childhood Review to examine what is going wrong and what scope there is for Government to help set it right. Over the past year, the Review team has met a variety of individuals and groups committed to improving children's well-being.

One response to the UNICEF findings was trying to pick holes in their evidence. Individual findings may be debatable but the overall picture of a serious problem affecting the quality of childhood in Britain is not. It chimes with what child development experts, teachers, doctors, and parents have witnessed.

The Government's response to the problems highlighted by the UNICEF report were contained in the Children's Plan, published in December 2007, which attempted to set out an agenda for children in the UK. The aim is admirable and some of the ideas are useful, but it contains neither a coherent explanation of why our children scored so poorly in the UNICEF league table nor a vision of how we might improve British childhood.

We are aware that the problems faced by children in Britain run deep, and are caused by a variety of factors ranging from poverty, pressures on parents, and a growing concern with the security of the outside world. This report does not attempt to provide all the answers, and future work from the Childhood Review team will look at how we can provide more support to parents with their childcare needs, and how we can close the inequality gap that plays such an important part in children's outcomes.

In this report, we analyse how changing circumstances in the outside world have driven children indoors, and explain how this retreat from the outside world is having a profound effect on children's well-being.

At this stage we are wary of producing too many policy responses. As the Government discovered with its Children's Plan, the temptation is to fire out regulations and initiatives that may even harm the very causes they are trying to help. It is not about how much government

spends on children, it's about how it's spent, and how we engender a new culture. The analysis below points out the need for work in three vital areas:

- **Making outdoor space safer and more protected, so that parents and children feel more confident about spending time there;**
- **Dealing with bullying, which is a source of much misery for children and which has elicited too little attention;**
- **Increasing accessibility to sports and other activities within and outside school, so that children have more opportunities to exercise, learn in an outdoor environment and mix with children of different ages and backgrounds.**

None of the solutions is straightforward, but tackling them is an essential part of our strategy for giving children back their childhoods. The loss of confidence in outside space, combined with greater exposure to commercial influences, a reduction in the availability of sport and a growing culture of risk aversion are significantly harming the childhoods of too many children. We owe it to them to act.

### David Willetts MP

Chairman of the Childhood Review

# 1. Children and the outside world

## 1.1 Parents under pressure

Our starting point is children and their parents. One theme running through much of the commentary about childhood is to blame parents themselves for the state of childhood in Britain. Individual parents do sometimes let their children down and, in extreme cases, blight their lives, but we have concluded that blaming parents is a false trail.

### Increasing parental commitment

The evidence shows that parents are doing more for their children than ever before. Despite more parents working, we are also devoting more time to our children, especially before they go to school. Time use surveys show that parents spend, on average, ninety-nine minutes a day with their children compared to twenty-five minutes a day in 1975<sup>1</sup>. There is a real truth behind the widespread belief that today's parents are closer to their children and do more with them than their parents did with them.

This increase in parental commitment is partly because more and more children are positively wanted than ever before and families are smaller, thereby enabling parents to spend more time with individual children.

### Loss of trust in other adults

However, it is also telling that, despite the growing amount of time parents spend with their children, many parents feel that it is difficult to balance their responsibilities as parents with the other elements of their lives, especially work. This problem is worsened by another modern phenomenon – the catastrophic loss of trust in other adults. This loss of trust has in turn meant that more parents feel isolated from other people and from the support mechanisms they need. The responsibility of being a good parent seems heavier because there are no other people with whom to share the enterprise, especially when the children are young.

Teachers do their best when the child is older and we believe it is also a false trail to blame teachers for what is going wrong. Our focus of attention is the physical and social space that lies between the parents and schools. That is where the experiences of childhood have been most undermined. Unfortunately, standard responses to this problem, such as extending school hours or using lessons to highlight the dangers of the outside, merely serve to exacerbate negative impressions of the outside world. A new approach is needed.

Parents are shouldering a greater burden because there is a decline in the willingness of adults to engage with other

parents' children. One of the reasons why the well-being of children in Britain is so low is that we leave parents on their own to raise their children more than in other countries – it is less of a shared enterprise in which other adults are trusted to help. What is more, those adults that are involved in children's lives are often strangers, as increasing labour mobility and the fragmentation of family life mean that parents trust fewer people in their local areas.

The evidence on parental trust in others in Britain compared to other countries is not straightforward. But it does suggest this is where the problem lies. The table below, dating back to 1999, shows very low levels of trust. A later piece of research suggested higher levels of trust in Great Britain. But even this showed that 58 per cent of adults think "you can't be too careful" about others<sup>2</sup>.

% of people in Western European/North American countries who believe "most people can be trusted" <sup>4</sup>	
Norway	65%
Denmark	64%
Sweden	64%
Netherlands	59%
Finland	57%
Canada	38%
Spain	36%
USA	36%
Ireland	35%
Italy	32%
Austria	31%
Belgium	29%
UK	28%
West Germany	22%
France	21%
Portugal	10%

Fifty years ago, 60% of adults trusted other adults<sup>4</sup>. There is no point simply berating parents for this extraordinary loss of trust. It is easy to understand why parents feel the way they do. The real challenge is to try to identify the conditions that have led to the loss of trust and tackle them.

Parents feel they are on their own. The old ideological battle of market versus government seems irrelevant. Neither feels particularly pro-family. Market pressures are commercialising childhood and strengthening pester power, stimulating appetites for unhealthy foods and violent video games. Meanwhile, government just piles on more injunctions and advice without doing much that is practical to improve the quality of childhood or help protect families from commercial pressures.

Parents are finding it hard to compete with the media as they try to care for and supervise their children. Advertisers have mastered the art of presenting themselves as the child's ally against parents. Parents worry about the violent and sexual messages from the media which they are helpless to regulate: three-quarters of parents worry about their children having unsupervised access to the internet<sup>5</sup>. Specifically, parents feel there is a skills gap between them

and their children when it comes to knowledge about the media – 16 per cent of parents consider themselves advanced users of the internet, compared to 32 per cent of children. Only one in five parents say they know how to help their children use the Internet safely.<sup>6</sup>

Whilst Gordon Brown claims to be boldly extending the welfare state with more provision for early years, the truth is that a lot of the basic services which were part of a shared political recognition of the need to help parents with young children, have actually been withdrawn by successive governments. All this leaves British parents feeling unusually isolated and pressurised. The problem is worse than in many other countries where other adults are trusted more, commercial pressures are less intense, and public services are more practical and effective.

## 1.2 The dangers of public space and the impact on children

The isolation and lack of trust experienced by many parents, and the concern about their children these feelings produce, are driven above all by a growing fear about the security of public space. A perception that the outside world is both a more dangerous place for children and a less protected one is having a profound effect on the way that parents are bringing up their children.

### *Dangers of public space*

The single most vivid example of the hostile environment parents and children face is the decline in the quality of public space. Families lose out most from this civic decline. The outside environment for children is much worse than it was even a generation ago. There is more traffic and it is faster. Streets are more aggressive places and felt to be more dangerous. And as the final twist, the very public parks and playgrounds set aside for children have themselves become more threatening.

In 2005, 31 per cent of 10-15 year olds said they had been a victim of personal crime such as personal assault and theft. Similarly, 24 per cent of 10-17 year olds said they had committed an offence in the last 12 months. 4 per cent of young people in the UK carry a knife<sup>7</sup>.

We have a higher rate of child pedestrian deaths than our European neighbours<sup>8</sup>. Though there has been a decrease in the number of child pedestrians killed or seriously injured since 1994, evidence suggests this may be heavily influenced by the decline in the number of children walking out on the streets<sup>9</sup>. 23 per cent of children who are afraid of walking or playing alone in their neighbourhoods blame the dangers of traffic<sup>10</sup>.

### *Retreat from public space*

The growing dangers of crime, traffic and bullying have made four out of ten young people concerned about their personal safety<sup>11</sup>. The result has been a retreat from public space. The area in which children are free to roam is one ninth of what it was a generation ago<sup>12</sup>. Play England laments the “continuous erosion of the freedom that children have to play with each other”<sup>13</sup>. Studies have found that the proportion of ten and eleven year olds who travel unaccompanied to school fell from 94 per cent in 1970 to 47 per cent in 1998<sup>14</sup>. The overall picture is one where, because of the growing risk or perceived risk associated with public space, children are retreating from the outside world, encouraged by parents who feel little control over the influences on their children or support to help them deal with these problems.

Nowhere is the decline in public space and its effect on children more poignantly illustrated than in the public parks and playgrounds set aside for children, which have themselves become places of danger. Some playgrounds are safe, good and popular. But they are not all like that. Home Office evidence suggests 43 per cent of gangs meet in children’s playgrounds<sup>15</sup>. Gangs can be a threat wherever they meet. However, they are a particular menace when they occupy the places that are specifically designed for younger children. When surveyed about what Government could do to help them, one of the key things parents mentioned is safe spaces for their children to play<sup>16</sup>.

The Government’s Children’s Plan promised the rebuilding or renewal of 3,500 more playgrounds<sup>17</sup>, but this approach won’t work on its own. If those playgrounds are not protected, the risks to children could increase, not decrease. Although improvements in physical space are welcome, the real problem is that the space that does exist – in parks, playgrounds, streets and elsewhere – has become unsafe for children. If playgrounds are places where gangs gather, or are strewn with syringes and broken glass, it is not surprising that children stay away and parents do not feel confident about letting their children out to play. We must first make public spaces safer to tackle the understandable fears parents have.

### *New forms of deprivation*

The loss of confidence in public space affects all parents but has different implications for children from different backgrounds, opening up a new gap between rich and poor. For many children, especially from poorer families, it means a retreat indoors – often to the child’s own bedroom – to a world of television, electronic games and the internet. On Sunday afternoons, 32 per cent of children from the poorest families in the UK are watching television whereas only 7 per cent of those from the most affluent families are<sup>18</sup>. This is a new form of deprivation which can

do real damage to a child's development. Their way of experiencing the world becomes quick and shallow. Jean Piaget argued that experiencing the world in three-dimensions by physically interacting with it is essential for cognitive development. Throwing things, hitting things, and putting things into water or sand are all crucial for young children's development. But for many children, their world is now flat.

Watching too much television may also be a contributory factor in reducing educational attainment. A study by Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York tracked 700 children and found that 22 per cent of 14-year olds who watch television for more than three hours a day do not go on to higher education compared to 7 per cent of fourteen year olds who watch television for less than an hour a day<sup>19</sup>. It has also been suggested that there is a link between extensive television viewing by young children and attention problems: the chances of children aged between one and three developing attention problems by the age of seven increases with the more hours of TV watched a day<sup>20</sup>.

Despite these warnings of too much screen bingeing, children in the UK tend to watch television more in other countries.

11-year-olds who watch television four or more hours a day on weekdays (%) <sup>31</sup>		15-year-olds who watch television four or more hours a day on weekdays (%)	
USA	31%	UK	30%
UK	30%	USA	29%
Netherlands	20%	Spain	26%
Italy	18%	Netherlands	26%
Spain	18%	Italy	24%
France	16%	Sweden	22%
Sweden	13%	France	21%
Average	24%	Average	26%

Too much time isolated in front of the television also means less opportunity to interact with others. Relationships are vital for children's happiness: in a survey of primary school children completed by The Children's Society Good Childhood Inquiry, 63 per cent of those questioned said that what made them happy was having friends<sup>23</sup>. Interacting with peers also develops social skills such as conflict resolution. These 'softer' skills are particularly important for success in a service-based economy. As the structure of the British economy has changed, personal and social skills have become more important for individuals in the workplace than the 'hard' technical skills. In fact, the evidence suggests that these softer skills are 25 per cent more important in determining life chances for the cohort born in 1970 compared to those born in 1958.<sup>24</sup>

Children's transfer from public space to cyber space also leaves children vulnerable to the unregulated world of the

internet, which can be dangerous to them. In many ways, children are fortunate to have access to such modern media. It is an excellent source of knowledge and entertainment, empowering children more than ever before. But along with these benefits, the internet can bring harm. 32 per cent of children say they have received unwanted nasty or sexual comments while on the web<sup>25</sup>.

More affluent families are able to use their resources to provide outside activities for their children. Their children are more likely to be in organised child care and involved with extra-curricular activities. Parents in these circumstances are doing the best for their children. Children are driven to school sports matches, swimming lessons, and supervised activities. But, highly organised and rigid diaries can remove the opportunities for spontaneous play and activity. These children face new stresses from being more managed, supervised, and timetabled than in previous generations.

The different impact of the loss of confidence in public space on children from less affluent backgrounds and from wealthier backgrounds opens up a new frontier in the battle for social mobility. It may help to explain the crucial and worrying finding by Leon Feinstein that bright children from poorer backgrounds fall behind children from more affluent backgrounds with lower cognitive skills well before the age of eleven<sup>26</sup>. If children do not have space to play with others their chances of social mobility may be reduced. Physical mobility affects social mobility.

### 1.3 Reclaiming public space

The terrible murder of Rhys Jones in August 2007 who was on his way back home after football practice showed how dangerous public space can be. Home Office statistics shows that between 1998/99 and 2005/06, the number of injuries as result of gun crime has increased by 342%<sup>27</sup>. These attacks are thankfully rare, but children across the country are exposed to significant violence. We allow children to live in a world of far greater disorder than we did as children.

It is clearly an issue for public policy that the public space which we have put aside for children is dangerous. Until we have dealt with the very real issues of youth disorder, parents will (quite rightly) have little confidence in letting their children out.

#### Measuring crime against children

The British Crime Survey does not measure crimes against children or by children<sup>28</sup>. This means there is little incentive for policymakers to prioritise crimes against children. At the moment, preventing an assault on a

twenty-one year old contributes to the headline figures on crime reduction and helps the Government claim crime is under control, but preventing an attack on a ten-year old does not. This makes no sense, and makes children and parents feel that somehow crimes against children are of lesser importance.

### ***Greater adult supervision of public spaces***

Parental fear about crime and bullying would be minimised by the greater presence of adults. It is a shame that there has been a narrowing in inter-generational contact. Eyes on the street would make parents more comfortable about letting their children outdoors. There is a range of examples of how we can increase adult supervision of public spaces: modern-day park rangers and walking buses, where parents take it in turn to walk each other's children to school. In Balsall Heath, Dr Dick Atkinson has overseen an impressive social revival and one component is that every street has a Street Steward<sup>29</sup>.

### ***More visible policing***

In the ICM Police Reform survey in March 2007, 75 per cent of the public did not know of any police officers in their neighbourhood<sup>30</sup>. Parents would feel safer in letting their children outdoors if they knew that there were eyes on the street that can protect their children.

The reality is that the police are over burdened by bureaucracy. Their anonymity is caused by the burden which keeps them behind desks and off the streets. Just 14 per cent of all police officers' time is spent on patrol compared with 19.3 per cent of their time on paperwork<sup>31</sup>.

**All Police Officers distribution of time<sup>4</sup>**

Year	Total Time Spent On Paperwork	Time spent on patrol
2003-2004	20.1 %	14.2 %
2004-2005	18.4 %	15.3 %
2005-2006	19.3 %	14.0 %

The Government have continuously promised but failed to cut the bureaucratic burdens on the police. The Labour Party manifesto in 1997 said the Government wanted to "relieve the police of unnecessary bureaucratic burdens to get more officers back on the beat"<sup>33</sup>. But, the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit last year stated that it takes 11.5 hours to process an arrest<sup>34</sup>. More recently, Sir Ronnie Flanagan has published an interim review on policing, saying that the problem of bureaucracy is a burden that has been detrimental to the police's "ability to provide the level of public presence and service which both they and the public deserve"<sup>35</sup>. Likewise, Flanagan describes a force that had completed over 79,000 Stop and Account forms in 2006, from which the administration and recording

processes has been estimated at 25 minutes per submission. Across the force this would equate to 32,916 hours of process work or a full-time commitment of 16 staff members dedicated to filling and processing Stop and Account forms<sup>36</sup>.

If police are on the streets instead of in the office, crime would reduce. It is vital we find ways of reducing the bureaucratic burden on police officers to free them to patrol our neighbourhoods. Tackling low-level disorder must be a crucial part of any serious childhood strategy. One of the specific advantages of neighbourhood policing is its focus on exactly this kind of disorder. If police are on the streets instead of in the office, the crime which would fall hardest and farthest first of all would be crimes of low level disorder – the kind of crimes which hurt children the most.

### ***Allowing children to play***

Police need to be tough but they also need to ensure that harmless play is not stopped. The aim is safer neighbourhoods not neighbourhoods without children. The negative portrayal of young people has made many people believe that children who are outdoors are up to no good. Since 1996, there has been a 42 per cent increase in the percentage of people perceiving teenagers hanging around to be a very or fairly big problem<sup>37</sup>. In April 2007, an incident occurred where police were called when children as young as five had drawn a hop-scotch grid on the street<sup>38</sup>. The temptation to act against trivial incidents is heightened by the way national targets are set by Government so identifying a crime and the offender improves their clear-up rate.

We must allow our children to be seen and heard. In particular, children playing outdoor ball games in the appropriate places are a very good way to do this. We understand the pressure on councils to say "No Ball Games" allowed on patches of land where children gather to play. But by depriving children of the opportunity to let off steam, it can make the problem worse.

We recognise there are other measures that can also help increase confidence in public space. The pressure to build more homes on so-called brownfield sites actually deprives children in urban areas of places to play. Also, as traffic is a key concern to parents, we do need to look at international evidence on how streets can be made safer.

### ***Making outdoor play more exciting***

The Government is investing money in the development of playgrounds. But it needs to think about how these playgrounds look. We have already addressed the problems of diminishing demand because of the safety of public spaces. But demand has also been affected by the quality



of outdoor play equipment. Many public playgrounds have become boring and over-regulated. Children are therefore not going to playgrounds because, as one playground safety advisor says, “we have made playgrounds so monumentally boring that any self-respecting child will go somewhere else to play, somewhere more interesting and usually more dangerous”<sup>39</sup>. A survey conducted in northwest England revealed that the majority of parents of 8-11 year olds were dissatisfied with play facilities<sup>40</sup>. Likewise, half of all children report that there is no where to go in their area<sup>41</sup>.

Experiments in some local authorities have shown how public playgrounds can have more capacity for natural play and can be more exciting. Playgrounds should and can be challenging.

## 2. Happy and resilient children

### 2.1 Introduction

One of the most shocking pieces of evidence from the UNICEF report was on happiness. We may fear that our children are not as well educated as before but we hope that they are at least happy? The evidence is that many are not happy.

10 per cent of boys between the ages of five and ten and 13 per cent of boys between the ages of eleven and sixteen have a clinically recognisable mental disorder<sup>42</sup>. Even more disturbing is the increase in self-harm among children in the UK.

#### Finished consultant episodes for 0-14 year olds where cause of treatment was intentional self harm or poisoning<sup>43</sup>

1999-2000	3,509
2000-2001	3,320
2001-2002	3,779
2002-2003	4,002
2003-2004	4,299
2004-2005	4,099
2005-2006	4,575
2006-2007	4,241

### 2.2 Bullying

One part of the problem comes from the loss of trust in other children, due largely to bullying. Britain was the only country in the UNICEF report where less than half of all young people found their peers kind and helpful<sup>44</sup>. Equally, The Children's Society Good Childhood Inquiry revealed that, since 1986, the number of teenagers with no best friends has increased from one in eight to one in five<sup>45</sup>.

#### Percentage Of Young People Aged 11, 13 And 15 Who Find Their Peers 'Kind And Helpful'<sup>46</sup>

Sweden	77 %
Germany	76 %
Netherlands	73 %
Finland	70 %
Spain	59 %
Italy	55 %
France	54 %
United States	53 %
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>43 %</b>
<b>UNICEF Report Average</b>	<b>66 %</b>

Bullying has become a major threat to the happiness and well-being of Britain's children, and it must be tackled more effectively if we are to ensure that schools are environments where children thrive. Beatbullying research points to a figure of 55.5 per cent of young people having been bullied<sup>47</sup>. A similar study found that, depending on the definition of bullying used, 60 per cent of young people have been bullied<sup>48</sup>. 20,000 young people per day truant because they are being bullied<sup>49</sup>. In 2005, Child Line reported that over 32,000 had contacted them as a result of bullying<sup>50</sup>. The table below illustrates how, compared with other countries, British children report being bullied a lot more frequently.

#### Percentage Of Young People Age 11, 13 And 15 Who Report Being Bullied In The Previous 2 Months<sup>51</sup>

Germany	37 %
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>36 %</b>
France	35 %
United States	34 %
Netherlands	29 %
Italy	27 %
Spain	26 %
Finland	24 %
Sweden	15 %
<b>Uncief Report Average</b>	<b>31 %</b>

About 70 per cent of all reported bullying occurs in schools.<sup>52</sup> Over half of both primary and secondary school pupils report that bullying was "a big problem" or "quite a problem" in their school.<sup>53</sup> 51 per cent of pupils in Year 5 and 28 per cent of pupils in Year 8 report being personally bullied during the previous term. In 2004/05, there were 7,680 suspensions and 130 permanent exclusions of children who were bullying persistently<sup>54</sup>.

Bullying of homosexual and disabled pupils are a significant problem in schools. In the UK, 82 per cent of youngsters with learning disabilities are either bullied at school or when they go out in the evening<sup>55</sup>. 82 per cent of secondary school teachers are aware of verbal homophobic incidents in their schools.<sup>56</sup>

This is having a substantial impact on their well-being: nearly one in ten fifteen year olds say they "feel like an outsider or left out of things"<sup>57</sup>. Fewer than 20 per cent of British children report "liking school a lot", well below the average of OECD countries.

#### Percentage of students age 11, 13 and 15 report 'liking school a lot'<sup>58</sup>

Austria	36 %
Netherlands	34 %
Germany	30 %
United States	23 %
Spain	23 %
France	22 %
Sweden	22 %
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>19 %</b>
Italy	13 %
Finland	8 %
<b>UNICEF Report Average</b>	<b>23 %</b>

For victims of bullying, the effects can be profoundly disturbing. Primary school children who are bullied can experience bed wetting, headaches and stomach aches, while studies of adolescents have pointed to physical health and psychological problems<sup>59</sup>. Sometimes, bullying can even lead to suicide. It is estimated that sixteen children in the UK take their own lives each year because of bullying.<sup>60</sup> Beatbullying estimates that more than one in five severely bullied children will attempt to take their own life<sup>61</sup>.

Being bullied makes pupils dislike and avoid school. It has

been estimated that 42 per cent of school non-attendance is in some way related to bullying<sup>62</sup>. 215,000 secondary school pupils were classified as ‘persistent absentees’ during 2005/06 – 7 per cent of pupils<sup>63</sup>. This may help explain the fact that being bullied at school is inversely associated with wages received in adulthood<sup>64</sup>.

Even for the perpetrators, the effects are extremely damaging. Bullies tend to be aggressive, with positive attitudes to violence. In their recent report on bullying, the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee found that “casual attitudes to violence seem to be becoming more common”<sup>65</sup>. Evidence suggests that they often have a background of domestic violence, a domestic environment where their views go unheard, and - in the case of boys – uninvolved fathering. Bullying is recognised as a response to the deep frustration felt by individuals who have been exposed to conflict and violence. People who bully can sometimes be the victims of bullying themselves. They are also far more likely to become involved in crime<sup>66</sup>.

Thus, to improve children’s happiness, we must have robust policies to tackle bullying in schools. Schools are required by law to have an anti-bullying policy. However many strategies are simply ineffective, with much confusion over definitions of bullying and the action to take in the case of bullying. One study showed that over a quarter of secondary schools lack a definition of bullying in their anti-bullying policies, and less than a fifth set out the responsibilities of non-teaching staff if they know of bullying.<sup>67</sup> We need to learn from those schools that have the best anti-bullying strategies. Schools with successful policies to tackle bullying include:

- Dedicated staff whose main role is to enforce good behaviour
- Swift and timely sanctions applied when rules are broken
- Boundaries clearly drawn and an escalating scale of sanctions for those who transgress
- Dedicated rooms for those who have to be taken out of class for discipline reasons<sup>68</sup>

We believe that we must approach the issue from two angles. First, schools should take stringent action against those who persistently bully. Second, schools should take measures to promote positive attitudes between children, cultivating respect between pupils, so bullying can be prevented before it occurs.

### **Excluding bullies from school**

Currently, parents have the right to appeal against the decision of a Head Teacher to permanently exclude their child through an independent appeals panel administered by local authorities. These are expensive and time

consuming for Head Teachers. As a result, there has been a decline in the number of permanent exclusions in mainstream schools- from 11,700 in 1997/98 to 8,960 in 2005/06<sup>69</sup>.

Head Teachers are instead issuing suspensions, which are fixed period exclusions. This means disruptive children can re-enter the classroom time and time again. The number of suspensions in secondary schools rose from 288,040 in 2003/04 to 343,840 in 2005/06<sup>70</sup>. We believe that pupils who persistently bully should not be in mainstream schools, but PRUs (Pupil Referral Units). This is a more appropriate setting to meet the needs of these pupils.

Our proposal that head teachers should be given the right to exclude pupils that bully is welcome. Head teachers must have control over the standards of behaviour in their schools and this means, as a last resort, the power to exclude students whose conduct disrupts the education of others or harms other pupils.

### **Introducing binding home school contracts**

As OFSTED has noted, schools with a ‘strong ethos’ and shared expectations of behaviour are generally very good at dealing with bullying. We believe that this ethos can be created if we give schools the power to set out clear codes of behaviour and to enforce them effectively. That is why schools should be given the right to make parents sign some form of home-school contract in order to accept a place at a school. This home- school contract could set out, on the one hand, clear expectations that the child would comply with expected standards of behaviour and discipline, including not bullying, while also setting out the school’s obligations to the parent. In order to accept the place at the school, the parent would be required both to agree to abide by the terms in the contract and the current school rules. We would expect schools to draft and revise their home school contracts in consultation with parents and pupils. Such a policy is likely to be popular with the vast majority of parents who aspire to a school with an ethos that promotes good behaviour.

### **Bullying in public spaces**

Bullying is not simply a school-based phenomenon. It takes place in the public spaces where children play. 500,000 of those who are bullied each week- nearly 50 per cent- are bullied outside of school in the community<sup>71</sup>. Of the children who report feeling unsafe in their neighbourhoods, 20 per cent claim it is because of bullying from other children<sup>72</sup>.

Two in ten children regularly play outside in the streets and spaces where they live compared to seven in ten adults who recall playing out when they were a child<sup>73</sup>. Bullying, alongside crime and anti-social behaviour, is a central

reason why children have retreated from outdoor space.

### **Adults in public space**

Rather than being a source of danger, adults could well be what are needed to supervise public spaces to ensure bullying does not take place. Indeed, it may be disengagement of other adults from any dealings with children which is a key factor. We are seeing a collapse of inter-generational contact: a world where the only adult contact with children is from parents or an officially approved professional. This is an extraordinary experiment in the way we raise children. It weakens the sense of inter-connectedness which we know is essential to keeping children safe. Adult supervision may well be the key to reducing bullying.

## **2.3 Age mixing**

The breakdown of relationships between children of different ages may be because so many activities at school are segregated by age. You only have friends or competitors: no mentors. Children of particular ages need contact with different age-groups: whether it be grandparents, adults or older or younger children. Shaun Bailey, youth worker and Conservative Parliamentary candidate, is a major advocate of this: “The elder boys in the team must be responsible for the younger boys”<sup>74</sup>. This is part of the appeal of gangs, of which 12 per cent of fourteen to sixteen year olds are members<sup>75</sup>. It is the chance to hang around with older children.

Extensive evidence suggests that age-mixing is extremely beneficial for children. In several studies, children report a better attitude towards school after studying in multi-age classes<sup>76</sup>. In multi-age classes, there is also evidence that children’s self-esteem is increased<sup>77</sup>. Children in these settings also demonstrate better attitudes towards their classmates and less anxiety when at school<sup>78</sup>. Evidence also shows that social skills improve in mixed-age classes<sup>79</sup>.

Our proposal to ensure children are taught at their basic literacy or numeracy standard is an example of putting less weight on chronological age. It could be part of a wider approach to achieve greater mixing of ages in school activities. David Cameron’s National Citizen’s Service provides an opportunity for older children to organise activities for younger children.

## **2.4 Street-proofing children**

We need to help our children to be more emotionally resilient and street-aware to deal with the problems encountered in public space. In Canada, there is an

organisation called Child Find which is a charitable organisation which aims to reduce the incidence of missing and exploited children by a programme of ‘street-proofing’. It conducts public awareness campaigns and undertakes community education programmes in public and private schools across the province.

‘Street-proofing’ involves practical tips such as:

- Teaching children their full name, address, and telephone number;
- How to use a telephone, area codes, reverse-charge calling, and pay phones;
- Defining what a stranger is and explaining that people in uniform, such as a policeman, or with a name-badge, for example a shop-assistant, are safe to approach if they get lost;
- Teaching that it’s safest to travel in groups and to stay away from isolated, dark areas;
- Telling children to report any suspicious incidents or people;
- Teaching children to run, kick, scream and fight if threatened by a stranger;
- Teaching them that no one has the right to touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable;
- When home alone, not to let anyone know they are alone, and to call out for a parent even if they are not at home<sup>80</sup>.

Similarly, there is a charity called Protective Behaviours<sup>81</sup> which helps reduce the neglect and abuse of children. Its central philosophy is to develop self-confidence and self-empowerment to ensure children are not victimised. The charity provides training sessions for a variety of individuals- from police officers to teachers- to help them teach and understand measures that will build up their resilience to the dangers around them.

Current safeguarding policy is strong on structures, processes, and top-down interventions, but less effective in terms of building a wider culture of safeguarding children. Charities can help by equipping, empowering, and building resilience among children. Safeguarding children is not something that can be achieved as a result of systems and processes alone, important though they are.

## **2.5 Extended family**

Substantial and convincing evidence shows how important a happy family is for the emotional and cognitive development of children. Children in intact, two-parent families do better on a wide range of outcomes. For example, they are less likely to smoke, become a single parent, be in social housing, and receive benefits<sup>82</sup>. In an atmosphere of extreme marital discord, children are more



likely to be anxious, depressed and withdrawn<sup>83</sup>. Children feel unhappy if they think the family is breaking down, that mum and dad are arguing all the time. In a survey of 2,343 pupils aged between eleven and sixteen, 7 out of 10 said parents getting on well is one of the most important factors for a happy childhood<sup>84</sup>.

Iain Duncan Smith has been examining the effect of broken homes on the approximately three million children who have experienced the separation of their parents<sup>85</sup>. In this section, we examine the valuable contribution the extended family- particularly grandparents- can make to the happiness of children. In 2001, over 1.2 million men and 1.6 million women aged over 50 were providing unpaid care to family members, neighbours or relatives<sup>86</sup>. It is estimated that 60 per cent of childcare provision in the UK is provided by grandparents<sup>87</sup>.

Grandparents' involvement in their grandchildren's lives, in the majority of cases, is extremely positive. The positive effects of children having contact with the extended family have long been recognised, and involvement can range from informal and ad-hoc contact a few hours a week, to providing continual care, fostering, or even adoption.

### **Parental Separation**

For children experiencing family breakdown, "grandparents were valued particularly as a source of time, attention and reassurance"<sup>88</sup>.

During the breakdown of the parent's relationship, extended family members can cushion the blow of the break-up on the children. Often, family members may start to look after a child because there is a crisis in the parental home. There may have been incidents of violence, alcohol or drug misuse, mental or physical illness, disability, a death, separation, divorce, domestic abuse, or imprisonment. Children in these circumstances may have experienced trauma and will be particularly vulnerable. The extended family, often involved in the early stages of these situations, should be utilised to look after, care for, or simply have the opportunity to be involved in, the child's life. This support is in the best interests of the child.

However, it should be acknowledged that in some cases, utilising the extended family in the life of the child may not always be beneficial, practical or desired. Where a child is taken into care from a dysfunctional family, placing that child with another member of that same dysfunctional family may be equally detrimental to the child. Equally, it is important to recognise that there should not be a presumption that relatives always want to provide support: a sense of obligation can be a heavy burden on the extended family. However, we consider it to be important that there is a legislative framework in place that acknowledges that in most

cases, kinship care can be hugely valuable to the child.

Current legislation largely ignores the extended family, despite evidence and best practice demonstrating the crucially positive role most family members can play in a child's life. There are no formal legal rights for grandparents to have contact, but they do have the right to apply for leave from the court, under Section 8 of the Children Act 1989, to apply for contact. However, this process is considered by various grandparents' organisations as a lengthy, complicated and expensive process that could be simplified. If parents object, the Court must be persuaded, usually by way of a full hearing, that grandparents had a meaningful and ongoing relationship with grandchild and that it is in child's best interests for relationship to continue. This will involve a welfare report by a Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) Officer to be presented to the Court, usually taking 12 - 16 weeks to complete. Even if the report is favourable, the parent may still not agree to grandparents contact, resulting in a full hearing with both sides having to give evidence.

## 3. Play, risk and adventure

### 3.1 Benefits of play

#### Physical health

Outdoor play is critical for physical health, and the decline in sports, play and other activities is one of the reasons why child obesity is much higher than in other European countries. The UNICEF report showed that Britain is the only country to have more than 20 per cent of young people reporting their health as “fair or poor”<sup>89</sup>. The prevalence of obesity among boys rose by 65 per cent and among girls by 51 per cent between 1995 and 2005. Today, 18 per cent of boys and 18.1 per cent of girls are obese in the UK<sup>90</sup>. Equally as alarming, the UK has the highest proportion of fourteen to seventeen year old girls who are overweight in Europe<sup>91</sup>.

#### Community

It is not just children who benefit from outdoor play. When parents take their children to the playground, or watch their child in the local football team, or take them to Guides once a week, they meet other parents and friendships are forged. Communities are created. A Swiss study demonstrated that families with children who had little outdoor playtime had poorer social networks<sup>92</sup>. And when mutual trust and neighbourliness is alive, a study has shown that a community is less likely to be vulnerable to crime<sup>93</sup>. The more opportunities children have to play, the more different people meet and the safer a neighbourhood becomes.

#### Mental well-being

Studies have shown the positive impact of the outdoors in reducing the symptoms of attention disorders and, conversely, the negative impact of electronic stimuli on exacerbating the symptoms. Stressful urban environments have a very significant effect on concentration<sup>94</sup>. Roger Ulrich’s experiments showed how play de-stresses the mind: “leisure activities in natural settings are important for helping people to cope with stress”<sup>95</sup>.

**Prescriptions of drugs used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder<sup>96</sup>**

Year	To Under 16s	To Aged 16 To 18 In Full Time Education
1996-97	48,264	2,058
1997-98	86,247	3,388
1998-99	112,294	4,596
1999-2000	144,894	7,698
2000-01	171,244	7,873
2001-02	200,202	9,225
2002-03	247,115	11,935
2003-04	289,009	17,218
2004-05	338,909	24,906
2005-06	379,334	31,694
2006-07	454,797	40,339

The rise of depression, stress and anxiety amongst children is a worrying trend. Children’s mental health has

progressively worsened over the past few decades. 12 per cent of sixteen year olds had emotional problems in 1986; today that figures stands at 16.9 per cent<sup>97</sup>. Since 1996, the number of under sixteens prescribed antidepressant drugs has increased by 40 per cent<sup>98</sup>. Shockingly, the prescription of drugs to control ADHD for under sixteens has increased by 842 per cent since 1996<sup>99</sup>.

#### Enhancing non-cognitive skills

Play makes children more sociable, developing their communication and language skills and basic social skills such as sharing and negotiation.

Play and recreation are critical in the development of children’s cognitive and emotional skills<sup>100</sup>. They are potent tools in raising happy, healthy and productive members of the British economy. The creative and social skills that children develop through play help them to develop lateral thinking and emotional intelligence that are becoming increasingly important in a globalised, non-hierarchical economy<sup>101</sup>. Participation in play and extracurricular activities leads to higher self-esteem, better inter personal competence, higher aspirations, and a heightened motivation for learning and self-efficiency.

### 3.2 Sport

#### The importance of sport

Fostering a love of sport in young people and children today is a project which will have many long term benefits, but it is also the most significant part of physical play and exercise for older children.

#### Sport in schools

60 per cent of 15 and 16-year-olds are not still taking part in intra-school competitive games; 76 per cent of 15 and 16 year olds are not taking parting in inter-school competitive sport in 2004-05.<sup>103</sup>

This failing is occurring within schools for a number of reasons:

- PE is not seen as a priority. This is despite the fact that 80 per cent of primary school teachers have observed that lack of outdoor exercise affects children’s learning<sup>104</sup>.
- It can be costly and time consuming, especially because of transport costs and equipment costs, to provide sporting opportunities to children.
- Teachers may not be willing to organise sporting activities, especially in primary schools.
- There is still some residual hostility to sports (competitive sports in particular) within schools.

While some schools are very active in opening their schools up to the local community so that adults and children can use them out of hours, the practice is by no means universal. Headteachers are justifiably worried about cost, damage to school property and liability for injuries. While we appreciate these barriers and problems do exist and that some schools are more easily opened up for public use than others, opening up schools to the local community is a worthwhile objective.

### Community sports

Outside school, the Government has been very bad for sport. London's 2012 Olympics Games are a good thing. However, while we want to see world class facilities in place, regeneration for East London and success for the British team in 2012, the real legacy of the Olympics should be the spark for a new generation to take up sport. However, to pay for part of the spiralling Olympic budget, Ministers are looking to find a further £675 million from the Lottery on top of the £1.5 billion they are already taking. As Tim Lamb, chief executive of the Central Council for Physical Recreation said:

*'If there is to be a real legacy of increasing participation in sport, it seems ironic, if not perverse, for money to be taken away from community sport to fund the Olympics'*

However, the Olympics are just one of the sources of increasing pressure on the Lottery from other sources which has meant that public funding for grassroots sport has fallen by nearly 50 per cent, from £397m in 1998 to £209m last year.<sup>105</sup>

This fall in funding has had serious consequences. The Government pledged in 2000 to create 30 Sport Action Zones to boost sport in deprived areas. But seven years later, only twelve have been created.<sup>106</sup> The amount being cut from sport lottery funds to pay for the Olympic overspend alone is equivalent to more than £100,000 per Parliamentary constituency – enough to pay for one floodlit multi-use games area.<sup>107</sup>

Ministerial responsibility for the Olympic facilities and for encouraging participation in sport is split between a number of ministers in the Department of Children, Schools and Families and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. As a consequence, the problems caused by cutting funding for sport are not being adequately weighed against the need for money for the Olympics. While these responsibilities are separated, the Olympics Minister has a weak incentive to avoid overspending since she is not forced to account for the decline in sports funding.

It is therefore not clear how the Government will meet its aim to increase sporting participation by children to five hours a week, of which three hours are expected to be provided outside school hours.

## 3.3 Risk and adventure

Play and recreation provide an arena for children to assess and manage risk. They learn what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable risk. If children are unable to distinguish between them, this could cause risk-seeking that is antisocial or criminal. Play and recreation provide an ideal opportunity for children to become effective evaluators of risk and less susceptible in the long-term to dangerous risk-taking.

Lisa Fowlie, President of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health, said children need to learn how to manage everyday risks.

*"It does mean letting children play games in the playground and allowing them to go rock climbing at an accredited centre where the risks are controlled. They might get the odd bump and bruise, but that's part of growing up."*<sup>108</sup>

### Compensation culture

In some schools around the country there are bans on conkers, marbles and snowball fights because, terrified by the threat of civil or criminal proceedings, schools are opting to crack down on normal childhood games. The compensation culture means these schools have gone further than simply protecting children and may well be hurting them in the long run.

The Education and Skills Committee found that "there is currently a very patchy provision of outdoor education in schools" and their witnesses cited "the possibility of litigation as one of the main reasons for the apparent decline in school trips"<sup>109</sup>. 34 per cent of children do not go on any trips involving an overnight stay<sup>110</sup>.

Outside school, a further means of encouraging children to socialise and play are organisations such as the Scouts and the Guides. A significant part of their appeal is the possibility of exciting activities, trips and camps. Unfortunately, the fear of litigation is hurting them. The Scout Association undertook a survey in 2005 that found that 92 per cent of adult volunteers agreed that risk-aversion is affecting the range and nature of activities being offered to young people<sup>111</sup>.

More broadly, the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) found that out of eight factors the blame culture

and fear of litigation was the main barrier to volunteering<sup>112</sup>.

This is being driven by a combination of factors, including the rise in accident management companies, ‘no-win, no fee’ arrangements, the growing awareness of the right to claim compensation and the media reporting of bad court judgements. According to the Government:

*“The increased awareness of the public that it is possible to sue without personal financial risk, when combined with media attention to apparently unmeritorious claims being bought, has contributed to a widely held opinion that we do indeed have a compensation culture”<sup>113</sup>.*

Teachers and sports organisers avoid trips because they feel more people are willing to sue them if an accident happens, and believe they do not have enough legal protection from being sued even if they take reasonable care to ensure accidents are avoided. Some high-profile cases have substantiated this. In the 2002 Joseph Morrison vs. The Scout Association case, a youth leader decided to ‘dive’ on a water slide on a gentle slope using a helmet without reference to the supervising Scout Leader who was instructing the other Scouts on using their helmets. The youth leader cut the bridge of his nose after the front part of the helmet slipped down when he dived. The Scouts were sued, and the judge concluded that the Scout Leader should have checked that people could not get on to the slide without the helmets being checked.

The compensation culture (or fear of it) is affecting the provision of everything from the bans on conkers through simple sporting activities right up to adventure trips – all things that are vital for getting children excited about exercise and the outdoors.

The Government did introduce a clause into the 2006 Compensation Act which gave the courts the right to consider whether a claim “might prevent a desirable activity from being undertaken at all, to a particular extent or in a particular way, or discourage persons from undertaking functions in connection with a desirable activity”. However, since the Courts have the option to consider the desirability of the activity, it does not give reassurance to teachers and other organisers of recreational activities that judges will recognise the social benefit of the activities they are organising when examining a compensation claim.

This climate means insurance companies have raised their premiums, making it harder for recreational providers to be able to afford to run the activities they provide. In 2004, the National Caving Association could not find coverage from

any insurance providers. Eventually it did, but it found that its premium had risen from £1 per head to £18 per head. Similarly, in June 2007, the British Gliding Association reported that their insurance premium had risen 150 per cent in ten years<sup>114</sup>. 650 riding schools have closed as a result of soaring insurance costs in the past four years<sup>115</sup>. Aside from the threat of closure, providers could make their activities more expensive, which might make them uneconomical or unaffordable.

### **A proportionate response to risk**

The courts in most states of the USA have now recognised the rather special position that sports and recreation play in the nation’s well-being. In order to be negligible for an accident in a sporting or recreational setting the defendant must have shown a ‘reckless disregard’ for the safety of the claimant. Many American states and Western Australia – whose legal system is very close to our own – have taken steps to protect sport and adventure training from unreasonable litigation<sup>116</sup>.

The Western Australia Civil Liability Amendment Act (introduced in 2003) has been a success and is a useful model which means courts must consider the “social utility of the activity that creates the risk of harm”<sup>117</sup>. They have introduced the concept of ‘reckless disregard’ which requires a much higher burden of proof than ordinary negligence; it is necessary to show deliberate intent or at least that a reasonable person must have known that he was behaving recklessly. This will ensure that judges recognise the special benefit of sports and adventure and be under stricter guidelines when judging compensation claims against sports and recreational providers. This Act also introduced the idea that “a person (the “defendant”) does not owe a duty of care to another person (the “plaintiff”) to warn of an obvious risk”<sup>118</sup> and introduced a legal presumption of contributory negligence in circumstances where a claimant is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

There is another specific issue: any risk assessment must take account of the “past form” of the children concerned. If, for example, a child has a persistent record of disobedience, the implication must be that either considerable extra resources for supervision must be available for that child or the child should be left behind. Thus the very children who are most at risk of substance abuse, antisocial behaviour and crime are those most likely to be denied opportunities for the very kinds of adventurous activities which provide character development, on the grounds that it would be too risky to give them the opportunity. The likely risks of *not* doing so cannot be taken into account by the courts.

A number of head teachers have expressed concern over the fact that the law nowhere recognises the value of giving



teenagers opportunities to take responsibility for other teenagers and to develop leadership. If something goes wrong, for example on a night patrol, in the Cadets or Scouts, the argument will be put in court that there was a lack of adult supervision even where, for example, a 16-year-old has been thoroughly trained in the task. Thus opportunities for developing leadership and responsibility have been greatly diminished.

### **Improving public playgrounds**

A specific area where compensation culture has had an impact is the provision of playgrounds.

In July 2005, Tony Blair claimed there was a myth that the European Union regulated playgrounds and had forced a Cotswold village to remove a see-saw. He was right that there was no EU regulation, but there is a set of European Standards – a voluntary guideline issued by the EU standards authorities. Though these standards are not enforced by law, it has been used as a guide of good practice for the courts. Many play providers thus comply strictly with the extensive rules of the standard because they fear litigation. The main rules include a height restriction of 3m on all equipment and the use of soft surfacing such as rubber tiles, mats, wet-pour and loose-fills<sup>119</sup>.

Since these regulations were introduced, they have had little impact on reducing deaths and injuries. The number of fatal accidents that occurred on playgrounds has remained roughly one every three or four years for the past twenty years (a risk factor of around one in thirty million)<sup>120</sup>. In terms of hospital attendances by children, less than 2 per cent can be attributed to equipment in playgrounds. Likewise, only 40 per cent of non-fatal accidents that occur on playgrounds are due to playground equipment. Large numbers of accidents on playgrounds have little or nothing to do with fixed equipment.

The slavish following of these guidelines on playgrounds has also led to a decline in the number of playground facilities, a view which is confirmed by the Play Safety Forum.

Experiments in Freiburg and Stirling have shown how public playgrounds can have more capacity for natural play and can be more exciting. In Stirling, there is a deliberate avoidance of standard, prescriptive play park equipment in favour of mounds, dips, copses and wetland.<sup>121</sup> The use of natural materials and undulating surfaces aims to provide a stimulating landscape, where children can experience the irregularity of life, and develop the real skills and abilities to assess risk. It is impossible to imagine that there are many children who would prefer to play on the multicoloured monkey bars and small climbing frames over a rubber-matted floor than the exciting provision available in Stirling.

## Conclusion

A year ago, UNICEF produced powerful statistics that showed Britain is at the bottom of the league table for the well-being of children. Our Childhood Review was established to uncover the explanation that makes sense of these figures.

We have found that the general environment for children is too hostile. We are not blaming parents or teachers for this. Parents spend more time with their children than ever before. And many of the problems that children face start before they go to school and are beyond the influence of teachers.

This stage of our Childhood Review has focussed above all on public space. Parents have lost confidence in allowing their children outdoors, whether in playgrounds or on the street. We need to improve the public space in which children can flourish. Above all, this means better recording of crimes against children, more visible policing, improved support for neighbourhoods from street wardens, and the creation of child-friendly communities.

We also want Britain's children to be more resilient and streetwise. We need to give them practical advice, not just general warnings.

One of the most shocking pieces of evidence is the sharp rise in unhappiness amongst children. A tougher stance on bullying, which is depressingly common, would start to tackle this. We also need more activities that promote a mix of ages to work together – children spend too much time with others in the same year group, rather than with younger and older children. Time with the extended family is also very important for children's happiness, especially if parents have split up.

People of all ages benefit from having access to outdoor, extra-curricular activities. But if these are to be readily available to children, then teachers and other professionals need to feel they are trusted, and volunteering needs to be encouraged. We want to see greater protection, such as measures against mischievous litigation, for adults who organise worthwhile activities for children.

The well-being of the next generation is of vital importance to the future of our country. Above all, we need to make Britain's children safer, healthier and happier. This means giving them better public places, strengthening their social networks and improving their access to outdoor activities. Only then are we likely to move up from our dismal placing in the UNICEF league table.

Britain is the least family-friendly country in Europe. Our ambition is to make it the most family-friendly.

## Appendix

### *List of Independent Advisors*

#### NAME & DESCRIPTION

##### **Tim Gill**

Former director of Play England and author of “No Fear-Growing Up in a Risk-Averse Society”

##### **Sue Palmer**

Education Consultant and author of “Toxic Childhood: How modern life is damaging our children...and what we can do about it” and “Detoxing Childhood: What parents need to know to raise happy, successful children”

##### **Baroness Susan Greenfield**

Professor of Pharmacology at Oxford University and cross-bench peer

##### **Bob Reitemeier**

CEO of The Children’s Society

##### **Sir Richard Bowlby**

President of the Centre for Child Mental Health

##### **Lord Richard Best**

Former Director of Joseph Rowntree Foundation and cross-bench peer

### *List of Organisations consulted*

#### DESCRIPTION

Family and Children’s Services, Westminster Council  
Play England  
NSPCC  
Young Adult Trust  
Save the Children  
Montessori Centre International  
Daycare Trust  
Oxford Centre for Research into Parenting and Children  
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA)  
Health and Safety Commission  
The Children’s Society  
beatbullying  
Girl Guiding  
Bolton Lads & Girls Club  
Balsall Heath Forum  
4Children  
Manifesto Club  
Barnardo’s  
Kidscape  
Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)  
Campaign for Adventure  
Kennedys Law Firm  
UNICEF  
One Plus One  
Grandparents Association  
The Catholic Children’s Society  
Centre for Separated Families  
Family Rights Group  
Grandparents Plus  
National Association of Child Contact Centres  
Centre for Education and Employment Research,  
University of Buckingham  
Winston’s Wish

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