

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEPARTMENT

YOUTH AND PLAY SERVICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE – JANUARY 7TH 2008

PLAY CHAMPION REPORT

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents to the Youth & Play Service Advisory Committee (YAPSAC) the outline proposals for a Wirral Play Champion. YAPSAC is asked to approve the proposals for the nomination and election of a Wirral Play Champion.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 At the end of 2005, Government announced £155 million would be made available by the *Big Lottery Children's Play Fund* in England. It stated that successful access to this new money is dependent on local authorities demonstrating a strategic approach and partnership working, and that in terms of play services this should be demonstrated with the adoption of a local cross-cutting Play Strategy Implementation Plan.
- 2.2 The national guidance on the development of play strategies '*Planning for Play*' strongly recommends that each local authority identifies a Play Champion, to act as an advocate for the strategy in the Council's policy discussions and provide political leadership. This person should be in a position to ensure all departments support the process and should be a cabinet member or other senior elected member.

2.3 Local Progress

- 2.4 In October 2006, Play Strategy seminars entitled 'Developing a Play Policy and Strategy for Wirral' were held in different locations across the Wirral, attended by over 50 representatives from a cross-cutting section of statutory and voluntary agencies. This enabled participants to explore the ethos and underpinning values of play, identify barriers which limits children's access to play and raise issues which determine the provision of play. The seminars provided the basis for the formation of the Wirral Play Partnership.

- 2.5 The Wirral Play Partnership meets quarterly and is well supported. The terms of reference have been agreed and composition of the partnership includes representation from the local authority, the voluntary and community sector and the private sector.
- 2.6 The play partnership led on the development of the Wirral Play Strategy implementation plan and identified the portfolio of projects. This culminated in Wirral's bid for it's allocation of Big Lottery Children's Play funding totaling eight hundred and eighty one thousand, two hundred and eight pounds, and sixty-six (£881,208.66) over 3 years., submitted on 7th September 2007.

2.7 Play Champion

- 2.8 The Wirral Play Partnership, as an interim measure, nominated the Head of Participation and Inclusion, Play Champion, in order to support the play strategy development and Wirral's BIG Lottery bid.
- 2.9 To progress the appointment of a Play Champion, a sub- group met to investigate the different options available to the Partnership, in particular, how children and young people can be fully involved in the appointment process. The sub-group drafted a job description and person specification (see appendix A and B).
- 2.10 The role of the play champion has been considered further at the Youth & Play Service Advisory Committee (YAPSAC) on October 8th 2007. They asked for a report to be written and stipulated children and young people be involved in the recruitment and selection process and final appointment of the play champion.
- 2.11 The next step is the involvement of children and young people in the appointment of the Play Champion. Children would be also asked to consider the attributes of a Play Champion and what it means for them. The job description and person specification would be developed in to a final draft. The Play Partnership would take expressions of interest from potential candidates and children and young people would draw up a shortlist of those meeting the criteria. Short listed candidates would be asked to produce a short child friendly resume which would be presented appropriately to children and young people. They would be supported to work in partnership with adults to organise an election to be carried out in a child-friendly setting for children and young people. The children and young people's vote would decide the final outcome.

- 2.12 The Wirral Play Partnership will need to identify ways in which the Play Champion can be accountable to children and young people, for the duration of the appointment.
- 2.13 The Play Champion will work alongside Playwork Partnership to promote play friendly environments, raise the profile of play and be an advocate for children's play across Wirral. The post is voluntary with a minimum commitment of one year and will be subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check
- 2.14 Given the additional time required to support and embed the Play Strategy, the Committee may wish to consider having two Play champions, each one responsible for play development in two districts.

3.0 Financial and Staffing Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications.

4.0 Equal Opportunities Implications

- 4.1 Wirral's appointment of a Play Champion or Champions reflects inclusiveness and promotes equal opportunities and access.

5.0 Community Safety Implications

- 5.1 There are none arising from this report.

6.0 Local Agenda 21 Implications

- 6.1 There are none arising from this report

7.0 Planning Implications

- 7.1 There are none arising from this report.

8.0 Anti - poverty Implications

- 8.1 There are none arising from this report.

9.0 Social inclusion Implications

- 9.1 There are none arising from this report.

10.0 Local Member Support Implications

10.1 There are none arising from this report.

11.0 Background papers

11.1 Draft Job description (Appendix A)
Draft Person specification (Appendix B)

12.0 Recommendations

12.1 This report invites the Youth & Play Service Advisory Committee to approve the selection and appointment of a senior elected member or members as the Wirral Play Champion (s).

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services