



Playing Out

A Children's Commissioner's report on the importance to children of play and physical activity

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Contents

Foreword by Anne Longfield and Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson 2

Introduction..... 4

What Children Tell Us..... 7

Recommendations 10

Foreword

We all remember the long hot summers of our childhood with endless warm days playing out and having fun with our friends from dawn until dusk. There is, of course, a serious chance that our memory is getting the better of us and telling us what we want to remember rather than what actually happened.

That said, there can be no doubt that for children growing up in 2018 things have changed - a lot.

Today's children are the least active generation ever. Just 1 in 4 boys and 1 in 5 girls in England do the recommended 60 minutes of activity each day.¹ At the same time, figures from Ofcom tell us that children between the ages of 5 and 15 spend nearly 2 hours a day online during the week and nearly 3 hours a day at the weekend.² Playing out used to be a feature of every child's day, children now spend just four hours a week playing out.³ This is part of a wider trend. The area around the home where children are allowed to go unsupervised has shrunk by 90% since the 70s.⁴ And the problem now gets worse during school holidays. Research from ukactive suggests that children return to school in September less fit than when they broke up in July, with children from poorer areas worse affected.⁵

The fact of the matter is that busy lives, busy roads and fewer safe communal spaces have conspired to make what used to be a normal and spontaneous part of everyday life, an activity in itself - something requiring planning, scheduling and adult supervision. It also increasingly needs to be paid for.

It is not surprising then that some children feel that they are missing out. Children we spoke to felt that many of the good clubs and activities are out of their reach - too expensive or too far away from where they live. Others felt that there was little to do locally with play parks falling into disrepair or catering for a different age group. Some children are put off because they don't feel that the public areas and parks are safe. Some would like more adult supervision in public spaces, more lights and more security measures. It is clear that the concern about public safety is shared by children as well as their parents - something that current headlines about serious violence in our cities will only add to.

Against this backdrop, the screen can seem an irresistible way of occupying children – able to absorb them for hours on end in the complete safety of the home. Many children told us how they expected to spend most of the summer online playing games, while others said that they would be online chatting to their friends. We know that there are serious consequences of this increasingly sedentary childhood.

Play is important for children. Not only is it great fun but it also benefits their health and wellbeing. By playing, children try out new things, test themselves and learn new skills. Play is also a way of developing social and emotional skills: by playing with others children learn to share, take turns, negotiate and make friends – the exact opposite of the kind of worrying behaviour seen in violent gangs where supremacy, provocation and retaliation are all. Play fuels children's imagination, creativity and expression. Play therapists tell us how children explain and process the world around

¹ <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/publicationimport/pub22xxx/pub22610/hse2015-child-phy-act.pdf>

² 2017.pdf

² https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/108182/children-parents-media-use-attitudes-2017.pdf

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jul/27/children-spend-only-half-the-time-playing-outside-as-their-parents-did>

⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-17257562>

⁵ http://researchinstitute.ukactive.com/downloads/managed/Pre-print_-_Body_Mass_Index_and_Cardiorespiratory_Fitness_in_UK_Primary_....pdf

them through play - especially important for those children who have experienced serious trauma. Far from being an inconsequential time filler, it is clear that play helps children grow into the rounded, sociable and skilled people we all want them to be.

So how can we turn the tide and ensure that play time isn't consigned as an outmoded activity of the past, taking with it all its known benefits? How can we prevent it from being transformed simply into screen time, with children connecting and engaging with others only online, without the need for physical activity?

This paper has recommendations for national government, local councils, health trusts and for parents and children themselves. It precedes ukactive's second *Generation Inactive* report, which presents valuable evidence and solutions to get more children more active, more often.

Parks and public spaces that are accessible and safe mean that families have places they can get outside and spend time together. Activities for children and families in the park encourage more children to get out and get active. Local communities may be able to turn their street into a play zone for children - with the council's permission, blocking traffic on certain days. More schools can keep their doors open throughout the school holidays - opening up access to sports facilities, halls and arts rooms. We could spend bursaries such as the sugar tax as strategically as possible, by unlocking community assets in disadvantaged areas during school holidays rather than focusing just on school sports.

Councils and health trusts could do much more to make sure that children who receive free school meals during term time carry on getting access to the right nutritional intake and enriching activity during school holidays. And they could ensure that children in care are able to access the best opportunities to play and be active, so that they too can benefit from structure and activity outside of school.

Some of this will require additional funds but much can be achieved by using resources more creatively and effectively and bringing schools, sports clubs, councils and parents together to help children get active. We have the benefits of a vast workforce of coaches, youth workers, activity professionals, play workers, health mentors and community activators, all of whom can be our army in the fight against childhood inactivity – with greater co-ordination and some support.

We also need to help parents change their family's habits – not least in tackling the influence of social media, which can play an all-consuming role in many children's lives. Informing parents about the importance of play and activity, offering them advice, and supporting them to take simple steps to reduce children's reliance on technology and get them outside will make all the difference – not just to inactivity, but to the related challenges of mental ill health and obesity too.

There is so much to be gained by enabling children to play and be active. It's time for a joined-up approach to supporting children's health and wellbeing and a recognition that only by working together will we deliver the changes necessary to protect the health of future generations.

Anne Longfield and Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson

Introduction

Why play and physical activity is so important

Play and physical activity can play a vital role supporting children's well-being and development. Whether it is going down to the park with friends or family, playing in a sports team or attending a holiday club – being active delivers important benefits to children and young people. Evidence has linked play and physical activity to:⁶

- Improved mental health and wellbeing. Children who play are happier and more confident. They are better at dealing with stress and forming healthy attachments.
- Better physical health. Playing and being active supports children's physiological, cardiovascular and motor skills development. It is also crucial in enabling children to maintain a healthy weight – now, as children, and in the future, as adults.⁷
- Cognitive development. Play teaches children to use language effectively and solve problems. It also improves memory and concentration.
- Social development. Through play and physical activity, children learn how to negotiate, cooperate and see things from other people's points of view.

Furthermore, although the evidence base is not as developed, research suggests that children's play benefits the wider family and community too, through improved family wellbeing, reduced anti-social behaviour and vandalism, and even increased volunteering and social action.⁸

Recognising the importance of physical activity to child development, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) recommends that children and young people aged 5-18 years old should do at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. The government's Sporting Future strategy also emphasises the benefits of being active, and the need to promote activity in childhood in order to ensure people grow up to be active as adults.

What is the problem?

The benefits of play and physical activity to children are undeniable. Yet the proportion of children being active is extremely low. In 2015, just 1 in 4 (23%) boys and 1 in 5 (20%) girls aged 5-15 met the CMO's recommendation of 60 minutes of activity each day.⁹

Children who don't get the opportunity to play and to be active may be putting their social, emotional, intellectual and physical development at risk. The impact on mental health is particularly concerning given that children's mental health is reaching crisis point: it is the most frequently raised issue with the Children's Commissioner's Office and one in 10 children have a mental health disorder.¹⁰ A major

⁶ <http://www.playscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Play-Return-A-review-of-the-wider-impact-of-play-initiatives1.pdf>

⁷ <http://bjsm.bmj.com/content/45/11/866>

⁸ <http://www.playscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Play-Return-A-review-of-the-wider-impact-of-play-initiatives1.pdf>

⁹ <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/publicationimport/pub22xxx/pub22610/hse2015-child-phy-act.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Childrens-Commissioner-for-England-Mental-Health-Briefing-1.1.pdf>

study published later this year¹¹ is likely to show that the number of children with mental health conditions has increased even further.

Play is critical in helping children to process their emotions, live out their anxieties and build friendships and resilience.¹² The fact that play therapy is frequently used to treat children who have experienced complex trauma, such as violence and conflict in war zones, is testament to the power of play and its critical role in supporting mental health.

Children we speak to often link their anxiety and concerns to their use of social media, which can be all-consuming – and yet they rely on social media to pass the time given a lack of opportunities to engage with more stimulating activities. The latest figures from Ofcom show that children aged 5 to 15 spend an average of nearly 2 hours a day online during the week, and nearly 3 hours a day at the weekend.¹³ And some children are online for much longer: over 150,000 children aged 12 to 15 spend over eight hours a day online at the weekend.¹⁴

Children's social skills are also honed through play. Equipping children with the skills to negotiate and draw boundaries, e.g. through role play, may help prevent unhelpful peer relationships from forming, such as those in gangs.

Girls are at particular risk of inactivity: boys aged 8-15 spend on average 40 minutes per day on sports activities compared with just 25 minutes per day for girls.¹⁵ Furthermore, only one in five parents of a child with a disability or long-term health condition report their child belonging to a sports club.¹⁶ And the bad news is that it doesn't get better as children grow up – inactivity increases with age. In 2015, 5% of girls and boys aged 2-4 were sedentary for 6 hours or more per day on weekdays, compared to 18% of boys aged 13-15 and 23% of girls aged 13-15.¹⁷

The Government committed £2 million to enable disadvantaged children to take part in enriching activities over this year's summer holidays and to provide them with healthy meals. Investment like this is much needed. Recent research from ukactive has shown that children are less active during the summer holidays than they are at school. After six weeks of being free of their desks, we should see children returning to school in September fitter and healthier than when they left in July – but the opposite is true, with 9-10 year olds returning to school in September less fit than when they left in the summer. Most concerning is that the effect is most pronounced for pupils from deprived areas.¹⁸

Holiday Hunger

Many children face a double-whammy during the summer: lack of activity and lack of proper food. There are an estimated 1.8 million children in England experiencing some level of food poverty, 1.1

¹¹ <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/areas-of-interest/public-health/national-study-of-health-and-wellbeing-children-and-young-people>

¹² [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642\(17\)30092-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642(17)30092-5/fulltext)

¹³ https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/108182/children-parents-media-use-attitudes-2017.pdf

¹⁴ https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/108182/children-parents-media-use-attitudes-2017.pdf

¹⁵ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/childrensengagementwiththeoutdoorsandsportsactivitiesuk/2014to2015#children-spent-68-minutes-of-their-leisure-time-per-day-on-average-engaging-in-an-outdoors-activity-sports-related-activity-or-actively-travelling>

¹⁶ <https://www.variety.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/downloads/level-playing-field-report.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://healthsurvey.hscic.gov.uk/media/37752/hse2015-child-phy-act.pdf>

¹⁸ http://researchinstitute.ukactive.com/downloads/managed/Pre-print_-_Body_Mass_Index_and_Cardiorespiratory_Fitness_in_UK_Primary_....pdf

million of whom rely on free school meals during the school term,¹⁹ but for whom parents have to provide meals during the holidays. A report from the APPG on hunger estimates that the loss of free school meals adds up to £40 per week to parents' outgoings.²⁰ The report highlights the experiences of children who either go without food, or rely on cheap, unhealthy junk food during the holidays. This is supported by research from the Trussell Trust which highlights surges in demand for emergency food parcels during school holidays as families struggle to provide regular meals for their children during the 170 days a year that children are out of school.²¹

For these children, their health is being compromised both by their lack of activity and poor nutrition, and in some cases even malnutrition, leading to a whole range of poor health outcomes which will often affect their immediate wellbeing and long-term prospects.²² But when parents are struggling to put meals on the table, it is not a surprise that play and holiday activities are often seen as an unaffordable luxury.

¹⁹ <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Summary-Table-Annex-1-to-Vulnerability-2018-Overview-Report.pdf>

²⁰ <https://feedingbritain.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/hungry-holidays.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/aug/03/food-banks-appeal-for-help-to-feed-children-during-school-holidays>

²² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/718903/childhood-obesity-a-plan-for-action-chapter-2.pdf (p6)

What Children Tell Us

We asked children how they spend their time outside school and during the school holidays. This is what they told us.

Overall, our conversations suggested that preoccupation with technology, the need for parental supervision to go outside and a lack of quality facilities prevented children from being active. Holiday, sports and play clubs are effective antidotes, but many children told us they were too expensive – especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This leaves children with little to do outside of school or over the school holidays.

What is there to do in your local area?

There are things to do in their local areas, but cost can be a problem and often the activities are of poor quality. All of the children we spoke to were able to name facilities in their local area where they could, in principle, play and be active, including parks, playgrounds and sport centres. However, experiences of these facilities were mixed. Furthermore some children were unable to access some of the facilities due to cost.

“There isn’t enough variety.”

“Some of the fun stuff to do is expensive and I can’t always afford it”

Parks were frequently mentioned as a place children could go to get outside and be active – especially for younger children. Children were positive about the fact they could go to the park for free, but mentioned lots of things which put them off from doing so. In particular, there were concerns about safety, which meant children often couldn’t go without a parent:

“I don’t like going to parks if the toilets are dirty or if they don’t have any.”

“There should be more things for older kids as they always go in the playgrounds and take over.”

“I would go to the park but a lot of the equipment is broken, is old, [sports] cages are often full.”

There are lots of great activities on offer, but these are expensive and often inaccessible. Some children attended after school clubs which they enjoyed, including swimming, gymnastics, football, Brownies and boxing. But other children did not attend these clubs for a variety of reasons.

“There are age restrictions on clubs and there are less for older children to do.”

“I can’t afford to pay for the clubs so I wish there were some free ones.”

“My friends stopped doing clubs so I stopped.”

“I’m too busy in year 6, there is too much to do and I am tired.”

How do you spend your free time?

Tiredness, needing to study and – most importantly – social media and technology prevents many children from getting outside and being active. Most children told us that they spent most of their spare time using technology – particularly social media.

“I play with friends online.”

“I prefer to be on my own playing tech.”

“I play Fortnite every day.”

Children suggested that there were more opportunities to play outside in the school holidays than in the evenings and weekends – there was more free time in the day and they had more energy. However, the fact that friends often went away in the school holidays meant that many children did not want to make use of the opportunity. Indeed, being unable to see friends in person often led children to spend even more time online in order to stay connected to them. Family members were key to getting children active – without friends or family to play with, children stayed inside.

“Friends make the park fun but they are often away in the summer.”

“Sometimes I feel lonely in the holidays as I’m used to seeing my friends [in school], but I can play online with them.”

“Friends come over and we go out more.”

“I feel good as I play with my little sister.”

Holiday clubs, play facilities and sports clubs all offer children the opportunity to socialise and take part in a variety of activities. The children we spoke with at holiday clubs were positive about the experience. Children told us about how they enjoyed the activities and the chance to make and be with friends.

Although children were positive about their experience, when asked whether there is anything they would prefer to be doing, the answer was often playing on social media.

What would help you and other children to play outside more and be active?

When asked about how they would spend their free time in an ideal world, nearly all of the primary school-aged children we spoke to focused on better park facilities.

“I would go to a skate or bike park if they had one.”

“I want an indoor park or maybe a trampoline park.”

Improving parks was also a frequent response when we asked children directly what could be done to encourage them to be more active.

“Have a sports area or cage, maybe more than one.”

“Have more equipment for children.”

“Have more interactive stuff in parks.”

Some of children thought that more should be done to highlight the benefits of going outside in order to persuade more children to be active.

“Do adverts on Fortnite about why it’s bad to sit down too much.”

“Put adverts about obesity around the place.”

Addressing safety concerns would help some children to be more active. It emerged that worries about safety prevented some children from playing in certain areas, especially parks.

“Sometimes I don’t go to the park because I’m worried.”

“Sometimes I don’t play out as you can’t see my house from the park.”

“I get worried when I see big groups of kids if they are being silly.”

Children suggested a number of way to help them feel safe when using parks.

“One of the parks is okay as there is a low fence all around it so you can see out.”

“There should be more adults working there.”

“They need more lights.”

“Maybe, if there was an alarm you could press or a phone.”

“Put cameras up and CCTV.”

Recommendations to help children become more active

Increasing children's play and physical activity would have a range of physical and emotional benefits. This paper makes the following recommendations to Government and local areas.

Government

Recognise the importance of play and activity for children's physical and mental health.

- 1) Put out of school activity at the heart of the plan to reduce obesity

The Government's high profile obesity action plan, which aims to halve childhood obesity by 2030, focuses almost exclusively on nutrition, advertising and in-school physical activity. But we know that being active is just as important as diet when it comes to maintaining a healthy weight, and that the need to be active does not end at the school gates. The sugar tax levied for the first time in April is expected to raise £240m per year, with the funds being used to improve school sports provision, playgrounds, kitchen and dining facilities. Some of the proceeds should instead be used to promote play and activity outside of school, along with making healthy meals available to children during these times so that they have the energy and strength to take part.

Holiday Playschemes

Holiday playschemes are vital in keeping children active and entertained over the summer holidays, while providing affordable childcare for working parents and meals for children who would rely on free school meals during term time. In many disadvantaged areas, they have become much rarer as funding has declined. Yet there are a whole range of providers of great holiday clubs across the country. For example, the Trussell Trust runs holiday clubs providing both breakfast and lunch as well as a range of activities for families who often rely on their services. This summer Sainsbury's is partnering with ukactive and holiday camp provider Premier to run multi-activity holiday clubs. For £7.50 per day, children aged 5-15 years old in over 20 schools across the UK will be able to participate in a variety of activities including sports, active play and arts and crafts, ensuring appeal for as many children as possible – including those who might not enjoy school sports. Children will also enjoy a healthy lunch as part of the daily cost. If there is evidence of it being a success, it is hoped that the scheme will be expanded to reach more children and parents next year. Demand for consistent, fun and safe programmes for children at times that enable parents to work remains strong, and it is vital that as many children and families as possible can access it.

- 2) Focus on play and activity in response to other challenges faced by children, including mental health and technology use.

The benefits of play and activity are often overlooked by policymakers. For example, physical activity is barely mentioned in the Government's green paper on Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health, with no measures included to specifically address activity as a key determinant of mental health. And while the Internet Safety Strategy green paper recognises the need to advise parents about minimising screen time, it does not recognise the need to offer alternative ways for

children to spend their time. Enabling children to play and be active needs to be brought back into the equation across all areas of children's policy.

- 3) Reduce the bureaucracy in getting financial help for childcare after school and during school holidays

Holiday and out of school clubs provide important opportunities for children to play, be active and spend positive time with friends. They offer important physical health benefits, boost mental health and improve children's social skills, while also providing childcare for parents. But these schemes are often expensive, and we have heard that getting financial help can be complicated. Many schemes are reliant on childcare vouchers (which will cease in October) or tax-free childcare, the take-up of which has been extremely low – 90% lower than initially expected, according to figures released by HMRC in March 2018.²³ This also means that these schemes are rarely used by disadvantaged children – those least likely to be active.

- 4) Fund holiday play schemes in disadvantaged areas

The Government has committed £2 million to support voluntary organisations providing enrichment activities and healthy meals over this year's summer holiday.²⁴ Given the very low take-up of tax-free childcare for school holiday provision to date, the Treasury should consider direct grants to holiday and out-of-school play schemes, to help the most disadvantaged parents get access to childcare.

OnSide Youth Zones

OnSide Youth Zones are spaces where young people aged 8-19 (or up to 25 for those with a disability) can spend time with friends, enjoy a meal and take part in activities such as football, rock climbing, gym and dance. Existing Youth Zones are situated in areas of relatively high deprivation where cost may be a barrier for many young people who want to participate in activities, but at just 50p per visit or £5 for annual membership, attending a Youth Zone is a much more affordable option.

Many features of OnSide Youth Zones are consistent with what children told us would help them to be active: the variety of activities on offer, separate opening times for younger and older children and the drop-in nature of the facilities.

Each Zone is funded by a mixture of public and private funding. 40% of the annual running costs for a start up zone are met by the local authority, but an evaluation has shown that the return on the local authority's investment is £6.66 for every £1 spent, with savings associated with improved health and wellbeing, reduced crime and anti-social behaviour and improved school attendance. (source: <http://www.socialvalueuk.org/app/uploads/2016/03/OnSide-Defining-the-Impact-of-a-Youth-Zone-Final-with-exec-summary-M....pdf>)

- 5) Make children's play and physical activity a public health priority

This means NHS England and Public Health England should:

- Expand the use of Play on Prescription across the country.

²³ <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/treasury/Memorandum-HMRC-Supplementary-Estimate.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-holiday-activities-and-meals-for-disadvantaged-families>

- Encourage early healthy habits by funding activities to help pre-school get active and stay active.
- Help parents to understand the importance of play and activity by providing information and advice following the birth of their child, along with information on breastfeeding.
- Encourage active play sessions in children’s centres and play networks of parents.
- Help parents to develop strategies and techniques to enable the family to turn screens off, get out and be active.

Local areas

- 1) Think strategically about how to promote play, and work with local venues to maximise the use of existing facilities.

Given its importance to health and wellbeing, play provision should be strategically planned as part of each area’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). Local authorities should also identify existing facilities which could be opened up for wider use by children use – sports halls, fields and other facilities in leisure centres and schools too often stand empty, particularly in the school holidays. Local authorities should begin conversations with these venues to identify ways of enabling children to make use of them for free, or at a minimal cost.

Local areas must also ensure that adequate space for children to play is factored into new residential developments, to enable children to get outside in a safe space next to their home – especially young children who cannot go away from home unsupervised.

- 2) Focus on making parks and other areas a safe, child-friendly space.

Investment is needed to ensure that parks and playgrounds are properly maintained and safe environments. It would make a big difference if broken equipment was repaired more quickly and if there was a police officer or community warden on duty at all times in each park. Local areas could also work with parents and communities to open up areas closer to home. For example, street play initiatives, in which streets are temporarily pedestrianised for an hour or two per week, are growing in popularity, but are less common in disadvantaged areas. Local areas and voluntary organisations could provide greater support to parents in these areas to set up schemes.

Play Zones

When it comes to encouraging play, some areas are taking matters into their own hands by applying to the local council for their street to be temporarily pedestrianised for a few hours every week. Street play zones are a growing phenomenon, but they are less common in disadvantaged areas – organising a street play session is much more challenging in areas with difficult traffic conditions and street layouts, and parents with less time or ability to navigate their local authority’s application procedures. However research has suggested that these challenges can be overcome by local authorities and voluntary organisations playing a more proactive and supportive role in arranging the sessions.

(source: <http://www.playengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/StreetPlayReport2web.pdf>)

Making parks and spaces child-friendly: Play Torbay's Bay Play Schemes

Play Torbay is a small charity which runs play projects and eco schemes across the area.

Play Rangers work in parks, playgrounds and open spaces across Torbay to run free activity sessions for children and families. The sessions are highly inclusive: they are free to attend and there is always a range of activities on offer, including outdoor cooking, nature trails and creative art. All children are welcome.

GPs are increasingly making referrals to the play schemes for children who are anxious or having trouble as part of a 'Play on Prescription' approach. The schemes are also increasingly working with families to provide trusted support, encouragement and activities to socialise, take part in activities and develop positive parenting approaches to help their children develop skills and build in confidence.

3) Fund holiday and out of school activities for every looked after child.

All children can benefit from the sense of structure and opportunities to socialise offered by out of school activities and holiday provision. But there is a great deal of inconsistency in how local authorities approach funding these activities for looked after children, leaving many children unable to access them. Some provide specific funding for this, others do not. Some put the onus on foster carers to ask for it, others proactively fund providers to put aside places for looked after children. In order to ensure that children in care can access this vital provision, all local authorities should provide funding directly to providers and publicise holiday clubs to foster carers.

Parents

Amongst seemingly endless advice to parents about what children should and should not be doing, and how best to keep children safe, it is vital that we never lose sight of the importance of keeping children active. The benefits of simple activities like playing in the park can be as important to children as what they eat. While there is lots for policymakers to do to make many activities more accessible, what children told us is that it is often the simple things – like going to the park – they enjoy the most.

And for those parents struggling to reduce their children's screen time, smartphones and tablets can even be your allies in getting children to do more physical activities! There are now a range of child-centred apps to help encourage children to do more. For example, Change4Life have produced a Star Wars-themed play-along set of videos and games called "Train Like A Jedi" and a series of Disney-themed "10 Minute Shake Ups" which may grab children's attention.

The Children's Commissioner has also produced a Digital 5 A Day Guide, which gives tips to parents on how to help children use their time online productively and put screens down and get active.



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