

IPA England calls for Covid-19 Clarity for Children.

The International Play Association England branch (IPA England) is calling on the government to give consideration to children's play and provide clear guidance for the public and professionals to follow. As the leading organisation for children's right to play in England, we advocate that the government consider all children's rights equally, but emphasise the importance of the child's right to play, Article 31 (and the supporting General Comment 17) of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child's. This should be a priority for any post Covid-19 strategy to support children and young people to thrive during this traumatic period.

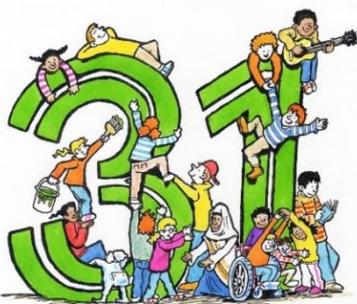


Children's Rights have consistently been forgotten in the decision making process during the response to Covid-19. Where they have been considered it has been solely in the context of education and returning parents to work. Consideration needs to be given to children's physical, social, emotional, and mental wellbeing within the context of their rights.

IPA England understands the magnitude of the challenge the government is facing post Covid-19. However there is a need for clarity about when we will see the opening of children's outdoor play spaces, after school clubs, adventure playgrounds and youth facilities. We ask the government to consider the current research- albeit limited- regarding children's role in the spread of the coronavirus, and to responsibly share this knowledge, in a clear and accessible way, with the public so they are able to make informed decisions regarding their children's play outside. There should be a balanced approach to any guidance, weighing the risks to the spread and control of the virus, with the risks posed to children with the current lockdown conditions and the benefits of improving conditions for children to socialise and exercise together.

We urge the government not to follow some of the examples we have seen recently, where children have been expected to remain at their desks throughout the school day, or separated by painted lines on the playground. It is also important that children should be able to, where possible, return to the same class with their peers and consistent adults. Play should be at the top of the curriculum agenda for the foreseeable future, as it is through play that children overcome adversity, learn resilience and make sense of the world around them. This should be the case for all children regardless of age or stage of education.

Finally we ask the government to consider longer term plans for children and young people's play, particularly with regard to the public realm. Traffic controls, pedestrianisation, promotion of independent mobility and street closures will all help to support children to play in public spaces. Further consideration should be given to play within the curriculum for children of all ages, and to space and time for children to play throughout the school day. Opportunities and the freedom to play, such as Play Ranging, Adventure Playgrounds, Holiday Playschemes, Play Streets and After School Clubs supported by qualified Playworkers should be consistently available as a service to support all children, particularly the most vulnerable, to overcome adverse experiences they have faced during the Covid-19 outbreak and to flourish.



IPA England aims to uphold the right of all children and young people to time, freedom and space to play in their own way by:

- Promoting the premise that playing is a universal behaviour
 - that the benefits to children and young people achieving their right to play are shared by all races and people around the world
- Fostering and facilitating evidence gathering and exchange (beyond and between international borders):
 - to inform, invigorate, critique and enhance research, policy and practice relating to play, environments for play and playwork
 - recognising that international professional networking and relationship building encourages mutual support and promotes understanding

Please reply to: info@ipaengland.org www.ipaengland.com Charity No: 1094980