

# PLAY DAY

Give us a go! special edition

play  
today



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# Editorial



Hi, and welcome to this section of *PlayToday* that is specially dedicated to this year's Playday. Written and designed by a team of young people from Headliners (check us out below) it'll fill you in on what was happening all over the country on 6 August this year.

After hours of redesigning the layout, we hope you're happy with what we've finally achieved. For content, we got a bit stuck as most of us had never been to a Playday event so in the interests of research (and to embrace our inner 10-year-old selves) we went to Whitehorse Adventure Playground in Tower Hamlets to see what they had planned for this year.

Playday was also popular with the MPs and Welsh Assembly members, who happily spent a day reminiscing their childhood. See the interviews with Dawn Primarolo and Rhodri Morgan to find out what they used to get up to as kids and if they think children get a fair chance to be adventurous now.

This year's theme *Give us a go!* explored risks and challenges. Lots of Playday events certainly indulged in this theme and welcomed the opportunity to test out some risky play (rock climbing was a popular choice and the pictures of the custard paddling pool aren't to be missed).

Often children don't get the opportunity to be involved in risky play, such as climbing trees and playing down their street as adults are being more cautious for their children's safety. But sometimes this is taken too far and we reach what we call the 'cotton wool' culture where adults are so protective that their child's opportunities to play are limited. We understand adults' natural desire to ensure the safety of children, but it's equally important that children learn to take risks, push the boundaries and learn from their mistakes.

We hope you enjoy this supplement.

The Headliners team!

This Playday supplement has been produced by reporters from Headliners, an organisation working with young people aged between 8 and 19. We promote young people's voices through our national news agency run for and by children.

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Front cover image: Albion Kids Show at Hackney Downs Playday/Alan Finlay.  
Cutouts from Bristol Playday College Green.



## Playday: biggest and best ever!

Over 550 Playday events took place across the UK, making this year's celebration the biggest on record!

This year's theme, *Give us a go!*, explored the benefits and challenges of enabling children to manage their own risks whilst playing. Research commissioned for Playday found that children are facing serious restrictions to their opportunities for adventurous play – to view some of the results of the survey and read some of the research highlights, go to page 6 of this supplement.

Playday, the annual celebration of children's right to play has been running for 21 years and continues to grow. The campaign is an important tool for highlighting issues affecting children's opportunities to play. This year's campaign certainly got people talking – and generated more media coverage than ever. Visit the Playday website for campaign related news items.

Play England would like to thank everyone who got involved – the success of Playday 2008 is down to you. Special thanks to Playday organisers and young reporters across the UK, and our campaign partners Play Wales, Play Scotland and PlayBoard Northern Ireland. We're grateful for wide-ranging campaign support; from cross-government, national organisations and also from our funders, the Big Lottery Fund and Persil. Persil's support enabled us to fund materials for event organisers, and generated extensive media coverage. Playday also featured on Persil's national television and cinema advert. Finally a huge thank you to our young editors from Headliners for putting this supplement together – we think you've done a great job.

For more information about Playday and to get involved in the 2009 campaign, go to:

[www.playday.org.uk](http://www.playday.org.uk)

## 60 second interview

**At Bristol Playday, Dawn Primarolo, Minister of State for Public Health was interviewed by Jessica Jones and Amy Colgan.**

### How did you play when you were a child?

DP: I grew up in Crawley in Sussex. In those days there was much less traffic on the roads so all the children on my street used to play together. We used to play hop-scotch, marbles, skipping; allsorts really. In the summer, we used to walk over to the woods and make dens and play hide and seek.

### Why do you think play is so important?

DP: Play is fun, so if children have lots of opportunities to play they are more likely to have a happy childhood. Play also gives children a chance to explore the world around them and it gives children a chance to become more independent and more creative. I think it's great that this year's Playday is about risk because risky play helps children find out about safety by understanding what risks are, while adding to their bank of experience.

### Why do you think that some children are prevented from playing?

DP: I think parents worry a lot more than they have before about

their children's safety and feel they need to supervise or keep their children indoors away from harm. Although I understand this, it's a shame because children have less chance of adventurous play.

### What can government do to make sure children aren't prevented from being able to play?

DP: I think children need more places to play, public play space that is exciting as well as safe. So we need to ensure children are safe from bullying, crime and traffic on the streets and also on routes to parks or other play areas. There are so many factors that affect play it is important that communities and agencies work together to ensure play is promoted.



## Playday in Cardiff

**Joe Rowley (age 13) and Trystan Hardy (age 13) quizzed Welsh First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, on this year's Playday theme *Give us a go!***

After toasting too many marshmallows on the fire – we asked the First Minister what he thought about risky and adventurous play – this is what he said:

Rhodri thought the theme was a good idea as children today don't do the same sorts of things that he did when he was younger.



He said that he used to go out straight after breakfast and not come home again until teatime. He told me a story about making and playing with catapults when he was younger, explaining that when people did get hurt, it helped them to learn about the outdoors and learn their own limits.

# Playday



## Junior reporters

**PlayToday enlisted the help of a team of young reporters to find out what happened across the UK on Playday, here is what they told us.**

### **Birmingham: Centenary Square**

Centenary Square was overcome with paint splattered children, custard pools and funky music. The square was buzzing with hoards of people eager to join in and get their hands dirty. With cardboard cities, circus tricks and games including giant Jenga and Connect Four, children were guaranteed to love every minute. Local radio station, BRMB, and Weapons of Sound, a drumming company, who use recycled materials, were also there.

The children seemed to revel in pushing the boundaries of what would normally be an average day in the summer holidays. When asked what the best aspects of the day were, the responses included 'being messy' and 'having space to go wild'. Many were also astounded with the sheer size of the play area. On the other hand, parents took comfort in having a closed, secure space for their children to play freely. An event on this scale, the fun and vibrant atmosphere left everyone awestruck. The range of activities



combined with the carefree attitude of the children and the fun loving, helpful nature of the volunteers made the day one that will not be forgotten easily.

By: Maryam Patwa and  
Grace Ollivent

### **Hove: Hangleton Park**

We had lots of activities, including a climbing wall (pictured right), giant games, team games, face painting, craft activities, raffles, community stalls, a fire engine, police, bouncy castle, toddler play area and refreshments. Approximately 300 people turned up and it was very busy all afternoon.

By: Imogen Giles (age 9)

### **Somerset**

There were lots of people at our Playday event, about 1500 children came to enjoy the activities. Adults and many of the children enjoyed building the rope bridge and going across it. Another popular activity was the straw with children and adults playing together. Some children groomed and petted the donkeys. In the forest school area the children made a big den with seats. They were able to come back during the day and add things to it. Everyone had enjoyed Playday and they couldn't believe it was free!

By: Becky and Dani (age 12)



### **Newark**

Outside there were six huge trampolines that you were allowed to go on for free. There were also space hoppers, boat making, giant Jenga, a mud pit, craft stalls and much more to get your teeth stuck into. Half way through the day everyone got soaking but no one complained and it didn't dampen people's spirits.

By: Brogan Edwards (age 11)



### Grimsby

Five Grimsby clubs joined together bringing different activities for all the children to play on. Everyone sat together to eat lunch and all had a great time. It was nice for the children to meet others and work together with children from different clubs. All of the children enjoyed themselves; it was success!

By: Mollie Francis, age 13

### Tameside: Stamford Park

There were loads of stalls and activities for lots of different age groups. There was early years play for the under fives, trampolines, a cricket area, boating lake and a climbing wall. Tameside Radio were there too with a big stage to entertain people. Lots of children had their faces painted and looked like they were having a really good day. I can't remember ever having anything like this in Stamford Park before – it was great - especially as it was all free!

By: Tom Reed (age 14)



### Manchester: Hulme

I went to the adventure playground for Playday in Hulme. I have never been to Playday before and it was really good; there were about 100 people there. There was lots to do. They had a bouncy castle, junk modelling, den building, face painting, a water slide as well as the structures from the playground. It was ace. The workers from the adventure playground, Parktastic and volunteers were very helpful, we even had the local police community support officer in goal for the penalty shoot out.

By: Sophie (age 10)



### Swansea

On Playday I visited a few events in the Swansea area. It was a great day at Penlan Youth Centre. The kids were beaming and their parents enjoying themselves. We then went to Clase where there was another Playday event. There was a lot to do and everyone was having a great time – at all times the morale stayed on an absolute high.

By: Alex Clarke (age 15)

# Playday research

## What we found out!

**Headliners' Chika and Tajha decided to investigate this year's Playday research to support the campaign theme *Give us a go!* which aims to highlight that children need opportunities to experience more adventurous and challenging forms of play as a way to counteract the apparent 'cotton wool culture'. This research explores the positive effects and challenges that enable children to manage their own risks whilst playing.**

### Encouraging risky play is better than avoiding it

Children's emotional and social development can benefit from play that exposes them to risk and challenges, but due to the overprotective nature of some adults today, play is more focused on avoiding risks.

An opinion poll conducted for Playday found that 42 per cent of children aged between 7 and 12 are not allowed to play in their local park without an adult present.

Adults feel their presence is needed to caution children on how to avoid dangerous play. This is not necessarily required as children seek out and enjoy 'scary' risk taking opportunities allowing them to extend their physical competence and exert their independence. Statistics show that children are cautioned away from risky play at a young age, this may result in children having a lack of risk assessment skills as they get older.

#### Percentage of children aged between 7 and 12 who have been stopped from playing the following games because they are considered too dangerous

Climb a tree	49%
Play conkers	21%
Chase	17%
British bulldog	32%

### Risk has little to do with danger

There seems to be a strong contrast between a child's actual safety and the sometimes exaggerated concerns about potential risks. Actual danger is very different from what parents and the public perceive to be risky. This might be due to media coverage that tends to focus mainly on what might go wrong, with little regard as to how hazardous or likely the outcome might be.

Research indicates that adults believe that children are more at risk now than they were 25 years ago. Adults also feel that their children are at greater risk in public spaces than when they are at home -

however the opposite is true on both accounts. When surveyed, adults said they enjoyed numerous types of adventurous play during their childhood such as bike riding, skateboarding and also exploring nature environments in new and unfamiliar surroundings. Seventy per cent of these adults said that they enjoyed outdoor activities and natural spaces, for example in woodlands, going outside and climbing trees, whereas in the children's survey only 29 per cent said that they experience adventurous play in outdoor natural environments.

Children today are deprived from managing their own risks:

- It's interesting how half of the children surveyed had been stopped from climbing trees as it's considered too dangerous.
- A third of children are not allowed to bike ride to a friend's house without an adult being present.



## Junior reporters: continued

### Brentford Big Picnic

Once again, children from Brentford celebrated Playday with a massive picnic and activities in the local recreation ground. Some of these activities included African drumming and dancing, rock climbing, arts and crafts and juggling. We saw some fantastic drumming and dancing. One of the drummers was doing some really cool stunts like balancing three plates at once whilst doing gymnastics!

By: Mouch, Anya and Ciara



### Leicester: Town Hall Square

The event was alive with fun, laughter and excitement. The attractions included circus skills, water slide, den building, fishing in the fountain, rock climbing and street drawing. Dean (age 11), said: 'The best thing I liked was the water slide it was lots of fun. I went on the climbing wall that was fun too. I normally play at my local park with my friends. My grandad has brought me today and I think that it is cool.' We had fun ourselves and got to have a go on everything too.

By: Chris (age 12), Roani, Millie and Elliot (age 8), Destiny and Ethan (age 9).

### Portchester

It was a free family event for local residents in Portchester. Activities included bouncy castle, football skills, arts and crafts, face painting, sandplay and human table top football on the fore shore. At the event local Cllr David Norris said he felt there were more restrictions for children now than when he was young, due to more traffic on the roads and parents not wanting to annoy other adults who may think the children aren't being properly supervised. Everyone we saw really enjoyed the day, and we did too.

By: Ellie Howden (age 12), and friends  
(picture: Alice, Ellie, Katy and Annabelle)



### Plymouth Hoe

Kathryn: On Plymouth Hoe, the bouncy castle and the rock climbing were the most popular activities; they both had long queues all day.

Nick: I think it was nice for the children to have a chance to try new activities like the climbing wall and fire lighting. The children who did the junk modelling were proud to pose with their creations and it was fun to photograph some of the organisers on the bouncy slide.

By: Kathryn Anderson (age 11) and  
Nick Anderson (age 13).

### Hull

Playday was brilliant. The best part was the bikes. There were different types, for example, bikes that you had to peddle backwards, bikes that go up and down as you go along, and there was a bike able to carry about six people that was shaped in a circle, it went round and forward at the same time. There was a large paddling pool filled with custard. When I put my feet into the custard I sank down to the bottom, but when I tried to get my feet out I couldn't. I pulled and pulled and finally my feet came out with lots of gooey custard, which was solid at first, then dripped off my hands. I really enjoyed it.

By: Pheobe and Joel, (age 11)



# Is risky play really that risky, or is it a smart move?

Headliners' reporter Kamil, age 13, investigates



In today's society adults are increasingly worried about the dangers children may encounter when they go out to play, such as not coming home for hours, crossing the roads without getting knocked down and who they are mixing with. However, there are some good things about play, especially play that allows for risk and challenge, giving you the chance to learn from your mistakes, find your limits and explore the area around you.

This year's Playday promoted risk and challenge in play. We went to Whitehorse Adventure Playground in Tower Hamlets on Playday to find out what young people and parents thought about this year's theme.

A 14-year-old there explained some of the dangers and fears adults have for their children when they are playing: 'Some people might slip on the slides and break a bone or something.'

Jason, age six, and his brother, age nine, said: 'Some people are bad and might kidnap you.'

These are obvious dangers, but Bob Hughes, who was from a research project on play deprivation, thought that not taking part in challenging play can actually be more dangerous: 'Play isn't dangerous but it's essential for children to take risks and that's part of what play is about. The problem is that the modern environment is dangerous because children don't know about cars, electricity, gas bottles and all that kind of thing, so they risk themselves a lot.'

'One of the valuable things about Whitehorse Adventure Playground is that children can take risks but aren't endangering their lives. What happens is if children don't come to places like this they don't learn to risk assess and that means that when they go out into the real world they don't know what risk is and they don't know how to assess it.'

Another advantage is making new friends and catching up with old ones. Jason and his brother agreed: 'Playing is a way of spending more time with friends, if you've just made a new friend then you can get to know more about that person.'

If we want children to take part in risky play we need to have more safe and clean areas like the

Whitehorse Adventure Playground. Bob said there were four play areas in Tower Hamlets like it, but there needs to be better access to them, because there have been times when Jason and his brother have walked passed them and they have been closed. The brothers think young people need more things to do:

'They could put a basketball court, tennis court and football area in more places so more kids would come and play and enjoy risky play.'



**This story was produced by Kamil Boriel (age 13), from Headliners, a journalism programme for young people aged between 8 and 19 years. [www.headliners.org](http://www.headliners.org)**



Go-karts at Whitehorse were a big hit. Above: Bob Hughes



## What's your adventure? Competition winner!

Congratulations to Elizabeth Watts, age 10, whose entry was selected in this year's prize draw to win a digital camera. Elizabeth's highly imaginative risky adventure involves her being 'stuck in syrup, whilst her toes are being eaten by snakes', and as if this wasn't bad enough she is also being scared by a big roaring bear!

Thanks to everyone who submitted a drawing. All entries will be on the Playday website soon. [www.playday.org.uk](http://www.playday.org.uk)