THE NATIONAL

PLAY

CONFERENCE 2026

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KOMPAN

Creating the Conditions for Play

Friday 9 October 2026 | The Slate, University of Warwick

MORNING PROGRAMME / 08:00 - 13:30

From 08:00 / Delegate registration, refreshments & exhibition

09:00 - 09:30

Welcome: Creating the Conditions for Play

Host: Amber Ogunsanya-William

Dr Kathryn Severn, Chair, SAPCA

Euan Wilmshurst, Vice Chair, Play England

Child's voice keynote: Why play matters

09:30 - 10:00

Keynote: A national moment for play: what should England do next?

Tom Hayes MP, Chair, APPG on Play

10:00 - 10:30

Creating the conditions for the right to play: Space, Time, Acceptance and Rights

Dr Naomi Lott - Lecturer in Law, University of Reading and Associate Fellow, Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, University of Oxford.

Child's Voice: Poem about play

10:30 - 11:00 / Interval & exhibition

11:00 - 11:45

Planning for play sufficiency: evidence, policy and investment

Dr Michael Martin, Director of Urban Design & Planning, University of Sheffield & Dr Paul Brindley, Senior Lecturer in Landscape Architecture, School of Geography & Planning, University of Sheffield

Gemma Hyde, Projects & Policy Manager, Town & Country Planning Association

Maciek Kaszubowski, Head of Parks and Green Spaces, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG)

11:45 - 12:15

Accessible, inclusive and integrated: what does good play provision look like?

Lead speaker: Becky Maddern, PiPA Play

Opening contribution: Harriet Waldegrave, Deputy Director for Policy, Children's Commissioner's Office

12:15 - 12:30

Looking ahead: National Festival of Play 2027

Charlotte Barry, Event Curator & Creative Producer, HemingwayDesign

Louise Blackwell, Creative Director, Creative Crawley

Child's Voice: Song - 'If you're out there'

12:30 - 13:30 / Lunch - supported by JUTA A.S.

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AFTERNOON PROGRAMME / 13:30 - 16:30

Host: Amber Ogunsanya-William

Child's Voice: Welcome back and introduction (post-lunch)

13:30 - 14:00

The future of the play workforce: recognition, standards and a stronger profession

Sereena Keymatlian, Director, Haringey Play Association and Playworker
Dr Mike Wragg, Lecturer in Playwork, Leeds Beckett University
Colin Huffen, Associate Director of Standards & Regulation, CIMSPA

14:00 - 14:15

Provocation: Who owns the street?

Robert O.N. Torto, known as Rasta Rolla

14:15 - 15:00

PANEL: Play everywhere: creating the conditions for play across children's lives

Laura Walsh, Director of Play in Healthcare, Starlight Children's Foundation
Tim Gill, independent researcher and advocate on childhood and the built environment
Chris Wright, Head of Wellbeing, Youth Sport Trust
Andy Robertson, Digital Play Practitioner, Family Gaming Database
Dr Amanda Gummer, Chair, Association of Play Industries

15:00 - 15:10

Launch: University of Exeter Outdoor Play Research Centre

Prof Helen Dodd, Director of the Outdoor Play Research Centre

15:10 - 15:30 / Interval & exhibition

15:30 - 16:00

What can sport and coaching learn from play? Putting children's voice, choice and journey first

Heather Douglas - Head of Coaching & Policy, Play Their Way / UK Coaching

16:00 - 16:15

Free to Play UK: investing in the conditions for play

Patrick O'Kelly, Head of Partnerships & Insight, and Sam Grimmett Batt, Director of Partnerships & Insight, UK Community Foundations

16:15 - 16:30

From conference to action: what happens next?

Richard Shaw, CEO, SAPCA

16:30 / Conference close