



Creating opportunity for all children and Young People

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**RAISING
THE
NATION**

**PLAY
COMMISSION**



The starting points for opportunity for all children

Most children, young people and families in our country are doing well. However, there is a sizeable group – in fact millions of children and families - for whom this isn't the case.

The impact of entrenched, generational disadvantage and vulnerability has an impact on young people's lives, their future opportunities, and our prosperity as a nation.

Covid and the cost of living crisis has exacerbated this.

Many have complex problems, growing up in homes where there are mental health problems, violence or addiction, poverty, poor housing, or insecure employment.


Too many of these problems start in childhood and continue into adult life, and then cascade down from generation to generation without the cycle ever being broken.

These limit opportunity in every way

The social and economic cost to our country is huge, not just in lost opportunity, but also the additional pressure it puts on public services and the public purse.

What the data tells us - the headline risks and vulnerabilities – huge numbers and big impact

AROUND 1 IN 6 OF ALL CHILDREN IN ENGLAND ARE LIVING IN FAMILIES WHERE THERE ARE SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH PARENTAL MENTAL HEALTH, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, AND/OR ALCOHOL OR DRUG ADDICTION.



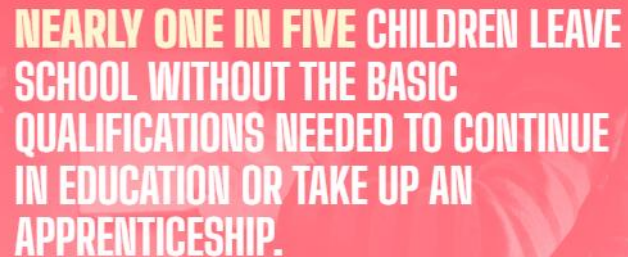
A THIRD OF CHILDREN ARE GROWING UP IN POVERTY.




ONE IN SIX CHILDREN HAVE A PROBABLE MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER.



NEARLY ONE IN FIVE CHILDREN LEAVE SCHOOL WITHOUT THE BASIC QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED TO CONTINUE IN EDUCATION OR TAKE UP AN APPRENTICESHIP.



THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN ARE VULNERABLE TO INVOLVEMENT IN SERIOUS VIOLENCE OR CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION.



How these translate - Children held back from opportunity – the symptoms and indicators of vulnerability

School Absence	Hungry	Poor concentration	Low confidence and self esteem	Tooth decay
Developmental delays - Not ready to start school	Speech and language difficulties	Difficulty with reading and writing	Behaviour problems/poor regulation in schools	Exclusions
Poor grades at schools	Poor housing	Anxiety and poor mental health	Limited enrichment opportunities	Limited places to play
Experiencing violence	Involvement in crime	Exploitation and abuse	Being taken into care	NEET

N8 Child of the North/Centre for Young Lives evidence based reports



There are solutions!

But..

- Many of these problems are entrenched
- These issues won't fix themselves
- Many players and many unconnected
- Different parts of the system and Government have roles for different aspects & aren't connected enough
- Needs often go unnoticed and become more complex
- Services and support are now weighted to crisis – costs more and fewer children helped (EI down, crisis up)
- Often small scale/short run interventions without strategic coherence – families give up
- Money is short and often not used strategically
- There has been poor learning and a lack of strategic mission.

All of this means that problems compound rather than reduce.



Delivering a new mission of opportunity for children

- Support that helps families overcome adversity, intervenes early and is preventative
- From the first 1001 days to moving towards adulthood
- Reducing risk to overcome health, education and social inequalities
- Ready for school and ready to learn
- Support around school – breakfast, afterschool and holiday opportunities
- Young Futures – the 'sure start style' approach for teenagers
- Joined up relational support – for children, young people and families
- Targeted interventions to remove barriers

An expectation of success for all children with a determination to remove barriers wherever they occur – the system changes to lean in.





About the Play Commission

The “Raising the Nation Play Commission” is chaired by entrepreneur and author Paul Lindley, in partnership with the Centre for Young Lives.

Paul Lindley OBE is an award-winning British entrepreneur, social campaigner and best-selling author. In 2006 he founded Ella’s Kitchen, the UK’s largest baby food brand. In 2018 he was appointed Chair of London’s Child Obesity Taskforce by Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, and was appointed Chancellor of the University of Reading in 2022. In 2019 he founded just IMAGINE if... a biennial innovation competition supporting entrepreneurial ideas addressing global challenges. He is Chair of Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights UK, sits on the board of environmental beer brand Toast Ale and is a Trustee of Sesame Workshop, the creators of Sesame Street. His first book, Little Wins: The Huge Power of Thinking Like a Toddler was published in 2017.

The Play Commission aims to move play up the political agenda and lead a national conversation about how to encourage and support children to play more.

The Commission launched in June 2024, and will publish its final report on 11th June 2025, the International Day of Play.

In partnership with

Impact
on Urban
Health

API

Supporting the
UK Play Industry



Objectives

Start a national conversation about how to encourage and support all children to play more, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds

Set out a Play Strategy for England, including a Play Sufficiency Duty like Wales and Scotland

Challenge perceptions about play and support parents and carers to play with their children

What the evidence says

There is already an established body of evidence about the benefits of play, for children's physical and mental health, as well as their cognitive, social, and emotional development.

In the early-years, play helps children to learn about:

- **Risk and how to manage it**
- **Building relationships**
- **Communication**
- **Problem-solving**

What the evidence says

Despite the wealth of evidence about the benefits of play, children are playing less:

- **In school, children at KS1 have 45 minutes less breaktime each week on average than in 1995**
- **Only one in four children play out regularly on their street compared to their grandparents' generation where almost three-quarters said they played outside a few times a week**
- **2.3 million children under the age of 9 (31%) live more than a 10-minute walk from their nearest playground**

Focus areas

Learning through play

Places to play

Time to play

Right to play

Digital play

Parents and play

**Across all 6
themes we will
consider:**

- **Inequality in opportunity to play**
- **Play and health**

What we've learned so far

Through our call for evidence and oral evidence sessions, we have heard about several barriers to play:

- **Children are too often an afterthought in the planning and design of homes and public spaces**
- **Pressure on schools to deliver a narrow set of outcomes has not left any time for play-based pedagogy**
- **Proliferation of the 'no-ball games culture' means children are often actively discouraged from playing in public spaces**



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