

## **Evaluation of 'Play Works'** **A Conference on Why Northern Ireland's Children Need to Play**

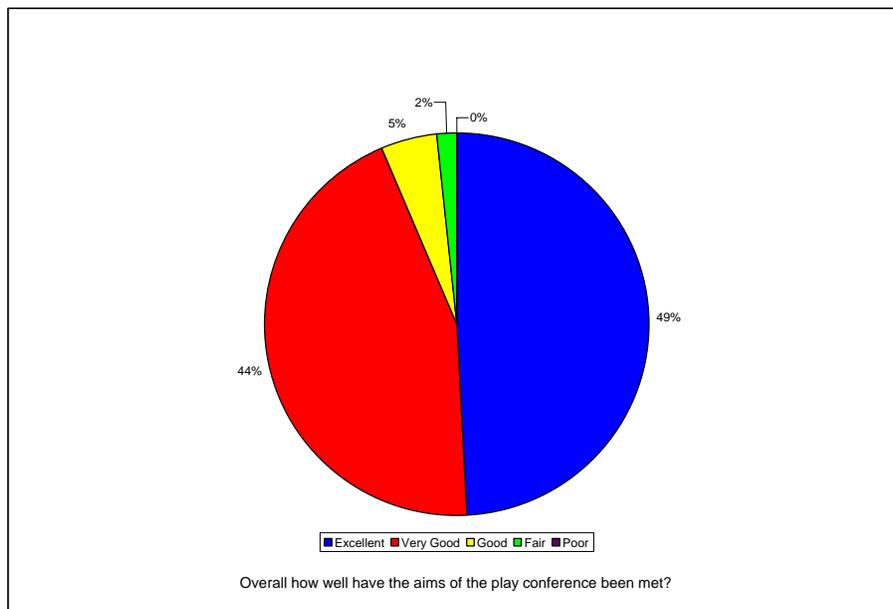
The Play Conference took place on Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2006 at the City Hotel, Derry and was hosted by NICCY, in partnership with NIPPA, Playboard and the Derry Children's Commission. A total number of 197 delegates attended on the day, of which almost one third (64) completed a feedback sheet about the event.

### **Q.1 Aims of the Conference**

The aims of the play conference were:

- a) To promote the right of all children and young people to play; and
- b) Raise awareness of the importance of play, especially for children aged 0-11 years, and learn from best practice; and
- c) Lobby Government to produce a National Play Policy and Strategy for Northern Ireland; and
- d) Explore how best to work together and meet our shared obligation to provide play opportunities for children

**When asked how well they felt the aims of the conference had been addressed, 93% of respondents indicated that this had been 'excellent' or 'very good', 5% said 'good', while only 2% stated that it was 'fair'.**



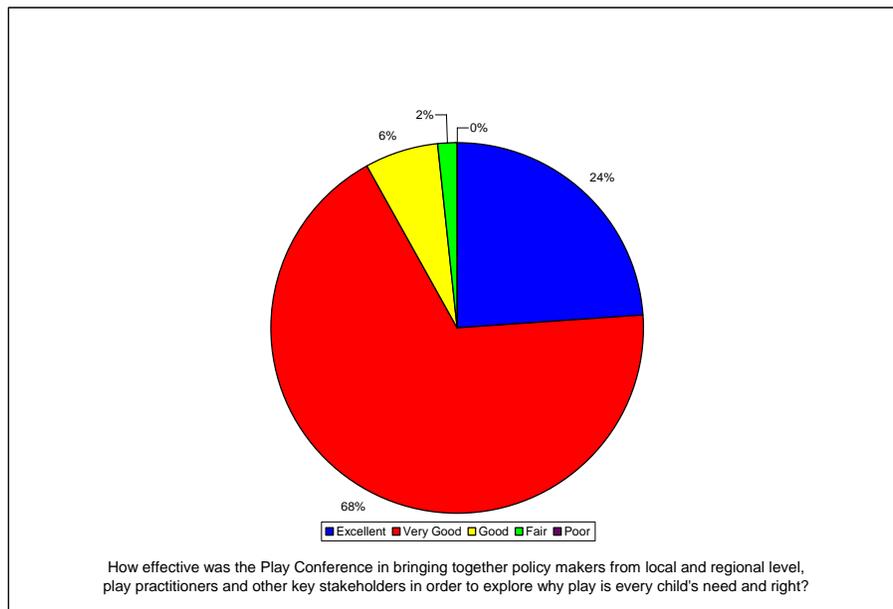
## **Q.2 Outcomes of the Conference**

Respondents were asked how well the conference managed to achieve each of the 4 following outcomes:

### Outcome 1

Bringing together in the region of 200 policy makers at local and regional level, play practitioners and other key stakeholders in order to explore why play is every child's need and right.

**92% of respondents stated that this had been either 'very good' or 'excellent', while 6% indicated 'good' and 2% said this had been 'fair'.**

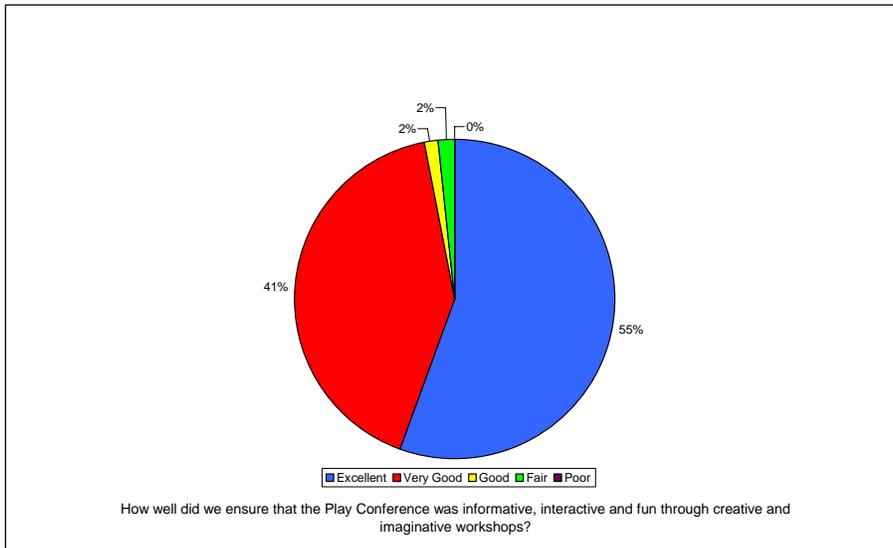


### Outcome 2

Ensuring the conference was informative, interactive and fun through creative and imaginative workshops.

**The majority of respondents (96%) indicated that the workshops were either 'excellent' or 'very good', while 4 % stated they were 'good' or 'fair'.**

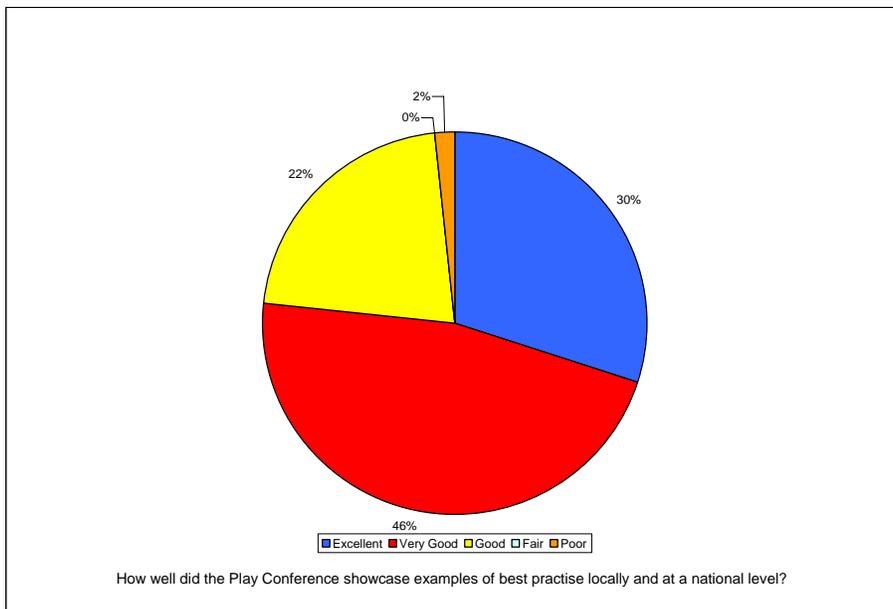




Outcome 3

To showcase examples of best practice locally and at a national level.

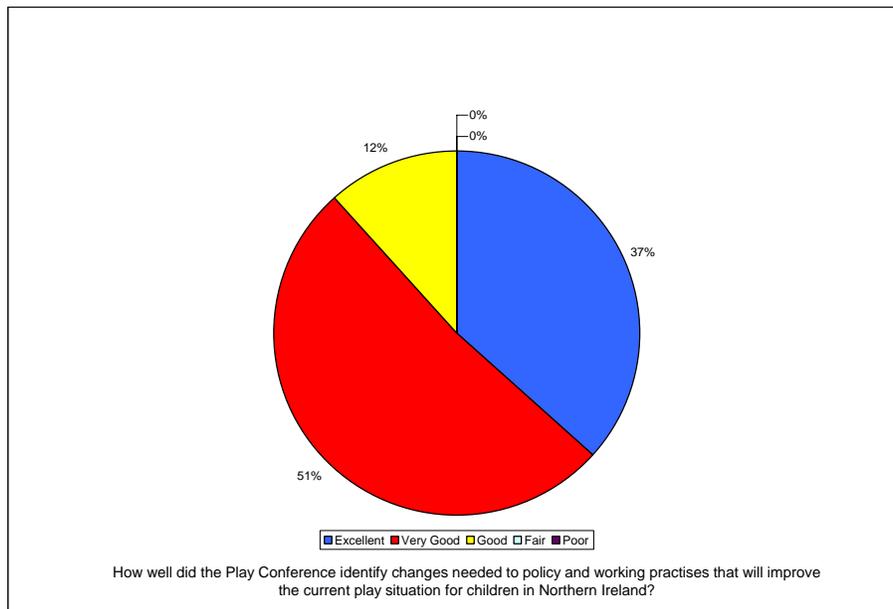
**76% of respondents thought that the conference had achieved this outcome at either an 'excellent' or 'very good' level, while 22% stated this had been 'good'. A minority of respondents (2%) indicated this aspect had been 'poor'.**



#### Outcome 4

Identifying changes needed to policy and working practices that will improve the current play situation for children in Northern Ireland.

**88% of respondents thought this aspect had been either 'excellent' or 'very good', while the remainder (12%) indicated it was 'good'.**



### **Q.3 Rationale for a Play Policy for Northern Ireland**

Included in each conference pack was a copy of the briefing paper outlining the rationale for a Play Policy for Northern Ireland. For evaluation purposes, delegates were asked, "in your opinion, what are the three key areas you would like to see included".

**Of the 64 returned feedback sheets, 26 respondents ranging from local government members, educators, to lecturers, early years and project/play workers, provided some comments to this question and commonly identified the following key areas:**



- Changing the culture and attitude to play; strategy for the acceptance of the value and benefits of play amongst parents and communities; highlight social/physical/environmental importance of play. (13)
- Consultation with key stakeholders – especially children, carers, educators, early years etc (including at steering group level). Children to be involved in all aspects of planning and design. (8)
- Specific play centres and play areas/family-friendly areas - particularly green areas. (8)
- City planners/housing developers working within play policy requirements; urban planning to be child-friendly i.e. road and housing designs which allow children to play at their homes and streets – not only in playgrounds. (6)
- Play opportunities for all children – being able to relax, work out their own play. (4)
- Funding strategy, ensure funding being used well. (4)
- Children’s Rights in relation to Play. (3)
- Promoting play within the education system (including compulsory play up to a certain age; enriched curriculum; those involved in education on steering groups) and within communities. (3)
- Play proofing all government policies. (3)
- Insurance/claim culture; Insurance companies impacting on what children can and can’t do. (3)
- More materials. (3)
- Change in education system/change to prevent introduction to formal learning too young. (2)
- Multi-agency commitment. ‘Play champions’ within agencies. (2)
- Strategy/policy to promote the value of play as a right and need, based on the needs of children with an accountable leader to head it. (2)

Other areas highlighted were:

- Baseline information
- Community policing
- Safety and maintenance of play parks
- Less traffic
- Play for play itself (e.g. not just so parents can go to work; or to fulfil health objectives or get kids off the streets at times of trouble in NI)



#### **Q. 4 Any other comments**

**Respondents were asked if there was anything else they would like to add with regards to the conference and 23 provided comments as follows:**

“A positive, heartwarming experience. Hope that tangible changes are in the pipeline” (Early Years Lecturer WWIFHE)

“Very informative and enjoyable day. Good beginning to development of play policy” (Advisory Teacher / Early years)

“Very informative and enjoyable” (Pre-School Assistant)

“The physical play workshop was fantastic” (Youth Worker)

“Cultural change is necessary. Government need to get more involved” (Lecturer in Child Care)

“Environmental play areas need to be created” (Did not specify an occupation)

“As in Europe – use family insurance” (Play Advisor)

“Need to change claim culture” (Did not specify an occupation)

“Didn’t learn much from workshops, better opportunity to interact with others. Bob very inspiring, clowns got in the way of interaction. Would have liked more factual info like Bobs [Hughes]” (Did not specify an occupation)

“Dominated by male speakers? Most play workers female. Clionagh Boyle and Wendy Russell very good” (Playgroup leader)

“The main theme throughout the conference was play and recreational / therapeutic values. Play as an educative tool has been widely forgotten at this event. The education sector need to maximise cognitive play rather than rely on formal traditional learning / teaching methods” (Education)



“This was a really informative day, which I thoroughly enjoyed”  
(Childcare Worker)

“Was the planning department represented?” (Nursery School  
Teacher)

“Have one every year!” (College Tutor)

“With regard to outcome 4 above, I think the time taken to “identify changes” takes much too long. I would much prefer to see changes beginning to happen e.g. Improved outdoor facilities in Derry City Council Area. I am also a bit disappointed with the level of spending involved in the conference. I would much prefer to see the money being spent where it is needed i.e. Not on an expensive day out at the City Hotel” (Daycare Manager)

“Thank you for a great event.

- Involvement of children in the event.
- However – it was shocking that no arrangements had been made for a crèche/child care until two days ago, despite it being offered and booked – only when I enquired on Tuesday was the women’s centre even contacted! How very ironic that children were a last minute thought”. (Solicitor – here as a parent)

“Very enjoyable conference a very important topic brought to light and introduced to a wide range of organisations” (Community Relations Officer)

“Well done Wales and Derry City – Clionagh and Co.” (Education Advisor)

“Brilliant day. Loads of opportunity to network” (Development Officer)

“Really enjoyable and informative day. Good to meet all the agencies involved with children especially at workshops. Going away invigorated and full of ideas. Thank you so much” (Education)



“Look forward to seeing the draft policy in June” (Play Leader)

“More input from Department of Education and educational people on the ground; teachers, organisations etc.” (No occupation specified)

