

Welcome speech by Wendy Russell: Chair of JNCTP

JNCTP and ? in the Nineties

Welcome to our Coming of Age party. A friend of mine recently threw a party for her daughter's 21st birthday, and in preparation for this event she had put together a photographic display of her daughter's life and achievements. I'd like to take this opportunity of doing something similar although 18 or more years of meetings, conferences, working parties, consultations and more meetings doesn't really make for a stimulating visual display! So I will, with your permission, take you on a short verbal guided tour of some of the JNCTP's childhood developmental milestones, through its adolescence (characterised by a mild but obligatory crisis of identity) onto today, the beginning of our enthusiastic, energetic, young but experienced adulthood. My credentials for being your guide on this tour are my current role as Chair of the JNCTP, plus an involvement with the executive committee of the organisation since 1980, excepting a few years out between 86 and 89.

When I first started working as a playworker on an adventure playground about 20 years ago, and people would ask me what I did for a living, I would always have to explain and justify my work. People had heard of Preschool Playgroups, they'd heard of Youth Clubs; but somehow those years in between just disappeared.

In the space of 20 years things have improved. There has been an enormous increase in play and playcare provision for school-aged children, and a corresponding growth in training opportunities for playworkers.

The role of the playworker is by no means a simple one. We expect playworkers to be playmates, child psychologists, guardians of the child's domain, social workers, disciplinarians, even ridding areas of the problems of juvenile delinquency. We expect them to be organisational and administrative experts, and financial wizards. We expect them to have management skills, to be fully conversant with the relevant aspects of the law, to be talented artistically and also be able to run games sessions. We expect them to have interpersonal skills, and work with children, parents, professional agencies, local government officials and councillors. (We also sometimes expect them to be cleaners, builders, brickies, plasterers, joiners and plumbers).

This is where training comes in. In the early days, playworkers were either untrained, gleaning the necessary skills and knowledge from life experience and as they went along; or they were "other-trained": trained as teachers, youthworkers, social workers, or nursery nurses. It soon became evident that this was an unsatisfactory position. Gradually, training opportunities began to appear for playworkers.

In 1970, the National Playing Fields Association sponsored a one-year, full-time Diploma in Playleadership Course at Thurrock Technical College, in Essex. This course, much changed, still exists today as a Diploma in Higher Education in Playwork. Other colleges began to offer a Playwork option on professionally recognised Youth and Community Work qualifications.

Local authorities, colleges and voluntary organisations began to recognise the need for in-service training opportunities for full-time, part-time and unpaid playworkers, and to offer practical training opportunities in response.

By the early to mid-1970's, there were several playwork courses running throughout the country, a few full time, but mostly in-service or initial courses, as well as several agencies offering one-off training opportunities for playworkers. As the number of playwork training opportunities grew, a new problem became evident: what did it mean if you'd done a Playleadership Course at Goldsmiths College in London? Was it the same as a Playleadership Course at Stockport College of Technology? Or the Mabel Fletcher College in Liverpool? What was a Diploma in Playleadership? Or a Certificate in Playwork? How many hours was each course? What was the content, the work practice element, the assessment?

In 1975, the Joint National Committee on Training for Playleadership (now Playwork) was formed, growing out of smaller, national working parties. The committee consisted of representatives of many forces working in the field of children's play, including playworkers, play organisers, students and training agencies, all sharing a concern for the future of playwork, and recognising the need for trained staff. The JNCTP has existed since this time, as a democratic membership organisation, influencing the development of playwork training through conferences, consultation exercises and representation on relevant bodies.

In response to the question of consistency and quality assurance in playwork training, the JNCTP published in 1979 what became known as "the Black Book"; a small pamphlet entitled "Recommendations on Training". This booklet stated that the JNCTP was the "central reference body for consultation and advice on all matters pertaining to playwork training", and also stated that the organisation would "recognise" in-service and full-time courses established following the recommendations laid out in the Black Book.

But it soon became clear that this was an unmanageable task for an organisation whose executive committee was made up of those already fully employed in their own posts. By the early 80's, the JNCTP had accepted that it did not have the financial or human resources to carry out the recognition function effectively, and concentrated its efforts instead of working towards a properly funded and recognised endorsement system.

In the Spring of 1984, a JNCTP Conference held at Leicester agreed to add to the initial 1979 "Recommendations on Training". Two Working Parties were set up: one to look at the "Content, Structure and Method of Qualifying Training for Playwork", the other to look at "Routes to Qualification for Playwork".

The findings of these two Working Parties, along with a Charter for Training for Playwork, were published in 1985 as a sequel to the Black Book, and is sometimes referred to as the Salmon Book.

Having recently skimmed through this 1985 publication, in preparation for today, I was pleasantly surprised to see how much of it is still relevant today, nearly ten years on. Indeed, the booklet shows great foresight: not only did we beat the Tories to their supposed rediscovery of the Charter, but the publications, and recommended Accreditation of Playwork Practice as a valid route to qualification, several years before APL became a commonly used acronym amongst those involved in training.

The Charter for Training for Playwork was adopted by the JNCTP at its conference in Bristol in September 1985. It is worth reading it out in full here, partly because it is mostly still relevant today, and partly because many of you here today will either have forgotten the Charter or not known of its existence.

1. **A licence to Practice:** A playwork qualification should confer a licence to practice work with children and young people. It should be in accordance with professional codes and standards to be established by the Endorsement Panel.
2. **A Playwork Qualification Specific to Playwork:** A playwork qualification should be play specific, discrete from other related "people-work" qualifications. It should be at a standard sufficient to confer a status equivalent to these allied, but separate disciplines.
3. **Endorsement by the Field:** Agencies offering training opportunities leading to a playwork qualification should be subject to an endorsement process which has been developed in consultation with representatives of the playwork field, and which involves playwork field representatives in the endorsement process.
4. **Equal Opportunities Principles:** Real equality of opportunity should characterise the nature and resourcing of the whole process leading to a playwork qualification. Positive action to alleviate the present differential access to play, playwork and training for playwork because

of discrimination on grounds of sex, race, sexuality, disability, class and religion should be promoted.

5. **Access to a Range of Routes to a Playwork Qualification:** There should be open access to a range of routes to a playwork qualification. These routes should particularly meet the interests and needs of voluntary, temporary and part-time Playworkers. There should be a route that allows for qualification by the Accreditation of Playwork Practice.
6. **Pre-training Playwork Experience:** All those entering qualifying training should have direct practical experience of playwork under appropriately supervised circumstances. They should also have a broad life experience and should normally be over 21.
7. **The Ethos of Play:** A playwork qualification should embrace the ethos of the process of play. The training should be flexible, adaptive and reflective of existing good practice in playwork. It should involve periods of supervised field placement, and should promote both the professional and personal development of those seeking the qualification.
8. **Self-Managed Learning:** All routes to playwork qualification (whether by full- or part-time study, modular training or the accreditation of practice) should use the self-managed learning style, and include both individual and group programming.
9. **Collaborative Assessment:** Assessment of learners' progress towards a playwork qualification should be conducted collaboratively and include learners, peers, tutors and field supervisors.
10. **Evolution of routes to playwork qualification:** The different routes to a playwork qualification, and particularly course or module design, should be kept under constant review. This should involve internal and external appraisal, and the sharing of ideas between practising field workers and those responsible for training provision.

Not bad for something written in 1985, eh?

This work was continued with the formation of another Working Party, set up at the Manchester conference in October 1986. Working Party Three looked at "The Modular Route to Qualification by Self-Managed Learning" and their findings were published in October 1987, as the third in the "Recommendations on Training" series, known as the Yellow Book. This publication refers to the existence of a fourth Working Party looking at the Accreditation of Practice. Unfortunately, both my personal involvement and my records are patchy for this period, and so I'm not exactly sure what happened to Working Party Four.

I do know, however, that the JNCTP has been advocating Accreditation of Practice as a highly appropriate route to qualification for playworkers for several years. This view was shared by the National Children's Play and Recreation Unit, who commissioned in 1989, a research and development project to set up a pilot accreditation scheme. The JNCTP, as the major national organisation representing the field of playwork concerned specifically with training, undertook to support this project by carrying out an in-depth national consultation, to enable our members – playworkers, employers, managers, trainers and trainees – to influence the development of the scheme. Three national consultation meetings were held during 1989 and 1990, which looked at the core competences for playwork and also at how an accreditation scheme might work. The Accreditation Report was published in 1990. Although the scheme was somewhat overshadowed by both the advent of NVQs and the demise of NCPRU, much of this work has influenced the development of NVQs, particularly the values of playwork; and work still continues around using the scheme as a basis for Accreditation of Prior Learning through NVQs, and also for Range 5 of the Scheme.

1989 saw the introduction of the Children Act, a piece of legislation which has had a considerable effect, sometimes for the good, sometimes for the worse, on playwork. The issue for the JNCTP was, of course, that of training and qualification. Since playwork did not have its own nationally recognised or endorsed system of qualifications, the requirement of the Act that those working with children should be trained, and a proportion qualified, raised some potential difficulties for

registering authorities. In 1992, the JNCTP issued a small leaflet offering guidance to Social Services Departments on training for playwork.

One central theme to all these publications and debates around playwork training and qualification is that of endorsement. Particularly with the arrival of the four National Centres for Playwork Education & Training, and with more and more locally and sometimes nationally validated courses, the need for a national framework and an endorsement structure for playwork training was becoming urgent. In 1992, the JNCTP joined forces with the four National Centres to organise a major national consultation programme to find out the needs of the field and the feasibility of establishing playwork's own professional endorsement system. This consultation programme consisted of talks with national agencies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, a postal consultation paper, circulated to over 200 key playwork agencies, and a programme of nine regional consultation meetings throughout England, which took place between December 1992 and January 1993. In total, 489 people attended these consultation meetings.

The findings of this major piece of national consultation were published in the "Getting Recognition" Report, which was launched in May 1994. The JNCTP continues to be active on the Getting Recognition Steering Group.

So that's a sketch of what the JNCTP has achieved over the last 18 or so years, in terms of what is tangible – lots of reports and publications. But a lot else has happened along the way too. Looking back over these publications and reports, what is noticeable is that each piece of work has come out of a JNCTP conference or some other democratic process. One of the strengths of the JNCTP is that we have always been a democratic organisation, committed to working with our members to draw up recommendations and influence the direction of playwork training.

We hold regular conferences, which act as an opportunity to share experience and information with other playworkers and playwork trainers, and at which we can keep members up-to-date with any developments. We are aware of the difficulties for our members of attending meetings at the opposite end of the country, so we are committed to moving meetings around the country, and also to sending out full reports to each conference to all members.

The JNCTP has depended, for the whole of its childhood and adolescence, upon income raised only from membership subscriptions and conference fees, coupled with the commitment of its executive committee and members who have had to squeeze JNCTP work into already overfull schedules, often allowing it to overflow into their own time.

It is time for the JNCTP to leave home and become financially self-supporting. If you have any expertise to offer us in the area of fundraising, please join the "Securing a Future" workshop after lunch.

But we have survived, and I feel that, in a way, this is our biggest achievement. Since our birth in the mid 1970s, we have seen PlayBoard and the National Children's Play & Recreation Unit come and go: we are still here. We are waiting now to hear what level and nature of support Central Government will be giving to Children's play in the future. This is unclear, it is insecure. Many of the organisations which go to make up our membership are themselves threatened with cuts or closure. However, we can say that the JNCTP will continue to exist as an independent forum for playwork training. We have had our difficulties, mostly to do with issues of resourcing, but we know our strengths, we are here today to celebrate our achievements, and to look forward to change. A new JNCTP for the nineties and beyond into the 21st century; join the workshop to decide on a new name and logo for this modern organisation.

I'm getting a bit carried away here, and this is beginning to sound a bit like a Tony Blair speech. Yes we will have a new JNCTP, yes there is hope for the future of playwork training in this country, and no, we are not going to scrap Clause 4 – going back to the Charter for Training for Playwork, Clause 4 is the one which refers to equality of opportunity, and we will not compromise on that.

Here's to the future, and I hope you enjoy today.

- End -

KEYNOTE SPEECHES

Playwork Training : the past

1. Perspective

I have been asked to say a bit about the history of playworker training. I can tell you only of my own experience and what I have gleaned over the years of the picture of playwork training. I have not carried out any in-depth research into this presentation, and I apologise if any of what I say is inaccurate or indeed if I have left out huge chunks of a history which is not known to me.

My own background is as a playworker on adventure playgrounds in Waltham Forest and Islington in the mid to late seventies, then as a playwork trainer in Islington, and for the last ten years as a playwork trainer based in Nottingham. I have been a member of the JNCTP Executive Committee since 1980, and this has given me a JNCTP perspective of the national picture since then, as well as access to JNCTP publications which give a JNCTP perspective on the national picture previous to this time.

Having said I have not carried out any in-depth research for this presentation, I have checked out a few facts in some of the documentation that is around. I thought it might be useful to say which publications I have used. They include:

- The JNCTP "Black Book" (Recommendations on Training, 1979)
- The JNCTP "Salmon Book" (Recommendations on Training, 1985)
- Play Board's "Playwork: Training, Qualifications, Conditions of Service (1985)
- The JNCTP's "Accreditation Report" (1990)
- Harry Shier's "In-Service Training & Professional Development in Playwork" (1980)
- The JNCTP and the National Centres "Getting Recognition Report" (1994)
- The Sports Council, JNCTP and the National Centres' "Playwork Education & Training: outline of a national strategy" (1994)

There may well be other publications which I have omitted to mention here, but these are the key ones which have informed my picture.

2. Playwork

The need for making some provision for supervised opportunities for children's play began to be recognised in this country as early as the 1920's, the local authorities joined the voluntary sector as providers of play facilities from about the 1950's. This provision took the form of supervised activities in parks and buildings, as well as the beginnings of the first adventure playgrounds.

So who were the play workers on these first play projects? Lady Allen of Hurtwood, writing in 1968 of adventure playground workers, said:

"He or she must be a mature person who provides the background for the children's own initiative and who is willing to act rather as an older friend and counsellor than as a leader Only rarely do trained youth leaders or school teachers feel at home in so unorthodox a situation."

The role of the playworker is by no means a simple one. We expect playworkers to be playmates, child psychologists, guardians of the child's domain, social workers, child protection experts, disciplinarians, even ridding areas of juvenile delinquency. We expect them to be organisational and administrative experts and financial wizards. We expect them to have management skills, to be fully conversant with the relevant aspects of the law, to be talented in the arts and sports, and to be able to run co-operative games sessions. We expect them to have interpersonal skills and work with children, parents, carers, professional agencies, local government officials and councillors, and the press. We also sometimes expect them to be structure builders, bus mechanics, cleaners, brickies, plasterers, joiners and plumbers.

3. Training

This is where training comes in. For a long time, playworkers were either untrained, gleaned the necessary skills and knowledge from life and experience as they went along, or they are “other-trained”: trained as teachers, youth workers, social workers, nursery nurses or playgroup leaders. It soon becomes evident that this was an unsatisfactory situation.

Gradually, training opportunities began to appear for playworkers. Initially, this training was usually in the form of short in-service training courses, or one day events which concentrated on practical activity skills. In his book called “Playleadership” written in the late sixties, Bernard McGovern listed the topics he thought playleaders needed training in. Most of these topics are sports related, as he thought playleaders needed to know all the techniques, rules and regulations of the most popular sports. These skills were no doubt appropriate to the play facilities provided by the GLC in those days, but would not be considered relevant today. However, the emphasis on practical skills was prevalent amongst playwork training opportunities in the late sixties and early seventies.

Discussions on setting up some kind of training centre for playworkers in Islington began in the early seventies, and playworkers then felt that training should concentrate on what playworkers did rather than how they did it. There was, in some cases, great opposition to the idea that playworkers needed training at all, many playworkers felt that it was a job you could either do or you couldn't and no amount of training could change that.

At the same time as these in-service training initiatives were beginning, the first full time Diploma in Playleadership was sponsored by the National Playing Fields Association, based at Thurrock Technical College. This course, much changed, still exists today as the Diploma in Higher Education in Playwork.

Other colleges also became involved in offering in-service courses, and by 1979 the training opportunities included:

Full Time Courses

- Diploma in Playleadership, 1 year course at Thurrock Technical College
- A Play Option on the Community & Youthwork Course at Leicester Polytechnic.

In-Service training

- Playleadership Course at Stockport College of Technology
- Playleadership Course at Goldsmiths College, London
- Playleadership Course at Mabel Fletcher Technical College, Liverpool
- Playleadership Course at Stevenage College
- In-service training at Islington Play Training Unit

Trainee Schemes

- London Adventure Playground Association
- Nottingham Adventure Play Training Scheme
- Derby Adventure Play Training Scheme

Initial (pre-entry) Courses

- Islington Play Training Unit
- Community Education Unit, Manchester

By 1985, the courses at Goldsmith's College in London, and that at Stockport Technical College, had closed. The trainee schemes at Nottingham and Derby had also ended. However, new in-service courses had been established, including Charles Keene College in Leicester, Bilston Community College at Wolvehampton, Harlow College in Essex, and South West London College. There may have been other changes to the overall picture, but these are not recorded in my sources. However, by this time, the number of training agencies, either within the local authority or the voluntary sector had also increased, and so in-service short courses were becoming increasingly available as was induction training for newly employed playworkers.

4. Co-ordination

As the number and variety of playwork training opportunities grew, a new problem became evident: what did it mean if you'd done a Playleadership Course at Goldsmiths College or Mabel Fletcher or Bilston Community College? What was a Diploma in Playleadership? Or a certificate in Playwork? Or a Foundation Course in Play Skills? How many hours was each course? What was the content, the work practice element, the assessment methods? What about people who attended lots of one day training courses on a variety of topics – how did they measure their training?

In 1975 the Joint National Committee on Training for Playleadership (now Playwork) was formed, growing out of smaller national working parties. The committee consisted of representatives of many forces working in the field of children's play including playworkers, play organisers, students and training agencies, all sharing a common concern for the future of playwork, and recognising the need for trained staff.

In response to the question of consistency and quality assurance, the JNCTP published in 1979 what became known as the Black Book, a small pamphlet entitled "Recommendations on Training". This booklet stated that JNCTP was the "central reference body for consultation and advice on all matters pertaining to playwork training". It also stated that JNCTP would "recognise" in-service and full time courses established following the recommendations laid down in the Black Book. By the early 80's, JNCTP accepted that it did not have the human or financial resources to carry out an effective recognition function, and so it concentrated its efforts instead on working towards a properly funded, representative and recognised endorsement system.

The last ten years have seen many changes in playwork training. Some courses have ended, others have begun. Play Board supported the development of a Neighbourhood Playwork Training Scheme which no longer exists in the same form. The National Children's Play & Recreation Unit invested much in an Accreditation Scheme for experienced playworkers to gain recognition of their skills and knowledge. This scheme faltered when the Unit's funding ceased.

The launch of National Vocational Qualifications in Playwork in 1992 has had an enormous effect on playwork training, as has the establishment by the National Children's Play & Recreation Unit of four National Centres for Playwork Education. This brings us up to the present day, and I'll hand over to Paul who will give a picture of playwork training and education as it stands now.

- End -