

CHAPTER ONE

Summary and Recommendations

Accreditation can be simply defined as the formal recognition of assessed competence.

As playwork moves towards the status of a recognised profession, nationally recognised qualifications will become increasingly important. In establishing a national framework for training and qualification, it is essential to ensure:

- a. Recognition of the great skill and competence that many playworkers, without formal training, have gained through experience in the job.
- b. Access to qualified status for all competent playworkers, with full equality of opportunity, and regardless of personal circumstances.

There must therefore be a variety of different routes to qualification. Becoming qualified in playwork through accreditation of competence in the job must be a major part of the new framework.

This report is the result of a national consultation undertaken by the Joint National Committee on Training for Playwork to find out the views of the playwork field on the issues surrounding accreditation, as a contribution to the development of a National Accreditation Scheme.

CHAPTER TWO, which is largely based on a discussion paper produced by the JNCTP in October 1989, explains in more detail what accreditation is, why it is important to playwork, and the aims of the JNCTP consultation.

CHAPTER THREE describes how the consultation was organised, based on a series of three consultation meetings in different parts of the country between November 1989 and January 1990.

CHAPTER FOUR considers some important general issues about reporting the consultation; in particular the use of appropriate language and clearly defining terms used.

CHAPTER FIVE explains the significance of identifying Core Competencies for playwork; that is a list of all the things a playworker must be able to do in order to be effective. At the consultation meetings, participants worked together on developing a draft list of playworker competencies. The results of this work, combined from all three meetings, are presented here in full.

CHAPTER SIX presents an outline model of how an accreditation process might work. This model was used to help structure discussion at the consultation meetings and received a generally positive response.

The report then presents a detailed summary of discussion at the consultation meetings on each stage of the proposed accreditation process. Among many important points discussed are:

- * The need for open access to the scheme for all who can benefit from it. There will probably be very great demand. It should be available to everyone involved in playwork, paid or unpaid, full-time or part-time.
- * The role of Personal Tutor is of great importance. Recruitment, training, preparation and support for tutors will be vital to the success of the scheme.
- * All participants should have the opportunity to join a participants' support/learning group, though nobody should be excluded if they are unable to do so.
- * There will need to be a general increase in, and co-ordination of, learning opportunities in all aspects of playwork in order for the scheme to operate successfully.
- * Playworkers will create Portfolios containing a wide variety of evidence to demonstrate their competence in all aspects of the job. The breadth and variety of evidence will require a properly developed assessment procedure, with sound criteria for accreditation.
- * Assessors must be appropriately trained and competent to do this job effectively.
- * The qualification awarded must carry the endorsement of an appropriate national endorsing body, representative of all sections of the playwork field and formally recognised by playwork employers. Qualifications gained by accreditation are as good as (or better than) those achieved by conventional routes, and we must ensure employers recognise this.

Recommendations

Because of the short timescale for holding the consultation and producing this report, it has not been possible for the full membership of the JNCTP to meet and formulate formal recommendations.

The following, therefore, are interim recommendations, agreed by the JNCTP Executive Committee on the basis of the views expressed and issues discussed at the consultation meetings.

1. The Accreditation Project Team of Calibre Training Limited should study this report in detail and take full account of its contents and conclusions in the further development of the pilot accreditation scheme for the National Children's Play and Recreation Unit.
2. The NCPRU should immediately take the lead in bringing together interested parties and moving towards the establishment of a National Endorsing Body for Qualification in Playwork.

- * The National Endorsing Body must be set up by a democratic process involving all major groups within the playwork field, and must be shown to be representative of the field.
 - * It is particularly important that current face-to-face playworkers are fully involved and represented in the establishment of the endorsing body.
 - * The JNCTP should play a major role in this development.
 - * Local Authority employers must be represented, possibly through formal involvement of representatives of the Local Authority Associations.
3. The terms of reference of the endorsing body should be to establish an endorsement system that will endorse the competence of individual workers (rather than completion of a particular course) and would therefore incorporate qualifications gained through accreditation from the start.
 4. The NCPRU should continue, with the fullest consultation, current work on Mapping Playwork. This should lead to a consensus involving playworkers, employers and Trade Unions, on a number of “levels of responsibility” in playwork, for which appropriate levels of qualification/competence could be indicated, along with national agreement on salary scales and opportunities for career progression for those who want it.
 5. The NCPRU and other interested bodies should work to secure from central government (a) funds for initial development of the accreditation scheme, and (b) permanent on-going funding to operate the scheme. This would be essential for:
 - * Initial training and support for personal tutors and assessors. This could be carried out by the National Centres in the regions. Central funding could be routed via these centres.
 - * National co-ordination, support and regulation to ensure national comparability. This would include publication and distribution of support materials and guidelines to all participating agencies.
 - * Staffing and resource costs of the National Endorsing Body.

Note: Throughout this report, the term “playworker” refers to a person who works face-to-face with children in play settings (but the accreditation of people involved in play provision in different roles is also referred to specifically at various points in the report). A playworker may be paid or volunteer, and may work full-time, part-time or on a sessional basis.

CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

What is Accreditation?

Imagine a local support system that helps experienced, competent playworkers get a formal playwork qualification by demonstrating the competence they have gained through practical experience and learning on the job.

This might be a welcome alternative to having to go off to college for a year or more to learn things you have been doing for years.

But you wouldn't have to be totally competent in every aspect of playwork to benefit from this scheme. By identifying and demonstrating those areas where you **are** competent, you could accurately pinpoint what you still need to learn. Then you could develop the additional skills you need through, perhaps, a series of short courses or independent study. In due course, you would be able to show a full range of competence and gain your professional qualification. This process of earning a qualification by demonstrating your actual competence in the job is what we mean by the term "Accreditation".

* **Accreditation can be simply defined as the formal recognition of assessed competence.**

Looking more closely at this definition:

- * **"Competence"** in playwork sums up the range of knowledge, skills and attitudes you need to be an effective playworker. Identifying what these are is one of the major issues discussed in this report (see Chapter Five).
- * **"Assessed competence"** means that there must be an agreed process where you can show evidence of your competence, so that it can be confirmed. This also raises a number of issues that are discussed in Chapter 6.
- * And finally, **"formal recognition"** implies there must be a formal agreement by all the interested parties, including most importantly playwork employers, that such demonstration of competence, properly assessed, entitles you to a recognised qualification at an appropriate level. Again, this issue is considered in Chapter Six.

Qualification for Playwork

Why do we want qualifications in Playwork?

There are several good reasons for moving towards a qualified workforce in playwork:

- * We want to raise standards. So we want to encourage people to train, and make it worth their while. Playworkers who undertake training want some recognition for it.
- * Employers and parents want reassurance about the quality of playwork staff employed.
- * We want to raise the status of playwork, establish it as a profession and enable people to make a career in playwork. We need to stop so many experienced, able playworkers going off to train for better paid, better-respected professions.

So we could be moving towards a situation where playworkers will be **expected** to have an appropriate qualification; it may even be essential for some jobs. At any rate, more and more playworkers are going to **want** the added status that qualification will give them.

There is now widespread agreement that the playwork field needs more and better training and proper qualifications: The JNCTP has been organising, consulting and campaigning on these issues for fifteen years. We now feel we can take this agreement as the starting point for future development work.

The National Children's Play and Recreation Unit has undertaken to establish a National Framework for Education, Training and Qualification for Playworkers. The next few years should see major changes in the field, as new qualifications are established and existing training adapts to the emerging National Framework.

Alternative Routes to Qualification

It would be a disaster for the playwork movement if this means all playworkers have to go off to college to learn to do playwork. Many excellent playworkers have commitments and responsibilities that would make this quite impossible. Many more are already highly competent, and may even be training others, without having an actual qualification on paper. There must be a range of **different ways of getting qualified** ("routes to qualification") so that no-one will be disadvantaged or discriminated against if they wish to be involved in playwork or make a career in it.

Accreditation of Competence is one of the possible routes to becoming qualified in playwork.

Why is Accreditation of Competence so Important?

We see three main reasons why Accreditation of Competence is an important option, and will benefit certain particularly important groups of playworkers.

1. Access to Qualified Status

The more important qualification becomes, the more important it is to ensure no playworker is prevented from working towards qualification. There are several obstacles that prevent people working towards qualification through traditional training courses:

- * Colleges often ask for GCE or GCSE passes or other certificates as a condition of getting on a course leading to a professional qualification. People who did not get these qualifications at school are thus at a great disadvantage. This disproportionately affects working class people and black people who face discrimination in the education system.
- * The style of many courses requires a high level of prior training in academic study and presentation skills – often far more than is needed to work effectively as a playworker. People who aren't confident of their academic or study skills will be discouraged from applying. Again this will disproportionately affect working class people and black people – not because of a lack of intellectual capacity, but because of the failures of the education system.
- * Many people have responsibilities or commitments that prevent them from going to college or moving away from home to train. Most obvious are parents or those with other dependants, and the great majority of these will be women. Quite apart from the need to look after their dependants, they may also depend on their salary so they can't afford to give up their existing job in order to train.

An accreditation system offers a route to qualification that can meet the needs of all these people. There would be no bar to entry, and the level of academic ability required would be in line with the actual requirements of being an effective playworker – no more, no less. The time commitment and scheduling of the work would be flexible enough to meet the needs of each individual. People could undertake the accreditation process while continuing with their normal work, earning their regular salary and/or looking after their dependants. Playworkers with disabilities will also find accreditation schemes more likely to meet their needs than most college-based courses.

To sum up: it is clear that conventional training courses are discriminatory. As a route to qualified status, they serve to reinforce existing inequalities in society on grounds of race, sex, class and disability. To establish a system of qualification that is non-discriminatory and offers equality of opportunity there must be alternative routes to qualification that recognise the real life experiences and situations of playworkers. Accreditation of Competence is such an alternative route, and this is one reason why accreditation is a vital pillar of the proposed new Framework for Qualification.

2. An Experienced Workforce

At present there are **no** qualifications in playwork that are nationally endorsed by the playwork field. Existing playwork training courses and certificates cannot be assumed to carry professional endorsement as a licence to practice. In this sense, there is currently no such thing as a "Qualified Playworker".

Although we know playwork has a high turnover of staff, a survey carried out by Playboard in 1985 found that 39% of permanent, full-time playworkers had been in post for three years or more. As playwork tends to become more and more a qualified profession, these experienced workers will be under pressure to seek a nationally recognised qualification.

Now, we know that experience does not in itself confer competence, but in very many cases these playworkers are highly competent, skilful, capable and effective. The last thing they need is to be sent on courses to be taught how to do playwork, probably by people less able and experienced than themselves!

These experienced, competent, but unqualified playworkers make up the second major group who will benefit from an Accreditation Scheme. In fact, they are often the same people as those discussed above who face discrimination in conventional training.

3. Individual Learning Styles

People learn in different ways. Everyone has their own preferred learning style, and different learning processes will work best for different individuals. Becoming aware of one's own learning style, identifying an appropriate learning process, and **taking responsibility** for one's own learning are all parts of a uniquely valuable process of personal growth. An accreditation process that empowers people to take control of their own learning will most effectively reflect the true ethos of playwork.

The Aims of the JNCTP Consultation

Both the JNCTP and the National Children's Play and Recreation Unit believe that the route to qualification through Accreditation of Competence is an essential pillar of any new national framework for playwork training. The NCPRU have commissioned a major research and development project to set up a pilot accreditation scheme. This is currently being carried out by an independent specialist agency, Calibre Training.

The JNCTP, as a 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, trainer and trainees – to:

1. Fully understand how accreditation might work.
2. Explore and debate the issues raised.
3. Put on record their comments and ideas.
4. Formulate recommendations for the development of the Accreditation Scheme, and so.....
5. Influence the development of the scheme so it truly responds to the needs of the field.

This report is the record of that consultation process. We believe the consultation has achieved the first four of these aims. We hope that the presentation of this report will achieve the fifth, and an accreditation scheme will be developed that truly meets the needs of the playwork field.

CHAPTER THREE

How We Organised the Consultation

The consultation was carried out through a series of three meetings held in Walsall, West Midlands (28th November 1989), Manchester (11th December 1989) and London (16th January 1990).

Before the meetings, the JNCTP Executive wrote and distributed a briefing paper explaining what accreditation is, why it is important for playworkers, and how an accreditation system might work (the previous chapter is largely based on this paper). The briefing paper, together with a publicity leaflet and booking form for the consultation meetings, was distributed to all JNCTP members. Because we realised that face-to-face playworkers have not been well represented at previous JNCTP events (which have attracted predominantly play organisers, managers and trainers) we asked member organisations to ensure the information was circulated to playworkers, students and trainees, and make it possible for them to participate in the consultation. We are indebted to many of our members who took this need very seriously, copied and distributed the information and encouraged a large number of playworkers to attend the meetings.

We are also grateful to the National Children's Play and Recreation Unit, which gave financial support to the consultation. This enabled us to pay travel expenses and provide free lunch and childcare for those attending, which in turn enabled playworkers from all over the country to attend without personal expense.

For each meeting we established a team of three experienced facilitators, with additional volunteers leading smaller groups for some sessions. In seeking to ensure the consultation gave equal weight to the needs and aspirations of all playworkers, we made sure that each team included male and female and black and white facilitators – responsible for planning and structuring the meetings, not merely window-dressing.

An outline programme was developed for the first meeting; this was evaluated and slightly amended for the second meeting and further adapted for the much larger third meeting (see page 9).

There was good attendance in all three meetings: Walsall 37, Manchester 27, and London 63. Those attending were widely representative of the playwork field throughout the country (lists of participants are included in the Appendix to this report).

Both our own evaluation and the feedback from participants suggest that, given the limited time and resources available to us, this was an effective and worthwhile consultation. The process of the days enabled a very high level of active participation, even in the larger meetings.

It was never the intention of this consultation process to achieve unanimous or even majority decision on the issues surrounding accreditation. It is therefore not possible for this report to state "This is what the playwork field believes..." or "This is what playworkers want...". The strength of this type of participatory consultation is the

opportunity for people to come together to discuss and explore the issues, to weigh up different arguments and options and, where necessary, to pin-point areas of disagreement. This process will therefore be reflected in the presentation of this report.

Programme for the Consultation Meetings:



Joint National Committee on Training for Playwork

Accreditation: Becoming a Qualified Playworker Through Recognition of Competence in the Job

NATIONAL CONSULTATION MEETINGS

28th November 1989: Walsall, West Midlands

11th December 1989: Manchester

16th January 1990: London

PROGRAMME

- 10.00 Arrivals, registration, coffee.
- 10.30 Introductions.
The Calibre Training Consultancy on Accreditation
- 11.00 Core Competencies for Playwork.

Determining an agreed list of what a Playworker must be competent to do in order to be effective is an essential starting point for a successful accreditation scheme. The main theme of the morning session will be looking at these "Core Competencies".
- 12.00 Introduction to afternoon workshops.
- 12.10 LUNCH
- 1.10 Reviewing the Core Competencies.
- 1.40 Discussion on key issues: small groups:
- * Recruitment, target groups, participants' groups
 - * The Participant/Consultant relationship.
 - * Implementing a personal learning programme.
 - * Collecting and assessing evidence of competence.
 - * The Playwork Qualification.
- 2.40 Break
- 3.00 Feedback from key issue groups. Recommendations.
- 4.00 Finish

CHAPTER FOUR

Reporting the Meetings: Overall Issues

The three meetings produced a great mass of information recorded on flipcharts and workshop notes. Presenting this in an accessible way for this report required difficult choices: to present an account of each meeting as it happened would involve a lot of repetition and possible confusion, while to edit the findings of the three meetings together runs the risk of losing some of the detail or, worse, distorting the sense of individual contributions to fit the overall pattern.

In the end we have decided to present the report issue by issue, merging the material from all three meetings together. This will make a clearer, more readable and, we hope, more useful report. Every effort has been made to ensure that we clearly and accurately reflect the sense of all three meetings, and the report is true to the meaning of what was said, if not always the words spoken.

How Representative Was It?

Participants at the Manchester meeting raised the issue of how representative these meetings were. With a total attendance over all three meetings of some 130 people out of a target group that must run into several thousands, we have to acknowledge that only a small percentage of playworkers actually participated. It is largely in response to these questions that we have included the participants' lists in the Appendix, so that readers can check the extent to which the consultation was genuinely representative of the views of the field.

Defining Playwork: Age Range

The main focus of JNCTP's work has been on training for those involved in playwork with school age children (ie 5-16), in out of school settings. However, upper and lower age limits for playwork have not been specified. At all three meetings, the majority of participants were involved in work with school age children. In Walsall and London the issue of age range was not raised, but in Manchester the meeting decided by a large majority vote that they wished to define playwork with **no age limits**.

Terminology – a Perpetual Problem

In the modern world of vocational training, new jargon is thrown up at an alarming rate. Sometimes, because we are dealing with new ideas, we **need** to learn new words. We would suggest that, while we can't avoid unfamiliar words altogether, we should keep them to a minimum, and make sure, if we do use them, that everyone is clear and confident about what they mean. We have tried to do this throughout the consultations and throughout this report.

Our biggest problem with terminology has been to find appropriate words for two very specific new roles: that is, the person who is working to gain accreditation, and the person who acts as their personal supporter/counsellor/guide through the process. The first of these roles we have simply called "participant" – not a particularly attractive word,

but we felt it was preferable to alternatives like “student”, “trainee” or “accreditee”. The choice of the term “participant” has not caused any problems to our knowledge.

The other role gave us more trouble. Options we considered were “supervisor”, “consultant”, “supporter”, “advisor”, “mentor”, “counsellor” and “tutor”. All of these convey aspects of the role, but none really seemed to define it properly. For our briefing paper and the first meeting, we used the term “tutor”. Some people found this misleading because it suggested we were describing a teaching role. For the second meeting we used the term “consultant”, but some people found this rather superior and overpowering, and it was suggested we should have stuck with “tutor”.

We do not think we have yet found the right word to describe this role, but we have decided to stay with the term “tutor”, or “personal tutor” in this report. In doing so it is important to point out once again that this tutor is not a teacher, or even a trainer in the conventional sense; they do not have the responsibility for delivering new skills to the participant. The tutor role is discussed in depth in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER FIVE

Core Competencies for Playwork

What are “Core Competencies”?

Unlike traditional training, where qualification is based on successful completion of a prescribed course, with an accreditation system qualification is based on demonstration of competence in the job. In order to do this properly, overall job competence has to be analysed and broken down into its different elements, that is, we need a list of all the things a playworker **must** be able to do in order to be effective. In training jargon, these “elements of competence” are called “competencies”. Some competencies may be useful but not essential, or may be job-specific (ie needed for some playwork jobs but not for others). The competencies that we would require **every playworker** to be able to demonstrate are called the **Core Competencies for Playwork**.

Developing an agreed list of Core Competencies is easier for some jobs than others. It is easiest in manual jobs; for example it would be fairly straightforward to make a list of the things you would require a qualified lathe operator or typist to be able to do. With “people work” jobs like playwork it is much more difficult. Also playwork is a very flexible and ever-changing job; we find it hard to define or analyse what we do and we often resist definitions that might restrict us.

But in order to reap the benefits of a viable accreditation scheme we have to accept the challenge of analysing and, to some extent, defining playwork. We have to work out what the Core Competencies really are. Because this task is so difficult, yet so vital, we devoted half the time at the consultation meetings to it. At least we have been given the opportunity to analyse the job from **our own perspective** and to write down our competencies in terms that make sense to us.

Competencies agreed at the Consultations

At all three meetings we started by working in groups looking at our idea of an “effective playworker” and from this went on to work out what an effective playworker is able to do. This enabled us to generate and discuss Competency Statements in the form:

“An effective playworker is able to ...”

At the Walsall and Manchester meetings, we went on to a further stage where we checked which statements the whole meeting was able to assent to. This entire process had to be very brief and further discussion would probably lead to considerable revision of the list.

At the London meeting, with more participants, we felt it was not feasible to seek a consensus of the whole meeting. Four groups produced their own lists, which we shared and compared.

In producing this one overall competency list, we have organised it as follows:

Competency statements agreed by the Walsall meeting are shown by (W) and Manchester (M). Competencies proposed by a least two of the four working groups at the London meeting (ie at least half of the meeting) are shown by (L), those put forward by just one group as (1). Wording has been changed slightly in some cases to improve readability and avoid repetition, but we hope meaning has not been changed. Also we have grouped them together into a number of areas or sub-headings to make the final list easier to read and analyse.

The list below, being an attempt to report the consultation meetings as accurately as possible, is probably too long and contains too many overlapping or inadequately-defined competencies to be used as a basis for an accreditation scheme. It does however offer a starting point from which a valid analysis of the Core Competencies of Playwork could be developed.

This list is followed by a list of other suggestions that did not receive the same level of agreement, and some of the issues where there was clear disagreement.

An Effective Playworker is able to.....

A. Inter-personal/Communication Skills

- Communicate effectively (with adults and children) (W M L)
- Communicate through play (M)
- Listen (W M L)
- Demonstrate listening skills (M)
- Empathise with children (M)
- Be in tune with children (M)
- Understand others (M)
- Use appropriate language (ie to children, parents, authorities) (W)
- Work with individuals (adults and children) (W)
- Form relationships (1)
- Be aware of the needs of individual children (W 1)
- Demonstrate counselling skills (1)
- Work with groups (adults and children) (W)
- Offer support and encouragement (W 1)
- Earn the respect of the children (W)
- Respect children (M)
- Be calm and reasonable and use humour constructively (W)
- Demonstrate social skills (M)

B. Equal Opportunity

Demonstrate awareness of equal opportunity issues (W M)

Understand equal opportunity issues eg racism, sexism, able-bodiedism, heterosexism, etc.

Be committed to working in an anti-oppressive way (W)

Demonstrate commitment to equal opportunity: anti-racist, anti-sexist, disability etc (M L)

Put awareness of equal opportunity issues into practise (eg challenging racist/sexist language or behaviour appropriately in a play setting) (M)

Challenge attitudes and develop strategies for dealing effectively with racism, sexism, heterosexism, people with disabilities and other oppressed groups (W)

Understand what multi-cultural play means (M)

Understand girl's work (M)

Show awareness of the needs of children with disabilities and respond appropriately (W)

Understand integrated play (M)

Be aware of children's social and legal rights (M)

Respect children's rights (M)

Promote children's rights (W)

C. Knowledge/Understanding Base

Demonstrate understanding of children's development (W M L)

Demonstrate basic knowledge of child behaviour (1)

Show understanding of role of play in child development (M 1)

Understand why and how people play (1)

Understand play and play provision (M)

Demonstrate a basic knowledge of theories of play and playwork (W)

Demonstrate awareness of the importance of play and related issues (M)

Understand the role of the playworker (M)

Have a balance between theory and practical skills (M)

D. The Play Environment

Create an environment to enable play (M)

Provide a safe play environment (W M)

Ensure children's safety – physical and emotional (M)

Create a safe and stimulating play environment that is welcoming (W)

Manage resources (M 1)

- Oversee repairs and maintenance of site, equipment and materials (W)
- Recognise hazards and respond appropriately (W)
- Demonstrate knowledge of Health & Safety law (M)
- Understand health and safety requirements (M)
- Be aware of health and safety issues and be able to implement them (W L)

E. Creating Play Opportunities

- Use a basic knowledge of child development in practice (W)
- Use a basic knowledge of theories of play and playwork in practice (W)
- Create play opportunities appropriate to individual children's needs, including development needs and developmental level (W M 1)
- Create play opportunities that can enhance children's development (W)
- Offer children choices (M)
- Plan and organise a programme of activities (W 1)
- Undertake practical activities with children (according to different personal styles eg leading from the front and mucking in together etc) (M)
- Demonstrate a range of practical activity skills (L)
- Enable and facilitate others to initiate and carry out practical play activities (1)
- Involve children in activities (1)
- Share activity skills with children (1)
- Relate play and playwork to wider issues (eg environmental) (W)
- Get the best from the surroundings (M)

F. Teamwork, Management and Administration

- Demonstrate organisational skills (L)
- Establish aims and objectives (M 1)
- Carry out forward planning (M L)
- Support and motivate other staff and volunteers (W)
- Work effectively as part of a team (W L)
- Evaluate their work and use the results of evaluation to plan effectively and improve practice (W M 1)
- Manage time effectively (W)
- Assess training needs (of self, other workers, volunteers) and assist in meeting these (W)
- Carry out basic administration (1)
- Keep an accident book (W)

Manage and balance a budget (W 1)

Work within a budget (whilst not ignoring the need to give playwork higher financial status) (W)

Keep proper records (W)

Complete essential paperwork (W)

Be aware of aims and policies of the project/authority/funding body and relate to them appropriately (W)

G. Self-Awareness/Self-Development

Understand themselves (M)

Demonstrate self-awareness (M)

Respect and value themselves (M)

Identify their own needs – not imposing them on children, but using this awareness positively (M)

Learn from children (M)

Develop (M)

Acquire new skills (M 1)

Demonstrate reliability and trustworthiness (W)

Demonstrate resourcefulness (W)

Work on their own initiative (1)

Be flexible (W M 1)

Be creative (M)

Have a sense of humour (M)

H. Community/External Relations

Liaise effectively with other agencies, people in the community and local authorities (W)

Promote children's play and the work of the project.

Demonstrate community development skills (1)

Recognise how norms and values prevailing in the local community affect play needs and respond to this (eg values based on traditional cultures) (W)

I. Working with Children – Additional Issues

Recognise and respond appropriately to suspected or discovered child abuse (W)

Establish and carry out codes of practice for behaviour of children, staff, management and visitors (W)

Be aware of health and environment (M)

Carry out first aid in the event of an accident (L)

Empower children to learn new skills, speak for themselves etc (M)

Demonstrate practical commitment to the empowerment of all children throughout society (1)

Understand their legal responsibilities and the law relating to their job (M 1)

Demonstrate a caring attitude to children (M)

The following suggestions received wide support but were felt to be too vague, and require further specification to be included in a list of competencies:

Carry out first aid in the event of an accident (W M) *To what degree? Note: this was also put forward in the London meeting and is therefore also included in I. above*

Assert themselves (M)

Demonstrate commitment (M) *(to what?)*

Relate to parents and co-workers (M)

Relate to children and adults (M)

Set boundaries (M)

Understand the community (M)

Have some practical skills (W M)

Promote play and playwork (M)

Deal with difficult situations (M)

The following suggestions received varying degrees of support at the Walsall and/or Manchester meetings, but did not receive full agreement:

Offer counselling to children, young people and staff (W) *Some people felt that this area of work requires a high level of specialist skills, which makes it inappropriate as a core completely for playworkers) Note: this was also put forward in the London meeting and is therefore also included in A. above.*

Work unsocial hours (W) *Not a competency requirement*

Do crafts (M) *Not an essential competency*

Fundraise (W) *Not an essential competency*

Write reports and fundraising applications (M) *Desirable not essential*

Keep a petty cash account (W) *Not an essential competency*

Demonstrate knowledge of procedures to follow when dealing with child abuse (M) *Desirable not essential*

Liaise with parents and the community (M) *Desirable not essential*

Liaise with other professionals (M) *Some people felt it was possible to be effective as a playworker without doing this. Some also felt to include this would devalue the role of the non-professional volunteer playworker*

Show a sense of fun (M) *Desirable not essential*

Work with a team – establishing common aims (M) *A few people felt it would be possible to be effective as a playworker without doing this, but this was a minority view*

Be diplomatic (W)

Be objective (M)

Demonstrate self-confidence (W)

Demonstrate a mature outlook (M)

Like children (M) *You **can't** like **all** children*

Organise play activities (M) *In the case of this and the following two suggestions, there was discussion of the role of the playworker as activity organiser. Some felt this was an appropriate role, some disagreed. Generally it was felt preferable to express these competencies in terms of creating opportunities, rather than organising*

Organise new games (M) *Useful, not essential*

Organise trips (M) *Useful, not essential*

Scrounge materials (M) *To make this an essential competency would be to institutionalise the poverty of playwork, which we are committed to fight against*

Make practical application of their understanding of issues eg racism, sexism, sexuality, disability, etc (M) *One participant suggested that taking action on equal opportunity issues was a political act and should not be an essential competency requirement. There was, however, a strong feeling that such action is central to all playwork; this is reflected in many of the other competencies agreed in section B. above.*

Accreditation in Action: How the Scheme might Work

1 Initial enquiry and introductory discussions.

Checking that accreditation is an appropriate route to qualification for this worker.

2 The participant is matched up with a Personal Tutor.

This two-way relationship is fundamental to the whole process.

3 Participant and Tutor form a learning contract.

This must also be endorsed and supported by the employer.

4 Participant joins participants' group.

Learners commonly stress the importance of belonging to a group for support and to share learning experiences. Although accreditation could be done in isolation, it would probably be important to involve each participant in a group, alongside their relationship with their Personal Tutor.

5 Reflecting on and interpreting previous experience.

6 Identifying actual learning from this experience.

7 Forming statements about current level of competence.

These three stages are closely linked and would be done by the participant with guidance and support from their Personal Tutor, over a series of one-to-one meetings as agreed in their learning contract.

8 Comparing current level of competence with established competencies required for accreditation and qualification.

The participant will also now be able to identify gaps or areas where they need further learning and experience, before they can be accredited.

9 Devise a personal learning programme to achieve competence still required.

This could include activities to carry out on the job, to enable learning through experience. It may also include participation in various short training events to acquire a specific new skill or knowledge, reading or other forms of individual study.

10 Carry out personal learning programme.

11 Collecting and preparing evidence of claimed competence.

This collection of evidence is often referred to as a "Portfolio", and a system that uses it, "Portfolio Learning".

12 Presentation of evidence for assessment.

13 Accreditation and certification.

As the participant is assessed as being competent in a certain area, they will be accredited with that competency. Once they have been accredited with all the required competencies they will be awarded the appropriate qualification.

14 Negotiating a personal development plan.

This must be endorsed and supported by the employer to ensure a continuing process of personal and career development, opportunities for post-qualification learning and "life-long learning".

Introduction

The concept of qualification through accreditation of competence is still new and unfamiliar to most playworkers (in fact, to most people!). In setting up the consultation the JNCTP had to find a way to communicate clearly what accreditation is and how it might work. To do this, we included in our initial briefing paper an outline of a possible accreditation system. This also provided an effective framework around which to structure discussion at the meetings.

Because this framework was developed **before** the consultations, we have thought carefully about presenting it again in this report. We are aware that offering one model to people before discussion, and using this to structure the discussion, is bound to influence what comes out of it. We have not sought to sell one pre-conceived idea to the field.

And so we have re-assessed our original model and structure in the light of all the material that came through the consultations. The model has had a thorough examination, both as a whole and by being taken apart and scrutinised piece by piece. We believe our original model has stood this test very well and has received, in principle, the endorsement of the meetings. We feel it is most appropriate to retain the same framework as a format for the discussion presented in this report. The original JNCTP model is therefore shown on page 19. The following sections offer a summary of discussion at all three meetings, organised according to the successive stages of this model.

1. Initial Enquiry and Introductory Discussions

Checking that accreditation is an appropriate route to qualification for this worker.

➤ Who will be eligible?

The overwhelming agreement was that restriction to access should be an absolute minimum, and as far as possible entry to the accreditation scheme should be available to anyone who wishes to pursue it. The scheme should be open to volunteers as well as paid workers, and to part-time and sessional playworkers as well as full-timers. It would also be important to ensure it was fully available to workers in voluntary sector projects as well as Local Authority employees. There should be **no requirement for academic qualifications**. All publicity, recruitment and selection for an accreditation scheme must be carried out under a comprehensive and continually monitored equal opportunity policy.

However, several possibly important criteria were suggested:

- ★ Completing the scheme successfully would require considerable commitment from the participant. The applicant would need to recognise this and perhaps undertake a process of reviewing for themselves that they genuinely wish to undertake such a large commitment.
- ★ Applicants for the accreditation scheme would probably have to have some previous experience of actual involvement in playwork: accreditation relies so

heavily on learning from previous experience that it would probably be a less appropriate (and more difficult) route to qualification for inexperienced workers. However, in identifying relevant previous experience it would be important to include all forms of voluntary playwork and related work with children in out of school settings, where relevant experience may be gained (the relevance of experience gained within uniformed organisations such as the Brownies or Woodcraft Folk was also considered - although this type of work is often seen as very distinct from playwork, it was felt that valid competence may be gained in certain areas). Recognition must also be given to the experience gained by people who are bringing up their own children.

- ★ Applicants might also be required to be **currently** (as well as previously) involved in playwork. It would be very difficult to complete the process unless the participant had regular access to playwork experience – both to develop new competence on the job and to collect evidence of competence they already claim to possess.

➤ **How much demand will there be? Will it be enough to make the scheme viable on an on-going basis?**

There was expected to be very high demand at first, as experienced long-serving playworkers use this route to become qualified. The main factor was thought to be whether a nationally endorsed qualification can be gained, and particularly the value attached to this by employers. For example, salary enhancement for qualified playworkers would give accreditation a major boost.

It was pointed out that “as long as there are children, there will be play” so there should always be a demand for accreditation – particularly from women workers and those in the voluntary sector. However, the demand will ultimately depend on the jobs and resources available and the career prospects.

➤ **Will it be suitable for playwork managers, organisers and trainers, as well as face-to-face playworkers?**

There was strong agreement that there should be a route to qualification through accreditation for playwork managers, organisers and trainers.

There seem to be two main issues:

- a) Managers, trainers, etc, may feel they will benefit from achieving an actual playwork qualification (ie qualification for face-to-face playwork) as part of their personal and professional development. Looking at the criteria for eligibility suggested above, they would have to have had previous experience of face-to-face playwork, and they may also have to make a commitment to undertaking on-going playwork sessions while they worked for accreditation. It was suggested that if places were limited, face-to-face playworkers should be given priority.
- b) There may be accreditation schemes specifically for play managers, trainers, etc. This could operate in the same way as for face-to-face playwork, but would be based around the specific competencies of these jobs, with their own criteria and

levels of assessment. Accreditation schemes suitable for playwork trainers are already being piloted and JNCTP will be monitoring such developments.

2. The Participant is matched up with a Personal Tutor

➤ How will tutors be chosen? How will they be trained?

There was a strong agreement that participants should have some control over selection of their tutor. It must be someone who is “credible”, acceptable and accessible to the participant. For example, it should be totally acceptable for women and black participants to request tutors of the same gender/race.

However, it was also agreed that there should be external criteria for selection of tutors. A range of criteria were suggested:

- ★ They must be committed to the scheme’s Equal Opportunity Policy and competent to maintain anti-racist and anti-sexist working practice.
- ★ They should have playwork experience, knowledge and understanding of playwork (ie ex or practising playworkers).
- ★ They should have an in-depth understanding of the core competencies, and an understanding of the process of accreditation.
- ★ They should have counselling skills, ability to make participants aware of their strengths and competence, and to help them identify their learning needs.
- ★ They would need knowledge of local resources, contacts and networks for information, support and further training opportunities
- ★ If the tutor was in full-time employment, it would be important that they have the support of their own employer for the commitment this role would involve.

In the light of this, tutors would be chosen in two ways:

- a) People wishing to act as tutors on the accreditation scheme could be invited to come forward. They would be offered initial training for the role of tutor and if they met the agreed criteria they could be put on an approved list (ie they themselves would be accredited). Applicants for the accreditation scheme could meet people on the list until a mutually satisfactory partnership is identified.
- b) If the applicant wishes to nominate someone who is not on the list, the organisers of the scheme would have to undertake an appraisal of that person. If they met the criteria or were willing to undertake additional training to achieve the criteria, they would become an accredited tutor as above.

In both cases, training opportunities should be available for tutors, to help them achieve maximum effectiveness in this role.

There should be a system for review if a tutor-participant relationship does not work out. There should be appropriate support for both parties and the possibility of the participant identifying another tutor.

➤ **Who will pay the Tutors?**

There was general agreement that tutors must be properly paid for a demanding professional role. This was seen as just one aspect of the issue of funding for the accreditation process as a whole. It cannot succeed if it is mistakenly seen as a cheap option.

To ensure equal opportunity and access, costs to participants themselves must be minimal. Employers, through payment of fees, should contribute to the cost of the scheme (perhaps on a sliding scale, to protect employees of small voluntary organisations). Local Authorities should fund accreditation schemes in their areas through grants to training organisations (or possibly by running schemes themselves).

It was also felt that we would need additional funding from a national body, to support piloting and establishment of the new scheme.

3. Participant and Tutor form a Learning Contract

This must also be endorsed and supported by the employer. It was suggested that this would have to include the time commitment of both parties, and agreed time limited for achieving each stage of the process. It was re-emphasised that the tutor would need a sound understanding of the accreditation process to ensure a workable learning contract that would lead to accreditation.

4. Participant joins Participants' Group

Learners commonly stress the importance of belonging to a group for support and to share learning experiences. Although accreditation could be done in isolation, it may be important to involve each participant in a group, alongside their relationship with their personal tutor.

➤ **Would group participation be an essential requirement? What about participants who are geographically isolated? Or where there are too few to form a group?**

There was strong agreement that participation in a group would be highly desirable. Benefits were seen as:

- ★ Support
- ★ Sharing ideas and information
- ★ Learning through participation in the group, and using the group situation to demonstrate what has been learnt
- ★ Giving and receiving feedback: developing your self-awareness through the group

Every effort should be made to ensure everyone is able to participate in a group, and ideally this would be a requirement for all participants. However the scheme would have to be extremely flexible to ensure no applicant is disadvantaged or prevented from undertaking accreditation by their geographical or personal situation preventing them from participating in a group, eg, people in rural areas, people with limited mobility or those caring for dependants, who cannot easily travel to group meetings. Resources should be available to provide help with transport, childcare facilities, and to ensure only fully accessible buildings are used for group meetings.

It was suggested that, as part of the monitoring of the accreditation scheme, we could find out to what extent participation in a group does actually help people gain accreditation. Then the system could be revised if necessary.

5. Reflecting on and interpreting previous experience

6. Identifying actual learning from this experience

7. Forming statements about current level of competence

These three stages are closely linked and would be done by the participant with guidance and support from their personal tutor, over a series of one-to-one meetings as agreed in their learning contract. In considering this part of the process, once again the importance of the tutor role and the need for skilled, competent tutors were highlighted.

(It might be appropriate to assemble evidence of current competence and submit this for assessment at this stage – see 11 and 12 below.)

8. Comparing current level of competence with established competencies required for accreditation and qualification

The issue of what are the required competencies is so important that it has a chapter of this report to itself (Chapter Five).

It was pointed out that in order to carry out this part of the process effectively, the tutor would have to be able to help the student, not just in interpreting the Competency Statements but also in recognising and comparing against the actual criteria to be used for assessment of each competency. This shows that a great deal more work still needs to be done once the core competencies are agreed, to establish agreed assessment criteria for each competency. This is even more complex if we are hoping to move towards a system of competence-based qualifications at different levels (see 12 and 13 below).

The participant will also now be able to identify gaps, or areas where they need further learning and experience, before they can be accredited.

9. Devise a personal learning programme to achieve competence still required

This could include activities to carry out on the job, to enable learning through experience. It may also include participation in various short training events, to

acquire a specific new skill or knowledge, reading or other forms of individual study.

10. Carry out Personal Learning Programme

Individual learning methods, such as reading and distance learning opportunities (such as Open University) will play a part, helping people to gain background knowledge and understanding, but will not in themselves be seen as a demonstration of competence.

Short courses on particular topics will also be very important in developing new knowledge and skills. Unless the course itself contains an acceptable assessment of competence, this would again have to be followed by an assessment of competence gained.

Participants would need to carefully plan their work and manage their time so as to take advantage of learning opportunities as they arise. Employees would also need the full support of their management in taking time off to attend training courses and events, and in some cases would need support with fees and expenses. Participants will probably need help in finding out what training is available locally. A lot of training that is not specifically for playwork could help playworkers develop their competence, for example training opportunities provided by local Youth & Community services.

Learning on the job should play an important part in working towards accreditation. This could take place in the worker's regular job, and also a variety of placements and work exchanges could be organised. A problem here is that a worker's learning opportunities will depend to a large extent on the quality of experience available to them where they work. Will they be disadvantaged if they work in a project that is under-resourced, badly managed or lacking skilled staff? In some areas good quality playwork is hard to find, which will limit opportunities for learning on the job.

Overall, it was agreed there would need to be a substantial increase in training opportunities, properly co-ordinated, all over the country, if playworkers are to get the full benefit of the accreditation scheme. It was hoped that the establishment of the NCPRU-sponsored National Centres would provide new opportunities and resources for playworkers to tap in to.

Some important questions were also asked about post-qualification training: Will there be a way to update skills once people have qualified? Will there be refresher courses? How will post-qualification learning needs be built into the system?

➤ **How long will it take? Should there be a time limit?**

It was generally thought that time limits should be flexible, but that work schedules and deadlines for each part of the process must be negotiated by each participant with their tutor, monitored, reviewed and revised if necessary.

11. Collecting and preparing evidence of claimed competence

This collection of evidence is often referred to as a “Portfolio”, and a system that uses it “Portfolio Learning”.

➤ What will be acceptable as evidence?

There was wide agreement that a playworker’s portfolio could contain a wide variety of evidence of different types. The sort of evidence that would be appropriate would vary according to the specific competency being assessed. For some competencies it would be quite simple to produce adequate documentary evidence, for example:

- ★ A set of well-kept accounts would be good evidence of ability to manage and balance a budget.
- ★ Before and after photographs of a site the worker has been developing would give evidence of ability to create a safe and stimulating play environment.

The main issue here is the extent to which, for some competencies, the participant would have to be seen and assessed actually working with children (and by whom?). Can interpersonal skills like “Communicate effectively with children” be assessed any other way than by observing the worker in action in the work environment?

Bearing this in mind, a wide range of possible types of evidence was suggested:

- ★ Diary recordings or log-book.
- ★ References and statements from employer, line manager/supervisor and colleagues.
- ★ Photographs (with appropriate explanatory material).
- ★ Video record of play activities or project work.
- ★ Notes or tape recordings of discussions – with tutor, colleagues, etc.
- ★ Recordings of placements carried out in other play projects.
- ★ Scrapbook.
- ★ Any form of record that has been kept of previous work.
- ★ Reports and assessments of specific training previously undertaken (though a certificate of attendance at a training course does not itself count as evidence of competence).
- ★ Write-ups or other documentation of special projects undertaken on aspects of playwork – individual or small group projects.

- ★ Observations from tutor or other assessor who visits the worker on the job and can report directly on their observed competence.

This last type of evidence – on-the-job assessment – raises a number of issues that would need to be closely examined:

- a) Assessment would have to take some account of the project where the worker is based. Their achievement may be determined by other factors like the amount of support, quality of teamwork, level of resources, etc, as well as their own competence.
- b) All those involved would have to be sensitive to the needs and rights of the children using the project. They should not be exploited in the interest of producing good evidence.
- c) It was pointed out that we often make assessment of others based on “gut feelings” or “hunches”. This would not be acceptable in evidence for accreditation. We would have to develop ways of identifying the observed behaviour that gives rise to feelings and hunches about people. To ensure an objective assessment the observer/assessor would need prior training, a strict set of guidelines on what to look for, and the ability to separate actual observed behaviour from their own assumptions.
- d) The personal tutor also has a support role and if they were involved in collecting evidence for assessment they would have to show they were not biased towards the participant.
- e) Can a fair assessment of competence be made in a single visit? There could be a **programme** of assessment over a period of time, building up an accurate assessment over a number of observation visits.

Finally, it was noted that length of service in the field should not count as evidence of competence. The worker would still have to show what they had learned through their experience and how they apply that learning in their work.

➤ **Will self and/or peer assessment be acceptable as evidence?**

There was strong feeling that self-assessment would play a part in the process, alongside the other forms discussed above. Self-assessment is only valid if it is totally honest, and the tutor would probably play an important role in helping the participant to make honest self-assessments.

12. Presentation of Evidence for Assessment

➤ **Who will assess the evidence?**

At present it is hard to say who would be qualified to act as an assessor for the scheme. The preferred solution would be a regional panel of assessors, who would have to be chosen initially on the basis of recognised competence and relevant experience. They could be managers, playworkers, trainers or others, provided they

had substantial experience of play and “credibility” with the field. It was suggested that they might be seconded from their regular work for a year, and that they should be paid from a national fund.

It was generally agreed that the Personal Tutor would not act as the main assessor, but would probably play an important part in the assessment as supporter and possibly advocate for the participant.

From a number of different suggestions, we can envisage the following possible assessment procedure:

- a) A completed portfolio of evidence on a number of competencies (see 11 above) would be sent off to the Regional Assessment Panel (it might be better to deal with a small number of competencies at a time like this, rather than doing the whole lot in one go at the end – but either way would be possible).
- b) A member of the panel would meet with the participant and discuss aspects of the evidence. This would help to confirm the validity of evidence presented, and provide a more direct and human element in the process. It would also be possible to involve the Personal Tutor in a three-way discussion at this stage.
- c) The assessor would have to apply clear, objective criteria (see below) and accept or reject the evidence as demonstrating the required level of competence. If evidence was rejected the assessor should indicate why, and suggest what additional information might be required.
- d) There would have to be a good appeal procedure, perhaps involving other members of the regional panel.
- e) There would obviously be a prescribed number of competencies to be achieved for certification. The assessment panel would keep a record as they were achieved, and when the required number was completed the worker would be awarded their qualification.

➤ **What will be the criteria for assessment?**

It was agreed that there would have to be clear criteria for assessing the evidence of competence put forward. And further if there is to be Qualification by Accreditation, at more than one professional level, then there must be accurate specification of the degree of competence to be demonstrated at each level, with separate criteria for each.

Setting criteria will be particularly difficult, because of the great variety of different types of evidence that may be presented, which may not easily be comparable.

The overall feeling at the consultations was that this is a crucial aspect of the scheme that will require a great deal of detailed work in the future. This will have to be undertaken as a priority as soon as basic agreement on the Core Competencies is reached.

Will someone oversee the process to ensure all assessors are fair and equal?

It will certainly be difficult to achieve national standardisation, given the diverse nature of playwork and the wide range of opinions and attitudes around the field.

It was suggested that the assessors will need nationally-organised training for their role. They will need a detailed understanding of the competencies and the criteria for assessment.

It was also suggested that there should be a National Panel to oversee the scheme; to act as a “Court of Appeal” or undertake a trouble-shooting role.

An appropriate national organisation would have to take responsibility for these aspects of the scheme. It was suggested that JNCTP may be the best-placed organisation, but whoever takes it on will have to be properly resourced in order to fulfil these responsibilities.

13. Accreditation and Certification

As the participant is assessed as being competent in a certain area, they will be **accredited** with the competency. Once they have been accredited with all the required competencies they will be awarded the appropriate certificate.

- Who will award the Qualification? Will it carry national endorsement? From whom?

There was strong agreement at all the meetings that the qualification **must** carry the endorsement of a national body representing the playwork field and fully recognised by playwork employers, “otherwise it is not worthy setting up”. Even if qualifications were awarded by regional bodies, they must still carry national endorsement and employer recognition. This recommendation and the following discussion relate to the issue of playwork qualifications generally – by whatever route they are achieved.

Considering the national bodies currently in the field, it was generally felt that there is not at present any organisation that meets the requirements for the National Endorsing Body. JNCTP has the greatest collective experience and expertise in training, but would need substantial new resources and an expanded representative membership structure to take on the role. The National Children’s Play and Recreation Unit has greater resources, but is not representative of the field.

The prevailing view was that the field would need to establish a new body, widely representative of the playwork field, and of both local authority and voluntary sector employers. This body would need to seek formal recognition from the Government and from the local authority associations. It would also have to be adequately centrally funded to carry out its tasks properly.

- **Will employers recognise it? Will it lead to career opportunities?**

It is essential that employers recognise the new playwork qualifications. It was felt that they will, provided the qualifications have **national** endorsement from a credible

body, and that employers, through their own organisations, are part of this. Initially some “agitation” may be needed to inform and motivate employers to participate.

If we establish a system of qualifications at different levels, we will also have to work with employers and Trade Unions on identifying for what grades of jobs they will require what levels of qualifications.

It is already apparent that recognised qualifications lead to career opportunities. People with little or no experience of playwork, but “recognised qualifications” in related fields, are often able to get key posts in playwork. This highlights the importance employers already attach to recognised “paper qualifications”. But....

➤ **Will accreditation be as good as a qualification gained by a traditional route? Will it be seen as a second-class qualification or a short-cut?**

The overwhelming view of the meetings was that a qualification gained by accreditation of someone’s actual competence is, if anything, a better qualification than one gained by a traditional route such as a college course.

However, it was recognised that there may be some resistance to this idea:

- a) From employers, unfamiliar with the concept of accreditation and maybe mistrustful of the new scheme.
- b) From workers who have trained by traditional routes and feel accreditation is a soft option.
- c) From colleges and polytechnics protecting their own interests.

Again it may be necessary to inform and educate local authority employers, so that they recognise and accept qualification through accreditation as being in their own interests in ensuring competent staff.

➤ **Will it come within the new Government-sponsored “National Vocational Qualifications” scheme?**

It was generally felt that we need to develop a scheme based on the needs of playwork and playworkers first, and then see to what extent our needs can be met by working with the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. People need more information about NCVQ in order to discuss this further.

Whilst many of us would not accept the elitist hierarchy of job status in our society, it was pointed out that we want to see playwork recognised as a **profession** – not “just a job”, ie, it should be on a par with solicitors, teachers and doctors.

➤ **Will it help people who want to move to a related area of work?**

Our main focus is on achieving appropriate qualifications specifically for playwork, but it was recognised that “transferability” of qualifications will be very important in the future.

It was generally hoped that the playwork endorsing body would recognise relevant competence gained in related fields, and that equivalent bodies in other fields would recognise accreditation gained in playwork.

14. Negotiating a personal development plan.

It was widely agreed that learning and development, both personal and professional, should be continuous throughout one's career. It was therefore generally accepted that the final stage of the accreditation process would be the development of a plan for future learning and development. This must be endorsed and supported by the employer to ensure a continuing process of personal and career development, opportunities for post-qualification training, and "life-long learning".

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusions

At the end of this long, rather formal report, I hope it's OK to add a brief personal conclusion.

As the co-ordinator of the consultation process and principal author of this final report, this project has been a big commitment over the past four months, and at times I have felt it was going to take over my life completely.

At the same time, it has been a rewarding experience – full of learning for me – and it has been exciting too. I feel we are about to take playwork education and training into a new age.

We took as our starting point that **playwork is important**, that playworkers make a significant and valuable contribution to the development of children (and so to the future of the world), and that to do this difficult, complex work well requires not just enthusiasm and commitment, but very great skill and understanding as well. We felt that, after many years of inconclusive debate, people in play are starting to agree with one another that:

It actually does matter that people working in children's play, whatever their level of commitment or responsibility, should be competent to do what they do effectively.

Playworkers need opportunities to learn and grow and gain competence for the work they do. It actually does matter that playworkers should have access to training.

Playworkers need recognition for the learning they have undertaken and competence they have achieved. **We want proper qualifications for playwork.**

Because, in the '90s, we can start from these shared beliefs, it feels like we can move further and achieve more than we ever achieved before – a proper national system of training and qualification for playwork, and the national recognition that will go with it.

And that wasn't all. There was the high level of active participation, the quality of debate and discussion, the sharing and mutual support, the challenge, the informal networking and building of relationships. And the fact that so many people cared enough to give up their day to discussion of unfamiliar and sometimes difficult issues. For what? What did they take away in return? Perhaps only the hope that they had contributed to our ultimate goal – the true recognition and valuing of who we are and what we do.

And there was something else even more exciting....

The people at the consultations showed that in an age of greed and oppression, playwork wants to hang on to its principles. Time and again people reminded us that equality of opportunity and equality of access are fundamental to all playwork and must

be equally fundamental to all our training. We renewed and strengthened our commitment to challenge racism, sexism and all forms of oppression in our work and in society. We recognised that while we are striving for professionalism, we must clearly reject the elitism and exclusiveness of the established professions. We discussed the importance of starting from people's strengths; recognising the unique value and contribution of every adult and every child.

And finally we recognised playwork's long tradition of democracy – of local grass-roots organisation, of empowering adults and children to take control of their own lives, of consultation and participation at all levels and of organising from the bottom up.

Sometimes it seems to me that principles are out of fashion these days - that British society revolves round the crude values of the market place, and even our children are simply another set of consumers.

Playwork has a different tradition – a different view of the world. **Whatever** comes out of this process, we must make sure it is true to our principles.

Harry Shier
February 1990

APPENDIX

Participants in the Consultation

MEETING ONE

Afro-Caribbean Youth Council, Walsall, West Midlands – 28th November 1989

Planning and Co-ordination:

Haki Kapasi	Play-Train
Wendy Russell	Nottingham Play Forum
Harry Shier	Play-Train

Additional Working Group Facilitators:

Viv Dudley	Nottinghamshire Social Services
Sue Platt	Islington Play Training Unit

Other Participants:

Peter Lewis	Coronation Road Adventure Playground, Birmingham
Mary Miles	Birmingham Education Department
Wendy Matthews	Wrekin District Council
Sylvia Davies	Wrekin District Council
Richard Corfield	Dudley MBC Leisure Services
Alan George	Calibre Training Limited
Neil McCarthy	Newark Play Support Group
Ray Hautot	Wandsworth Latchkey Development Group
Peter Middleton	City of Birmingham Rec & Community Services
Jack Hynes	City of Birmingham: Chinbrook Hall Play Centre
Peter Bowden	City of Birmingham: Chinbrook Hall Play Centre
John Freeman	City of Birmingham: Handsworth Park Play Centre
Foster Darby	City of Birmingham: Small Heath Play Centre
Deby Morgan	City of Birmingham: Farm Park Play Centre
Albert Lyons	City of Birmingham: Small Heath Play Centre
Grace Turner	City of Birmingham: Burbury Park Play Centre
Pauline Collins	City of Birmingham: Henry Barber Play Centre
Trevor Jones	City of Birmingham Play Development Officer
Jackie Eite	City of Birmingham Play Centres in Schools
Mrs D Dunn	City of Birmingham Play Centres in Schools
Mrs J F Wallis	City of Birmingham Play Centres in Schools
Liz Quartey	Manchester City Council Play Unit
Mel Potter	Wolverhampton MBC Community Play Section
Dave Kilworth	Wolverhampton MBC Community Play Section
Alison Paxton	Wolverhampton MBC Community Play Section
Jackie Jackson	Islington Play Association
Karnel Singh	Islington Play Association

Shashi Bhana	Balsall Heath Park Play Centre, Birmingham
Janette Bushell	Play-Train
Ju Desborough	West Hill College, Birmingham
Louie Robinson	Walsall MBC Community Play Service
Daljit Kaur	Bentley Drive Primary School

MEETING TWO

The Mechanics' Institute, Manchester – 11th December 1989

Planning and Co-ordination:

Judith Horsfall	Manchester City Council Play Development Unit
Liz Quartey	Manchester City Council Play Development Unit
Harry Shier	Play-Train

Additional Working Group Facilitators:

Judy Benson	Manchester City Council Play Development Unit
Phil Gunn	Manchester City Council Play Leadership

Other Participants:

Heather McAvoy	Stockport Play Development Team
Franca Fenocchi	Stockport Play Development Team
Stephen Rennie	Playtech and Leeds Polytechnic
Sue Birtles	Rochdale and District Play Action Council
Kath Jackson	Rochdale MBC Play Development
Christine Taylor	Thurrock Technical College
Christine Johnson	Calibre Training Limited
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James Holian	Manchester One Parent Families
Wendy Cross	South Manchester Community College
Eva Smith	Manchester City Council: Play Leadership

MEETING THREE

Highbury Roundhouse Community Centre, London N5 – 16th January 1990

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Harry Shier	Play-Train

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Wendy Russell	Nottingham Play Forum
Alison White	Hackney Play Training

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