

80 per cent of parents see children's freedom curtailed

Submitted by: Thinc PR (JBA Public Relations)

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New statistics released today reveal a disconnection between what parents want for their children and the reality of our current nanny state.

The research, conducted by YouGov on behalf of Record RSS, suggests that children today are increasingly being wrapped up in cotton wool, with eight out of 10 respondents (83 per cent)* agreeing that today's children miss out on play - without adult supervision - because of concerns about their safety. It is also clear that from the research, parents understand the value of play, with 71 per cent of adults wanting children to be challenged and motivated through unsupervised play.

Douglas Belfield, director at playground designer Record RSS says: "Whilst Record RSS welcomes the fact that Government is investing in playgrounds, with £235 million committed over the next three years, we would argue that the over zealous focus on health and safety by nervous councils could misdirect the way the money might be spent. As a result, we have some of the most sterile, boring and unchallenging playgrounds in Europe."

He continues: "Our research findings highlight a concern that today's children are missing out on unsupervised play, a critical part of their mental and physical development. Incorporating risk is an important aspect of growing up. We develop from learning by our mistakes and pushing our boundaries and this has to start in childhood."

Sue Palmer, author of Toxic Childhood comments: "Adults are right to be worried. For healthy physical and mental development, children need first-hand real-life experiences – and since time immemorial they've got these experiences through free-ranging loosely-supervised outdoor play. In our increasingly risk-averse society freedom to play has been massively curtailed. Instead, today's children spend an average of 5 hours 20 minutes a day staring at screens. As a society, we urgently need to reverse this trend. So it's no good just being worried - communities have to act to ensure this and future generations of children get the healthy outdoor play that's every child's birthright."

Belfield adds: "Fears over health and safety have left the UK with uninspiring playgrounds. We are championing the fact that playgrounds – by their very nature – need to be challenging and risky in order to attract children to go back again and keep trying. It is fine for kids to fall over!

Belfield concludes: "Government intervention and our nanny state is damaging our children's development. This will have a lasting impact as they go through life. If we are not careful, we will become a completely risk averse country to the detriment of our growth and prosperity."

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors:

* All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1960 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 2nd July – 4th July 2008. The figures have been weighted and are

representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

Additional statistics from Record RSS' research:

- Eighty per cent of adults agree that today's children have less freedom to play than they did as a child.
- Almost nine out of ten (86 per cent) 55+ year olds surveyed agree that children today have less freedom than they did as a child.
- Parents with children aged 16 to 18 years old 43 per cent strongly agree that today's children miss out on unsupervised play due to adults being overly concerned about their safety. Compared to those with children aged 5 to 6 with 31 per cent strongly agreeing.
- Seven out of 10 adults (73 per cent) say a little bit of risk is OK when children play unsupervised if it means that they are challenged and stimulated compared to only one in ten disagreeing.
- A quarter (25 per cent) of adults surveyed said that children should have the independence to play unsupervised outside the home at the age of 10.
- 80 per cent of adults agree that children today have less freedom to play as a child.

Additional quote:

David Ball, Professor of Risk Management, Middlesex University comments: "There is a gathering view that British children and young people no longer have a good childhood. Their lives are dominated by time spent at home, in organised activities, and motor transport. The days of playing freely and imaginatively with friends and without adult intrusion have been severely curtailed. These changes have resulted in part from concerns about safety, but what is often overlooked are the health benefits, physical and emotional, of play, and the valuable experience of making one's own choices. Children and young people need these opportunities to learn about life and its dangers, otherwise they will find it all the more difficult to survive the challenges of adulthood."

About Record RSS

Record RSS is proud of its reputation as market leader in the provision of innovative and reliable play solutions. Record RSS is committed to providing safe play equipment for children of all ages who now demand more fun, increased challenges and stimulating equipment to mirror influences and aspirations.

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