Welcome to this special edition of the Súgradh newsletter dedicated to a celebration of the recent National Play Day which is an annual event to prioritise play and recreation for children; all the while encouraging communities throughout the country to organise energetic and health-focused activities in their own cities, neighbourhoods, streets, parks and open spaces. The theme for this year’s event was ‘Street Games’ which is aimed at communities taking action to support children playing outdoors and within their own communities. Indeed the importance of children having the time and opportunity for play was acknowledged internationally earlier this year by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child with the adoption of a General comment that clarifies for Governments worldwide the meaning and importance of article 31 which states that States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities…and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.” We hope you enjoy a snippet of the activities that took place nationally highlighted within the newsletter.

Dr. Carol Barron, Chairperson.
Súgradh.
Súgradh welcomes the announcement earlier this year from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child of the adoption of a General comment that clarifies for governments worldwide the meaning and importance of article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Article 31 ensures that “States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities...and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.”

The stated objectives of the General Comment are:

- To enhance understanding of the importance of Article 31 for children’s well-being and development, and for the realisation of other rights in the Convention.

- To provide interpretation to States parties with regard to the provisions, and consequent obligations, associated with Article 31.

- To provide guidance on the legislative, judicial, administrative, social and educational measures necessary to ensure its implementation for all children without discrimination and on the basis of equality of opportunity.

The Committee was concerned by the poor recognition given by States to the rights contained in article 31. Specific areas of concern relate to:

- Poor recognition of the significance of article 31 in the lives of children which has resulted in lack of investment in appropriate provisions, weak or non-existent protective legislation and the invisibility of children in national and local-level planning. In general, where investment is made, it is in the provision of structured and organized activities, but equally important is the need to create time and space for children to engage in spontaneous play, recreation and creativity, and to promote societal attitudes that support and encourage such activity.

- The Committee is also particularly concerned about the difficulties faced by particular categories of children in relation to enjoyment and conditions of equality of the rights defined in article 31, especially girls, children with disabilities, indigenous children and children belonging to minorities, among others.

This general comment has been developed to address these concerns amongst others, raise the profile, awareness and understanding among States of the centrality of the rights in article 31 in the life and development of every child, and urge them to elaborate measures to ensure their implementation. The full copy of the General comment No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (art. 31) can be accessed at http://www.refworld.org/docid/51ef9bcc4.html.
Clare County Council

For National Play day and Recreation Week, Lissycasey GAA club held an Under 10 Football Blitz at Lissycasey GAA Club main pitch on 26/6/13. 6 teams took part and each team had three games of football. It was a lovely sunny evening and the children from all clubs really enjoyed the event.

All children received a medal and a goodie bag. The event was co-ordinated by Declan Kelly and it is intended to run this Blitz each year from no one. Teams included in the events were the Shannon Gaels, Kildysart, Clondegad and Lissycasey.

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Dublin City Council

Dublin City Council's Merrion Square Park will hosted its annual national Play-Day event on Sunday, 3rd July from 2-5 p.m. Families joined in this FREE afternoon of fun and games in one of the City's favourite parks, Merrion Square.

Speaking on Play-Day, Lord Mayor Councillor Oisín Quinn said: "This is one of Dublin City Council's family-friendly events taking place during the summer holidays. This free event took place in the beautiful surroundings of Merrion Square Park and proved to be lots of fun and entertainment."

The theme for this year's event was 'Street Games'. This theme was aimed at communities actively encouraging and supporting children in outdoor play. Games new and old were featured for example, skipping, marbles, penalty shoot-outs and relays and obstacle courses.

Tapping into the imagination of children was also a key focus on the day with creative elements of play on offer such as messy play, art, dress up and den building. A special interactive theatre performance by Blackthorn Arts will celebrated 'Street Play'. Debby Clarke, Community Officer with Dublin City Council said, "Play-Day encourages the very essence of Children's Play. Playing outside is beneficial for children's overall health and well being. The sight and sound of children playing on the street is an important element of a vibrant, sustainable community."

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Súgradh Playday Newsletter August 2013
Fingal County Council, together with volunteers from Balbriggan, Rush and Swords Cycling Clubs and BMX Ireland, facilitated and organized a weekend of BMX-ing in Balbriggan. The National Play Day 2013 theme ‘Street Games’ was very apt not only for the children participating, but also for Fingal Council as the event type was edgy and outside of the comfort zone of previous events hosted by the council.

The event was attended by approximately 1,200 children and adults on what was a scorching weekend. Four events areas were set out to cater for children aged 2 to 18 years, including: Strider Bikes (peddle-less bikes) for 2 to 5 year olds; Time Track for 3 to 10 year olds; Pump Track for 5 to 18 year olds; and a Dirt Jump Line for the 12 to 18 year olds. The overwhelming feedback from the parents and children was ‘Deadly!!’ and, ‘can you leave the track here all summer…? Please?’

There was lots of fun, lots of smiles, lots of excitement and thrills; not to mention the exercise and health benefits to those taking part. The event linked in very well with the tradition of road cycling that exists in North County Dublin. Many of the cycling clubs members have children who find there is no appropriate facility for their age group. A BMX track (all-be-it temporary) was broadly welcomed and supported by the cycling clubs and cyclists of all ages in North County Dublin and further afield. In fact, people from as far away as Trim are known to have travelled to Balbriggan specifically for the event.

The event was funded by Dept of Children and Youth Affairs and Fingal County Council. It is important to say that the event would not have been possible without the generosity and know-how of members of the cycling bodies already mentioned.

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‘Play in the Park’ was held on Sunday July 7th 3-5pm in Aughrim Visitor Centre and Community Park near Ballinasloe Co. Galway. The Park beside the Centre is beside the local community playground so it provided a relaxing place for families on what proved to be a sunny afternoon.

Play is a fundamental part of every child’s nature and children will play wherever they are. There are over fifty playgrounds available in County Galway for pre-school up to 12 and in many cases 16 year olds. Many have adapted equipment for inclusive play for children with special needs. As part of National Play Day fun events in Aughrim Community Park and Playground, Galway County Council launched its first on-line Playground Guide – Lets Play! on www.galway.ie www.gaillimh.ie.

Playgrounds provide a free place for children, their families and minders to explore play and enjoy the outdoors. The Guide was welcomed by the parents present who saw it as useful guide to planning a family day out throughout the County. Fun activities on the day included a variety of outdoor parachute games, old fashioned sack races, games with giant footballs, art and crafts, face painting and a chance to visit the Battle of Aughrim Visitor Centre which was free to families on the day.

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On Saturday 6 Libraries joined forces to deliver 2 play day activities in 2 locations for young children. This play day formed part of the National Play Day initiative to increase awareness of the importance of play for children and the vital role it plays for children’s physical, social and overall holistic development. 

In Thurles Library, creative messy play was a big success in Thurles with the children becoming involved in experimenting with gloop and cooked play dough, providing an enriching sensorial experience for young children. Adding materials from home, metal jugs/spoons, wooden sticks, straws etc. extended the learning (and the mess!) promoting exploration and thinking, and a prime opportunity for language development and building communications. Children also got to play with a well stocked treasure basket, wooden blocks and natural musical instruments. All of the play activities reflected the key themes within Aistear, the National Early Years Curriculum Framework.

Story-time was facilitated in Nenagh Library with the children extending the story through role play with puppets and dress up clothes. Building blocks, tents and tunnels were provided for the children to engage in pretend play, with parents and children alike becoming involved.

There was a large turnout, with children ranging from 6 months to 6 years, playing parallel and together.

‘Aistear’ tip sheets were provided to parents to promote the importance of play for their children in line with key themes of Identity and Belonging, Communications, Well-being and Exploring and Thinking. We also disseminated NALA promotional materials for their ‘Help my kid learn’ initiative. Overall positive feedback was given with the suggestion that this should be a weekly event!
National Play Day is an opportunity to link activities already undertaken by Local Authorities and many other locally based providers, youth and sporting organisations. Sligo Libraries ran a number of events throughout its branch network for National Play Day, one of which was a colouring competition of “Nina The Owl”.

The image selected to be coloured in is that of Nina The Owl who is “EU guardian of children’s right to go to school and get an education.” Entries were received from a number of playgroups, pre-schools and afterschool homework clubs throughout County Sligo. Sligo County Library Service wishes to acknowledge the support given by Sligo County Childcare Committee with regard to the distribution of entry forms and to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs for funding the events. Simone Schümmelfeder, a German storyteller hosted a storytelling session in Sligo Central Library. Simone told a number of European stories and give a bit of information about the countries the stories were from as well. She used a Kamishibai – a small table theatre, which you can put pictures into, it looks a bit like a TV, and used pictures of the different countries and let the children guess which country it was. Simone included stories from Croatia as it joined the EU as the 28th country on July 1st 2013.

Laura Brett conducted a Euro Child workshop in Ballymote Community Library starting at 10am on July 6th, aimed at children aged 6-8 years. Laura worked with the children to compose funny and outrageous lines which could then be put together to form a poem. Laura helped the children work on both rhyming and nonrhyming poetry and brought along a selection of poetry and art work by children from a number of European countries which demonstrated different cultures and self-expression.
National Play day Events also took place in:

Carlow:
Family Play day in Bagenalstown Tow Park,

Cavan:
Family Play day in Con Smith Park, Cavan Town

Cork:
Ballyphehane Togher Fun Day in Tory Top Park, Ballyphehane

Dublin:
All Day Family Play Day Free in Merrion Square,
All Day National Street Performance Championships
Libraries Summer Reading Events
Dún Laoghaire:
Teddy Bears Picnic, Outdoor Movies, DLR Libraries Summer Reading Events Cabinteely
Carnival in
Blackrock Park and Cabinteely Park.

Kerry:
Registration; Pedal in the Park; Introduction to Football Camp for Girls Aged 9-11 in
Killarney National Park and Moyderwell Primary School, Tralee.

Kildare:
Introduction to outdoor exercise equipment;
Kildare Libraries Summer Events; Family Play Day; Indoor & outdoor educational events in
St Catherine's Park, Leixlip and Harbour Field, Maynooth.

Kilkenny:
Lego Concepts Workshop for children aged 7-12
Go-Carting Challenge; Killadooley Family Day in
Portlaoise Leisure Centre and Killadooley, Borris-in-Ossory

Leitrim:
Fun in the Sun Cam; Multi Sports Activities For All in
Leitrim Village Community Facility.

Limerick:
Play Day Activities in Maghnus Castle, Kiltimagh
Family Fun Day; Summer Ply Picnic in
St Colmcilles, Navan, Kells and Ashbourne.

Monaghan:
Family Play Day; Games of Yesteryear in
Mindszenty Park and Inniskeen.

Offaly:
Family Play Day in Tullamore Town Park

Roscommon:
Lough Key Adventure Kingdom in Lough Key Forest Park Activity Centre.

Westmeath:
Leadership training through recreational & sports activities in Lilliput Activity Centre, Co
Westmeath.

Wexford:
Table Tennis Coaching; Wellness Day; Bowling Competition; BBQ & Soccer Blitz; Gorey Play
Day in
Youth Room, St Joseph's Community Centre, St Joseph's Community Centre and Gorey Community School.
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