



# Should Playwork Principles apply to Children's Ministry?

*by Tonia Vincent*

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## **Acknowledgments**

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My Professional Practice and Dissertation Tutor has done so much to draw out of me why I feel play is so important to Children's Ministry and encouraged me to pursue a play-based model for Children's Ministry.

My thanks to go a friend and experienced proof-reader for the numerous times she has proof read the many drafts of this research project.

## **Abstract**

This participatory action research project asks the question, 'Should Playwork Principles apply to Children's Ministry?' It seeks to understand perceptions of play in Children's Ministry from the perspectives of children in a Sunday morning group for children in school year three and four, the Children's Ministry Leaders and volunteers in an evangelical church in the East Midlands.

A review of literature relevant to our understanding of play and the role of play in Children's Ministry is conducted. This provides an understanding of and suggestions for play-based Children's Ministry.

Current models of Children's Ministry tend to mimic an educational model. This is not effective in engaging children, as children prefer an active and participative approach. Play provides space for children to participate, freely explore and experience God and the Christian faith. A play-based approach, it is argued provides participation, freedom, space and choice for children and reflects the approach taken by Jesus when he placed a child in the midst of a theological debate and puts children at the centre of how Children's Ministry is implemented.

The research included an interview with the Children's Ministry Leader, a consultation group with volunteers involved in Children's Ministry and participative action research using photos with twelve children in school years three and four. The research revealed views that reflect current understanding of Children's Ministry as an educational model but with inclusion of play and activities to ensure Children's Ministry is more engaging. Play, space for children to participate, freely explore and experience God and the Christian faith was perceived positively with openness to developing resources and space for play in partnership with children and a desire for further understanding and training on a play-based approach to Children's Ministry. Participatory action research with children gave insight into how children play and their perceptions of activities used in Children's Ministry, providing awareness of what activities they consider play.

## Contents Page

Introduction and Aims	5
Literature Review	8
Playwork Principles	8
Children’s Ministry	10
Conclusion	13
Methodology	14
Participatory action research with children	14
Research with adults	17
Discussion of findings	19
Findings of interview with Children’s Ministry Leader	19
Findings of consultation group with volunteer helpers	20
Findings of children’s views of activities and play	21
Analysis, evaluation and critical reflection of findings	22
Recommendations for Children’s Ministry	26
Conclusion	31
Appendices	34
Bibliography	63
Ethical Clearance	65

### List of figures and tables

Figure 1 – Children’s Work Model	6
Table 1 – Children’s views on activities	21
Table 2 – How children play	22

## **Introduction and Aims**

‘The first thing liberated beings do is enjoy their freedom and playfully test their newfound opportunities and powers. Why are we seeing so little of this?’

Moltmann, J (1972: vii)

‘Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.’

(Matthew 18:5)

To be happy and enjoy ourselves we need to be free but in contrast, our lives are often busy, stressful and hassled (Moltmann, 1972). In the heat of theological debate, Jesus stops, and welcomes a child, placing her front and centre. Jesus’ approach challenges us to stop and take stock of what we are doing and how. If we can receive children like Jesus, we will provide a warm, empowering, safe, respectful and open space. Jesus calls adults to become childlike, and our response to that call depends on our ability to play, since play is an important element of kingdom life, helping us find the freedom we need to build community (White, Willmer, 2013).

Moltmann suggests we have failed to grasp this idea of play and freedom, and I believe in doing so we are not only lacking so much ourselves as Christians, but so are our children. Ministry means to give humble, loving service, as Jesus did when he washed the disciple’s feet (Douglas, 1998). It is my hypothesis that in trying to humbly love and serve our children, freeing them to enjoy and encounter Jesus, we are in fact, stifling their exploration, controlling their space and restricting their ability to grow spiritually and develop a deep, lasting faith. Adopting educational models of Sunday School as described by Lamont, has meant Children’s Ministry is about knowledge and understanding rather than exploration, awe and wonder (Lamont, 2007).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has two articles relating to children’s right to have their views respected and the right to play. Article 12 states children have the right to say what they think should happen to them, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account. Article 31 declares that children have the right to wide variety of artistic and cultural activities. The

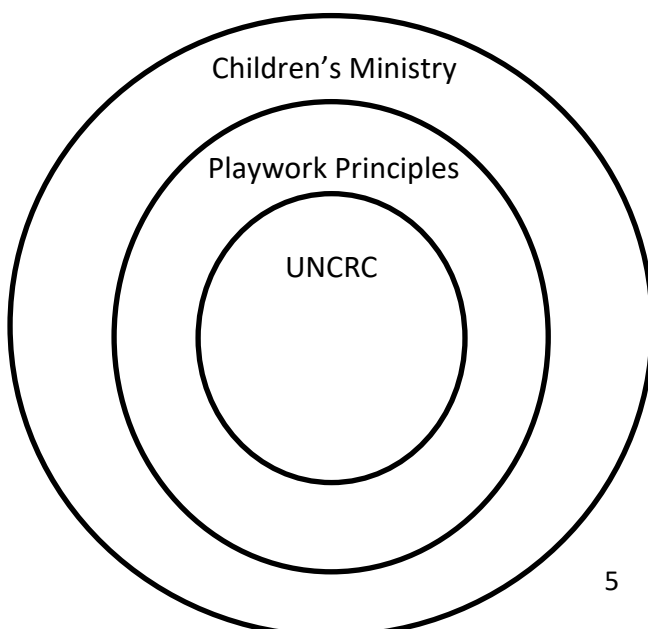
UNCRC is something that I have regularly come across in reading and researching playwork but it is barely mentioned in research and writing about Children's Ministry ([www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org) accessed 27/3/18).

The Playwork Principles provide a framework for being with children that like Jesus, puts children front and centre, respects their views and choices and provides freedom and space for exploration and experience.

Children's Ministry founded on the principles of the UNCRC and Playwork, would I believe begin to see a Ministry that offers greater freedom, respect, participation, play and choice for children that would be beneficial to their spiritual and faith development. A play-based model of Children's Ministry founded on the UNCRC offers the freedom, participation and child centred approach necessary for children to explore and experience the awe and wonder of God and the Christian faith.

Two years of study and practical application of the Playwork Principles and the UN Convention on Rights for the Child to my own practice have exposed me to an alternative approach of being with children that has transformed my thinking and practice in Children's Ministry at our Sunday gatherings.

Below is a model of Children's Ministry embedded within the UNCRC and Playwork Principles. I would argue that the church has much catching up to do in order to keep up with current thinking and practice. This model begins to emulate Jesus when he placed a child in the midst of disciples and to recognise nationally and internationally regarded rights and frameworks.



Allowing children freedom to play, explore and experience awe and wonder of God is important because as Paul expresses to the Ephesians, faith allows us to approach God with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12). For our children to understand and grow in faith they need to experience freedom and grow in confidence.

This research hopes to understand perspectives of play and Children's Ministry at Sunday morning gatherings from those leading and volunteering in Children's Ministry and of children in school years three and four who attend an evangelical church in the East Midlands. The research consists of an interview with the Children's Ministry leader, a focus group with volunteers of those working with children in school years three and four and participatory action research with children in school years three and four who attend a medium sized church in a town in the East Midlands.

In seeking perspectives on play from various stakeholders, an understanding of play and its relevance to Children's Ministry in our Sunday morning gatherings will begin to emerge. The information gained will help towards developing a play-based approach to Children's Ministry in Sunday morning church gatherings, built on the foundations of the Playwork Principles and the UNCRC.

I recognise that this is only a snapshot of one element of Children's Ministry in one location, but it will provide an indication of how Children's Ministry in my setting compares to the views of those writing on the subject of Children's Ministry and how play is viewed in a church context.

## Literature Review

### Introduction

This review explores approaches and thinking towards Playwork Principles and Children's Ministry. The questions I will seek to answer are what are current views on playwork and Children's Ministry? What do playwork and Children's Ministry have in common? Where does Children's Ministry engage in or fail to engage in a playwork approach? Is there scope for further developing playwork and Playwork Principles in Children's Ministry in Sunday morning church gatherings?

There are eight playwork principles. The first two define what is important for us as adult playworkers to understand about children's play. The following six principles describe aspects of playwork and the practice that supports what playworkers do.

There are various definitions of and approaches to Children's Ministry but they tend to emulate an educational model. It is my hypothesis that a play based approach to Children's Ministry on Sunday mornings would be more effective for children's spiritual and faith development.

### Playwork Principles

The Playwork Principles acknowledge that there will be significant improvement to children's and young people's development if they are given a broad range of environments and play opportunities. Established and endorsed in 2005 by SkillsActive, working collectively with playwork professionals and trainers across the UK, the Playwork Principles provide a 'professional and ethical framework for playwork' ([www.issuu.com/playwales](http://www.issuu.com/playwales) accessed 19/2/18). Having a collective approach to playwork helps to deliver consistency and understanding so that playworkers can identify different types of play ([www.issuu.com/playwales](http://www.issuu.com/playwales) accessed 19/2/18).

The principles reflect scientific studies of the previous thirty years, particularly evolutionary psychology studies of human behaviour and play (Hughes, 2012). Hughes, Kilvington and Wood agree that scientific study reveals the vital importance of play to human development and that play is most effective when there is a rich variety of environments with the least amount of adulteration, that is, plays space adults spoil or dominate with their own agenda.



(Hughes, 2012; Kilvington, Wood, 2010). Hughes also argues that Playwork Principles reflect a need to respect children and recognise the biological importance of play (Hughes, 2012). In conclusion, Hughes states the importance of children to our future and of play to children. It is therefore vital for us to provide space and freedom for our children to play (Hughes, 2012).

Hughes, Kilvington and Wood describe Playwork Principles as providing an overview. The first two principles define adult's perspective on play using their intuition, childhood memories, experience of working with children in play settings and research (Kilvington, Wood, 2010). Underlying the first two principles is the reality that children do not want adults to 'control or direct their play' because they intrude, ruin and misunderstand their play (Kilvington, Wood, 2010:5). Kilvington and Wood go on to say that Principles three to eight describe what underpins the role of a playworker, portraying 'an approach, an attitude, a belief system, a way of working that is very different to others ways of working with children' (Kilvington, Wood, 2010:6). Playworkers understand that play is children's domain and are largely responsible for supporting play by creating space where there is none, making that space interesting and making careful assessment about when and how to intervene (Kilvington, Wood, 2010).

Brown offers a critique of the Playwork Principles, arguing that Principle 2 does not stand up to scrutiny. Freely chosen play is not always the case, argues Brown. For example, children playing may coerce other children. Brown further argues that play may be directed but may not always be personally directed as children will often be led and told what to do by another child. Brown also argues that play may be motivated, but not intrinsically, as a child may be taking part in play, for example, being teased, but is not intrinsically motivated to be part of the play. Brown contends that freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated play is what we should be *encouraging*. Brown prefers Play Wales wording, 'play which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated is vital in a child's development' (Brown, Taylor, 2009:123-125). Brown claims that, even when children do not determine or control the content and intent of their play, it still has developmental benefits. Playwork Principles 3-8 describe *what* we do as playworkers but not *how* we do it. Playwork is unique in that it is concerned with a child's perspective rather than an adult agenda. Missing from the Playwork Principles is an awareness of the holistic, flexible, reflective, non-

judgemental awareness of the individual child, where they are now and the non-directive character of playwork and playworkers (Brown, Taylor, 2009).

Summing up, it is clear to see that an approach to Children's Ministry based on Playwork Principles, even taking into account Brown's criticism, provides a framework for children to be at the centre. Playwork Principles provide a framework for adults to know how to provide space and freedom for children to explore and wonder about God and the Christian faith in their own way, for their own reasons.

### **Children's Ministry**

Children's Ministry on a Sunday morning generally consists of telling a story, interactive recall of the story followed by an art and craft activity and worksheet (Lamont, 2007:82-84). Lamont adds that Sunday school has tended to mimic the school system children are familiar with and equates knowledge with faith. She goes as far as to say that in some churches, Sunday school is a 'sacred baby-sitting service' (Lamont, 2007:82-84).

Statistics show that between the years 1990-2010 the church in the UK will lose an estimated 1.1 million children. It is also predicted that the number of children aged fifteen and under who attend church will fall to 183,700 in 2020 compared to 375,300 in 2010. Peter Brierley suggests that if action is taken, we can buck the trend ([www.eauk.org](http://www.eauk.org) accessed 9.4.18). A play-based approach to Children's Ministry could be part of the solution, providing a child-centred with freedom and choice to encounter God and the Christian faith.

Mark Griffiths admits with Lamont, that Sunday morning children's programmes are baby-sitting but suggests that the attitude of children's workers should be different to that of a babysitter. Griffiths defines children's Sunday morning programmes as the activity that happens when the adults are in their meeting for a short period. Griffiths adds this programme should form only part of what should be a balanced church experience that includes all-age services and living as a community. Griffiths recommends that a Sunday morning children's programme should include prayer and praise, a variety of teaching materials and the use of positive reinforcements (Griffiths, 2017). I fear Griffiths misses the mark in not exploring elements of play in a programme with space for children's free choice and intrinsic motivation. Application of Playwork Principles would remove the need for positive reinforcements and allow personally directed play where children experience the

wonder and awe that Griffiths argues we are to ‘preach,’ to children (Griffiths, 2017:26). Griffith’s ideas about Children’s Ministry on Sunday mornings are adult-led and taught rather than child-centred, perhaps explaining why play is not mentioned anywhere in his ‘Essential Guide to Ministry with Children and Families.’

In ‘What reaches children?’ Pearson discusses issues raised from a biannual survey she conducted of Episcopal churches in the United States. She describes a familiar Sunday School scene both in the States and in the UK (Lamont, 2007) where children sit around an adult telling a story, with worksheets to follow. Pearson adds that this is not what she is finding through her survey. Instead, children are not keen to sit and listen but prefer to take a more active, participatory role in Sunday School. Sunday School teachers are looking for easy to use material that is ‘contemporary, experiential and ‘entertaining,’” (Pearson, 2014:28). Pearson speaks of teaching in Sunday School but acknowledges the popularity and growth of Montessori based approaches, like Jerome Berryman’s Godly Play, to ‘children’s formation’ where children are given choice and experiences that engage all the senses (Pearson, 2014:30). This article is interesting as it suggests Sunday School models based on teaching are not attracting and keeping children engaged in church but play-based curricula are proving to be more successful. A play-based approach to Sunday School would be experiential, active and participative for children.

Berryman, Nye and White have made significant progress in recognising the importance of play in Children’s Ministry. Berryman models his Godly Play Curriculum on Garvey’s definition of play as pleasurable, intrinsic, spontaneous, voluntary and involving deep, active engagement (Berryman, 2007). Berryman is endeavouring to use Godly Play as a means of helping children to understand religious language and to use that language in creative and liberating ways. Nye describes play as the natural language of childhood and states that play has sacred qualities (Nye, 2013). White describes creativity as one of five essential elements of child development. White prefers to use the term creativity rather than play, arguing that the word ‘play’ presents a false dichotomy of play being the opposite of work and therefore non-productive. For White, creativity reflects the fact that we are all made in God’s image, including children, and he adds that a playing child sees no difference between creation and recreation, art and work (White, 2011). In conclusion, White says, ‘creative

play is potentially one of the most important activities in the life of a child' (White, 2011:170).

Miller-McLemore explores the role of play in the Christian faith wanting to articulate how play is a spiritual practice. She argues that play and religious practice have 'unique qualities' such as, 'spontaneity, creativity, joy, freedom and grace' (Miller-McLemore, 2009:506) and suggests that we undervalue children's understanding of play and the positive impact play could have within our faith. Miller-McLemore argues that 'there is spiritual wisdom in play' despite play having been idealized by modern culture (Miller-McLemore, 2009:507).

Childlikeness is a suggested sign of Christian maturity, and play therefore has relevance to all generations. Therefore, as play is an important element of a healthy childhood and 'essential practice of faith,' it should also be an important and essential element of our practice of faith (Miller-McLemore, 2009:516,517).

Eaude discusses the need for hospitable space in Sunday school to nurture children's spirituality, suggesting that children need a space where they can explore, reflect, imagine, be creative, playful and wonder voluntarily, and not have over-controlled activities or outcomes. Eaude proposes that adults need qualities that enable them to empower and enable children rather than exert influence, power, control or authority, whether consciously or not. He concludes that 'opportunities for genuine play are an important element of hospitable space' (Eaude, 2014:245). I would argue that playwork principle two is reflected in Eaude's ideas and that providing freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated play opportunities would help create hospitable space for children's spirituality to develop.

Csinos explores how we can create hospitable spaces that nurture children's faith and spirituality. In his research with thirteen young people, he saw four repeated styles of spirituality emerge he was able to categorize as word, emotion, symbol and action. Word-centred people prefer clear and precise use of words and like focusing on God' written word, the Bible and the spoken word, for example, preaching and Bible studies. Emotion-centred people like spiritual experiences that evoke an emotional response and value music, drama and personal testimony. They enjoy the freedom and space to be creative and express how they feel and live in the moment. Symbol-centred people find silence, listening and connecting with God important. They like calm, quiet space and enjoy God's creation,

art and ritual because of its rich symbolism. Action-centred people place value on justice and making the world a better place and express a desire to care for others and God's creation. Csinos concludes that there are a variety of different ways in which young people express their spirituality and spiritual styles helps make sense of that (Csinos, 2011). In reviewing Csinos, 'Children's Ministry that fits,' Dawson wonders if Csinos spiritual styles are more complex than he describes. She cites for example, that Csinos emotion-centred approach does not include art forms such as drama and dance ([www.childhoodandreligion.com](http://www.childhoodandreligion.com)).

Like the Playwork Principles, Csinos approach focuses on children and their preferences and suggests that we need a variety of approaches in order for children's faith and spirituality to develop.

### **Conclusion**

Pearson, Miller-McLemore, Eade and Csinos reflect Playwork Principles in their discussion of Children's Ministry including, freedom, exploration, voluntary wonder, a need to resist over-controlled-activities and a desire to respect, empower and enable children to explore in a variety of different styles rather than allow adults to control and limit children's experiences. However, Pearson, Lamont and Griffith's description of Children's Ministry still reflects an adult led, child taught model. When Jesus placed a child in the midst of his disciples, he said that to understand His Kingdom we had to become like them. Children play, children explore and learn as they play, children need a rich and varied environment to grow and the Playwork Principles provide a framework in which this could be achieved in Children's Ministry in our Sunday morning gatherings.

The next section considers the methodology used in understanding views of play on Sunday mornings from the perspective of children and adults involved with Children's Ministry.

## **Methodology**

Through the method of participatory action research, I looked to answer the questions, 'What are people's perception of play and should Children's Ministry include play?' I was not seeking to establish what was considered play or compare different perspectives, merely understand different people's perspectives on play.

Action research is a participatory, democratic approach to research with a wide variety of methods that aim to see individuals and communities flourish through an evolving cycle of change that is collaborative (Brannick, Coghlan, 2014). Methods available to action researchers include interviews, focus groups, and participatory activities (O'Kane in Christensen, James, 2008).

### **Participatory action research with children using photographs and feedback on play**

When researching the views of children and their perceptions of play and Sunday morning Children's Ministry, I used a participatory action research method with visual stimuli.

Participatory action research views children as active agents, is alert to issues of manipulation, coercion, power and authority and is a process leading to improvement and change for the better (Bottrell et.al, 2015). These were all important factors to consider when involving children in this research study.

Having come across Howard and McInnes, 'Activity Apperception Story Procedure,' (AASP) I was keen to use this method of research, described as game-like, easy to use and child-friendly in research with children (Howard, McInnes, 2013:44). AASP requires children to post photographs into two post boxes labelled play or not play. Using photographs of activities undertaken in the setting captures a more accurate reality than pictures. The idea of the exercise is to understand children's perception of play in my setting. I added a further two letterboxes. One labelled 'not sure' and one labelled 'how I play,' with a postcard and writing and drawing implements for children to write or draw their personal play preferences. The letterbox labelled 'play' was green, the 'not sure' letterbox, orange and the 'not play' letterbox red, mimicking traffic lights. Mimicking traffic lights was a visual aid I hoped would help children who may not be able to read or speak English, as most children know how traffic lights work. I added the 'not sure' letterbox to provide more choice for children, appreciating that they do not necessarily view things so clearly as 'play' or 'not

play', sometimes they don't know, and that's ok. Allowing a letterbox where children could present their own views and preferences of play demonstrates a willingness to hear and respect their views; children are after all, experts in play.

Having read about Howard and McInnes AASP and its advantages, I began to take photos of activities that I had used in the setting, in preparation for this research. The photos used are of actual activities in the setting itself, making the research more meaningful and therefore more valid. The letterboxes include the element of choice, a cue considered play by children helping make the research play-based. Appendix 2 shows the children's responses.

I approached the parents and children of a convenient sample available on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2018 to take part in this research.

### **Evaluation of participatory action research with children using photographs**

Evaluation of the participatory action research method with children seeks to answer the questions, 'Was the method of taking photos and placing them in letterboxes relevant and appropriate for the children participating and answering the question?' and 'How can I understand children's perceptions of play in Children's Ministry?'

Article 12 of the UNCRC states that 'children have the right to say what they think should happen to them, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account.' Play Wales have produced Children and Young People's National Participation Standards containing seven standards to help those working with children ensure the 'process, quality and experience of young people of all work involving the participation of young people and children' ([www.childreninwales.org.uk](http://www.childreninwales.org.uk) accessed 24/11/17). The standards include, having information that you can understand, the right to choose to participate, to be respected, treated fairly, the opportunity to work with others and make a difference, to know that your ideas are listened to and that decisions are made in the children's best interest and central to everything done. The standards highlight that I produced information that children can understand having produced an information sheet specifically for them (Appendix 1 of Ethical Clearance Form). Children also had the choice to participate, their views respected and their best interests taken into account through communication before the research took place and during the research process. (Appendix 1 of Ethical Clearance Form). Children could withdraw at any point, have a parent or carer

present if they desired and were given the opportunity to participate in research regarding the group they attend on Sunday mornings.

Working alongside children should reflect Jesus in the way that he walks humbly serve alongside us. Immanuel is a name given to Jesus meaning, God with us. It denotes that God, in the form of a man came down from heaven to be with us, to come alongside us.

Philippians describes Jesus as one who gave up his power and authority to become not only like one of us, but more than that, to humble himself and became a servant. I would like to reflect this same attitude more in my ministry by working with and coming alongside children, relinquishing my own power and serving children. Throughout the research process, my attitude was one of wanting to come alongside children and give them choice and freedom in participating and expressing their views on play.

The use of photographs with children was a good one according to Thomson, for a number of reasons. Children are interested in images and like working with visual tools as they communicate emotionally and aesthetically, eliciting a different response than perhaps speech or word based research methods (Thomson, 2008). I would add that it also enables children with a language or speech barrier or additional need to participate fully and equally. The AASP method mirror Jesus who painted pictures with words in the parables he told, using images of familiar and everyday scenes.

Using photos of activities reflect that of 'The First Claim.... A framework for playwork quality assessment,' that assesses playworker's use of props. However, this research assesses play and props from a child's perspective rather than the assessment framework that uses adult's assessment (Hughes, 2008). Again, this places children at the centre of the process.

I took photos of activities I had planned and not of other sessions or leaders activities. However, the photos reflect what other leaders do as we all use the same curriculum and resources in a shared cupboard.

In conclusion, AASP and the additions I made reflect a methodology that is child- centred, participative, play-based and reflects elements of 'The First Claim... A framework for playwork quality assessment.'



## **Research with adults**

With adults I was looking to answer the questions, 'How do others perceive play and should Children's Ministry include play?'

Alongside participatory action research with children, I also conducted an informal interview with the Children's Ministry Leader and a focus group with volunteer helpers of the group I lead on Sunday mornings for children in school years three and four. Informal interviews and focus groups provide an opportunity for participants to express their personal views and help me understand and appreciate the perceptions of those who lead and participate in Children's Ministry in our Sunday morning gatherings. Interviews and focus groups are also open-ended and unstructured and focus on the participants and what they have to say rather than merely confirming the view of the interviewer (Brannick, Coghlan, 2014). As questions posed during interviews and focus groups can confirm the hypothesis of the interviewer, it is important to be sensitive to the impact asking questions can have and essential that I am open and flexible in designing and conducting the focus group and interview (Brannick, Coghlan, 2014). In order to reduce these factors, I devised questions in consultation with a tutor.

I identified participants based on their roles in church, i.e. Children's Ministry Leader for the interview and volunteer helpers of the group on Sunday mornings at church for children in school years three and four.

I have transcribed and coded the interview and focus group drawing out themes that are relevant to play and Children's Ministry (Appendices 3 and 4).

## **Evaluation of research methods used with adults**

The interview and consultation group revealed a different view of play to my own, which suggests the interviews were open-ended and focused on those participating, helping me gain valuable insights into perceptions of play.

Coghlan and Brannick suggest using the term consultation group rather than focus group when undertaking action research in your own organisation because technically, focus groups consult members of the public anonymously without any further engagement. In this study, however, I am eliciting views of members of the organisation I am studying which intervenes in their thinking, creating expectations. By applying the term 'consultation

group,' I am acknowledging the interventionist character of the study (Brannick, Coghlan, 2014:91).

The element of intervention was an aspect of action research I had not fully appreciated when considering methodology. Action research is not just a method of gathering knowledge but is a way of enabling transformation and new ways of carrying out Children's Ministry in my setting. Conducting an interview is itself an intervention that can potentially lead to change. Change is something that needs to happen in consultation and collaboration with all stakeholders. However, not all stakeholders were included in the research, for example, the church leader and elders. I understood interviews collected knowledge but not that they could also be an intervention (Mowat, Swinton 2016).

In conducting the interview and consultation group a tutor advised that I have a definition of play should I be asked. As the aim of the interview and consultation group was to elicit the views of those being interviewed, I chose not to have a pre-written definition so that I learned others views on play rather than others views of *my definition* of play. The interview transcript confirm that I learned the views of others rather than confirming my own. I expressed my own definition of play when asked as part of the wider, open discussion. The definitions I used were based on Playwork Principles and in context with the discussion (Appendices 3 and 4).

Proverbs state that, 'wisdom is found in those who take advice,' and that, 'with humility comes wisdom' (Proverbs 13:10; 11:2). I am now more aware of action researches transformative and interventionist nature, and in future will consider with all stakeholders whether any change because of research will be welcome.

The following section evaluates, analyses and reflects on the findings of the views of children and adults towards play and Children's Ministry in Sunday morning gatherings in light of research and literature on play and Children's Ministry.

## **Discussion of the Findings**

In exploring the question of whether Playwork Principles apply to Children's Ministry, this discussion begins by looking at an interview and consultation group with adults involved in Children's Ministry, considering their perspective on play and Children's Ministry. Data from a participative activity with children in school years three and four is also used to help assess what activities used in their Children's Ministry the children consider play and how they play. In light of these findings and drawing on the literature reviewed, this discussion will then analyse, evaluate and critically reflect on whether Playwork Principles should apply to Children's Ministry when we gather on Sunday mornings.

### **Findings from interview with Children's Ministry Leader (Appendix 3)**

The Children's Ministry Leader enjoyed children joining in and appreciated knowing when they had understood what she was trying to teach during Children's Ministry on Sunday mornings. For her, teaching about God from the Bible in a way that was simple, fun and enjoyable was an essential element. In her view, play included playing with toys and playdoh, being creative, being able to use their imagination and games.

The Children's Ministry Leader felt that play was important but not essential, seeing play as something that made Children's Ministry fun and enjoyable. The emphasis of Children's Ministry for her was teaching children and helping them to learn. She added that, it was good when play activities were used as part of teaching as they appeal to children and probably make the teaching and learning memorable.

When discussing the possible benefits of play to Children's Ministry on Sunday mornings, the Children's Ministry leader defined play as: different activities, offering variety, engaging children who learn in different ways, appealing to more children and helping children remember. There was a distinction for her, between play and learning about God. For the Children's Ministry Leader, play provided introductory fun but then needed to stop so that teaching could begin. Finally, she expressed the view that generally, she made an effort to make Children's Ministry interactive. She was also open to training and assistance in Children's Ministry, to develop confidence in the team so they felt able to do things differently.

**Findings from consultation group with volunteer helpers in a Sunday morning group for children in school years three and four (Appendix 4).**

The volunteers working with children in school years three and four enjoyed working with a dedicated team, who were committed, prepared and longed for children to know Jesus more. Volunteers enjoyed the fact children were valued and respected by those involved in Children's Ministry. An essential element of Children's Ministry included the centrality of the Bible whether through storytelling, drama or other means of communication. Different forms of play were crucial to Children's Ministry along with prayer and learning how to pray. Fun, too was essential along with learning as a community and being a community. When asked 'What is play,' their responses included words and phrases such as fun, enjoyable, active, helpful, necessary, spontaneous, freedom to express yourself, helps see children in a different light. Play was also described as helping to get the best out of children, helps children's skills come to the fore, is a way of finding out about the children, is therapeutic, an outlet for energy and frustration and creates a sense of togetherness and community.

In discussing whether play should be an essential element of Children's Ministry, the answer was yes, as it allowed for discovery, engagement and development of community. Giving children choice and different activities empowered them and created a relaxed atmosphere. It was also felt that play created enthusiasm and was deep and experiential. There was positive regard for play throughout the consultation as it meant children were not sitting down and listening to an adult, as at school. They also felt that play gave children the opportunity for free expression, was more natural and helped build relationships.

When discussing play and Children's Ministry the participants used words such as games, toys, community and mentioned activities that linked to teaching themes and a message. A discussion between the interviewer and participants on giving children choice and freedom followed. When debating the benefits and limitations of play in Children's Ministry, it was felt that increased adult supervision would be required. Other limitations of play and Children's Ministry included the need for adequate physical space including space for children to be loud or quiet.

Benefits of play to Children's Ministry included children's enjoyment and engagement. Play, they suggested, provided an opportunity for children to delight, imagine, create, experience,

be themselves and discover for themselves. When working with large groups of children, the school model makes it easier to manage children’s behaviour, despite the fact it is restrictive and children do not enjoy it or learn at such a deep level.

The consultation ended with a brief discussion about training and equipping for those currently involved in Children’s Ministry. This could ensure resources for play were readily available and perhaps make it possible to involve children in the process of planning play.

**Findings of children’s views on activities used in Children’s Ministry and their views on how they play (Appendix 2).**

Twelve children were given twelve photos of activities used in their group to assess whether they saw these activities as play, not play or were uncertain whether they were play or not.

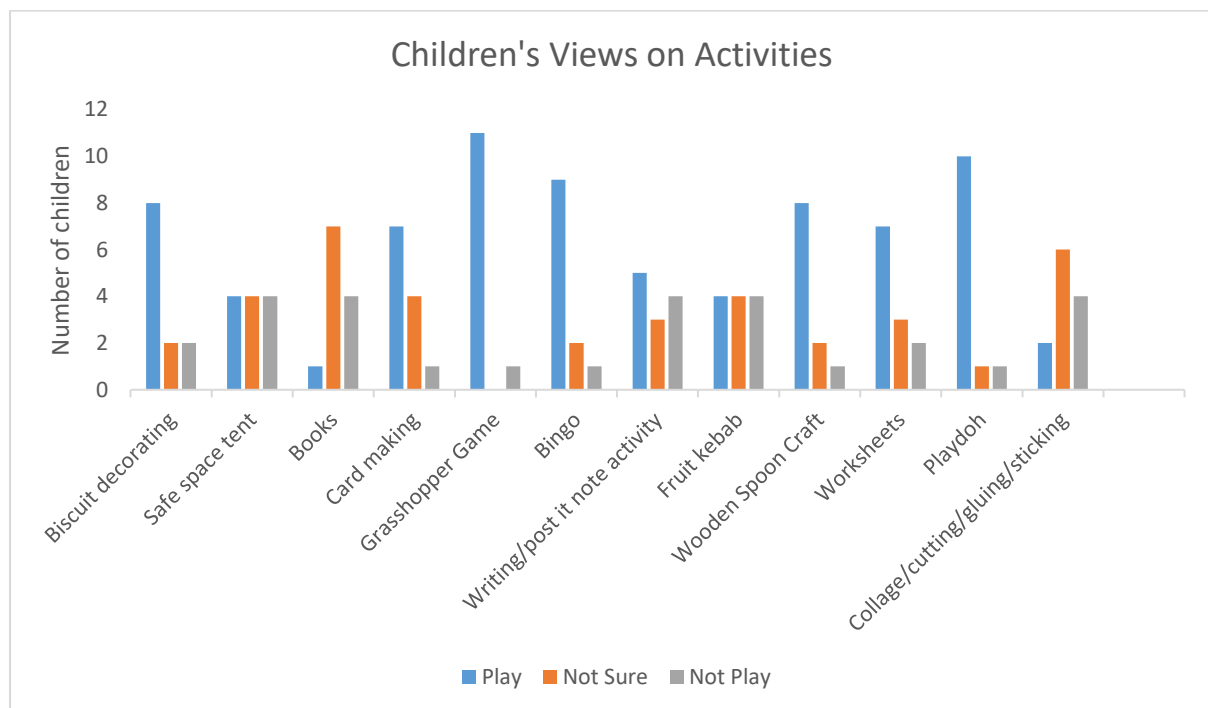


Table 1

A large majority of children considered, the Grasshopper game, biscuit decorating, bingo and playdoh to be play. The collage activity, books and writing were deemed as not a play activity by a quarter of the children. Opinion was equally divided over the safe space tent and fruit kebab activity. The implications of the findings are discussed later, but the graph demonstrates the range of activities and range of children’s views on those activities.

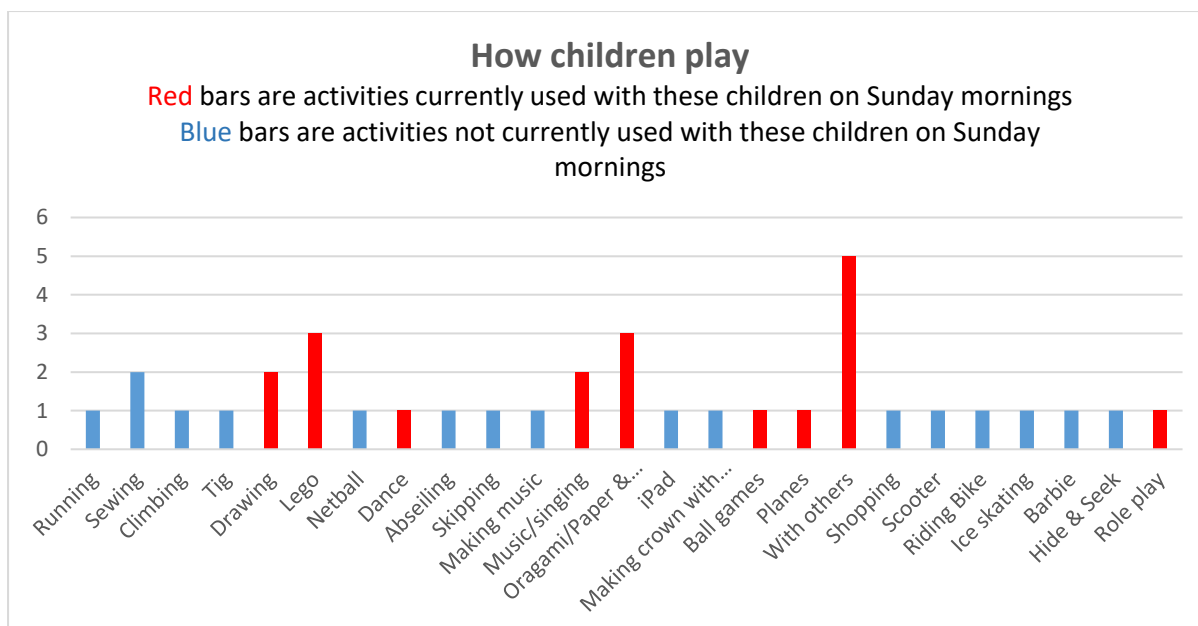


Table 2

When expressing how they play children made twenty-five suggestions, that included running, sewing, climbing, tig, drawing, Lego, netball, dance abseiling, skipping, making music, music and singing, origami and paper activities, iPad, ball games, making crowns with sticks, planes, playing with others, shopping, playing on their scooter, riding their bike, ice skating, Barbie, hide and seek and role play.

A proportion of activities children suggested are already used in Children’s Ministry on a Sunday morning. Those activities include drawing, Lego, dance, music and singing, origami and paper activities, ball games, planes, activities with others and role play. Running, skipping, sewing, tig, making music, making crowns with sticks, Barbie, iPad’s and hide and seek could be used in Children’s Ministry whilst climbing netball, abseiling, shopping, scooters, bikes and ice-skating could not be incorporated into Children’s Ministry on a Sunday morning when we gather.

### Analysis, evaluation and critical reflection of findings

#### Interview with Children’s Ministry Leader

Why are we seeing so little of Christians enjoying their freedom and playfully testing their newfound opportunities and powers of which Moltmann speaks? The interview with the Children’s Ministry Leader reflects Lamont’s view that Children’s Ministry mimics the

education system and is about Biblical knowledge and understanding. Play was a means to help children feel relaxed and prepared, ready for teaching about the Bible and the Christian faith. Play consisted of activities that make Children's Ministry fun, enjoyable and memorable. What this shows, probably unconsciously, is a desire to control the space and limit exploration, which I feel limits children's spirituality, faith development and learning.

As I have changed my practice to adopt an approach based on the UNCRC and Playwork Principles, I have been on a journey of discovery and delight, growing in confidence but also making mistakes along the way. Play, I have discovered is more than activities, it is an approach, as Hughes suggests; it is a different way of being with children. For playworkers, play is not the warm up act, preparing the children for the act to follow, teaching from an adult. The Children's Ministry Leader makes a distinction between play and God, faith and spirituality, like oil and water they do not mix. For Nye and Miller-McLemore, play is itself spiritual and sacred. As White says, play reflects that we are made in God's image. Play, for me, based on Playwork Principles reflects the freedom and choice we have as Christians.

The Children's Ministry Leader showed an awareness of the fact that children learn in different ways and that providing different ways of learning would appeal to more children. Csinos styles of spirituality recognises that just as we learn in different ways we also express our spirituality in different ways. Creating play opportunities around Csinos four spiritual styles of word, emotion, symbol and action would help children explore and experience spirituality and faith in meaningful ways for them as well as provide choice, freedom and space for children to encounter spirituality and faith in a way that is in harmony with their spiritual style.

That the Children's Ministry Leader is open to training and assistance opens up an opportunity to share my journey and an approach to Children's Ministry with the UNCRC, especially Articles twelve and thirty-one and Playwork Principles embedded within the theological concept of the child in the midst demonstrated by Jesus in Matthew 18. Modelling and promoting this approach would, I believe, enable us to begin to see children experiencing awe and wonder, encountering freedom, testing newfound opportunities and empowered to enjoy all God and the Christian faith has for them.

The play that I am speaking of is one where children have choice and freedom through a variety of play opportunities to create, be spontaneous, joyful and free, aspects of the Christian faith that make it so unique. Play, for me, should be child-centred and child-led, where adults as playworkers understand their role to support and facilitate children as they explore the people and stories of the Bible and Christian faith. This would mean a one hundred and eighty degree turn for the Children's Ministry Leader where the children would be central. This is how I have seen my practice shift over the last two years and as a result have seen children engage, participate and encounter their spirituality, their God and Christian fellowship and community. This play approach reflects a divine approach evident in Colossians chapter one where we see that Jesus holds everything together and but also giving us freedom, as described in 2 Corinthians (Colossians 1; 2 Corinthians 3).

The Children's Ministry Leader wants to create the hospitable space that Eade speaks of and is open to children being more participative. Eade helps us to understand that as those involved in Children's Ministry we need qualities that empower and enable children, relinquishing our own power and authority and serving children lovingly and humbly as spoken of about Jesus by Paul in Philippians 2. Jesus calls us deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him, that is, to walk humbly before others, including children.

Opportunities for child-led play where as playworkers, we facilitate and support genuine play will surely begin to create an atmosphere where we respect and value children. This in turn could begin to see a reversal the number of children attending church ([www.eauk.org](http://www.eauk.org)). Child-led play would also help us understand what Jesus implied when he placed a child in the midst and said that to enter the Kingdom of Heaven we needed to become childlike.

#### **Consultation group with volunteers helpers in a Sunday morning group for children in school years three and four**

This consultation revealed a positive attitude towards play and children's participation. Children were valued and respected with an emphasis on knowing Jesus, not learning about him. Play was essential and linked to freedom and choice. The consultation reflected that there are people who understand aspects of play, its importance in children's lives and that play is necessary in Children's Ministry. Nye and Miller-McLemore make links between play



and spirituality and here, as in the Children's Ministry Leader interview, that play is spiritual is not considered.

Another point that emerged from the consultation was that more adult supervision would be needed if play were to become part of Children's Ministry on a Sunday morning. The Playwork Principles encourage playworkers to take a facilitative approach to play where play is child-led rather than spoiled by adult agenda's. Those involved in a play-based Children's Ministry would need to relinquish their own power, authority and agenda and instead be led and guided by children. This approach reflects Jesus placing a child in the midst and his servanthood and humility as described by Paul in Philippians.

As with the interview with the Children's Ministry Leader, there was discussion about training and equipping those involved in Children's Ministry, with an openness and enthusiasm for resources that would facilitate a play-based approach. Perhaps as Pearson says there is an understanding that children are not keen to just sit and listen but prefer a Children's Ministry that is more active and participatory.

### **Children's views on activities used in Children's Ministry and their views on how they play.**

Assessing activities reflects the assessment framework produced by Play Wales (Hughes, 2008). This is a good way of assessing *what* happens in Children's Ministry but does not reflect *how*. Not reflected in photos is the choice of activities alongside each other in a session so that children have freedom to explore their faith and spirituality in their own way for their own reasons. Reflected in the findings is that all of the activities were considered as play by most of the children involved. If only one child considers books as play, the child has that choice available to them. Csinos spiritual styles offers a method of providing variety, choice, space and freedom that would engage children with different spiritual styles, helping them to encounter and develop their faith and spirituality. Hughes, Kilvington and Wood all agree that play is effective when there is rich variety and recognises the importance of play to children's development. Couple this to Csinos spiritual styles, creating Eade's hospital space and acknowledging Pearson's findings that play-based curricula are proving more successful than Sunday School models and the beginnings of a new model for Children's Ministry begin to emerge (Csinos 2011; Eade, 2014; Hughes 2012; Kilvington, Wood 2010; Pearson, 2014).

Expressing how they play, children in the findings mention a number of outdoor and physical activities. Csinos spiritual styles do not necessarily reflect these activities in his four spiritual styles and would lead me to reflect that maybe there are more spiritual styles than Csinos has suggested. For example, there may be people who would encounter spirituality through physical activity such as dance, cycling and sports. Eric Liddell, the athlete featured in Chariots of Fire famously said, 'God made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure.' (Csinos, 2011; [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com) accessed 1/4/18).

Play Wales Assessment Framework for Quality Assessment lists fifteen different play types, which when used alongside Csinos spiritual styles provides a framework for a play-based model of Children's Ministry (Hughes 2008, Csinos 2011). Blending play types and spiritual styles provide an approach for being with children that puts them at the centre, facilitates, and supports them to freely choose, personally direct and be intrinsically motivated in their faith and spiritual development. This would also make Children's Ministry more hospitable for children and create more genuine play opportunities and therefore greater opportunities for children to encounter God, develop spiritually and grow in their faith.

Willmer and White suggest that as adults we should receive children, as Jesus invited his disciples to, with a warm, open, respectful, safe and enabling space, walking and talking alongside them in order to learn what they are learning for the first time. As we walk and talk alongside children, listening attentively, we will enjoy a new perspective that will involve us seeing, listening, watching, being silent and 'being' in new ways too. Everything a child does, it does with their whole being. Play is joyful, helps us not to take ourselves too seriously and through play we enjoy a sense of freedom. We are called to be like children, which includes the ability to play (White, Willmer, 2013).

### **Recommendations for Children's Ministry**

It is my recommendation that Children's Ministry should adopt an approach based on Playwork Principles as it reflects Jesus placing a child in the midst, where children are at the centre and provides the space, freedom and choice for children to encounter God and develop their spirituality and faith in their own way, for their own reasons.

## **Free to participate**

Article 12 of the UNCRC expresses the right of children to express their views and feelings in matters that affect them. This applies to Children's Ministry as in every area of their lives. The Playwork Principles articulate that children should determine and control their play. As the disciples scrambled to keep children away from Jesus, Jesus indignantly rebukes them, takes a child from the edge of this encounter and places her on his knee, right at the centre. Jesus is declaring by his actions that children could and should participate. In fact, Jesus goes even further stating that we need to be like children in order to understand His Kingdom.

Allowing children to participate shows the respect for children that Jesus demonstrated when he placed a child in the midst of theological debate. Our children's confidence in themselves and the Christian faith will grow as we show them such respect.

As Pearson suggests, children do not want to just sit and listen, they want to be active and participate. The Children's Ministry Leader herself admits that children learn in different ways and having variety of styles would appeal to more children and I would conclude; make Children's Ministry more participative.

Encouraging more participation in Children's Ministry could entail asking children what they would like to learn about the Christian faith and community, and allowing children to ask the questions they would like answers to, rather than adhering to a curriculum written and prepared by others who have decided what children should know. In the past, as part of providing appropriate choice I have asked children to tell me what activities they enjoy participating in and included a variety of those activities in sessions so that children could participate in ways for which they had expressed a preference.

## **Free to play**

Article 31 of the UNCRC declares that every child has the right to leisure, play and culture, taking part in a variety of cultural and artistic activities. This applies to Children's Ministry in the same way it applies to every other area of children's lives.

The Playwork Principles state that all children and young people need to play as a biological and social necessity and to promote healthy development and well-being. Play is

fundamental to children's faith and spiritual development and well-being as it is to every area of children's development and well-being.

If play is vital to children, as the UNCRC, Playwork Principles and thirty years of psychological study of human behaviour and play suggest, play is vital in Children's Ministry. If as Nye proposes, play is the natural language of childhood and has sacred qualities, it should be intrinsic to Children's Ministry. White advocates that play reflects our Creator God and that we are made in His image, therefore play is essential to Children's Ministry as it provides opportunities for children to reflect God's creativity. Miller-McLemore states that play is spiritual and an essential practice of faith. For Eade genuine play creates the hospitable space children needs to explore, reflect, imagine and wonder. These are a few of many reasons to include play in Children's Ministry.

Play is child-centred reflecting Jesus placing a child in the midst of theological debate and suggests that we too, should playfully explore, reflect, imagine and wonder. Children playing remind us of our need to playfully explore, reflect, imagine and wonder. Play also gives opportunities for children to test the opportunities and challenges of the Christian faith. Pearson and those interviewed for this research describe play as more effective than traditional education models of Children's Ministry as it more engaging, fun, active and participative. Play offers an approach to Children's Ministry that allows for encounter and experience as well as knowledge and learning.

Play based Children's Ministry reflecting the arguments above would include a variety of play opportunities for children. Play that offered children a variety of activities based on Csinos spiritual styles would create space where children could experience and explore their faith and spirituality in ways that were meaningful for them. Including Scripture, opportunities to think logically, reflect and read books would suit word-centred children. Providing activities such as drama, personal testimony, and spiritual experience that evokes emotion would suit those with an emotion-centred approach to spirituality. Symbol-centred children would appreciate silence, creation, visual art and ritual, being given time to listen, hear and connect with God whilst action-centred children would value opportunities to make the world a better place. Following a session on Faith and Justice I delivered recently, many children in the group I lead are keen to collect shoes and give them charities that will either recycle or refurbish them so they can be reused in areas of the world where children

do not have shoes of their own. We could also consider visiting and getting involved in our local foodbank or donating clothes to local charity shops and recycling waste as part of caring for our local community and the planet and providing opportunities for action-centred approach children.

Children's Ministry based on Playwork Principles would also seek to help adults understand the impact they have on play space and equip adults to intervene and extend children's play. This could include having a variety of resources available to hand that included, art and craft material, Lego, sand, water, playdoh, toys and games, for example, so that children could play in their own ways for their own reasons, following their own instincts and ideas. Including a tent or fabric to make a designated quiet area would suit children who like to reflect or be alone.

### **Free to choose**

Article 31 states children have a right to a wide range of cultural and artistic activities whilst the Playwork Principles advocate freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated play. Offering choice gives freedom to enjoy, explore, learn and experience. Choice makes children the focus, respects children and builds their confidence. Choice makes the space and activities interesting, pleasurable and voluntary and empowers children.

In order to offer choice in Children's Ministry, I have found it helpful to have a range of activities available throughout a session. I always have books and different Bibles available in a quiet area of the space. I also have a tent for those who want to be quiet and alone. A variety of art and craft materials is available for children who like to be creative. Children also know there are cupboards with other materials for their use. Children are given the choice of whether to participate in planned activities or not, whether to watch what others are doing or choose an alternative activity. Fidget toys and playdoh are also available for those who like to listen and talk but need something to do with their hands.

Jesus suggests in John 1 that we can choose to receive him, in John 7 that we can choose to do God's will and in John 14 that we can choose to love God. Jesus offers us choice; we can choose to receive him, follow him and love him. Surely, we should reflect Jesus' freedom to choose with our children and offer them the same freedom to choose as Jesus does.

## **Actions for myself**

For me, this research has made me aware of the impact I have on the Children's Ministry in my setting and the impact I have on the adult's I work alongside. Action research is an intervention and seeks to be transformative. The challenge for me now, is to respond sensitively to those involved in Children's Ministry, modelling as well as promoting the UNCRC, especially articles relating to seeking and respecting children's views and participation and children's right to play. The Playwork Principles require playworkers to advocate for play when engaging with adult agendas and support as well as, facilitate play through training, strategy and policy.

The Children's Ministry Leader and volunteer helpers have expressed a desire for more training and equipping, opening a door for me to explore further with others how play and a play-based approach to Children's Ministry could benefit us all. As a Children's Ministry team, we have a termly breakfast meeting where I will suggest the idea of providing information and training to anyone interested in a play-based approach to Children's Ministry. These meetings also provide me with an opportunity to advocate for children's right to have a say and participate in how we do Children's Ministry, in line with the UNCRC and Playwork Principles.

A suggestion made by the consultation group was that children could be involved in developing resources for play. This excellent idea could be easily be implemented, asking children what play space and equipment they would like and working together to have those resources available for Children's Ministry on Sunday mornings. This places children at the centre of the process of the creation of space in which they can play.

Finally, as I have discussed the findings of the research a model for Children's Ministry has begun to emerge based on the UNCRC, Playwork Principles, play types, the child in the midst and Csinos spiritual styles. This requires further research and study but this research has laid the foundations.

This all leads to the following conclusion that will draw together evaluation, theological reflection, literature reviewed and discussion of the findings in answering the question, 'Should Playwork Principles apply to Children's Ministry?'

## Conclusion

So, 'Should Playwork Principles apply to Children's Ministry?'

For theologian Moltmann, play is the outworking of the freedom we have in Christ and provides an opportunity for us as 'liberated beings,' to enjoy that freedom and test our new powers (Moltmann, 1972:vii). For White and Willmer, play is important to kingdom life (White, Willmer, 2013)

Taking stock of what we are doing and how, I conclude that Children's Ministry should be play-based and incorporate the UNCRC and Playwork Principles. I draw these conclusions based on the UNCRC along with the Playwork Principles emphasis on the necessity and right of children to play. The UNCRC articles 12 and 31 state we should respect children's views and understand they have a right to play. The Playwork Principles provide a framework for working with children recognising the importance of a wide variety of play opportunities to their development and well-being. Play is a process freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated by children themselves and the UNCRC and Playwork Principles provide adults with an approach to play and children that offers participation, space, freedom and choice in Children's Ministry. The church needs to acknowledge and implement the UNCRC in line with others involved in Children and Family Work.

Answering the question, 'Is there scope for further development of play in Children's Ministry?' literature on the subject of Children's Ministry would suggest there is. Lamont and Griffith's view that Children's Ministry had tended to mimic the educational model and be a baby-sitting service with a change in attitude required helps build an argument for a Children's Ministry based on Playwork Principles. Pearson argues that current models of Children's Ministry are not working but play-based approaches like Berryman's Godly play are. Statistics also reflect that children's attendance in church is declining and a play-based approach could be part of seeing the downward trend reversed. A Children's Ministry based on Playwork Principles develops an approach that is not only play-based but also child-centred, reflecting Jesus placing a child in the midst and Jesus' model of humility and servanthood in Philippians.

A play-based Children's Ministry would reflect the sacred and spiritual qualities of play, reflect that we are made in the image of our Creator God and provide hospitable space, freedom and choice for our children to explore, encounter, wonder and learn.

The participatory action research sought to answer the question, 'What are people's perception of play?' An interview with a Children's Ministry Leader of Children's Ministry on Sunday morning's states play is fun and enjoyable and helps make learning memorable. She indicates a lack of confidence in a different approach but is open to training and assistance.

Consultation with volunteers involved with Children's Ministry on Sunday mornings reveals a positive regard for play, children's participation and a respect and value towards children. It was important that children experience prayer and Jesus as well learn about prayer and Jesus. Participants were open and enthusiastic about a play-based approach to Children's Ministry, which is something I can build on in the future.

Participatory action research with children identified activities considered play but did not reflect how play fitted in to Children's Ministry. Children's Ministry is not just *what* we do but *how* we do it. The Playwork Principles offer an approach to Children's Ministry that is different from current educational models. Children's Ministry based on Playwork Principles would provide play and activities with choice, freedom and space for children to explore and experience spirituality and faith in their own way for their own reasons.

The research undertaken reveals an openness to a different approach to Children's Ministry that is participative, engaging and fun. This provides me with an opportunity to continue to model, promote and train others in a play-based approach to Children's Ministry. The consultation group suggested that play helps build community and relationships. How play builds community and relationships requires additional study and is another aspect of play-based Children's Ministry for further development.

The UNCRC and Playwork Principles offer adults a different way of being with children that supports and facilitates children, where children are central, respected and valued. This way of being with children reflects Jesus placing a child in the midst and Jesus' attitude of humility and serving that relinquishes power, control and authority. A play-based Children's Ministry would reflect the child in the midst and be a ministry that lovingly and humbly serves our children, placing them at the centre of all we do.



Jesus said, 'Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.' For me, the childlikeness that Jesus speaks of to his disciples, and play are inextricably linked and we have much further to go in exploring what this looks like not just for children and Children's Ministry, but for us all.

Word Count: 9770

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Playwork Principles

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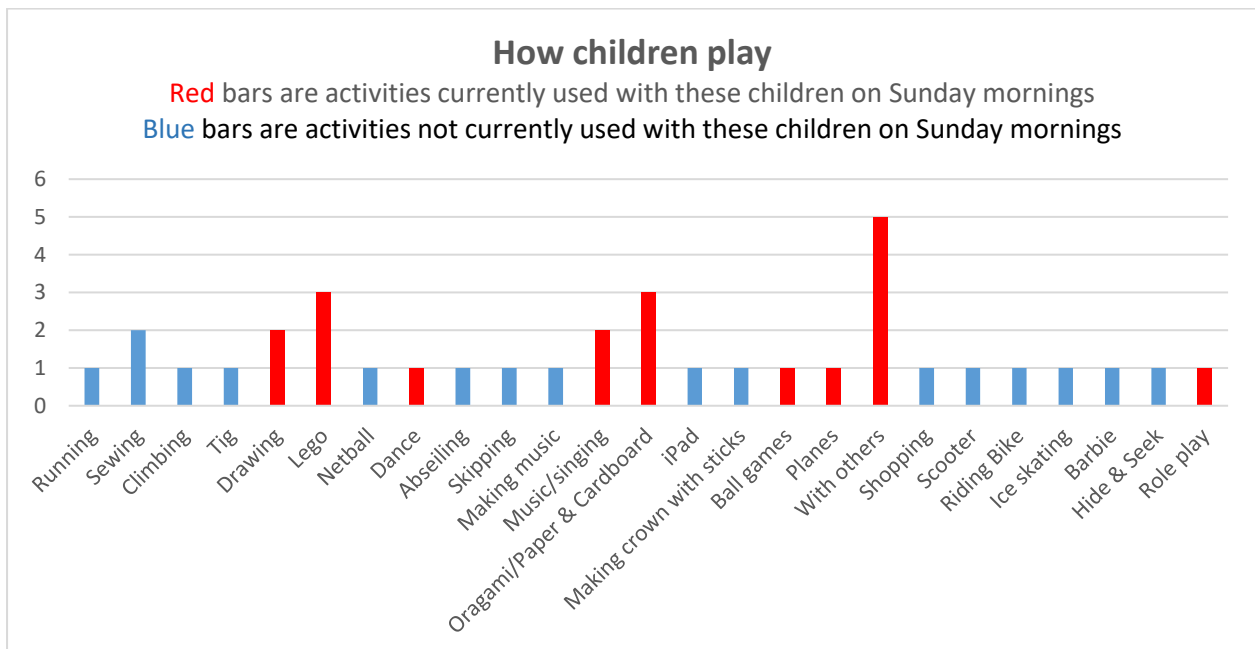
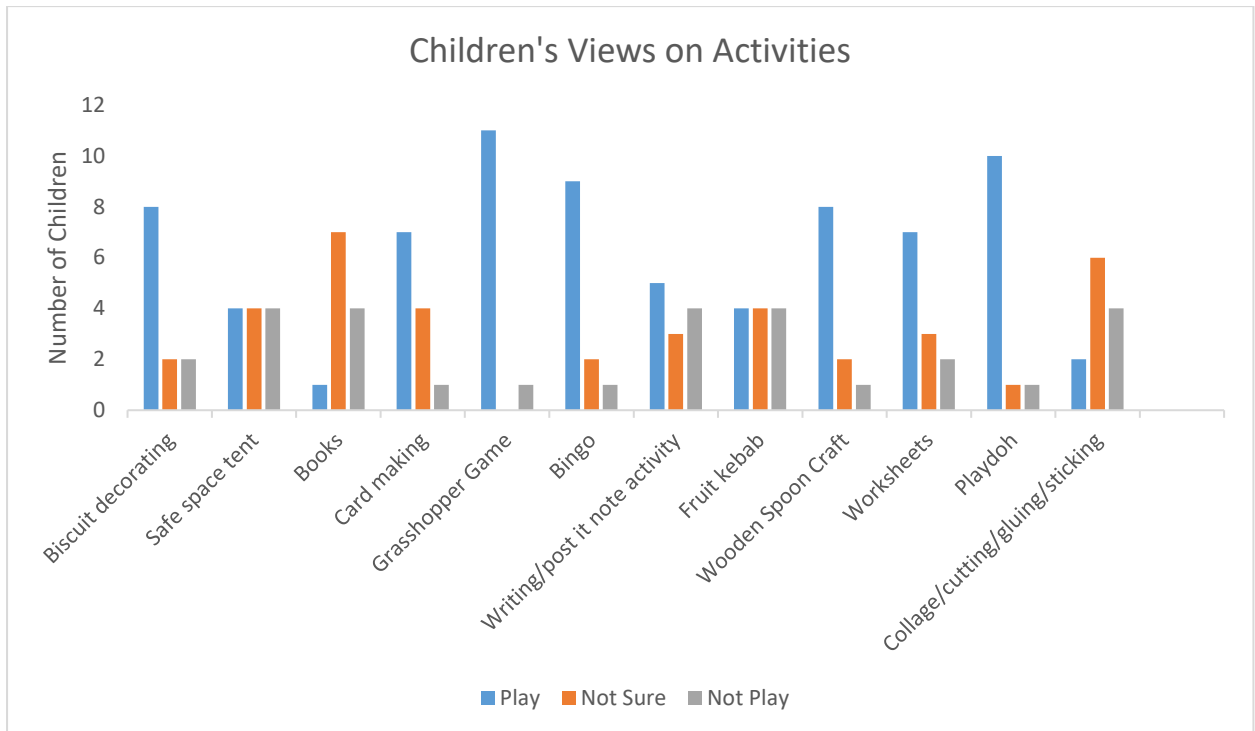
These Principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork and as such must be regarded as a whole. They describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people. They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

1. All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well being of individuals and communities.
2. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
3. The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
4. For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.
5. The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
6. The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
7. Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
8. Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.

<http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/playworkprinciples> (accessed 26/3/2018)

## Appendix 2

### Children's Responses





How I like to play is  
with Zion and phil.

By  
Timi I like to play with my  
friend and making the  
Sure I get a turn I like  
Doing role play to ACTING  
and Singing is fun

I like to  
play  
kindly +  
fairly.  
Also play with  
other

1. playing at
2. swimming
3. shopping
4. going on my scooter
5. making words
6. going on my bike
7. going on my ladies
8. see skating
9. Barbie
10. kids and truck

## Appendix 3

### Transcription of Interview with Children's Ministry Leader

Coding:

Children's Participation and involvement

Activities

Play, fun, enjoyable, toys

Learning, teaching, remembering

Interviewees definition of play

Interviewer: What do you enjoy most about our Sunday school?

Interviewee: I think it varies each week. I think I really like it when it seems to go well and when the children join in with whatever's going on. So whether that's craft, a story, a drama, a song, game, and particularly when they seem to get the point of the story or what you're teaching. And sometimes because I help with the little ones that doesn't always show, you don't know what's gone in and what they've understood, but sometimes you do see that they've remembered, that they've understood something. That's what I really enjoy.

Interviewer: So what do you think are the essential elements of Children's Ministry on a Sunday morning?

Interviewee: I think you've got to have, you're always teaching them something about God from the Bible. Usually based on a bible verse or a bible story. Although I know sometimes with a theme it might be several different bits of the bible. And it's got to be simple enough for them to understand and take away something and at the same time it's got to be fun and enjoyable so they want to back.

Interviewer: So, going on to play, having talked about Children's Ministry for a little bit. What would you say play is? What is play?

Interviewee: I was trying to think about this, I think it can be a lot of different things, I know with the three and four year old's we usually have toys, train sets, duplo bricks, something out at the beginning just for them to do when they come in to settle and I suppose we'd call that free play. It's not usually got a story or a Christian element it's just toys that they recognise and feel comfortable. Play can also be more structured games or it could more sort of creative I know not on a Sunday so much but when we've done other things with the older children like Holiday club we've given them puppets and we kind of just let them make things up and I think that's play as well. So I think there's lots of different elements to it really, even like playdoh, I know that I've sometimes done a starter activity on a Sunday with playdoh where either they're just making what they want or they're making something that might have a link to the topic of the day.

Interviewer: That's lovely, thank you. There's quite a lot in there

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: So, do you think that play is an essential part of Children's Ministry on a Sunday morning?

Interviewee: I suppose I don't really always put in something that is the same kind a play but I think if you had a Sunday morning without any of those things, so nothing creative, none of those toys, no games, it would be less fun and engaging, it would be more like school. I know they play at school sometimes but I think it would be, I think it would still appeal to some children but it probably wouldn't appeal to all children because the more different activities you do the more you capture their different learning styles and their different, there's something of everybody. Yeah, and you want it to be fun and you want them to enjoy church and get to know each other so, I suppose some kind of play activity is important.

Interviewer: Lovely, thank you. So, do you think children would describe play as an essential element of children's ministry?

Interviewee: I don't know what the children would think. Again because I do the, I suppose the little ones they would probably be a bit too young to explain to you what they think, but they do settle much better when they come into the same room that know and when they have something to, some play time, when they start rather than just being brought in and told to sit on a chair and sit at a table and listen to a story. SO yes they probably would say that play is essential, I think.

Interviewer: How do you think Children's Ministry would be different if a play based model was adopted?

Interviewee: I don't really know what a play based model is.

Interviewer: Ok. So, if for example, instead of inviting the children, using your earlier example, of the children coming in, sitting down at tables and chairs and listening to a story, if that was, if you were wanting to do that in a play based way, you would maybe have props that reflected that story or something that they could make their own props out of and you could maybe have a variety of ways they could explore, that story in the Bible or that character in the Bible or that verse in the Bible that you were wanting to make the focus for that morning. Does that help?

Interviewee: Yes

Interviewer: sort of, give you some ideas of what a play based model might look like?

Interviewee: I mean I think, I suppose we do sometimes do some of those things but probably not intentionally. I mean, I think that when I plan a session, I always, I try, to keep the main point as simple as possible and try and make as many things link to it as possible to help them learn it and that depends on what the story is so sometimes the playing will link to the story, the game will link to the story the song will link to the story and it will all be on the same theme. I think it's harder with some stories to find play activities that link into it. But I think it's good when they do, when you can find play activities that you can use to do



the teaching because I think that appeals to lots of the children and therefore they probably remember it better. I suppose my main aim is that at the end of the morning they go away having learned something and that some of them will be able to tell their parents what they've learned and talk about it at home. And so whether that's from showing them the crafts they've made or telling them about the game they've played, the more sort of links to the same point the better. So yeah, I don't know if that, does that answer your question?

Interviewer: Yeah, it does.

Interviewee: Ok.

Interviewer: Thank you. It's interesting to get different peoples thoughts and ideas and it's been interesting how people view play. I'm learning a lot through this. What do you think would be the limitations of including play in Children's Ministry on a Sunday morning?

Interviewee: I think, a lot of time your main limitation is the resources and energy and planning and time of the leaders. Because a lot of the, the more activities you put on and it's good to have a choice or its good to have several different things, the more planning and preparation is usually required. If you were using props you sometimes need to find a way to source those things, and the material we use often has a lot of good ideas in but its again its having time to think through and work out what you're going to use. I think there's also a bit of a limitation with space sometimes, depending on what the activities are, again more for the older children, there's probably a lot of other games and activities you could do if you had more space.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's interesting. Thank you. What do you think would be the benefits of including play in Children's Ministry on a Sunday morning?

Interviewee: I suppose in a way it's similar to what I said before. So if you've got different ways of learning the story or the topic and remembering it then more children will be able to engage with it because, I know we all learn in different ways and adults learn in different ways and I sometimes think we need more play in big church as well. Or more different ways of doing things rather than sitting and listening, which is something we've talked about in our life groups actually. But that's beside the point. But yes, so some children love craft and would happily do, learn everything through craft and colouring but that doesn't appeal to all of them, some of them are much more active and if you can do some craft thing, some active thing, some musical things, I think in theory you will appeal to more children and they remember different things.

Interviewer: So you would define all of things you have just described such as active, music and things like that as play?

Interviewee: I wouldn't have put the music and the singing in play. You probably could in a broad definition of play, put music and singing in there, I guess, especially if you use instruments. I know its ? when we have all the children together but music is used more like that, when instruments are used and everything. I wouldn't think of that as play I suppose, but I don't really think of it like that I think it's different activities.

Interviewer: So you would see those as different activities rather than as play activities?

Interviewee: Yes I suppose the only thing I really think of and would use the word **play** was getting the **toys** out at the beginning. And the **games**. I think a lot of the other things could come under the category of **play**.

Interviewer: Thank you. Finally, I would just want to give you the opportunity to ask me any questions or make any observations you have about Children's Ministry and play.

Interviewee: I don't really. I suppose it would be interesting to hear what your definition of play is.

Interviewer: **My definition of play is still forming and changing on an almost weekly basis. But for the most part I think what I would say is definitely play is child-led, child focused and freely chosen by them. That play would give children the opportunity to explore, investigate, experiment, create, in their own way, for their own reasons.**

Interviewee: Yeah, ok

Interviewer: That I would definitely adhere to, but there's a lot more being tacked onto that the more I read and the more I study. That would definitely be my baseline.

Interviewee: The main thing I think of is the **free play** that fits with that, it's when **they choose** and **do what they choose** to do with the **bricks and toys**.

Interviewer: I would agree with that. So any observations or anything that you think would be good for me to bear in mind as I'm thinking about a play based model? I know you've mentioned times, space and resources already.

Interviewee: I think when you're planning these sessions it's just always important to try and get the balance between making it really **fun** and **enjoyable** but also having enough **structure** to get the **point across**. Because what you wouldn't want, in a church setting on a Sunday morning session is for children never to **learn** anything about the Bible, because they never **chose** the **activities** or the bits about God. I suppose and that's difficult to do particularly with some children who don't like to **sit and listen**. So with some children it's much more difficult to **find what engages them best**. But, I suppose it's trying to get that balance.

Interviewer: It's interesting that when you've talked about play, you've talked about it with the younger group because you obviously that's the group you lead. And I obviously, I'm working with the children in Key stage 2, years 3 & 4, and so, I'd be interested in how you see, how you think play would be appropriate in that group or with age children?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think you can do more **choosing and letting them choosing activities** at that age because the younger ones will **build with the bricks** until you take the bricks away. And then you have to take the **bricks** away if you want to **do something** else. The I think you have to be a little more **structured** there. So what did you ask me? How would **play** work with the older ones?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I don't know, it's a long time since I done Gold (Pseudonym for group at church for children in years three and four). I know I was talking to Sally (Pseudonym used) about **crafts**, we were doing **crafts** at the toddler group and she was talking about Kids Club (a weekly group on Friday nights for Key Stage 2 children in the surrounding community). Which is the same age as Gold. Saying how **some children like to sit and do one activity for a long time and some of them do their craft really quickly and then run off because they want to be running around, being more active.** I suppose the more you know what children you've got in your group, the more you **can provide the right activities that are going to suit them.** But I think it's great when you can use **physical things** that they can **explore the story,** you know like **props and costumes** and **food** and **everyone make something** that's going to be used when people have time and ability to prepare that and I suppose another limitation is the, I think we have amazing leaders and generally they try to make things as **interactive** as they can. A lot of our leaders are **teachers**, so they're quite used to that but I think there are probably some people who would benefit from more training. If you were to help them think of different ways of doing things because I think some people don't always have as much confidence when doing things differently. They like to do things the way they know and also don't always have the ideas unless they've seen other people do it.

Interviewer: That's really helpful, thank you.

## Appendix 4

- Transcript of consultation group consisting of two of three volunteer helpers in Gold (pseudonym), a Sunday morning group for children in school years three and four
- Photos of focus group post it notes

Coding:

Children's Participation and involvement

Activities

Play, fun, enjoyable, toys

Learning, teaching, remembering

Interviewees definition of play

Interviewer: You have in front of you a piece of paper and some sticky notes, so grab yourself a pen, there's no limit as to how many things you can say. But what do you like most about our Sunday morning Children's Ministry? Go ahead and write down, stick on down, on the poster the things you like about what we do. Thank you. You are allowed to talk to each other and bounce ideas off each other, it doesn't have to be done in silence.

Katy (Pseudonym): I've only been with age group once so far. I'll be with you next Sunday.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Katy: So in that sense I Haven't done a lot yet.

Interviewer: It doesn't just have to be our group

Katy: Ah, ok.

Interviewer: It can be anything, things you like about our Sunday Children's Ministry.

Sally (pseudonym): I think space, we never have enough, but we do have a few rooms

Interviewer: Yeah.

Sally: And Mosaic (A church coffee shop on the opposite side of the road to the churches main building). Which is a real blessing.

Interviewer: That's physical space isn't it?

Sally: Yes.

Interviewer: So what other things have you put there?

Sally: Other leaders, dedicated, committed leaders, and that turn up, are there, are prepared, that really long for the kids to know Jesus more which is what we're all there for, you don't get that everywhere. And the kids, if it's about anything it's about the kids you work with isn't it?

Interviewer: So when you both feel you've written everything you want to, we'll go onto the next question.

Sally: are we going on to what we like least? (Laughter)

Interviewer: No,

Sally: we don't need to

Interviewer: No, I'm trying to be positive rather than negative.

Sally: I think as well that overall, we're supported by the church leadership. You're not battling against that. I mean there are times when we see it a bit differently but overall,

Interviewer: you said a lovely thing earlier on, you've written it down, about how the people who are involved in Children's ministry have got a real heart to see

Sally: Yes

Interviewer: the children, I can't remember what the term you used was,

Sally: Love Jesus better, I guess. Maybe we take it for granted but, I know when I've been at other churches it's not always quite the same.

Interviewer: That heart for Jesus and the kids, for the kids to know Jesus.

Katy: I think that comes under **being respectful**. Like not in a formal sense but yeah, **valuing children and youngness**. There's a **real regard and respect for who they are now because of who they're going to become and they can know God now. There's that real respect for and investing**

Interviewer: That's good, so respect and investing. It does help having something to do and writing it down, doesn't it? It's not a competition to see who can write the most comments! Shall we move onto the next question then? So, It's all colour coordinated, yellow, blue and green so I know which comments go with which question.

So what for you are the essential elements of Sunday morning Children's Ministry?

Sally: The bible, somewhere, it doesn't mean necessarily that you're reading it as a story. It might be a **drama** or a **storytelling**, it could be all sorts of things. But somehow we need the Bible. Without pre-empting because I know what your .... **Play**.

Interviewer: I have mentioned the word **play** already, right at the beginning and you know I'm looking at **play**.

Sally: And in some way **that is crucial**. But that can take **lots of different forms**.

Interviewer: Absolutely. So we've got Bible, play, learning how to pray or what prayer is.

Sally: It sometimes feels like that gets rushed because we can't always predict how long we've got.

Katy: Yeah,

Sally: You don't want to start with it necessarily because you don't want to feel you're coming in cold, but maybe sometimes, we should.

Katy: The hope is that this is being supported by those at home, obviously, not for every kid,

Sally: But most of them

Katy: Yeah. So there's that sense that it all has to done but you just have to bit of let up.

Interviewer: so we've got Bible, play, learning how to pray,

Sally: We want them to have fun,

Interviewer: Yeah

Katy: Yeah

Interviewer: So fun's an essential element.

Sally: Some sort of togetherness, team, I mean that will come through play often, but the fact that they're working it out, they're learning as a community, it's not just like learning at home, because you could read the bible at home with your children, you could pray with them, but for them to be doing things with other children so that, you know, that gives them a, especially if they're at school where there aren't many children from church or from any church there's a feeling that they're not on their own as much. They're part of the community,

Interviewer: So community, bible, play and fun, how to pray and what prayer is. Community so this is essential elements so we don't hundreds of them but are there more that you would consider absolutely essential?

Sally: I think if you had some element of those every week

Katy: That sounds pretty fun

Sally: Yeah

Interviewer: Ok Let's move onto the next one then. What is play?

Katy: This is terms of children, obviously,

Interviewer: I haven't defined it as necessarily as children. We are talking about children's ministry but, just shoot out some ideas of play and what play is to you and

Sally: Fun, you enjoy it. I suppose it's often active, it doesn't have to be. Maybe it particularly helps kinaesthetic learners, but it helps everybody, we all need it.

Katy: Spontaneity. A chance for spontaneity within a structure. We're going to play lego, is a structure, as in with a direction, but then you do whatever you want with that, kind of,

Interviewer: within a children's ministry

Katy: As in there's a framework, then there's a freedom of expression, whereas homework has no chance for spontaneity, you have to do the spelling that's on the page, rather than

here's some sounds let's play with the sounds, let's make up pretend words. Play is that chance to express yourself.

Sally: Sometimes it what gives you time to. Well its partly for the leaders to see children in a different light. You know, sometimes, they are children who don't particularly want to sit and listen, and they can be quite disruptive even, and yet when they get engaged in an activity, a game or playing in some way then their skills come to the fore and you start to see another way of their learning but you also get to see the best of them.

Interviewer: So play brings out the best in children?

Sally: Yeah. Some children, well I guess, even the ones who sit and listen quietly, you don't really find out about them as much as when they're playing, it partly helps them to talk it, sometimes of they're playing, they're doing something with their hands, it encourages them to speak more if they're quiet, if they're disruptive, it gives them something to focus on and they can achieve more sometimes. I don't know how to write that on a post it note.

Interviewer: That's alright, I can transcribe it. Have you got any other ideas, or shall I move on to the next question?

Katy: Just therapy. Depending on what the play is. An outlet as in jumping around, noisy play, and it's an outlet for energy and frustration or whatever, or calming, engaging our, like the community aspect, its re-enforcing support and

Sally: work together especially if you're working towards a common goal. You're not all making your own little lego thing.

Katy: That sense of belonging

Interviewer: Lovely, thank you for that it was really helpful. So that leads nicely onto the next question. Do you think play should be an essential element of children's ministry?

Sally: Yes.

Katy: With this age group I would say that in Sunbeams.

Interviewer: So in Sunbeams, that's Years 1 & 2 is it?

Katy: No, it's nursery & reception.

Interviewer: So would say that play is essential for nursery & reception?

Katy: Yeah and for their discovery of the world. And then there's years 1 & 2 for them it almost seems like the play is used for engagement. So for when they're still immature in their sense of community at the age of 5 they're not necessarily linking emotionally with people in your peer group, but you are with the grown-ups more so probably. So play in that regard seems to really strengthen the involvement and the story or the verse becomes like a visual aid, and then B's in your group, years 3 & 4, I think, I don't know yet. I think that from the session that I did with you, they're very different, I haven't been with that age group before and it was really great to see the discussion side of things and stuff and I've loved seeing them get to the point where they have something to say and they really respond to

being listened to, so there's a change there in the relationship of it not all being grown-up led but there's a respect for one another and a valuing of one another, of listening and expressing and then understanding that we're all different. So then I guess I haven't yet seen play in that environment. Although what, as you're saying what is play, is play an activity? A focused activity or is that different?

Interviewer: It's an interesting question isn't it?

Katy: So that, it's definitely great to give kids choice, because it empowers them, so in the sense of different activities being arranged and again it just makes them relax and not feel talked at, kind a thing. So there's definitely value in having a focused activity and I think that is essential but it's for you to define Tonia. Is a focused activity defined as play?

Interviewer: Is it for me to define or is it for the children to define?

Katy: Well you ask them, but I don't know.

Interviewer: I'm beginning to but it's really interesting, because you use the word activity more than you've used the word play so Sally, when you say yes play is essential to Children's ministry can you unpack that a little more for me?

Sally: I think it changes over time as they get older but I'd say for Blaze, Years 5 & 6 it's still essential probably to engage them because they're maybe getting to an age where they're not quite so automatically enthusiastic about things so it keeps them on board but more important than that it's part of the same thing, it's helping them to learn for themselves, rather than just spoon-feeding and you can do that up to a point by getting them to read the bible by themselves, they can find out answers to questions but the bigger things, the issues about faith and hope and those bigger lessons that you're trying to get across to them, sacrifice, that kind of thing they can that on board to a deeper level if they actually experience something for themselves rather than just read it.

Interviewer: And you think they can do that through play?

Sally: Yes, sacrifice (Laughter)

Katy: Yeah, bring your younger siblings dolly! So what does it look like when you're talking about play?

Sally: I mean we'd normally start with a couple of games, that might be just fun, we did one ten days ago with Blaze over in Mosaic (Church coffee shop), you don't want to damage anything so there's a limit to what you can do, so you have to be careful because you don't want to knock anything over but we did one where you're just back to back with somebody and you're trying to move a tennis ball, you have to stay back to back, work as a team it was not really to do with what we were teaching, it was more about teamwork because they have to get from end of the room to another, and work out the best way of doing that by staying together. You're stronger as a pair because if one person raises their head you drop the tennis ball and you've got to go back to the beginning. So there's some play like that which has a message but it might not be what we are doing that week but then we've done other things like building with lego or jenga blocks to see who can build the tallest tower,



and I suppose that's again teamwork. We've been talking about being on your frontline because that's been the theme, I'm trying to think what else we played that week. I suppose games they often have a message but there maybe not be directly linked to what you're teaching that morning. Because they're more able to think abstractly for themselves but the games are still important in bringing them together as a group and engaging them. Just maybe less important to actually learn the message, that's what the game is.

Interviewer: That was really good, thank you. So how do you think Children's Ministry would be different if a play based model was adopted?

Katy: Can you express what that would look like?

Interviewer: if we go back to what we said earlier about play, I think you pretty much summed up what I would have said play was. From studying play for the last couple of years I'd say that play is often spontaneous, gives children a way to express themselves, that it is fun and enjoyable, that it's often active and therapeutic. I think the other thing for me about play for me that's really important is that it's child led, it's freely chosen, personally directed by them and intrinsically motivated by them. So if we had a Children's Ministry that was based on play it would be the child at the centre and their play as the tools that are used.

Sally: So if you were teaching a bible story as part of a play based ministry, there are some which are quite active anyway, like when we've taught things like Joshua and the walls of Jericho we might do that as role-play and have lots of blocks or cardboard boxes and then you could act it out. Would you call that play based way of learning the story? Because you're not necessarily giving them complete choice with that. They might have a choice as to which role they play, but we're all learning the story together at the same time.

Interviewer: So if I wanted it to be play based, and wanted to introduce the idea of choice and freedom for the children I would perhaps say, 'for those of you who like doing drama and role play, we'll act this out. For those who like to build things and construct things and make things, why don't you go and make the walls of Jericho, and maybe give them lego, and plasticine or playdoh.

Sally: But initially you've got to know the story.

Interviewer: They're going to, in order to act it out they're going to need to know the story. I presume we'll give them an age appropriate written script for them to work from so they know the story. And they can't really build a scene of Jericho without knowing the story so again.

Sally: That's what I mean, for some of it, you have to help them learn the story. It depends on the age of the children and what they can read or not. This is one of the issues, say you have different stations, you really need a leader for each of those

Interviewer: Yes, you do.

Sally: so in ideal world you have enough leaders that would be, there are lots of benefits to that, being able to give them a choice, sometimes we don't have that number of leaders, so

that's one of the reasons why we have sometime where we're all together and we're all going to learn the story then you can go off and do and reinforce it in different ways.

Interviewer: Yes, through play

Sally: possibly. I think sometimes it can't all be play based, with that choice unless you have sufficient adults.

Interviewer: That leads onto the next question, which is, what do you think are the limitations of including in Children's Ministry on a Sunday morning in children's ministry, and that would be one of the limitations.

Sally: I think either way you include play, it's just whether it's play based or whether play is an element. But the more adults you have the more you make it based on play. Give them more free choice.

Interviewer: So you're saying you would need more adults for play to be child-centred and child led.

Sally: Yes because what you don't want is for it just to be children building lego. Because it isn't just about lego. If you're using the lego to build walls of Jericho and telling the story through lego, you really need an adult to guide that.

Interviewer: So you would say that children need guiding in their play

Sally: Yes

Interviewer: If it was part of children's ministry?

Sally: Yes.

Katy: So it's a bit like Splash isn't it? (Splash is a termly Sunday morning children's session where the children are all together for the whole morning). So because everyone is together, resources are pooled and so in that room only are the dens and whatever, and the prayer stations and the drawing and the sticking and the quiet thing. And then we'll swap and then there's icing biscuits into pigs because the pigs ran over the cliff edge or whatever. And so there's an element of choice because their still directed through to the quiet room and then to the active room but within that there are different activities and that's very engaging and there's always a lot of energy. And that's pooled all the resources together and

Katy: And the quiet, loud thing is another limitation. If you're going to offer a prayer station as part of that play based which might have active things that you can do to help you pray you need a bit of peace and quiet rather than a station where there's role play and they're blowing trumpets of Jericho. Offering that choice you need enough space like with Splash, but you can't normally have

Interviewer: In our individual groups in a smaller room.

Sally: There could be an element of that. You could pool everyone together at the end for a couple of minutes and pray.

Katy: I think there's, in my mind I'm up for seeing new things, definitely a really positive thing to have this element of **play** within the sessions. You haven't got the kids sitting on their bottoms. That's just not kids. And this sense of, talking about **school**, kids blossoming into their individual, you can only know them so well when you only see them once a week but all kids are different and it gives that chance for that **expression through activity** and you can start to **chat with them a bit more and one on one perhaps, alongside an activity so that's good relationally**. And as they're getting older, this is what I was impressed by, the more structured sessions with the kids, you've got your, this is the next part, at the beginning and it's not all, every part has a purpose, and the kids value that there's time for a meal and there's a time to **run round crazy** and it helps just with the whole of culture of church when we're gathering, the sitting on bottoms in rows. How natural is that for mankind? But that is currently how we do it or there's messy church or church in your home but, there is that sense that it is amazing the expectation that you can sit and listen and respect that folk have bought something to share, so they can **learn** that in their groups too. I love the **discussion** time **as they get older they can start to be valued that they have a point of view or they've heard someone said and they not quite sure what that means**. SO that isn't play based, it's **discussion**. So there are lots of things that are really valuable to kids growing in God. I think **play** and **interaction** are **activities** that are a real **highlight** for kids. I wouldn't imagine the whole session on it necessarily. I don't know how.

Interviewer: My next question is what do you think would be the benefits of including play in Children's ministry on a Sunday morning? You've already begun to answer that there.

Katy: **Kids will look forward to that engagement** because kids love

Sally: And that's what you said about that **coming alongside adults**, you know at **school** there's just so many of them all the time, whereas I don't know how many you get in GOLD normally

Interviewer: Between 12 and 18.

Sally: BRONZE (Pseudonym for group for children in years 5 & 6) is smaller and it's a bit too small in a way but the ones who come really appreciate the fact sometimes when we were all together with GOLD it was too big, too noisy and they really appreciate the **opportunity to be able to talk about things** and it's a bit calmer. We can still **play silly games** but that relating to an adult that isn't your parent, that wants to spend time with you, listen to you, is really good. But that could be with **play**. Cause for some of them they need to be doing things at the same time as talking, not just sitting still.

Katy: I think it's really good, very beneficial place. What was it again?

Interviewer: what are the benefits of including play in children's ministry on a Sunday morning?

Katy: I think its **where they can just be themselves**, they are **free to express themselves**

Sally: They're **not being measured for how much they can write**.

Katy: or how nicely they're sitting and are they squashing the cup with their squash in, it's not their manners or good behaviour

Sally: you get to know them.

Katy: Yeah, I think that's very cool. I guess in my head what I picture is, you know you get these forest schools, and you get nurseries next to them that are like, we are forest school, and so to me that just that and that age group as well, they're learning to, my assumption is that get your coat on, get your wellies on, go outside, see what you find, come and show me. It's all discovery

Sally: It's about experience.

Katy: It's amazing but the and that age as well the pre-school type of thing that is just so heightened you know, it really is a delight and a strengthening and a developing through that discovery, like L licking glass and discovering it's smooth with his tongue. But that does change as they get older and I wouldn't expect B to be learning through forest school 100% because of the strength of her characteristics won't all be met by doing a forest school however, she would love it. So it's not that it isn't cool and isn't fun but it meets different proportions of development and at different ages. So that's I view it at the moment.

Interviewer: That's interesting. That's lovely. So just one final question. Have you got any questions you want to ask me about play and children's ministry? Have you got any observations that haven't come out of the questions that I've asked so far?

Sally: What you asked about limitations. The play you've got. The more play based you need enough adults, quiet and loud area. It's also time to prepare resources can be greater although if you didn't make it play based for the whole time you might still be doing lots of different activities. You still need to prepare things but that's one factor. I'm so impressed when I come up and get ready for BRONZE, you've got, clearly you've spent a lot time getting all your resources ready. And I know I just can't spend that time, so it's all really good but it relies on people having the time available to do that. It would be nice to be able to do that.

Interviewer: That's a possible area for me to look at how we can equip and make resources available so they're just there all the time, you can just help yourself to them and you don't have to go looking for them. It is one of the things I'm looking to do. I obviously need to talk to people who are involved in leading Children's Ministry and leading the church to see how they feel about there being a toy cupboard upstairs with toys that children can choose, activities that they can choose and what a playworker would call 'loose parts.' So just things that are available for children to play with that could be anything, junk modelling, paint, plaidoh, sand. All those sorts of things so that it's just there for the children, there for those involved in working with children.

Sally: I suppose I can always get hold of resources through school and pick up things from when the children were younger, I can find things but it's quite hard if you started doing this with children's work for those who don't have children, don't have access to those things

Interviewer: toys and..

Sally: Yes. It would even more useful to have, to have access to a general store at church.

Interviewer: It's something I'll look to develop but I can't just go off independently, it needs to be done in consultation with the people who lead and with everybody else but it's an idea I've got. We'll see.

Katy: Can children themselves be involved in the planning of the **play** like they..

Interviewer: That would be good.

Katy: can be part of **play** ministry, here's the **story**, how could we express that with these things. What do you think we could do? So as, in, that goes beyond these three **stations** but then obviously it helps to have some resources available. But almost a bit like the kids story books where there's **adventure** and then turn to page 7 if you want to go in the cave. Turn to page 9 if you want to go down the forest road. So that kind of format. That again takes time and **imagination** and that's got to be your thing to do that. For it then to go somewhere like, do you want to meet God in a quiet place or do you want to meet God in the noise. Show us that part of his character or do you want to meet God in his power, let's go over to the cliff face. So the kids are then starting to go God spoke in a quiet voice. That's another way of simply playing but it's **creativity**.

Sally: But the actual stories, the truths that are true, this is what the story is in the bible and that's absolute so you don't to have to start where you can just do anything. We're not there just to **play** as an end in itself. We're there to help you to move on towards God. You don't want to lose sight of that.

Interviewer: No, no. But I do like the idea of children being in control and choosing. Like you said just at the beginning of that example it was a really lovely idea for me that is what I'm trying to incorporate and try and develop in the Children's Ministry that I do. That sense of here's a story let's explore it together. How shall we explore it.

Katy: Rather than we're just **reading** some words. Do we know who Joseph was or not just like school but let's get hold of this, like **putty**. What does it **create** in us. How do feel about that? What if we put in our bag of life, where's it going to be useful for us? Again it's all this, kids love **imagery**, I love imagery.

Sally: The only issue with that is you lead GOLD most weeks, so you can go with an idea and get some continuity. I kind of dip in and out of it because I can't commit to that as often but sometimes I lead GOLD occasionally but more often I'm in BRONZE. So you don't quite have the **freedom** to, 'Well let's just **explore** this and then next week we can carry on,' because I can't carry on next week. That's another limitation I guess. It's not ideal because I don't feel I build the relationships with them anyway but then neither do I get the continuity where we talked about this or

Interviewer: That's interesting.

Sally: It's better when we do it every week.

Interviewer: Which is obviously a lot to expect from volunteers who are coming to church not just to serve in Children's work but also to engage

Sally: for ourselves.

Interviewer: With God themselves and with the wider community. Katy has just left the room because she needs to go and collect her son from pre-school. I don't know if you've got any other observations that you'd like to make?

Sally: I suppose the only thing is about how things were a year or so ago. There was a large group in not a very big space, and quite a few children with different needs meaning behaviour was quite an issue. That's difficult because of you just make it very restrictive and school like they don't enjoy it and they don't learn as much really at such a deep level but it does make it a bit more manageable when you have those large numbers. Now that we've split into two groups that's not such an issue. But I guess that's another .... We needed enough adults so we could manage two separate groups and now the numbers have gone down quite a bit anyway which is sad but some have moved up and that's quite normal. We don't seem to have as many of the year 5,6's at the moment.

Interviewer: So thank you Sally, really appreciate your observations and comments. They've been really helpful so I'm going to stop the interview there.



fun -  
enjoy

often  
esp. good  
for  
kinesthetic  
learners

pro

What is play?

therapeutic >!

a chance to  
express yourself

a chance for  
spontaneity within a  
structure / framework  
→ creative



# Code of Ethical Conduct for Play Work

## BACKGROUND

As part of its objectives **The Register of Playwork Professionals** (the Register) aims to ensure that playwork professionals who are admitted to the Register should both establish and maintain proper standards of ethical and professional conduct in fulfilling their playwork role. In these circumstances persons who are registered will, as a part of their membership of the Register, be expected to adhere to these standards of ethical and professional conduct.

This **Code of Ethical Conduct** (the Code) defines what is good practice for professionals in playwork by reflecting on the core values of rights, relationships, responsibilities, standards and safety. The term 'professional' is used in a qualitative context and does not necessarily imply a paid position or person. Where playwork professionals are employed the Register accepts that they will be subject to the codes of practice and employment rules of their employers. In determining compliance, the Register will have careful regard to any such employment rules and in particular whether or not, in the case of any complaint being made, the professional concerned has or will be subject to any internal investigation by his or her employers. Therefore, any complaint received will be referred to the employer. In addition, any complaint to an employer which relates to a member of the Register should be notified to the Register, in order that the complaint can be reviewed and, if necessary, the playwork professional may be removed from the Register.

Playwork professionals on the Register accept their responsibility to children and young people who participate in playwork activities; to other professionals and playwork colleagues; to their respective playwork associations, professional bodies and institutes; to their employer; and to society. When practising, members must also be covered by adequate liability insurance which may, for employed members, be provided by their employers.

This Code of Conduct is guided by the Playwork Principles and members of the Register are expected to apply these principles to their practice.

## The Playwork Principles

These principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork, and describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people. They are based on the recognition that children and young

people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities:

- All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well being of individuals and communities.
- Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
- The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
- For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.
- The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
- The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
- Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
- Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.
  - The Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group, Cardiff, 2005

For the purposes of this document, anyone under the age of 18 (under 16 in Scotland) should be considered a child.

There are five ethical principles to the Code:

### **ETHICAL PRINCIPLE 1: RIGHTS**

**Playwork professionals should have consideration for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in their work at all times. In particular, playwork professionals should note and apply the following in their work:**

- Playwork professionals should respect individuality, difference and diversity, challenge discrimination and promote inclusion in their work with children, young people, their families and carers.
- Playwork professionals should hold the best interests of the children and young people with whom they work as their primary consideration. While safeguarding the

interests and safety of children and young people, playwork professionals should also take cognisance of the benefits afforded by children and young people's play which may sometimes contain an element of risk.

- Playwork professionals should take account of the importance of, and wherever possible promote, children's development.
- Playwork professionals should enable all children with whom they work to express their views freely in matters which affect them, and take those views into account when planning and providing for play.
- Playwork professionals should recognise that children and young people using their provision have a right to rest and leisure, as well as upholding their right to engage in play and recreational activities. Playwork professionals should also take children's right to freely participate in cultural life and the arts into account through their work.
- Playwork professionals should take all steps necessary to fully comply with any laws and legal principles and practices concerning the care and treatment of children and young people.

## **ETHICAL PRINCIPLE 2: RELATIONSHIPS**

**Playwork professionals will seek to nurture positive relationships with the children, young people, parents and carers with whom they work and with other professionals.**

Playwork professionals should seek to ensure that the relationships they have with the children and young people attending play sessions and their parents and carers are based on openness, honesty, mutual trust and respect

- Playwork professionals should acknowledge that children and young people are the experts in relation to their own play. Where possible, playwork professionals should help parents and carers whose children use the play setting, and other professionals, to understand this.
- Playwork professionals should communicate clearly with children, young people, parents and carers, professional colleagues and representatives from other spheres of children's lives. In relationships with other professionals, colleagues, parents and carers, playwork professionals should ensure transparency, honesty, accuracy and cooperation when communicating.
- As dictated by the role, playwork professionals should act with integrity in recognition of the position of trust that they hold. In all professional relationships, they should avoid any behaviour which may cause offense or bring the sector into disrepute.

Although the Register cannot and will not seek to adjudicate or deal with private disputes (which should be dealt with by members, their employers and the complainant) the Register will, nevertheless, seek to ensure that playwork professionals maintain a proper regard to dealing with and addressing concerns raised by the people with whom they work. If a dispute should arise between a member of the public and a member of the Register, the member of

the public shall, in the first instance, seek to resolve that dispute with the Register member and their employer. Only if that matter cannot be resolved or the dispute reveals a lack of proper professional conduct would the Register seek to intervene. The Register itself has no jurisdiction to actually resolve such a dispute.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 states: "It is an offence for a person aged 18 years or over to involve a child under that age in sexual activity where he or she is in a specified position of trust in relation to that child. This includes those who care for, advise, supervise or train children and young persons."

- No sexual relationship should exist between any person who is entered onto the register and any young person under the age of 18 or any vulnerable adult (Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, the grooming of a child for the purposes of developing that relationship into a sexual one is a criminal offence).
- All members who work with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults must obtain a Disclosure and Barring Service clearance (formally known as CRB) which must be updated in accordance with guidelines and upon commencement of a new post where appropriate.
- All members should ensure that any concerns regarding the safeguarding of children, young persons or vulnerable adults are dealt with expediently and appropriately and in accordance with the laws, principles and best practices regulating those matters.

### **ETHICAL PRINCIPLE 3: PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Playwork professionals should take responsibility for their own professional conduct**

Compliance with this principle requires playwork professionals to:

- Maintain high standards of professional conduct appropriate to their dealings with children and young people, parents and carers, and other professionals with whom they work and which reflect the particular image and expectations relevant to the role of the playwork professional working in the playwork sector.
- Have an understanding of their legal responsibilities and accountability when dealing with the public and an awareness of the need for honesty and accuracy when promoting their services in the public domain.
- Recognise their duty of care to be aware of their working environment and be able to deal with all reasonably foreseeable accidents and emergencies and to protect themselves, their colleagues and the children and young people with whom they work.

- A willingness to accept responsibility and be accountable for professional decisions or actions, welcome evaluation of their work and recognise the need when appropriate to refer to another professional specialist.
- An understanding of the Playwork Principles and their application in the context in which they work.

#### **ETHICAL PRINCIPLE 4: PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

##### **Playwork professionals will seek to adopt the highest level of professional standards in their work and in the development of their career**

Compliance with this principle requires playwork professionals to commit to the attainment of appropriate qualifications and ongoing training to demonstrate:

- Engagement in actively seeking to update knowledge and improve their professional skills in order to maintain a quality standard of service, reflecting on their own practice, identifying development needs and undertaking relevant development activities.
- A personal responsibility to maintain their own effectiveness and confine themselves to practice of those activities for which they are trained or competent as recognised by the register.

#### **ETHICAL PRINCIPLE 5: SAFE WORKING PRACTICE**

##### **Playwork professionals should apply safe working practices while complying with good playwork practice, relevant local and national guidelines, regulations and laws.**

Compliance with this principle requires playwork professionals to consider their role in children's and young people's safety, while assessing the benefits that risky play might provide against the likelihood of harm in their play environment and to make a judgement on provision accordingly.

Playwork professionals should demonstrate:

- A responsible attitude to the care and safety of children and young people within the playwork setting and in specific play opportunities which are being offered, ensuring that both are appropriate to the play needs of the children and young people who attend, and provide the benefits that can be afforded.
- An appropriate ratio of playwork professionals to children and young people within any play session to ensure that, where appropriate, regulatory standards are met and sufficient adults are available to respond to children's and young people's needs, deal with emergencies and safeguard others present, when necessary.
- Compliance with local safeguarding procedures, including the application of discretion when dealing with and reporting disclosure of abuse
- In addition, playwork professionals should never subject children or young people, parents or carers, or other professionals to any form of treatment that is harmful, abusive, humiliating or degrading.

Taken from <http://www.playworkregister.org/resources/code-of-ethical-conduct> 15.09.2015

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# RESEARCH ETHICS

## Full Ethical Review Form

- Full ethical review must be used for research involving above minimal risk and therefore necessitating a more thorough ethical review prior to approval.
- Further guidance on projects which involve above minimal risk is provided within the University's Ethical Review Policy.
- Relevant professional body ethical guidelines should be consulted when completing this form.
- Please seek guidance from the Chair of your Faculty Research Ethics Committee if you are uncertain about any ethical issues arising from this application.
- There is an obligation on the researcher and supervisor (if applicable) to bring to the attention of the Faculty Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not identified by this form.

### PART A: TO BE COMPLETED BY RESEARCHER

Name of Researcher:	Tonia Vincent
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Student/Course Details (If Applicable)			
Student ID Number:	v010653f		
Name of Supervisor(s)/Module Tutor:	Dawn O'Connell/Sally Nash		
PhD/MPhil project:	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Taught Postgraduate Project/Assignment:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Award Title:	BA (Hons) Children and Family Work with Practical Theology
Undergraduate Project/Assignment:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Module Title:	Dissertation

Project Title:	<b>Should Playwork Principles apply to Children's Ministry on Sunday mornings?</b> A participatory action research study into play and children's work in church.		
Expected Start Date:	January 2018	Expected End Date:	10 <sup>th</sup> April 2018

<b>Application Checklist</b>		
Have the following documents been supplied alongside this application?	Yes	N/A
Participant information sheet(s) in language appropriate to the recipient	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant consent form(s) in language appropriate to the recipient	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
Letter/s of invitation to participants in language appropriate to the recipient	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
Questionnaires (only attach questionnaires that have NOT been validated previously)	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health related projects only: Letters giving permission for access to participants or confirming that full LREC ethical approval is not required	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓
Other relevant information (e.g. tests or product information)	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓

<b>Submission Guidance (for completion by Faculty):</b>

## 1. Project Outline

Please provide a brief paragraph indicating answers to the following questions where relevant:

- i) The aims and objectives of the project.
- ii) Its rationale and justification.
- iii) The research question or specific hypotheses to be tested.
- iv) The background to the project.
- v) Where the research is to be carried out.
- vi) Names of other individuals or organisations involved in the project.
- vii) Whether other approvals have been gained or are to be sought.

The aim of this Study is to explore how Playwork Principles could apply to Sunday morning Children's Ministry in order to begin to develop a play-based model of Children's Ministry in my setting. I would like to understand the impact a play-based model has on Children's Ministry including the benefits and disadvantages of such an approach. Alongside this degree course, I have completed a Basic and Intermediate Professional Playwork Portfolio and have gained an understanding of the importance of play for children's development and well-being. CYM's GRACE Principle of Growth and Learning through Play states that 'play provides children with the opportunities to explore, enquire, create, imagine build, work together, take risks, rest and pretend in a way that fosters spirituality, healthy development and promotes learning.' I would like to explore this further so that the church I attend can use play more consciously and confidently in its practice. The research will be carried out in my current church setting with a group of children in school year's three and four, others volunteers who work with the group of children in question

and the Children's Ministry Leader of the church. I will seek consent and approval from a relevant gatekeeper at the church.

## 2. Research Procedure

Please provide a summary of the procedures that will be followed when carrying out the research project under the following headings.

### a) The design of the project (including, where appropriate, issues of statistical power):

I will be adopting a participatory action approach to the research, using mixed methods in order to discover a range of people's views on play in Children's Ministry.

The study will include

- An informal interview with the Children's Ministry Leader about their views on play and Children's Ministry.
- A focus group with volunteer helpers about their views on play and its role in Children's Ministry
- Opinions and ideas from children in school years three and four who attend church about what they would describe as play using photos of activities used in previous sessions. I will also provide an opportunity for children to express their own views on their ideas of play.

### b) The procedures to be followed:

Firstly, I will gain the permission of the relevant gatekeeper.

The Children's Ministry Leader, focus group participants, parents, and children in school years three and four who attend the church I attend will be provided with an appropriate information sheet and consent form (**Appendix 1**).

The informal interview will be conducted at a time and place agreed by the participant and myself. The interview will be recorded on a Voice Recording App on a mobile device. The interview will then be transferred to a password-protected laptop and the Voice Recording App interview deleted.

The focus group will be arranged at a time and place convenient to those participating. The focus group will be recorded on a Voice Recording App on a mobile device. The focus group interview will then be transferred to a password-protected laptop and the Voice Recording App interview deleted.

Children will be given photos of activities previously used in the setting (**Appendix 3**). They will be asked to put the photos into one of three post boxes; play, not sure and not play. There will be a fourth post box for the children to write or draw a postcard about how they play.

The data will be collected and analysed to give understanding on children's play in Children's Ministry on a Sunday morning.

c) The participation of subjects in the project:

I will approach the participants for the interview and focus group in person and ask if they would be willing to participate. If they are agreeable they will be given the appropriate information sheet and consent form (**Appendix 1**)

Parents of children who attend the Sunday morning group for children in school years three and four will be approached by myself and asked if they would agree to their child taking part in the study. If they are agreeable they will be given the appropriate information sheet and consent form (**Appendix 1**).

d) How the design of the project and the procedures followed are likely to assess the research question or test the hypothesis in question or establish some significant result:

The focus group and interview with the Children's Ministry Leader will give insights into play, how it viewed and its benefits and disadvantages for Children's Ministry on Sunday mornings.

The children's feedback will give insights into the children's views on play and how it is has been incorporated to the group I lead.

The action research method I am adopting will help me to critically reflect on and analyse the information in order to gain greater understanding and awareness of the importance of play and its role in Children's Ministry on a Sunday morning. The research will also help me to develop an alternative approach to Children's Ministry based on Playwork Principles.

e) Availability of facilities/resources/equipment to enable the project to be carried out:

I will coordinate with focus group volunteers and Children's Ministry Leader an appropriate time and place for the group and interview to take place. There are rooms available in the church building that would facilitate this.

The children will complete the photo and postcard activities after Sunday morning group has finished. Their parents will be on site and are invited to be in the room with their child if they wish. The child will be asked if they would like their parents to be present.

f) Procedures that will be followed if any adverse event occurs:

It is unlikely that the study would cause any adverse effects. However, in the event of a child reacting adversely, parents will either be present or in the building. The gatekeeper will also be in the building and available should children or parents need to talk through any issues arising from the research.

Should a focus group member or Children's Ministry Leader have any issues that arise from the group or interview, the gatekeeper will be available for them to talk to.

The church's procedures will be followed on the event of a fire or other emergency.

### 3. Participant Recruitment & Characteristics

Please provide clear information regarding the recruitment of participating subjects and their appropriateness to the project:

*(NB: Student researchers must also ascertain from their Supervisor whether or not they require a criminal record check through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in order to enable this project to proceed. If this is the case the application must make clear whether or not it has been undertaken. Any data collection or other activities requiring this clearance must not begin until it has been obtained.)*

a) The number of subjects involved in the study (including the adequacy of the sample size for both qualitative and quantitative research):

I have a current DBS check which can be verified through the DBS Online Registration Service (**Appendix 2**).

I will conduct an interview with the Children's Ministry Leader.

I will conduct a focus group with a maximum of three participants who are involved in working with a group of children in years three and four at the church I attend

I will approach all families who attend the group for children in school years three and four (currently 32 families), inviting their children to participate in the photo and postcard activity.

As I am taking an action approach to this study, the qualitative data from the interview and focus group and the quantitative and qualitative data from the children's photo and postcard activities will be critically reflected on in order to identify how Playwork Principles can be applied to Children's Ministry.

b) How participants will be identified, approached or recruited:

Participants are identified by their roles in the church, i.e. Children's Ministry Leader and Group Volunteer Helpers and the children belonging to a the group I lead on Sunday mornings at church for children in school years three and four. The Children's Ministry Leader and Group Volunteer Helpers will be approached in person by myself and asked if they would be willing to participate in this study.

Parents of children attending the group I lead will be emailed by myself, inviting their children to participate in this study with appropriate information sheet and consent form attached.

c) Whether there are any inclusion or exclusion criteria, together with their justification:

There are no exclusions from taking part in this research. Additional needs will be catered for in consultation with the participants and their parents. Participant's involvement is voluntary and they are able to withdraw consent up until the study is published on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018 ready for submission on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

d) The age range of subjects; the gender balance of subjects; and the subjects' state of health:

Participants of the photo and postcard activity will be aged aged seven and eight. There are currently fifteen boys and 17 girls on the groups register.

The children's ministry leader and group volunteer helpers are all female. There are no males involved in working with children in the church age seven and eight years old.

The health of those taking part will not have any effect on the study. There are a number of children in the sample who have additional needs.

e) Whether there is any inducement to participate in the study:

There is no inducement to take part in the study or rewards for taking part.

f) How participants will be informed about the right to withdraw from participation the study (and whether time limits will be established during which a participant can request for their data to be withdrawn from the study):

Participants will be informed on the information sheet of their right to withdraw. Participants will have the right to withdraw their data up until the study is printed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018 ready for submission on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

g) Whether the project involves any special groups requiring some additional justification or permission (e.g. children and young people under 18 years of age, those with a learning disability or cognitive impairment, patients, people in custody, people engaged in illegal activities (e.g. drug taking), or individuals in a dependent or unequal relationship):

The study involves research with children aged seven and eight, including a child with additional needs. Permission will be sought from their parents/carers in order for the children to take part in the study. I have a current DBS check which can be verified through the online registration service (**Appendix 2**).

h) Will informed consent be obtained from research participants?      Yes       No

Please give details of who will obtain consent and how this will be undertaken.

Parents will be invited to talk to their child about involvement. Parents will be given an information sheet for them and an age appropriate information sheet for their child. There will also be a consent form signed by the parent and child. The consent form will confirm that the parents have fully explained the study to their child and that the child understands what they are being asked to do and why.

#### 4. Information and Data

Please provide answers to the following questions regarding the handling and storage of information and data:

a) How will research data be stored (manually or electronically)?

Research data will be stored electronically on a password-protected laptop.

The interview and focus group will be recorded on a Tablet app (Voice Recorder). The data will be transferred onto a password-protected laptop and deleted from the Tablet.

The children's postcard responses and signed consent forms will be kept in a locked metal filing box.

The photos placed in the post-boxes are anonymous. All children are given the same set of photos with no names or numbers used to identify the children's responses.

b) How is protection given to the subject (e.g. by being made anonymous through coding and with a subject identifier code being kept separately and securely)?

Children's responses are anonymous, the study will describe the participants as 'the children's ministry leader, volunteer helpers and children in schools years three and four who attend an evangelical church in a town in the East Midlands.' The interview and focus group recording will be fully transcribed and group names, the name of the church and individuals names given pseudonyms.

c) What assurance will be given to the subject about the confidentiality of this data and the security of its storage?

The information sheet will explain confidentiality and anonymity. It will also make clear that data provided will be stored securely and password protected.

d) Is assurance given to the subject that they cannot be identified from any publication or dissemination of the results of the project?

The church will be described as 'an evangelical church in a town in the East Midlands,' to reduce the likelihood of the church being identified geographically.

The information sheets and consent forms inform participants that their identity will be kept anonymous. Participants will be informed that the data being collected is for the purpose of a dissertation and permission sought for their data to be used.

e) Who will have access to this data, and for what purposes?

My dissertation supervisor will have access in order to verify conclusions drawn from data provided.

f) How will the data be stored, for how long, and how will it be discarded?

Signed consent forms and children's postcard responses will be stored in a locked, metal filing box. Electronic data will be stored on a password-protected laptop. Data will be stored for twelve months before being deleted from the laptop and consent forms and postcard responses shredded.

## 5. Risk, Harm and Other Ethical Considerations

Please provide an estimate of the perceived benefits or outcomes of the project weighed against the possible harms caused to the participating subject.

Please identify any potential risks or hazards that might be caused to subjects or the researcher, in addition to any discomfort, distress or inconvenience to them, together with any ethical problems or considerations that the researcher considers to be important or difficult in the proposed project.

It is unlikely that the study will cause any adverse effects, discomfort or inconvenience. The Children's Ministry Leader and volunteer helpers may have a better understanding of how play could benefit Children's Ministry in our setting and therefore the children involved. Knowing how the children in the study play, will help inform how their sessions could better include play that is tailored to their personal preferences.

Please explain how any potential risks or hazards will be dealt with, along with any justificatory statements. This information should highlight any remaining ethical considerations and to respond to them in a way which may assist the Research Ethics Committee in arriving at some judgement upon the proposal.

Should the children experience any adverse effects, parents will either be in the room or close by and can be called on. Participation is voluntary and any participant can withdraw at any point during the study up until publishing the study on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018. Participants all know the gatekeeper and that they are available to talk to should any issues or adverse effects be experienced.

## 6. Supporting Information

Please attach the consent form, information sheet, and questionnaire/interview questions to this application. Further guidance on the design and content of consent forms and information sheets can be found on the University's Research Ethics website.

### Researcher Declaration

I undertake to carry out the project described above in accordance with ethical principles. I have completed the application in good faith. I accept that providing false information constitutes scientific fraud and will be subject to appropriate disciplinary procedures.

Signature of Researcher:	<i>T.E Vincent</i>	Date:	11/11/2017
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**NB:** Any departure from the protocol for this research project may mean that the ethical approval decision made by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee is no longer valid and a new ethics proposal will have to be submitted. It is the responsibility of a student researcher to discuss proposed changes to the agreed protocol with their project supervisor as soon as possible so that a revised /new ethics application can be submitted. Research based on any revised / new protocol **MUST** not proceed unless and until the protocol has ethical approval.

### STUDENT RESEACHER: NEXT STEP

- COMPLETE AND SAVE THIS FORM IN THE FOLLOWING FORMAT FOR THE FILE NAME
  - FAMILY NAME FIRST NAME, STUDENT, DISCLAIMER E.G. WHIZZ BILLY STUDENT DISCLAIMER
- E-MAIL IT AS A WORD ATTACHMENT, ALONG WITH ANY RELEVANT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS, USING THE FILE NAME AS THE SUBJECT [IN THE SUBJECT BAR OF THE E-MAIL] TO YOUR SUPERVISOR.

\*THERE IS NO NEED TO PRINT THIS FORM\*

### STAFF RESEACHER: NEXT STEP

PLEASE FORWARD THIS FORM TO FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE [ethics-FACT@staffs.ac.uk] WHO WILL ARRANGE FOR IT TO BE CONSIDERED BY AN INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF THE FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE



\*THERE IS NO NEED TO PRINT THIS FORM\*

**PART B: TO BE COMPLETED BY SUPERVISOR/MODULE TUTOR (If Applicable)**

I have examined this proposal and confirm that the rationale and methodology is appropriate and that it can proceed to the stage of ethical consideration.	✓
I have checked and approved the key documents required for this proposal (e.g. consent form, information sheet, questionnaire and interview schedule).	✓

Signature of Supervisor:	Dawn O'Connell	Date:	21 Nov 2017
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**SUPERVISOR: NEXT STEP**

- **READ AND CHECK WHEN RECEIVED FROM THE STUDENT; IF SATISFIED ADD YOUR NAME AND DATE WHERE INDICATED**
- **SAVE AND SEND AS A WORD ATTACHMENT BY E-MAIL, USING THE FILE NAME AS THE SUBJECT [IN THE SUBJECT BAR OF THE E-MAIL] TO [ethics-FACT@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:ethics-FACT@staffs.ac.uk)**

\*THERE IS NO NEED TO PRINT THIS FORM\*

**PART C: TO BE COMPLETED BY CHAIR OF FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

This research proposal has been considered by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee and <b>RECEIVED</b> ethical approval.	<input type="checkbox"/>
This research proposal has been considered by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee and was REFUSED ethical approval on grounds detailed below:	<input type="checkbox"/>



Gill Benson <[g.benson@stjohns-nottm.ac.uk](mailto:g.benson@stjohns-nottm.ac.uk)>

13/12/2017

to me

Hi Tonia

We have heard from Staffordshire University that your Ethical Clearance has been approved with no conditions.

Happy Christmas

*Gill Benson*

Midlands CYM Administrator

St John's School of Mission  
Chilwell Lane, Bramcote, Nottingham, NG9 3DS

☎ 0115 9683222

✉ [mcym@stjohns-nottm.ac.uk](mailto:mcym@stjohns-nottm.ac.uk)

**Appendix 1**  
**Children's Ministry and Play**  
**Dissertation Research**  
**Parent's Information Sheet**

Hi, I am Tonia Vincent and I lead the GLOW group on Sunday mornings. I am currently studying a BA (Hons) Children and Family Work with Practical Theology at Midlands CYM at St. John's School of Mission. As part of my studies, I am completing research on Children's Ministry and play for my dissertation.

The research will explore the role of play in Children's Ministry on a Sunday morning. My aim is to understand what children, volunteer helpers and Children's Ministry leaders consider play is and whether play could be used as a model for Children's Ministry.

The research will involve asking children to choose whether photos of activities planned for GLOW are play or not play, in their eyes. I have been taking photos of activities I have used in GLOW and children will be asked to put photos in one of three different coloured post boxes, a red one for 'not play,' a green one for, 'play,' and an orange one if they are not sure. There will also be postcards for your child to write and/or draw their play ideas for GLOW, which can be posted in a blue post box.

As your child attends GLOW on a Sunday morning, I am approaching you as a parent to ask if you would consider asking your child if they would like to take part in this research. Participation is voluntary and anonymous; you or your child can withdraw at any point up until the study is printed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018 ready for submission on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 2018. None of the photos used in this study contain images of any children who attend GLOW. Children's responses will be kept confidential, anonymous and stored on a password-protected laptop. If your child finds any of the activities upsetting or feels overwhelmed by it all, one of GLOW's helpers will come and get you straight away. You are of course welcome to be around at the end of GLOW sessions to observe what we do and offer your child support if needed. The idea is to keep it all keep simple, quick and fun.

If you are happy for your child to participate I would be grateful if you could talk through the study with your child, using the Children's Information Sheet attached and then sign and return the enclosed consent forms to me using the stamped addressed envelope provided.

Alan Stapleton is aware of and given permission for me to conduct this research and I have complied with Staffordshire University and Midland's CYM's Ethical Clearance Procedure before beginning this research. Should you have questions or concerns please feel free to contact myself on my mobile phone, the number is 07477 504 463 or email me at, [tonia71.vincent@gmail.com](mailto:tonia71.vincent@gmail.com).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information,

Yours Truly,

Tonia Vincent

January 2018

**Children's Ministry and Play**  
**Dissertation Research**  
**GLOW Helpers Information Sheet**

Hi, I'm Tonia Vincent and I lead the GLOW group on Sunday mornings. I am currently studying a BA (Hons) Children and Family Work with Practical Theology at Midlands CYM at St. John's School of Mission. As part of my studies, I am completing research on Children's Ministry and play for my dissertation.

The research will explore the role of play in Children's Ministry on a Sunday morning. My aim is to understand what children, volunteer helpers and Children's Ministry leaders consider play is and how play could be used as a model for Children's Ministry.

As part of the research, I would like to form a focus group of volunteers who work with GLOW. This focus group will entail a once only thirty to forty minute informal conversation about your views on play and Children's Ministry. Participation is confidential, voluntary and anonymous and you can withdraw at any point up until the research is printed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018 ready for submission on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 2018. The conversation will be recorded on a Dictaphone and then transferred onto a password-protected laptop before being deleted.

If you are happy to take part, I would be grateful if you would sign and return the enclosed consent form in the stamped addressed envelope provided.

Alan Stapleton is aware of and given permission for me to conduct this research and I have complied with Staffordshire University and Midland's CYM's Ethical Clearance Procedure before beginning. Should you have questions or concerns please feel free to contact myself on my mobile phone, the number is 07477 504 463 or email me at, [tonia71.vincent@gmail.com](mailto:tonia71.vincent@gmail.com).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information,

Yours Truly,

Tonia Vincent

January 2018

**Children's Ministry and Play**  
**Dissertation Research**  
**Children's Ministry Leader Information Sheet**

Hi, I'm Tonia Vincent and I lead the GLOW group on Sunday mornings. I am currently studying a BA (Hons) Children and Family Work with Practical Theology at Midlands CYM at St. John's School of Mission. As part of my studies, I am completing research on Children's Ministry and play for my dissertation.

The research will explore the role of play in Children's Ministry on a Sunday morning. My aim is to understand what children, volunteer helpers and Children's Ministry leaders consider play is and whether play could be used as a model for Children's Ministry.

As part of the research, I would like to conduct an informal interview for no longer than half an hour about your views on play and Children's Ministry. Participation is confidential, voluntary and anonymous and you can withdraw at any point up until the study is printed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018 ready for submission on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018. The conversation will be recorded on a Dictaphone and then transferred onto a password-protected laptop before being deleted.

If you are happy to take part, I would be grateful if you would sign and return the enclosed consent form in the stamped addressed envelope provided.

Alan Stapleton is aware of and given permission for me to conduct this pilot study and I have complied with CYM's Ethical Clearance Procedure before beginning this study. Should you have questions or concerns please feel free to contact myself on my mobile phone, the number is 07477 504 463 or email me at, [tonia71.vincent@gmail.com](mailto:tonia71.vincent@gmail.com).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information,

Yours Truly,

Tonia Vincent

January 2018

## Play on a Sunday morning at GLOW

### Information for children

#### Who am I?



Hi, I'm Tonia and like you I'm at school and learning all about play and how to be better on a Sunday morning at GLOW. As part of my learning, I would like to know what you think about play and what I plan on Sunday mornings.

#### What will you be asked to do?

If you want to take part, I'll be giving you photos of activities I've planned for GLOW and asking you to put them into one of three post boxes. A green post box if you thought the activity was play, a red one if you thought it wasn't and an orange one if you're not sure it was play or not to you. There will also be a postcard for you to write or draw your own ideas for play activities at GLOW and place in a blue post box. I'm hoping that everything we do will be fun and very quick and easy. If you find it all a bit too much, we can ask your parents to come straight away as they will only be downstairs, or if you'd like, they can come and watch us posting your ideas.

#### Why am I asking you for your help?

I'm asking for your help because you come to GLOW on a Sunday morning and I want to know what you think. Your ideas will help me understand what you think play is and what play we should have as part of GLOW.

#### What happens with what I tell you?

I will take all the information and ideas you give me and write about them as part of my homework for the course. I will also use what you say to help me improve what we do on Sunday mornings.

#### Do I have a choice?

Yes! You only take part if you want to, and if you say yes I'll ask you to sign a piece of paper with your mum or dad or carer to say you understand and agree to take part. You are allowed to change your mind at any time you like, just let me, your mum, dad or carer know that you don't want to take part anymore. No one who reads what I write will know your name, the name of GLOW or the church.

You can talk to me or Alan Stapleton at church if you want to know more.

Thank you for going through this information sheet. Ask you mum, dad or carer if there's something you don't understand or want to know more about.

## Children's Ministry and Play

### Dissertation Study

#### Consent form for parents, carers and children

##### Children

Have your parents/carers explained the information you were given?

Yes  No

Have you understood what they have said?

Yes  No

Are you happy to take part in Tonia's learning about play in GLOW?

Yes  No

Do you know that if you want to change your mind and not take part, at any time, that's ok?

Yes  No

Do you understand that if it feels too much, we will get your parents/carers straight away?

Yes  No

If you have said yes, thank you. I look forward to knowing what you think.

##### Parents/Carers (Please tick to say you agree)

- I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and agree to my child taking part.
- I have explained the information to my child and they understand and agree to take part.
- I understand that participation is voluntary and my child or I can withdraw consent at any time up until the submission date of 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018.
- I agree to my child's views being used anonymously in the study.

- I understand that the photos will be used and taken but will not contain images of children.

Name of child participating \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Carers signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I would like a copy of the dissertation once published



## Children's Ministry and Play

### Dissertation Study

#### Consent form for GLOW helpers focus group

- I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and agree to take part in a one off thirty to forty minute focus group.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time until submission of the study on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018
- I agree to the focus group being audio recorded
- I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in the study

Name of participant \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I would like a copy of the dissertation once published

## Children's Ministry and Play

### Pilot Study

#### Consent form for Children's Ministry Leader

- I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and agree to take part in an informal interview.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time until submission of the study on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018.
- I agree to the interview being audio recorded.
- I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in the study.

Name of participant \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I would like a copy of the dissertation once published

## Appendix 2

### DBS

For DBS Certificate go online to:

- <https://www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service>

You will need the ID:

- C7672705917

My date of birth:

- 12<sup>th</sup> January 1971.

### Appendix 3

#### Photos of activities being used for children's research activity







