

PLAY SIMPLY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

OVERVIEW

Play Simply is a joint venture between Playwork NW, tsconnected.com (Tyrer Sorrel) and a number of Principal Associates. Playwork NW is a registered charity (No: 1096201) and still the largest and most established membership organisation for individuals interested in Play and Playwork in the North West. The primary aim of Play Simply is to increase the membership of Playwork NW and help those individuals feel more connected. It must be stressed that Play Simply is more than an income generating exercise for the Associates. Play Simply is a research and event programme that includes learning, intergenerational activities and live entertainment for a family audience. Play Simply is a series of Enterprise Projects challenged to make family life easier and build a momentum around the value of Play in both children and adult's lives.

One of the first questions we obviously need to address in light of the increased emphasis on children and the children's workforce is "Why do we need Play Simply now"? Clearly the Children's sector is in a period of increased development, interest and opportunity. Again we need to be clear from the start that Play Simply is not being developed to separate, oppose or challenge these opportunities but rather enhance, connect and focus individuals on the needs of children and their families. We aim to ensure that in what appears to be an increasingly complex world we put the child in the centre of family life and discover "What Does it Mean to Play Simply?" We believe by doing this we will help to raise the self esteem of families, Playworkers (a person who facilitates children's play) and the profession of Playwork as a whole.

In researching the potential of Play Simply we have highlighted a number of key issues facing Playworkers and the profession of Playwork. Many of these issues are leading to a lack of connection, self esteem and understanding of Play. For example we have been told that Playworkers feel or are labelled "underskilled, undervalued and under performing". We have further been told that Playwork is a profession that young men are reluctant to join as it brands them a "paedophile when they say what they do in the pub". We have also been told that "working with kids is exhausting work and built on a culture of short-termism". More alarmingly we have even been told that "Playwork is dead" as a new wave of professionals enter the children's sector and we "demote staff and destroy existing services" to take advantage of the opportunity. Increasingly it seems Playwork is a profession that makes little difference as children face crime, poverty and lack of community (whilst we have more technological opportunity to connect with each other, children and their families appear more disconnected then ever before).

At this stage we are unclear whether this is a true picture of childhood today and Playworkers role in it. However the aim of Play Simply is to explore these issues and develop intergenerational activities to make the business of family life easier.

This development plan sets out the targets for the Associates in launching the project. The document is not a business plan (available separately) but rather sets out the vision and direction with the aim of positioning Play Simply to address the issues highlighted and increase the understanding of Play as a universal, fun and ageless activity.

KEY AIMS

- “Win the Family” - Intergenerational Knowledge Exchange and Play activities for large groups of people
- Celebrate the “Degrees of Difference” in family life
- Connect, simplify & reinvigorate a unique profession and help Playworkers both paid and voluntary deal with change

KEY OBJECTIVES

Play Simply will focus on a Family Knowledge Exchange and a range of opportunities for individuals to meet, participate in shared activities and access a “family life resource storeroom”. Play Simply will be linked to music, entertainment and large groups of people/families playing together. Play Simply Programme will be split into 3 Project Areas: Exchanges, Challenges and Debates. The key objectives will be:

1. 1,200 Playwork NW Members by Project Stage 5
2. 4 Principal Associates at Project Start Up increasing to 8 by Project Stage 5 with an annual contribution of 10% to the Enterprise Fund and a 10% Management Fee (minimum £4,000).
3. 1 Family Fun Franchise(s) and/or event(s) at Project Start Up increasing to 10 by Project Stage 5. At Project Stage 5 there will be 30,000 participants and an annual contribution of 20% to the Enterprise Fund by the franchises
4. 1 diverse, robust and reliable knowledge/research database by Project Stage 3 with a tie in operations guide and 6,000 Play Simply Subscribers by Project Stage 5
5. 1 Knowledge Store and a number of local Member Centres (TBC) by Project Stage 3 with 100 Mentors signed up to the mentoring scheme by Stage 5
6. The Enterprise Projects will be supported in part by the sales of Exclusive Learning Content and Sales of products and services to Family Activity and Training Providers (TBC)

KEY DIFFERENTIATION

- Connection not Collection - Mentoring and Family Knowledge Exchange (Tacit not just Explicit Knowledge)
- Lifetime Financing
- Play is Universal, fun and ageless activity

THE NEED

The principal need identified is the need to increase the subjective well being of families. The method we have chosen to achieve this need also highlights a number of more detailed secondary needs:

1. Set up knowledge sharing “deals” with equal status/rewards and incentives. This is also linked to a fear of openness and misuse (privacy needed sometimes).
- 2. Fear of showing that they need the information.**
3. Databases cannot deal with badly asked questions (need people to give depth).
- 4. Remoteness from others (the more disperse a group the more they need to meet face-to-face).**
5. Capture knowledge from failure.
6. Need to have fun and be entertained.
7. High level knowledge can appear complex and difficult to replicate.
- 8. Most network/group relationships are transactional not social (they remain cold because of this).**
- 9. Some people want to share but miss or cannot find other sharers (need a facilitator, systems and opportunity).**
10. Need to increase transferrable assets (including mobility within one occupation but not one organisation).
11. Need to tell stories to share facts and knowledge (personal knowledge/specialisms).
12. Need to share high cost of launching a new venture/scheme.

THE AUDIENCE

We are looking to win the “Family Life” audience. By “Family Life” we mean children and their parents/carers, step parents, other family members, friends, same sex parents, lone parents, communities and professionals working with children. We obviously include children in our Family Life Profile as we aim to position children in the centre (but not *the* centre) of family life. In the first instance as we are working from a successful and established base with Playwork Professionals it is envisioned that the audience mix will be 50% Professional, 30% Parents/Carers and 20% Children with a move to increase the Parents and Carers band by Project Stage 5.

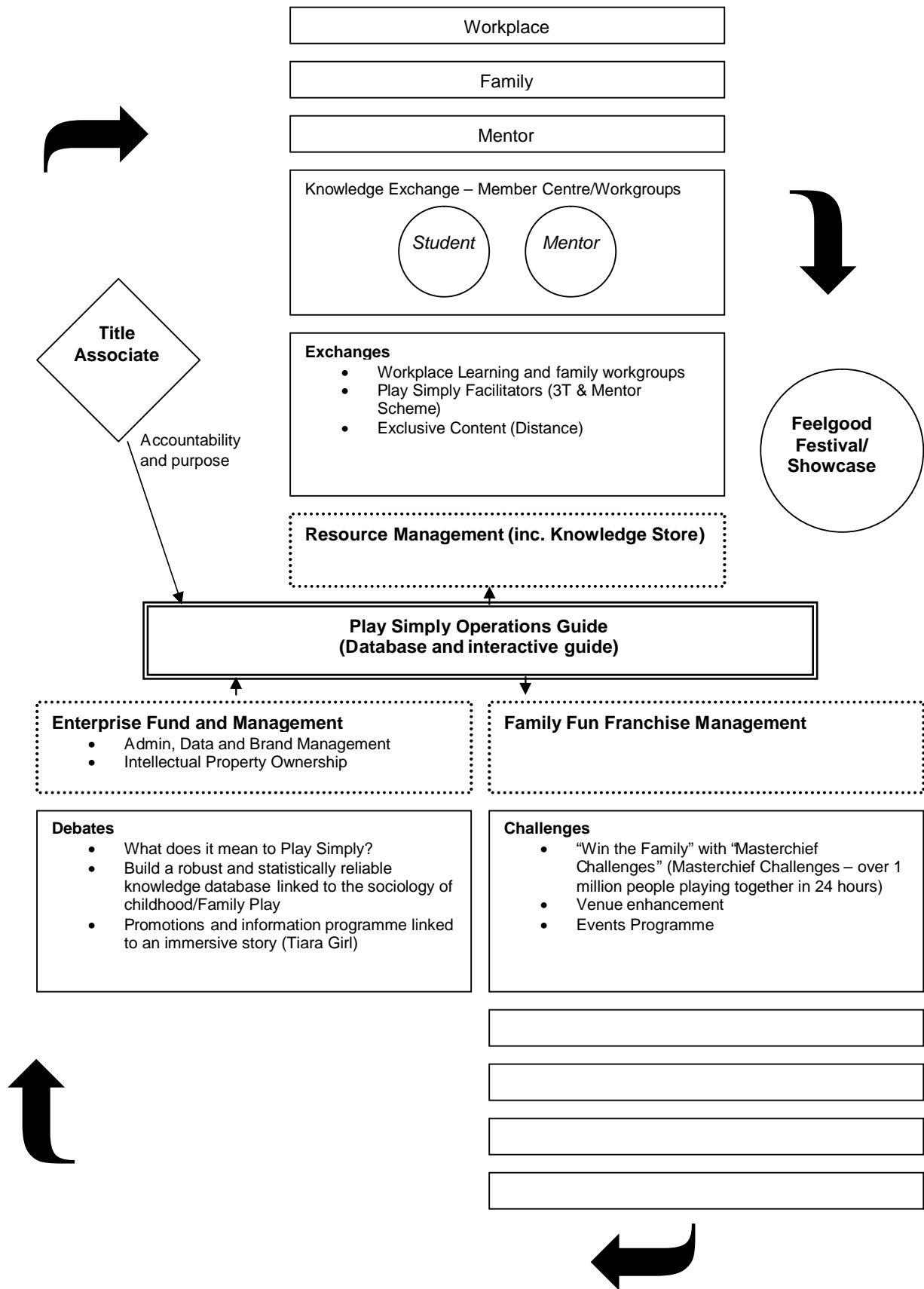
We are building from an established and proven subscription base but further work is required between Start Up and Project Stage 3 on the sources of information for the new audience mix. The sources will be split into Primary, Secondary and Referred. The identified sources will include parenting magazines, local partnerships, charitable cause tie-ins, health/leisure centres, children’s centres, schools, education centres, parenting support groups, telephone helplines, website referrals and workplaces.

THE BENEFITS AND BRAND STATEMENT

Play is a universal, fun and ageless activity.

The primary brand focus will therefore be on a simple and unifying group/social activity. We will reinforce the belief that just because something is “simple doesn’t mean that it is not powerful or effective”. The simple approach obviously leads to a small palette of high quality products and services. However we will guard against a soulless and repetitive approach. The programmes will be people driven, inclusive and focus on the delivery of “Sameness, Surprise and Satisfaction”.

THE PROGRAMMES



EXCHANGES

“Quality may help a team figure out how to solve a specific problem. But the really big pay off comes when they share that solution with other teams.”

Anne Mulcaby, Xerox

We will work to broaden the existing learning, qualifications and knowledge base around children and family activities to include the concept of Play Simply. Our aim will be to focus on the “Connection not Collection of knowledge” (Explicit Knowledge Programmes linked to Tacit, Individual and Group Exchanges)

CHALLENGES

“Every person who has played a Halo game feels some ownership or connection to the primary characters, having trudged with them through the halls of the library, the decks of the Pillar of Autumn, or the streets of Mombassa. The fans of Halo are just not a passive audience but part of the story.”

Lee Hammock, Halo writer

What is it that we all do when we play games? Regardless of individual tastes in leisure and play activities we will create shared fun and social activities with the aim of creating stable and predictable ways of family interaction in a number of key areas:

- Family Meals
- Family Outings
- Family Entertainment
- Family Play
- Family Holidays

DEBATES

“The scraps of lore which children learn from each other are at once more real, more immediately serviceable and vastly more entertaining to them than anything which they learn from grown-ups.”

Opie and Opie – The Lore and Language of School Children

We will build a Knowledge base to enable a better understanding of children’s local language, learning, relationships, cultures and behaviours. In so doing we will answer a number of “WHAT IF” questions:

1. What if 80% of Play happens naturally and is outside of adult led activity?
2. What if Play is a necessary human activity to build subjective well being?
3. What if Play isn’t a job but rather the business of families and communities?
4. What if Play Entertainment is just as valuable as Learning Through Play?
5. What if children need stories to help them understand their world?
6. What if Play was something we all did not just children?
7. What if we could all learn from the people that are great at playing (capturing the present like the Columbia astronauts)?
8. What if we could create the most family friendly places in the world in the NW?
9. What if there was a way to ensure “Lifetime Financing” for children’s activities and the answer to complex social issues was to do things simpler?
10. What if society’s view of childhood is different than children’s experience of it?

MANAGEMENT, RISK AND GROWTH STRATEGY

Play Simply is being Enterprise Managed by Playwork NW and Tyrer Sorrel. This is the team behind the membership, information and executive management of the NW Centre for Playwork Education and Training. This was a £50,000 (annually renewed) project delivered over a 7 year period. The project was DFES funded through the Sector Skills Council for Active Leisure and Learning. Many of the innovations and practices introduced by the team have been replicated or copied nationally. Alongside this project Tyrer Sorrel have worked with the NW Regional Assembly on a detailed research project to develop strategies to market to “hard to reach” audiences (up to 5,000 participants). The lessons learned form the basis for the Inclusive Information Strategies to be used by Play Simply.

The official resource management will be undertaken by Merseyside Play Action Council (MPAC). MPAC have operated in the Arts and Play field for the past 20 years. They currently administer an Arts Award learning programme and were responsible for the summer Playscheme training for Liverpool City Council in 2007 (£90,000 Contract).

The team behind the development of the Family Fun Franchises and activities are Warrington Play Council (WPC). WPC have been responsible for Playscheme and family fun activities in Warrington for the past 16 years alongside Warrington Borough Council and other local partners.

We have identified a number of risk factors: High cost of launch, lack of personality for the audience to connect to, overambitious programmes, lack of resources, lack of focus by diversifying the audience, potential for low quality delivery, lack of demand and poor ongoing training and marketing for Family Fun Franchises.

We aim to address these risks and achieve growth through a steady increase in participants and by setting Project Stages rather than annual milestones. This will ensure that we have built a stable and secure platform before moving onto the next level. We will expand the participant base by building on the proven Inclusive Information Strategies with increased public education and media circulation activities.

The next step is a foundation phase (feasibility study and pilot testing) up to Project Stage 3.

REFERENCES

In creating this document we have undertaken an ongoing feedback/annual review of members needs. We have also built on a comprehensive needs analysis undertaken for the development of learning programmes in 2004 and have researched, reviewed or referenced the following:

Childhood (2 nd Edition)	Chris Jenks	0415341671
Contemporary Strategy Analysis (5 th Edition)	Robert M Grant	9781405119986
Killer Brands	Frank Lane	9781598691238
The Franchisors Handbook	John H Pratt	BFA
The Starburcks Experience	Joseph A Michelli	9780071477840
The Wealth of Knowledge	Thomas A Stewart	1857882873
Toxic Childhood	Sue Palmer	9780752880914
Bagpuss	Small Films	DVD
Barney Live	Hit Entertainment	DVD
Lunar Jim	BBC	DVD
Pocogo and Friends	Zinkia Entertainment	DVD
Shoe Box Zoo	BBC	DVD
17 Lies that are holding you Back	Steve Chandler	Audio Book
Bewitched & Bewildered: The Perfect Day Out	Will Buckley	Article
Can't Miss Christmas Spectaculars	Richard Corliss	Article
Enriching Entertainment	Architectural Review	Article
Going Deeper, Seeing Further: Enhancing Ethnographic Interpretations to Reveal More Meaningful Opportunities for Design	Jane Fulton-Suri	Article
Hail the Chief	360 Magazine	Article
Halo 3 Reviews	Various Magazines	Article
Halo – The Game (Wired)	Clive Thompson	Article
Interactive Theatre	Justine de Mierre	Article
Men 'are afraid to work with Children'	Rosemary Bennett	Article

One billion 'denied a childhood'	BBC News	Article
Putting Fun into Family Life	YMCA	Article
Recent Findings on Subjective Well-Being	Diener, Suh & Oishi	Article
The Future of Kids TV	Anne Wood	Article
The Game Design Challenge	Eric Zimmerman	Article
The Leader of the Future	Ronald Heifetz	Article
ABC of Childhood	BBC	Discussion
Catch Wii if you can	CNN Money	Blog
Social Networks: Stop Designing Out the Fun	Michael Francis Booth	Blog
Why spending your time wisely Is the key to happiness	Timemakes theworldgoround.com	Blog
Australian & Miami Open	IBM	Website
Credit Unions	FSA	Website
Family Vue	VUE	Website
Festival of Childhood	Christina Gambin	Website/Article
Marketing for Halo 3	Wikipedia	Website/Article
Microsoft – Small Business Specialist Accreditation	Microsoft	Website
Fact File 2008	Statistics	9781905600137
Family Spending 2006	Statistics	9781403993939
Social Trends 2007	Statistics	9781403993946