

Erasmus + Loose parts play

Module 5: Loose parts play – Plans, policies and procedures

Module summary

This module helps participants learn about the process of creating plans and guidelines that are important to the smooth running of loose parts play. Through the exercises, the participants gain personal experiences and understand the essence of these processes. Participants in the module should have a deeper understanding of how loose parts play (LPP) works and benefits.

This module can also be offered as a stand-alone session for those who have advanced knowledge of loose parts play. The session offers opportunities for personal reflection and practical experience as well as theoretical input, for example: discussions, presentation, developing own play statement, group work/exercises to get familiar with risk-benefit assessment, and the role of playworker.



Target group

As improving children's play requires a whole school approach, if possible the full staff team should participate in this session. It is for everyone involved with children, who has an impact on children's lives. This session can be especially useful for playworkers.

Previous training/experience required to attend

Advanced knowledge of loose parts play

Length: 3 hours

Module 5 learning outcomes

By the end of this module, participants will:

1. have discussed why a play statement is important and ways of developing one
2. have created a framework for their own play statement, identifying headings and key points
3. be able to explain the ideas underpinning risk-benefit assessment
4. have explored playwork responses to risk in play using dynamic risk-benefit assessment
5. have considered the why, what and how of monitoring and evaluation.

Learning indicators:

Understanding of play statements; ability to explain the ideas underpinning risk-benefit assessment; ability to review one's own subjective risk assessment, ability to form one's own judgement; sees the importance of taking risks for the benefits of LPP, considers it important to jointly discuss the framework and rules for LPP.

Resources required – loose parts play manual, A4 papers, flipchart papers, pens, drawing materials, post-it notes, cubes, blindfolds.



Manual: 6.1, 6.3, 6.4



Tools: 6, 10, 17



Manual: 6.1, 6.3

Trainer notes

Let participants know that the session will include personal exercises, thinking back to play as children. Our own childhood experiences of playing often influence our view of play when we encounter it as adults. This can influence and sometimes restrict children's play opportunities, therefore it is important to explore our feelings and experiences around play.

This session has been designed without a power point presentation, meaning it can easily be delivered indoors or outdoors. Have copies of the manual available. When referring to the manual, write the relevant number sections clearly to help participants find them.

Introduction

Time 5 minutes

In the short introduction, we describe the module's content and outline the learning outcomes. It is important to create a pleasant and cooperative atmosphere, since the Module will include discussions and exercises requiring joint cooperation. Although some people may have a negative attitude towards making plans and setting rules or find it boring, this Module is based on personal experiences - we can voice this from the beginning.

Icebreaker - Clap, jump, squat

Time 10 minutes

Resources needed: none

This energiser game helps to focus the participants' attention and move their bodies, and it also helps the group to be attuned to each other. The difficulty of the game increases gradually.

At the beginning of the game, the participants form pairs, and the task is to count from 1 to 3 together, but alternately. So the first member of the pair says "one", the other member says "two", and again the first says "three", then the second says "one", and so on.

When this is going well, then the participant who would say one doesn't say anything, just claps once, so: clap, "two", "three", clap "two", "three", still alternating.

In the next step, instead of the two, they just jump up silently. The third step is when instead of "three" they do a squat. At that point, no one counts out loud.

When everyone is done with the clap-jump-squat version, they can switch pairs and try this final version with others.

Trainer notes

Pay attention to how well the group is doing with the given level of difficulty. If they make many mistakes, perhaps it is not worth making it more difficult. Instead, slow down the tempo and have the whole group do it together.

Activity 1: Play statement - why is it important?

Time 20 mins

Resources needed: manual



Manual: 6.1, 6.3

This exercise is a group discussion and conversation, which is an introduction to the topic of the following exercises. Sitting or standing in a circle, ask who has experience with a statement from a community or institution, who has already written one, or who has had a positive experience with a statement.

Look for positive experiences that show what can be achieved if a community or institution articulates its own vision or the values it represents. After we have explained the importance and role of statements through our own experience, present or read the relevant part of the manual. Give the opportunity to those who want to share their thoughts or ask questions about it.

Trainer notes

The aim of this exercise is for the participants to understand why it is important for each institution to formulate its own Play Statement, and how all this can contribute to the introduction of loose parts play. Sharing personal examples makes this topic more practical and relatable for the participants.

It may happen that no one in the group wants to share their experience, despite the encouragement, or no one really has any previous experience with statements. In this case, it is worth preparing with some of your own examples.

Activity 2: Motives and fears

Time 30 mins

Resources needed: paper, pens, post-it notes, flipchart paper or whiteboard, marker pens

Once we have introduced the importance of the play statement, we can move on to the content part of the play statement. The first step in doing this is to define who the play statement is for. If we have already defined these target groups during a previous Module, we can continue to work with those target groups.

For example, the defined target groups might be:

- management
- teachers
- parents
- students
- other staff.

Write the name of each target group on separate flipchart papers, divided into three equal parts. We call the first part Fears and the second part Motives.

In these sections, the participants will write down their ideas and insights regarding the fears of the given target group regarding loose parts play, as well as what can be motivating for them and how the introduction of loose parts play will help them in their work.

All this can be written individually, in pairs, or in small groups, the main thing is that everyone can come up with ideas for all target groups in about 15 minutes.

After that, they can go through all the flipchart papers again and read each other's notes, while in the blank part of the flipchart papers, they write messages for the given target group that either arouse their motivation or reduce their fears.

After everyone has had the opportunity to write a message to all the target groups, we can go through the flipcharts and the formulated messages together, or perhaps in a short group sharing, the participants can highlight the most important messages for them.

Activity 3: Play statement - identifying the key points

Time 20 mins

Resources needed: paper, pens



Tool: 6

After formulating our messages to the different groups of the setting in the previous exercise, everyone will use this to formulate their own Play Statement in an individual exercise. The key points of this statement can be the messages expressed in the previous exercise, but they can also formulate points that did not occur in the previous exercise.

It is important that they formulate it in a comprehensive but concise way, in a language that the given target group can understand. After individually formulating their own Play Statements, they compare them in pairs and form a joint statement - they may just complement each other's, or they may formulate it differently. At the end, the entire group can share the statements and reflect on what was difficult for them in this process.

As a summary of the session, present the “Steps in developing a play statement or policy” tool from the toolbox to the group, which is used as a guide to write the institution's play statement.

- do some basic groundwork
- find out about play from different points of view
- use existing information
- think about the important things you want to be able to say
- bring it together
- possible headings
- consider how you will present your statement.

This may be an appropriate point for a break in the session. Let participants know if refreshments are available and when and where to meet after the break.

Energiser game - Running game

Time: 5 minutes

Resources needed:

No equipment or resources needed, but as it needs plenty of space, it is ideal to do it outside.

This game is a dynamic and uplifting energiser but it is also a slightly risky game, because the participants run close to each other, so there is a chance for an injury. That is also the main point of how this activity is connected to this topic: if we make this activity safe it won't be exciting. At the end of this activity, it is worth reflecting about who felt the activity is risky.

The participants choose another person from the group. But they don't tell anyone, not even the chosen one, who it is. Ask the participants to scatter themselves in the space, no more than 1 metre from each other at the beginning.

The task is to run around the chosen person three times as fast as possible, when you say 'Go'.

Trainer notes

The task itself will create very funny situations, as there will be people who choose each other, several people can choose the same person, etc. This task will result in a lot of laughter and fun.

The attention of the participants must be drawn to take care of each other's physical integrity. You can also use this game to introduce the idea of dynamic risk assessment.

Activity 4: Risk-benefit assessment - definition

Time 15 minutes

Resources needed:

A pre-printed risk-benefit assessment definition from the manual, broken down into small segments. Place these in envelopes. (Make sets of these in advance – one per pair of participants.)



Manual: 6.3



Manual: 6.3

Risk-benefit assessment – a definition divided into segments

Risk-benefit assessment means
that the play provider weighs, with equal consideration,
the duty to protect children from avoidable serious harm
and the duty to provide them with stimulating, adventurous play opportunities
to let children take risks when they play
without putting them in undue danger of serious harm.

Print out the risk-benefit assessment definition and cut it into different segments. Put these segments into an envelope. Divide the participants into smaller groups depending on the group size. Each group receives an envelope containing definition elements. The task of the team is to put the elements in the right order as soon as possible. As soon as each group has put the individual elements in order, read the definition.

Trainer notes

The main goal of this activity is for the participants to become familiar with the defining elements of risk-benefit assessment via discussing the order of the elements.

Activity 5: Cube game

Time 40 minutes

Resources needed: wooden play cubes, blindfolds, a stopwatch, instructions and pens



Manual: 6.3

The risk-benefit assessment is an important element of the introduction of loose parts play. Facilitators often have the question of what they can allow children to do, when they should intervene, and they are also under a lot of pressure because they are responsible for injuries that may occur. Involving everyone in the risk-benefit assessment process can help raise awareness of the benefits of risky play as well as ensuring everyone feels listened to.

The participants must be divided into groups of three people. One of them will be an observer, the other a facilitator and the third a builder. In the first round the builder, while blindfolded, will have 2 minutes to build the highest possible tower with the help of the facilitator. The facilitator can give spoken advice only, such as 'put your hand forward, steady the tower, etc.

If the facilitator instructs the builder to stop building, the builder must stop. In the second round the builder, while blindfolded, builds the tower alone, without the help of the facilitator. The time limit in the second round is also 2 minutes.

In both cases, the task of the observer is to observe the interactions between the facilitator and the builder and its effect on the builder and the result (how tall the tower will be and whether it will be built). The observer is also responsible for notifying the others when the time is up and the round is over.

After these 2 rounds, the participants switch roles, so that everyone in each group is once in the role of observer, facilitator and builder.

As soon as everyone has tried the roles, they share their experiences in the big circle. Here it is worthwhile for the trainer to discuss how the builder felt when the construction was controlled, and when they were free to build. It is also worth discussing how it felt to achieve the result alone/or when the builder worked under supervision.

Trainer notes

Once the participants have become familiar with the definition of risk-benefit assessment, they can experience the benefits of risk-taking through this exercise, experientially.

In this activity, they can really experience the positive effects of risk-taking on the individual, which can dissolve the fear that would prevent them from letting the children have free play.

Activity 6: Risk-benefit assessment tool

Time 20 minutes

Resources needed: Risk-benefit assessment tool - the sample from the toolbox, written pre-specified situations.



Tool: 10

The participants should work in small groups and fill out the risk-benefit assessment tool in response to pre-specified situations. If appropriate, participants can do this exercise for their own setting.

Trainer notes

The aim of this task is for the participants to consider what dangers can arise from these situations, and what, if anything, should be done to reduce the danger and who is responsible for these actions.

Activity 7: Monitoring and evaluation 'carousel' activity

Time 25 minutes

Resources needed: Large sheets of paper or sheet of flipchart paper,



Manual: 6.4



Manual: 6.4

Pre-prepare the flipchart with key questions. Write each question on a separate sheet, as follows:

- What difference is loose parts play making? e.g. to what, how?
- Quality of experience e.g. is everyone included?
- How well are systems working? e.g. are there sufficient diverse loose parts?
- How well is the environment supporting loose parts play? e.g. access to variables, all weather?
- How can information for monitoring and evaluation be gathered?
- What will you do with information that has been gathered?

Introduction

Monitoring and evaluating the impact of loose parts ensures the effectiveness of your efforts by showing things like: what is working, what's making a difference, where there are gaps and what needs to be improved.

Monitoring and evaluation can help you to share what you are doing with various stakeholders and provide evidence for funding applications.

Task: The purpose of this activity is to consider the why, how and what of monitoring and evaluation.

- Divide the participants into small groups
- allocate each group to a separate question/sheet of paper
- ask each group to consider the question and write and draw their responses on to the sheet. Ask them to write or draw as clearly as possible
- after 10 minutes, ask each group to leave the sheet of paper where it is and move as a group to the next one and add their own thoughts and ideas (i.e. adding on what has already been written).
- after 5 minutes, repeat so that each group is again considering a new question
- continue with as many rounds as you choose.

Trainer notes

Sum up with the key points.

Make sure you are familiar with content of the manual so that you can highlight omissions.

Closing

- Thank everyone for their participation.
- Return to the learning outcomes you introduced at the beginning of the module to check with participants if they have been achieved.
- Ensure participants know arrangements for any other modules they can participate in.
- Create an opportunity for participants to set their own personal goal or task to carry out as a result of the session.
- Plan a short evaluation exercise to check satisfaction with the training content, the training style, the venue and arrangements.
- Provide contact details as appropriate.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**



In Scotland, the project was co-ordinated by
East Lothian Play Association
www.elpa.org.uk
Scottish Registered Charity SCO50202