



Creating a Pathway To Play: Join us in urging the new Government to invest in playgrounds

The [Association of Play Industries](#) (API) is calling on the public to support its [Pathway to Play](#) campaign by writing to their local MPs, urging the government to invest in public playgrounds in their first Budget on 30 October. The campaign seeks to address the growing crisis of childhood obesity and mental health issues by ensuring that every child has access to safe, high-quality outdoor play spaces.

The newly elected Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, and key government ministers [have already been approached by API Chair Dr. Amanda Gummer](#), who is advocating for policy changes that will make outdoor play a central aspect of childhood.

Dr. Gummer says: "Investing in playgrounds is crucial for reversing the alarming trends in childhood health. Outdoor play is an essential aspect of childhood and public playgrounds are the number one location for children's outdoor play.

"Policy oversight has led to inadequate provision of dedicated play spaces, resulting in children spending more time indoors, alone and inactive. The new Chancellor will be announcing the first Labour Government Budget on 30 October and it's imperative that they find room in the budget to protect our children's right to play in their communities. Urgent change is needed to reverse rising childhood obesity and mental health problems."

The API has created a template letter for members and supporters to send to their local MPs. The letter highlights the importance of conducting a national audit of playgrounds, securing long-term funding for community play spaces and integrating outdoor learning into schools.

Get involved: help us shape the future of play

The API urges everyone who cares about children's wellbeing to download the template letter from the API website, personalise it and send it to their MP before the budget on 30 October. Together, we can ensure that the government recognises the vital role of public playgrounds in building healthier communities.

For more information and to download the template letter, click [here](#).

END

About the Association of Play Industries

The Association of Play Industries (API) is dedicated to promoting the value of play in children's development and advocating for high-quality play spaces across the UK. Through research and campaigns, API aims to ensure that every child has the opportunity to play outdoors in a safe and stimulating environment.

For media inquiries, please contact:

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Creating a Pathway To Play may be the answer for the new government – the API outlines a plan to support improvements across health, communities and education.

The Association of Play Industries (API) is reaching out to the newly elected Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, and key Government Ministers, advocating for significant investment in public playgrounds to help them fulfil their manifesto promises.

Dr. Amanda Gummer, Chair of the API, is formally requesting meetings with the Prime Minister, Health Minister, Education Minister and the Minister for Housing, Communities & Local Government, to discuss the urgent need for policy changes that prioritise universal access to community play opportunities for all children and create a Pathway To Play.

A Call to Action: Addressing the Inactivity Epidemic

In her letter to the Prime Minister, Dr. Gummer emphasises the critical importance of outdoor play for children's physical, emotional and social development. Highlighting research showing a drastic reduction in children's outdoor play compared to previous generations, Dr. Gummer says:

"Outdoor play is an essential aspect of childhood and public playgrounds are the number one location for children's outdoor play*. However, policy oversight has led to inadequate provision of dedicated play spaces, resulting in children spending more time indoors, alone, sedentary and on their screens. Urgent change is needed to reverse rising childhood obesity and mental health problems."

The Role of Public Playgrounds

The API's [Pathway to Play](#) campaign draws attention to the alarming trend of playground closures due to insufficient funding. Research shows that one in three children in Britain lack access to nearby playgrounds, exacerbated by local authorities' budget constraints. The campaign calls on the government to:

- Conduct a national audit to assess the quantity, quality, and location of public playgrounds.
- Ensure long-term sustainability by providing dedicated funding for the installation and upkeep of free-to-use community play spaces.
- Integrate outdoor learning into the National Curriculum and fund school play spaces and equipment to increase physical activity levels in schools.

Addressing Inequity and Inclusivity

The API's campaign also highlights the significant disparity in children's access to public play areas across the UK, with urban areas and disadvantaged communities being the most affected. Additionally, many playgrounds are not accessible to disabled children, further excluding them from the benefits of outdoor play.

A Meeting to Shape the Future

The API seeks to collaborate with the Government to prioritise outdoor play as a non-negotiable aspect of childhood development. "Investing in high-quality, accessible public playgrounds is a modest measure that would yield significant health benefits for children," says Dr Gummer. "We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss how we can work together to ensure all children, regardless of their background or location, have access to the benefits of outdoor play."

*away from the home setting

Read our letters to the [Prime Minister](#), [Education Minister](#), [Health Minister](#) and [Housing, Communities & Local Government Minister](#).

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Pathway To Play Campaign Urges Next UK Government to Invest in Public Playgrounds

The Association of Play Industries (API) has issued [an open letter](#) to the next UK Government, calling for urgent and significant investment in public playgrounds as part of the Pathway To Play campaign. This appeal highlights the critical role of outdoor play in combating childhood obesity, poor mental health and sleep problems.

The #PathwayToPlay manifesto emphasises the importance of public outdoor play spaces and outlines three key commitments for the government:

- 1. Conduct a National Audit:** Perform a comprehensive national audit of public playgrounds to assess their quantity, quality, and accessibility.
- 2. Ensure Long-term Sustainability:** Allocate dedicated government funding for the installation and maintenance of free-to-use community play spaces. Every child deserves access to safe, local, high-quality outdoor play areas.
- 3. Increase Physical Activity Levels at School:** Integrate outdoor learning into the National Curriculum and provide funding for school outdoor play spaces and equipment to boost children's physical activity levels.

API Chair Dr Amanda Gummer stated: "Outdoor play is as fundamental to children's development as sleep, nutrition and education. The decline in freely accessible outdoor play areas has pushed children indoors, leading to sedentary lifestyles and missed developmental opportunities."

API's research reveals alarming trends: childhood obesity and mental health issues are at record levels, and children's outdoor playtime has significantly decreased. Playground closures, driven by budget constraints, have exacerbated these problems, creating a postcode lottery of play where access to public play areas is uneven across the UK. This inequality is especially pronounced in urban areas and among families with disabled children, who face barriers to accessing inclusive playgrounds.

Recently, Fields in Trust's Green Space Index research revealed that 2.3 million children in Britain under the age of nine (31%), live more than a ten-minute walk from the nearest playground.

The Pathway To Play campaign underscores the essential role of public playgrounds as community resources. Despite their increased appreciation during the pandemic, playgrounds have been undervalued by policymakers. Investing in high-quality, free and local playgrounds is vital to encouraging outdoor play and mitigating the negative effects of excessive screen time.

"We urge the next UK Government to prioritise outdoor play as a non-negotiable aspect of childhood development," Dr Gummer continued. "A modest investment in public playgrounds will yield significant long-term benefits, securing brighter, healthier futures for our children and communities."

The Association of Play Industries calls on the next government to act immediately and ensure that every child in the UK has access to safe, local and high-quality playgrounds, levelling up the life chances of millions of children.

END

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#PathwayToPlay

A Manifesto for Children

The Association of Play Industries (API) is launching a new campaign – Pathway To Play – urging the next UK government to invest significantly in public playgrounds. With an alarming rise in childhood obesity, poor mental health and sleep issues, the #PathwayToPlay manifesto stresses the crucial role of outdoor play in promoting the health and wellbeing of children across the nation.

"We can no longer ignore the importance of play, physical activity and movement in improving children's lives. Playgrounds are the number one, most popular location for outdoor play* and major government investment in them is long overdue." says API Chair and child development expert Dr Amanda Gummer.

"It is time to prioritise the health and wellbeing of our children by ensuring they have the opportunity for everyday free-to-access outdoor play. We are calling for a relatively modest investment in government terms, but one which will have a hugely significant impact on children's lives and families and will transform entire communities."

Public playgrounds play a pivotal role in facilitating outdoor play, yet they often suffer from underfunding and neglect. In light of this, API calls upon the next UK government to make the following commitments:

- **Conduct a National Audit:** API urges the government to conduct a comprehensive national audit of public playgrounds, considering not only their quantity but also their quality and location.
- **Ensure Long-term Sustainability:** It is imperative to ensure the long-term sustainability of public playgrounds by allocating dedicated government funding for the installation and maintenance of free-to-use community play spaces. This will guarantee that every child has access to safe, high-quality and local outdoor play.
- **Increase Physical Activity Levels at School:** API advocates for increasing children's physical activity levels through outdoor play at school. This can be achieved by integrating outdoor learning into the National Curriculum and providing government funding specifically for school outdoor play spaces and equipment..

We must work together to get children outdoors again, promoting their health, happiness, and overall wellbeing," says Dr Gummer. "Every child deserves the right to play every day."

The Association of Play Industries encourages all stakeholders, including policymakers, educators and parents, to support this crucial campaign and prioritise the wellbeing of children across the UK.

*away from the home setting

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About Association of Play Industries (API):

The Association of Play Industries (API) is the lead trade association for the UK play sector. Its membership comprises manufacturers, installers, designers, and distributors of both outdoor and indoor play equipment and safety surfacing. API represents the best interests of its members to the government, local authorities, schools and other organisations within the play sector. For more information, visit www.api-play.org.

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