

GCPH Seminar Series 14: lecture 3
21st century children – the state of play

Sue Palmer
*Writer and consultant on literacy and
child development, Chair of Upstart Scotland*

21st February 2018, 4.30pm – 6.00pm
200 St Vincent Street
Glasgow G2 5RQ



Over the last few decades, evidence has been steadily growing on the importance of play in child development. Simultaneously, opportunities for children to engage in active, creative, outdoor play have declined and, in many cases, have disappeared from young children's lives. Since we now know that this sort of 'real play' (especially in early childhood) is extremely important for children's long-term physical and mental health, it is becoming a matter of urgency to find ways of reinstating it into children's lives.

In this seminar, Sue Palmer will argue that the most effective way to reinstate play at the heart of early childhood is to introduce a Nordic-style kindergarten stage for 3-7 year-olds, with particular emphasis on outdoor play. As well as the undoubted health benefits of such a culture change, the evidence suggests it would also bring educational benefits, including a narrowing of the current 'attainment gap' between rich and poor.

*Sue Palmer, a former primary headteacher in the Borders, is a literacy specialist, writer, presenter and 'childhood campaigner'. She has written over 250 books, software packages and TV programmes for schools on aspects of literacy and many hundreds of articles for the educational and national press. Over the last ten years, her books on child development in the modern world – notably Toxic Childhood (second edition 2015) – have led to frequent media appearances and comments about changes in children's lifestyles. Her latest book, Upstart: the case for raising the school starting age and providing what the under-sevens **really** need, was published in 2016. Sue chaired the Scottish Play Commission, served on the Scottish Government's Early Years Task Force and currently chairs the Upstart Scotland campaign.*

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A written summary, recording and video will be available on the GCPH website after the event.