

A Play Strategy for Newcastle upon Tyne 2007 - 2012

'The right to play is a child's first claim on the community. Play is nature's training for life. No community can infringe that right without doing enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens.'

David Lloyd George

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“... play is an end in itself and must be encouraged for its own sake ... (as well having a)...vital role in helping children to achieve the key outcomes” of the Every Child Matters agenda.”

Beverley Hughes, Minister for Children

1.Introduction:

1.1 The Scope of the Strategy

Play is important because it is one of children and young people's key priorities in life and has a major impact on their overall development. Good quality, accessible play opportunities for children can have a vast, and currently undervalued, positive impact on the lives of children and their communities.

It is an element that impacts on a range of agencies, service providers and voluntary organisations. Planning based on an agreed Citywide Play Strategy is important if all children and young people are to have access to a range of high quality play opportunities. This Strategy will support the development of play opportunities in several ways. It will clarify what is meant by play and play opportunities, describe what children and young people can expect as an entitlement and outline how to create and sustain the effective, efficient and coordinated development and delivery of Play across Newcastle. The Newcastle Play Service will work in partnership with key agencies and providers to prevent the duplication of services and promote high quality play opportunities.

This strategy will need to link with Newcastle's Green Space Strategy (2004-2009), The Outdoor Play Area Strategy, The Children and Young Peoples Plan, as well as reflecting the Corporate Priorities in the Newcastle Plan. In addition, the Strategy will contribute to the Local Development Framework for Newcastle.

This strategy has been produced in line with the government review of Children's Play: "*Getting Serious About Play*". This review of Children's Play, produced by the Department of Culture, Media and Sports (2004),¹ included the outline of a funding stream from The Big Lottery Fund, to enhance and develop play opportunities, as a free public service.

A key recommendation of the review was the designation of a 'Play Champion' to advocate on behalf of Play and provide leadership.

The challenge for Newcastle is to move beyond simply listening to children and young people. We need to really hear what they have to say about their play opportunities and what they want from their play. Then we need to deliver on their needs and aspirations.

The development of the Newcastle Play Strategy has been informed by 'Planning for Play' the guidance on the development and implementation of local play strategies, produced by The Children's Play Council in March 2006.

“Every local authority (should) work.....with local partners, to develop and promote a Corporate Play Strategy, as described in ‘Play as Culture’.”²

1.2 The Context of the Strategy

The National Context

The National Policy context for the Play Strategy occurs in a variety of legislative enactments.

- **The Children Act (2004)**

Specifies recreation as a key outcome for Children's Services.

The Play Strategy will play an important role in contributing to the improvement of children's' well being, as defined by reference to the five key outcomes in the **Every Child Matters** framework

The Every Child Matters framework, version 2, refers directly to 'play' in points 3.6 and 3.61.

'Planning for Play' the guidance document of the Children's Play Council, refers to the development of local play strategies and explains the synergy between play strategies and the five ECM outcomes as follows:

Meeting the five outcomes

"Play, recreation and leisure outcomes sit equally alongside the others... in the provision of children and young people's services". (Rt. Hon Tessa Jowell MP, Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport.)

Play is a fundamental part of a healthy and happy childhood and its enjoyment is recognised by government as equally important to other outcomes for children. Because it is so fundamental it also contributes to each of the five outcomes for children specified in Every Child Matters.

Being healthy

Play is crucial to health and development throughout childhood, contributing to social, physical, intellectual, cultural, emotional and psychological development. The physical activity involved in energetic play provides children and young

people with a significant amount of regular exercise. Research shows that school-aged children and young people get more exercise in free play than from most structured activities. ^{11, 12, 13}

Staying safe

One of the main reasons children give for not playing outdoors is that they and their parents are afraid for their safety. Fear of strangers, traffic and bullying by other children combine to keep children in their own homes. Good play provision protects children through reducing unacceptable levels of danger, while allowing them the opportunity to challenge themselves and use their initiative. At the same time, play enables children to take risks, to think through decisions and gain increased self-confidence and greater resilience. Good play opportunities give children and young people the chance to try out and experience a range of emotions in a 'safe' way. It allows them to learn and develop emotionally by promoting resilience and fostering self-esteem.

Enjoying and achieving

The essence of play is enjoyment. When playing, children define their own goals and interests, decide what is success or failure and pursue those goals in their own way. Children's enjoyment through play is linked to the control and choice they are able to exercise. Giving children the chance for free, uninhibited play allows them a psychologically safe space in which to try out new roles and experiences and enhances their enjoyment of life. There are many developmental and experiential advantages associated with children's play – providing children also with the opportunities for achievement and enabling them to reach their full potential. These include the development of problem solving and language and literacy skills as children and young people develop their social skills and express their emotions. Play is also seen as important in the development of children's imaginations and creative interests and abilities. Play allows children and young people to explore boundaries, be fully absorbed in what they are doing and feel satisfied with what they have achieved.

Making a positive contribution

Children's involvement in the development of their own play is fundamental. Children learn the effects of their actions and the value others place on them, from the reaction to their play. When there are no adults present, children will make choices

for themselves. In good supervised play provision, adults involve the children and young people in decisions about resources and facilities that might be available to them. Local authorities and community groups are increasingly involving children and young people in local play audits and discussions about their play and free time needs. This results in more appropriate provision, helps children and young people develop their skills and knowledge and ensures they are valued as active community members. Respecting and incorporating children and young people's views into plans and provision helps develop motivation and, potentially, participation in society.

Economic well-being

Play provision often acts as a focal point for parents and carers to meet, giving them an opportunity to socialise with other adults. The creative and social skills that children develop through play help them to develop the lateral thinking and emotional intelligence that are becoming increasingly important in a globalised economy. Good play provision promotes community well-being and security. It brings economic benefits through jobs and training, and parents can feel confident their children are occupied and enjoying themselves. Good play provision, which offers genuine challenge and excitement, can help prevent children and young people behaving in ways that are socially unacceptable. Development of outside play and recreation spaces has been shown to have a measurable impact on local interaction, new friendships, community cohesion and community safety.

- **Joint Area Review (JAR)**

Guidance from the Department for Education and Skills identifies that the Play Strategy should link to the City's Children and Young People's Plan. It should help to meet the requirements of Joint Area Review Inspection framework, which includes the following key judgments in relation to children's enjoyment of play and recreation:

Key Judgments

Parents and carers receive support in helping their children to enjoy and achieve. All children and young people can access a range of recreational activities, including play and voluntary learning provision.

Evidence

- Targeted guidance and support is provided to parents and carers, in line with their expressed wishes, in helping children and young people to enjoy play..... and make productive and enjoyable use of leisure time.
- There are safe and accessible places where children and young people can play and socialize.
- A range of affordable, accessible, challenging and rewarding recreational opportunities are provided.
- Action is taken to ensure that the cost and/or availability of suitable transport is not an undue barrier to participation in recreational.....activities.
- Recreationalopportunities reflect the needs and interests of individuals as well as groups.

All children and young people can access a range of recreational activities, including play and voluntary learning provision.

Evidence

- There are safe and accessible places where children and young people can play and socialise.
- A range of affordable, accessible, challenging and rewarding voluntary learning opportunities is provided.
- Action is taken to ensure that the cost or availability of transport are not undue barriers to participation in recreational and voluntary learning activities.
- Recreational and voluntary learning opportunities reflect the needs and interests of individuals as well as groups.

- **National Planning Policy**

National Planning Policy is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and circulars. PPG17 (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2002) declares that *'well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are...fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives'*

Newcastle has set out its strategy for preserving and enhancing open spaces and playing fields and children's play areas within its Local Development Framework. In addition Supplementary Planning Guidelines on Play are being developed, in partnership with Parks and Countryside, Green Space Strategy officers and the Play Service.

The Local Development Framework 2006 will in turn inform and is informed by, the 'Playing Pitch Strategy', 'Parks Strategy' and the 'Green Space Strategy' 2004.

The Sub-regional Context

A local strategy for Play in Newcastle is part of a set of regional policies to make the North East a better place for all children and young people. Particularly important in this respect is the co-operation between Gateshead MBC and Newcastle City Council in terms of cultural development.

The Government has asked all local authorities to work with partners to develop a local cultural strategy, in order to promote local cultural well being. In response to this Newcastle and Gateshead Councils have joined together to produce one overall local cultural strategy for NewcastleGateshead.

Building Bridges is a 10 year cultural strategy for NewcastleGateshead. A simple but inclusive definition of culture has been adopted, as the expression of the Cities' values and identity. Culture is defined as everything we don't have to do to live, but need to do to feel alive. It is what gives meaning to our lives. Culture is seen as everything that enables people and communities to articulate what they believe and see as valuable or meaningful. It embraces not just the areas most often seen as cultural, the arts, museums and heritage but sport, libraries, the creative industries, open spaces, festivals, **children's play** and much more. This approach to culture includes everyone, since we all have cultural values, tastes and enthusiasms.

The Local Context

The Play Strategy is linked to many local strategies and it crucially and fundamentally contributes to meeting the aims and objectives of The Newcastle Plan:

- **Supporting children and young people to achieve their potential**

Engaging and involving children and young people is a core aspect of the strategy. Supported play facilities fill a vital need for all children and offer activities to many children and young people at risk from social exclusion.

- **Promoting the quality of life and the environmental agenda**

The Strategy links to the Green Space and the Outdoor Play Area Strategies, all of which support the aim of ensuring green spaces, quality play areas and equipment are made available for all children and young people. Play has a crucial role in encouraging children and young people to be more active.

- **Regeneration and priority neighbourhoods**

The Strategy aims to target the development of play opportunities in the identified areas of deprivation, as well as addressing the play needs of newly regenerated areas and areas currently under development.

- **Building safe and clean neighbourhoods**

Good local play and sports facilities, improve the quality of local areas, engages young people in creative activity and away from crime and social exclusion. Neighbourhood play facilities can act as areas for communities to gather and interact socially, building community relationships and cohesion.

1.3 The Purpose of the Play Strategy

This document aims to be a practical working tool, to be referred to whenever decisions about play need to be made. It is intended that the Strategy will have an impact on the work of individual Council departments, key partner agencies and voluntary sector organisations.

The purpose of the strategy is to:

- identify and respond to the play needs of children and young people in Newcastle, in consultation with them
- audit the existing and diverse play opportunities across the City
- ensure that all children and young people, regardless of circumstance, have equal opportunities and are treated equally
- recognise the key contribution that specialist and specifically targeted projects make to play development
- outline how the Play related workforce will be trained and resourced for long term professional development
- develop the ways in which play contributes to the ECM agenda
- design appropriate sets of standards to improve the quality of play provision
- provide a framework for the potential allocation of existing and future resources
- act as a clear template for how Newcastle intends to develop play provision and facilities from 2007-2012
- create a mechanism to respond to the changing needs, wishes and aspirations of children and their carers, in relation to play.
- address the barriers to play, particularly adult imposed ones, and enable children to engage in challenging, risk managed play opportunities
- improve communication about play and its value
- strengthen and develop partnerships with the voluntary, private and statutory sectors
- develop opportunities and programmes for adults and parents to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of the value of play

1.4 Who will benefit from the Strategy?

This strategy will focus on all children aged 0-18 taking account of children's different abilities, their age, gender, and cultural backgrounds, social, family, economic and environmental situation in order that it is truly inclusive.

The strategy will therefore benefit:

- children, their parents / carers and communities, by improving and developing services and facilities to address their needs
- elected members and managers in the authority, by creating the basis for working in a more efficient, effective and co-ordinated way.
- voluntary sector providers and community groups, by clearly recognising them as key partners in the development of play services and provision
- those working in play focused services, establishing common values and clear principles to guide and train staff, allowing good practice to be shared and providing consistency throughout the whole Playwork field.

1.5 Listening to Children's Voices

This strategy was developed in response to a request by the Children and Young Peoples' Strategic Partnership Board. The strategy has, in turn, been informed and shaped by the children and young people's consultation, "What Matters To Us", which identified children and young people's priorities for Newcastle. The 'What Matters To Us' Report was the result of partnership working between 'Investing In Children', 'The Voices Project', 'The Children's Society', 'Connexions Tyne & Wear', 'Play & Youth Service' and 'Sure Start Armstrong'.

It is implicit in the strategy that the ongoing involvement and engagement of children and young people should inform the development and direction of planning for children's play. Further consultation will need to be informed by ongoing work. Not only should children be consulted and listened to but, where appropriate, projects should be initiated and directed by children. It is essential, as part of this process, to support children and to advocate on their behalf when their needs and aspirations are in

conflict with the desires, beliefs and fears of adults. (UN Convention on the rights of the child Article 12: States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.)

This perspective is supported by Government research, the Children and Young Peoples Unit (DfES, Children's Consultation Report, 2002), found, for example, that children under 12 rated more activities and parks as the most important things that Government could do for them.

2. Background

2.1 What is Play?

It is widely acknowledged that play is essential to every area of children's development and to their health, well-being and happiness. The drive to play is an evolutionary imperative, enabling children to develop skills for life, understand the environment around them and their role and place in it.

Play brings about important benefits to children individually and in groups, but it also benefits families, communities and society as a whole.

Children play anywhere and at anytime. While some of children's play takes place within play provision and playgrounds, it is important to remember that play happens wherever children are at home, in the streets, on the way to school etc.

Play is a universal language, strongly associated with childhood, but accessible throughout our lives. It is common to all countries and cultures, though the form or content of it may differ and each individual's experiences through play are unique. The benefits of children having access to good quality play opportunities cross and link to a number of areas, including education, health, social relationships, family and community.

We recognise play, because we have experienced it, but it is notoriously hard to define. Play has been variously described as a drive, a need, a survival mechanism, an orientation or mode. Certainly play that is open-ended, spontaneous and joyful is considered an essential expression of childhood

For the purpose of this strategy we use the definition of play given in Best Play:

'Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child'.

A version of this definition is included as an underpinning assumption in the National Occupational Standards for Playwork. The assumption goes on to highlight the importance of play to children's development:

'by playing children learn and develop as individuals and as members of the community'⁶

The current underpinning values of playwork from the National Occupational Standards are given in appendix B.

There is a great richness and variety in children's play. The Playwork profession identifies 15 distinct 'play types', which are described in section 3.

There is a lack of understanding of children's play, what it is, the benefits of it, the value and necessity of it, and how it is best delivered. Play is still regarded by most adults as a recreational pastime and as a way of occupying children's free time, hopefully keeping them quiet, out of sight and off the streets.

Play: a fundamental of development

Play provides a fundamental developmental process for children, allowing them to expand their skills, knowledge and understanding of the world. It allows them to test their abilities, use initiative, take risks and make mistakes. Children's learning through free play is broad ranging and crucially is not fixed to adult expectations of what should be achieved by children. There are no targets, outcomes or milestones. The motivation for free play, exploration and discovery comes from the child themselves, rather than from any external factor.

Play promotes increasing levels of flexibility in the individual (problem solving, creativity, new combinations of thoughts and ideas, adaptability) - exactly the kind of 'higher order' skills that are required in a fast changing world.

Through risk and challenge encountered in play, children are able to develop skills and judgement vital to negotiating every-day life. Without such opportunities children may not be able to learn to judge risk appropriately for themselves and will be vulnerable to misplaced feelings of fear or conversely have little sense of danger, in later life. Play in the outdoors allows children and young people to explore, understand and use the natural environment creatively.

2.2 The Variety of Play Environments

For children to get the maximum developmental, experiential and experimental benefit from their play, they need to play in a variety of ways and be involved in different types of play. Children and young people need to play in a range of public and natural environments, as well as in dedicated provision. Children themselves tend to be very clear about what they need and desire from a range of play opportunities and activities.

2.3 The Importance of Play

Article 31 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child⁷ (ratified by the UK Government in December 1991) recognises the importance of play for the child:

‘States parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure; engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts’. Allowing children adequate playtimes and appropriate play opportunities gives children and young people a number of benefits:

“Work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do, play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do”

Mark Twain

Reducing crime, Anti-Social Behaviour and Social Exclusion

Quality play provision has the potential to significantly improve social inclusion and promote social and community development. This is particularly relevant to Newcastle's environment with the problem behaviours of youth crime, school-failure, teen pregnancy, childhood obesity and drug misuse.

*There is evidence to suggest that access to play opportunities is a significant compensatory factor in alleviating the effects of disadvantage on young people's well being. (State of London's Children Report 2001).*⁸

In addition, evidence, supported by the Police Crime Prevention Unit,⁹ indicates that good local play and sports facilities steer 'hard-to-reach' young people away from crime and social exclusion.

Tackling crime and community safety is a key priority in The Newcastle Plan, and the successful implementation of this Play Strategy will have a role in supporting this goal.

Anti-social behaviour is a problem that disrupts the lives of many people bringing misery and despair.

*'Young people are often represented as the perpetrators of crime, but in parks and play spaces they suffer from anti-social behaviour in the form of bullying and from other groups e.g. those who let their dogs roam free in play areas, litter, and from threats of attack and fear of others'*¹⁰

Children in Newcastle have highlighted the problems with anti – social behaviour, traffic, transport; dirt and safety in preventing them from using existing play spaces. Young children took a range of photographs to highlight many of these issues supported by the Sure Start Children's Participation Worker. (Walking with Children, Sure Start Armstrong.)

The Play Strategy also has a role in supporting the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers particularly by supporting and providing opportunities that help them play safely without fear of prejudice or discrimination.

Benefiting the Community

Play benefits the wider community. Play services can be seen as a focal point for communities, offering opportunities for social interaction and developing a greater sense of community spirit. Promoting social inclusion can encourage inward investment and economic growth.

Improving Health

Research indicates that the current generation of children are less physically active than their predecessors. Fears around safety, television, computer games and the increased usage of the car, combined with a fat rich diet, have caused a reduction in time spent outdoors involved in active, free play, and a marked increase in childhood obesity. Research goes on to predict an increase in coronary heart disease in adulthood as a consequence, if this issue is not addressed. Active children's play can help address health issues.¹¹

Play is essential for children's healthy physical and emotional development. The Chief Medical Officer in 'At Least Five a Week (2004)', advises that:

"children and young people should achieve a total of at least 60 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each day".¹² There is growing research evidence that increased opportunity for free play is the most effective way to ensure this for children, and that a range of increasing health problems are associated with the decline in such opportunities."¹³

Supporting Educational Achievement

Play provision can support the objective of raising educational standards of achievement, by extending opportunities for informal learning and cognitive development.

Play experiences and the support of professional play providers can help to motivate children; building their self-esteem and helping them aspire to high standards of achievement, thus raising educational standards. This links to The Newcastle Plan's vision for supporting children and young people.

The importance of play to learning is recognised in the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, QCA, 2000.¹⁵ The guidance states:

“Well-planned play, both indoors and outdoors, is a key way in which young children learn with enjoyment and challenge. In playing, they behave in different ways: sometimes their play will be boisterous, sometimes they will describe and discuss what they are doing, and sometimes they will be quiet and reflective as they play. Through play, in a secure environment, with effective adult support, children can:

- *explore, develop and represent learning experiences that help them make sense of the world;*
- *practise and build up ideas, concepts and skills;*
- *take risks and make mistakes;*
- *think creatively and imaginatively;*
- *communicate with others as they investigate or solve problems;*
- *express fears or relive anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.”*

All of these skills can contribute to achievement in Education.

2.4 Play for Older Children

In supporting The New Charter for Children's Play¹⁶ the Play Strategy endorses the belief that every child has the right to adequate and appropriate play opportunities. In the values and principles section of this document, it is maintained that the play needs of distinct groups of children and young people vary.

Age and Gender

Providing a range of provision for all ages is vital. Children and young people of different ages require access to different kinds of play opportunities and experiences that are appropriate to both their age and needs. There are over 135 Parent and Toddler groups spread across the City, developing provision for the younger children and supporting parents and carers. As children get older, they begin to move further away from home as they play. Their interests change and their physical and mental capacity is extended. It is often these older children whose play needs are not being adequately met.

Girls and boys tend to choose different types of activity. The Children's Play Council review¹⁷ indicates that girls were more likely to enjoy activities such as dance and drama, whereas boys preferred more sport-based activities.

Therefore, in order for play opportunities to be utilised to their fullest potential and hence provide maximum benefit for users, they must complement the characteristics of the group they are targeting. Children's needs at different ages must be taken into consideration when planning provision.

'We are completely at one in the importance we attach to play as a developmental aspect of children's lives in terms of learning and enjoyment...'

Baroness Andrews -Children Bill Amendment Debate 2004

Black and Minority Ethnic Communities

The play needs of children from black and minority ethnic communities may be different. These must be identified and taken into account when developing play opportunities. Haki Kapasi in 'Asian Children Play (2001)'¹⁸ found that Asian children sometimes preferred to play out on the streets than go to supervised provision. This is because they did not feel comfortable in staffed provision and did not feel a sense of belonging. Again, Kapasi found in 'Playing in Parallel (2002)'¹⁹ that a play environment with a positive environment and good quality staff, with representation from Black and Minority Ethnic groups attracted most black and ethnic minority children.

Homeless Families

These children face barriers to adequate opportunities such as lack of space, transience and dislocation.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

There is some research evidence to show that refugee children may not pursue leisure activities and are less likely to spend time outside with friends, suggesting that their free play opportunities may be restricted.²⁴

Children with Disabilities

Including disabled children is about focusing on diversity and responding to the individual rights of every child, as well as meeting the statutory obligations of the Disability Discrimination Act. It is about striving to create an environment within which each child can join in, play with other children and, where possible, additional appropriate staff and resources are there to support them. Inclusive play can give 'ordinary' childhood experiences to the child, and reduce social isolation for children and parents.²⁰ Consultation has shown that parents and disabled children want to be able to access specialist as well as inclusive provision in their own neighbourhoods.

2.5 Barriers to Play

Play opportunities are under threat right across Britain and play space is being lost. In Newcastle the lack of supervised open-access playgrounds and adventure playgrounds is noticeable.

Children and young people commonly identify many barriers to play, recreation and their enjoyment of public space. [Cf., The State of London's Children report (2001)]. These include:

- fears for their safety, especially from bullying
- traffic
- dirty and/or run-down play areas and parks
- lack of choice
- lack of access.

Fear of 'stranger danger' is often cited, by parents, as a major reason why they do not allow their children to play out. Other studies have shown that traffic is the more significant factor.

Research undertaken in Zurich, compared children aged five, who could play out near their own homes, with those who could not. It found that where they could play out, the children and their parents had more friends, and the parents had three times as many people they could call on to look after their children. The children who could not play out had less physical and social development and were less autonomous. (M Huttenmoster and D Degen-Zimmermann, Zurich 1994)²¹

The growth of out of school activities and focus on providing care and increasing attainment through study support means opportunities for free play are being squeezed out.

The following barriers were identified as needing to be addressed to ensure the successful implementation of the Play Strategy:

- **TRAFFIC:** fear of being run over and parked cars taking up space.
- **STRANGER - DANGER**
- **POVERTY:** some parents may not be able to afford to let their children go to paid-for provision.
- **ADULTS COMPLAINTS:** children's fear of being told off by angry neighbours/adults, 'No Ball Games' signs.
- **LACK OF SPACE:** the perception that there is nowhere suitable to play locally, or that play areas have been vandalised and not repaired.
- **SAFETY FEARS:** leading to the promotion of activities, such as computer games, that keep children and young people indoors.
- **KEEPING CLEAN:** parents may be concerned at children spoiling clothes, and are reluctant to allow them to wear old or worn ones.
- **STEREOTYPING:** of children and young people playing out as being anti-social may result in adults demanding that children and young people should not play near them or their house or car.
- **BULLYING:** children and young people may be afraid of bullies or teenage gangs.
- **PREJUDICE:** some children and young people and parents are afraid of racist, sexist or anti-disabled prejudice from others.
- **BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT:** has taken over space once used for play.

- **AGE/GENDER SUITABILITY:** there may only be a local play area for younger children.
- **PARENTS INDIFFERENCE:** some parents may think play is a waste of time compared to learning, homework or household chores, or they may not know how to play.
- **BAD COMPANY:** parents may be afraid their children will be encouraged or bullied into anti-social or criminal activity by peers.
- **PARENTAL PEER PRESSURE:** parent's fear of being seen as uncaring or colluding in the possible anti-social behaviour of their children by neighbours or friends, if their children are out unaccompanied.

Of the above, increasing physical and psychological restrictions on children and young people's ability to travel, even short distances, caused by increase in traffic and the widespread fear of 'stranger danger' places greater importance on local, easily accessible play facilities.

The lack of play space within walking distance must be considered a priority when deciding upon future developments, as must the availability of supervised play. Good management of green spaces is vitally important, as it is often this type of space which is closest to where children actually live and is potentially the easiest to access. The Green Space Strategy has been addressing this issue, but further work in partnership with Play providers will be necessary to encourage usage of available space.

Organised play provision needs to be delivered by skilled, knowledgeable and trained staff that are committed to promoting and enacting a play curriculum, quality standards and providing high quality training.

2.6 Questions of Risk and Challenge

All children and young people both need and want to take risks and be challenged in order to explore their limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities. Concepts of “acceptable risk” and “unacceptable risk” are critical to making informed judgements about what constitutes a best possible play environment. This strategy supports the statement ‘Managing the Risk in Play Provision from the Play Safety Forum’²² (Appendix D) and therefore play providers must take steps to ensure that the risks are managed, so far as is reasonably practicable, while allowing the potential benefits. In relation to risk the Strategy also recognises the need to have well-documented, risk assessment and management procedures, as well as systems for safeguarding children relating to staff screening, qualifications and deployment.

It is the job of all those responsible for children's play to assess and manage the level of risk, so that children are given the chance to stretch themselves, test and develop their abilities without being exposed to unacceptable risks. If we do not provide well-controlled opportunities for children to encounter and manage risk then they may be denied the chance to learn these skills.

Nationally, opportunities for adventurous outdoor play have declined in recent years as Local Authorities have sought to eliminate areas that may give rise to insurance claims. However, this is the type of decision that demonstrates the need for consultation with children and young people about their play preferences. It demonstrates the importance of involving all Directorates and other agencies, not just Play providers in the formulation of this Strategy.

If we fail to do this children and young people may choose to play in uncontrolled environments, where the risks are greater. If we are going to meet the needs of children and young people, in play provision, there may be occasions when they are exposed to the possibility of minor injuries such as bruises, grazes or sprains. Providers need to strike a balance between the risks and the benefits and this should be done using rigorous safeguarding systems, risk management techniques and a regular review cycle. Parents and carers need to understand and accept that occasional minor injuries are part of play and children developing skills.

3. Vision and Principles

Summary

This section sets out the values and principles, which underpin this Play Strategy. These were developed out of the Newcastle City Council Play Policy (Appendix C) and through the wider consultation process. They also outline the value of Play, Playwork and the key role it has in helping all children and young people in Newcastle develop to their full potential.

Context

This Strategy is founded on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by the UK Government in December 1991), which recognises the significance and importance of Play in children's lives. Article 31 of that Convention committed its signatories to supporting the child's right to engage in play and recreational activities, and to the promotion of appropriate provision.

In the UK the child's right to play is articulated in the Charter for Children's Play, developed by the Children's Play Council (Appendix A).

Play is a right, which should be recognised and promoted at a City level because it is part of what it is to be a citizen of Newcastle and the United Kingdom.

Fifteen principles were identified:

1. Children need the opportunity provided by play in order to experience the true wonder of childhood. Play is their common experience.
2. The active involvement of children and young people is the bedrock of play and play development and the adult role in play provision is to enable rather than to direct.
3. Promoting partnership working, social inclusion and community involvement is vital to the development of a successful play strategy.
4. All children should be able to play within their local neighbourhoods and have safe, attractive and accessible play spaces within easy walking distance of their homes. For older children and young people, having opportunities to meet friends and to enjoy and develop their own cultural and recreational pursuits is equally important.
5. Play is essential for children's healthy development and well-being. As children grow up, the ability to meet up with friends to visit the local park, swimming pool or shops under their own steam is central to their developing competence.
6. Being able to have fun in public spaces and participate in cultural life is one of the hallmarks of a vital and vibrant city: Cultural strategies should reflect that play is an essential aspect of children's culture and quality of life. Newcastle should be a city where childhood is cherished and children are heard.
7. 'Children's. ...Play which necessarily involves some risk.... shouldn't be sacrificed in the pursuit of the unachievable goal of absolute safety.' Health and Safety Executive, 2005
8. The decline in play opportunities affects children generally and the impact is disproportionately greater on disabled children and those living with other forms of social or economic disadvantage.
9. Children are losing their connection with the natural environment and their well-being and environmental quality are inextricably linked. The worse condition or more dangerous a local environment is in, the less able children are to play freely.
10. Some play space should be visible and readily accessible at the heart of the communities and in the environments in which children are familiar and where they feel socially secure and better access to and use of school grounds can help provide this.

11. The threat of traffic and other perceived dangers to children playing outdoors should be minimised.
12. Play is about more than swings and roundabouts in the park. It is more than good quality childcare. It is important to recognise the diversity, complexity, richness and intrinsic value of children's play.
13. Play should allow children to be socially safe (to 'see and be seen'), but as their development progresses there should be opportunities for children to experience play that is exciting and physically challenging.
14. Children sometimes need a forum and the support of trained staff to manage the impact of their play with the sometimes-conflicting demands and actions of adults.
15. Play spaces and play provision should not be viewed in isolation or as the sole responsibility of a single service area, but as a corporate priority reflected across a range of developments such as neighbourhood renewal, housing and regeneration programmes.

The City recognises these values and principles as being the embodiment of the UN Right of Children to play. They are concisely reflected in our Corporate Vision:

“Newcastle, a Playful City”

And given form in our Play Pledge:

“We will strive to ensure that all the children in Newcastle have a childhood in which they can play freely and safely in a range of good quality play environments, which offer challenge and stimulus. The right of children to play freely will be valued, respected and actively promoted across the City.”

4. About Newcastle

4.1 General Summary

Context

Newcastle is the regional capital for a population of over two million people across the Northeast of England. Newcastle has a Local Authority serving 266,000 people, within its administrative boundary. There are approximately 64,000 young people in the 0 – 19 age range (2004 mid year estimate).

It is a city of influence that exhibits the diversity of the region. It includes a lively City Centre that provides entertainment, employment and commerce for people throughout the Northeast and visitors from around the country and beyond. Its residents are diverse with affluent areas and areas of significant deprivation. Minority ethnic communities make up 6.9 per cent of the population. This proportion is higher among young people. Almost ten per cent of the school population is made up of young people from minority ethnic groups.

Newcastle, together with the area covered by Gateshead to the south of the river Tyne, is widely recognised as a regional centre and is a focus of transport, commerce, services, knowledge and culture. There are 143,000 jobs within the city and 80,000 people come in each day from neighbouring areas to work. Although the area is associated historically with 'heavy industry' the sectors now employing the greatest numbers of people in the city are finance, retail, health and social care, education and public administration. The traditional industries associated with the area: coalmining, shipbuilding and manufacturing now account for less than 10% of the working population. Unemployment is high. Local data records show that in 2004, 7.6% of the working-age population was unemployed, higher than the average of 4.9% for England and Wales. Employment in manufacturing is now below average.

The majority of the population (93.1%) identify themselves as white, above the average of 91.3% for England and Wales. Nevertheless there is an increasing ethnic diversity within the City's population with strong Pakistani (1.9%), Indian (1.2%), Bangladeshi (1%), Irish (0.7%) and Chinese (0.7%) communities, all of which contribute to the dynamism of the area. The

proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is higher in the school-aged population (9.7%) and at Newcastle College (9.1%). In recent years, refugees and asylum seekers have arrived in the City from areas such as Eastern Europe, Africa and Afghanistan. The ethnic minority population is concentrated in some wards of the city e.g. 46% of the BME population live in Riverside West and 14.6% of the population of Inner West is from the BME community compared to 6.9% of the City as a whole.

In 2001, there were 63,800 young people aged 19 years and under in Newcastle upon Tyne, out of a total area population of 259,600, of these 32,400 were male and 31,400 female.

Age	Males	Female	Total	%	UK %
0-4 years	7,300	6,900	14,200	5.5	6.0
5-15 years	17,800	16,600	34,400	13.2	14.1
16-19 years	7,300	7,900	15,200	5.9	6.0
Total 19 years and under	32,400	31,400	63,800	24.6	25.1
20+ years	93,200	102,600	195,800	75.4	74.9
Total	125,600	134,000	259,600	100	100

4.2 Deprivation

Newcastle is ranked 20th out of 159 on the 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation. This is a change from 2000 when Newcastle was ranked 48th. In terms of intensity of deprivation, Newcastle in 2004 is ranked 5th. It has the most deprived score of the five Tyne and Wear authorities. Newcastle has 53 Super Output Areas (out of 173) in the 10% most deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs) in the country; a figure that is much higher than would be expected. 31.4% (81,552) of the population live in the most deprived areas of Newcastle. In contrast, underlining the stark social contrasts that characterise the city, 3 Newcastle wards are amongst the most affluent in the Northeast and figure above the mean for England.

Within Newcastle, it is evident from the Index that some areas of the City are considerably more deprived than others. There are pockets of high levels of deprivation in the Outer East (including Byker, South Heaton, Walker and Walkergate), Inner West

(including the wards Benwell and Scotswood, Elswick, Westgate) and parts of the North and Outer West (including Blakelaw, Kenton, Denton, Newburn and Woolsington). On average 70% of children on the Child Protection Register and 70% of Looked After Children come from these wards. The fall in population that has been experienced in recent years is both a symptom and a cause of Newcastle's problems. In affluent areas of Newcastle there is a severe housing shortage and high house prices. This contrasts with large numbers of empty houses, high levels of long-term unemployment and low levels of educational attainment in the East and Inner west areas. The proportion of pupils in secondary schools eligible for free school meals at 28.5% is considerably higher than the national average of 17.1%.

Life expectancy figures are below the national average with male life expectancy in 2001 being 73.7 (England and Wales average 76) and female being 79.1 (England and Wales average 80.6). A total of 22 percent of people in Newcastle live with a long term limiting illness, as opposed to an England and Wales average of 18 percent.

4.3 Children and young people in Newcastle

Childhood Obesity

The baseline assessment of children starting school in 2004 suggested that 30.4% of 4 and 5 year olds were overweight or obese compared to a national figure of 27.7% (children aged 2 to 10 years). If this rate of obesity continues into adolescence there is cause for concern as obesity in adolescence is associated with increased morbidity and mortality in adult life. The youngest children in the Newcastle cohort were more likely to be overweight or obese.

Young Carers

Data from the 2001 census shows that there are 475 carers under 16 in the City who provide 1 hour or more per week care to someone who is old or ill. Of these 390 provide between 1 and 19 hours, 55 provide between 20 and 44 hours and 30 provide 50 or more care hours per week.

Disabled Children and Children with complex health needs

The Northern Region has the highest proportion of children with disabilities in the country (3.9% cf. 3.1% nationally). The RVI Neonatal Unit (part of Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals Trust, providing tertiary services across the region) has the lowest mortality rate in the country, which increases the number of children requiring support from Health and Social Services. The needs of children with complex health issues and those of disabled children are often very similar. Children become disabled if the complex health issues remain over time

Looked After Children

The number of looked after children in Newcastle at 31st March 2004 was 420, a rate of 77 children (under 18) per 10,000 which is significantly higher than the rate for England, 55 per 10,000. The number of looked after children at 31st March 2005 had increased to 458.

Given the multi-faceted and complex needs of children and young people outlined above, the Play Strategy represents a way in which we can provide an opportunity for children and young people to foster their own personal growth and improve the quality of life for all citizens of Newcastle.

5. Play Provision

The development and implementation of Newcastle's Play Strategy presents substantial challenges to all involved. The sheer diversity of provision, the variety of its locations and the assortment of providers make strategic delivery a real issue.

The City's response to this will be the development of local management and direction of service delivery.

This community development approach builds local community capacity and complements regeneration strategies by building mutual respect between the generations. This is "social inclusion" developed through community based self-help. Utilising these networks to develop local approaches and solutions will enhance implementation of the Play Strategy.

The implementation and development of quality play opportunities will be informed by other initiatives already undertaken around the City. For example, the work of 'Investors in Children' and others in developing the "voice" of children and young people will ensure that their needs are uppermost in developing provision that is fit for purpose.

As indicated earlier the diversity of provision that has play, as part of its work, is enormous. The following list gives an indication of the scope of play providers.

- Play Centres,
- Play schemes,
- Play within families and at home.
- Playschemes for Children with Disabilities.
- Family Learning Service
- Early Years Service
- Children's Centres
- Youth Service
- Schools
- Extended Schools

- Social Services
- Parks and Countryside
- Sports Development
- Child Health Initiatives
- Private sector play i.e. play areas in pubs, soft play, bowling alleys etc
- Out of School Clubs
- Sunday Schools
- Uniformed Organisations
- Nurseries
- Playgroups & Parent/Toddler Groups
- Crèche's
- Mobile play projects

The above list illustrates the scale of provision and both the problems and opportunities in developing a strategic response.

The approach suggested has two layers. The delivery of services will be managed locally through locality teams, whilst other aspects will be developed at a strategic, City-wide level by a Citywide Play Partnership.

This approach builds upon the best practice developed over a number of years within the City. The Local Authority will have a role in ensuring all play providers develop provision, which conforms to appropriate quality standards, provides risk and challenge and complies with current legislation.

6. Listening to Feedback – Issues and Findings

6.1 Participation: Children and Young People

The views of children and young people were taken from existing reviews and documentation, as well as extensive checking with children and young people of all ages, from all areas of Newcastle and from different social groups. This consultation formed the basis of “What Matters To Us” (op.cit.) and in it children and young people identified the priorities that would improve their day-to-day experience in Newcastle. They are:

- Space and opportunities to spend time with friends
- Good quality outdoor play spaces
- Involvement in decision making
- Respect for children and young people in relationships with adults
 - between different groups of children and young people
 - fair treatment from organisations
- Accessible leisure and sports provision- cheap, or free for all
- Road safety
- Discrimination including bullying, racism and homophobia
- Policing, crime and anti-social behaviour
- Decent neighbourhoods to grow up and live in

- Public transport
- Healthy lifestyle issues (around food, exercise, drugs and alcohol)
- More interesting lessons and fairer treatment in schools

It is recognised, within the Play Strategy, that meeting these concerns and aspirations particularly those related to self-direction are central to the successful implementation. The active participation of children and young people in the planning and evaluation of play opportunities was identified as one of the most important aspects of planning for Play.

6.2 Results from the Consultation

Consultation was held prior to the development of this Strategy, with a number of agencies and individuals, to help inform the content and direction of the Strategy. The consultation revealed a broad agreement about the value of Play, as an end in itself and as a developmental process. This was demonstrated in the strong consensus about values and principles outlined in Section 3.

However, this was also countered by a general unease about the status of Play and a sense that there was no clear 'voice' for play or well-defined plan by which improvement could be made.

The quality of responses demonstrated that staff were focused and committed and that there are an ample number of projects, centres and activities demonstrating good practice on which to build. Several excellent examples of playwork were identified e.g. St. Anthony's Children's House, Raby Street Play Tasks Project, West End Women and Girls Project, The Kids' Kabin and Kids' Café were cited while the play-yard in Wharrier Street Primary School was highlighted as a well designed and much enjoyed play space.

There was no single age range that was identified as being particularly relevant. There was however a significant number of returns suggesting 4 – 12 as a core age range, but overall, play was seen as being a legitimate and valued mode of experience for all ages.

With regards to organisation there was a significant degree of recognition that “play” was more than direct provision and within the context of the strategy a number of respondents stressed the need for fixed play and open spaces to be fully involved from the start. However, a common theme was the need for all sectors to work together, council, voluntary and community. There was also a belief that the Newcastle Play Service could refocus itself, using a more community development approach, to support play in neighbourhoods and thereby work effectively with other sectors. It could also make a number of internal changes to make more effective use of its existing resources and to ensure a strategic direction for Play in the City; by appointing a Head of Play.

There was also concern expressed that play did not have influence or was not perceived as being important in terms of local politics and as part of the planning system including the emerging Local Development Framework. Most respondents felt that the very unique contribution of play was overlooked or deemed unimportant. Some even saw this as a consequence of an undue focus on the examination of children within schools. One respondent however had a different view of this dichotomy “(some believe)...that play and education are mutually exclusive, whereas play is education and the best education is play.” It was felt that at the moment, too many see play as an opportunity for children to ‘let off steam’ before they get down to ‘proper learning’. Research demonstrates that when children’s play is supported sensitively, wisely and intelligently it is a major source of learning and development. Adults need to be interested, proactive, enthusiastic and facilitative of play. Regardless of whether or not there is a “right view” there is clearly scope within the strategy for play expertise to inform the practice of the whole spectrum of practitioners that work with children and young people.

There was almost unanimous recognition of the value and the need for joined up thinking and action, particularly with regard to Council services and the formulation of local and sub-regional policy. This was not merely an intellectual recognition there was a genuine willingness amongst almost all of those involved in the consultation to commit to working across traditional divides especially if it was going to make a real difference to children and young people’s experience of play. Examples ranged from a willingness to tackle dog fouling that restricts play opportunities to consideration of new methods of delivering services such as commissioning. The main proviso in most returns was that innovations should produce demonstrable improvement to play opportunities and provision. Quality mattered to everyone.

“We are more likely to be effective if we pull together in this and build up shared understandings.”

Play-worker .

6.3 Key issues from the Consultation and feedback

It would be wrong to say that there was agreement in all areas, some respondents believed that play should only be delivered directly by the Council while others felt suspicious of particular issues or anxious about change. The voluntary sector want to be able to have their say in how priorities are set. Nevertheless, there was such an impressive harmony of values and a common belief in the importance of play that it was relatively straightforward to condense these into objectives relevant to play organisation and delivery.

The following objectives were synthesised from the whole consultation process and they give a focus to the strategy and provide a framework for implementation.

Strategic Aim

To improve the understanding of parents, carers, service providers and practitioners of how children and young people learn in order to promote and develop good quality play opportunities.

- **Objective 1**

To strive towards every child and young person in Newcastle having access to good quality green play spaces within easy walking distance of their homes, which meet their needs for variety, accessibility, choice, open space, adventure and other play aspirations.

- **Objective 2**

To maximise the participation of children and young people, local communities, in the provision, management and evaluation of play provision in their neighbourhoods.

- **Objective 3**

To ensure that children and young people with disabilities have access to the widest possible range of play opportunities and that play in Newcastle conforms, at a minimum to the requirements set out in the Disability Discrimination Act.

- **Objective 4**

To provide a range of play opportunities in the built environment, city parks, natural spaces (managed or wildlife) open spaces, woodlands, riverside and other areas used for play where risk is managed.

- **Objective 5**

To agree standards and performance indicators for play and use these to improve provision across the City; ensure that relevant training is available to practitioners involved in the delivery of services to children and young people.

- **Objective 6**

To organise the resources of Play to provide a clear framework for investment, action, workforce development and partnership working.

- **Objective 7**

To improve the awareness of play amongst policy makers and the public so as to promote good quality play as a right that fosters children and young people's growth, learning and development.

- **Objective 8**

To communicate effectively about all aspects of play with the public, including "hard to reach groups", play providers, internal and external partners and other organisations with the aim of improving the quality of provision and participation.

7. Implementing the Strategy

7.1 Links with other Plans and Strategies

The Play Strategy has links with other plans and strategies within the Council and with external agencies. This should avoid duplication of resources in delivering on all these strategies and ensures that there is a joined up approach to achieving the aim and objectives of the Play Strategy.

The Play Strategy is informed by The Newcastle Plan which aims to enhance the quality of life of local communities, through promoting and improving the economic, social, and environmental well being of the City.

The Play Strategy will contribute to meeting the aims and objectives of The Newcastle Plan:

- Promoting the quality of life and the environmental agenda
- Regeneration and priority neighbourhoods
- Building safe, clean and green neighbourhoods
- Supporting Children and Young People to achieve their potential

Play clearly has a role within these priorities and in particular to the aim of supporting children and young people.

The Newcastle Plan has the declared intention of helping all children and young people “fulfil their aspirations and potential, encourage everyone to learn, develop skills and build self-esteem. Ensure excellent outcomes for children and young people that encompass good health, safety, achievement and economic well-being.”

The Play Strategy dovetails with all other work being undertaken within Children’s Services, particularly the Children and Young People’s Plan. The Play Service will be an integral part of Children’s Services and will work alongside multi-agency locality teams across Newcastle. The Play Strategy, along with all other relevant strategies, will be included in the Newcastle Children and Young People’s Plan. This is regularly reviewed, to ensure that outcomes for children and young people are improving; service delivery is of a high quality and responsive to the identified needs of children and their families.

The City Play Partnership will act as a sub group of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and have representation on the Executive Board. This will enable Play to be an integral part of the planning for children and ensure its inclusion in all service planning and delivery.

The Play Strategy also links with other local strategies and initiatives. Newcastle's Outdoor Play Area Strategy will be part of the plan for play. Having already identified gaps in the provision and consulted widely with young people about their preferences, an action plan to develop and improve play areas will be produced in line with the principles and recommendations of the Play Strategy.

The Play Strategy is linked to Newcastle's Local Development Framework which sets out the statutory planning framework on the development and preservation of the urban and green environment, and in particular its outdoor space and indoor sports facilities. As outlined previously the Play Strategy is linked to the Green Space Strategy and it will also inform the Supplementary Planning Guidelines around play and play space for new development in the City.

7.2 Working in Partnership

The aim of working in partnership with all organisations that have an impact on children's play is to create a continual dialogue in order to develop and provide a range of play services and opportunities which meet the needs of all children, young people and their families in the City.

To do this we must:

- Support local networks, associated with children and young people
- Increase involvement in national networks
- Work more closely and effectively with the voluntary and community sector, children and young people, their families, schools and local communities
- recognise and celebrate the diversity of provision.

- Continue to work closely with and seek opportunities for joint working with different Directorates within the Council e.g. Education, Planning, Regeneration, Social Services and Your Homes Newcastle. In order to ensure that Play is considered in all areas even those where it may be less obvious e.g. developing tenancy agreements that recognise the need for children and young people to play.
- Maximise the use of existing community buildings.

Partnerships with Children's Centres and Extended Services in Schools are particularly important in developing play opportunities for children.

Children's Centres provide integrated care and education for young children, health services, family support and a base for childminders with children's activities based on play. They provide a venue and opportunity to provide free play opportunities for children, alongside the more formal integrated education. There is also an opportunity for Playworkers to work alongside parents to introduce to them the importance of play; to support and encourage them to play alongside their children.

Extended Services in Schools provide a range of services and activities outside of the school day to help meet the additional needs of children and families. Services could include play for local communities and partnership working between play providers, schools and the local community would open up the possibility of providing local, safe and secure play spaces for children. This in turn could lead to maximising the usage of school buildings and integration of services for children and their families.

7.3 Recommended Future Structure

To ensure an efficient and effective strategic delivery of play services, there will be a clearly defined management infrastructure in place. Play is a major contributor to Children's Services and needs to have a strategic link to the range of services and providers that influence play opportunities and developments. Decisions that could have an impact on children's play should be referred to the Head of Play, for comment and to ensure compliance with the Play Policy and the Play Strategy. A stakeholders group in the form of a City Play partnership will be created to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Play Strategy and make recommendations for future development and priorities. The Head of Play should also represent Play on the Children and Young People's Strategic partnership .

The Head of Play would, along with senior colleagues, play practitioners and partners, be responsible for:

- Directing the implementation of the Play Strategy.
- Supporting and developing the work of the City Play Partnership
- Ensuring that Play issues are addressed at a Citywide level
- Raising the awareness of the importance and value of play
- Publicising, promoting and disseminating the Play Strategy
- Allocating resources and investment in ways that support the Strategy
- Develop effective working partnerships with appropriate voluntary sector organisations
- Ensuring that play provision provided directly by the Local Authority or funded by the Council will contribute to the Play Strategy
- Encouraging and supporting all play providers to adopt the values and principles highlighted in the Play Strategy
- Identifying additional funding sources for play and disseminating funding information to relevant groups
- Stimulating the creation of innovative projects or partnerships in support of children's play.
- Linking with existing and future policies, e.g. Regeneration Strategies, Green Space Strategy and the Local Development Framework.
- Reporting on progress and issues to the City Play Partnership, Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership and the City Council

7.4 Resources

A stated commitment to children's play implies that there will be adequate and sustainable resources allocated. The best use of resources can be made through co-ordination of council directorates, voluntary organisations and external agencies in their efforts to provide suitable play opportunities.

Key providers and funders will need to:

- Commit to working and allocating resources at a local/neighbourhood level as well as working strategically at a City-wide level.
- Extend the operational scope of play to include fixed play and neighbourhood play space development.
- Maintain a "mixed economy" of Council, Voluntary Sector and community provision and examine other provision opportunities

- Commit resources to support the ongoing implementation of the Strategy.
- Aim to increase funding for staff development, equipment and quality improvement.
- Bid for central government funding to develop open-access play particularly of a challenging nature.
- Grant Aid local play opportunities and seek funding for additional facilities and activities.
- Support innovative projects and those targeted at specific groups e.g. disabled, BME and hard to reach groups.

7.5 Workforce development

Workforce development is a major element of Every Child Matters, the creation of Integrated Children's Services and therefore development of Play opportunities across the City. The overall aim of workforce development is to ensure that the skills, knowledge and experience exist across the Play workforce to enable services to deliver improvement on the five outcomes for children and to create opportunities for children to actively engage in free play whenever possible.

What do we mean by a skilled and effective Play workforce?

- A workforce, including volunteers, that improves the play experiences of children
- A skilled and stable workforce, in sufficient numbers, well led and deployed around the needs of children and young people.
- multi-agency and multidisciplinary working, with an understanding and respect for the values and principles of Play and Playwork
- high quality support, supervision, training and continuing professional development
- effective recruitment and retention policies in place which reflect local needs and diversity in local communities
- strong and effective leadership and management

Newcastle has a Children's Services Workforce Strategy which will create a workforce that is:

- competent and confident
- people aspire to be part of and want to remain in, where they can develop their skills and build satisfying and rewarding careers
- parents, carers, children and young people trust and respect

In the City, workforce development is being progressed under a set of themes, including multi-agency working, ongoing support and training, recruitment and retention, leadership and management. There are opportunities to develop more joined up training and support structures which will lead to more inclusive and efficient provision and better value for money

Whilst more work is required to predict future workforce requirements, to address shortages and ensure a workforce that is representative of the local community. There is also a need to audit current workforce provision more thoroughly to enable, building on good practice, the identification of gaps and areas for development plus flexibility to address new and emerging priorities

A Workforce Development Core Group has been established with multi-agency/cross service representation from across the Children's Services workforce to develop the Workforce Strategy.

Key challenges are:

- attracting more people into the Play workforce, ensuring that the work is attractive, well paid and more adaptable; particularly promoting more flexible entry routes
- Developing and retaining more people within the Play workforce, improving their skills, building on the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge and creating a single qualification framework which fits play
- Strengthen inter-agency working, promoting the importance of play and play work, within the whole gamut of services for children
- Promote stronger leadership, management and supervision
- Develop skills and understanding of managers of multi-agency teams about the importance of play and playwork

As part of the overall Workforce Strategy there will be an inter-agency/cross sector consortium approach to professional development provision, which incorporates the Common Core Skills and Knowledge.

The Newcastle Children's Services Workforce Strategy was completed by 31st March 2006. The Strategy is the beginning of a process which is ambitious and challenging and will take several years to complete. This is acknowledged in the Children's Workforce Strategy consultation document and also by the Children's Workforce Development Council who will be providing support to Local Authorities and Government offices on local workforce strategies. As a result this strategy will be regularly reviewed and developed in response to learning nationally and locally.

Newcastle Play & Youth Service has a long standing commitment to professional development of the play workforce across the City. It also has a commitment to developing the skills of staff employed within other areas of children's services, who may not fully understand the principles of play and playwork and the importance of free play opportunities for children.

The capacity and competence exists within the Service to deliver tailor made and nationally accredited training programs, ranging from Introductory Play course to Level 3 training, as well as specific subject training.

In addition there are strong and ongoing links with local and regional HE and FE Colleges and the University of Northumbria, providing easy access to higher level training in Play. The Play service has been an active partner with regional training providers, including Newcastle College, Gateshead College and Tyne Met College in the creation of a consortium to design and deliver a Foundation Degree in Playwork across the region. (Due to start September 2007, subject to validation.)

Play providers across the City have also maintained a strong relationship with the National Centre for Playwork Education, based in the University of Northumbria. In turn this has led to close links with SkillsActive, the Play Sector Skills Council.

Through the implementation of the Play Strategy there will be an opportunity to identify existing and future training needs across the City and the improvements in networking and communication will ensure a more joined up approach to training the workforce.

7.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Appropriate monitoring procedures will be developed and implemented as an ongoing and integral part of service delivery and will include active involvement of service users in identifying and responding to children's needs.

A Monitoring and Evaluation framework will be put in place to ensure:

- Common standards and quality assurance systems are used to deliver and evaluate all play opportunities in Newcastle
- Delivery against aims and objectives is monitored
- Progress is reported back to management, funders and stakeholders
- The Strategy is monitored annually with a comprehensive review at least every three years.
- There are clear and well documented safeguarding systems in place for all aspects of Play and Playwork that are centrally managed
- Training for all play providers is in place to ensure consistent and quality delivery of play opportunities

8. Outcomes and Objectives

The objectives below fall under the overarching Every Child Matters Outcomes. They are central to the development of play opportunities in Newcastle.

Key Aims

Play Strategy Objectives matched to ECM outcomes

Be healthy

- a) physically healthy
- b) mentally and emotionally healthy
- c) healthy lifestyles

- Promote the importance of play to children's health, well being, their learning and creativity, to parents and carers and those working with children.

Stay safe

- d) Safe from accidental injury and death
- e) Safe from bullying and discrimination
- f) Safe from crime and antisocial behaviour

- Ensure that all children and young people have the chance to encounter acceptable risks in stimulating and challenging play environments.
- Work to ensure that play spaces, routes to school, parks, thoroughfares, housing estates and other public spaces within the borough are as safe as, and as conducive as, possible to children's play.

Enjoy and achieve

- g) Achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation
- h) Achieve stretching national educational standards at primary and secondary school

- Create, develop and maintain a variety of safe, local, and high quality play spaces and play provisions i.e. Make play fun!
- Support schools, childcare providers and other children's services to develop opportunities for, and recognise the value of play within their provision.
- Work to ensure that an expanding range of play opportunities is available to disabled children and young people, and that all provision aims towards becoming fully inclusive and accessible.

Make a positive contribution

- i) Engage in decision-making and support the community and environment
- j) Engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school
- k) Develop positive relationships and choose not to bully or discriminate

- Ensure children are consulted and involved with the development of new provision
- Work to ensure that play providers actively seek to address the needs of children from diverse communities and those at risk from social exclusion.
- Work with children and other providers to ensure that activities that develop social interaction and emotional growth are part of the Newcastle play entitlement.

Achieve economic well-being

- l) Live in decent homes and sustainable communities

- Work with partners and providers to that the needs of children are met in the provision of play spaces and open green spaces and other public spaces within the city and that play provision is sustainable.

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Appendix A: The Charter for Children's Play

The New Charter for Children's Play was written by the Children's Play Council and was originally published in 1992 by the National Children's Bureau. A new edition was published in 1998 by the The Children's Society. The Charter provides a framework for the development of local authority and other organisations' play policies. Given below are the ten headline standards of the Charter. The full text is available from the Children's Society.

The Charter

- All children need to play and have a right to play. Children of all ages should be able to play freely and confidently on their own and with other children.
- Parents and other carers should respect and value their children's play and try to maximise their opportunities for safe and stimulating play within and outside the home.
- All children should have equal access to play opportunities and services
- All children should be able to play safely outdoors wherever they live, in cities and in the countryside. Older children should also be able to get around safely on their own.
- Central and local government and voluntary organisations should think creatively and strategically about children and their play needs.
- All children should have access to a range of good quality early years, play and out-of school services, such as play centres, holiday play schemes, adventure playgrounds, after-school clubs, playgroups, toy libraries and play buses.
- All schools should support and facilitate children's play. Play and learning are not separate; play is part of learning and learning is part of play. Learning through play supports and enriches learning through formal education.
- Play opportunities should challenge and stimulate children's abilities but not threaten their survival or well being.
- Hospital admissions, visits to a doctor, or a stay in temporary accommodation are some of the situations where children are in strange surroundings, perhaps experiencing fear, pain, anxiety and discomfort. They should be provided with play opportunities led by staff and volunteers who understand their special needs.
- All play work education and training should be flexible, adaptable, reflective of existing good practice in play work and should involve a significant fieldwork practice component.

The set of Best Play Objectives set out below is from 'Best Play' a widely recognized benchmark document describing the objectives for good play provision. (Best Play: What play provision should do for children. Children's Play Council, NPFA and Playlink; 1999)

Objectives for Play Provision

1. The provision extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.
2. The provision recognises the child's need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need.
3. The provision manages the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.
4. The provision maximises the range of play opportunities.
5. The provision fosters independence and self-esteem.
6. The provision fosters children's respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction.
7. The provision fosters the child's well being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.

Elements of rich, high quality play environments

1. A varied and interesting environment
2. Challenge in relation to the physical environment
3. Playing with the natural elements
4. Movement, such as running, jumping, rolling climbing, swinging, balancing
5. Manipulating natural and fabricated materials
6. Stimulation of the five senses
7. Experiencing change in the natural and built environment
8. Social interactions
9. Playing with identity
10. Experiencing a range of emotions

Appendix B: Playwork Principles

- 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.
- The role of the Playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
- Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playwork intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.
- The Playworkers response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
- 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.
- *Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the Playworker.*
- 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.

Appendix C: The Newcastle City Council Play Policy

Draft Newcastle City Council Play Policy

“The right to play is a child’s first claim on the community; Play is nature’s training for life. No community can infringe upon that right without doing deep and enduring harm in the minds and bodies of its citizens.” [Lloyd George.]

Introduction

The decision to develop a Play Policy is an explicit demonstration of the importance Newcastle City Council places on the value of Play and the importance of Play to the City’s children, the wider community and society as a whole.

This Play Policy reflects the commitment made, to ensure that children are involved in decision-making and the development of policies, which affect them. It is designed to show that Newcastle City Council is responsive to the needs of the children in Newcastle.

The Play Policy is a broad statement of principles, rather than a detailed description of how Play provision should be implemented. The Play & Youth Service will use the Policy to develop a more detailed Play Strategy for the City, in partnership with other relevant Council Directorates, Voluntary and Community groups and local, regional and national Play practitioners.

The Play Strategy will inform the development of quality play opportunities, play spaces and play provision across the City.

The development of this Play Policy and the corresponding Play Strategy will contribute to the overall Children and Young People's Plan, for the City. It will also demonstrate how the provision of quality play opportunities contributes to the Every Child Matters Outcomes, as well as other relevant strategies.

Background

Newcastle City Council is committed to working towards enabling every child to exercise their right to play, as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, (ratified by the Government of the United Kingdom in December 1991.) The UN Convention recognizes the significance and importance of Play in children's lives.

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, ARTICLE 31, STATES:

“States parties recognize the right of the child to rest, leisure, to engage in Play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.”

“States parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural and artistic, recreational and leisure activity.”

In the United Kingdom, the child's right to play is expressed in the Charter for Children's Play, developed by the Children's Play Council.

Benefits of Play

- Play promotes children's development, learning, creativity and fosters independence and self esteem. Children exhibit a behavioural imperative and instinctive desire to Play. The range of Play opportunities they have access to will affect a child's development.
- Play keeps children healthy and active, throughout their childhood and transition to adulthood. Children engage in Play for its own sake not for any external goal or reward.

- Play fosters social inclusion
- Play allows children to find out about themselves, their abilities and their interests. Play is a vital way for children to understand themselves and the world around them.
- Play is therapeutic, it helps children to cope with difficult and stressful situations
- Play offers opportunities for children to test boundaries and explore risk. Risk taking is an essential element of children's play; children need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, embark on new experiences and develop their capacities.
- Play develops children's respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction.

Principles

Play is a natural and universal activity. It is a process with no necessary outcome. Play is **freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated**, that is Play is entered into by the child because they want to do so; they control the play and undertake play because it is personally satisfying to them.

This strategy was therefore formulated on the basis that children:

- want to play and have the right to do so, in a variety of public spaces, near to their home; including designated play spaces and shared public space.
- have had their play space eroded by the impact of modern society and have a shortage of quality play opportunities in their local environment.

- The community as a whole benefits from an environment in which children are able to play in public space, free from unacceptable risks.
- Designated play areas can provide enhanced play opportunities for children, beyond those offered in public spaces. Staffed facilities enable children to experience a wider range of play activities, take more managed risks, both physical and emotional, than would otherwise be available.
- Stimulating and challenging play environments ensure children can experience acceptable levels of risk.
- Some children have more limited access to play opportunities than others, due to personal or family circumstances, their social and physical environments. The play needs of these children must be addressed when developing play opportunities.
- Play opportunities must reflect and meet the needs of the black and minority ethnic communities in the City.

Commitment

Newcastle Play & Youth Service will work in partnership with other Council Directorates, the Voluntary Sector, community groups and children and young people, to develop a comprehensive Play Strategy.

The implementation of the Play Strategy will endeavour to ensure that children can access a range of quality play opportunities and environments.

The importance of Play will be promoted to all those who work with children, parents / carers and all those who develop services for the community.

Schools, childcare providers, and all services for children will be supported to recognize the value of Play within their provision.

Parks, housing estates and public spaces will be as conducive to Play as possible and appropriate.

Local, accessible and inclusive play spaces will be developed. These will include dedicated play areas and staffed Play provision. Staffed provision will be informed by the aims and objectives outlined in the 'Best Play' document, published for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, (DCMS,) by the National Playing Fields Association, The Children's Play Council and Playlink. Staffed provision will also operate according to the Play-work Assumptions and Principles.

Play opportunities will aim to offer children the chance to experience acceptable risk within a safe, stimulating and challenging environment.

All Play provision will aim to become fully accessible and inclusive.

A wider range of play opportunities will be made available to disabled children

Play provision will aim to address the needs of children from 'hard to reach' communities and children who are, or are at risk of social exclusion

Children will be actively consulted and encouraged to participate in making decisions about their opportunities to play and the spaces in their communities where they play.

All decisions and activities that may affect play spaces and opportunities will be informed by this Play Policy.

In light of these commitments Newcastle City Council will adopt the New Charter for Children's Play and endeavour to implement it.

Appendix D: Managing Risk in Play Provision

Position Statement

Play Safety Forum: Summary Statement

'We consider Managing Risk in Play Provision to be an important document that will contribute to the debate on the provision of children's play.'

Health and Safety Executive

Introduction

Children need and want to take risks when they play. Play provision aims to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. In doing this, play provision aims to manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risk of death or serious injury.

The Play Safety Forum, a grouping of national agencies involved in play safety, has produced Managing Risk in Play Provision to support the work of those involved in play provision of any kind (for example play areas, playgrounds, adventure playgrounds, play centres and holiday play-schemes). These include local authorities, voluntary organisations, play equipment manufacturers and inspection agencies.

The statement has relevance to other settings and environments in which children play; such as childcare provision, schools, parks and public open spaces. It will also be of interest to those involved in insurance and litigation in relation to play provision. The statement has equal relevance to children and young people of all ages from 0 to 18, and it uses the term 'children' to cover the whole age range. It focuses on physical injuries resulting from accidents. However, the overall approach, namely that a balance

should be struck between risks and benefits, is also relevant to agencies concerned with other issues such as the personal safety of children.

The statement is in two forms: a summary and a full statement. The summary aims to state the key points of the full statement in a more accessible form, for a non-technical audience.

Context

There is growing concern about how safety is being addressed in children's play provision. Fear of litigation is leading many play providers to focus on minimising the risk of injury at the expense of other more fundamental objectives. The effect is to stop children from enjoying a healthy range of play opportunities, limiting their enjoyment and causing potentially damaging consequences for their development.

This approach ignores clear evidence that playing in play provision is a comparatively low risk activity for children. Of the two million or so childhood accident cases treated by hospitals each year, less than 2 per cent involve playground equipment. Participation in sports like soccer, widely acknowledged as 'good' for a child's development, involves a greater risk of injury than visiting a playground. Fatalities on playgrounds are very rare – about one per three or four years on average. This compares with, for instance, over 100 child pedestrian fatalities a year and over 500 child fatalities from accidents overall. In response to this situation, and in order to ensure that children's needs and wishes are properly acknowledged, the Play Safety Forum has prepared this statement.

Full Statement

Acceptable and unacceptable risk

In any human activity, there is an element of risk. Three factors are central to determining whether or not the level of risk is acceptable or tolerable:

- the likelihood of coming to harm
- the severity of that harm
- the benefits, rewards or outcomes of the activity.

Judgements about the acceptability of risk are made on the basis of a risk assessment. Risk assessment and management are not mechanistic processes. They crucially involve making judgements about acceptability based on an understanding of the balance between risks and benefits. Even where there is a risk of fatal or permanent disabling injury, this risk may sometimes be tolerable. For instance, going paddling at the seaside involves an unavoidable risk of fatal injury, but this risk is tolerable for most people because in most circumstances the likelihood of coming to harm is very low and there are obvious benefits. Social and psychological factors are also important in risk assessment. Risks that are acceptable in one community may be unacceptable in another, and policies should take this into account.

Almost any environment contains hazards or sources of harm. In many cases the existence of hazards can be justified, perhaps because they are impossible to remove or perhaps because their removal would have undesirable consequences or be too costly. Where the existence of a hazard can be justified, measures should be in place to manage it. In a controlled environment such as a workplace or a playground, those responsible are required by law to identify, and make informed judgments about, the hazards to which people are exposed. They must take steps to ensure that the risks are managed and controlled so far as is reasonably practicable while allowing the potential benefits to be delivered.

Children and risk

All children both need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities, from a very young age and from their earliest play experiences. Children would never learn to walk, climb stairs or ride a bicycle unless they were strongly motivated to respond to challenges involving a risk of injury. Children with disabilities have an equal if not greater need for opportunities to take risks, since they may be denied the freedom of choice enjoyed by their non-disabled peers. It is the job of all those responsible for children at play to assess and manage the level of risk, so that children are given the chance to stretch themselves, test and develop their abilities without exposing them to unacceptable risks. This is part of a wider adult social responsibility to children. If we do not provide controlled opportunities for children to encounter and manage risk then they may be denied the chance to learn these skills. They may also be more likely to choose to play in uncontrolled environments where the risks are greater.

Any injury is distressing for children and those who care for them, but exposure to the risk of injury, and experience of actual minor injuries, is a universal part of childhood. Such experiences also have a positive role in child development. When children sustain or witness injuries they gain direct experience of the consequences of their actions and choices, and through this an understanding of

the extent of their abilities and competences. However, children deserve protection against fatal or permanently disabling injuries, to a greater degree than adults.

Children have a range of physical competences and abilities, including a growing ability to assess and manage risk, which adults arguably tend to underestimate. However, children typically have less experience than adults of assessing the broad range of risks and hazards that they may encounter. So it is important to give them appropriate controlled environments in which they can learn about risk.

Play provision and risk

Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision, and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and controlled learning environment. In the words of the play sector publication *Best Play*, play provision should aim to 'manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm'. While the same principles of safety management can be applied both to workplaces generally and play provision, the balance between safety and benefits is likely to be different in the two environments. In play provision, exposure to some risk is actually a benefit: it satisfies a basic human need and gives children the chance to learn about the real consequences of risk-taking. Therefore it is acceptable that in play provision children may be exposed to the risk of minor and easily healed injuries such as bruises, grazes or sprains. On the other hand, play provision should not expose children to significant likelihood of permanent disability or life-threatening injuries. However, it may on occasions be unavoidable that play provision exposes children to the risk – the very low risk– of serious injury or even death. But this would only be tolerable in the following conditions:

- the likelihood were extremely low
- the hazards were clear to users
- there were obvious benefits
- further reduction of the risk would remove the benefits
- there were no reasonably practicable ways to manage the risk.

For example a paddling pool, even if shallow, involves a very low but irremovable risk of drowning (even with parental supervision), but this is normally tolerable. The likelihood is typically extremely low; the hazard is readily apparent; children benefit through their enjoyment and through the learning experience of water play; and finally, further reduction or management of the risk is not

practicable without taking away the benefits. Providers should strike a balance between the risks and the benefits. This should be done on the basis of a risk assessment. Crucially, this risk assessment should involve a risk-benefit trade-off between safety and other goals, which should be spelt out in the provider's policy. Given children's appetite for risk-taking, one of the factors that should be considered is the likelihood that children will seek out risks elsewhere, in environments that are not controlled or designed for them, if play provision is not challenging enough. Another factor is the learning that can take place when children are exposed to, and have to learn to deal with, environmental hazards. Play provision is uniquely placed to offer children the chance to learn about risk in an environment designed for that purpose, and thus to help children equip themselves to deal with similar hazards in the wider world.

Good practice

Clear, well-understood policies, together with procedures that put these policies into practice, are the key to good practice in risk management in play provision. Policies should state clearly the overall objectives. Procedures, including risk assessment, should state how these policies are put into practice, giving guidance but also recognising the need for professional judgement in setting the balance between safety and other goals. Such judgements are clearly multidisciplinary in nature. For example, while they may contain an engineering dimension, of equal or greater importance is likely to be knowledge of child development and play itself. The Children's Play Information Service (see References below) has information on sources of authoritative, relevant guidance on good practice.

One valuable approach to risk management in play provision is to make the risks as apparent as possible to children. This means designing spaces where the risk of injury arises from hazards that children can readily appreciate (such as heights), and where hazards that children may not appreciate (such as equipment that can trap heads) are absent. This is particularly useful in unsupervised settings, where the design of the equipment and the overall space has to do most of the work in achieving a balanced approach to risk.

Conclusion

Safety in play provision is not absolute and cannot be addressed in isolation. Play provision is first and foremost for children, and if it is not exciting and attractive to them, then it will fail, no matter how 'safe' it is. Designers, managers and providers will need to reach compromises in meeting these sometimes conflicting goals. These compromises are a matter of judgement, not of mechanistic assessment. The judgements should be based on both social attitudes and on broadly based expert opinion informed

by current best practice. They should be firmly rooted in objectives concerned with children's enjoyment and benefit. And they should take into account the concerns of parents. Ultimately the basis of these judgements should be made clear in the policies of the play provider as written down in policy documents. These policies should in turn be understood and embodied in practice by all the key stakeholders. " We consider Managing Risk in Play Provision to be an important document that will contribute to the debate on the provision of children's play. It articulates the balance between the benefit and the need for children to play against the duty of play providers to provide safe play. It makes clear that the safety must be considered at all stages of play provision but that, inevitably, there will be risk of injury when children play, as there is risk of injury in life generally. We must not lose sight of the important developmental role of play for children in the pursuit of the unachievable goal of absolute safety. The important message is though that there must be freedom from unacceptable risk of life-threatening or permanently disabling injury in play"

Health and Safety Executive

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National Playing Fields Association, Children's Play Council and LAYLINK (2000), Best Play: What play provision should do for children (available from National Children's Bureau)
Information on these and other relevant publications, and contact details for Play Safety Forum members, can be obtained from the Children's Play Information Service, National Children's Bureau, 8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE
(Tel: 020 7843 6303, e-mail cpis@ncb.org.uk, website www.ncb.org.uk/library/cpis)

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For further copies of this statement contact the Children's Play Council on 020 7843 6016, or e-mail cpc@ncb.org.uk

The Play Safety Forum

The Play Safety Forum brings together the main national organisations in England with an interest in safety and children's play. Members include representatives from providers, regulatory bodies and expert agencies. The aim of the Play Safety Forum is to

build consensus on issues around risk and safety in relation to play provision. It is an independent body hosted by the Children's Play Council at the invitation of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Play Safety Forum members

- Association of Play Industries
- Child Accident Prevention Trust
- Children's Play Council
- Health and Safety Executive
- Institute for Sport and Recreation Management
- Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management
- Kids active
- Local Government Association
- National Early Years Network
- National Playing Fields Association
- National Family and Parenting Institute
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
- PLAYLINK
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
- Adviser: David Ball, Centre for Decision Analysis and Risk Management, Middlesex
- University
 - Observer organisations: Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Play Wales