

Guide to preparing play strategies

Planning inclusive play spaces and opportunities
for all London's children and young people

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Greater London Authority
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foreword by Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London



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. Being able to have fun in public spaces and participate in cultural life is one of the hallmarks of a vital and vibrant city. And London has much to offer.

Yet many parents and the wider community believe that children today have fewer opportunities to play than they did – citing fears about safety and traffic as major concerns. Run-down and depressing physical environments contribute to unequal life chances and children and young people themselves highlighted the lack of safe places to play and the lack of facilities for older children and young people as major priorities in their response to my Children and Young People's Strategy (January 2004).

I am therefore determined that, as the regeneration of London continues apace, better provision for children's play is a key element of local and regional planning. I will be working with key partners to develop regional standards, as further guidance to *The London Plan*, to ensure that all children and young people are able to play within their local neighbourhoods and have safe and attractive play spaces within walking distance of their homes.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Livingstone". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Ken Livingstone
Mayor of London

Part 1 – The need for play strategies

1 introduction

'A consistent theme is the importance of having communities where there is somewhere safe to go and something to do... (providing) recreational activity for children and young people... building the fabric of communities and increasing young people's skills, confidence and self-esteem.'

Every Child Matters, Government Green Paper, September 2003

- 1.1 Play is essential to children's happiness, health and development. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, gives all children the right 'to rest and leisure; to engage in age-appropriate play and recreational activities...'. There is increasing evidence, however, that children's play opportunities are under threat. Many children and young people, particularly in our cities, do not have the degree of freedom or access to the spaces and environments – physical and social – that they need to play. The consequences – real and potential – both for their immediate quality of life and for their long-term health and development are serious.
- 1.2 While the decline in play opportunities affects children generally, the impact is disproportionately greater on disabled children and those living with other forms of social or economic disadvantage, for whom access to free, safe and enjoyable play spaces is especially important.¹
- 1.3 London is home to 1.61 million children and young people under the age of 18, with a greater share of children up to four years old than in England and Wales as a whole. The child population is projected to grow between 2001 and 2011 compared with a fall during the same period, nationally. More children in London than in England as a whole are likely to be living with only one parent and 38 per cent are living in poverty – 54 per cent in inner London – compared with 29 per cent in England. Children of black and minority ethnic communities are more likely to experience poverty than white children.²
- 1.4 *Making London Better for All Children and Young People*, the Mayor's Children and Young People's Strategy (January 2004), sets out the Mayor's policy on children's play, based on the belief that all children should be able to play within their local neighbourhoods and have safe and attractive 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.³
- 1.5 *The London Plan*, the Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London (2004), sets the strategic context for planning and contains measures to protect and improve open space, including children's play space. Supplementary planning guidance to *The London Plan* will cover



the spatial needs of London's diverse population, including those of children and young people.⁴ The plan requires boroughs to undertake an audit and assessment of open space as part of an Open Space Strategy (OSS). This guidance is designed as a companion to the Mayor's *Guide to Preparing Open Space Strategies*.

- 1.6 Data Management and Analysis Group, GLA identifies a projected increase in London's child population of around 200,000 from 2004-16. Meeting the needs of the increased child population will require a similar growth in play and informal recreational provision in the capital. In response to the public consultation on the draft Play Strategy Guide, the GLA will work with key partners to develop regional benchmark standards for children's play and leisure facilities. These standards will provide additional guidance to London boroughs, together with decisions in relation to strategic planning applications, and will be developed as further guidance to *The London Plan*.
- 1.7 The government too has recognised the need to make better provision for children's play as a theme that cuts across a range of policy areas, from planning, open spaces and transport to health, education and childcare. Most significantly, the enjoyment of 'recreation', including play, is one of the key outcomes for children that authorities are required to consider in drawing up co-ordinated children and young people's plans under the Children Act, 2004.



'Such is the contribution that play can make to children's lives in so many areas that the Department for Education and Skills, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Department of Health and the Home Office can [each] contribute to play through their policies. My department... is beginning to draw up a government agenda for play.'

Estelle Morris, Minister for the Arts (Department of Culture, Media and Sport)
House of Commons, January 2005

- 1.8 *Getting Serious About Play: A review of children's play* (2004), written to advise the government on lottery funding for play, recommended that 'authorities should take the opportunity... to improve the planning and operation of play facilities across their area... in partnership with other local agencies, children and young people and local communities...'. In spring 2005, the Big Lottery Fund announced a strategic funding programme for play provision in England to the sum of £155 million, to be based broadly on the recommendations of this review.

Purpose of the guide

- 1.9 The purpose of this guide is to assist the London boroughs and their partners in preparing local strategies for children's play provision within a regional policy framework, and to take best advantage of national initiatives for the optimum benefit of London's children and young people.
- 1.10 It seeks to enable the development of local play strategies to be based upon clear understandings about children's play, leading to a focused play policy, 'integrated with other relevant community, corporate and departmental plans'⁵ such as the Open Space, Green Space, Community and Cultural Strategies as well as the Children and Young People's Plan required under the Children Act (2004).
- 1.11 The guide sets out the need and the basis for providing children with free and accessible spaces offering high-quality play opportunities throughout their environment. It offers good practice guidance on delivering this for all London's children and young people through the preparation and implementation of inclusive play strategies.
- 1.12 The guide is not intended to be overly prescriptive, but to provide a framework, a proposed structure and some common principles for these strategic developments. It provides a toolkit of different approaches illustrated by practical examples, with some suggested processes and references.
- 1.13 In line with the age definition adopted in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Mayor's Children and Young People's Strategy, this guidance is for play strategies applying to children and young people under the age of 18. Unless a particular age group is specified, all references to either 'children', 'young people' or to 'children and young people' should be taken to include this full age range.



2 play and its benefits

‘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

Defining children’s play

- 2.1 Although we all recognise it when we see it, play is difficult to define. The National Occupational Standards of the playwork, childcare and early years professions define play as ‘freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. It can be fun or serious... by playing, children learn and develop as individuals and as members of the community’.⁶
- 2.2 The 2004 play review uses the straightforward description of play as ‘What children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons’.⁷
- 2.3 While the play strategy may adopt a simple definition, it is important to recognise the diversity, complexity and richness of children’s play – that is, if the strategy is to fully address the need to accommodate this. The playwork profession has identified no fewer than 15 distinct ‘play types’ which are listed and described in Appendix D.
- 2.4 These definitions all suggest two things: that play is instinctive, arising from children’s innate need to express themselves and explore their world; and that its benefits for children’s development derive from them choosing it and doing it for themselves. The adult role in play provision is to enable rather than to direct.

The benefits of play

Play and health

- 2.5 Play is essential for children’s healthy physical and emotional development. The Chief Medical Officer advises that ‘children and young people should achieve a total of at least 60 minutes of at least moderate-intensity physical activity each day’.⁸ 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. The government White Paper *Choosing Health*, 2004, noted that ‘many children appear to have less time being physically active... because of the increase in car use and heightened concern about the potential risks of unsupervised play outdoors...’.



Play and health

- Children and young people themselves express considerable concern about the restrictions on their independent activity⁹, and about the lack of provision for regular and enjoyable exercise.¹⁰
- The British Medical Journal reported in 2001 that there is ‘an obesity epidemic in young children’ and that the main solution should be to ‘reduce television viewing and promote playing’. The report identifies that ‘opportunities for spontaneous play may be the only requirement that young children need to increase their physical activity’.¹¹
- A study by University College London in 2004 highlighted the benefit of unstructured play to children, placing it as second only to PE in calorific intensity. It concluded that ‘walking and playing provide children with more physical activity than most other activities’.¹²
- The Mental Health Foundation has reported that the increasingly limited amount of time children have to play outside, or to attend supervised play projects, was a causative factor in the rise of mental ill health in young people.¹³

Play and the environment

‘Children are losing their connection with the natural environment and their well-being and environmental quality are inextricably linked. The worse a local environment looks, the less able children are to play freely...’

A Child’s Place – why environment matters to children, Green Alliance/Demos, 2004

- 2.6 A research report by Demos and the Green Alliance¹⁴ has found that there is a big gap between children from rural and urban backgrounds in their level of access to natural environments and that this is detrimental to city children. Among the report’s key recommendations was that children from disadvantaged backgrounds should be provided with more and better opportunities to good quality open space and its design. The environmental charity Groundwork reports that community-based play activities can ensure optimum use of such space, contributing to the environmental awareness of local children.



Barriers to play

‘The overwhelming cry from both parents and young people is around the lack of activities and facilities... the thing they say would most improve family life is the provision of places to go and things to do... where they can spend their leisure time with their friends.’

Margaret Hodge, Minister for Children and Families, January 2005

- 2.7 Children and young people commonly identify many barriers to play, recreation and their enjoyment of public space.¹⁵ These include: fears for their safety, especially from bullying; traffic; dirty, boring or run-down play areas and parks; lack of choice; and lack of access.
- 2.8 Parents and the wider community strongly believe that children today have fewer opportunities to play than they did as children, and are spending too much time watching television or using computers. This is a serious concern for many adults. A 2001 MORI poll cited activities for teenagers as people’s top priority for local improvement, ahead of crime reduction, road repairs and better transport. More and better facilities for younger children was next.¹⁶
- 2.9 Studies show dramatic decreases in children’s independent mobility, a major factor in their access to play opportunities. For example, the proportion of seven and eight-year-olds walking unaccompanied to school fell from 80 per cent in 1971 to nine per cent in 1990.¹⁷ While fear of ‘stranger danger’ is often cited as a major reason, other studies have shown that traffic is the more significant factor. One study demonstrated that, where traffic is slower, parents allow their children to play outdoors in much greater numbers than in similar streets where it is faster. The same study concluded that fear of abduction was more of an effect of children not being allowed to play outdoors than its cause.¹⁸
- 2.10 Research in Zurich compared children aged five who could play outdoors by their own homes, with those who could not. It found that where they could play outdoors, 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 outdoors had less physical and social development and were less autonomous.¹⁹
- 2.11 Children and young people themselves talk about being prevented from playing out in public. In the 2003 *Playday Survey*²⁰ of seven to 16-year-olds, two-thirds said they like to play outside daily, mostly to meet friends, but:

- four in five said they had been told off for playing outdoors
- half said they had been shouted at for playing outdoors
- one in three aged seven to 11 said being told off stopped them playing outdoors
- 11-year-olds said they were told off more than any other age group.

Inequalities and social exclusion

‘Inclusive play provision is open and accessible to all and takes positive action in removing disabling barriers so that disabled children and non-disabled children can participate.’

Alison John, for Kidsactive and the Better Play Awards

- 2.12 For disabled children, negative attitudes and inaccessible physical environments compound the general problems experienced by most children, creating enormous social and physical barriers to the enjoyment of their right to play independently. In London, as across the UK as a whole, there is evidence that disabled children do not enjoy equality of access to play and leisure activities. A recent survey of 1,000 parents of disabled children demonstrated how their children were excluded from ordinary leisure opportunities. Parks and playgrounds were the least user-friendly, with few facilities for disabled people.²¹
- 2.13 Research has shown that certain minority ethnic groups are disproportionately excluded from play provision. For example, Asian children – and girls in particular – are widely discouraged from attending mainstream play services owing to a range of cultural and ethnic pressures, including overt and implicit racism.²²
- 2.14 Enjoyment of the public realm is significantly compromised for many black and ethnic minority children. There were more than 20,000 race-related incidents and 18,000 racial offences in London in 2001.²³ A survey of 3,000 young Londoners²⁴ found that many children and young people have had experiences of racist abuse and bullying and that this inhibits their enjoyment of open space.
- 2.15 There are around 4,000 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people in London and many more with families.²⁵ Many of them experience a lack of respect and overt discrimination in public spaces.²⁶

Anti-social behaviour

- 2.16 Groups of children or young people ‘hanging out’ in the public domain are often characterised as posing a threat or a nuisance, even when they are simply enjoying being together. Many children and young people complain



that they do not have access to space that is theirs, or which they are welcome to share with adults, and that they are consequently scapegoated.

- 2.17 Anticipating the Youth Green Paper expected in Spring 2005, Margaret Hodge, Minister for Children and Families, has said 'if we want young people to flourish and if we want to divert [them] from anti-social behaviour, thinking about what the community can provide really counts. Some adults perceive teenagers on the streets as a problem and teenagers want safe spaces to hang out. Surely we must somehow be able to square that circle'.²⁷
- 2.18 A report by Groundwork for the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce, 2002, said 'Young people are often represented as the perpetrators of crime, and yet it is clear that in terms of parks and green spaces they see themselves as the victims. They suffer anti-social behaviour in the form of bullying from other age groups but also on the part of adults – ranging from the possibility of attack in unlit areas to adults allowing their dogs to roam loose in children's areas. Contrary to expectations, young people are also very concerned about issues of maintenance in parks and green spaces.'
- 2.19 Research commissioned by CABI Space shows that 'place making' – improving the design, maintenance and supervision of parks and other public spaces – is a more effective solution to anti-social behaviour than simply increasing security measures.²⁸



3 play provision

‘Young people want to play and spend time outside and it is important that we provide suitable spaces for them. Alongside learning more about themselves and each other, play facilities will help keep children fit and healthy, help tackle the growing issue of obesity and provide parents with places where they are happy to let their children spend their free time.’

Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, 2002



When and where children play

- 3.1 Half of all days in the year are weekends or school holidays, when, given the opportunity, children will play outdoors for many hours. If given the opportunity they also play before, after and on the way to school.
- 3.2 Research shows that children, especially those with special educational needs, benefit from the space and the opportunity to play during the school day.²⁹ The school curriculum is not within the scope of this guide, but the play strategy should address the use of school grounds and attempt to engage the education authority and schools' communities. The school grounds charity Learning through Landscapes offers a guide to writing a school play policy³⁰ and this is recommended for adoption and promotion as part of the strategy's implementation plan.
- 3.3 Children's out-of-school play spaces are nearly always where they can see and be seen by a trusted adult. In most instances this adult will be a parent, carer or that of a friend. It may also be a playworker or someone without direct responsibility, such as a park keeper or neighbourhood warden. This explains why putting children and their playgrounds 'out of sight and out of mind' leads to facilities that are little used and often vandalised.
- 3.4 Research has shown that children like their play space to be visible and readily accessible, to be the heart of the communities and the environments with which they are familiar and where they feel socially secure. However, they also like the option of accessing or creating special and 'secret' spaces: dens and hideaways. Successful play places will take account of children's need to see and be seen without compromising the need for a rich and varied environment.³¹ Play spaces that do not comply with these criteria are generally used by fewer children and are more vulnerable to vandalism.
- 3.5 Children instinctively like to be within the heart of their neighbourhoods. They tend to play where there is a high probability that they will meet friends and other members of the community. This is why they often congregate in front of shops, on street corners and in other well-used public spaces. All children depend upon the suitability of these environments to be able to play. If not on the roads and pavements

themselves, they certainly depend on these being safe routes to spaces where they can play. Strategies that attempt to simply corral children into 'safe places' are not likely to succeed³² and the play strategy should seek to minimise the threat of traffic and other perceived dangers to children playing outdoors.

- 3.6 Many children, but by no means all, have opportunities to visit dedicated, unsupervised play spaces: playgrounds with appropriate equipment and landscaping. These can be successful if they meet the various criteria and at least some of the objectives for good provision, but can be underused, neglected and vandalised if they do not.
- 3.7 Destination or 'showcase' parks are sometimes seen as the solution to the need for more play provision, and the popularity of large town parks with quality equipment is clear. However, research analysis demonstrates that the majority of users of such facilities are on a family visit, and that they do not meet the everyday play needs of more than small numbers of local children.³³
- 3.8 Childcare facilities have developed significantly in recent years to meet the needs of working parents. Good quality childcare provision will incorporate opportunities for play for those registered to attend. It is important to ensure that childcare provision is not expanded at the expense of open access play services to the detriment of children of non-working parents.



Good play provision?

- 3.9 Neither the identification of children's need for play, the definitions of play itself, nor the description of its objectives, actually tell us what constitutes good play provision. What they do tell us is that play is about much more than swings and roundabouts in the park. Fixed equipment playgrounds have their place but the strategy should take a much broader view of where and how often children need access to the space and opportunity to run, climb, skip, hide, play with ropes, jump, practise cartwheels, throw and kick balls, make friends, fall out, build fires, grow things, tell stories, climb trees, take risks, get wet, explore nature, build dens, get dirty, dress up, keep animals, dig holes, swing on tyres, shout, fight, invent games, make things, paint pictures, talk with their friends or just sit.
- 3.10 A play strategy is a strategy for allowing children to be children, wherever they are. The strategy should challenge the presumption that a certain number of prescribed, fenced-off areas with a quota of manufactured equipment is a sufficient response and engage in creating the widest

range of play opportunities and spaces, from dedicated, supervised provision to play-friendly streets, parks and open spaces.

- 3.11 A good play strategy will address all these issues by developing more and better play spaces and opportunities, a more child-friendly public realm and greater recognition of the importance of play across the range of policy areas that have an influence on children's lives. By engaging children and young people themselves in the process, the play strategy can engender community cohesion and a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for sustainable public space. It can help to cultivate a young population that identifies with, and feels a sense of belonging to, its physical, social and natural environment.

The objectives of play provision

Best Play (2000) is a widely recognised benchmark document describing the outcome objectives for play provision.

According to *Best Play*, good play provision:

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

From *Best Play: What play provision should do for children*, Children's Play Council, National Playing Fields and PLAYLINK, 2000

- 3.12 An essential feature of the play strategy is that it promotes inclusion and access for disabled children. Inclusive principles and good practice should be an integral part of the document but also highlighted as distinct areas for action to ensure, as a minimum, compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act.
- 3.13 Consultation exercises regularly find that parents want 'a safe place for my children to play'. This is often interpreted as referring to the safety of equipment. However, when asked, parents often complain that play

equipment is not exciting enough and that children have grown out of it by the time they are seven or eight.³⁴ Parents want somewhere where they feel that their children are socially safe (to 'see and be seen') but know that, physically, they want and need excitement and challenges from their play.³⁴

Design and cost

- 3.14 Imaginative, well-designed and well-equipped play space can sometimes be perceived as an expensive add-on when considering budgetary priorities. Following the principles and processes set out, however, good quality play provision, developed strategically and managed properly, should represent best value over time as a valuable community asset. The engagement of designers, landscape architects and community artists in the creation and development of play spaces and the wider public realm can add much value to both the process and the provision for children.³⁵

Human resources

- 3.15 A good play strategy will include the development of a range of supervised and unsupervised provision, from child-friendly design of the public realm to properly staffed adventure playgrounds and after-school clubs. Resources will need to be identified for the recruitment, training and development of a skilled workforce: playworkers, play development and outreach workers, structure builders and site managers. Participation workers will also be needed. Skillsactive, the Sector Skills Council for the play sector, has information about the training and qualifications framework for playwork and has a three-year strategy, *Quality Training, Quality Play*, for playwork education and training (www.skillsactive.org.uk). For boroughs aiming to develop a range of supervised provision, a workforce development plan, making reference to this national framework should be an integral part of the play strategy's implementation. This is particularly important where there is a deficiency in open spaces.



4 the policy context for play

‘We recognise that play can impact positively on a range of issues and we will continue to... ensure that it is recognised as having an important contribution to the Change for Children Programme, the Physical Activity Plan and the Cleaner, Safer, Greener agenda. We will be considering how to take forward a more strategic, cross-departmental policy for play.’

Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, 2005



The Play Review

- 4.1 *Getting Serious About Play – a review of children’s play* (2004) made the key recommendation that ‘the local authority or a local partnership should be responsible for drawing up proposals... prepared in partnership with other local agencies, children and young people and local communities’. A fuller summary of the recommendations of the Play Review is set out on page 57.

Every Child Matters and Change for Children

- 4.2 The government’s *Every Child Matters* framework and *Change for Children* programme (www.everychildmatters.gov.uk) identify the enjoyment of recreation, including play, as a key outcome for children and young people to be considered in the preparation and implementation of Children and Young People’s plans under the Children Act (2004).

The National Childcare Strategy

- 4.3 The Extended Schools Initiative – part of the National Childcare Strategy to offer ‘wrap-around care’ for all children up to age 14 – is to look at opening school grounds and premises for out-of-school activities, including children’s play. These are expected, as a priority, to provide leisure facilities for all children in a locality, including disabled children, and not only for those who go to a specific school.³⁶
- 4.4 Early years development and childcare partnerships have been encouraged by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to promote play as an integral part of childcare plans. Government guidance to the partnerships sets out a range of measures to ensure the quality of play opportunities within childcare provision, stating that ‘partnerships have a crucial role in the promotion and development of good quality play opportunities’.
- 4.5 Supervised provision that is open to children under eight must be registered with Ofsted under the National Standards for out-of-school care. Under the standards, open access playgrounds or playschemes have alternative criteria to those that apply to childcare, and these are set out in Appendix A of *Out of School Care: Guidance to the National Standards*.

PLAYLINK has published a valuable guide: *Open for Play – the National Daycare Standards in open access play provision*.

Summary of government guidance on play within childcare

- Children need opportunities to play in different ways at different times.
- Children need safe play spaces where they can be physically active as well as quiet and still.
- Childcare staff and playworkers can enrich and enhance children's play.
- Children's play needs may differ depending on their age, ability, culture and circumstances.

Good Practice Guidance for Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships, No 13, DfES (2001)

Regeneration

- 4.6 The development of the play strategy should reflect the new focus on liveability, emphasising the role of play space in regeneration, neighbourhood renewal and in delivering the *Cleaner, Safer, Greener* urban renaissance called for by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

Planning policy

- 4.7 Planning Policy Guidance Note 17, Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG 17) aims to safeguard open spaces and playing fields. It was revised in 2002 to become much more focused on assessing the need for different types of open space, rather than – as in the previous guidance – merely setting quantitative standards. This is the national context for the play space and open space aspects of a play strategy. At the same time, new legislation was introduced to lower the threshold (from 0.4ha to 0.2ha) above which local planning authorities are required to consult Sport England about developments affecting playing fields, with objections referred to the ODPM.

London policy context

- 4.8 *The London Plan*, the Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy for London (2004), sets out the spatial planning framework for London for the next 15 to 20 years. It contains a number of policies in respect of London's open spaces, including:
- realising the value of open space to communities and to protect its many benefits, including those associated with play and recreation
 - requiring the London boroughs to produce open space strategies that include an audit of existing provision and an assessment of needs
 - protecting locally important open space
 - creating new open spaces where there is inadequate provision
 - promoting improvements in existing provision

- ensuring that everyone has equal access to and can use London's open spaces.

The Mayor has made a commitment in *The London Plan* to develop Supplementary Planning Guidance on the spatial needs of London's diverse population, which will include children and young people.

- 4.9 *Making London Better for All Children and Young People*, the Mayor's Children and Young People's Strategy (2004), sets out the Mayor's vision for developing London as a 'genuinely child-friendly city' where 'children are seen and heard'. It contains specific policy commitments and action points about children's play and young people's leisure. A Children and Young People's Unit has been set up within the Mayor's Office to ensure delivery, implementation and monitoring of its objectives.
- 4.10 The Mayor's Transport Strategy also includes proposals for 20mph restrictions and safe routes to schools and play areas. Transport for London's Children and Young People's Action Plan will aim to influence the boroughs' transport spending plans to ensure that they fully take into account the provision of safe and accessible transport for children and young people.
- 4.11 The Mayor's Walking Plan for London (2004) has been produced as an integral part of the Mayor's sustainable transport strategy. It aims to promote walking as the most environmentally friendly mode of transport by making it an 'attractive, safe and convenient mode of travel for everyone'. It includes the increased introduction of Home Zones, where pedestrian and community needs are placed ahead of traffic considerations.
- 4.12 Making Space for Londoners is an initiative of the GLA's Architecture and Urbanism Unit aiming to create or upgrade 100 public spaces in London during the next five years. The strategy outlines ten initial pilot projects to highlight how to achieve the best quality for public spaces.
- 4.13 The Mayor's Culture Strategy (2004) promotes the cultural benefits of open space as an important cultural resource and recognises children's play as a distinct cultural activity for inclusion in local cultural strategies.
- 4.14 The Mayor's London Childcare Strategy (2003) was launched in response to the government's National Childcare Strategy and contains a range of strategic proposals that the Mayor will implement in order to increase the availability of affordable childcare in London.





Local policy context

- 4.15 Unitary Development Plans (UDPs), leading to Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), provide the framework for decisions on the nature and location of new developments within London and are therefore an extremely important vehicle for shaping the physical and spatial environments for children's play. In preparing UDPs and LDFs, boroughs are required to have regard to the relevant policies and themes set out in *The London Plan*, which include protecting and developing open space for community use, including children's play. LDFs will contain Statements of Community Involvement (SCIs), which should therefore include reference to the involvement of the voluntary and community sectors, including parents/carers, children and young people and play agencies in the strategic planning process.
- 4.16 Open Space Strategies (OSS) should develop detailed policies and objectives for open space based on an assessment of existing provision and the needs of the local community. The strategy should inform other local authority strategies and plans including the UDP. The *Guide to Preparing Open Space Strategies* (London Plan Best Practice Guidance, 2004) gives practical advice to London boroughs on the preparation of an OSS. It is a companion to this guide.

Play and the cultural and community strategies

- 4.17 As well as sitting alongside the OSS, there should be a clear link between the play, cultural and community strategies. The Local Government Act (2000) requires authorities to develop Community Strategies through a Local Strategic Partnership, aimed at improving the economic, social and environmental well-being through sustainable development. It co-ordinates the actions of the council, and of the public, private, voluntary and community organisations that operate locally.
- 4.18 A cultural strategy may form part of the community strategy. A government funded report on the role of play in cultural strategies³⁷ states: 'In developing the vision, aims and objectives of their cultural strategies, local authorities should bear in mind that: play is an essential aspect of children's culture and quality of life; children's play is an initiation into a wider cultural life; and that play and culture share the characteristic of being intrinsically worthwhile'.

'The culture of childhood has play at its heart. By recognising this and fully incorporating play provision into Local Cultural Strategies, local authorities will be extending the enhanced quality of life... to children, whose voices too often go unheard...'

Richard Caborn, Minister for Sport, from *Play as Culture*,
PLAYLINK and the Children's Play Policy Forum, 2002

Children and Young People's Plan

- 4.19 From April 2006 local authorities will be required to produce a Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) which sets out the local vision for children and young people, a strategic analysis showing how key outcomes will be achieved, and the actions, timescales and costs involved. It links upwards to the community strategy and downwards to other local plans and strategies, including the play strategy, to integrate the delivery of all services for children and young people in the area.

Play and best value

- 4.20 Boroughs are required to undertake best value reviews of all their services. (Note the Audit Commission *Proposal for Comprehensive Performance Assessment* (CPA) from 2005 outlines proposed changes to the CPA methodology. See www.audit-commission.gov.uk for further details.)

Many authorities will find that some of the information they need to start preparing a children's play strategy has already been gathered as part of a previous best value review. Conversely, the audit, consultation and analysis stages of the play strategy development will prove useful to future reviews.

Example: Best value and play

The London Borough of Southwark's best value review determined that the council should 'implement a cross-cutting review of play areas'.

The target outcome was to jointly commission a review of play areas to be funded by the parks department budget, and ultimately linked to the production of the Open Spaces Strategy. Contributions to the review were to come from planning, housing and play services, with external contributions from Sport England, the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) and the London Parks and Green Spaces Forum.

- 4.21 The Audit Commission identifies the development, adoption and implementation of an appropriate play policy and strategy by the local authority as a Best Value Performance Indicator in the Strategic Objective/Quality of Life category. This indicator, PI 115, is reproduced in full in Appendix A as it represents a good overview of the purpose and position of a play policy and strategy as well as a tool for assessing its progress and effect. Note, however, that this type of indicator does not evaluate provision and should not replace the need to establish benchmarks and measures of quality.

5 the purpose and scope of the play strategy

- 5.1 The purpose of preparing and implementing a play strategy is to enable the borough and its partners to establish clear policies on play as the basis for a range of activities that will create and improve access and opportunity for all its children and young people to enjoy a range of quality play and recreation opportunities. In so doing it will also contribute to achieving the Every Child Matters outcomes for children: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving economic well-being.
- 5.2 The play strategy should convey a vision of what the council wants to achieve, setting out aims, objectives and broad policies. It should be based on an understanding of the supply, distribution, quality and level of use of current provision and the present and future needs of children and young people. It should be placed within the wider borough, sub-regional and London context. An action plan or delivery mechanism with clear and identifiable milestones should be developed as a key component that focuses on the implementation of the strategy.
- 5.3 It will expand the areas of the public realm where all children and young people feel safe and welcomed. It should seek to improve the quality of life for the whole community by engaging with its young people to challenge negative perceptions and engender shared ownership of – and responsibility for – open space and the built environment.
- 5.4 It will better enable the borough to consider the needs of children, young people and their families across a range of policy and strategy areas, adding value to existing and forthcoming developments and initiatives and enabling the acquisition of new investment for the benefit of the whole community.
- 5.5 It should seek in particular to meet the needs of the children and young people of local communities, including groups that have traditionally suffered exclusion, such as disabled children and young people, those from minority ethnic or refugee communities, girls and young women, looked-after children and young people, and those at risk from social exclusion.

Strategic benefits

- 5.6 The strategic benefits of preparing and implementing a play strategy include:
 - bringing together a range of issues, disciplines and interests to promote closer inter-departmental, inter-authority, cross-sectoral and community relationships around the key theme of children and young people's enjoyment of inclusive play and recreation



- providing the evidence base, building the strategic partnerships and developing the plans to support funding applications to a wide range of potential funders, including the Big Lottery Fund
- complying with relevant legislations including the Children Act 2004 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- helping to meet the requirements for assessments and audits for open spaces contained in Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG 17): Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (July 2002)
- promoting a more holistic view of play space provision, distribution and quality
- providing the basis for a consistent approach that contributes to a strategic overview within current priorities
- identifying areas of play space deficiency, gaps in types of provision and the need for improvements
- assisting in the identification of priorities, and in planning for improvements or the creation of new play spaces or services
- enabling better management of assets
- highlighting issues of quantity, quality and accessibility
- maximising budgets through Section 106 agreements for play space
- maximising the effectiveness of budgets through strategically targeted expenditure based on need assessment
- assisting in development plan review, development control, decision making and the negotiation of developer agreements
- contributing to best value reviews (see earlier comment about this, paragraph 4.20) and other corporate strategies
- promoting partnership working, social inclusion and community involvement.



Scope

- 5.7 Play is an important aspect of many areas in children's lives and needs consideration within environments and different spheres of local authority activity. Children need access to dedicated play space but also to child-friendly neighbourhood environments, green and open spaces. The play strategy should assess and analyse not just the quantity, quality and current usage of existing play spaces and facilities but the current accessibility of the public realm against the needs and wishes of local children and young people, taking into account issues of gender, ethnicity, disability and sexuality.
- 5.8 There needs to be a close strategic fit between the Children and Young People's Plan, the Open Space Strategy and the Unitary Development Plan/Local Development Framework, and the Play Strategy. The Local Strategic Partnership has a central role in ensuring that this happens. 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 and regeneration programmes. The range of partners involved in the play strategy's development should reflect this cross-cutting approach.

- 5.9 As well as a broad range of local authority activities, the play strategy will also be significant to, and need the involvement of, a range of other stakeholders from the community. These must include children and young people of all ages and backgrounds, their parents and carers, and ensure that children living away from their birth parents, or in care, and young carers are involved. If necessary, specialists with relevant communication and other skills need to be employed to hear from the whole diversity of children (see box below). It is important that these groups, many of whom will have useful information and expertise, should be consulted and fully involved.
- 5.10 Much data will be available as part of preparing a borough's OSS and there will be benefits to integrating the development of the two documents so that the collection and use of data is maximised and duplication avoided. There will, however, be important differences. Those preparing the play strategy should be enquiring into the extent that children play outdoors (and identifying barriers to playing outdoors) and the level of opportunity for challenge and variety, rather than simply the extent of play facilities. The strategy should assess and analyse where and how children are playing and identify where they are not. It should assess what modifications need to be made to existing open spaces and playgrounds against current and future need. It should also assess and analyse the quantity, quality and accessibility of supervised play opportunities.

Stakeholders in the development of a play strategy

Children and young people are the main stakeholders and careful consideration of the nature and extent of their involvement, and the resources required, should be made throughout the process. The cross-cutting nature of play provision means that the widest range of local authority activities and community groups should be involved to ensure representation of the community, in particular children and young people. This would include:

Local authority departments

- Children and young people's directorate
play services, schools, children's centres, children's services, education, social services, early years and childcare partnerships and children and young people's participation and consultation teams/officers

- Highways, traffic and transport
- Housing
- Planning, development and regeneration
- Leisure and recreation
- Environment
- Parks and open spaces
- Youth provision
- Insurance section
- Human resources departments

Local play champions – this may be a local councillor

Community groups and external partners

- Children and young people
- Parents/carers
- Play associations
- Disability organisations
- Local environmental groups
- Housing associations
- Tenants associations
- Amenity interests and ‘friends’ groups
- Black and minority ethnic community groups
- Children’s charities
- Faith groups

Partnerships and other statutory agencies

- Local strategic partnerships
- Cultural groups
- Children’s trusts
- Children’s fund boards
- Primary care trusts
- Police
- Sure Start services
- Strategic health authorities – children’s leads
- Primary care trusts – public health
- Housing associations



Main objectives

- 5.11 The main objectives of the play strategy should be to:
- protect and improve play space and play provision in terms of quality, quantity, accessibility and safety
 - ensure that play space and play provision is inclusive and meets the needs of all local children and young people
 - promote greater social inclusion
 - develop a balance between supervised and unsupervised provision according to local need
 - ensure that play spaces enhance the quality of the local environment for children and young people
 - improve the public realm as a child-friendly environment
 - provide a clear framework for investment priorities, action and workforce development
 - make clear links to other relevant strategies and plans in the borough.
- 5.12 It is recommended that the preparation of the play strategy should be based on the following general principles, which develop the main objectives outlined above:
- Meaningful participation of children and young people in the whole process, right from the start, to ensure relevance and ownership
 - Establishment of a clear vision and policy framework
 - Shared understanding and adoption of the principles of play as a child's right and essential to their healthy development
 - Shared understanding of the principles of inclusion and the social model of disability
 - Understanding the play needs and aspirations of local children and young people
 - Formation of collaborative and enabling partnerships
 - Sustainability
 - Understanding of risk and safety issues in relation to children's play
 - Quality, long-term design principles
 - Sustainable management and maintenance arrangements
 - Understanding and promotion of the recognised objectives of good play provision
 - Inclusive and accessible design principles.

Timetable

- 5.13 A play strategy may take anything from eight to 18 months or longer to produce, depending on a number of factors, not least the existence or not of relevant data and the current state of the authority's open and green space strategies. The timetable should take into account potential constraints or milestones such as best value reviews (see earlier comments

about BVRs) and council elections. Some key issues determining the timing of the process will be:

- internal resources and funding
- the role of external consultants
- the involvement of voluntary and community groups
- involvement of children and young people, taking account of term times and school holidays
- production/review of related policies and strategies.

5.14 The times and the duration suggested for different tasks is a rough guide only and will depend upon key stakeholders’ and officers’ other commitments, the resources available and other variables. This suggested timetable is illustrative of the general scale of the project.

Stage	Process	Substantive time (days)	Duration (months)
1	Preparation/scoping	2–4	1–2
2	Review	9–12	1–6
3	Identifying, mapping and auditing current provision	8–15	2–3
4	Consultation	8–10	2–3
5	Analysis	3–5	1–2
6	Preparation of strategy and action plan	6–9	2–6





Part 2 – Preparing a play strategy

6 the methodology and stages to preparing a play strategy

Introduction

- 6.1 This section of the guide makes recommendations for producing and implementing a play strategy. It is designed to be used in conjunction with the *Mayor's Guide to Preparing Open Space Strategies*, with which it shares a general structure and some suggested methodologies. Those responsible for preparing the OSS should be involved from the outset in order to avoid duplication and ensure that the two strategies are integrated wherever possible and desirable. A staged approach is recommended, as set out below:

- 1 Preparation and scoping
- 2 Review
- 3 Identifying, mapping and auditing current provision
- 4 Consultation
- 5 Analysis and identification of objectives
- 6 Preparation of the strategy and action plan.

Process and development

- 6.2 While setting out a suggested approach, it is recognised that each local authority is different in the current status of its play provision, the history and role of its children's services, the development of its OSS and in the current needs and aspirations of its communities. The process set out should not therefore be considered prescriptive, although certain key elements are strongly recommended.
- 6.3 It is essential that the right people are engaged, both across the borough, including the voluntary sector, and vertically within the council, as described in paragraph 5.10. Equally, the values and principles underpinning the strategy should be founded in a sound understanding of the importance of play, children's participation and the diversity of environmental, spatial and social factors affecting these.

Involving children and young people

- 6.4 Consideration of, and decisions about, the involvement of children and young people in the process should be made at the earliest possible point in the process if it is to be a meaningful and mutually beneficial engagement. Links should be made with the local children and young people's participation and consultation officer and youth parliament as appropriate.
- 6.5 Stage 4 deals with specific methods for consulting young people and offers suggestions for good practice. From the outset, though, the



strategy group should establish its policy on children's participation. It is worth asking basic questions:

- Why are we consulting children?
- What do we want to achieve for ourselves and the children involved?
- When and at what stages is it appropriate?
- Is this to be a one-off exercise or a regular activity of the implementation?
- At what level are we planning to consult children?
- How are we planning to achieve this?
- Do we have the expertise and resources to undertake these activities? If not, what extra resources do we need or have to pool?

Stage 1: Preparation and scoping

Managing the process

- 6.6 As the corporate nature of the strategy will need to arise from the involvement and engagement of a range of key officers and departments and include key stakeholder representatives, it is recommended that a Play Strategy Group be formed to steer the process.

Lead officers and play champions

- 6.7 Many local authorities in London have experienced and qualified play practitioners in management positions or development roles. Where this is not the case, it will be an important first step to recruit such a person to be the lead officer with responsibility for researching, consulting, co-ordinating and drafting proposals for the strategy. It is vital that the lead officer has a full understanding of the diverse nature of children's play and its relevance to the full range of local authority and community activities.
- 6.8 As well as a lead officer it is strongly recommended that the authority designates a play champion, who can advocate for the strategy in the council's policy discussions and provide political leadership. This should, ideally, be a cabinet member, other senior elected member or a departmental director. In Croydon, for example (see Appendix C), the involvement of the Chief Executive's office provided political leadership and gave authority to the development work of a specially recruited Play Strategy Officer. Without such authority, it is less likely that the strategy will develop at a sufficiently senior policy level to be effective.

External advice and facilitation

- 6.9 It is also recommended that, particularly where the authority does not have an established play service and may therefore lack the relevant expertise, consideration be given to the involvement of external agencies



with specific knowledge, skills and experience in play policy and practice. A list of current play agencies is contained in Appendix E.

- 6.10 Representatives of children and young people's organisations and bodies, such as the United Kingdom Youth Parliament, youth councils, school councils, peer mentors etc, should also be involved.

Agreeing the principles

- 6.11 An effective, value-led strategy first requires a clear and coherent policy framework based on an agreed set of principles and understandings. These should be set out in a Play Policy Statement based on agreed definitions of play, its value for the children and young people within the borough, and a clear vision and purpose for the strategy. The formulation of this statement should consider certain key issues such as: understandings about play's role in child development; the importance of consulting and engaging children and young people; risk and safety; inclusion of all children and young people; and children and young people's use of shared public space.
- 6.12 The necessary diversity of the steering group means that arriving at common understandings, shared values and joint objectives will not necessarily be easy. A literature review is recommended and, while the range of publications that could inform such a process is potentially vast, there are some key texts quoted throughout this document, with suggested further reading in Appendix B.
- 6.13 It is recommended that the literature review be supplemented by some play policy workshops, which could be led by the lead officer or an external facilitator. The purpose should be to arrive at a shared understanding of play at an early stage in the process and so avoid wasted effort later. The literature review might inform the development of a 'key issues' paper, which would provide the basis for discussion in the policy workshops. The purpose is to create shared ownership of the policy proposals that will emerge, based on common understanding about children's play and its role for the borough's children.
- 6.14 During this stage of the process, there should be an inclusive consultation with the community reflecting local diversity – including children and young people and parents/carers – in order to establish their view of what the broad aims of the strategy should be. The later, more detailed consultation will be more about finding out what local children and their families want for their area.



- 6.15 Once the principles and broad aims are agreed, a Play Policy Statement should state clearly what these are and what they are based on. The Audit Commission has produced a model statement of principles in support of its Best Value Performance Indicator for local Play Policies and Strategies (BVPI 115) and this is reproduced in full (see box below). During the pilot project to test this guidance, Tower Hamlets and Sutton found this model useful in developing their play policy statements.

Model statement of principles for a play strategy

The Audit Commission includes this model statement as a supplement to its Best Value Performance Indicator for developing local play strategies (reproduced in full in Appendix A):

The Authority recognises the significance and value of play and the poverty of play opportunities in the general environment. It is committed to ensuring that all children have access to rich, stimulating environments, both in and out of doors, free from unacceptable risks, thereby offering them the opportunity to explore through their freely chosen play, both themselves and the world. The policy is based on the understanding that every child needs opportunities to play both on their own and, crucially, with others.

The Authority is committed to ensuring that environments, services and provision for play are attractive, welcoming and accessible to every child irrespective of age, gender, background or origin, or of individual capacities and abilities.

The Authority will work towards increasing play opportunities for and eliminating barriers to the take-up of play provision by disabled children and children with specific cultural needs. This will take the form of developing increased inclusive provision or, if necessary, separate provision, recognising that separate provision may sometimes be a valuable staging post for particularly vulnerable children. Use of specialist services should only be at the choice of the child or their advocate and all mainstream services must be welcoming and accessible to all children.

The Authority recognises that:

- children play in a of variety public spaces as well as in dedicated provision
- play environments should provide safe, stimulating play opportunities that place children at the centre of the play process
- children need to encounter and learn to manage an acceptable level of risk in their play
- children's views should be sought and listened to

- children should have access to the widest possible range of play experiences and play environments, both indoors and outside.

Judgements about quality in provision will be based on the degree to which children are provided with opportunities to experience directly:

- **the natural elements** – earth, air, fire and water
- **fabricated and natural materials and tools** – consumables, ‘loose parts’
- **challenge** – in the physical environment, in the social context and in private
- **free movement** – running, jumping, climbing, rolling, balancing
- **emotions** – both painful and pleasurable, the chance to validate a range of feelings
- **a variety of stimulation to the senses** – hearing, taste, smell, touch, sight
- **play with identity** – drama, dressing up, role plays, masks, face painting
- **varied social interactions** – freely chosen across the age, ability, gender, ethnic and cultural barriers, co-operating, resolving conflict, chatting, negotiating, sharing
- **change** – building/demolishing, transforming environments, the effect of the seasons and weather, growth and decay, predicting and planning, interesting physical environments – plantings, varied levels, enclosed/open spaces, mounds, steps, walls, shelters, surfaces, platforms, seating, privacy, vistas, flexibility.

Audit Commission (BVPI 115)

- 6.16 Early in this preparatory stage should be an assessment of the resources and skills that will be required to complete the remaining stages of the strategy’s preparation. These should be identified and secured before proceeding to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Review

- 6.17 There are some key questions to begin the process of reviewing current play provision in the borough, which should then be placed within the national, regional and local policy context. These questions might include:
- Which services within the local authority deliver play opportunities?
 - Which other organisations deliver provision?
 - What relationships exist between different providers?

- Who is involved in the planning and development of play provision in the borough?
- What written plans and policies are there?
- What do these documents cover and how are they implemented?
- How does play provision fit into other local authority priorities and initiatives?
- Are there processes for mediating between children's play needs and the needs of others?

6.18 Apart from assessing the use of space, the Play Strategy Group will also want to consider questions about resources. These might include:

- How much is spent on play provision?
- What is the spending per child or resident?
- How is this spending allocation between different provisions?
- Are Section 106 agreements used to provide/improve play provision?
- Are other funding streams available for play provision?

6.19 The play strategy will need to take account of a range of national, regional and local policies and initiatives across the full range of relevant areas. This is an important stage; ensuring that there is a strategic fit with regional and national strategies and opportunities but based always on the understanding and policy commitments established at Stage 1. In drafting the strategy, the group should seek to make the appropriate links and demonstrate how it helps the borough to meet corporate objectives within this wider context. Some of the key current policy areas to be considered are set out in Part I, Chapter 4.

Stage 3: Identifying, mapping and auditing current provision

6.20 This part of the process will need to be methodical and systematic in order to arrive at a sound understanding of the extent, the quality and the accessibility of existing play spaces and play opportunities. The following steps are offered as guidelines.

- 1 Desktop study and identification of children's play space
- 2 Develop a play space typology
- 3 Audit of existing provision:
 - assessment of the quantity of play spaces
 - qualitative assessment of play spaces
 - assessment of the social and physical accessibility of play spaces

Desktop study

6.21 In deciding what play spaces to include in the audit, consideration should be given to the range of spaces within the agreed scope of the strategy.



As a minimum, audits should assess areas where play is intended to be at least one of the functions of the space.

Dedicated play spaces

- 6.22 These will be where play is identified as one of the prime functions. These include playgrounds, playing fields, skate parks and other recreation areas. Dedicated play spaces can be publicly owned and open to public access. Many private play spaces are outside the influence of local authorities, such as play areas in shopping centres and private gardens. Dedicated play spaces can be supervised – such as adventure playgrounds and play clubs – or unsupervised areas. They may include play equipment and facilities, such as playgrounds, skateboard parks, basketball hoops and teenage shelters. Alternatively they may be informal non-equipped areas, such as landscaped areas and playing fields that can be used for a variety of recreational activities, including children's play.

Adventure playgrounds

- 6.23 Because of the added human and material resources they afford, supervised play facilities – especially those with substantial open spaces like adventure playgrounds – often provide opportunities for children to experience more challenging, exciting and creative activities than are otherwise available. The Best Play objectives are most achievable through this type of provision.

- 6.24 Adventure playgrounds typically include indoor play facilities and options as well as the characteristic and perennially popular rope-swings, aerial runways and elaborate climbing structures. They offer to children a level of physically challenging play, and a range of other activities – from making fires and building dens to cooking and arts and crafts – within a safe environment and where their choice is paramount. They can offer extremely positive play opportunities to disabled children and young people. This is enabled through the presence of trained playworkers who also provide positive adult interaction and role models. Estimates suggest that the number of adventure playgrounds in London has reduced from around 150 to just 80 during the past 15 to 20 years.³⁸

Non-dedicated play spaces

- 6.25 The general public realm – streets, estates and open space – especially in residential neighbourhoods, is probably the most commonly accessed environment for children's play and yet rarely designed for it. Children have always played in the street where they live more than anywhere else. Even children with back gardens will often prefer it, as it offers opportunities to meet friends while still being close to home. As discussed earlier, streets have become less and less safe owing to the increase in





volume and speed of traffic. Environmental traffic management and the rethinking of street design should be considered with a view to children's neighbourhood play needs. One solution, which embraces all these issues, is the Home Zones concept.

'Neighbourhoods should be recognisably designed, maintained and managed in children's interests and should include the principles contained in the Department of Transport's Home Zone programme.'

The Mayor's Children and Young People's Strategy, 2004

Home Zones

- 6.26 A Home Zone is a street, or group of streets, where people and vehicles share space safely and on equal terms. They are part of the Mayor's policy to create more child-friendly neighbourhoods and to generally improve the quality of life for London's communities. They can include traffic calming measures, reconfiguring the road, creative parking, and the installation of benches, planting, play and informal sports areas. Ideally, they are designed – according to local need and with active community participation – to encourage people of all ages to use and enjoy the public space in their immediate environment. Home Zones are attracting funding from a range of environmental and regeneration budgets. As well as the Mayor's Children and Young People's Strategy, Home Zones are also part of Transport for London's Streets for People programme. Well-designed Home Zones, developed with the participation of children and young people and their families as well as the wider community, can be a major part of the solution to creating play-friendly neighbourhoods. There are examples of Home Zones in the boroughs of Ealing, Camden and Tower Hamlets, among others. More information can be found at www.homezones.org or from London Play at www.londonplay.org.uk.
- 6.27 It is advisable, where possible, to include a wider appraisal of the public realm from a children's play perspective as part of the play strategy, and for these findings and considerations to be integral to wider discussions informing policy and strategy affecting the planning of spatial development. The borough Unitary Development Plan is one key document that might be used to inform this process.
- 6.28 In addition to information contained within council departments, other organisations may have information on play spaces within the borough that can be used in the strategy. It is important to maximise existing information to avoid duplication. For example the GLA Open Space and Habitat Survey of Greater London, as outlined in the OSS Guide, will have such information, although only on sites larger than 0.25ha.

- 6.29 Some open space will not be considered appropriate and may be dangerous, such as building sites and railway lines, and where these are being used by children, particular care should be given to developing or improving safer alternatives.
- 6.30 Some areas are deemed unsuitable for play by sections of the adult community because of potential or actual conflict with other activities in the area. These can often be made more available for children by reducing tensions. Education, consultation and mediation – leading to improved understanding between children and young people and adults – can be part of the strategy’s development and implementation.

Example: Appraising play in the public realm

The London Borough of Camden’s Play Service mapped the use of the public realm for play through the use of a pro-forma observational survey. It recorded by area, age and ethnicity the type of environments where children and young people were playing, the type of activity and the level of adult supervision. The categories of location were:

- library
- park/square
- street
- doorstep
- playground
- open space – grassed
- open space – non-grassed
- shopping area
- sports pitch/area
- train station
- other.

Where do Children Play in Camden? LB Camden, 2003

- 6.31 Pooling knowledge and ideas from a range of local authority departments will help to identify types of space to include in the audit. Engagement with external play practitioners and with local play providers would also help in this process. External organisations with data on children’s play spaces might include:
- London Play
 - children’s funds
 - local play associations
 - Kidsactive
 - Barnardo’s
 - the Children’s Society
 - Greater London Authority

- Groundwork
- London Parks and Green Spaces Forum
- housing associations.

Borough departments that may have data on children's play space include the Play and Youth Services, the Education Department, the Children's Information Service, the Parks, Planning and Housing Departments and Community Services.



Using geographical information systems (GIS)

- 6.32 GIS (the generic term for computer-based mapping and data assessment tools increasingly used by local authorities) can be a valuable tool for the preparation, monitoring and review of the play strategy and is recommended as the best way to record, analyse and maintain information throughout the process. Centralised data is also available from Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL) at www.wildlondon.org.uk.
- 6.33 GIS helps to identify areas of deficiency, measure catchment areas and relate the distribution of play spaces to socio-economic and demographic characteristics, ie areas with a high number of children and areas with potentially greater needs. Crucially it can be used to identify real travel distances and likely barriers to accessibility, such as busy roads.
- 6.34 Mapping the data collected in the audit on GIS makes it much easier to monitor changes in play provision and add these to the database, making long-term planning and monitoring easier. Some authorities use a GIS database, or database system linked to GIS, as a more sophisticated tool to assist in the maintenance of play space (eg London Borough of Bexley). Maintenance tasks and requirements can be included in the database as part of day-to-day management. The OSS Guide sets out some minimum criteria for standard collection. Boroughs may wish to use this in order to facilitate benchmarking and sharing of information.

Developing a play space typology

- 6.35 Typologies of play space should be developed by individual boroughs to reflect their local characteristics and facilities, and how local children perceive their environment. Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG 17) sets out a typology of open space. Play space is included, described as play areas, skateboard parks, outdoor basketball hoops and other, more informal areas.
- 6.36 Within housing estates and new developments, provision should be made for young children to play safely and for older children and teenagers,

including kickabout areas. Estates should be designed so that children can walk and cycle freely and safely.

- 6.37 The decision to describe a playground by any particular category will inevitably have a degree of subjectivity. The following two-tier typology is suggested as a starting point from which boroughs can develop individual classifications according to local conditions. The first tier identifies the type of space, the second the type of facility. The descriptions relate to purpose, rather than rigid physical attributes, such as the number of items of equipment or the amount of space.

Note that hierarchies and typologies do not include streets, estates or other built-up public space. The wider appraisal of the public realm referred to in paragraph 2.4 should supplement these descriptors.

Tier 1 – Description of location

- 6.38 For the purposes of an audit, the spaces where children play will be detailed and a proportion of these will not be playgrounds as such. It is therefore suggested that the following be used as a first tier; they may or may not contain playgrounds.
- Playground – The primary purpose of the space is that of a playground and it will have some equipment, or design, that clearly indicates this to be the case.
 - Open space (small) – This will be informal open space, usually in close proximity to housing and smaller in size than a quarter of an acre (one quarter of a football pitch).
 - Open space (larger) – This will be informal green space, usually in close proximity to housing and of a more substantial size.
 - Playing field – A large area, mainly of flat grass, that either has, or is intended to have, sports pitches on it.
 - Local park – A park within an area of housing, which is essentially for the use of local people. It would not generally attract people from other areas. Local children probably attend unaccompanied.
 - Destination park – This would be a major town park, or country park, that is primarily used by people as a special visit location. The majority will arrive by car, public transport or cycle; it may or may not have housing nearby. The majority of children attending will be accompanied.
 - Ball games area – A flat area, usually surfaced, which has one or a combination of basketball net, goal etc. Its primary purpose is for informal use.
 - Other – Not covered by any of the above.



Tier 2 – Playground classification

6.39 The second tier will classify the playground situated at the location. In calculating the number of items of equipment, a multi-play should be calculated by the number of major elements contained, eg slide, clatter bridge, fireman's pole = three.

- Space – There is no specific equipment or design for children's play.
- Doorstep/toddler – This is designed for small children and is very close to housing. It may or may not have one or two items of equipment (this approximates to a 'LAP' in the National Playing Fields Association's Six Acre Standard descriptions – see page 51).
- Small equipped – This has a few play items (three to five) generally for younger children (this approximates to a 'LEAP' in the Six Acre Standard but with a smaller amount of equipment). It is near to housing.
- Large equipped – A reasonable variety of play items (four to eight) generally for children up to the ages of ten or 11 (this also approximates to a 'LEAP'). It is near to housing.
- Neighbourhood – A good variety of play items for children of all ages (including young teenagers). It will probably have ball games or skateboard areas, or spaces that encourage activities for this older age group (this approximates to a 'NEAP'). It serves an area of housing.
- Attraction – The purpose of this area is primarily to serve family, or similar groups, as a visit location; visitors will exceed the number of people reaching the playground on foot. The amount of equipment will usually be substantial. Above a dozen items it should be called 'large'; between eight and twelve items it is 'medium' and below this it is 'small'. Children are unlikely to attend unaccompanied.
- Adventure playground – A playground with playworkers offering a range of challenging play opportunities and co-creative environments; these may include using tools, lighting fires, planting gardens, digging etc. It will have substantial outdoor space for these activities and will have indoor space for arts and craft activities.
- Play centre/after-school club – This has playworkers and indoor space for a range of play, arts and crafts activities. Outdoor space may sometimes be limited.
- Wheeled sports area – An area for use with skateboards, bikes etc. It will have mounds and/or ramps.
- Other – Not covered by any of the above.



Audit of existing provision

- 6.40 In order to make an assessment of play spaces, it will be necessary to undertake site visits, unless sufficient up-to-date information is available from existing studies. Assessments of play space may have been included in surveys as part of an OSS, or as a review by recreation or housing departments.
- 6.41 If site visits are done, a standard form is invaluable in ensuring that a consistent approach is used to assess all the sites that are visited. A recommended approach is to organise the assessment under broad headings.

*Issues to address in the audit*

- 6.42 The audit needs to provide the data necessary to answer a range of questions on the quantity, quality and accessibility of play spaces for children. It is therefore important to consider what questions need to be answered before undertaking any major data collection exercise, particularly site audits. The questions asked through the audit will be informed by the aims and objectives set for the study.

i. Quantity

- 6.43 Assessing the quantity of play space can include the total provision as well as amounts of different types of play space. There are a number of measures of the quantity of open space. This would be descriptive and may relate to the National Playing Fields Association's (NPFA) descriptions in its Six Acre Standard (see paragraph 6.77). It should also assess functionality. For example, a large area of playing fields may have a proportion near housing, which is used for play. Comments could be made about its suitability for purpose, for example its size may not be ideal for family homes within a reasonable catchment. Other facilities available at larger parks, such as accessible toilets, cafés, sports facilities etc, should also be briefly detailed, including:
- total area and area of different types of provision based on typology (ref to PPG 17 open space guidance – recorded and mapped)
 - distribution – travel distance to play provision
 - area per population/area per child population.
- 6.44 Factors restricting access, such as roads, railways, watercourses, isolated or secluded routes and social divisions associated with location, all need to be included in assessments of catchment areas. Barriers such as the main road network and railways should overlay the catchment areas of the publicly accessible facilities. Where the catchment areas cross the barriers, the catchment area should end. This will reduce the catchment area and indicate where a deficiency area exists. This process can be refined for

different types of provision. In addition, action plans can seek to overcome these barriers through the creation of child-friendly traffic calming, crossings and signage, or by identifying opportunities for new facilities that serve areas without the need to cross significant barriers.

GLA public open space hierarchy

Type	Approximate size	Indicative catchment area	Indicative catchment area (refined to take into account barriers to access)
Regional	Over 400ha	8km	
Metropolitan	60–400ha	3.2km	
District	20–60ha	1.2km	
Local parks	2–20ha	400m	280m
Small local parks	0.4–2ha	400m	280m
Pocket parks	Less than 0.4ha	400m	280m
Linear open spaces	Variable	Where feasible	

ii. Quality (including equality and inclusiveness)

‘We must look to reclaim for children and young people a part of their childhood that is in real danger of being lost. Too many play facilities are run-down, in the wrong place, or simply too dull to keep children’s interest.’
Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, 2002

- 6.45 A key aim of the play strategy should be the identification and recognition of what constitutes good play opportunities and provision. These features should be developed into appropriate benchmarks against which progress should be monitored. A key measure is popularity with, and use by, the fullest range of children and young people in a particular geographical location, although other subjective measures should also be developed based on the principle aims of the strategy.
- 6.46 A range of different play experiences enables children to engage in different types of play, as set out in Appendix D. It is not necessary that every type of play experience is provided in a single place, but important that children have access to this range in their local area, in a number of different play spaces.

- 6.47 Where a quality assurance system is already in place, the latest assessment or internal evaluation reports will provide valuable information about the need for improvements in supervised provision. More information about quality assurance appears on page 62.
- 6.48 It is important to assess the types of play engendered by different play spaces, and also to consider the Best Play objectives. This then needs to be viewed across a wider area to look at overall play opportunities. The range of types of play space in parts of the borough, based on the defined typology, will help to assess the range of play opportunities available to local children.
- 6.49 Fitness for use (related to, but not dependent upon, standard compliance) should also be assessed, based on the overall condition of the equipment and its life expectancy. This may be covered in an annual inspection already carried out, or an audit may additionally include these elements. Data collected should inform existing asset management plans.



iii. Accessibility

- 6.50 Good quality play spaces only provide a quality play opportunity if they are inclusive and accessible. Physical and social barriers need to be carefully considered and inclusive design principles established from the outset. This section should assess whether there are any significant barriers to access, such as busy roads, railway lines and travel distances, as well as access to sites for the purposes of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). Access audits can be useful. Accessibility to different types of transport – accessible bus routes, space for car and minibus parking – is important for children with mobility impairments, as is the design of entrance gates and paths, which should all have wheelchair access from the road.
- 6.51 Distance is a key barrier to children's play. Benchmarks are given in the GLA Open Space Hierarchy and the NPFA standards. These can be useful rules of thumb – and can help to identify deficiencies – but it is important to consider what the particular barriers are to children accessing even those areas that are within the recommended distance. These include:
- roads where speeds are in excess of 20mph³⁹
 - railways
 - watercourses
 - isolated or secluded routes
 - social divisions associated with/by location.



‘Sensible health and safety is about managing risks, not eliminating them all. HSE is not in the business of stamping out simple pleasures wherever they appear and at whatever cost. We recognise the benefits to children’s development of play, which necessarily involves some risk, and this shouldn’t be sacrificed in the pursuit of the unachievable goal of absolute safety.’

Health and Safety Executive, 2005

Risk and safety

- 6.52 The issue of risk and safety in play provision is a crucial one to get right, if the play strategy is to be effective. What concerns children about their play space and public space generally is often quite different from the concerns of those in authority. Because of insurance issues and concerns about liability, those in charge of public parks are increasingly wary of accidental injuries caused by equipment. On the other hand, playgrounds that are too safe become underused and an inefficient use of resources. This tension in expectations needs to be addressed. Over-safe playgrounds can, paradoxically, create more danger for children by causing them to look for their fun elsewhere. Conversely, a playground equipped with the best apparatus can be similarly underused, or vandalised, if it is not under some kind of supervision.
- 6.53 The Play Safety Forum, a national body with government funding, was set up to consider this issue, and its position statement is recommended for adoption as part of the play policy framework (see box on page 41).
- 6.54 CABE Space believes that many risk and safety issues can be addressed through the careful consideration of design quality, the selection of materials and approaches to maintenance.⁴⁰
- 6.55 Research with children and young people in London⁴¹ shows that bullying and traffic are children’s main concerns, rather than the physical dangers of play itself. To be enjoyable, play areas should be challenging and ‘fun’. ‘Safe’ to them would mean meeting friends, having opportunities to stretch themselves physically, while being free from harassment. This section should assess whether children are likely to feel secure at a play area because of such factors as good sightlines from their homes, the presence of passers-by, casual supervision from park staff or actual supervision from park rangers or playworkers. These factors can be highly significant to the degree of use. They can also be used to identify why a particular play facility may be particularly vulnerable to vandalism or inappropriate activities.

Risk and safety in play

The Play Safety Forum offers this perspective:

‘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, fewer than two per cent involve playground equipment. Participation in sports like soccer, widely acknowledged as ‘good’ for a child’s development, involve 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, more than 100 child pedestrian fatalities a year and more than 500 child fatalities from accidents overall.

Summary position statement

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 risks of death or serious injury.’

Extracted from the position statement of the Play Safety Forum, 2002

- 6.56 This issue is even more acute for many disabled children – who are often discriminated against on misguided ‘health and safety’ grounds – but who may have an even greater need than other children to experience risk and challenge, since they are so often denied the freedom of choice enjoyed by their non-disabled peers. The experience of adventure playgrounds, like those provided by *Kidsactive*, suggests that disabled children can – and need to – enjoy play opportunities that are robust, challenging and adventurous. A recent guide to accessibility and inclusion, published by the NPFA, cogently makes this point:



‘We strongly recommend that a “can do” approach is taken in all play situations and that, while regard to health and safety must always be taken, it should only be used reasonably and not as a knee-jerk reaction to discriminate against disabled children. We recommend that those with health and safety responsibilities consider the danger to the health and well-being of disabled children if they are discriminated against by over-cautious application of recommendations and guidance.’

Rob Wheway and Alison John, *Can Play Will Play*, National Playing Fields Association, 2004

- 6.57 Overcoming exclusion will require specific strategies for inclusion and the commitment of playworkers and managers working together with those who are responsible for the play spaces. The aim should be to facilitate informal, unsupervised play within neighbourhoods, rather than to rely solely on a strategy of supervised facilities.
- 6.58 The DDA requires service providers to include disabled people and, from October 2004, to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to the physical features of their premises to overcome barriers to access. In 2003, the ODPM published guidance⁴² to accessible play provision, noting that ‘the key recommendation of the guide is that developers should concentrate on making the environment fit the child. There is no need to focus on impairment-specific issues – rather identify the obstacles to play for any child who might wish to access the play space and think about ways to circumvent them’.

‘Enabling disabled children to access play spaces helps them and their families build relationships and neighbourhood networks that can bind communities and promote social inclusion.’

Developing Accessible Play: A Good Practice Guide, ODPM, 2003

- 6.59 Other recommended guidance on providing for the widest range of children and their needs is available from the following:
- *Kidsactive*, whose guide, *All of Us*, sets out good practice for playworkers and childcare staff and an inclusion framework for local authorities
 - the NPFA, whose *Can Play Will Play*⁴³ offers advice on accessibility for existing playgrounds within the social model of disability.

‘Enabling all children to play, and to play together, is about a benefit to the whole community. It is not about overcoming legal hurdles or making expensive provision for a small section of the community. If any child is prevented from playing then it diminishes the play experience of all.’

Whewey & John, *Can Play Will Play*, National Playing Fields Association, 2004

Stage 4: Consultation – engaging children and young people

‘Proposals must be prepared in partnership with other local agencies, children and young people and local communities...’

Play Review, 2004

- 6.60 Engaging with and consulting children and young people as fully as it is possible to do well is an important aspect of the whole process: at least as important as the audit of provision. It is from determining the young community’s needs and aspirations for their free time, and assessing this against current provision and how it is used, that the specific objectives for the play strategy should emerge. A policy decision about the nature and extent of children’s participation in the process, together with an allocation of the appropriate time and resources should have been made at the outset.
- 6.61 Children’s play tends to be very local, particularly for younger children. They have ‘expert’ knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of their local area for play. An approach that cumulatively builds on local consultations, rather than trying to obtain a strategic view from a representative group, is likely to give greater insights and will have the added advantage of engaging those children with their local facilities.
- 6.62 There should have been consultation with the community, including children and young people, during Stage 2. This stage is much more about finding out what local children and their families want for their area, although local consultations can also inform the wider strategy.
- 6.63 Careful planning is needed to engage children and young people, their parents and carers in a meaningful way that both empowers them and helps the borough to respond effectively to their needs, and to manage and fulfil their expectations. Employing special workers or engaging consultants with the relevant skills and experience is essential to ensure best value. They should then be provided with the time and the resources to do the job properly.
- 6.64 Very young children should not be excluded but the relevant methods and skills deployed to give them and their parents and carers a voice.



‘The most important outcome from undertaking consultation with children was the sense of ownership that it gave them. This ultimately increased the number of children that actually used the play opportunity once their views had been accounted for and acted upon.’

Borough Officer, London Borough of Ealing

Example: Playing for Real in Devon

In Devon, several play areas have been developed using the Playing for Real process, inspired by the Planning for Real method which uses scale models as the basis for discussion.

At the request of the local community, a playworker visits the site with a group of local children. The children are asked what they like and dislike, how they access it, plus their play preferences. They then go to an indoor venue where there is a short discussion and a viewing of display materials. Questionnaires are completed with assistance. The practical session begins with a map of the play site on either cloth, sand or clean compost. The children then create models from various materials to show the features and equipment they would most like to see. Finally the model is discussed and a consensus reached on the most important aspects. This is used as the basis of a report to the planning authority, which will typically incorporate at least some of the ideas presented.

Playing for Real draws adults and children together to plan, and uncovers local solutions. It adds credibility to the planning group and, because it is fun, helps to break down barriers.

Adapted from *More than Swings and Roundabouts*,
Children’s Play Council, 2002

Consultation methods

- 6.65 Methods of consultation with children and young people vary considerably and may include one-to-one or group interviews, questionnaires, conferences, arts and drama workshops, youth councils and forums, focus groups, postal surveys and Playing for Real sessions (see box above). Games can be devised to facilitate engagement. For example, the Project for Public Spaces has created the *Place Evaluation Game*, which can be adapted for play space evaluation.⁴⁴ *Making Connections* by Pippa Murray offers recommendations for enabling young disabled people’s play and leisure needs to be explored.
- 6.66 Observational surveys (such as ‘Places for Play’ by *PlayLink*) can also give insights into how and where children actually play and where they do not. When consulting children, a deliberate approach should be taken to

involve those who do not play outdoors, or who do not use particular facilities. It may well be that they have the greatest need. Tower Hamlets and Sutton both recognised the need to promote and value play in the home to families and communities, and to consider the play needs of children in hospitals and closed institutions.

Example: Young consultants in Lambeth

In 2000, the Article 31 Children's Consultancy Scheme, working for LB Lambeth with funding from the Health Action Zone, recruited a team of 16 young consultants, aged seven to 13, to review play provision in the borough and to inform the development of the council's Play Policy. The team were trained in peer consultation methods and conducted a survey of 1,000 children and young people. They visited play facilities in the borough and, for comparison, in neighbouring boroughs. They analysed their findings and produced a report to the council. Their recommendations included ensuring shorter travelling distances to play spaces, better lighting, safer road access to play space, more variety, cleaner toilets and more indoor play space for bad weather days. The council incorporated many of the recommendations in its Play Policy, adopted in 2001.

The Article 31 Children's Consultancy Scheme in Lambeth,
PLAY-TRAIN, 2000

- 6.67 Consultation exercises can broadly be used in two different ways: first, as a basic means of gathering views and information in order to inform broad decision-making about provision throughout the borough; second, as a means of influencing decisions to be made of a more site specific or financial nature, such as for an actual play area. For the wider issues informing the play strategy, the former is appropriate, whereas the latter approach may be more relevant for the action plan.
- 6.68 An understanding is also needed of children's timescales and expectations, which need to be considerably shorter than for adults. If expectations are raised for provision that cannot be delivered within a few months, disenchantment with the process is likely to set in. Once the views of children and young people have been received, they need to know that they will learn the outcome of the process and how they have influenced it. What has changed or will change as a result of their involvement? The methods and purpose of different types of consultation are set out below.

Method	Purpose
Children’s conferences	Opportunities for delegates to share ideas and projects and to develop future directions and initiatives. Multimedia and video conferencing present further opportunities
Surveys and consultation exercises	Obtain information and necessary feedback in developing child-aware services and structures
Access days; children’s days	For a specified time each year, programmes are organised whereby children are able to voice their concerns with leaders and officials in government at all levels
Youth councils/forums	Meetings of young people who come together, usually as a committee, to voice views about their social and physical environments
Websites, videos, audio-visual or other new media projects	Allow children to use sound, images and text to get their messages across in new, exciting and engaging ways
Focus groups	Where children come together, either with or without professionals to address particular issues

Adapted from *More than Swings and Roundabouts*, Children’s Play Council, 2002

Note Tick-box consultations should be avoided or used with discretion. Though ‘multiple choice’ or ‘yes/no’ questionnaires can be useful, they can also limit qualitative responses and introduce bias to the results. Children, eager to please, can be susceptible to giving responses that they have heard in the question. Open questions, discussion groups and playful planning exercises will give greater insights into what children really think.



Consultation with children

Consultation with children is vital if their true needs are to be considered. The following guidance may be helpful in formulating consultations.

- 1 Children should NOT be interviewed without the permission of their parent/carer or teacher.
- 2 It is important that the children realise that there are no 'right' answers. Consultations should be deliberately open (asking closed questions such as 'You do like swings don't you?' limits the answer both to equipment and to a specific item of equipment).
- 3 Asking children 'Where do you go?' or 'Where do you hang out after school or at weekends?' is likely to reveal a wider range of places than 'Where do you play?' to which the obvious answer is 'playground'. Favourite play places may not be designated play places.
- 4 'What things do you like doing?' will reveal a much wider range of activities than 'Which equipment do you play on?'.
- 5 Having identified locations and activities, asking how often will indicate whether they are regular play places or places that are only visited occasionally.
- 6 Asking why they go to those places will indicate whether the reason is proximity, friends, specific equipment etc.
- 7 Asking why children do not go to specific places in the area will indicate physical or social barriers to their attending.
- 8 Asking if they like what is at the play places in their neighbourhood will indicate the play value of what is on offer.
- 9 Inviting their suggestions for improvements, both for themselves and for children of other ages, will encourage them to use their expertise – they are after all the experts in children's play.
- 10 When consulting children it is important to select a wide cross-section by age, gender, culture, ethnicity, disability etc. It is as important to consult those who do not get out and play as those who do.
- 11 Meaningful consultation with young disabled people aimed at developing inclusive practice needs, itself, to be fully inclusive, which 'entails building respectful relationships with a grouping for whom respect is definitely not the norm' (Pippa Murray, *Making Connections*).
- 12 Consulting in this more open way does make analysis more difficult than simple tick-boxes. However, it will give a much truer picture of where children need their play opportunities to be located if they are to use them and what they think will give good play value.

Stage 5: Analysis and identification of objectives

Analysis of the audit

- 6.69 This stage is to assess the results of the Stage 3 audit of provision (supply-side), with the results of the Stage 4 consultation (demand-side). The analysis should be within the context of both the broad policy statement (Stage 1) and the review (Stage 2) in order that gaps and shortfalls in provision can be viewed strategically. This should enable priority objectives to emerge and form the basis of the strategy.
- 6.70 A list of suitable questions to use in analysing the audit, adapted from the Children's Play Council, are suggested below:

Questions for the play space audit

- Do all children and young people have easy access to play spaces appropriate to their age, needs, culture, interests and abilities?
- How well is existing space currently used by different groups of children and young people?
- What are the reasons for the ways in which the space is used?
- Where is existing provision in relation to children and to where they want it to be?
- How safe, easy and accessible are the routes between home, school and play spaces?
- How easily can children and young people travel independently to outdoor play spaces and other areas?
- In spaces used by other groups and other sections of the community, how is shared use managed and negotiated?
- What plans exist for the future development of land currently used by children and young people for play and recreation?

Adapted from More than Swings and Roundabouts – planning for outdoor play, Children's Play Council, 2002

Comparing supply and demand for children's play space

- 6.71 The questions above should provide key comparisons of the current provision against its usage and against the needs of the community, allowing gaps in provision to be identified:
- Where children and young people's outdoor play needs are currently being met, where they are not, and the implications of this.
 - Deficiencies in access for disabled children and other minorities.
 - What works within existing provision and what are the problems.
 - Where provision is staffed and supervised and where it is not.

6.72 Where there is a play service, or supervised provision offered from the voluntary sector (remember we are primarily concerned with free, open-access provision, not commercial or fee-charging services), an assessment of the extent and role of playworkers will be appropriate:

- How many community groups are involved (formal and informal)?
- How many paid and unpaid playworkers are there?
- How many have playwork qualifications and/or access to training?

Developing local standards and indicators

6.73 Standards for local play provision should be developed locally, with an emphasis on quality and accessibility as opposed to overly prescriptive measures of mere quantity. Government policy on recreational open spaces (PPG 17) recognises that it is important to modify standards to reflect local need, identifying that consultation on children's play needs and consideration of the socio-economic context of an area will enable boroughs to adapt measures accordingly. In some cases, it may be appropriate to adopt different thresholds for different sub-areas of a borough to reflect the needs of different neighbourhoods.

6.74 This guide is not prescriptive as to quantity of space. It is recommended that the vision and aims contained in the Play Policy should inform the strategy and therefore the standard of provision for each community. This in turn should be informed by local need and aspirations, with children and young people's own views being paramount. The guiding principle should be that 'all children and young people should be able to play within their local neighbourhoods and have safe and attractive play spaces within walking distance of their homes' (The Mayor's Children and Young People's Strategy, 2004).

6.75 It is anticipated that the development of regional standards for play (see paragraph 1.6) will assist the benchmarking of local provision and development of local action plans for improvement. In the meantime a number of widely used measures in planning and play are included for indicative purposes (paragraphs 6.76–6.78). Some of these have been used as minimum standards, or as benchmarks against which progress can be evaluated. They have also been used for different sub-areas to be evaluated against each other or for external comparisons to be made against other boroughs. They are, however, subject to a considerable degree of interpretation and very often what is found on the ground cannot fit precisely into a set framework. As recommended above, they should therefore be used for indicative purposes, rather than specifications to be rigidly adhered to, or aimed for. They are detailed below for information.





Best Value Performance Indicators

6.76 A number of Best Value Performance Indicators other than the one relating to the overall play strategy (see page 67) relate to provision of play space. Again, these indicators can provide useful benchmarks for assessing the level of play space provision and measuring how this changes over time, although it should be noted that they do not serve as a measure of quality of provision. The Best Value indicators most relevant to the provision of play space are summarised below.

Best Value Performance Indicators relating to play

PI Ref.	Title	Type of PI	Description	Technical description	Source
LIB037	Number of playgrounds and play areas provided by the council per 1,000 children under 12	Service delivery outcome	Every child should have equal access to play opportunities. Looks at the level of provision of playgrounds	A ‘playground’ is any area formally designated by the council for children’s play and open to the public	Last set as an ACPI AC-I2 for 2000/01
LIB038	Number of sports pitches available to the public per 1,000 head of population	Strategic objective	To assess the level of provision of publicly available sports pitches	Pitches available for team sports. A pitch should only be counted once regardless of how many sports it can accommodate	Last set as a statutory PI I3 for 1999/2000
LIB039	Area of parks and green spaces per 1,000 head of population	Strategic objective	To provide an indication of the extent of green space available to the public for recreational purposes	Hectares of publicly accessible green spaces per 1,000 population	Currently being piloted as a quality of life indicator

The Six Acre Standard

6.77 The NPFA *Six Acre Standard*⁴⁵ is a widely used standard for provisions of open space. It is, however, based on children’s travelling distances as researched in 1970. As children’s ranges have reduced dramatically since this time, its recommendations should be treated with some caution.

Recent experience using GIS has shown that the radial distance can be misleading and the walking distance is a truer reflection of its usefulness from a child's point of view.

- 6.78 It sets a minimum standard for outdoor playing space of 2.4ha (6 acres) for 1,000 people. This comprises:
- 1.6ha (4 acres) (per 1,000 population) for outdoor sport
 - 0.8ha (2 acres) (per 1,000 population) for children's play.

The Six Acre Standard

The National Playing Fields Association's recommended minimum levels of provision for different types of facility:

Facility	Time	Walking distance	Radial distance	Minimum size	Nearest dwelling	Characteristics
LAP Local Area for Play	1 min	100m	60m	100m ²	5m from activity zone	Small, low-key games area
LEAP Local Equipped Area for Play	5 min	400m	240m	400m ²	10m from activity zone	Five types of equipment, small games area
NEAP Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play	15 min	1,000m	600m	1,000m ²	30m from activity zone	Eight types of equipment, opportunities for ball games or wheeled activities

- 6.79 Deficiencies in the quality of provision should be identified. This can be assessed against meeting whichever qualitative standard the borough adopts or establishes, always aiming that children and young people with a wide range of needs and abilities will find any new developments both attractive and accessible. A list of improvements that are required to meet the standard could then be compiled for each site, feeding into the production of management and action plans.

Prioritising

- 6.80 Consideration should be given to how investment in play spaces is to be prioritised. A simple scoring system can be adopted relating to a number of standard categories, including socio-economic characteristics. The contextual review (Stage 2), including data relating to indicators of deficiency, is a valuable source of information for prioritising, particularly

in identifying opportunities to improve the quality of existing play space through better management, maintenance and use of resources.

Example: Prioritising investment

The London Borough of Ealing has adopted a Priority Matrix for Open Spaces that enables investment to be prioritised on the basis of a number of standard categories. Each park is assessed in relation to:

- deficiency in play provision
- park deficiency as defined in UDP
- nature conservation deficiency
- parks audit score
- playground audit score
- deprived area in line with Multiple Deprivation Indicators
- funding available to undertake improvements
- whether it is a key park
- community involvement/usage
- potential sports centre of excellence.

Each category is scored: 3 Important, 2 Medium, 1 Less important. Each category is also given a weighting so that an area of deficiency in park provision is highly significant and weighted 5, whereas access to nature conservation has been weighted as 2. The overall assessment is presented in the form of a spreadsheet.

This system could be adapted for the play strategy.

Stage 6: Preparation of the strategy and action plan

Strategy

- 6.81 The draft strategy should bring together the work done in each stage of the process and set out the framework for the future planning and management of open spaces in the borough. The document should, first, give a statement of the broad policy framework and understandings about play agreed at Stage 1. It should briefly set the context (national, local and regional) within which the strategy is being written. It should give key findings from the audit and identify significant issues that have arisen from the audit and the consultations. A summary of the main action points should be available in a child-friendly format and distributed through children and young people's information networks. A special point should be made of providing copies to those who participated in the consultation phase.

Suggested structure for the play strategy

- Broad statement of principles (vision and rationale)
- National and regional context
- Local context (including local needs)
- Results of audit of existing provision
- Summary of consultation
- Analysis and identification of priorities
- Development of policies and goals
- Links to other local and regional policies and strategies

Action plan

- 6.82 The draft strategy should include an action plan that shows how the opportunities for play will be maintained and improved. It should include a programme of annual review to enable effective measurement of targets achieved and to reflect changes in strategic priorities. In particular it should address the issues identified in Stage 5 and set targets that are achievable, as well as some that are more aspirational. The action plan should identify who would be responsible for meeting those targets, and within what timescale.
- 6.83 The plan should also indicate significant changes that are needed in the policy or management of play, both within the local authority and by other organisations. It should identify any funding applications that will need to be made. The plan will also identify the ways in which the strategy will be assessed, reviewed and modified in the light of changing circumstances. Annual reviews are recommended. The draft strategy and action plan should then be subject to consultation, both within the authority and with key stakeholders outside the authority.
- 6.84 The approach to the preparation of an action plan will relate to the best value review and preparation of Service Delivery Plans. It should, however, seek to:
- identify and prioritise a set of actions, initiatives, timescales and delivery agents in order to implement the policies and to achieve the goals
 - establish means of assessment, performance indicators and targets for these actions and initiatives, how these will be monitored and, if necessary, how they will be adjusted in the light of actual performance and changing circumstances
 - identify implementation plans, those who will be responsible and sources of funding.

A series of management plans should be prepared in respect of key provisions. These can take the form of individual site management plans, which reflect local needs and specific issues.

Consultation

- 6.85 The draft play strategy should be the subject of consultation with the stakeholders identified at Stage 2. This can take the form of requests for formal responses, questionnaires, public displays and focus group meetings. In order to ensure that consultation on issues relating to play is maintained, consideration could be given to the establishment of a permanent consultative network, or Play Forum.

Adoption

- 6.86 Once the consultation exercise is completed and any necessary amendments made, the borough should adopt the play strategy. The adoption of the strategy will provide the framework for the delivery of the identified aims and objectives. The strategy and the audit information should be made available as widely as possible, for example on the borough's website and in libraries.

Play forums

In many local authority areas where play strategies have been developed, the Play Strategy Group has formed a Play Forum to provide a borough-wide perspective on play issues. An annual meeting could be held to review progress on the play strategy and inform and set priorities for future action to improve and develop provision. This forum could also scrutinise the borough's achievements in meeting the objectives expressed in the strategy.

7 making the play strategy happen

Policies for play

- 7.1 The development plan should contain policies regarding the protection of play space, how to address deficiencies, the enhancement of existing provision and the creation of new open space. The emphasis should be on the achievement of improvements in the quantity and quality of play space, with clear policies relating to implementation. Local boroughs' urban designers should work in partnership with play professionals in implementing material changes.



Depending on the results of the earlier stages, policy themes could include:

- protection and enhancement of play space using appropriate designations
- improved access to and linkages between play space, other open space, residential streets and other routes used by children
- more and better recruitment and retention policies for playworkers, including training and development
- improving the quality and safety of existing provision and creating new play spaces
- promotion of inclusive provision for disabled children, children from minority ethnic communities, girls and young women and those at risk of social exclusion
- addressing deficiencies
- improved signage, marketing and communications
- adoption of quality assurance for supervised play provision
- the use of vacant land as temporary play space
- the use of Section 106 agreements to address deficiencies and improve the quality of play space.

- 7.2 Local Development Frameworks should identify how the need to protect and develop play space is met. Their Statements of Community Involvement should specify the role of the community play sector. Development plans should identify all open space in the borough that is to be protected, including play space. Consideration should be given to the identification of standards for play space in new developments.

Development briefs/frameworks/master plans

- 7.3 The preparation of development briefs or guidelines in respect of major development sites can provide an effective mechanism for securing new open space provision and improving the quality and facilities of existing open space. These measures should include play spaces, covering issues such as safety, accessible design, lighting and staffing. Refer to the OSS guide for more information.

External funding

- 7.4 The OSS will provide the detailed framework for supporting funding applications and implementing the action plan. There are a number of external sources of funding that are available for the creation and improvement of open space. It is more difficult to attract revenue funding than capital funding, often resulting in the deterioration of open spaces despite good initial investment.
- 7.5 Potential external funding sources for parks and green spaces developments are set out in *Claiming Your Share, a guide to external funding for parks and green space community groups*, published by Green Space (2004). This extremely helpful guide also sets out guidance for developing a fundraising strategy.
- 7.6 There may also be opportunities for the joint funding of initiatives with other agencies and organisations. Voluntary organisations and charitable trusts have an important role to play in open space provision and management and the various guides to charitable trusts published annually by the Directory of Social Change are useful sources of information.

Government funding

- 7.7 Many government initiatives are supported by dedicated funding that can also be used to develop outdoor play space. These include Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies and the Children's Fund.
- 7.8 The website www.governmentfunding.org.uk contains up-to-date information on funding from four key central government departments. It is an online portal to grants for the voluntary and community sector from:
- the Department for Education and Skills
 - the Department of Health
 - the Home Office
 - the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

It is possible to search the site for suitable grants and download application forms and guidelines. Users can also register to receive grant updates by email.

National Lottery

- 7.9 The National Lottery is currently the largest funder of voluntary and community activity and the Big Lottery Fund announced in spring 2005 a play programme for England worth £155 million, to be based broadly on the recommendations of the Play Review (2004). In 2004 it also launched the Young People's Fund, which may be a source of funding for some play and recreation projects. (www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)



- 7.10 New initiatives are being announced regularly and it will be essential to keep up to date with changes in funding opportunities, criteria for eligibility and potential partnerships. London Play's website, www.londonplay.org.uk, contains regularly updated funding information of particular relevance to the play sector in London.

Key recommendations of the Play Review, 2004

Getting Serious About Play, the report of a major national play review, chaired by Frank Dobson MP, sets out how best to invest the £200 million lottery fund pledged in 2001, for improving children's play opportunities. It recommends that:

- funding should be focused on areas and groups with the poorest access to good quality play opportunities, with a major emphasis on the inclusion of disabled children and young people
- long-term popularity with children and young people is the main test of success
- the main emphasis should be on projects with medium or small catchment areas. Access should be free
- play opportunities with some form of adult supervision or adult oversight are likely to prove more successful
- the local authority or a local partnership should be responsible for drawing up proposals for the use of the funds allocated to their area which add to existing provision and reflect the priorities set out above. Their proposals must be prepared in partnership with other local agencies, children and young people and local communities
- local agencies will be expected to fund the consultation and preparation of plans from their own resources. However, the distributor, government and local agencies should work together to ensure that all areas, especially the most deprived communities, have the necessary support to prepare sound, high-quality proposals and to implement them
- where possible, local proposals should try to maximise the impact of lottery funding by complementing and augmenting it with funds from other sources
- out-of-hours use of school grounds and buildings should be promoted, most especially when schools are being built or refurbished
- local authorities should take the opportunity provided by the programme to improve the planning and operation of play facilities across their area. They should designate a 'play champion' to carry out this task and to help ensure the success of the lottery funded projects.

Getting Serious About Play, a review of children's play,
Frank Dobson MP, Chair, 2004

Developers' agreements

- 7.11 Planning conditions, local area agreements and Section 106 'planning gain' agreements can be used to address identified quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in provision or where new development would increase the need for local provision. Agreements can secure both capital and revenue funding to provide for the future maintenance of open space. Boroughs should develop a broad strategy for the use and negotiation of Section 106 agreements. Again, refer to the OSS guide for more information.

Community and partnership working

- 7.12 The creation of partnerships and increased community involvement in the use and management of facilities can assist in project implementation. Supporting local community organisations may lead both to an increase in playwork schemes and a greater feeling of ownership of their children's play opportunities by local people.
- 7.13 Maximum use should be made of existing community resources, such as play associations, in the design, implementation, monitoring and operating phases of all forms of play development. Where there is no play association, community organisations with experience of consulting and working with children and young people should be involved wherever possible.

Options for the Play Strategy Action Plan

a Traffic calming and Home Zone schemes

These may reduce barriers to local provision and/or increase the distances children are allowed to travel unaccompanied. In this way, accessible provision can be increased without any actual increase in provision.

b Opening up sightlines

Judicious thinning and pruning of hedges or replacing fencing with see-through fencing may assist children to feel more secure in playgrounds and also to reduce vandalism and thereby improve usage.

c Increasing supervised provision

Where there is an under-provision of open play space and limited opportunities for creating it, priority might be given to developing supervised provision, such as adventure playgrounds and playschemes. These should be staffed by qualified playworkers.

d Resiting playgrounds

When playgrounds are refurbished, re-siting them so that they are nearer to housing, or changing the access points, so that travel distances are decreased, may widen catchment and improve usage.

e Inspection and maintenance

Reviewing procedures to ensure that adequate maintenance and replacement schedules are built into any improved or new provision can significantly improve efficiency and release resources for park ranger-type schemes, which can take a much more positive approach to promoting play.

f Play value assessments

These can be used to assess whether current provision gives value for money and improvements can be made to ensure opportunities for a wider age or ability range of children.

g Inclusion strategies

Inclusion strategies can be developed to ensure the fullest use of provision by the widest possible range of children and young people. *Kidsactive* has a range of resources, including literature, training courses and seminars on inclusive play.

h Involvement strategies

Maintaining and developing the level of involvement of children and young people in their own play space can be a vital factor in ensuring its sustainability. A strategy for this should be a key element of the play strategy.

i Mediation strategies

These can be used to reduce fears and conflict and ensure that children who are just ‘being children’ rather than ‘a nuisance’ are enabled to play within their own neighbourhood.

j Housing developments

Children only make limited use of back gardens for play. A greater provision of communal open space will therefore give more benefit for children’s play than back gardens.

k Poorly-used playgrounds

Where the location of a play facility means that it is poorly used and this is unlikely to change, permitting development on this site but replacing with the same, or better, in a more appropriate location, could be considered.

l Safe routes to school and play and spaces

Much children’s play occurs in transit and regular journeys can provide opportunities for physical and social activity if the routes are designed or modified with children’s play needs in mind. This measure can have the added benefit of reducing car use.

m Protecting and making better use of school grounds

Children need access to play space during the school day, especially at lunch-time. Schools can be encouraged to develop play polices (see paragraph 3.2) and to design school grounds so as to be more suitable for a range of outdoor play activities.

- 7.14 Implementing a strategy can potentially provide training opportunities associated with playwork, the management and maintenance of play spaces, and the involvement of children and young people.

Involving children and young people

- 7.15 There is a vast range of methods that can be used to engage children and young people – and their parents and carers – in planning, designing, creating, maintaining and managing play spaces. It is important to adapt the techniques to the needs and aspirations of the different preferences, backgrounds and ages of the young community in question. Techniques range from Planning (or Playing) for Real exercises (see page 44) to less resource-intensive techniques such as informal surveys and interviews. Several techniques should normally be used to ensure a wide range of young people have an opportunity to participate.



- 7.16 Artwork, logo design and playground naming competitions are all good ways to stimulate creative thinking and to generate interest and ownership with children and young people. Art workshops engage them in designing and constructing artwork to improve their local environments. Community arts projects are particularly useful with young people to enable them to express their creativity, build confidence, develop skills, and develop a sense of identity and community pride.
- 7.17 It is critical that the techniques for promoting community and young people's involvement are understood to be part of a fuller process of meaningful community engagement. Applying techniques in isolation can raise unrealistic expectations. In addition, the post-consultation process is essential in order to analyse the results of a community involvement process, to generate options and to work with communities to prioritise and agree preferences.
- 7.18 CABE Space has produced a good practice guide to involving children and young people in the design, development and continuing management of public urban spaces (April 2004). This can be downloaded from www.cabespace.org.uk. Some of the key points from its good practice examples are set out on page 61.

Involving children and young people in design and care for their space

A good practice guide by CAGE Space offered some key points:

- Playworkers can encourage and support all children who use a play space to get involved in the design process.
- Links should be made with disabled children and their carers, and the space developed with their views and needs in mind.
- Trips to different play and public spaces can help young people to develop ideas.
- Giving young people support for decisions, and enabling them to present projects externally, engenders creativity and responsibility.
- Using models helps children to understand designs and allows them to comment and suggest changes.
- Young people, especially from ethnic minorities, can be unwittingly stereotyped, for example being seen as anti-social. Only contact and continuing dialogue will realise genuine relationships.
- Physical regeneration can provide a starting point for continuing participation.
- Playworkers provide a high level of maintenance and help to create a safe and secure atmosphere for children and young people.
- Building on existing networks can be effective in involving young people.
- The political will to involve them can be critical to creating a dialogue between the council and young people.
- Young people and designers working together can create a better space than either could on their own.

Adapted from *What would you do with this space?*, CAGE Space, 2004

Ways to improve provision

- 7.19 Boroughs should consider innovative approaches to the creation and enhancement of open spaces. This will involve creative approaches to funding and to the use of land. A number of schemes in London demonstrate interesting features or management approaches; examples included in Appendix C demonstrate how benefits can be achieved through the application of a comprehensive strategy.
- 7.20 In some neighbourhoods the simple provision of additional play opportunities may not be possible. In others, improving the quality of the opportunities may be the main concern. The box on pages 58 and 59 offers a range of ideas and solutions that could be included in the action plan.

Quality assurance

- 7.21 For supervised provision, it is recommended that an appropriate quality assurance system be adopted. The government has launched the Investors in Children (IiC) initiative, which endorses quality assurance schemes that meet rigorous criteria, building on the national standards. Endorsement shows that a provider accredited through an IiC scheme is committed to delivering standards associated with high-quality programmes and positive child outcomes. DfES guidance to local authorities and partnerships recommends that they should promote participation in quality assurance schemes, focusing on those that have IiC endorsement.

Quality in play

London Play has produced a quality assurance system specifically for supervised play provision, based on the values and assumptions of playwork and the *Best Play* objectives. The Hackney Play Association originally developed it through a collaboration of playworkers and quality assurance specialists. The system identifies 19 different quality areas ranging from 'a warm and welcoming environment' and 'play environment audit', to 'managing resources' and 'working with families and the community'. Each quality area has a specific written standard and the system provides for assessment of current performance against the standard to three levels of achievement, with examples of the appropriate evidence. Quality in Play was awarded endorsement within the government's Investors in Children framework in June 2004.

Monitoring and review

- 7.22 The strategy document and action plan will need to be kept under regular review in order to be effective. Regular review of the action plan will be especially important in ensuring that targets are being met, or checking whether they need to be modified in the light of changing circumstances. The action plan should be subject to annual review. The play strategy should be kept up to date and the need for review will depend on whether there are significant changes in funding, legislation, Section 106 opportunities, other strategies or planning. The local authority should also be responsive and flexible to community feedback as the strategy implementation progresses.
- 7.23 To effectively review the plan, performance will need to be monitored by agreed performance indicators. These could include:
- cost related to usage
 - actual catchment area, as defined by users
 - numbers using and times spent at specific facilities
 - usage on the basis of gender, ethnicity, age, impairment
 - involvement of community groups

- children and young people's satisfaction
- inclusive access
- attainment of quality assurance standards by supervised provision.

- 7.24 Given the complexity and variety of children's play opportunities, it is clear that every single play opportunity cannot be monitored. For many performance indicators, monitoring may need to take place at a sample of local sites.
- 7.25 Existing opportunities may need to be used; for example a traffic survey, following traffic calming, could also be used to ascertain children's travelling distances around their own neighbourhood. A community consultation on facilities in general might include a few questions on children's play. Schools may be assisted to undertake projects, which meet National Curriculum criteria, on such subjects as geography and citizenship. Their findings may be related to performance indicators.
- 7.26 In some instances proxy indicators may be used. For example, an increase in children travelling unaccompanied to school is very likely to indicate the freedom of children to travel other routes unaccompanied within their neighbourhood.



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Appendix A

Best Value Performance Indicator 115

The status of the local authority's policy and strategy for play

Rationale

This indicator identifies the extent to which the authority has developed and adopted a comprehensive play policy. To what extent the play policy can act as a practical working tool to influence, and guide, any decisions made across all relevant departments, which affect or relate to children's play opportunities. How far an authority achieves in relation to the processes the indicator details will be determined by local objectives and resources, but it is important that achievement is related to goals as set out in the 'advanced', 'established' and 'emerging' criteria. The indicator should be supplemented by further information relating to quality and cost effectiveness determined according to local priorities.

It assesses the extent to which the development, adoption and implementation of a corporate play policy has involved users and providers, is responsive to local and diverse needs and demonstrates an understanding of the importance of play and the child's right to play.

Supporting table

Definition

- a Status of the local authority's development and implementation of a corporate play policy (advanced, established, emerging)

The status of the local authority's contribution should be matched as closely as possible to the criteria for 'advanced', 'established' or 'emerging' as detailed in the table below, against each of the components A to I. Please note that the policy must meet all the criteria to qualify at the higher levels.

Columns entitled 'Advanced', 'Established' and 'Emerging' each identify the different actions required against each of the component elements of a play policy and strategy, as identified in A–I.

To assess your position, review the columns to identify for each of the criteria A–I below which best describes your current position. For example, if your policy has identified the range of authority services with relevance to play and their responsibilities, but has not provided guidance to staff in these departments, then 'tick' column 'Established' for line A. Continue working through the criteria, selecting for the corresponding line the columns which best describe your current position.

Your position to be reported for part (a) of this indicator is that for which you have been able to tick all the behaviours required, or demonstrated behaviour required at the higher level, ie the programme must meet all the criteria to qualify at the higher levels. For example, an advanced status would need to demonstrate evidence for all the criteria A–I as detailed in the ‘Advanced’ column. For an authority that meets five of the criteria shown in the ‘Established’ column, but can only demonstrate the action detailed in the ‘Emerging’ column for the remaining four, the authority’s policy and strategy for play would be reported as having an ‘emerging’ status.

- b Number of ‘advanced’ criteria met as a percentage of the total advanced criteria

Of the components detailed, the number of these for which the authority meets the criteria as detailed for an ‘Advanced’ plan, as a percentage of the total nine component areas detailed.

Development and implementation of a corporate play policy: assessing your progress

		Advanced	Established	Emerging
A	The policy is widely scoped, including any local authority services that might directly or indirectly affect children’s play opportunities.	The policy clearly identifies the range of authority services with relevance to play and their respective responsibilities. Supporting guidance is provided to the relevant staff in these departments to ensure that the policy is implemented in practice.	The policy clearly identifies the range of authority services with relevance to play and their responsibilities.	The policy broadly identifies services that have relevance to play.
B	The play policy clearly identifies the importance of play.	<p>The policy includes a clear assessment of the specific needs and priorities for the local area, identifying, for example, particular locations where action is required.</p> <p>It displays a clear understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the child’s right to play, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child • why a variety of play opportunities is important • defines play, play opportunities, children and acceptable risks. 	<p>The policy includes a broad assessment of needs and priorities for the local area, but does not identify specific areas of action.</p> <p>It displays a broad understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the child’s right to play • why play is important. <p>It defines play, play opportunities, and acceptable risks.</p>	<p>The policy shows an understanding of why play is important, and defines what ‘play’ and ‘play opportunities’ mean.</p> <p>The policy is couched in general terms and does not identify the specific requirements and priorities of the local area.</p>

		Advanced	Established	Emerging
C	The policy is integrated with other relevant community, corporate and departmental plans.	<p>The policy is consistent with the authority's corporate objectives, and identifies the role of play in contributing to the achievement of these objectives. The policy should be linked to a corporate strategy on children and young people. Where there is no separate corporate strategy for younger people, links to other corporate strategies should be explicit.</p> <p>It considers or makes reference, where relevant, to other existing activities and corporate or departmental plans which may affect the delivery of the play policy.</p>	<p>The policy is consistent with the authority's corporate objectives, and identifies the role of play in contributing to the achievement of these of objectives.</p> <p>The policy does not consider or make reference to specific departmental plans or activities which may affect the delivery of the play policy.</p>	The policy is a stand-alone document that makes little or no reference to corporate or relevant departmental policies and activities.
D	The policy was developed drawing on consultation with a range of relevant stakeholders.	<p>Consultation included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public sector agencies, including tiers in local government • the voluntary sector • adults, children, young people and the private sector from the local communities. <p>Consultation was:</p> <p>'Inclusive', drawing on views from a cross-section of people, representative of the local community as a whole, with particular focus on children of different ages, parents and young people, and including appropriate representation from black and minority ethnic groups, traveller families and children and families with disabled children.</p>	<p>Consultation included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public sector agencies, including tiers in local government • the voluntary sector. <p>Consultation was:</p> <p>'Inclusive', drawing on views from a cross-section of people, representative of the local community as a whole, with particular focus on children of different ages, parents and young people, and including appropriate representation from black and minority ethnic groups, traveller families and children and families with disabled children.</p>	<p>Consultation included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public sector agencies, including tiers in local government. <p>No steps were taken to ensure that consultation included a cross-section of the population representative of the wider community.</p>
E	The policy has been endorsed by the chief executive and/or members of the relevant committee.	Yes and engaged for the future.	Endorsed	No

		Advanced	Established	Emerging
F	The play policy is based on a clear baseline assessment of local needs and identifies current provision and opportunities for play.	In developing the policy, the authority has carried out and included an assessment of the current range of provision throughout the authority area. The policy identifies specific local needs and how these are addressed by the current provision, and/or where there is a shortfall.	The policy includes a broad assessment of needs and priorities for the local area, but does not identify specific areas of action. The authority has not carried out and included an assessment of the current range of provision throughout the authority area, and how this relates to identified needs.	The policy is couched in general terms and does not identify the specific requirements and priorities of the local area. The authority has not carried out and included an assessment of the level and suitability of the current provision.
G	The play policy provides a clear framework for implementation and delivery.	The play policy identifies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key principles and a clear framework for the planned development of play opportunities • short, medium and long-term priorities and target delivery dates • resource implications and allocation • a plan for stakeholder involvement • mechanisms to monitor and review arrangements. 	The play policy identifies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key principles and a clear framework for the planned development of play opportunities • short, medium and long-term priorities and target delivery dates • mechanisms to monitor and review arrangements. It does not clearly identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resource implications and allocation • a plan for stakeholder involvement. 	The play policy identifies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • general principles and an outline framework for the planned development of play opportunities. It does not clearly identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short, medium and long-term priorities and target delivery dates • resource implications and allocation • a plan for stakeholder involvement. No mechanisms have been identified to monitor and review arrangements.
H	A play policy working group with key partners has been established for delivery.	Yes, with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear terms of reference • allocated resources and the authority to drive the policy forward • an agreed action plan identified and in the process of being delivered. 	Yes, with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear terms of reference • a commitment to secure resources and responsibility to drive the policy forward • an agreed action plan identified. 	Yes, with clear terms of reference. However, no resources have yet been committed nor any action plan identified.
I	A framework is in place for monitoring progress and regular reporting on plans.	A framework is in place that ensures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivery against targets and objectives is monitored and on a minimum of a quarterly basis • progress is reported back to management and stakeholders • the policy/strategy is reviewed annually, with a comprehensive review at least every five years. 	A framework is in place that ensures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivery against targets and objectives is monitored on at least a quarterly basis • progress is reported back to management and stakeholders • there are no plans in place for the review of the policy. 	There is no framework in place.

Appendix B

Suggested further reading

This list is not intended to be comprehensive and inclusion does not imply specific endorsement of the content or the views expressed.

Play principles

A New Charter for Children's Play, The Children's Play Council/The Children's Society (1998)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF (1989)

Play provision

Best Play – what play provision should do for children, National Playing Fields Association/Children's Play Council/PLAYLINK (2000) (can be downloaded from ncb.org.uk/cpc)

Getting Serious About Play – a review of children's play, Department for Culture Media and Sport (2004)

Open for Play – the National Daycare Standards in open access play provision, PLAYLINK (2003)

Wonderful Places to Play – adventure playgrounds in London, PLAYLINK (2001)

Playwork

Making Sense – playwork in practice, PLAYLINK (2001)

Evolutionary playwork and reflective analytic practice, Bob Hughes, Routledge (2001)

A Playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types, Bob Hughes, PLAYLINK (2002 2nd ed.)

Towards a Technology of Playwork, in proceedings of PLAYLINK/Portsmouth City Council Conference, Bob Hughes, PlayEducation (1997)

How Not to Cheat Children – the Theory of Loose Parts, Simon Nicholson, Landscape Architecture (1971)

Playground as Therapeutic Space: Playwork as Healing, Else, Perry and Sturrock ('The Colorado Paper') – Paper to UFA/IPA Triennial Conference, Colorado US (1998)

Quality Training, Quality Play – the national strategy for playwork education, training and qualifications 2002–2005, Skillsactive Play Unit (2002)

Policy

Making the Case for Play – building policies and strategies for school-aged children, Issy Cole-Hamilton and Tim Gill, Children's Play Council (2002)

Play as Culture, PLAYLINK and the Children's Play Policy Forum (2002)

From Children's Services to Children's Spaces, Public Policy, Children and Childhood, Peter Moss and Pat Petrie, Routledge/Farmer (2002)

The State of London's Children Report, Suzanne Hood, Office of Children's Rights Commissioner for London (2004 2nd ed.)

Children, Young People and Families' Response to 'Every Child Matters', Barnardo's (2003)

Planning

More than Swings and Roundabouts – planning for outdoor play, Children's Play Council (2002)

Home Zones, a planning and design handbook, Mike Biddulph, The Policy Press/Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Children's Play Council (2001)

Child's Play – facilitating play on housing estates, Rob Wheway and Allison Millward, The Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Chartered Institute of Housing (1997)

No Particular Place to Go? – children, young people and public space, Ken Worpole, Groundwork UK (2003)

Planning Policy Guidance 17 – planning for open space, sport and recreation, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2002)

Assessing Needs and Opportunities – companion guide to PPG 17, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2002)

Green Spaces, Better Places – the final report of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce, Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (2002)

Six Acre Standard, National Playing Fields Association (1992)

Towards a level playing field – a guide to the production of playing field strategies, National Playing Fields Association (2003)

Green Space Strategies – a good practice guide, CABE Space (2004)

Design

Designing for Play, Barbara E Hendricks, Ashgate Publishing (2001)

Building for Young Children – a practical guide to planning, designing and building the perfect space, Mark Dudek, The National Early Years Network (2001)

An Architecture of Play – a survey of London's adventure playgrounds, Nils Norman, Four Corners Books (2003)

Inclusion and access

Developing Accessible Play Space – a good practice guide, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2003)

It doesn't just happen – inclusive management for inclusive play, P Douch, Kidsactive (2002)

All of Us, Inclusive checklist for settings and inclusive framework for local authorities, Kidsactive (2004)

Can Play Will Play, Rob Wheway and Alison John, National Playing Fields Association (2004)

Everybody here? Play and leisure for disabled children and young people, P Shelly, Contact-a-Family (2002)

Playing in Parallel – a study of access to play provision by black and minority children in London, Haki Kapasi, London Play (2002)

Asian Children Play, Haki Kapasi, Playtrain (2000)

Come on in – a practical guide for children's services, Council for Disabled Children, NCB (2004)

Making Connections: developing inclusive leisure in policy and practice, Pippa Murray, The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2003)

Childcare, children's centres and extended schools

Promoting Play in Childcare – good practice guidance for Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships, No 13, DfES (2001)

Integration in Practice, a guide to integrated provision for 0 to 16-year-olds through children's centres and extended schools, 4Children (2004)

Children's participation

What would you do with this space? – involving young people in the design and care of urban spaces, CABI Space (2004)

Changing Places, children's participation in environmental planning, Eileen Adams and Sue Ingham, The Children's Society (1998)

Making Connections – developing inclusive leisure in policy and practice, Pippa Murray, The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2003)

Practice Listening to Young Children – the Mosaic Approach, Alison Clark and Peter Moss, National Children's Bureau and The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2001)

Young People's Charter of Participation, The Children's Society (2001)

Taking the Initiative – promoting young people's involvement in public decision making in the UK (2002)

A Journey of Discovery – children’s creative participation in planning, Judy Miller, Children’s Discovery Centre/Save the Children (1999)

Risk and safety

Risk and Safety in Play – the Law and Practice for Adventure Playgrounds, Dave Potter, PLAYLINK (1997)

Managing Risk in Play Provision – a position statement, the Play Safety Forum (2002) (ncb.org.uk/cpc)

The Dignity of Risk: a practical handbook for professionals working with disabled children, National Children’s Bureau (2004)

Quality assurance

Quality in Play – quality assurance for children’s play providers, Mick Conway and Tony Farley, London Play (2004 3rd ed.)

The First Claim – a framework for playwork quality assessment, Play Wales (2001)

Funding

Claiming Your Share – a guide to external funding for parks and green space community groups, Green Space (incorporating the Urban Parks Forum) (2003)

The Youth Funding Guide, Nicola Eastwood, Directory of Social Change (2002 2nd ed.)

A–Z to finding funds, Directory of funding for Early Years Education and Childcare (2002)

A Guide to Local Trusts in Greater London, Sarah Harland, Directory of Social Change (2005)

A Guide to the Major Trusts, Sarah Wiggins, Directory of Social Change (2005)

Information about many of these and other play-related publications can be obtained from:

Children’s Play Information Service, National Children’s Bureau, 8 Wakeley Street, London EC1V 7QE. Tel 020 7843 6303 www.ncb.org.uk

All the referenced strategies and guides of the Mayor and the Greater London Authority can be obtained from:

Greater London Authority, City Hall, The Queen’s Walk, London SE1 2AA. Tel 020 7983 4100 www.london.gov.uk

Appendix C

Play strategies in London

Case studies

When this guide was published as a draft for consultation in August 2004, two London boroughs – Sutton and Tower Hamlets – agreed to pilot its use in the development of play strategies, with the assistance of London Play. The work in each borough, still in progress at the time of this publication, is reported here as a case study. Lessons from these studies have been incorporated into the revised guide.

London Borough of Sutton

The process is being led by a small steering group consisting of the Play Service Manager, the Play Development Worker based in the Sutton Council for Voluntary Service (SCVS) with support from London Play. The group reports via the Play Service Manager to the Council's Children and Young People's Partnership, and to a Play Network with representatives from the voluntary and community sector, council play and youth service providers, environment and special needs groups, the Children's Trust and Children's Fund.

The play strategy is being developed alongside an early years strategy and an existing youth strategy as a subset of the Community Plan. It will become an integral part of the Children and Young People's Plan, which Sutton has pioneered, and will strongly feature in the evidence base for the new Joint Area Review, which Sutton is piloting.

The steering group has focused on:

- making clear links to the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* outcomes and the Children and Young People's Plan as well as the Open Space Strategy
- reviewing existing provision against the Children's Play Charter to identify action points
- the launch of the Play Network and ensuring that members were signed up to the strategy to make it real at local level
- gaining political and corporate management team support for the strategy champions.

Good practice examples include:

- a strong ethos of working together resulting in the Play Network developed and facilitated by a partnership between the play service and SCVS
- multidisciplinary work where sports and youth workers, art, dance and music specialists, teachers and behaviour specialists work together with playworkers to share their different skills and approaches

- under-8s and over-8s consultation questionnaires completed by children in playcentres, with the results analysed and published in a report to inform service planning.

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

The process is being led by a small steering group consisting of the Head of Access and Inclusion in Education, the Head of Leisure, and the Director of Play Association Tower Hamlets (PATH) with support from London Play, reporting to the Children and Young People's Partnership Board and ultimately to the Local Strategic Partnership.

A wider working group with representatives from the voluntary and community sector, youth service, housing, planning, parks, the environment trust and extended schools have developed a widely scoped draft strategy covering play in the home, in good quality play provision near home, and in the wider public realm for children aged up to 18.

The working group agreed that there needed to be additional focus on:

- clear links to the *Every Child Matters* outcomes and the Children and Young People's Plan as well as the OSS
- the need to promote the value of play to families and communities
- ensuring that the strategy was 'real' at neighbourhood as well as strategic level through engaging Local Area Partnerships
- quick and tangible outcomes for children and others consulted during development of the strategy, and avoidance of 'consultation fatigue'
- an urgent need (in the context of *The London Plan* housing target) to embed the play strategy in planning and development control guidance in the Unitary Development Plan/Local Development Framework.

Good practice examples include:

- the PATH children's consultation exercise resulting in a borough map of play spaces distributed to children, with consideration being given to overlaying a new edition with public transport routes
- the borough is also considering a 'homework-free week' when children in schools complete a play strategy questionnaire as part of the citizenship element of the National Curriculum, with prizes of free leisure passes as an additional incentive
- the corporate management team is kept aware of developments to ensure that the strategy fits with council priorities.

London Borough of Croydon

Prior to the drafting of this guide, London Play assisted the London Borough of Croydon in preparing its play strategy.

A dedicated play strategy development officer was appointed, who co-ordinated a steering group including representatives from:

- Cultural Services
- Education
- Housing
- Chief Executive's Office
- Planning and Transportation
- Social Services
- Primary Care Trust
- Voluntary Play Sector
- Youth Service
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
- London Play

The audit divided play space into unsupervised and supervised play provision and included unsupervised playgrounds, multi-games courts, skate ramps, youth shelters and supervised after-school clubs, holiday clubs, youth centres, mobile play, organised sports and libraries. The consultation identified young people's concerns about the lack of choice, a shortage of supervised open access provision, and limited opportunities for disabled children.

The Croydon Play Strategy was launched in November 2003 with a three-year action plan aimed at raising awareness and developing a cohesive approach involving partnerships across the borough to identify resources and stimulate the creation of new play projects.

Appendix D

Play types

	Play type	Explanation
1	Symbolic play	Play which allows control, gradual exploration and increased understanding, without the risk of being out of one's depth.
2	Rough-and-tumble play	Close encounter play which is less to do with fighting and more to do with touching, tickling, gauging relative strength, discovering physical flexibility and the exhilaration of display. For example, playful fighting, wrestling and chasing.
3	Socio-dramatic play	The enactment of real and potential experiences of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature. For example, playing at house, going to the shops, being mothers and fathers.
4	Social play	Play during which the rules and criteria for social engagement and interaction can be revealed, explored and amended. For example, any social or interactive situation with abiding rules or protocols, such as games or conversations.
5	Creative play	Play allowing a new response, the transformation of information, awareness of new connections, with an element of surprise. For example, enjoying creation for its own sake, with a range of materials and tools.
6	Communication play	Play using words, nuances or gestures. For example, mime, jokes, play-acting, mickey-taking, singing, debate, poetry.
7	Dramatic play	Play dramatising events in which the child is not a direct participant. For example, presentation of a TV show, an event on the street, a religious or festive event, even a funeral.
8	Deep play	Play which allows the child to encounter risky or even potentially life-threatening experiences, to develop survival skills and conquer fear. For example, leaping onto an aerial runway or riding a bike on a parapet.
9	Exploratory play	Play to access factual information consisting of manipulative behaviours such as handling, throwing, banging or mouthing objects. For example, engaging with an object or area and, either by manipulation or movement, assessing its properties, possibilities and content, such as stacking bricks.
10	Fantasy play	Play which rearranges the world in the child's way, a way which is unlikely to occur. For example, playing at being a pilot flying around the world or the owner of an expensive car.
11	Imaginative play	Play where the conventional rules governing the physical world do not apply. For example, pretending to be a tree or ship, or patting an imaginary dog.
12	Locomotor play	Movement in any and every direction for its own sake. For example, chase, tag, hide and seek, tree climbing.
13	Mastery play	Control of the physical and affective ingredients of the environments. For example, digging holes, changing the course of streams, constructing shelters, building fires.
14	Object play	Play which uses infinite and interesting sequences of hand-eye manipulations and movements. For example, examination and novel use of any object, such as cloth, paintbrush, cup.
15	Role play	Play exploring ways of being, although not normally of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature. For example, brushing with a broom, dialling a telephone, driving a car.

Adapted from Hughes, *A Playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types*, 1996, as cited in *Best Play: What play provision should do for children*, PLAYLINK, NPFA and the Children's Play Council, 2001

Appendix E

Play agencies and other useful sources of information

Londonwide play organisations

KIDS London (incorporating *Kidsactive* playgrounds)
49 Mecklenburgh Square
London WC1 2NY
www.kids-online.org.uk

London Centre for Playwork Education
Block D, Barnsbury Complex
Offord Road, London N1 1TH
020 7527 5824
www.playworklondon.org.uk

London Play
89–93 Fonthill Road
Finsbury Park
London N4 3JH
020 7272 2464
www.londonplay.org.uk

London borough play associations

Barnet Play Association
Old Barn Youth and Community Centre, Tarling Road
East Finchley, London N2 8LB
020 8343 1449

Enfield Children and Young Person's Services (incorporating Enfield Play Association)
Unit 9, Centre Way
Claverings Industrial Estate, Montagu Road
London N9 OAP
020 8373 2699

Hackney Play Association
All Saints Centre, Haggerston Road, London E8 4HT
020 7923 7897

Hammersmith and Fulham Voluntary Sector Resource Agency
1 Gayford Road
London W12 9BY
020 8762 0862
www.hammersmithfulham.cvs.org.uk

Haringey Play Association
N17 Studios, Unit 22 F
784–788 High Road, Tottenham
London N17 ODA
020 8808 0533
www.haringey-play.org.uk

Islington Play Association
West Library
Bridgeman Road
London N1 1BD
020 7607 9637
www.islingtonplay.org.uk

Lambeth Play Association
205 Stockwell Road
London SW2 9SL
020 7771 2111

Merton Voluntary Service Council
The Vestry Hall,
London Road
Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3UD
020 8685 1771
www.mvsc.co.uk/playdevelopment.htm

PATH (Play Association Tower Hamlets)

Oxford House
Derbyshire Street
London E2 6HG
020 7729 3306
www.playtowerhamlets.org.uk

Southwark Play Network
Southwark Children and Families Alliance, 32–36 Rye Lane
London SE15 5BS
020 7639 9807

Sutton Centre for Voluntary Service

Unilink House
21 Lewis Road
Sutton, Surrey SM1 4BR
020 8643 3277
www.scvs.org.uk

West Play (Hounslow Play Association)
c/o Sue Coates at London Play (address as above)
020 7272 8782

Westminster Play Association
18 Paddington Green
London W2 1LG
020 7258 3817

National play organisations**4Children**

3 Muirfield Crescent
London E14
020 7512 2112
www.4children.org.uk

Children's Play Information Service

National Children's Bureau
8 Wakley Street, London
EC1V 7QE
020 7843 6303
www.ncb.org.uk/library/cpis

The Children's Play Council

8 Wakley Street
London EC1V 7QE
020 7843 6016
www.ncb.org.uk/cpc/

Fair Play for Children

35 Lyon Street
Bognor Regis
PO21 1YZ
0845 3307635
www.arunet.co.uk/fairplay

Kidsactive National Development Division

Aztec Row, Berners Road
London N1 OPW
020 7359 3073
www.kids-online.org.uk

National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries

68 Churchway, London
NW1 1LT
020 7387 9592
020 7520 0405
www.natll.org.uk

National Playbus Association

AMS House
Whitby Road,
Brislington
Bristol BS4 3QF
0117 977 5375

The National Playing Fields Association

Stanley House
St Chad's Place
London WC1X 9HH
020 7833 5360
www.npfa.co.uk

PLAY-TRAIN

31 Farm Road
Birmingham B11 1LS
0121 766 8889
www.playtrain.org.uk

Skills Active Play Unit

Castlewood House
77–91 New Oxford Street
London WC1A 1PX
020 7632 2000
www.skillsactiveuk.com

Other London organisations**3rd Sector Alliance**

356 Holloway Road
London N7
020 7700 8107
www.actionlink.org.uk

Association of London Government

59½ Southwark Street
London SE1 0AL
020 7934 9999
www.alg.gov.uk

Corporation of London

Open Spaces Department
PO Box 270, Guildhall
London EC2P 2EJ
www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/Corporation/

Government Office for London

Riverwalk House
157–161 Millbank
London SW1P 4RR
020 7217 3328
www.go-london.gov.uk

Groundwork UK regional office, London

18–21 Morley Street
London SE1 7QZ
020 7922 1230
www.groundwork.org.uk

London Parks and Green Spaces Forum

Pp 19b City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA
www.green-space.org.uk

London Playing Fields Association

Framer House
29 Albermarle Street
London W1X 3FA

London Voluntary Services Council

356 Holloway Road
London N7 6PA
020 7700 8107
www.actionlink.org.uk/lvsc

London Youth

Bridge House, Bridge House Quay,
Prestons Road
London E14 9QA
020 7537 2777
www.londonyouth.org.uk

Planning Aid for London

Unit 2, 11–29 Fashion Street
London E1 6PX
020 7247 4900
www.pafl.org.uk

The Royal Parks Agency

The Old Police House
Hyde Park
London W2 2UH
020 7298 2000
www.royalparks.gov.uk

Other national organisations

Barnardo's

Tanners Lane
Barkingside, Ilford
Essex IG6 1QG
020 8498 7589
www.barnardos.org.uk

Building Futures

RIBA, 66 Portland Place
London W1B 1AD
020 7307 3620
www.buildingfutures.org.uk

CABE Space

The Tower Building
1 York Road
London SE1 7NX
020 7960 2400
www.cabespace.org

Centre for Accessible Environments

Nutmeg House
60 Gainsford Street
London SE1 2NY
020 7357 8182
www.cae.org.uk

The Child Accident Prevention Trust

18–20 Farringdon Lane
London EC1R 3HA
020 7608 3828
www.capt.org.uk

The Children's Society

Edward Rudolf House
Margery Street
London WC1X 0JL
0845 300 1128
www.the-childrens-society.org.uk

GreenSpace

Caversham Court
Church Road
Reading RG4 7AD
0118 946 9060
www.green-space.org.uk

Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (ILAM)

ILAM House
Lower Basildon
Reading, Berks RG8 9NE
0870 845 8475
www.ilam.co.uk

Learning through Landscapes

3rd Floor, Southside Offices
The Law Courts, Winchester
SO23 9DL
01962 846258
www.ltl.org.uk

RoSPA Play Safety

The Old Village Hall
Kingston Lisle Business Centre
Wantage, Oxon OX12 9QX
01367 820 9889
www.rospace.org.uk

Sport England

3rd Floor, Victoria House
Bloomsbury Square
London WC1B 4SE
020 7273 1500
www.sportengland.org

Relevant government departments

Department of Culture, Media and Sport

2–4 Cockspur Street
London SW1Y 5DH
020 7211 6200
www.culture.gov.uk

Department for Education and Skills

Caxton House, Tothill Street
London SW1H 9FN
0870 000 2288
www.dfes.gov.uk

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

26 Whitehall, London
SW1A 2WH
020 7944 4400
www.odpm.gov.uk

Appendix F

Report on consultation

The consultation on the draft Guide to Preparing Play Strategies took place between 3 August and 12 November 2004. The views of organisations, individuals and children and young people were actively sought.

Prepared in partnership with London Play, in close consultation with the play sector in London, the draft guide was launched by the Mayor at Playday 2004, a major event in Trafalgar Square attended by an estimated 15,000 children, parents and carers. It was posted on the Mayor's website and circulated to the London boroughs and other key stakeholders, both organisations and individuals, with an interest in children's play and other children's issues. Respondents were asked to consider some key questions (below) about the guide's suitability for its purpose.

Two pilot studies of the work to prepare local play strategies, using the draft guide as a resource, were carried out in the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Sutton.

There were two stakeholder events: at City Hall on 27 September 2004, and at the Resource Centre, Holloway Road on 1 November 2004. The purpose of these events was to highlight gaps, refine proposals and identify key areas where the guide could better assist the boroughs to improve children's opportunities for play.

The events were attended by 78 respondents. At each event presentations were made of the guide's structure, principles, methodology and context, and the case studies in Tower Hamlets and Sutton were presented. Each event contained discussion groups for participants to comment on the guide and the issues it raises. These discussions were recorded. Children and young people were consulted about play in London at the Playday event and their views were recorded.

Children's views

Children were asked to give three pieces of advice to someone who was trying to make London a better place for children to play. Here are some of the responses:

- Make sure there's at least one park in every estate. Make it safe.
- Keep London tidy.
- To make big toys cheap.
- Make streets where children can play.
- Free access to leisure centres.
- Better football grounds, swings and playgrounds.

- More activities after school. Closer activities to school. New things like different playgrounds.
- More ramps and pools.
- More parks, fewer cars.
- Larger play areas.
- No bad people, more parks.
- More benches to hang out with my friends.

In addition to the children's responses, and the stakeholder events, there were 13 written responses to the draft guide from organisations and individuals as follows:

- Association of London Government
- CABI Space
- Groundwork UK
- *Kidsactive*
- Learning through Landscapes
- LB Hounslow
- LB Islington
- LB Sutton
- London Parks and Green Spaces Forum
- Melian Mansfield
- Merton Voluntary Service Council
- National Playing Fields Association
- PLAYLINK

The responses

There was strong support for the guide, with written and verbal respondents generally welcoming the purpose, structure, scope and methodology of the document. A selection of comments appears below.

'The ALG (having taken views from the boroughs) very much welcomes the [document]... it is well-researched and provides boroughs with a clear and detailed guide' – Association of London Government

'[we] support this document... a very positive addition to the existing suite of guidance that sits within local and regional policy and strategy frameworks; a comprehensive treatment of a range of diverse issues... well-considered and pitched at a suitable level' – CABI Space

'well-informed, clear and readily understood; soundly researched and suitably referenced' – National Playing Fields Association

'we welcome the guide and support the importance that it seeks to place on the role of play...' – LB Islington, Planning Department

‘a good workmanlike document covering the bases and marshalling the evidence...’ – PLAYLINK

‘...an excellent guide... [we] congratulate your team for putting it together’ – London Parks and Green Spaces Forum

‘The council welcomes the guide and is looking forward to developing a cross-cutting play strategy’ – LB Hounslow

‘we welcome the guide and appreciate the fact that it has been developed in partnership with London Play, thus recognising the input of professionals from this field’ – LB Sutton

‘a key document... to emphasise the importance of high quality play areas for the regeneration of London’ – Groundwork UK (London Region)

Key questions

Respondents were asked to consider some key questions in their responses:

The guide encompasses the public realm, open space and dedicated play space: is this approach correct?

Respondents agreed with this approach, wanting the guide to cover all play opportunities for children, from registered childcare provision to unsupervised play space and the public realm.

Should the guide be more prescriptive, eg on minimum standards or criteria?

A number of respondents recommended the production of regional benchmark standards in this area. The Children’s Play Council has expressed an interest in contributing.

Are the definitions of play correct?

Respondents agreed with the definitions used but suggested that a definition of inclusive play provision be inserted.

Is the typology for play space acceptable and useful?

The majority of respondents found the typology helpful and particularly welcomed the two-tier approach.

Is the positioning of the play strategy under the open space strategy helpful?

There were different views expressed here. Some respondents found the positioning helpful while others suggested that the draft guide emphasised the spatial aspects of a play strategy at the expense of highlighting the importance of a cross-cutting approach and the coverage of issues about supervised provision. Some respondents felt that the position of the play strategy – and which department would take the lead role – would be decided locally.

Is the cross-cutting approach right, and is it feasible?

The majority of respondents welcomed the guide's emphasis on the cross-cutting approach and the importance of ensuring that play strategies influence other strategies such as the new Children and Young People's Strategy and the Community Strategy. All felt it was essential for the play strategy to be cross-departmental.

What is the best/most practical way to co-ordinate and monitor information about play?

Some respondents proposed the development of benchmarks against which information could be collated, monitored and evaluated.

What are the barriers to developing local play strategies?

Many respondents felt that a lack of adequate resources, leading to the lack of a clear departmental lead, would be the main barrier.

Comments and suggestions

Suggestions for additions and improvements were for:

- more about the importance of innovative design aspects of play spaces and play equipment, expounding on the use of imaginative features – with children and young people being involved as much as possible – to build in risk and challenge at a design stage without compromising safety
- a clearer link with local strategic partnerships, community and regeneration strategies and a greater emphasis on the need for clear departmental responsibility for leading on the play strategy
- a stress on the need for a lead officer in the preparation of a play strategy
- greater emphasis on the need to develop a programme of activities and projects that engage children and young people and provide an element of support and supervision
- highlighting the new statutory status of recreation in *Every Child Matters* in order that it 'not be sidelined by other priorities'

- more discussion of the issues for older children
- a greater emphasis on inclusive play throughout the guide
- more guidance on play in schools and on improving school grounds
- an alternative concept of play space that doesn't 'trap play within designated play areas... home to various types of equipment'
- the need for a clearer and more illustrative exposition of what constitutes good play provision, emphasising the need to break out of the stereotype of swings and roundabouts and other fixed equipment which 'is neither necessary nor sufficient to create a quality play environment'
- a more balanced coverage of the areas to be covered by play strategies, other than play space issues.