

POWER & PLAY 03

THE GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY AND THE MAYOR OF LONDON



The Greater London Authority is a democratically-elected strategic authority with two separate parts: the Mayor and the Assembly. This tool describes how they work and how they influence play in the capital.

The Mayor of London

Is elected directly by Londoners and is responsible for setting out an overall vision for London and defining clear strategies on a range of issues (including air quality, spatial development, culture and tourism, economic development and transport).

The Mayor sets an annual budget (around £20bn) for the Greater London Authority (GLA) and Transport for London, The Metropolitan Police and the London Fire Brigade. The incumbent mayor is Sadiq Khan, who was reelected for his third consecutive term in 2024. The next elections are in 2028.

The London Plan

Culture, environment and roads are all relevant to play but the most explicit of all the Mayor's strategies concerning play is **The London Plan**. This is the capital's regional spatial strategy, which sets out an economic, environmental, transport and social framework for development.

Since 2011 it has included a policy and supplementary planning guidance specifically relating to **Children and Young People's Play and Informal Recreation**. This gives minimum space requirements for play provision in new developments (at least 10sqm per child) and guidelines for accessibility and quality of play facilities - eg catering for a range of ages and abilities, incorporating greenery and natural surveillance. The plan is updated every five years, most recently in 2021. The full document is [here](#) and excerpts relating to play are [here](#).

London Assembly

Consists of 25 [elected members](#) (14 representing constituencies and the rest elected from party lists according to total London-wide vote) and acts as a scrutineer, or watchdog for the Mayor.

It has the power to veto the Mayor's budget plans (although only with a significant majority) and has a number of committees that meet regularly to scrutinise the Mayor's work and make proposals and recommendations.

For more about the GLA visit london.gov.uk

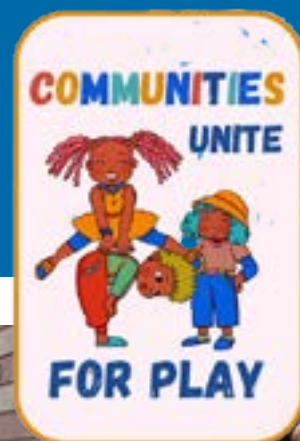


"The Mayor wants London to be a child-friendly city, where children can properly enjoy play and recreation. Providing inclusive, accessible, and safe play spaces is central to achieving this aim."

The Mayor's ambition for London's play spaces

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You can challenge the London Mayor via your London Assembly member ([here's a list](#))

They can ask a question at [Mayor's Question Time](#)

Consider challenging your local authority on planning decisions or development proposals which don't conform to the London Plan. Ask them to implement a borough play strategy.

Whether at the scale of the street, the neighbourhood or the city, we must move away from an approach that is just about 'play provision' and embrace the potential of London's urban environment to plan and design spaces that put children and young people first.

Deputy Mayor for Children & Young People, Joanne McCartney
[Making London Child-Friendly \(2020\)](#)

Councils and the London Plan

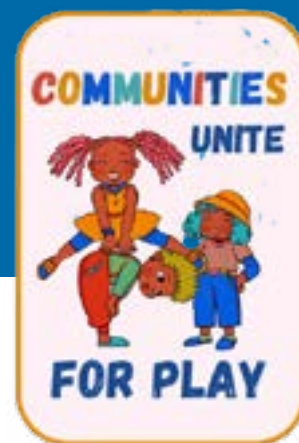
If all local authorities complied with the London Plan guidance on play, this would be a great start! London councils' local development plans are required to be 'in general conformity' with the London Plan and they are responsible for approving planning applications in their boroughs. But the reality is that compliance is patchy. The London Plan is monitored annually against a limited set of key performance indicators; but these do not include play. So developers are able to get away with substandard, uninspiring 'tick box' play offer.

For example we know of many new developments where play areas may meet the 10sqm requirement but fall seriously short in terms of quality and accessibility. The Plan also says that local authorities should have a play strategy; as far as we know only one London borough ([Lewisham](#)) currently has one in place.

There have also been instances of developers segregating access to play space on a housing development by tenure. Updates to the 2021 version of the London Plan explicitly warn against this.

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Five ways to a Playful London

Below is the five point manifesto that London Play produced in the leadup to the 2024 London Mayoral elections. The five 'asks' are all within the powers of the Mayor of London - essentially calling on the new Mayor to provide leadership and a strategic framework so that play is valued and protected across the 32 boroughs and the City of London; including monitoring and enforcement of the requirements set out in the London Plan.



1 Implement a London-wide strategy for play

To set the capital on course to be the most playful city in the world by 2030.



2 Act to promote, protect and celebrate London's unique adventure playgrounds

London is the adventure play capital of the world. Its 72 surviving staffed adventure playgrounds are part of the city's unique heritage, and must be preserved for the benefit of current and future generations of Londoners.



3 Enforce the recommendations set out in the London Plan relating to the quantity, quality, and accessibility of play provision.

Too many play areas built as part of new developments are tick box exercises – unimaginative and depressing.



4 Continue working to reduce the speed and volume of traffic on all roads so that children can access all their daily needs safely and independently.

Continue to use Car Free Day as an opportunity for Londoners to experience their own streets as spaces for playful community interaction.



5 Appoint a young Mayor for Play

Ensure that children in London have their views heard and acted on in relation to the decisions that affect their lives. Appoint a young person as Mayor of Play, supported by children from across the city.