



Embedding the Play Strategy

Draft guidance to local authorities, Children's Trust Boards and Local Strategic Partnerships on sustaining improvements and planning the development of provision and space for children and young people's play and informal recreation.

Embedding the Play Strategy has been produced by Play England, part of NCB.

It is draft non-statutory guidance, with a view to final publication by HM Government after a period of consultation.

Play England is the Government's national delivery partner for the Play Strategy.

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How to respond to this consultation

We welcome your views on this document.
The consultation will be open from **5 October**
to **30 October 2009**.

You can respond to this consultation in two ways.

- Complete and return the consultation response document to playstrategy@ncb.org.uk
- Complete the questions online at <http://www.playengland.org.uk/playstrategy>

More information on both the publication and consultation can be found at <http://www.playengland.org.uk/playstrategy>.

Foreword from the Association of Directors of Children's Services

Children and young people have a mental, emotional and physical need to play. It is how they explore and learn about their world.

At play, children should be free: to make a mess, make a noise, make friends, make up new games, and find new ways of looking at the world. Playing – alone, or with others, indoors or out – is fundamental to a good childhood and one of children's basic human rights.

It follows that the adult world has a duty to make space for and defend children and young people's right to play: to channel their extraordinary energy and creativity. Play can be quiet or noisy, contained or uncontained. It is boundlessly inventive, always changing.

Children need to be able to take risks when they play – it is part of growing up – but to be safe from serious harm. And so the duty we owe them extends to making sure that there are boundaries, so that their risk-taking is managed and that they are never placed in real danger or exposed to the consequences of youthful recklessness. These responsibilities are an important part of local authorities' duty to work across their areas with the full range of partners to improve outcomes for children.

This is why the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) very much welcomed the Government's Play Strategy. The strategy is helping local authorities, their partners and communities to transform public parks, children's play areas and school grounds so that all children have the opportunity to enjoy playing outside with their friends in a safe, stimulating and exciting environment.

We now welcome this consultation on strategic guidance, which sets out a clear rationale and a set of recommended processes for the all-important planning that is needed if we are to sustain these efforts to genuinely make space for play in the longer-term. We especially welcome the links that are made with the effective joint planning and commissioning process; essential for good play services and 'playable' places becoming an integral part of Children and Young People's Plans.

The task is a vital one and we look forward to engaging with the Government and our colleagues in planning, housing, highways and parks – as well as the play sector itself – in responding to this challenge.

Kim Bromley-Derry and Maggie Atkinson
President and immediate past President,
Association of Directors of Children's Services

Message from the Local Government Association

The Local Government Association (LGA) welcomes this consultation on non-statutory guidance to local authorities on embedding The Play Strategy.

Improving and extending children's play areas and making neighbourhoods more child-friendly – creating places where children can thrive – is not only good for children; it is good for their families and their communities too.

England's councils take play very seriously. We need to raise the profile of play and of those who work in play. The LGA therefore commends the ambition and the breadth of The Play Strategy and endorses this proposed guidance document. It should enable councils to work with other agencies and with children and families themselves to make play come alive in the best possible way for them and their communities.

Councillor Les Lawrence

Chair, Safer Communities Board
Local Government Association

Executive summary

Purpose

This document is draft guidance to Children's Trust boards and Local Strategic Partnerships on embedding The Play Strategy.¹ The current version is being made available on the Play England website as a consultation document with a view to it becoming Department for Children, Schools and Families non-statutory guidance in winter 2009. Although this document is still in draft form, it includes a range of information that local authorities and their partners delivering play pathfinder and playbuilder programmes may find useful now.

The Play Strategy aims for all children to be able to enjoy a range of safe and exciting places to play close to where they live, and for children and young people to have a clear stake in public space.

Strategic planning has been required under funding agreements for the play pathfinder and playbuilder programmes. Furthermore, local authorities are now expected to develop a 'strategic approach to play across the local area, with the full involvement of children, local communities and the third sector in decision-making' under Statutory Guidance to Children's Trusts.² This guidance is designed to assist local authorities and their partners on the Children's Trust Board to undertake the necessary planning for this approach, and to embed and sustain recent changes and improvements in the local play offer.

Specifically, the guidance aims to:

- drive improvements across all five of the Every Child Matters outcomes and support performance on a range of indicators in the National Indicator Set
- specifically improve performance under National Indicator NI 199 on the level of satisfaction with play areas and parks reported by children and young people in the TellUs survey
- support top-tier local authorities in receipt of government funding under the playbuilder and play pathfinder programmes, in the wider strategic planning required to embed and sustain improvements
- guide Children's Trust boards in applying a planning and commissioning process to developing and adopting an effective area-wide play strategy as a part of the Children and Young People's Plan
- guide Chief Planning Officers in their contribution to the local play strategy as an important element of the Open Space Strategy and wider Local Development Framework

- support play partnerships in second tier authorities in developing and reviewing their existing local play strategies
- advise senior decision makers in transport, housing and public health on how to fulfil their role in creating and advocating the use of child-friendly public spaces to improve outcomes for children and young people.

The Play Strategy has allocated £235 million to improve the play offer to communities over 2008 – 2011. Over the longer term, every child and young person should be able to enjoy stimulating, safe and accessible play and recreational spaces in their local community, which respects and values children's play and involves children and young people in decisions affecting them.

Part 1

Part 1 of *Embedding the Play Strategy* offers strategic guidance to local authority senior executives, strategic planners and their partners on embedding everyday opportunities for healthy, active play, particularly outdoors, for all children and young people within the top-level strategies for children, communities and spatial planning.

Promoting children's play will help to realise the ambition, set out in The Children's Plan,³ that England becomes the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up; enjoying childhood whilst also being prepared for adult life. Play is central to each of the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes.

Play is a national priority for the Government and this is recognised in the new performance framework, using children's views as the driver for local delivery. From April 2009 the National Indicator Set included a new indicator (NI 199) to show what children think about the parks and play areas in their local area. This

will be measured through the TellUs survey of school-aged children, and will be reported against by Ofsted for every top-tier local authority as part of the annual Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process.

Children and young people's enjoyment of play and informal recreation is thus firmly established as a measure of local authority performance. Other outcomes can also be improved by extending and developing the local play offer. Play provision can contribute to a range of National Indicators under different themes, including:

- NI 1–6 (Stronger Communities) – Community cohesion, civic participation and satisfaction with the local area
- NI 17, 22, 23 (Safer Communities) – Dealing with concerns about anti-social behaviour, parents' responsibility for their children and perceptions that people treat one another with respect and dignity
- NI 48 (Safer Communities) – Children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents
- NI 50, 54, 55, 56, 57 and 58 (Children & Young People – *Be Healthy*) – Children's physical, emotional and behavioural health
- NI 116 (Proportion of children in poverty) – Good play provision is at the heart of the safe, cohesive and prosperous communities where children can thrive and develop.

Ofsted's inspection of the National Indicator Set covering the five ECM outcomes and local authorities' self-assessment of the Children and Young People's Plan should include play provision. As the National Indicator Set suggests, play provision cuts across many other local responsibilities and improvement

strategies. Statutory Guidance to Children's Trusts⁴ underlines that many key local services have a part to play in improving the lives of children and young people. This includes highways, housing, transport and planning. It also concerns other local authority agencies concerned with economic prosperity, skills and regeneration.

As well as offering advice on how to ensure the quality and sustainability of play areas, the approach set out in this guidance addresses the wider issues of children and young people's access – physically and socially – to the space to play within a more child-friendly public realm. Planning, housing, public health, highways and transport, parks and leisure are all services that should be engaged in strategic planning to promote safer and more attractive public places for children to play and teenagers to meet.

Local authorities and their partners can therefore consider the inclusion of commitments to extend and improve play provision and to develop and protect 'playable', child-friendly space within the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and the Sustainable Community Plan. Many local authorities have found it helpful to develop a cross-cutting approach by adopting a top-tier local play strategy and a recommended approach to this task is set out in Part 3 of this guidance.

The term 'play' in the national Play Strategy means what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons. Playing for children is a primary need, closely linked to their innate need to express themselves, to explore, learn about and make sense of their world. Its benefits for children derive from them choosing it and doing it for themselves: the adult role in play provision is to enable rather than to direct. For older children and young people, who no longer think of themselves as 'playing', the need for free time and space for informal recreation, to

'hang-out' with friends and follow their own cultural and social lives, is also important. The strategic action needed to improve and extend the play offer should embrace the full age range from birth to 19 years.

The requirement to support children's play and young people's recreation is underpinned by Section 10 of the Children Act 2004, which places a duty on local authorities and their 'relevant partners' to cooperate in the making of arrangements to improve well-being for local children, as implemented through the ECM outcomes framework.

Subject to Royal Assent of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill to extend the number of 'relevant partners' on the Children's Trust and to put the Children's Trust board on a statutory footing with responsibility for preparing the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), a full consultation on new Children's Trust guidance and new CYPP regulations is planned for autumn 2009. The expectation is that Children's Trusts will be established by April 2010 and all areas will be required to have new jointly-owned CYPPs (currently CYPPs are local authority plans) in place by April 2011.

It is recommended, therefore, that planning and commissioning processes for Children's Trusts⁵ should include plans for extending the play offer to children and communities according to local need.

New guidance to planners on play space, supplementary to Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17: *Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation* will be published later in 2009 by the department for Communities and Local Government (CLG).

In two-tier authorities, where district councils have a major role in the delivery of play provision and in the planning and management of the neighbourhoods where children live, Local Strategic Partnerships

(LSPs) are expected to work together in developing Sustainable Community Strategies and spatial and thematic plans within an area-wide LAA. Almost every district and unitary authority now has a cross-cutting play strategy, as the basis for its allocation of lottery funding for outdoor play under the Big Lottery Fund's Children's Play programme. Top-tier authorities should build on and seek to coordinate these second tier plans and commitments through the area-wide play strategy, with district councils represented on the top-tier play partnership (see below).

Cross-cutting play partnerships, with appropriate leadership and reporting through the Children's Trust board should be an effective way to secure the collaborative, multi-agency approach necessary to ensure a cohesive approach to improving the play offer. The make-up of play partnerships will vary, but should include the local authority departments, other statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector (with links, where appropriate, to the private sector) with a responsibility for:

- play services
- planning
- public health
- procurement and commissioning
- community engagement
- neighbourhood management and regeneration
- police
- youth

- housing
- highways and transport
- parks and open spaces
- schools and childcare (early years and extended services)
- children's workforce development
- disabled children
- children's social care.

The local authority's lead role in the play partnership includes reviewing and auditing existing play opportunities; setting local standards for the quantity, quality and accessibility of provision; ensuring community engagement, children's participation and voluntary sector involvement; ensuring provision for children in local authority care or in unusual or exceptional circumstances; planning for the recruitment and development of the workforce; pooling financial resources; accessing different funding streams for delivery; and evaluating the impact of the local play strategy.

It should also seek to secure commitments on children's play and child-friendly environments within the spatial planning framework, including housing, and in local transport plans.

The Play Strategy's capital programme allocated funding to 30 play pathfinder and 122 playbuilder authorities in England. By April 2009, this had delivered 500 new or refurbished play areas that are free, accessible, local and inclusive: based on new design and safety principles and on consultation and engagement with local communities and their children. By 2011 this number will have risen to

at least 3,500 free play areas and 30 fully staffed adventure playgrounds or play parks.

The capital programme of investment in dedicated play provision is only the first stage of a 10-year strategy to transform children and young people's access to and enjoyment of play and informal recreation. Embedding improvements, and building upon new commitments, should be the purpose of the strategic planning that local authorities and their partners are now expected to undertake, and which this guidance is for.

Part 2

Part 2 sets out the case for local strategic planning for provision and space for play and informal recreation. The development of a local play strategy is voluntary, but has been shown to be an effective way to define and drive the strategic action required across a range of delivery partners to deliver improved play opportunities according to local need. A local play strategy will also help to clarify the commitments on play and child-friendly public space that should be embedded within wider plans and strategies.

The local play strategy should link upwards to the CYPP (following the planning and commissioning cycle for Children's Trusts⁶) but also to the Open Space Strategy and wider Local Development Framework. Thus, a local play strategy should be a collaboration between spatial planning and children's services. It should aim to create more child-friendly public space as well as more and better play areas and play services.

Part 3

Part 3 sets out a recommended process for developing and implementing a local play strategy. The process follows the nine stages of planning and commissioning recommended to Children's Trusts, applied specifically to the need for a local play strategy:

Stage 1. Looking at outcomes for children

Stage 2. Looking at particular groups

Stage 3. Needs assessment

Stage 4. Identifying resources and priorities

Stage 5. Plan the pattern of services and spaces for play

Stage 6. Develop and adopt joint commissioning strategy for play

Stage 7. Commissioning services and spaces for play

Stage 8. Play workforce development and market management

Stage 9. Monitoring and reviewing the local play strategy

The Government's 2020 vision for play

- In every residential area, there is a variety of supervised and unsupervised places for play, free of charge.
- Local neighbourhoods are, and feel like, safe, interesting places to play.
- Routes to children's play spaces are safe and accessible for all children and young people.
- Parks and open spaces are attractive and welcoming to children and young people, and are well maintained and well used.
- Children and young people have a clear stake in public space and their play is accepted by their neighbours.
- Children and young people behave in a way that respects other people and property.
- Children and young people and their families take an active role in the development of local play spaces.
- Play spaces are attractive, welcoming, engaging and accessible for all local children and young people, children of both gender, disabled children, and children from minority groups in the community.

The Play Strategy (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008)

For an executive summary of *The Play Strategy*, see Appendix 1 (page 81). The *Play Strategy* and related documents are available at: www.dcsf.gov.uk/play

The purpose of this guidance

The Government's ambition is to make this the best place in the world for children to grow up. Children, young people and their parents recognise that play is a vital ingredient of a happy and healthy childhood, supporting children's physical, emotional, social and educational development.

The Play Strategy, backed by £235 million of dedicated investment for local play facilities across the country, is informed by extensive consultation with children, young people and their parents. The Government's aim is for all children to be able to enjoy a range of safe and exciting places to play close to where they live. Through children's and communities' involvement in the design and planning of these spaces, play areas will be valued locally and continue to reflect the distinct needs of each community.

This non-statutory guidance is to assist Children's Trust boards and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), working with directors of public health, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), Chief Planning Officers and other strategic decision makers, to improve outcomes for children and young people by implementing the longer-term aims of the Government's Play Strategy according to the needs of their areas and their communities.

The Play Strategy's capital programme allocated funding to 30 play pathfinder and 122 playbuilder authorities in England. By April 2009, this had already delivered 500 new or refurbished play areas that are free, accessible, local and inclusive: based on good practice design and safety principles and on consultation and engagement with local communities and their children. By 2011 this number will have risen to at least 3,500 free play areas and 30 fully staffed adventure playgrounds or play parks.

The capital programme of investment in dedicated play provision is only the first stage of a 10-year strategy to transform children and young people's access to and enjoyment of play and recreation, and the wide-ranging benefits that play can bring. As well as offering advice on how to ensure the quality and sustainability of play areas, the approach set out in this guidance addresses the wider issues of children and young people's access to the space to play within a more child-friendly public realm.

A National Indicator for play

The achievement of these aims locally will be measured by the new **National Indicator NI 199** on the level of satisfaction of children and young people with play areas and parks where they live and go to school, as measured through the TellUs survey.

Specifically, the steps recommended in this document should:

1. Assist Children's Trustsⁱ in the strategic planning and multi-agency cooperation required to provide opportunities for outdoor play and safe places for teenagers to meet, as identified in statutory guidance.⁷
2. Guide Directors of Children's Services in applying a planning and commissioning process to developing and adopting an effective area-wide play strategy, linked to the Children and Young People's Plan.
3. Provide a framework for the strategic planning expected of pathfinder and playbuilder authorities, as outlined in the 2008–2011 play capital programmes grant guidance, and for embedding and sustaining this investment.
4. Offer updated guidance to play partnerships within second tier and unitary authorities on developing and reviewing their local play strategiesⁱⁱ and, where relevant, on working with the top-tier authority to coordinate planning and delivery of local provision within the area-wide strategic frameworks.
5. Enable senior decision makers and strategists to identify and discharge their responsibilities for contributing to positive outcomes for children and young people by working together to create child-friendly public spaces.

Planning for the development of local play spaces and a more generally child-friendly public realm is an important part of the overarching responsibility of the LSP to improve communities' quality of life and to promote a safer and a more attractive built environment. But children's needs are too often ignored in public space design. Enabling children and their families to take an active role in the development of local play provision and the design of their neighbourhoods is relevant to the duty on local authorities to lead local place-shaping that empowers, involves and achieves positive outcomes for the community. This duty is set out in *Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities: Statutory Guidance*.⁸ This present guidance, along with forthcoming guidance specifically for planning departments (see e, below), should help local authorities and their partners on the LSP to meet these responsibilities.

Everyday opportunities for active play have a particularly important role in promoting healthy lifestyles for children and this guidance will also be relevant to PCTs and all those concerned with combating childhood obesity (which is a national priority in the NHS Operating Framework, *Vital Signs*, and covered by two indicators in the National Indicator Set).

Part 1 of *Embedding the Play Strategy* contains strategic guidance to local authority senior executives, strategic planners and their partners on embedding commitments to improve play opportunities within top-level strategies for children, communities, spatial and transport planning.

i. Children's play often sits logically with Children's Services Department, but is also an important responsibility of other departments such as parks, leisure and cultural services, any of which may have the lead role. In this case these departments should be fully represented on the Children's Trust.

ii. *Guide to preparing play strategies* in the London Boroughs was produced by the Mayor of London in April 2005 and, for England, *Planning for Play* was produced by the Children's Play Council and the Big Lottery Fund as part of the Children's Play programme in 2006. This current guidance aims to build on and update *Planning for Play*. Whilst emphasising the lead role of top-tier authorities and, in particular, Children's Trusts, it also aims to encourage the sustained role of the districts and their play partnerships.

Part 2 sets out recommended practice for developing and implementing play strategies at different tiers and across different functions of local government, coordinated and led by the Children's Trust.

Part 3 sets out a nine-stage process for developing and implementing a local play strategy within the joint planning and commissioning framework for Children's Trusts.⁹

Note The development of local play strategies is voluntary, but has been shown to be the most effective way to identify and communicate a vision for play, and to drive the strategic action from the range of partners necessary to deliver the improvements that local people want to see. It also helps to clarify and embed the necessary cross-cutting commitments within other local plans and strategies in a way that retains the focus on play provision and its outcomes for children.

Other guidance

This draft guidance is one of a suite of new guidance documents and tools to support the implementation of the Play Strategy and should be read in conjunction with them, depending on the role of the reader. The other guidance documents are:

Currently available:

- a. *Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces.*¹⁰
- b. *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide.*¹¹
- c. *Safe from Bullying in Play and Leisure Provision – good practice guidance.*¹²
- d. *Outdoor play: A communications toolkit for local authorities*¹³ – to help local authorities and

service providers to inform parents and children about local play opportunities.

To be published winter 2009:

- e. *Better Places to Play through Planning*¹⁴ – guidance to planners in support of the policies in PPG17 and PPS3, to help local authorities to develop effective spatial strategies for play.
- f. *The Playful Communities website*¹⁵ – an online resource to support community play provision.
- g. *Tools for evaluating play provision: A technical guide to Play England local play indicators.*¹⁶

In addition, the Department of Health and the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) have produced a number of guidance documents relevant to the play offer. These include:

- h. *Promoting physical activity for children and young people: Public Health Guidance 17.*¹⁷
- i. *Promoting and creating built or natural environments that encourage and support physical activity: Public Health Guidance 8.*¹⁸
- j. *Clinical Guideline 43. Obesity: guidance on the prevention, identification, assessment and management of overweight and obesity in adults and children.*¹⁹
- k. *Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: A Cross-Government Strategy for England.*²⁰
- l. *Healthy lives, brighter futures: The strategy for children and young people's health.*²¹



Making space for play

Support for embedding the Play Strategy

To support local authorities and their partners in implementing and embedding the Play Strategy, The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has appointed Play England, part of NCB, as its national delivery partner.

Play England is working closely with the Government Offices to provide differentiated packages of support and challenge to every top-tier local authority in promoting good practice in local implementation of the Play Strategy.

Through its specialist resources and information, strategic advice, training, conferences and peer networking activity, Play England is:

- supporting all 152 top-tier local authorities in project planning, designing and building play spaces for the playbuilder programme
- supporting the 30 play pathfinders in developing high-quality adventure playgrounds

- working with the disabled children's charity KIDS, to promote fully inclusive and accessible play provision
- supporting the voluntary and community play sector to enable communities to be more involved in play provision and to access funding from the capital programme, and
- developing and delivering Play Shaper,ⁱⁱⁱ a cross-professional training programme on children's play for all those with responsibility for shaping and managing public space.

Play England has nine regional offices, from which it also supports the Big Lottery Fund's Children's Play initiative. To make contact, or to access Play England's online resources please visit www.playengland.org.uk.

iii. The Play Shaper programme is in partnership with SkillsActive, the sector skills council covering playwork and Playwork Partnerships (part of the University of Gloucestershire).

Part 1: The policy context for play



'Evidence suggests that play can drive improvements across all five Every Child Matters outcomes... To improve local play offers ... will require a strategic approach to play across the local area, with the full involvement of children, local communities and the third sector in decision-making. Delivering excellent outdoor play opportunities for all children will require working closely with the broader Local Strategic Partnership on issues such as town and highways planning and the management and maintenance of public space, in order to promote communities that are more child-friendly.'

Children's Trusts: Statutory guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve well-being of children, young people and their families (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008)

Chapter 1

What we mean by play and why it is important

- 1.1** Playing for children is a primary need, closely linked to their innate need to express themselves, to explore, learn about and make sense of their world. Its benefits for children derive from them choosing it and doing it for themselves. The adult role in play provision is to enable rather than to direct. Thus, the term 'play' within the Play Strategy describes what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons.
- 1.2** The Government values play for its own sake and views it as a vital ingredient of a happy childhood, recognising it as a right for children under Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 1.3** The Children's Plan²² sets out the Government's aim to make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up. It underlines the principle that children need to enjoy their childhood as well as grow up prepared for adult life. Children's play is fundamental to this principle.
- 1.4** Older children and teenagers tend not to use the terms 'play' or 'playing' about themselves. But they have a similar need for places to go where they can enjoy their own informal recreational time and things to do that reflect their own social and cultural lives. Whilst the playbuilder and play pathfinder programmes have a focus on 8- to 13-year-olds, the strategic scope of the Play Strategy and this guidance document encompasses the informal, freely chosen leisure and recreational activities of all children and young people up to age 19.
- 1.5** The Government understands the benefits that play brings for children's health, development and the acquisition of life skills. As well as being a vital part of a happy childhood, play is also important for their ongoing and future well-being, making a major contribution to positive outcomes. Research tells us, for instance, that play may help to combat childhood obesity by increasing activity levels; aid children's mental and emotional responsiveness; improve their social skills; and promote their resilience. There is also evidence that play helps children to develop learning and problem-solving skills, key to their ability to achieve in school and in later life.²³
- 1.6** This is why local authorities and their partners have a responsibility to support children's play and young people's recreation as an aspect of the duty to cooperate under Section 10 of the

Children Act (2004) and within the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes framework.

- 1.7** The Play Strategy has allocated a total of £235 million to improve the play offer to communities. This guidance is designed to assist local authorities to undertake the strategic planning necessary to embed changes and sustain improvements, as expected of pathfinder and playbuilder authorities under the terms of these capital programmes.
- 1.8** Over the longer term, the Government aims to see provision for play fully embedded in the priorities of local authorities and Children's Trusts according to need; with every child and young person having access to enjoyable, safe and stimulating play opportunities within local communities that respect and value children's play and involve children and young people in decisions that affect it.
- 1.9** Responding to a consultation on The Children's Plan, parents and children said that play was intrinsic to children enjoying their lives, an essential component of a good childhood, and that they want more safe outdoor places to play and for teenagers to meet. We also know that areas with good places for children to play are good for families and communities, improving social cohesion.
- 1.10** The response to *Fair Play*,²⁴ the consultation on The Play Strategy, overwhelmingly endorsed that document's 2020 vision for play and the policy commitments set out to achieve it. The executive summary of The Play Strategy can be found at Appendix 1 or go to www.dcsf.gov.uk/play, where the underpinning evidence can also be found.

Chapter 2

Responsibility for play provision and its outcomes

- 2.1** Children's play is a universal need and cuts across many local authority responsibilities, from schools and children's centres to parks, open spaces, housing and highways. Provision has traditionally been the responsibility of town, parish and district councils, responding directly, or through the voluntary sector, to local need.
- 2.2** Second tier authorities, town and parish councils and the voluntary and community sectors continue to have a central role in providing for play. The dual intention of The Play Strategy is that this provision, and improvements to public space for children, form part of the integrated children's services offer and the spatial development plans for local areas. These will each require collaboration and commitments at the top level of local government and its partners.
- Children's Trusts**
- 2.3** The Children's Trust has the key role in planning and commissioning services and spaces for the delivery of positive outcomes for children and young people. This should include the enjoyment of play and informal recreation. Statutory Guidance to Children's Trusts²⁵ sets out the need for a strategic approach to play across the local area, with the full involvement of children, local communities and the third sector in decision-making.
- 2.4** The requirement to support children's play and young people's recreation is underpinned by Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 on local authorities and their 'relevant partners' to cooperate in the making of arrangements to improve well-being for local children, as implemented through the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes framework.
- 2.5** Subject to Royal Assent of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill to extend the number of 'relevant partners' on the Children's Trust and to put the Children's Trust board on a statutory footing with responsibility for preparing the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), a full consultation on new Children's Trust guidance and new CYPP regulations is planned for autumn 2009. The expectation is that Children's Trusts will be established by April 2010 and all areas will be required to have new jointly owned CYPPs (currently CYPPs are local authority plans) in place by April 2011.
- 2.6** The Children's Trust alone cannot deliver the friendly, safe and accessible spaces that will be essential to the success of the Play Strategy.

iv. Weblinks to published local authority play strategies can be found at the Children's Play Information Service, based at NCB www.ncb.org.uk/cpis

Statutory guidance also identifies that 'delivering excellent outdoor play opportunities for all children and young people will require working closely with the broader Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) on issues such as town and highways planning and the management and maintenance of public space, in order to promote communities that are more child-friendly'.

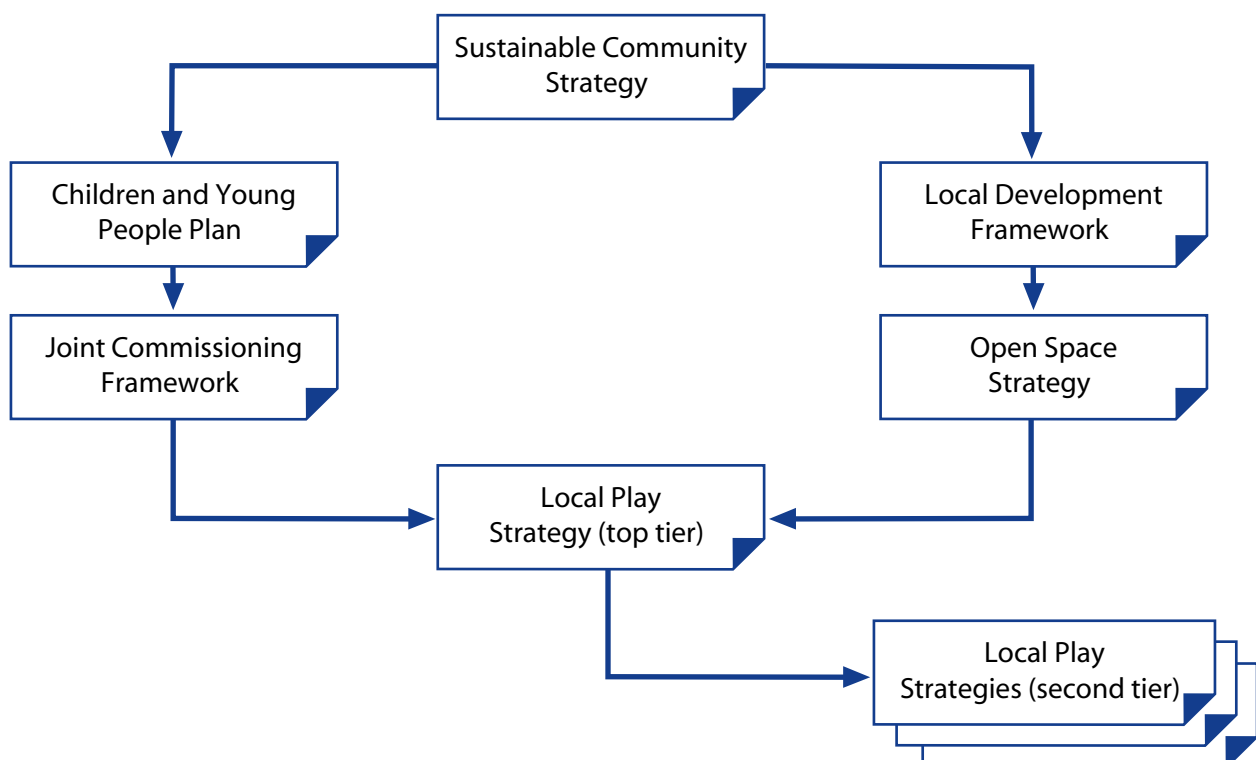
Local Strategic Partnerships

2.7 Statutory Guidance on *Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities*²⁶ requires closer joint working between local authorities and their partners to improve communities' quality of life and to promote a safer and a more attractive built environment that meets people's needs, including those of children and young people: promoting safer and more attractive public places for children to play and teenagers to meet.

2.8 Planning policy and the role of planners is vital to the creation of child-friendly public space. CABE Space, the Government's adviser on public space has published guidance that identifies a local play strategy as one component of the Open Space Strategy that should inform the Local Development Framework for spatial planning.²⁷

2.9 Thus, a local play strategy, via the CYPP on the one hand and the Local Development Framework on the other is a recommended vehicle for ensuring that the top level Sustainable Community Strategy takes account of children and young people's need for play provision and of the whole community's need for a safe, child-friendly public realm. The local play strategy is also a commissioning strategy for play and sits alongside other commissioning strategies for the Children's Trust.

Figure 1. Play within the local strategic planning framework



Play and the performance and inspection framework

2.10 The Government has made it clear to local authorities that parents and children want play to be a priority and it is now part of the performance framework for local areas. From April 2009, the National Indicator Set has included an indicator on children's views of the parks and play areas in their local area, measured through the TellUs survey of school-aged children, and reported against by Ofsted as part of the annual Comprehensive Area Assessment.

2.11 Local authorities and Children's Trusts can prioritise children's play and the development and protection of 'playable' child-friendly space

as part of their Local Area Agreement or local targets. Local authority play services and their partners will need, therefore, to look at their own monitoring and evaluation, including the impact of their playbuilder or pathfinder funding. This will help to inform the overall assessment of services by Ofsted and enable effective performance management.

2.12 The next chapter explores the range of national policy aims and measures for local implementation on which an improved local play offer can have an impact. This is preceded by a table illustrating the range of National Indicators to which good play provision can contribute.

Table 1: Play and the National Indicator Set

Outcome	National Indicators	The contribution of play provision and play space
Stronger communities	NI 1–6 Community cohesion and satisfaction with local area	Play spaces are a high priority for families – the introduction of play spaces can engender community ownership and engagement, bring families together, and can help to reduce youth crime and anti-social behaviour.
Safer communities	NI 17, 22, 23 Perceptions of anti-social behaviour, parents' responsibility for children – respect NI 48 The number of children killed or seriously injured in traffic accidents	Good play provision and child-friendly public space can promote a sense of belonging, increasing mutual understanding and respect and changing perceptions of behaviour and responsibility. Reducing levels of car usage in the built environment, through 20 mph zones, home zones and other design, planning and engineering measures can calm traffic and reduce accidents to children. Involving children in the planning and design of routes and other measures can facilitate access to play and increase children's independence while also reducing accidents.

Table 1: Play and the National Indicator Set		
Outcome	National Indicators	The contribution of play provision and play space
<p>Children and Young People</p> <p>Be Healthy</p>	<p>NI 50, 54, 55, 56, 57 and 58</p> <p>Children's physical, emotional and behavioural health</p> <p>NI 199</p> <p>Children and young people's satisfaction with parks and play areas</p> <p>(from April 2009)</p>	<p>Playing out increases physical activity and can promote mental well-being and resilience.</p> <p>Good play provision offers opportunities for children to have fun and enjoy life, to develop and maintain friendships, and increases their self-confidence.</p>
<p>Children and Young People</p> <p>Stay Safe</p>	<p>NI 69</p> <p>Children who have experienced bullying</p> <p>NI 70</p> <p>Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children and young people</p>	<p>Well-designed play spaces and supervised free play can reduce bullying and help children's self-confidence.</p> <p>Well designed play areas and staffed play provision like adventure playgrounds can enable children to develop the physical skills and confidence to manage risks at play; helping to improve their safety from accident in parks and green spaces, schools and children's centres.</p> <p>Safer routes to and from play spaces and street play schemes, and greater supervision of public space, should reduce accidents involving children.</p>
<p>Children and Young People</p> <p>Enjoy and Achieve</p>	<p>NI 72–78</p> <p>Children and young people achieving minimum standards at each key stage</p> <p>NI 88, 109</p> <p>Number of Extended Schools and children's centres</p> <p>NI 92–98, 106–108</p> <p>Narrowing the gap</p>	<p>Good play opportunities promote informal learning, creativity and initiative, and can improve children's ability to concentrate.</p> <p>Play facilities can make schools more enjoyable and welcoming to children.</p> <p>Staffed play provision within the 'varied menu of activities' offered through extended services and children's centres make these more enjoyable and attractive to children.</p> <p>Children's enjoyment of their childhoods, including play and recreation – things to do and places to go – is a key to the Every Child Matters outcomes.</p>

Table 1: Play and the National Indicator Set		
Outcome	National Indicators	The contribution of play provision and play space
Children and Young People Make a positive contribution	NI 110 Young people's participation in positive activities	Facilities for play and informal recreation that are well designed through engaging with children and young people can enhance their sense of ownership and respect for their neighbourhood environment. Staffed play provision can offer volunteering opportunities for young people.
Children and Young People Economic Well-being	NI 116 Proportion of children in poverty NI 117 16- to 18-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)	Good play provision is at the heart of the safe, cohesive and prosperous communities where children can thrive and develop. Staffed play provision can offer training and employment opportunities for young people. Free, accessible play space helps children from poorer families to compensate for lack of other opportunities.
Tackling exclusion and promoting equality	NI 140 Fair treatment by local services	Play services and play spaces can, and should be, fully inclusive and accessible and all neighbourhoods should have access to playable areas.
Local economy	NI 151 Overall employment rate NI 155, 160, 170, 175, 179 Number of affordable homes, local authority tenants' satisfaction with landlord services, developing brownfield land, access to services, and value for money	Increased local play provision includes increased investment in the local workforce and generates business for suppliers. Good play space can increase residents' satisfaction with their local area and with local authority services.
Environmental sustainability	NI 195, 197 Improved street and environmental cleanliness, local biodiversity and positive conservation management NI 198 Mode of travel to school usually used by children	Well used and maintained children's play areas add to general use of, and pride in, community space. Natural play areas add to green space and engender environmental awareness in children. Where children and their families feel safe for them to play outside, they are more likely to walk or cycle to school.

Chapter 3

How play supports local priorities and policies

Play's contribution to Every Child Matters

Being healthy

- 3.1** Play is crucial to health and development throughout childhood. It supports children's emotional, physical and mental health, well-being and development. There is growing evidence that a decline in the freedom to play is a factor in a range of increasing health problems – from childhood obesity to mental illness in children.
- 3.2** Provision for play is embedded across the delivery planning for Public Service Agreement (PSA) 12 to improve the health and well-being of all children and young people and is an important part of the children and young people's health strategy, *Healthy lives, brighter futures*.²⁸ Children's Trusts should work closely with senior decision makers in public health and with Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) to ensure a coordinated approach to promoting play as an aspect of children's everyday activity.
- 3.3** The cross-government strategy *Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives*,²⁹ and the Department of Health guidance, *Be Active, Be Healthy: a plan for getting the nation moving*³⁰ each promote the importance of play in children's

lives, whilst *Play4Life* is an integral part of the national *Change4Life* campaign.

... letting children go out to play is one of the best things that parents can do for their children's health: outdoor play uses more calories than clubs and tuition.

Mackett, R. (2004) *Making children's lives more active. Research report*. Centre for Transport Studies, University College London.

Staying safe

- 3.4** Fear of strangers, traffic and bullying are cited as reasons for children not playing outside. Staffed play provision can allay many of these concerns and is an important element of the integrated children's services offer.
- 3.5** As well as an appropriate level of staffed provision where need is greatest, a key aim of local play strategies should be the development of knowledge and skills within the wider workforce and within community volunteers of how to enable children's play in public space,^v including the supervision and oversight that will help to instil confidence in children and their parents that children will be safe from bullying and other perceived threats.³¹

v. See Play England's Play Shaper programme. www.playshaper.org.uk

3.6 Playworkers are among the professionals that should be following safeguarding guidance as set out in *Working Together to Safeguard Children*,³² linking with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). For the third sector, the Safe Network was launched in June 2009 to provide advice and resources on safeguarding and safety issues specifically for the sector (www.safenetwork.org.uk).

3.7 Children want and need exciting and adventurous play experiences. To challenge and stretch themselves under their own initiative is one of the main reasons children play. Research shows that encountering and managing risk at play increases children's resilience, adaptability and self-confidence. The Government's Staying Safe Action Plan³³ recognises these benefits and the Play Strategy has taken this forward by publishing, with Play England, guidance on managing risk in play provision.³⁴ This sets out an approach to risk management, endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive, which recognises the benefits to children of encountering and managing risks for themselves as part of their play experience, whilst ensuring reasonable steps are taken to mitigate risks of serious harm.

Enjoying and Achieving

'Play is not a trivial pursuit ...(and) although it benefits young children individually to have ample space and time to play, investigate and explore, they benefit equally from learning together through shared play'

*Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum: Final Report.*³⁵

3.8 It is a principle of The Children's Plan that children should be able to enjoy their childhood as well as

be prepared for adult life. Children's enjoyment of play for its own sake is therefore an important outcome in its own right, as are more things to do and places to go for young people. But play can also complement and enhance children's more formal learning.

Play in Schools

3.9 One of the tenets of education is that children learn more and better when they enjoy it. The final report of the Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum by Sir Jim Rose has highlighted the importance of play and proposes extending and building upon the active, play-based learning of the Early Years Foundation Stage across the transition to primary education, especially into Key Stage 1.^{vi}

3.10 In addition, schools are traditionally – and remain – important places for children to play for its own sake, at playtime and at other times. Opportunities for play are an important feature of after school provision as part of the varied menu of activities and the childcare elements of the core offer of services. This is made clear in the extended schools prospectus *Extended schools: Building on experience*.³⁶ As such, schools have an important role in the local play strategy.

3.11 Well-developed sites and facilities, including for play, are an important feature of the Building Schools for the Future programme and the Government's vision for the 21st Century School. Schools should endeavour to embed the provision of play opportunities within the school day, to provide stimulating play facilities on their sites, and to explore opportunities to make these available outside school hours.

Play is a very important part of the concept of extended activities in schools ... Children should not just have study support and curriculum-focused activities at the end of the day; we want them to relax and unwind in a secure and stimulating environment.

Rt. Hon. Beverley Hughes MP,
Minister for Children, Young People
and Families, Hansard, 27 April 2006

- 3.12** The need for good play provision is just as important for disabled as for non-disabled children. The *Aiming High for Disabled Children* programme is designed to offer a range of short break opportunities for disabled children and young people, including time with their peers in staffed play provision.^{vii} Good play provision should be fully inclusive and accessible to disabled children.

Play in early learning and childcare

- 3.13** Play is central to early childhood and young children should have access to a wide range of indoor and outdoor play opportunities. Parents and carers, and those offering childcare as group provision or to individual children, should be supported to understand both the importance and nature of good play opportunities and how to provide and facilitate them.

- 3.14** Play is central to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS),³⁷ which became statutory from September 2008 for all early years settings, including those registered with Ofsted, working with children aged from birth to 5 years. It is designed to ensure that every child will benefit from positive relationships with adults and other children, in safe, fun, high-quality, play-

based, child-centred provision that enables all children to develop their full potential.

- 3.15** The Government's children's centres programme is on track to deliver 3,500 children's centres across England, one for every community by 2010. Children's centres in the most disadvantaged areas provide integrated childcare and early education (including the EYFS) along with information and advice for parents and carers, and a range of family and parenting support, outreach, health and employment services.
- 3.16** Outside the most disadvantaged areas the range of support children's centres provide is more flexible – for example, the provision of integrated childcare and early education varies according to local need. However, all centres are expected to offer activities for children, parents and carers. Play is integrated into many Sure Start Children's Centre services: play sessions, indoor and outdoor play areas, and support for parents and carers in encouraging play; support for childminders, including access to toy libraries; and sensory play rooms for disabled children in some centres.
- 3.17** Children's centres have a key role in ensuring local parents and carers know about local play opportunities. As children's centres are already hubs of local services, they are already well placed to link with local play providers or to develop additional free play provision themselves, by opening up access to the Children's centre space – both indoor and outdoor – to be used for free play both during the week and, where possible, at weekends.

vii. *Aiming High for Disabled Children* (AHDC) www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/ahdc/AHDC/

Making a positive contribution

- 3.18** Children's play is a fundamental medium for their self-expression and development of their own agency, where they can realise the extent and the limits of their effect on their own lives and the contribution they can make to their community. Playing together, children rehearse interactions and explore boundaries that are a key to their healthy communities as they grow. Good play provision also promotes innovation and creativity in children. Development of outside play and recreation spaces has been shown to have a measurable impact on community cohesion and community safety.³⁸
- 3.19** Local authorities and community groups are increasingly involving children and young people in local play audits and discussions about their play and free time needs. This results in more appropriate provision, helps children and young people develop their skills and knowledge and ensures they are valued as active community members. Respecting and incorporating children and young people's views into plans and provision helps develop motivation and, potentially, participation in society.³⁹
- 3.20** Aiming High for Young People sets out the Government's vision for improving youth facilities in response to clear ongoing demand from young people, parents and communities for more and better places to go. In April 2008, *myplace* was launched to deliver over £270 million of capital investment in youth facilities over three years, through grants of between £1 million and £5 million. Delivered by the Big Lottery Fund on behalf of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), *myplace* will be driven by the active participation of young people and their views and needs. Facilities will need to be delivered in cross-sector partnership and offer young people a safe place to go, access to an exciting range of positive leisure time activities and access to support services as and when they are needed. These programmes should respond to young people's need for things to do and places to go, including recreational sites, to get involved in constructive and positive activities and mix with others.
- 3.21** Local authorities should also, wherever possible, align the planning of youth and play capital investment in order that they might complement and add value to each other for middle years and older. This may also have the benefit of reducing vandalism and inappropriate use of play provision by teenagers where this has been a problem. It is in areas of highest deprivation that groups of children or young people 'hanging out' in the public domain are most often characterised as posing a threat or a nuisance, even when they are simply enjoying being together, leading adults in some communities to be hostile to any measures to provide public space for them. Many children and young people complain that they do not have access to public space because of the negative perceptions of local people and wider society. Such views can serve to exacerbate the sense of alienation that can itself lead young people into anti-social behaviour. Actively engaging children and young people in the design and development of their own play and recreational spaces can help to counter such trends and engender within them a greater sense of community and mutual respect.
- 3.22** Research commissioned by CAFE 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.⁴⁰ An evaluation of the Children's Fund by Birmingham University⁴¹ found that children's play projects and after-school clubs may have a significant role in preventing social exclusion by diverting children from anti-social behaviour and the consequent risks of offending.

provide compensatory benefits for children and their families living with economic hardship.⁴³

Enjoying economic well-being

- 3.23** The creative and social skills that children develop through play help them to develop the lateral thinking and emotional intelligence that are increasingly important in a globalised, non-hierarchical economy.
- 3.24** Good play provision promotes community well-being and security. It brings economic benefits through jobs and training; through the increased confidence and freedom that comes from children being enjoyably and safely occupied and through the creation of safer, more positive, more desirable neighbourhoods where there is more chance of the community being economically sustainable.
- 3.25** Children in deprived communities can often lack safe spaces to socialise and play. This can have knock-on effects on a child's cognitive development, communication skills and health, and affect their attainment. Some researchers have suggested that an approach to building services for children that take their wider domain into account would do more 'to tackle the broader, more ecological and structural aspects of social exclusion'.⁴² Research in London has shown that free access to play areas and child-friendly public space can
- 3.26** The Child Poverty Bill, which was introduced before Parliament in summer 2009, requires the Government to publish a child poverty strategy within one year of the bill receiving royal assent. This strategy will set out Government plans to meet a series of targets to eradicate child poverty and ensure, as far as possible, that children in the UK do not experience socio-economic disadvantage. It will consider the access that poor children have to safe places to play and also the potential role this can have in breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty. In addition, the Bill will introduce a new duty on local authorities and relevant delivery partners to work together to tackle child poverty in their area. This responsibility will be delivered by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and its partners, such as Children's Trusts. The duty to work together to tackle child poverty will be accompanied by a duty to carry out a local child poverty needs assessment.
- 3.27** Part of the Government's commitment to end child poverty is 'the aspiration that families will live in safe, cohesive and prosperous communities where children can thrive, with safe places to play, opportunities to develop, and access to high-quality services'.⁴⁴
- 3.28** The consequences of children being deprived of the space to play can be serious, with childhood obesity, anti-social behaviour and a range of emotional and mental difficulties being attributable, at least in part, to a lack of free play opportunities. The Government expects LSPs and Children's Trusts to ensure their strategies for reducing child poverty and on

extending and improving provision and space for children and young people's play and informal recreation are aligned. The recommended steps and processes set out in this guidance are part of the approach to realising this ambition.

Play's contribution to strong, safe and prosperous communities

3.29 *Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities: Statutory Guidance*⁴⁵ requires closer joint working between local authorities and their partners to improve communities' quality of life and to provide a safer and a more attractive built environment that meets people's needs and empowers communities. Involving children and young people in the place-shaping of their neighbourhoods is consistent with this duty, and may also help to combat anti-social behaviour by engendering in them a sense of community engagement and identity.

Community empowerment

3.30 The Communities and Local Government White Paper *Communities in control: real people, real power*⁴⁶ offers a blueprint for how communities can be given real control over local decisions and services. This shift in power and influence to communities and individual citizens provides opportunities to influence children's services and play facilities. The White Paper, published in April 2009, identifies a duty on local councils to involve local people in key decisions, including planning decisions, and a new duty to respond to petitions, so that, for example, when local communities put forward proposals for action to regenerate or provide play space, their proposals should be properly considered.

Planning policy

- 3.31** National planning guidance explicitly recognises the need for dedicated outdoor space for play and recreation. Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17)⁴⁷ requires local authorities to assess the needs and opportunities for different types of open space and recreational facilities, including play space for children. The department for Communities and Local Government is publishing, in autumn 2009, supplementary guidance to PPG17 on developing and implementing planning policy on the provision of play space. This will be supplemented by comprehensive guidance from Play England, *Better Places to Play through Planning* (Play England, 2009).⁴⁸
- 3.32** Government policy on the planning and development of housing and public open spaces is clear that the needs of children and young people are an important consideration for all local planning authorities. *Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing* (PPS3)⁴⁹ requires planning authorities to consider, where family housing is to be developed, the needs of children. There should be good provision of recreational areas, including private gardens, play areas and informal play space. These spaces should be well-designed, safe, secure and stimulating with safe pedestrian access. To achieve this, planning authorities should engage, early in the planning process, with local communities, stakeholders and infrastructure providers. The aim should be to create places, streets and spaces which meet the needs of people, are visually attractive, safe, accessible, functional, inclusive and have their own distinctive identity whilst maintaining and improving local character. Well-designed play spaces and playable public space are an important part of this vision.

3.33 In addition to PPS3, Government housing and regeneration initiatives have supported improvements to the built environment alongside economic measures, with a growing focus on improving public spaces. Research in 2006 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation⁵⁰ found that a focus on play and public space was a key factor in making new and regenerated communities attractive to families. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) drew similar conclusions from its research into the views of residents of new housing.⁵¹ These findings are especially relevant to the growth points and growth areas set up under the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan, Housing Renewal areas and the new Eco-towns.

3.34 In order to promote the wider aims for children's environmental well-being within spatial and housing planning policies, the Children's Trust should engage with planning departments to assist their consideration of the need for play provision during the preparation of Local Development Frameworks and, where appropriate, at the planning decision stage.

3.35 An area-wide local play strategy, as discussed in Part 2 of this guidance, should be coordinated with the local open space strategy. CABE Space, the Government's adviser on planning issues for open space has published guidance on developing open space strategies and much of this guidance methodology can be applied to the development of a local play strategy.⁵²

Safe routes to play and active travel

3.36 A key expectation of the play capital building programme is that local authorities should develop safe routes to play spaces. Not only

should they take account of the guidance and resources mentioned here, but they should also consider sustainable development and active travel. In many cases, this will mean providing walking or cycling routes for children, linked to existing networks.

3.37 Guidance from both Communities and Local Government⁵³ and the Department for Transport⁵⁴ emphasises the importance of taking account of the needs of children and young people in master planning for large developments and in the placement of access routes to play spaces. Adventure playgrounds, play parks and other play destinations may require travel plans to ensure sustainable access routes are planned in from the start. It is particularly important, under the Sustainable Community Strategy, that:

- new and refurbished play spaces are safely accessible on foot or bicycle
- children are able to travel freely around their local streets safely on foot or bicycle
- play spaces are situated away from busy roads where practicable
- consideration is given to developing playable routes within and between neighbourhoods.

3.38 Department for Transport Local Transport Plan guidance, published in July 2008, is statutory guidance on local authority transport planning. It promotes the integration of transport with wider corporate priorities at local level. The guidance recommends that local authorities strategically align Local Transport Plans and CYPPs. The associated Policies and

Good Practice Handbook⁵⁵ provides links to further guidance and resources, and includes a section on child-friendly travel and transport planning and policy (www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/ltp/guidance/localtransportplans).

Consultation questions

Part 1. The policy context for play

1. Is the importance of play provision and child-friendly public space within the broad policy context made clear?
2. Is the guidance clear about how play contributes to local and national policy?
3. Is the information on National Indicators clear, helping you to put play in the wider context of local authority policy and delivery?
4. If you have answered 'No' to any of the above, what further information would be helpful?

Part 2: Local strategic planning for play



... a good (local) play strategy will 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, pretend, keep animals, dig holes, swing on tyres, shout, fight, invent games, make things, paint pictures, talk with their friends or just sit.⁵⁶

Planning for Play (Children's Play Council, 2006)

Introduction

The first part of this guidance set out the policy framework, including statutory guidance, for play provision and child-friendly public space as a priority of the Children's Trust board and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

It recommended that the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) should identify commitments to extend and enhance the play offer according to local need and that the LSP should ensure these commitments are reflected within plans for spatial and community development and the infrastructure that supports it.

Thus, the planning and commissioning process for Children's Trusts⁵⁷ should be applied to coordinating and leading the development of the cross-cutting approach that is required. More and better play provision should be considered for ongoing investment from the integrated budgets and coordinated delivery that will flow from this process. So too should improvements to the built environment and open spaces to make them safer, more accessible and more 'playable' for children.

Many authorities, including top-tier authorities, have found the production of a local play strategy to be the most effective way to achieve the desired outcomes. This approach to embedding play within the strategic planning framework, which is voluntary but recommended,^{viii} is illustrated below, followed by descriptions of a local play strategy and play partnership. Part 3 describes a recommended process for developing and implementing a local play strategy within this framework.

Note: The *Commissioning Support Programme*^{ix} offers ongoing advice, support, information and tools to Children's Trust partners, for successful joint commissioning. Published in July 2009, *Achieving Better Outcomes: Commissioning in Children's Services*⁵⁸ is recommended guidance and can be downloaded from the Commissioning Support Programme website.

viii. It is expected that revised Statutory Guidance on CYPPs, to be launched for consultation in autumn 2009, will include the expectation that local commitments to extend and improve the play offer should be embedded within the CYPP, coordinated and implemented through a local play strategy.

ix. <http://www.commissioningsupport.org.uk>

Chapter 4

The benefits of a strategic approach

The local play strategy

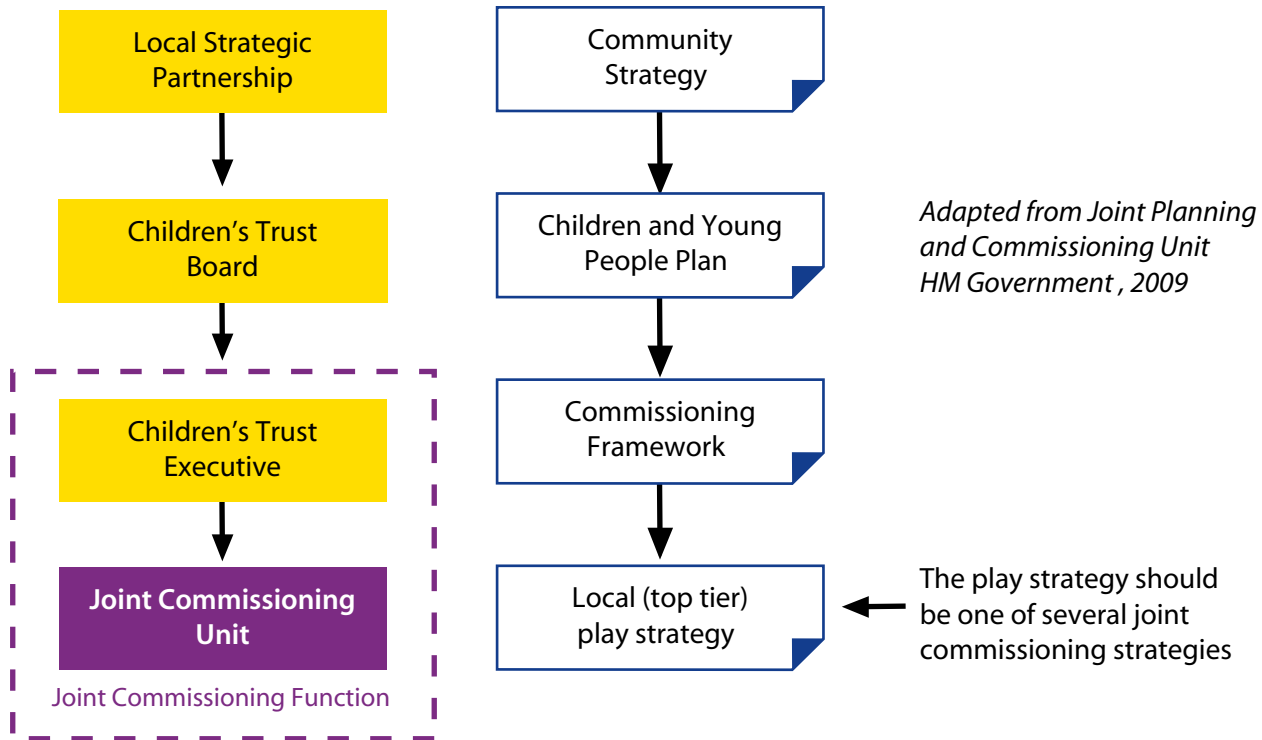
4.1 A cohesive vision for play that is shared across the authority and its partners on the Children's Trust board, and adopted by the LSP, will require considerable joint planning. The Children's Trust will need to engage with the LSP on issues such as town and highways planning and the management and maintenance of public space: aiming to embed play within local housing, regeneration and transport plans. It should thus enable the LSP to consider children's play provision and the creation of more child-friendly communities within the priorities for improvement in the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and associated targets.

4.2 Many local authorities have already opted to develop and adopt local play strategies, co-ordinated and led by a local play partnership reporting to the Children's Trust Board. This approach is recommended, with the local play strategy becoming a commissioning strategy that sits alongside other commissioning strategies for the Children's Trust.

4.3 For two-tier areas, where district councils have a very large part to play in the delivery of play provision and in the planning and management of the neighbourhoods where children live, this guidance should provide a framework for the review and renewal of their local play strategies,^x many of which were produced for the Big Lottery Fund Children's Play programme. Two-tier authorities and their respective LSPs are expected to work together in leading local partner activity on developing Sustainable Community Strategies and spatial and thematic plans within a countywide LAA. The local play strategy is one that should be developed within this two-tier approach.

x. Weblinks to published local authority play strategies can be found at the Children's Play Information Service, based at NCB www.ncb.org.uk/cpis

Figure 2. Play within the planning and commissioning system



Essential elements of a successful local play strategy

- **Cross-cutting:** top level commitments within the CYPP, Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Development Framework with links to open space, transport, traffic and housing.
- **Strong leadership:** lead officer with appropriate seniority and resources, supported by a play champion within the council or relevant cabinet.
- **High-level support:** support for a cross-cutting, collaborative approach from the Director of Children's Services and the Chief Planning Officer.
- **Sound basis:** based on a comprehensive play audit and needs assessment.
- **Participative:** active participation of children and young people, parents and community members.
- **Inclusive:** actively includes disabled children, children from minority ethnic communities, and children living with social or economic disadvantage.
- **Commitment:** commitments are defined as SMART objectives with a timetabled action plan.
- **Resourced:** activities are resourced and there is a commitment to sustainability.
- **Learning:** regular monitoring, evaluation and review.

The play partnership

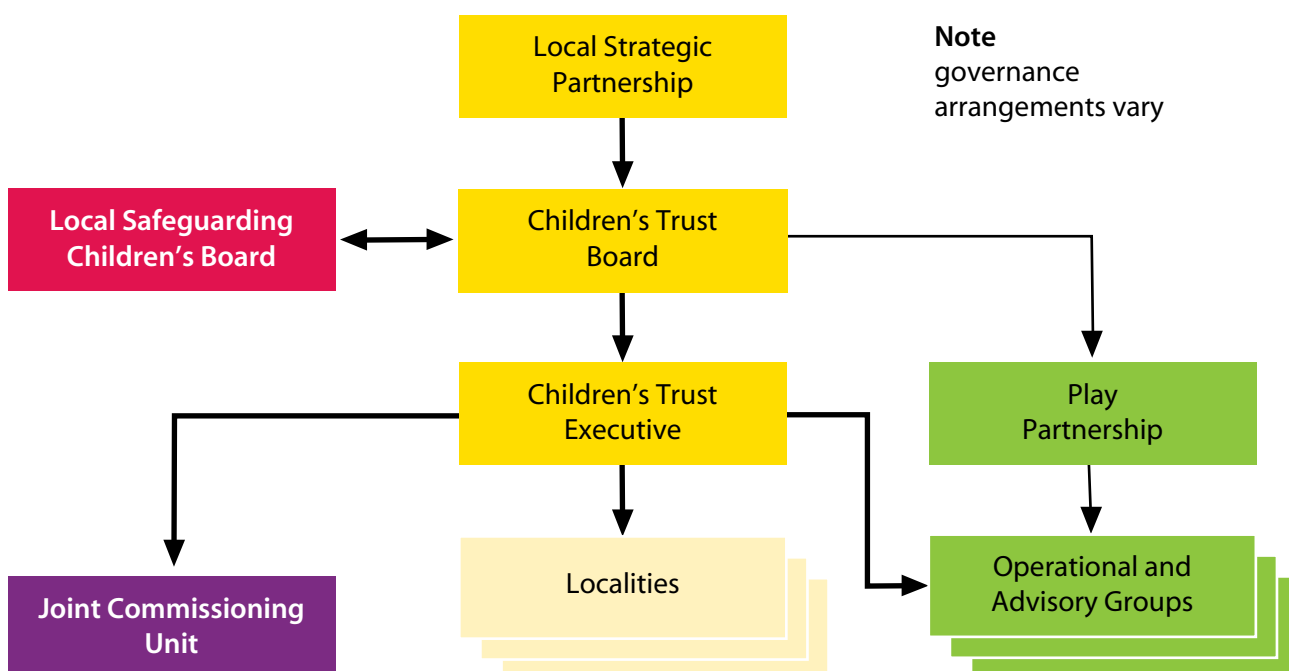
4.4 The experience of unitary authorities and district and borough councils has demonstrated that the creation and maintenance of a play partnership, involving all the key agencies and departments, is the best way to develop an effective local play strategy. The local authority with its partners on the Children's Trust Board should consider establishing a play partnership within its governance structure (see Figure 3 below).

4.5 The play partnership should develop a shared vision for play across the whole area, with clear commitments from each partner and a co-ordinated delivery plan, implemented through a joint commissioning strategy for play and a suitable operational group.

The make-up of play partnerships will vary, but should broadly include those in the local authority, other statutory agencies, and the voluntary and community sector (and with links, where appropriate, to the private sector) with a responsibility for:

- play services
- planning
- public health
- procurement and commissioning
- community engagement
- neighbourhood management and regeneration
- police

Figure 3. The play partnership as part of the emerging governance structure



- youth services
- housing
- highways and transport
- parks and open spaces
- childcare, schools and extended services
- workforce development
- services for disabled children and young people
- services provided for children in exceptional circumstances.

Chapter 5

Roles and responsibilities

The local authority

5.1 Play partnerships will vary, but whatever the local circumstances, the local authority will have some key roles, including:

- reviewing and auditing existing play opportunities
- setting local standards for the quantity, quality and accessibility of provision
- fully engaging the voluntary and community sector
- planning for the recruitment and development of the workforce
- pooling financial resources, accessing different funding streams for delivery
- evaluating implementation and impact.

Lead officers and play champions

5.2 Play services in some authorities may be led by a different department but generally the director of children's services^{xi} should take the lead in overseeing the development of the top-tier play strategy and identify an appropriately

senior and qualified officer to drive its development and implementation, liaising with other key departments to ensure support for the process.

5.3 The play lead should be supported by a board or partnership of officers from all the appropriate departments, such as planning, housing, schools and transport, as well as representatives from key partner agencies such as health, police, local voluntary and community sector organisations, each with sufficient seniority to make decisions.

5.4 Almost all district and borough councils now have a local play strategy and play partnership, in support of funding allocations from the Big Lottery Fund Children's Play programme (2006–2011). In two-tier authorities, therefore, it is recommended that the local authority, with its partners on the Children's Trust board, form a play partnership including representatives from each second-tier authority. This should then lead the development of a countywide approach to co-ordinating activities and programmes and commissioning projects (from the districts or their partners where appropriate) through a top-tier play strategy.

xi. As explained in Part 1, it is recognised that in some authorities, particularly at the second-tier, the lead for play is not with children's services, but, for example, with leisure, culture or life-long learning. Whichever department takes the lead in service delivery, the Children's Trust should aim to co-ordinate activities and secure cross-cutting commitments within the framework of the joint planning and commissioning framework.

5.5 As well as a lead officer for play, it is strongly recommended that local authorities designate a councillor as a 'play champion', to act as an advocate for the play strategy in policy discussions, and to provide political leadership. They should be in a position to ensure that all key departments support the process: ideally, a cabinet member or other senior elected member.

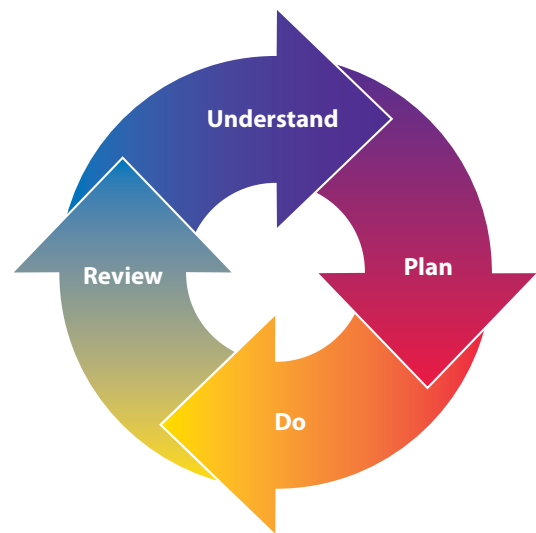
5.6 Local MPs have an important role too, in representing community interests in their constituencies and maintaining links with Parliamentary activity. The play partnership should seek opportunities to invite local MPs to engage with the local play strategy and to help shape its development on behalf of their constituents. They can also, of course, be invaluable informal champions, adding value to the advocacy of elected members.

5.7 However it is constituted, the play partnership should reflect local requirements. It should provide strategic leadership for play services and play space development: overseeing the delivery of play pathfinder or playbuilder projects and those resourced through other funding streams. It should also ensure that provision by the voluntary and community sector is appropriately recognised and supported as part of area-wide provision.

5.8 To sustain these improvements, the play partnership, embedded within the wider Children's Trust partnership, should ensure that a cohesive vision and strategy for play is shared and co-ordinated across all the key responsibilities and activities. The local authority should then ensure that the commitments of the local play strategy are embedded within statutory plans like the CYPP

and Sustainable Community Strategy – so that local play needs become an integral component of the LSP's vision for its community.

5.9 Children's Trusts use a variety of processes for their planning and commissioning cycles, each based on the principles: Understand, Plan, Do Review.



5.10 Part 3 of this guide is based on the nine-step planning and commissioning cycle described in the Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services.

Consultation questions

Part 2. Local strategic planning for play

- 1.** Is the rationale for a local play strategy clear and does it fit accurately onto your local strategic systems and processes?
- 2.** Are there any potential partners in a local play strategy not identified?
- 3.** If you have answered 'No' to any of the above, what further information would be helpful.

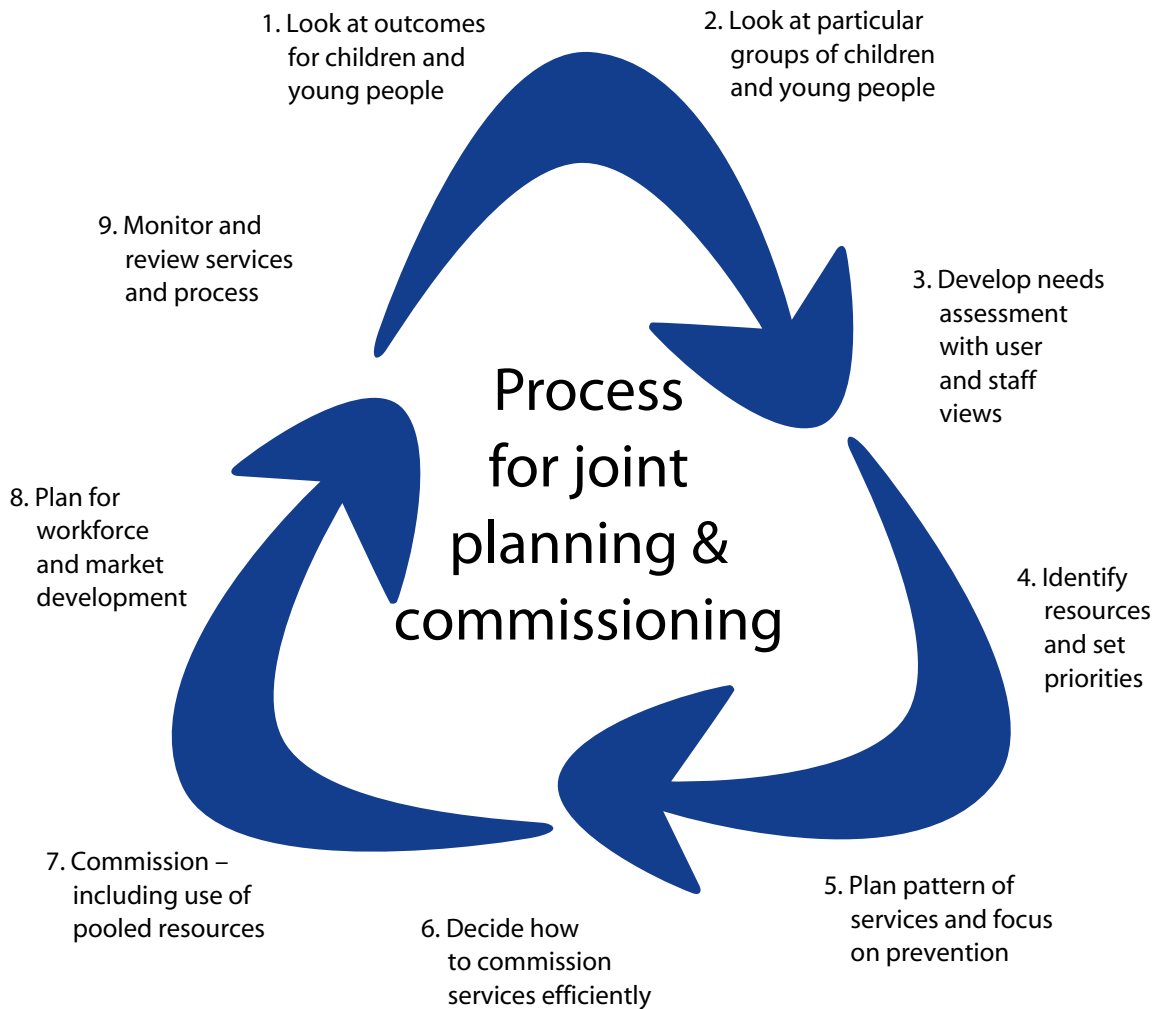
Part 3: A suggested process



Children in deprived communities can often lack safe spaces to socialise and play. This can have knock-on effects on a child's cognitive development, communication skills and health, and their attainment. The Government has set itself the aspiration that families will live in safe, cohesive and prosperous communities where children can thrive, with safe places to play, opportunities to develop, and access to high-quality public services.

Ending child poverty: making it happen (HM Government, 2009)

Figure 4. Developing and implementing a local play strategy within the joint planning and commissioning framework for children's services.



How the generic stages in the planning and commissioning cycle (above) can be applied to a local play strategy

1. Look at NI199 as a measure of children's enjoyment of play and recreation and consider play's contribution to other outcomes and indicators (see Table 1).
2. Look at particular groups and neighbourhoods that may need targeted investment for play provision.
3. Develop play needs assessment through engagement with community, including these groups.
4. Audit play provision. Identify gaps and resources and agree priorities for play strategy.
5. Plan the pattern of services and spaces for play to be commissioned targeted at areas of greatest need as identified at Stage 4.
6. Design the local play strategy identifying effective commissioning mechanisms where appropriate, and working through the Joint Commissioning Unit.
7. Commission services and spaces for play: look for potential for joint commissioning, using pooled resources and collaboration across departments.
8. Develop and implement a play workforce development plan, including both playwork and cross-professional skills development. Develop market management plan for other suppliers.
9. Monitor progress of the action plan against agreed milestones and review the commissioning process. Evaluate performance using local play indicators. Evaluate the play strategy against identified outcomes and review results of NI 199.

Stage 1

Looking at outcomes for children

Stage 1. Look at NI 199 as a measure of children's enjoyment of play and recreation and consider play's contribution to other outcomes and indicators.

The Children's Plan and the Play Strategy emphasise the importance of children enjoying childhood as well as being prepared for adult life. Play and recreation significantly contribute to the Every Child Matters outcomes framework and to a range of other desired outcomes for communities.

National Indicator NI 199 for play

The baseline data from the 2008 TellUs 3 survey found 45 per cent of children rated parks/play areas as 'very good' or 'fairly good'. However, a larger proportion of children was indifferent or rated them as 'poor'.

To make the enjoyment of play a more robust part of the outcomes framework, since April 2009 the National Indicator Set has included NI 199, which will measure children's satisfaction with their local play areas and park. As part of the annual Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process, Ofsted will assess every top-tier local authority against the full range of national indicators, including NI 199. The Government expects progress against this indicator to be seen across every top-tier local authority in the country. Where local authorities are shown to have relatively low levels of child satisfaction with local parks and play areas, the authority and Government

Office should consider whether NI 199 should be used as one of the local targets to be included in the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

Local evaluation tools

Play England has developed and piloted a set of voluntary local play indicators, as part of a toolkit for evaluating and improving the play offer.⁶⁰ These can provide targeted data on the extent of local participation in play provision, the degree of access to playable spaces, and an objective tool for assessing the quality of these spaces. The local play indicators can also enable authorities to closely monitor the impact of improvements on children and young people's satisfaction with the play offer in their area, offering detailed, localised information which can help planning and delivery that drives up performance under NI 199.

Play's contribution to other national indicators

As illustrated in Part 1, play provision also makes a significant contribution towards other outcomes and indicators within LAAs, cutting across the four key LAA themes:

- Children and young people
- Safer and stronger communities
- Healthier communities and older people
- Economic development and the environment

Play in Local Area Agreements

Darlington District Council: Play as part of the safer and stronger communities block

As part of their safer and stronger communities block, Darlington has included the indicator: 'percentage of residents very or fairly satisfied with children's play areas'. Darlington chose to use this indicator because it reflects their local priority to increase numbers of children and young people who are positively engaged in their free time, enjoying play and recreation and achieving personal and social development. Darlington measures this through a survey of local residents.

Somerset County Council: Play as part of the Children and Young People Theme

As part of its commitment for children to 'achieve personal and social development' Somerset intends to extend its range of play opportunities and the numbers of children and young people using them. The county is linking this aim to the five district play strategies within the county. Somerset chose this indicator as it represented both the wishes of the wider community and their target to increase children's physical activity.

Consultation questions

Stage 1. Looking at outcomes for children

- 1a.** Is the guidance in this section clear?
- 1b.** Does this accurately reflect and fit into your own local area systems and delivery processes?
- 1c.** What further information or changes would you find helpful?

Stage 2

Looking at particular groups

Stage 2. Look at particular groups and neighbourhoods that may need targeted investment for play provision.

The local play strategy should aim to identify locations with the greatest need for more play provision or improvements to public space. Play deprivation can result from a number of factors including traffic, badly planned, high-density housing, dearth of green space, low level crime and bullying, lack of supervision or oversight. These can affect whole communities, particularly those living with other forms of social disadvantage or discrimination. Therefore, although the local play strategy should aim to improve provision and environments for children across the whole area in question, it should prioritise improving outcomes for children in deprived neighbourhoods and particular groups.

Before undertaking the audit of play spaces there should be an analysis of key demographics of local children and families. Obtaining and understanding key data about the young community – numbers of children, gender, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic status, types of family structures, types of housing, and employment profiles – will help to identify the specific needs of local children.

Data on local needs should be analysed to draw conclusions, inform local priorities, and provide information required to build an informed picture

of local play needs. The data can then inform LAA negotiations, strategic documents such as the CYPP, Local Development Framework, local transport planning and decisions on commissioning and service design.

The assessment of data should look at groups of children and young people with particular needs for targeted provision. These groups may include children from ethnic minority communities, disabled children, children of refugee or asylum-seeking families, looked-after children, and those at risk of offending, or in the youth justice system. The particular needs of girls and young women should also be considered.

It is particularly important to understand where children and young people live and learn, as well as play – so that services and spaces can be made as accessible as possible.

Disabled children

For disabled children, negative attitudes and inaccessible environments compound the general problems experienced by most children, creating enormous social and physical barriers to the enjoyment of their right to play independently. There is evidence that disabled children do not enjoy equality of access to play and leisure activities. A survey of 1,000 parents of disabled children demonstrated how their children were excluded from ordinary leisure opportunities.⁶¹ Parks and

playgrounds were the least user-friendly, with few facilities for disabled people. Other studies have shown that disabled children and young people can often feel threatened in open spaces, with bullying a particular problem for some groups of disabled children. In a recent Mencap survey, for example, 8 out of 10 young people with a learning disability had been bullied, and 6 out of 10 said they had been physically hurt by bullying. Eight out of 10 were scared to go out because of bullying.⁶² Poor designs of play equipment and play areas can compound the problems for children with mobility impairments, limiting or curtailing their access altogether.⁶³

See page 63 for further guidance on inclusive play provision.

Black and minority ethnic children

Research has shown that some minority ethnic groups can find themselves excluded from play provision. For example, some Asian children – and girls in particular – do not access mainstream play services owing to a range of cultural and ethnic pressures. Enjoyment of the wider public realm is also significantly compromised for many black and minority ethnic children.⁶⁴ Research by Barnardo's has recommended that the involvement of community-led organisations in the development of play strategies is vital if play opportunities are to be culturally appropriate and inclusive of diverse communities.⁶⁵

Looked after and vulnerable children

It is particularly important that looked after and vulnerable children have access to free play opportunities where they live, in nearby open spaces and in staffed provision. Where children are moved around between homes or families, and where they have suffered abuse or neglect or are going through stressful experiences, they are at risk of losing friendships and of not developing the experience to play either alone or with peers. Also, it is very important that adults with parental responsibility play with vulnerable children, or encourage and reinforce their play. This can help to build trust and self-confidence, establish relationships and develop positive adult role models.

Consultation questions

Stage 2. Looking at particular groups

- 2a. Is the guidance in this section clear?
- 2b. Does this accurately reflect and fit into your own local area systems and delivery processes?
- 2c. What further information or changes would you find helpful?

Case study: Healthy Care

In the West Midlands, Play England is working with the Department of Health and NCB Healthy Care Programme to promote play for children in foster care. The aim of the project is to encourage looked after children and carers to engage in

play as a means of developing an active lifestyle and to support foster carers in developing their understanding of the value of play in nurturing relationships and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Stage 3

Needs assessment

Stage 3. Develop play needs assessment through engagement with the community, including groups identified at Stage 2.

After identifying the particular neighbourhoods and groups of children in the community who may need targeted provision or support, the next stage of the joint planning and commissioning process is a comprehensive needs assessment. In order to understand fully the needs of local children and young people for play and informal recreation, it is important to involve them and consult with them. It is also important, particularly when developing new play spaces, to involve the views of the community, families and those that work with them and their children. Needs assessment and local community consultation, including with children and young people, are requirements under the play pathfinder and playbuilder programmes. More information on the involvement of children and young people can be found in the two publications: *How to involve children and young people in designing and developing play spaces*⁶⁶ and *Our play – our choice*.⁶⁷

Engaging children and their communities

Local authorities have a duty to empower local communities by taking steps to involve *local people (including children)*⁶⁸ by providing information, consulting them, or any other way considered appropriate to the function in question. Local authorities will want to review previous consultations

from across all Children's Trust partners (for example CYPP consultation) to ensure that they are making best use of the available information and not repeating questions that have already been asked.

Children and young people should be the main focus for community empowerment work around the play strategy and whichever projects are commissioned from it. Plans and initiatives will impact on their lives more than any other group, and the success or failure of any changes will depend critically on whether children and young people value and use them or not.

Involving children and young people in this way can give them a voice that all other stakeholders in the process have to pay regard to. It will help the play strategy, and ultimately the changes delivered on the ground, to be more successful, better matched to local circumstances and more valued and sustained over the long term.

Successful involvement will mean making contact with a diverse cross-section of the local young population. Children's Trusts need to empower children and young people: increasing their influence over the design and delivery of services; building on the experience of Youth Opportunity Funds and Capital Funds (YOF and YCF) and local youth councils or forums; and offer children and young people opportunities to contribute to their communities.

Techniques such as Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA)^{xii} are effective ways to engage with a wide range of children, young people, parents, providers, professionals and community groups.

Involving particular groups of children

Groups of children identified as being disadvantaged in terms of play opportunities at Stage 2 should receive particular attention at this stage. This may mean looking beyond existing consultation networks and frameworks and seeking out specific groups of children and young people whose views would not otherwise be represented.

Often children and young people who are most in need of play and recreation provision, and whose day-to-day free time is punctuated with boredom, or behaviour unacceptable to others, are also those least likely to take part in formal consultation processes. There are likely to be a number of agencies in regular contact with these children, who should be able to help and support the process. These include both voluntary organisations and local community police.

Disabled children, especially those with communication difficulties, are also often excluded from consultation and participation. The disabled children's charity KIDS^{xiii} offers advice and support on involving disabled children in every phase of play strategy development, both on designing and building play spaces and on delivering integrated or specialist provision, linking up with short breaks funding.

Involving playworkers

The experience and expertise of playworkers working directly with children at play is a valuable resource. They know how to facilitate children's play and are

aware of the barriers and opportunities afforded by different environments or interventions. They are also skilled at listening to children talk about their play and how this is viewed within the wider community. They are also likely to have relationships with other agencies and adults working with children.

Involving parents and carers

Depending on children's age and other factors, parents are, to a lesser or greater extent, the gatekeepers of their children's play opportunities. Their views on play provision and public space – particularly on the factors that increase or decrease confidence in their children using it – can be valuable data for the audit.

This is especially true for younger children, who can only visit play spaces when accompanied. Nurseries and parent and toddler groups provide good opportunities for consultation, both for the distribution of questionnaires and for convening focus groups.

Parents of older children can be contacted through schools, registered playschemes and out-of-school clubs.

Involving the voluntary and community sector

Statutory Guidance to Children's Trusts⁶⁹ requires that the strategic approach to play across the local area should be with the full involvement of children, local communities and the third sector in decision-making.

One of the key aims of the national Play Strategy is to drive community ownership of play by engaging local people in decisions about its provision, and

xii. Outcomes based accountability: see www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/8940584

xiii. KIDS, the disabled children's charity. www.kids.org.uk

supporting their involvement in capital projects. Another aim is to increase the availability of supervised play by exploring volunteering initiatives and building the capacity of the voluntary sector to support local play spaces.

The *Fair Play* consultation found that adults and children each wanted a greater say in decisions about the design and development of play space. They asked for greater involvement and more opportunity to have a say in what happens in local communities and have more ownership. If communities are involved in local decision-making about which play sites receive investment, where they are situated and what they look like, local people will be more likely to understand children's play needs and accept children in public space.

Many areas have play associations. These local (or, in some cases, regional) charities offer a range of support services and advocacy for children's play. Such organisations, run by local volunteer trustees but employing professional staff, will often be the most experienced agencies on children's play as well as its longest established champions. Local play associations should be natural partners in developing a local play strategy.

The funding requirements of play pathfinder and playbuilder authorities include the need to engage with children, parents, communities and third sector groups. Play England is producing the *Playful Communities* website (replacing the former *Neighbourhood Play Toolkit*)⁷⁰ as an online resource, alongside this guidance as part of its Community Play programme. Play England also offers advice to local authorities that need particular support in engaging communities in supporting local play provision.

Community Play programme

Play England's Community Play programme will provide a range of activities and resources to support and encourage community engagement in the development and delivery of local play provision. This programme will include a dedicated website, a toolkit for local people and community groups, seminars and briefings for third sector, voluntary and community organisations. It will also support local authorities to facilitate and promote local activity and engagement with the third sector.

The up-dated version of the Neighbourhood Play Toolkit will include information and resources to enable local people and community groups to organise, create and sustain local play provision. This will include advice on the strategic context as well as practical advice on setting up a local group: how to involve the whole community; insurance; health and safety; funding; design; and maintenance.

More information will be available from www.playfulcommunities.org.uk later in 2009

*Design for Play*⁷¹ gives advice on community engagement in all aspects of the design process for new and refurbished play areas from preparation and planning, to involvement in construction and maintenance.

Many small voluntary and community groups are involved in the direct delivery of play services for children. This includes play schemes, play ranger projects, after school projects, and adventure playgrounds, where volunteers may be playworkers, members of management committees or simply helping keep the play space in good condition through supervision and repair. These services

Case study: Engaging communities in Knowsley

Knowsley became a play pathfinder in April 2008, and is placing a strong emphasis on putting communities, including children and young people, at the heart of planning and play spaces. When complete, the pathfinder programme will provide bigger, higher, natural, free, more challenging, more accessible, more social and more 'grown up' play spaces, designed with children and communities at the heart of the process.

Knowsley is one of five Metropolitan Authorities in Merseyside and comprises five townships with varying degrees of play deprivation and provision. The pathfinder programme has put the assessment of need and ongoing consultations with local communities at the forefront of their work.

They recruited six part-time consultation playworkers very early on, which allowed them to gain an excellent depth and breadth of engagement with the community. Consultation took place at a wide range of events, including Playday, festivals and flower shows, mobile play and play ranger sessions, primary schools and after-school clubs. The team were able to observe children's use of space and play habits, as well as showing them examples of play provision that was very different to what they were used to, for example by visiting sites such as Tatton Park in Cheshire.

A local play audit (measuring the quantity, quality and accessibility of play spaces) and local needs assessment were carried out alongside the ongoing community consultation to help identify potential sites for the pathfinder programme, and provide a strategic rationale for targeting capital and revenue finance.

Knowsley found it useful to use a variety of consultation methods, including questionnaires and booklets; free play activities; graffiti walls; visits to unused spaces within their areas; and the visit to Tatton Park. They found that when consulting with local communities it was important to start with a broad explanation of children's play and to outline the importance of natural play space for children, and use consultation with local children and young people to support the argument.

The authority is now considering options for sustainability in the future, including initiatives for volunteering, private sector partnership, social enterprise, developer contributions, Covenants on new residential property in New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas and support for community-led bids and projects.

should be part of the Children's Trust commissioning arrangements and staff should be integrated as far as practicable in workforce development and other integrated processes, particularly safeguarding.

Involving residents' and community associations

The siting of play and youth facilities can be a contentious issue at the local level, with the needs and wishes of children and young people for play space and facilities sometimes at odds with those of nearby residents. Equally, residents and community

associations are often strong supporters of provision for local children and young people. For these reasons, residents' and community associations need to be involved in the process, though not at the expense of giving due weight to the concerns of children and young people themselves. Ensuring that consultation is undertaken both directly with young people and through residents' associations can go a long way to minimise conflict when play and youth facilities are being planned.

Residents' and community associations can be involved at the outset by helping to explore general principles about the location of play space in relation to housing, for example.

Residents' and community associations are also often a good source of information on local issues such as problems with the number, location and accessibility of local play spaces and ideas for improvement.

Consultation questions

Stage 3. Needs assessment

- 3a.** Is the guidance in this section clear?
- 3b.** Does this accurately reflect and fit into your own local area systems and delivery processes?
- 3c.** What further information or changes would you find helpful?

Stage 4

Identifying resources and priorities

Stage 4. Audit play provision. Identify gaps and resources and agree priorities for play strategy

Definitions

Before mapping provision and space for play, a typology will need to be adopted that is underpinned by agreed definitions. The national Play Strategy defines play as children and young people following their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons, having fun while respecting themselves and others. It aims that in every residential area there are a variety of supervised and unsupervised places for play, free of charge.

The Big Lottery Fund's Children's Play programme targeted investment on new provision for play that was free of charge, where children are free to come and go (other than where safety is an issue for children with particular needs), and where they are free to choose what they do. This rule of thumb for public play provision, known as the 'three-frees'^{xiv} rule, is one that many local authorities have adopted.

The play space audit

The purpose of the audit is to gather information about local play provision and play space: quantity,

location, quality and extent of usage. This should include a survey of access routes and transport links.

It is important to establish the scope of the audit. Children and young people will play wherever they have the chance. This includes most public space: streets, town centres and squares; parks, playing fields and amenity areas; as well as the more recognisable play and youth facilities such as equipped playgrounds, youth shelters, BMX and skateboard parks, multi-use games areas, and so on. Play is not restricted to designated areas for play provision and so the principle should be to make as much of the environment suited to play as possible. The adoption of this principle provides an added incentive to those involved in promoting play to influence the planning and urban design process.

Thus a comprehensive play space audit should cover all public open space, including not just dedicated play provision, parks and other green space, but also civic and public hard spaces, which may have an important informal play function.

Note: Many local authorities have found it helpful to deploy Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to map provision and prioritise improvements. Play England's guidance *Tools for evaluating local play provision: A technical guide to Play England Local Play Indicators* discusses the use of GIS for mapping play spaces.⁷²

xiv. Concept developed by Perry Else, Sheffield Hallam University 2005.

Where do children play?

The London Borough of Camden looked beyond its dedicated play provision to begin its audit of play space:

'...during the school summer holidays, Camden Play Service, with a range of partners, undertook an audit of all public space within Camden to see where children play. It involved small teams, in every ward, visiting all public spaces (parks, open spaces, streets, housing estates, etc.) on the same afternoon to monitor what was being used by children and young people and how it was being used. The "Where do children play?" audit was a useful first step in building a picture of children's use of public space for play – and has been useful as a tool for assessing other audit findings.'

From Camden's Play Strategy, 2007–2012, London Borough of Camden

Different types of play space

It is recommended that the audit consider types of play space by two different sets of criteria.

A. By scale and distance from children's homes

For the purposes of auditing play space and for collecting data for the local play indicators, the following categories are recommended for the broad types of play space (which should be taken to include space for the informal recreation of older children and young people) according to scale.

'Door-step' spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation

A small space, within sight of home, where children, especially young children can play within view of known adults.

For example, this could be a grassed area, open space, residential street in a home zone, or a small designed play area, which is large enough to enable young children to play within sight of known adults. The space could incorporate some interesting and attractive landscape features and/or a small number of items of play equipment and create an environment which will stimulate young children's play, providing opportunities for a variety of play

experiences, bearing in mind that older children and young people may also use the space from time to time. A doorstep space would be sufficiently close to home for the children who use it to feel safe and be able to interact with individuals and groups of other children. It should also cater for the needs of children with a range of impairments. Seating may be available for carers to be able to sit, watch and meet other people.

'Local' spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation

A larger space which can be reached safely by children beginning to travel independently and with friends, without accompanying adults, and for adults with young children to walk to with ease.

For example, this could be a grassed area, small park, local open space, designed space for play or informal recreation, or school playground open out of school hours, which is attractive to children as they begin to move around their neighbourhoods without being accompanied by adults. These spaces and facilities provide varied and interesting physical environments including, for example, natural features, sand and water, and incorporate landscape features with varying levels and contours, which test children's

capabilities. There might also be features designed for specific activities such as ball games, wheeled sports or meeting places and/or several items of play equipment offering a variety of play experiences. Play facilities might also include local staffed play provision such as play centres, play-schemes, play ranger projects and adventure playgrounds. These spaces and facilities should also be capable of catering for the needs of children with a range of impairments. The children who use these spaces and facilities should feel safe and be able to interact with individuals and groups of other children of different ages.

'Neighbourhood' spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation

A larger space or facility for informal recreation which children and young people, used to travelling longer distances independently, can get to safely and spend time in play and informal recreation with their peers and have a wider range of play experiences.

For example, this might be a park, playing field, recreation ground or natural open space such as woodland, moorland or a beach, accessible and attractive to older children and young people. The space or facility provides for a variety of age appropriate play and informal recreational experiences. It might provide a varied and interesting physical environment incorporating some interesting and attractive landscape features with varying levels and contours. There are likely to be more challenging items of equipment and features that meet the needs of older children and young people. Larger facilities

specifically designed for informal recreation could be present, such as a ball court, multi-use games area or skateboard area, which can provide the opportunity for a variety of experiences to young people with differing skills levels. These spaces and facilities should also be capable of catering for the needs of children and young people with a range of impairments. There is likely to be sufficient space to play large group ball games and seating and shelter to enable young people to socialise with their friends.

Distance thresholds for the three types of play space

Within any given catchment area, the following distance thresholds should be applied for different types of play space.

B. By designation

Designated and non-designated play places

Places where children play may or may not be specifically designed for play or informal recreation (designated or non-designated) and may or may not be supervised by staff trained in play work or other skills. The play place grid (below) gives examples of the types of facility and space which can offer children and young people the best opportunities for play and informal recreation and which should form the basis of provision where children should be able to play freely and free of charge in their own neighbourhoods.

Table 2: Type of play space	Distance criteria	
	Walking distance (m)	Straight line distance (m)
Doorstep play spaces	100	60
Local play spaces	400	240
Neighbourhood play spaces	1000	600

Table 3: The play place grid

	Supervised and semi-supervised	No formal supervision
Designated places for play and informal recreation	Adventure playgrounds Open access play centres Play ranger and outreach play projects Mobile play facilities School playgrounds (out of school hours)	Playgrounds/play areas, Bike, skate and skateboard facilities Ball courts Multi-use games areas Hangout/youth shelters
Non-designated places for play and informal recreation	Parks with rangers and gardeners Streets with wardens	Residential streets Neighbourhood open spaces Parks and green spaces Beaches, rivers and lakes Woodlands and natural open spaces Routes to school and play areas Playing fields and recreation grounds Public squares and plazas Public rights of way

Summary of suggested typology for play space audit

Door-step spaces and facilities

- small designated play areas (furnished primarily for young children)
- neighbourhood amenity green spaces (unequipped)
- home zone or equivalent.

Local spaces and facilities

Supervised

- adventure playgrounds
- open access play centres
- open access play schemes
- play ranger and out-reach play projects

No formal supervision

- larger designated play areas (furnished primarily for children aged between 7 and 11 years)
- satellite parks
- junior bike, skate and skateboard facilities, kick-about areas.
- school playgrounds (open out of school hours)
- ball courts, multi-use games areas
- hangout/youth shelters

Neighbourhood spaces and facilities for play

- neighbourhood play areas (furnished for children of different ages)
- teenage wheeled sports area
- community parks
- local parks
- playing fields and recreation grounds freely available for children to use
- beaches, woodlands and natural areas.

Note 1

The audit may also identify local play sector infrastructure and support services such as play associations/networks, training centres, children's resource centres, toy libraries and scrap stores.

Note 2

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 high quality equipment is clear. However, research shows that the majority of users of such facilities are on an occasional family visit, and that they do not meet the everyday play needs of more than small numbers of local children.⁷³

Access audit

An access audit should also be undertaken for dedicated play provision in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act (1995 and 2005). As well as including a detailed analysis of the play space itself, the audit should cover access to the site in relation to, for example, car parks, bus routes and paths. It may be helpful to bring in people who are qualified to undertake such audits.

The audit process

Once the typology is agreed and adopted, the audit should follow a two-stage process:

Stage 1: Desk-based research

The first step is to finalise the essential information that will be required relating to every site based upon consideration of the factors outlined above. From this, appropriate questionnaires or pro forma surveys can be produced that can be completed in relation to every site.

The next step is to build up a database of play spaces to reflect the information being gathered. Sites on the database should initially be built up from existing databases made available by partners. It is important that the database provides information so that the location of all sites can be precisely identified. This will ideally mean a grid reference or at the very least a full address and postcode for every site. Sufficient detail also needs to be gathered to classify each area using the play space typology, or preferred categorisation.

The task of updating and completing the audit database will depend upon the pattern of provision. It may involve gathering information from a large number of other stakeholders including housing associations, local councils, and voluntary organisations such as local recreational trusts.

Unless there is complete confidence in the accuracy, quality and extent of the current information available it will be necessary to undertake additional research, including site visits (see below). Hence, it is a significant task. For example, some rural local authorities will have many town and parish councils who are the primary play providers. The time implications of this should not be underestimated.

More detail about data to collect and possible sources can be found in Play England's guidance *Tools for evaluating local play provision: A technical guide to Play England's Local Play Indicators*.

Stage 2: Site visits

Sites should be seen as integral to the play space audit. The main purposes of site visits are to:

- fill gaps in site-specific information not secured through stage 1
- review information received from different sources through stage 1 so that it is consistent across the council area
- classify sites in accordance with the agreed provisional audit typology
- undertake qualitative assessments
- undertake an audit of access for disabled children.

Local authorities may wish to ensure that the site visits to designated play spaces required for the audit coincide with the annual or quarterly visits undertaken for health and safety purposes.

Identifying financial resources

The play partnership should now consider the question of resources. This would ideally embrace all

sources of revenue funding over the previous two or three years as well as current capital assets, including sites and buildings identified in the play audit. The assessment should then consider potential new funding streams.

A typical resource analysis might include looking at:

- overall spending on play provision (including third sector capacity)
- allocation of spending between different types of provision
- how planning obligations are used to provide/improve play provision
- what additional resources are available to bid into (such as lottery funding or the application of other funding streams to emerging play priorities)
- spending per child or resident
- where local housing associations, hospitals or others may wish to allocate funding to the surrounding built environment (such as through Section 106, planning gain)
- where transport or business development departments are allocating resources to the built environment
- where regional bodies are allocating regeneration resources and undertaking master-planning
- where local residents' associations are raising funds to develop local provision.

Development agreements

Planning conditions, local area agreements and Section 106 'planning gain' agreements are an important additional source of funding that should be maximised wherever possible.

Matching needs to resources

Once both the audit and the consultation stages are complete, all the relevant information should be at hand to undertake a detailed analysis of existing play opportunities relative to the identified needs of the community. On the one hand, the audit will have achieved the detailed mapping and recording of play spaces of all kinds. It will have assessed their quantity, size and distribution; and examined their quality and suitability for use by different groups. On the other hand, local consultation should have provided information about the needs and aspirations of different sections of the community. These two sides of the process need to be brought together. The depth and content of this analysis will need to be agreed locally, although the following issues are likely to feature:

- needs of age groups
- needs of social/community groups
- needs by geographical area
- overall distribution and characteristics of provision
- quality of provision
- quantity of provision
- accessibility of provision
- deficiencies and opportunities.

The needs/resources analysis can be undertaken and reported through words, pictures, tables, charts and maps.

Identifying workforce and provider resources

Commissioners will want to undertake a similar audit of local markets and the available provider workforce (for example, staff in Children's Centres and Schools) to identify the resources available to meet play outcomes for children and young people.

Markets and workforce information will contribute to the local play strategy and commissioning decisions. It will also inform the tasks undertaken in Stage 8 of the process (see page 75).

Consultation questions

Stage 4. Identifying resources and priorities

- 4a.** Is the guidance in this section clear?
- 4b.** Does this accurately reflect and fit into your own local area systems and delivery processes?
- 4c.** What further information or changes would you find helpful?

Stage 5

Plan the pattern of services and spaces for play

Stage 5. Plan the pattern of services and spaces for play to be commissioned, targeted at areas of greatest need as identified at Stage 4

Deciding where to invest

Clearly, investment should be where the need of a particular community is greatest. There are, though, some general principles about the location of play spaces and other improvements to the play offer that should be considered as part of this process.

Research has shown that children prefer play spaces to be widely visible and easy to access: at the heart of the communities and the neighbourhood environments they know best. Children value the freedom and independence that outdoor play can give them. They also like to be where they can see and be seen by (or at least be in reach of) trusted adults, although this naturally decreases with age. Paradoxically, children also like the option of accessing or creating special and secret places: dens and hideaways; and so landscapes with natural growth interspersed with clearings and open space that have good access points and sight lines are ideal locations.

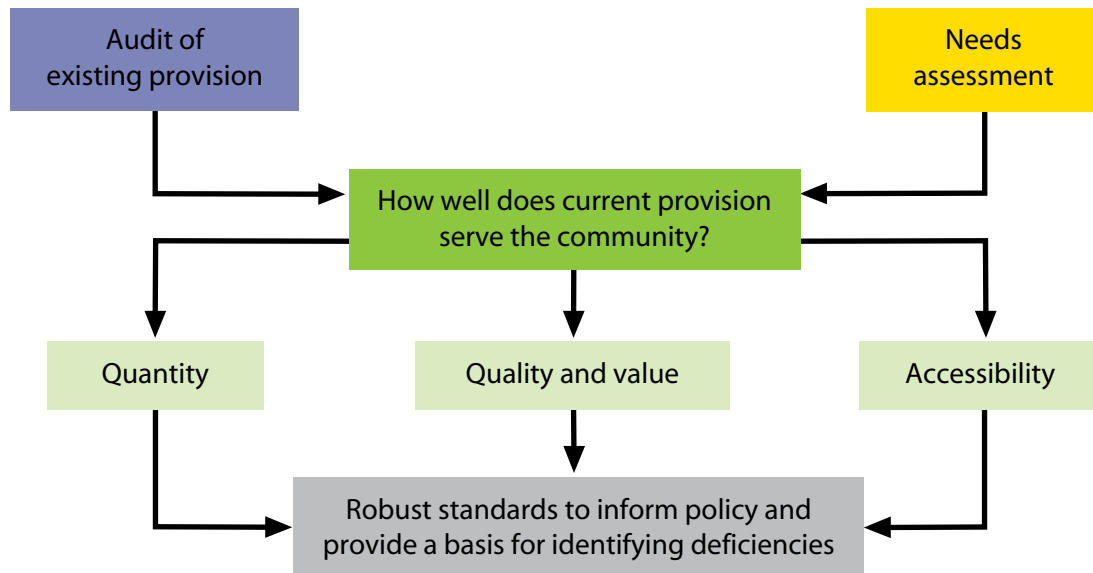
Standards

The information gathered in the audit is also helpful in the development of local standards for play space. Government policy on planning for open space, sport and recreation advocates strongly the production of standards for such provision based on an assessment of local need and provision. Local standards for play provision should therefore be an essential product of the play strategy process. Setting robust local standards based on assessments of need and audits of existing facilities will form the basis for redressing quantitative and qualitative deficiencies. Standards should be included in local authority development plans as well as in the play strategy. Government guidance stresses these standards should be founded on three core components:

1. a quantitative element (how much new provision may be needed)
2. a qualitative component (against which to measure the need for enhancement of existing facilities)
3. an accessibility element (including distance thresholds).

Drawing up play provision standards is a challenging task, and one that will need careful consideration. There is agreement that standards should capture how engaging and enjoyable spaces and services are for children and young people, and hence how popular and successful they are.

Figure 5. Setting standards for play space



More detailed information on developing local standards will be available in *Better Places to Play through Planning*⁷⁴ to be published by Play England later in 2009.

Options for the local play strategy

Adapting universal services

As well as considering the options for dedicated services and spaces, the local play strategy will want to include, where necessary, changes to universal services such as children's centres, schools and leisure services to ensure that they are designed in the best possible way to meet the play needs of local children, young people and families. It may also include other means of improving play outcomes such as motivating families to access their local services, ensuring communities are aware of what's on offer, and changing resident's attitudes to young people playing in urban spaces.

There follows a short description of some of the options for dedicated provision and some of the issues involved.

Re-siting or replacing play areas

When playgrounds need to be refurbished, re-siting them so that they are nearer to housing, or changing the access points so that travel distances are decreased, may widen catchments and improve usage. Where the location of a play facility means that it is poorly used and this is unlikely to change, relocating it to a better, more appropriate location should be considered.

Ensuring success

After location, there are a number of other principles that should be considered with a view to ensuring successful play spaces.

In response to the *Fair Play* consultation, children said that they wanted more stimulating and exciting places to play. Investment should be used to produce innovative and creative public play spaces that are designed, wherever possible, as an integrated part of the wider landscape and, in any event, follow design principles that engender optimum play value for children.

*Design for Play*⁷⁵ shows how to design good play spaces, which can be affordably maintained, which give children and young people the freedom to play creatively, yet still allow them to experience risk, challenge and excitement. It sets out a new approach, tackles some current myths, and aims to challenge providers to think more laterally and creatively about children and young people in the public domain.

Design for Play sets out 10 design principles asserting that successful play spaces:

1. are 'bespoke'
2. are well located
3. make use of natural elements
4. provide a wide range of play experiences
5. are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children
6. meet community needs
7. allow children of different ages to play together
8. build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge
9. are sustainable and appropriately maintained
10. allow for change and evolution.

In addition to *Design for Play*, Play England has produced a *Playable Space Quality Assessment Tool*⁷⁶ to enable a full consideration of the full range of factors that contribute to the success of any site. The tool covers the three broad themes that should be assessed:

- a. location and accessibility
- b. play value
- c. care and maintenance.

There are also dedicated tools for looking specifically at the needs of disabled children and young people. These are published by KIDS and can be found at www.kids.org.uk.

Maintenance

Maintenance is a key issue and should be integral to the action plan. The following advice on maintenance of play areas is adapted from *Design for Play*.

Planning for ongoing maintenance is central to the design cycle. Successful play spaces are sensitively and carefully maintained and resources must be allocated for a high standard of maintenance. The hallmark of a successful and well-used play scheme is wear and tear – and a degree of this is perfectly acceptable. Wear and tear must not be allowed to descend into neglect, though, which can quickly become a downward spiral.

A good standard of maintenance is essential to the long-term sustainability of play areas. Maintenance options and costs should be analysed at the outset to ensure that adequate resources will be available. This includes everything from litter collection to checking for hazards and replacing equipment and features. Children will be more likely to respect the play space if the council or owner is seen to be investing in caring for it. Resources will often be necessary to allow adjustments once designs are implemented. It is not possible to foresee all the issues and possibilities on the drawing board. The experience of construction and use may highlight additional maintenance requirements and risk-benefit issues.

These judgements may change and develop over the life of the play space and there should be opportunities and resources built into maintenance programmes to experiment with and reconfigure the space. Play spaces that fall out of use even temporarily because equipment is not working or

is poorly maintained, quickly become a source of frustration to users and may become more vulnerable to further damage. Regular repairs and a quick response time are both essential.

Maintaining and developing the level of involvement of the community, including children and young people, in designing and looking after play spaces can be a vital factor in improving and sustaining play provision – a complementary role to the supervision and oversight discussed on page 65. People from the local community or friends' groups can also form part of the inspection team. More details of how this can be achieved will be in the *Playful Communities* website.

Good design and high quality equipment and features may mean a greater initial outlay, but should have the advantage of lower maintenance costs. If some parts of equipment wear out more quickly than others, consider ordering key spare parts along with new equipment. This will help avoid delays in repairs. Allowing for asset depreciation is also important. Make sure that, after a suitable period has elapsed (usually 10–12 years) funds are available for renewal of key features.

Play England has produced *Nature play: Maintenance guide*, specific guidance on the maintenance of natural play spaces.⁷⁷

Mediation strategies

As important as situating play space where it is likely to be most used and enjoyed by children, is locating an area that will be accepted for play by the wider community. The Outdoor Play Campaign Toolkit⁷⁸ gives detailed information on consulting with people in local communities. The following advice is from *Design for Play*:

'It is not unusual for communities to be hostile to the idea of new play spaces. In this situation, taking time

to explore concerns is essential. Differing local views can de-rail a project, unless the commissioner and designer are prepared to make a serious attempt to confront and negotiate over them, and ultimately they may have to take a strong line to preserve the integrity of the design concept. A frank and open process of engagement with the community may not avoid disagreements, but should have the effect of showing the process to have been fair. Identifying someone within the group to take a leadership role and act as a project advocate will also be very helpful.'

These can be used to reduce fears, to ensure that children who are just 'being children' rather than 'a nuisance' are enabled to play within their own neighbourhood, and to resolve genuine conflicts.

The community conflict resolution role of the neighbourhood police team may come into play where there is difficulty in overcoming differences about what does and what does not constitute a nuisance or an acceptable place for children and young people to gather. Where a consensus cannot be reached, or if indeed the consensus view is that a location is unsuitable, then the decision should be reviewed.

Managing risk in play provision

Children need to take risks to learn how to manage risks. This is an essential part of growing up, and play is one of the most important ways in which they develop this vital skill. Statistically, children's playgrounds are among the safest places to be; but no environment is risk-free. Furthermore, because the need to experience challenges is so pronounced in children, any play provision that does not cater for this need will tend to fail them and they will seek their thrills elsewhere. A degree of risk in play provision is therefore not only desirable but also integral to one of its primary purposes.

The Play Strategy consultation found that parents and children place a high priority on safe places to play but also often complain that play equipment is not exciting or challenging enough. It is essential to ensure that play managers and providers are properly aware of appropriate risk management and not risk averse to the point where play provision is sterile and non-stimulating as a result. Risk management should be proportionate and realistic, taking into account both the benefits as well as the risks for children and young people. A range of guidance and training is available to help play professionals and others manage risk more effectively:

*Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide*⁷⁹ is a non-statutory guidance document, which has been endorsed by both the Health and Safety Executive and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. It shows how play providers can replace current play space risk assessment practices with an approach that takes into account the benefits to children and young people of challenging play experiences. This document follows on from a position statement produced in 2002 by the Play Safety Forum.

Managing Risk in Play Provision: Summary 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.

Managing Risk in Play Provision:
Implementation guide.
(Ball D, Gill T, Spiegel B, 2008)

Accidents cannot be eliminated. Indeed, it can be argued that falls and scrapes in childhood are not accidents at all, but part of growing up: an important aspect of learning about boundaries and how to manage risk. The courts accept this principle. Sound policies and risk management procedures provide the right framework for shaping provision, strike the right balance between children's wishes and provider's concerns, and provide a robust defence against claims.

Managing risk is a key factor in ensuring inclusion of disabled children, who are often discriminated against on misguided 'health and safety' grounds, but 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 KIDS, suggests that disabled children can – and need to – enjoy play opportunities that are robust, challenging and adventurous.

Staffed play provision

Where there is under-provision of open play space and limited opportunities for creating it, staffed provision, such as adventure playgrounds, playschemes or mobile projects should be considered. These can offer the social safety of on-site responsible adults, an enhanced element of challenging play and a greater sense of community, compared with non-staffed play areas.

Staffed play provision should aim to deliver the outcomes described in *Best Play*,⁸⁰ the widely recognised benchmark document:

- a. The provision extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.

- b.** The provision recognises the child's need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need.
- c.** The provision manages the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.
- d.** The provision maximises the range of play opportunities.
- e.** The provision fosters independence and healthy self-esteem.
- f.** The provision fosters the child's respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction.
- g.** The provision fosters the child's well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.

While there may be some overlap with childcare settings, supervised play provision should generally offer enriched play environments (also described in the *Best Play*) where children are free to come and go, there is generally no charge to attend, and they are free to play as they choose. Staffed adventure playgrounds are generally regarded as the ideal form of supervised play provision (see box on page 64).

After school clubs and extended services

By 2010, all schools should be offering access to a core offer of extended services. This includes access to a varied menu of activities (combined with childcare in primary schools), that should include play provision, both before and after school and during school holidays where there is demand. Many schools work in partnership with other schools and with wider community organisations in the delivery of extended services. Children's Trust Boards should commission extended services that include

opportunities for free play and employ suitably qualified playworkers.

Play England has produced a briefing paper *Play in schools and integrated settings: A position statement*, this can be found at www.playengland.org.uk/resources

Inclusion initiatives

An essential feature of the play strategy should be that it promotes inclusion and access for disadvantaged and disabled children and young people. 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 (1995 and 2005).

Successful play spaces should, as the design principles imply, be fully accessible and inclusive to both disabled children and their non-disabled peers, to both genders, and to children from the fullest range of socio-economic groups and from all cultural, faith and ethnic communities. Procurement and design briefs should therefore fully embed the principles of inclusive design of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (originally adopted and advocated by the former Disability Rights Commission). These are that designing inclusive projects or facilities need to always consider and be guided by:

1. Ease of use.
2. Freedom of choice and access to mainstream activities.
3. Diversity and difference.
4. Legibility and predictability.
5. Quality.
6. Safety.

Why adventure playgrounds?

Traditional, staffed adventure playgrounds meet the needs of a wide age range, crossing the primary/secondary divide, and can provide a gateway to more structured, positive activities like sport and music, thus adding value to the youth offer.

More importantly to the local play strategy, many play specialists regard them as the ideal form of play provision. Although the term is sometimes co-opted to describe unstaffed, fixed equipment playgrounds that ape their typical structures and materials (for example rope swings and runways, tyres and wood), traditional adventure playgrounds are staffed by skilled playworkers who enable and facilitate the ownership, development and design of the space – physically, socially and culturally – by the children playing there. It is this crucial relationship between playworkers and children – forming unique communities of play – more than any physical attribute, that most defines these settings.

Adventure playgrounds aim to serve the full range of children's play behaviours and provide access to important childhood activities and experiences not readily available or allowed elsewhere: digging holes, making fires and cooking outdoors, using tools and materials to build (and demolish) camps and dens, playing with water and mud. Continuous modification and evolution of the play environment – creating and recreating the physical world to reflect imagined ones, and defining spaces as uniquely children's own – are deeply instinctive play behaviours. Honouring and supporting this is fundamental to the adventure playground ethos.

A briefing paper on developing adventure playgrounds has been produced by Play England for the play pathfinder authorities. See www.playengland.org.uk/resources.

The play design principles are fully expanded upon in *Design for Play*, while the inclusive design principles, as they apply to play settings, are the basis for the guidance document *Inclusion by Design*⁸¹ and *Inclusive Design for Play*.⁸²

Protecting play space

Measures to protect play space by legal means, through particular deeds, can ensure the positive benefits of the strategy for future generations of children, young people and communities.^{xv}

Improving supervision and oversight of public space

Children have traditionally played more within the informal public spaces of the streets and estates where they live than in dedicated play areas.

Children of all ages want to play where they are likely to meet their friends. Children's everyday play opportunities, beyond the school day, can depend to a great extent upon the suitability of their local streets and estates: the public spaces that make up their immediate environment outside the home. Even if they do not play on the roads and pavements themselves, they certainly depend on these being safe routes to play space. Strategies that attempt to

simply corral children into 'safe places' are not likely to succeed⁸³ and the play strategy should seek to minimise the threat of traffic and other perceived dangers to children playing outside.

Although currently often perceived as a negative phenomenon, children's tendency, if allowed, to congregate together in and around the streets where they live is an instinct for community that is deeply embedded in children's culture: an elemental play behaviour that should be supported and facilitated by the adult community. The perceived lack of community oversight and shared responsibility for today's children 'playing out', compared to previous generations, is a major reason for the decline in children's outdoor play.

This oversight of children at play in their neighbourhoods does not need to be solely dependent on family, carers or even neighbours, although each of these has an important role. Play rangers, park keepers, neighbourhood wardens and community police officers are just some of the public service roles that can facilitate and informally supervise children's play in public space.

The Play Shaper programme (see page 76) is designed to develop this role within all public sector jobs that have an influence or impact on the design, management and supervision of public space.

Community volunteering (see page 46) is another way to promote a greater degree of community responsibility for local play provision that can be as effective for supervising street play as for developing local ownership of dedicated play areas or staffed playgrounds.

Traffic calming, safe routes to play and home zone schemes

Measures to decrease the risk – and perceived risk – from traffic will be vital, not just to allowing children greater access to play areas, but to the broader aim of creating child-friendly public space. Increasing children's independent mobility – the distances they are allowed to travel unaccompanied – can increase their access to play space without actually expanding provision. Much of children's play occurs in transit and regular journeys can provide opportunities for play if the routes are designed or modified with children's play needs in mind. Such measures can have the added benefit of reducing car use and increasing children's physical activity.

Sustainable transport policies, plans and resulting schemes should include references to play and other leisure facilities of value to young people. The design of streets and public places should take account of children's play needs immediately outside their homes and in local neighbourhoods. Consideration should be given to modifying the design for busier streets to allow children and young people to travel safely along or across them, enabling them to reach play destinations. All walking, cycling and public transport networks should be planned with similar objectives.

Places to Go? A summary of research evidence (Sustrans and Play England, 2008).

Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity, has developed guidance for local authorities on how to ensure children and young people can enjoy independent and active access to play provision through its Active Play and Travel programme.

xv. Fields in Trust, formerly The National Playing Fields Association, is the country's leading advocate for the protection of public space for play and recreational use by the community www.fieldsintrust.org

Their guidance document *Routes to Play* offers practical recommendations on improving walking and cycling access to play spaces, along with a series of case studies. It can be downloaded from the Sustrans website: www.sustrans.org.uk/play

The Children's Trust should work locally with local planning and highways authorities in considering the Department for Transport's (DfT's) guidance *Manual for Streets*⁸⁴ and the National Institute for Clinical Excellence's (NICE's) *Public Health Guidance 8*. Good practice guidance is also available on developing home zones from www.homezones.org.uk^{xvi}

More affordable alternatives to the home zone approach are now being piloted by a number of local authorities in the UK, including those involved in Sustrans' *DIY Streets*^{xvii} pilot programme.

DfT *Local Transport Plan* guidance, published in July 2008, is statutory guidance on local authority transport planning. The guidance recommends that local authorities strategically align Local Transport

Plans and CYPPs. The associated *Policies and Good Practice Handbook* provides links to further guidance and resources, and includes a section on child-friendly travel and transport planning and policy (www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/ltp/guidance/localtransportplans).

Additional information to assist planners in considering the needs of children and young people can be found in DfT guidance *Making Residential Travel Plans Work: Guidelines for new development*.⁸⁵ This guidance seeks to bridge the gap between designing and locating developments (such as planning and design guidance) and managing the resulting travel patterns (for example, through Local Transport Plans).

These are issues which may be expected to appear in local transport plans and strategies but which often appear in local design guidance. Guidance and standards, arising from PPG17 assessments, should include play spaces that have safe access routes to them that encourage independent travel, and are

Case study: Ensuring safe routes for play

Cornwall Council is using the Sustrans checklist as part of the site selection process for playbuilder investment and to identify where further work is needed to improve active and independent access to successful playbuilder sites. The checklist has served as a focus for discussion between the playbuilder implementation team and the Travel Awareness and School Travel Plans teams with the intention of joint working to survey children about how they travel to play areas and what improvements can be made.

In **Bristol** new lines of communication across play, transport planning and park services are leading to a joined up approach between play area, green space and cycle route development. Cycle parking is now planned for most playgrounds across the city and a city-wide accessibility map is being generated that combines school, green space and playground locations with paths, crossing points and bus stops.

xvi. See also www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/homezones/

xvii. See www.sustrans.org.uk/default.asp?sID=1165320622046

located in places free from noise and pollution from road traffic. Priorities for action include taking steps to address road safety and access to green space. Local policy affecting children should extend to embrace the environment as a key factor in their well-being. Local Transport Plans should always consider the social as well as the environmental impact of traffic and transport developments, taking full account of the needs of children and young people to play, walk and cycle around their local neighbourhoods.

Local authorities in rural areas may encounter different issues from those of metropolitan and borough authorities. The relative low-density population, dispersed settlement patterns and poor transport in rural areas can leave some children and young people very isolated. Linear villages, heavy through traffic, lack of pavements and edge-of-village playing fields can all be barriers to children playing. Parental restrictions on children's freedom of movement can have a more limiting effect on rural children, while public play provision tends to be very limited. In rural areas, consideration will need to be given to children's need for independent travel as much as the provision of play spaces and facilities. Links with schools and opportunities for using school playgrounds for play out of school hours may provide a solution in some areas.

Making links between play space and active travel

Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and health professionals, through the Children's Trust partnership, have a vital role in supporting a strong, coherent play element in physical activity strategies and the health improvement section of the Local Delivery Plan: ensuring that it is coordinated with the local play strategy and wider CYPP. They should also engage with planning departments to ensure that Local Development Frameworks support these aims by promoting decisions to support children's play and child-friendly public space.

Local authorities are obliged to publish Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategies (SMoTS), which are informed by School Travel Plans. Many activities delivered under these plans, such as cycle training and safe routes to schools, will promote safety, healthy physical activity and build confidence in children and parents. Promoting free independent travel is an important factor in delivering more play opportunities to disadvantaged children.^{xviii}

Case study: ProActive Islington: A strategy for Islington 2006–2012

The London Borough of Islington's physical activity strategy sets out the aims of the ProActive Partnership, which works to increase levels of physical activity in all sections of the Islington community, regardless of ability. The strategy clearly recognises the importance of play in increasing children's physical activity levels, stating that:

'Life-long physical activity starts with children's play.' It also fully supports the borough's local play strategy. Islington Play Association worked closely with the ProActive Partnership to ensure that play was represented appropriately and present in local strategies that determine where funding goes.

Case study: Partnership between health and play services in Halton

Halton Borough Council has invested significantly in modern, stimulating play facilities over the last 10 years and recognises the impact that play has on improving children and young people's health. To build on their investment in play, the borough and St Helens Primary Care Trust have created an innovative partnership in which the PCT has agreed to fund a team to maintain new play facilities.

The PCT will fund an additional two-person Playground Maintenance Team, at a cost of £80,000

per year for at least five years and, in return, Halton Borough Council will create five new play facilities. The PCT believes that health services should place an emphasis on health promotion, well-being and illness prevention, as well as treating illness. It is therefore keen to work with partners and the public to better improve lifestyles, including through supporting play.

An option for the play strategy might be to site new play spaces along existing or planned cycling and walking routes; using, for example, information from school travel plans and the National Cycle Network to create attractive, traffic-free routes which can become networks of playable space that also promote active travel.

Consultation questions

Stage 5. Plan the pattern of services and spaces for play

- 5a.** Is the guidance in this section clear?
- 5b.** Does this accurately reflect and fit into your own local area systems and delivery processes?
- 5c.** What further information or changes would you find helpful?

Stage 6

Develop and adopt joint commissioning strategy for play

Stage 6. Design the local play strategy, identifying effective commissioning mechanisms where appropriate, and working through the Joint Commissioning Unit.

Play policy statements

The play partnership, having reviewed the audit and the needs analysis, should now identify gaps in provision and specific barriers to play, thereby determining priorities for investment.

The context for this local play strategy should be the CYPP and the local commissioning framework for Children's Trusts, with ultimate reference, where relevant, to the Sustainable Community Strategy and both the LAA and Local Development Framework. The local play strategy should be a commissioning strategy setting out how the aims and priorities will be achieved.

In analysing the audit against need, the partnership will want to identify areas for improvement according to the typology adopted at Stage 4 and a consideration of the different types of provision discussed at Stage 5. The play partnership will need to develop proposals for a commissioning strategy that responds to the needs of children and young people and their communities, and of particular groups. The playbuilder capital programme requires that the work of engaging the community

and assessing needs be done before new sites are shortlisted.

Some authorities have found it helpful to then set out an overall vision for play through some policy statements that establish both the principles and the key objectives for a new joint commissioning strategy for play. As well as defining local priorities and aims, the policy statements should aim to set these in the context of the national Play Strategy, the wider Children's Plan and the Every Child Matters outcomes framework.

Working through the Joint Commissioning Unit

Commissioners who are designing and implementing the local play strategy will want to work within the Children's Trust Joint Commissioning Unit or alongside an identified commissioning function. Working alongside other commissioners will ensure that their knowledge, skills and experience can be brought to bear on play. This should ensure that the process leads to improved outcomes in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way. Skills, competencies and experience for commissioning of play services include:

- knowledge and understanding of children's play
- engaging and drawing on the experience of local community leaders and partners

- engaging and drawing on the experience of local leaders from schools, hospitals and other locally-based agencies
- engaging with children, young people and their families
- collaborating with providers
- mapping resources
- specifying and measuring outcomes
- managing knowledge and assessing needs
- prioritising investment
- shaping and managing the markets
- promoting improvement and innovation
- securing procurement skills
- implementing project and change management
- managing and leading the children's services system
- making sound financial investments.

The Joint Commissioning Unit (or other commissioning function) will help to ensure that there is strategic alignment between neighbouring Children's Trusts where there is likely to be cross boundary access to services. And it will help to maintain strategic alignment across different organisations in the local area such as schools, adult services, housing, children's centres, leisure services, etc.

Communicating the local play strategy

During Stages 1–5, a good deal of communication relating to the strategy and its contents will have taken place. At this defining stage it is important to ensure that the strategy receives as wide as possible coverage, through a range of media.

This phase is about telling people, particularly children and young people, the good news. It is particularly important that children and young people get to know that their contributions to the process have been valued and that their views have been heard. Equally important is that families do not feel lectured or cajoled into different lifestyle choices but made to feel empowered by the increased range of opportunities that reflect their needs and aspirations.

The range of media for disseminating information about future plans will include, for example:

- existing play facilities
- newsletters and leaflets
- posters
- Family Information Service
- children's centres, schools and youth facilities
- libraries
- local authority website
- local media (TV, radio and newspapers).

The action plan should be sufficiently concrete for its proposals to be costed precisely for short-term proposals and realistically estimated for medium- and longer-term plans. These costs need to be reviewed annually in line with councils' and PCTs' budget programming so that funds can be secured for the coming years' proposals. It is important that all partners who are contributing financial and other resources towards implementing the action plan adopt a similar approach.

It is likely that the action plan will also need to secure additional external funds. Maximising funding from associated initiatives, and in line with other cross-cutting strategic themes, both locally and nationally, is anticipated as the norm if the strategy is to be successful and sustainable, particularly in the longer term. Plans may require funding applications to be made from a wide variety of sources. It is important that the human resource implications of preparing and managing such applications be taken into account.

It is important, however, that the strategy process itself is used to demonstrate the importance of play (both in itself and as a contribution to wider agendas) to all partners. Mainstream budgets for play services and facilities should be maintained or increased during the strategy timeframe, to ensure stability and manage growth.

Note: DCSF has produced *Outdoor play: A communications toolkit for local authorities* – to promote their play offer.⁸⁶

Consultation questions

Stage 6. Develop and adopt joint commissioning strategy for play

- 6a. Is the guidance in this section clear?
- 6b. Does this accurately reflect and fit into your own local area systems and delivery processes?
- 6c. What further information or changes would you find helpful?

Stage 7

Commissioning services and spaces for play

Stage 7. Commission services and spaces for play: look for potential for joint commissioning, using pooled resources and collaboration across departments

The play partnership should include colleagues with expertise in commissioning, in planning and in procurement to ensure that all aspects of delivering the local play strategy can be resourced effectively. This has been seen to be particularly important with time-bound resources, such as the current capital programme.

The play commissioners will want to consider whether pooled or aligned budget options are appropriate where multiple partners are contributing to the local play strategy. Pooling can be achieved under Section 75 of the NHS Act 2006 and Section 10 of the Children Act 2004. Pooling can help to ensure strategic alignment and reduce the complexity of multiple funding streams – both for the commissioners and for providers.

There are a range of procurement mechanisms available to drive efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable outcome improvements. The local play strategy will identify the most appropriate mechanisms for implementation during this stage of the commissioning cycle. Framework contracts, such as the Pro 5 for play contract detailed below, are becoming increasingly popular to ensure

value for money whilst reducing the cost and time implications of running an open competition under EU procurement rules.

Whichever procurement options are taken, the play value to children from the sites and services so delivered should be paramount. *Design for Play*⁸⁷ describes how this process must be design-led, with the 'commissioner ... looking for an individual, design-led approach for each play space, which may involve purchasing play equipment and features from different companies, and where any equipment and features are located within a setting which complements their play value'. This guidance stresses the potential role of landscape architects in this process, but also recognises that 'Local authorities and other providers commissioning play spaces frequently appoint play equipment companies to design and build a number of playgrounds. Some of these companies have their own specialist designers with expertise in both landscape design and play design and can work with commissioners to develop site-specific play spaces using a design-led approach.' The principle is to secure value for money without sacrificing quality, and to make use of good play equipment without the design being dominated by it.

As discussed earlier, a key to successful play spaces is that individual designs are bespoke, responding to the particular need and character of their community and the aspirations of the children who will use them. Thus, judgments must sometimes be made between cost efficient procurement and meeting the design

Pro 5 for play – examples of good practice

The local authority working with its partners on the Children's Trust Board should work closely with procurement and legal teams and ensure their local arrangements ensure the best outcomes for children. They should:

- Manage and develop the local market by partnership-building with all providers. This allows the market to understand the Children's Trust's strategic objectives and evidence base, encourages dialogue between suppliers and the trust and makes for a more transparent and flexible marketplace.
- Use seed funding, standardised contracting, and capacity building to support smaller providers to compete, so as to maintain the markets' diversity, choice, innovation and sustainability.
- Ensure the procurement process takes account of the engagement with children, young people and the wider community in the design and delivery of services.
- Use, as far as is practical (taking account of the nature and value of the contract), competitive tendering between providers. Increasingly this will mean internally provided services will have to compete against external providers to ensure a range of provision, and the most efficient and effective delivery of outcomes.
- Competitive tendering decisions should not just be based on cost, but on quality factors decided by the Children's Trust. Understand the full costs of services (internal and external) and ensure that all tenders include full costs to ensure that services are sustainable in the long term.
- Assess different options for their risk and impact on equality.
- Award contracts that are flexible, proportionate to the complexity of the task, and non-combative in nature.
- Award long-term contracts where this is appropriate (3–5 years – possibly with rolling extensions for a fixed period of time) so as to encourage providers to invest in services and innovate solutions.
- Implement robust monitoring arrangements, with provision for contract termination if services are failing to meet the needs of children and young people.

Note Existing frameworks and procurement arrangements should not necessarily be discarded where there are clear benefits to retaining them. For more information on Pro 5, visit:

www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/managersandleaders/planningandcommissioning/playequipment/

principles that deliver long-term play value. Some local authorities have a framework agreement with a manufacturer or landscape architect, who having agreed their costs and committed to these over a set period of time will then design multiple sites in that locality. These frameworks will need to ensure sufficient flexibility to allow for a different design to be developed for each space. If the existing framework is not sufficiently flexible, local authorities are not restricted to using those companies on the framework and can invite other companies to join a competitive bidding process.

Play England can advise on procurement, and runs regular workshops and seminars where advice can be sought.

Consultation questions

Stage 7. Commissioning services and spaces for play

- 7a.** Is the guidance in this section clear?
- 7b.** Does this accurately reflect and fit into your own local area systems and delivery processes?
- 7c.** What further information or changes would you find helpful?

Stage 8

Play workforce development and market management

Stage 8. Develop and implement a play workforce development plan, including both playwork and cross-professional skills development. Develop market management plan for other suppliers.

Playwork

'The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.'

The Playwork Principles⁸⁸

As with other children's services, appropriately skilled and qualified staff is the key to successful play provision. It is important that those supervising and facilitating children's play have access to appropriate training in playwork. A range of playwork qualifications and endorsed training is available, from entry to postgraduate level.

The Playwork Principles,^{xix} underpinning the National Occupational Standards, state that 'The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.' Playwork training and qualifications are developed to support children in a play environment. They include specific knowledge and skills on how to

create, with children, an enriched play environment and to ensure the child's need to be challenged and to encounter risk in their play, is balanced with their safety and well-being.

*Quality Training, Quality Play 2006–2011*⁸⁹ is the UK Strategy for Playwork Education and Training, developed by the Sector Skills Council for the playwork sector, SkillsActive. It sets out the aims and priorities for the development of professional playwork. SkillsActive provides support for employers and information on routes to training and qualifications. SkillsActive oversees the National Occupational Standards, endorses playwork training, and works with awarding bodies to ensure qualifications are fit for purpose. A dedicated national Playwork Unit provides support, tools, and additional information on locally available education and training opportunities. For more information, visit www.skillsactive.org.uk/playwork.

The Government has asked the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) to lead a programme of work to ensure 4,000 playworkers achieve Level 3 qualifications by 2011. In addition CWDC is leading the pilots for a leadership and management training programme to support playwork managers in working more effectively in an integrated workforce environment. This will feed in to a wider leadership programme for middle managers within the

xix. The Playwork Principles were endorsed by SkillsActive in 2004 and are being incorporated into the Playwork National Occupational Standards to replace the previous Assumptions and Values of Playwork.

integrated children's workforce being developed by CWDC with the National College for School Leaders.

For authorities aiming to develop a range of supervised provision, a workforce development plan should be an integral part of the local play strategy. Playwork should be seen within the wider context of the integrated children's workforce and should be planned for under the local children's workforce strategy as carefully as for schools and social services.

Local authorities should insist on playwork qualifications for their play service staff and those they commission services from (although note that Ofsted does not require playwork qualifications for staff in settings registered under the Early Years Foundation Stage [EYFS]).

Cross-professional training in play

The full realisation of neighbourhoods where all children can play will require some understanding of the principles and practice of play provision within those professions that have responsibility for planning, designing and managing public space. The local authority may want to work closely with its Children's Trust partners in ensuring relevant professionals have opportunities to undertake training in these principles as part of continuous professional development.

The Government has commissioned a national partnership, led by Play England, to develop and offer to local authorities the Play Shaper cross-professional programme (www.playshaper.org.uk), focusing on the particular needs of children in the design, planning and management of public space. The aim is that participants will better understand:

- the nature and importance of children's play

- the characteristics of good quality play space
- the tenets of good practice in delivering it.

The training will promote a greater appreciation of the responsibility of different professional roles in enabling children's safe access to, enjoyment of, and mobility around the public realm, as well as the importance of cross-professional collaboration in achieving these ends.

Managing the play equipment market

The requirements of the playbuilder programme and its associated guidance represent something of a sea change in expectations, particularly for fixed equipment playgrounds. The equipment market will therefore need careful management to ensure best value, at the same time as delivering on the aspirations of the Play Strategy.

Play partnerships should consider whether to co-operate across sub-regions or regions to manage the markets for particular services, develop specialist providers, make best use of scarce skills, or meet high cost and low incidence needs. Existing examples of this include standardising contracts and bidding processes across a region, using consortiums, combining purchasing power, and pooling commissioning and contracting skills to secure outcomes focused and 'strategic partnering' style contracts.

Having informed and intelligent suppliers makes contracting for outcomes an easier task, as suppliers are clear as to the approaches required by the local authority and its partners on the Children's Trust and can provide solutions to achieving outcomes as part of the tendering and contracting process.

The Play Strategy recognises the issue of capacity and sustainability for the voluntary and community sectors and their concerns about attracting funding. Local authorities should consider how to build the capacity of local voluntary and community organisations as part of a strategy for shaping and developing the market to deliver play services for children, depending on the priorities of their local play strategy. Capacity building could include direct financial investment or support in kind, such as access to workforce development opportunities. It may also include funding for umbrella bodies (such as play associations or play networks) whose role includes representing their members in local play partnership arrangements.

Consultation questions

Stage 8. Play workforce development and market management

- 8a.** Is the guidance in this section clear?
- 8b.** Does this accurately reflect and fit into your own local area systems and delivery processes?
- 8c.** What further information or changes would you find helpful?

Stage 9

Monitoring and reviewing the local play strategy

Stage 9. Monitor progress of the action plan against agreed milestones and review the commissioning process. Evaluate performance using local play indicators. Evaluate the play strategy against identified outcomes and review results of NI 199.

Evaluation of the strategy – its effectiveness and impact against its intended outcomes – will be a crucial part of the review process that should be built into the plan from the outset. In addition, authorities are expected to conduct a local evaluation of their play pathfinder or playbuilder projects. This could include conducting local surveys to gather the views of all children and young people, taking steps to ensure those who might not normally take part in consultations are included.

A national evaluation of the pathfinder programme is being undertaken. The research tools used to conduct this evaluation will be available to authorities as they undertake their own evaluations.

Strategic planning for play opportunities must include mechanisms for regular monitoring and review of progress towards identified outcomes. The National Indicator (NI 199) of children's satisfaction with parks and play areas should provide a benchmark against which future improvements can be measured on an area-wide basis. More detailed local evaluation should aim to capture the impact of play provision on specific communities, and on other outcomes.

The intended outcomes identified at Stage 1 should provide the basis for such work.

The local play strategy document and relevant action plans need to be kept under regular review in order to be effective. Regular reviews will be especially important in ensuring that targets are being met, and 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.

To effectively review the plan, performance will need to be monitored by agreed performance indicators. Play England has developed a set of performance indicators for area-wide play provision, piloted and developed to support local authorities in collecting robust information about the provision in their area. Details and guidance, including a full evaluation report of the pilot programme, are available from Play England.⁹⁰

Local play indicators

Play England has worked with a number of local authorities to pilot indicators upon which local standards may be based.^{xix} The resource implications of the data collection for the indicators will differ

between local authorities and depend on other information being collected locally, resources available with the local authority performance management team, and skills available locally. Data collection methods include household surveys, surveys of children – through schools – audit and GIS mapping and site visits for quality assessment.

The data collection for the local play indicators should, seek to measure the extent to which children and young people have access to spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation that:

1. are free of charge, allowing children the freedom to come and go, and where children are free to play as they choose (the 'three-frees')
2. are accessible, welcoming and engaging for all, including those who are disabled or have specific needs and wishes
3. allow for the needs of different ages of children.

Table 4. Play England local play indicators		
Indicator 1	Participation	Method of generation
Description	The percentage of all children and young people aged from birth to 16 years (from all social and ethnic groups, including those who are disabled), who play out for at least four hours each week.	Household survey
Indicator 2	Access to a variety of facilities and spaces	Method of generation
Description	The percentage of all children and young people aged from birth to 16 years that have access to at least three different types of space or facility (doorstep, local and neighbourhood), at least one of which is a dedicated place for play and informal recreation, which are all within easy walking or cycling distance as defined in Table 3.	Open space and play strategy audits GIS mapping
Indicator 3	Quality of facilities and spaces	Method of generation
Description	The proportion of play spaces and facilities with high scores for location, play value and care and maintenance as assessed using the Playable Space Quality Assessment Tool.	Quality Assessment Tool
Indicator 4	Satisfaction	Method of generation
Description	The percentage of all children and young people (from all social and ethnic groups, including those who are disabled), who think that the range and quality of play facilities and spaces they are able to access in their local neighbourhood is good/very good. (Note: this local indicator links to NI 199, but allows for more locally targeted analysis and therefore assessment of need for, and impact of investment in specific locations.)	Questionnaire survey of children and young people

There are four local play indicators, which should, ideally, be used together to assess effectiveness of provision in particular areas. (This differs from data collected to inform NI 199, which will provide an aggregate measure, for the whole authority, from the TellUs survey).

Consultation questions

Stage 9. Monitoring and reviewing the local play strategy

- 9a. Is the guidance in this section clear?
- 9b. Does this accurately reflect and fit into your own local area systems and delivery processes?
- 9c. What further information or changes would you find helpful?

Consultation questions

Overall

- 1. Is the purpose of the guidance clear?
- 2. Is the guidance presented as relevant and helpful to its intended audience?
- 3. Do you think the recommended steps set out in this guidance will help to embed commitments to children's play locally?
- 4. If you have answered 'no' to any of the above, what further information would be helpful?
- 5. Are there any other final comments on this draft guidance that you would like to make?

Appendix 1

Executive summary of The Play Strategy

Introduction

1. The Government's ambition is to make this the best country in the world for children to grow up. Children, young people and their parents all recognise that play is a vital ingredient of a happy and healthy childhood, supporting children's physical, emotional, social and educational development.
2. This national Play Strategy, backed by £235 million of dedicated investment for local play facilities across the country, is informed by extensive consultation with children, young people and their parents.
3. Our *Fair Play* consultation, launched in April 2008, attracted a huge response. Over 9,400 children and young people shared their views with us, giving widespread support for our 2020 vision for play in every residential area.
4. Our aim, shared with children, young people and parents, is for all children to be able to enjoy a range of safe and exciting places to play close to where they live. Through children's and communities' involvement in the design and planning of these spaces, play areas will be valued locally and continue to reflect the distinct needs of each community.
5. This Strategy sets out how we will deliver our vision for 2020, supporting local delivery

partners to make a reality of children's right to play, as stated in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Our vision for play

- in every residential area there are a variety of supervised and unsupervised places for play, free of charge;
- local neighbourhoods are, and feel like, safe, interesting places to play;
- routes to children's play space are safe and accessible for all children and young people;
- parks and open spaces are attractive and welcoming to children and young people, and are well maintained and well used;
- children and young people have a clear stake in public space and their play is accepted by their neighbours;
- children and young people play in a way that respects other people and property;
- children and young people and their families take an active role in the development of local play spaces; and
- play spaces are attractive, welcoming, engaging and accessible for all local children

and young people, including disabled children, and children from minority groups in the community.

Delivering our vision for play

- Chapter 2, *Our vision for 2020*, sets out the short-, medium- and long-term objectives that will deliver our vision for play.

Short term: 2008–2011

- Through the development and implementation of this national Play Strategy, backed by dedicated investment, our immediate priority is to increase the availability of safe, exciting and inclusive play facilities, putting the needs of local communities at the heart of the design process and improving facilities in the areas where children need them most. We will establish a strong framework for local delivery, including continuing to develop the compelling evidence base on the benefits of play and identifying and disseminating best practice to help our partners deliver high quality local play spaces.

Medium term: 2011–2014

- Over the medium term, we will build on our initial investment and support Children's Trust partnerships to provide the local leadership necessary to build communities that value and respond to children, young people and parents' demands for safe and well maintained places to play. This will rely on staff from across wider local authority and health services understanding and supporting this agenda, integrating it within local children's services. Progress will be demonstrated year-on-year by higher reported satisfaction of children with local outdoor play facilities. Those who support and supervise children's play will become increasingly professionalised, ensuring staffed

provision is high quality and makes the right links with other children's services locally.

Long term: 2014–2020

- Over the longer term, our objective is that all children and young people will be able to access world-class play and recreation spaces near where they live, within communities that are child-friendly. The local authority working through strong Children's Trust partnerships will lead the delivery of excellent local play provision, with consideration of children's needs embedded in the planning of the wider Local Strategic Partnership.
- This rest of this Play Strategy sets out in detail how we will work with local partners to deliver this vision across the country.

Chapter 3: More places to play

- Children and parents told us that they want more high-quality places to play near where they live. To respond to this demand, our aim is to provide a variety of safe, accessible and exciting places to play in every residential area.

Children, young people and adults asked for:

- more play spaces, accessible to all children throughout the country;
- play spaces that are exciting and stimulating for children, especially 8- to 13-year-olds;
- play spaces where families can share and enjoy leisure time; and
- places to play when the weather is bad.

Our key actions:

- we are investing £235 million in up to 3,500 play areas across the country;
- we are investing in 30 Pathfinder local authorities to receive additional funding, part of which will be used to develop a large, staffed adventure playground;
- every local authority will receive at least £1 million in funding, to be targeted on the children most in need of improved play opportunities;
- so that children can benefit from this investment as soon as possible, we are accelerating national roll-out so that every local authority will be offered funding by April 2009;
- we have contracted Play England as our national delivery partner and significantly expanded their capacity. Play England will provide all local authorities with access to expertise, planning advice and guidance;
- we have published detailed design guidance to help local partners produce the new and refurbished play areas that children and parents tell us they want to see; and
- we will explore how good play opportunities can be provided when the weather makes outdoor play unappealing to children.

Chapter 4: Supporting play throughout childhood

12. Children of all ages want to have opportunities to play, regardless of their background, physical ability and where they live. To improve opportunities for all children, the Play Strategy

focuses on places where children and young people spend their leisure time (including parks and green spaces), schools and Sure Start Children's Centres. Through the implementation of this Strategy, we will make sure that parents know what opportunities exist locally.

Children, young people and adults asked for:

- improved play opportunities for all children in schools, children's centres and through other local services;
- improved provision and access for children least able to take advantage of play opportunities;
- play spaces that are exciting and accessible for children with disabilities; and
- better information about what is available locally.

Our key actions:

- by April 2009, we will publish a toolkit to help local authorities and service providers inform parents and children about local play opportunities;
- to ensure disabled children benefit fully from our investment in play we have introduced funding requirements and are working with the third sector to provide expertise, advice and guidance for local authorities;
- new Sure Start Children's Centres will deliver best practice in design and provision of spaces for children to play; and

- the Building Schools for the Future capital investment programme will have clear requirements around outdoor play and recreational spaces in schools.

Chapter 5: Playing safely

13. Children, young people and parents told us that concerns about safety are preventing children from going outside and accessing play areas, and that play facilities are often dull and are not challenging and stimulating for children. To address this, we will do more to tackle bullying and crime, improve road safety and increase the availability of appropriately supervised play, as well as to support partners to deliver safe and exciting play areas that children and young people want to see.

Children, young people and adults asked for:

- steps to address fears of bullying and crime;
- increased supervision of play spaces, but without turning play into a regimented, structured activity;
- safer routes to play spaces;
- play spaces that are clean and well maintained;
- play spaces that are exciting and help children learn how to take and manage risks in a safe environment; and
- those working in local areas asked for support on the issue of litigation around play-related accidents.

Our key actions:

- we will publish guidance for practitioners on tackling bullying outside schools;

- we are taking steps to tackle youth-related crime through the Youth Crime Action Plan and the Youth Taskforce Action Plan;
- we are supporting links between local authorities, the third sector and community policing to improve appropriate supervision of children playing;
- we will provide resources to support the third sector and volunteering in support of play; and
- we are publishing guidance on proportionate risk management to support the delivery of exciting play spaces.

Chapter 6: Child-friendly communities

14. We want to see communities that give greater consideration to children's needs and interests – communities which are more child-friendly. Children and young people want their own views to be reflected in local decisions about how their neighbourhoods are designed and developed. In response to this, we are taking steps to make local areas more child-friendly and more welcoming for children, in particular, by working with local partners and the housing industry.

Children, young people and adults asked for:

- children, young people and local communities to be involved throughout the design and construction of play spaces;
- children to be able to play in public space, streets and neighbourhoods; and
- communities to become more tolerant and welcoming of children's play as long as children respect the views of others.

Our key actions:

- we will ensure that children's needs are fully reflected in a forthcoming review of planning policy;
- new web-based guidance will bring together best practice for planning officers on supporting children's play and recreation;
- a new national partnership will deliver training to every local authority by March 2011, focused on helping the professionals who design and manage our neighbourhoods to understand the importance of play and child-friendly spaces;
- we are working with the social housing sector and regulators to ensure that play is supported in some of the most deprived areas;
- the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment is working with the Government, local authorities, and the housing development industry to deliver residential developments and new housing growth areas that meet children's needs and interests; and
- our Aiming High strategy is taking steps to foster a more positive approach to young people across society.

Chapter 7: Embedding play in local priorities

15. Parents want play to continue to be a priority for the Government and local authorities and we also want to ensure that our investment will have a lasting impact. To achieve this we will

create a policy framework and incentives for sustainable and effective delivery in every area and invest in a skilled workforce. This will be driven by a shared understanding across local partners and local communities on the value of play, what good play opportunities look like and where they are needed, and what the various roles and responsibilities should be locally to deliver on this.

National and local delivery partners asked for:

- action to ensure play becomes a priority, with respondents welcoming the National Indicator;
- play to have a higher priority locally and be embedded in children's services and wider local authority business planning;
- the health sector to play a key role in supporting and promoting play;
- support for the playwork profession and recognition of their commitment; and
- the third sector to receive support, as a crucial delivery partner.

Our key actions:

- we are introducing a new National Indicator from April 2009 for local authorities, which will ask children how satisfied they are with their local parks and play areas;
- updated statutory guidance for Children's Trusts sets out roles and responsibilities in relation to play;
- jointly with Play England, we are publishing for consultation new draft guidance on how Children's Trusts and Local Strategic

Partnerships can respond to children's play needs as they plan services and changes to neighbourhoods;

- we are working with the Department of Health to support active play as part of the drive by Children's Trusts to help children lead healthy lives, and through the healthy lifestyle campaign Play4Life;
 - we are enabling 4,000 playworkers to achieve a Level 3 playwork qualification by 2011;
 - we are supporting the continuous professional development of leaders and managers in the play workforce by developing a new playwork management qualification; and
 - we are investing £1.5 million in third sector-run adventure playgrounds and providing funding to help build third sector infrastructure that will support play locally.
- 16.** This Play Strategy aims to make a reality of our ambition for world-class opportunities for play in every area, by helping professionals in local government, the third sector and business to respond to the play and recreational needs of children and young people.

Appendix 2

Government policy in relation to play

Government initiative	Key issues raised	Importance for children's play
General guidance		
<p><i>Children's Trusts: Statutory guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve well-being of children, young people and their families</i>⁹¹</p> <p>(DCSF, 2008)</p>	<p>Wide-ranging guidance aimed at ensuring that Children's Trusts promote the general well-being of children and young people as an important element of their roles and responsibilities.</p>	<p>Children's Trust partners should consider children's safeguarding needs, wider issues such as bullying, preventing accidents, traffic calming measures, access to quality green spaces, providing sufficient opportunities for safe outdoor play, and safe places for teenagers to meet.</p>
<p><i>The Children's Plan</i></p> <p>(DCSF, 2007)</p>	<p>Through The Children's Plan the Government wants to 'help to make sure that young people have interesting and exciting things to do outside of school, and provide more places for children to play safely' (Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families).</p> <p>The Children's Plan has the ambitious goal of "making England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up". Health and well-being is given high priority and the plan includes specific proposals to increase the quantity and quality of play spaces across England. It also includes the commitment to a national play strategy.</p>	<p>Government policy intends that local planning authorities work with local communities to provide better play-friendly physical environments. In support of this, Government is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● publishing a toolkit for planners; ● working on reviews of statutory planning guidance; ● working in partnership with registered social landlords to improve the quality of the play environment; ● highlighting to chief planning officers the importance of outdoor play for children; ● improving training for planners in relation to play; and ● working with local authorities and others to make child-friendly public space a feature of eco-towns and major new housing developments.

Government initiative	Key issues raised	Importance for children's play
<p><i>Every Child Matters: Change for children</i> (DfES, 2004)</p>	<p>The Government's Every Child Matters: Change for children strategy, published in December 2004, provides a national framework to guide change at local authority level. The ten-year strategy for early years and childcare (DfES 2004b) was published at the same time. Together, these documents set out the bigger picture in terms of national and local change.</p>	<p>The provision of quality playable space makes a major contribution to the Government's Every Child Matters outcomes for children.</p>
Children's health		
<p><i>Healthy lives, brighter futures: The strategy for children and young people's health</i>⁹² (DH and DCSF, 2009)</p>	<p>This guidance encourages Primary Care Trusts and Strategy Health Authorities as part of Children's Trust to work with planners, highways officers and managers of public spaces to help them shape healthy environments for children.</p>	<p>The strategy encourages Children's Trust boards and wider local governance structures like the Local Strategic Partnership to think about the health and play needs of children in their neighbourhoods and to promote child-friendly environments.</p>
<p><i>Obesity: guidance on the prevention, identification, assessment and management of overweight and obesity in adults and children</i>⁹³ (NICE, 2006)</p>	<p>NICE guidance, on preventing obesity: Health care specialists are expected to follow this guidance, which supports the implementation of the White Paper Choosing health: making healthy choices easier.⁹⁴</p>	<p>The guidance makes a number of recommendations including, providing facilities and schemes such as cycling and walking routes; safe play areas and making streets cleaner and safer, through to measures such as traffic calming and congestion charging.</p>
<p><i>Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: a Cross-Government Strategy for England</i>⁹⁵ (DH and DCSF, 2009)</p>	<p>DH guidance to Primary Care Trusts on implementing Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives.</p>	<p>The guidance encourages Primary Care Trusts to work with local authority planning departments to promote more opportunities for play, especially unstructured play.</p>

Government initiative	Key issues raised	Importance for children's play
<p><i>Promoting and creating built or natural environments that encourage and support physical activity</i>⁹⁶</p> <p>(NICE, 2008)</p>	<p>In 2008, NICE published guidance recommending that 'planning applications for new developments always prioritise the need for people (including those whose mobility is impaired) to be physically active as a routine part of their daily life'. Communities and Local Government will be producing information for planners about a recommended approach for achieving this.</p>	<p>The guidance makes recommendations on ensuring the natural and built environment is more suitable for children to participate in physically active play.</p>
<p><i>At least five a week</i>⁹⁷</p> <p>(DH, 2004)</p>	<p>In April 2004, the Chief Medical Officer in England recommended that children be physically active for at least 60 minutes every day.</p>	<p>To support children in being sufficiently active the guidance suggests that they should have access to three or four afternoon or evening play opportunities in the week.</p>
<p><i>Promoting physical activity, active play and sport for pre-school and school-age children and young people in family, pre-school, school and community settings</i>⁹⁸</p> <p>(NICE, 2009)</p>	<p>Amongst its detailed recommendations to national and local agencies NICE suggested the need for Government to deliver a long-term (minimum five years) national campaign to promote physical activity among children and young people.</p>	<p>The campaign should be integrated with and support other national health campaigns and strategies to increase participation in play and sport and reduce obesity (such as 'Change4Life').</p>
<p><i>Tackling Child Obesity – First Steps 2/2006</i>⁹⁹</p> <p>(National Audit Office, Audit Commission and Healthcare Commission, 2006)</p>	<p>An inter-agency national report Tackling Child Obesity – First Steps proposed wide-ranging policies to tackle childhood obesity.</p>	<p>The report indicated that in formulating national policy government departments should consider provision for children's play as an important contribution to reducing obesity in children and young people.</p>
<p><i>Be active be healthy: a plan for getting the nation moving</i>¹⁰⁰</p> <p>(DH, 2009)</p>	<p>Wide-ranging guidance on policies and strategies to encourage people to be more physically active.</p>	<p>Promoting opportunities for active play is seen as an important part of this strategy.</p>

Government initiative	Key issues raised	Importance for children's play
Improving the environment		
<p><i>Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities</i>¹⁰¹ (CLG, 2008)</p>	<p>The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 set up a mechanism for creating Sustainable Community Strategies (SCS). These strategies are the overarching expression of long-term thinking and planning for the creation of a better local environment. The process is managed by the multi-agency Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP).</p> <p>The mechanism for identifying and resourcing local priorities is the Local Area Agreement (LAA) which clarifies the local authority service objectives. Local authority performance is measured against their LAA and also against the National Indicator Set (NIS). NI 199, to be introduced in April 2009, measure the levels of satisfaction with local parks and play areas amongst children and young people.</p>	<p>There is a Government commitment to widen and deepen the involvement of local communities in shaping their own future. Statutory guidance informs local authorities that, from April 2009, there will be a duty to involve local representatives in the LSP which draws up the SCS. This includes local third sector groups and anyone else likely to be affected by, or interested in, the function. This includes children and young people, as well as adults.</p> <p>This is the opportunity for interested local bodies, such as a Play association, to become involved in issues around improving the environment for children and young people's play and recreation.</p> <p>The duty set out in LAAs to cooperate to agree targets provides a lever to bring about a more robust approach to local partnership working.</p>
<p><i>Green Spaces, Better Places</i>¹⁰² (CLG, 2006)</p> <p><i>Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener</i>¹⁰³ (CLG, 2006)</p>	<p>The Urban Green Spaces Taskforce published its first report <i>Green Spaces, Better Places</i> in May 2002. The report considered the benefits that urban parks and green spaces bring to cities, the problems affecting them and how these can be overcome. It also gave examples of good practice, and ideas for achieving solutions.</p> <p>The Government's response, <i>Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener</i>, confirmed the protection of play space as part of the wider environmental agenda.</p>	<p>The report highlights the importance of play areas and youth facilities and their contribution to both health and community safety.</p>

Government initiative	Key issues raised	Importance for children's play
<p><i>Securing the Future: UK Government sustainable development strategy</i>¹⁰⁴ (Defra, 2005)</p>	<p>The Government launched its strategy for sustainable development <i>Securing the Future</i> in March 2005. Provision for, and the involvement of, children and young people were identified as an important element in creating sustainable communities.</p> <p>The strategy notes that people's local neighbourhoods matter to them and have a significant impact on their quality of life – whether they live, work or play there. People want to be able to have a say in, and make a more tangible contribution to, the way their local area and services are managed. The Government aims to make local services work together to ensure cleaner, safer, greener and healthier neighbourhoods for everyone, where local people have their say.</p>	<p>The Government's priorities for creating better neighbourhoods are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● create attractive and welcoming parks, play areas and public spaces; ● engage and empower local people and communities; ● improve the physical infrastructure of places; ● make places cleaner and maintain them better; ● make places safer and tackle anti-social behaviour; ● improve health by encouraging and supporting healthy lifestyles; and ● tackle inequalities and support the needs of children and young people. <p>In making provision for playable space, planners and highways' departments have a crucial role in contributing to these priorities.</p>
<p><i>Transport strategies and Manual for Streets</i>¹⁰⁵ (DfT and CLG 2007)</p>	<p>Government planning guidance promotes transport strategies that support the creation of safer, more child-friendly environments through the development of more sustainable transport policies. PPS1 <i>Delivering Sustainable Development</i>, PPG13 <i>Transport</i>, and the forthcoming PPS on <i>eco-towns</i>, along with DfT's <i>Manual for Streets</i>, promote a range of measures to improve walking and cycling. These include 20 mph zones in residential areas, traffic calming and home zones, all of which can improve children and young people's access to play opportunities. They also directly create opportunities to play, since for children the act of getting from one place to another is often part of their play, whether or not it is a purposeful trip.</p>	<p>Transport policies can, however, work against children's freedom of movement and limit their play opportunities if traffic speeds and volumes are too high in residential neighbourhoods. The DfT's <i>Manual for Streets</i> offers detailed guidance which, when implemented, can improve children and young people's opportunities for play and informal recreation.</p> <p>The 2007 DfT's <i>Child Road Safety Strategy</i> incorporates a specific action point on creation of safe routes to play areas as well as to schools (DfT 2007: 62, Action 16).</p>

Government initiative	Key issues raised	Importance for children's play
<p><i>Aiming High for Young People: A 10-year strategy for positive activities</i>¹⁰⁶</p> <p>(DCSF, 2007)</p>	<p>Aiming High sets out the Government's ambition to transform opportunities for young people, aged 13–19 years, in their leisure time and give them an equal place in communities. It emphasises the importance of providing attractive safe facilities for young people in every community. It aims to provide young people with 'places to go and things to do'.</p> <p>The most common concern of teenagers about public open space is the lack of provision that meets their needs. They feel there is little provision specifically aimed at teenagers and that, often, their right to be recognised as legitimate users of the public space is not respected.</p> <p>A common objection to new play areas is that they will be 'misused' by teenagers. Provision of age-appropriate play and recreational space for teenagers will help to ameliorate this problem.</p>	<p>Although the primary focus of Aiming High is on providing supervised structured activities in youth provision and extended schools, its emphasis on safe 'places to go' with 'things to do' is of clear significance to spatial planners.</p> <p>The provision of 'places to go' for teenagers, so that young people have an 'equal place in communities', also applies to public open space. This means planners should consider the place of youth facilities such as skate parks, multi-use games areas and youth shelters when planning for public open space. In addition, they should aim to ensure that the wider public realm is welcoming to young people. The need for playable space is as important to teenagers as it is to younger children.</p>
Schools		
<p><i>Extended Schools: Building on Experience</i>¹⁰⁷</p> <p>(DCSF and ContinYou, 2008)</p>	<p>The Government's stated aim is that, by 2010, all children should have access to a variety of activities at schools after the end of ('beyond') the school day.</p> <p>Extended schools provide a range of services, facilities and activities, beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of children, their families and the wider community. The aim is for all schools, and children and families, to be able to access a core of extended services and publicly accessible facilities developed in partnership with others.</p>	<p>Fair Play (2008a) highlights the potential for providing publicly accessible play and youth facilities on school sites as part of the extended schools initiative. This may be of importance to planners when assessing the amount and type of playable space freely available to children and young people in their local neighbourhoods; and to highways departments in working with schools to develop safe routes to schools.</p>

Government initiative	Key issues raised	Importance for children's play
<p><i>Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system – The Pupil Guarantee</i>¹⁰⁸ (DCSF, 2009)</p>	<p>The Government's vision is that every child enjoys their childhood, does well at school and turns 18 with the knowledge, skills and qualifications that will give them the best chance of success in adult life.</p>	<p>Within this White Paper, Government is establishing a new Pupil Guarantee, setting out new entitlements to personalised support for every child. Free play as part of extended services is now an embedded part of the Pupil Guarantee.</p>

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Embedding the Play Strategy

Draft guidance to local authorities, Children's Trust Boards and Local Strategic Partnerships on sustaining improvements and planning the development of provision and space for children and young people's play and informal recreation.

This publication can be downloaded at www.playengland.org.uk

Play England

Play England aims for all children and young people in England to have regular access and opportunity for free, inclusive, local play provision and play space. Play England provides advice and support to promote good practice, and works to ensure that the importance of play is recognised by policy-makers, planners and the public.

Play England is a Government delivery partner, working closely with local authorities and the voluntary sector to ensure that England's first ever national Play Strategy transforms public play space and play services.

Play England is part of NCB and is supported by the Big Lottery Fund.

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NCB promotes the voices, interests and well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives.

As an umbrella body for the children's sector in England and Northern Ireland, NCB provides essential information on policy, research and good practice for NCB's members and other partners.

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