

BOLSOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

Play Strategy

November 2009

This Strategy addresses the following Corporate Aims:



COMMUNITY
SAFETY



CUSTOMER
FOCUSED SERVICES



ENVIRONMENT



REGENERATION



SOCIAL INCLUSION



STRATEGIC ORGANISATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT



The District of Bolsover Equalities Statement

The District of Bolsover is committed to equalities as an employer and in all the services provided to all sections of the community.

- The Council believes that no person should be treated unfairly and is committed to eliminate all forms of discrimination in compliance with the Equality Strategy.
- The Council also has due regard to eliminate racial discrimination and to proactively promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups when performing it's functions.

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A

1. Principles of the Strategy

The Bolsover District Play Strategy has been developed to address the issues that prevent children and young people aged 0 to 19 years from playing naturally and to support the establishment of high quality and diverse play environments for all of the children and young people who reside within the district.

The Play Strategy also recognises the role of adults in supporting and encouraging play as a range of activities that children and young people partake in for their own intrinsic enjoyment.

The Play Strategy aims to be all encompassing with regard to play in children's and young people's lives and will be delivered within the strategic framework of:

- The Corporate Plan 2007-2011¹
- The Community Strategy 2006-2020²

The adoption of this strategy will support and inform the Sustainable Community Strategy 2006-2020.

The strategy has been developed around the following principles:

Play is fundamental to children's health and well-being throughout their childhood and during the transition to adulthood.

- Children and young people engage in play for its own sake, not for any external goal or reward; it is a significant part of children's culture.

Play is critically important to children's development and learning. Children and young people exhibit a behavioural imperative and instinctive desire to play.

- Through play children learn that which cannot be taught and which can only be learnt through experience, such as self-confidence and resilience. A child's development, and their future capacity as an adult, will be affected by their access to a range of play opportunities.

Play is a natural and universal activity. It is a process with no necessary outcome. Play is freely chosen (i.e. entered into by the child because he or she wishes to do so); personally directed (i.e. under the control of the child playing); intrinsically motivated (i.e. is undertaken because it is satisfying for the child playing).

- Through play children and young people find out about themselves, their abilities and interests. Play is therefore crucial for developing children's

self-awareness and an understanding of the world around them. Play helps children and young people to cope with difficult and stressful situations, and fosters social inclusion.

- To support the child's right to participate fully in leisure, recreation and play, the child's participation, opinions and views must be sought, listened to and taken into account.
- Risk-taking is an essential feature of children and young people's play; children and young people want and need to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities

It is recognised that children and young people want to play and are entitled to do so, in a variety of public spaces near to their homes. This includes both places designated for play and shared public space.

- This is based on the understanding that all members of the community, whether young or old should have a mutual respect for each other's individual needs and requirements.

Adults, including play workers, childminders, nursery staff, classroom assistants, teachers, head teachers, governors, youth workers and other professionals, volunteers, parents, carers, enforcement agencies, relatives and friends have a significant role in supporting and enabling children's play.

- Based on the overriding principle that it is everyone's responsibility to protect children from harm and neglect, ensuring their access to stimulating and challenging play environments is an important objective of the Bolsover District Play Strategy.
- Adults have an extremely important role in supporting and encouraging children's natural instinct to play and maximising their use of local play environments.

It is also recognised that:

- Children and young people want to play, and should be entitled to do so, in variety of public spaces near to their homes. This should include places designated for play as well as shared public space.
- The impact of modern, urban society on children's lives significantly restricts their opportunity to play freely, and has resulted in a poverty of play opportunities in the general environment.
- Children, their families and society as a whole, benefit from an environment in which children and young people are able to play in public spaces free from unacceptable or avoidable risks

- Adults, in the form of play workers, parents, carers, relatives and friends have a significant role in supporting and enabling children's play.
- It is important that all children and young people have access to stimulating and challenging play environments where they are exposed to acceptable levels of risk, but where they are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury. This is in line with the policy statement 'Managing Risk in Play Provision', published by the Play Safety Forum and endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive.
- Some children, due to their personal or family circumstances, or their social and physical environment, have more limited access to play opportunities than others, and that the play needs of these children must be catered for in the development of the Play Strategy.

2. Introduction

The Bolsover District Play Strategy recognises that play is fundamental to the life of every child, is vital both to children's quality of life during their childhood, and to their development into healthy and independent adults.

The Play Strategy reflects Bolsover District Council's commitment to ensuring that children and young people's needs are central to policy making, and that provision is made to meet those needs and desires.

It seeks to improve children's lives by first establishing a set of values and principles and then sets out a number of proposals for the future development of quality play opportunities across the District.

The development of the Play Strategy began during the spring of 2007 with the creation of the Bolsover District Play Partnership, which comprises a range of individuals and organisations from both within the statutory and voluntary sectors and the wider community.

The role and terms of reference of the Bolsover District Play Partnership is to:

- Assist with the development of the play strategy
- To ensure that children and young people are consulted and engaged in both the development of the strategy and in its implementation
- To ensure that the strategy is inclusive of all children and young people, whatever their particular needs or backgrounds
- To help promote and publicise the strategy process
- To assist with the implementation, monitoring, review and evaluation of the strategy over the next five years

During a launch workshop, the scope of the strategy and a number of key principles and objectives for the strategy were agreed.

Those attending were also given the opportunity to provide their hopes, fears and ideas for the development of play within the District. These are summarised in appendix A.

The following policy statements describe Bolsover District Council's understanding of the role of play in children's lives, and the values and principles that underpin the development of the Play Strategy.

Policy 1: The Play Strategy recognises that play and Informal activity programmes have a vital role to play in improving the health and well being of children and young people

Policy 2: The Play Strategy will seek to protect and improve and play opportunities across the district

Policy 3: Play opportunities across the district will be provided on the basis of a strategic analysis of local needs with the aim of providing an equitable distribution of facilities and services across the district

Policy 4: Children, young people and their families will be actively engaged in the planning and development of play opportunities through appropriate consultation and active involvement.

Policy 5: The Play Strategy acknowledges the vital role played by parish councils and the voluntary and community sector within the district in relation to the provision of play opportunities and we will work to support their efforts

Policy 6: Through the Play Strategy Bolsover District Council's Leisure Services department will seek opportunities to improve and enhance Play provision across the district through planning obligations and Section 106 agreements with developers

The adoption of these policies on play will reflect Bolsover District Council's commitment to ensuring that the needs and desires of children are central to policymaking, and that appropriate provision is made to meet those needs and desires.

The vision for the future of play in Bolsover is:

“Working together to support children and young people and their right to play within their own communities”

3. The Scope of the Strategy (Executive Summary)

The Bolsover District Play Strategy, which has been developed by Bolsover District Council and the Bolsover District Play Partnership, aims to provide a series of key actions that are supported by policies and based on the needs, wishes and ideas of children, young people, parents, carers and adults living and working within the district.

The Play Strategy aims to address the issues that prevent children and young people from playing naturally and to support the establishment of high quality and diverse play environments for all of the children and young people who reside within the district.

The strategy will also recognise the role of adults in supporting and encouraging play as a range of activities that children and young people partake in for their own intrinsic enjoyment.

The aim of the Play Strategy is ultimately to improve and increase the range and availability of play opportunities and experiences for children and young people.

The Bolsover District Play Partnership will achieve this through the establishment of clear policies for the development and provision of opportunities for play. These will then provide the basis for the development and provision of a range of high quality and accessible play activities and facilities for all its children and young people across Bolsover district.

The development of this strategy has been based on an understanding of the quality and quantity of current play environments, whether they be formal or informal and as well as the barriers that prevent children and young people from making full use of existing play opportunities within their own community.

The strategy contains an action plan, which has clear and identifiable targets and milestones.

The Strategy aims to expand the areas of the public realm where all children and young people can feel safe and welcomed.

The Strategy seeks to meet the needs and desires of children and young people within their local community, including groups that have traditionally suffered exclusion, such as disabled children and young people and those from minority ethnic or refugee communities.

The Strategy seeks to improve the quality of life for the whole community by engaging with its children and young people to challenge negative perceptions and engender shared ownership of, and responsibility for, open space and the built environment.

The following objectives provide scope and focus for the development of the Play strategy and are linked to the priorities identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Objective 1:

Improve the public realm as a child friendly environment, ensuring that parks, thoroughfares, housing estates and other public spaces across the District are as conducive as possible to play for all children and young people.

Objective 2:

Promote the importance of play in relation to children and young people's health, well-being and personal development, to all those that have an influence.

Objective 3:

Develop a joined up approach to the distribution of play resources, striking a balance based on need between supervised and unsupervised provision.

Objective 4:

Work to reduce the barriers that prevent children and young people from accessing and playing in the general public domain

Objective 5:

Aim to offer all children and young people the chance to encounter acceptable risks in stimulating and challenging play environments

Throughout this strategy the term children and young people refers to all children and young people aged 0 to19 regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnic background or social status.

The Play Strategy focuses on children of all ages, from the early years, through the middle ages and right into young adulthood. It will take account of children's different abilities, their age, gender, cultural background, social, family, economic and environmental situation.

The strategy will therefore benefit:

- Children and young people, their parents and communities as services and facilities are improved and developed to address their needs.
- Members and officers of Bolsover District Council by creating the basis for more efficient, effective and co-ordinated play provision.
- Those officers responsible for the development of opportunities for play by bringing clarity to their daily working environment, allowing good practice to be shared and providing consistency.

The most important aspect of a strategy with a focus on play is the provision of a framework for regulation and consistency in offering play opportunities for children and young people.

The development of a play strategy was also a key recommendation of the guidelines provided by the Children's Play Council within the document 'Making a Case for Play' (2002).

'Local authorities should work with partners to develop and promote corporate play policies and strategies which take into account the needs and wishes of children and young people.'

Children's Play Council, Making the Case for Play (2002)³.

The Strategy will enable Bolsover District Council to consider the needs of children, young people and their families across a range of policy and strategy areas.

Development and Implementation of the Play Strategy will also enable Bolsover District Council and its partners to:

- Bring together a range of disciplines, interests and issues to promote closer inter-departmental, inter-authority and community relationships around the key theme of children and young people.
- Provide an evidence base, build strategic partnerships and develop plans to support funding applications to a wide range of potential funders.
- Comply with relevant legislation including the Children Act (2004) and the Disability Discrimination Act (1995)
- Help to meet the requirements for assessments and audits of open spaces contained in Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG 17)
- Promote a more holistic view of play space provision, distribution and quality
- Provide the basis for a consistent approach that contributes to a strategic overview within current priorities
- Identify areas of play space deficiency, gaps in types of provision and the need for improvement
- Assist in the identification of priorities, and in planning for improvements or the creation of new play spaces or services
- Promote / enable better management of assets

- Highlight and resolve issues relating to the quantity, quality and accessibility of play provision
- Seek opportunities for the development of play spaces through Section 106 agreements with developers
- Maximise the effectiveness of budgets through strategically targeted expenditure based on an assessment of need
- Assist in the development plan review, development control, decision making and the negotiation of developer agreements
- Contribute towards best value reviews and other corporate strategies
- Promote partnership working, social inclusion and community involvement.

Everybody within a community will benefit from an environment that supports the development and welfare of children. However, the Play Strategy is predominantly for:

- All children and young people aged 0 and 19, their parents, carers and families.
- Elected members and officers of Bolsover District Council who have an influence over children and young people's opportunities to play
- Those who directly offer services through staff and volunteers to children and their families including nurseries, child minders, play schemes, out of school groups, play buses, open access schemes and youth clubs.
- Individuals, agencies or groups who have an interest in the development of quality play facilities and play services for children and young people.

In adopting this Play Strategy Bolsover District Council will ensure that:

- All decisions and activities that might affect children and young people's opportunities and space to play should be guided by this strategy
- Officers across a range of departments will work together and in partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies, in order to make the most effective use of resources and ensure that all children and young people within the District have access to the broadest range of environments and opportunities for play.

B: Bolsover District Play Strategy

4 Setting the Scene

4.1 What is play?

Children and our own childhood experiences tell us that play includes, but is not necessarily limited to:

Running, climbing, skipping, hiding, playing with ropes, jumping, practising cartwheels, throwing and kicking balls, making friends, falling out, growing things, telling stories, climbing trees, taking risks, getting wet, exploring nature, building dens, getting dirty, dressing up, keeping animals, digging holes, swinging on tyres, shouting, fighting, inventing games, making things, painting pictures, talking with friends or just sitting .

Although we all recognise it when we see it, play is actually very difficult to define. The national occupational standards of the playwork, childcare and early years professions define play as:

'freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. It can be fun or serious...by playing children learn and develop as individuals and as members of the community'.

The report 'Getting serious about play', published by DCMS in 2004⁴ uses the straightforward description of play as:

'What children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons'

The Play Strategy recognises the diversity, complexity and richness of children's play.

These definitions all suggest two things:

- That play is instinctive, arising from children's innate need to express themselves and explore their world.
- That the benefits of play for children's development derive from them choosing it and doing it for themselves.

The adult role in play provision is to enable rather than to direct.

4.2 The Benefits of Play

4.21 Play is a Part of Education

Play allows children the chance to explore their environment, to learn how it works and how they relate to it.

Play fosters the development of a range of personal and social skills and can be used as a vehicle to address deficits in child development, particularly social inclusion.

Play presents a child with the opportunities of choice, freedom and control as well as a wide range of physical, social and intellectual experiences.

To a child, play can present benefits both at the time of play or as the play evolves. Over time play can enhance self-esteem, respect, social inclusion, wellbeing, healthy growth, creativity, knowledge and understanding.

4.22 Play is Essential for the Physical and Mental Health of the Child

Play is an active and healthy pursuit enabling and promoting physical mobility. It is through play that children develop and learn basic motor skills and improve co-ordination, balance and dexterity.

Play can allow children to deal with certain situations and feelings using play in a spontaneous way to work through emotions, possibly retelling and sometimes reworking experiences through their pretend play, story creation and artwork.

When playing, a child demonstrates independence and imagination to present themselves and their character. Play allows children to test themselves and become aware of their physical strengths and limitations.

4.23 Play is an Essential Part of Family and Community Life

Play is a social activity that allows for interaction with other children and adults. It helps children gain understanding and experimentation with different social roles and integrating with others. This has benefits to the child in sharing ideas and responsibilities whilst also communicating their thoughts and feelings for desired outcomes.

The benefits of child's play extend to the wider community in tackling issues such as countering anti social behaviour, community safety, youth crime and other common community problems.

Play can also bring community benefits in terms of employment, volunteering and training for those working with children and young people.

4.3 Barriers and Social Exclusion

4.31 Barriers to play

“Children are being poisoned by a ‘junk culture’ of processed food, computer games and over-competitive education. There is less room for reading, for dreaming, for music, for drama, for art, and simply for playing.”

Michael Morpurgo, children’s author⁵

Children and young people commonly identify many barriers to play, recreation and their enjoyment of public space.

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

Parents and the wider community strongly believe that children today have fewer opportunities to play than they did as children, and are spending too much time watching television or using computers.

This is a serious concern for many adults.

A 2001 MORI poll cited activities for teenagers as people’s top priority for local improvement, ahead of crime reduction, road repairs and better transport. Next was the provision of more and better facilities for younger children.

Studies show dramatic decreases in children’s independent mobility, a major factor in their access to play opportunities. For example, the proportion of seven and eight year olds walking unaccompanied to school fell from 80% in 1971 to 9% in 1990.

While fear of ‘stranger danger’ is often cited as a major reason, other studies have shown that traffic is a more significant factor.

One study demonstrated that, where traffic is slower, parents allow their children to play outdoors in much greater numbers than in similar streets where it is faster. The same study concluded that fear of abduction was more of an effect of children not being allowed to play outdoors than its cause.

Children and young people themselves talk about being prevented from playing out in public.

In the 2003 Playday Survey⁶ of 7 to 16 year olds, two thirds said they like to play outside daily, mostly to meet friends, but:

- 80% said they had been told off for playing outdoors
- 50% said they had been shouted at for playing outdoors

- 33% of 7 to 11 year olds said that being told off stopped them playing outdoors
- 11 year olds said that they were told off more than any other age group.

4.32 Inequalities and Social Exclusion

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

Alison John, for Kidsactive and the Better Play Awards⁷

For disabled children, negative attitudes and inaccessible physical environments compound the general problems experienced by most children, creating enormous social and physical barriers to the enjoyment of their right to play independently.

Throughout the UK, there is evidence that disabled children do not enjoy equality of access to play and leisure activities. A recent survey of 1,000 parents of disabled children demonstrated how their children were excluded from ordinary leisure opportunities.

Parks and playgrounds were the least user-friendly, with few facilities for people with disabilities.

4.33 Negative Perceptions about Children and Young People

Groups of children or young people 'hanging out' in the public domain are often characterised as posing a threat or a nuisance, even when they are simply enjoying being together. Many children and young people complain that they do not have access to space that is theirs, or which they are welcome to share with adults, and that they are consequently scapegoated.

'Young people are often represented as the perpetrators of crime, and yet it is clear that in terms of parks and green spaces they see themselves as the victims. They suffer anti-social behaviour in the form of bullying from other age groups but also on the part of adults – ranging from the possibility of attack in unlit areas to adults allowing their dogs to roam loose in children's areas. Contrary to expectations, young people are also very concerned about issues of maintenance in parks and green spaces.'

A report by Groundwork for the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce, 2002⁸

4.34 Managing Risk or Managing the Risk of Litigation?

There is an increasingly growing culture of blame and litigation.

This has left providers of play facilities more and more concerned about minimising the chances of even minor accidents for fear of being taken to court.

It is widely recognised that play facilities which don't offer an element of challenge cannot contribute much to a child's development, quickly become boring, under used and ultimately a waste of valuable resources.

Worse still, this scenario could cause children to seek excitement elsewhere often at much greater danger to themselves and other people. This is an obvious possible result when play facilities lack challenge, are closed because of fear of litigation or because insurance premiums have been increased.

Consultation carried out as part of the Play Review 2004 revealed strong concern about the damaging impact of an overly cautious approach to safety. The fundamentals of play involve creativity of thought, challenge, fun and excitement for those engaged.

“Play areas may become so boring that children seek excitement elsewhere often at a much greater danger to themselves and other people”

‘Getting serious about play’, DCMS 2004⁴

Play, which is internally focused, fosters a degree of risk and experimentation, which will actively involve children and young people for large periods of time.

However, with growing concerns about children's safety, play providers are becoming lost amidst increasing fears of litigation from even the most minor of accidents.

This fear has a jeopardising effect on children's play opportunities and child development, as a play area with no element of challenge will hold no benefit to its users.

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

Health and Safety Executive, 2005⁹

Bolsover District Council has signed up to the Health and Safety Executive's Sensible Risk Campaign. The principles of sensible risk management are set out below.

1. Sensible risk management **is** about:
 - Ensuring that workers and the public are properly protected
 - Providing overall benefit to society by balancing benefits and risks, with a focus on reducing real risks – both those which arise more often and those with serious consequences
 - Enabling innovation and learning not stifling them
 - Ensuring that those who create risks manage them responsibly and understand that failure to manage real risks responsibly is likely to lead to robust action
 - Enabling individuals to understand that as well as the right to protection, they also have to exercise responsibility
2. Sensible risk management **is not** about:
 - Creating a totally risk free society
 - Generating useless paperwork mountains
 - Scaring people by exaggerating or publicising trivial risks
 - Stopping important recreational and learning activities for individuals where the risks are managed
 - Reducing protection of people from risks that cause real harm and suffering

The principles were launched by Bill Callaghan, Chair of the Health and Safety Commission in August 2006

4.35 Position Statement: 'Managing Risk in Play Provision', Play Safety Forum

Children and young people need and want to take risks. Concepts of "acceptable risk" and "unacceptable risk" are critical to making informed judgements about what constitutes a best possible play environment.

This Strategy supports the Play Safety Forum Position Statement 'Managing Risk in Play Provision' (Play Safety Forum 2002)¹⁰ and therefore strives to ensure that risks are managed and controlled so far as is reasonably practicable while allowing the potential benefits to be delivered.

All children and young people both need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities. It is the job of all those responsible for children at play to assess and manage the level of risk, so that children are given the chance to stretch themselves, test and develop their abilities without exposing them to unacceptable risks. If we do not provide controlled opportunities for children to encounter and manage risk then they may be denied the chance to learn these skills. They may also be more likely to choose to play in uncontrolled environments where the risks are greater.

Therefore it is acceptable that in play provision children may be exposed to the risk of minor and easily-healed injuries such as bruises, grazes or sprains. On the other hand, play provision should not expose children to significant likelihood of permanent disability or life-threatening injuries. However, it may on occasions be unavoidable that play provision exposes children to the risk – the very low risk– of serious injury or even death.

Providers should strike a balance between the risks and the benefits. This should be done on the basis of a risk assessment. Crucially, this risk assessment should involve a risk-benefit trade-off between safety and other goals, which should be spelled out in the provider's policy.

Managing Risk in Play Provision (Play Safety Forum 2002)¹⁰

4.4 The National Context for the Play Strategy

Whilst play alone is an important factor in a child's development, offering play opportunities can clearly link with other national priorities for children and young people:

4.41 The National Position in Relation to Play

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

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

4.411 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 31)¹¹

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

“State parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure; engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and arts”

4.412 Every Child Matters

The development of the play strategy will also help meet the vision of outcomes for children and young people as described within the Governments 'Every Child Matters' report 2003¹² and adopted within the Children's Act 2004¹³ as being:

- **Being Healthy**
- **Staying safe**
- **Enjoy and achieve**
- **Make a positive contribution**
- **Help achieve economic well being**

Being Healthy

All children and young people need access to safe, stimulating, outdoor play environments where they can get the physical exercise they need to stay healthy, just by running about and playing. Physical activity is widely recognised as important for health in childhood, providing for both physical and psychological well being.

Staying Safe

“One of the main reasons children give for not playing outdoors more is that they and their parents are afraid for their safety. Fear of strangers, traffic and bullying by other children combine to keep children in their own homes. Good play provision protects children through reducing unacceptable levels of danger, while allowing them the opportunity to challenge themselves and use their initiative. At the same time, play enables children to take risks, to think through decisions and gain increased self-confidence and greater resilience”.

Planning for Play, Guidance on the development and implementation of local play strategies (Play England, 2006)¹⁴

Play is also an extremely effective vehicle for addressing issues surrounding social inclusion and also helping children who are vulnerable and or have special needs.

The aim is to enable children to have access to play opportunities provided in a safe and stimulating environment free from discrimination.

Enjoy and Achieve

Improved play provision within the District of Bolsover will help children and young people to learn, grow and develop. Opportunities for physical activity and socialising with their peers, provides fun and enjoyment, as well as contributing towards achievement in school by helping to overcome barriers that prevent learning.

Play can also help provide a sense of belonging.

Making a Positive Contribution

The more that children are able to make decisions about things that affect them, and the more choice and control they have over their everyday lives, the less likely they are to be involved in so-called anti-social behaviour. Good play provision is child centred. Giving children and young people a real say in play and youth provision will encourage them to take responsibility for their actions and help to build community cohesion across the ages

Economic Well Being

Play projects can be seen as focal points for communities and can offer opportunities for social interaction for the wider community, supporting the development of a greater sense of community spirit.

Good quality accessible play provision as a free public service will help to ensure that the economic circumstances of children, young people and families are not a barrier to an active involvement in community life.

Nationally, there is a growing recognition of the importance of specific representation for children and young people in policy development.

The National Play Review, 'Getting Serious about Play' compiled in 2004⁴ by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport was the first government led review of children's play and offers positive solutions as to how gaps in play provision can be addressed.

The DCMS report 'Creating Opportunities: Guidance for local authorities'¹⁵ aims to assist the public sector in developing their Cultural Strategy. Within the guidance, play is drawn out as an essential ingredient of culture giving it legitimacy as an integral component for local authorities to prioritise.

The DCMS report 'Time For Play' (2006)¹⁶ sets out the cross cutting nature of play provision and its links to a wide range of government agenda's and initiatives.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17, Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG 17)¹⁷ aims to safeguard open spaces and playing fields. Revised during 2002, it focuses on assessing the need for different types of open space, rather than, as in the previous guidance, merely setting quantitative standards.

4.413 The National Position in Relation to Children's Health and Wellbeing

There is a common agreement that prevention is better than cure and that active lifestyles lead to a healthier state.

"The lack of physical activity is a major underlying cause of death, disease and disability. Preliminary data from a WHO study on risk factors suggest that a sedentary lifestyle is one of the ten leading global causes of death and disability. More than two million deaths each year are attributed to physical inactivity"

World Health Organisation, Move for Health, 2002¹⁸

The expert recommendation for young people supported by the Department of Health is that:

"All young people should participate in physical activity of at least moderate intensity for one hour per day. This hour can be made up from a variety of activities across the day, including organised sport, play, walking or cycling to school, physical education or planned exercise."

Health Development Agency, 2003¹⁹

Stimulating physical play opportunities for all ages will greatly contribute to the recommended increase in participation in physical activity.

4.414 Choosing Health White Paper 2004

The white paper 'Choosing Health'²⁰ set out the key principles for supporting the public to make healthier and more informed choices with regards to their health.

Improved play opportunities can make a considerable contribution towards meeting this agenda particularly with regard to tackling obesity and improving mental health and well being.

4.5 The District of Bolsover

4.51 Profile

The district had a resident population of 71,766 as at the 2001 Census of which 20,013 residents are aged under 16. The rural nature of the District ensures a low population density of just 4.48 people per hectare, although approximately 60% of the District's population is located in the districts four towns: Clowne, Shirebrook, Bolsover and South Normanton.

The population breakdown by parish (including under 16s) is presented in Table1.

Parish	Population	U16
Ault Hucknall	864	262
Barlborough	3,018	779
Blackwell	4,163	1,154
Bolsover	11,291	3,163
Clowne	7,447	1,987
Elmton with Creswell	4,757	1,404
Glapwell	1,503	430
Pinxton	5,431	1,541
Pleasley	2,066	489
Scarcliffe	5,214	1,500
Shirebrook	9,288	2,821
South Normanton	8,546	2,275
Tibshelf	3,544	1,008
Whitwell	4,634	1,200
Totals	71,766	20,013

Table 1: Population breakdown by parish, Bolsover District

The percentage of ethnic minority residents in the District (0.88%) is much lower than the national average of 9.08%.

Bolsover ranks as the 46th most deprived area in the country out of 354 local authorities on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and as such there is an impact of deprivation on health.

Life expectancy for males and females at birth in the District is lower than the national average. In particular, premature (under 75) death rates are around 10% higher in Bolsover as a whole than the national average, and nearly 40% higher in some wards in Shirebrook.

Obesity in the District is also high. In the majority of areas, 25% - 40% of people suffer with obesity.

4.52 Bolsover District Council

Bolsover District Council was rated as excellent under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in 2008 and as 'performing adequately' under the Organisational Assessment and Area Assessment element of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) in December 2009.

"The council is very ambitious on behalf of its communities and has a clear long term vision for improving the quality of life in the area through regeneration and economic development".

Audit commission, 2004

The Play Strategy will be delivered within the framework of the following policies and strategies:

4.521 Corporate Plan 2007-2011

"To enhance and improve the wealth profile, well-being and quality of life for the communities of the District of Bolsover".

The Corporate Plan¹ was developed in conjunction with a range of strategic partners from across the District and strives to promote and improve the well being of the area and the social, economic and environmental well being of the community.

In order to achieve this, it identifies the following 6 main corporate aims.

Community Safety – Ensuring that communities are safe and secure

Customer Focused Services – Providing excellent customer focused services

Environment – Promoting and enhancing a clean and sustainable environment

Regeneration – Developing healthy, prosperous and sustainable communities

Social Inclusion – Promoting fairness, equality and lifelong learning

Strategic Organisational Development – Continually improving the organisation

The implementation of the Corporate Plan is underpinned by the following values:

- **Accessible**
Listening to and responding to the needs of people
- **Accountable**
Accepting responsibility for and explaining our decisions
- **Democratic**
Taking decisions in the public interest
- **Equality**
Ensuring that everyone is treated equally and with dignity
- **Equitable**
Being fair in dealing with people and making decisions
- **Ethical**
Behaving with integrity
- **Open**
Telling people about what the Council does
- **Sustainable**
Minimising the adverse impact of actions

4.522 The Sustainable Community Strategy 2006-2020

A diverse, healthy, fair and prosperous District, building on the strengths of our industrial past to become a vibrant, thriving community capable of meeting the challenges and the opportunities of the future.

The Sustainable Community Strategy 2006-2020² is a long term plan that aims to provide a better quality of life for everyone in Bolsover District by making it a safer, healthier, more prosperous and attractive place for people to live, work, play and visit.

Developed by the Local Strategic Partnership, widespread consultation with the people of Bolsover has ensured that it is based on issues and themes that matter to local people the most.

- **Safer communities** – free from the fear of crime
- **Better health for all** – healthier people in a healthier environment
- **Educated and skilled people** – with raised aspirations
- **A dynamic outward-looking economy** – creating and sustaining the jobs of the future and the talents to fill them

- **Deeper respect for the environment** – making lives better, but not at the expense of those who are to come after us
- **Access for all to the benefits and services of the District** – no barriers of age, disability, race, gender, or lack of transport.
- **Equality of access and opportunity** – to services and jobs
- **Sustainable development** – that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs
- **Striving to improve the quality of public services**

4.523 Children and Young People’s Plan 2006-2009

Derbyshire County Council in liaison with its District partners including Bolsover District Council has developed a Children and Young People’s Plan²¹.

Covering the period 2006-2009, the plan outlines the vision and key priorities to improve the lives of children, young people and their families within the County of Derbyshire and is based on the five outcomes for children and young people in Every Child Matters

The following priorities were produced following widespread consultation with young people and discussion with partner organisations in the statutory, community, voluntary and private sectors.

Being Healthy

- Tackling health inequalities
- Reducing obesity
- Reducing unwanted teenage pregnancy
- Reducing infant mortality rates

Staying Safe

- Improving the stability of care placements
- Reducing out of authority placements
- Meeting national care standards
- Reducing bullying, racism and non-accidental injury

Enjoying and Achieving

- Improving attainment of Looked After Children
- Increasing Level 2 qualifications for 16-19 year olds
- Improving attendance and attainment for all

Making a Positive Contribution

- Reducing the level of youth offending
- Reducing exclusions

- Increasing participation of children and young people

Economic Well Being

- Continuing to improve outcomes for those not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- Achieving the child care targets

4.6 Play and the District of Bolsover

Within the District there are a wide variety of agencies that are either directly or indirectly involved in providing or supporting children's play.

4.61 Bolsover District Council

“Meeting the needs of young people is considered by the council to be an integral part of the regeneration of former mining communities. The development of services for young people is therefore a priority for the council”.

Audit Commission, 2004

Bolsover District Council provides a range of play, sports and arts activities, which are co-ordinated by the council's Leisure Services department for all age groups in a wide range of locations across the District.

Feedback from users and stakeholders is positive, demonstrating that the activities are meeting the needs of young people.

In terms of fixed play facilities the Council currently manages and maintains 14 unsupervised outdoor-equipped play areas and they are found at the following locations:

- Houfton Road Recreation Ground, Bolsover
- Crich View , Bolsover
- Laburnum Close, Bolsover
- New Bolsover Model Village, Bolsover
- Heritage Drive, Clowne
- Model Village, Creswell (toddler and junior play areas)
- King Street, Hodthorpe
- Shirebrook Town Park, Shirebrook
- Sherwood Drive, Model Village, Shirebrook
- Broadmeadows, South Normanton
- Sough Road, South Normanton
- Staffa Drive, Tibshelf
- Poppy Gardens, Tibshelf

In addition the council manages a number of play areas for parish councils and other agencies through its Playground Inspection and Management Service (PIMS). These are located at:

- Barlborough Country Park, Barlborough (*Barlborough Parish Council*)
- Manor Road, Barlborough (*Barlborough Parish Council*)
- Ruthyn Avenue, Barlborough (*Barlborough Parish Council*)
- Gloves Lane, Blackwell (*Blackwell Parish Council*)
- North Street, Blackwell (*Blackwell Parish Council*)
- Bamford Street, Newton (*Blackwell Parish Council*)
- Charnwood Crescent, Newton (*Blackwell Parish Council*)
- Olive Avenue, Shirebrook (*Northern Counties Housing Association*)
- Tibshelf Road, Westhouses (*Blackwell Parish Council*)

4.611 Parks and Amenities

The Council actively encourages the development of recreational open space and countryside amenity areas and is responsible for developing and maintaining a variety of small green spaces for amenity or informal play purposes.

The Council also makes recreational land available to Parish Councils and other organisations through leases and management agreements and most of the playing fields in the district are either managed by the local education authority, parish councils or Miners Welfares.

4.612 Development Control

Development Control, based within the council's Planning Department has responsibility for controlling the development of land within the strategic framework of the local plan.

In terms of Children's play the local plan seeks to secure the provision of children's play areas, sports pitches and public open space on new residential developments to a level at least in line with the National Playing Fields Association's six acre standard, although this is being reviewed as part of the production of the Local Development Framework (LDF).

4.613 Bolsover District Youth Council

Bolsover District Council in partnership with a range of public and community sector partners from within the local strategic partnership has developed a district-wide Youth Council, the purpose of which is:

- To build on existing consultation with young people, such as through the Bolsover Youth Forum, to inform improvements to service delivery
- To engage young people in Bolsover in the local democratic processes and institutions

- To provide schools with a learning tool to enhance the teaching of citizenship
- To develop a positive image of young people across the District

4.62 Other agencies

4.621 Parish Councils

Within Bolsover District there are fourteen parish / town councils, all of which provide and maintain playing fields and play areas in their respective parishes.

There are currently 54 play areas under the ownership and responsibility of parish councils, although Bolsover District Council does provide advice on safety and design matters when requested and can help secure funding to help improve and develop these facilities.

4.622 Derbyshire County Council

Derbyshire County Council is responsible for a range of services within the District that have an impact of play opportunities

Extended School Services

Derbyshire County Council is the local education authority and as such is currently undertaking a number of initiatives in order to meet the government requirement that by 2010 all schools provide extended services and in particular the core requirement of:

- Quality child care from 8am to 6pm all year round for all under 14 year olds who want it
- A varied menu of activities, including study support
- Parenting support
- Swift and easy referral to specialised support services
- Wider community access to school based facilities

In developing its strategy Derbyshire County Council intends to “extended services in and around schools” thereby reflecting:

- the important role that partner agencies have in providing services
- that whilst services may be accessible via schools, they may be provided on other sites
- that close links will be established to services developed in Children’s Centres and as part of Youth Matters

Transport

“The existence of 32 million vehicles has been the single biggest impact on children’s freedom”

Ken Worpole, Places to Play, National Conference, Oct 2006²²

Increasing volumes of traffic is one of the main barriers preventing children and young people's freedom to play.

Derbyshire County Council is responsible for the management of highways within the District and their main objectives are:

- To reduce the number of people killed and injured on the county's roads
- to reduce congestion
- to reduce inconvenience to the public caused by roadworks and temporary obstructions
- to improve public access to local services
- to encourage cycling and walking
- to encourage the use of public transport.

These objectives will be achieved by the implementation of a wide range of measures including:

- Accident reduction schemes
- traffic calming
- junction improvements
- speed limits
- pedestrian facilities - signal crossings, zebra crossings, traffic islands, new footways
- waiting and parking restrictions
- public transport facilities - bus lanes, bus priority schemes, bus shelters, bus stop waiting areas
- cycle facilities – cycle lanes and routes, cycle parking

4.623 Other Providers of Play Opportunities

There are a number of other providers of play opportunities within the District, most notably toddler groups and pre school play groups.

However, these groups generally charge a fee and whilst their significant contribution to play across the district is recognised, the emphasis of the play strategy is the development and provision of play opportunities that are freely accessible and free of cost. As such, these groups fall outside of the remit of the play strategy.

4.7 Where Are We Now?

4.71 Measuring Performance

In order to evaluate existing play opportunities across the district, an integral part of the review process has been the establishment of a baseline against which performance can be measured.

In consultation with our partners, three main themes were identified:

a) Accessibility and Inclusiveness

Children and young people's play and informal recreation takes place in a wide variety of locations / facilities and spaces, some of which are specifically designed for the purpose or have a different function but have become naturally adopted as a play space by local children.

The Play Strategy supports the view of the Children's Play Council that the primary aim of investment in, and support for play, should be to increase the numbers and frequency of children and young people from all social groups playing freely in their local neighbourhood.

Whilst it is accepted that private fee charging play provision has a role within the community, the aim of the play strategy for Bolsover District Council will be to ensure that:

Wherever they live or spend the majority of their free time, children and young people should have access to spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation, which meet the 'three frees' test and:

- Are **free** of charge, where children and young people are **free** to come and go and **free** to choose what they do whilst there
- Are accessible, welcoming and engaging for all, including those who are disabled or have specific needs and wishes and supports a wide range of differing play needs.

b) Quality

The quality of play opportunities can be very difficult to define as children will play in a wide and diverse range of areas.

For the purpose of this strategy, quality will be measured against the Seven Best Play Objectives as developed by the Children's Play Council and published in '*Best Play: What Play Provision should do for Children* (Children's Play Council, 2001)'.

Objectives should apply to any provision which aims to offer children good play opportunities. They form the basis against which play provision can be evaluated.

Objective 1: *The provision extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.*

Objective 2: *Recognises the child's need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need.*

Objective 3: *Manages the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.*

Objective 4: *Maximises the range of play opportunities*

Objective 5: *Fosters independence and healthy self- esteem*

Objective 6: *Fosters the child's respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction*

Objective 7: *Fosters the child's wellbeing, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn*

As children and young people choose to play in a wide variety of formal and informal spaces and there can be many reasons why they choose to play in such a space, the most reliable guide to the quality of the play experience can be ascertained by monitoring the amount of use an area is receiving by the type of children for which its use was originally intended.

c) Quantity

In order to establish the quantity of provision a typology of play space has been adopted that closely mirrors that provided by the Children's Play Council as part of its pilot CPA performance indicator programme³.

Use of this typology will enable Bolsover District Council and its partners to measure its performance against nationally recognised benchmark criteria and also enable the creation of a local standard for play space.

Types of Play Facilities:

Door-step spaces and facilities

- Small equipped play areas furnished primarily for young children
- Neighbourhood amenity green spaces (unequipped)
- Home zone, traffic calming or equivalent

Neighbourhood spaces and facilities

- Large equipped play areas primarily for children aged 5–11
- Satellite parks
- Junior bike, skate and skateboard facilities, kick-about areas.

Local spaces and facilities for play:

Supervised

- Adventure playgrounds
- Open access play centres
- Open access play schemes
- Play ranger and outreach play projects.

No formal supervision

- School playgrounds (open out of school hours)
- Neighbourhood equipped play areas (8+ items)
- Teenage wheeled sports areas (BMX / skate parks)
- Ball courts, multi-use games areas
- Hangout / youth shelters
- Public parks
- Playing fields/recreation grounds freely available for children to use.
- Canals, woodlands and natural areas.

Making the Case for Play, Children's Play Council (2002)³

4.72 Consultation and Audit of Play Opportunities

4.721 Consultation with children, young people, parents and carers

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

'Getting Serious about Play', DCMS (2004)⁴

In order to establish the views of children and young people as well as those of their parents and carers, a widespread programme of consultation with the community took place during the spring / summer of 2007 which comprised:

- 200 completed questionnaires from children and young people within school and leisure settings
- 50 completed questionnaires from parents and carers
- Interviews with children and young people
- A review of previous consultation with young people was undertaken
- Press statements were published within the local media encouraging comment and feedback from the whole community.
- Meetings took place with representatives of organisations supporting play and interviews were held with Senior Officers of Bolsover District Council

4.722 Audit of Play Opportunities

In order to arrive at a sound understanding of the range of play opportunities for children and young people within the district an audit of play opportunities was undertaken which aimed to identify:

- Where children and young people's outdoor play needs are currently being met and where they are not
- Where there are deficiencies in access for children with disabilities and other minority groups
- What works within existing provision and what, if any, are the problems
- Where provision is staffed and supervised and where it is not.
- How well existing space is currently being used by different groups of children and young people
- Where the existing provision is located in relation to children and to where they want it to be

- How safe, easy and accessible are the routes from home to play spaces
- How easily can children and young people travel independently to outdoor play spaces and other leisure / recreational areas
- Plans for the future development of land currently being used by children and young people for play and recreation

4.8 Summary of Consultation Results

4.81 Previous consultation

As there had been a number of consultation exercises with children and young people prior to the production of the play strategy, a desk top study was carried out to collate the results of these consultations.

4.811 Youth Council Consultations

As part of the development of the Youth Council, detailed consultation events were held at each of the five secondary schools within Bolsover District.

The purpose of the consultation was to:

- Provide information that could be used by prospective candidates for Bolsover District Youth Councillors from each school
- Provide information for elected Bolsover District Youth Councillors to utilise in discussions within the Youth Council
- Inform Bolsover District Council on issues relevant to young people
- Inform Bolsover Local Strategic partnership about youth issues in the District.

This consultation identified that leisure and recreation featured strongly in young people's lives, particularly amongst older teenage groups where socialising with friends was seen as a high priority. In terms of facilities, areas that provided peace and quiet, such as parks, were popular as were areas that provided opportunities for sports activities.

4.82 Children and adults questionnaire

In order to establish the views of younger children within the community, 250 questionnaires were distributed via primary and junior schools across the district. A total of 154 responses were received. Parents and carers were also invited to comment.

The survey identified that the majority of children like to play at a friend's house or at the local park or recreation ground. They like to meet and chat with friends and they like to be close to home.

In terms of play areas, they liked to use play areas and they were identified as a good place to meet friends and have fun, but they also said that they could be improved in terms of quality and maintenance. Sometimes they didn't always feel safe because of gangs.

As with the older children, visiting their local park or recreation ground was a popular pastime but a feeling of safety was also a significant factor in their enjoyment of these spaces.

With regard to parents and carers, the survey provided the following information:

- All the parents and carers surveyed thought that being able to play outside is important to children and young people
- The majority of parents and carers thought that children and young people are not playing outside as much as they used to because of fear of strangers, general safety concerns and road traffic
- Many of those responding also felt that television and computer games were a barrier to playing outside
- All the responders said that they felt that they had a role in supporting and encouraging children's play and more specifically encouraging children to play outside and join in activities
- When asked 'what could be done in the public realm to encourage children's play?' responders said they would like to see more supervision around community areas, more organised activities and the provision of better play areas and improved maintenance

4.83 Audit of Play Opportunities

In order to arrive at a sound understanding of the distribution, range, quality and quantity of play opportunities for children and young people within the district a comprehensive audit of equipped play provision has been undertaken, which identified:

- The location of provision
- The population of young people (U16) in the local area (e.g. ward / parish)
- The ownership / lease arrangements
- Site area

- Primary / secondary purpose of sites (as per PPG17 typologies)
- The nature of access arrangements (free or at cost)
- The number of entry points
- The levels of maintenance
- The quality of the whole site (qualitative assessment)
- The quality of the equipped play area (qualitative assessment)
- NPFA grading (i.e. Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP), Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP), etc.)
- Manufacturer
- Age of equipment (where known)

4.9 Summary of Findings Arising from the Audit

A full summary of audit findings can be found in Appendix B.

4.91 Equipped Play Facilities: Free Access

4.911 Quantity

There are 67 equipped play areas (EPAs) distributed across the District. This equates to a total area of 6.2ha, an average of 925m² (0.09ha) per play area.

Based on the local standard of 0.8ha per 1000 population, this equates to a deficit of 0.46ha of equipped play areas, although there are significant local variations in provision across the district.

A breakdown of provision by parish is presented in Table 2.

Parish	Population	U16	No. EPAs	Total EPA Area (ha)	ha / 1000 pop'n	ha / 1000 U16
Ault Hucknall	864	262	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
Barlborough	3,018	779	3	0.18	0.06	0.23
Blackwell	4,163	1,154	6	0.54	0.13	0.47
Bolsover	11,291	3,163	12	1.96	0.17	0.62
Clowne	7,447	1,987	2	0.34	0.05	0.17
Elmton with Creswell	4,757	1,404	5	0.34	0.07	0.24
Glapwell	1,503	430	1	0.02	0.01	0.05
Pinxton	5,431	1,541	3	0.10	0.02	0.06
Pleasley	2,066	489	3	0.48	0.23	0.98
Scarcliffe	5,214	1,500	8	0.55	0.11	0.37
Shirebrook	9,288	2,821	7	0.84	0.09	0.30
South Normanton	8,546	2,275	6	0.22	0.03	0.10
Tibshelf	3,544	1,008	5	0.08	0.02	0.08
Whitwell	4,634	1,200	5	0.55	0.12	0.46
Totals	71,766	20,013	66	6.20	0.09	0.31

Table 2: EPA provision (quantity) by parish

4.912 Quality

An assessment of play area quality by parish is presented in Table 3.

Parish	No. EPAs	Grade				
		A	B	C	D	E
Ault Hucknall	0					
Barlborough	3		2		1	
Blackwell	6	1	3	1		1
Bolsover	12	1	3	2	6	
Clowne	2	1			1	
Elmton with Creswell	5		2	1	1	1
Glapwell	1			1		
Pinxton	3		1	1		
Pleasley	3		2		1	
Scarcliffe	8		1		5	
Shirebrook	7		4	2	1	
South Normanton	6		3	2		
Tibshelf	5	1	1	1		
Whitwell	5		1	2	2	
Totals	66	4	23	13	20	2

6% 34.8% 19.7% 30.3% 3.0%

Table 3: EPA quality by parish

From this it can be seen that only four existing play areas achieve the highest grade (A / excellent). Although a large number of play areas (23) achieve grade B / good, 20 were poor (grade D) and 2 were very poor (grade E).

4.92 Parks, Open Spaces and Natural Areas for Play

4.921 Quantity

There are 98.12ha of other playable spaces within the district, and these include both formal and less formal parks and recreation grounds.

The largest total areas of playable space by parish are in Shirebrook (19ha), South Normanton (10.33ha) and Bolsover (7.94ha), whilst Pleasley has a deficit of 0.08ha when compared against the NPFA Six Acre Standard.

4.922 Quality

Parks, open spaces and other natural areas (playable spaces) have the potential to meet the objectives set out in 'Best Play'.

The audit of play areas identified a wide variation in quality. In some areas older and more established play areas actually provided more play value than more recently developed play areas which tend to be smaller with fewer, lower quality and less mature landscape features.

The quality of maintenance of both play equipment and play areas varies considerably across the district. This is partly due to the wide variation in the number of site owners, mainly parish councils, and the differing levels of investment in ongoing maintenance and repair.

This particularly applies to the frequency of mowing regimes which can have a significant effect on the play value of an open space.

A breakdown of open space by settlement can be found in Appendix C.

4.93 Supervised Local Facilities for Play

Bolsover District Council operates a number of outreach projects during school holiday periods. These include:

4.931 Sport and Leisure Activities in School Holidays (SPLASH)

A diverse programme of sport, leisure and play activities aimed at all children and young people across the district is delivered by the Council's Leisure Services Department via leisure centres, outdoor sports facilities and recreation grounds. However, the programme is dependent upon external funding, so the number and range of activities has reduced in recent years.

However, feedback from all participants and parents has always been very positive.

4.932 Extreme Wheels

Extreme wheels is a outreach project based around wheeled 'extreme' sports such as skate boarding, BMX (both racing and freestyle) and KMX. The project has a collection of mobile ramps that are designed to provide temporary skate parks / BMX tracks in community settings as well as bikes, skateboards and helmets.

As with the SPLASH programme, Extreme Wheels is dependent on external funding and the number of sessions delivered will vary from year to year. There has been an increasing number of external bookings in recent years and income has helped sustain the project.

The project is often hired by community safety partnerships as it is recognised that wheeled sports are an excellent way of engaging with children and young people who may otherwise become involved in nuisance or anti-social behaviour or are not engaged by more traditional sports, such as football.

4.94 Community based provision

There are a number of playgroups provided by community and voluntary organisations across the district, which provide a range of free play activities for children particularly for those under the age of 7.

These are an invaluable resource and the main provider of supervised play opportunities in some parishes.

C: Implementation of the Bolsover District Play Strategy

5. Action Plan

5.1 Themes

As a result of the consultation exercise that was undertaken as part of developing this strategy and the parallel audit of play opportunities across the district, two distinct themes have been identified that will address the play needs and desires of the district's children and young people.

These themes formed the basis of Bolsover District Council's submission to the Big Lottery under the Children's Play Programme in September 2007, through which funding has been secured for the development of a range of play focussed projects.

These are:

Playable Spaces: the development of a number of equipped play areas (initially 7), to be located in those areas with the greatest identified deficit in provision and / or quality.

Neighbourhood Play: the development of opportunities for the delivery of play activities on open spaces across the district through the provision of a range of equipment for play and play leader training for local volunteers.

These particular themes were chosen as they directly address issues raised through the consultation and will contribute to reducing deficiencies in play provision and play opportunities across the district. They also meet all five of the objectives for the Play Strategy, as outlined in section 3.

In order to ensure that the objectives of the Play Strategy are achieved whilst also addressing the objectives set out in '*Best Play, What Play Provision Should do for Children*', (NPFA, 2000)²³ an Action Plan has been developed to guide the development and implementation of play provision and play opportunities across the district.

This is set out below and is also summarised in Appendix D.

5.2 Play Strategy Objective 1

Improve the public realm as a child friendly environment, ensuring that parks, thoroughfares, housing estates and other public spaces across the district are as conducive as possible for play for all children and young people

5.21 Playable Spaces

Consultation with children, young people and their parents has identified that they place a high value on having high quality, safe and accessible places to play - whether it be in an equipped play space or less formal recreation areas.

There are a large number of play areas and play spaces distributed throughout the District but, when measured against the quality and quantity standards, both local and national, there are significant variations in both play provision and play opportunities.

It was also identified that natural / semi-natural areas can also provide good play opportunities and that their use should be encouraged wherever possible.

Action Point 1:

Bolsover District Council will identify the current shortfall in both formal and informal play provision across the district based both on adopted standards and on an analysis of local need and will take a stronger lead in supporting both Parish and Town councils to address this shortfall.

A measured improvement programme will also be developed (the Playground Upgrade Programme (PUP)), against which performance will be monitored and reported back through the Play Partnership.

Link to the Seven 'Best Play' Objectives:

Objective 1

Extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.

Objective 4

Maximises the range of play opportunities

Objective 7

Fosters the child's well being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn

5.22 Giving children and young people a greater say

In order to ensure that play provision meets the future needs of children and young people and that they are encouraged to 'own' their own play spaces, new play areas should be developed in full consultation both with them and also with the wider community.

Action point 2:

All children and young people will be given the opportunity, through a range of inclusive consultation and participation activities, to help shape their future playable spaces.

Link to the Seven ‘Best Play’ Objectives:

Objective 1

Extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.

Objective 4

Maximises the range of play opportunities

Objective 5

Fosters independence and healthy self- esteem

Objective 6

Fosters the child’s respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction

5.23 Local and national quantitative / qualitative standards

Bolsover District Council will review its use of the NPFA Six Acre standard as a measurement of performance for play as it is widely recognised that its emphasis is mainly on quantity and not quality and that it does not take into account more local variables and characteristics.

Action point 3:

Bolsover District Council will review the use of the NPFA Six Acre standard, develop a local ‘Bolsover’ standard and produce a supplementary planning document (SPD) in respect of children’s play provision.

Link to the Seven ‘Best Play’ Objectives:

Objective 1

Extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.

Objective 4

Maximises the range of play opportunities

5.24 Extended Schools

School grounds, particularly in the more rural areas of the District, could provide high quality play opportunities outside of school hours, but are nearly always closed to both children and the wider community.

Action point 4:

Bolsover District Council will liaise with Derbyshire County Council with regard to the Extended Schools Strategy and will make representations with a view to promoting the use of school grounds as playable spaces outside normal curriculum time.

Link to the Seven ‘Best Play’ Objectives:

Objective 1

Extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.

Objective 4

Maximises the range of play opportunities

5.3 Play Strategy Objective 2

Promote the importance of play in relation to children and young people’s health, well-being and personal development, to all those that have an influence

5.31 Play Strategy dissemination

In order to ensure that any future decisions that might affect play are made with the knowledge of the play strategy and policy, we need to ensure that it is widely disseminated across the council.

Action point 5:

Promote the existence of and circulate copies of the play strategy to all those who have influence

Link to the Seven ‘Best Play’ Objectives:

Objective 4

Maximises the range of play opportunities

5.32 Charter for play

We have identified that play has an extremely important role in the personal development of our children and young people and we need to do as much as we can to promote this through out the council, to our partners and the wider community.

Action Point 6:

Bolsover District Council in liaison with its strategic partners will develop a Charter for Play that can be disseminated through our partners across the community.

Link to the Seven ‘Best Play’ Objectives:

Objective 4

Maximises the range of play opportunities

5.4 Play Strategy Objective 3

Develop a joined up approach to the distribution of play resources, striking a balance based on need between supervised and unsupervised provision

5.41 Effective Partnership working

Through the existence of the play partnership we have already begun to realise the benefit of partnership working and we need continue to develop the ethos through the local strategic partnership to the wider District community.

Action point 7:

Continue to identify and engage suitable partners in respect to play opportunities within the District and establish a parish play forum.

Link to the Seven ‘Best Play’ Objectives:

Objective 1

Extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.

Objective 4

Maximises the range of play opportunities

5.42 Community arrangements

We have identified through the development of the play strategy that particularly within a rural district such as ours, community groups and volunteers have a very important role to play in developing and supporting play activities within their own communities.

Whilst in most cases dedication and enthusiasm is not a barrier, finding appropriate sources of funding for equipment, training and delivery of play activities usually is.

As part of the Big Lottery Children’s Play Programme, it would be possible to develop a neighbourhood play project that would provide equipment (play bags) that could be loaned to community and voluntary groups, provide training for volunteers who run play activities and a small fund for groups to fund other play / sporting activities.

In order to raise the profile of play, support play opportunities at a local level and encourage greater community involvement, a Neighbourhood Play project should be established, which would assist groups and individuals to deliver play activities within their own communities.

Action point 8:

Develop and maintain a Neighbourhood Play project that will provide support for community and voluntary sector groups to deliver play activities in their own communities

Link to the Seven 'Best Play' Objectives:**Objective 1**

Extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.

Objective 4

Maximises the range of play opportunities

5.5 Play Strategy Objective 4

Work to reduce the barriers that prevent children and young people from accessing and playing in the general public domain

5.51 Barriers to play

Children, young people and their parents / carers have told us that there are many barriers preventing them from making use of the public domain for play.

Action point 9:

With our partners we will continue to address the barriers preventing play by identifying the cause and seeking solutions on a local basis.

Link to the Seven 'Best Play' Objectives**Objective 1**

Extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.

Objective 3

Manages the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.

Objective 4

Maximises the range of play opportunities

Objective 5

Fosters independence and healthy self- esteem

Objective 6

Fosters the child's respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction

5.6 Play Strategy Objective 5

Aim to offer all children and young people the chance to encounter acceptable risks in stimulating and challenging play environments.

We have identified through the development of the play strategy that for their play environments to be stimulating children and young people need to take acceptable risks.

Action Point 10:

Bolsover District Council will adopt the recommendations of the Play Safety Forum Managing Risk in play statement and aim through the use of appropriate risk assessment mechanisms to provide challenging and stimulating play environments

Link to the Seven 'Best Play' Objectives:

Objective 1

Extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.

Objective 2

Recognises the child's need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need.

Objective 3

Manages the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.

Objective 4

Maximises the range of play opportunities

Objective 5

Fosters independence and healthy self- esteem

Objective 6

Fosters the child's respect for others and offers opportunities for social

5.7 Delivering the Strategy

5.71 Links with Other Plans and Strategies

For the play strategy to be effective, cannot exist in isolation and therefore provides links with other plans and strategies both within the Council and other external agencies. The strategy contributes to and informs the Community Strategy and also other departmental service plans, which impact on the delivery of play.

This will avoid duplication of resources and ensures there is a joined up approach to achieving the aims of the Play Strategy.

5.72 Working in Partnership

Key to delivering the strategy and ensure the most efficient use of resources, will be the ability to:

- Work in partnership with all local organisations that have an impact on children's play.
- Support local networks and neighbourhood partnerships associated with children and young people.
- Consult with the voluntary sector, children and young people, their families, schools and local communities.
- Continue to work closely with and seek opportunities for joint working with different departments within the Council

5.73 Resources

A commitment to children's play implies that there will be adequate, secure and ongoing resources.

The best use of resources can be made through the co-ordination and co-operation of Council departments and external agencies in their effort to provide suitable play opportunities.

The Play Strategy will therefore be directly instrumental in influencing the Council's ability to attract additional resources and to focus on work programmes that will lead to more efficient service delivery.

It will be necessary to secure resources to support the Play Strategy and any policies developed from it and it is recognised that there is a need for ongoing capital and revenue input into to play development.

Wherever possible, external funding will be sought as it is acknowledged that the provision of play is not a statutory function. Leisure Services has a good track record for attracting funding, with £200,000 secured from the Big Lottery and £150,000 from Playbuilder as well as significant amounts from the Landfill Community Fund and developer contributions in recent years.

5.8 Implementation

Any move towards developing and delivering a quality play service must be underpinned by the implementation of appropriate monitoring procedures.

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

5.9 The Play Development Group

To ensure an efficient and effective delivery of the Play Strategy, it is proposed to establish a Play Development Group from the membership of the

Play Partnership and this will be co-ordinated by a designated lead officer from within Bolsover District Council.

The aim of the group will be to act as the lead body and reference point for all services making decisions that may have an impact on children and young people's play within the district and to be responsible for implementation and monitoring of the Play Strategy against the actions identified within the action plan.

It is proposed that the group will meet on a quarterly basis and be responsible for:

- Evaluating and reporting performance to the relevant committee
- Raising the awareness of play
- Publicising, promoting and disseminating the Play Strategy / policies
- Developing a coherent, cohesive and co-ordinated approach to the development of play opportunities
- Ensuring all services providing play experiences will make decisions with reference to the Play Strategy / policies
- Encouraging and supporting all play providers to adopt and implement the Play Strategy
- Developing partnerships across different forms of provision and between departments, sectors, organisations and projects
- Identifying additional funding sources for play and disseminating funding information to relevant groups
- Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the Play Strategy
- Stimulating the creation of joint projects and partnerships in support of children's play.

D

6. Acknowledgements / References

6.1 Acknowledgements

A draft Bolsover District Play Strategy was written in 2007 by Simeon Packard of Urban Play Solutions as an integral part of Bolsover District Council's application for funding from the Big Lottery Children's Play Programme.

The Play Strategy was revised in 2009 prior to its presentation for formal adoption by Bolsover District Council.

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7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix A: Hopes, Fears and Ideas



**Bolsover District Play Strategy Workshop
Friday 27 April 2007**

Hopes, Fears and Ideas

Group 1

Hopes

- Views and needs of different age groups of children are met
- Imaginative play encouraged, i.e. moveable / changing environment
- Natural environment is maximised, e.g. willow tunnels, scented plants, logs to climb on, low hanging trees, etc, etc.
- Maintained over longer period – not just when new

Fears

- £200,000 not enough to do anything meaningful
- Short timescale may restrict consultation / development
- Too centrally / adult directed
- No risk culture restricts creativity of project

Ideas

- Build on what is already happening in local areas (e.g. youth forums, local development for children)
- Ensure community and young people involvement in developing strategy and the on the ground work
- Local artists to work with children to develop, for example, sculptures that can be over / through, etc.
- Make some roads 'play streets', i.e. very restricted / no car access

Group 2

Hopes

- Children / young people allowed to be children / young people
- Safe / happy children
- All children / young people involved in consultation with regular feedback opportunities
- Whatever is provided is maintained and sustained (built into the funding application)
- Age appropriate

Fears

Play is changing / darker side

- Young people / society expect children / young people to grow up too quickly
- Parents provide too much – children / young people expect it
- Parents fear children / young people being bullied

Ideas

- Regular consultation with young people / children / parents
- Education for parents
- Link to county strategy

Group 3

Hopes

- More co-ordination between all agencies, communities, schools, etc.
- Privacy opportunities
- More smiles all round
- Kids more active – more opportunities
- Work with parents / families
- Intergenerational projects
- Children learning about risk
- More parks – use more?
- Make more of arid space
- Less equipment, more imagination
- More imaginative spaces
- Unstructured play opportunities for older children / young people
- Clubs – need support / volunteers
- Increased community involvement

Fears

- Deflecting inc. ASBOs, etc.
- Insurance / legal / compliance
- Reluctance to go to (parks) due to fears
- (are these vital!)
- Problems involving older teenagers
- Not enough workers, supervisors and clubs
- Exhausted volunteers
- Headlines: traffic and child protection stop opportunities
- Adult fears beyond shared actual knowledge of risk
- Cost! Individual and groups
- Need more people devoting time to this
- Continuity not hit and run and one off

Ideas

- Kids bookshop / swap / bus
- Mazes
- Forest Schools – family learning
- Skill share / learning opportunities for parents / families
- Link with playgroups
- Use open space more creatively – arts opportunities
- Playscheme provision
- Sculptured and landscaping
- Cultural opportunities extend
- Specific events for children
- Maximise opportunities / programmes for parents to play with children (e.g. baby play)

- Help small groups go on trips (re: compliance)
- Projects to burn energy

Group 4

Hopes

- Inclusive for disabled users
- Sustainable
- Free play
- Avoid duplication
- Link to other partners
- Children's centres
- Targeted youth support
- Indoor facilities for art / craft / cooking

Fears

- What happens to provision when the money runs out?
- Charging
- Isolation / hard to reach families
- Money targeted to meet one section's needs
- Need to act on consultation advice

Ideas

- Adventure play like forest schools / skills
- Pond dipping
- Ownership by stakeholders including children / young people
- Play Rangers
- Involve local people in paid voluntary tasks
- Home Zones