

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE PLAY STRATEGY 2010 - 2015

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To recommend that Cabinet agrees and endorses a new Play Strategy – *Taking Play Forward, a Play Strategy for North Lincolnshire*.
- 1.2 The existing Play Strategy – *Play Alert* was approved in 2004. The strategy is now out of date. Officers have prepared a new strategy - *Taking Play Forward* to replace it.
- 1.3 A range of council services, external partners and stakeholders were involved in the development of the strategy.
- 1.4 The strategy links to and contributes to the delivery of the strategic aims for the North Lincolnshire area.
- 1.5 The Children's Trust Board will assume accountability for delivering the outcomes set out in *Taking Play Forward*.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Cabinet approved a Play Strategy – *Play Alert* in February 2004. Many of the objectives set out in *Play Alert* have been achieved or are work in progress.
- 2.2 A revised and updated play strategy *Taking Play Forward* was recently developed and completed by the North Lincolnshire Play Strategy Group (PSG). The PSG is made up by key council services and external partners involved in play. The new strategy includes as an appendix, summary information on progress toward achieving the objectives set out in *Play Alert*. A full copy of *Taking Play Forward* was deposited in each Political Group Office. Copies were emailed to Cabinet Members.
- 2.3 *Taking Play Forward* has nine strategic aims as follows:
 - ***raise the standards of play provision***
 - ***promote inclusive and accessible play for all children and young people***
 - ***make sure children and young people know and exercise their rights to play, culture, rest and leisure***
 - ***encourage genuine communication and interactions between children and young people, individuals and services with interests in play***

- ***create flexibility in the use of play resources***
- ***identify accessible criteria for funding and developing play opportunities***
- ***increase public recognition of the importance of play and enable relevant legislative requirements to be met***
- ***better manage play environments and increase recognition of the complex resources needed to provide stimulating children's play opportunities***
- ***ensure that children's access to play opportunities is protected/safeguarded as appropriate to current legislation/best practice***

2.4 The Local Strategic Partnership and the North Lincolnshire Children's Trust are committed to delivering the five outcomes set out in Every Child Matters. These are:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

2.5 Delivering the objectives set out in *Taking Play Forward* will improve the quality and quantity of children's play opportunities and contribute to achieving the Every Child Matters outcomes.

2.6 The benefits of developing and supporting play opportunities for children, families and communities include the following.

- The fostering of children's independence, confidence and self esteem
- The development of children's respect for others and the offer of the opportunity for social interaction
- Support for the child's well being, healthy growth and development through the improvement of physical and mental health
- An increase in children's knowledge and understanding
- The promotion of children's creativity and capacity to learn

2.7 The document, unlike its predecessor, includes a set of indicators on children's play. The indicators are designed to assess the satisfaction of children and young people with the parks and play areas where they live and go to school.

2.8 The Children's Trust Board will assume accountability for the outcomes set out in *Taking Play Forward*. The PSG will take responsibility for delivering the objectives set out in the strategy.

2.9 In 2009 North Lincolnshire's Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel reviewed children's play and made a series of recommendations. These recommendations were built in to the objectives set out in *Taking Play Forward*.

3. **OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

3.1 The following options are suggested for consideration by Cabinet.

3.1.1 **Option 1** - That Cabinet approves and endorses the new North Lincolnshire Play Strategy – *Taking Play Forward*.

3.1.2 **Option 2** - That Cabinet does not approve the strategy and requests changes to the draft document.

4. **ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

4.1 **Option 1** will allow work to commence toward delivering the objectives and benefits set out in this report.

4.2 **Option 2** will delay implementation of the strategy and action plan.

5. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

5.1 Currently many of the partners involved in play services have core funding to deliver activities. The delivery of some actions will depend upon securing external funding.

5.2 There are no other immediate financial, staffing or property implications arising out of the report.

6. **OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)**

6.1 Implementing *Taking Play Forward* will make a positive contribution to the Council's Comprehensive Area Assessment and help to deliver on Every Child Matters outcomes.

6.2 The Strategy explicitly promotes inclusive and accessible play for all children and young people.

7 **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

7.1 The roll out of projects, services and initiatives under *Play Alert* established a precedent on consultation in ensuring that children had a direct input in to the design of services and facilities. Some examples include the 3B's project, Street Sport and Playbuilder. The intention is to continue to use this approach with young people.

7.2 Partners, citizens, the Children's Trust Board and the PSG were consulted in the development of *Taking Play Forward*. The strategy presented for approval by Cabinet reflects the outcomes of these consultations.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That Cabinet approves a new North Lincolnshire Play Strategy – *Taking Play Forward*.

SERVICE DIRECTOR ASSET MANAGEMENT AND CULTURE

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Date: 17 May 2010

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

- **Report to Cabinet of 5 February 2004 – Play Strategy for North Lincolnshire**

Taking Play Forward

A Play Strategy for North Lincolnshire

(A Review of 'PLAYALERT')

Version 5 17th May 2010

Contents

	Page
Background.....	3
Executive Summary.....	4
What is Play?	4
The Benefits of Play.....	5
Why a Strategy for Play?	6
The Better Play Objectives	7
The Government's 2020 Vision for Play	8
Regulation.....	8
Local Play Indicators.....	9
PLAYALERT	10
Accountability.....	11
Scrutiny.....	13
Implementation	13
Partners in Play and Strategic Links	13
Associated Plans and Strategies	17
Consultation.....	17
Developing Ongoing Opportunities	17
References	21
Appendices.....	21

Background

In 2004, North Lincolnshire Council created its first play strategy in response to a number of national and international initiatives. It was founded on the principle of children's right to play as stated in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children. This states:

- 1) *Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.*
- 2) *Member governments shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.*

The strategy recognised the importance of play for all children and its fundamental role in children's development. It also recognised that children need a variety of play opportunities for their total development, ranging from open access, free play opportunities to parent and toddler groups. A central principle was access to play opportunities for all children, irrespective of ability, lifestyle, geographical location or culture.

The strategy was developed in consultation with service providers in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors, parents, children and young people, taking account of a variety of other strategies and plans from both North Lincolnshire and other organisations which might have impacted on overall attitudes or provision. In all, its primary aim was to increase both the quantity and quality of play opportunities for children in North Lincolnshire.

Since the production of the initial strategy, the government has introduced a number of new initiatives which will ultimately impact on the way North Lincolnshire Council delivers its future strategy. Of primary importance are The Department for Children, Schools and Families document 'The Play Strategy' (*1) and Play England's 'Embedding the Play Strategy' – October 2009 (*2), together with the recommended introduction from April 2009 of new Local Play Indicators for inclusion within local government's National Indicator Set.

'The Play Strategy' (*1) sets out five overarching areas of action to improve play opportunities for all children. These are:

- *More places to play,*
- *Supporting play throughout childhood,*
- *Playing safely,*
- *Child friendly communities, and*
- *Embedding play in local priorities*

This document is an analysis of progress to date, a look at these new initiatives, and suggestions of fresh pointers for the way forward over the next five years.

Executive Summary

In taking this play strategy forward, it has become increasingly important for all providers of children's play to work together in promoting good practice and availability. At the same time, there are increasing requirements for both new national indicators and the profile of safeguarding initiatives and agency regulation.

The background on which the thought processes of provision were founded has not changed. These are outlined within the document, and still form the rock on which all agencies should build their outputs. Critically, many of the requirements for all agencies and partners have been strengthened with new guidelines and measurements.

Many achievements have already been made. These achievements should not be undervalued, but greeted with enthusiasm as the basis for further improvements. The reader can see from the original strategic objectives of PLAYALERT, the many improvements which have been achieved since 2004. These are listed within the appendix to the document. Agencies should use the various discussion forums as both self-help groups for achieving extra funding through the sharing of best practice information, and for assisting each other through the myriad of new safeguarding regulations.

Readers should use the document as the basis for progressive challenge, and not as a restrictive statement of the status quo. Together, significant advances can be made.

What is Play?

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)

In reviewing the original strategy, perhaps the first point of review should be to question whether any of the background has changed.

Accepting that play is essential to children's quality of life the following, (taken from Best Play (*3) and widely accepted within the play-work sector, is considered the best definition:

"Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. Play can be fun or serious. Through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter."

Alternatively, 'Getting Serious About Play' (*4) 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."

Notwithstanding these definitions, children have a natural tendency to play anywhere. This has an impact on formal play provision as well as wider local services. All relevant agencies and planning authorities need to consider, and plan for, the complex range of resources which can have an effect on any form of play opportunity. This includes the natural environment as much as traditionally provided play equipment, and which will require future assessment. (*9)

At the same time, nothing has changed from the Government's green paper (2003) called 'Every Child Matters' (*5) in which five central outcomes for support for the well-being of children were established. These are:

- 1) *Be healthy,*
- 2) *Stay safe,*
- 3) *Enjoy and achieve,*
- 4) *Make a positive contribution, and*
- 5) *Achieve economic well-being*

Improving these outcomes for our children and young people remains a key factor in all planning regimes relating to children and young people across the LSP, Children's Trust and individual agencies.

The Benefits of Play

Benefits of play for both families and community are listed in Best Play (*3) as:

- 1) *Helping to reduce the involvement of children and young people in anti-social behaviour in the short term, and to play a part in promoting social cohesion in the longer term.*
- 2) *Supporting families and communities by providing a focus for informal networks of family support, and by allowing children autonomy within an environment which parents feel secure about.*
- 3) *Making an important contribution, in parallel with education, in developing adults who are creative and effective in the social economic sphere.*
- 4) *Offering opportunities for exploring cultural identity and difference.*
- 5) *Providing a focus for tackling social exclusion through community development.*

Further, this document lists benefits experienced by children at the time of play as:

- 1) *Providing children with opportunities to enjoy freedom and exercise choice and control over their actions.*
- 2) *Offering children opportunities for testing boundaries and exploring risk.*
- 3) *Offering a very wide range of physical, social and intellectual experiences.*

Best Play (*3) goes on to suggest that there are a variety of benefits which develop over time:

- 1) *The fostering of children's independence, confidence and self esteem.*
- 2) *The development of children's respect for others and the offer of the opportunity for social interaction.*
- 3) *Support for the child's well being, healthy growth and development through the improvement of physical and mental health.*
- 4) *An increase in children's knowledge and understanding.*
- 5) *The promotion of children's creativity and capacity to learn.*

The document also suggests that there are a variety of negative effects associated with play deprivation. These are:

- 1) *Poorer ability in motor tasks.*
- 2) *Lower levels of physical ability.*

- 3) *Poorer ability to deal with stressful or traumatic situations and events.*
- 4) *Poorer ability to assess and manage risk.*
- 5) *Poorer social skills, leading to difficulties in negotiating social situations such as dealing with conflict and cultural difference.*

In conclusion, it also suggests that if children do not have a good range of play opportunities, they may lose the chance to develop their emotional intelligence, independence, self-esteem and self confidence, and to acquire self management skills.

Why a Strategy for Play?

Guidance from the Department for Education and Skills (*8), and now further underlined by 'Embedding the Play Strategy' (*2), identifies that the play strategy should link to the Children and Young People's Plan, helping to meet the requirements of the Ofsted Children's Services Inspection framework. The following 'key judgements' are included in that framework:

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

National planning guidance explicitly recognises the need for dedicated outdoor space for play and recreation. PPG 17 requires local authorities to assess the needs and opportunities for different types of open space and recreational facilities, including play space for children.

The review of North Lincolnshire's current strategy aims to reinforce the value of play. All partners and those able to influence play provision are invited to the signed-up commitment to this joint vision.

Through this joint vision, the strategy aims, through the re-interpretation of its original objectives, to:

- 1) ***raise the standards of play provision – commensurate with original objectives 4 & 5***
- 2) ***promote inclusive and accessible play for all children and young people – commensurate with original objectives 2, 3 & 5***
- 3) ***make sure children and young people know and exercise their rights to play, culture, rest and leisure – commensurate with original objectives 2 & 5***
- 4) ***encourage genuine communication and interactions between children and young people, individuals and services with interests in play – commensurate with original objectives 1, 2 & 3***
- 5) ***create flexibility in the use of play resources – commensurate with original objectives 1, 4 & 6***
- 6) ***identify accessible criteria for funding and developing play opportunities – commensurate with original objectives 4, 5 & 6***
- 7) ***increase public recognition of the importance of play and enable relevant legislative requirements to be met – commensurate with original objectives 1, 2 & 3***
- 8) ***better manage play environments and increase recognition of the complex resources needed to provide stimulating children's play opportunities – commensurate with original objectives 4, 5 & 6***
- 9) ***ensure that children's access to play opportunities is protected/safeguarded as appropriate to current legislation/best practice – commensurate with original objectives 5 and 6***

The Better Play Objectives

In 'Planning for Play' (*6), the Children's Play Council/Big Lottery Fund advocate seven objectives for good play provision. These are:

- 1) *extension of the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it*
- 2) *recognition of the child's need to test boundaries and respond positively to that need*
- 3) *managing the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm*
- 4) *maximising the range of play opportunities*
- 5) *fostering independence and healthy self-esteem*
- 6) *fostering the child's respect for others and offering opportunities for social interaction*
- 7) *fostering the child's well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn*

In planning their strategy, another local authority (*7) has included two more as 'desirable' to the main thrust. As these are part of existing criteria for North Lincolnshire, it would be logical to document them. They are:

- 8) *the provision meets the necessary legislative requirements*
- 9) *the organisation involves users in decision making and consultation.*

The Government's 2020 Vision for Play (October 2009)

Originally aired in the National Play Strategy (*1) and reinforced in Best Play (*3) the government's 2020 vision for play considers the following circumstances as 'must haves'. They are:

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

From April 2009, it is recommended that these visionary ideals should be required to be measured through a series of criteria contained within the National Indicator Set as discussed below.

Regulation

Given the wide variety of circumstances within which children's play operates, all providers should be aware of the potential for registration with Ofsted. Regulating Play Based Provision (*12) gives relevant advice regarding the circumstances in which registration may apply. In general terms, anyone who provides:

".....freely chosen, self directed play for children aged from birth to the 31st. August following their fifth birthday it is likely that you will have to register with Ofsted on the Early Years Register."

Equally, following on from the date above:

"If you provide play for children aged from the 1st September following their fifth birthday to eight years of age, it is likely you will have to register with Ofsted on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register and meet its requirements for registration."

Ofsted provides comprehensive guidance on this issue at:

<http://www.playengland.org.uk/resources/eyfs-ofsted-childcare-register-summary.pdf>

Local Play Indicators

Fair Play: a consultation on the play strategy (*9) introduces a series of indicators on children's play which are recommended for insertion into each local authority's National Indicator Set. These are new for 2009, and will assess the satisfaction of children and young people with the parks and play areas where they live and go to school. Every top tier local authority is recommended to report on their success in supporting children's enjoyment through play.

This data seeks to measure the extent to which, wherever they live or spend the majority of their free time, children and young people have access to spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation which:

- 1) *passes the **3 frees** (*10) test. ie. **free** of charge, where they are **free** to come and go and **free** to choose what they do whilst there*
- 2) *are accessible, welcoming and engaging for all, including those who are disabled or have specific needs and wishes*
- 3) *allow for the differing needs of people of different ages and with different play interests and needs*

Specifically, the four indicators will be:

Indicator 1	Participation	Method of generation
	The percentage of all children and young people aged birth to 16 (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	Method of generation
	The percentage of children and young people aged birth to 16 that have access to at least three different types (A, B, or C – see below) of space or facility, 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 below	Open space and play strategy audits GIS mapping
Indicator 3	Quality of facilities and spaces	Method of generation
	The proportion of facilities and spaces with high scores for location, play value and care and maintenance as assessed using the quality assessment tool	Quality assessment tool
Indicator 4	Satisfaction	Method of generation
	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	School survey

The types of play space referred to in indicator 2 are defined as:

Type A – ‘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. No more than 100 metres walking distance or 60 metres direct.

Eg. grassed or open space/residential street in a home zone.

Type B – ‘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. No more than 400 metres walking distance or 240 metres direct.

Eg. small park/local open space/designed place for play.

Type C – ‘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. No more than 1,000 metres walking distance or 600 metres direct.

Eg. park/playing field/woodland/beach.

PLAYALERT

PLAYALERT was launched as North Lincolnshire's first play strategy in 2004. It contained six main objectives which themselves contained a number of smaller issues/topics. Prior to setting these objectives, an audit of provision was carried out to ascertain the then current levels and/or gaps in provision. These objectives were then earmarked for 'progress assessment' during 2006 and 2009. The objectives were:-

- 1) *Develop a co-ordinated approach to play*
- 2) *Raise the profile of play*
- 3) *Develop a play service that is accessible to all children*
- 4) *Develop existing and new opportunities*
- 5) *Develop the quality of play opportunities for children*
- 6) *Develop a service that is properly resourced and supported*

During 2009, progress against these objectives was reported to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel of North Lincolnshire Council. Allowing for any necessary/expected change/influence over the five year period and/or development of the original concept, many of these objectives have progressed in a positive manner. A description of this progress appears as Appendix 1 to this document.

The themes contained within PLAYALERT are still relevant, and are subsumed within the new direction of 'Taking Play Forward'.

Accountability

In North Lincolnshire the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is the overarching partnership with responsibilities for improving the quality of life through improved services for all people across North Lincolnshire under the auspices of the Sustainable Community Strategy – 'Many Faces, One Community'.

The LSP is made up of key players from the statutory, business, public, faith, and voluntary and community sectors, who are of sufficient seniority to decide future plans and commit their organisation's resources to implementing the LSP strategy.

The LSP Strategy contains a number of shared ambitions and objectives towards which an active contribution through 'Taking Play Forward' can make a difference.

As well as the overarching LSP strategy, the LSP is responsible for six themes boards, each of which have their own strategic responsibilities and planning regimes.

The Statutory Guidance (*11) suggests that Children's Trusts:

".....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."

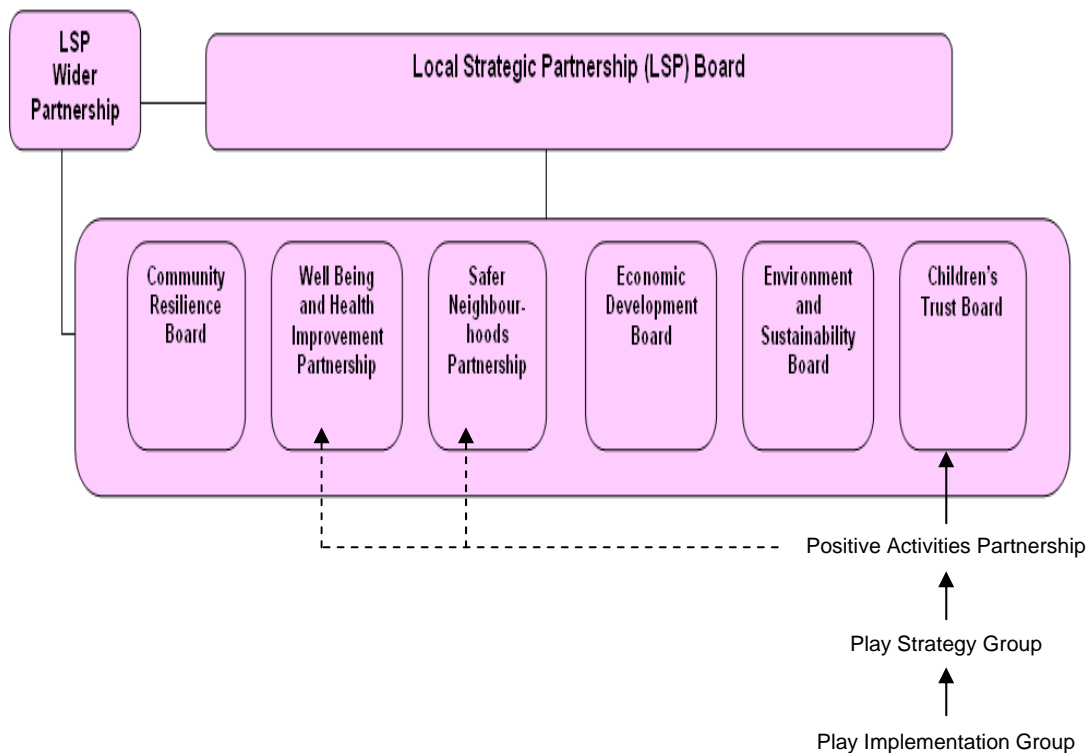
North Lincolnshire Children's Trust is committed to focus on improving outcomes for all children and young people and brings together services for children and young people.

The Children’s Trust Board is accountable for all services for children and young people and links to the Local Strategic Partnership in the role of a theme board.

The Children and Young People’s Plan is the delivery plan for the Children’s Trust and will ensure that play opportunities are prioritised and that there are appropriate linkages with other theme boards and planning regimes to ensure children’s issues are represented across the whole LSP.

The Children’s Trust Board will be accountable for the outcomes set out in ‘Taking Play Forward’.

Two groups are in operation, the Play Strategy Group and the Play Implementation Group. The intention of the strategy group is to include all those decision makers responsible for policy and procedure within the wider environment, who may have an impact (direct or indirect) on the quality and/or quantity of children’s play provision and its environment. The implementation group is representative of those who can actually provide ‘on the ground’.



‘Taking Play Forward’ will endeavour to increase representation at both levels, in order that the development and co-ordination of future policy both provides as it should, and makes best use of all resources available.

All individuals and organisations should accept responsibility for both the bigger picture, and their own contributions.

The Play Strategy Group will be responsible for delivering the objectives set out in ‘Taking Play Forward’. The Play Strategy Group will report to the Positive Activities Partnership, which in turn reports to the Children’s Trust Board (see diagram above).

The Play Strategy Group will forge links to the other five boards which report to the LSP, in particular the Well Being and Health Improvement Partnership and Safer neighbourhoods Partnership.

Scrutiny

The Children's Trust Board are called to accounts by the relevant Scrutiny Panels. This ensure that play services and activities for children and young people are scrutinised.

Implementation

In ensuring optimum progression, it is important that:-

- a) All individuals and/or organisations who make decisions which impact on the rights of children to be consulted should be aware of this need.
- b) Each of these individuals/organisations should be able to develop policy which also furthers their own ambitions/objectives.
- c) Both the Play Implementation Group and the Play Strategy Group should encourage the wider involvement of other 'interested' parties.
- d) All participants should be aware of the wider implications of North Lincolnshire's Children & Young People's Plan.
- e) Collation and dissemination of examples of good practice should be encouraged by all.
- f) All opportunities to exploit provision should be pursued.
- g) Joint funding should be utilised for optimum provision.

Partners in Play and Strategic Links

□ *Extended Services*

The provision of extended services in schools under the nationwide Every Child Matters policy will result, by 2010, every school offering:

- A varied menu of inclusive activities including study support, play, recreation, sport and music clubs, arts and crafts and other special interest clubs in a safe place in primary and secondary schools, combined with quality childcare in primary schools, 8.00 am. – 6.00 pm.
- Parenting support including family learning.
- Swift and easy access to specialist support services for children with additional needs.
- Community access to school facilities, including adult and family learning, ICT and sports facilities.

The quality of Extended Services provision and impact is assessed through a self-evaluation process with a national recognition of achievement. This demonstrates the contribution that extended services has on the achievement of children and young people, values effective partnership working with other services and promotes the consistency of quality aims in provision, practice and performance.

□ *Youth Service*

The Youth Service works through partnerships with community organisations, young people and other agencies, in rural and urban communities. It provides services for young people between eight and twenty five years old, with an emphasis on those between thirteen and

nineteen. It also runs a number of youth centres throughout the area which provide opportunities for young people to take part in a variety of activities.

Young people are encouraged to:

- Participate in decision making,
- Accept responsibility and learn how to effect changes in society,
- Participate in arts and develop creativity, and
- Gain knowledge, awareness and skills to make changes in life, both for themselves and others.

The service provides meeting places that are warm and safe, with the resources for activities and learning. Youth Workers also work with young people in a variety of other settings.

□ **Library Service**

North Lincolnshire Council's libraries offer an extensive range of services (for both young and old) to the local community. This offer is via one central library, 14 branch libraries and two mobile libraries.

Each of these facilities offers separate services for children, and not just via reading and play material. There are a number of new initiatives such as 'Poetry in the Park', North Lincolnshire's 'Favourite Nursery Rhyme', and 'Storytime' at both the central library and many of the branch libraries throughout the area. Up to date activity programmes can be obtained from the website, or direct from the nearest branch.

□ **Parks, Neighbourhoods and Open Spaces**

North Lincolnshire Council provides a large and varied amount of green space within its boundaries, and is blessed with three 'Green Flag' parks offering excellent opportunities for the residents of North Lincolnshire to enjoy safe and well maintained parks and open space.

A two year improvement programme to twenty two children's playgrounds within North Lincolnshire will see vastly enhanced and challenging facilities for young people together with the construction of an iconic playground for young people in the redevelopment of Central Park in Scunthorpe.

□ **Voluntary and Community Sector**

The voluntary sector in general is assisted in North Lincolnshire through 'Voluntary Action North Lincolnshire' (VANL). VANL works with charities and voluntary groups, providing a wide range of services and support to local organisations. In general, this is delivered through:

- Development Work,
- Liaison and Representation,
- Service Provision and Support,
- Finance,
- Policy Provision, and
- IT Services.

There are 352 organisations fairly evenly dispersed around North Lincolnshire, providing both formal and informal opportunities for children and young people. They cover a cross section of activity, from specialist provision for children with disabilities/BME groups, through Playing Fields/Playgrounds, Recreation and Sport, Brownies, Rainbows, Scouts, Guides, Cubs, etc., Air/Army Cadets, Pre-schools, Out of School Clubs, Play Schemes and Youth Clubs. Most of this provision is unfunded generally, or subject to a charge at the point of access, thus presenting a real barrier to some potential users.

❑ **Arts Service**

North Lincolnshire Council runs a thriving arts development and museums service. Activities for children occur throughout the school holidays via a variety of workshops and 'taster' sessions. These are held regularly at the museum, 2021, Normanby Hall, and other venues throughout the area.

Additionally, programmes such as Buzz Youth Arts Festival, Music4U, Scunthorpe Young People's Film Festival and the South Bank Youth Dance Hub make a major contribution to activity for young people.

Programmes constantly change, but exact information can always be sought via the council's (or the organisation's) website.

❑ **Aiming High For Disabled Children (AHDC)**

In April 2008, the government launched the AHDC programme with the aim of transforming services and improving outcomes for disabled children, young people and their families. The biggest part of the programme is the development of Short Breaks. This aims to give disabled children and young people enjoyable experiences away from their primary carers, thereby contributing to personal and social development and reducing social isolation. There are two key objectives:

- enable disabled children and young people to engage in meaningful fun activities, including those with complex health needs;
- enable parent carers to have a much needed break from their caring role.

The AHDC programme has outlined a set of National Standards within its Core Offer, based on five elements key to transforming and improving services:

- Information,
- Transparency,
- Assessment,
- Participation, and
- Feedback.

A national indicator (NI 54) will assess parental perceptions based on these five elements.

North Lincolnshire is currently increasing the range and the volume of short break opportunities for disabled children and young people. This work has been developed through effective multi-agency partnerships, including parents.

❑ **Positive Play 4 Schools Association**

A specifically constituted group aiming:

- To offer high quality Play to pupils aged 5 – 16 years of age no matter what gender, ability or race.
- To ensure duty of care to all, and training and support given to all schools in North Lincolnshire.
- Behaviour/incident/attainment, and increasing physical activity

❑ **Regional Support**

Play within the region is supported by the charity 'Yorkshire Play'. Its specific aim is to promote access to excellent play opportunities for all children and young people in the Yorkshire and Humber region.

It does this through:

- Supporting play providers to develop high quality, diverse and inclusive play environments.
- Supporting the development of a qualified workforce.
- Advocating the right of all children and young people to play, through lobbying at local, regional and national levels.
- Promoting a play friendly approach within all the services for all children and those services that impact on play.

□ **Local Development Framework (LDF)**

The LDF together with the Regional Spatial Strategy for Yorkshire and the Humber will form the development plan for North Lincolnshire. It will be the basis on which any planning decisions are made. The LDF will help shape the future of North Lincolnshire's towns, villages and countryside for the next 10 to 20 years.

The LDF is a folder of documents, and the Core Strategy Development Plan Document will contain a policy which will ensure that North Lincolnshire's leisure, recreation facilities, and play facilities are sustained and improved so that they continue to make an important contribution to the quality of life for local people.

Associated Plans and Strategies

□ **Transport Plan**

The Local Transport Plan 2008 outlines the vision for transport in the wider context. This plan is influenced through a variety of different consultative groups, and takes account of significant potential influences on the North Lincolnshire areas. Issues of potential current impact are the Baths Hall, Sports Academy, Lincolnshire Lakes, and the Scunthorpe Town Centre redevelopment.

It contains a number of initiatives, many of which cross reference indirectly to the inherent threads of 'Taking Play Forward'. These include 'Better Air Quality', 'Quality of Life', 'Safer Roads', and 'Accessibility'

It refers to research which concludes that (in the wider context) *"there is clear evidence that a comprehensive and high performing transport system is an important enabler of sustained economic prosperity"*. This, clearly, will have an impact on play.

Consultation

Through the original development of PLAYALERT, North Lincolnshire Council has sought to include all interested parties/organisations in the process of policy formulation and implementation. This is the primary purpose of the Play Strategy Group and the Play Implementation Group. A variety of successes are recorded within the section attributed to PLAYALERT above.

Equally, the Play Implementation Group will strive to ensure consultation and collaboration with all groups/services listed above, whether internal or external, in order to drive forward the impact on play and leisure environments.

Developing Ongoing Opportunities

Objective	By 2011	By 2015
1) Raise the standards of play provision	a) Establish a 'baseline' score for indicator 3 and benchmark the level. b) Establish a 'baseline' score for indicator 4 and benchmark the level. c) Compile a register of examples of 'good practice' nationally. d) Positive Play 4 Schools to have trained 25% of Y6 pupils in each school across North Lincolnshire to become Playleaders.	a) Aim to score no less than the second quartile regarding national benchmarks. b) Aim to score no less than the second quartile regarding national benchmarks. c) Positive Play 4 Schools to ensure that Y6 children pass on playleader skills to lower year groups.
2) Promote inclusive and accessible play for all children and young people	a) Establish a 'baseline' score for indicator 1 and benchmark the level.	a) Aim to score no less than the second quartile regarding national benchmarks.
3) Make sure children and young people know and exercise their rights to play, culture, rest and leisure	a) Establish a 'baseline' score for indicator 2 and benchmark the level. b) Undertake a PR campaign in schools.	a) Aim to score no less than the second quartile regarding national benchmarks. b) Establish credible consultative mechanisms with children.
4) Encourage genuine communication and interactions between children and young people, individuals and services with interests in play	a) Produce area maps of different play provision authority wide. b) Enhance PSG and PIG activity. c) Create a communications and mailing database. d) From the Children & Young Peoples' Scrutiny panel:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Produce an action plan to assist in the removal of barriers to recreation, including bullying, transport, cost, localised provision and supervision. ii) Consider different age groups and more challenging adventure play through the total inclusion of young people in the full process. iii) Target marketing to both children and families. iv) Strengthen communication lines between 	

	<p>council services and external agencies.</p> <p>v) Take advantage of facilities/opportunities through Building Schools for the Future.</p>	
<p>5) Create flexibility in the use of play resources</p>	<p>a) Identify opportunities for shared provision.</p> <p>b) From the Children & Young Peoples' Scrutiny panel:-</p> <p>i) Increase levels of maintenance in parks and open spaces (subject to resources)</p> <p>ii) Investigate the use of Park Wardens to alleviate anti social behaviour, graffiti, broken glass and damaged equipment (subject to resources).</p> <p>iii) Specific budgetary provision to Neighbourhood Services for provision/maintenance.</p>	<p>a) Successful provision of at least three joint opportunities.</p>
<p>6) Identify accessible criteria for funding and developing play opportunities</p>	<p>a) Identify further opportunities for funding, in addition to Playbuilder and Adizone.</p> <p>b) Actively pursue planning obligations/S106 agreements as potential contributions.</p>	<p>a) Achieve at least five successful grant applications or bids for available resources (across all providers)</p> <p>b) Achieve at least five successfully planned objectives via S106.</p>
<p>7) Increase public recognition of the importance of play and enable relevant legislative requirements to be met</p>	<p>a) Engage all key stakeholders in the Play Strategy.</p> <p>b) Publish a commitment to the Play Strategy that organisations and people can sign up to.</p> <p>c) Hold internal/external seminars to promote the Play Strategy to officers and members, and other decision makers in key external organisations.</p> <p>d) From the Children & Young Peoples' Scrutiny Panel:-</p> <p>i) Implement a process which ensures that parents, carers, and guardians are supported in participating in future play development opportunities.</p>	

<p>8) Better manage play environments and increase recognition of the complex resources needed to provide stimulating children’s play opportunities</p>	<p>a) Establish a baseline score for indicator 4 and benchmark the level. b) Raise the profile of the requisite indicators with the Planning Authority to enable best advantage to be taken from all development opportunities presented. c) From the Children & Young Peoples’ Scrutiny Panel:- i) Update (and ensure a comprehensive approach to) the audit of playgrounds and open spaces in North Lincolnshire. ii) Monitor and enforce Section 106 agreements. iii) Take advantage of facilities/opportunities through Building Schools for the Future.</p>	<p>a) Aim to score no less than the second quartile regarding national benchmarks.</p>
<p>9) Ensure that children’s access to play opportunities is protected/safeguarded as appropriate to current legislation/best practice</p>	<p>a) Ensure that proper provision for screening all staff with access to children is adequate and in place.</p>	

In reviewing their original policy, North Lincolnshire Council (through its Play Strategy Group) is committed to ongoing regular review and monitoring of these revised objectives.

The Play Team will, in conjunction with the Play Implementation Group, carry out annual monitoring and evaluation of the policy, and report relevant progress to the Play Strategy Group.

Regular opportunities will be provided for children, young people and play partners to express their views.

References

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

*2 Embedding the Play Strategy (Oct 2009) – Play England’s 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.

- *3 Best Play – What Play provision should do for children – National Playing Fields Association, Children’s Play Council and PLAYLINK 2000.
- *4 Getting Serious About Play – a review of children’s play – DCMS, 2004.
- *5 Every Child Matters – Government green paper published in 2003 as an adjunct to the report into the death of Victoria Climbié.
- *6 Planning for Play (2006) – Guidance on the development and implementation of a local play strategy – Big Lottery Fund/Children’s Play Council.
- *7 A Play Strategy for York
- *8 DfES – Guidance on the Children and Young People’s Plan (2005) – Department for education and Skills.
- *9 DCSF – Fair Play – a consultation on the play strategy (2008)
- *10 Three Frees Test developed by Perry Else – Sheffield Hallam University (2005)
- *11 Statutory Guidance on inter-agency co-operation to improve the well being of children, young people and their families (DCSF, 2008)
- *12 Regulating Play Based Provision – Ofsted factsheet No. 090271 (2009)

Appendices

Appendix 1

Progress of PLAYALERT objectives against documented actions.

Action	Progress to Date
1 - Develop a co-ordinated approach to Play	
Set up Play Strategy Implementation Group	Established
Establish a Play Development Agency	Roles and functions have been undertaken by the Play Strategy Implementation Group
Establish a play information service	Established via Family Information Service, Lincs2leisure, A-Z of Leisure, etc.
Establish a Children's and Young People's Play Forum	Locality based Neighbourhood Implementation Groups established in five neighbourhoods
Develop a Play Policy	Policy written and adopted by Play Strategy Implementation Group
Establish a comprehensive consultation process on matters affecting children's play	Consultation processes developed through various case studies involving young people in the design and development of a variety of play projects
Carry out play impact assessments on all key partners' policies and strategies	Children and Young People's Plan, Parenting Strategy
2 – Raise the profile of play in North Lincolnshire	
Promote the Play Strategy	Promoted to partners via a wide variety of networks, partnerships and media. eg. press releases, Lincs2leisure, newsletter
Raise awareness of the importance of play	Play included in a variety of related plans and strategies including Parenting Strategy, Obesity Strategy and Children & Young People's Plan
Promote play through events such as the August Playday	Playday and other play events delivered across North Lincolnshire throughout the life of the strategy
Adopt the new Charter for Children's Play and other significant documents	New Charter adopted by Play Strategy Implementation Group
3 – Develop a play service that is accessible to all children	
Increase play opportunities for marginalised groups of children, particularly children from minority communities	Development and delivery of a number of inclusive play projects including Crosby Play Scheme, BEM Sports & Crosby Neighbourhood Management pathfinder play projects
Provide transport to enable children to access play opportunities	Progress towards developing locally based facilities/services. eg. 3B's Street Sport, Kick Start, Fair Play Football
Increase play opportunities for children in rural areas	Delivery of rurally based play projects including Westwoodside Play Area, Scawby Community Play, 3B's Street Project and Street Sport
Increase inclusive play opportunities	Delivery of various inclusive play projects

for disabled children	including Epworth CAP club, Sparky's, Scorers and SEN Summer Playscheme, SSP Disability Officer.
Provide free or low cost play opportunities to ensure all children can access play	Creation of concessions and free access. Pricing is a key part of project planning and delivery. Grant funding secured to remove fees and charges. eg. Kick Start, Street Sport, Fair Play Football and 3B's
Develop a network of local venues easily accessible on foot or without private transport	Delivery of a number of locally based play projects
4 – Develop existing and new provision	
Develop a range of play opportunities	Street Sprt, Kick Start, Fair Play Football, Street Dance, 3B's, Wiggle & Giggle, Positive Play 4 Schools and Secondary Active Lunchtimes.
Work in partnership to ensure children can play safely in parks and open spaces	Neighbourhood Services recruited Park Wardens. Delivery of Kick Start, Street Sport and 3B's projects to encourage play in public spaces. Wave 2 Pathfinder bid unsuccessful, but North Lincolnshire included in Wave 3 (April 09) - £1m capital, £45K revenue
Build partnerships with those who provide activities for children in out of school and early years settings	Children's Centres, Extended Services, Child Development Service, Kaleidoscope, Early Years in PSIG. Development of Physicality and Wiggle & Giggle projects for under 5's
Develop a mobile play project	3B's, Street Sport, Kick Start and Fair Play Football
Increase community led and local play projects	Large number of projects delivered are community led including Big Lottery portfolio. eg. 3B's Kick Start, Fair Play Football and Street Dance. Services to be delivered via locality working to enable community led provision. Sport & Play Development Team now reflects locality based working
5 – Develop the quality of play opportunities for children	
Ensure all provision meets relevant national standards	Leisure Services Safeguarding Children Policy recognised by LCSB as best practice. All projects developed through PlayAlert have incorporated best play practice, child safeguarding standards, etc
Establish a training and education programme to develop a skilled workforce	Play training programmes delivered to local staff and volunteers. eg. Primary Positive Play in Schools and Secondary Active Lunchtimes, SEN play training, Wiggle & Giggle, More is Caught than Taught
Ensure all training and education is rooted in Best Play principles	All training delivered reflects Best Play principles
Use quality assurance standards to measure the quality of play	Some assessments of fixed play equipment through Neighbourhood Services. Steps to Quality. Quality Mark in Extended Services.

Develop assessment criteria to assess the quality of play opportunities	Informal assessment and evaluation criteria established through Play pathfinder bid. Tell us 2 survey
Ensure effective monitoring of the Play Strategy	Strategy monitored throughout by Play Strategy Implementation Group
Ensure systems of effective monitoring and evaluation of spending on play provision	E Financial system utilised effectively throughout key services. Budget targets met year on year for Sport, Play and Community Development
Ensure Play Development is informed by national best practice	Partnerships developed with Play England, Yorkshire Play, and other key national/regional partners
Ensure play providers have the opportunity to engage in wider debates at national/regional level	Play promoted through a variety of local seminars/events that bring play and related services together. eg. Parenting Partnership, NL Tackling Obesity Partnership, Safer and Stronger Communities, Parenting Strategy, Training and Development Agency.
Provide opportunities for children to meet and make friends with children from other localities/countries	School exchange visits, NL grant aid scheme
Ensure that all play providers meet relevant standards for safeguarding children	Leisure Services development of Safeguarding Children policies and procedures approved by North Lincolnshire Local Safeguarding Children Board
6 – Develop a service that is properly resourced and supported	
Identify additional funding to develop play opportunities	Variety of funding secured for large scale play projects including Kids, CAP Club, Big Lottery Play Programme, Better Play, Street Sport/Kick Start, Fair Play Football and Street Dance. Positive Play 4 Schools Association (a constituted group).
Identify funding that enables communities to provide play opportunities	Variety of funding secured for community led projects including Big Lottery Play, Awards for All applications, Grant Aid projects and Landfill Tax Credit schemes
Support the development of play resource centres with a variety of materials	Area has its own local 'scrapstore'