

Hampshire Play Strategy

2011 – 2013

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Foreword

“Hampshire County Council is committed to enabling partners to provide a Play Service that ensures that all children have the right to Play, Rest and Leisure under Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. “

The Hampshire Strategy recognises that Play happens in all areas of children's lives, it can be adult led or freely chosen. It recognises that through play children learn how to communicate, socialise and become active members of their community. In order to help our children reach their full potential, it is important for all partners within Hampshire to understand the benefits of play in all its forms.

This document has been produced in partnership with Hampshire County Council, the 11 District and Borough Councils, the Hampshire Play Strategy Steering group and has been informed by stakeholder events and consultation. The 11 Boroughs and Districts have undertaken various consultations with children and young people to influence developments. They commented on what play means to them, the play opportunities and possibilities they value, and highlighted the importance of risk in their play. This feedback is incorporated throughout the Play Strategy.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

For the purposes of this document the definition of play is as follows –

“Freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child”.

(National Playing Fields Association, 2000)

The Hampshire Play Strategy is driven by the recognition of the cross-cutting nature of play and by the need for and existing presence of play in all strategies, initiatives, and environments that relate to or impact upon children and young people.

This document presents a Play Strategy for Hampshire. It is a practical document offering guidance to all partners and stakeholders engaged in the delivery of play

provision (through development, training, management and delivery of resources and services) via organisations across the Districts and County of Hampshire.

The Hampshire Play Strategy steering group will develop further consultations with young people to monitor progress and refine the Strategy over the coming years.

It is acknowledged that any Play Strategy will, by its nature, always be an 'imperfect' statement of play and play provision if it is to be brief enough to be a useful and practical document. However the aim of this document is to provide a useful starting point for any organisation in Hampshire wishing to create new or sustain existing, play opportunities for children and young people. The Strategy can be:

- Adopted by an organisation or voluntary group
- Used as a reference document

This document is relevant to the following partners in Hampshire: -

Local Children's Partnerships, Health and Well Being Board, Town and Parish Councils, Schools, Early Years Settings, Community Associations, Registered Social Landlords, Childcare providers, Environmental Agencies, Open Space, Playground and Leisure providers, Uniformed groups, Faith groups, Public and Private Sector organisations, Voluntary groups and Charities, District and Borough Councils, Transport Planners, Child and Adolescent Health Improvement post holders. This list is not exhaustive.

From the consultation the following definitions of play emerged:

- Play is what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons.
- Must be available to all children and young people according to their needs abilities and disabilities.
- Should be freely chosen and is 'time out' from other activities.
- Is a right for all children, of any and every ability and background.
- Develops imagination.
- May require specialist provision to initiate and support certain play activities with certain children.
- Spans all childhood experiences and should be championed in all settings where children are present.
- Involves beneficial activities that support physical and emotional health and well being
- Should be engaged in without fear of bullying or prejudice.

- Is fun and is engaged in for its own sake
- Can be 'serious' in that it is engaged in to acquire skills and may involve formal or informal rules (e.g. a game of hockey or war play).
- Must allow for levels of challenge, risk and testing of personal limits and boundaries.
- May be introduced or encouraged by adults and may or may not be part of planned activities.
- Should offer opportunities for children and young people to learn and develop as individuals and as members of the community.
- Should provide the opportunity to confront positive and negative messages about themselves and the wider world.
- Is something that adults should ensure time and safe space is made available for.
- Does not rely on equipment or resources but may be enhanced and extended by these.
- Changes with age.

Chapter 2 - Vision Statement

Play England is the national charity which works to ensure that the importance of children's play is recognised by all, therefore we have adopted their vision statement.

Our Vision is:

- "All residential neighbourhoods are child friendly places where children can play outside"
- "All children have the opportunity to play throughout childhood"
- "To give all children somewhere to play, in freedom and safety, after school and in the holidays"

We will realise this vision when:

- Planning and regeneration takes account of children's play – protecting play areas and building new ones, and ensuring that children have safe routes to take them to local green spaces.
- Roads in all residential areas have a 20mph maximum speed limit and there are more pedestrian zones.
- Public space is designed, managed and supervised with a better understanding of children and their need to play.
- All places where children live offer genuinely inclusive play opportunities.

- All children have the opportunity to play throughout childhood.
- Policies for housing, education, childcare, health, arts, the environment and sport - nationally and locally – recognise and respond to the importance of children’s play.
- Parents are listened to and given information about what play provision is available locally.
- Schools are required to protect playtime for play and to provide good outdoor play areas.
- People who work and volunteer with children and young people are encouraged to understand and support the benefits of play.
- More children have access to staffed play services.
- There is more support for volunteering and play.
- All group childcare and after school clubs can access training in play and good outdoor areas
- After school clubs and holiday schemes have quality standards for play provision as well as safety and well being.

Chapter 3 - Hampshire Play Strategy – A Strategic Fit

The Hampshire Play Strategy fits with national and regional strategies and policy statements and with Hampshire Local District and Borough Councils’ Play Strategies in the key ways listed in this chapter. These links reflect the nature of provision that is already in place in Hampshire and / or specified by the Hampshire District and Borough Play Strategies. It is also in other play policy and planning documents and initiatives such as the Play Builder Capital Programme.

Since 2008 the Play Builder Capital Grant Programme has spent approximately £890,000 on 19 new play or refurbished play sites across Hampshire. These sites have reflected the innovative thinking around ensuring risky and more natural play for children and young people. Future design of play landscapes should reflect the specification and values of Play builder design.

This strategy links with Hampshire Children and Young People’s Plan, although not a statutory document Hampshire County Council use this document to plan services for children and young people. Furthermore, it fits in other Hampshire County Council plans such as Community Safety, Partnership Strategies, the Voluntary Sector Engagement Plan, the Rural Plan, Shaping our Future Together, Healthy Weight Strategy, Hampshire’s Multi-Agency Strategy for Young Carers, Hampshire School Landscapes Strategy and the Short Breaks for Disabled Children Strategy.

This Strategy recognises the inter-relation of Local Children's Trusts and the emerging Health and Wellbeing Board and the effect these will have on both driving and measuring progress in children's play using performance indicators from the trust and boards plans.

Chapter 4 – State of Play in Hampshire Today

There are 11 District and Borough Authorities in the County of Hampshire: Basingstoke and Deane, East Hampshire, Havant, Eastleigh, Fareham, Gosport, Hart, New Forest, Rushmoor, Test Valley and Winchester.

Each District or Borough produced a Play Strategy in 2006 – 7 and the learning from their implementation and the two consultation events in 2009 and 2010 has informed this strategy. We have taken these examples of good practice and areas of development to improve the Hampshire Play Service, the overview of which is outlined in the tables.

From this overview three common themes emerged:

1. Advocating for play
2. Planning for play
3. Developing sustainable partnerships

The following table shows 9 areas for improvement which were identified during visioning days and meetings.

Identified areas for improvement:

1. Equality of access and disability awareness
2. Improvement of play provision in rural areas
3. Development of new play provision and maintenance or development of existing play sites
4. Accessibility of play sites and provision
5. Funding
6. Advocating for play / promoting play
7. Training and staff development
8. Development of partnerships
9. Consultation with children and young people

Chapter 5 - The Way Forward 2011-2013

Theme 1 – Advocating for Play		2013 Milestone
<p>Action: Progression of Hampshire Play network.</p>	<p>Rationale: Hampshire Play Network with the Play Strategy Coordinator post aims to address all issues relating to play, health and wellbeing plus the development of play in the county across all childhood experiences of children aged 0 -19 years. The network would provide a highly recognisable focus for play issues, enquiries and planning. The network will also promote early years physical activity through play and sport as a means to address healthy weights and activity levels in children under the age of 5. Hampshire Play Network will be a dynamic resource available to promote an evidenced based approach in order to enable partners to respond to opportunities and changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop tools to measure types of contact with partners in Hampshire and nationwide. • Successful bids for grant funding to support the work of Hampshire Play Network. • Mapping and identifying resources available to play sector. • Promote the use of Hampshire Participation Strategy • Database of academic evidence will be created for quick reference.
<p>Action: Coordination of a network of “ Play Champions”</p>	<p>Rationale: This could be undertaken by existing staff or young people with a “play remit”. There could be a course or accreditation that individuals could gain in order to actively promote play in schools, holiday schemes, in care and childcare settings, childminding networks, etc. The promotion of play in non traditional play settings underlines the idea of play as a cross cutting activity across all childhood experiences. Examples of best practice will be critically evaluated and reviewed, the aim would be to use these examples and adapt them to specific training needs. The play champions will support an approach that will enable partners to engage with children and families in a positive way when decisions are being made about play provision. At the forefront of this approach will be consultation that includes the voice of the child and the communities needs to influence provision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than one Play Champion per District or Borough actively engaged with the Play Strategy. • At least one Councillor in each Borough and District actively engaged in the Play Strategy. • More than one Play Champion per District or Borough actively engaged with the Play Strategy. • A series of learning workshops to support play champions will be offered to partners.

Theme 2 – Planning for Play		2013 Milestone
<p>Action: Creation of more “Play friendly spaces”</p>	<p>Rationale: In 2009 the Department for Communities and Local Government published the Child Well being Index. Hampshire County Council ranked as the fifteenth highest county in England in terms of its child wellbeing. Hart had the highest child wellbeing amongst all the local authorities in England. Havant and Gosport were the two local authorities where child wellbeing levels fell in the bottom half of local authorities in England, with other localised pockets of poorer child wellbeing across Hampshire. Key areas that Hampshire residents see as needing to be improved were activities for teenagers, level of traffic congestion, road repairs and public transport. (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2009). Increasing the number of play friendly spaces is evidenced by Play England data to have an impact on a child’s wellbeing and also on the community perspective of wellbeing. Children playing out in play spaces increases the sense of safety.</p> <p>Establishing tangible and direct links between this strategy and planners at a District and Borough level will lead to improvements in access to play spaces for all children regardless of age and ability. Consideration needs to be given to safe access i.e. Crossing routes, traffic calming, cycle routes and locations where children do not have to cross roads with heavy traffic in order to play.</p> <p>85% of Hampshire is classed as rural, ensuring that rural play opportunities are supported is important.</p> <p>Play spaces should be exciting, innovative and include mainly elements of natural play. In order to deliver this vision, it is recommended that partners follow the award winning design principles of Play England. Design for Play - A guide to creating successful play spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish tangible links with Hampshire Planning Department and School Landscape Programme team in order to share themes from this strategy which will support the creation of play spaces with the implementation of a robust play policy. • Work with at least one Parish or Town Council per District/Borough to raise awareness of creating play spaces that are safe to get to for children and families. Ensure children and families have been consulted as per Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. • Ensure the Right to Play under Article 31 UNCRC is upheld and respected during all planning processes. • Establish a model of work to be trialled with a Local Children’s Partnership. The aim will be to take this model to areas of relative deprivation to increase and support child wellbeing through play services.

Theme 3: Developing Sustainable Partnerships	2013 Milestone
<p>Action: Develop play and physical activity as a theme with schools to promote the benefits of play in child development</p>	<p>Rationale: Play is important for children 's development regardless of age, it does fit with the majority of the National Curriculum. Where possible, this link should be part of future planning for partnerships and services regarding education. Play is firmly embedded in the Early Years Foundation Stage, practitioners should consider this when planning projects for engaging children in play or creating new play opportunities. Play and active play is less embedded in Secondary schools, there is a need to address this issue and protect and promote play opportunities for children in years 7 and above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work directly with schools through Play Strategy Coordinator using a variety of tools such as "Research In Practice Tool Kit" and the Hampshire School Landscape Strategy • Establish good working relationships with Schools Landscape Team • Develop a relationships with NHS Hampshire, Hampshire Healthy schools team and this strategy.
<p>Action: Highlight play and active play as a means of sustaining healthy weights in children.</p>	<p>Rationale: Growing trends in evidence demonstrate the link between being active and maintaining a healthy weight. Many children do not have opportunities to be active through play before school, during playtimes and after school. Due to increases in traffic, fear of strangers and poor transport and housing planning, children are not able to walk to school frequently enough to help maintain a healthy weight. Current Early Years Physical Activity Guidelines issued by the Chief Medical Officers (CMO) (2011) recommend that children under the age of 5 years and able to walk should be physically active for 180 minutes per day. The CMO state that currently this age group spend 120 - 150 minutes per day in physical activity.</p> <p>For children under the age of 5 and not yet walking, the recommendation from the CMO is that the amount of time spent restrained in push chairs, baby bouncers and walkers is limited so that they are able to move around and develop healthy bone density and muscle movement. The CMO recommends floor based and water based activity to provide this physical activity plus valuable opportunities to develop social and emotional bonds.</p> <p>For more information on these guidelines and to read the report supporting these recommendations, please visit the Wellbeing South East Government website - http://www.wellbeingsoutheast.org.uk/physical_activity/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a partnership with the Youth Sports Trust and other relevant organisations to create a workshop aimed at developing an awareness and understanding of active play and sport in the successful management of child development and healthy weight. • Encourage schools to protect play times. • Make opportunities to be active more readily available. • Disseminate evidence and tools from organisations such as SUSTRANS, NHS Hampshire and Department of Health to partners in order to inform best practice

<p>Action: Focus awareness on accessible play opportunities</p>	<p>Rationale: Accessible play opportunities are neither more expensive nor difficult to design and plan. There is a great deal of guidance available through credible networks and organisations. Historically, Hampshire County Council has worked, in partnership with KIDS and Parent Voice in order to highlight the many opportunities and a focused way of thinking to create play opportunities for all children and their families. National and local policy on inclusion should be embedded in the decision making process in play opportunities, especially with District and Borough planners.</p> <p>Ensure information about play provision is available to all children, families and young people, regardless of age, background or ability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of the Inspiring You Inclusion Resource Pack and Research in Practice Tool Kit. • Establish links with KIDS and Parent Voice • Link with play networks to disseminate information and guidance on current legislation and best practice guidelines to support their work in improving accessible play opportunities.
<p>Action: Establish cross sector communication between professionals working to promote play across Hampshire</p>	<p>Rationale: Mapping and identifying routes and resources to facilitate better understanding of play opportunities. Centrally stored data and information regarding consultation undertaken with children and young people would be vital. Using the Hampshire Play Strategy as a document to underpin best practice is a key element to creating a shared vision of aims within the county.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular communication through Hampshire Play Network • Use of emerging Research in Practice Tool Kit.

Chapter 6 – Case Studies

Case Study – Rural Areas Play Project

What were the issues?

During 2006 East Hampshire District Council identified a gap in play provision for children aged 5–12 years living in rural areas not well served by public transport.

What did East Hampshire District Council do?

Together Hampshire County Council and East Hampshire District Council sourced a grant of £21,000 to fund a van that was hired and stocked with a wide range of play equipment. Childcare workers and volunteers staffed play sessions using the van at village halls and adjacent open spaces in rural villages across the district. The project received a further £23,500 in 2010/11 from the Children’s Integrated Services Grant and Extended Schools Services to sustain the growing popularity of the project. A “Friends of RAPP” group was formed and constituted in 2010 which enabled grants of £12,000 to be secured.

Each session was designed to be child led but with a series of adult led workshops such as African drumming or craft. The project was designed to provide an opportunity for parents and carers to play alongside and with their children so that everyone could benefit from this experience.

What were the results?

Disabled children and young people were able to access the play sessions, accessible bikes and equipment have been purchased along with staff training on disability awareness.

An online booking system was introduced and a website created to support the popularity of the sessions available.

For more information about the RAPP website, please follow the link below -

[Get Active Now! East Hampshire District council](#)

RAPP has two play sessions per day, 11 weeks per year during the school holidays. Each session is generally filled to capacity, specialist equipment has been purchased for individual children with or without a disability so that they can attend every RAPP session.

2,500 children attended RAPP sessions in 2010 over 5 weeks in the summer holidays, an increase of over 50% since 2008.

RAPP has won and been nominated for the following awards:

2010 – Awarded Horndean Extended Services Partner of the year and received £500

2010 – Nominated for National Lottery Good Causes Award

2011 – Nominated and short listed Play Work Development Team of the year at the 9th Annual Play Work Conference 2011.

Case Study – Aldershot Park

What were the issues?

Aldershot Park was identified as in need of a major refurbishment that would enable local residents to enjoy a play space that was creative, challenging, and an exciting feature of the community. The existing equipment was dated and in major need of updating.

What did Rushmoor Borough Council do?

Rushmoor Borough Council with other partners invested £24,000 to transform the play space into an exciting and challenging area for the whole community. The council worked extensively with the local community by consulting with many residents, including children and young people. From the consultation it was clear that the community wanted a play space for all ages that was different and exciting. The new equipment sourced was made mainly of natural materials, fallen trees were chosen for seating and climbing whilst for the under fives a landscaped play space with a large sand pit was added.. The overall theme and

design specification which enables children to access natural and risky play from the Play Builders capital project were brought together to enable this park to become a flagship in Rushmoor.

Funding for the park was received from the following partners:
Big Lottery (£125), Play Builder (£30K), Aiming High for Hampshire's Disabled Children (£30K), Veolia Environmental Trust, through the Landfill Communities Fund (£30K).

What were the results?

The site was officially opened in June 2010, on National Play Day. Many children and their families braved the rain to enjoy face painting, den building and messy play in the park. During sunny weekends hundreds of children and their families enjoy this facility, families with disabled children travel 30-40 miles with their children to this park as it has many inclusive features. Children of all ages come to the park and are usually seen playing football, riding bikes, using the challenging equipment to their maximum capabilities and generally enjoying their own playful space.

MENCAP have opened a small coffee shop in the park which has provided volunteering and work opportunities for local people with learning disabilities. For more information on play opportunities in Rushmoor please browse the following links–

[Rushmoor Borough Council - Play Areas](#)

[Rushmoor Play Strategy](#)

Case Study - "It's Okay to Play"

What were the issues?

The lack of natural play sites for young children was identified by Winchester City Council. The need to create opportunities for children living in areas of deprivation which would develop access to adventure, risk and physical outdoor play was seen as a key target by the Council. By adding natural play sites the Council realised that this would enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of this community of children.

What did Winchester City Council do?

A consultation event was held as part of a larger event at Winchester University. All young people in Winchester were invited to talk to the Community Team about how they would like to see their play opportunities develop. Winchester Youth Council also took part in the consultation event, guiding young people to have a say in future developments. An online survey was created on Winchester City Council website It had a good response rate and together with the consultation event, the Council was able to define how their play sites were going to take shape.

A multi - agency sub group of the Local Children's Partnership was created which progressed the design of the site, followed by a bid to the Big Lottery which supported a natural play project for three years.

Four priority sites were identified (Micheldever Wood, West Wood, West Walk and Creech Wood) all of which are Forestry Commission owned. Enabling children from disadvantaged communities, disabled children and children living in rural isolation to access these sites was defined as a key priority

What were the results?

A total of four natural play sites were installed on Forestry Commission sites, a total of 39 activity days have since taken place on all four sites. There has been an increase in the amount of contact to the Forestry Commission from the community requesting permission for parties, scavenger hunts and orienteering activities. The sites are not staffed and therefore classed as "open access", however staff are visible during routine inspections.

In the past three years to date 2,100 children have accessed the site during formal activities days which have been staffed by play workers and play champions. It is anticipated that hundreds more children and their families will access the sites informally.

A legacy has been created due to the success of "Okay to Play". The Forestry Commission has been able to build upon this success by creating a further steering group with the hope of a successful bid to the Big Lottery which will support the project for another three years. The Forestry Commission has reported that a shift in their approach in the way they develop play opportunities for children has enabled this project to succeed.

Residents have reported the following – " This is a great resource for the community. The more people that see what is available the more they are likely to venture further into the woods. The "Okay to Play" Project was a significant part of our summer holiday and has opened the eyes of the children we took along to the fun and wonder of nature"

The Big Lottery final evaluation and site visit in August 2011 reported that this was one of the best natural play projects in the South East.

Documents referenced: The 2006-7 Play Strategies of the 9 Districts and Boroughs of Hampshire. Hampshire Children and Young People's Plan 2009, Hampshire Obesity Strategy and recommendations report 2011 . Play England Manifesto for children's Play 2009, Play England Design brief 2008