

## **Hastings and St Leonards Play Strategy 2007-2012 DRAFT Refresh 2010**

Since our Play Strategy was adopted by Hastings Borough Council in 2007 priority for play has increased nationally. Important developments have included....

The growth of Play England, (part of the children's charity NCB) originally due to a Big Lottery Fund (BIG) grant of more than £15million as an integral part of the BIG Children's Play initiative. They are funded by BIG until March 2011 with their main purpose being to ensure that children and young people in England have the space and opportunity to play freely as part of their daily lives, at school and other services, at home, and throughout the public realm.

The success of the Children's Play initiative, together with effective research, policy and campaigning activities from Play England, contributed the decision of the last government to adopt a national Play Strategy. Play England will continue to support the play sector and respond to the changing political and economic context.

The publication of the National Play Strategy in December 2008 set out how the Government would support local delivery partners to make a reality of children's right to play, as stated in article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This was to be achieved through partnership working and national investment, such as the Play Pathfinder grant. East Sussex County Council successfully bid for the previous Government's phase 1 Play Pathfinder funding and allocated £800k to Hastings to build an Adventure Playground within the Ore Valley and a further £320k over two years for playground refurbishments. Sites at Seaside Road, West Hill, Waterside Close and Shornden, Alexandra Park were all significantly improved.

Hastings and St. Leonards has also benefited from a successful bid to the Big Lottery Children's Play initiative securing £ 263,136 .Our 'Make way for play' portfolio ensured we were financially assisted in our delivery on actions within the 3 year action plan. The funding enabled us to deliver a 3 year outreach street play program, running 4 nights every week in after school hours, in areas of high deprivation. It also funded us to deliver 3 years of Play on the Beach annual events and 6 extra Summer Play in the Park events .In addition to this an inclusion project ran along side all of our events to try to improve local families access .Natural Play aided the development of two new natural play spaces for the town. The first is based on Wishing tree field, St Leonards and the second at Bembrook Road, Hastings. Both play spaces have greatly improved the children's play opportunities within these neighbourhoods.

Due to the amount of recent changes and improvements to our local play spaces the Play Development team and the Parks and Opens Spaces team are carrying out a re- audit of fixed play provision. Amicus Horizon. (Was 1066 housing association) have also agreed to audit their play grounds using an audit criteria model designed by Hastings Borough Council. Amicus Horizon Ltd and Hastings Borough Council remain the principle providers of publicly accessible equipped play sites in the town and we have agreed to a shared strategy for future play

provision. The aim of this New Strategy to work together in order to improve and sustain existing play areas and, subject to funding, develop new sites so that the maximum numbers of children can access good value & high quality play within a reasonably short distance of their home (600 metres).

Our challenge for play overall now is to sustain and increase the value and time Play has received over the last 3 years and ensure children and young people within our Borough are supported in claiming their right for time and space to play too. **Changes in Government will not change the fact that play is innate and a biological, physical and social necessity. Play is fundamental to the healthy development and well being of individuals and communities.** ( Principle 1, children’s play principles) . It is still clear from regular community consultation and research that local families want and need better play opportunities and Hastings Borough Council in partnership with the Hastings and St Leonards Play Forum will continue to implement our strategy. The following objectives were adopted by Hastings Borough Council in 2006 and its partners and will continue to be set out in our new 2 year Play Action Plan:

**Objective 1** Children must feel safe and be welcome where they play. Our community must make safe welcoming accessible provision for all our children to play, no matter what their age, mental abilities, personal circumstances or cultural background. All children and young people have a right to play freely and safely in inclusive play spaces.

**Objective 2** Work with children, young people and their parents/carers seeking and valuing their views and opinions.

**Objective 3** Develop and sustain partnerships that will extend the range of play and leisure facilities

**Objective 4** Maintain a flexible and co-ordinated approach to play services to support community expectations with resources available

**Objective 5** Develop play opportunities that meet identified needs and support community development and regeneration

**Objective 6** Work to improve the quality of life of children and families by encouraging play schemes and groups for formal and informal play activities within neighbourhoods, meeting local needs

**Objective 7** Work to improve quality and variety of play for children and families by making local play opportunities enriching, rewarding and fun

**Objective 8** Help children feel safe and secure in their surroundings, and understand the natural and built environment

**Objective 9** Raise the profile of children’s play