

Hastings Borough Council Play Strategy

**'Make Way For Play'
2007 –2012**

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Executive Summary 'Make Way For Play' 2007 – 2012

What is play and its importance?

There are many different definitions of play but most agree that play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the participant. Play is one essential way children and young people come to understand themselves and the world around them. Play is a vital component of a child's life. A child's capacity for positive development will be inhibited or constrained if denied access to a range of stimulating play opportunities. There is wide recognition that play is of fundamental importance for children and young people's health, development and wellbeing, emotional and spiritual growth and their relationships. It is through play that children develop physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.

At Government level there is now a clear acknowledgement of the need to improve the provision that is made for children to play from planning, open spaces and transport to health, education and childcare. Local authorities in England have a statutory duty, under the Children Act (2004), to co-operate in their provision for the enjoyment of play and recreation as part of the five key outcomes for all children.

Strategic context

Recent years have seen a growing interest in children and young people's play and informal recreation and the need to improve this is included in many national, regional and local policies. In developing this strategy a number of national, regional and local strategies and best practice guidance were considered. The play strategy influences and is influenced by, the following:

National

- Children's Act 2004 and Every Child Matters Agenda
- Time for Play (DCMS 2006)
- Youth Matters (Df ES 2005)
- Joint Area Review
- 'Cleaner, greener, safer' Agenda
- National Planning Guidance
- Involving children in design and care for their space (CABE Space 2004)
- Extended Schools

County

- East Sussex Children and Young Peoples Plan (CYPP 2006- 2008)
- Local Area Agreement for East Sussex

Local

- Hastings and St Leonards Community Strategy 2003-2013
- Local Development Framework
- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy

- 1066 Housing Association Draft Play Strategy

Why we need a Play Strategy

Given the importance of play and the consequences of play deprivation it can be seen that there are a number of factors supporting the need for a Borough wide play strategy including:

- A recognition that play deprivation is a serious disadvantage for children and that fully inclusive and accessible play provision can have an important role in enhancing the lives of children
- Having a planned and strategic approach to play provision is likely to allow for enhanced funding opportunities, such as those arising from the BIG Lottery Fund's Children's Play Programme
- Recognition that children's play as a theme cuts across a range of policy areas, from planning, open spaces, health, education and childcare.
- A greater understanding of the importance of play and ensure children's needs are taken into account within the wider community

What did we do?

In order to find out more about play opportunities within the Borough we carried out a number of tasks

- An Audit of play provision- What provision exists and where is it located
- Considered recommendations made by Park and Open Spaces Strategy with regard to children's play space.
- Community consultation- what did local children, young people and their families think of play provision within the Borough, what improvements would they like to see?
- Analysed consultation findings in partnership with Hastings and St Leonard's Play Forum.

What did we find?

Audit Findings:

- There are over 21,000 children and young people aged 18 years and under living within the Borough.
- There are 57 equipped play areas across the borough of which the council owns 17.
- There is 1 skate park and 2 community sited ramps
- There are 5 multiuse games areas
- There are 2 out of school clubs, 3 after school clubs, 8 before school clubs, 2 holiday play providers.
- There are approximately 25 parent and toddler groups and drop ins.

Consultation findings:

- More places to play safely in neighbourhoods
- Less conventional play spaces/ equipment
- More challenging equipment and designated space for older children
- More chances to play with the natural elements and within the natural environment
- More places and events that children of all ages and abilities can enjoy together
- More free play events and sessions during school holidays and spare time
- Improvement of current play events by considering accessibility and provision of numbers attending
- More training and support for people pursuing a career in Playwork

What are we going to do?

Based on the audit and consultation findings we have developed an agreed set of objectives and a detailed action plan that will significantly improve play provision within the Borough.

In order to ensure that the play strategy remains relevant and that the objectives are implemented a monitoring review process has been identified.

HBC Play Strategy 'Make Way for Play' 2007 - 2012

Introduction

1.0 The importance of play

Play is essential to children and young people's health, happiness and development. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child gives all children the right to 'rest and leisure; to engage in age-appropriate play and recreational activities' (Article 31). At Government level there is now a clear acknowledgement of the need to improve the provision that is made for children to play from planning, open spaces and transport to health, education and childcare. Local authorities in England have a statutory duty, under the Children Act (2004), to co-operate in their provision for the enjoyment of play and recreation as part of the five key outcomes for all children.

In 2004, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) published the report of a national review of children's play in England. The report 'Getting Serious About Play' made recommendations on the use of National Lottery funding for improving children's play provision. It also led to the creation of the national Children's Play Programme with a £155 million funding stream for improving provision at local level.

Hastings Borough Council has a long commitment to and proud tradition of supporting children's play. This Strategy provides an opportunity to build on that foundation in order to create a long lasting legacy of improvements for children's play opportunities within the town. The aim of this strategy is to ensure that a consideration of children's need to play, becomes part of the strategic policy framework for all decisions that affect the planning, and design of community services and public space in Hastings into the future.

1.2 Why Play Matters

There is wide recognition that play is of fundamental importance for children and young people's health, development and wellbeing and their relationships, contributing to their social, physical, intellectual, cultural, emotional and psychological development and learning.

Children will play anywhere, even in dangerous places, to satisfy their hunger for new experience and greater understanding. Play is often seen as a physical activity, however it is much more than the development of motor skills. It allows children a greater emotional understanding and intellectual awareness of the world around them.

1.2.1 Play and physical health

The physical activity involved in energetic play provides children and young people with a significant amount of their regular exercise. School-aged children and young people get as much exercise in free play as they do from more structured activities.

The Chief Medical Officer for England has advised that 'children and young people should achieve a total of at least 60 minutes of at least moderate-intensity physical activity each day'. There is growing research evidence that increased opportunity for free play is the most effective way to achieve this target, and that a range of increasing health problems, including both child mental health issues and obesity, are associated with the decline in play opportunities.

1.2.2 Play and mental health

Good play opportunities promote good social, mental and emotional health, giving children and young people the chance to try out and experience a range of emotions in a 'safe' way. It allows them to learn and develop emotionally by promoting resilience and fostering self-esteem.

There is now evidence of a rapidly growing increase in mental health problems experienced by children and young people. The Mental Health Foundation's report Bright Futures estimates that at any time 20 per cent of children and young people experience psychological problems linked to lack of self-confidence and resilience and this may also be linked to the decline in play opportunities. Their report also recognises the importance of supervised opportunities for play and the role of these services in supporting children's mental health.

1.2.3 Play and the environment

There is evidence which shows that contact with the outdoors, and especially with the natural environment, is important for children particularly in the middle years of childhood. It contributes to giving children a sense of identity, of being in the natural world and experiencing the restorative effect of special, often secret places.

1.3 Barriers to Play

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of play children's play, opportunities to play are subject to more and more restrictions and factors outside of their control. These include roads and traffic hazards, fear for personal safety, lack of tolerance towards children and young people, an increase in short term and cost cutting measures concerning play spaces, life style changes including the increase in computers and sofa entertainment and new patterns in family life and work. In some areas children may live within a less restricted play environment, and are allowed to 'play out', but even these experience an increasingly dangerous play environment as they are not always able to access a well planned, safe and stimulating play space. These children are also often affected by a lack of access to stimulating play space, cars, intolerant neighbours and conflicts over the use of public and private open spaces.

1.4 Risk and Play

People learn by taking risks. This applies equally to children and young people. Play provision stimulates a child's need to learn through taking risk. When we fail to provide stimulating and challenging play environments and eliminate risk from play, children and young people will seek these elsewhere, possibly in ways that are dangerous or socially unacceptable to adults. Whilst acknowledging that children need freedom to take risk, all play facilities need to meet legislative

requirements. Adults are responsible for ensuring that there are no ‘unacceptable risks’.

1.5 Play Deprivation

“Play is a child’s first claim on the community. No community can infringe that right without doing deep and enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens” Lloyd George, 1926

There is a growing body of research that has begun to identify the disturbing consequences of children being denied access to stimulating play experiences. The research suggests that children who are not allowed or able to play freely experience distinct physiological consequences including

- poorer neurological development,
- child and adolescent mental health problems such as depression,
- an increase in tendencies to become more violent, aggressive and antisocial,
- obesity and lack of fitness.

1.6 Types of Play

We all recognise play when we see it. However when we define it we know that play takes many forms. In fact fifteen play types have been defined and associated criteria or performance indicators, for enriched play environments have been outlined.

The National Planning for Play Guidance sets out a suggested typology for categorising play spaces. These are also used within the Borough Council’s Open Space Strategy. They are being piloted for possible inclusion within the revised Comprehensive Performance Assessment process for local authorities. This typology is reproduced below:

Type A: Door-step spaces and facilities

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

Type B: Neighbourhood spaces and facilities

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

Type C: 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 (eight+ items)
Teenage wheeled sports area
Ball courts, multi-use games areas
Hangout/youth shelters
Community parks
Local parks
Playing fields and recreation grounds freely available for children to use.
Beaches, woodlands and natural areas

More information about the proposed performance indicators for play can be found at www.playengland.org.uk

The wide nature and different types of play makes planning for provision a complex task. Children need spaces where they can choose and direct their own activity with no adult interference at all. However, appropriate, sensitive, intervention by enthusiastic, knowledgeable and caring adults can enable children to meet their developmental needs. The diversity of provision under the broad heading of play does not lend itself to clear, coherent policies, as provision is made for different reasons. There is a misconception that play is solely about equipped play areas because this is the most widely available and visible type of provision.

1.7 Why we need a Play Strategy

Given the importance of play and the consequences of play deprivation it can be seen that there are a number of factors supporting the need for a Borough wide play strategy including:

- A recognition that play deprivation is a serious disadvantage for children and that fully inclusive and accessible play provision can have an important role in enhancing the lives of children
- Having a planned and strategic approach to play provision is likely to allow for enhanced funding opportunities, such as those arising from the BIG Lottery Fund's Children's Play Programme
- Recognition that children's play as a theme cuts across a range of policy areas, from planning, open spaces, health, education and childcare.
- A greater understanding of the importance of play and ensure children's needs are taken into account within the wider community

1.8 Aims of this strategy

The aim of this strategy is to establish a framework for the local authority and its partners to plan, improve, develop and sustain play opportunities within the Borough. It aims to make best use of allocated Lottery funding from the Children's Play programme but also to take advantage of other funding opportunities wherever possible to improve and increase play provision and environments for play throughout the Borough.

2.0 Strategic Context

Recent years have seen a growing interest in children and young people's play and informal recreation and the need to improve this is included in many national, regional and local policies. In developing this strategy a number of national, regional and local strategies and best practice guidance were considered. The play strategy influences and is influenced by, the following strategies:

2.1 National

2.1.1 Every Child Matters

In 2004 the Government published 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' setting out national and local priorities for children's services. It sets out an outcomes framework for every child and young person. This play strategy can make a major contribution to the Government's Every Child Matters agenda. The benefits of children's play are closely linked to the five outcomes for children and young people that form the core of Every Child Matters, namely: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being. Play is a fundamental part of a healthy and happy childhood and its enjoyment is recognised by Government as equally important to other outcomes for children

The Children Act 2004 provides the legislative foundation to support the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme. It established a duty on local authorities to make arrangements to promote co-operation between agencies and other appropriate bodies in order to improve children's well being and a duty on key partners to take part in the co-operation arrangements.

2.1.2 Time for Play (DCMS 2006)

This presented the findings of a cross-departmental government group to look at the role play contributes to many government policies. The document demonstrates how play contributes to many government priorities including the reduction in childhood obesity, the Every Child Matters agenda, the creation of better public spaces and diversion away from crime. It advises that national government will do all it can to support play, and that local authorities must maximise the opportunity to begin the process of developing an improving accessible play provision for all ages.

2.1.3 Youth Matters (DfES 2005)

The proposal set out in 'Youth Matters' include a new duty on local authorities, working through Children's Trusts to secure positive activities for young people. New national standards are planned which aim to encompass exciting, and enriching activities in which young people might wish to engage in their free time.

2.1.4 Joint Area Review

Guidance from the Department for Education and Skills identifies that local authority play strategies should link to the Children and Young People's Plan, helping to meet the requirements of Joint Area review of the Ofsted Children's Services Inspection Framework. This includes the following key judgements in relation to children's enjoyment and recreation:

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

2.1.5 'Cleaner, Safer, Greener'

The Governments' cleaner, safer, greener agenda on improving the quality of public space emphasises the stake that children and young people have as users of public space. It is well recognised that high quality green spaces go along way to encouraging people to pursue healthier lifestyles through exercise and children's play.

2.1.6 National Planning Guidance

Planning Policy Statement 17 explicitly recognises the need for dedicated outdoor space for play and recreation. It requires local authorities to assess the needs and opportunities for different types of open space and recreational facilities, including play space for children. The council has undertaken such an audit in partnership with CABI Space and this has informed both the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and this document.

2.1.7 Involving Children and in Design and care for their space (CABI Space 2004)

This good practice guide provides guidance on involving children and young people in the design and management of children's playing space. It recognises the role that play workers can have in encouraging children to take part in designing a space and the importance of involving and designing for children with disabilities.

2.1.8 Extended Schools

Extended schools offer a range of services and activities beyond the 'normal' school day to help meet the needs of pupils, families and the wider community. Free play provision can be part of this agenda.

2.2 County

2.2.1 East Sussex Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2006-2008

This strategy sets out key priorities and actions for all the organisations in the county that have a role to play in supporting and improving the lives of children and young people in East Sussex from birth to age 19. It describes the different ways in which these organisations will work together to create 'children trust' arrangements in the county. Hastings BC is a member of this Trust. The aim of the CYPP is that East Sussex should be a place where all children and young people:

- Are celebrated, cherished and well cared for by their families and their community
- Are protected against risks they cannot manage, but helped to take responsibility for their lives and to contribute to their communities
- Have every opportunity to learn and develop, with high quality information and advice to guide them
- Have healthy lifestyles and high quality health care

- Benefit from, and contribute to, the economic prosperity of the county
- Participate fully in decisions which affect them and their communities

Priorities that are directly relevant to this strategy include

- Keep working hard to keep streets clean and develop more play spaces where we can

This plan is delivered locally in part through the Children Services Planning groups for Hastings (5—11 group and 11-16 group).

2.2.2 Local Area Agreement for East Sussex

East Sussex's Local Area Agreement is a 3-year agreement between local central government to identify and deliver local priorities that will lead to a better quality of life for people in East Sussex. The Play strategy compliments a priority theme of the LAA – the Children and Young People Block, which contains the following outcomes:

- Outcome 1 Stay Safe: protected from harm and neglect
- Outcome 2 Be Healthy – enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle
- Outcome 3 Enjoy and achieve: Getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood
- Outcome 4 Making a positive contribution: being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti social behaviour
- Outcome 5 Economic Well-Being: Reduce economic disadvantage and achieving full potential in life; and raising the aspirations of young people

Within the LAA additional targets have been developed for Hastings to address deprivation issues within the town – this 'Mini-LAA' is Outcome 23 and includes the following priorities:

- 23.3 Enabling young people to make a positive contribution in school and in the community
- 23.4 Increase young people's involvement in decision making at a faster rate in the most deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs)
- 23.6 Providing children and young people and their parents access to activities and support to address anti-social behaviour and exclusion issues

2.3 Local

2.3.1 Hastings And St Leonards Community Strategy 2003 – 2013

The Hastings and St Leonard's Local strategic partnership seeks to unite the towns public, private and voluntary sector and business sectors. It has adopted a ten-year community strategy (2003-2013), which sets out a clear vision for improving the town. The community strategy vision is:

'The renaissance of Hastings through social, economic, cultural and environmental regeneration'

With the supporting mission:

'To build on the town's strong community spirit, culture, diverse population and extraordinary natural environment to create a safer, healthier more sustainable and more prosperous place with lasting opportunities for everybody.'

This is supported by the thematic partnerships to consider:

A safer town, an economically successful town, a learning town, an inclusive town, a healthier town, a town with a decent home for every one and a town that's good to live in.

The Play Strategy can make a major contribution to the aims of this strategy including regeneration and improving residents' quality of life.

2.3.2 Local Development Framework

A more participative planning system based around spatial planning and understanding current and future community needs is being embedded through the Local Development Framework. This LDF will consider the use and development of land, the movement of people and access to opportunities. The LDF will support the new approach to play provision as set out in the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy below.

2.3.3 Parks and Open Spaces Strategy

The Parks and Open Spaces strategy sets a framework to deliver and manage a network of good quality/value and safe greenspaces, sport and recreation facilities, which are accessible to all.

Within this a new approach to play provision has been adopted following extensive consultation and in recognition of the fact that children need more than just equipped play areas. In fact, very little play takes place in formal play areas and most in green and other spaces in and around housing. In order to maximise play value, it is desirable that these spaces should provide stimulating opportunities for play and the strategy states that play provision should be based on:

- Designing local green spaces in such a way to maximise their play value for children of different ages with opportunities to hide, climb, run, see nature, handle sticks and stones and get dirty and wet
- Having a relatively small numbers of large equipped play spaces at key locations around the borough
- Requiring developers to design housing environments to give children safe spaces to play and have priority over vehicles.

2.3.4 Draft 1066 Housing Association Play Strategy

1066 Housing Association is also planning to adopt a new approach to children's play provision based on:

- Designing local green spaces in such a way as to maximise their play value for children of different ages with opportunities to hide, climb, run around, see nature at work, handle sticks and stones and get dirty or wet.
- Contributing to the Council's ambitions to have a relatively small number of large equipped play spaces, such as the recently built play area in Alexandra Park at key locations around the borough that are accessible to all.

The strategy also sets out minimum standards of new equipped play areas, which envisages a minimum of 5 pieces of equipment, and adopts the importance of community involvement. This Strategy complements the Parks and Open Spaces strategy and the aims and objectives of the Council's play strategy.

3.0 Position Statement

3.1 Profile of Hastings

Hastings and St Leonard's is a predominately urban coastal town. Historically the town was a popular destination for seaside holidays, but with the decline of traditional tourism market it looked to develop in other ways. The town faces a large number of social and economic problems and whilst having enormous potential to change, it is the 39th most deprived area nationally (rank of wards, index of multiple deprivation 2004). Five of our wards fall within the most deprived 10 percent of all communities in England. Areas of particular need include Baird, Tressell, Gensing, Hollington, Castle and central St Leonard's. (2001 census). The impact of this has resulted in nearly 8000 children (46%) living in low income households – 13 out of 16 wards in the borough.

3.2 Population and Demographics

The population of Hastings is 85,000 (Census 2001). Over 25% of the population is under the age of 19. Hollington has the highest percentage of children where 27% of the population are under 15, followed by Tressell where 25% are under 25. Appendix 1 shows the age structure of the borough.

There are over 37,000 households in the Borough of which 8000 children (46%) are living in households dependant on means tested benefits.

4.0 Audit of Existing Play Provision

In order to make an assessment of play provision within Hastings an audit of existing provision has been undertaken. Over the past three years Hastings Borough Council in partnership with many other statutory and voluntary organisations has gathered information about the play needs of children, young people and their families and has looked at how these are currently being met. This consultation and auditing process has been ongoing and locally far-reaching and is an essential element in the devolvement of this strategy. The audit findings are as follows:

4.10 Unsupervised Play

The development of the Council's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy included an audit of green space provision for children and young people including facilities such as equipped play areas, skateboard areas and teenage shelters and classified parks and open spaces according to their quality value. This provision has the primary purpose of providing opportunities for play and social interaction involving children and young people.

4.1.1 Equipped Play Areas

There are 57 equipped play areas across the borough of which 17 are owned by the council and 40 by 1066 Housing Association and other organisations. Five of the Council's equipped play areas are classified as Local Equipped areas for Play (LEAPs) and 13 are deemed high quality, high value sites according to the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy audit. See Appendix 1 for further details of high/low quality value play areas.

4.1.2 Teenage facilities

Currently there is 1 skate park at White Rock Gardens and 2 other skate ramps and 5 multi-use games areas on publicly accessible green spaces within Hastings. There are three teenage villages (Robsack, Broomgrove and Wishingtree).

4.1.3 Youth Services

Youth services have key workers and detached staff working in some areas of the town and also have an information shop in the town centre and run youth club sessions and holiday activities in a few of the local community centres.

4.1.4 Supervised Play

Supervised play refers to a setting where informal, structured or free play may happen under the supervision of members of staff or play workers. These settings include breakfast clubs, after school clubs, out of school clubs, activity clubs and parent and toddler groups.

Using figures from the East Sussex County Council Annual Audit, information from KITES Children information service and Hastings Play Forum it has been possible to identify the amount of supervised play provision within the borough.

Hastings has 16 day nurseries, 6 play groups, child minders and other supervised activities e.g. drop-ins which may provide an element of play, however these

settings are used as a basis for more formal childcare or as educational facilities and have as such been excluded.

4.1.5 After School Clubs

There are currently 3 venues providing after school care across the borough. This provision is located in day nurseries and primary schools providing 110 places. Aimed at the 4-12 year old age group, each setting is registered to take a varying number of children per session depending on their individual circumstances.

4.1.6 Out of School Clubs

Providing open access sessions for children 5-11 years. There are 2 'out of school' clubs in the borough, which operate out of 3 venues, offering 100 places.

4.1.7 Pre-school Parent and Toddler Groups and drop-ins

There are between 25 and 30 groups per week at which parents/carers can accompany children to experience and enjoy play and socialisation opportunities.

4.1.8 Breakfast Clubs

There are approximately 8 schools offering breakfast club spaces across the borough. Breakfast clubs are offered at individual schools or day nurseries and are seen as a way to encourage and promote the benefits of eating a proper breakfast before starting the school day. The breakfast club environment also offers the children the opportunity to participate in some relaxed informal activity with friends.

4.1.9 Holiday Play Scheme Provision

Holiday play provision is very limited in the borough with only 2 providers. The council co-ordinates a summer play programme offering free play events in Alexandra Park and neighbourhood locations during August. These are run in partnership with Hastings Play Forum and other partners and attract over 3000 local families and children a week.

4.1.10 Provision for Children with Disabilities

There is currently only one after school club and one holiday play scheme that provides provision for children with disabilities. However, all out-of-school clubs and holiday clubs are encouraged to be inclusive through providing accessible childcare and play meeting the needs of all children. Play groups, nurseries and out of school clubs can offer one to one support for children with disabilities and severe education needs, and the County Council has a specialist officer who supports and advises play providers through the ESCC bursary scheme and Special Needs Early Years pre-school service.

4.1.11 Voluntary Groups

It is recognised that voluntary, faith and uniformed groups within Hastings provide a vast range of out of school opportunities for children and young people across the borough. The services provided are seen as an invaluable contribution to the needs of children and young people and complement the range of other services provided.

4.1.12 Children's Centres

Linked with the Every Child Matters agenda there are 3 children's centres in Hastings. As part of their role they deliver play activities for 0-5 year olds linked with both children's early learning and health.

4.1.13 Playworkers – Training and Support

The Borough Council, groups and organisations utilise trained, paid and voluntary playworkers whose role it is to supervise and enrich children's play, whilst managing the risks involved and acting in some cases as confidants and advocates for children's rights, needs and wishes. A skilled and trained workforce will play a key role in supporting the quality of play provision provided in the borough.

4.2 The Gaps Identified

As part of this audit it has become apparent that there are a number of gaps with regard to play provision in Hastings, which may be partly met by the provisions of this strategy, these include,

4.2.1 Neighbourhood Play

It was shown that there was a need for more informal play opportunities, which allowed children and young people to access them for a long or short time, with or without their parents. This was especially true of children 7 years and over who wanted spaces and activities they could socialise in with limited adult contact but in which they felt safe, this provision could be met through neighbourhood street play and neighbourhood play spaces.

4.2.2 Holiday Play

Limited holiday play provision is a concern for parents who work, particularly those on low incomes, as it can be difficult to find affordable childcare in the school holidays.

4.2.3 Natural Play

Many children and young people have limited access to safe and accessible opportunities in spaces such as woodland and wild settings for natural play e.g. den making, mud pies, hide and seek and rope swings.

4.2.4 Adventure Playgrounds

Adventure playgrounds tend to be staffed spaces that aim to provide a wide range of play opportunities aimed at children over 5 years, with playworker supervision. Such provision is open access and often has large outdoor play structures alongside an indoor space.

4.2.5 One O'clock Clubs

These apply similar principles to Adventure Play grounds and tend to be held in local parks and gardens. They encourage parents/carers and young children to visit a supervised play session whilst at the same time access local open spaces.

4.2.6 Mobile and Outreach Play Service

These include play buses, mobile playschemes(e.g. resource van loaded with play, arts and crafts materials and equipment), mobile cafes and play rangers. These can either enable play to be undertaken in the vehicle itself or take resources to venues and places such as community halls or outdoor play spaces on and other neighbourhood locations e.g. local streets. Sessions are staffed by playworkers.

5.0 Consultation

The preparation of the play strategy has been informed by extensive consultation as follows:

5.1 Community consultation

Hastings Borough Council play development have taken every opportunity possible to consult with as many children, young people and their families about what play opportunities they enjoy and value, what play opportunities they would like or need and where and how they feel play could be improved locally. We have created opportunities for different groups to share and exchange ideas and comments and provided an enjoyable approach to consultation. Different types of consultation have been carried out at large centrally located play events and at street play sessions in 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006. Thousands of responses, which included lots of valuable opinions, information, suggestions and drawings were analysed. The results gave clear evidence of the importance of play to children, young people and their families.

Top priorities from consultation:

- More places to play safely in neighbourhoods
- Less conventional play spaces/ equipment
- More challenging equipment and designated space for older children
- More chances to play with the natural elements and within the natural environment
- More places and events that children of all ages and abilities can enjoy together
- More free play events and sessions during school holidays and spare time
- Improvement of current play events by considering accessibility and provision of numbers attending
- More training and support for people pursuing a career in Play work

Here are some examples of quotes from children, young people and families about what they think about play and what they would like to see in the future:

When we asked parents what would you and your children be doing if not at our play events, feedback included:

- Spending lots of money we don't have
- Being bored
- Tearing my hair out

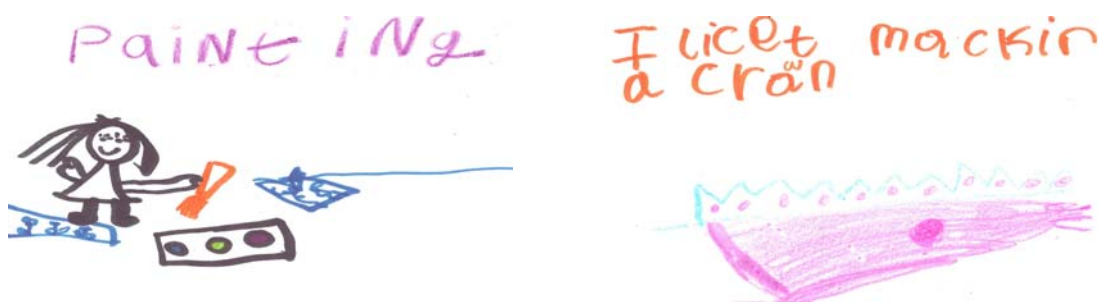
When we asked families what they enjoyed least about the event:

Most families said they enjoyed it all but some of the feedback included:

- Felt there was too much queuing/waiting in line
- Didn't like going home
- Too short

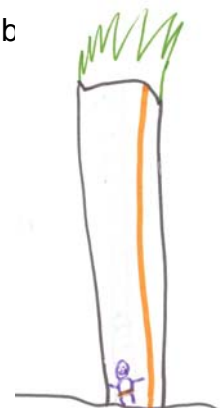
When children were asked at some of our street play events to draw or write what they thought about our events feedback included:

- I think they are really good as you can do cool stuff with out paying
- The things I like best were the 'make and do'
- 'Playing out ' is much more fun now you bring the play van here



When we asked children and parents what they thought about the places where they play and how could play opportunities be improved in their neighbourhoods feedback included:

- We play in near our house but not in the playground, as it is boring. We like to play down by the stream in the woods.
- We would like a zip line, and water play to make our play ground b
- We would like Places that are safe and fun to hang out
- Consider improving maintenance at all designated play spaces
- More equipment for older children in neighbourhoods
- More inclusive play spaces
- More things to do at weekends



5.2 Youthink

Extensive consultation for the Hastings and St Leonards Youth Strategy, 'Youthink' in 2004 summarised that the gap in provision most consistently highlighted by children, young people and professionals was:

- Lack of accessible and affordable play recreation and social facilities for children and young people

Children and young people also identified a desire for less conventional play grounds and places to chill out, and a number of respondents felt that adults were worsening children's opportunities for free play and leisure and were unsympathetic to the underlying problem of there not being enough to do e.g.

"The wardens keep taking down our rope swings, they say they are a danger to health and safety"

Consultation produced demands from participants for children and young people to be treated the same as every one else.

5.3 Consultation in Partnership with the Play Forum

As part of the consultations linked with preparation of the play strategy and the big lottery play programme, the play forum offered their recommendations based on their collective knowledge of overall need within the borough and analysis of consultation gathered.

Key themes were as follows

- Increase access to quality freely chosen play opportunities by developing play spaces using existing landscapes and natural features
- Extend on the established ,free large and , small scale play events that encompass traditional and new play opportunities.
- Create a structure for supporting all of the boroughs families to access the events.

5.4 Parks and Open Spaces Strategy Consultation

The development of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy for Hastings and St Leonards involved wide community consultation and specific recommendations included:

- Design local green spaces in such a way to maximise their play value for children of different ages with opportunities to hide, climb, run, see nature, handle sticks and stones and get dirty and wet
- Have a relatively small numbers of large equipped play spaces at key locations around the borough

- Requiring developers to design housing environments to give children safe spaces to play and have priority over vehicles.

5.5 Citizens Panel

The Council has had a Citizen Panel of local residents since 1999 and a Young Peoples Panel since 2005. The panels provide the council with views on a range of subjects by completing postal questionnaires and by taking part in small discussion groups. The results from Citizen's Panel research are used to inform decisions and service priorities from a range of Council departments. The panels have been used to find out about the support for children's play

December 2004

We asked people about what activities the council should continue to support including providing play activities for children such as Play Days in the summer – in parks, on the beach and in neighbourhoods – 83% agreed this was an important issue.

Young People Survey March 2005

We asked the panel what they thought of the things that there are available for young people to do in their area and 33% considered them to be good.

We asked them what they thought needed most improving in their local area and over 51% wanted improvements for activities for teenagers and 19% for facilities for young children.

Neighbourhood Renewal Survey August 2005

We asked the panel how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with their neighbourhood as a place for children up to 12 years and for young people aged 13-21 years, the results were as follows:

Children up to 12 years – 44% satisfied, 25% dissatisfied (30% didn't know)

Young people 13-21 years – 33% satisfied, 33% dissatisfied (32% didn't know)

Citizen Panel Decembers 2006

We asked the panel for their views about the Council's plan and budgets for 2007-2010, specifically about play services when we asked about holding play events and maintaining play facilities for children and young people, 56% of respondents stated this should be a core activity of the council.

6.0 The Strategy ‘Make Way for Play’

The aim of this strategy is to establish a framework for the local authority and its partners in the community to plan, improve and sustain play opportunities for children and young people for the future. It aims to make best use of allocated Lottery funding from the Children’s Play programme, and also to take advantage of other funding opportunities wherever possible to improve and increase play provision and environments for play across the local authority area.

The following objectives were adopted by Hastings Borough Council in 2006 and its partners and are set out in our first 3 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

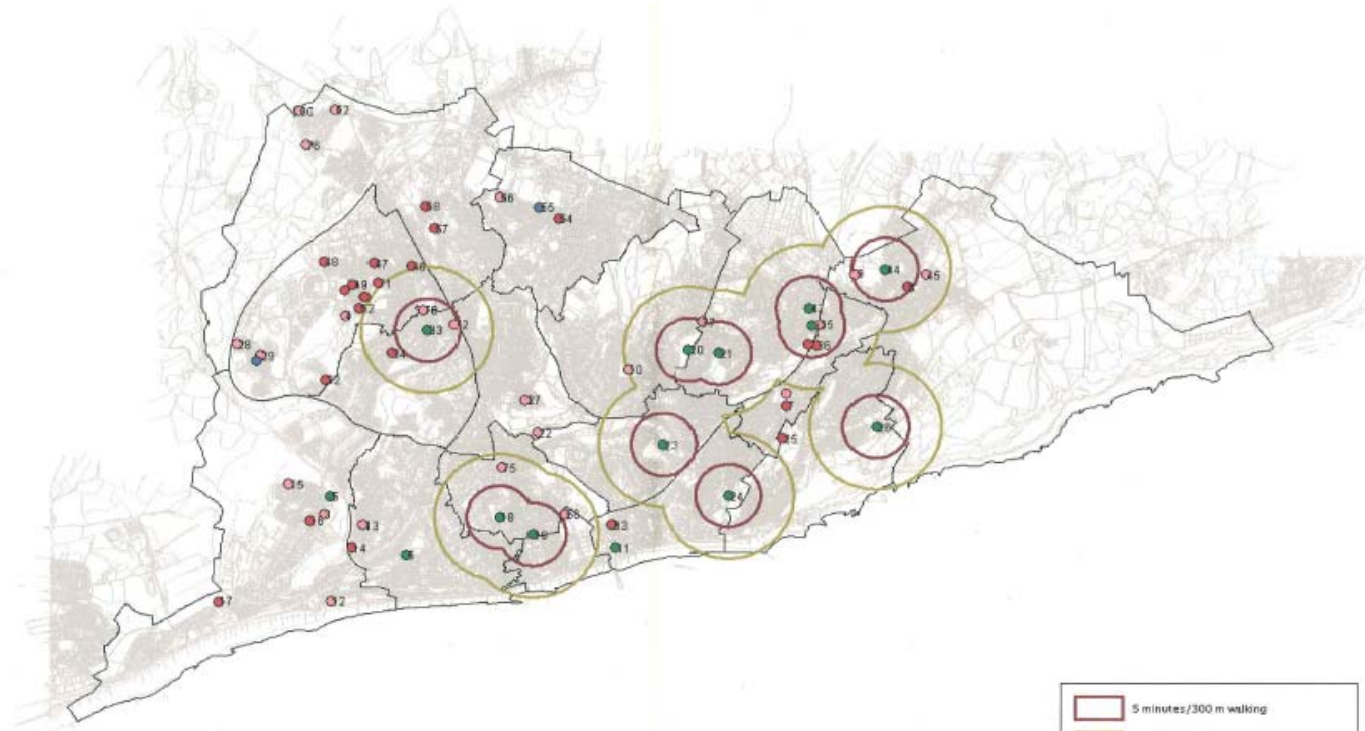
7.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

We will review progress of this strategy annually with our partners through monitoring delivery of the action plan and will revise the strategy as required to take account of any new government policies and guidance.

Appendix 1 Population Estimates in 2006 – wards

Age group	All people	0-14	15-29	30-44	45-64	65-74	75-84	85+
Hastings	85,422	15,908	14,854	17,487	22,218	7,348	5,211	2,396
Ashdown	5,196	1,030	755	1,165	1,453	444	236	113
Baird	4,933	1,019	758	895	1,306	534	306	115
Braybrooke	5,124	867	963	1,067	1,351	420	316	140
Castle	6,454	1,083	1,390	1,491	1,521	436	343	190
Cent St Leonards	6,119	781	1,137	1,167	1,605	589	569	271
Conquest	5,070	812	836	1,087	1,369	511	326	129
Gensing	5,878	1,084	1,127	1,255	1,491	423	320	178
Hollington	6,455	1,742	1,269	1,405	1,442	380	179	38
Maze Hill	4,960	742	756	933	1,279	503	438	309
Old Hastings	5,897	1,062	892	1,240	1,693	488	339	183
Ore	4,986	1,038	881	972	1,322	401	289	83
St Helens	4,912	652	682	771	1,559	684	389	175
Silverhill	4,387	884	694	902	1,084	375	288	160
Tressell	5,131	1,267	1,005	1,153	1,168	317	167	54
West St Leonards	4,944	923	908	1,051	1,280	409	278	95
Wishing Tree	4,976	922	801	933	1,295	434	428	163

Appendix 1



Hastings PPG17 Assessment and Open Spaces Plan

Accessibility, Quality and Value: Map 3B: Equipped Play Areas

Notes
Distance thresholds relate only to high quality, high value sites with unrestricted access
Numbers refer to equipped play audit sheets
Sites shown enlarged for clarity

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