



DORSET PLAY STRATEGY

2012 - 2016

Foreword

We are delighted to introduce and endorse the Dorset Play Strategy which sets out our ambitions for improving play provision and services in Dorset.

Play is vitally important in improving children and young people's wellbeing across all the Every Child Matters outcomes. It is fundamental to a good childhood and one of children's basic human rights. Children need to be free to run around, use their imagination, have adventures, make new friends and simply have fun. Play is also good for our local communities. Safe, welcoming environments and shared use of space within a culture of trust and respect are good indicators of strong, healthy, vibrant communities.

The Dorset Play Partnership recognise the shared responsibility and duty we all have in creating child-friendly communities and public spaces that value and enable children's play. This strategy builds on the achievements of the first Joint Play Strategy in 2004 and re-drafted in 2007. The aim is that play will become more firmly embedded in joint planning and commissioning processes to become an integral part of the Children and Young People's Plan and the Dorset Community Strategy.

We welcome this strategy and action plan in raising the profile of play and supporting Dorset Councils in working with their partners and local communities to improve the local play offer by ensuring play is included in key strategies for children, communities and spatial planning.



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CONTENTS

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Vision for Play in Dorset
- 1.2 Purpose and scope
- 1.3 Defining Play
- 1.4 Why Play is important?

2 National Context

3 Barriers to Play

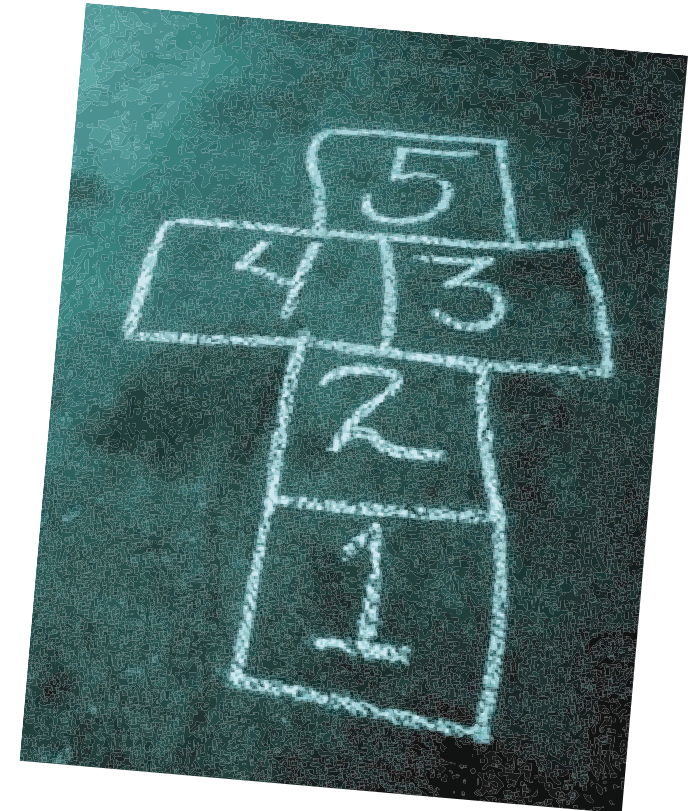
4 Local Context

- 4.1 Dorset Play Partnership
- 4.2 Local Provision Examined
- 4.3 Achievements in developing play opportunities in Dorset
- 4.4 Local Indicators

5 Next steps

- 5.1 Identify how play contributes to a range of shared goals that improve outcomes for children and young people and for communities.
- 5.2 Identify particular groups and neighbourhoods that need targeted investment for play provision and services
- 5.3 Develop play needs assessment through engagement with the community
- 5.4 Audit play provision.
- 5.5 Plan the pattern of services and spaces for play to be commissioned

6 And finally...



Introduction

1.1 Vision for Play in Dorset

Dorset Play Partnership has identified our shared vision for play for all children and young people aged 0-19.

'We want Dorset to be a place where all children and young people are able to play freely and safely, and make informed choices about how, where and when to play'



We aim to achieve this by working in partnership to:

- ✓ Raise the profile and importance of play in improving outcomes for children and young people.
- ✓ Improve the local play offer by embedding opportunities for play in strategies for children, communities and spatial planning.
- ✓ Improve access to high quality, free play opportunities that offer fun, variety, adventure, culture and challenge.
- ✓ Create play opportunities which balance appropriate challenge and risk taking with staying safe.
- ✓ Develop supervised and non-supervised play provision that meets the needs of all children and young people including children who are disabled.
- ✓ Support the development of the children's play workforce.
- ✓ Ensure children, young people and communities are able to participate in the planning and delivery of play services and provision.
- ✓ Develop child-friendly communities.

Our Vision is founded on the child's right to play and leisure as stated in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child. The Convention was ratified by the UK in 1991 and states that:

"Parties recognise the right of the child 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 arts"

Parties 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 activities

'The right to play is the child's first claim on the community. Play is nature's training for life. No community can infringe on that right without doing enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens'.

David Lloyd George

The Dorset Play Partnership has also adopted Play England's Charter for Children's Play. The charter sets out a vision for play and aims to be a catalyst for individuals and organisations to examine, review and improve provision for children and young people's play and informal recreation.

1.2 Purpose and scope

The purpose of this up-dated Play Strategy is to build on progress achieved through the 2007 strategy. This strategy aims to firmly embed play as a cross cutting policy issue and ensure local communities are active partners in identifying and meeting local play needs. Play contributes to a range of initiatives and strategies to improve outcomes for children, young people and communities, therefore it is vital that we embed it in our strategic planning and commissioning within authorities and ensure it is integral to the Children and Young People's Plan.

More than ever a joined up approach is needed. Engagement and responsibility of all partners is crucial to ensure opportunities for play are included in strategies as diverse as planning, community safety, transport, public health, community development, youth services, children's centres, leisure and cultural services and social care.

Working in partnership with local communities and the third sector in Dorset to meet local needs is essential. Creating communities where children are able to play freely isn't just good news for children; it can help us deliver on a range of priorities in many different areas including health, culture, community cohesion, regeneration and the reduction of crime and accidents.

Therefore, a key role of this strategy is to ensure that play provision and services are in place to meet the needs of children, families and communities in Dorset. Strong strategic direction, democratically led, will ensure that resources are fairly distributed, both across the county and between individuals and groups at a local level. The Dorset Play Partnership aims to provide practical support, information and equitable access to local resources for local organisations.



1.3 Defining Play

The Dorset Play Partnership subscribes to the definition of play used by the Children's Play Council which is:

'freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child or young person'

So, throughout this strategy we use 'play' to describe what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons, balancing fun with a sense of respect for themselves and others. Older children and teenagers tend not to use the term 'play' about themselves but still have a need for places to go where they can enjoy their own informal recreational time.

Where play is supervised, the role of the adult is to support and facilitate children's natural ability to play in a way that enables them to learn and develop as individuals and as members of the community.

1.4 Why Play is important?

The importance of play cannot be underestimated. We know that children who access play opportunities enjoy a range of significant benefits across all five 'Every Child Matters' outcomes. Play supports their physical and emotional wellbeing, providing opportunities for positive social interaction, learning, health and independence.

Play is the way children and young people explore the world around them and develop and practice skills. It is essential for intellectual and educational development by allowing children to learn through curiosity, invention and persistence. Play develops the creative process and growth of problem solving skills which will ultimately help children achieve. (Rogers, 1988, NCB, 2006).

Activity with friends provides children with enjoyment, accomplishment and belonging. It supports the development of interpersonal skills, such as empathy, trust and ability to express ideas. Evidence shows that early experience of play deprivation can have a negative impact on later social behaviours (Kreppner, 1999).

Basic skills, such as making friends and dealing with conflict, support children's 'emotional literacy' and resilience to mental health problems (Mental Health Foundation, 1999). Play is fun and research highlights that the positive emotions gained from

having fun generate psychological resources such as resilience, endurance and optimism (Fredrickson, 2006). Children with attention deficit disorder have been shown to experience improvements in their symptoms if they play in natural areas or even have views of trees and grass outside their home (Kuo, 2004). Contact with nature can also reduce psychological problems caused by stress (Wells, 2003) and help increase children's sense of independence (NCB, 2006).

Active play has a range of health benefits for children. Evidence suggests being active for 60 minutes each day (including active play) can reduce a child's risk of developing stroke, type 2 diabetes and other conditions in the future. Research between 1995 and 2003 found obesity levels rose in children aged between 2 and 10 years, with the most significant increase seen between the ages of 8 and 10 years; rising from 11.2% in 1995 to 16.5% in 2003 (Jotangia et al, 2006). For a number of children, obesity will continue into adulthood. The loss of outdoor play opportunities is one of the main causes of this rise in numbers of overweight and obese children. While governments have, over the years, brought forward a range of responses, the 2009 OECD18 says that Great Britain is below the OECD average for level of physical activity. Research evidence shows that 15 minutes of moderate exercise reduces a child's chance

of being obese by 50% and unstructured play has been found to be particularly beneficial because more calories are burnt compared to the equivalent organised activity (Ness, 2007; Mackett, 2004)). A local project in Christchurch has resulted in some very positive health outcomes. The provision of a weekly play session through the Play Rangers to a group of 40 children who are disabled has resulted in parents reporting a marked reduction in chest infections in this group.

Outdoor play for children is in serious decline. 90% of adults played out regularly in their street as children, but now one in three of today's children say they don't play out in their street at all. Because of this, they, their families and communities are losing out, and problems are building up for the future. This decline and its consequences are of real concern to the



public; an opinion poll carried out by ICM in March 2010 found that 83% of British adults said the next government should have policies that ensure children can play outside more. Not surprisingly, parents are especially concerned. In the same poll, 93% of parents said it was important for their children to have more opportunities for outdoor play (Play England, 2010). Research suggests a positive affect on community cohesion where children play outdoors. Parents' confidence in the safety of the area is enhanced where children have more social networks in the neighbourhood and parents establish their own networks through their children more than any other means.



2. National Context

The value of play is a vital part of a happy childhood and for on-going wellbeing and development. Play is also an important element of the public realm for families and communities, enhancing the liveability of shared space. It strengthens community cohesion and helps reduce anti-social behaviour and crime. Promoting opportunities for children to play and addressing current barriers to play can support a range of national policy objectives.



Children Act 2004

The Act places duties on local authorities in England to improve well being for children and reduce inequalities between them. Statutory guidance to Children's Trusts set out the need for a strategic approach to play across the local area, with the full involvement of children, local communities and the third sector in decision-making.

The Play Strategy (2008)

The National Play Strategy was built on responses to 'Fair Play: A consultation on the play strategy' and reflects the views of children, families and professionals that responded. The strategy outlines a long-term vision and actions to deliver more and better play provision for children in England. The focus is not just on places where children play but also on play services and how communities and neighbourhoods can become more child-friendly. The strategy sets out five areas to support the work undertaken at a local level:

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

The over-arching aim is to see provision for play fully embedded in the priorities of local authorities and Children's Trust partnerships, with every child and young

person having access to enjoyable, safe and stimulating play opportunities within local communities that respect and value children's play. Embedding the Play Strategy (2009) sets out non statutory guidance to help local authorities and their partners fulfil their role in delivering the aims of the Play Strategy ensuring that play is at the heart of their local communities.

Child health and wellbeing

Active play is widely recommended as an important element in combating childhood obesity. This is reflected in the government's engagement paper 'Achieving equity and excellence for children' (DH, September 2010). This paper highlights the role many agencies and groups have to deliver change. The importance of early intervention and prevention services in child health is also underpinned in the Kennedy Report, 'Getting it right for children and young people' (DH, September 2010)

The Child Poverty Act (2010)

The Child Poverty Act obtained Royal Assent on 25 March 2010. This legislation ensures sustained action must be taken to tackle child poverty by this, and future, governments, by the devolved administrations and by local government and their partners. Access to green and playable space is an important element in a healthy environment for children. Key to tackling child poverty is planning to ensure that the child's environment supports them

to thrive. Thus 'taking action on neighbourhoods, play, green spaces, transport and crime to ensure all children can thrive in safe and cohesive communities, with equal access to work, cultural and leisure opportunities' is proposed as a key plank for local child poverty strategies. At a time when direct economic measures to alleviate child poverty are more difficult, improving space for play in deprived areas can be an effective part of these strategies. Local Authorities are now required, by legislation, to consider the full range of factors causing or mitigating child poverty, including the spatial and built environment.

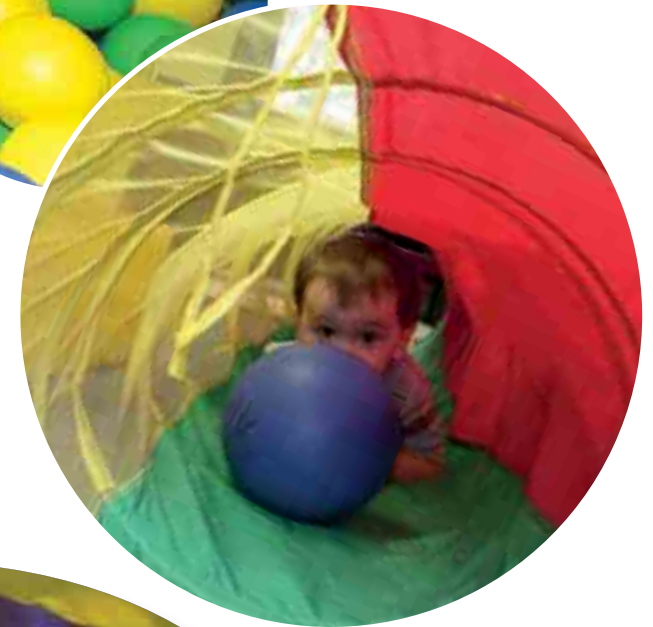
The 'Big Society' and Decentralisation and Localism Bill (2010)

The 'Big Society' is a new policy idea introduced by the government and forms part of their legislative programme. It is about empowering local communities, redistributing power from central to local government and fostering a culture of volunteerism. The Bill is the legislation to put these plans in place. It gives more power to councils and neighbourhoods and gives local communities greater control over local decisions like housing and planning.

The Value of Culture

Culture is recognised as having two elements, these being physical and emotional experiences. Physical experiences cover places you have been to, buildings you like or visited, performances you've seen, your own interest; to name a few. The emotional element gives us the feelings about places we have been, memories of playing, understanding and appreciating other diverse faiths and cultures.

Play is an integral part of cultural activity by individuals, families and communities. Many people have great play experiences from when they were younger. These are sometime physical spaces of where they used to play and some are emotional memories of experiences and times they had with their friends.



3 Barriers to Play

One of the key objectives of this strategy is to raise awareness about the barriers to play and develop ways to minimise these through actions identified at district, borough and county level. Barriers to play can be categorised in four broad areas:

Accessibility – Access to play facilities and services can be better in the urban areas of the county where provision is more likely to be within easy walking distance. However, children and young people living in more densely populated areas are more likely to live in flats or dwellings without gardens or limited outdoor space and may have more difficulty accessing open space (Thomas, 2004). Access to outdoor spaces and play opportunities is likely to be more difficult for children living in areas of deprivation. ‘Children’s ability to experience the natural environment is under threat. Fear and risk; lack of investment; overcrowding and poverty are all restricting their opportunities to spend time outside’ (Thomas and Thompson, 2004). Access can also be more difficult for other key groups, such as children who are disabled (Clarke, 2006); therefore, it is vital that we prioritise this. Building child friendly communities must also remain a priority. Whilst national survey evidence suggests that 85% of adults agreed that it was important for children to play safely in the street (Department of Transport, 2004), the

national Playday Survey (2007) showed 51% of children 7-16 had at some point been told to stop playing in an area near their home.

The Dorset Play Partnership support the ‘3 frees’ in terms of access to play. That is:

- free of charge
- free to come and go
- free to choose what children do whilst they are there

Quality of Provision – Perception of quality has a direct link with use and willingness of parents to let their children play outside. Linked to this is the appropriateness of the play service or facility in terms of needs. Needs analysis and consultation has identified gaps in suitable provision for children 8-13 years and as a result more emphasis has been placed on developing quality play opportunities and play facilities for this age group. Much has also been achieved in improving the quality of play opportunities for children who are disabled and this drive should continue.

Child Safety – Safety concerns (traffic, crime and the fear of crime), fewer open spaces and changing pressures on children and families have all conspired to restrict children’s freedom. Current estimates are that today’s children enjoy on average just a ninth of the space in which to roam freely compared to previous generations.

Research evidence suggests that the perceived risk of crime in a park or other open space is not reflected in actual crime levels (Wilson, 2006). Parents in rural areas are more likely to perceive traffic as a problem whereas in urban areas fear of other people is more likely to be the reason cited for not letting their children play out (DCSF, 2006/7). Children are more concerned about bullying and being harmed by their peers. Whilst a quarter of parents (DCSF, 2006/7) reported dissatisfaction with their local facilities, citing safety of equipment as a concern, evidence suggests playgrounds are relatively low risk; of the 2 million childhood accidents each year less than 2% relate to playground equipment (Ball, 2002). Continued focus on road safety and safe access to play spaces is required through measures such as traffic calming and signage.



Children need and want to stretch and challenge themselves when they play. In Dorset, our aim is that play provision and services respond to these needs and wishes offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. By allowing children to take managed risks helps them build confidence, learn skills and develop resilience. Play provision aims to manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risk.

Other demands on children's time –

Parents are increasingly prescribing how their children use their activity time with restrictions on outdoor play and travel to school. This is particularly the case in rural areas where children are more reliant on their parents for transport to activities or to visit friends. Children have greater access to new technologies, however, there is no evidence that these have become a substitute for outside play or just replaced other forms of sedentary activity such as watching TV. Robinson (1999) suggests that television viewing may be restricting active behaviour. Therefore opportunities for activities in nature should be encouraged.



4 Local Context

This revised strategy aims to achieve continued strategic co-ordination and development of play facilities and services locally across Dorset. This section focuses on the local context and opportunities for play. By working together in partnership we can improve and maximise local play provision and projects.

4.1 Dorset Play Partnership

Since its launch in November 2004, the Dorset Play Partnership has been instrumental in helping to promote and champion the importance of children's play with a range of key statutory, voluntary and community sector agencies in Dorset. It has also influenced a number of new and existing local plans and policies such as the Healthy Weight Strategy for Dorset and the Dorset Cultural Strategy.

From 2012 Dorset County Council will be required to establish Health & Wellbeing Boards and it is intended that the current Children's Trust will become a sub group of this. Responsibility for public health outcomes, such as physical activity, obesity and accidental injury, will sit with the Local Authority subject to the progression of the current legislation in parliament. Play has a significant role in improving public health outcomes and, as such, we aim to continue to strengthen the Dorset Play Partnership by ensuring that it is embedded within the Children's Trust governance structure, and

links to the Dorset Community Strategy. The involvement and commitment of statutory, voluntary and community sector agencies and departments is key to managing and implementing an effective play strategy, including those responsible for:

- Play services, parks and open spaces
- Land Use Planning and Community Planning
- Public health
- Cultural policy and provision
- Procurement and commissioning
- Community engagement
- Neighbourhood management and regeneration
- Police/ community safety
- Youth services
- Housing
- Highways and transport
- Schools
- Early years and childcare

- Children's workforce development
- Services for disabled children and young people
- Services provided for children in exceptional circumstances who may be at risk of losing friendship and opportunities to play with their peers

Through this strategy we aim to identify commitments to extend and enhance the play offer in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and ensure these are reflected in plans for culture and spatial and community development and the infrastructure that supports it.

4.2 Local Provision Examined

Boroughs and Districts have a responsibility for safeguarding and improving the well-being of local children. This is set out within local play strategies and action plans. Borough and District Councils along with Town and Parish Councils are primarily providers or facilitators of fixed outdoor equipped play provision, along with some outreach and development activities.

Funding the Council's provision i.e. play areas and play ranger services, is done through existing revenue budgets, capital budgets and sourcing specific funding for projects often in partnership with local communities.

New provision is achieved through Developers Contributions - Section 106 Agreements - which are the key mechanism for providing new equipped play opportunities and in some cases improving existing ones.

The development of community plans has helped to identify local needs and inform the District and Borough Local Development Frameworks (LDF). Districts and Boroughs offer grants and contributions, be it financial or officer resource, to community groups and Parish Councils so they can develop schemes which provide play opportunities for children and young people.

Some councils have leisure centres and community centres that provide play activities during holidays, and through other services (e.g. Countryside, Arts, Informal Learning, Open Spaces and Sports) a contribution is made to the range and opportunities of child focussed activities.



4.3 Achievements in developing play opportunities in Dorset

Playbuilder – The national 'Playbuilder Programme' has created the opportunity to develop provision with the biggest ever capital investment in play in Dorset. 2009/10 saw a number of innovative and exciting new public play areas developed across all localities. The focus of investment in Dorset has been to develop adventurous areas to play for children 8-13 years. Twenty new play sites across the County are complete. The new sites offer a wide range of inspiring and exciting play experiences including: a ship themed sand and timber play park in West Bay; a water based splash park at Christchurch Quay; and various zip lines, basket swings and climbing structures across multiple village and town locations. Projects have combined a number of different cultural facets throughout from community engagement, artistic influence, project design and celebration.

The Splash Park – situated in the town centre on Christchurch Quay, is an innovative, interactive, educational, and exciting water based play area for the local community and visitors to Christchurch. The design was created by a group of children, young people and the community and uses a water recirculation system. The Splash Park incorporates water jets and sprays, water play pump, channels, sluices and wheel as well as a paddling pool, which all

make an imaginative connection with Christchurch's heritage such as the historic Place Mill, and Tuttons Well.

OurSpace2 – This play project has supported the development of play spaces (including Playbuilder projects) across the county. Participation has been integral with children and young people actively involved in securing funding and designing the play spaces. A good example of how the needs and aspirations of Young People have been met is a project at Beaminster. This project was initiated by the Town Council and involved the 'Our Space 2' project in partnership with the Dorset Youth Service.

Playday's – National Playday has been supported locally each year with events held in early August in celebration of children's right to play, and to raise awareness about issues affecting children's play. Playday's have been organised in Christchurch and Dorchester to help celebrate and provide a fantastic day out for children and their families. In 2010 well over 1,000 children plus family members attended across the two events participating in a range of activities including: mobile climbing wall, archery, bouncy castles, water park, soccer skills, trampolining, music and arts and crafts. Evaluations conducted on the day confirmed the popularity of these events.

Big Lottery Fund – In 2006 the Big Lottery Fund ran a Children’s Play programme and the 6 districts in Dorset were allocated funding to increase play provision in their areas. Funding was used in variety of ways to meet identified need in each district. Some completed fixed outdoor play sites in towns and villages, some worked with Children’s Centres to deliver play and others employed play workers to encourage more play opportunities. The main overarching aim for all projects was to offer children free play that was free to access and free to come and go.



One of the projects was Dorchester’s Skate Park. Opened in May 2009, it was instantly judged to be a great success and one of the top skate parks in the country. What makes it special is that it was designed by skaters and handcrafted in concrete to their design. A committee of young people had been working for two years to raise funds and successfully raised £40,000. Dorchester Town Council and West Dorset District Council further agreed to add substantial lottery funding from the Big Lottery Children’s Play programme plus further match funding. Hundreds of young people now use the skate park every week with holiday periods extremely popular. 55.5% of young people surveyed stated they did not skate prior to the facility being built. 93% stated that they are either very satisfied or satisfied with the facility.

Also popular is **West Dorset’s Mobile Skate Park**. The facility is available to organisations across the district. Hirers can also access a ‘Skate Ranger’ service to support in setting up and supervision of the session.

Play Rangers - East Dorset and Christchurch Councils now have play rangers in their district thanks to the Big Lottery Funding investment. The Play Rangers have been well received and massively popular with the children and young people. The Play Rangers encourage the children and young people to plan the sessions and choose what activities they

would like to do. Activities have included junk modelling, den building, parachute games, arts and craft, ball games and sports.

The Christchurch Play Ranger Service is a good example of the community working with other partners through the Community Partnership in order to secure the funding. Christchurch Community Partnership played a key role in developing the Big Lottery bid for improving play facilities for Christchurch. The service has proved extremely successful with national recognition and awards. The Children’s Centre in Christchurch is also working with the Play Rangers which maximises opportunities for the play offer for under 5’s, meeting the wider needs of families and the community as a whole.

Developing High Quality

The development of high quality provision and best practice is high on the local agenda in Dorset. This ambition is reflected in the achievement of a number of awards in the county. The Play Ranger Project was awarded runner-up in the National ‘Children & Young People Now Awards’, 2010. Waterman’s Park was recognised in the ‘Street Design Awards’, 2008.

Forest School - Forest School is an inspirational process that offers children and young people opportunities to develop confidence and self-esteem, through hands on learning experiences in a local woodland

environment. By participating in achievable tasks that are motivational and engaging in woodland environments, children, young people and their parents and carers have an opportunity to develop intrinsic motivation, emotional and social skills in the unique environments of woodlands and forests. Research evidence shows the success and benefits of Forest Schools. Children and young people have the opportunity, through play and challenging activities, to learn about the natural environment, handle risks and most importantly to use their own initiative to solve problems and cooperate with others. In Dorset we are developing a co-ordinated approach to the training of practitioners and the development of a Forest School Network. The overall aim is to make full use of the unique environments that we are fortunate to enjoy in Dorset and develop the widest range of opportunities for learning, play and enjoyment.

Children's Centres – Play is central to all the activities and services provided by the network of 22 Children's Centres across Dorset. Play is fundamental to early child development and parents and carers are actively encouraged to participate in their children's play. All activity sessions are run by experienced and skilled practitioners who are trained to a minimum level 3 in Early Years. In several of the children's centres there is at least one practitioner with Early Years Practitioner status.



General stay and plays are planned and evaluated using the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. A number of centres have introduced the use of learning journeys for individual children who attend regularly. These can be used to track their development and can then be passed onto any pre-school / school to support their on-going development. They also provide a lovely record for parents of their child's early learning and development and parents are encouraged to contribute to these records.

Children's centres also provide a number of play based, structured programmes that encourage strengthening relationships between parents and their children through play, for example Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP) and Incredible Years (IY). There are also a number of activities that promote specific types of play, for example sessions based on messy play, outdoor play in all weathers, heuristic play and Jabadao that encourages physical play. Similarly, centres also provide play sessions aimed at dads and their children to highlight the importance of male role models in children's lives, for example the 'Forest School' programme.

Count Me In is an inclusion project delivered by Dorset Early Years and Childcare Team and aims to support children aged 5 -11, with additional needs, to attend Ofsted registered mainstream out of school settings in their local community

during term time and/or school holidays. Count Me In is designed to increase the social networks and play opportunities for children and young people who are disabled.

Island Play - This project provides free outdoor play experiences for children on Portland. Initially operating from a tepee, the scheme was developed by Dorset Community Action to meet Ofsted best practice, and proved very popular attracting a large number of children to each event. The project was then transferred to a voluntary group of parents and carers, linked to local primary schools and continues to go from strength to strength. A partnership with the local coastal ranger has been productive in developing the range of play activities available.

Summer Reading Challenge - A nationwide challenge in which over 7,000 children take part in Dorset libraries each year. Children are challenged to read at least 6 books over the holidays and if they do, are awarded a certificate and medal. There are shared family activities such as quizzes or craft making and these help children to keep enjoying reading.

4.4 Local Indicators

Play is a cross cutting policy issue which makes a significant contribution to four local area themes:

- Children and young people
- Safer and stronger communities
- Healthier communities
- Economic development and the environment.

A set of local play indicators has been developed by Play England to measure use, access, experience and quality of local play spaces, facilities and informal recreation. It is proposed that Dorset Authorities will increasingly use these as a tool to evaluate progress and inform future improvement.



5 Next steps

The following outlines the next steps needed to further support, plan and implement strategic delivery of play provision in Dorset within the joint planning and commissioning process of the Children's Trust.

5.1 Identify how play contributes to a range of shared goals that improve outcomes for children and young people and for communities.

Making effective links between different programmes and departments is essential in terms of achievement of shared goals and targets at this time of public sector funding cuts. For example, Planning Policy Guidance 17 – Open space, sport and recreation (PPG17) aims to safeguard open spaces and playing fields. Proposals to update this document also make clear links between the natural environment and health and well-being. Section 106 of the Town and County Planning Act enables local planning authorities to enter into legal agreements with planning applicants. This provides opportunity for the maintenance, improvement and development of open spaces and play provision. Access to play areas can be improved through traffic calming, the built environment and safe routes to play. The 'Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) recognise the importance of environments that are

welcoming and accepting of children and young people playing socially and respectfully as a sign of a healthy community.



Play England has developed guidance that supports planning and transport authorities to ensure children and young people can access high quality, local play spaces and playable public space. The publication, funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), gives detailed guidance on setting local standards for access, quantity and quality of playable space, signposting benchmark standards for different types of local authority. It also shows how provision for better play opportunities can be promoted in planning policies and processes, giving detail of how Local Development Frameworks and managing planning applications can be utilised in favour of child-friendly communities.

The growth of the National Healthy Schools programme has provided opportunities for schools in Dorset to develop their play offer and facilities. Play is a fundamental part of the Early Intervention Services agenda and continues to contribute to improving 'Every Child Matters outcomes' for children and young people living in Dorset. Much has already been achieved in developing out of school and holiday provision including access for children who are disabled and it is vital that this

drive continues. Play is at the heart of early learning and development and the network of Children's Centres across the county has brought increased opportunities available to very young children. Play is also a significant part of the Youth Matters agenda in terms of positive activities and volunteering opportunities and this is reflected in the Dorset Integrated Youth Strategy.

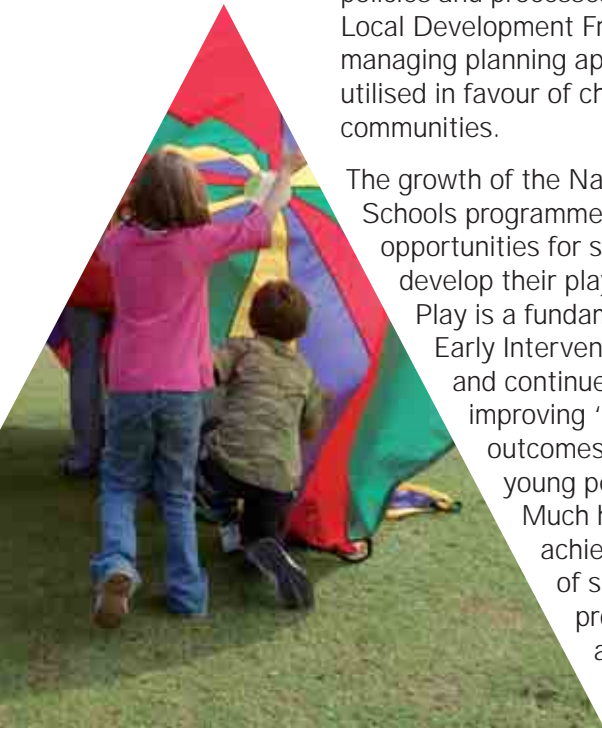
5.2 Identify particular groups and neighbourhoods that need targeted investment for play provision and services

The introduction of integrated locality working across the county provides a framework to identify needs and inform play planning and delivery at locality level. Data collection and analysis by locality provides a good starting point to help identify groups of children and young people with particular needs for targeted provision. These groups may include ethnic minority children, children who are disabled, looked after children, children in hospital, those at risk of offending and children who experience deprivation.

5.3 Develop play needs assessment through engagement with the community

The Dorset Play Partnership is committed to the principles and values set out in the Dorset Children's Trust Participation Strategy 2010 in ensuring that children, young people and local communities are at the heart of planning, design and development of play projects and the evaluation of the Play Strategy. Much has already been gained across the county by sharing good practice and working collaboratively and the Partnership is keen to continue to foster this.

Established community planning processes across Dorset have provided opportunity for the expressed needs of local communities in terms of play to link through to the work of district/borough and county councils and the Dorset Community Strategy. Parish / Community plans are about working with local communities to shape and sustain services, facilities and the local environment in a way that meets the needs of the community. Provision for play is identified as a need in many of these plans. Proposals for neighbourhood planning offer the opportunity to strengthen the role of local communities in identifying and meeting local needs.



The Localism agenda will also enable neighbourhoods and communities of interest to undertake the provision of services currently delivered by public sector organisations. As such, this strategy supports endeavours by groups and individuals to fashion new models of service delivery in areas of play and learning opportunities.

5.4 Audit play provision

The Dorset Play Partnership is aware of the fantastic play opportunities available in the County from its play schemes to its play spaces.

Commitment to on-going auditing of play provision (supervised and unsupervised) at local level will help to identify gaps and resources and agree priorities for action, whether this is investment into more play schemes or new play areas.

The Play Partnership, using the national guidance on play and the playwork principles as a framework, will aim to identify resources to meet local needs. By making effective links between different programmes and departments/ organisations we aim to maximise the benefits of economies of scale, enhanced delivery through pooling of resources or more cost effective procurement.



5.5 Plan the pattern of services and spaces for play to be commissioned

As a Play Partnership we aim to match needs to resources alongside a commitment to a number of general principles.

These are:

- ☀ Promoting high quality play services and spaces.
- ☀ Creating play spaces and services that are inclusive and accessible.
- ☀ Managing risk in play provision. Risk-taking is an essential feature of children's play, allowing them to explore limits and develop their capabilities and confidence. Dorset Play Partnership recommends that play has some risk and endorses the 'Managing Risk in Play Provision Guide'.
- ☀ Participation – The play strategy values the contribution children, young people and communities make to ensuring play services and spaces are effective and well used.

- ☀ Supporting the Third Sector - The strategy recognises the important contribution of the voluntary and community sector to delivering play.
- ☀ To promote and support play workforce development.
- ☀ Evaluation – The Play Partnership will be responsible for the delivery and review of this strategy and action plan and will report to the Children's Trust.



6 And finally...

To achieve the objectives set out in this strategy and action plan, the Play Partnership have recognised the need to review and up-date our Terms of Reference and membership. This requires commitment of all partners to play an active part in these new arrangements. Only by working in partnership across the full range of statutory sector services and with the voluntary and community sector can we deliver effective and innovative solutions to the priorities set in this strategy and action plan.



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