

Playing for Real

A strategy for making quality inclusive play a reality for all the children and young people of Bristol.



Developed by Bristol City Council in partnership with; children and young people, play providers and the voluntary and community sector. Endorsed and promoted by the Bristol Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

Draft for consultation



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Playing for Real

Almost anything is possible

Exciting things happen when children and young people play – almost anything is possible. They connect with the world around them and learn to value themselves and others. They develop positive approaches to solving problems. They set their imagination free. Through participation in play, they grow.

In Bristol we aim to keep it this way. In August 2003 we launched ‘Making Play Matter’, a play policy for the children and young people of Bristol.

Now we want to turn this policy into reality. This Play Strategy builds on the aims and objectives of Making Play Matter. Young People’s Services convened a Play Strategy Development Group, comprising of stakeholders to undertake the work. A full list of the groups represented is attached at the end of this document. We worked with play providers, the voluntary and community sector, local communities, council departments and the children and young people of Bristol themselves. We combined their ideas, experience and energy to create a strategy that is an inspiring blueprint for the future of play in this city.

Bristol has a rich tradition of play going back many years with a strong and structured voluntary and community sector providing for children’s and young people’s play in partnership with the Council. This Council and the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership will continue to work with partners and stakeholders for the benefit of all children, young people and the communities in which they live and play.



The Play Strategy adopts the fundamental play policy objective: “To increase the quality of children’s play opportunities in a variety of settings and to ensure that all Bristol’s children and young people have easy access to such opportunities.” Making Play Matter

We are committed to making it work, and we want you to help us make it real.

‘Inclusive provision is open and accessible to all and takes positive action in removing disabling barriers so that disabled and non disabled children can participate.’

Alison John – All of Us, Inclusion Framework for Local Authorities, KIDSactive

Case Study One

Bristol Playday, for over 1400 children, was a celebration of all children's right to play in a public space. 800 children from Bristol's diverse cultural communities were invited and each child received a striking t-shirt. The children, on a hot sunny day, participated in a range of play cues and activities that included: hay bale play, trampolines, BMX track, canoeing in the council moat, samba drumming, a wacky puppet show, plus inflatables and climbing frames. There were performances by young people in carnival, hip-hop and Asian dance. Participation was highlighted with a multi-media 'Your Say Tent' where children were interviewed LIVE! and dot voted on their favourite play activities. Bristol Playday met many of the outcomes for children and young people set out in the Government's Green Paper, 'Every Child Matters' (see Appendix) and was also the perfect blend of fun, celebration, culture and participation that encompasses play today. The day raised public and media awareness of the importance of children's play.

"We want more play"

Because we believe every child is important, the focus of the Play Strategy 'Playing for Real' is on listening to what each child and young person wants.

At the 'Your Say' event (a Bristol conference organised jointly by Young People's Services and the City of Bristol Young People's Forum in December 2003) and at Bristol Playday 2004, the city's children and young people told us that recreational, leisure and play opportunities were their top priority.

The Government's own research by the Children and Young People's Unit found that children under 12 rated more activities and parks as the most important things the Government could do for them. Nearly 70 per cent of 13 to 19 year-olds said that if they were Minister for a day they would provide more places for children and young people to go. Planning for Play, Children's Play Council.





Adults have their views too, and they reflect what children and young people want. A MORI survey commissioned by the Audit Commission in 2001 found that – of 20 factors which might improve their area – adults rated ‘activities for teenagers’ as the most important and placed ‘facilities for young children’ in the top five.
Planning for Play – Children’s Play Council

Clearly there is an urgent desire and a need for quality play provision in Bristol, and this is where ‘Playing for Real’ can deliver.

‘Inclusion is access plus respectful relationships’ –
Pippa Murray, All of Us, KIDSactive

Case Study Two

‘Esme was shy and struggling to keep up with the other kids. She is a fostered child who has a hearing impairment. This year, with her playground, she attended the junior camp, her first time camping, and at first was struggling to keep up on the beach and rocks. But a day or two later she gained in confidence and was running around on her own. Coming back to the playground she was far more a part of the other children’s games, and for the pirate party she wrote a book with drawings and games. Esme has grown physically and socially from these positive play experiences.’

Quality people mean quality play

‘Playing for Real’ places great emphasis on the quality of the people who provide the play opportunities. They will be skilled and motivated, and excited by the opportunity to deliver the best possible play solutions. They will also reflect the diverse communities that make up this vibrant city. And they will be committed to working together, combining their talent, experience and energy.

National developments, local action

We have based 'Playing for Real' primarily on local needs and wants, but we have also taken into account national policy development and research and this is listed in the Appendix.

How play benefits us all

The Children's Play Council has suggested how play benefits us all. Planning for Play (see Appendix).

We believe that:

- **Play benefits all children and young people**

Whether it is fun or serious, polite or mischievous, children and young people love to play. Giving them access to a variety of play opportunities also helps ensure their healthy growth and development.

Play is also a powerful way for all children and young people to learn through experience what cannot be taught. To a child, play is their culture – they learn how values, beliefs and traditions transform into the ways of life they see around them. Play stimulates their learning and imagination, gives them the chance to explore the physical and social environment, to play with ideas and concepts and to deal with situations that might trouble or frighten them.

Play promotes confidence, self-esteem, creativity and intellectual development and is self-satisfying and freely chosen. Through play, children and young people can choose their own direction and make informed choices. Ultimately, these experiences will help them become well-rounded and resourceful adults.

- **Play benefits families**

When children and young people are away from home, being busy, happy and healthy, this can help reduce stress in families. If parents/carers (including young/sibling carers) know their children are safe and enjoying themselves, they are able to work, undertake training or contribute as volunteers in their community. Good play provision also offers parents/carers a place to meet, make new friends, and receive new play parenting skills and advice. Parents/carers may also take part in community celebrations and organised family outings co-ordinated by play provision staff.

- **Play benefits communities**

The whole spectrum of play opportunities works to promote a sense of community, well-being and security. Research by the New Economics Foundation shows that play provision can connect people more and lead to greater trust. There are measurable benefits to local interaction, friendship networks, community know-how and community safety. Children and young people who are absorbed in their play are also less likely to be seen as a nuisance to others. And the setting and facilities used by play services can frequently become a community focal point.

Case Study Three

'It's boring round the square' said Nicky 'and we kept getting into trouble'. So he set about making some goal posts. 'Everyone helped' he said, 'took all day to carry it down in a wheelbarrow'. It was a great success. People said there was no trouble that week. We had 40 kids playing Wembley in one goal - 10 teams.... Not surprising then, that he was "gutted" to see it being taken down. With the support of playworkers from the adventure playground the team set about making another goalpost - this time with official backing. 124 signatures later it was agreed and it was the young people who dug the holes, mixed the cement and cemented in the uprights. On the second day a larger group came to help add the crossbar and back posts. 'I feel good about it. At first my Mum said she wouldn't believe me until she'd seen it and it keeps me out of trouble' he says, smiling. The goalposts have been very popular with not only the young people but also the community as a whole and this has resulted in a decrease in anti-social behaviour and an increase in physical activity.

... and beyond

The benefits of good play provision spread beyond children, young people, families and communities to support our other policy agendas. When a community enjoys well-planned play provision there is a greater experience of social inclusion as well as the revitalisation of run-down neighbourhoods. Good play provision can also play a part in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. And it can provide physical exercise, mental stimulation and encourage healthier lifestyles for children, as well as their parents.

Change is needed

Although the wide-ranging benefits of play are demonstrable, the fact is that the opportunities for children to play - especially outdoors - are gradually being eroded.

There are other factors too. Busy traffic, lack of open spaces, (in some areas of the city eg Hartcliffe some feel there is too much open space), lack of private sector opportunities, under resourced playgrounds and public parks, increasing fear of litigation, fears for children's safety, and a prevailing intolerance of children and young people by many adults deny children the freedom to play that was enjoyed by their parents and grandparents.

We are working hard to address these issues, but it will need cooperation and commitment amongst our partners to help change the trend for the better.

Time to act

A new direction

In Bristol, strategic leadership across the Council sits with Young People's Services, who have led in the development of this strategy. In a series of Council reports called 'Building Better Youth and Play Services' (see Appendix), a new direction was set for the delivery of play services in Bristol.

The reports show how Young People's Services need to refocus resources on provision that is inclusive and is able to reach children in the city with the highest need.

Playing for Real is committed to KIDSactive's Inclusion Framework for Local Authorities (see Appendix). This framework reflects our commitment that disabled children and young people should have the right to be part of any local play environment they choose.

The local authority Play Service is part of Young People's Services in Environment, Transport and Leisure. Its role is to:

- Provide strategic leadership across the Council
- Ensure the local authority Play Service is a key contributing factor in the local preventative strategy, working closely with the Children Fund, and Sure Start
- Ensure the active participation of children and young people in the specification, governance, management, delivery and quality assurance of play services
- Secure appropriate and coherent play work provision through coherent partnership arrangements
- Take a leading role in representing play service interests at local, regional, national and European government levels
- Provide high quality play work in settings where the local authority is uniquely placed to make direct provision
- Ensure a safe environment supervised by skilled and caring workers providing a facility in which the community has the utmost confidence

Delivery of services, opportunities and environments sit across a wide range of departments, partnerships, agencies and voluntary and community sector organisations.

For example:

- Bristol Parks is responsible for delivering better quality play environments across the city's parks and green spaces, including managing over 150 equipped playgrounds, plus skateboard parks and teen environments.
- Education and Lifelong Learning promote quality play environments in schools and other formal learning environments.
- The Early Years and Childcare Partnership are leading on the development of community based Children's Centres

Therefore, it is important that 'Making Play Matter' and 'Playing for Real' are used as the driver and reference points when developing appropriate responses according to the expressed needs and wants of all children, young people and the communities in which they live and play.

Case Study Four

The principles of the Play Policy were recently applied at Cabot Primary School where the playground has been transformed due to a £48,000 makeover. Carmen Cadwgan, head teacher of the primary school in St Paul's said: "This has been a real community project and it is wonderful that pupils now have this great play area." She viewed this development as a great opportunity for the children and feels that the playground will make a difference and help them in their learning.

Better together

The success of Playing for Real depends on increased investment in play opportunities for children and young people. The Government, the City Council and local partners show their commitment to children's play through investment in play provision.

However, we know that there are currently insufficient resources for the aspirations within this strategy. There are no Government guidelines on 'spend per head' for staffed play services, but it is possible to compare other similar guidelines.

For example, the Government recommend a spend on youth services for 13 – 19 year olds in Bristol of £135 per head, of which Young People's Services currently receive £102 per head.

By comparison the budget Young People's Services have for Play Services is only £30 per 5 – 13 year old.

We believe together is better, which is why we value and encourage the cooperation of a diverse range of organisations and local authority departments.

Together we can make sure that every child and young person in Bristol receives the play opportunities they deserve.

Case Study Five

Play participation research in Lockleaze, May 04, summary of children's views:

The most regularly occurring views of the children interviewed were:

- that they enjoy attending the facilities available to them but feel that there are not enough of them
- that facilities available are not open regularly enough or for enough hours
- that the majority of children in Lockleaze attend Lockleaze Adventure Playground as this is the most regularly open facility and offers the widest range of activities, and in Upper Horfield they attend Eden Grove for the same reasons
- that the majority of children and young people would like workshops and constructive activities to do such as music workshops, dance clubs, etc
- that teenagers feel that they are not adequately catered for and would like more venues, workshops and activities suitable to their ages and interests
- that the majority of children would like to have sports resources available to them e.g. a football pitch, basketball court, swimming pool, etc

When children and young people are consulted and taken seriously, they are keen to express their views. In this process, services are relevant, attractive and planned effectively for the future.



From a blueprint to reality:

Through consultation, seven strategic objectives have been identified to implement the aspirations of 'Making Play Matter' and 'Playing for Real'. Partners within the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership will each identify a Play Champion, who will produce and implement a SMART action plan to meet the objectives within the 5-year period 2005 – 2010.

The seven strategic objectives are:

1. To increase the range, distribution and quality of supervised play provision that meets the Play Policy objectives, and the guidelines for creating an inspiring play environment
2. To enable opportunities for the voice of all children and young people to be routinely heard and taken into account in all decisions made which affect their play needs and wants, in line with the Participation Strategy 'We've got something to say' (see Appendix)
3. To ensure that the Play Policy is referred to whenever decisions are made that could impact (negatively or positively) on children's and young people's play opportunities
4. To improve opportunities for all children and young people to meet and play within shared public space, having due regard to other legitimate usage of that space
5. To promote the increase of quality play opportunities within formal settings
6. To ensure that the risk assessment of play opportunities, environments, facilities and provision takes appropriate account of the benefits to all children and young people of acceptable levels of risk, challenge and stimulation
7. To secure a skilled and motivated workforce that is diverse and reflects the community.

Already, a number of partners have identified actions. They are as follows:

Young People's Services will:

- Work with children and young people to develop quality standards and an assessment process for play provision delivered or funded by YPS
- Advise public, private, voluntary and community sector partners on the application of quality standards
- Realign resources to focus on provision that is inclusive and within reach of children in the city with the highest need, including disabled children and young people and children and young people from black and other minority ethnic communities

- With partners, develop a funding strategy to secure the aspirations of Playing for Real by maximising all relevant funding streams
- Provide and support a strong infrastructure for play associations, networks, resource and training centres
- Act on lessons learned from the Children's Fund and play related funding streams
- Train and support agencies in participation skills
- Develop a promotional plan to raise awareness of the strategy and importance of play
- Promote the availability of supervised play provision by providing up to date information to 'One big Database'.
- Promote awareness amongst children, young people and adults, of their rights and responsibilities when using shared space, providing mediation if necessary
- Train health and safety advisors and play providers (including parents/carers) in 'managing risk in Play Provision'.
- Implement Child-Safe to promote safety and ensure parents, carers and organisations are made aware of the potential risks for children and young people when involved in travel, sport and organised groups
- Review previous risk assessments against 'managing risk in Play Provision'
- Campaign for Government to underwrite play organisations against insurance claims
- Support organisations to ensure that staff working with children and young people are trained to deliver and advocate for improved play opportunities
- Offer play training and information to play workers

Bristol Parks will:

- Produce a Parks Play Strategy which meets the Play Policy objectives and establishes standards for the creation of inspiring play environments
- Increase informal sports opportunities in parks and green spaces in partnership with Sports Development
- Identify where there are 'no ball game' signs and review the criteria for their installation, in partnership with Neighbourhood and Housing Services
- Offer play training and information to parks staff

Cultural Services will:

- Increase the proportion of quality play experiences and environments within the library and museum services
- Use public art, buildings and culture to enhance play opportunities
- Offer play training and information to staff working with children and young people

Early Years and Child Care Partnership will:

- Assess and develop childcare schemes and Children's Centres in line with Making Play Matter and Playing for Real

- Offer play training and information to child care staff

Sustainable Development

- Ensure that the annual Young Person's Quality of Life Survey includes quality of play as part of the survey

Planning Department will:

- Ensure adequate resourcing of play improvements, by maximising the use of S106 planning gain distribution
- Ensure new housing and other developments maximise the use of new environments and opportunities for children's and young people's play

Neighbourhood and Housing Services will:

- Review how noise complaints against children and young people are dealt with, to ensure legitimate play is encouraged, not discouraged
- Promote the development of Homezones to increase play opportunities

Regeneration Unit will:

- Ensure that when setting priorities for spend under regeneration programmes, opportunities for play are increased, or at least not decreased

Safer Bristol Partnership will:

- Ensure that the use of Anti Social Behaviour Orders are not used to reduce play opportunities

Traffic and Transport will:

- Create safer routes to school and play

Education and Lifelong Learning will:

- Promote to all schools the importance of quality school playgrounds, and maximising use of the whole schools grounds area
- Promote to all schools the importance and benefits of appropriate break times, and discourage the shortening of break times
- Promote to all schools the importance and benefits of having skilled play staff and resources for break times to ensure inclusive and quality play experiences
- Increase the 'out of hour' use of all school buildings, grounds and other community property for play opportunities
- Offer play training and information to school break time staff and governors

Social Services and Health will:

- Promote the importance of quality play environments/experiences in residential children's homes, foster carers' homes and other settings where children and young people receive services

- Offer play training and information to staff in residential children homes and foster carers
- Offer play training and information to social workers and other Social Services and Health staff

Health Trusts will:

- Promote the importance of quality play environments/experiences in hospitals and health centres
- Promote to hospitals and health centres the importance and benefits of having skilled play staff and resources for patients and visitors.

Case Study Six

At Bristol Playday 2004, we consulted children and young people on their favourite activities and places to play by dot voting. This is what they told us:

Favourite Play Activity

Adventure activities 18%
 Music and Dance 14%
 Hanging out with friends 13%
 Trips and camping 13%
 Running around 13%
 Indoor games 13%
 Arts and crafts 8%
 Food and cooking 8%

Favourite Places to Play

The beach 16%
 Friends' or relatives' houses 16%
 Parks%
 The woods 13%
 My house 13%
 Adventure playgrounds 12%
 After school clubs 8%
 The street 7%

The exercise illustrates that children and young people do not prefer one activity or one place but like to have choice and a variety.

Monitoring 'Playing for Real'

The lead officer for monitoring the implementation of the Play Strategy is:

Head of Young People's Services

The Executive Member for Play – Executive Member – DETL

The Strategy will be monitored and evaluated by the Play Strategy Development Group, to review progress towards achieving the strategic goals and issues, on a periodic basis and achievements will be celebrated annually.

Each department has identified a Play Champion as lead officer for the implementation of this strategy.

They are:

Environment, Transport and Leisure: Deputy Head of Young People's Services

Neighbourhood and Housing Services: Head of Neighbourhood and Housing Services – Technical Services

Social Services and Health: Planning and Development Manager

Education and Lifelong Learning: Schools, School Governors, Extended Schools Officer, ELL

Play Strategy Development Group:

The group is made up of representatives from:

- Bannerman Road Primary School
- Bristol Children's Fund
- Bristol Holiday Playschemes
- Bristol Parks Forum
- Bristol Playbus
- The Children's Scrapstore
- Felix Road Adventure Playground Management Committee
- Play and Early Years Training Unit

and the following Bristol City Council departments:

- Bristol Parks
- Education and Lifelong Learning
- Regeneration Unit
- Social Services and Health
- Sports Services
- Young People's Services



Appendix

References:

- All of Us – Inclusion Framework for Local Authorities – KIDSactive – 2004
- All of Us – Inclusion Checklist for Settings – KIDSactive – 2004
- Building Better Youth and Play Services – Bristol City Council – 2001
- Children’s Centres – Developing Integrated Services for Young Children and their Families Guidance, Sure Start – 2003
- Draft guide to preparing play strategies – Greater London Authority – 2004
- Early Years Development and Childcare Plan – 2003
- Every Child Matters – Government Green Paper, DfES – 2003
- Getting Serious about Play – A review of children’s play, Department for Culture, Media and Sport – 2003
- Making Play Matter – A Play Policy for the children and young people of Bristol – 2003
- Making the Case for Play: Gathering the Evidence, Children’s Play Council – 2002
- Parks and Green Spaces Strategy for Bristol – Bristol City Council
- Planning for Play – A briefing for local authorities – Children’s Play Council – 2004
- Playwork Values and Assumptions consultation – Play Wales – 2004
- We’ve got something to say – Participation Strategy – Bristol City Council – 2004





Find out more:

To find out more about 'Playing for Real - A strategy for making quality inclusive play a reality for all the children and young people of Bristol', please contact our Young People's Services on 0117 3532295 or email your comments to youngpeopleservices@bristol-city.gov.uk

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