

The Play Strategy

for Wycombe District

2007-2017

Jan 2007

FOREWORD

Local parents know – and research bears out – that it is vital for children and young people to be able to play. Play is essential for children’s healthy development and well-being. As children grow up, the ability to meet up with friends, to visit the local park, swimming pool or shops on their own is central to their developing competence for life. Being able to have fun in public spaces and participate in cultural life is one of the hallmarks of a vital and vibrant district.

Yet many parents and the wider community believe that children today have fewer opportunities to play than they did. Children and young people themselves highlight the need for safe places to play and the lack of facilities for older children and young people as major priorities in their response to the Buckinghamshire Children and Young People’s Strategy.

For this strategy to deliver real benefits it needs a wider partnership of statutory, community and voluntary groups. Our task together is to enable children and young people to play safely, in an environment which stimulates their imagination and allows them to partake of those most simple of pleasures: fresh air and exercise.

Young people have not forgotten what it is to lose themselves in their own world. This Strategy needs to enable them to fulfil their dreams, fuel their imagination and feed their minds. I hope that this document, which lays out clearly the way in which we envisage the future of play in the Wycombe District, will provide the blueprint to enable us to really move forward.

Councillor David Carroll

Wycombe Play Champion &

Cabinet Member for Community

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This strategy encompasses the whole District and has been developed by local partners and in consultation with children and young people. There has been a growing recognition, both nationally and locally of the importance of play for the healthy emotional, social, physical and mental development of children.

Nationally this interest has received an impetus since the government announced its intention of dedicating a strand of Lottery funding to play. Locally, interest has developed through many routes - the rising number of requests for skate parks from young people, communities seeking to provide exciting play opportunities for their young people as well as the impact of changes in early years and school services such as SureStart.

However, one of the main drivers behind the idea of developing a play strategy has been the recognition, through the needs assessment for the Children and Young People's Plan, that a top priority for the Wycombe District should be that children and young people have somewhere safe to play and meet friends. Furthermore that it is vital that the active involvement of young people is maintained as programmes are developed and that the particular needs of children with disabilities are considered.

The strategy is in three parts – an exposition of our play **values**, an explanation of our priority **outcomes** and the mandate for the **programmes** required by this strategy:

Values - the values that underpin the strategy

- a) A respect for the play choices of children and young people
- b) Providing quality experiences for children and young people
- c) Listening to the voices of children and young people and acting upon findings
- d) Enabling the community sector and voluntary sector to extend children's play choices and the satisfaction that children gain from play opportunities
- e) Safer play environments that retain a spirit of adventure

Outcomes - the four outcomes that will have the most impact in increasing the quantity and quality of play in Wycombe.

1. The creation of new imaginative play opportunities
2. Improved promotion of play opportunities and child safety
3. Better support for community based playschemes and play opportunities in Wycombe Partnership priority areas
4. Improved fixed play grounds and the provision of outdoor play facilities in areas of deficiency

Programmes – the priorities for action needed by services to deliver the outcomes identified. These programmes will be developed through the life of the strategy to meet the agreed outcomes. Each programme will incorporate one or more projects with agreed mandates, scope and deliverables. These will be published in a separate action plan.

1. Create a Wycombe Play Partnership
2. Develop an “active involvement” programme for local children and young people
3. Identify one or more locations within existing parks and open spaces where traditional play areas can be linked to an “Imagine area” (described in more detail later in the strategy)
4. The creation of 3 new specialised play areas in the district for the use of skateboards, blades, bikes and other wheeled play activities
5. The coordinated promotion of play opportunities and children’s safety through a dedicated website and publicity campaign
6. The development of projects that improve the safety of children and their understanding of hazards and risk.
7. All Wycombe Partnership (LSP) priority areas under the “Raising Up Programme” (areas described in strategy) will have at least one Holiday Playscheme

8. The creation of a district wide programme of training and support for voluntary and community groups to create, support and maintain effective play work.
9. Ensure that all playschemes work to quality standards arising from an audit of all local schemes
10. Implementation of sustainable, effective and locally managed options for local resource organisations
11. The provision of new play spaces in areas of need
12. The development of a “Standard for Wycombe for fixed play areas” – mapping the level attained by a play area against the quality standard developed from the play values
13. Refurbishment of play equipment and surroundings that create challenging and stimulating new play spaces with access for all

The main benefits of the Play Strategy will be to encourage children and young people to develop their imaginations, to be actively involved in the provision of new fixed play opportunities, to enjoy their play activities and to ensure that they can be more active in seeking their own play.

INTRODUCTION – THE CASE FOR PLAY

Children play! They play naturally – in their own way - and for their own reasons. Play may take place with or without other children, and any adult involvement is at the invitation of the child. Play is different from organised sports, groups, clubs and classes, which are clearly defined by external rules and definitions, and usually controlled by adults.

What is Play?

Play encompasses the 3 “free’s”:

- freedom to chose
- free of charge and
- freedom to come and go.

Through play children grow socially, physically, intellectually, creatively and emotionally. They develop, explore and learn about themselves and the world around them.

- Play is essential for all children whatever their background and ability.
- Play is freely chosen, personally directed behaviour, motivated from within.
- Play takes place for the child’s own satisfaction.

Ensuring children and young people have safe environments for play without supervision is difficult and challenging. Yet it is important that all play environments have an element of risk, as risk is an integral part of everyday life.

Quality play opportunities can bring families and communities together; childcare and organised activities provide play, however open access play facilities such as green space, parks, playgrounds and play schemes are essential.

Central Government has recognised the need for play, within the Green Paper, “Every Child Matters. Change for Children”.

The paper highlighted

“The importance of having communities where there is somewhere safe to go and something to do..... (providing) recreational activity for children

and young people.... building the fabric of communities and increasing young people's skills confidence and self esteem.”

These principles were enshrined in the Children Act 2004. It made enjoyment of recreation, including play, one of the key outcomes for children that authorities are required to consider in drawing up and coordinating Children's Plans.

Throughout this strategy we define children and young people as being under 16. However there are older young people with additional needs that we will wish to encompass in this strategy.

The Profile of Wycombe District

Wycombe District covers 125 square miles. The main towns are High Wycombe, Princes Risborough and Marlow. According to the 2001 Census, approximately 162,000 people live in the district in 63,500 households.

The ethnic makeup of the district is 88% White British, Irish or European with the remaining 12% coming from a wide ethnic/ heritage base which includes, but is not limited to Pakistani, Black Caribbean, Chinese, Indian and Black African people, most of whom live in High Wycombe. The largest ethnic group is people of Pakistani origin who comprise nearly 6% of the population; almost 2% of Wycombe residents are African Caribbean and 1% from an Indian heritage. No other group comprise more than 1% of the total population.

Most importantly it is an area where, in 2001, 33,860 children under the age of 16 years lived.

PLAY STRATEGY STATEMENT

What is the Play Strategy?

The aim of a Play Strategy is to enable all children who live in the District to have access to a range of rich, stimulating and fun play environments, which are challenging, have an acceptable degree of risk, and are seen as special by local children.

The overall vision of this strategy is:

“To enable children and young people to have safe play opportunities of their choice near to where they live”

The implementation of this vision will demand both a delivery framework based on clear outcomes and, importantly, it demands a commitment to several key values from all the enabling organisations, communities and parents.

The values described in the Play Strategy serve to help parents, organisations and agencies make that commitment to children’s play. They are based on the ten Play Values¹ produced by the Children’s Council, but focus on those values which will enable improvement in play locally.

This District strategy has been prepared in conjunction with the Buckinghamshire Children and Young People’s Plan

Children and Young Peoples Plan Vision Statement:

“In Buckinghamshire we want all our children and young people to have the best start in life and be able to lead safe, healthy and fulfilling lives, and to be able to make a positive contribution to their communities and to society. We will ensure access to a range of universal services as well as developing more targeted services to meet their specialist’s needs.”²

¹ See Appendix 1 : The Values and Principles of Play as printed in ‘Best Play’

² Children and Young People’s Plan: see www.buckscc.gov.uk

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Consultation work for the Play Strategy is based on various participation and consultation initiatives. Gathering views from children formed the largest part of the Play Strategy consultation although teachers, parents, and play providers were all surveyed too.

Table showing consultation Programmes that fed into this policy

	Consultation and Methodology	No.
1.	Individual engagement using a reward box for children to draw or write how play could be improved Conducted by Surestart and District Council	98 Children and Young People (including 32 Asian ethnicity and 6 African Caribbean)
2.	Group engagement through partner play agencies and summer schemes Conducted by play partners	124 Children and Young People (including 13 Asian, 6 Chinese and approx. 34 African Caribbean ³)
3.	Youth survey into the nature and type of skate park provision Conducted by Youth Services Officer WDC	147 Children and Young People (no breakdown)
4.	Consultation survey through schools that sought to understand play in the context of what children and young people are proud of and what would help them to be safer Conducted by Youth Services Officer WDC	252 Children and Young People (no breakdown – 17 from children with a disability)
5.	Parental focus groups separately engaging	65 Mothers

³ Number remembered after the event

	Consultation and Methodology	No.
	Mothers and Fathers Conducted by Surestart and Street Dreams	23 Fathers
6.	Youth Council consultation	20 Young People
7.	Engagement of Children and young people asking them about play needs Conducted by Early Years Inclusion Officer	87 Children and young people including approx 12 children with a disability
8.	Consultation conducted through the County Play strategy Conducted by Bucks County Council	No numbers available
9.	Play equipment consultation – part of the audit of facilities and current replacement programme Conducted by WDC Parks Service	1200 children and young people and parents/carers during 2004-2006

These consultations together represent the views of approx 2000 children and young people in the district

Wycombe's Principles of Community Engagement

Effective, open and honest communication with the community – and in particular children and young people has been fundamental to the development of this strategy.

Further engagement will continue through the life of the strategy based on the following.

The three Ls: Listening, Learning and Liaising...

Listening - Demonstrating genuine commitment to working with children, young people and communities regarding the monitoring and evaluation of both informal and formal play opportunities and location of play services.

Learning - Engaging with children, young people and communities in ways that lead to meaningful and tangible outcomes - and with the wide range, and the diverse nature, of our communities.

Liaising - Engaging with children and young people at levels they can best relate to, rather than expecting them to relate to partners' own organisational structure or processes. Work to ensure the active involvement of a wide range of community and voluntary groups.

The Need for Further Engagement

This strategy acknowledges of the need for further engagement and especially the needs of children with disabilities, different heritage/ethnic groups and children and young people in particular neighbourhoods. It also acknowledges the involvement of parents, carers and local workers in this work. Therefore it is important that all the projects developed with this strategy include a communications and engagement plan to include who and how these views will be obtained.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Nationally, 80% of UK children prefer playing outdoors and 86% prefer activities such as building dens and getting muddy compared with playing computer games (The Children's Play Council - "Play, naturally").

What Children and Young People (and their Parents) want to see:

1. The provision of quality play and creative activities that:
 - are fun – and develop children's self esteem, confidence and ability
 - cheap – free where possible
 - imaginative
2. Better promotion of the facilities provided for children and young people, in terms of playgroups, holiday play schemes, after school clubs, playgrounds, recreational facilities, and youth clubs.
3. Programmes for disadvantaged children and young people
4. Personal safety training to help both allay fears and protect children from stranger danger and also the provision of better information to help parents understand the true risk and address their fears.
5. Play areas that are:
 - accessible, open access and allow a child to decide to use the playground themselves, when they choose,
 - designed specifically to respond to the needs and wishes of children,
 - in good repair so that all the play area can be used safely and to its potential,
6. Proposals to make the district more children and young people friendly.
7. Playschemes provision which give children:
 - resources to help local people to develop play opportunities
 - something exciting, stimulating and different to do during the long summer holidays

- an activity run by people they know from their own community – offering security and role models
- playschemes that are supported, resourced and open access
- neighbourhood based schemes that include their peer group

8. Where there are areas of play area deficiency:

- young people desire that the agencies are more actively engaged with their need for an area for play
- children and young people want to help set up a Programme,
- imaginative solutions

Local Provision Examined

Various studies examining local provision have been conducted; including the Scott/Wilson study on the provision of open space linked to PPG17, audits by the Early Years and Childcare Unit of Bucks County Council and consultations by various local organisations and children and young people's partnerships.

Dedicated Areas for Play

Dedicated Areas for Play covers a broad range of open spaces and includes provision of open space for children and young people and the wide range of provision they might need. This includes play areas, skateboard parks, outdoor basketball courts, hoops and other more informal spaces, such as "hanging out" areas and teenage shelters, and opportunities for play.

1. 69 play areas have been identified in Wycombe District, 38 of which are owned and managed by Wycombe District Council. The others are owned and managed by Town and Parish Councils and Housing Associations. In addition to this Wycombe District Council manages teen facilities at 16 locations which can range from a shelter or ball wall to a full Multiple Use Games Area (MUGA). Some of these play areas are in a very poor condition due to a lack of investment over the last thirty years and repeated vandalism. It is anticipated that on average a play area should have a fifteen year lifespan, but due to lack of past funding some of the play areas are over 20 years old.

2. Planning Policy Guidance Note 17⁴ (PPG17) on Open Space, Sport and Recreation provides the national planning policy framework for the protection of existing children's play-spaces which are required to meet the needs of local communities.
3. PPG 17 has also ensured that where planning permission is granted for new developments (especially housing), authorities should ensure that provision is made for local sports and recreational facilities. Depending on the existing open space and play provision in the vicinity this is either through an increase in the number of facilities or through improvements to existing facilities.
4. Wycombe District Council seeks through the Local Development Framework⁵ (LDF), to set standards of provision for all types of open space, including play-space for children. These are drawn up on the basis of an assessment of current and future local need and an audit of the quality and quantity of existing facilities (open space study). The LDF identifies the following six areas of open space deficiency: Desborough/Green Street, Cressex, Bowerdean, Southern part of the Hughenden Quarter, East Marlow and Southern Princes Risborough
5. An analysis of current play area provision was carried out by studying data gathered as part of the Scott Wilson open spaces study (OSS)⁶ of 2004/5 and the Council's current open space database and mapping, which has evolved from the original study. This has enabled the Council to identify areas of over-provision or deficiency in both open space and/or play.
6. A rolling replacement programme has been drawn up, to ensure that play areas are replaced every 15 years. This plan is contained in Wycombe District Council's Fixed Play Programme. Even with this programme and sufficient funding in place it is still anticipated that it will take another 5 years before all of our outdated equipment is replaced.

⁴ See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144067>

⁵ See <http://www.wycombe.gov.uk/sitePages.asp?step=2&categoryID=3749>

⁶ See <http://www.wycombe.gov.uk/uploads/documents/Environment/Planning/Open%20Space%20Study%202005%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf>

Play Schemes

A play scheme is a planned programme of recreational activities for children outside of school. They usually run during school holidays and are centred around a designated 'base' which is available for the exclusive use of the group, Play schemes usually consist of a large group of children of a similar age.

1. Play schemes in Wycombe District are usually run by people who are recruited from the local community. Whilst in the past the local authority ran its own schemes in various communities these ceased in 2005 and some communities are without a scheme.
2. Groups and organisations that come under the registration requirements of the Children Act 2004 receive support and training from the Early Years Development and Childcare Service.
3. However most of the training is around policy and procedures for safeguarding rather than skills and techniques that enhance the quality of activities, experience and play. Some groups, particularly small local groups are outside this support.
4. Groups and organisations that come under the registration requirements of the Children Act 2004 receive support and training from the Early Years Development and Childcare Service. Most Play Schemes in the District do not come under this provision.
5. An audit of training and support needs for these groups reveal that:
 - training is around policy and procedures for safeguarding rather than skills and techniques that enhance the quality of activities, experience and play.
 - some groups, particularly small local groups are outside any support.
 - resources are available and versatile enough to give children the scope to determine, influence or modify how they are used.
6. There are two resource organisations in the District each with a different niche, these are: Boomerang – who provides a toy library and Wycombe Resource Zone scrap store and equipment hire.

Raising up Communities

Version 2 of the Community Plan for Wycombe District included the following target:

“By 2011, all of our communities will be above the bottom 25% on all of the indices of deprivation”.

The Wycombe Partnership responded to this challenge by recognising specific communities which have the greatest need as “Raise Up Communities”⁷. In all seven communities were recognised as areas that the Indices of Multiple Deprivation identified as such communities.

The areas are specific parts of

Castlefield

Green Street Area

The Pastures, Downley

Bowerdean

Hicks Farm / Windrush, Micklefield

Wycombe Marsh/Kingsmead

Lane End

⁷ See

http://www.bucksonline.gov.uk/BSP/Reports/sg20050304/Item4_Raising%20up%20Communities.pdf

THE STRATEGY IN OUTLINE

This Strategy is divided into three sections.

Part one: explains the values that underpin the strategy.

Part two: identifies the six outcomes that when achieved will have the most impact in increasing the quantity and quality of play in Wycombe.

Part three: outlines the actions and resources needed by services affecting children's play to deliver the outcomes identified.

This strategy will depend on the commitment of relevant organisations and individuals signing up to the parts they can deliver and linking their action plans as appropriate.

Part One: The Values that underpin the strategy

a) A respect for the play choices of Children and young people

Children play because they wish to do so, it is under their control, is chosen by them and is undertaken solely because it is satisfying, and is an outcome in itself. For the older age group this may include activities that are viewed as "suspicious" by older generations such as meeting together in public spaces and "hanging out".

In supervised provision, trained play workers have an important role supporting children to create and explore their own play experiences, without stifling and inhibiting the freedom of play. Training is essential to improving the quality of play supervision. Good play supervision is the key to the inclusion of all children in play events and the deepening of play experiences.

Unsupervised play is important to all children but especially to the older age group who will seek opportunities to be with their peer group. It is necessary to find / allow young people space to meet and engage in recreational activities with their friends.

b) Providing Quality Experiences

Quality play environments are those that offer children and young people new horizons. They are experiences that are born out of listening to the voices of Children and young people. Examples of what we mean by quality are environments that help children and young people:

- to engage with their natural surroundings,
- be sociable or solitary,
- create imaginary worlds,
- test boundaries,
- construct and alter their surroundings,
- experience change and continuity.

A quality play environment is therefore not uniform and static. It is rather it is a place of adventure and exploration between children and the world - or between children and the worlds they make.

c) Listening to the voices of Children and young people

Statutory agencies, partnerships and other providers are committed to seek out children and young people, listen to their views and act on their expressed needs and wishes. This will often naturally follow from a respect for the play choices of children and young people. However it should be recognised that children and young people do not just talk about the type of play they desire but also how that play can be a quality play experience.

This will include:

- A determined effort by the Planning Services, County and District Council Community Services, Housing Services, local housing associations and other agencies to consult children and young people about any decision which might affect their opportunities to play.
- Appropriate and informed techniques to include children and young people from under-represented groups, in particular disabled children, in consultation processes.

- Recognition in schools that opportunities for play during the school day and after school are an important element of a child's education and that children are involved in discussions about the use of school facilities in or out of school hours.
- Recognition and understanding of the value of play by childcare staff and providers to ensure that they allow children the opportunity to define their own needs

d) Enabling the community sector and voluntary sector

It is vital to the development of play that statutory agencies value the uniqueness of experiences and knowledge of the community and voluntary sectors.

Partnership working through this play strategy will respect what each partner can bring and each partner being enabled to take a lead on different aspects of the shared strategy. It will challenge and support communities to find their own solutions. This can happen if we first work to ensure that we are working for the same targets.

e) Safer Play Environments

Being committed to safe environments requires some intervention into the world of children's play. The question being: how does one reduce the risk of serious childhood injuries, while promoting an inclusive play environment that allows children and young people to take risks and learn through exposure to an acceptable level of hazard?

Children need and want to take risks when they play. An essential part of the process of a child becoming an adult is the need, and desire, to explore limits and to try new experiences. Play provision will aim to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. However, adults will intervene to ensure child safety.

This intervention will be guided by the idea that "child safety is no accident". That is, there is much that can be done in the planning stage to ensure that children are protected from harm, but also have quality play experiences.

Examples include:

- a) Play spaces that could be made safer through better design

- b) Ensuring that children do not participate in formal activities that are not consistent with the child's abilities and development
- c) Increasing a child or young person's awareness of the potential for dangers in various situations and environments to children.
- d) Children with disabilities also want to engage in risky play, so that all play is inclusive - environments rather than structures facilitate this.

Part Two: The Play Strategy Outcomes

The four outcomes below have developed from the audit and from what people said they wanted to see. From these outcomes, priorities have been set as programmes for action. These have been developed in response to consultation with children, carers and the play community. We hope that as many people as possible will sign up to and contribute to the achievement of these aims.

1. The creation of new imaginative play opportunities

When we spoke with children and young people their response was that they liked creative play that is fun and cheap to access. This recognises the standard that children and young people want from their play offer. To be enjoyable, play should be challenging and fun. A play area without traditional equipment, called an "Imagine Area" is one solution. This is a play space part way towards an adventure playground, targeted mostly at the 6-14 age group.

What issues need addressing to be able to deliver?

- A more developed local partnership to plan and co-ordinate new opportunities
- The development of the active involvement of children and young people in planning the future of play opportunities

Key improvement Areas:

- Raise the profile and value of play and the wider recognition of the importance of play in a child's development.
- Development of new "Quality Play Areas" such as the "Imagine Area"
- Enhancing the public space to meet the play aims of young people

Key Programmes:

Programme 1: Create a Wycombe Play Partnership from existing groups to promote play and build a commitment to meeting children's needs and rights to play within the community

Programme 2: An "active involvement" programme for local children and young people

Programme 3: One or more locations within our existing parks and open spaces where traditional play areas can be linked to an imagine area.

Programme 4: The creation of 3 new specialised play areas for the use of skateboards, blades, bikes and other wheeled play activities

2. Improved promotion of play opportunities and child safety

Children feel unsure about the facilities and activities that are already available. They also feel restricted in the opportunities they have to range, explore their environment and simply play outside than children were able to do in the past.

What issues need addressing to be able to deliver?

- A co-ordinated information campaign on the play offer in the District
- The promotion of the specific facilities provided for children and young people: play areas, holiday play schemes, after school clubs, playgrounds, recreational facilities, youth clubs, programmes for disadvantaged children and young people as well as other facilities.
- Proposals to make the district more children and young people friendly. These will include:
 - a) cycle-ways, road crossings and public transport,
 - b) Local personal safety training to help children and young people understand "hazards" and protect them from stranger danger

Key improvement Areas:

- Better literature and website promotion of play opportunities
- Better information to help parents understand the true risk and address their fears.

Key Programmes:

Programme 5: Co-ordinated promotion of play opportunities and children's safety through a dedicated website and publicity campaign

Programme 6: Projects that improve the safety of children and their understanding of hazards

3. Better support for community based playschemes and play opportunities in Wycombe Partnership priority areas

Children and young people favoured local playschemes as they were accessible and included their own peer group. These schemes find it hard to run cost-effective schemes that are creative, due to the resources and training issues they face. Some of schemes - for example, those that cater for over-eights only or operate for less than two hours a day – are not registered. The lack of small community based playschemes in some areas of the District limits the choices for children and young people, many of whom may find the large numbers and sporty preferences of other schemes less attractive.

What issues need addressing to be able to deliver?

- develop the capacity of the community to run and sustain good quality safe childcare and play facilities through:
 - a) Training opportunities
 - b) Support, advice and information
 - c) Ensuring unregistered schemes are nevertheless quality assured
- An audit of the provision of schemes in the areas
- Future sustainable funding for the playschemes

Key improvement areas

- The capacity of local people to run community based scheme is supported and built by local agencies
- Strengthen Local Resource Organisations through the implementation of options that ensure their sustainability, effectiveness and ability to be managed by the organisations they serve
- Linking of schemes with other areas of the district - rural/urban and bringing communities together
- Raise the profile and value of play work as a professional discipline

Key Programmes:

Programme 7: All Wycombe Partnership (LSP) priority areas under the “change up programme” will have at least one Holiday Play Scheme

Programme 8: The creation of a district wide programme of training and support for voluntary and community groups to create, support and maintain effective play work.

Programme 9: Ensure that all play schemes work to quality standards arising from an audit of all local schemes

Programme 10: Implementation of sustainable, effective and locally managed options for local resource organisations

4. Improving fixed play grounds and the provision of outdoor play facilities in areas of deficiency

The opportunity to be able to access play spaces and take risks is paramount for the healthy development of all children, physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and creatively. “Fixed playgrounds” are a part of the play space provision.

Good quality play space needs to be planned. The Planning Authority can enable this through PPG 17 by:

- a. Protecting and enhancing existing play-space and associated facilities
- b. Identifying needs and opportunities for improvements.

The refurbishment of play areas is also an opportunity to improve play opportunities, but also allows children and young people to have the play areas they desire. Children and young people wish to be involved in these decisions, but also in their design and in working out how these areas are used.

What issues need addressing to be able to deliver?

- Continued funding after the current capital programme ends in 2007/08.
- Ensure that the majority of the District population has access to a local play area within walking distance from their home.
- Refurbishment that create play areas with access for all, especially children with a disability.
- The Planning Authority ensures that new play provision or off site contributions from housing developers are put in the right places, to tackle deficiencies.

Key Improvement Areas

- Improvement of play equipment and surroundings to create challenging and stimulating new play environments.
- Improvements to equipment with improved risk management and compliance with EN 1176 and EN1177.
- A new quality scheme commencing at the start of the Play Maintenance Contract in 2007. The scheme will, through a system of point scoring against condition, play value and repair record, be able to identify those sites that not only are in need of refurbishment or upgrading, but also those sites that are most regularly reported as requiring repair either through level of use or propensity to vandalism.

Key Programmes:

Programme 11: The provision of new play spaces and environments of choice in areas of need through the use of planning procedures and specific projects

Programme 12: The development of a “Standard for Wycombe” that will:

- Firstly be applied to all fixed play areas under the management of Wycombe District Council are maintained to an appropriate standard

- Under agreement apply to all other play areas in the District

Programme 13: Refurbishment of play equipment and surroundings that create challenging and stimulating new play spaces with access for all

Part three: Programmes and Projects

Please note: This a dynamic table that will develop over time for the latest version see the Wycombe District Council Website

	Programmes	Targeted Outcome	Projects/Action	Initiation / Expected Completion	Resources
1	Create a Wycombe Play Partnership	The creation of new imaginative play opportunities	New Play Partnership created Plan and co-ordinate new opportunities/plan portfolio presented to Lottery Support for the value of playwork as a professional discipline	January - May 2007 Completed March 2007 Sept – May 2007	Within existing WDC Children and Young People Budgets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time • Meeting Support
2	An “active involvement” programme for local children and young people		To be developed by the play partnership as a separate programme	From April 2007	Within existing Budgets

	Programmes	Targeted Outcome	Projects/Action	Initiation / Expected Completion	Resources
3	One or more locations within our existing parks and open spaces where traditional play areas can be linked to an imagine area	The creation of new imaginative play opportunities	<p>Identification of natural sites for new play spaces</p> <p>Engagement with local children and young people on the possibility of “Imagine Areas” including their involvement as “consultants” (Jan 2008)</p> <p>Programme management using the sites as a background for continued participation (Jan -Sept 2008)</p> <p>Completed Play Areas</p>	<p>April 2007 – September 2007</p> <p>September 2007 – Jan 2008</p> <p>Jan -Sept 2008</p> <p>Sept 2008</p>	New resource needed: Part of the Portfolio to be presented for Lottery Funding

	Programmes	Targeted Outcome	Projects/Action	Initiation / Expected Completion	Resources
4	Identify and complete the creation of 3 new specialised play areas for the use of skateboards, blades, bikes and other wheeled play activities	No.1 The creation of new imaginative play opportunities	Identification of 3 sites for new wheeled play areas (Jan 2007) Agreement with commercial partners to the designs and plans developed with young people (Jan 2007) Completed 3 wheeled play type Play Areas	Jan 2007 –Sept 2007	£280,000 from WDC capital programme and commercial and statutory partners

	Programmes	Targeted Outcome	Projects/Action	Initiation / Expected Completion	Resources
5	Co-ordinated promotion of play opportunities and children's safety through a dedicated website and publicity campaign	Improved promotion of play opportunities and child safety	Improved promotion of the importance of play in a child's development. Plan and co-ordinate an information campaign	From April 2008 – March 2010 Summer 2007, Summer 2008, Summer 2009	Promotional campaign - Within existing Budgets Information campaign Within existing WDC Community Services Budgets
6	Development of proposals that improve the safety of children and their understanding of hazards	Improved promotion of play opportunities and child safety	Moto Project initiated	Summer 2007	Within existing Budgets and external funding bid by Fire Service

	Programmes	Targeted Outcome	Projects/Action	Initiation / Expected Completion	Resources
7	All Wycombe Partnership (LSP) priority areas under the “raising up communities programme” will have at least one Holiday Playscheme	Better support for community based play schemes and play opportunities in Wycombe Partnership priority areas	<p>An audit of the provision of schemes in the areas</p> <p>The capacity of local people to run community based scheme is supported and built by local agencies</p> <p>Linking of schemes with other areas of the district - rural/urban and bring of communities together</p> <p>Future sustainable funding for the playschemes</p>	<p>May 2007</p> <p>Summer 2007</p> <p>Milestone to be agreed</p> <p>Milestone to be agreed</p>	Redirection of Playscheme grants

	Programmes	Targeted Outcome	Projects/Action	Initiation / Expected Completion	Resources
8	The creation of a district wide programme of training and support for voluntary and community groups to create, support and maintain effective play work.	Better support for community based playshemes and play opportunities in Wycombe Partnership priority areas	<p>New Training opportunities provided to small organisations to create, support and maintain effective play work</p> <p>Training opportunities ensure that supervised play opportunities allow children and young people to play</p> <p>Support, advice and information for all involved in delivering, managing and supporting play</p>	<p>Jan 2008 – March 2010</p> <p>Jan 2008 – March 2010</p> <p>Jan 2008 – March 2010</p>	Within existing WDC and Bucks County Council Budgets

	<i>Programmes</i>	<i>Targeted Outcome</i>	<i>Projects/Action</i>	<i>Initiation / Expected Completion</i>	<i>Resources</i>
9	Ensure that all playschemes work to quality standards arising from an audit of all local schemes	Better support for community based playschemes and play opportunities in Wycombe Partnership priority areas	New Quality Standard standard produced Pilot audits against standard completed	Oct 2007 Summer 2008	Within existing Budgets

	<i>Programmes</i>	<i>Targeted Outcome</i>	<i>Projects/Action</i>	<i>Initiation / Expected Completion</i>	<i>Resources</i>
10	Implementation of sustainable, effective and locally managed options for local resource organisations	Better support for community based playshemes and play opportunities in Wycombe Partnership priority areas	Options for Change Review completed including feasibility of one stop shop arrangement Links between the resource organisations developed –	April 2007 Sept 2007	Possible resource implications to be determined by review

	Programmes	Targeted Outcome	Projects/Action	Initiation / Expected Completion	Resources
11	The provision of new play spaces and environments of choice in areas of need	Improving fixed play grounds and the provision of outdoor play facilities in areas of deficiency	<p>Identify locations for the provision of new play spaces through a developed Programme plan</p> <p>Engagement with local children and young people including their involvement as “consultants”</p> <p>Programme management using the sites as a background for continued participation</p> <p>Completed Play Areas</p>	<p>Dec 2006</p> <p>To Dec 2007</p> <p>Jan 2008</p> <p>By Sept 2008</p>	Part of the Portfolio to be presented for Lottery Funding

	Programmes	Targeted Outcome	Projects/Action	Initiation / Expected Completion	Resources
12	The development of a "Standard for Wycombe"	Improving fixed play grounds and the provision of outdoor play facilities in areas of deficiency	<p>A new quality scheme</p> <p>The use of a system of point scoring against condition, play value and repair record to identify sites</p> <p>The use of the above information to guide future decisions on toughness, suitability of the site or need for improvement through more imaginative equipment.</p>	<p>Commencing at the start of the Play Maintenance Contract in April 2007</p> <p>April 2007 –March 2010</p> <p>(Milestone to be agreed)</p>	Within existing budgets

	Programmes	Targeted Outcome	Projects/Action	Initiation / Expected Completion	Resources
13	Refurbishment of play equipment and surroundings that create challenging and stimulating new play spaces with access for all	Improving fixed play grounds and the provision of outdoor play facilities in areas of deficiency	Target areas identified – 1)Wycombe Marsh & 2)Green Street/Town Centre/ Rural provision solution. Locations agreed by Play Partnership.	Kingsmead Rec 2007, The Rye Imaginarea 2008	Within existing budgets (s106 funding) and New resource needed: Part of the Portfolio to be presented for Lottery Funding

Monitoring the Strategy

This strategy seeks to link outcomes with process. Progress toward the strategy's outcomes will be constantly assessed in order to gauge success or failure and adjust the strategy accordingly.

- a. All projects will have a brief and plan which will be agreed by the Wycombe Play Partnership
- b. Monitoring reports on all projects will be gathered by the Senior Parks Officer on a quarterly basis starting July 2007
- c. The relationship between outcomes, projects, and resources will be reassessed on a half yearly basis by the Wycombe Play Partnership
- d. Any relevant performance indicator will be collected to monitor progress based on the eight draft indicators from the Children's Play Council. However some of these will require adoption with surveys by schools or other agencies.
- e. A review of the "Play Offer" on a yearly basis will seek to identify factors that influence the desired outcomes. This exercise will enable the Wycombe Play Partnership to identify external factors over which they do not have control. This process should result in Play focused organisations forging partnerships with non-Play focus organisations that influence extraneous factors.
- f. The strategy will be refined on a yearly basis with more appropriate annual targets will be adopted if necessary.

Local Play Partners and Contact Links

Wycombe Play Champions

Cllr David Carroll

Cabinet Member for Community,

Wycombe District Council

Officer Champion

Ian Westgate

Strategic Director

Wycombe District Council

Practical Contacts for this Strategy

Strategy Development – Stephanie Tebbutt

Wycombe District Council – 01494 421886

Email: stephannie_tebbut@wycombe.gov.uk

Monitoring – Sarah Brion

Wycombe District Council – 01494 421878

Email: Sarah_Jane_Brion@wycombe.gov.uk

Project delivery – Neil Coleman

Wycombe District Council – 01494 421823

Email: Neil_Coleman@wycombe.gov.uk

Appendix 1

The Values and Principles of Play as printed in 'Best Play' available from the Children Play Council are as follows:

1. **Children's views** Children are "active in the construction and determination of their own social lives". (Prout and James 1997). This has implications for playwork and for the development of better play provision. The voice of the child, their opinions reactions, should be taken into account to the maximum degree consistent with health, safety and respect for the needs of others.
2. **Access to rich, stimulating environments** There is a poverty of play opportunities in the general environment, and it is the responsibility of the community to ensure that all children have access to rich, stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable risk, and thereby offer children the opportunity to explore both themselves and the world, through their freely chosen play.
3. **Freedom to play** Children's freedom to play, and children's sense of freedom, needs to be preserved. Many pressures increasingly dominate the lives of children in the UK. Public fears about safety, including the threat from traffic and from other people, lead many parents to restrict their children's freedom to play and get around on their own. Commercial interests intrude into children's lives through targeted marketing and advertising campaigns. Religious and cultural organisations believe that theirs is the right mould with which to shape children. Educational policies and practice take a curriculum-centred approach that places increasing demands on children's time and energies in pursuit of educational attainment, and constrains their free time.
4. **Equal entitlement** Every child, irrespective of gender, background, cultural or racial origin, or individual ability, should have equal access to good play opportunities.
5. **Respect for children** Children should feel confident that the adults involved in play welcome and value them as individuals.
6. **Children's abilities** The child's control of their own play activity is a crucial factor in enriching their experience and enhancing their learning and development. Adults need to recognise that play is something children do very well on their own.
7. **Play for its own sake** As the definition states, play is intrinsically motivated. Hence there should be no task or product required of the play by those not engaged in it. However, adults may need to support children in creating and determining their own goals and outcomes.
8. **The importance of risk** Play is a key element in children learning to appreciate, assess and take calculated risks, which is fundamental to the development of confidence and abilities in childhood. Children seek out

opportunities for risk-taking and it is the responsibility of play provision to respond with exciting and stimulating environments that balance risks appropriately.

9. **The adult role in play** Whereas children may play without encouragement or help, adults can significantly enhance the opportunities for a child to play creatively, through the provision of an appropriate human and physical environment.

10. **Adult responsiveness** Children can sometimes unleash powerful feelings, in themselves or in their companions, through their play. The process often has valuable cathartic or therapeutic effects but can also be disturbing. Children are entitled to expect that adults involved in play provision will understand and be responsive to cues that they may be in need of comfort or reassurance as a result of their play.

Contact Children's Play Council: Tim Gill, Director - Children's Play Council - +44 (0)20 7843 6094

Appendix 2

Table showing the Wycombe District Council's Area Provision

LEAP – Local Equipped Areas for Play – playgrounds within 5 minutes walking time from home for children of school age, up to 8 years. These have play equipment that should provide opportunities for at least 5 types of play, such as climbing, sliding, swinging, rocking, balancing etc.

NEAP – Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play – sites within 15 minutes walking time from home servicing a substantial residential area, equipped mainly for older children, but with play opportunities for younger children. These should include opportunities for at least 8 types of play, a ball area, wheeled games area and a meeting place for older children.

Area	Sites	Provision
Booker	Booker Rec / Shrimpton Rd and Redman Rd	Adequate
Cressex		Underprovision and lack of open space. This has also been highlighted in the LDF.
Sands	Roundwood Rec	Currently a LEAP but recommended upgrading to a NEAP to serve a wider population.
High Wycombe Town Centre	The Rye (nearest open space)	The Rye play area serves the east side of the town, but play is deficient on the west (Desborough/Green Street/town centre) and Southern sides.

Area	Sites	Provision
Downley	The Pastures/ Rennie Close/ Desborough Rec and Hughenden Park	Some overlapping/duplicate provision with the NEAP site at Desborough and Hughenden. Downley village (parish provision) and Bellfield lack provision but the deficiency at Bellfield will be addressed by new housing developments.
Micklefield	Forest Way/ Melbourne Rec / Baring Rd / Conway House / Welles Rd / Herbert Rd	Adequate
Bowerdean	Bowerdean Rec	Under provision and lack of open space (also highlighted in LDF)
Totteridge	Totteridge Rec	Adequate
Loudwater	Queensmead / Thanestead and Snakely Close (parish)	Adequate
Wycombe Marsh	Kingsmead Rec	Currently LEAP standard play area needs upgrading to NEAP to serve a wider population.

Area	Sites	Provision
Flackwell Heath	Oakwood / Straight Bit (parish)	Some under provision, Straight Bit could be upgraded from a LEAP to a NEAP to cover area of deficiency.
Wooburn/Bourne End	4 play areas, all parish council owned	Sufficiently provided in open space but potentially some under-provision in play
Princes Risborough	4 play areas, all Town Council Provision	Sufficient provision in most parts of PR. Open space and play deficiency at the southern end of PR (also highlighted in LDF)
Marlow	Higginson Park / Riley Rec / Newfield Gardens / Shelley Rd / Wallace Close / Sandygate Close & Seymour Court (Town Council provision)	Sufficiently provided in most parts of Marlow. An open space deficiency has been identified at the eastern end of Marlow (LDF).
Hazlemere	Badger Way & parish provision	Adequate
Tylers Green	The Pines and Ashley Drive(parish provision)	Adequate
Lane End	Simmons Way and The Row(parish provision)	Simmons Way upgrade from a LEAP to a NEAP.
Castlefield	Cross Rd/ Chairborough Rd and Deeds Grove	Adequate

Area	Sites	Provision
Desborough	Desborough Rec / Desborough Street	The eastern end of Desborough to the town centre (Desborough / Green Street) is deficient in open space and play facilities (also highlighted in the LDF).
Naphill / Walter's Ash	3 play areas, parish council provision	Adequate.
Stokenchurch	1 play area, parish council provision	No open space deficiency but potentially a deficiency in play..

Footnotes:

- 1) "adequate" means adequate in terms of space standards for current population. It does not refer to the quality of play areas or play equipment
- 2) Please note that play provision other than WDC ownership has not been fully assessed to date. This situation is hoped to be remedied by the proposed play partnership (programme 1).

Appendix 3

MAP 1

MAP 2

MAP 3

Appendix 3

The Wycombe District Council Fixed Play Strategy (attached)