

# **New Forest @ Play**

**Play Strategy and Action Plan for the New Forest**

**With Revised Action Plan 2006 - 2011**

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## **Foreword**

Play is not only a right for all children but also an essential aspect of their development, culture and quality of life and their initiation into wider cultural and leisure experiences.

Leisure pursuits and play, whether undertaken by adults or children, share the common characteristics of being undertaken voluntarily, requiring no necessary outcome. These activities are intrinsically worthwhile, and are distinct from those driven by necessity. In creating space and opportunities for children's play adults affirm the value of children in our society.

Children are entitled to special consideration in strategic planning because they rely on adults in the social, economic and political spheres, to ensure that their views are heard and taken into account. This strategy will show how children's play needs and wishes are to be interpreted and met within the District.

The Leisure Service of the District Council has co-ordinated the development of this strategy, but is only one amongst many organisations supporting and delivering play opportunities. The aims and objectives could not be achieved without the active involvement of all key partners

The strategy has been developed to inform and guide partner organisations and others involved in delivering and improving play in the District. It includes specific action on agreed partnership priorities for Play for 2006-9

### **New Forest @ Play Partners**

Forest Bus

Handy Trust

Hampshire Children and Families Forum

New Forest District Council

- Leisure
- Policy and Design
- Housing
- Community Safety

New Forest Association of Local Councils

Totton College

Pre- School Learning Alliance

Hampshire County Council Children's Services

- Youth Service
- Early Years
- Children's Fund

## **The Aim and Values of the Strategy**

The Aim of the Strategy is to:-

Assist the development and sustainability of a network of quality play opportunities in the New Forest District, identifying and prioritising areas for joint work.

New Forest @ Play Partners agree that the following principals are important and that they should underpin the work of the strategy

- All children and young people have need and right to play
- A commitment to strong partnership working between agencies, networks and the community to provide a co-ordinated and strategic approach to development of play opportunities
- Children's views about their play needs should be sought and given appropriate consideration in shaping new and existing provision
- Action should be taken to remove disabling barriers so that all children and young people can have easy access to the widest possible range of play experiences and play environments both inside and outside
- Play environments should provide safe stimulating play opportunities that place children at the centre of the play process. A variety of play experiences should be offered recognising that children and young people have the need for different kinds of play.
- Children need to encounter and learn to manage an acceptable level of risk in their play
- Play work training is a key to the development of quality play and should be accessible, adaptable and reflect good play work practice. It should involve a significant fieldwork component
- Priorities should be based on needs assessment and consultation

## What is Play ?

**Play is what children and young people choose to do in their own time. It is a freely chosen and personally directed behavior which is motivated from within each child and flourishes naturally given the right conditions. It has its own intrinsic value for children.**

"Play is an essential part of every child's life and vital to their development. It is the way children explore the world around them and develop and practice skills. It is essential for physical, emotional and spiritual growth, for intellectual and educational development, and for acquiring social and behavioral skills. Play is a generic term applied to a wide range of activities and behaviors that are satisfying to the child, creative for the child and freely chosen by the child. Children's play may or may not involve equipment or have an end product. Children play on their own and with others. Their play may be boisterous and energetic or quiet and contemplative, light hearted or very serious."

(Definition - from the Charter for Children's Play)

## **Why is Play is Important ?**

Play is a fundamental to children's happy healthy development. The main benefits to individual children from being able to play freely is in how satisfying it is and how much it meets the needs of the child at the time. Play and free time activities are important to children; they are seen as different from school and other organised activities and serve a different purpose. Children who feel secure in their play can spend many hours occupied in investigating and learning about themselves and the world around them.

## **Every Child Matters and Good Outcomes for Children and Young People**

The enjoyment of play is recognised as an important outcome for children alongside being healthy, staying safe, economic well being and making a positive contribution, as part and parcel of the Every Child Matters agenda. The Children's Play Council have outlined the ways that play can contribute to the well being and good outcomes for children:-

### ➤ **Enjoying and Achieving**

The essence of play is enjoyment .When playing, children define their own goals and interests, decide what is success and failure and pursue those goals in their own way. Children's enjoyment through play is linked to the control and choice they are able to exercise. Giving children the chance for free, uninhibited play allows them a psychological safe space in which to try out new roles and experiences and enhances their enjoyment of life.

There are many developmental and experiential advantages associated with children's play-providing children also with the opportunities for achievement and enabling them to reach their full potential. These include the development of problem solving and language and literacy skills as children develop their social skills and express their emotions. Play is also seen as important in the development of children's imagination and creative interests and abilities. Play allows children and young people to explore boundaries, be fully absorbed in what they are doing and feel satisfied with what they have achieved.

### ➤ **Being Healthy**

Play is crucial to health and development throughout childhood, contributing to social, physical, intellectual, cultural, emotional and psychological development. The physical activity involved in energetic play provides children with a significant amount of their regular exercise. Research shows that school age children get more exercise in free play than from most structured activity, excepting only P.E.

➤ **Staying Safe**

One of the main reasons children give for not playing outdoors more is that they and their parents are afraid for their safety. Fear of strangers, traffic and bullying by other children combine to keep children in their own homes. Good play provision protects children through reducing unacceptable levels of danger, while allowing them the opportunity to challenge themselves and use their initiative. At the same time, play enables children to take risks, to think through decisions and gain increased self confidence and resilience.

➤ **Making a Positive contribution**

Children's involvement in the development of their own play is fundamental. Children learn from the way others and the environment react to their play, the effects of their actions and the values others place on them. When there are adults no present, children will create and make their own choices. In good supervised play provision, adults involve the children and young people in decisions about resources and facilities that might be available to them.

Local Authorities and communities groups are increasingly involving children and young people in local play audits and discussions about their free –time needs. This results in more appropriate provision, helps children and young people develop their skills and knowledge and ensures they are valued as active community members. Respecting and incorporating children and young people's views into plans and provision helps develop motivation and potentially, participation the society.

➤ **Economic Well-Being**

Good play provision enables parents to work or train and allows them to feel their children are happy, safe and enjoying themselves.

The creative and social skills that children develop through play help them to develop lateral thinking and emotional intelligence that are becoming increasingly important in a globalised, non – hierarchical economy.

Good play provision promotes community well-being and security. It brings economic benefits through jobs and training, it offers genuine excitement and challenge to prevent children and young people behaving in ways that are socially unacceptable. Development of outside play and recreation spaces have shown to have a measurable impact on local interaction, new friendships, community cohesion and community safety.

## **Children want and need a good range of places to play**

Children's play is rarely confined to one place; children play in their homes, at school, in supervised provision, in parks and recreation grounds and in the streets and neighbourhoods close to their homes, in fact anywhere they are at the time. This needs to be recognised in the design and provision of all elements of the public and domestic environment from street design to housing provision.

For children and young people to make use of the best possible play and free-time opportunities, they need to have places near their homes and schools where they can:

- Enjoy themselves and play with or without supervision from adults
- Chose and take control of their own play activities
- Play by themselves or with others
- Experience varied and interesting environments
- Challenge and extend the limits of their physical, mental, emotional or creative abilities
- Feel safe from environmental and human dangers.

These places can be indoors or outside, may or may not be specifically designed for children's play and may be staffed or un- staffed. The essential elements are that there are a number of such places in any locality, that they are accessible to and available to all children who might want to use them and there is sufficient variety to ensure plenty of opportunity to satisfy the play and free-time needs of children of different ages, abilities, cultures and interests and with different home and family backgrounds.

Even where there are good play opportunities, children and young people can only enjoy them if their parents and carers allow them the freedom to play away from their homes and the community allow them to equally share in and use all kinds of public spaces.

## **The Need to Provide Challenges and Manage Risk**

Play and safety experts agree that there is currently a tendency for providers to minimise accidents and injuries of any kind, at the expense of play environments that offer real challenge and enjoyment. This is a poor use of resources, as such facilities will tend to be under used or abused.

The effect is to stop children from enjoying a healthy range of play opportunities, limiting their enjoyment and causing potentially damaging consequences for their development.

The Partners involved in this strategy endorse the position statement developed by the Play safety Forum who have considered this issue in depth.

*'Children need and want to take risks when they play. Play provision aims to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. In doing this, play provision aims to manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risk of death or serious injury'*

From Managing Risk in Play Provision, Play Safety Forum, 2002

## **How this Strategy Links to the Wider Local Agenda for Children and Young People**

### **Links to Other Strategies and Plans**

Play Development and the Play Strategy sit within the Leisure Portfolio of the District Council. It has identified actions linked to the work and plans of the following local authority departments, plans and initiatives.

- Leisure Plan
- Community Safety Strategy
- Town and Parish Plans
- Hampshire Early Years Education and Childcare Strategy
- Hampshire Extended Schools Initiative
- New Forest Housing Strategy
- New Forest Transport Strategy
- New Forest Open Spaces Strategy
- New Forest Health Strategy 'Improving Life in the Forest'

These contribute to the joint efforts being focused on good outcomes for children by the key overarching strategies namely

- The Local Strategic Partnership's Community Strategy
- The Local Development Framework
- The Hampshire Children and Young Peoples Plan

This joint work is further focused through the joint health targets in the Local Public Service Area Agreement aimed at the reduction of childhood obesity.

### **The Children and Young Peoples Community Action Network (CAN) or Locality Children's Partnership**

The District has a well established Children and Young Peoples Community Action Network / Locality Children's Partnership. This Network is developing as the key interface between local field work and policy and acts as the primary reference group on children and young people's issues for all of the major District and County Plans.

The CAN or Locality Children's Partnership brings together different parts of the local system including those involved in developing play. The Network / Partnership seeks to achieve the best outcomes for children in the District by improving information sharing, adding value to developments and the delivery of services and giving a cohesive, co-ordinated input into all plans policy and strategy for children and young people.

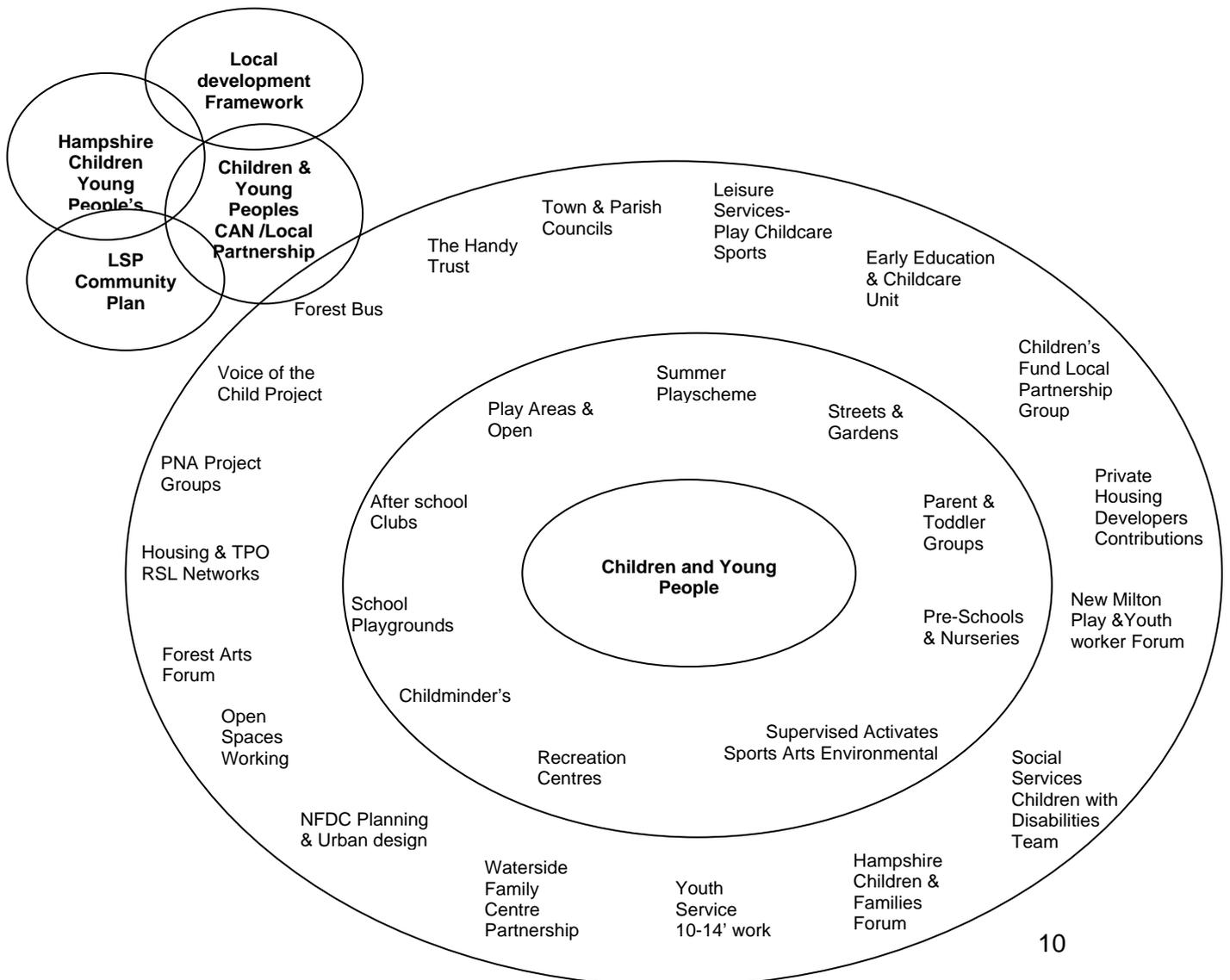
The Children and Young Peoples Community Action Network will establish appropriate links with other 11 CAN's e.g. Transport, Health, Housing to ensure the needs of Children and Young People are considered in the widest context of community planning

The success of our efforts to provide safe, accessible play opportunities for all children and young people to enjoy will be measured as part of the Joint Area Review of Children's Services.

## Working in Partnership

Children's play in the New Forest benefits from the active involvement of community and voluntary sector organisations and different levels and departments of local government. There are strong links between organisations and this has resulted in joint working and actions. This is vital for achieving the aims of the strategy. It is important to encourage and support representation of children's play issues in strategic planning groups, operational/ implementation groups, local and district forums. Between partners we have been successful in achieving this. The range of links and influences can be seen in the diagram. The benefits are:

- Awareness, understanding and support for play issues gained at lots of levels
- A co-ordinated approach to play across agencies and identify gaps in services
- A comprehensive overview held by the Play Development Officer - helps in joining up things, finding and focusing relevant support and avoiding duplication.
- Developments based on sound local knowledge and community links, this helps make provision relevant and builds in sustainability
- Linking in funding from other strategies and programs
- Provides opportunities to influence a variety of policy and plans that affect children's play
- Direct provision of play areas and playable environments through planning



## Commitment to Quality and Inclusion

### Access and Inclusion

The partners involved in this strategy have endorsed the principal that states

*Action should be taken to remove disabling barriers so that all children and young people can have easy access to the widest possible range of play experiences and play environments both inside and outside*

Fundamentally all children are entitled to go out to play and feel included. Work is taking place in the District to improve access to play and provide inclusive play environments. However there are a range of factors that sometimes prevent equal outcomes, these include:

- A shortage of play facilities, especially in some of the more rural parts of the District.
- The cost and affordability and relevance of supervised activities highlighting the need for more low cost open access provision
- Housing- Children living without immediate access to appropriate outside play space e.g. First and second floor flats and children living in cramped temporary accommodation
- Fear of crime, including bullying
- Environmental barriers that exclude children from play areas such as uneven surfaces, busy roads, pavement parking, narrow gates
- Social barriers and discriminatory attitudes that can be experienced by disabled children or children from minority ethnic backgrounds

In order to overcome some of these barriers, the action plan for this strategy includes specific work and actions to:

- Increase access to a range of free open access provision in identified areas through targeted 'Access to Play' projects and initiatives'.
- Provide training to raise awareness and promote good practice e.g. 'Every one Can Play'
- Increase support for out of school providers through the appointment of Inclusion Co-ordinators by the Early Years Unit.
- Support a bridging process to enable disabled children to access their local provision
- Provide local input into the into the early years and child vulnerable children sub group
- Promote good practice guidance around developing accessible play areas

## **Best Play and Local Standards**

### **'Best Play' Objectives**

Best Play Objectives are a widely recognised criteria for measuring –'What Play Provision Should do for Children'. They specifically focus attention on the quality of the play experiences offered. This strategy endorses and promotes their use used as a tool improve and develop children's play opportunities. They can be applied to any provision i.e. supervised groups, unsupervised play areas and public open space.

They can be used across services, agencies and organisations to access and improve play value for example when:

- Developing funding criteria
- Delivering supervised activities for children and young people
- Planning and designing or improving play areas
- Designing open spaces and housing schemes

The 7 objectives are that the provision:

- Extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction that they enjoy from it.
- Recognises the child's need to test boundaries and respond positively to that need.
- Manages the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe.
- Maximises the range of play opportunities.
- Fosters independence and self esteem.
- Fosters children's respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction.
- Fosters the child's well-being, health growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.

## **Standards for Supervised Provision**

The following range of other good practice guidance and standards will be promoted and used by partners to maintain or improve and develop quality play opportunities

- National Standard for Day Care and Childminding relevant to childcare provision and supervised activity schemes
- Quality Assurance Schemes – There are a range of relevant schemes for Out of School, Early Years, Playschemes
- Hampshire County Council 'Open Country Pursuits' – policy and good practice relevant to Out of School provision and Playschemes taking children off site.

## **Local Standards for Open Space and Play Areas**

PPG17 Guidance local authorities are asked to:

*...assess existing and future needs, establish the quantity, quality and accessibility of existing open spaces and recreation facilities, and establish standards of provision. The needs of those living and visiting rural areas are also to be met.*

To achieve this, members of The District Council Policy Design and Information Team are in the process of leading the development of an 'Open Spaces Strategy' for the District. This involved an audit of local open space and the development of new robust local standards.

At present standards are set out in the local plan using 'NPFA Six Acre Standard'

Within the District it is the Town and Parish Councils that manage most play areas and open space. An established open spaces working group aids the development and sustainability. The group includes representation across the District Council, it brings together all the services that have a role in helping to secure recreational open space. This extends from the first ideas of land allocation, through negotiations with developers to commenting and influencing design and implementation.

In addition there is a regular liaison meeting with representatives of the principal Town and Parish Councils that utilise developer's contributions. This assists in monitoring levels of provision, needs and progress with site transfers.

There is an established protocol in place to guide the development and handover of space generated through 106 agreements.

## Training

Playwork training remains the cornerstone of developing good quality, accessible provision whether it is for staff or volunteers in childcare or supervised activities. All clubs, communities, playschemes, play organisations and recreation centres are encouraged to take up training for their staff and volunteers. Play work education and training in the District, continues to be aided by the Local Training Forum, which is made up of representatives from the voluntary and community sector, statutory and private providers of play, early year's education, childcare, colleges and other training providers. This is still producing a co ordinate approach. The forum is chaired by the Hampshire Early Years and Childcare Unit.

The training available in the District continues to expand and is outlined in The Hampshire Early Education and Childcare Unit, training and continuing professional development program. This covers training for early years and projects for older children. The training route actions outlined below are the ones linked to play projects for school age children. There is a similar route and training for early years education and nurseries workers. This can be found as another part of the Hampshire County Early Years Development and Childcare Plan.

There is also a regular up date of courses published by Hampshire Early Education and Childcare Unit in the termly Horizons Magazine, which is automatically sent to every registered childcare provider. Representatives from the District are also involved in the regional work of Playwork South East. This group supports the overall development of playwork training in our area.

### Training and Professional Development for Playworkers Working in Play Projects with School Aged Children

First Steps Basic Playwork Certificate	Intermediate Certificate in Developing Skills Working With Children and Young People
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Certificate in Playwork Level 2  
or  
NVQ Playwork Level2

Diploma in Playwork Level 3  
or  
NVQ Playwork level3

Early Years Care and Education  
Level 4

#### Professional Development Workshops

- First Aid
- Basic Child Protection
- Advanced Child Protection
- Behavior Management
- Every One Can Play
- Health and Safety
- Food Hygiene

Similar pathways exist for pre- school and day nursery staff and childminders

## **Actively Involving Children and Young People in Consultation and Decision Making**

The Partners involved in this strategy share agreed values for the future active involvement of children and young people in the planning and development of their own play spaces and play activities. If carried out in an appropriate way this can bring many benefits:

### ***Benefits for organisations/agencies when they are developing and supporting play***

- Information can be gained from children and young people as citizens and customers about their changing attitudes and needs, their views as to what constitutes quality in service provision and barriers to accessing services
- Children and young people can bring a fresh perspectives and new ideas about services, policies and democratic processes, helping tackle key objectives and promoting social inclusion.
- Services and policies can be designed, delivered and evaluated based on actual rather than presumed need. This saves money.

### ***Benefits for children and young people***

- Children and young people can build on existing skills and develop new ones, increasing confidence and self esteem.
- Children and young people may better understand organisations and how to influence them.
- Children and young people benefit from new and better services that are more responsive to their needs.

### ***Benefits for the wider Community***

- There is a more vibrant local democracy through the active involvement of children and young people.
- Community cohesion is fostered through the inclusion of children and young people in local decision making
- There is an empowering environment that raises aspirations among children and young people and the wider community

The shared values outlined on the next page form part of 'Hear by Right' – standards for the active involvement of children and young people. The standards have been developed by The National Youth Agency in partnership with the local Government Association.

## Shared Values for Involving Children and Young People in Consultation

- Children and Young People's participation is a visible commitment that is properly resourced.
  - There is visible commitment to the principals and practice from senior managers, elected members or trustees.
  - Participation is built into the organisation and is reflected in its strategic planning, services, resources and communication
  - Relevant staff, elected members or trustees have the opportunity to develop the attitudes and skills to work effectively with children and young people.
- Children and Young People's involvement is valued
  - Children and young people are treated honestly and their contributions are taken seriously
  - Feedback to children and young people about the effects of their involvement is prompt and clear
  - Children and young people's participation is celebrated
- Children and young people have an equal opportunity to participate
  - All children and young people have a right to participate in the decisions that affect them
  - Children and young people feel welcome and valued and are not discriminated against or prevented from participating on grounds of ethnic origin, language, religion, culture, disability, age, gender, sexuality or location
  - Care and time is taken to go the extra mile to ensure children and young people facing greatest barriers to getting involved are aware of and can take up opportunities to have their say
  - Information is available to children and young people in good time and is accessible, jargon free and culturally appropriate
- Policies and standards for the participation of children and young people are in place, evaluated and improved
  - What the organisation is trying to achieve and the intended benefits are clear from the start
  - Children and young people evaluate the process and changes that result from their points of view and help apply lessons learned
  - There are agreed quality standards and codes of conduct for working with children and young people to ensure their participation is safe and sound

## Establishing What Needs to be Done

Improving and successfully developing local play opportunities depends in part on:

- knowing about local children and their met and unmet play needs
- what play opportunities exist for them now
- what support currently exists for play development
- what potential exists for developing better play opportunities
- what parents' needs are in relation to their children's free time activities.

In order to find out some of these things, an audit and consultation were carried out during 2004 and involved representation from a range of key partners involved in supporting play, multi agency groups, play providers, other district council services, the county council, town and parish councils, parents, children and young people and elected members. This Consultation has given the main steer for the values, principals and policy of the Strategy. From that time the consultation process has been on going through locality working groups. New audit information is constantly being gathered being added to the picture .This has enabled up dates to the action plan.

### The Consultation

Consultation was carried out in cluster areas.

<b>5 clusters in the north west</b>	<b>5 clusters in the South West</b>	<b>6 clusters in the Waterside and South Forest</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downland and Forest</li> <li>• Fordingbridge Ward</li> <li>• The Ringwood Wards and Sopley Ward</li> <li>• Forest North West</li> <li>• Bransgore and Burley</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lymington Town Ward</li> <li>• The 5 New Milton Wards</li> <li>• Boldre and Sway Ward</li> <li>• Brockenhurst and Forest South Ward</li> <li>• Hordle Ward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lyndhurst Ward</li> <li>• Marchwood Ward</li> <li>• The 5 Totton Wards</li> <li>• The 3 Hythe Wards</li> <li>• Fawley,Blackfield &amp; Langley; Furzedown &amp; Hardley ;Holbury &amp; North Blackfield</li> <li>• Ashurst, Copythorne South &amp; Netley Marsh; Bramshaw, Copythorne North &amp; Minstead</li> </ul>

Use was also made of information from other relevant consultation and research produced for other initiatives plans and strategies e.g.

- The Children's Fund Implementation Plan – Hampshire Children and Families Forum consultation
- Hampshire Early Years Development and Childcare Plan and SW Local Strategic Plan
- Participatory Needs Assessment for Pennington; Calshot; Ashley and Waterside and New Milton.
- New Milton Market Town Initiative
- Summary of the indices of deprivation 2004 for the New Forest
- Improving Health in the Forest – New Forest Health Strategy
- Hythe and Dibden Play Areas Working Group
- New Forest Transport Strategy
- The work of the open spaces working Group

## **Consultation with Children and Young People**

Children and Young People are being consulted through the 'Voice of the Child Project' on an ongoing basis. Information was also used from The District Council Youth Panel consultations, which take place as part of the Leisure Service review process.

The 'Voice of the Child Project' is funded and supported by the Children's Fund and encourages the active participation of children and young people in shaping services. The strategy has linked to consultation work that has been carried out. Views continue to be captured in a mixture of formats including:

- video
- photographs and with written comments by children
- model making 'Planning for Real' workshops
- survey questionnaires

A number of examples are

- At children's play and arts festival days at Blackfield and New Milton organised by the Forest Bus and produced a big brother diary video
- In Ringwood South, Fordingbridge and some surrounding villages carried out during summer fun events as a partnership between Hampshire Children and Families Forum and Forest Bus
- With young people in a range of settings and situations in Hythe organised in partnership with the Handy Trust.
- Young Peoples questionnaire undertaken by Pennington PNA Working Group
- The 'Planning for Real' process with children at New Milton and Ashley Junior Schools as part of the New Milton Market Town Planning, involving model making and workshops.

The issues discussed by the children and young people ranged from global and national concerns through to comments and ideas about the Towns, villages and streets where they live. This consultation is seen as an important on going process and dialogue within the strategy and will be key in the development of the "Access To Play" Projects.

## **Consultation with Key People Involved in Supporting Play**

3 area meetings / workshop events were held. There were 80 participants in total across all the sessions. The events were open invitation and brought together key partners involved in supporting play. This included representation from play and youth work organisations / providers, the county council, town and parish councils, parents, faith groups, schools, health visitors, local children and families forums and elected District Council members. Because of the local nature of the events, representatives were able to identify and discuss grass roots issues relating to play in local communities.

Letters inviting open comments were sent to all Town and Parish Councils and New Forest District Council Members. This brought some in-depth and valuable feedback, but was limited to only 4 responses.

Led interviews using prompt questions were held with other services within NFDC. Feed back was gained from Community Safety, Housing, Planning Policy, Open Spaces working Group, Transport and Health Policy Development.

### **The consultations looked at four subject areas**

- The importance of play to children and the community
- Joint values, principals and standards
- Identifying present good practice and provision
- Actions for the future

### **The key Issues from the Adult Consultation**

- Endorsement for supporting the improvement and development of children's play opportunities
- An understanding and appreciation by the community of play as a freely chosen activity, valuable in its own right, and that it is central to the lives of children and young people
- Promoting play – keeping the issues in the front of the minds of the whole community
- Involving children and young people in identifying needs and decision making about their play environments is important
- The importance of working together with other agencies and the community to improve play opportunities and to influence a wide range of services at lots of levels
- We should be sharing facilities and buildings more
- There is a need to improve access for children who are disabled
- More information is needed on where to get funding for play
- The development of more supervised open access and affordable provision
- Improving the relationship between children and young people and older people in the District.

## **Audit information**

The body of audit information available is steadily growing. At present it takes in

- Parish and Ward and population statistics
- ward and SOA statistical information regarding children disadvantaged by low income and those facing considerable geographical barriers to services
- supervised play provision both open access and childcare
- existing play area and open space information

The open spaces and play area elements are currently being updated through the audit for the Open Spaces Strategy, so up dated information is being assimilated in to picture.

## **What we know at the moment**

there are :

303.89ha of designated informal open space and 257.22ha formal open space.

63 designated fixed equipment children's play areas in the District.

54,000ha of heath, woodland and forest lawns.

180 Pre Schools and Toddler Groups

A strong voluntary and community infrastructure involved in delivering, developing and supporting play

2 further education Colleges offering play work and childcare courses

On average 13 summer play schemes mixture of open access and sessional care

17 Out of School Childcare clubs offering a range of after school, holiday and breakfast care

Forest Bus Mobile Community Project- delivering and developing 4 open access play projects in areas of need.

Significant pockets of disadvantage both in terms of geographical barriers to accessing services and children living in low income households. Three of the District wards are in the top 10% of the most disadvantaged in England

A population of 38,000 children and young people 0-19

## Criteria for Prioritising Action and Resources

Meeting the needs of the varied and complex mix of rural and urban areas in the District is a challenge in terms of policy and prioritization.

Children and young people living in some areas of the District are disadvantaged by lack of access to appropriate services or opportunities. The reasons vary. Some live in very small rural settlements where opportunities to socialise other than at school are limited. Relying on parents and carers for transport can lead to lost independence and spontaneity and isolation. In other parts of the District the age profile of the population can lead to tensions that are difficult to manage. There are also pockets of disadvantage resulting from low income.

Over the years an infrastructure has built up that has the capability of supporting the sustainable development needed to increase play opportunities for these children. The infrastructure is a partnership and interdependence between statutory and voluntary sector organisations and relies on working closely with communities to increase the capacity they have to sustain provision on a very local basis. The support of this broad infrastructure is key to the success of the strategy.

The action plan section of the strategy has two elements:

- Sustainability of the play infrastructure and existing provision
- A focus on increasing access to a range of play opportunities for children living in areas of greatest need. This has been determined by identifying areas that have a combination of the following factors.
  - SOA's that are the most disadvantaged in terms of geographical barriers to services and children living in low income households.
  - Children who have access to less than 3 types of good quality play provision/ facilities within walking distance
  - High child population in urban areas combined with lack of facilities or poor quality facilities.
  - Low child population in rural areas combined with and lack of opportunities to socialise informally with out adult assistance with transport.
  - Quality of other local open space including access to woods, heath, forest lawns.

## Our Priority Areas for Increased Access

The following 20 areas have been identified as priorities for improvement. Partners have agreed to joint working to improve access to play in these areas, across a range of provision for example

Open spaces and play areas  
 Supervised open access play  
 Summer Playschemes  
 Out of School Childcare  
 Early Years Provision including Childrens Centres

<b>Aeas known locally as</b>	<b>SOA</b>
Heather Rd across to Gang Wairily Centre (Blackfield)	013A
Downland Villages of Rockbourne, Damerham , Martin, Whitsbury	001A
Netley View (Hythe)	011D
Bramshaw, Fritham, Minstead	007B
Applemore, Challenger Way (Hythe)	008B
Beaulieu, Exbury, East Boldre, Denny Lodge	017B
North Milton (New Milton)	020B
Ellingham Harbridge and Ibsley	010A
Pennington	019C
Thorneyhill and Bransgore	016C
Hardley.Lime kiln Lane	014E
Ringwood South,Kingston,Bisterne	012E
Owlsfield ,Davis Field (New Milton)	020D
Water Lane (Totton)	002D
Woodlands	006C
Totton Central	004B
Hyde and Godshill	001G
Central Lymington	017D
Breamore, Woodgreen, Hale	001B
Sopley and Ripley	016E

For children and young people to make use of the best possible play and free-time opportunities, they need to have places near their homes and schools where they can:

- Enjoy themselves and play with or without supervision from adults
- Choose and take control of their own play activities
- Play by themselves or with others
- Experience varied and interesting environments
- Challenge and extend the limits of their physical, mental, emotional or creative abilities
- Feel safe from environmental and human dangers.

These places can be indoors or outside, may or may not be specifically designed for children's play and may be staffed or un-staffed. The essential elements are that there are a number of such places in any locality, that they are accessible to and available to all children who might want to use them and there is sufficient variety to ensure plenty of opportunity to satisfy the play and free-time needs of children of different ages, abilities, cultures and interests and with different home and family backgrounds.

## Performance Management and Evaluation

The National Children's Play Council have been funded to develop a small number of strategic indicators for assessing local authority performance in ensuring the availability of quality facilities and spaces for all children and young people's play and informal recreation across their area.

The indicators being piloted during 2006 for potential use within the cultural block of Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Joint Area Reviews of Children's Services which form a part of the Every Child Matters inspection framework. They demonstrate the potential contribution of play opportunities to key outcomes for children.

Although the indicators are in draft format at the time of forming this strategy, partners see the value of their use to assess the impact of our work in the 'Access to Play' project areas and have agreed to adopt them for the life of this plan.

Performance will be monitored through annual feedback to the Children and Young Peoples Can / Locality Partnership and NFDC members.

### Main Indicators

Indicator 1	Participation in play and informal recreation	Generation
	The percentage of children and young people aged from birth to 16 who play out for at least four hours each week	School/household survey
Indicator 2	Access to a variety of facilities and spaces	Generation
	The number of targeted SOA's where children from birth to 16 have access to a range of at least 4 different types of spaces, facilities or free supervised play opportunity. At least one of these should be an appropriate dedicated place for informal recreation within easy walking distance.	Open spaces and play strategy audits of spaces and facilities within local authority area that provide opportunities for free play  GIS mapping
Indicator 3	Quality of facilities and spaces	Generation
	The proportion of facilities and spaces meeting the quality criteria with, for example ratings of excellent, good, adequate or poor	assess against standards on quality
Indicator 4	Satisfaction	Generation
	The percentage of children and young people who think that the range and quality of play facilities and spaces they are able to access in their neighbourhood is good/ very good	School/household survey

### Additional Supporting Indicators

<b>Indicator 5</b>	<b>Planning and play strategy</b>	<b>Generation</b>
	The extent to which a local authority has developed, adopted is resourcing and implementing a comprehensive strategy for the improvement of children's play provision	Assess against Criteria
<b>Indicator 6</b>	<b>Awareness/consultation</b>	<b>Generation</b>
	Extent to which attitudes have changed towards the importance of creating and sustaining opportunities for children to play out in their own neighbourhoods	Household survey
<b>Indicator 7</b>	<b>Road safety</b>	<b>Generation</b>
	Proportion of residential streets within the vicinity of schools that have traffic speeds of 20mph or less	County Council Highways Statistics
<b>Indicator 8</b>	<b>Children walking and cycling to school</b>	<b>Generation</b>
	Percentage of 8-10 year olds who travel to school unaccompanied by an adult.	School /household survey

## Action Plan – Priorities for 2006 - 2009

### Section 1: Sustaining Infrastructure and existing provision

<p><b>Funding the Development Infrastructure</b></p> <p>In order to make sure that provision develops in an appropriate and sustainable way and is of good quality it is important that there is an infrastructure in place that includes development worker support and training. The Partners in this strategy are a key to providing this infrastructure. Voluntary sector partners can face particular uncertainty and difficulty in raising funds for their core running costs. Supporting core costs for voluntary sector partners helps with long term planning and leveraging in substantial funding that statutory partners are unable to access.</p> <p><b>Partners of the strategy sign up to the delivery of the revised strategy and action plan by August 2006</b></p> <p><b>Partners reflect on the impact of delivering the play strategy when reviewing annual funding and resources.</b></p> <p><b>In particular the existing funding agreements for</b></p> <p><b>Forest Bus</b>  <b>Pre-School Learning Alliance</b>  <b>HANDY Trust</b>  <b>Out of School Development Work</b>  <b>Hampshire Children and Families Forum</b></p>	<p>NFDC to co ordinate</p> <p>All Play Partners</p>
<p><b>Quality</b></p> <p>In order to increase quality and inclusion and promote good practice in line with the strategy , our priorities are to:</p> <p><b>Incorporate' Best Play 'objectives as a quality bench mark for grant aid. To be in place by April 2007</b></p> <p><b>Offer ongoing support and mentoring to ensure all relevant schemes register with Ofsted. Target - 95% of schemes reaching satisfactory or better by April 2009</b></p> <p><b>Increase the number of Out of School providers gaining accreditation to 40 % by April 2009</b></p> <p><b>Adopt and introduce local standards for play space as part of the open spaces strategy by Dec 2006</b></p>	<p>NFDC to coordinate</p> <p>EECU</p> <p>NFDC</p> <p>NFDC</p>

<p><b>Training</b></p> <p>Playwork training remains the cornerstone of developing good quality, accessible provision whether it is for staff or volunteers in childcare or supervised activities. All clubs, communities, playschemes, play organisations are encouraged to take up training for their staff and volunteers. Priorities for 2006- 2008 are to:</p> <p><b>Actively link play workers into relevant training through field work and networking</b></p> <p><b>Produce and distribute information training information Horizons Magazine -Termly</b></p> <p><b>Provide specific training session for summer playscheme inductions before each summer holiday period</b></p> <p><b>Provide a rolling program of Qualifying Courses in Playwork and Early Years</b></p> <p><b>Provide a rolling program of CDP courses</b></p> <p><b>Deliver at least 1 introductory course for Young Play workers</b></p>	<p>Lead</p> <p>NFDC</p> <p>EECU</p> <p>NFDC</p> <p>Totton and Brockenhurst College Bursaries EECU</p> <p>EECU</p> <p>Handy Trust NFDC</p>
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## Section 2: Increasing Access and Opportunities

<p><b>Including Disabled Children</b></p> <p>All children and young people should have easy access to the widest possible range of play experiences and play environments both inside and outside. Actions towards removing barriers for disabled children will include</p> <p><b>The development of a joint action plan for the District to improve access for children to leisure and recreational activities. To be in place by April 2007</b></p> <p><b>The development of local bridging activities that enable at least 40 disabled children of school age to access their local provision by April 2009</b></p> <p><b>Providing training on a regular basis to raise awareness and promote good practice e.g. ‘ Everyone Can Play ‘</b></p> <p><b>Recruitment of new area inclusion co-ordinators to support out school providers of 7hrs per week across the District</b></p>	<p>Lead</p> <p>CWD steering group –HCC and PCT</p> <p>NFDC SCARF</p> <p>HCC Early Years</p> <p>HCC Early Years</p>
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<p><b>Information</b></p> <p><b>Link NFDC Leisure /children and young peoples web pages site to both Hants FISH and CIS by April 2007</b></p>	<p>NFDC and HCC</p>
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<p><b>Access to Play Projects</b></p> <p>The strategy identifies 20 priority areas that are lacking in appropriate play space or facilities.</p> <p>In order to increase the range and quality of provision in these areas</p> <p><b>Focus development work in these areas to increase the capacity of local communities in developing, managing and sustaining new provision.</b></p> <p><b>Provision and facilities include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Open spaces and Play Areas</li> <li>- Supervised Open Access Play</li> <li>- Summer Playschemes</li> <li>- Out of School Childcare</li> <li>- Early Years Provision Including Children’s Centres</li> </ul> <p><b>Actively seek additional external funding to build or pump prime new provision in identified areas</b></p> <p><b>20 Identified Areas</b></p>	<p><b>Play Partnership</b></p> <p><b>Play Partnership</b></p> <p><b>SOA</b></p>
Heather Rd across to Gang Wairily Centre (Blackfield)	013A
Downland Villages of Rockbourne, Damerham , Martin, Whitsbury	001A
Netley View (Hythe)	011D
Bramshaw, Fritham, Minstead	007B
Applemore, Challenger Way (Hythe)	008B
Beaulieu, Exbury, East Boldre, Denny Lodge	017B
North Milton (New Milton)	020B
Ellingham Harbridge and Ibsley	010A
Pennington	019C
Thorneyhill and Bransgore	016C
Hardley.Lime kiln Lane	014E
Ringwood South,Kingston,Bisterne	012E
Owlsfield ,Davis Field (New Milton)	020D
Water Lane (Totton)	002D
Woodlands	006C
Totton Central	004B
Hyde and Godshill	001G
Central Lymington	017D
Breamore, Woodgreen, Hale	001B
Sopley and Ripley	016E

# Appendix 1

## **More About Key Partner Organisations**

### **Forest Bus**

The Forest Bus is a mobile project organised by New Forest and Romsey Mobile Community Project.

The project employs play and youth workers to develop community provision where there is an identified need. Sessions are delivered from a vehicle specially converted for play and community work. The staff work alongside volunteers in the community to help develop groups that continue to be of benefit long after the Bus has moved on.

In response to local needs the bus provides family groups for parents and children and supervised open access holiday and after school sessions for school age children. The sessions are free at the point of delivery. The mobile nature of the project means that valuable community development, play and health promotion resources can travel to communities that might otherwise miss out.

### **The Hampshire Early Education Development and Childcare Partnership and Unit**

Hampshire County Council Early Education Development and Childcare Unit is responsible for leading and facilitating the Early Education Development and Childcare Plan for our area. The aim of the plan is to ensure accessible, affordable and good quality childcare is available for all parents and children that want it. This provision includes Pre Schools, Nurseries Childminders and Out of School Childcare for children 5-13.

Partnership agreements with the County Council jointly fund some of the work of the District Council Childcare Development, Pre – School Learning Alliance and National Child minding Association in the District.

### **Town and Parish Councils**

There are 37 Town or Parish Councils in the District. They are some of the Key supporters of neighbourhood play. Support comes in the form of management of play areas, skate parks and open space; small grants to play projects and invaluable grass roots knowledge of communities. Some directly organise and support summer playschemes.

### **Totton and Brockenhurst Colleges**

Totton and Brockenhurst College both deliver the vocational playwork courses described in the training section. Many of the courses are funded by bursaries routed through the Hampshire Early Years Unit. These courses are a cornerstone for developing quality in supervised settings.

## **The Pre School Learning Alliance**

The work of the Pre-School Learning Alliance is key to the development and sustainability of play and early learning opportunities for pre-school children. They offer a high quality support network providing advice, guidance to good practice and training. There are 3 Branches of the Pre-School Learning Alliance in the District, who between them support approximately 180 pre school groups in the District, including pre-school playgroups, parent and toddler groups, drop – ins, full day care groups and extended day pre-schools.

In addition to the work in supporting existing groups, the Pre-School Learning Alliance work with the community to identify areas where needs are not met and ensure that community based services are developed appropriately.

## **Hampshire County Youth Service**

Hampshire County Youth Service aim to promote and deliver opportunities which are challenging, supportive, exciting and fun for young people, enabling them to learn, develop and respond to change. Opportunities are offered through a voluntary association and open access basis and predominantly within young people's free time. Effective services for young people are delivered through Youth Service projects and in partnership with other organisations and agencies.

The service is committed to increasing its work with young people aged 10-14 years and acknowledges the importance and value of enabling young people to access and engage in play opportunities.

## **Hampshire Children and Families Forum**

Hampshire Children and Families forum are a voluntary organisation. There are 3 locality based Branches within the District. Local Parents are encouraged to have a say about services for children and families in their area. The Forums also provide information to Parents and each branch produces a directory of local services.

## **District Council**

There are many services based at the District Council that support the development of play. The resource of Play Development Officer and Childcare Development Worker and colleagues based in Community Services enable dedicated time to be spent on supporting a co-ordinated and joined up approach to play development across the District.

## **The Handy Trust**

The Handy Trust is a voluntary organisation. The trust employ outreach staff who support youth and community work in Hythe and latterly in Marchwood.

## **Hampshire Children's Fund Programme**

The Hampshire Children's Fund has become important in supporting a variety of preventative work with children 5-13. The current programme (2003 –6) is managed locally by the county with the assistance of a strong New Forest Local Partnership Group. The work of the programme is focuses recourses on children, young people and families who may be facing disadvantage and social exclusion. Within the District it is funding 3 projects 'Kids Link', 'Voice of the Child' and The 'Access to Play Project'

