
PLAY STRATEGY

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to update committee members about the work taking place to improve opportunities for Play in Darlington.

Summary

2. The Government has emphasised the importance of an active Childhood and Play in its 2007 Children's Plan.
3. Play should be at the heart of children's everyday lives.
4. Capital Government funding of £1,128,558 has been made available to Darlington over 2 years from 2009/10 and 2010/11 to develop 22 play areas which will involve some refurbishment of existing sites and development of some new areas.
5. Darlington Children's Trust Board has allocated £185k of Area Based Grant to commission further play opportunities for children within the most disadvantaged wards within the Borough.

Recommendation

6. Members of The Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the content of the report

Background Papers

2007 Children's Plan.
PLAY ENGLAND: Making space for play
Darlington's Children and Young People's Plan 200-11

**Murray Rose
Director of Children's Services**

S17 Crime and Disorder	Provides purposeful activity.
Health and well-being	Supports the health and emotional well-being of children and young people in the Borough
Sustainability	Helps contribute to community capacity.
Diversity	Data will be collected and analysed to ensure all children are included and to consider impact in any particular groups of children.
Wards affected	All
Groups affected	All
Budget and policy framework	Continuation of commitment beyond 2011
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
On Darlington: perfectly placed	This supports all 5 key themes.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

7. What is the National Context?

Play is what children and young people do in their own time, for their own reasons. When playing, children choose what to do, how to do it, and who to do it with. Play takes many forms: doing nothing in particular; doing lots; being challenged; being thwarted; overcoming difficulties. Through play, children explore the world and learn to take responsibility for their own choices (PLAY England: Making Space for Play.)

Playing allows children to develop a sense of well-being, develops their emotional responses and improves their interpersonal skills. It involves exploration and creativity, helping children think in a flexible manner, developing creative processes, language skills, and learning and problem solving skills (DCSF:2008)

The Government has emphasised the importance of an active childhood and play in its 2007 Children's Plan. Within the plan the Government acknowledge that children want places to play and parents want their children to enjoy the same freedoms they had when growing up. Play should be at the heart of children's everyday lives and experiences throughout childhood. Children play in many different ways according to their own interests and abilities and enjoy different forms of play at different times and places; play can reduce obesity, build social and emotional resilience, develop social skills, strengthen friendships and help them learn how to deal with risks.

8. What is happening in Darlington?

Play is also a priority for Darlington's Children and Young Peoples Plan 2008-2011.

The Darlington Play Partnership was convened at the request of the Darlington Children's Trust to review play provision as a key commissioning priority for the current financial year. The Play Partnership has partner representation from Children's Services, Community Services, Housing Department, Groundwork, DAD, Sports Development, Redhall Partnership, Firthmoor Play Scheme, Community Partnerships, Elected Members and Play England. The Play Partnership determined that as Darlington is developing a locality model of delivering services for children and families, a "core offer" of play should be identified for each locality area as detailed below:

- a) Play opportunities for pre-school children and their families in Children's Centres;
- b) Registered childcare provision for 0-14 year's playgroups and parent toddler groups;
- c) Registered holiday play schemes.
- d) Play schemes – not required to be registered.
- e) Supported outdoor play.

- f) Free play and access to play spaces.
- g) Easy access to positive youth activities (13-19 years).
- h) Easy access to sport and physical activities (all ages).

Many of the strands of the “core offer” are already being delivered, or are planned for, throughout a variety of other strategies and funding streams such as the development of services throughout Children’s Centres, childcare provision and positive youth activities.

The most apparent age gap in service provision relates to access to play for the 5-13 years age groups through the delivery of play-schemes supported outdoor play, free play and access to play and open spaces for children.

9. Current Position

In order to achieve this “core offer” of play. The Play Partnership is currently involved in the following activities.

A number of play areas have seen improvements carried out in the last 3 years mainly from local Area Agreement funding, which on some sites has been complemented by other external funding and section 106 monies.

A report to cabinet on 3rd March 2009 released further section 106 funds, which will enable improvements to take place at Sadberge, Albert Hill, Green Park, South Park and Broken Scar.

The council has also been successful in its application to Playbuilder and has received a grant from the Department of Children Schools and Families of £1,128,558. This funding has been allocated over 2 years from 2009/10. £530,535 and for 200/11, £598,023. Eleven sites per year must be developed and the emphasis on these projects will be around natural play using the landscape as an integral part of the play experience for young people. Details of these projects were reported to Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 23rd April 2009. Sites to be developed in this financial year are:

- a) Albert Hill
- b) Cocker Beck
- c) Eastbourne Park
- d) Lascelles
- e) Red Hall
- f) West Park
- g) Bensham Park
- h) Bushel Hill
- i) Skerne Restoration
- j) Eastbourne Sports Complex
- k) Green Park

Children and young people's satisfaction with these play areas is the nationally required performance indicator.

In addition to the capital development for play areas and spaces, Darlington Children's Trust Board has allocated £185k of Area Based Grant to commission further play opportunities for Children within the 11 most disadvantaged wards within the Borough.

A commissioning brief was developed by the Play Partnership which has been secured by Groundwork through a tendering process. Service requirements are that:

- l) Children will be able to access play in all 5 locality areas through the provision of play schemes.
- m) Service standards are to be consistently high by delivering a sustainable approach to the integration and development of play.
- n) Children's use of and access to outdoor spaces to be developed and extended in localities.
- o) Children have access to supported outdoor play in all localities.
- p) Children's use of fixed play areas to be extended.

Outcome of Consultation

Consultation with children, families and local communities is extensive and very specific to local areas. As part of the contract with Groundwork, consultation is the starting point for each individual project and children and parent's views will have a heavy influence on design. Groundwork are already consulting with children, parents and local communities, involving them in the design processes and are currently working with existing organisations delivering play activities.