

PLAY AND FREE TIME STRATEGY - UPDATE

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform members of progress in the Darlington Play and Free Time Strategy which was launched in Autumn 2007.

Summary

2. Darlington has developed a Play and Free Time strategy in consultation with partners for 2007-2012. This identifies a number of actions which will provide a coordinated approach to developing play in the borough based on identified need.
3. The Play and Free Time Strategy has been adopted by the Darlington Children's Trust and Councillor Chris McEwan has been identified as the Play Champion for the Borough.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that:-
 - (a) Members note the content of this report.

Murray Rose,
Director of Children's Services

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Gill Walker : Extension 2878

S17 Crime and Disorder	This strategy will support crime and disorder reduction with increased engagement of children and young people in play and free time activity.
Health and Well Being	This strategy contributes to improved health and well being for children and young people.
Sustainability	Sustainability of this activity will be planned to ensure a clear timely exit strategy has been developed before any temporary funds cease.
Diversity	The strategy aims to meet the needs for all children and young people. Needs of any specific group will be recognised and supported.
Wards Affected	All wards
Groups Affected	All children and young people.
Budget and Policy Framework	No change

Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This strategy supports One Darlington – it will ensure a universal core offer of play and free time provision is identified and any gaps or overlaps remedied.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. Darlington has developed a Play and Free Time strategy in consultation with partners for 2007-2012. This identifies a number of actions which will provide a coordinated approach to developing play in the borough based on identified need.
6. The Play and Free time strategy details the following outcomes to be achieved by 2011:
 - (a) 2534 children aged 5-19 will have increased access to play and free time provision and increased access to information about play.
 - (b) 65 children aged 8-16 with disabilities and special needs will have increased access to play provision.
 - (c) Children aged 5-19 with the highest deprivation will have increased access to play provision.
 - (d) 2078 children aged 12-19 will have increased access to youth free provision.
7. The responsibility for the Play and Free Time strategy has now been transferred to the Assistant Director - Partnerships (Children's Services) from Assistant Director- Cultural services (Community Services) to enable this work to be aligned to the work of the Youth Service and other Play Projects which have been temporarily funded by Children's Fund.
8. As part of this strategy Darlington successfully bid for Big Lottery funding of £257K over 3 years to support 'fun and free time' with the development of three projects from 2008 – 2011.
9. Progress against these projects are as follows:
 - (a) Fund and Games in the park (£91K) – the process to appoint the part time Play rangers has begun. The posts have been advertised and appointments are expected to be made by July.
 - (b) Fun on wheels (£54K) – consultation has begun with young people about the nature of this provision. The Youth Service are meeting a number of young people to outline the nature of the facility that will best meet the needs of young people across the borough – particularly to ensure access where youth provision is not currently available. It is anticipated that 'mobile' facility will be ready for use by the planned date in October.
 - (c) Better play in the Denes (£87K) – the recently developed play area in the Denes has been opened. Discussions are taking place to consider the development of other provision in the Denes to complement its use.
10. The Play and Free time Partnership is meeting on a quarterly basis to monitor progress against this strategy. The next meeting is being held on when membership of the group will be reviewed and reporting arrangements to the Children's Trust confirmed.
11. The Children's Trust Development and Commissioning group have recently approved continuation of funding for a further year for the Redhall and Firthmoor play projects – these were established three years ago supported with Children's Funding. Further discussions are taking place with all partners to consider aligning this work with the work now being developed with the Big Lottery fund and the development in the Youth Service.

12. The actions identified in the Play and free time strategy are on track to meet the identified deadlines.

Outcome of Consultation

13. The Play and Free Time Strategy was consulted on prior to the adoption by the Children's Trust in the Autumn 2007.

Impact on Looked After Children

14. It is considered the Play and Free Time Strategy will have positive outcomes for all children and young people in the Borough, including looked after children.