

**BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**FROM: Project and Programme Executive**

**REPORT NUMBER    G72**

**TO: Strategy Committee**

**DATE OF MEETING: 16 August 2007**

**PLAY POLICY FOR BABERGH**

**1.    PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To consider adopting a play policy for Babergh, endorsing the Suffolk Play Strategy and approving an application to the Big Lottery for funding for play in the district.

**2.    RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1    That the Babergh play policy attached to this report be adopted.
- 2.2    That the Suffolk Play Strategy be endorsed.
- 2.3    That an application be submitted to the Big Lottery for funding for three play projects as detailed in this report.

The committee is able to resolve this matter.

**3.    FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1    The adoption of the play policy will not involve the District Council in additional financial resources.
- 3.2    A successful bid to the Big Lottery would commit the Council to long-term maintenance of a replaced play area in Hawkins Road, Sudbury. The play worker will be entirely lottery funded and continuation of the post beyond the initial two years would be dependent on identifying other sources of funding without calling on the District Council to supply any finance. The informal play areas would be managed locally by the relevant Parish Councils.

**4.    RISK MANAGEMENT**

<b>Risk Description</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Seriousness Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation measures</b>
Failure to adopt a play policy will bar the Council from applying and securing lottery funding	Very Low	Marginal	Approval of the play policy will enable a lottery bid to be submitted.

## 5. **KEY INFORMATION**

- 5.1 In spring 2006 the Government announced a new strand of lottery funding through the Big Lottery for children's play. Each borough and district council area in the country was allocated a sum of money (in Babergh's case £200,000) for the development of play. This money is for the district council's area and not for the district council itself.
- 5.2 To access this money local authorities have to prepare a play policy and submit it with an application to the Big Lottery fund for the money. The play strategy is intended to be much wider than merely a document to secure lottery funding. It is meant to represent the specific need of each local authority area. It should influence the local authority as a whole and the need for children's play.
- 5.3 Babergh has been developing a play strategy and also working with district and borough colleagues and the county council to develop an overarching countywide strategy. This has entailed considerable work against the tight deadline set for Big Lottery applications. There are four rounds of applications, with the last one being the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2007. The vast majority of lottery bids are being submitted in this final round including all Suffolk authorities.
- 5.4 A pre-requisite of a successful lottery bid is the creation of a play partnership for the district which will drive the policy forward and be heavily involved in its delivery.
- 5.5 The emerging themes for the Babergh play policy, which were developed following extensive consultation with young people, were agreed by the Babergh Play Partnership at its second meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> July. As a result the Babergh Play Partnership consider that the Council's bid to Big Lottery should comprise the following three projects:-
- (a) A play worker – this would entail a dedicated officer working right across the district, particularly in rural areas offering free open access play opportunities for young people. The Babergh Play Partnership suggest that Babergh's own sports and arts development officers and the Be Active project could link into some of this work which is thought to be an excellent idea.
  - (b) The replacement of the existing play facility in Hawkins Road, Sudbury with new play equipment designed and planned with children and young people in partnership with local people.
  - (c) The provision of informal play areas themed around the natural environment (comprising seating and logs and other items defined by children and young people through consultation) in three rural parishes where no play provision exists.
- 5.6 Given the extraordinary tight timetable the chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Community Services) agreed that the draft policy could be submitted direct to the Strategy Committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> August, which is the only opportunity for the document to be approved (a pre-requisite of the lottery application) prior to submission by the 10<sup>th</sup> September 2007. However, he felt it important for members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Community Services) to have the opportunity to hear the progress made to date and consider endorsing the lottery proposals. This was undertaken at the meeting of the Committee on 24 July 2007. The proposals have also had member involvement through the children and young people's champion member, Rex Thake, who is also a member of the Babergh Play Partnership.

5.7 Play England, an independent Government funded organisation who offer advice and support on children's play, have offered guidance on the content of the policy, which has also been screened by a play expert at Suffolk County Council who regards it as fit for purpose for a lottery bid.

5.8 The play policy needs to be read in conjunction with the countywide Strategy which seeks to provide a vision for play in Suffolk.

6. **APPENDICES**

(a) Babergh Play Policy

(b) Suffolk Play Strategy

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO**

None.

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**BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL**

# **PLAY POLICY**



**September 2007**

# **INTRODUCTION**

Play has changed unreasonably since my young days. It was a totally different experience to the situation that exists today where traffic, safety, rules and regulation and many other obstacles seem to get in the way. When I was a lad we could disappear for hours on end and explore, climb trees and kick a ball before returning home tired, usually in need of a bath but having had a great time.

Of course I accept the need for much of the changed environment but we do have to also remember that play for young people is vital to the way they develop. So, there is a balance to be struck with the need for care and safety on the one hand and the opportunities to take risks, explore and have fun on the other.

This first Babergh Play Policy will I believe help to strike that balance. The policy has been developed following extensive consultation with young people and has been endorsed by the newly formed Babergh Play Partnership.

It will help Babergh deliver its objectives and provide the framework for more play opportunities for the young people in our area.

Rex Thake

Chairman of the Council and Member Champion for Children and Young People

## 1. **An Introduction to Play**

1.1 This Play Policy should be read in conjunction with “Play Matters – A Strategy for Suffolk”. This latter document enables play to be seen within the wider cultural development of Suffolk. Babergh’s Play Policy sets play in a local context.

1.2 What is Play?

**“..... what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons”.**

**(Source: Getting Serious About Play, 2004).**

Different people have different definitions of play. From an early age, play is important to a child’s development and learning. It isn’t just physical but can involve cognitive, imaginative, creative, emotional and social aspects. It is the main way most children express their impulse to explore, experiment and understand. While few teenagers would describe what they do as play, they also need the time, space and freedom associated with play for younger age groups.

### 1.3 **The Need For A Play Policy**

Babergh District Council has developed a play policy, for the following reasons:

- To support delivery of its corporate objective of promoting healthy living and reducing health inequalities.
- To commit to Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which states ‘children have the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts’.
- To complement the county wide “Play Matters – A Strategy for Suffolk”.
- Babergh requires an up-to-date formal set of shared and agreed values and principles to underpin the development of play across the district.
- The development of a play policy is considered essential in delivering the recognised needs of the ‘Every Child Matters’ framework.

### 1.4 **Values**

Babergh District Council recognises that all children and young people have the right to play and opportunities are essential for a child’s development and well-being.

The key values below are national principles for play.<sup>1</sup> Good quality children's play opportunities should consider the following:

- **Children's views**
- **Access to rich, stimulating environments**
- **Freedom to play**
- **Equal entitlement**
- **Respect for children**
- **Children's abilities**
- **Play for its own sake**
- **The importance of risk**
- **The adult role in play**

### 1.5 **The Case For Play**

**'Young people want to play and spend time outside and it is important that we provide suitable spaces for them. Alongside learning more about themselves and each other, play facilities will help keep children fit and healthy, help tackle the growing issue of obesity and provide parents with places where they are happy to let their children spend their free time'.<sup>2</sup>**

### 1.6 **Why Does Play Matter**

The UN Convention on the rights of the Child (1989) gives all children the right 'to rest and leisure; to engage in appropriate play and recreational activities'.<sup>3</sup> It is clear that 'things to do, places to go, are vitally important. The 2001 Mori poll for the Audit Commission and follow up report in 2005 showed that 'activities for young people were ranked by adults as the most requested improvement in local services; and 'facilities for young children' scored ahead of health, education and housing and almost level with crime reduction.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.7 **The Benefits of Play**

The information below highlights a selection of benefits play can provide to children and young people:

- Play keeps children healthy and active, with active children more likely to become active adults.
- Play promotes social inclusion. It helps children learn about their environment and develop a sense of community.
- Play promotes children's development, learning, independence and creativity.
- Play can be therapeutic. It can help deal with emotional stress or medical treatment. Play provides the opportunity for children to expend energy and have fun.

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1 National Strategy for Playwork Education and Training, National Playing Fields Association (1998)

2 Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2002)

3 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratification and accession by General Assembly (1989)

4 Time for Play, Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2006)

### 1.8 **Managing Risk**

- Providers of play facilities and services are increasingly concerned about minimising the risk of injury due to the fear of litigation. Play facilities and

services that offer no challenges will not contribute much to a child's development and if children become bored they may seek excitement elsewhere, possibly a more dangerous environment.

- Many parents are very concerned about the safety of their children and are reluctant to let them out of the house, citing fears of strangers and traffic as their main concerns. This results in an increased tendency for parents to escort their children to and from more structured activities or prevent their children playing outside unsupervised, leading to a loss of free play opportunities. Whilst statistics prove that traffic is a big danger, it is extremely rare for children to be harmed by a stranger. However, parents fears are real so must be acknowledged.
- It is the job of all those responsible for children's play to assess and manage the level of risk, so that children are given the chance to stretch themselves and develop their abilities without exposing them to unacceptable risks. Play provision is uniquely placed to offer children the chance to learn about risk in an environment designed for that purpose, helping to equip children to deal with hazards in the wider world and later in life.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. **Context**

During the last five years there has been a range of strategies and legislation that has had a significant impact on the development of play. The information below highlights these key documents:

### 2.1 **National**

<b>National Strategy</b>	<b>About This ...</b>
Best Play – What play provision should do for children (2000)	Best Play – What play provision should do for children was produced by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA), PLAYLINK and the Children's Play Council (CPC) in 2000. It is a response to a number of pressing issues within the field of children's play. This document showed that a body of knowledge has accumulated which allows the fundamental need for children's play to be asserted, bringing with it a commitment to the view that there should be public provision of high quality environments suitable for play.
Making the Case For Play (2002)	Making The Case For Play was produced by the Children's Play Council in 2002. The document called for a national play strategy and made local recommendations for developing play
Getting Serious About Play – A Review of Children's Play (2002)	Getting Serious About Play – A review of Children's Play was produced by central government in 2002. The report sets out how best to invest the £200 million from the New Opportunities Fund, pledged in June 2001, for improving children's play opportunities. It is the result of an eight month review that involved extensive

National Strategy	About This ...
Every Child Matters (2003/2004) & The Children Act (2004)	<p>consultation, commissioned research and drew on evidence from existing sources.</p> <p>Every Child Matters, was published for consultation in September 2003 and outlined a programme of reform setting out a framework of services that cover children and young people from birth to nineteen. The Children Act 2004 provides the legal framework for this reform. The legislation was accompanied by the launch of a major strategy document for English authorities, Every Child Matters: Change for Children 2004, which is intended to set the direction for the major programme of change in the delivery of children's services.</p> <p>The Children Act 2004 places a duty on services to ensure that every child, whatever their background or circumstances, should have the support they need to; Be Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying &amp; Achieving, Making a Positive Contribution, Economic Well Being.</p>
Youth Matters (2005/2006)	<p>Youth Matters, the Youth Green Paper, was published on 18 July 2005 and the subsequent consultation ended on 4 November 2005. With over 19,000 responses from young people, this is one of the largest responses to a Government consultation from any one group. The Government response, Youth Matters: Next Steps was published on 8 March 2006 and sets out the vision for empowering young people, giving them somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to.</p>
Big Lottery Fund (BLF) – Children's Play Initiative	<p>The Children's Play initiative is a new strategic funding programme for children's play, funded by the Big Lottery Fund. £155 million has been committed to the programme to develop free play opportunities in the areas of greatest need, as well as a regional support and development infrastructure and support for innovation. The Children's Play initiative is based on the recommendations made in Getting Serious About Play, the initiative is made up of three elements; Children's Play Programme, Playful Ideas Programme and a Regional Support &amp; Development Programme.</p>
Audit Commission (BVPI 115)	<p>The Audit Commission has developed a voluntary performance indicator BVPI</p>

National Strategy	About This ...
	115 on the development of local play policies. This states that every county, unitary and district authority should have an agreed play policy.

## 2.2 Regional

Regional Strategy	About This...
Suffolk Play Policy (2007)	Suffolk County Council, the seven district and borough councils and a range of other partners have worked together – Partners in Play Suffolk – to develop the Suffolk Play Strategy. This document provides a vision for play in Suffolk.
Suffolk Children and Young People's Plan (2006)	The Suffolk Children and Young People's Plan was developed by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. This document sets out the strategic priorities and commitments and how they contribute to the five outcomes from Every Child Matters. Play has a significant role to play in meeting the outcomes of Every Child Matters and in delivering the Children's and Young People's Plan.

## 2.3 Local

<b>Local Strategy</b>	<b>About This.....</b>
Babergh Youth Strategy	Babergh District Council's Youth Strategy identifies the main youth issues and priorities for the area. The Youth Strategy has a key theme of 'Things to do and Facilities'.
Babergh Partnership	Babergh District Council has taken a lead in developing a Play Policy for the district. The council will act as a leader and strategic facilitator for the development of play within the district. To achieve this the Babergh Play Partnership has been established. This working group aims to be inclusive with a range of skills, knowledge and expertise to develop play (Babergh Play Partnership Membership List can be seen in Appendix 1)
Local Area Agreement (LAA)	Suffolk's Local Area Agreement is a new approach on how central government, the local authority and local partners work together to improve priority outcomes for the citizens of Suffolk. It is currently themed into four areas including one relating to Children and Young People.
Babergh Local Plan	The Babergh Local Plan provides the development framework for the district. It ensures new development provides adequate open space and opportunity for play which are secured under planning obligations (known as section 106 agreements).

## 3 The Babergh District

- 3.1 The Babergh area has a population of circa 85,100 and covers 240 square miles, stretching from the Shotley Peninsula in the east to Bury St Edmunds in the west. 18% of the population are over the age of 65 and 18% under the age of 14 (Source: Suffolk Observatory). Overall, unemployment is low (1.3%). When measured using the National Index of Multiple Deprivation, Babergh is rated 283 out of 354 authorities (with 1 being the most deprived). The latest census shows that Babergh has a non-white population of just 0.77 %.

- 3.2 Babergh District Council has a 2007/08 budget of almost £10 million and is responsible for a range of services including planning, domestic waste collection and recycling, the collection of Council Tax and administration of housing and Council Tax Benefits, council housing, leisure centres, economic development, environmental health and some aspects of community safety.
- 3.3 Babergh works with a broad range of partners in the private, public and voluntary sectors to deliver its five main service priorities; raising individual and community ambitions, maintaining a safe, clean and sustainable environment, promoting healthy living, increasing the supply of affordable housing and giving easy, convenient access to services.
- 3.4 Babergh has been given Beacon status in four areas: neighbourhood renewal, supporting people, waste and recycling and culture and sport for hard-to-reach groups. This last award is particularly relevant to children's play. The Be Active Leisure Inclusion Project is working to achieve a safer, healthier and more active community by improving leisure participation opportunities in Babergh. The project aims to support socially excluded groups, in particular vulnerable young people between the ages of 13 and 19 and people of all ages with physical and learning disabilities. The Council's Be Active officer is a member of the Babergh Play Partnership.
- 3.5 The Council was assessed as being a 'good' council in its 2004 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA).

#### 4. **Leadership for a Play Policy**

- 4.1 Recognising the importance of Children's Play and the development of this Policy the Council has identified and committed councillor and officer roles as follows:-
  - Lead Member for Children and Young People – Councillor Rex Thake
  - Sponsoring Corporate Director – Mike Hammond
  - Project Lead – Tim Mutum

This has ensured a consistent approach to the preparation and delivery of the policy with clear lines of communication at member and officer level.

#### 5. **Play in the Context of the Council's Corporate Plan**

- 5.1 Babergh has five main service priorities which are contained in its Corporate Plan. These are:-
  - Promote healthy living and reduce health inequalities
  - Increase the supply of housing that local people can afford to rent or buy
  - Maintain a safe, clean and sustainable environment
  - Give easy convenient access to quality services
  - Raise individual and community ambitions and encourage active citizenship
- 5.2 The Council regards play as making a contribution towards its priority of 'providing healthy living and reducing health inequalities'. There is specific reference within this priority to developing a children's play strategy.

#### 6. **Babergh's Current Play Provision**

- 6.1 Babergh's current commitment to play is delivered in a number of ways.

The authority:-

- Provides fixed play equipment in the three parks it owns and maintains in its two main urban area, Sudbury and Hadleigh. Access to these facilities is free.
- Provides, access free, fixed play equipment on 19 sites throughout the district on housing estates.
- Ensures that through the planning system new housing developments include appropriate areas where children can play either on open spaces or on local areas of play (LAPs), local equipped areas of play (LEAPs) and neighbourhood equipped areas of play (NEAPs).
- Owns and maintains nine countryside areas for the enjoyment of people of all ages. They offer informal recreation.
- Awards grants to local community groups to enable them to provide accessible play equipment and opportunities for leisure activity. For example, Great Cornard Parish Council was awarded £7,216 for new play equipment and Polstead Parish Council was given £5,000 to upgrade a play area and resurface it.
- Presents annual fun days in Sudbury where young people can participate, free of charge, in a range of activities including face painting, jewellery, storytelling and similar. These take place in August.

6.2 Babergh has joined forces with two adjoining councils to create

- 'Turn Up and Play' – A community outreach approach to enable young people aged 8 – 12 and 13 – 18 and those living in rural isolation and/or social deprivation to join informal activities and learn new skills. This project is funded by the Western Suffolk LSP and is part of a project to get the people in the western part of the county more active.

6.3 Has a Beacon awarded Be Active Leisure Inclusion Project (disaffected and disabled young people) which includes play elements such as "Samba Soccer" and a full range of summer holiday activities. These include turn up and play sessions for children aged 8 years and upwards. Some activities are specifically for children with disabilities.

## 7. **Audit and Findings**

7.1 Babergh consulted every Parish Council (76) on their existing level of facility provision for recreation purposes in late 2006/early 2007. This included play facilities. Parishes were provided with maps showing recreation facilities already known to Babergh District Council. They were asked to amend the maps and complete a questionnaire detailing all open spaces and play areas, their purpose, range of provision and how they are used.

7.2 Responses were received from 50 parishes giving a return of 66%. Previous surveys suggest that a number of non-responses are because there are no facilities in a parish (probably the smaller ones).

7.3 Of the 50 parishes making a return the following findings were identified:-

- That 16 parishes have no play facilities at all for young children. However, given the comment in 7.2 this figure is likely to be higher suggesting that at

least 25% of the parishes in the district have no play provision whatsoever.  
The 16 parishes who responded were:-

Aldham  
Alpheton  
Belstead  
Boxted  
Brent Eleigh  
Burstall  
Erwarton  
Higham  
Holton St Mary  
Lindsey  
Preston St Mary  
Semer  
Shelley  
Somerton  
Wattisham  
Wenham Parva

- That 31 of the remaining 34 villages have some form of play equipment ranging from a swing and a slide to a play area with 23 pieces of equipment (Great Cornard).
- That with two exceptions, none of the facilities are used by schools.
- That only 10 parishes have facilities with disabled access.

## 8. Community Engagement

8.1 Babergh is anxious to ensure that services are co-ordinated and delivered according to need. Accordingly consultation has taken place with young people, residents, play agencies and providers and any other appropriate organisation when considering any improvements to play provision within the district.

8.2 To ensure the views of young people, residents and partners were considered the following were targeted during the consultation period April 2007 to June 2007:-

- Children and young people
  - Youth Council of East Bergholt High School (6 pupils aged 11 – 15) and 10 pupils from Holbrook High School (aged 11 - 14)
  - Children aged 5 - 9 years of age at Pot Kiln Primary School, Great Cornard – 82 questionnaires were completed and returned.
  - 83 children aged 6-15 years of age who attend All Saints Middle School, Sudbury and Woodhall Primary School, Sudbury completed a questionnaire
  - Fourteen young people with severe, profound and multiple disabilities, aged 10 – 19, Hillside Special School, Sudbury – questionnaire
  - Three excluded pupils with behavioural issues at the Ryes School, Sudbury – questionnaire
  - Two young members of a disabled powerlifting club - questionnaire
- Members and staff at Babergh
  - The Council's Member Champion
  - Staff who work and engage with young people
- Play providers
  - To gauge their views on the level of play and the quality of play

- Residents in Sudbury
  - Through the Residents Association, 31 residents of Hawkins Road, Mountbatten Road and Hawkins Court Sudbury

8.3 Our methods of consultation were:-

- Engagement with the newly formed Babergh Play Partnership
- Parish Councils' audit (2006-2007)
- Use of existing surveys undertaken in 2006 at Nayland and Glemsford by the Suffolk Children's Fund.
- Direct engagement with young people by meeting them and involving them in different forms of consultation i.e. "post its ideas storm", questionnaires and discussion.
- Questionnaires (114 returned) and meeting with residents association of a Sudbury estate (Hawkins Road area).

8.4 Our main consultation findings were:-

- 67% of Nayland young people aged 12 and over thought there was insufficient activities and facilities for them.
- Whilst Nayland young people are happy with the range of facilities, 95% of them would travel to an adjoining village to join in an event for young people.
- The majority of young people aged 12 and over in Nayland wanted places to go where they could socialise and meet friends.
- Children and young people in Glemsford aged 5-15 years of age were consulted using the POD regarding their play and leisure activities. As with Nayland it was clearly identified that seeing friends was clearly important.
- The majority of young people in Glemsford would welcome more sporting activities and play equipment and would be interested in joining a youth club or project in their area.
- Endorsing the consultation undertaken at Nayland and Glemsford, students at Holbrook and East Bergholt High Schools supported more activities and specifically the idea of the Babergh area having its own dedicated Play Worker. They also supported replacing unused out of date play equipment with new equipment, which ideally would be chosen with their involvement.

- The survey of play providers concluded that the level of fee paying organised play provision in the area (excludes child care arrangements) was adequate up to 12 years of age (100%) with this figure dropping to 60% for 13 years to 19 years of age. The quality of provision for children over the age of 5 was only satisfactory by a strong margin. This was clearly identified as a common theme of there being little for children and young people to do which is not sports orientated. Once again it was identified that young people need places where they can just “hang out” and the opportunity to participate in activities that are not sports based e.g. drama, dance.
- 96% of children aged 5-9 years of age at Pot Kiln Primary School had a garden in which they could play. When not playing in a garden most played in the immediate vicinity of their home or in a nearby park. Surprisingly, 83% felt safe playing outside of their garden.
- 70% of the Pot Kiln Primary School children had a playground near them with play equipment and 72% thought the equipment exciting.
- To increase the use of open space and recreation areas in the vicinity the children at Pot Kiln Primary School were asked if they would like a play worker to help organise games and activities. Only 7% of the children surveyed said they would not like it.
- 87% of residents who returned a form in the vicinity of the Hawkins Road play area in Sudbury did not think there are enough play facilities in the locality for local children.
- 98% of residents in the same vicinity would use the play area in Hawkins Road if it was refurbished and modernised. Upon being asked the type of equipment they would prefer to be installed the biggest response was for swings (76), seesaws and rocking horses (75), an adventure playground (71) and a fantasy fun run (64).
- Whilst the vulnerable young people surveyed could access a wide range of activities e.g swimming, basketball, art, archery, they would like a special youth club for special needs youngsters. They would also like adults/youth workers to help with activities. The view was also expressed that equipment in parks/play areas needs to be more “disabled friendly”.

## 9. **Babergh Play Partnership**

9.1 The audit findings and community engagement have been discussed with the newly formed Babergh Play Partnership. The emerging themes – listed below – have been developed with partners through the Babergh Play Partnership (Appendix 1).

## 10. **Emerging Themes**

10.1 The consultation and audit have identified a number of themes for the improvement of play services within the district. These are as follows:-

1. All children and young people want and need open playing spaces which can be facilitated through parks and recreational areas where they have opportunities to identify equipment and apparatus they want to play on.

2. There are clear indications that all children want open spaces to play, kick a ball, meet friends, ride bikes which are not necessarily supervised but where they need to feel safe.
  3. There is a need to work with parishes where there is limited or no play provision to ascertain whether there is a desire to make provision and, if so, to work with the community to identify opportunities and funding.
  4. There is a need to engage with Suffolk County Council to explore the potential for greater involvement of youth workers in the district and to explore the funding of them through the county council, district council, town/parish councils and local strategic partnerships.
  5. The submission of a bid to the Big Lottery fund (£200,000) for the following:-
    - (a) A dedicated play worker working in defined areas across the district, particularly in rural areas, offering free, open access play opportunities for young people.
    - (b) Replacement of the existing play facility in Hawkins Road, Sudbury with new equipment designed and planned with children and young people in partnership with local people.
    - (c) Provision of 3 informal play areas themed around the natural environment in places that currently have no facilities.
- 10.2 As a small rural authority with limited resources Babergh, with its partners, will take a realistic and pragmatic approach to delivery of the emerging themes. It will do this through an Action Plan which will be prepared, reviewed and updated by the Babergh Play Partnership on an annual basis. The Action Plan up to 31 March 2009 will be developed based on the emerging themes. Monitoring of action will take place through the Babergh Play Partnership, consultation with young people, and the Council's Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services) Committee.

**Babergh Play Partnership**  
**Membership**

Babergh District Council -	Lead Member for Children and Young People Community Development Division
East Bergholt Sports Centre	
Great Cornard Sports Centre	
Hadleigh Sports Centre	
Out and About Charity	
Suffolk Constabulary	
Suffolk County Council -	Children's Centres Children and Young People's Directorate Extended Schools Youth Offending Team
Suffolk County Sports Partnership	
Suffolk Young Carers	

## **Babergh Play Partnership**

### **Terms of Reference**

#### 1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Babergh Play Partnership is a district wide group of representatives from different sectors and geographical areas who are working together to oversee the development and delivery of the local Babergh Play Policy and action plan for the Babergh District. They are also supporting the process to develop a Big Lottery application for funds.
- 1.2 The Play Policy will cover an initial period of at least 3 years. The Babergh Play Policy will link into the policy and outcomes set out in the Suffolk County Strategy that has been developed by the Suffolk Play Partnership, facilitated by Suffolk County Council.
- 1.3 The Policy is to be based on a local needs assessment and on local consultation linked to the approach set out in the Children’s Services “Having My Say Framework”, which sits in the Every Child Matters policy agenda, as set out in the Suffolk Play Strategy. It will also support and link to a range of District, County, regional and national plans and policy agenda. The relevant Babergh District Council Corporate Objective is as follows:-

Promoting healthy living and reducing health inequalities.

The Babergh Play Policy will need to impact on this objective.

#### 2. **FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS AND SUPPORT**

- 2.1 The Babergh Play Partnership will meet as and when required but not less than quarterly.
- 2.2 The Play Worker, with other Babergh officer support will facilitate and develop most papers and agenda items. However, from time to time partner members will be asked to work with on a number of the key processes and to support activity with distinct pieces of work, between the meetings.

#### 3. **PURPOSE OF THE PARTNERSHIP AND ROLES OF THE MEMBERS**

- To define a vision for play in Babergh, that is incorporated in the Babergh Play Policy that seeks to ensure that every child matters in the provision of enjoyable and inclusive opportunities for high quality play the Babergh area.
- To identify needs and priorities in the Babergh area
- To set out action plans in the Babergh area for the next 3 years
- To identify resources and all sources of funding
- To secure the Big Lottery Funding allocated for free play projects in Babergh and seek to establish other funding sources to support the Babergh action plan

- To share knowledge and expertise and practical support in the work to be undertaken
- To make best use of resources through partnership working
- To identify and link to relevant key plans/activities/policies and targets at local, regional and national levels
- To seek to consult with local groups and to treat children and young people as the primary stakeholders in the consultation process
- To ensure Play Partnership issues are taken to appropriate meetings/partnerships/groups/networks in which members are involved
- To cascade and disseminate Play Policy information in members own organisation and networks
- To champion play opportunities for children and young people in the Babergh area

#### 4. GROUP MEMBERSHIP AND CHAIR PERSON

Babergh District Council have sought to generate the widest possible membership of the Play Partnership in order to ensure the widest range of knowledge, skills and experience. The Partnership will appoint a Chairman. A list of the current membership is attached. This could change over time.

## References

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# Play Matters

## A Strategy

### for

# Suffolk



Produced by Partners in Play, Suffolk – PIPS  
**First draft – September 2006**  
**Revised November 2006**  
**Revised January 2007**  
**Revised February 2007**  
**Revised April 2007**  
**Revised June 2007**

#### **Risky play**

‘Children need and want to take risks when they play. Play provision aims... [to offer] children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities... to manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury.’  
Play Safety Forum

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## Foreword

As a Haverhill child in the 40's and 50's 'playing out' was a very different experience to the one many Suffolk children will have today.

We ranged for miles, discovering the wildlife and countryside. We built dens, climbed trees, cooked on fires and experienced a rich and diverse childhood play experience.

Not so for many of today's Suffolk children. The problems we now associate with predatory adults, traffic and roads, pollution, and traditional play habitats being sold off or turned into building sites and golf courses, were virtually non-existent then.

This means that without careful and sensitive planning, without knowledge and understanding of the complexities of the play process, and without a considered strategic overview of children's play needs in a fast changing world, many children in the County will not experience the play that I and my own children knew and benefited from.

Play is not just something to do to while away spare time. It is a vital component of the evolutionary process, a process that makes it possible for human beings to adapt and survive these changes too. When we play our brains and muscles grow; play makes it possible to 'roll with the punches of life'; it is play that makes us both human and humane. Without regular access to the kinds of high quality play experiences I and many others had, today's children will find it increasingly difficult to make sense of their existence and may suffer psychologically and spiritually as a consequence.

This strategy has been developed to combat this modern 'play deprivation' scourge that our children increasingly face, and I feel honoured to have been asked to provide a Foreword to it. I hope you will feel able to support its 'spirit' and ensure the current and future right of the children of Suffolk to enjoy playing in all of its diversity and wonder.

*Bob Hughes,*

*Playworker, play theorist and researcher. Author of 'The Playworker's Taxonomy', and 'Evolutionary Playwork'.*

*He has managed Play Education, an independent playwork research, training and events agency since 1984.*

## Our Vision

Our vision is:

***to create and sustain inclusive play opportunities to contribute to enabling all children and young people in Suffolk to enjoy themselves and develop their potential, giving them the basis for a successful life as active members of their community.***

**'Play is the highest form of research.'**  
*Albert Einstein*  
*German-American physicist*  
*1879-1945*

### **Why plan for play in a strategic way?**

Welcome to the first ever play strategy for Suffolk. This is an exciting opportunity to encourage those in influential roles to take seriously their part in developing coordinated services to support play for all children and young people in Suffolk.

Readers may ask why it is necessary to plan for play in a strategic way. To understand the answer to this question, we need to consider how play opportunities for children and young people today can be much more limited than those for children growing up say, forty years ago.

Not all readers will be able to rely on memory so it may be helpful to note some of the major changes in lifestyles that drive us to plan more effectively for play.

As transport has become more accessible, today's children and young people have become less active, many are taken by car to and from school and out of school activities. A higher volume of traffic has in turn led to a reduction in the opportunities for children to 'play out', as parents have concerns for their children's safety. In addition, parents have concerns that children playing out unsupervised may be at risk from strangers. This has contributed to a generation of children and young people who rarely play unsupervised and may not have had the enjoyment of making a den in the local open space and socialising with friends in the process. These experiences can provide a wealth of opportunities to try out and experiment as a way of learning.

In addition, the combination of the availability of fast food and less physical activity is beginning to have a negative impact on children's health and well-being.

More opportunities for play, particularly physical play; can help to tackle this problem and help to reduce the numbers of children who are obese. The Department of Health promotes free play in the Healthy Schools guidance. Play can be seen then, as a preventative measure, not just in terms of physical health but also in relation to the positive impact on children's mental health.

If children and young people can be engaged in play opportunities there can be a wide-ranging number of benefits, not just for the child or young person as an individual but also for parents and communities. For example, there is evidence here in an area of Suffolk, of a reduction in anti social behaviour and petty crime as a result of coordinated extended services during the summer holiday of 2006.

We believe play matters and our aim is to make explicit the links to other national policy documents in order to engage with partners who can help make a difference to outcomes for children and young people.

Play makes a valuable contribution to the Every Child Matters outcomes and the following extract from the Children's Play Council document 'Play in coordinated children's services' makes clear the benefits.

'Play provision contributes to each of the five outcomes for children specified in the government's Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme. There are also benefits to families and communities.

### **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 school-aged children and young people with as much exercise as more structured activities. Good play opportunities also give children and young people the chance to experience a range of emotions in a 'safe' way, promoting resilience and fostering self-esteem (Cole-Hamilton and Gill 2002).

### **Staying safe**

Parents' and children's fears of strangers, traffic and bullying by other children combine to stop children playing out as much as they would like. Good play provision protects children through reducing unacceptable levels of danger while allowing them the opportunity to challenge themselves and use their own initiative. It enables children to take risks, to think through decisions and gain increased self-confidence and greater resilience.

### **Enjoying and achieving**

The essence of play is enjoyment: it is how children and young people most enjoy being themselves. Giving children the chance for free, uninhibited play is essential to their enjoyment of life. Play also promotes children's sense of achievement. When playing, children define their own goals and interests, decide what is success or failure and pursue those goals in their own way. Their enjoyment of play is linked to the control and choice they are able to exercise and the personal satisfaction they derive from this. Free play allows children a psychologically safe space in which to explore boundaries, try out new roles and experiences, be fully absorbed in what they are doing and to learn and grow as individuals and as members of a community. Play allows for the development of problem-solving, language and literacy skills as children

develop their social skills and express their emotions. Play is also vital to the development of children's imaginations and creative interests and abilities.

### **Making a positive contribution**

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 community groups are increasingly involving children and young people in play audits and discussions about their play and 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.

### **Confident parents and families**

Good play provision enables parents to work or train and allows them to feel their children are happy, safe and enjoying themselves. Offering parents the opportunity to have time away from their children can also be an important benefit of play provision. Play provision often acts as a focal point for parents and carers to meet, giving them an opportunity to socialise with other adults.

### **Stronger communities**

Good play provision promotes community well-being and security. It brings economic benefits through jobs and training, and parents can feel confident their children are occupied and enjoying themselves. Good play provision, which offers those seeking it genuine challenge and excitement, can help prevent bored children and young people behaving in ways that are socially unacceptable. Development of outside play and recreation spaces has been shown to have a measurable impact on local interaction, new friendships, community know-how and community safety (New Economics Foundation 2001)'.  
*Play in Co-ordinated Services, Children's Play Council, National Children's Bureau, 2005.*

Play also links to the Youth Matters national standards at Appendix 2.

## **Partners in Play Suffolk**

This strategy is the result of consultation with and contributions from the following partners:

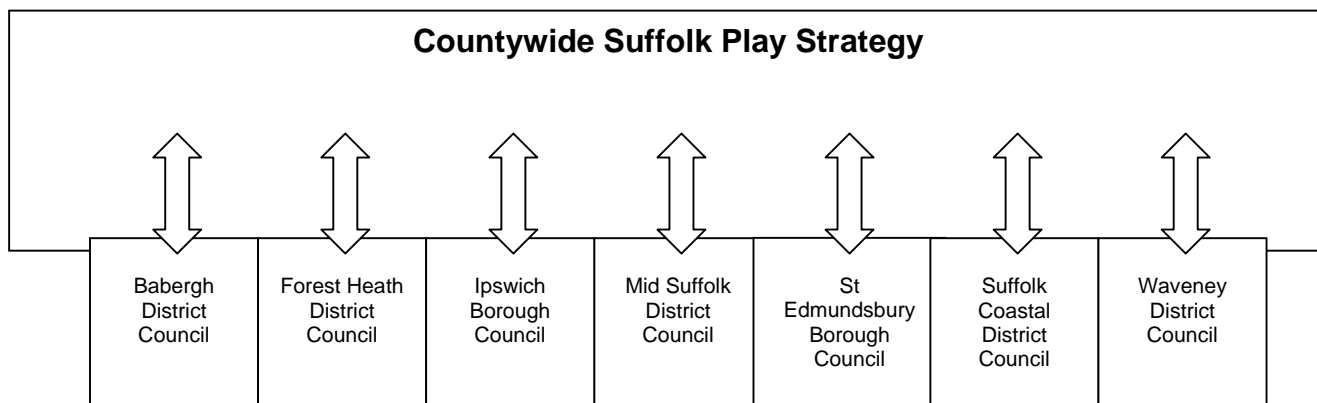
- Babergh District Council
- Forest Heath District Council
- Suffolk PCT and Great Yarmouth and Waveney PCT
- Ipswich Borough Council
- Mid Suffolk District Council
- Out and About ( Registered Charitable organisation)
- St Edmundsbury Borough Council
- Suffolk ACRE
- Suffolk Coastal District Council
- Suffolk County Council
- Waveney District Council
- Young Suffolk (Voluntary organisation)

The group, Partners in Play, Suffolk will be referred to as PIPS in this document.

PIPS recognises the need for an overarching county strategy that will set out the vision for providing play opportunities for children and young people in Suffolk. See Appendix 5 for our agreed Terms of Reference. In developing this countywide strategy, we want to provide a framework that will support the development of more local play policies and strategies to help shape the action plans for play provision at parish, town, district and borough level for all children and young people in the county of Suffolk. It therefore has the intention of providing a coordinated, countywide response to play and we strongly believe that this will facilitate a balanced approach to planning for play in Suffolk.

Whilst the group has agreed the initial strategy it recognises that such a document needs to evolve over time and that it will take considerably longer than the 12 months devoted to the work thus far. The group is committed to continue to develop this work beyond BIG funding and will review and revise the strategy at regular intervals and as a minimum on an annual basis.

The following diagram illustrates how we expect this strategy to inform local strategies, policies and plans.



District and borough councils have consulted more widely whilst developing their local action plans and will make use of the outcomes of the implementation of 'Having my Say', (the overarching consultation strategy with children and young people) to inform this process. In addition, PIPS agrees that there is a place for play to be included within the wider cultural development of Suffolk.

As well as really good, well-organised activities... we need to provide children with opportunities for adventures. A load of constructive material must be put at their disposal. Children must be able to play games and let their imaginations roam around the possibility of using such material.  
Hilton Dawson, MP, Hansard, 2003.

## Defining Play

For the purposes of this strategy we are using the definition of play as stated in the play review Getting Serious About Play, published in 2004.

It defines play as ‘...what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons.’

PIPS shares this understanding of play and is committed to ensuring the links between play and the wider agendas are made explicit in order to support the development of more and better play spaces and opportunities for all children.

In the same way, PIPS adopts the description of play provision in the same document, Getting Serious About Play.

‘...a space, some facilities or equipment or a set of activities intended to give children the opportunity to play as defined above. At its most successful, it offers children and young people as much choice, control and freedom as possible within reasonable boundaries. This is often best achieved with adult support, guidance or supervision. The children and young people may themselves choose play involving certain rules or; in some cases, informal sport.’

The group has adopted Best Play, a widely recognised benchmark document, as a shared understanding of a good quality play provision and the basis to develop future projects. However, it also recognises that to be fully inclusive it should be read with the individual needs of young people and families in mind.

PIPS also recommends that the seven key Best Play outcome objectives should underpin the play provision in Suffolk so that good play provision:

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

*Best Play – What good play provision should do for children (2001)*

Space dedicated to children’s play is shrinking. For every acre of land in England given over to public playgrounds, over 80 acres are given to golf.

Children’s Play Council, 2004

## Background

Suffolk is the eighth largest county in England, located in the East, it consists of seven districts: Babergh, Forest Heath, Ipswich, Mid Suffolk, St Edmundsbury, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney. Suffolk is a largely rural county encompassing countryside and coastline. However, there are areas and small pockets of significant deprivation. Benefit dependency is higher than regional and national levels: 8.6% of the working age population compared to 6.1% for the East of England, and 6.7% of the country as a whole. Geographical Barriers show the highest levels of deprivation, 182 areas (43%) are in the most deprived 20% nationally, and 129 of these (30%) are within the top 10%. The areas in the most deprived 20% are spread across all districts of the county illustrating that most of the population living in rural areas is geographically isolated from basic services (reference Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004)

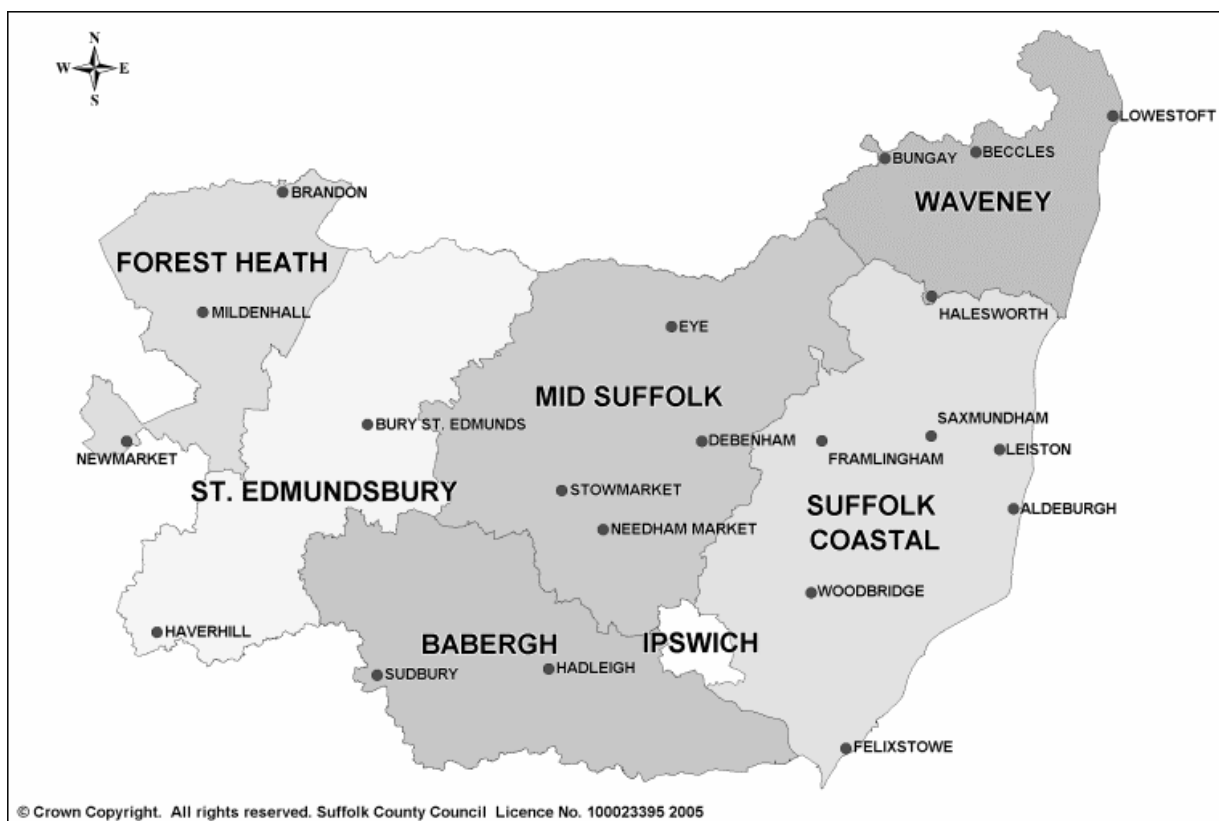
The current population is estimated at 678,100. 42% of the population lives in rural communities, with concentration of population in and around Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Felixstowe, Haverhill, Lowestoft, Mildenhall, Newmarket, Stowmarket, and Sudbury.

### Children and Young People population in Suffolk

There are currently 164,900 children and young people under 19 years of age in Suffolk, representing 24.3% of the total population, this is higher than the national average of 22.7% and is broken down by local authority areas as follows:

<b>Boroughs and Districts</b>	<b>Under 19 Population</b>
Babergh	20800
Forest Heath	14500
Ipswich	30100
Mid Suffolk	21200
St. Edmundsbury	23700
Suffolk Coastal	27700
Waveney	27000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>164,900</b>

Source: Suffolk Observatory, Population by age – persons for 2004



In January 2006, there were 3,612 children with a statement of special educational need, and 15,259 children were identified by their schools as having a special educational need. Census data indicates there are 7,000 disabled children in the county. The number of children from a black or minority ethnic heritage background in Suffolk increased from 6.95% to 8.35% between 2003 and 2006 (as reported in the annual schools census). This trend may continue as more people come to the county for work from Eastern Europe and elsewhere in the European Union. Research also indicates there are as many as 4,000 young carers in the county. The population of children and young people is predicted to stay fairly stable over the short-term, but with a slight reduction thereafter with figures declining to 159,800 by 2011 and 154,700 by 2021. (Reference CYP Plan, Appendix 3)

## Strategic Context

Play Matters, A strategy for Suffolk sets out a vision for play in Suffolk. This vision is supported by a range of national, regional and local strategies and multi-agency plans including 'Shaping the Future of Suffolk' Community Strategy 2008-2028 and the Suffolk Children and Young People's Plan 2006-2009.

### **Key National Strategies, including:**

Every Child Matters  
Youth Matters  
The Children's Workforce Strategy  
The Children Act 1989 and 2004  
The Childcare Act 2006

### **Regional Strategies, including:**

Sport East  
East of England Health Strategy  
Children's Workforce Development Council  
SkillsActive

### **Local Multi Agency plans and strategies for children and young people, including:**

*Shaping the Future of Suffolk*  
*Suffolk Children and Young People's Plan*  
Play Matters - A strategy for Suffolk  
Safeguarding Children Strategy  
Extended schools strategy  
Suffolk Youth Offer  
Having My Say  
Suffolk Arts Plan

### **Other strategies and policies impacting on the Play Strategy, including:**

Childcare Act 2004  
The Disability Discrimination Act  
Building Schools for the Future  
Children's Centres  
National Healthy Schools Programme  
Planning policy

## Playing today in Suffolk

An initial audit of play has identified a variety of play opportunities available in Suffolk including: before and after school clubs and holiday play schemes. Leisure Centres offer a range of activities such as swimming, ball sports, gymnastics and trampolining. Children and young people may access a range of sports training available through local football, rugby, martial arts, golf, hockey, sailing and fishing clubs and Rangers provide a variety of environmental activities. There are an abundance of natural open spaces in Suffolk, including a wonderful coastline, woodlands and heaths, all of which provide opportunities for children to play on the beach, swim, cycle or just enjoy playing outdoors. Each of the seven Borough and District Councils provide fixed play areas and playgrounds and a number of schools provide 'out of school activities'. Cub, Brownie and Cadets groups meet across all areas along with a range of voluntary play providers such as church and community groups.

Although a myriad of play is available it tends to be focused in particular areas. Play in these areas is accessible and varied, however, many areas, particularly those in rural Suffolk, do not have this variety of play opportunities and are further challenged by accessibility.

This was made clear through countywide consultations involving 1700 children and young people in an extensive survey that helped to build the Children and Young Peoples Plan (2006). The 'Tell Us' survey (2006/2007) was undertaken in preparation for the Joint Area Review (JAR) at a number of schools across Suffolk, using The Pod (a multi media kiosk), questionnaires and an ideas boards. Children and young people said:

*'we need more things to do with friends'  
'somewhere to hang out'  
'an area to play in where we could just roam'  
'free activities, my mum can't afford for me to go to anything'  
'where we live there is nothing to do'  
'we don't have a car and there are no buses'*

It is these gaps in services that PIPS aims to address.

## Developing a play strategy for Suffolk

Developing a play strategy for Suffolk is a priority of the Suffolk Children and Young People's plan and the commitment to: improve access to informal learning, leisure and recreation services for all children and young people; this is clearly linked to the Every Child Matters outcome: enjoying and achieving. However, PIPS recognises play contributes to other outcomes as identified earlier in the section 'Why plan for play in a strategic way?'

PIPS is committed to ensuring the long-term provision of accessible and inclusive play opportunities for all children, young people, parents and carers of all abilities and cultural backgrounds.

'The primary aim should be to promote access for all children to the same range of services'.

Guidance to the Children Act (DoH 1989b, 2.)

In order to achieve this, PIPS recognises the need to continue to work collaboratively with voluntary, statutory and private sector groups and organisations. Developing new and strengthening existing links across the county through play partnerships is essential to the success of this, and district and borough strategies.

As part of their commitment, the Early Years and Childcare service is planning to establish a Play Support Officer post funded by the General Sure Start Grant (GSSG) until March 2008 in the first instance. It is envisaged that the post will support the play strategy work and assist the districts and boroughs as they further develop play infrastructures at a local level. In addition to this, the Early Years and Childcare Training Unit will continue to deliver and expand playwork training on offer to all playworkers.

Research commissioned by CAFE Space shows that 'place making' – improving the design, maintenance and supervision of parks and other public spaces – is a more effective solution to "anti-social behaviour" than simply increasing security measures.  
CAFE

## Key Outcomes

The key outcomes of the strategy have been agreed as follows however, it is important to note that there is no priority order as each Borough or District Council will decide on their priority according to local need.

1. The profile of play in Suffolk will be raised and PIPS vision of play promoted;
2. The audit of provision will inform future planning and identify workforce development strategies;
3. Access to and the variety of quality play provision for ALL children and young people in Suffolk will be increased;
4. An infrastructure for play will support and develop play policies and action plans in Borough and District councils to facilitate applications to Big Lottery and other funding streams;
5. The views of children and young people in Suffolk will inform the development of play, planning, monitoring and evaluation;

**Almost all creativity involves purposeful play.**

*Abraham Maslow  
American psychologist  
1908-1970*

## ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE OUTCOMES

The following actions to achieve outcomes will be incorporated into local strategies as appropriate, given that different areas within the county have differing needs, priorities and natural resources for play. However, it is anticipated that each outcome will feature in all local plans.

### **1. The profile of play in Suffolk will be raised and PIPS shared vision of play promoted**

The lack of awareness of the importance of play is not unique to Suffolk, funding for play has, historically, been limited and many buildings where play does take place are not ideal. In Suffolk there is no tradition for example, of open access play provision. Although there are fixed play facilities in all seven borough and district councils with some ranger provision, currently there is not an infrastructure of play officers whose job it would be to develop play facilities or play partnerships. Promoting PIPS shared vision of play will ensure that irrespective of where children and young people live in the county of Suffolk, any local plans for play are based on this shared vision.

#### **Actions to achieve outcomes**

- 1.1 PIPS members will actively promote the profile of play through working in partnership with statutory, voluntary and private organisations.
- 1.2 Implement the play strategy across the county and work to establish local play partnerships.
- 1.3 Challenge negative views and perceptions of children's play.
- 1.4 Identify ambassadors for play in Suffolk
- 1.5 PIPS members will work in partnership to deliver the shared vision.

Parks, street corners, playgrounds, football pitches, pavements and open spaces provide room for children to meet and play, to establish a world for themselves independent of their parents and to explore the natural and built environment. For many children, their local environment is their main experience of the outside world.

CABE 2004

## **2. The audit of provision will inform future planning and identify workforce development strategies**

Local authorities in Suffolk already know where fixed play provision is and where this provision may require additional resources to upgrade it. However, play provision is wider than this and local authorities will be able to work together with the county council in order to identify registered out of school provision as this will contribute to the overall play provision. By working in partnership, information sharing can inform future planning for play

It is vital that any workforce supporting play is appropriately trained and qualified. There is good support for this from the county council, enabling district and borough councils to access the service to support playworkers at a local level.

The Early Years and Childcare Service - within the Children and Young People's Directorate - publishes an annual training programme that includes qualifications and continuing professional development opportunities for playworkers. This training programme is available to the private, voluntary and independent sectors in addition to those working in maintained settings. The Early Years and Childcare Service also offers a range of recruitment services to support private, voluntary and independent providers of early years, childcare and playwork.

As part of the development of the Children's Trust the County Council is currently developing its children's workforce strategy. As part of this work, any training developed will incorporate the six headings of the Common Core of Skills, Knowledge and Competence for people working with children and young people as set out in the National Children's Workforce Strategy, published in 2006.

These are:

- child and young person development
- safeguarding children and promoting the welfare of children
- effective communication and engagement
- supporting transitions
- multi agency working
- sharing information

### **Actions to achieve outcomes**

- 2.1 Establish consistent baseline information and regular audit mechanisms.
- 2.2 Establish and report on the numbers of children accessing play across individual boroughs and districts, this will inform future play planning and may lead to a rationalisation of provision.
- 2.3 Information gathered from the audit will be used to identify and develop a workforce development strategy linked to the County's Workforce strategy ensuring a consistent, countywide approach.
- 2.4 The Early Years and Childcare Service will continue to offer information, advice and guidance to all adults who support play provision, including: out-of-school settings, childminders, park rangers, wardens and all involved in the voluntary and private sector.
- 2.5 To provide a range of accessible playwork qualifications which include, as part of the Common Core of Skills and knowledge, safeguarding and risk assessment and link with existing networks such as the Sector Skills Council for Playwork, SkillsActive nationally and regionally as appropriate.

2.6 PIPS members recognise the need to ensure the workforce is diverse and reflects the needs of the local community they are working in.

### **3. Access to and the variety of quality play provision for ALL children and young people in Suffolk will be increased**

Our rural county offers many opportunities to support play for example, open spaces, country parks and an extensive coastline. However, there are challenges too, much of the population living in rural areas are geographically isolated from basic services, combine this with limited public transport and this can leave children, young people and their families unable to participate in a variety of play activities, clubs, sports activities or leisure centres. Opportunities for children to 'play out' are limited for a variety of reasons and where play is available, in parks and recreation grounds, it is designed to 'keep children safe' and offers little opportunity for risk or the testing of boundaries, both of which are essential when providing a good play provision (Best Play 2001).

Children want, and need to take risks in their play. 'It is the job of all those responsible for children at play to assess and manage the level of risk, so that children are given the chance to stretch themselves, test and develop their abilities without exposing them to unacceptable risks'. (Managing risk in play provision 2004) Other challenges are specific to local areas and will need to be identified, acknowledged and addressed wherever possible.

All children have the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age and to participate freely in cultural life and arts (1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 31, Appendix 1). However, children with additional needs or those from minority groups face further challenges in terms of their access to play. Inclusive play encourages children to make friends; it breaks down visible and invisible barriers and extends to all children.

#### **Actions to achieve outcomes**

- 3.1 Increase the range of indoor and outdoor play opportunities making the most of local features for example, the coastline and beach.
- 3.2 Encourage traffic management giving children and young people priority over traffic to allow for more street play wherever possible.
- 3.3 Facilitate access to local play opportunities enabling independent access avoiding children traveling too far.
- 3.4 Develop areas and meeting places for older children and younger people to meet designed with their input.
- 3.5 Ensure that all planning for play includes children with additional needs, incorporating Every Disabled Child Matters and the Disability Discrimination Act.
- 3.6 Facilitate increased access to travel subsidy schemes such as Explore Card and encourage subsidies to charged play opportunities wherever possible.
- 3.7 Expand and improve access to information about play opportunities. (Duty of LA to provide information, Childcare Act 2006).

'A starting point is to identify the obstacles to play for any child who may wish to access the play space and think about ways to overcome them.'

Developing Accessible Play Space. A Good Practice Guide 2003

#### **4. An infrastructure for play will support and develop play policies and action plans in Borough and District councils to facilitate applications to the Big Lottery and other funding streams**

As previously stated, the infrastructure for supporting the development of play in Suffolk is currently limited. It is anticipated that this overarching county strategy will provide an opportunity for local play networks to develop policies and action plans in a coordinated, countywide approach, in partnership with the private, voluntary and independent sectors.

Resources are an important element of developing play strategies both countywide and at a more local level. Wherever possible it will be important to pool resources to gain maximum impact for children and young people in Suffolk.

##### **Actions to achieve outcomes**

- 4.1 The development of District and Borough play policies and action plans will be supported through Suffolk's Play Strategy and PIPS members meeting on a regular basis to share best practice and resources as appropriate.
- 4.2 Local communities and existing providers will be encouraged and supported to provide play opportunities that involve the full age range of families within the context of the play strategy and local authority play plans.
- 4.3 Play partners will be encouraged and supported to provide play opportunities that include risk and challenge enabling children to acquire the appropriate skills to support safe play.
- 4.5 Local play networks will be established to create a sustainable future for play in Suffolk.

#### **5. The views of children and young people in Suffolk will inform the development of play, planning, monitoring and evaluation**

It is not only essential that children and young people are involved in the development of their play provision, it is their right to be consulted about matters that affect them (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12). Involving children not only helps to provide a better play provision based on 'their' needs rather than adult's perception of their needs, it promotes social inclusion through their active participation. 'Having my Say' (Appendix 4) Suffolk's strategy for involving children and young people has already engaged many young people through Children's Fund activities, Suffolk Young Carers, school councils and youth groups in the design, delivery and review of services that affect them. However, it is important to recognise that to be effective, the aims of involvement and consultation events need to be clear so that expectations are realistic.

##### **Actions to achieve outcomes**

- 5.1 Make use of, and develop the existing networks that include children and young people and develop new networks as appropriate.
- 5.2 Ensure consultations are accessible to children and young people and that their views and involvement and those of their families, youth and community groups and other residents are actively encouraged and respected.

5.3 PIPS will actively promote working within the framework of 'Having my Say' (Appendix 4) and Best Play to extend the choice and control that children have over their play.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

PIPS members, voluntary, statutory and private providers and importantly children and young people themselves, will contribute to the regular review of this strategy and the effective implementation of the five Key Outcomes. It is envisaged that this will take place on an annual basis and encompass relevant performance indicators as developed by The Children's Play Council.

District and Borough Play partnerships will monitor and evaluate their plans on a quarterly basis using agreed performance indicators, these will include:

- \* Quantitative evidence monitoring the number of children and young people accessing play activities.
- \* Statistical evidence recording the ages and diversity of children.
- \* Having My Say (Appendix 4)
  
- \* Providers monitoring and evaluating play provision based on Best Play values
- \* Providers evidencing the impact of play in terms of effectiveness and achievement
- \* Maintaining financial records

Quality is a subjective and dynamic judgement that entails negotiation between different stakeholders' perspectives which change over time; rather than being prescriptive, quality standards should be established within each context to respond to the real needs of parents and children'.  
The Bernard van Leer Report (1995)

Building capacity to support play in the long term is an aspirational aim of this strategy. It is recognised that this can only be achieved by working in partnership with the many agencies who are already involved in supporting children and young people's play across the county. Making use of local community officers to support play in the long term and working with partner organisations including the voluntary and private sectors will help build capacity. Identifying 'play champions' will ensure networks are developed and maintained so that play remains high profile. Evidence gathered from the monitoring and evaluation of District and Borough plans will impact on building capacity in terms of ensuring it meets the needs of children and young people, their families and the community in which they live.

## United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989

The right of all children to have time, space and opportunity to play is defined in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the UK ratified in 1991.

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural artistic, recreational and leisure activities.

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – the right to play; and will take the following into account as they strive to achieve:

- access to play;
- provision of quality play space;
- the benefits of play as outlined in the ‘Play in coordinated children’s services’\*;
- inclusive play opportunities – access to play for all children and young people; and working in partnership to achieve better outcomes for children and young people.

## National Standards for Positive Activities

Access to two hours per week of sporting activity including formal and informal team and individual sports, outdoor and adventurous sports, and other physical activities such as aerobics and dance - provided through national curriculum and leisure-time activities.

Access to two hours per week of other constructive activities in clubs, youth groups and classes. This includes activities in which young people pursue their interests and hobbies; activities contributing to their personal, social and spiritual development; activities encouraging creativity; innovation and enterprise; study support; and residential opportunities.

Opportunities to make a positive contribution to their community through volunteering, including leading action, campaigning and fundraising.

A wide range of other recreational, cultural, sporting and enriching experiences.

A range of safe and enjoyable places in which to spend time. This could simply be somewhere to socialise with friends.

**The Suffolk Children and Young People's Plan**



<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/AD1641DD-4F8E-49B4-9DC8-60417A6113F9/0/CYPPlan15606.pdf>

## Having My Say

Having my say is Suffolk's strategy for involving our children and young people in the design, delivery and review of services that affect them. May 2005

This strategy will be a mechanism for sharing good practice. The government has made its commitment to children and young people's involvement clear and embedded it in the law.

### Our priorities for Suffolk

We will have one countywide strategy for involvement, which organisations will be asked to adopt. By adopting the strategy, organisations will commit to:

1. Surveying their baseline position of current involvement within a year. This framework outlines a tiered approach for effective involvement.
2. Developing an annual implementation plan for involvement, including key targets with effective monitoring and evaluation, as part of their current planning processes.

### Monitoring and evaluation

The strategy includes four audit documents:

Creating and empowering service user environment  
Are children and young people involved in consultative activities?  
Are children and young people involved in service, delivery and planning?  
Are children and young people involved in governance?

Completion of the audit identifies areas of evidenced good practice and areas of development which may then be targeted on the final document the Action Plan.

(Taken from Having My Say 2005)

<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/FBD27C2C-CA2B-4BCD-8358-B991B656D1F5/0/Havingmysay.pdf>



## Partners in Play, Suffolk (PIPS) Terms of Reference

### Background

PIPS has been established\* to develop a Play Strategy for Suffolk. The group has a shared vision of Play and agrees to the Terms of Reference as set out below.

The Group will meet on a regular basis with the main aim of:

- raising the profile of Play in Suffolk
- developing a Play Strategy for Suffolk, as outlined in the Children and Young People's Plan, page 55.
- supporting District and Borough Councils to develop individual action plans alongside the Strategy; and
- facilitating District and Borough Councils to apply for Big Lottery Funding for the Children's Play Programme.

The partners have adapted the Suffolk Vision for children and young people as stated in the Children and Young People's plan:

Our vision is:

***to create and sustain inclusive play opportunities to contribute to enabling all children and young people in Suffolk to enjoy themselves and develop their potential, giving them the basis for a successful life as active members of their community.***

In developing the Suffolk Play Strategy, PIPS acknowledges the importance of:

1. linking the work to other relevant national strategies;
2. working in partnership with statutory, voluntary and community services; and
3. identifying where aims and targets can be shared and outcomes for children, young people and families improved.

The following list of national strategies relates to our strategic planning for play, however, it is not in any specific priority order.

- Every Child Matters: Change for Children Programme;
- Youth Matters;
- The Children's Workforce Strategy;
- Extended Schools Agenda and the core offer;
- Building Schools for the Future;
- Connexions and the core offer;
- The Children Act 1989 and 2004;
- Childcare Act, 2006;
- The Disability Discrimination Act;
- Children's Centres;
- DCLG – Cleaner, Safer, greener public spaces;
- National Healthy Schools Programme;
- National Service Framework for Children;

- Shared Public Service Agreement between DCMS, DH and DfES aims to halt the year on year increase in obesity among children under 11years by 2010;
- Home Zones;
- Arts Council England - agenda for the arts 2006-08 including children and young people and taking part in the arts; and
- Suffolk Arts Plan.

Time for Play, - Department of Culture Media and Sport, August 2006 has been used to compile the above list.

The PIPS group will, within their own organisations;

- identify the range of authority services with relevance to Play and their respective responsibilities;
- identify the mechanisms required to monitor progress on a minimum of a quarterly basis;
- report to management and stakeholders; and
- ensure the strategy is reviewed annually with a comprehensive review at least every five years.

Ref. Local Performance Indicator LIB115

**In developing the Play Strategy the group formally adopts:**

- The Children’s Charter (appendix A) including Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – the right to play; and will take the following into account:
  - access to play;
  - provision of quality play space;
  - the benefits of play as outlined in the ‘Play in coordinated children’s services’\*;
  - inclusion – all children and young people; and
  - working in partnership to achieve better outcomes for children and young people.

\*Children’s Play Council, National Children’s Bureau, 2005.

The group has also adopted the following as a shared understanding of Good Play Provision and as the basis to develop future projects. However, it also recognises that to be fully inclusive it should also be read with young people and families in mind and for this reason the BEST play version has been adapted.

Best Play is a widely recognised benchmark document describing the outcome objectives for play provision. It sets out key objectives reproduced here.

***Good play provision***

- *extends the choice, control and involvement that children and young people have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it*
- *recognises the child’s need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need*
- *manages the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm*

- *maximises the range of play opportunities*
- *fosters independence and healthy self-esteem*
- *fosters the child's respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction*
- *fosters the child's well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and*
- *develops understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.*

*Adapted from Best Play – What play provision should do for children,*

*NPFA/PLAYLINK/Children's Play Council (2001*

*\* Established 15 May 2006.*

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# Young Suffolk

the independent voice of the voluntary children and young people's sector in Suffolk



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'Playgrounds are ideal environments for  
intelligently monitored free play.'

Bob Hughes, Play Environments: A Question  
of Quality