

Stockton-on-Tees
Children's Trust Board

Play Strategy
2007 - 2012

'Play Matters'

20 June 2007

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1 **Foreword**

We can all remember playing as a child. Climbing trees, playing in the street, adventures in the woods; these are familiar memories of play. But for many children today, these traditional ways to explore and have fun are often unavailable or unsafe. Appropriate Play provision allows children to let off steam, build social relationships and challenge their own boundaries in a constructive way. Play is a very important part of a child's life. Many experts in childhood development regard play as the 'work' of children. Play helps a child to experiment with their world and enables them to learn new skills.

With a renewed interest in children and young peoples entitlement to play arising from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), it is timely that Stockton-on-Tees has established Play high on the agenda within the Children and Young People's Plan.

This Play Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees is the result of a partnership approach involving a number of representatives from across council departments, voluntary sector organisations, SureStart and other agencies who are committed to enhancing the quality of children and young people's lives.

The Play Strategy Group has carried out an audit of current play provision; collated feedback and consulted with a range of children, young people and their families. This strategy responds to what we have heard and what we have learned.

The Strategy is designed to be the core reference point for all organisations, agencies and groups that have or should have an impact on children and young people's play. The intention is that those organisations, agencies and groups should formally endorse this strategy that has been agreed by the Council's Executive after initial consultation.

I wish to acknowledge all those that have contributed to this policy and strategy in the process of its development.

Councillor Alex Cunningham, Cabinet member for Children and Young People /
Chairperson of Children's Trust Board

2 Executive Summary

The aim of the Stockton-on-Tees Children's Trust Board's Play Strategy 2007 – 2012 is to develop the number of accessible, quality play opportunities for children and young people available across the Borough. The Strategy has been written for all the children and young people in the Borough up to the age of 18 years, and includes their ideas and views as well as those of their families, communities and the providers of children's services within the Borough.

This strategy has been developed through a 'Play Partnership' approach. It sits firmly within national, strategic and local contexts. It is linked specifically to the Every Child Matters five outcomes;

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Achieve Economic Well-being.

Specifically this strategy is linked to the Be Healthy outcome and contributes to the development of healthy lifestyles and tackling obesity.

The 2004 children's play review "Getting Serious About Play", published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) defines children's play as, "what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas, in their own way and for their own reasons".

The Children's Play Programme has developed nationally in response to the recommendations contained within "Getting Serious About Play". The programme is supported by Play England and grant funding is available from the Big Lottery to support the implementation of Play Strategies within council areas. The Stockton-on-Tees Children's Trust Board Play Strategy has adopted the Children's Play Programme outcomes:

- More children will take part in the wider range of good, inclusive and accessible play experiences.
- Children will have more choice and control over their play.
- Children will develop greater well-being through play (including health, growth, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn).
- Children will achieve greater independence and self-esteem through play.
- Children will acquire greater social skills and respect for others through play.
- Children will be able to test boundaries, be challenged and take risks through play, while kept safe from harm.
- More children experiencing barriers to free play will be included in mainstream play provision (e.g. girls, religious minorities, children in care, children of refugees and homeless families and those living in rural areas).
- Local communities, especially children, will have greater involvement in designing, planning and running of play projects.

Through the adoption of these outcomes, our intention is to raise the awareness of the importance role that play plays in the lives of children and young people.

Five key objectives have been central to the development of this strategy and action plan:

- To develop and promote high standards of play provision across the Borough.
- To increase the range, distribution and quality of child-led play activities across the borough
- Provide a range of appropriately risk managed play environments, which physically challenge, and stimulate the minds of children and young people.
- Promote free inclusive and accessible play opportunities for all children and young people, whatever their age, ability, and circumstances.
- To empower children and young people to contribute as equal partners in the development, monitoring and review play provision.

The Strategy

The overall aim of the strategy is to develop locally based, easily accessible play facilities across the borough of Stockton-on-Tees both through the extension of existing provision and the development of new facilities. Play areas are integral to the strategy in the form of free imaginative space as well as more structured play environments. All provision should challenge children and young people whilst ensuring their safety. Where support is provided by Play Staff, they will be appropriately trained and qualified for the roles undertaken.

When gaps in provision are identified, available resources will be utilised to reduce inequality of access for children and young people through the refocusing of mobile facilities and / or the securing of new funding opportunities.

3 Introduction

Whilst there is currently no statutory requirement for authorities to develop a play strategy, the Children's Trust Board recognises the value of play in supporting the delivery of key national, regional and local policies, strategies and plans. Feedback from consultation activity with children and young people, local residents, elected members, council officers and community and voluntary organisations frequently highlights the lack of activities for children and young people as a key issue.

Local authorities have more influence on children and young people's play and free time activities than any other organisation. The daily decisions and actions of many local authority departments, in particular, planning, transport, highways, education, leisure, parks, housing, community safety, regeneration and environmental protection, have a major impact on where and how local children and young people are able to play.

Children's Play Council – Planning for Play

The Children's Trust Board is committed to ensuring that environments, services and provision for play are accessible, welcoming and attractive for every child and young person irrespective of age, gender, background or origin, or of individual capacities or abilities. In doing so it is acknowledged that development and delivery of play opportunities does not solely fall within the domain of local authority provision. Community and voluntary sector organisations and local private enterprise have a key and important role to play.

The Children's Trust Board is comprised of representatives from the key organisations with responsibility for delivering services to children, young people and families that meet the Every Child Matters outcomes. Representation includes; the Local Authority, Primary Care Trust, Police, Community and Voluntary Sectors.

The Children's Trust Board has the mandate to oversee the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan, 'Every Child Matters: No Child Left Behind.' At the time of writing the Children and Young People's Plan is currently being revised and will include the reference to the importance of play within the borough.

The Children's Trust Board has endorsed the development of a play strategy as a key element within the Children and Young People's Plan and representatives from Stockton Renaissance, the Local Strategic Partnership, have been involved with its development.

The children's Trust Board has developed its Play Strategy as a means of championing play across a range of contexts and in order to improve access to play across the Borough, in response to the DCMS report 'Getting Serious About Play.'

Purpose and Scope

Children and young people need opportunities to participate in, experience and benefit from, positive play. These opportunities should be available to them in their own environment whether that be their own home, school setting, local neighbourhood or more widely. They should be given opportunities that allow them to experiment with play, have fun, socialise, make friends and let off steam in a way that is safe and welcoming.

The purpose of the strategy is to give a focus and priority to play. As the first formal Play Strategy for the Children's Trust Board it will be reviewed as part of the Children Trust Board's robust performance management framework and will evolve in line with wider developments around Children's Services. It will seek to promote the adoption of play standards and positive promotion of play across other organisations operating within the geographical boundaries of the authority.

The strategy embraces the concept of play in a broad sense and in all its forms and acknowledges the need to develop inclusive play opportunities that allow children and young people across the age, ability and cultural spectrum to experience as many forms of play as possible and challenge their own boundaries in a constructive way balanced against risk, without the risk becoming an unnecessary barrier. It is about Free Play, **free** of charge, **free** for children and young people to come and go and where they are **free** to choose what they do while they are there. The strategy includes within its scope play provision in the sense of spaces for play, facilities or equipment, or a set of activities that allow children and young people to play in the sense of following their own ideas, in their own way, for their own reasons in a way that is safe.

Whilst the Play Strategy encompasses play for children and young people up to the age of 18 it also acknowledges the role of adults in championing and enabling play.

It seeks to outline the intention of the Children's Trust Board to provide high quality play opportunities, identify priorities for consideration for the allocation of resources and establish a common set of standards for play.

It is recognised that reaching the high quality of play provision promoted through the Play Strategy and embedded standards may take some time and may necessitate the prioritisation of internal funding and the submission of funding bids to external bodies.

It aims to act in accordance with relevant legislation, best practice guidance and advice from appropriate play experts (including children and young people).

Outline of Content

The strategy includes information on why play is important, how the strategy has been developed, including the results from consultation and an action plan that captures how the outcomes within the strategy will be achieved.

Definition of Play

Play can be defined in a number of ways, as everyone has their own perception and understanding, often based on their own experiences. The Children's Trust Board has adopted the Play Council definition of play as the focus for a broad framework against which to develop its strategy.

'Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. Play can be fun or serious. Through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter.'

Children's Play Council

While play remains in adulthood it has been argued that the immense value of play is in the childhood years. As children grow up, older children and young people may prefer not to describe what they do as play and communities may not recognise it as such. However, there is still a need for exploration, challenge and social and playful activity in their free-time without undue adult intervention.

The important thing is to recognise the diversity, complexity and richness of children's play and the aim of this strategy is to reflect that and expand the focus beyond the provision of play equipment and open spaces. While some of children's play takes place within play provision and playgrounds it is important to remember that play happens wherever children are: at home, in the streets, on the way to school.

4 The Case for Play

Play is an essential part of every child's life and vital to processes of human development. It provides the mechanism for children to explore the world around them and the medium through which skills are developed and practised. It is essential of physical, emotional and spiritual growth, intellectual and educational development, and acquiring social and behavioural skills.

Charter for Children's Play, 1998

The Value and Significance of Play for Children and Young People

Play is of fundamental importance to the health, well-being, development, learning and relationships of children and young people and has a key role in supporting the delivery of the Every Child Matters outcomes. Play brings about important benefits to children as individuals and as groups but also to families, communities and society as a whole. Play has particular value to children at times of stress or change in their lives. Play is universal. It is common to children of all countries and cultures, though the form or content of it may differ and each individual's experiences through play are unique.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) gives all children the right 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.' The convention also promotes 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'.

Play is not just a physical activity but can involve cognitive, imaginative, creative, emotional and social aspects. Play is the main way that most children explore, experiment and develop much of their understanding and whilst few teenagers would describe what they do as play they still need to be given the time, the space and the freedom to experience play in the broader context.

'Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.'

Albert Einstein

Increasingly restrictions are being placed on children's opportunities to play, which are, in the main, outside of their own control. For example the dominance of cars in residential areas, a trend towards a lack of tolerance towards children and young people, lack of access to and conflicts over the use of local spaces in both rural and urban areas, concerns around safety and linked to that the increasing litigious society in which we live. In addition there is an increased focus on academic learning and structured activities outside of school. In the context of this strategy it needs to be balanced against opportunities of free play.

Play is of fundamental importance for children's healthy physical and emotional well-being. The Chief Medical Officer (DH) advises that children and young people should achieve 'a total of at least 60 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each day', and growing research continues to develop the link between free play and good health.

Research underlines the fact that opportunities for children and young people to play are directly linked to their understanding and awareness with their natural environment. 'A Child's Place why environment matters to children' (2004); recommends that children, and in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds, should be provided with more and better opportunities to access good quality play areas.

Play is able to contribute to the wider agenda in a number of ways;

- Anti-Social Behaviour
Many children and young adults complain that they do not have access to adequate and usable open space. Often communities can be hostile to providing space in the public domain. Research by CABI Space (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) however demonstrates that 'place making' (improving the design, maintenance and supervision of parks and open spaces) can be a very effective solution to anti-social behaviour issues.
- Inequality and Exclusion
There is increasing evidence that ethnic minorities and disabled children encounter significant physical and cultural barriers to using play areas in their

local environment. Quality play area provision can be open and accessible to all and takes positive action in removing disabling barriers so that disabled children and non-disabled children can participate.

- Play Areas and the Environment. It is repeatedly identified that both parents and children wish to see an improvement to the provision of places to go and things to do, where they can spend their leisure time with their friends. Unimaginative or run down play areas and parks are significant barriers to play, and a 2001 MORI poll identified better facilities for young people as priorities behind crime reduction, road repairs and better transport.

Learning Through Play

Play is one of the fundamental ways in which children develop a sense of identity, it is core to the learning process for children, allowing them to expand their skills, knowledge and understanding of the world. Play allows them to test their abilities, use initiative, take risks and make mistakes without fear of failure. Children's learning through play is broad ranging and crucially is not fixed to adult expectations of what should be achieved by children. The motivation for play, exploration and discovery comes from the child him or herself rather than from any outside reward.

Play is a crucial medium for social interaction and for forming, maintaining and negotiating relationships. In itself it is a means of communication and allows understanding and empathy to develop. It supports relationships within the family and between generations.

Play promotes increasing levels of flexibility in the individual (problem solving, creativity, new combinations of thoughts and ideas, adaptability). These are exactly the kind of 'higher order' skills that are required in a fast changing world.

Through risk and challenge encountered in play, children are able to develop skills and judgement vital to negotiating everyday life. Without such opportunities children may not be learn to judge risk appropriately for themselves and could be vulnerable to misplaced feelings of fear or conversely have little sense of danger.

Contribution Play Makes to Wider Agendas

- Community Cohesion
Play makes an important contribution to community life. Contact with others in play spaces or play provision can help to provide networks of support to children and families and increase a sense of community cohesion. Where there is a lack of understanding between different members of a community, play and play provision can be a positive integrating factor. A sense of connection to, and participation in, community life underpins development of citizenship amongst young people.
- Health
Playful interaction between a parent and child begins at the earliest stages of a child's life and forms a firm foundation for the child's emotional and physical health.

It has been found that play accounts for the greatest proportion of children's and young people's physical activity. As there is increasing concern for the health of the population, play (particularly outdoors) offers a vital opportunity to establish healthy lifestyles.

Children's emotional health is supported by the experiences they have at play. Through wide-ranging, satisfying play they develop a robust sense of self worth and gain a broad emotional repertoire. As they grow up, forms of play that involve roles and identity help children to understand who they are and how they fit into the world.

There is growing concern about the effects of 'play deprivation' on children and young people and the possibility that children's play is restricted to a degree that is causing them long-term harm. Manifestations of this might be incidences of anti-social behaviour, poorer motor skills and less resilience to stressful or traumatic events.

Play is a vital tool in supporting troubled or traumatised children. Play acts as a medium by which the child can express their feelings or anxieties. The act of playing can be therapeutic in nature helping the child to come to terms with difficult experiences.

Careful thought given to the play needs of children and the provision of play space and play things, can alleviate feelings of unease and anxiety in strange or difficult surroundings.

- Social Inclusion

Many children and young people suffer from the effects of disability, poverty and other social conditions, which can be a barrier to accessing play opportunities unless there is a strategy in place to overcome them.

It is particularly important that children with disabilities are enabled to play as fully as possible and that play providers actively plan to ensure that their provision is accessible to them; not just physically but in terms of attitude, atmosphere and flexibility.

Inclusive play is primarily about all children and young people having equal access to, and equal participation in, local play opportunities. The principles of inclusion apply not only to children and young people with a disability but to children of all abilities, ethnic background and age.

Research has shown that children with disabilities are more likely to be denied the right and freedom to play far more than their more able peers. There tends to be more control from adults and a natural tendency to want to protect children with disabilities from physical risk and negative attitudes. In addition, despite the move towards inclusion in education, many children with disabilities can only be catered for in special schools often increasing the sense of exclusion from the wider community.

5 National Context

National Policy Framework

The government, through the Children Act, has placed an increased focus and accountability on a range of organisations, placing on them a duty to co-operate to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. The expectation within the Children Act and the delivery framework of Every Child Matters: Change for Children is that local authorities and its key partners including the Primary Care Trust, police, community and voluntary sector organisations will review and adapt the way that services to children and young people are delivered. This will be achieved through integrating governance arrangements and developing integrated

strategies that result in seamless delivery of services that focus on meeting the needs of children and families.

The Children's Play Initiative

Play is of fundamental importance for children and young people's health and well-being, their relationships, their development and learning. Until recently providing places to go and opportunities for children to play has not been seen as a public responsibility or priority. A survey of local authorities in England in 2001 found that less than 40% had any kind of plan for play.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) commissioned national play review 'Getting Serious About Play; A review of children's play' made recommendations on the use of National Lottery Funding for improving children's play opportunities, through a new, dedicated children's play programme. The report also concluded that local authorities should take the lead in planning for play across their area and that a much greater profile and priority should be given to play in the future. It recommended that consideration of children's need to play becomes part of the strategic policy framework for all decisions that affect the planning and design of both children's services and public space in the future.

In support of implementing the recommendations within the review the Big Lottery developed its Children's Play Initiative. Its aim is to support the creation, improvement and development of inclusive play provision across England that responds to the needs of the community and reflects that interests and wishes of the children and young people who will use it. The vision is that every child should be able to access play provision that offers the opportunity to develop important social and life skills.

The eight national Children's Play Programme outcomes are covered in the opening section of this document.

The Children's Play Initiative aims to:

- Create, improve and develop children and young people's free local play spaces
- Support innovation and new ways of providing for children's play
- Ensure that local authorities work with other stakeholders to develop children's play strategies and plans.
- Ensure that good, inclusive and accessible children's play services and facilities are provided locally.

6 Local Context

Profile of Stockton-on-Tees and its Children and Young People

Stockton-on-Tees is the largest unitary authority in the Tees Valley, established following local government reorganisation in 1996. It is a Borough of contrasts, a mixture of busy town centres, urban residential areas and picturesque villages. The population is approximately 186,000 living in over 77,000 households.

The Borough has a unique social and economic mix, with areas of disadvantage situated alongside areas of affluence. Measured against the Governments Index of Multiple Deprivation, thirteen of its twenty-six wards fall within the worst 20% of deprived wards nationally. Eight of these wards are amongst the worst 10%, whilst two wards fall within the 20% most affluent wards. Despite these levels of

deprivation, a MORI survey carried out in 2006 showed that the majority of residents are satisfied with Stockton-on-Tees as a place to live. (85% satisfied). 46,400 children and young people live in the Borough. Of these 10,530 are under five years of age and 35,870 are of school age (from nursery to sixth form). 973 of pupils have special educational needs, and 1,786 are from black and ethnic minority heritage. The latest estimate is that there is over 400 young carers within the borough, however this does not include the growing number of children within families where there is parental drug misuse. The number of children in the Borough is projected to fall over the next ten years, but general population rises in the more affluent areas in the south of the Borough will include significant increases in the number of children and young people in those areas.

Social and economic disparities across the Borough are reflected in the life experiences of children and young people: inequalities in economic prosperity, in health, in educational attainment, in access to sport, leisure and culture, and in the level of social exclusion and offending. A key aim for all agencies involved in children's services is to narrow these gaps by improving services for all children across the borough but to prioritise services for those most in need. In Stockton-on-Tees, Every Child Matters, no child must be left behind.

Local Policy Framework

The Stockton-on-Tees Play Strategy supports the children of the borough, whatever their background or circumstances to achieve against the Every Child Matters; Change for Children 5 Outcomes.

In Stockton-on-Tees the requirements of the legislation are being implemented through the Children's Trust Board. The Local Authority has appointed a Director for Children, Education and Social Care and a lead Elected Member for Children's Services. In April 2006 it published its first Children and Young People's Plan and is currently implementing Integrated Service Areas, aimed at ensuring seamless access to services for children, young people and families on a local level.

The Participation, Involvement and Consultation (PIC) Strategy has been developed with the primary aim of involving children and young people in shaping services to meet their needs. The PIC Network, a group of organisations that actively work with children and young people on a regular basis, has been charged with implementation of the PIC Strategy.

Consultation exercises (see section 8) have revealed that children and young people often identify the need for 'things to do and places to go' as a priority.

It is important that the Play Strategy, whilst being a document in itself in order to give a detailed focus on play, is not seen in isolation from other key policy documents. It is an integral part of strategies such as the Community Strategy, the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, the Children and Young People's Plan, Integrated Service Strategy and Community Cohesion, amongst others. The implementation of the action plan embedded within this strategy will help support the achievement of key objectives and outcomes within other plans.

At a high level the Community Strategy aims to 'Promote Achievement and Tackle Disadvantage'. The priority theme for children and young people being to "promote the health, well-being and achievement of children and young people, and tackle inequalities and disadvantage experienced by some children and their families"

The Community Strategy is to be superseded by the emerging Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 – 2021 where the key ambitions are to include;

- Improved transport networks
- Create better open spaces
- Strong Community Involvement
- Reduce Anti-social Behaviour
- Increased choice and voice for service users

The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy is aimed at narrowing the gap between those who live in the more disadvantaged communities and the rest of the borough the equality of access within the play strategy supports the achievement of this aim.

The vision within the Children and Young People's Plan aims to assure that all children and young people in the borough of Stockton-on-Tees:

- Have the opportunity to grow up in a loving, stable environment
- Have real opportunities to achieve their full potential and contribute to a fast moving, changing and interdependent world
- Have opportunities to experience the benefits of living in a diverse multi-cultural society, where all experiences are valued and racism is not tolerated
- Live in a safe and secure community where they are protected from harm, abuse, harassment, exploitation or neglect and have the chance to enjoy the opportunity to grow-up with their peer groups and friends
- Are given chances to contribute to their local communities, feeling heard and being valued as responsible citizens, shaping their lives and their futures
- Have the opportunity to appreciate their environment and participate in sport, music, art, drama and a variety of cultural activities of the society and community in which they live
- Are given focused support as they pass through the various transitions from birth to adulthood, expanding their capacity to make decisions about their identity, relationships, education, future careers and financial affairs
- Enjoy excellent joined-up public services, which strive to meet the individual needs of children, young people and their families and which are accessible.

The underpinning principle of the development of Integrated Services is about wrapping services around the child and the family as far as possible on a locality basis in order to improve outcomes linked to the five Every Child Matters outcomes. As can be seen from the section on 'The Case for Play' ensuring children and young people have easy access to good quality play opportunities can support many of these outcomes.

A Planning Policy-Open Space Audit has been undertaken to identify and assess the borough's open spaces. This audit included a detailed analysis of play area provision and as such is a tool in forming the basis of long term plans and standards for the development of new facilities and the maintenance of existing sites. The Planning Team will be undertaking a comprehensive 'needs assessment' as part of the next stage of the process that will be relevant to future developments within the timescale of this strategy document.

The Stockton Renaissance Neighbourhood Matters Strategy emphasises the value of attractive green spaces with good leisure facilities, and community consultation often highlights a strong public desire for leisure provision aimed at young people.

Both the Local Action Plans and Area Partnership Boards regularly highlight the value of high quality play provision.

The Council's draft Play Area Strategy emphasises the need to improve play provision and has specific proposals around the securing of funding for the upgrade of sites as well as the review of location and community value of play facilities. It identifies the value of children's play in promoting:

- healthy lifestyles;
- awareness and understanding of the natural environment;
- inequality and tackling social exclusion
- community engagement with young people
- safer and stronger communities
- quality of place

The Urban Environment Task Group is to consider the proposal that the Council's former 'Parks, Open Spaces and Countryside Strategy' is replaced with a broader Green Infrastructure Strategy to cover the period 2007-2012. If agreed by Cabinet this will form the overarching strategy for the management and development of all the Borough's open spaces, providing the broad strategic context for the management and development of the Borough's play areas and play spaces. Addressing play provision in the context of a wider 'green infrastructure' approach ensures that wider environmental and social factors are given full consideration when planning play spaces (as reflected in the emerging concept of 'landscapes for play'). It also means that other landscapes and green spaces are recognised for their play potential.

7. Local delivery

Principles

As part of its role in championing play and increasing the focus for its delivery the Children's Trust Board has adopted the Model Statement of Principles for Play developed by the Audit Commission:

- We recognise the significance and value of play and the poverty of play opportunities in the general environment.
- We are committed to ensuring that all children have access to rich, stimulating environments, both in and out of doors, free from unacceptable risks, thereby offering them the opportunity to explore through their freely chosen play, both themselves and the world.
- Our policy is based on the understanding that every child needs opportunities to play both on their own and, crucially, with others.
- We are committed to ensuring that environments, services and provision for play are attractive, welcoming and accessible to every child irrespective of age, gender, background or origin, or of individual capacities and abilities.
- In line with the Play programme outcomes we are committed to reduce the barriers experienced by: girls, religious minorities, children in care, children of refugees and homeless families and those living in rural areas, but would wish to expand this list to include young carers.
- We will work towards increasing play opportunities for, and eliminating barriers to, the take-up of play provision by disabled children and children with specific cultural needs. This will take the form of developing increased inclusive provision or, if necessary, separate provision, recognising that separate provision may sometimes be a valuable staging post for particularly

vulnerable children. Use of such specialist services should only be at the choice of the child or their advocate and all mainstream services will be developed to be welcoming and accessible to all children.

In addition we recognise:

- Children play in a variety of public spaces as well as in dedicated provision.
- Play environments should provide safe, stimulating play opportunities that place children at the centre of the play process.
- Children need to encounter and learn to manage an acceptable level of risk in their play.
- Children's views should be sought and listened to.
- Children should have access to the widest possible range of play experiences and play environments, both indoors and outside.

Judgements about quality in provision will be based on the degree to which children are provided with opportunities to experience directly:

- The natural elements – earth, air, fire and water.
- Fabricated and natural materials and tools – consumables, 'loose parts'.
- Challenge – in the physical environment, in the social context and in private.
- Free movement – running, jumping, climbing, rolling, balancing.
- Emotions – both painful and pleasurable, the change to validate a range of feelings.
- A variety of stimulation to the senses – hearing, taste, smell, touch, sight
- Play with identity – drama, dressing up, role plays, masks, face painting
- Varied social interactions – freely chosen across the age, ability, gender, ethnic and cultural barriers, co-operating, resolving conflict, chatting, negotiating, sharing.
- Change – building/demolishing, transforming environments, the effect of the seasons and weather, growth and decay, predicting and planning, interesting physical environments – plantings, varied levels, enclosed/open spaces, mounds, steps, walls, shelters, surfaces, platforms, seating, privacy, vistas, flexibility.

Assessing Need and Community Engagement

The assessment, appraisal and review of attitudes and expectations from the local community regarding the provision of play areas have been a continuous ongoing process for a number of years. Through Local Area Partnership Boards, the Community Strategy and the Council Plan discussion and consultation has formed a significant part in the review and development process. The Play Area Strategy of 1998 formed the basis of considerable community consultation and discussion. Ongoing consultation will be a feature of the long-term development of play facilities and regular questionnaires are planned through the Council's Residents Panel and through Local Action Plans to examine satisfaction levels and future demands.

Involving young people and children in the development of children's play has been an integral part of the successful regeneration and restoration of town parks to date. This has involved local schools, youth groups and resident associations working in partnership with landscape architects and play area designers. A higher level of engagement with the Youth Assembly and work with the Council's Youth Services Team will develop over the term of the strategy.

8. Risk management

Taking risks

Children learn about risk through play. It is an essential element of confidence building necessary for personal development and survival. Through their play children choose to encounter risk, learn to assess it and develop skills to manage it. Through trial and error they discover their own limitations and realise their own potential for undertaking challenge. Children are inquisitive and curious with an innate and compelling drive to explore the unknown, experiment and test themselves.

Managing Risks

Under the Health and Safety Act 1974, employers must undertake regular Risk Assessments. A Risk Assessment is based on a holistic approach to assessing risk.

Those responsible for the regulation, inspection and implementation of Health and Safety are required to make appropriate judgements to the particular circumstance of the individual play provision.

Factors to be considered:

- Age and capacity of children and young people using the provision and equipment
- The levels and types of accidents that have occurred in the past
- The levels and amount of supervision that is available
- Risk assessment can be a highly effective tool in supporting the development of quality play environments
- Specific play training is provided to support settings to enable them to conduct an effective risk assessment

The Play Safety Forum, a national body with government funding was set up to consider issues, and its position statement *Managing Risk in Play* provides a helpful focus for discussion.

Managing Risk in Play

The Play Safety Forum 2002 set out in its document “*Managing Risk in Play Provision*” the key issues in relation to risk and play provision as highlighted below

“There is a growing concern about how safety is being addressed in play provision. Fear of litigation is leading many play providers to focus on minimising the risk of injury at the expense of other fundamental objectives. The effect is to stop children from enjoying a healthy range of play opportunities, limiting their enjoyment and causing potentially damaging consequences for their development. This approach ignores clear evidence that playing provision is a comparatively low risk activity for children. Of the two million or so childhood accident cases treated by hospital each year, fewer than two percent involve playground equipment. Participation in sports like soccer, widely acknowledged as ‘good’ for a child’s development, involve a greater risk of injury than visiting the playground. Fatalities on playgrounds are very rare - about one per three or four years on average. This compares with, for instance, more than 100 children pedestrian fatalities a year and more than 500 child fatalities from accidents from overall.”

Risk position statement

'Children need and want to take risk when they play. Play provision aims to respond to those needs and wishes by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. In doing this, play provision aims to manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unaccepted risk of death or serious injury.' (*Managing Risk In Play Provision, Play Safety Forum 2002*).

9. Local Provision and Local Play Standards

The Voice of Children and young People

There is a robust consultation system within the borough that has included issues around play in recent years, as such it was not felt necessary to undertake a new consultation process to specifically link to the development of this strategy. Children, young people and adults have been consulted on play, and it was important to listen to what they have been saying.

Whilst some of the consultation exercises were specifically around 'play', findings from other consultation exercises with children and young people where 'play' has been commented on were also taken into account. A total of 1500 responses were received from children and young people and from approximately 1600 adults. The children and young people involved in the consultations were aged 4-19 years and were from a range of backgrounds; including rural and town, different ethnic and religious backgrounds and disabled children and young people:

Information has been collated from a range of consultations including:

- Adult Viewpoint Questionnaire; Parks Survey, September 2005
- The Ezeelive Questionnaire; October 2005
- Youth Viewpoint Questionnaire; Parks And Community Survey, October 2005
- Findings from the 'Youth Matters' Seminar; October 2005
- 'Somewhere to Go? Something to do?' DfES Questionnaire on Youth Matters; October 2005
- Consultation on youth cafes; March 2006
- Learning Together Event; July 2006
- Student Councils Events; November 2006
- Youth Viewpoint Questionnaire; Play Areas Survey, November 2006
- Corner House Youth Project-Interim Report and findings January 2007
- Adult Viewpoint Questionnaire; Twentieth Viewpoint Survey Results (Play Areas), February 2007.
- Student Councils Event; March 2007
- Stockton Youth Assembly; May 2007
- Voluntary & Community Sector
- Stockton Parent Support (Children with Disabilities)
- Children's Fund Projects

What they said

The initial findings from the consultation undertaken show that the children and young people of Stockton-on-Tees have the following concerns:

- There are not enough parks or play areas
- Most parks are too far out, they are inaccessible!
- There are not enough places to "Chill Out" / area for older groups
- A permanent skate park / stunt bike area

- Being intimidated by large groups in Parks

They want:

- More control and choice over what is on offer in their area
- Access to free activities
- Mobile play facilities
- More localised provision
- Free transport to help access facilities
- More information on what is on in their area
- To be able to use school facilities outside of school hours
- Better access for children with disabilities
- To feel safe / CCTV cameras
- To be challenged

Audit of local provision

A comprehensive audit of local provision was carried out by the play strategy group, this identified gaps in service provision. The audit identified a wide range of services in the borough, but did not include issues of accessibility or quality of the service available. In certain areas of the town, and in particular in the outlying villages there is a deficit of play facilities available.

Through the audit and the consultation undertaken with children, young people their parents and carers a number of potential developments have been identified. These have informed the priorities within the Action Plan (Appendix 1).

Analysis of Fixed Play Facilities

There are at present 40 fixed equipment play areas on land in the public domain (excluding schools) in Stockton Borough. This number has been reduced from 60 since the Play Area Audit Report produced in 1998. The areas are defined into 3 categories:

- Destination sites – These are sites that provide additional facilities to the fixed play equipment found on site such as toilets, refreshment facilities and usually benefit from an on site ranger service.
- Neighbourhood sites – These are high quality, well equipped areas with innovative provision that have a large catchment area, and are located in a park or recreation ground with a cluster of good recreational facilities and have CCTV coverage.
- Doorstep sites – These are smaller stand alone equipped play areas that have a reduced range of equipment that serve a local catchment area.

Using GIS (Geographical Information System) to plot the fixed Play facilities across the borough indicates a deficiency in the main areas of population (Norton and Ingleby Barwick areas of the authority), as well as some of the outlying villages.

Parish Councils within the Borough are responsible for the maintenance of 10 sites, 8 of which are maintained by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

Other sites maintained by Stockton-on-Tees Borough through Service Level Agreements but controlled by others including English Partnerships, the Community Sector and by a Housing Developer (with a view to freehold transfer to SBC).

The Play Area Audit Report was produced in 1998, highlighting the poor state of play sites across the borough. Many of the sites contained equipment that was old or obsolete and suffered from serious public nuisance problems. Very few of the 60 sites had appropriate play equipment or safety surfacing and the Council received many complaints and insurance claims resulting from accidents at sites.

The 1998 review recommended the creation of a hierarchy of play sites to be located in key parks and recreation grounds, allowing limited revenue resources to be focused on major play sites. The report also recommended the immediate closure of a number of sites.

ROSPA were commissioned to undertake inspections on all play areas in 2000 and 2001. The subsequent reports recommended the removal of a number of items / closure of a number of sites. The need was emphasised by the increasing insurance claims received by the Council for accidents on the older and heavily vandalised sites. A total of 28 play sites have been closed during the past 5 years in an attempt to rationalise facilities, with over 30 pieces of individual play items removed from sites currently open to the public.

Most neighbourhoods in the borough are served by existing facilities, a fairly even spread having been achieved through the closure process since 1998.

None of the Council managed sites are supervised though six sites have a ranger service present and CCTV overlooks eight sites.

Environment is an important factor for play. A secluded, vandalised site with poor natural surveillance will be less attractive to genuine users, whereas a well maintained site, with an open aspect and trees and colour will be more appealing. Each site in the borough has had its environmental aspects assessed.

All play areas in the borough achieve at least a satisfactory rating for accessibility through DDA 2005 (Disability Discrimination Act) ratings. Other measures to improve accessibility for all have been assessed.

The management of play areas is dependant upon the ownership of the land upon which it is situated. Care For Your Area has responsibility for the management of twenty sites, with twenty others the responsibility of others. The long-term retention of non-Council sites cannot be guaranteed.

Local Play Standards

The quality of play provision is important and whilst in some cases the quality can not always be easily defined, at the outset the Play Strategy includes some locally agreed play standards

In seeking to adopt these standards it is important that it is recognised that it is not only the Local Authority that provides play services, facilities and equipment within the borough. Community and voluntary sector organisations and local businesses have an important role in developing and delivering play for children and young people. The standards have been developed through drawing on the work of The Children's Play Council 'Play Indicators Project'.

Wherever children and young people live or spend their free time they should have access to spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation which:

- are **free** of charge, where they are **free** to come and go and that they are **free** to choose what they do whilst they are there. Within this standard it is acknowledged that particularly for young children and those with specific special needs issues of mobility will impact on the 'free to come and go' element.
- Are accessible, welcoming and engaging for all, including those who are disabled or have special needs.
- Allow for the differing needs of people of different ages, with different interests

The Action Plan (Appendix 1) sets out the intention to add to these by the development of local common standards for quality play based on the principles contained within this document, whilst ensuring that they are aligned to national standards. This will be undertaken through local work with partners.

The locally developed standards need to be clearly about the standard of play provision that children can expect rather than a set of performance indicators.

10. Outcomes

As previously stated the desired outcomes for the borough are aligned with those of the children's play Children's Play programme (see page 4). The overall outcomes and objectives will be clearly specified for individual projects within service specifications or contracts.

Performance and Review

The Play Strategy and the Play Action Plan will both be monitored by a multi-agency Play Partnership, this will meet on a minimum basis of six times each year to discuss progress towards project targets and take action to rectify any problems that may arise. The formation of a small number of sub-groups is likely to be required to focus on particular actions.

Local people and young people participating in the project will be invited to contribute to Play Partnership meetings. This will ensure that beneficiaries are fully involved, have a sense of ownership and can change any aspects of the project if they are not satisfied with it.

The Play Action Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis with report on progress to the Children's Trust Board.

Monitoring

Regular monitoring of individual projects will occur on an ongoing basis. Typical milestones for each project / play area will include:

Key Tasks

- Consultation with the community
- Consultation with Planning Officers
- Proposals / play design completed
- Play posts advertised (revenue projects)
- Planning permission obtained (where appropriate)
- Contracts in place with providers
- Community Play Officer appointed
- Start on-site (for capital schemes)
- Capital Completion

Milestones

- Official opening of play scheme
- Play Courses / Activities started
- Financial Completion

Review

Evaluation of projects will be undertaken by the Play Programme Manager. This person will report to a Play Partnership Board who will have overall responsibility for the project.

A comprehensive, independent evaluation report will be undertaken after the project is complete, interviewing all participants, ascertaining their satisfaction with the project and examining ways in which they may continue to shape and influence project direction.

Exit Strategy

We will ensure that the project will be sustainable after the period of Lottery funding ends. It is anticipated that this project will continue to expand and develop over future years. The intention is to develop projects which have long-lasting impact and sustainability.

Within all projects the underlying objective is to ensure that the play projects are fully utilised by the local community - who will feel a strong sense of ownership for the new facilities created. As a result, it is anticipated that many projects will establish 'friends of' groups (led by local residents) who will be able to access charitable funding streams to cover long-term maintenance and staffing costs.

The ultimate aim is for the project to become self-sustaining, with venues generating enough revenue to employ play development workers and cover ongoing maintenance costs.

It is also the intention to secure future grant funding from external sources where appropriate, who may support this project in the longer-term, particularly where the project enables grassroots community organisations to access play facilities and opportunities. We will also continue to build strong links with core funding agencies across the wider region such as the Tees Valley Partnership.

Key Objectives

The key objectives that have been set out within this strategy form the action plan (Appendix 1). These are:

- To develop and promote high standards of play provision across the Borough.
- To increase the range, distribution and quality of child-led play activities across the borough
- Provide a range of appropriately risk managed play environments, which physically challenge, and stimulate the minds of Children and Young People.
- Promote free inclusive and accessible play opportunities for all Children and Young People, whatever their age, ability, and circumstances.
- To empower children and young people to contribute as equal partners in the development, monitoring and review play provision.

Appendix 1: Action Plan

Key Objective One:

To develop and promote high standards of play provision across the Borough.

Action	Milestone	Date	Responsible	Measurable Outcome
1.1 To evolve the Play Strategy group into a Play Partnership Board with the responsibility for the co-ordination of any Big Lottery Grant funding and monitoring this action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree membership requirements • Develop Draft terms of reference • Announcement from Big Lottery on success of application • Release of Big Lottery Funding 	2007/08 Dec 2007 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Strategy Group • Big Lottery • Big Lottery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Partnership Board established • The securing of the full £488K funding available from the Big Lottery • Transfer of initial grant payment
1.2 To develop common standards for Quality Play based on the Principles in the Stockton-on-Tees Play Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align national standards with local standards • Consult with stakeholders and agree common standards 	2008/09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Partnership Board / CT Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have common standards for Quality Play based on the principles in the Stockton-on-Tees Play Strategy.
1.3 Undertake a workforce analysis with the Play providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct audit • Use findings from audit to plan training programme • Make training programme available 	2008 2008 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be identified following reorganisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff have their training needs assessed • Training programme matched to needs of workforce • Monitoring of attendance • Course developed in light of evaluation feedback

<p>1.4 To respond to the Children Workforce Development Council's (CWDC) requirement to promote a "Common Core Curriculum" for all staff or volunteers working with children and young people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Core Curriculum available to play workforce • LSCB Safeguarding Children training available to play workforce 	<p>2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Officer (CESC) via Eric Jewitt • LSCB (Training Task Group) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All newly qualified or appointed play staff will have achieved common core training
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Key Objective Two:

To increase the range, distribution and quality of child-led play activities across the borough

Action	Milestone	Date	Responsible	Measurable Outcome
2.1 To secure grant funding via application to Big Lottery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio application submitted • Announcement from Big Lottery on success of application • Contracts in place for providers (who will be in receipt of Big Lottery funding) prior to release of funds from Big Lottery • Release of Big Lottery Funding 	10/09/07 Dec 2007 Tba 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Strategy Group • Big Lottery • C&YP Strategy Team • Big Lottery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission of Bid application plus endorsed Play Strategy to Big Lottery by 10 September 2007. • The securing of the full £488K funding available from the Big Lottery • Contracts agreed and signed • Transfer of initial grant payment
2.2 To explore the feasibility of extending the use of existing services / facilities within the borough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit of existing services • Clarify financial implications • Agree priority list 	2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Partnership Board / Extended Schools / Children's Centres / Building Schools for the Future (BSF) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended Play services available via Children's Centres • Extended Play services available via Schools
2.3 To raise awareness of child led play with: -families -voluntary and community groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information posted on Children's Trust website 	2008/09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Partnership Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase of 12.5 % of use of SEAL (Stockton Events and Activities Listing) website • To maintain this increase of activity once the role of CT website develops.

<p>2.4 Develop Area plans for play that include an increase in child –led play opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renaissance Area Partnership Plans for play promote child –led play opportunities 	<p>2008/10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renaissance Area Partnership Boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 4 Renaissance Area plans for play include targets for an increase in child led play
<p>2.5 To expand the holiday play opportunities within the borough</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of Play opportunities on CT website 	<p>2008 - 2012</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Partnership Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase by 12.5% the numbers of C&YP engaging in holiday play opportunities within the borough

Key Objective Three:

Provide a range of appropriately risk managed play environments, which physically challenge, and stimulate the minds of children and young people.

Action	Milestone	Date	Responsible	Measurable Outcome
3.1 To have a play representative available to the four Renaissance Area Partnership Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify play champion / representative for 4 Renaissance areas 	2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renaissance Area Partnership Boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play representative on each Renaissance Area Partnership Board
3.2 Play audit used to identify gaps in play provision within the Renaissance Area Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gap analysis undertaken for each Partnership Area Individual Action Plans developed as result of gap analysis Long-term objectives within Action Plans to inform development of Play Strategy 2012 - beyond 	2008/10 2011/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renaissance Area Partnership Boards Play partnership Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renaissance Area Partnership Plans for play Production of Play Strategy 2012 and beyond
3.3 Promote play facilities within the borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information available through: Children's Trust Website / Extended Schools / Children's Centres 	2008/09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and Young People's Strategy Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of hits on website information Increased uptake of Play services
3.4 To have effective risk management systems for current and new outdoor and indoor play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk management programme in place that involves children and young people Development programme for risk management in place Review of risk management programme 	2008/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SBC Partnership of Countryside and Greenspace, H&S, Risk Management Team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well managed, safe and challenging play opportunities increased across the Renaissance partnership Areas

Key Objective Four:

Promote free inclusive and accessible play opportunities for all Children and Young People, whatever their age, ability, and circumstances.

Action	Milestone	Date	Responsible	Measurable Outcome
4.1 Use the Play England Quality Assessment indicators to assess the play opportunities for children with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality indicators or Play adopted • Plan in place to meet indicators • Review of progress 	2007/08 2008 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBC Countryside and Greenspace • SBC Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record of play facilities that are fully accessible to children with disabilities. SBC play provision measurable against 4. indicators (need to specify these)
4.2 To establish a baseline of the play opportunities that meet the 3 'frees' test - Free of charge; - Free to come and go; - Free to chose what they do whilst there.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop self assessment tool • Pilot to be identified • Pilot self assessment tool • Identify gaps • Develop Renaissance Area Action Plans to address gaps 	2008/09 2009 2009 2009 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Partnership Board • Play Partnership Board • Renaissance Area Partnership Boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline established • Completion of Pilot by 31 March 2009 • Geographical spread of open, inclusive accessible pay environments
4.3 Greater engagement with services that work with and support 'Hard to reach' groups with reference to play opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify groups • Clarify deficit • Develop action plan • Establish means of measurement 	2008 2008 2009 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Partnership Board • Play Providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring system in place to measure uptake of play opportunities by 'Hard to Reach' groups • Increase uptake of play activities by Hard to reach groups by 12.5%

Key Objective Five:

To empower children and young people to contribute as equal partners in the development, monitoring and review play provision.

Action	Milestone	Date	Responsible	Measurable Outcome
5.1 Children and young people to be represented on the Play Partnership Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish membership of Play Partnership Board 	2008/09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play Partnership Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of contribution via minutes Children and Young People actively participating in a minimum of 50% of Play Partnership Board meetings
5.2 Involvement of children and young people in the appointment of the play workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children & young people involved in the appointment of Play staff through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - contributing to job descriptions / person specifications - contributing to short-listing - taking part in the interview process 	2008/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play Partnership Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement of children and young people is evident within consultation and evaluation documentation Involvement of young people is evident in the development of 75% of Job Descriptions and Person Specifications for new posts relating to Children's Play Involvement of young people is evident in 75% of Short-listing of Candidates Involvement of young people is evident in 75% of Interview panels.
5.3 Children and young people in the four Renaissance Areas participating in the planning for play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local area audits involving children and young people 	2009/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renaissance Area Partnership Boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All four areas to produce records of involvement
5.4 Children and young people are involved in the review of the current Play Strategy and development of the next	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree Review process Establish role of children and young people Annual Review 	2011/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play Partnership Board CTB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Strategy published for 2012 and beyond

Appendix 2
Membership of Play Strategy Bid Group

Children and Young People's Strategy Team
Children and Families Service
Parks and Countryside Services
Voluntary and Community Sector
SureStart
Children's Fund
Youth Service
Extended Schools
Renaissance Area Boards
Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
Young Persons Representative
Tees Active
Community Safety
Arts and Culture
Sports Development

Appendix 3

Proposed Projects for the Big Lottery Application

Expressions of interest were sought from potential play providers. In total 24 applications were submitted, totalling approximately £3.4million. The applications were considered by a Panel consisting of young people, officers from the local authority, representatives from the voluntary and community sector, and members of the Play Strategy Group. The Panel was advised by a Regional Development Officer Play England.

The criteria for the panel in relation to decision making included whether applications:

- Were compatible with the five key objectives within the draft Play Strategy
- Met three or more of the Play Programme outcomes
- Included duplication with existing service provision
- Could link in with other applications that have been submitted.

The recommendations from the Panel regarding the projects that should be included in the priority list within the bid application for the grant funding (figures are approximations) from the Big Lottery Fund are:

- A mobile play facility covering the borough (£190K)
- Landscaping of Park in Ingleby Barwick (£100K)
- Development of facilities for children with special needs in Abbey Hill School and Westlands School (£100K)
- Community Projects in Thornaby and Thorpe Thewles (£50K)

If successful in relation to the bid, the Local Authority will be the accountable body for the grant and delivery of the portfolio. The Big Lottery Fund specifies that Management costs can be no more than 10% of the total allocation.