



BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

# **Bath and North East Somerset Play Strategy**

## **2006-2012**

## Foreward

***By Councillor Jonathan Gay, Chief Executive for children and young people, Bath and North East Somerset Council***

I am delighted to be able to present a Play Strategy that builds on the commitment of the Council to strengthen the play sector and link strategic objectives across many of the Council's services such as Leisure and Sport; Housing; Children's Services; Transport and the Environment as well as linking joint objectives with Health.

Having the freedom to play is a child's basic right. However there are a myriad of reasons why children and young people do not access free play or feel that they can play freely in their local community. In Bath and North East Somerset the development of our Play Policy in 1999 put play in the strategic policy framework of the Council and supported the work of the Strategic Development Officer for Play.

Since then a lot of exciting and innovative work has been achieved in the area. Voluntary sector play grants have enabled organisations to lever in additional funds to support play and play has been promoted through the Play Awards and a range of play conferences.

In December 2004 Community Play Rangers (funded by the Children's Fund and the Council) won the Sure Start Partners in Excellence award for their innovative work in improving children's sense of Well Being. Community Play Rangers have since gone on to win an award for Community Care for their work on involvement of children in the design of a small park. The Council is proud of the work that it funds and several Councillors are committed to the development of new opportunities for children to access play.

This Strategy clearly links the myriad of initiatives that the Council is involved with relating to children and young people and to bring our voluntary sector partners with us on the development of a long-term strategy for Play. It heralds the challenges that we have ahead to increase children and young peoples access to free play provision and will inform our bid to the BIG Lottery for Play and a range of other initiatives that we have already started work on.

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## Executive Summary

This Strategy has been produced by Bath and North East Somerset Council and a wide range of partner organisations who work with children and young people in play. Play is a vital part of every child's healthy development. Children play at all ages. This strategy focuses on services for children from 5-16 years old.

Playing freely helps children to learn, be healthy, develop relationships and feel part of their local community. Bath and North East Somerset Council developed a Play Policy in 1999. This conveys a vision to give all children in the area access to a range of quality play and recreational opportunities. Examples of these are free holiday playschemes; play areas in parks within easy reach of home; informal green space to play with friends who live nearby.

To develop the Children and Young Peoples Plan in 2005, one thousand children and young people aged between 5 and 24 years old were asked what matters most to them. 43% wanted safer places to play outside and hang out. They also wanted less bullying, more respect and to feel safe from crime. Play services support all of these needs. An example is the work of the Community Play Rangers working after school and at weekends in parks and outdoor spaces to enable children living nearby to play freely, choose games and activities and above all feel safe playing in their local community. The Bath and North East Somerset Community Play Rangers have won national awards for their work in achieving the outcomes in Every Child Matters which are to improve children and young peoples opportunities to:

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

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that signatory nations will *“recognise 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.”* This Convention was ratified by the UK Government in 1991 and by Bath and North East Somerset Council in 1999.

Although funding for play through the Council is not substantial, work to develop play services over the years has led to a strong play sector. The Strategic Development Officer for Play is responsible for developing play services and working closely with the voluntary sector partners who are commissioned to provide play services.

Funding from a wide range of different sources including the Children's Fund and Lottery has been used to build up play in the area.

This Strategy provides information on existing work in play and sets targets for what we aim to achieve over the next six years to give children and young people more play services that are free of charge, where they are free to come and go as they please and free to choose what they do.

The Outcomes (see Chapter 3, Table 2) in the strategy give specific, measurable and achievable targets of what we want to achieve. They are divided into five themes (see Chapter 3, Table 1);

1. More safe and attractive outdoor play spaces near home

Parks and outdoor green spaces and sports facilities are an essential way to enable children to play freely. Work with the Parks Department, Planning Transport and Highways and Voluntary Sector play providers will inform a bid to the BIG Lottery for Play to increase work of Community Play Rangers to cover Keynsham and Peasedown St John in addition to existing areas and increase children and young people access to local holiday playschemes in isolated rural areas.

2. High quality play

People working in play need to be trained in playwork. It is essential that training covers the importance of reasonable risk taking in quality play and risk assessment. Voluntary organisations need capacity building if their services are to grow to respond to demand. Play provision needs to be accessible to all children and young people and work needs to be done to break down barriers to inclusion of all.

3. Play and Participation

Play services and playworkers are good at carrying out consultation and asking children what they want. An example of this would be the development of a new service for 12-16 years olds in the summer of 2006 when young people could choose from a range of sports and other activities instead of attending local playscheme which they felt was better for the younger children. We aim to build upon this pilot project and develop further play provision for this age group.

4. Promoting play

One of the biggest barriers to playing freely in streets, parks and neighbourhoods is the attitude of many adults to children and young

people. This strategy aims to do more to publicise to parents and the general public that children and young people have a right to play and that it is a vital part of their development. Other workers such as Community Wardens, Community Beat Officers, School Meal Supervisors and Youth Workers need to understand play and its importance.

#### 5. Play in schools and community services

Free play services and sports facilities/areas are often at the heart of developing a sense of community. We need more holiday playschemes in Bath and North East Somerset that are free to everyone. Schools are key to developing play in the community and outreach work to bring cheap and re-usable resources to all those interested in work with children. Parents can help promote play and gather people together where they might not otherwise see playwork as common ground.

This strategy is divided into five sections:

1. The importance of play and what children want from play
2. The national and local context for play
3. The audit of play during the development of the Play Strategy
4. The key themes and action plans identified by partners in the development of the Play Strategy, including the outcomes expected
5. How we will know if we are meeting our targets and how children will be involved in reviewing our progress

# Chapter 1

## The importance of play and what children want from play

### 1.1 Introduction

By Sara Willis – Early Years, Childcare and Play Team Leader

Bath and North East Somerset are delighted to be able to present a Play Strategy that builds on the commitment of the Council to strengthen the play sector, at the same time as link strategic objectives across many of the Council's services such as Leisure and Sport; Housing; Children's Services; Transport and the Environment as well as linking joint objectives with Health.

The Council stated its commitment to Play through the adoption of the Play Policy in 1999 (see Appendix 1). This policy was further reviewed in 2004/5 by an external consultant and an action plan developed to ensure that Play was central to many of the Council's plans, policies and departments (see Appendix 2 for summary of Play Policy Review 2005).

Although funding for play through the Council is not substantial it has been recognized that the development of play through the adoption of the Play Policy and the allocation of grant funds, as well as the employment of a Strategic Officer for Play, has meant that a play infrastructure is in existence in Bath & North East Somerset. Core funding for the voluntary sector has meant that it has been possible to attract external funding such as Better Play and Children's Fund monies, thus enhancing provision for children.

In December 2004 Community Play Rangers (funded by the Children's Fund and the Council) won the Sure Start Partners in Excellence award for their innovative work in improving children's sense of Well Being. Community Play Rangers have since gone on to win an award for Community Care for their work on involvement of children in the design of a small park. The Council is proud of the work that it funds and several Councillors are committed to the development of new opportunities for children to access play.

The development of this strategy has involved all the key partners who have over the last five years supported the Council's Play Policy. The strategy therefore builds very much on shared values and aspirations for our children and communities. The Children & Young People's Plan explicitly lists Play as a central objective to improving outcomes for our children. Play is also recognized as an important means to providing inclusion in the GetActive Vision for Sport and Active Leisure and the Green Spaces Strategy.

The importance of play in schools was recently highlighted in a 'Play in



Schools' (September 2005)<sup>1</sup> conference where headteachers and teachers welcomed the opportunity to discuss how we could improve our children's health and well being through good quality play in schools.

In all recent consultations with children, the need for more places to hang out and play has been raised by children themselves.

Bath and North East Somerset has therefore been poised to embrace new funding to support our vision and Play Policy, at the same time using the opportunity to produce this strategy to clearly link the myriad of initiatives that the Council is involved with and to bring our voluntary sector partners with us on the development of a long-term strategy for Play.

## **1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Play Strategy**

The Bath and North East Somerset Play Policy (Appendix 1) developed in 1999 conveys a vision of what Bath and North East Somerset Council wants to achieve to give all children in the local authority area access to a range of quality play and recreational opportunities. This Play Strategy sets out how the council will achieve this vision over the next six years. It is based on an understanding of the supply, distribution, quality and level of use of current provision and views of children, young people and their families living in Bath and North East Somerset.

Underpinning the success of all work within this Play Strategy is the need to promote an understanding of play both in the public realm and within different Council departments. The Bath and North East Somerset Play Policy is a corporate document which can and should influence all Council decisions and strategies that affect children and young people.

## **1.3 The Value and Significance of Play**

Play and its significance in children's healthy development is often misunderstood and undervalued. It has historically been separated from other services for children and young people and has grown up out of voluntary work in response to community need.

However, "Play is an essential part of how children come to understand themselves and the world around them and is a vital component of a child's life. A child's capacity for positive development will be inhibited or constrained if denied access to a range of stimulating play opportunities." Through play children explore their physical and social environment; they experiment with ideas and concepts, and learn how to deal with situations that trouble or frighten them. In this way children learn for themselves what cannot explicitly be taught.

Play services do not only benefit children and young people. They have a positive knock on effect for the whole family. When asking local parents for feedback on play services in parks, many parents living in flats near the park commented on the relief they felt in knowing that their children were able to enjoy safe play. Some had asked staff for support and/or advice in managing their children's behaviour. This shows the level of trust that a quality play service can get from parents and carers who might otherwise not link with any community support services.

*"The overwhelming cry from both parents and young people is around the lack of activities and facilities....the thing they say would most improve family life is the provision of places to go and things to do....where they can spend their leisure time with their friends."*

(Margaret Hodge, Minister for Children and Families, January 2005) <sup>2</sup>

#### **1.4 Barriers to Play**

There is increasing evidence that children's play opportunities are under threat. *"Over the past fifty years it is not unreasonable to state that adults have progressively colonised virtually all public outside space"* (Play Policy Review 2005)<sup>3</sup>. Playing with friends near home is an important way in which children develop a sense of belonging within a community. Many children do not have the opportunity to play with peers in this way. Children attending specialist schools or living in rural areas are driven to school, which are some distance from home. This limits their chance to mix with their peer group locally.

*"While the decline in play opportunities affects children generally, the impact is disproportionately greater on disabled children and those living with other forms of social or economic disadvantage, for whom access to free, safe and enjoyable play spaces is especially important"*

(Margaret Hodge, Minister for Children and Families 2005) <sup>2</sup>

In August 2006, 279 children aged from 5-13 years from across Bath and North East Somerset took part in a survey about Safe Play (see Appendix 3). Overall 41% of children did not feel safe at play. When asked about what made them feel unsafe children gave a variety of reasons. Many of these came from parental fear of strangers,

*"My mum says strangers might get me" and not being allowed to go to parks as "they are full of weirdo's"*

(Play Development Advisory Group Consultation, August 2006).

Parental fear for safety from traffic and bullying often prevents children from

getting to a park or meeting point where their friends gather unless accompanied by an adult. Because of this dependence on adult's availability and inclination, children are not able to go to the park as often as they would like. Consultation with children and young people, parents and carers has also revealed the extent of negative attitudes many members of the public have towards children and young people. In some cases these attitudes prevent children from moving freely around their local community.

It is essential that parents, carers and members of the public are made aware of the importance of play and of children's rights to play in their local communities. Creative and innovative ways need to be found to involve all sectors of the community in better understanding play.

Some barriers to play faced by children are linked with "territories" which influence how children feel about moving around in their local communities. An example of this would be neighbouring areas like Whiteway and Twerton and in Keynsham, Queens Road and Downfields. Very often these divisions are accentuated by a busy road with inadequate pedestrian crossings.

Lack of accessible public transport provision means that some children miss out on play unless it is happening in their immediate local area.

Lack of awareness and resources within the play sector itself can prevent play provision from being truly inclusive. Time therefore must be spent and costed into quality provision to make personal contact with families who find it hard to access services.

It is critical that play provision is welcoming and accessible to every child. In order to achieve this goal we must consistently review our approach to developing play provision and consult with children, young people and families from minority groups who might otherwise not feel included in provision.

## **1.5 A Commitment to Children, Young People and Play**

Bath and North East Somerset Council is committed to bringing play into the centre of children's and young peoples services. This will be done by working collaboratively across Council departments and partner agencies to drive home the importance of quality play in children's lives. An important part of the work to promote play is enabling children and young people to express their own views on how the Council should develop services and facilities. Children themselves need to understand what is meant by free play. A powerful and effective method of doing this is for children to each other children and/or adults about the importance of play.

As a means of putting this overarching commitment into practice the Play Strategy includes a priority target to promote play through publicity, increased media coverage, workshops and presentations for professionals, parents, carers, children and young people.

## 1.6 Definition of Play

Play is satisfying, creative and freely chosen. It may or may not involve equipment; it can be boisterous and energetic or quiet and contemplative. Play may be done with others or alone. It can be light hearted or very serious. For play to be free and uncontaminated by adult expectation, emphasis must always be on the child's choice and control over his or her own experience. Adults have a significant role to play in supporting and facilitating environments in which children can play freely. This approach is distinctly different to one where children's learning is directed by adults and play is structured.

Although we all recognise it when we see it, play is difficult to define. The National Occupational Standards of the playwork, childcare and early years professions define play as *"freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. It can be fun or serious... by playing; children learn and develop as individuals and as members of the community"*.

(B Hughes and F King, 1985 as adopted by the National Occupational Standards for playwork) <sup>4</sup>

The 2004 National Play review uses the straightforward description of 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"*.

(Department of Culture, Media and Sport, Getting Serious About Play, A Review of Children Play, 2004). <sup>5</sup>

These definitions all suggest that play is instinctive, arising from children's innate need to express themselves and explore their world; and by choosing and doing it for themselves children develop skills that are vital for future life. Some children need to be given the chance to play, for example those who have experienced long periods of time in hospital or care. They may not know how to play or how to use this in developing their skills. The prime location of most children is playing in the home; however, for some children there isn't parental support available to fully enhance development through play.

This strategy focuses primarily on children's free play in their local communities. Opportunities for safe free play are supported through use of parks, play areas, community play provision which is free of cost and "open

access” meaning that children can come and go as they please and can choose what they do.

Childcare such as after school clubs and holiday playschemes contribute significantly to play. They are described as “closed access” whereby children are registered in and out and can not leave without parental agreement. Fees are required to make closed access clubs or holiday playschemes financially viable as a service to parents who, due to work or other commitments require childcare. Bath and North East Somerset Children Services expects private play providers to employ playwork trained staff. The play sector workforce is therefore found across open and closed access provision.

The private sector contributes to play development in Bath and North East Somerset and are active on the Play Partnership. Many private play providers model best practice in terms of children’s participation and development of children’s self-esteem through a rich and varied play environment. At consultation events in October 2006 on the Play Strategy targets, private play providers highlighted the work that they have achieved in raising children’s self-esteem and confidence through play at clubs and playschemes. In some cases children who had benefited from this support would not have been able to access open access play provision due to lack of confidence or local knowledge. In order to maximise resources it is important to include quality private play providers in discussions on how to develop play in areas identified as having no other provision.

Children and young people make up 24% of the population in Bath and North East Somerset and their first demand is for more safe places to play (see p ) Competing demands for housing, roads, schools and other services should not diminish the opportunities for play.

## **1.7 Age Definition**

Play is vital throughout childhood. Very young babies interact with parents and carers as soon as they are born and much important bonding takes place through play. As children get older their types of play change but the need to play does not diminish. Bath and North East Somerset Play Policy does not prescribe age ranges for play provision. This is based on the understanding that children and young people across a wide age range like to play, and benefit from doing so.

*“We want something good and fun. We don’t want people telling us what to do all the time, that’s what happens all day at school. You need it to be different.”*

(comment by a 13 year old, Consultation at summer playschemes Aug 2006)

Much of the work funded through the Council has grown out of an identified need for activities for school aged children in the holidays, after school and in their local communities. Funding has been available for work with 0-5 year olds through the Children's Services Team. The Youth Service targets work towards 13-19 year olds. For the purpose of this strategy, play focuses on play facilities and services for 5-16 year olds. Many projects and initiatives benefit children of all ages and indeed their parents and carers too, but it is important to recognise our focus on this age group who would not otherwise have targeted funding for provision.

## Chapter 2

### The National and Local Context for Play

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise links between national and local initiatives which have a direct influence on play development.

Throughout this chapter references are made to strategic outcomes listed in Table 2, Chapter 4.

#### 2.1 Play in the National Context

Play is an important, intrinsic part of every child's life and does not necessarily receive the same attention in public life as might be expected. However since the Laming Report and the subsequent Children Act 2004 there has been an unprecedented focus on the role of local government in protecting children and promoting early intervention into children's lives, wherever they live but with particular focus on those children living in poverty and in areas of deprivation; at risk of social exclusion; poor health; or disabled children. This has been accompanied by a first step towards a national strategy on Play with the publication of the Dobson Report: "Getting Serious About Play" (DCMS 2004).<sup>5</sup>

#### 2.2 Every Child Matters

The Children Act 2004 requires all those working with and for children and young people to review their work, to appraise their links with other agencies and to integrate and develop collaborative work including improved information sharing, accountability and governance arrangements. This way of working in partnership to provide a seamless service of support and information to children, young people and their families is a challenge to all service providers. However, it means that where play providers have often been on the outside of networks they are now key to the infrastructure of support for children and families, their value and significance in local communities is becoming more widely acknowledged.

All those working in children's services including the play sector need to target their work in relation to improving the 5 outcomes identified in Every Child Matters:

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

Existing play projects, which provide local play and community facilities, contribute significantly to each of the five outcomes identified in Every Child Matters (as shown Appendix 3).

Evaluating the long-term impact of playwork is a challenge. The play sector is still devising ways in which to monitor work in relation to these outcomes. An example is the Community Play Rangers (see p28) work, which does not lend itself to hard data assessment as children come and go as they please and some do not come regularly.

Criteria are used in monitoring of Council play grants and tenders to establish whether provision is meeting objectives of high quality play as defined in the Play Policy.

This Strategy includes an outcome to develop data collection systems in order to better argue the case for play through performance indicators and quality assurance standards devised and carried out by children themselves (see output 5.7, page 58 and Appendix 4 – Local Preventative Strategy).

A target within the local Children and Young Peoples Plan is to “Promote high quality, play, leisure and sport”. The Play Development Advisory Group (PDAG) has taken the lead on developing a delivery plan for this work (see Appendix 4). This work has been incorporated into the Play Strategy. The delivery plan significantly contributes to each of the five Every Child Matters outcomes (see Appendix 5, Monitoring Report – Progress with Delivery Plan for Children and Young People’s Plan).

## **2.3 The Children and Young Peoples Plan**

*“We want all children and young people to do better in life than they ever thought they could. We will give children and young people the help that they need to do this”* <sup>\*1,6</sup>

(Appendix 6 – Children and Young Peoples Plan 2005)

The Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (C&YPSP), a partnership of statutory, voluntary and community organisations working with children, young people and families carried out extensive consultation with children and young people across Bath and North East Somerset in 2005. This work informed the content of the Children and Young People’s Plan which is central to the planning and development of services over the next 3 years (2006-9).

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\* \* Wording for the “vision” for the Children and Young Peoples’ Plan (CYPP) is based on the language used by children and young people and produced by the participation sub-group through extensive consultation in 2005 (see Appendix 6).



The key values in this Plan are that all children and young people will enjoy:

- A positive sense of personal identity and self-worth
- Belonging to a family, in the widest sense, and also to be part of a community
- Good health
- A safe, healthy, child-friendly environment, including appropriate housing, play and leisure facilities
- Freedom from bullying
- High quality learning opportunities and education achievement for everyone
- Freedom from poverty
- A right to privacy
- Equal access to services
- Respect

All these values are pertinent to the development of play provision in Bath and North East Somerset. A sign of the commitment that the Authority has to play is shown in the work to develop an outcome entitled “Promoting High Quality Play, Leisure and Sport”. The Play Development Advisory Group (see p17) has been instrumental in developing work towards this outcome (see Appendix 4). Key targets within the Children and Young Peoples Plan pertaining to play have been incorporated into the Play Strategy outcomes (see Chapter 3 p42) in order to maximise resources and to avoid duplication.

## **2.4 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified by the UK Government in December 1991 and by Bath and North East Somerset Council in 1999.

The Council’s Play Policy states that the Convention ‘should provide the foundation of principle for all dealings with children’.

Article 31 is particularly pertinent to the development of the Bath and North East Somerset Play Policy. It states that signatory nations will: “recognise 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.”<sup>6</sup>

## **2.5 The Bath and North East Somerset Play Policy 1999**

Bath and North East Somerset is proud to have been one of the first Local Authorities to develop a Play Policy which has subsequently had an important influence on play development in the area.

This policy recognises play as ‘intrinsically valuable’. It is also ‘committed to encouraging the creation of high quality compensatory play provision that is accessible, local, free from unacceptable levels of risk, yet stimulating and challenging.’ (see Appendix 1 - Play Policy 1999) The Play Policy Review, carried out by PLAYLINK \*\* in 2004, investigated how effective the Councils’ ‘informed and planned’ approach to play has been since the Play Policy was adopted in 1999 and contributed to the recommendations made in this report. (see Appendix 2)

## **2.6 The Children’s and Young Peoples Rights Charter**

This Charter was developed and promoted by the Children’s Society in partnership with Bath and North East Somerset Council and the Primary Care Trust in 2002. It gives play and other children’s settings the opportunity to assess how well they involve children and young people in decision making and what they can do to improve their work to include children’s and young peoples views. In 2005/6 this project worked with 12 new organisations providing play and/or care for children. We are proud to have developed this pioneering work to consult children and young people on service delivery in Bath and North East Somerset. Existing strengths in play projects to include children in planning and decision-making must also be acknowledged and celebrated. This Strategy aims to build upon work to ensure that outcomes for play respond to the wishes and views of children and young people. (see priority theme area 3 – Play and Participation p56 )

## **2.7 Strategic Development Officer for Play (SDOP)**

The strategic intent of the Play Policy implementation required the establishment of a dedicated post to be responsible for developing, co-ordinating, liaising and managing the play strategy. In 2005 the SDOP post was established with sufficient seniority to reflect the range of responsibilities that are required to be fulfilled, not least that of authoritative interface with other services and sectors.

## **2.8 Play Development Advisory Group (PDAG)**

The Play Development Advisory Group emerged in 1999 as a working group

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\* PLAYLINK is a national organisation which supports Local Authorities and other agencies to develop policies in play and subsequent strategic plans.

to develop and support the implementation of the Play Policy. In the main members are voluntary sector play providers. It has always worked very closely with the Local Authority. Key achievements have been developing the Bath and North East Somerset Play Awards, Play in Schools and Playworkers Conferences as well as the initiation of the Community Play Rangers project. In 2005 PDAG had a key role in developing a Delivery Plan of the Local Preventative Strategy, which is relevant to play. (see Appendix 4)

## **2.9 Play Partnership**

The Play Partnership has developed in 2006 in response to the Play Policy Review (2005) and work to develop this Play Strategy. It is a large forum, which brings together strategic decision makers from Council departments which have a bearing on play such as Parks, Planning and Extended Services in schools. It also includes representation from the voluntary sector who deliver the majority of play services in the area, Health representatives and Councillors who have a role in scrutinising the work of the Executive Member for Children's Services (see Appendix 7 – Terms of Reference of Play Partnership). It is important to note that the members of PDAG (above) also attend the Play Partnership and work has been done to ensure that past experience of Play Policy and Strategy development has been incorporated into the work of the new Play Partnership.

## **2.10 The Children's Fund**

The Children's Fund work (2002-2008) has had an important impact on the development of preventative work with children from (5-14s) in the area. It has enabled there to be an important increase of work with 5-14 year olds to take place. All the projects funded through this initiative have a bearing on play and provide a useful foundation for future work to develop play services in Bath and North East Somerset (see Appendix 8 – How the Play Strategy will build on Children's Fund projects).

The Play Strategy will incorporate and build upon key lessons learnt from this work for example:

- Commissioning work from known agencies proved very beneficial.
- Supporting targeted, separate provision proved very effective in reaching vulnerable children and young people.
- Children should be given more opportunities to control decision making
- Work needs to be developed in reaching parents and carers both in

terms of getting their views and in terms of informing them about the importance of play and other community services in giving general family support.

- More work is needed to develop performance indicators for play in order to assure future funding and sustainability.

(Source: Evaluation of Bath and North East Somerset Children's Fund December 2005 – undertaken by Dialog) <sup>7</sup>

This Strategy needs to take into account the impact that the end of Children's Fund will have on play related work in March 2008.

## **2.11 Bath and North East Somerset and Children's Participation**

*We want children and young people to make a difference to how services work for them now and in the future.*

(Bath and North East Somerset Children and Young Peoples Plan 2005) <sup>23</sup>

The Bath and North East Somerset Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) adopted its Strategy for the Participation of Children and Young People in July 2005. A primary aim of this strategy is to support each agency to develop its own participatory structures and practices with a view to creating a culture of participation within the new Children's Trust arrangements.

The Participation Sub-Group (of the CYPSP) works to implement this strategy and has been instrumental in pulling together and analysing a wide range of consultation with children and young people in the past and in organising the Change for Children Consultation 2005 (see Appendix 6).

This work is essential to quality play development in Bath and North East Somerset and is an integral part of work within the Play Strategy. The SDOP sits on the Participation Sub-Group and has used this forum to discuss and shape the Play Strategy.

An ethos of participation and consultation are at the core of good practice in developing services for children and young people. Free play opportunities are regularly used as a means of engaging children in community development initiatives.

## **2.12 Demographics of Bath and North East Somerset**

Bath and North East Somerset is a Unitary Authority serving a population of some 173,000, about half of whom live in the city of Bath, the rest in town and villages in the more rural parts of the Authority. An area of relative

affluence overall, there are pockets of significance deprivation where children and young people are an obvious priority. The Authority has a relatively small black and other minority population of about 2.7%.

The City of Bath is often perceived as an area which is affluent whereas the reality is very different in parts, with Twerton named in the Local Deprivation Indices with the highest deprivation in Bath and North East Somerset overall.

Despite the size of the Authority it is interesting to note from the Children's Fund work that the size of the Authority appears to have enabled the Children Fund Partnership Board to operate great efficiency, tracking progress, supporting good practice and being flexible. This work provides a useful foundation for this Play Strategy.

### **2.12.1 Identifying areas to focus resources for children and young people**

Funding for activities to increase support for children and young people have been targeted in areas where there are the highest density of children aged under 12 years (see Appendix 9a) and on the Indices of Income Deprivation Affecting Children (see Appendix 9b).

Qualitative evidence gathered over the past four years shows that free play services which engage 5 to 14 year olds in activities in their local communities contribute significantly to lowering levels of anti-social behaviour in the area. It is therefore also useful to use needs assessment developed by the Youth Offending Team (YOT) when identifying areas in which to target resources. Data is collected in areas where there is a significantly high level of young people currently, or at risk of, offending (see Appendix 10a and Appendix 10b, YOT maps of Vulnerable Areas). An outcome of this Strategy is to develop systems for collection of evidence to show the link between play and community safety (see Output 5.7, p58).

### **2.13 Funding to the Play Sector**

There is no statutory obligation that states the Council is obliged to provide for children's play. However the weight of current research suggests it would not be possible to deliver the outcomes of Every Child Matters or to achieve success in key corporate plans without providing funding to ensure children have good play opportunities.

In 2005/6 the budget for play grants was £144,000. The grants enabled 1224 children to access supervised open and closed access play opportunities in 25,000 attendances and funded 82 part-time paid posts and 91 voluntary workers. 17% of the grants went to provision primarily aimed at disabled children.

The play grants have always funded organisations to actively contribute to community development as well as to deliver a play service. Successful tenders from Wansdyke Play Association, The Community Bus and Bath Area Play Project in 2005 enabled these organisations to access greater resources in the form of new funding streams, volunteers and in kind benefits that the Local Authority could not access.

### **2.13.1 Capacity Building**

Voluntary play organisations in Bath and North East Somerset reach large numbers of children whilst relying on low resources. In recent years small organisations have grown quickly to meet demand and to respond to national initiatives. Over the next six years they need to become better equipped to respond to potential expansion and development.

*“Having a three-year service level agreement has enabled us to go for funding which we previously could not access. It has also saved us time which we have been able to put into looking into new funding initiatives.”*

(Quote: manager of a voluntary play provider consultation October 2006)

The Play Strategy can only succeed if work is done to sustain the voluntary sector level of work and to attract additional funding for future developments. Issues such as accessible and adequate office space; up to date technology and robust business plans are needed (see Output 2.5, P55).

### **2.14 Play and Health**

The Public Health White Paper, Choosing Health, and the Choosing Activity action plan highlights the “major contribution to children’s overall level of physical activity” of outdoor play, including playing in the street. Increase in traffic and parental fear for children’s safety leads many children to have little chance to play out freely near their homes. Reduced play opportunities are cited as one of the contributory factors to increased childhood obesity. (The British Medical Journal (Vol 322) 10 February 2001) <sup>8</sup>

In September 2006 the Daily Telegraph launched the “Hold on to Childhood” campaign citing lack of play opportunities as a contributory factor to children’s deteriorating health. This was in response to the call by 110 academics, writers and medical experts for a close examination of the quality of children’s lives. At the same time an inquiry by the Children’s Society into the state of childhood has given rise to an increase in public debate over the pressures that today’s children and young people are under. The play sector is in a strong position to argue the case for play as a means by which children’s mental and emotional well being as well as their physical health can be nurtured.

*The increasingly limited amount of time children have to play outside or attend supervised play projects is a causative factor in the rise of mental ill-health in young people (The Mental Health Foundation, Bright Future 2000)*<sup>9</sup>

## **Local context**

Through funding a range of free open access holiday playschemes Bath and North East Somerset Council supports children's health and well-being. However, more must be done to advertise these opportunities and to increase provision to areas where there is a high level of need.

Work on anti-bullying and anti-racism is an important way to support children's emotional well-being (see Outcome 2.10, p55). Play times at school are frequently cited by children and young people as being the worst time for bullying occurring. Play policy development in schools highlighting the need for children's free play opportunities during the school day and equipping playground staff with skills to tackle bullying can make an enormous difference to children emotional well-being when at school. Play at school also helps to balance the pressures that children face in academic achievement, protecting free time for them to choose their own activities and enjoy time playing with friends (see Output 2.9, p 55).

The Sport and Active Leisure Team are responsible for planning and delivering Sport and Active Leisure services. Their vision is:

*To make Bath and North East Somerset active, healthy and successful by increasing sustainable and inclusive participation in physical activity.*

GETACTIVE - A vision for sport and active leisure 2005-2010<sup>10</sup>

As well as traditional work through leisure centres and sports clubs the Bath and North East Somerset Councils Sport and Active Leisure Team are developing work with community groups, including play providers, to make a wide range of physical activities available to children and young people who may not otherwise engage in "sports" or see themselves as "sporty". By working closely in a creative way the play sector and sports sector are in a strong position to reach more people.

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**Case Study:** In the summer holidays of 2006, 8 sports coaches worked in 12 different locations with children from 5 – 12 attending open access holiday playschemes. In total 1114 children and young people benefited from these sports sessions run alongside a range of other. This work allowed for important cross sector understanding to be built up between sports coaches and play workers.

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Enhancing children and young people's opportunities to walk and cycle is an important way to develop health and is key to the Healthy Schools

Programme. During consultation with parents, children and young people in August 2006 many people flagged up the importance of having places for young children to practice riding a bike, for all ages to have safe cycle routes and several requests were made for better information on enjoyable and safe walks. The Strategic Development Officer for Play must highlight these needs in work with other relevant departments and strategies such as the Greater Bristol Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP), which concurs with the need to promote and facilitate healthy and active lifestyles within the population with safety issues in mind.

Close partnership between Primary Care Trust (PCT) health visitors in Children's Centres and the children's services has given rise to a more creative way of engaging children, young people and their families in health awareness campaigns. National Playday was celebrated in August 2006 at Cladown where play providers delivered a range of activities alongside the PCT who were giving out free health check and smoking cessation information to families. In addition the outreach bus of the Police Community Safety Officers was on hand for informal advice on community safety.

## **2.15 Play and Schools**

Through their play children develop key skills for learning. It is the process of a child's own, self-directed learning that has validity for all ages of children. Through the freedom, choice and control they experience at play, children learn about themselves and how to interact with their surrounding, including the natural world. Children's physical, social, mental, emotional and creative skills all develop when they are playing. *"Such skills are critical in the creation of self-esteem and confidence, and are linked to emotional intelligence, an increasingly important attribute for successful functioning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."*

Goleman 1995 <sup>11</sup>

*"Bath and North East Somerset rank play alongside education in terms of its fundamental role in enabling children to engage positively with the complexities of the world around them. Through play children learn what cannot be taught; for example; the sense of themselves as autonomous agents, capable of making choices."*

(Appendix 1 Bath and North East Somerset Play Policy p.6 )

Children currently spend 26% of their waking hours in school, of this around 25% of the day may be available for play. Play time in the school playground is an essential time for children to play freely and to build friendships.

The development of extended services can be seen as both a threat and an opportunity to the play agenda. By 2010 all schools are required to provide



core services which include:

- Wrap around childcare 8 am - 6 pm 48 weeks a year
- A varied menu of activities
- Swift and easy referral to specialist services
- Parenting support
- Community access

In order to achieve these schools need to develop positive partnerships with local play providers and other providers. The play sector must be made aware of the opportunities that this initiative can offer (see Output 4.4, p 57).

### **Local Context**

Bath and North East Somerset has 69 primary schools and 13 secondary schools. Since 2000 the SDOP has worked closely with schools to develop play policies and deliver play training to School Meal and Playground Supervisors. This work has reached 80% of primary schools and has led to 9% of primary schools having a play policy. Due to the high turnover of school meal supervisors and playground staff it is essential that work is done with the whole school community to achieve long term goals towards play in schools (see Output 2.9 p55).

From 2003-2005 Better Play funding enabled Barnardos to manage the Community Schools Play Project (funded through Better Play) whereby 5 schools in Norton Radstock received playwork training and play support during lunchtime playground sessions. The evaluation of this project showed that incidents of bullying at playtimes were drastically reduced due to the children being engaged in activities; teachers reported that children were more settled when returning to the classroom and that they spent less time resolving conflicts from the playground. Lunchtime staff felt more confident in dealing with conflict between children.

The Council have organised two annual Play in Schools Conferences in 2004 and 2005. In September 2005, 82 delegates from schools across the Authority attended a conference on play in schools. Headteachers and teachers identified the following key points from this event:

- Increasing opportunities for creative play increases children's capacity to learn
- More play training needed for School Meal Supervisors and Playground Supervisors
- Assistance and advice on development of outdoor spaces in schools<sup>1</sup> (see Output 1.11, p54)

*“Where playgrounds are bleak and barren, it encourages stereotypical and stressful situation. You are more likely to get accidents in a bleak space as the children are running around and bump into one another.”<sup>12</sup>*

The need for a more innovative approach to play in primary schools has been realised through the extensive work described above. Bath and North East Somerset Council have gone on to become key partners in a new and innovative action research project on play in schools entitled Play Pods. Through partnership work with Children’s Scrapstore (based in Bristol), and Bristol and South Gloucestershire Councils, a bid has been put into Playful Ideas lottery funding for development of Play Pods. Each Pod will contain diverse materials and loose parts chosen by children themselves that can stimulate facilitate and enhance children’s play in the school playground. Selected schools will have a Play Pod for two terms. Training, networking and practice dissemination on child-centred play will be made available to school staff and to other schools in the area.

A significant way in which schools (both mainstream and specialist schools) can contribute more fully to local community play needs is to allow public use of their grounds. This would help to achieve the new local standards for green space as required by the Green Space Strategy.

*“It is recognised that there will be concerns for schools that public access to their ground may compromise security of their premises, but with the majority of schools unused outside of the schools day there are great opportunities for partnership working.”*

Proposed measure to improve green spaces – Bath and North East Somerset Green Space Strategy 2004

## **2.16 Play and Outdoor Spaces**

The wide-ranging benefits that the right amount of good quality accessible green space can bring to society are being acknowledged by Central Government. Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17): Planning for open space, sport and recreation, requires Local Planning Authorities (LPA’s) to undertake a robust assessment of the existing and future needs of their communities for green space and allows them to require house builders to address deficiencies in provision which are created by their developments.

The Government has highlighted the importance of a sense of community participation in the management of public parks. Cleaner, Safer, Greener, seeks to encourage

*“local initiatives and partnerships which promote greater involvement of local people and stakeholders, optimise the capacity of communities, foster a greater sense of individual responsibility an citizenship and give communities a sense of ownership of their local spaces”*

Children and young people make up nearly 25% of the population, and are the greatest users of the outdoors spending 4-6 hours a day and sometimes up to 10 hours outside, playing and hanging out together. It is key that play and the needs of children and young people are considered when developing local green spaces strategies. (see Output 1.5, p54)

### **2.16.1 The Green Space Strategy**

National guidance on the preparation of Green Space strategies propose breaking the existing green space network into a number of 'types' of land, based on their primary function and management requirements. In recognition of the multi-functional nature of the majority of green spaces and the diverse range of provision, management and need across Bath and North East Somerset, a simplified approach has been adopted within the Green Space Strategy (GSS).

The strategy promotes the use of the following land types:

- Informal Green Space – including parks and public gardens along with recreation grounds and open spaces.
- Natural Green Space – including woodland, natural and semi-natural spaces, green corridors and access land.
- Allotments – including community gardens and community orchards ( see P47 for hierarchy of green space provision provided in the GSS).

Standards for outdoor sports facilities and the provision of facilities for children and young people are included in the standard for informal green space (see Appendix 11 for proposed standards for informal green space) as it is within these spaces that these facilities are generally provided.

The Green Spaces Strategy<sup>24</sup> highlights a number of proposed measures to improve Green Space in Bath and North East Somerset. Work is underway to ensure that these measures take into account issues relating to play and children and young peoples concerns. Of particular notes are the following proposed actions :

- To work with partners to develop the concept of 'free play' within all green spaces. (also in Output 1.8, p 53 )
- To investigate the possibility of securing the joint use of some school grounds to help achieve the new local standards for green space

provision (also in Output 5.5, p 57).

- Preparation of a consultation framework setting out programmes of consultation (site, generic and minority groups) and methods of consultation on varying types of works/development affecting green spaces.
- Work to reduce the perception and effects of crime and anti-social behaviour in green spaces by working closely with the Community Safety and Drug Action Team, other agencies and the community.
- Investigation and promotion of cycle and pedestrian links to and between green spaces.

GIS mapping of the Bath and North East Somerset Area is a useful way to appraise equipped play areas and identify gaps in provision (see Appendices 14b, 14c and 14d). Consultation has shown that children and young people living within a radius of 450m of a local play park are not necessarily able to access it. This can be due to a number of physical barriers that can also enforce local “territories” such as busy roads, valleys, disused railways and rivers.

*“It no good telling the kids to go and play at the park. They will just get beaten up by the kids in the flats. That’s why they just hang around here messing up our green!”*

(quote; member of the public in Keynsham August 2006).

Quality play and community provision can do an enormous amount to break down the psychological barriers and physical barriers that prohibit children and young people from moving around freely in their local community.

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## **CASE STUDY**

Wansdyke Play Association manage a team of Community Play Rangers working in two distinctly separate communities in Radstock – Tynning and Writhlington. They have successfully brought children and young people together for joint activities such as football matches, go-kart making competitions and races they have assisted in breaking down barriers between communities

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The Strategic Development Officer for Play and the Senior Parks Officer are working closely to develop a new project in which Community Play Rangers play a pivotal role in facilitating community consultation on development of parks and outdoor spaces (see Output 1.3 p 53). There is also a need identified for a Community Parks and Play Liaison Officer (see Output 1.10 p 53) to respond to community issues relating to the usage of outdoor spaces

and the potential to develop community involvement in order to attract additional funding for improvements and developments.

## 2.16.2 Community Play Rangers

*“I wanna be a play ranger when I grow up because you get to spend time outside playing and don’t have to spend time in a stupid office”*

(7 year old – Community Play Ranger quarterly monitoring April 2006)

*“Successful public space play projects do more than provide activities to entertain and divert children; they become central to children’s perception of their communities and their role in those communities. Many of the children who were attracted to the free open access type of play offered in parks and open spaces had very negative associations with any activity connected with school. Play Staff were able to offer many positive social experiences to these children because children chose freely to engage.”*

(The Delivery of Better Play Projects in Public Spaces Briefing paper 2003)<sup>15</sup>

The Community Play Rangers project has been running in Bath and North East Somerset since 2002. Trained and experienced play staff run regular play sessions in parks and public open spaces both after school and at weekends. The aim of this work is to ensure that children and young people are able to have excellent opportunities for free play outdoors near their homes. The Community Play Rangers are a unique asset in the Authority’s ability to fulfil the Outcomes Framework of the Children Act 2004. They consistently deliver aspects of each of the five outcomes in Every Child Matters to children and communities (see Appendix 3).

A team of six Community Play Rangers are managed by Wansdyke Play Association and work with children from 5-14 in open spaces in Foxhill, Whiteway, Writhlington and Tynning, Radstock.

A key strategic aim to further children and young people’s enjoyment of playing outdoors is to develop the work of the Community Play Rangers in new areas.

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### CASE STUDY

*‘It feels really safe up here and that’s unusual.’*

(Journalist from Somerset Guardian about Tynning Park BMX track)

In September 2005 Community Play Rangers in Tynning Park, Radstock facilitated children and young people’s aspirations to improve their local park by designing their own BMX track. Over the course of the next year the

children wrote to local Councillors, the Council and local residents to put across their ideas and held an open meeting for discussion. Wansdyke Play Association manages the Community Play Rangers and was successful in applying to Community Care Awards for a grant of £5000 towards the park plan. The Council Parks and Amenities Department organised for dirt to be laid just prior to the school holidays (July 2006) and the children and young people helped with overseeing the design of their track as well as tree planting and path sculpting to improve the whole area. The result has been to improve children and young peoples sense of responsibility for the park.

*“I think the changes in the park are a brilliant thing... You’ve done loads of hard work and it’s really paid off. The children really benefit from you being here.”*

(local parent August 2006)

*“At Writhlington we eventually made the move to The Plantation making links with Somer housing about how to develop the area for the whole community. We worked jointly with an artist to in a project from NESA called Hidden Places. From this we discovered that the children had a complete ownership of this patch of land and enjoyed playing with the rubbish! However, Community Pay Back are currently in the process of clearing up the area involving a ‘deep clean’ and we have put in a bid for £10,000 to BBC Breathing Places. The children have already designed and planned what they would like to see in their space if we are successful.”*

(Community Play Ranger, quarterly monitoring report July 2006)

This highly participative way of working with children and young people to facilitate their involvement in their local community contributes to key objectives in both the Play Strategy and the Children and Young Peoples Plan. It has given rise to a strategic objective to increase children’s participation in outdoor space design to be facilitated by the Parks and the Strategic Development Officer for Play (see Output 1.4 p 53 and Output 1.3, p 53).

### **2.16.3 Traffic Flow and Home Zones**

A consistent theme arising throughout the consultation for this Play Strategy from professionals, parents and children and young people has been the importance of informal public spaces to play, hang out and relax. The most obvious example of this is the street where children and young people live. Playing in the street also has the effect of creating stronger social networks within communities. However to make this possible, a broader approach to reducing traffic danger, for instance 20 mph zones in residential streets, is required.

*“At present transport policy is directed at how to manage traffic flow rather than pedestrian needs such as children’s play opportunities.”*

(Road Safety Co-ordinator, Bath and North East Somerset Council)

In Home Zones, pedestrians and traffic have an equal right to use the road. The essence of a Home Zone is that the distinction between road space and pedestrian space is blurred, mainly through raising the road level to the level of the pavement, with other methods to slow traffic down.

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**CASE STUDY:**

In Peasedown St John a large green space in the middle of a housing estate was underused as a resource by the community due to traffic danger. Somer Housing then developed the green area into a communal space through landscaping and the development of a play area after consultation with local children and young people. Play Rangers were employed to encourage play in the area during the implementation process.

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The success of this kind of project is reliant on residents understanding of the aims of the project. The Community Play Rangers played an important part in developing the local communities support for the project above. Their work needs to be developed to increase capacity for community liaison (see Output 1.3 p 53).

**School Travel Plans**

- 2.16.4** At present there is a 20 mph zone around many of the schools in Bath and North East Somerset as part of the Safer Routes to School programme. The need for traffic engineering measures on routes to school is identified through the development of School Travel Plans. At present, 52 of our schools have developed School Travel Plans and there is a target for all schools to have a Travel Plan by 2010. Bath and North East Somerset Council have encouraged schools to engage children in development of travel plans through surveys and talks. A pilot project to engage children is currently being developed in Bathwick St Mary Church of England Primary School to look at ways of engaging children more thoroughly in the process. Transport planning needs to cover easier access to play areas with reduced speed measures around parks and play areas (see Output 1.10 p 53).

**2.17 Play and Planning**

*Children being seen and heard in public spaces is one of the hallmarks of a society at ease with itself...”*

Bath and North East Somerset Play Policy 1999

National planning guidance explicitly recognises the need for dedicated outdoor space for play and recreation. Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) requires local authorities to assess the needs and opportunities for different types of open space and recreational facilities, including play space for children.\*

*“Any effort to improve children’s play opportunities must recognise as a fact of life that most play does not take place on sites formally designated as play spaces. When not playing at home, many children resort to local streets or any nearby open spaces and building from which they are not excluded”*

Getting Serious about Play<sup>5</sup>

## **Local Context**

The health and vibrancy of the Bath and North Somerset area depends to a significant degree on people’s perception and use of its public spaces and thoroughfares. Urban and rural planning, design and architecture, along with sensitive approaches to the oversight of public space, can create the conditions necessary for the development of a sociable society.

*Developers should consider the type of houses they are building and think; there are going to be a certain number of kids who are 5 and under, there will be a certain number between 5-12, and there will be certain number of older ones who will have to be provided for”.*

Member of the Public, Green Spaces Strategy Consultation p.15 <sup>14</sup>

In Bath and North East Somerset the potential for monies from Section 106 to be prioritised for play provision needs investigating. The Play Partnership has identified this as a primary subject for future meetings and a play conference (see Output 1.7, p 53).

The Bath and North East Somerset Revised Deposit Draft Local Plan will be modified in November 2006 and recognises that it can “contribute to achieving opportunities for play by ensuring that existing outdoor play space is retained, and where development takes place, new play areas are provided” (para B4.41). This is also reflected in Policy SR.3 of this document. National government legislation (2004) has introduced a new approach to planning. Under the new system Local Plans will be replaced by a portfolio of planning documents called Local Development Documents, these are contained within an overall Local Development Framework. Local Development Documents should take account of the Play Strategy, as the Local Plan had previously (see Output 2.2 p 54).

There are key targets in the Play Delivery Plan of the Children and Young Peoples Plan on development of new supplementary planning guidance to better inform planners and developers of the needs of children and young



people when allocating space for play; reducing immediate assumption of the need for fixed play equipment which does not necessarily cater for all children and young people in the community. The Strategic Development Officer for Play works to raise awareness of the need for informal green space as well as play equipment in design of recreational space. (see Output 1.7 p 53)

Housing Associations and social landlords have an important part to play in developing children and young people's access to quality, outdoor play environments near their homes. Somer Housing Trust manage 10,000 properties in Bath and North East Somerset and 22 play areas (21 of which are leased from Bath and North East Somerset Council) and are represented on the Play Partnership. The Strategic Development Officer for Play will assist in work to develop a Play Policy for this Housing Association. This work will be a model to influence other community landlords.

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**CASE STUDY:**

In April 2006 Somer Housing Trust asked residents including children and young people of the Snowhill Housing area for their views on how to develop the play areas on the estate. This work resulted in the redevelopment of two play areas. This work responded to community survey requests to have more clearly identified age ranges for each play area. Somer intend to use this model of working in other areas and to develop their own play policy.

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2.17.1

The Planning Policy department are represented on the Play Partnership and have therefore been involved in the development of this Play Strategy. They will be preparing a Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document in 2007. Through joint working between the Planning department and the Strategic Development Officer for Play there will be significant scope to produce policy relating specifically to the provision of open public space and play space within this policy (see Outcomes 1.6 and 1.7 p 54).

**Joint Local Transport Plan**

Work on Accessibility Planning has been taken forward as part of the Joint Local Transport Plan for the Greater Bristol area. This is currently working on mapping levels of accessibility to health and education facilities and major employment areas using public transport options. Representatives on the Play Partnership from Transport and Highways can assist in highlighting the overlap between this work and the Play Strategy to promote and facilitate healthy and active lifestyles within the population with safety issues also in mind (see Output 1.9 p 53).

The Play Policy Review recommends that no planning application in respect of development that have implications for children and young people –

including shared public space – should proceed without involvement and comment from the SDOP. It also recommends close work between play and transport and highways with regard to development of School Travel Plans, new road developments and promotion of cycle and pedestrian links. These recommendations are also in the Play Strategy outcomes (see Outputs 1.6 and 1.10 p 53).

## 2.18 Play and Risk

Consultation exercises (eg MORI survey 2001) regularly find that parents want “a safe place for my children to play” as a top priority, but complain that play equipment is not exciting enough and that children have grown out of it by the time they are seven or eight. Parents want somewhere where they feel that their children are socially safe (to “see and be seen”) but know that, physically, they want and need excitement and challenges from their play.

*“Bath and North East Somerset would be failing in its responsibility if it did not create opportunities that allow children to explore and experience themselves and their world through the medium of play. This is done by offering children opportunities to take acceptable risks (that is, to freely undertake actions and involve themselves in situation that push against the boundaries of their own capacities) in environments that are challenging and stimulating”*

(Appendix 1, Bath and North East Somerset Play Policy p.10.)

The Play Policy Working Party recognised that decisions about children in general, and their play opportunities in particular, take place in the context of individual and institutional anxiety about children coming to harm in play settings. One of the main aims of play policy implementation has been to raise awareness about play’s vital role in terms of children’s development. This necessarily includes developing a better understanding about the relationship of risk in play.

A preliminary legal assessment by Public Interest Lawyers (PIL) in May 2005 confirms that Bath and North East Somerset Play Policy combined with the “Managing Risk in Play Provision Statement” (see Appendix 16) and proper risk assessment provides:

*A robust, explicit frame work for organisations to demonstrate that they have acted reasonably in offering children acceptable levels of risk in their provision for play, whether in designated play space or shared public space.”*

(Appendix 1 p 12)

The Bath and North East Somerset Play Policy describes in detail the concepts of ‘hazard’, ‘acceptable risk’ and ‘unacceptable risk’ and highlights that these are critical for making informed judgements about what constitutes

truly challenging and stimulating play environment. This informs the criteria by which all play environments should be judged to include 'challenge in relation to the physical environment'. More must be done to highlight this aspect of quality play. At present the criteria are not used in the commissioning and design of public open space and play equipment (see Output 2.13 p 54).

## **2.19 Play and Community Safety**

For many families often isolated within their community, activities and play provision for children are a safe route into developing networks of support which are sustained through ongoing and regular provision (for small villages without community venues mobile).

*A consistent theme is the importance of having communities where there is somewhere safe to go and something to do (providing) recreational activity for children and young people...building the fabric of communities and increasing young people's skills, confidence and self-esteem."*

(Every Child Matters, Government Green Paper, September 2003)

Children in Bath and North East Somerset face many restrictions on their opportunities to play. The streets are perceived as unsafe, the countryside and open space often inaccessible, much territory is forbidden and the mess and noise they create make children unpopular.

*"My older son still misses Playbus and looks forward to holiday playschemes. My younger son looks forward to Tuesdays and because of the adults on here I have become part of the community and have made good friends. For someone from outside the area it has meant that I was not isolated"*.

(Parent Community Playbus Holiday Playscheme Summer 2006)

Holiday playschemes in spring and summer holidays are often the only opportunities that parents and children have to come together in a shared, neutral space.

At a series of four consultation events June 2006, held in each of the newly developed Local Area Partnerships, play providers, parents, teachers and childminders were asked to consider what prevents children playing outside in their local area. One parent in Keynsham described how children avoid walking down certain roads to get to the park because of the negative attitudes and comments made by adults towards them. Community Wardens who are employed by Bath and North East Somerset Council to respond to issues relating to general community concerns for safety also attended the consultation event. Their perception was that "adults are very often the problem". Negative perceptions of children and young people lead

to high number of unnecessary complaints. Throughout promotion of play, its importance and this strategy these views can be challenged (see Outcomes 4.6 and 4.13).

The Community Strategy for Bath and North East Somerset has five core ambitions: be distinctive; be inclusive; be creative; be safe; be sustainable. The key goal of “be distinctive” is *Promoting a “sense of place” so people identify with and take pride in our communities*. Under the heading “*What we will focus on to achieve this ambition*” the Strategy includes: “*recognising play as a crucial part of children’s lives*”.<sup>18</sup>

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**Case Study:**

Community Wardens working in Midsomer Norton in August 2006 received a high number of complaints about children and young people skateboarding outside the shopping centre in the middle of town. In order to alleviate the problem they applied for funding to arrange a daily coach throughout the holidays to Bath in order that the young people could access the skateboard park.

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Police Community Safety Officers (PCSOs) will increase over the next two years. At present a community contact vehicle visits 28 venues in Bath and North East Somerset (mostly rural areas) and through this work meets a lot of children and young people. PCSOs need to understand the play sector and maximise opportunities to work in communities alongside playschemes and play events where appropriate.

## **2.20 Play and Workforce Development**

The expansion of childcare and OFSTED’s requirement for qualified staff within registered playschemes have both led to an increased need for good quality playwork training. The demands of the extended schools programme are likely to continue this trend.

In July 2006 Skillsactive published the first UK Strategy for Playwork Education, Training and Qualifications. “*Our vision anticipates that by 2016 playwork will be a profession acknowledged as central to provision for children and young people and the fulfilment of their individual potential*”<sup>19</sup>

Central to this work is the aim to professionalize and upskill the play workforce and to develop and implement coherent career pathways for workers.

### **Local Context**

The play workforce in Bath and North East Somerset is small. Staff work

short-term over the summer and there are difficulties in recruiting playworkers qualified to level 3 for childcare which runs from only 3-6pm each day. For this reason and the fact that pay for playwork remains low (average hourly rate of £7 per hour) means that many playworkers have more than one job and work in schools or nurseries as well as play settings. The lack of career progression in play means that there is a high turnover of staff and this makes work to develop the qualification levels within the workforce difficult to manage and monitor.

The Early Years, Childcare and Play Team has had an annual budget of £10,000 per year committed to play. This fund pays for conferences and events and playworkers are able to apply for support to fund up to 80% of qualification courses. Playworkers are very rarely paid for their time to attend training. Bath Area Play Project manages a Quality and Inclusion Worker who works with individual settings on meeting quality standards and offers guidance on the inclusion of all children. It has been found that this style of peripatetic training suits the play sector as so many staff are working short hours for low pay and can not afford to commit to long courses. The Playwork Network has been developed as a useful forum for playworkers to meet and receive continuous professional development as well as updates on current initiatives.

An objective was established within the Authority's Local Preventative Strategy to ensure the high quality training for staff working with children and families to ensure that we develop the skills across our services to deliver the Change for Children agenda. Playwork training needs to be included in this key work to develop a co-ordinated, integrated training and learning programme for all staff working with families and children.

At present OFSTED state that it is "desirable" for play workers to hold qualifications that relate to playwork and not purely to early years and childcare. The play grant conditions will emphasise the importance of play training qualifications and the new Transitional Awards whereby staff qualified in early years can become playwork qualified will be promoted. This will be addressed in a Playwork Training Strategy for Bath and North East Somerset (see Outcome 2.7).

The contribution to play provision from volunteers is immense. It is crucial that volunteers are recognised and supported and that schemes are put in place to encourage more people to get involved in volunteering. This work can be achieved alongside work to promote the play sector and through careful monitoring of service level agreements with play providers.

## **2.21 Youth Service**

The Youth and Community Service in Bath and North East Somerset provides universal and targeted opportunities within dedicated youth work builds, on the streets, in partnership with the voluntary Youth Sector, in schools and with mobile youth provision. It supports young people by providing a curriculum framework.

*“Our problem is that by the age of 13 it is often too late to really get through to some kids. By linking with other projects that they attend before this age it would be easier to build up trust and good relationships with kids who are likely to get into trouble later.”*

(Youth Worker, Consultation September 2006 – see Appendix 12)

The target groups of 13–19 year olds means that there is a significant gap in recreational activities for 10– 14 year olds. Work needs to be done to help older children attending play services to know about the Youth Service and what it can offer them. A key to the success of this work is to strengthen links between the Play and Youth Services at all levels.

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**Case Study: Summer of Fun Activity Programme (SOFA)**

In the summer of 2006 Bath Area Play Project a well established voluntary play organisation, ran this pilot inclusive Bath Area Play Project building on extensive work with disabled children and young people. The programme had clear objectives about access to activities, support where needed and understanding from instructors. The project targeted children from 12 – 16 who might not otherwise take part in play activities over the summer. An existing programme of activities was made available to them on a daily basis and transport was provided. A youth worker assisted in the staffing of each session. It was suggested that joint training prior to the project would have helped teamwork and supported the common purpose of staffing the project.

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Consultation has shown that in all areas there is a lack of activities for children and young people from 11 – 14 years of age. A key strategic aim of the Play Strategy must be to address this gap in services through collaborative work with the Youth and Community Services (see Outputs 2.6, p.54 and 5.18, p.54).

## 2.22 Play and Inclusion

*“Inclusive provision is open and accessible to all, and takes positive action in removing disabling barriers so that disabled and non-disabled children can participate.”*

(Alison John –Independent Disability Equality Trainer) <sup>25</sup>

Disability is a complex phenomenon to measure for a number of reasons; people's understanding of definitions of disability and the concept of disability

itself vary: it is possible for one person to define themselves as disabled when another person with an identical condition would not e.g. asthma sufferers. Other types of disability are fluctuating with levels of severity that vary over time. As a result there is variation in the national estimates of the number of disabled children within a population.

The government is beginning to use the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) definition of disability as a measure for estimations and is planning to produce a meaningful and reliable estimate of the number of disabled children in the near future.

DDA definition: A (or multiple) long-term health problem or disability that substantially limits a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day civilities.

For the purpose of this Strategy it is useful to refer to statistical information as a guide to establishing targets;  
in June 2005 there were 174 open cases with the Disabled Children's Team. In September 2005 there were 280 children attending Special Schools in B&NES whilst other schools included 595 children with SEN statements. In August 2004 there were 630 children (0-16) receiving a disability living allowance.

The development of inclusive play provision, which allows for the full participation of disabled and non-disabled children, is a key part of the Play Strategy see (Output 2.4, p 54). A child's desire to play or explore the world around them is just as keen whatever their impairment, yet play and leisure opportunities for many disabled children and young people are extremely limited.

*"Bath and North East Somerset recognises that resistance to opening up mainstream provision to disabled children often resides in the attitudes and values of service providers, coupled with understandable, though often misplaced, fears about doing something wrong or taking on more than can be coped with."*

Appendix 1: Bath and North East Somerset Play Policy 1999 p.8

In September 2005 the Development Worker for Disabled Children and their Families conducted a survey with approximately 150 families who had children with additional needs. 33% of the families returned the survey which was to establish whether the play provision currently available within Bath and North East Somerset was perceived by the parents and carers as meeting their children's needs. Response to this survey showed that parents and carers felt overwhelmingly that there was no provision available to them that suited their needs. Many expressed their sense of isolation and frustration at not having more play provision available to their child/children.

The Quality and Inclusion Development Worker works with play providers to ensure in house training is available to support inclusion of disabled children. The work done by the Family Information Service to “listen” to parents and carers of disabled children is linked to this development work as a means of linking families to local play provision and offering them choice between separate and inclusive play provision.

Both closed and open access play provision in Bath and North East Somerset must strive to be fully inclusive. This can be achieved in a variety of ways:

- To consult with disabled children and young people about their specific issues as well as general issues. Their experiences are likely to be different from non-disabled children.
- Play providers actively targeting special schools and disability organisations with publicity, talks, and presentations.
- Inclusive Play Training for all staff and volunteers which incorporates visits to inclusive play settings.
- Policies within each project that actively seek to promote inclusion.
- Involving disabled adults in planning and delivery services.
- On hand support with information and advice for play providers.
- Involving disabled children in planning.
- Clear and accessible information on projects and who can attend them.

Disabled children and young people must be given choice in play services. The importance of inclusive practice and understanding is central. This needs to acknowledge the role that specialist groups have in developing the confidence of children and young people with specific impairments. An example of this is a social club for young people run by the National Autistic Society which provides a service that is uniquely designed for 8 – 13 year olds with diagnosis of Aspergers Syndrome.

*“My son is able to do things outside the home for the first time. This group is his life. He looks forward to it all week.”*

(Parent: Childrens Fund Annual Report 2005 – 2006) <sup>17</sup>

Funding for this group through the Children’s Fund is only assured until March 2008 as are a number of play related projects.



### 2.22.1 Inclusion is not just about disability

*“Inclusion is a process of identifying, understanding and breaking down the barriers to participation and belonging”*

(Early Childhood Forum) <sup>20</sup>

Within the playwork sector in Bath and North East Somerset the term inclusion has been primarily used with regard to inclusion of children who are registered as disabled in mainstream play provision. However, it is important to note that this term is also important when discussing accessibility of a service by all sectors of the community including black and ethnic minority groups, families not living in houses, socially isolated families, those on low income and any child who may have factors in their lives that make it difficult for them to take part in mainstream play.

*Racism is much more difficult in rural area; there’s the isolation and people are unplugged from community support A lot is hidden because people don’t report it.,. it chips away at self-esteem”*

(Spokesperson from Support and Action Against Racism: Life in and around Norton Radstock Report) <sup>21</sup>

A range of strategies need to be adopted in order to make sure that all children are included in play provision. In order to achieve this aim this strategy requires the Play sector to work collaboratively with a number of other existing projects including:

- Support and Training Against Racism (STAR)
- The Race Equality Council
- Access and Inclusion Focus Group (Early Years, Childcare and Play)
- The Children’s Society – The Children and Young Peoples Rights Charter (see p )
- Barnardos and Southside Family Project – working with families suffering from Domestic Violence
- Support Against Racist Incidents (SARI)
- Anti-bullying strategies in schools
- Black Families Education Support Group.

## Chapter 3

### The Audit of Play to develop the Play Strategy

The following table illustrates the range and scope of auditing that has taken place to inform the development of the Strategy. It can be divided into the following categories:

Category of information collected	Primary sources of data collection
Consultation with children, young people and parents and carers	The two primary consultation exercises referred to are The Children's Fund Consultation in 2002 and the Change for Children Consultation in 2005 (see p. 42 ) June-October 2006 - Consultation by the Strategic Development Officer for Play (SDOP) with children attending holiday playschemes and community play rangers play sessions.
Parks and unstaffed play provision	The Green Spaces Strategy Market Research 2004 <sup>14</sup>
Supervised play provision (both registered and unregistered with OfSTED)	Audit information gathered by the Family Information Service
Voluntary Sector Play Providers and support organisations	<u>June –October 2006</u> Meetings of the Play Partnership and individual meetings between the SDOP and all key play providers and related Council departments (see Appendix 12)
Public Consultation	<u>August/Sept 2006</u> Press release giving overall aims of the Strategy and inviting public comment.  Visits to play events over the summer – discussion with parents/carers (see Appendix 12)  SDOP speaking/presenting at a wide range of different forums and agency networks including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playwork Network</li> <li>• Local Area Forums</li> <li>• Democratic Action for Bath and North East Somerset Youth (DAFBY)</li> <li>• Inter-agency forums</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth service</li> <li>• Community Wardens</li> <li>• Police</li> <li>• Town and Parish Councils</li> </ul>
Profile of Children within Bath and North East Somerset	Statistical Information from Diversity and Equalities (see Appendix 15)

### 3.1 Consultation with children

*“There should be safe places to hang out because then it might stop bullying because the bullies can’t find them”*

8 year old boy - Children’s Fund Consultation 2002

In August 2002 children attending playschemes in Keynsham, Radstock, Peasedown St John and Twerton (165 in total) were asked for their views on safe places to play and hang out. This work was used to inform the development of Children’s Fund projects all of which have a direct relationship to playwork (Appendix 8).

Play Parks were mentioned as one of the best places to play, particularly Radstock Park, Victoria Park in Bath and the Memorial Park in Keynsham. However issues that prohibit enjoyment of parks by children included dog mess not being cleared, broken glass and litter, broken play equipment, vandalism of equipment, motorcyclists, adults shouting at them and gangs of older children.

Fear of bullying is one of the main reasons that children and their parents feel afraid to use public outdoor space. Many found the presence of older children intimidating and in all areas children had experienced the danger of being chased or being verbally or physically abused by older children/young people.

Children wanted more adults to keep an eye on play parks and more police and CCTV cameras, they wanted more fenced areas to keep dogs out. Those children who were asked thought having adults like Community Play Rangers to help them play safely was a good idea.

**Change for Children 2005** was a comprehensive consultation process, undertaken by the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership from September to December 2005 which culminated in 937 children and young people feeding in to the plan (for methodology see appendix 6):

- 43% wanted safer places to hang out and play outside

- 36% wanted less bullying
- 35% wanted more respect
- 31% wanted to feel safe from crime

### **3.2 Recurring themes important to children and young people are:**

- Fear of being bullied
- Need for safe places to play and hang out
- Need for more things to do
- Being included and able to participate in services
- Not feeling informed about services
- Problems getting around Bath and North East Somerset
- Drugs and crime
- Looking after the environment

It is essential that the Bath and North East Somerset Play Policy and Play Strategy respond to the needs and desires of children and young people. An important element of this work will be to develop clear action plans and information on play development that children and young people can understand, contribute to and benefit from (see Outputs 1.3, 2.3, 3.1, 3.5, 4.5, Chapter 4).

### **3.3 Parents views**

*“He is a lot more relaxed and less hyper when he comes back from your sessions and has had fun with what you do”.*

(Mother of a 6 yr old boy – Foxhill Play Rangers, quarterly monitoring August 2006)

Many community playschemes have been originally set up by parents who are concerned about the lack of services for their children in the area. Involvement of parents in informing how services are developed is key to the Children’s Centre Service delivery model. Work to develop the Children and Young Peoples Plan 2005 showed that parents want affordable local services such as childcare and holiday activities for children and good information to help them access the support they need. Many parents and carers felt that

good housing, safe local environment/community and good transport systems were priorities for making sure that children and families do well.

The Play Partnership has representation from Community Development, Planning and Highways and it is intended that these related areas will be influenced by the Play Strategy.

*“Friendly fun activities for both my children. Social for parents too.”*  
(Consultation Summer Playscheme 2006)

Through the Priority Theme Promoting Play (see Chapter 4) work will continue through parents and carers who can gain a better understanding of play and its importance. Playschemes can provide excellent opportunities to achieve these outcomes as well as creating a useful meeting point for gathering parents and carers views on existing services.

### **3.4 Parks and unstaffed play provision**

*“I can’t get to the Park – the transport is a bit long winded and the parking isn’t great. My daughter is getting to the age where she wants to be alone with her friends, but I am not happy to let her walk to the park because there are too many busy roads to get there”<sup>14</sup>*

Parent, Green Space Consultation 2002)

Extensive consultation was carried out in the course of developing Bath and North East Somerset Green Space Strategy in 2004. Included in this research were members Democratic Action for Bath and North East Somerset Youth DAFBY) (65 responses from young people living across Bath and North East Somerset).

There are 117 equipped play areas in Bath and North East Somerset. (See Appendix 14a – map of free play provision in Bath and North East Somerset). An inventory of play equipment shows the variety of equipment and locations that the parks department covers to maintain outdoor play spaces Although some of these sites are owned by Housing Associations or Parish Councils the Council Parks Department is frequently contracted to carry out routine inspections and maintenance.

#### **3.4.1 Key Findings from Green Space Strategy research**

Consultation for the Green Spaces Strategy in 2004 showed that play facilities are one of the main motivating factors behind visits to formal and informal green spaces. Local green space provision is crucial for children as they are limited to how far they can travel alone. Research showed that the distance children travelled increased with age, but parents (and children’s)

perception of the safety of a green space and the route to it is also critical.

Both parents and children had high levels of fear in relation to play and public space. This was based partly on experience of bullying and intimidation by older children and adults and partly on a perception that the parks were not safe places to be. The presence of Play Rangers was found to alleviate these fears in both children and parents and resulted in much greater use of the park while they were present.

Broad conclusions from the Green Spaces consultation:

- In urban parts of the district there appears to be an oversupply of small-equipped play areas, located within sites that are too small, and with limited appeal to older children.
- The potential of informal play within green spaces generally is not being fully exploited.
- Children want a range of types of green space and activities from informal (kicking a ball around), natural (playing and cycling) and play facilities.

*“ I think there should be somewhere for the youngsters, or people in our age group can go and make as much noise as we want and not in trouble, or confrontations because of that.”*

(Green Spaces Strategy 2004)

There is an increasing demand from children and young people when asked for BMX dirt tracks to play on. In Tynning Park in Radstock children and young people worked with Community Play Rangers in 2006 to campaign to design their own small BMX track. This project has developed the confidence and interest of the Council in supporting young people to be involved in the design of outdoor spaces. It has provided the foundation for new work in the Play Strategy to use the work of the Community Play Rangers to assist in engaging children and young people in the design/adaptation of three pilot parks in the Authority see Output 1.4 p53).

In response to the observations from the Green Spaces consultation the Green Spaces strategy sets out a hierarchy for green space provision. This sees small informal doorstep spaces located close to homes, larger local spaces with equipped play areas a larger catchment area, larger still neighbourhood spaces with provision for young people and larger catchment areas and finally large district spaces sited centrally and serving the whole of each urban community.

In addition to setting out the ideal size and distribution of green spaces, the

strategy encourages the better design of green spaces to make them more inclusive for all sections of the community, including children and young people. The inclusion of informal play features within designs for green spaces is encouraged.

In response to the observations from the Green Spaces consultation the Green Spaces Strategy sets out a hierarchy for green space provision.

- Small informal doorsteps spaces located within 400m (0.25mile/5mins) Walking distance of home.
- Local spaces with equipped play areas within a larger catchment area within 600m (0.33mile/7.5mins) walking distance of home (see Appendix 14b, 14c and 14d).
- Neighbourhood spaces with provision for young people, within 1km (0.66 mile/12.5mins) walking distance of home.
- District spaces sited centrally and serving the hole of each urban area of The district i.e. Bath, Keynsham and Norton Radstock.

*“It is my quest to ensure there is an equitable supply of well designed and managed green spaces serving all sections of the community across the district.....Play, children and young people need to be recognised as legitimate users of green spaces and their design and management must reflect this.”*

Bath and North East Somerset, Parks Technical Manager August 2006

### **3.4.2 Geographical Areas Identified during consultation period**

During consultation over summer 2006 as number of areas were flagged up as being without play provision or having particular issues that affected the access that children and young people had in the area to play and recreation;

- Peasedown St John, areas of deprivation and social needs – high need for Community Play Rangers
- Keynsham – Kelston Road Park – as above
- Whiteway - Rosewarn Park – prime location for future involving children and young people in park development
- Chew Valley – more free access mobile playschemes
- Larkhall and surrounding area – no free access playschemes in area

- Westfield in Radstock – very high numbers of summer playscheme with days when children are turned away – need for specific activities for older age group (11-16 year olds)
- Newbridge area of Bath
- Clandown – fun day only once year needs more regular free play activity
- Camerton Village – active school but nothing for children and young people out of school (youth service mobile bus has worked there for six weeks now finished)
- Paulton – Active Town Council developed play area and current work to develop Children Centre services in the area need to include play (WPA running schemes there over summer)
- Staddlestone in Midsomer Norton – children have built their own BMX track, more permanent solution to needs of young people needed.

The Play Partnership will work on the criteria to use when prioritising areas for funding. This will be particularly pertinent when new funding is made available from the BIG Lottery for Play. The system for prioritisation needs to be consistent across the area (see Output 1.2 p53).

### **3.4.3 Parish Councils and Rural Issues**

Research for the Green Space Strategy focused in Norton Radstock, Keynsham and Bath, which have the highest density of population in Bath and North East Somerset. It is important to recognise that much of the Authority is very rural. There are 48 parish councils of which 41 responded to research on provision for children.

Market research for the Green Space Strategy in 2002 showed that there was no provision for youth in a high number of parishes and those who have some youth provision said that improvements were needed. Parish Councils need to be informed about the benefits of play and included in opportunities to develop provision.

*“We need playschemes in areas where there are no community facilities because people are quiet and keep to themselves, but given the opportunity, there’s good take up and people appreciate the opportunity to play”*

(Quote from Parent Consultation August 2006)



In 2006 the West of England partnership Rural Strategy Group allocated funding to the Children's Society to deliver a two year programme of free training to Parish and Town Councils in rural areas to increase skills and confidence in involving young people in their communities and planning processes. The aim of this work is to improve relationships between adults and young people and to increase tolerance and understanding on both sides. This work will be useful in increasing opportunities for young people to get involved in their communities.

It is important to acknowledge successful work by Parish Councils and Town Councils relating to play and to children and young peoples issues when it occurs. This can be achieved through a comprehensive marketing strategy for play (see Output 4.6 p 56). This work will also promote The Play Strategy as a tool to inform developments where existing services delivered by Parish or Town Councils could be enhanced.

A grant aid scheme was introduced in 2004/5 to assist Parish Councils and other providers of freely accessible public play spaces eg. Village Hall Committees, in the cost of replacement of existing play equipment. The scheme offers 85% of the cost of the supply and installation of new equipment and safety surfacing. The scheme has a clear set of criteria for identifying which applications will be prioritised.

### **3.5 Mapping play provision**

In Bath and North East Somerset children currently access play in many types of childcare settings. The Family Information Service (FIS) maintains records on all childcare providers and also provide an important link for marketing and publicity to the public about play through an information telephone service and website. At present five there area 235 childminders (many of whom take children over five in the holidays), 46 pre-schools, 103 parent and toddler groups and 52 nurseries.

	Number	No of places provided
After School Clubs	28	692
Breakfast Clubs	17	369
Holiday provision (sessional)*	10	160
Holiday daycare	22	663

\*Open access play provision included in this category

In the course of developing this Play Strategy the Play Partnership identified the need for a map which shows where there is currently free play provision. This includes the mapping that has been done for the Green Spaces Strategy on the location of equipped play areas. In addition free holiday playschemes and community Play Ranger work is marked. This map will be developed to

incorporate other community and play activities with a view to assisting in work to identify priority areas (see Appendix 14A).

### **3.6 Voluntary Sector Play Providers and Support Organisations**

The voluntary sector provide the majority of supervised play provision for the Authority and are valuable partners in helping to deliver key strategic aims of the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership.

Work to develop partnership working since the Play Policy in 2000 through the work of the Play Development Advisory Group has put Bath and North East Somerset in a strong position to develop the Play Strategy.

From June to October 2006 the Strategic Development Officer for Play carried out meetings and visits with the primary voluntary organisations in receipt of play grants specifically to get their views about the best way forward for play in the Authority. The SDOP also met with a range of agencies and departments delivering related work. All of this work has formed an important part of the audit of services and has informed the Strategic objectives of the Play Strategy (see Appendix 12).

### **3.7 Public Consultation**

Work to ensure that the public are informed about the Play Strategy and are given an opportunity to engage with services relating to play in Bath and North East Somerset is ongoing. Play needs to be promoted in the public realm. A wide range of activities, publications and events will be run throughout the year in order to meet this aim. These will be part of a new marketing strategy for play (see Output 4.6 p 56.).

### **3.8 Non-designated places to play (unsupervised)**

*"The woods the best place to do (bike) ramps – it's good fun there. We go down there near enough every day"*

Market Research for Green Spaces Consultation 2004

Non-designated places to play can be in natural green space. They are areas where children play but which are not necessarily designed for this purpose. They also include streets, routes to school, neighbourhood open spaces, shopping centres, car parks, woodland and nature reserves. Auditing these areas is problematic and many of them are by their very nature ones that children use but do not think of as play areas. Some are prohibited for public use but none the less provide great outdoor play spaces which once publicised would be under threat. They are often part of local knowledge between children but not known about by adults. This is one of the factors that makes them good play areas.

In August 2006 the Play Development Advisory Group (PDAG) consulted 279 children from 5-13 where they play, what their favourite place to play was and whether they felt it was safe. The older they were the less they used formal spaces. Non-designated places they play included streets, roads, garage blocks, green and parks, fields, footpaths and woods:

#### In Bath

75% play on the street or the road

22% play in the woods

51% play near garages or green spaces

#### Outside Bath

43% play on the street or road

35% play in the woods

53 % play in green spaces and fields

A higher proportion of children outside Bath felt the places where they play are safe (65% in Bath felt safe compared with 52% in Norton Radstock)

*The Green Spaces Strategy that the proposed quantity standard for Natural Green Space is a minimum of 20sqm per person. The current level of provision in Bath is 11.6 m<sub>2</sub> per person, in Keynsham is 20.7 m<sub>2</sub> per person and in Norton Radstock it is 15.6m<sub>2</sub> per person.*

Green Spaces Strategy: Proposed Standards for Natural Green Space 2004

Although it is impossible to capture all of these non-designated places to play it is none the less useful to keep a list of outdoor areas that have been mentioned or referred to by children and/or adults as being unofficial places to play. This might then be used when assessing where to allocate resources in the course of developing new areas for play. They might also be used for the focus of future consultation work.

## Chapter 4

## **The Key Priority Themes and Outcomes**

Work in the Play Strategy has been broken down into five key priority outcomes (see Table 1). The Outputs listed in Table 2 are the result of the overall work to appraise current play provision in Bath and North East Somerset through audit and consultation with play providers, children and young people, the public and other council departments. These outcomes are regularly reviewed by the Play Partnership.

## Priority Theme Areas and Outcomes for Bath and North East Somerset

**Table 1\***

1. More safe and attractive outdoor play spaces near home *	2. Working towards high quality play for all children *	3. Children and young people participate in ideas and planning and checking standards *	4. More people understand play and how important it is *	5. Play is included in schools and community services *
<i>More places to play and hang out</i>	<i>Always making play spaces and activities better</i>	<i>All children have a say on play</i>	<i>More people know about play and why it is important</i>	<i>Make sure that schools and other services near home include play</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks</li> <li>• Green Spaces</li> <li>• Strategy</li> <li>• Community Play Rangers</li> <li>• Disabled children's access</li> <li>• Transport-road safety</li> <li>• Play and children's health</li> <li>• Holiday Playschemes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Workforce</li> <li>• development</li> <li>• Capacity building/ sustainability</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Anti-bullying</li> <li>• Access disabled children</li> <li>• Importance of Risk</li> <li>• Regular monitoring and reviewing</li> <li>• Targeting socially excluded children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-bullying</li> <li>• Information on play to All children</li> <li>• Disabled children's participation</li> <li>• Children's guide quality assessment criteria</li> <li>• Children's views influence new developments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising the profile of play in public realm</li> <li>• Increase tolerance of children playing in public realm</li> <li>• Parents understanding/ knowledge of play</li> <li>• Parents, carers and those working for disabled children</li> <li>• Engaging decision-makers</li> <li>• Play links to community safety and police</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools (Extended Services)</li> <li>• Holiday Playschemes</li> <li>• Access to outdoor spaces</li> <li>• Access to sports</li> <li>• Local Area Partnerships</li> <li>• Building on Youth Service partnership</li> <li>• Access to affordable resources</li> <li>• Community providers include play</li> </ul>

\*Wording written by children and young people when consulted on Play Strategy September 2006.

\* See Glossary of Terms for definition of abbreviations.

### Breakdown of Targets from Play Strategy Themes

**Table 2 Outcomes 1: More safe and attractive outdoor play spaces near home**

	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Lead Agencies /Partners (SDOP Inc in all)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
1.1	Increase of existing holiday play provision or increase of provision in 3 isolated or rural areas identified as priorities.	Voluntary Sector SDOP Sport and Active Leisure Team (SALT)	June 2007	BIG Lottery for Play Council
1.2	Establishments of criteria for evaluating geographical areas for/of resources for playscheme development.	Play Partnership	Feb 2007	Council
1.3	Community Play Rangers working in Peasedown St John and Keynsham in addition to current teams working in Radstock, Writhlington, Foxhill and Whiteway.	Voluntary Sector Keynsham & Peasedown TCs/Housing	June 2007	BIG Lottery Council
1.4	Increase Community Play Rangers capacity to liaise with local community residents and organisations.	Voluntary Sector Community Development Children Centres	June 2007	BIG Lottery
1.5	Project to develop 3 outdoor areas in parks/open spaces – designed or altered through consultation with local children and young people.	Parks	From Sept 2007	Heritage Lottery
1.6	30% annual increase in children accessing outdoor play sessions.	Voluntary Sector Parks Get Active Swainswick Explorers	From Sept 2007	Lottery/other
1.7	Plans for all new developments to be viewed and commented on by the SDOP.	Planning/Parks/other providers	From Sept 2007	Nil/Council
1.8	Put policy in place that will facilitate legal agreements such as Planning Obligations/Section 106. Planning gain to be used to develop play environments in line with the play policy.	Planning/Parks/other providers	Sept 2007 annually	Council 106 planning gain; parish and town councils
1.9	All park workers and community wardens to receive play awareness training (also in Theme 4 – Promoting Play).	Parks Comm Safety Training provider	By 2008	Council
1.10	Development of a locally agreed tool for evaluating the quantity and quality of play spaces and facilities.	Parks, Play Partnership, SALT	By June 2008	Council
1.11	Develop transport/planning policy to include easier access to play areas and investigate reduced speed measures around parks and play areas.	Transportation, Highways, Play Partnership, Parks	By December 2007	Council
1.12	Creation of new post of Community Parks and Play Liaison Officer to advise on outdoor space design in schools, parks, community gardens etc.	Parks, SDOP, Children's Services, Community Safety	2009	Council

**Table 2 Outcomes 2: Working towards high quality play for all children**

	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Lead Agencies/ Partners (SODP Inc in all)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
2.1	Development of a locally agreed tool for evaluating the quantity and quality of play spaces and facilities – play performance indicators (also in Priority Theme 1)	Parks, Play Partnership,	June 2008	Nil/ Council
2.2	Strategic Development Officer for Play to be consulted on all relevant Local Development Documents that make up Bath and North East Somerset's Local Development Framework	SDOP, Planning Dept, Play Partnership		
2.3	Develop a child-led quality system for play, sport and leisure opportunities (*also in Aim 3)	Participation Working group, SALT, Play Partnership	July 2007 – pilot Summer 2007	Various
2.4	30% increase in disabled children attending mainstream play provision (also in Theme 5 – Play in Schools and Community Services)	Voluntary sector Extended Services, FIS, Play Partnership	By 2012	Various
2.5	Capacity Building and sustainability workshops/in-house training made available for all voluntary play organisations.	CVS/PP/other	From Sept 2006	GOSW/ other
2.6	Increase of 25% of children and young people aged 11-16 having access to play activities targeted at their age group	Youth Service, Voluntary sector SDOP	From April 2006	Lottery or Youth Bank
2.7	Launch of Playwork Training Strategy, including - link to play grants; playwork network; play awards, funding	FIS, Extended Services, LA	April 2007	Nil/Council
2.8	Training package developed on the need for risk and challenge in play	SDOP	Sept 2007	Nil/Council
2.9	20 school staff per year to attend play training as part of workforce reform legislation 2008 and extended services requirements (*also in Play and schools theme)	SDOP, voluntary sector, school improvement, extended services	Annual	Lottery – reaching communities
2.10	All schools to receive anti-racist/anti-bullying workshops for staff and children by 2009	STAR, CPRs Children's Services	By 2009	Council/other
2.11	All play and childcare training courses to include information on the Bath and North East Somerset Play Strategy	SODP / Children's Services	Ongoing	Nil/Council
2.12	Annual Play Awards to be held (*also in Promoting Play theme)	SDOP/ Children's Services	From Sept 2007	Training fund
2.13	Review of Elements of A Rich Play Environment: Criteria For Making Judgements About Play Provision (p11 of Play Policy) and implementation of these in assessment of quality of play environments and how these are implemented in design on public open space and play equipment.	Play Partnership	March 2008	Council
2.14	Play grants are prioritised for benefit of 5-16 year olds.	SDOP	Ongoing	Nil/Council

**Table 2 Outcomes 3: Children and young people are involved in ideas and planning and checking standards of play**

	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Lead Agencies/ Partners (SDOPInc in all)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
3.1	Develop a child-led quality system for play, sport and leisure opportunities	Participation; voluntary sector, CPR, SALT	July 2007 – pilot Summer 2007	Various
3.2	30% increase in attendance from play sector at Local Area Forum meetings of children's service providers	Council	Annual review	Council
3.3	Each Local Area Partnership for Extended Services gives information on children's opinions and wishes due consideration	Participation Working Group Extended services	By March 2008	Extended services
3.4	3 play providers each year are awarded The Children and Young Peoples Rights Charter	Children's Society Participation WP	Ongoing	Council
3.5	Children are included as stakeholders in community planning of developments	Planning, CPRs	Ongoing	Nil/Council
3.6	Further consultation for the Children and Young Peoples Plan includes issues relating to children and young peoples access to local outdoor spaces (minimum of 4 schools per year involved)	SDOP, Participation WP, CPRs, SALT	Ongoing – annual review	Nil/Council
3.7	Disabled children's views and wishes are sought and considered when developing play provision	All play providers, Council ; SDOP	Ongoing	Nil/Council
3.8	3 play settings each year are supported to include disabled or socially excluded children who previously did not access service	Council, voluntary sector	Annual review	Council/other
3.9	Play and Participation conference organised	Council, Participation WP	January 2008	Nil/Council



**Table 2 Outcomes 4: More people understand play and how important it is**

	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Lead Agencies/ Partners (SDOP Inc in all)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
4.1	All those working in parks, communities and parish councils with roving brief to receive basic training on play and participation/children rights. 3 training session per year	CPRs, parks, play providers, community safety, training provider	From Jan 2007	Children's Fund/Lottery/Council
4.2	Play Rangers to work alongside Community Wardens, Park Rangers, Community Beat Officers, Youth Workers, Drugs Action Workers to raise profile of importance of role and develop new initiatives in partnership with other departments, (4 instances of joint work per year).	CPRs, SALT, Parks, Play Partnership	From April 2007	Children's Fund/Lottery/Council
4.3	Play Awards to be held on an annual basis	Play Partnership	Sept 2007	Council
4.4	Information leaflet produced on play and its importance. Target audience parents, carers and children.	Play Partnership, SALT	January 2007	Council
4.5	Production of a children's information leaflet on play and The Play Strategy	Participation WP, PP, FIS	April 2007	Council
4.6	Development of a marketing strategy for play	PP/ FIS	April 2007	Nil/Council
4.7	Electronic information sharing group and website	BAPP	April 2007	Council
4.8	Information on play, sports and leisure directory for local areas (Local Area Partnerships) goes to every child and young person through school.	PP, FIS	Sept 2007	Council/Other
4.9	Presentation in whole school assemblies about range of opportunities for play	Voluntary sector SDOP	Sept 2007	CF/Council Fund/Lottery
4.10	Play Policy poster is reviewed and re-published for providers (to include a smaller leaflet format)	FIS/ SDOP	April 2007	Nil/Council
4.11	To increase recruitment, support and training of volunteers working in play	SDOP/CVS	From January 2007	Council/other
4.12	3 talks per year on play and its role/importance to Parish Councils/Town Council and Bath and North East Somerset Councillors.	SDOP/Play Partnership	From Sept 2006	Nil/Council
4.13	To develop signage which promotes play and its importance in children's on all public play sites.	Parks and other providers	By 2012	Parish and town councils/ Somer housing, 106

**Table 2 Outcome 5: Play is included in schools and community services**

	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Lead Agencies/ Partners (SDOP Inc in all)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
5.1	3 new areas to receive open access holiday playschemes in (isolated or rural areas) identified as priorities with no free play provision	Voluntary Sector SDOP	June 2007	BIG Lottery
5.2	30% increase in disabled children attending mainstream play, leisure and sports provision	Extended Service, FIS, voluntary sector	By 2012	Various
5.3	All Primary and Infant schools to have Play Policies and playground staff trained in playwork by 2012.	Voluntary sector SDOP, PP, Extended Services	From Sept 2007	Lottery/ Council
5.4	Community sports for fun programmes made available to all schools	Sport and Active Leisure (SALT)	From Jan 2007	Council
5.5	Pilot project promoting use of school grounds for play/community use outside of school hours	Parks, Council, Education	March 2008	Extended Services
5.6	30% increase in attendance from play sector at Local Area Forum meetings of children's service providers – leading to involvement in Local Area Partnerships	Council	Annual review	Council
5.7	Project to gather evidence to show how increased play provision is linked to reduction in anti-social behaviour.	Community Safety, Police	By April 2009	Council
5.8	Build on Youth Service partnership – SDOP to attend at least three Youth service management meetings per year.	Youth Service	From Sept 2007	Council
5.9	Development of Play Pods in school playgrounds – action research bringing loose parts to school playgrounds and training for staff.	PP, Children Scrapstore Extended Services	April 2007	Lottery
5.10	4 Scrapstore roadshows per year for play providers, parents and public	Scrapstore	Sept 2007	Council
5.11	Devise criteria for prioritisation of resources to increase play provision in specific geographical areas	Play Partnership	March 2007	

## Chapter 5

### How we will know if we are meeting our targets and how children will be involved in reviewing our progress

#### 5.1 Role of the Play Partnership

The Play Partnership will meet 3 times per year. A standard agenda item for each meeting will be to review the progress in achieving the outcomes in the Strategy. Strategic direction will be provided by the Play Partnership in light of regular monitoring of targets and any significant changes in funding, legislation, Section 106 opportunities and other Council strategies or plans effecting children and young people. The Executive working group of the Play Partnership will meet more frequently to examine the operational work that may need to be adapted in the light of monitoring and feedback.

The Local Authority is required to be responsive and flexible to feedback both from members of the Play Partnership and from residents, parents, children and young people living in Bath and North East Somerset in implementing the Play Strategy.

Progress on the Play Strategy will be given to the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Board by the Play Partnership. This will inform the Council's progress in achieving Performance Value Indicators. The Chair (a non Council elected members of the Partnership) will report on Play targets within the Children and Young People's Plan to the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Board.

#### 5.2

##### The Role of the playwork sector

Work to consult the sector on their views about the Play Strategy has provided an important model of participation that will be replicated the monitoring of progress. A summary of the Play Partnership Progress reports will be made available to the play and childcare sector workforce twice a year via the early years, childcare and play sector mailing and posted on the Council website.

#### 5.3

##### The Role of the Strategic Development Officer for Play (SDOP)

Targets from the Play Strategy will inform future funding bids and service level agreements with organisations commissioned to carry out work in the Strategy. Work will be monitored through Council contracting arrangements. New statistical information gathered to support the Play Strategy outcomes will inform the development of the Family Information Service database such as inclusion of the number of volunteers. Although much of the work to deliver targets in the Strategy will be carried out by voluntary sector organisations the Strategic Development Officer for Play will be responsible

5.4 for keeping up to date with progress and managing operational delivery of contracts.

### **Children and Young People Evaluation of Play Targets**

Children's and young peoples awareness of the Council's work to improve free play provision is essential. A priority target will be to increase children's understanding of what we mean by play and play provision. This work will be done in close partnership with the Participation Sub-Group in order to maximise existing opportunities to consult with children through schools, play activities, and informal visits. A danger will be in relying on feedback from a select group of children and young people when the strategic aim of this work is to affect all children in the authority. For this reason opportunities for children and young people to evaluate services will take place in a variety of ways:

- Specific monitoring in Service Level Agreements relating to children and young people's views will require agencies to show how they have ensured that all children's views are heard, including those who do not communicate verbally, those whose first language is not English and other hard to reach groups where time and commitment is required to ensure participation.
- Establishing a starting point for feedback from children involved in particular projects in order to give a clear performance indicator of change throughout various stages in the work (for example in work to design pilot parks in consultation with local children and young people. Evaluation will be required at the beginning, middle and end of the project)
- Use of existing networks and structures for children and young people's consultation to accumulate feedback from them on play and their access to play.

5.5 A key development in the success of this work will be the formation of a child-led quality system for play opportunities. This challenging work will enable the Council to gauge the progress of its work to improve play provision through the eyes of children and young people themselves.

### **The Role of Parents and the Public**

A major theme within the Strategy is to raise public awareness of play and its importance. This is a difficult target to measure, as it is impossible to measure a starting point of people's levels "awareness". However, existing public forums will be used to ask people if they are aware of play services in their area. The Parenting Strategy and new work established within the Family Information Service will be used to collect parents views on play provision in addition to other children and family services.

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