

**BRAINTREE DISTRICT PLAY STRATEGY**

**Agenda Item 8a.**

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**Background Papers:-** Braintree District Play Strategy (Draft)  
**Financial Implications:** - Extra costs to be met through existing budget and Big Lottery Fund, Children's play bid  
**Equalities Implications:** - Principles of inclusion run through the strategy  
**Legal Implications:** - No legal implications  
**Options:** 1. To adopt the play strategy 2. To not adopt the play strategy  
**Risks:** If the strategy is not adopted we cannot access the funding of £270,849 available as the bid must include a fully agreed play strategy

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. The draft, Braintree District Play Strategy (copy attached) has been developed by The Braintree District Play Partnership, which is a sub-group of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), led by Braintree District Council. The group was supported by the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Healthy Living and the Lead Member for Children and Young People as 'Play Champion', and officers from external funding, Community Safety, Leisure, Parks and Landscapes, Planning and Children and Young people, and representatives from other statutory and voluntary agencies.
2. The strategy has been developed through consultation with over 4000 children and young people, based upon the ethos of free access and free choice, and therefore covers a much wider area than just access to fixed play areas and provision.  
Through the consultation process a range of themes emerged around play, these were: -
  - More facilities for younger teenagers aged 11-13 (identified by the children themselves and also younger children).
  - The need for continued consultation with children and young people.
  - A change of attitude by adults, to children's play
  - The need for development of imaginative play for all ages.
  - Specific opportunities for vulnerable groups.
3. For the strategy to be effective it needs to be signed up to by all partners comprising the Play Partnership, and is a key document, and cross-cutting theme of the CYPSP action plan. It is hoped that by full implementation of this strategy we will continue to raise the profile of play as an essential medium for children to meet the outcomes of Every Child Matters.

## DECISION

1. For the strategy to be formally adopted by Braintree District Council.
2. To agree that the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children and Young People take the role of District Play Champion.

1. Following the recommendations from the 2004 play review, Getting Serious About Play by the Department of Culture, Media and Sports, each Local Authority has been allocated a proportion of the £124 million 'Children's Play Fund' administered by the Big Lottery Fund. The allocation for Braintree District totals £270,849.

The process for accessing the funding is in two stages. Development of the District Play Strategy, by a multi-agency play partnership, and then the development of a portfolio of projects to meet the identified strategic outcomes.

It is a requirement for the programme that the strategy is supported by a high profile Play Champion.

2. The scope of the strategy covers children and young people from birth to 19 years of age, although it is envisaged that future developments will embrace the ethos of a whole family approach to play.

3. The body of the strategy begins by setting out the philosophy of play and investigates the need for the strategy and also the benefits that can be gained by children and young people in terms of the five Every Child Matters outcomes.

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Achieve economic Wellbeing

It examines what is good play provision, the importance of play and also covers issues of access, inclusion and very importantly discusses attitudes to risk.

The document then looks at the strategy in relation to national, regional and local developments and strategies that have an impact on its development, to ensure that its strategic aims and outcomes are in line with other priorities.

4. The audit and consultation form the backbone of this document. Over 4000 children and young people were consulted with to ensure its outcomes truly represented the needs of the community it is primarily aimed at. Consultation took place within Braintree District Council summer play schemes, every year nine student as a part of Reality Roadshow, specific work with children with disabilities and also those living at the Women's Refuge, and also a large project funded by Children's Fund Essex, which used drama and arts in a number of primary schools in the district.

These numbers represent over 11% of the under 19 population in the District, which is a good representation of the population.

The themes that emerged from all of the consultations were very similar. The key themes to be considered as priorities for future development were:

- More facilitators for younger teenagers (ages 11-13) – this came out as a key area where more attention is needed, there are a number of opportunities for up to the age of 11 e.g after school clubs, and those over 13, but there is a definite gap with this age range.
- Children and young people are consulted about future provision – The consultation with children and young people showed that they want their own spaces and also want a say in how things are developed. Adults often assume that children will want certain facilities and these can often be wrong.
- Raising the profile of play – it is essential to ensure that 'play' which is freely chosen continues to be an important element of children's development and receives adequate investment and commitment from local authorities and key agencies. To be led by the current District Play Partnership

- Change attitudes of adults towards children's play and right to play spaces – It has been shown that fear of crime by older children and young people is a problem, particularly for the older generation. There needs to be conscious efforts to dispel these fears and to demonstrate the benefits of letting children and young people participate in activities in their local area, and to develop a greater understanding of youth culture by adults.
- Assisting and enabling children and young people to develop ideas for imaginative play. This is evident from the consultation where by and large the play that they are engaging with is organised or sport based in nature. It is envisaged that this could be developed through continually involving children and young people in the development of opportunities through participative events, activities and consultation, whilst ensuring that the Play Partnership is continually up to date with developments in Play theory and delivery to also inform development.
- The need for some extra specific play opportunities for vulnerable groups, particularly those children and young people with disabilities, and those coming from a background of domestic violence: – The key to any sustainable strategy is engaging children and young people in ways which will allow them to develop their own skills and abilities in designing free play.

These themes alongside the draft Play Policy for Essex have been used to develop the action plan of priorities and the continuing development of the portfolio of projects.

5. The strategy and associated action plan will continue to be monitored by the District Play Partnership to measure the outcomes for children and young people.

Brantree District Play Strategy  
2007 -2011

DRAFT



**Brantree**  
District Council



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“The Braintree District Youth Council agrees with all of the priorities for future development shown in the Play Strategy. We fully support the Braintree District Play Strategy and the positive impact it will have on the children and young people of the District” (BDYC, 2007)

Introductions by:  
Cllr?

## Contents

1. Executive Summary	Page 5
2. Play Policy Statement	Page 6
3. Scope of the Strategy	Page 7
4. Introduction	
4.1 Setting the Scene	Page 8
4.2 What is Play?	Page 8
4.3 Good Play Provision	Page 10
4.4 The Importance of Play	Page 11
4.5 Access to Play	Page 11
4.6 Commitment to Inclusion	Page 113
4.7 Risk Taking	Page 13
5. Braintree District Profile	Page 115
6. Links to Local, Regional and National Strategies	Page 16
7. The Current Picture	
7.1 Formation of the District Play Partnership	Page 20
7.2 Audit of Current Play Provision	Page 21
7.3 Previous Consultation	Page 23
8. The Consultation Process	
8.1 Consultation on Children's Play	Page 26
8.2 Summary of Responses	Page 27
8.3 Findings	Page 32
8.4 Summary	Page 34
8.5 Special Schools findings	Page 35
9. Resulting Strategic Themes	Page 37
10. Braintree District Play Strategy Action Plan – Priorities for 2007 – 2011	Page 39
11. Monitoring and Evaluation of Strategy and Action Plan	Page 40
12. References	Page 41
13. Appendix: A Play Policy for Essex	Page 42

## **1. Executive Summary**

This strategy has been developed by Braintree District Council as lead for the District Play Partnership a sub-group of Braintree District Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

It covers children and young people from birth to 19 years of age.

It defines and describes what play is and its importance, including issues of access, inclusion and the elements of risk associated.

It looks at current provision, based around the principles of free-choice and free access and the outcomes focus on what children and young people, themselves are telling us they need and want, and not just what adults say they want.

Through consultation with over 4000 children and young people, a range of themes emerged around play, primarily these are: -

- More facilities for younger teenagers aged 11-13
- Continued consultation and action with children and young people
- A change of attitude by adults, to children's play
- The need for the development of imaginative play for all ages
- Specific opportunities for vulnerable groups

The strategy is a vision for the District of Braintree and is signed up to by all partners comprising the Partnership, and is a key document in relation to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) action plan.

It is hoped that by the full implementation of this strategy and associated action plan we will be able to continue to raise the profile of play as an essential medium for children to meet the outcomes of Every Child Matters.

## 2. Play Policy Statement

(For full play policy for Essex see Appendix)

Everyone (participants, providers, planners, supervisors or observers) involved in playing in Braintree District will strive to:

- Ensure that Play is available for everyone identified as a child or young person up to the age of 19. as defined within Every Child Matters
- Ensure that Play is inclusive and complies with Living Places; Cleaner, Safer Greener, (ODPM February 2005), Developing accessible play space: a good practice guide and the Disability Discrimination Act.;
- Ensure that Play is accessible to all who want to play, or whose families encourage them to participate;
- Ensure that Play reflects local needs and priorities;
- Ensure the presence of a suitably qualified and vetted adult as and when this is required for a specific play type. Where this is the case there will be adequate evidence of procedures followed correctly. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) certificates will be obtained for named adults and references checked thoroughly;
- Offer adventure and reasonable risk.
- Offer all children and young people in Essex opportunities to attain skills and developmental milestones which can lead them to successfully achieve the five Outcomes identified as part of the government's *Every Child Matters Change for Children Programme*

### **3. Scope of the Strategy**

The Play Strategy will look at play provision and opportunities within the following criteria

- Relating to children and young people up to 19 years old, which encompasses the range of up to 16 for the Big Lottery funding.
- Where play activity is freely chosen by the child or young person
- Related to formal and informal environments
- Opportunities are provided free of charge

The Braintree District Play Partnership endorses a whole family/community approach to the development of play, therefore even though the scope of the strategy is up to 19 (as per Every Child Matters) we believe that any subsequent reviews and revisions should reflect this ethos and cover all ages.

## **4. Introduction**

### **4.1 Setting the Scene**

Today's society seems to place an ever-increasing pressure on children and young people to achieve and meet outcomes, particularly accredited ones. Many projects that deliver play do so within a structured environment, although most deliver good outcomes, we need to note the value of healthy risk taking and freely chosen play by children and young people.

It has been extremely exciting to have the opportunity to develop this strategy, alongside partners, that really embraces not only the physical aspects of play, but also the philosophical context of what play is and what it means to children and young people.

The importance of this document can be evidenced because it encourages children and young people to get active and stay healthy. All too often in today's society technology like computer games and the internet can lead to children and young people becoming isolated and less likely to engage in outside activities.

Play is one of the major forming influences in our lives, and particularly in the development of children and this strategy will ensure that we can create good quality, sustainable provision for all children and young people and also that they continue to have their voices heard in the development of services.

This strategy is aimed at all children and young people encompassed in the scope of the document and also as a support to those organisations working with them.

### **4.2 What is Play?**

Play is a word commonly used everyday, play time, play schools, play areas etc, but these do little to define play, so what is actually meant when we talk about play

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

(Getting serious about play, page 6)

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

*“the intrinsic motivation of play, the fact that for children play does not involve the pursuit of any external goal or reward – raises challenges when defining objectives for play provision, and especially when confronting the issues of assessment and evaluation.”*

(Best Play, Children’s Play Council 2001)

Play is therefore something that children and young people choose to do for themselves, often with little or no adult supervision. There needs to be freedom to explore, make choices and take risks, but while also balancing the need to stay safe from harm. Through these experiences children and young people can grow and develop into healthy young adults.

Play is a way for children (and adults) to exercise and practise their social skills in preparation for future life, therefore if we do not effectively accommodate the play needs of children this can have drastic consequences for the future.

True, informal play can be best described when children and young people make use of any open spaces, woods, parks, play areas, houses, garden’s, or the streets where they live. This may be with or without adult supervision, using their own imagination, with no costs involved and also having the freedom to come and go. Many play schemes and clubs provide opportunities for play, by providing equipment and adult supervision children can take part in more complex activities, and the level of choice is often dependant upon the skills of the play workers.

### 4.3 Good Play provision

1. Extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.
2. Recognises the child's need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need.
3. Manages the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.
4. Maximises the range of play opportunities.
5. Fosters independence and self-esteem.
6. Fosters children's respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction.
7. Fosters the child's well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.

(Best Play, Children's Play Council 2001)

Opportunities for play should stimulate the senses – children and young people need to touch, smell, see and hear colours, shapes and sounds. It is evident then, that while fixed play areas have their place, particularly where there is an identified need, such as a skate park, it is as important, and often more exciting that there are trees to climb, bushes and woods to make dens in. Nature, therefore, provides an underused, fully equipped playground, and in a district as rural as Braintree, these open spaces need to be recognised as such.

On the other hand play areas and opportunities do need to be visible, where children and young people are able to see the world around them, and where they can be seen by the rest of the world. The reasons for this can be threefold, it reduces the risks involved, will have an impact on levels of vandalism, and also keeps children's places firmly based in their communities, thereby giving them a sense of belonging.

#### **4.4 The importance of play**

We need to think about why play is important, if as we have said it has no real goal or outcome. The experiences that children have when playing help them to build up a whole array of skills that are essential for healthy and happy development.

Alongside developing specific skills, play gives children and young people the opportunity to explore their environment, in their own time. They can experiment with different realities and roles, take on different characters and try out new ideas. Play has the ability to aid children and young people to deal with real issues in their lives, and can help them to make sense of difficult or confusing situations. It can also aid the development of hand/eye co-ordination, encouraging children and young people to be active. They will learn to appreciate nature and the outside world, while running through woods, rather than watching computer generated images on a screen.

There are also going to be differences in play opportunities chosen by children compared to those chosen by young people, as skills develop so does the type and complexity of play. To begin with, play is about children learning about the world around them, and this moves on to them learning about themselves. Young people can take time to develop independence and levels of confidence and self-esteem by interaction with their peer group, they can practice making decisions that affect them, taking risks and learning about consequences in a safe environment. This experience is essential to helping young people develop skills and thought processes needed to make the transition into adulthood.

#### **4.5 Access to play**

Although we have discussed that play is essential to development of happy, healthy children and young people, we need to look at what may act as a barrier to participation.

There are many reasons identified by children and young people and these can either be a conscious choice or at other times the barrier removes the choice.

When it comes to making choices, it is more often quality of the experience that will make children and young people return again and again.

Also, when considering barriers to access, due to financial or geographical constraints it may not be always possible to have conveniently located fixed provision, it is always going to be more convenient to some rather than others, and we cannot move roads, rails or rivers to aid accessibility. Therefore some level of mobility is going to be necessary.

Physical barriers – many play facilities may not be accessible to wheelchair users or other people with physical disabilities, it is therefore hoped that future projects will take these specific needs into account. This is particularly true in relation to open and green spaces and access to woodland and park areas.

Geographical barriers – Children and young people may rely on parents for transport to and from play opportunities because they are too far from home, or because they feel it is not safe for them to make their own way there. This is particularly true for younger children and young women.

Social barriers - Some children and young people may experience a range of social barriers to accessing general play opportunities, for example children and young people who have experienced domestic violence. They may not have been able to develop the skills to interact with their peers or there may be a range of safety issues with accessing outside provision.

Cultural barriers – children and young people from ethnic minorities or from different cultural backgrounds e.g. travelling families may experience difficulties in accessing play opportunities. These could include language difficulties, barriers created by the nature of the play, or environmental barriers created by the nature of groups.

Safety barriers – Set by children and young people themselves or parents. Fear of bullying, strangers, traffic, dirty or rundown areas may prevent access. Broken glass and litter in skate parks and around play equipment is a common problem identified and a key factor in parents encouraging children to play at home rather than in the community.

Young people's culture – Young people, naturally, feel confident in their own areas, they are territorial by nature and therefore may not feel comfortable leaving this to access different opportunities. They may also want to 'defend' their territories from anyone from other areas, a situation which could lead to bullying.. this can be seen where parents of younger children do not like visiting play areas that are frequented by groups of teenagers.

It is difficult to address some of these barriers, but in recognising them in the planning stages we can go some way to minimising their effect. Improving communication with children and young people can be really effective in breaking down some of these barriers. Involving children and young people in the planning stages can provide insight into ways of removing these barriers and will also give ownership for the project. Therefore continued consultation is crucial to the success of this strategy.

#### **4.6 Commitment to Inclusion**

The Play Partnership and other partners involved in this strategy have endorsed the principles of quality and inclusion and are committed to ensuring that this play strategy provides the vehicle for removing barriers so that all children and young people can have easy access to the widest possible range of play experiences and play environments both inside and outside.

#### **4.7 Risk taking**

Play, by its very nature contains a large element of risk, both physical and psychological, children and young people need to take these risks, which is a good reason why play is so popular a leisure activity. For any strategy to be effective, we need to balance this need for healthy risk taking with increased concerns about children's safety.

*“Children need and want to take risks when they play. Play provision aims to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children*

*stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. In doing this, play provision aims to manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury”.*

(Play Safety Forum, 2002)

As the above statement demonstrates risk taking is essential and if this is provided effectively through play, children and young people will develop sound risk assessment strategies, which can be taken into adult life.

## **5. Braintree District Profile**

Braintree District covers an area of 236 square miles and is the second largest District in the County of Essex. The District has a population 137,800 as at mid 2005 of which 34,700 are 0-19 years old. This percentage represents 25.2% of the total population, compared with a regional average of 24.6%.

Braintree urban area (Braintree, Bocking and Great Notley), has the youngest average population with 27% aged under 20, compared to Witham area at 23%, and Halstead area 24%.

Overall, Braintree District ranked 237 out of 354 local authorities (number 1 in the rank is the most deprived, however on income Braintree District is ranked 161 out of 354).

In 2001 there were 2,856 lone parent families with dependant children in the District.

95.9% of residents in 2001 were white British, compared to a regional average of 91.45%.

There are 37 Conservation Areas; over 3,000 Listed Buildings; 8 designated Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest; 42 Ancient Monuments; 2,700 sites of archaeological interest; 3 designated local nature reserves and 3 proposed local nature reserves.

There are also 42 play areas maintained by Braintree District Council, and a further 50 maintained by Parish councils.

## 6. Links to local, regional and national strategies

Children and young people's services have undergone major reviews in recent times with several new pieces of legislation leading to a full programme of reform and changes in the way that agencies work nationally, regionally and locally, this strategy has been developed within this currently changing environment

Every Child Matters identifies 5 key outcomes for children, and play is most commonly associated with enjoying and achieving however quality play opportunities can contribute to all outcomes. The Children's Play Council have outlined the ways that play can contribute to the outcomes.

- Be healthy

Play is essential for health and development through childhood, and contributes to physical, intellectual, cultural, emotional and psychological development. The physical nature of energetic play provides children with a significant amount of their regular exercise.

- Stay safe

Safety is one of the main reasons children and their families give for not playing outdoors. Good play provision protects children through reducing unacceptable levels of danger, whilst allowing them the opportunity to challenge themselves and take risks.

- Enjoy and achieve

Play is about enjoyment. When they are playing, children define their own goals and interests, and pursue goals in their own way. Giving children the chance for free, uninhibited play allows them a safe space to try out new roles and experiences.

- Make a positive contribution

Local authorities and other groups are increasingly involving children and young people in play audits and consultations about their free-time needs. This results in more appropriate provision and helps them to develop skills and knowledge and feel they are valued as members of the community. Including these views in plans and provision helps develop motivation and potentially, participation in society.

- Achieve economic wellbeing  
Good play provision enables parents to work or train and allows them to feel that children are safe. It promotes community well-being and security and brings economic benefits through jobs and training.

This Play Strategy is therefore key to the development of any inclusive preventative strategy.

Within Essex there are two key documents influencing services provided to children and young people; the Local Area Agreement and the Children and Young People's Plan. The Local Area Agreement identifies children and young people as one of four priority areas which need addressing to achieve better outcomes, essentially this is about improving life chances. Other aspects of the Local Area Agreement that will impact on children and young people include tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, and improving health and wellbeing.

The Essex Children and Young People's Plan, which included participation of children and young people in its development also outlines key areas for improvement, and is based upon the five Every Child Matters outcomes. One of the targets under Priority 9 is for every District in Essex to have a Play Strategy arising from a Play Partnership in place by September 2007.

Further evidence of the importance of play is that it is included as one of the cross cutting themes of the Braintree District Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership business plan 2006-07 as a cross cutting priority.

Cross cutting priority 4 – To support the development and implementation of the District Play Strategy.

At a local level Braintree District Council has a number of Strategic Plans which, while not directly addressing the need for play, do impact upon accessibility and opportunities provided across the District. These include: -

- Community Strategy and Local Development Framework (currently being developed)
- Open and Green spaces Strategy (currently being developed)
- Community Safety Strategy
- Cultural Strategy

Although the word 'Play' is not directly identified in the Extended Schools initiative it relates closely to the expectations of the Core Offer.

The Core Offer for primary and secondary schools links to play via the provision of a varied menu of activities ensuring good quality provision and enrichment for all children. The expectation for Secondary schools is that they will need to provide or signpost to a range of activities in a safe place, rather than formal childcare.

The introduction of Breakfast clubs and after school clubs provide situations where play can be developed both freely and guided.

Learning through play is a core which runs through education, children are encouraged to be creative, think freely and develop ideas based on experimentation.

Schools under the core offer are being encouraged to link with the community to assess needs and if a need is identified then to assess how they can facilitate the activity to take place, this could encompass somewhere to go to play safely, use of the schools playground/field or play equipment.

PPG17 Guidance states local authorities are asked to:

...assess existing and future needs, establish the quantity, quality and accessibility of existing open spaces and recreation facilities and establish standards of provision. The needs of those living and visiting rural areas are also to be met.

To achieve this the District Council is in the process of leading the development of an "Green and Open Spaces Strategy", which is involving an audit of local open space and development of standards.

The right to play is also enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

"The child has a right to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities"

(Article 31)

Under the Children Act (2004), all Local Authorities have a duty to cooperate to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of children and young people, this strategy, therefore, supports this duty.

## **7. The Current Picture**

### **7.1 Formation of the District Play partnership**

Apart from being informed by the views of children and young people it was essential to develop a play partnership that was representative of the range of agencies and organisations working with children and young people across the district.

The partnership was set up as a sub group of Braintree District Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), and therefore had a direct line of communication through to this group.

The partnership consists of representatives from: -

Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services (ECYVS)

Play and resource Centre (PARC)

Mid Essex Primary Care Trust

Essex County Council Braintree Locality Commissioner for Children and Young People

Extended Schools

Essex County Council Youth Service

Christchurch Braintree

4 Children

Essex County Council Early years and Childcare

Braintree District Council – Children and Young People's Service, External Funding and Voluntary Sector Development, Community Safety, Leisure, Parks and Landscapes, Planning

The Partnership was formed in June 2006 and has met monthly, with a months break over the summer period. It was tasked with setting the priorities and scope for the strategy and supporting the consultation process

The partnership works under an agreed Terms of reference, which can be summarised under the following headings

- The contribution, agreement and adoption of the County Play Policy
- The consultation and development of the local Play Strategy
- Planning of project portfolio
- Submission of the funding application to BLF

- Monitoring of strategy outcomes
- Ongoing evaluation of strategy

The Partnership will continue to have representation from the District Play Champion, who will be the elected Member with lead responsibility for Children and Young People.

## **7.2 Audit of Current Play Provision**

Braintree District Council currently provides and maintains forty-two play areas across the district, ranging from basic toddler and junior swings, through to fully equipped skate parks.

The equipment provided is ever changing as older items are removed and newer and different items added.

The District Council's involvement in the provision of free play opportunities also extends into parks and open spaces and a number of other departments work directly with children and young people in the provision of leisure and other activities.

Leisure development provide a summer holiday scheme for children aged 5-8 and this is taken around the rural north of the District, and they also provide coaching courses during this time for older children, both of these activities carry a cost.

Braintree District museum provides educational activities for school children which allows them to role play Victorian lessons and dress in authentic costumes.

There is no established single play service in Braintree District, but there are a number of smaller providers offering a range of activities in different areas.

Essex County Youth Service offers a programme for all 13-19 year olds in the district, from three main youth centre in each of the three main towns and also a mobile and project based provision.

The Braintree District rural services survey carried out in 2005 received responses from all 52 rural parishes in the district (not including the town

parishes of Witham and Halstead), in total a response was received from 71 settlements. This survey found that: -

- 23 have a venue for indoor sports (32%) village hall or school hall
- 50 have a play area (70%)
- 44 have a sports pitch (62%)
- 34 have a pre-school, play school or nursery (49%)
- 13 have an after school club (18%)
- 5 have a youth club (8%)
- 17 have a mobile youth provision (24%)

And of these responses 58 (82%) consider that their community facilities were in good condition.

37 (52%) were considering improving their services/facilities including –

- Play areas and upgrading play equipment
- Providing an all weather play area
- New play area project
- Play area notice boards
- Skate ramp
- BMX track
- Ensuring that playing fields comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- New sports pavilion project
- New pavilion notice board
- Provide sports facilities
- Youth activities
- Tennis courts
- Youth club soon
- Nature trail

### 7.3 Previous consultation

#### Local Development Framework and Community Strategy consultation

Although consultation around play has not been explicit within this consultation process, services and activities for children and young people has come across strongly within all of the responses.

The focus group sessions were held in the three main towns of the District; Braintree, Witham and Halstead, alongside sessions with young people at two schools and a supported housing project, and a cultural partnership board meeting.

One of the categories consulted on was culture, leisure and facilities, and this generated some information relating to play and more broadly access to activities for children and young people.

The consultations available took place with 130 adults at five public meetings and 89 young people aged between 13 and 19, at two secondary schools and a housing provider.

The summary of priorities from the young people's sessions with direct relationship to play provision were: -

- Cost of transport
- New skate park
- Need various clubs and leisure activities
- Policing and safety at night
- Need various sports clubs
- Indoor sports and leisure activities
- Graffiti and litter
- Mini fetes and events to go to
- Youth clubs for people aged 16-25
- More place for teenagers to go e.g. amusement parks and under 18 nightclubs
- Have kept some countryside
- More events for young people to keep them off the streets.

The key priorities and areas for improvement from the public seminars were: -

- Improved and developing leisure facilities in Braintree
- Some good parks/recreation/open spaces
- Little children's facilities in parks
- Lack of leisure facilities in rural communities
- Lack of youth facilities
- Involve young people in projects
- Have more activities for young people
- Have more leisure time
- Provide a cinema/theatre bus with pick up and drop off points around the District to access leisure entertainment for remote areas
- Larger villages could be developed as hubs for other villages to avoid travelling to urban leisure facilities
- Provide play equipment for under fives within a short distance of all homes
- More play facilities for the young
- Work with youngsters to give them a sense of community and an understanding of responsibility to others
- Have facilities for young people (under 21) – cultural as well as physical
- Have more provision of leisure and cultural activities
- Have extended schools
- In rural areas where there is no recreation ground give grant money to buy land from a local farmer and provide play area for children
- Make better use of village halls by making them multi-purpose, e.g. internet café, 5-a-side football
- No facilities for youth/poor youth facilities
- Not doing enough for young people
- Lack of sports facilities including swimming pools
- Have better facilities for youth
- A clear classification of leisure activities – rural pursuits, passive leisure, formal sports, informal sports/activities, urban based provision, rurally acceptable provision, etc.
- Have addressed the needs of youth

- Have greater representation for younger people
- Have more support for minority sports I.e. BMX racing
- Have facilities for under 5's
- Leisure for under 8's protection from older children vandalising because of lack of resources
- Consult younger members of the community and involve them as much as possible in the decision making process
- Consider the needs of youth – venues and access
- Promote youth councils
- Establish the needs of youth
- Leisure facilities in rural areas
- have protected countryside
- Have more open woodlands
- Have more leisure facilities
- Existing facilities will be used and updated and must be fully maintained

## **8. The Consultation Process**

### **8.1 Consultation on Children's Play**

Braintree District Council recognises the value of involving children and young people in its decision-making processes. In partnership with Essex County Youth Service, the Council has supported the development of the Young Essex Assembly and the Braintree District Youth Council; elected bodies where over 4000 young people aged 13-19 were able to vote in a democratic process, which took place in December 2006.

Through the period 25<sup>th</sup> July to 11<sup>th</sup> December 2006, a wide-ranging consultation took place with children and young people across the Braintree District.

This included: -

139 children 5-11 attending Braintree District Council summer programmes

10 minute facilitated focus groups with 1500+ year nine students as part of Reality Roadshow

24 responses to questionnaires by children with significant additional needs (some responses provided by parents)

Two sessions facilitated by the play worker one with children and one with women and children living at Braintree women's refuge.

Facilitated questionnaires carried out by Essex Youth Service mobile provision.

Play4Play project delivered by Mapalim, consultants funded by Children's Fund Essex. (Full report available on [www.braintree.gov.uk](http://www.braintree.gov.uk) )

This information was analysed at a play partnership meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2006, to look for emerging themes, and drawing out from the responses some initial thoughts about the types of projects that would be feasible from the information gathered.

The questions

The questionnaire was designed to elicit answers not only around where, what and who but also to consider issues of safety as perceived by children and young people.

*What do you do when you play/hang out?*

*Who do you like to play/hang out with?*

*Where would you like to play/hang out?*

*I feel safe when...*

*I don't feel safe when...*

*List up to three things that would stop you playing/hanging out.....*

Brief training was provided to the staff of the summer programmes on how best to facilitate the questions, but the actual process was left down to the individual workers.

The questions were designed to allow us to develop a feel for and philosophy of play, which was separate from that of play activities and equipment.

## **8.2 Summary of responses**

Braintree District Council, summer schemes

Throughout the 2006 school summer holidays the summer programme staff from Braintree District Council included in their work programme short sessions with all of the children in attendance, based around the six questions from the questionnaire. This allowed for the opportunity to survey 139 children, between the ages of five and eleven in an intimate manner where they could discuss their thoughts on the subject in a focus group, rather than just answering questions. These sessions were delivered across the rural north of the District, where access to urban facilities is limited.

The majority of children that were involved during these sessions actively used football pitches and play areas in their local area, but there was a range of responses to the quality of this provision, and there was a lot of concern raised about safety, particularly in relation to older young people 'hanging about'. The responses also showed that most of the children felt safer when either a parent or sibling was present, or when in large groups of friends. There were also issues of having to cross roads to access play areas. Surprisingly there were only two responses from this age group with regard to playing on computers or video games.

Almost 50% of the children (66 respondents) considered playing organised sport as their favoured activities.

A very popular response to where you would like to play/hang out was organised activities or some kind of bus and they would particularly like this to offer music and art.

### Reality Roadshow

Over 1600 young people aged 12-13 were surveyed as part of a community safety day in all eight secondary schools across the District. They were asked in tutor groups of around 30: - What do you currently do when you play? What would you do if you could? And What makes you feel unsafe?

The responses which were gained from more than 20 young people for each question were: -

#### Current Play:

- Hang about with nothing to do (236)
- Walk around town (122)
- Nothing, we're too old or not old enough (145)
- Meet friends (112)
- Sit around parks (62)
- Watch TV with mates (21)
- Have fun (37)
- Skate park (42)
- Football (195)
- Cricket (32)
- Sports (119)
- PlayStation/Xbox (65)
- Youth Centre (41)
- Fun with friends (76)
- Snooker (21)
- Cinema (23)

#### What would you like to do:

- Hang out (153)
- Play football (132)
- Something new (32)

- Proper goals (27)
- Cinema cheaper (31)
- Need more lights in the parks (45)
- Nothing (97)
- Ice rink (34)
- More parks (65)
- Youth clubs for younger people (78)
- Free activities (143)
- Somewhere warm to go (72)
- Nightclub for younger people (37)
- Graffiti projects (20)
- Bowling (77)
- Fishing (23)

What makes you feel unsafe:

- Fear of anti-social behaviour (465)
- Young people getting the blame for everything (132)
- People having a go when you are not doing anything (56)

Overall the vast majority of young people (65%+ over 1000 young people) would you feel safe if you were out on your own, answered no.

Consultation with young people with disabilities

24 children and young people aged 5-18 were consulted with, that currently use services provided by a disabilities project within the District.

All of the children (or parents if they filled in the questionnaire on behalf of their child) identified that playing at this disabilities project was one of the key things they classed as play. With regard to safety one of the top answers (15/24) was the need for a familiar environment and people to make it a safe and enjoyable experience. This evidences the need for the development of imaginative spaces which will allow for a level of play similar to that which can be experienced by all children and young people.

### Children living in Braintree Women's Refuge

Children affected by domestic abuse often lack self confidence and self esteem and will have poor self-image. They will frequently have been witness to violent incidents and have been left confused and traumatised. They are not able to invite friends home and will quite often not be able to have contact with extended family and friends.

The children at the refuge were asked the same set of questions and the responses are summarised:

#### What do you do when you play?

- Chat with friends
- Paint
- Play with toys
- Listen to music
- Creative art
- Play dough
- Watch TV/films
- Modelling
- Cinema
- Swimming

#### Where would you like to play?

- Swimming
- Crazy kids
- Cinema
- Skate park
- Crazy golf
- Youth club

#### I feel safe when:

- At home (the refuge)
- There are people I can talk to
- With my friends

I don't feel safe when

- Stuff being vandalised
- Rain/snow can't play
- I don't know anyone

Youth service mobile unit consultation

The youth service mobile unit consulted with two groups of young people, one in Great Notley, and the other in Halstead. The responses provided mirror almost exactly those from the Reality Roadshow with a couple of variations about facilities they would like to see:

- Astroturf
- Somewhere warm and dry
- Play pool
- Dry ski slope
- Transport to town

Play4Play Project Consultation

To summarise the findings of the children, parents and carers in Braintree, the Play 4 Play Project consulted with a total of 918 people, 884 of these were children aged five to eleven years. The remaining 34 respondents were parents or carers. The following information has been captured and compiled from the interactive workshops with a large scale sample of children and their parents and carers. Deriving from the 6 key outcomes, there were 7 key question areas posed in the workshop and the parents and carers questionnaires.

1. What do children think play is?
2. Where children of all age ranges play at present?
3. Where children of all age ranges don't play?
4. Where children of all ages would like to play?
5. What children of all age ranges would like to play?
6. What accessibility aspects stops play for children of all ages?

## 7. What safety aspects stop children from playing?

### 8.3 Findings

#### **'What is play, where I play, and where I'd like to play'**

Findings based in responses to Questions 1 - 5

**Note:** these findings are based on data gathered from children and young people only.

#### **1. What do children think play is?**

Across the whole age range of the research, play was regarded primarily as physical or sports based activity: football, swimming and basketball being the top three most popular activities (in that order). Sedentary play activities, IT and games consoles, were the fourth and fifth most popular play options. Other physical activities made up the rest of the top ten play options.

#### **2. Where children of all age ranges play?**

Nearly a quarter of children across the whole age range chose 'the park' as their favourite place to play. Home was the second choice followed by a further outdoor option, the 'playing field', as third choice. Options 6 to 10 are all locations out of the house (but include the garden!) For children in school years 1 – 3 the park was the favourite play venue (possibly accompanied by adult carers), but for years 4 - 6 the home replaces the park as most popular venue – perhaps as ability to engage with home based play activity (computers etc) increases.

#### **3. Where children of all age ranges don't play**

The street, parks and forests/woods are the 'top' three places that children choose not to, or are told not to, play in. This suggests a strict division between those children for whom the park is the top choice of play venue and those who choose, or are told, to avoid it. This may be due to different parental views on safety, or the actual safety 'record and reputation' of a local public park. The park becomes a less favoured option among older children, probably because they are no longer having accompanied trips with parents and carers.

#### **4. Where children of all ages would like to play**

Children generally responded very specifically to questions regarding where they would like to play. Crazy Kids Fun Park, Freeport Bowling Centre and Football pitch/stadium/club being the top choices. Five of the top ten choices were pay to use facilities. However, the top two choices for children in years 1 – 3 were not featured in the all - ages top ten: ‘the farm’, and a golf club for kids! Not surprisingly, ‘wish list’ venues featured as popular choices: Jurassic Park, motor bike racing etc. In summary ‘fun’, adventurous, active, site specific play areas with specially designed equipment are popular but there is no mention of ‘structured activities’ as in outcome 1 (football); this could suggest that children want freedom of choice within a place that is contained, and safe.

#### **5. What children of all age ranges would like to play**

Ice skating, football and waterslides were the top three choices for what children of all ages wanted to play, all highly-equipped play locations focusing on specific activities in a controlled environment. This suggests that children see desirable play venues and activities as out of the ordinary – you can’t go to the ice rink or water flume everyday. Of the top ten choices seven and eight were ‘general’ choices: ‘better (play) equipment’ and ‘better parks’. We can make assumption to that ‘better’ would be in line with the types of ideas they are suggesting. The children across the age ranges mentioned several chocolate orientated play activities which may be real places or may be imaginary.

#### **What stops play?**

Findings based on responses to questions 6 and 7

These findings are based on data gathered from children and young people. There are no parents and carers views reflected.

#### **1. What accessibility stops play for children of all ages?**

Children cited bad weather, parental or other rules and money as the top three obstacles to play. Bullying, overcrowding and arguments featured in the top ten for all ages, whilst ‘getting into fights’, arguments’ and ‘getting hurt’ were listed third, fourth and fifth as issues for years 1 – 3.

This raises issues of supervision, popular play venues and whether it is fear of these things happening, or fear because they actually have happened, that is limiting play options. These limits on play appear to drop away as issues as children get older but this could be because there are fewer responses from the upper age range of children and young people surveyed.

Responses from parent and carers paint a different picture: they believe the biggest accessibility barriers to play venues for their children are information and publicity, and affordability links with the children's response around money. Parents and carers also report, in contrast to the national trend that 'everything is better by car', that walking or using public transport are the easiest methods of accessing play facilities

## **2. What safety aspects stop children from playing?**

Broken equipment is the top safety issue for all ages, particularly for children in years 1 -3. (For years 4 - 6 this inhibitor becomes the closely related 'vandalism'.) The unwelcome attention of 'bullies' and 'teenagers' are also key concerns. Six of the top ten safety issues for all children had to do with challenges from other young people. Graffiti is also seen as a deterrent – maybe it suggests older and more challenging young people marking out 'their' territory claiming spaces designed for younger children because they don't have their own.

Again, parents and carers had a different view on this issue to the children: the consensus being that overall safety is not considered to be in need of improvement – broken glass, vandalism and discarded used drugs needles were their main safety concerns – not the aggression of other/older children

## **8.4 Summary:**

### **1. Existing facilities**

Children like parks, playing fields and open spaces where they engage in their favoured play and sports physical activities, but they choose to avoid, or are told to avoid, wooded and otherwise secluded areas. (This is usually because of their location – and them being unsupervised)

They also enjoy, and aspire to playing in, highly specific and pay to use attractions: leisure centre, water parks, climbing walls etc.

## **2. Barriers**

The unwelcome attention of other/older young people, the fear of fights, bullying and confrontation, is a key limiter in the choice of play facilities.

Broken equipment is an issue for children, but much more so for parents and carers.

Parents and carers overall rating of existing play facilities is that they consider them to be poor and in need of improvement. This probably limits their willingness to allow their children to use them.

Rules and money were also high on the list of barriers to playing.

## **3. What children want / improvements they would like to see**

Children would like more and better maintained play equipment in parks and other local, free to use public spaces.

Graffiti removed from public play spaces

## **4. What parents and cares want / improvements they would like to see**

Better maintenance of existing equipment and grounds.

More and improved play facilities in public spaces.

## **8.5 Special Schools response (all Essex)**

### **1. Existing facilities**

- It seems that the children and young people surveyed find that existing facilities for simple outdoor playground type play would meet their needs if they were made accessible to them.

### **2. Barriers**

- Facilities are not thought to be welcoming or safe due to “Broken equipment” (through neglect or willful damage?), the presence, or the threat of, older “Teenagers” and the lack of adult supervision. (Older teenagers may choose to hang around play facilities

intended for people younger than themselves because of a lack of suitable facilities

meeting their own needs.)

### **3. What action children and young people want to see**

- \_ More play equipment, though not especially complex or costly items.
- \_ Existing playground facilities maintained and supervised.
- \_ Opportunities to engage in art and drama activities for exploring, experimenting and expressing themselves; dance and music in particular

Special Schools

From the summary and analysis of responses it is evident that the majority of children and young people prefer to play with their friends and/or siblings, and this is in an unstructured way, but what is also evident is that there seems to be a lack of imaginative play, and this is a gap that could be filled.

Developing systems for this is the most effective way of addressing the needs from this consultation and also building in sustainability and continued consultation to ensure new and emerging needs are being met.

## 9. Resulting Strategic Themes

The themes that emerged from all of the consultations were very similar. The key themes to be considered as priorities for future development are:

- More facilitators for younger teenagers (ages 11-13) – this came out as a key area where more attention is needed, there are a number of opportunities for up to the age of 11 e.g after school clubs, and those over 13, but there is a definite gap with this age range.
- Children and young people are consulted about future provision – The consultation with children and young people showed that they want their own spaces and also want a say in how things are developed. Adults often assume that children will want certain facilities and these can often be wrong.
- Raising the profile of play – it is essential to ensure that ‘play’ which is freely chosen continues to be an important element of children’s development and receives adequate investment and commitment from local authorities and key agencies. To be led by the current District Play Partnership
- Change attitudes of adults towards children’s play and right to play spaces – It has been shown that fear of crime by older children and young people is a problem, particularly for the older generation. There needs to be conscious efforts to dispel these fears and to demonstrate the benefits of letting children and young people participate in activities in their local area, and to develop a greater understanding of youth culture by adults.
- Assisting and enabling children and young people to develop ideas for imaginative play. This is evident from the consultation where by and large the play that they are engaging with is organised or sport based in nature. It is envisaged that this could be developed through

continually involving children and young people in the development of opportunities through participative events, activities and consultation, whilst ensuring that the Play Partnership is continually up to date with developments in Play theory and delivery to also inform development.

- The need for some extra specific play opportunities for vulnerable groups, particularly those children and young people with disabilities, and those coming from a background of domestic violence: – The key to any sustainable strategy is engaging children and young people in ways which will allow them to develop their own skills and abilities in designing free play.

The strategy themes identified in conjunction with the play policy for Essex will form the basis for the action plan. This plan will identify what tasks are considered priorities and propose projects to deliver on these strategic themes.

## 10. Braintree District Play Strategy Action Plan – Priorities for 2007 – 2011

Activity	Lead Agency	Timescale
<p>Review Play Partnership to ensure multi-agency membership able to manage strategy and project portfolio.</p> <p>Ensure the Play Partnership is developed and is the primary vehicle for promoting and co-ordinating play opportunities in Braintree District.</p> <p>Ensure that the Play Partnership is continually supported by an identified District Play Champion (ideally an elected member with lead responsibility for Children &amp; Young People) at all times.</p>	BDC lead officer Play Partnership	<p>March 2008</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>To set up, deliver, and staff a mobile service for 10 – 13 year olds to deliver direct free play opportunities, via Children’s Centre Initiative.</p> <p>Investigate opportunities to increase this provision to younger children</p> <p>Support the development of Witham Park funding applications, with the provision of the above services in that locality</p>	<p>4 Children</p> <p>Play Partnership</p> <p>Play Partnership</p>	<p>February 2008 – January 2011</p>
<p>Secure funding for the development of a natural outdoor play area for children and young people with disabilities.</p> <p>Funding of Play worker to support the above project to deliver direct play provision for children.</p>	PARC	<p>December 2008</p> <p>February 2008 – January 2011</p>
<p>Funding for play worker within the women’s refuge to deliver free play opportunities.</p>	Women’s Refuge	<p>February 2008 – January 2011</p>

Ensure the co-ordination of consultation relating to children's play and also children's services developments in line with CYPSP action plan.  Continued promotion of Play across the District.	CYPSP, Play Partnership	Ongoing
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Plan and deliver a Play conference to promote developing a whole family approach to play, and to promote the work of the Play Partnership and raise the profile of and importance of play for children and young people.	Play Partnership,  BDC Children's Services	March 2008
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Investigate funding streams for further projects identified through play partnership and consultation, e.g.– District Play Rangers Play Development Boards to be placed in parks and other areas children and young people play.	Play Partnership, BDC External Funding Manager	Ongoing
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## 11. Monitoring and evaluation of Strategy and Action Plan

The responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of the strategy and evaluating its outcomes will fall directly on the Play Partnership, led by Braintree District Council, which will report directly into Braintree District Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

The Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and during the first year the District Play Partnership will lead on developing a range of indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy and associated projects, although the accountability for the projects will rest with Braintree District Council.

## 12. References

1. Children's Play Council, *The 51 minute challenge*, 2004
2. Department of Culture, Media and Sports, *Getting Serious about Play – a review of children's play*, 2004
3. Department for Education and Skills, *Every Child Matters – Change for Children*, 2004
4. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, *Planning Policy guidance Note 17*, 2002
5. Children's Play Council, *Best Play*, 2001
6. UNICEF, *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*
7. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, *Living Places, Cleaner, Safer, Greener*, 2005
8. HMSO, *The Children Act 2004*, 2004
9. Play Safety Forum, *Managing Risk in Play Provision: a position statement*, Children's Play Council, NCB, 2002

## **Appendix: -**

# **A Play Policy for Essex**

### **Introduction**

This Play Policy for Essex demonstrates an awareness of and positive approach to supporting children and young people throughout the County. The purpose of the Play Policy for Essex is to set out an agreed, pan-Essex vision of play to support the development of local play strategies at district level.

The 12 district councils that make up New Essex, namely Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping Forest, Harlow, Maldon, Rochford, Tendring and Uttlesford have worked to develop strategies at local level that support free play for children and young people. Throughout this process, children and young people have been consulted and their wishes and needs with regard to play taken into account. They are the reason for these strategies and as such, their voices have been heard.

The process towards producing a Policy and subsequent local strategies began with the formation of district play partnerships made up of relevant representatives from county and voluntary organisations working towards the common goal of free play provision with full inclusion for all children and young people. A Countywide consultation process and local projects produced an effective response from children and young people, which reflects their wishes and needs with regards to play and its accessibility. The scope of this project is based in realism. The primary factor in this will remain with the children and young people that each district serves. Inclusion is at the top of the agenda and each district will demonstrate how it strives to reflect this philosophy.

### **Aim and Vision Statement for the Pan-Essex Policy on Play and Local Play Strategies**

An overarching Policy on Play demonstrates our awareness of the complexities of this county. It is specific, yet demonstrates flexibility. It is the umbrella under which all local strategies on Play shelter.

The Play Policy for Essex is durable and sustainable. It demonstrates a commitment to real inclusion at all levels. It is written in a language that is easily understood by those for whom it has been developed and realistically reflects the needs of the younger members of a growing population. It shows evidence of consultation across the various populations and play partnerships throughout the county. It is timely and strategic. Above all, it is honest and open.

By affirming that Play is an essential and automatic right for every child and young person and that Play and its provision is everyone's responsibility, the Play Policy for Essex ensures that the local strategies developed from it keep Play high on the agenda.

What develops from this Policy will equip future Play providers with a realistic vision of how to make Play available to all and where Play is needed. A

variety of creative and effective consultancy methodologies have been employed to gather information which inform and drive forward the local and county-wide strategies for play in Essex. The results of these together with local and county-wide audits into the scope and usefulness of current play provision form the basis of the local strategies.

### **The Process of Developing an Essex Policy for Play**

Each of the twelve district councils that currently make up the New County of Essex (see introduction) formed Play Partnership groups within their own areas with the intention of developing local strategies for Play. The principles for these strategies form the Essex Policy for Play.

Starting from The National Occupational Standard definition of Play (Skills Active 2005), the Play Partnerships developed a definition of Play for Essex. From this definition, the **Policy for Play** grew. The resulting definition of Play is of considerable length and detail. Its strength lies in the dedicated approach that members of various Play Partnerships demonstrated to ensure that their specific hope for Play in Essex was acknowledged and addressed. Other contributors wanted to acknowledge that Play in the right context has the power to 'bring back' those young people who may have been pushed or self-elected to set themselves outside of their community. These are powerful sentiments, and demonstrate the impact that Play can have.

### **Defining Play**

Play is an abstract concept which is difficult to describe in its entirety. We all recognise play when we see it in action, but feel restricted by a limited vocabulary when asked to reach a definition as to what play is. In order to produce an effective **Policy for Play**, it is necessary to agree a working definition of Play. This then, becomes the vision agreed by Play Partnerships within the district councils across Essex:

### **Play in Essex:**

- **is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child and young person**
- **is not always spontaneous and may have to be introduced gradually**
- **can be fun or serious. It is sometimes joyful; sometimes risky; always memorable**
- **is an essential and intrinsic part of growing up and time should be made for play**
- **allows children and young people to learn and develop as individuals and as members of the community.**
- **is a natural impulse and is what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons.**
- **Is that activity or 'chilling-out' period between school, home, homework and other demands made on the time of young people**

- **offers human learning and development in a non-threatening and un-prejudiced way**
- **provides children and young people with the opportunity to confront positive and negative messages about themselves**
- **has the power to re-engage disaffected children and young people**

### **Scope**

Everyone (participants, providers, planners, supervisors or observers) involved in playing in Essex will strive to:

- i) Ensure that Play is available for everyone identified as a child or young person up to the age of 19. as defined within Every Child Matters
- ii) Ensure that Play is inclusive and complies with Living Places; Cleaner, Safer Greener, (ODPM February 2005), Developing accessible play space: a good practice guide and the Disability Discrimination Act.;
- iii) Ensure that Play is accessible to all who want to play, or whose families encourage them to participate;
- iv) ensure that Play reflects local needs and priorities;
- v) Ensure the presence of a suitably qualified and vetted adult as and when this is required for a specific play type. Where this is the case there will be adequate evidence of procedures followed correctly.  
11Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) certificates will be obtained for named adults and references checked thoroughly;
- vi) Offer adventure and reasonable risk.
- vii) Offer all children and young people in Essex opportunities to attain skills and developmental milestones which can lead them to successfully achieve the five Outcomes identified as part of the government's *Every Child Matters Change for Children Programme*

### **Play Objectives**

Within the Play Policy for Essex there are seven key objectives for play, which are used as an evaluative tool against which provision of play is measured. These seven key objectives for Play underscore the five outcomes for children and young people and the Pan- Essex Definition of Play. They form the basis of true provision of Play across the county. At least one of the objectives should be identified and evidenced in any play provided by any of the 12 District Councils.

The seven key Play objectives are:

- Play provision should extend the choice and control that children and young people have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.
- The provision should recognise that children and young people need to test boundaries and respond positively to that need.
- The provision should manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children and young people safe from harm.
- The provision should maximise the range of play opportunities.
- The provision should foster independence and self-esteem.
- The provision should foster children and young people's respect for others and offer opportunities for social interaction.

- The provision should foster children and young people's wellbeing, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.

### **The Importance of Continuing Consultation**

Play provision should be flexible and sustainable. The generation of children and young people ready to use the Play facilities now will change within the next 5 to 8 years. Therefore it is essential that regular reviews and consultations are conducted to ensure that all play provision is appropriate and adequate. Essex endorses this philosophy and invites planners, businesses, families, children and young people to participate in this life-long commitment.