

# Lincolnshire Play Strategy and Policy



**2014-2016**

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## **Forward**

*Director of Children's Services and Portfolio Holder for Children's Services Debbie Barnes*

The play strategy updates our position on children and young peoples' play in Lincolnshire and sets out a clear vision for play in Lincolnshire for the next 2 years. It details the aims, objectives and policies for play. It can be used by any organisation or individual in Lincolnshire involved, interested and able to initiate or influence the development of play opportunities for children and young people. It promotes and supports the rights of children to participate in the planning process.

The strategy highlights our commitment with our partners to support the county's children and young people and their right to play and reaffirms Lincolnshire's commitment to the Child's Right to play which is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The progress our county has made in delivering play provision since 2009 has been towards improving our inclusive play facilities in parks, a more innovative approach to providing play and awareness of the need for open access provision which encourages free play outdoors and also working with the community and children to listen to their views and support provision which best suits their needs.

Lincolnshire County Council continues to support a play forum group which provides the steer for play across the county and in the 7 districts.

It recognises our commitment to play and play work and partnership working and the next 2 years will offer more challenges and opportunities for the development of children's play in the county.

The strategy aims to bring together all services for play in Lincolnshire under a shared vision and set of priorities, recognising the importance of play and the positive impact that quality play experiences have on children and young people This is increasingly important as we become more concerned about their lack of freedom to access outdoor spaces and the subsequent implications this has for their physical health and well-being.

The vision is

Every child and young person in Lincolnshire has the right to safe, accessible and exciting places to play that reflect the needs of the local community and empowers them for life.

Our fundamental objectives for play form the basis of the Lincolnshire play strategy 2014-16.

- 1 Raise the profile of good quality play
- 2 Develop partnerships to link play into all agendas
- 3 Create the opportunities for a range of local play for all children and young people

## What is our vision for play in Lincolnshire?

Underpinning the strategy is Lincolnshire County Council's recognition that play is the single most important factor in a child's development. It is also a basic human right as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The right for children and young people to play is proclaimed in Article 12 and 31 of the Convention to which the United Kingdom is a signatory.

On 1 February 2013 the UNCRC announced the adoption of a 'General Comment' which reaffirms its commitment to children's play, emphasising the importance of Article 31 and clearly defining the responsibilities of governments. It also puts an emphasis on the role of unstructured or 'free' play which is facing increasing challenges.

Article 31 recognises;

- The right of children to rest and leisure, to play and recreational activities.
- To respect and promote the right of children to fully participate in cultural and artistic life.
- To provide appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

Children's right to play is further supported by Article 12 (right to be consulted), Article 13 (right to freedom of expression) and Article 15 (right to freedom of association and assembly)

### Aims of the strategy

The aim of the Lincolnshire play strategy is that

**Every child and young person in Lincolnshire has the right to safe, accessible and exciting places to play that reflects the needs of the local community and empowers them for life.**

Lincolnshire County Council's commitment to play in this strategy ensures that they and all agencies and organisations are working together under shared principles to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people in the County.

The strategy draws together lots of services in the County under common aims for play, will encourage them to adopt the strategy and recognise the contribution that quality play experiences can make to the broader aims of the Children and Young Peoples' Plan and its linked policies and strategies.

## **Barriers to play - challenges**

Survey evidence undertaken for the strategy in 2010 from the districts and the public nationally through the National Playday survey in 2013 is that there are still barriers to play for children;

- Concerns about traffic, stranger danger and bullying
- Intolerant neighbours
- Parents fear they will be judged if they let their children out to play unsupervised
- Lack of time to play for children because of other commitments such as clubs and activities
- Parents don't value open access unsupervised play
- The increasingly formal school day places pressure on free play
- Lack of inclusive play spaces
- Lack of dedicated community spaces
- Increasingly play provision has a cost such as holiday activities, child care

## **What are benefits of a Strategy for Play to Lincolnshire**

- To have a clear vision and understanding of why play matters and what good play provision looks like.
- Since coalition Lincolnshire is one of the few local authorities to continue to support and advocate for play through its play forum involving 7 districts and partners and the play strategy
- Decisions that affect children and young people's play opportunities such as transport, planning, parks and open spaces will work to the values and principles of the play strategy facilitating improved partnership working.
- To give children, young people and their families a voice in the kind of play services they would like to see.
- Recognise the important contribution play services make to the wider local agenda for children, young people, families and communities
- Prioritise play needs so as to take maximum advantage of funding opportunities when they become available
- Improve children and young people's opportunities for quality play experiences and opportunities to experience risk



## The meaning of 'play' and why it is important

The term 'play' within the Play Strategy describes what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons.

Playing is a primary need for children, closely linked to their innate need to express themselves, to explore, learn about and make sense of their world.

Play allows children to move naturally through each stage of their development. It helps them to learn what they cannot be taught.

The benefits of play derive from children choosing and doing it for themselves. The adult role in play provision is to enable rather than to direct.

The key characteristics of play are fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity. Together, these factors contribute to the enjoyment it produces and the consequent incentive to continue to play.

Older children and teenagers tend not to use the terms 'play' or 'playing' about themselves. But they have a similar need for places to go where they can enjoy their own informal recreational time and things to do that reflect their own social and cultural lives.

*"We don't say we are playing but I suppose any time we are just doing stuff we like is playing, hanging about with mates, kicking a ball about – anything really where we can do what we want."*



## Why play matters for children and young people - what they think

*“Play is what I do when everyone else has stopped telling me what to do”*

*“Play is fun. Play is making a mess and being with my friends. When it’s playtime I can run and be noisy instead of being quiet. I like messing about with my mates and no one telling me what to do.”*

*“Play makes me happy.”*

*“I get to play with awesome things and it takes the stress away if you are mardy after school”*

(Children in Lincolnshire attending play ranger sessions)

The scope of the Lincolnshire Play Strategy and this guidance document encompasses the informal, freely chosen leisure and recreational activities of all children and young people and does not prescribe age ranges on the understanding that all children need and like to play and benefit from doing so.

## Definition of playwork - how can adults make Play better

Playwork is the provision by adults of an environment and opportunities that enable children and young people to engage in play. These opportunities support and enhance social, physical, intellectual, cultural, creative and emotional development.

A common misconception is that playwork is easy, unskilled work. Playwork is a complex discipline requiring highly skilled workers who need to be trained.

Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. They need to balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.





## **The values and principles that inform Lincolnshire's decisions about play**

Children and young people must be central to the process and their needs, opinions and reactions taken into account.

There must be consultation and development at all stages and children and young people must see the connection between our policies and what is actually going to happen in practice.

Children and young people's control of their own play activity is a crucial factor in enriching their experience and enhancing their development. Play provision will be based on the principle of empowering children and increasing their choices.

Play empowers children and young people; it affirms and supports their right to make choices, allowing them to discover their own solutions and to develop at their own pace.

All children and young people have a right to be able to have access to play environments that are challenging but safe.

Play should offer children and young people opportunities to extend their exploration and understanding of the wider world and therefore physical, social and cultural settings beyond their immediate experience.

Adults and children involved in play should always promote equality of opportunity and access for all children and young people and seek the development of anti-discriminatory practice and positive attitudes to those who are disadvantaged.

Play opportunities should always be provided within the current legislative framework relevant to children and young people's rights, their health, safety and well being.

### **Free play**

There are many types of Play Provision both supervised and unsupervised. The focus of this Strategy is "Free" play. The Play Partnership believes that the best Play opportunities are free to access, free of charge and most important of all freely chosen

### **Where does play take place?**

Play does not just occur in designated play areas and specific clubs or schemes. Play can and does happen almost anywhere that children and young people have the free time to choose their own activities. Play happens on street corners, school playing fields, homes, gardens, grass verges, afterschool clubs, youth clubs, parks, woods, town centres and in fact almost anywhere children and young people have space and freedom to Play. Play takes place on journeys between locations and is not just restricted to designated areas.

## Why play is vital to our children and young people – the case for Play

### What do we mean by all children?

We believe that all children have the same fundamental right to quality play opportunities regardless of culture, ethnic background, disability, learning difficulties, gender and social/economic circumstances. We also recognise the rights of children who are looked after and young carers, children who may be fulfilling the role of a carer in their family. When we talk about all children we mean that all children will be listened to and involved in the planning of play opportunities that meet their individual needs.

### Diversity

Increasing diversity in the County makes it essential that the Play Strategy meets the needs of all children. By making sure that key agencies are part of the partnership we constantly strive to address the needs of all children, including those who may be hard to reach. Equality of Play for all children is a core belief of the Play Partnership. The Play Strategy strives at all time to adhere to the Social Model of Disability which means that disabled children and young people do not have a disability; rather they are disabled by society's failure to provide for their individual needs.



## **The value and significance of play for children and young people**

The Lincolnshire Children & Young People's Plan 2013- 2016 is the single, overarching strategic plan for all services which directly support children and young people in the county of Lincolnshire.

The plan shows how the local authority will work with all of their relevant partners collaboratively and in partnership, to improve the Outcomes and the Wellbeing of every child, young person and family in Lincolnshire.

The Children & Young People's Plan 4 strategic outcomes are

- Children and Young People are healthy and safe
- Children and Young People develop to their potential in their Early Years and are ready for school
- Children and Young People learn and achieve
- Children and Young People are ready for adult life

The delivery of play and youth services across the county contributes towards these outcomes. Play is fundamental to these areas contributing to children and young peoples' development in complex and comprehensive ways.

### **Children and young people are healthy**

Childhood obesity at Year 6 (aged 10 to 11) in Lincolnshire is increasing by 1% year on year. This mirrors the trend across the East Midlands and England.

Walking and playing provide children with more physical activity than most other events. And encouraging children to be out of the house will increase their physical activity<sup>1</sup>. Play is recognised in a number of DOH reports<sup>2</sup> for the contribution it makes to improving children's fitness, health and emotional well-being. It also develops essential life skills such as teamwork and co-ordination, providing a basis for participation in sport and a diversionary activity for young people from alcohol and drugs.

### **Children and young people are safe**

Play is a key element in children learning to appreciate, assess and take calculated risks, which is fundamental to the development of confidence and abilities in childhood. Children seek out opportunities for risk-taking and it is the responsibility of play provisions to respond with exciting and stimulating environments that balance risks appropriately<sup>3</sup>. Good play provision can reduce anti-social behaviour and support safer neighbourhoods.

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1 Mackett Roger Professor 2004, Making children's lives more active Centre for Transport Studies University College London (publisher) 2004

2 Department of Health Choosing health ; making health choices easier, Stationary Office (publisher) 2004

3 National Playing Fields Association, Children's Play Council, Playlink 2000 Best Play Department For Culture Media and Sport 2000

## **Children and young people develop to their potential in early years and are ready for school.**

Playing is fundamental to the way babies and young children explore their new environment and learn about the world and themselves. Play helps them to learn and develop the physical, social, and emotional and problem solving skills through doing and talking which is how they learn to think. Through creative play opportunities they learn how to express themselves and crucially play has a significant role in building their communication and helping them to develop their social skills with other children and adults, develop empathy, altruism and how they cope with stress.

The Early Years Foundation Stage EYFS guidance is the framework that childcare providers use as a tool to ensure that children from birth to five years are developing and learning to their full potential.

The framework identifies Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Communication and Language and Physical Development as the 3 prime areas. These are seen as the essential foundations for healthy development and future learning.

Providers must also support children in 4 specific areas: literacy, mathematics, expressive arts and design and understanding the world through which the Prime areas are strengthened and applied.

Playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically are highlighted in the EYFS as 3 characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The EYFS continues to recognise “the central importance of play in children’s learning” and that children need to be introduced to formal learning in their foundation years in a way and at a time appropriate to their individual level of development.”

## **Children and young people learn and achieve**

Learning through play contributes to problem solving, language and literacy skills and children develop self-esteem and a positive outlook on life through the enjoyment of play.

Play complements schooling by providing an opportunity for children and young people to review, absorb and give personal meaning to what they learn in formal education settings. All too often the emphasis has been on the achieving aspect of this outcome whereas play focuses on the enjoyment factor with achievement being a secondary benefit. Outcomes based on the enjoyment and quality of experience is almost universally fulfilled by positive play experiences.

Research indicates that over-formalised approaches to teaching and learning can cause disaffection with learning. Play must be present in children’s school life, to enable them to define their own goals and interests, decide what is success or failure and pursue those goals in their own way. Children’s enjoyment through play is linked to the control and choice they are able to exercise

## **Children and young people are ready for adult life**

Play empowers children and young people with community skills and confidence to participate in decision making around play services and delivery and is relevant for school councils, youth forums and youth parliament and peer mentoring schemes in schools.

Play is a primary factor in a child's self-esteem which can directly affect their ability to achieve economic well-being in later life. Also through play basic social inclusion and economic skills are learnt.



### **Why play matters for families and communities**

There is growing awareness by parents of the importance of play and the need for better access to play opportunities, particularly outdoors. The National Playday survey 2011 and the Rethinking Childhood survey evidence growing parental concern about children's health, well being and quality of life.

Work in Lincolnshire with Waterloo housing (formerly New Linx Housing Association) is a good case study example of how play supports communities.

- Families benefit from healthier, happier children
- Promotes community cohesion and pride in the community
- Diversions and positive activities in the holidays
- Makes children more visible in public spaces and more likely to use them where there is good play provision
- Brings children and parents and community members together to play
- Promotes community safety and supports self-reliance
- More opportunities for them to be engaged in conversations about local services such as children's centres and for these providers to access new users to support better health and wellbeing
- Promotes opportunities for volunteering, learning and training
- Brings the community together to access funding for play provision

88% of parents say that children playing out helps families to get to know each other in the community

81% of adults believe that children playing outside helps improve community spirit

(Play England Playful Communities)

***'Every parent understands the importance of a secure environment for their children. Spaces where they can play...where different generations can meet, binding the community together.'***

(Nick Clegg, 2010)





## What has informed this plan?

### The need for a revised strategy

There has been a play strategy for Lincolnshire since 2006 and each of the 7 districts has also had their own play policies and strategic aims and objectives for play.

Play developments across the County were supported through play pathfinder money to build 22 new and exciting play sites and many free local and accessible play opportunities supported through the Big Lottery Fund through the children's play initiative.

Since the coalition government took office in 2010 the comprehensive spending review and subsequent austerity reforms have dramatically affected the government policy and resourcing of play.

The 10 year Big Lottery play programme strategy led by Play England to make neighborhoods, streets and green spaces safer and more suited for children's healthy outdoor play has been dropped.

Money previously ring-fenced for extended services has been given back to schools.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has been rebranded as the Department for Education (DfE), emphasis has shifted to educational achievement and the terminology around the Every Child Matters agenda and 'the five outcomes' has changed to "help children achieve more"

This makes for challenging times for children's play and play related services. The need for a revised strategy is therefore necessary to underpin the county's clear commitment to play and its contribution to deliver children, family and community services.

### Positive outcomes to date

In 2009 Lincolnshire received £1,136,805 of Playbuilder funding delivering 29 new and significantly improved play sites.<sup>4</sup>

£1,548,421 funding was also received from the Big Lottery's children's play initiative programme to fund free, open access play opportunities for children and young people across the county. Other sources of revenue for play came through WREN, Section 106, community grants, PCT and Youth Capital Fund.

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<sup>4</sup> *The Play Strategy World Class Places (HMG, 2009)* set out the former Government's vision for improving quality of place. It emphasised the importance of green infrastructure and advocated the benefits of outdoor play and everyday interaction with nature, setting out expectations on this for public and open space planning and housing development backed by £235,000,000 of dedicated investment for local play facilities. Funding was allocated through the BIG lottery programme to 30 play pathfinders and 122 play builder authorities in England. by 2011 there was 3000 new or refurbished free play areas and at least 30 fully staffed adventure playgrounds or play parks.

Lincolnshire has a Children and Young People's Plan for 2013–2016. This identifies commitments to enhance aspiration and well-being so that every child in every part of the County can achieve their potential and play can contribute to the outcomes.

The Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) reflect these commitments within plans for spatial and community development and the infrastructure that supports it.

They enable children and their families to take an active role in the development of local play provision. The design of neighbourhoods is relevant to local councils' duty to cooperate with partners and across services, and the duty to involve and empower communities.

The Lincolnshire Play forum partnership continues to run and all 7 districts are members supporting play and play initiatives across the whole County at district, town and village levels. It also includes voluntary organisations.

## **The Lincolnshire Play Forum**

In order to really make a difference to children and young people's lives, all 7 districts and several other organisations in Lincolnshire have joined forces to create the Lincolnshire Play Forum. These organisations share a single common goal of making life better for the children and young people of Lincolnshire. The creation of the Lincolnshire Play Forum has been a positive way of supporting and sharing play information, helping to develop policy in a non-coercive and sustainable way.

The work of the group since coalition continues. Whilst the climate is now radically different and play is polarized and isolated, we are encouraged that the forum is still engaged with the Government and the officers who work for Government. Our links through other regional associations and Play England remain pivotal in shaping play policy and direction nationally. The group is also not limited to its current members. Anyone who shares the common goals and agrees to the statements and policies within this document is welcome to join the group and help move Play forward in Lincolnshire

## **List of Play Partnership Organisations**

Active Nation  
Boston Borough Council  
Children's Links  
City of Lincoln Council  
Community Links  
East Lindsey District Council  
Family Places  
Gainsborough Adventure Playground Association  
Hartsholme Cricket Club  
Home Start  
Leisure Connection  
Lincolnshire County Council  
Lincolnshire Sports Partnership  
NHS Lincolnshire  
New Linx Housing Association  
North Kesteven District Council  
South Holland District Council

South Kesteven District Council  
West Lindsey District Council

## **Play policy context - National**

Nick Hurd MP<sup>5</sup> at the Cabinet Office has taken a personal interest in the play sector. He recognizes the cross cutting nature of play and the contribution it could make to the development and resilience of children, he sees the role of play bringing communities together and raising the wellbeing of families and their children. The Play Return – a review of the wider impact of play initiatives written by Tim Gill 2014 has been submitted to Nick Hurd with empirical evidence of play's relevance to the government's current policies and goals.

Play England was part of the Free Time Consortium (FTC), as are Children's Links on behalf of Lincolnshire; a collective of local and specialist organisations working together to increase freedom to play successfully. With Social Action Fund money from the Cabinet Office they have created 1,200,000 million play opportunities, and recruited over 47,000 volunteers.

Projects have seen children and young people who are healthier and more active, families that feel more confident to let their children play out and communities that value play.

## **Children's Act 2004**

This requirement to support children's play and young people's recreation was underpinned by Section 10 of the Children Act 2004, which placed a duty on the local authority and their partners to cooperate to improve outcomes for children and young people through the *Every Child Matters* outcomes framework

The role of Children's Commissioner currently Maggie Atkinson, was created by the Children Act 2004 and is there to promote the views of children and young people.

Initiatives such as National Take Over Day and the comments on article 31 of the UN Convention for Children's Rights ensure that adults listen to children and uphold young people's rights to play and recreation as being essential to children's health and well-being.

## **Childcare Act 2006**

The Childcare Act 2006 is the first ever act to be exclusively concerned with early years and childcare. Measures in the act formalise the important strategic role local authorities play through a set of new duties. These duties require authorities to:

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5 Conservative, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Charities, Social Enterprise and Volunteering at the Cabinet Office The play return a review of the wider impact of play written by Tim Gill and commissioned by The children's play policy forum May 2104.

- Improve wellbeing outcomes for all pre-school children and reduce inequalities in these outcomes
- Secure sufficient childcare for working parents
- Provide a better parental information service
- Support childcare providers with better information advice and training

The act reformed and simplified early years regulation and inspection arrangements, providing for a new integrated education and care quality framework for pre-school children and also for the new Ofsted Childcare Register.

## **Play and health**

Play is one of the most effective ways to keep children active and healthy, and research provides convincing evidence of the benefits of play for mental health. Play is an important part of the children and young people's health strategy, *Healthy lives, brighter futures*.

Tackling obesity is a national priority in the NHS. The cross-government strategy *Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives* and the Department of Health guidance, *Be Active, Be Healthy* promote the importance of play in children's lives.

*Play4Life* training courses in Lincolnshire support parents, carers and volunteers with children aged 0-5 years on how to play both indoors and outdoors, creating games and resources at home, low cost play and local activities, including advice on healthy eating and nutrition.

## **Play and the environment**

Children being visible in neighborhoods are an indicator for stronger communities and support healthier lifestyles for families.

Statutory guidance through the local authority transport plan promotes the integration of transport with wider corporate priorities at a local level such as encouraging active lifestyles and improving road safety. It gives a high priority to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and users of public spaces and supports more child-friendly travel for safe routes to school and play spaces.

The culture of seeing streets simply as a means of providing for traffic, to one of emphasizing their community and place function has been evident through lowering speed limits and street play schemes that close off streets to provide improved play opportunities for children particularly in urban high density areas.

The strategy recognizes that children want to play "freely" in all kinds of spaces that are not always designated for play. This includes woods, forest play and natural play and other assets some have been mapped and identified as spaces and opportunities for play in district council strategies.

## Planning and housing policy guidance

National planning guidance explicitly recognizes the need for dedicated outdoor space for play and recreation. Local authorities assess the needs and opportunities for different types of open space and recreational facilities, including play space for children. Section 106 interest has been used more judiciously to develop neighborhood play areas rather than very local play areas across Lincolnshire where it can be match funded to benefit the most people.

In Lincolnshire, Play forum members are using guidance from Design for Play which sets out the principles for creating imaginative, innovative, and stimulating play spaces. The criteria suggest what good play spaces might look like and how they can be evaluated.

### **Quality play provision should provide opportunities for:**

#### **A varied and interesting physical environment**

Examples: Things at different levels, spaces of different sizes, places to hide, trees and bushes as well as things that have been made, places to inspire mystery and imagination.

#### **Challenge in relation to the physical environment**

Examples: activities which test the limits of capabilities, rough and tumble, sports and games, chase.

#### **Playing with the natural elements - earth, water, fire, air**

Examples: campfires, digging, playing snowballs, flying kites.

#### **Movement - e.g. running, jumping, rolling, climbing, balancing**

Examples: beams and ropes, soft mats, bike riding, juggling equipment, ladders, space

#### **Manipulating natural and fabricated materials**

Examples: materials for art, cooking, making and mending of all kinds; building dens; making concoctions; using tools; access to bits and pieces of all kinds.

#### **Stimulation of the five senses**

Examples: music making, places where shouting is fine, quiet places, different colours and shapes, dark and bright spaces, cooking on a campfire, rotting leaves, a range of food and drink, objects that are soft, prickly, flexible, large and small.

#### **Experiencing change in the natural and built environment**

Examples: experiencing the seasons through access to the outdoor environment; opportunities to take part in building, demolishing, or transforming the environment.

#### **Social interactions**

Examples: being able to choose whether and when to play alone or with others, to negotiate, co-operate, compete and resolve conflicts. Being able to interact with individuals and groups of different ages, abilities, interests, gender, ethnicity and culture.

#### **Playing with identity**

Examples: dressing up, role play, performing, taking on different kinds of responsibility.

#### **Experiencing a range of emotions**

Examples: opportunities to be powerful/powerless, scared/confident, liked/disliked, in/out of control, brave/cowardly.



### **Safe communities and community engagement**

Sustainable play spaces and community action are the way forward since the comprehensive spending review and how communities can be given real control over local decisions and services. The duty on local councils to involve local people in key decisions has encouraged authorities to embed a culture of engagement, including when regenerating or providing new play space. The strategy recognises the support needed by communities from local government and the voluntary sector for advice, training and guidance to provide play opportunities in neighborhoods around fundraising and volunteering.

Underpinning the Play Strategy is a vision of community empowerment whereby local children, young people, families and residents are integral to the shaping, quality and long-term future of play provision. Whenever communities are asked about their levels of satisfaction with their neighborhoods, better play and recreational opportunities for children and young people are a consistently strong priority

### **Workforce development**

Fear of strangers, anti-social behavior and bullying are cited as key reasons for children not playing outside. Staffed play provision and volunteer supervision can allay many of these concerns. The DCSF 2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy describes playworkers as an important part of the children's workforce. The Lincolnshire play strategy supports the development of knowledge and skills within the wider workforce such as local planners and highways officers to enable children's play in public spaces.



## Health and safety - risk benefit and play

Children naturally seek out risk in their play. It is how they test themselves as they grow up and learn to develop confidence, self-reliance and trust in their abilities to manage challenging, scary or dangerous situations.

Play is different to a work based setting but still comes under Health and safety laws and regulations which are sometimes presented as a reason why certain play and leisure activities undertaken by children and young people should be discouraged.

Risk taking is an essential feature of play provision and the environments which children spend time playing in aim to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risk as part of a stimulating, challenging and controlled play environment .

Exposure to some degree of risk may be of benefit because it satisfies a basic human need and gives children the chance to learn about risk and consequences in a controlled environment. Increasingly children's lives have become more restricted and controlled. Their opportunities to explore their neighbourhoods on their own have decreased noticeably. They spend more time under adult supervision at home, in school and on supervised activities. They are less exposed to opportunities for independent free play than previous generations who took this for granted.

In her recent report on child health, the Chief Medical Officer described building resilience as an invaluable early intervention: '**By exposing young people to low doses of challenges, in safe and supported environments, we strengthen their ability to act effectively later in life**'.<sup>6</sup>

For many children playgrounds are becoming one of the few places they can experience risk and challenge. In providing play space and a play provision we aim to manage the balance between recognising the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.

In 2012 the HSE was tasked with The Play Safety Forum in promoting the recognition of an approach to risk management within children's play and leisure where risk and benefit are considered alongside each other in a risk benefit assessment. The guide shows how play providers can use an approach to risk assessment that balances the benefits of an activity with any inherent risk, thus fully taking into account and encouraging the benefits to children and young people of challenging play experiences.

Providers should strike a balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play. It is not about eliminating risk. Nor is it about complicated methods of calculating risks or benefits. In essence play is a safe and beneficial activity. Sensible adult judgements are all that is generally required to derive the best benefits from children whilst ensuring that they are not exposed to unnecessary risk (joint HSE play safety forum high level statement )

See index for full details of the statement.

The strategy adopts the play safety forums managing risk in play provision guidance.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chief-medical-officers-annual-report-2012-our-children-deserve-better-prevention-pays/cmoh-annual-report-2012-our-children-deserve-better-cmos-summary-as-a-web-page>



## 0-5 services

Play is central to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for all early years providers working with children aged from birth to 5 years. The EYFS acknowledges that young children learn best through play in a safe environment, with encouragement and support from parents and practitioners. Lincolnshire's 48 children's centres have a key role in ensuring local parents and carers know about local play opportunities. As hubs of local services, they are well placed to link with local play providers or to develop additional free play provision themselves. Children's centre services vary according to location and need with all centres offering activities for families, carers and children and up to 18.

## 5-11 services

The *Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum* by Sir Jim Rose, highlighted the importance of play extending and building upon the active, play-based learning of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) across the transition to primary education, especially into Key Stage 1. Play based learning particularly supports children who find formal learning and testing challenging. The school day should allow time for children to relax and play freely with their friends which also supports their physical and mental wellbeing. Young children learn best through play and, as they get older, play supports and enriches their learning. Children learn best if teaching is creative and enjoyable. In school, time and space for play and outdoor learning is as important as formal teaching. School grounds should be good places to play.

Opportunities for play are an important feature of after school provision as part of the varied menu of activities and the childcare elements of the core offer of services. The county's schools are using accredited outdoor learning programmes such as Outdoor play and learning (OPAL) and John Muir conservation awards to achieve this.

### 13-19 youth services

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires local authorities to secure sufficient educational and recreational leisure time activities for young people aged 13 to 19. *Aiming High for Young People 2007* the 10 year strategy to foster a more positive approach to young people across society and within communities with a focus on those most at risk. The emphasis is on increasing their participation in quality positive activities. Actively engaging children and young people in the design and development of their own play and recreational spaces, alongside local residents, can engender a greater sense of community and intergenerational tolerance and respect. Respecting and incorporating children's views results in more appropriate provision, helps them develop their skills and knowledge, and can help develop motivation and participation in society



## Local context

### How play links to local priorities and policies

#### Children and Young People's Plan 2013 – 2016

The Lincolnshire Children & Young People's Plan is the single, overarching strategic plan for all services which directly support children and young people in the county.

The vision is “that every child in every part of the County should achieve their potential”.  
Lincolnshire Council's Principles are:-

- Early Intervention and Prevention
  - Strong universal services, providing early action and intensive support to vulnerable children and young people
- Safeguarding and Best Start in Life
  - Ensuring children are safe in every environment
  - Encouraging community responsibility for safeguarding
- Aspiration and Well Being
  - Ensuring all those working with children champion the importance of aspiration
  - Develop self-esteem, self-belief and resilience in all children, young people and their families
- Learning and Achievement
  - All children being the best that they can be
  - Closing the gap between vulnerable groups and children living in disadvantaged communities
- Best Use of Resources
  - Integrating delivery with a focus on outcomes, life chances and opportunities
  - Effective use of resources to provide better services locally
  - Empower communities, creating opportunities for them to engage

#### Links to other Lincolnshire strategies

Sustainable Community Strategy

Local Area Agreements

District Local Strategic Partnerships

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013 – 2018

4<sup>th</sup> Lincolnshire Local Transport Plan

Cultural Strategy 2010 - 2015

Inspiration to participation – sport and physical activity strategy 2013-2017



## Play developments in Lincolnshire

See appendix for details of play developments since the last strategy.

## Issues identified in Lincolnshire relating to play

Key issues are

- Lack of opportunities for children with disabilities.
- If activities are charged the cost of them can be prohibitive for families.
- Funding and the reduced levels of government funding for play.
- Maintaining and sustaining play spaces.
- Lack of 'community' in some areas to work with
- Limited spatial opportunities in some areas
- Limited management resources
- Negative views of play by some residents
- Lack of coordination for many organisations delivering sport/play activities.



## **Current provision provided in Lincolnshire**

### **Fixed play**

Currently fixed play site numbers across the county by district are ; Boston 45, East Lindsey 51, North Kesteven 50 , South Holland 30, South Kesteven 68, Lincoln 28 ,West Lindsey <sup>7</sup> Community Lincs know of 180 community managed playing fields and play areas. These facilities are managed by a variety of community organisations from parish councils to local volunteers, village halls, RAF/MOD sites. A new survey in Sept 2014 will look to update these details.

### **Informal free play provision**

National play day is promoted, celebrated and recognised in the districts every year through the play forum group with free play activities organised to support families, children and young people in local communities.

Boston Borough Council, South Holland, North Kesteven and South Kesteven District Councils run holiday programmes of activities delivered through contractors across their districts that include free play opportunities and chances to get outdoors and get physical every year. In Boston children attending in 2012/13 were 5,915 rising to 8,000 in 2013/14.

Waterloo Housing ( formerly New Linx housing) and Children's Links have worked together since 2012 to deliver free play sessions with 2,000 children attending across 19 sites in East Lindsey in communities with high levels of deprivation and ensuring schemes are delivered for more people to access play provision on their doorstep.

Open spaces and parks are advertised and promoted by individual parishes and the destination play sites in parks and country parks on district websites and on the Play England mapping for play.

Informal spaces for play such as green areas and woodland play sites, picnic areas, orchards BMX tracks, are being mapped in Boston and North Kesteven and further identified through Community Lincs surveys.

### **Play strategies and forum groups**

The County Play forum group meets quarterly to raise the profile of and issues about play. Play strategies for District councils have been refreshed since 2012 for Lincoln, South Holland and Boston. In Lincoln this identified £935,000 of play area improvements and identified community aspiration around play.

North Kesteven will set out their play priorities linked to the strategy in Autumn 2014 Partnership NK Our Community priorities.

Revised standards for play have seen priority use for Section 106 money in Lincoln and South Kesteven.

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<sup>7</sup> Currently exact number unavailable but spread across 80 parishes in the district



Partnership working in Boston and South Holland developed a joint sports provision and open spaces assessment to better inform future planning policy.

Boston Borough Council hosts a play forum group that meets quarterly.

## **Play training**

Temporary play ranger posts have been created through the work of summer schemes and holiday activities. In East Lindsey in the last 5 years a total of 49 Play Rangers have been employed, they were provided with relevant training and guidance.

Positive play training is delivered to junior schools for lunchtime supervisors in Boston

Parent volunteers are trained to deliver play schemes in their communities in Lincoln, in 2014 RAF Scampton supported this with community funding.

The community initiative team at North Kesteven supports local communities with advice so that they can be more self-sufficient in providing for their leisure and play needs.

V card and Lincolnshire volunteer card are supporting volunteering

Since 2010 the Play For Life programme has delivered 45 courses with 324 parents attending and engaging 6,251 children in physical activity. There have been 1,843 activity sessions delivered at Children's Centres and 2,816 adults have further benefited from the course as a recipient of shared play ideas and activities.

## **Partnership working**

Partnerships across the districts have been built to meet increasing demand and needs for play services.

Play funding has been a catalyst for community development

Voluntary centre services and local parish councils are crucial partners in the development of play and leisure services.

Since Big Lottery Funding there has been a shift in thought about the criteria used to evaluate play spaces and the provision of play

## **Local partners and other organisations providing play**

Action for Children  
Children's Links – children's centre support, volunteer card, Play for Life, play  
Waterloo Housing  
Community Lincs  
Gainsborough Adventure Playground  
Freelance play providers



Draft

## Our vision and priorities

### Our vision for play in Lincolnshire

Every child and young person in Lincolnshire has the right to safe, accessible and exciting places to play that reflect the needs of the local community and empowers them for life.

### Our fundamental objectives for play

- 1 Raise the profile of good quality play
- 2 Develop partnerships to link play into all agendas
- 3 Create the opportunities for a range of local play for all children and young people

Profile	Partnerships	Product
<b>Objective 1</b>	<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>Objective 3</b>
<b>Raise the profile of play</b>  Play providers and commissioners know the value and benefits of play	<b>Develop partnerships to link play into all agendas</b>  Working to improve quality play provision and promote best practice	<b>Create the opportunities for a range of local play for all children and young people</b>  Working for accessible, challenging play environments and opportunities
<b>Objective 1a</b>	<b>Objective 2a</b>	<b>Objective 3a</b>
We communicate and promote our values and principles about play through the implementation of the strategy	Share resources to make play sustainable and appropriate to local needs	Add risk and challenge to children's play whilst maintaining safety
<b>Objective 1b</b>	<b>Objective 2b</b>	<b>Objective 3b</b>
We map play spaces and promote play services and provision so that we increase awareness of quality and the benefits of play	Promote quality play provision and use best play guidance when planning play spaces	Communities, children and young people have quality play provision that meets their needs in an inclusive way
<b>Objective 1c</b>	<b>Objective 2c</b>	<b>Objective 3c</b>
We consult and listen to children and young people's opinions when planning delivering and evaluating play environments.	We support qualified and trained staff and volunteers to provide quality play	Children's play in undesignated community spaces is recognised and accommodated by other users

**Objective 1 actions**

<b>Profile</b>	
<b>Objective 1 Raise the profile of play</b>	Play providers and commissioners know the value and benefits of play
<b>We communicate and promote our values and principles about play through the implementation of the strategy</b>	Play strategy is implemented through Children and Young Peoples Plan Play is integrated into the agendas of Local Strategic Partnerships The county-wide play policy is implemented through local area/district, specific action plans.
<b>We map play spaces and promote play services and provision so that we increase awareness of quality and benefits of play</b>	We keep updated a web page and play information service We support an annual national play day event in all 7 districts of the county We map play spaces that exist as open playable play spaces not just the swings and roundabouts We promote play spaces and services to parents We connect play into walking and cycling to school initiatives
<b>We consult and listen to children young people's opinions when planning delivering and evaluating play environments.</b>	Children and young peoples' views are included in decisions about new play spaces Children have a say in the play services they use

## Objective 2 Actions

<b>Partners</b>	
<b>Objective 2 Develop partnerships to link play into all agendas</b>	Working to improve quality play provision and promote best practice
<b>Share resources to make play sustainable and appropriate to local needs</b>	Sustain the county play infrastructure through the county play forum. Community groups both formal and informal know where to go for funding advice, expertise and training to support new play environments Identify funding streams that develop community led open access play provision
<b>Promote quality play provision use best play guidance when planning play spaces</b>	The impacts on play are considered when planning
<b>We support qualified and trained staff and volunteers to provide quality play</b>	Promote learning about play with parents through play 4 life Support school based play programmes inspire plus, legacy challenge, Opal Playwork training and qualifications are promoted Develop Community led open access play provision

**Objective 3 Actions**

<b>Product</b>	
<b>Objective 3 Create the opportunities for a range of local play for all children and young people</b>	Working for accessible, challenging play environments and opportunities
<b>Add risk and challenge to children's play whilst maintaining safety</b>	We evaluate play provision on value for money as well as its opportunity for risk and challenge
<b>Communities children and young people have quality play provision that meets their need in an inclusive way</b>	Promote open access play as a play provision in it own right Use best play provision guidance when planning play provision
<b>Children's play in undesignated community spaces is recognised and accommodated by other users</b>	Make public spaces playful in our planning



## Appendix

### Policy context local Lincolnshire districts information

#### Boston Borough Council

Achievements that have contributed to the county play strategy and progress since last strategy:

- 45 play sites fixed play – 10 district managed play parks, 2 country parks Witham Way and Wayside also local nature reserves.
- Open access- holiday play schemes , national play day initiatives
- Play support – advice to support play and improve play services
- Play partners – work with communities
- Delivered play training and qualifications
- Consulted and listened to children and young people and communities to ensure they have quality play provision that is fun
- Added risk and challenge to play

#### Vision for Play

- To support, deliver and promote play opportunities in Boston Borough. Increase participation in play activity for children and young people. Work in partnership with local, county, regional organisations to ensure effective delivery of play in Boston. Develop partnerships across the borough and build the capacity to meet increasing demand and needs.

#### Barriers

- Funding, resources

#### How is play communicated across the organisation

- Boston Play Forum meets every quarter to discuss play opportunities for the borough moving forward.
- Through the play providers 5915 children and young people attended various play opportunities in Boston borough in 12/13 increasing to 8000 in 13/14.
- This forum will continue to promote and deliver these opportunities and seek funding to improve play areas

#### What are future actions around play

- Ensuring a range of local play for all children and young people
- Build on partnerships to link play into other agendas
- Ensure qualified , trained staff and volunteers to provide quality play

## East Lindsey District Council

Achievements that have contributed to the county play strategy and progress since last strategy:

- Fixed play --children's play areas and public play spaces have been mapped through a village facilities survey in 2014 as part of the core strategy

The vision for the local plan for East Lindsey around growth and development.

- Play Builder funding was received to recondition and provide new facilities to 5 play sites across East Lindsey at Friskney, Wainfleet St Mary, Willoughby, Skegness and Ingoldmells.
- Play Rangers schemes that delivered free summer play schemes on the beaches of Mablethorpe and Skegness, delivering the scheme to 3182 young people and their families.
- Play Rangers delivered in 2012 and 2013 in partnership with New Linx Housing Trust and Children's Links. Delivered the scheme over 19 sites in 2012 attracting 1063 young people and 9 sites in 2013 seeing 897 pass through the scheme.
- Over the 5 years a total of 49 Play Rangers have been employed and trained in play.
- The Funk Bus ran to October 2012 with 5983 individuals using the service.
- Big Laughs & Fun Play Session delivered to rural areas across the district to young people and their families through Big Lottery Funding. The scheme was delivered during school holidays to over 500 young people during April 2008 – Summer 2010.
- Assistance from ELDC officers has been provided to local communities across the district linking to play provision to improve play services.
- Two Multi Use Games Areas were opened in Louth and Sutton on Sea. The project focused on delivering sports and play sessions in the two areas. The project employed two Leisure and Play Officers who were responsible for the schemes and focused on play across the district working in partnership with Children's Links and New Linx Housing Trust.
- Regular involvement in County Play Day.

Future actions around play

- Direct play provision is uncertain. In order to secure the delivery of culture, arts and leisure services arrangements are being made to transfer them to a Charitable Trust to provide the most sustainable long-term solution. A new non-profit distributing organisation (NPDO), company limited by guarantee with charitable status - A 'Charitable Trust' is currently being established in order to bid to provide those facilities, initiatives and services on the Council's behalf with a target transfer date of January 2015.

## City of Lincoln Council

Achievements that have contributed to the county play strategy and progress since last strategy:

- 28 fixed play sites and 4 formal parks and country parks
- Updated the Lincoln Strategy and GIS mapping in relation to fixed play opportunities
- A number of play events and sessions have been held at Hartsholme Country Park by the Park Rangers
- The City Council remains committed to deliver a 2<sup>nd</sup> skate park with an indicative budget of £200k
- A support and enable role is being developed in order to support community groups with aspirations to improve fixed play. Currently Sincil Bank/Queens Park.
- Engagement is always undertaken with all capital projects.

Vision for Play

- We aim to give a consistent, high quality, access to fixed play opportunities and work with community groups and partners where possible to support play.

Barriers

- Lack of 'community' in some areas to work with
- Limited spatial opportunities in some areas
- Funding
- Other priorities/limited management resources
- Negative views of play by some residents
- Lack of coordination for many organisations delivering sport/play activities in Lincoln

How is play communicated across the organisation

- Play is split operationally and developmentally between Community and Recreation Services
- Some engagement with Neighbourhood groups/boards but this is inconsistent

What are future actions around play

- A play opportunities website on a county basis with quality branding and initial setup and continued support for update would be beneficial

## South Kesteven District Council

Achievements that have contributed to the county play strategy and progress since last strategy:

- Fixed play – 2 new play areas, 1 new skate park, 2 new MUGAs, 12 improved play areas, 4 formal parks.
- Open access- annual publication of summer activity guides for Bourne, Stamford, Deepings and Grantham. These offer free advertising for all activities, clubs and play schemes and are distributed free to every child in the district.
- Open spaces and parks are advertised and promoted through SKDC website.
- Play support – SKDC is a consultee for play requirements on all planning applications of 10 dwellings and above.
- Commissioned PPG17 study “A study of open space, sport and recreation in South Kesteven District – 2009”
- Play partners – work with clubs, leisure centres, Inspire+, Children’s Links, LCC, youth clubs, schools, developers to help promote, develop and facilitate play opportunities in the district. supported through Play4Life

### Vision for Play

- We believe that every Child and Young Person in South Kesteven has the right to be able to play and be given every opportunity to do so in an inclusive way and in a safe and stimulating environment without compromising their enjoyment and fun.

### Barriers

- Lack of opportunities for children with disabilities
- Cost of activities can be prohibitive
- Reduced levels of government funding for play

### How is play communicated across the organisation

- Funding for fixed play is very much focussed on securing provision and funding through new development and S106 contributions.
- Delivery of play opportunities is focussed on working with partners to help coordinate and facilitate activities across the district.

### What are future actions around play

- Conduct regular consultations with young people when planning new play areas and organising holiday activity provision.
- Use Play England principles for designing new play spaces.
- Have included more challenging activities as part of holiday programme such as paintball, ice skating, climbing wall, skate boarding etc.
- Promote a variety of activities and try to ensure play spaces are inclusive to full range of young people,
- On-going work to try and ensure maximum potential is achieved through building effective partnerships.
- Work with CVS, Children’s Links, LSP to try and ensure training opportunities are maximised

## South Holland District Council

Achievements that have contributed to the county play strategy and progress since last strategy:

- Ran a 3 year (starting in April 2008) Play Ranger project across the district providing mobile play provision for children aged 5 to 15 years, working with 1800 children and young people.
- Developed a branded 'Summer Fun' holiday programme, in partnership with providers of varied cultural/healthy activity opportunities, which is marketed to every individual child in the district through a brochure.
- Developed, supported and delivered events and festivals in the district such as the Flower Parade, Pumpkin Festival, Food Festival, Youth Takeover, the annual Ayscoughfee Hall & Gardens events programme, South Holland Arts Development programme and the Transported Arts project events programme.
- Supported organisations and community groups with advice and guidance in accessing smaller grants for play projects and events.
- Maintained and managed its 30 play areas across the district.
- Supported the Improving the Donington Environment for All organisation to develop a Play Area in Donington's Flinders Park.
- Supported Holbeach St Marks Village Hall Committee to develop a Multi Use Games Area in the village.
- Worked in partnership with the Fulney Field Supporters Group and the Extreme Spalding youth group to develop and deliver 'The Bloc', a street scene themed multi wheeled/skate park on Spalding's Fulney Field.
- Worked in partnership with the local community to develop a scheme for a new zoned play/teen area on the Monkshouse Playing Field in Spalding.
- Supported the local community to work towards schemes for new teen areas on the Hall Hill Road open space and Fishpond Lane Playing Field in Holbeach.
- Redeveloped and updated the Ayscoughfee Hall Gardens Play Area and incorporated an additional open space for informal play and events.
- Worked in partnership with Boston Borough Council to develop a joint Sports Provision & Open Spaces Assessment to better inform future Planning Policy development for play through the South East Lincs Joint Strategic Planning Committee.
- Review and update the District Council's own Play Policy periodically

### Vision for Play

- Increasingly looking at play meeting the health and healthy activity agenda and linking it strategically to health and well being networks looking at community self sufficiency .

### Barriers

- Upcoming review of the play service linked into policy reviews around local development plan and political uncertainty for 2015.
- Reduced levels of government funding for play
- Parish play provision reduces council influence to an advisory role so good inclusive play provision is dependant on staffing to support.

How is play communicated across the organisation

- Funding for fixed play is very much focussed on securing provision and funding through new development and S106 contributions.
- Delivery of play opportunities is focussed on working with partners to help coordinate and facilitate activities across the district.

What are future actions around play

- Update a review of current play strategy 2015
- Provision of play using section 106
- Review and rationale play areas

Draft



## North Kesteven District Council

Achievements that have contributed to the county play strategy and progress since last strategy:

- An audit of play spaces has been carried out in 2014. This updates the data on fixed play spaces that are parish owned and recognises other spaces that accommodate the different types of play. There are;
- 15 wooded areas, 50 green areas, 50 play areas and parks, 13 shelters, 9 skate parks, 10 MUGAS.
- The full audit also includes the open access free play areas from sports pitches, BMX tracks, picnic areas, ponds, orchards disused spaces to football pitches.
- 1Life manage Little Darters, an outdoor children's play area at Whisby Natural World a specialist nature park.
- Youth Outreach Development Manager in post since May 2008 to run and manage the NK Outreach department who deliver play, sports opportunities across North Kesteven.
- Extreme NK project across the District since 2006 to present.
- This delivers a mobile climbing wall, mobile half pipe, medium skate park and mobile parkour equipment, which has been used by children and young people across the district at numerous free events.
- Have also had a mobile climbing wall open to the public but due to be decommissioned by end of 2014.
- Set up a community initiatives team that support communities to develop opportunities for children and young people. The team offers advice and guidance to develop community activities including play facilities and are currently supporting development of a skate park and 2 play areas.
- Deliver summer and winter programmes of free family days in the holidays concentrating on rural villages with the local children's partnership which includes playwork.
- Arts NK team deliver dance, have an aerial rig and performing arts programmes. There are funded project based initiatives that support local communities and some free opportunities to engage with the arts.
- Successfully secured funding from the Lottery, 1Life and NKDC for "The POD" a mobile play vehicle in 2009 which provides free inclusive play opportunities for 0-16 year olds in Rural communities across the district and currently until Autumn 2014.

### Vision for Play

- Integrated play as part of PartnershipNK under Our Communities priorities - to promote the sustainability, wellbeing, safety and health of communities in North Kesteven.

### Barriers

- Funding
- Officer time required to support funding bids, develop plan and consultation to support communities.

### How is play communicated across the organisation

- Through Partnership NK and the local children partnership group

What are future actions around play

- Developing a play action plan with a set of priorities for play owned by Our communities group for 2014 that links to the county play strategy.
- Appendix in action plan details the 2014 parish council full audit of play made available through partnership NK web site.  
The play pod mobile pay vehicle aims to continue a service after revenue funding ceases in what form is yet to be determined.

Draft

## West Lindsey District Council

Achievements that have contributed to the county play strategy and progress since last strategy:

- West Lindsey stock of fixed play has been transferred over between the 80 parish councils. As part of Big Lottery funding this included 5 new play areas.
- Play builder funding acted as a catalyst for areas in need of new activities and to develop the urban fringe. It developed a social club in Newtoft and the development of play and sporting opportunities in Brookenby.

Vision for Play

- As WLDC do not own or manage any play facilities, there are limits on what can be achieved. However a number of services, particularly the Localism service, do liaise and work with Lincolnshire County Council Youth Service and organisations within the voluntary and community sector to ensure positive activities for young people which is high on the agenda
- West Lindsey District Council gives grant funding to GAPA Gainsborough adventure playground

How is play communicated across the organisation

- Play is not separated into a single vision but tied into the localism service priorities
  1. Supporting Community Action
  2. Focus on Priority Areas
  3. Area Working
  4. Supporting Democracy
  5. Utilising Technology/Social Media
  6. Community Funds
  7. Voluntary sector and volunteering

What are future actions around play

- Continue to work closely with voluntary and community sector and LCC Youth Services

## Other organisations providing play in the county

### Community Lincs

Community Lincs is the rural community council for Lincolnshire. It is independent and is part of RCAN (Rural Community Action Network). This is the collective name for the 38 rural community councils throughout England, their eight regional bodies and their national umbrella ACRE (action with communities in rural England)

Achievements that have contributed to the county play strategy and progress since last strategy:

- Fixed play – worked with voluntary play area committees to develop projects to refurbish or install a variety of play equipment.
- Play support – worked with voluntary play area committees to develop projects to refurbish or install a variety of play areas. In Lincolnshire there are community managed 180 playing fields and play areas.
- Provided advice, information and support to voluntary community groups, e.g. community building and playing field managers, and to town and parish councils involved in the provision of rural play and green spaces. Advised over 150 play area and playing field committees over the past 6 years on topics such as: Funding, new play area development, safer surfacing, annual inspections, BMX track funding, skate park funding, CCTV, consulting with the community, governance, dealing with dog mess, hire charges, lease negotiations, maintenance costs, repairing equipment, regular inspections, insurance
- 2013 survey undertaken to find about facilities across the county and ascertain support required by management committees providing play in their communities.
- Training and qualifications
- 2 annual training sessions per year with the support of RoSPA on the topic of Volunteer Routine Playground Inspections.

### Vision for Play

- Community Lincs provides an advisory service to playing field managers in rural Lincolnshire with a comprehensive database listing of who the managers of play facilities are.
- The service recognises that unlike urban play provision rural areas are almost entirely reliant upon volunteers to provide and maintain play facilities and recreational green space.

### Barriers

- We know there is potential for playing fields use in the county; however we find it is difficult for volunteer committees to give the time and commitment required to improve the use of facilities.
- Raising the much needed funds to manage and maintain facilities. .

### How is play communicated across the organisation

- Community Lincs ensure that committees who want to improve their facilities engage fully with the community of all ages and then focus more on the age group they are targeting with their project. Not only does this help the committee understand the

needs of children and young people to help inform the right facilities, but it also proves the need to funders

- Adding risk and challenge to play through work with committees to consider a wide range of equipment and give examples of other play areas where equipment that challenges children is considered
- We encourage committees to think about all age groups when developing play facilities

What are future actions around play

- 2014 survey underway to find out about other sources of advice, support and ideas for use of these facilities by other organisations.

### **Action for Children**

Disability Lincolnshire is an Action for Children project which has been delivering services to disabled children, young people and their families in Lincolnshire since 1988. It supports local children and young people with a wide range of disabilities up until 25 years of age. They also work with children with more complex needs who are likely to need support in their day to day activities and aim to give children and young people the opportunity to be involved in a variety of group activities.

They provide short break activity clubs for 5- 19 year olds across the 7 districts these include monthly after school clubs, holiday activity clubs, youth and community groups. The Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board consists of a group of young people aged between 13 and 25. They act as a consultative group for Lincolnshire County Council (LSTB) and regularly attend the Lincolnshire Transitions Service Governance Board at County Hall, Lincoln. The Shadow Board also take part in interview panels for staff both at Action for Children and the County Council, take part in the annual Children's Commissioners Take Over Day and join in at all sorts of other events.

### **Children's Centres**

Lincolnshire's 48 children's centres provide a wide range of activities and services at each of their sites all centres offer child and family health services and advice and support for families', childcare and early education training and employment advice and outreach services to children and families not attending the centre.

Additional services relevant to play may include parent and toddler groups, baby massage sessions, messy play sessions, toy libraries and sensory rooms. Holiday activities in some children's centres across the district enable family play activities above 5 years old and up to early teens.

### **Children's Links**

Children's Links provide play sessions that support parents in promoting their children's development and learning. Activities include family groups and holiday activities in east Lindsey and West Lindsey. Parents are able to discover the joy of playing with their children, not only for the child but also for the parents. They are able to learn how these play opportunities facilitate their children in learning and developing new skills, the child's imagination and also communication and language.

Individual and group talk time with parents allows for discussions around various issues such as the benefits of interacting with their children, strategies for supporting their child's development and discovering their needs and requirements.

Children's Links play team provide a range of play services from direct delivery to training. They currently host the county play forum group.

They currently operate open access play schemes in East Lindsey in partnership with Waterloo housing. With Lincolnshire County Council Targeted Youth Service they run a positive activity programme for young people, that include holiday activities for families and young people, teen activity days in the holidays the John Muir environmental award, volunteering and mentoring.

Other play projects provide more specialised activities such as woodland play in schools and inset and outdoor environmental training in early year's provision.

Children's Links work within HMP prisons and the Immigration Removal Centre Morton Hall making family visit days more "family friendly" by planning and providing activities at the visit days and training prison staff to help them make the days more play orientated. They have run parenting courses for prisoners to help them adjust back into family life on release.

Children's Links deliver a comprehensive range of play training in the County including NVQs and apprenticeships and have delivered workshops at National and International conferences to promote play.

### **Gainsborough Adventure Playground Association (GAPA)**

Gainsborough Adventure Playground (GAPA) is a unique playground that offers open access play opportunities in Lincolnshire. This play provision is an example of open access free unstructured play. GAPA provides a programme of open access after school, Saturday morning and holiday sessions for children and young people aged 5-14 years old. Child-led play experiences both in and out doors in all types of weather are encouraged by staff who offer support for children to try new experiences, gain confidence, take risk and push boundaries. GAPA have a purpose built building and large outdoor grounds with wooded areas, fixed equipment, garden areas and is Lincolnshire's only adventure playground. GAPA also caters for 0-4 years offering a nursery and playgroup including a range of activities for parents to bring their children along to stay and play.

The service is funded through many grants, service level agreements and donations. West Lindsey District council and Lincolnshire County Council continue to fund the service and they also apply for and receive grants and donations from funding bodies, charitable trusts, and donations from the local business community.

### **Waterloo Housing**

Waterloo Housing Association (previously New Linx Housing Trust) continues to work with Children's Links to provide play activities throughout the school summer holidays.

This enables open access free play service in the summer holidays in locations across East Lindsey, where the majority of their housing stock is concentrated. This includes regular weekly sessions, together with a range of "one-off" sessions extending Play Rangers into communities which have not previously benefitted.

Two of New Linx 'Residents' Associations – Winthorpe Youth and Residents' Association (WYRA) and Queen's Estate, Wainfleet All Saints – are working within their communities to provide play and youth activities in community venues.

Their "Big Busy Diary" Project facilitated by the WYRA association volunteers run a Mums and Toddlers Group, Baby Bounce (music and activities for under 5's) and Youth Nights from Seathorne Community Hall. The Youth Nights have been a particular success and well attended with over 40 young people attending every week. The Hall is also the venue for Street Dance sessions which encourage physical activity for young people.

The Queen's Estate at Wainfleet All Saints is a small, socially isolated, community of around 60 properties which has no facilities and limited public transport. Waterloo housing has designated one property as a Community House and the Residents' Association provide an opportunity for young people to socialise by running a "tuck shop" drop in, monthly youth nights/discos etc. Waterloo Community Engagement Team support the Residents' Association to provide a greater number and range of activities.

Waterloo Housing also maintains 2 Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) on Queens Estate, Wainfleet All Saints and The Meadows, Skegness and the Woodland Corner Play Park in Louth. These facilities are well used by both their tenants and the wider community.

### **Lincoln Toy Library**

Lincoln Toy Library has been a registered children's charity since 1985. Committee run with around 6 part time staff. It is open to all families, child-minders, playgroups and schools as well as individuals and groups involved in child care. It offers

- Play space aimed at children 0-5 years and provides a range of play experiences
- Venue for meetings or other events
- Can hire the space for children's parties.
- Affordable hire of toys and accessories on a membership basis
- Over 600 toys and play equipment to hire that encourage enjoyment of play and stimulation
- Early years, multi-cultural, music, sensory, and imaginative play are all covered
- Caters for children and adults with special needs
- A selection of multi-sensory and other specialised equipment suitable for children and adults with disabilities.

### **Barriers**

- Financial constraints for the running costs of the library
- Reaching parents who need the service most
- Current lack of outreach service

## Health and Safety Executive statement

### Children's Play and Leisure – promoting a balanced approach

1. Health and safety laws and regulations are sometimes presented as a reason why certain play and leisure activities undertaken by children and young people should be discouraged. The reasons for this misunderstanding are many and varied. They include fears of litigation or criminal prosecution because even the most trivial risk has not been removed. There can be frustration with the amounts of paperwork involved, and misunderstanding about what needs to be done to control significant risks.
2. The purpose of this statement is to give clear messages which tackle these misunderstandings. In this statement, HSE makes clear that, as a regulator, it recognises the benefits of allowing children and young people of all ages and abilities to have challenging play opportunities.
3. HSE fully supports the provision of play for all children in a variety of environments. HSE understands and accepts that this means children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well-managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential danger.
4. HSE wants to make sure that mistaken health and safety concerns do not create sterile play environments that lack challenge and so prevent children from expanding their learning and stretching their abilities.
5. This statement provides all those with a stake in encouraging children to play with a clear picture of HSE's perspective on these issues. HSE wants to encourage a focus on the sensible and proportionate control of real risks<sup>8</sup> and not on unnecessary paperwork. HSE's primary interest is in real risks arising from serious breaches of the law and our investigations are targeted at these issues.

### Recognising the benefits of play

Key message: 'Play is great for children's well-being and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool'.

6. HSE fully recognises that play brings the world to life for children. It provides for an exploration and understanding of their abilities; helps them to learn and develop; and exposes them to the realities of the world in which they will live, which is a world not free from risk but rather one where risk is ever present. The opportunity for play develops a child's risk awareness and prepares them for their future lives.
7. Striking the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play is not always easy. It is not about eliminating risk. Nor is it about complicated methods of calculating risks or benefits. In essence, play is a

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<sup>8</sup> The Courts have made clear that when health and safety law refers to 'risks', it is not contemplating risks that are trivial or fanciful. It is not the purpose to impose burdens on employers that are wholly unreasonable (R v Chagot (2009) 2 All ER 660 [27])



safe and beneficial activity. Sensible adult judgements are all that is generally required to derive the best benefits to children whilst ensuring that they are not exposed to unnecessary risk. In making these judgements, industry standards such as EN 1176 offer bench marks that can help.

8. Striking the right balance does mean:

- Weighing up risks and benefits when designing and providing play opportunities and activities
- Focussing on and controlling the most serious risks, and those that are not beneficial to the play activity or foreseeable by the user
- Recognising that the introduction of risk might form part of play opportunities and activity
- Understanding that the purpose of risk control is not the elimination of all risk, and so accepting that the possibility of even serious or life-threatening injuries cannot be eliminated, though it should be managed
- Ensuring that the benefits of play are experienced to the full

9. Striking the right balance does not mean:

- All risks must be eliminated or continually reduced
- Every aspect of play provision must be set out in copious paperwork as part of a misguided security blanket
- Detailed assessments aimed at high-risk play activities are used for low-risk activities
- Ignoring risks that are not beneficial or integral to the play activity, such as those introduced through poor maintenance of equipment
- Mistakes and accidents will not happen

### **What parents and society should expect from play providers**

Key message: 'Those providing play opportunities should focus on controlling the real risks, while securing or increasing the benefits – not on the paperwork'.

10. Play providers<sup>9</sup> should use their own judgement and expertise as well as, where appropriate, the judgement of others, to ensure that the assessments and controls proposed are proportionate to the risks involved.

11. They should communicate what these controls are, why they are necessary and so ensure everyone focuses on the important risks.

12. It is important that providers' arrangements ensure that:

- The beneficial aspects of play - and the exposure of children to a level of risk and challenge - are not unnecessarily reduced
- Assessment and judgement focuses on the real risks, not the trivial and fanciful

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<sup>9</sup> Play providers include those managing or providing play facilities or activities in parks, green spaces, adventure playgrounds, holiday playschemes, schools, youth clubs, family entertainment centres and childcare provision.

- Controls are proportionate and so reflect the level of risk

13. To help with controlling risks sensibly and proportionately, the play sector has produced the publication *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide* which provides guidance on managing the risks in play. The approach in this guidance is that risks and benefits are considered alongside each other in a risk-benefit assessment. This includes an assessment of the risks which, while taking into account the benefits of the activity, ensures that any precautions are practicable and proportionate and reflect the level of risk. HSE supports this guidance, as a sensible approach to risk management.

### **If things go wrong**

Key message: 'Accidents and mistakes happen during play – but fear of litigation and prosecution has been blown out of proportion.'

14. Play providers are expected to deal with risk responsibly, sensibly and proportionately. In practice, serious accidents of any kind are very unlikely. On the rare occasions when things go wrong, it is important to know how to respond to the incident properly and to conduct a balanced, transparent review.

15. In the case of the most serious failures of duty, prosecution rightly remains a possibility, and cannot be entirely ruled out. However, this possibility does not mean that play providers should eliminate even the most trivial of risks. Provided sensible and proportionate steps have been taken, it is highly unlikely there would be any breach of health and safety law involved, or that it would be in the public interest to bring a prosecution.

September 2012