



Play in Plymouth:

The Play Policy and Strategy for Plymouth-
2007-2010

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1. Executive Summary

Our Vision

We want all children and young people in Plymouth to be able to exceed their aspirations and achieve their true potential.

Play in Plymouth – the Play Policy and Strategy recognises that children are part of the wider community; it acknowledges that their needs are central to policy making and that provision should be made to meet these needs. Play is so critically important to all children in their overall development that society should seek every opportunity to support it and create an environment that fosters it.

This policy is based on the recognition that the value of play in children’s development is an essential part of their capacity to learn, to socialise, to seek out opportunities and to take risks. There is also recognition that the impact of modern society on children’s lives has significantly restricted their opportunities to play freely and this has resulted in a poverty of play opportunities in the general environment.

Children’s play needs can also be influenced by their family situation and circumstances; their physical, sensory and learning abilities; their ethnicity and culture, the type of area where they live and their individual interests.

This requires a positive response to listen to children and young people; to respect their views and to work with the local community to extend the range of play environments and opportunities. Plymouth is committed to developing high quality play provision that is appropriate, local, stimulating and challenging for all children and young people.

What do we mean by play?

‘Play is what children do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons.’

Children’s play is freely chosen and personally directed. It can be physically active or creative; it can be very social or quietly reflective. Children and young people of all ages play. As they get older the words they use to describe their activities may change.

The term ‘play’ in this Policy and Strategy for Plymouth is used to describe the free-time activities for children and young people 0 -18 years.

Making provision for play does not necessarily involve providing fixed equipment. Play provision can be a space, some facilities, equipment or activities which encourage and promote playing. At its most successful it offers children and young people as much choice, control and freedom as possible within reasonable boundaries. Children themselves may choose play that involves rules, like informal sport.

Supportive, playful adults can significantly improve the quality and range of opportunities to play.

Play in Plymouth Policy Statements:

Play in Plymouth recognises that play is an important aspect of children's lives and that the right to play is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Play in Plymouth will develop play provision and opportunities for children to play where:

- play is freely chosen by the child or young person
- play is informal and not part of an organised activity
- play takes place in children and young people's free time and promotes fun and enjoyment
- the provision is close to home
- there is access for disabled children
- children and young people are consulted about the development of future play provision
- there is an identified need
- playworkers and adults are encouraged to support children playing to increase their feelings of safety without reducing the range and the challenge of opportunities on offer
- local communities help to design, develop and maintain cleaner, safer play areas and a variety of opportunities for children supported by Plymouth City Council
- There is an inter-departmental approach to developing, monitoring and evaluating the quality of play provision in line with Best Value Performance Indicator Ref LIB 115¹

Play in Plymouth links closely the City of Plymouth's Corporate Plan and identifies both children and young people and those living in the most deprived wards to receive extra priority in the delivery of services. Other City plans including the Children and Young People's Plan and the City of Plymouth's Sports Plan 2020 are also in line with the Government's Every Child Matters outcomes.

Consultation

There was a wide consultation with children, young people, parents, providers, councillors and officers. Up to 1,000 people took part to find out what they thought of play in Plymouth and how it should be developed.

What the children said:

Play means

...laughter, having fun, and being happy
...mucking about with family and friends
...football, or another sport that I do with friends, in the park or in a club
...hanging/chilling out with friends, getting along and making new friends
...being outside, enjoying fresh air and burning off energy.

What children and young people said they wanted:

Children aged 0-11 years like to play in a range of places, including the home, the garden, the playground, the park and at the beach. They like to play out, go swimming, play computer games, as well as a large range of traditional activities and games. A significant number of children said they would like someone to play with. Young people 10-18 years like to chill out with friends, both having fun and/or simply unwinding.

¹ The Best Value Performance Indicator LIB115 is included in Appendix 8 page 67

What the adults said:

Many adults remembered play from their own childhood and how that links to children and young people today. There were common concerns for children and young people and recognition that they need opportunities to play and meet up with one another.

Themes resulting from the consultation

- Providing more facilities for young people 10 – 18 years
- Developing and improving more local neighbourhood play spaces
- Providing more supervised play opportunities
- Developing access to play facilities for disabled children
- Improving access to local play and sport facilities especially swimming
- Ensuring cleaner play areas and public spaces with improved maintenance and security.

The results also highlighted the importance of putting in place processes by which these developments could be realised including:

- raising the profile of play
- developing capacity building for groups and playworkers.

Action Plan

All new provision will meet the criteria set down in Play Policy and Strategy. Children and young people must be at the heart of designing and delivering all future provision in Plymouth. The Action Plan for 2007 – 2010 is based directly on what children and young people identified in the consultation.

- 1** Children and young people aged 10-18 years from six local communities will have more choice and independence about places to go by 2010
- 2** By establishing Friends of the Parks groups and links to local schools 500 members of the local community, including young people, will have taken part in developing, designing, planning and running play spaces in seven different locations across Plymouth by 2009
- 3** 5000 more children and young people will have access to play in streets, parks and open spaces whilst being kept safe from harm by 2010
- 4** 1,500 children experiencing barriers to free play will have access to provision in the 14 Plymouth areas where there is the greatest need by 2010
- 5** By improving the access to local play, arts, sports, community and leisure facilities 1800 children and young people will engage in informal play opportunities by 2010
- 6** By 2010, more children and parents will express satisfaction in public play areas because they are cleaner and safer
- 7** Communities will have a greater awareness of the value of play for children and young people resulting in a 25% increased membership in Friends of the Park groups by 2010
- 8** Through training, workforce development and capacity building more members of local communities will have access to playwork training to develop the skills needed to support children's play

2. Introduction

2.1.1 The development of a Play Policy and Strategy for Plymouth is based on the vision that all children and young people should be able to exceed their aspirations and to achieve their full potential.¹

2.1.2 The need to improve the provision that is made for children to play is acknowledged in a range of national policy areas: from planning open spaces and transport to health, education and childcare. Local authorities in England have a statutory duty under the Children Act (2004) to cooperate in their provision for the enjoyment of play and recreation as part of the five key Every Child Matters outcomes for children.²

2.1.3 Children and young people, under Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, have the right to rest and leisure and to engage in age appropriate play and recreational activities, cultural life and the arts.

2.1.4 The Play Policy and Strategy for Plymouth has been developed through consultation with children, young people and adults. Sections 1-12 cover the background to the development; sections 13 and 14 outline the resulting themes and actions; section 15 includes the Appendices, the Membership and the Terms of Reference of the Plymouth Play Partnership Steering Group.

2.1.5 It is recognised that the Plymouth Play Policy and Strategy is affected by other development across the City. A fuller analysis of how different strategies affect play can be found in section 11.

2.1.6 The objectives of the Plymouth Play Policy and Strategy reflect a commitment to children's play as fundamental to their development from birth to eighteen years. It values children's right to play. It recognises the crucial role adults have in ensuring children and young people have good quality play experience.

¹ Plymouth Children and Young People's Plan 2006-2008

² Planning for Play – Guidance on the development and implementation of a local play strategy (2006)
Children's Play Council and Big Lottery Fund

3. The case for play

3.1.1 Traditionally, children's play services were generally not regarded as having a statutory basis. This is now clarified in the Education Act 1996 and the Children Act 2004¹.

3.1.2 There is increasing evidence that children's opportunities to play are limited by factors outside their control. This is confirmed in Plymouth where comments collected from children during the development of the first Children and Young People's Plan for Plymouth (2006) identified:

- the dominance of the car in residential areas preventing street play
- crime, fear of crime, vandalism
- environmental issues in particular litter and dog mess
- lack of access to places to play, lack of play equipment particularly for disabled children.²

3.1.3 Although most of us would say we know what play is – it is often difficult to define so that having an agreed understanding can support the argument. The following definition is widely understood and accepted:

'Play is what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons'.³

3.1.4 As children get older, the words used to describe activities change and tend to reflect specific activities rather than the generic term 'play'. It should be noted that these activities

can arouse controversy so that 'chilling out' or skate boarding in a public place can be described by some people as anti-social behaviour. In the context of this Strategy the term 'play' describing freely chosen, self-directed activities is used to cover provision for all children and young people 0-18 years.

3.1.5 The Play Policy and Strategy also recognises that children and young people play in both supervised settings where adults are present and non-supervised contexts and places where adults are not. Although both kinds of play are recognised as valid, there is an implicit understanding that where adults are present their interaction and involvement is sensitive to the needs of the child/children.

3.1.6 'Whereas children may play without encouragement or help, adults can, through the provision of an appropriate human and physical environment, significantly enhance opportunities for the child to play creatively and thus develop through play'.⁴

3.1.7 Play provision in this document is defined as...

'...a space, some facilities or equipment or a set of activities intended to give children the opportunity to play as defined above. At its most successful, it offers children and young people as much choice, control and freedom as possible within reasonable boundaries. This is often best achieved with adult support or guidance or supervision. The children and young people may themselves choose play involving certain rules or in some cases informal sport'.³

1 Guide to Preparing Play Strategies (2004) Mayor of London
2 Plymouth Children and Young People's Plan 2006-2008

3 DCMS (2004) Getting Serious about Play, DCMS

4 SPRITO (1997) Playwork National Occupational Standards,

3.1.8 Whilst recognising the importance of having a straightforward definition, there is also an acknowledgement that there is a diversity and complexity to children's play that needs to be understood in any strategic plan. The following common elements of play provision have been captured in the acronym VITAL as the five essential ingredients or characteristics¹

Characteristics of VITAL Play Provision

Value based

- respectful of children and young people's needs, interests, competencies and abilities
- welcoming to all children whatever their background especially those from disadvantaged groups

In the right place

- close to children's homes, schools or on well used travel routes and in a safe location
- located in places that the local community, children and young people are happy with

Top quality

- safe, welcoming, provision offering choice and variety
- well designed and planned in relation to the surrounding space and community
- well managed with a balanced approach to managing risks

Appropriate

- shaped by local needs and circumstances
- complementary to other local opportunities
- taking account of the views of all sectors of the local community

Long term

- sustainable
- valued and respected by the neighbourhood as a part of the social fabric

¹ DCMS (2004) Getting Serious about Play. DCMS

4. The benefits of play

The benefits of play are increasingly understood. The New Charter for Children's Play¹ published in 1998 highlighted a number of these including:

4.1.1 Play promotes children's development, learning, creativity and independence

The significance of play in the acquisition of information and knowledge has been known from the early times of Aristotle and Plato. More recently it is acknowledged that playing allows children to make mistakes and learn through trial and error, and that young people need these opportunities to learn about the world in ways that provide challenge and excitement². The link between children's play in the early years and learning is well recognised. Additionally play can complement schooling by providing opportunities to review, absorb and give personal meaning to what is being learnt in more formal settings³. Play helps children develop the imagination and sustain concentration⁴.

4.1.2 Play keeps children healthy and active – active children become active adults

Play is central to the development of good physical and mental health. The physical activity involved in energetic play provides school-aged children and young people with as much exercise as more structured activities. Good play opportunities promote good social

and mental health. It allows them to try out a range of emotions in a 'safe' way; to learn and develop emotionally by promoting resilience and fostering self-esteem⁵.

There is a clear link between good health and levels of activity. The Chief Medical Officer advises that 'children and young people should achieve a total of at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity on five days a week⁶'. The Government White Paper Choosing Health (2004) noted that 'many children appear to have less time being physically active....because of the increase in car use and heightened concern about the potential risk of unsupervised play outdoors'⁷.

...we are all aware of the 'five portions a day' concept as it applies to fruit and vegetables – let me suggest that as well as those five portions a day children should be given the opportunity to engage in a minimum of 3 portions of play a day.⁸

4.1.3 Play fosters social inclusion. It helps children understand the people and places in their lives, learn about their environment and develop their sense of community

When given the choice children and young people tend to spend their free time in places that are close to their own homes and easily visible to the local community. This is because it is easy to reach, traffic is less likely to be a problem and it will feel safe. However, if the

1 Children's Play Council (1998) The New Charter for Children's Play. The Children's Society and the Children's Play Council

2 Ludvigsen, A., Creegan, C., and Mills, H. (2005) Let's Play Together: Play and Inclusion, Evaluation of Better Play Round Three, Barnardos

3 NPFA/PLAYLINK/Children's Play Council (2001) Best Play, London NPFA

4 Strong National Museum on Play www.strongmuseum.org

5 Cole-Hamilton, I., and Gill, T. (2002) Making the case for Play – building policies and strategies for school-aged children, London NCB

6 Chief Medical Officer (2004) At least five a week. Evidence on the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health, London DoH

7 Department of Health (2004) Choosing Health, London DoH

8 Cole, D (2005) The concept of Play Malnutrition in the UK, International Play Association Journal

local play area is more remote, on the edge of a housing estate, is poorly lit and is rarely visited by adults, it is much more likely that the space will be vandalised and children will be reluctant to visit it. This is because it is uninviting; children will fear incidents of bullying and strangers. In their turn parents will be reluctant to allow children to go there either.¹

The Dobson report recommended that priority should be given to facilities that 'cater for a local neighbourhood or village rather than a whole town or area'.² CAFE Space, (part of CAFE, the Council for Architecture and the Built Environment) also acknowledges the value of developing opportunities for play within a local neighbourhood and the development of sustainable communities. CAFE advises local authorities on developing a strategic approach to green spaces building on Planning Policy Guidelines¹⁷ Open Space audits and has published a guide to working with children on the creation and maintenance of public spaces.³

'A lack of good play opportunities can also have adverse consequences on families and communities. The Zurich research....found evidence that families of children who were kept indoors had poorer local support networks and consequently found it more difficult to, for instance, organise informal childcare. This supports the thesis that community play opportunities form part of the 'glue' that brings communities and families together.⁴

4.1.4 Play allows children to find out about themselves, their abilities and their interests

To understand the contribution play makes in children's lives it is important to look at how children develop. Play can be seen as a preparation for the future or as an adjustment to the present. It can be an opportunity for children to develop skills, control their environment and make sense of things by turning them into activities that they can direct and understand. Play can help build emotional skills (for example, understanding others' points of view) and intellectual skills (such as holding a reasoned discussion).

4.1.5 Play is therapeutic. It helps children to deal with difficult or painful circumstances such as emotional stress or medical treatment

Play helps to alleviate stress or behaviour difficulties because it is a way for a child to work things out for themselves possibly with the help of an enabling adult. In parallel with concerns about the physical health of children there are also concerns about the rise in mental illness.⁵

4.1.6 Play gives children the chance to let off steam and have fun

Play is fun, it can mean playing outside, climbing trees, playing with the elements, playing on your own and with friends. The chances are that as an adult you will be able to remember some of the favourite things you used to play. Perhaps there are things you still do that could be described as playing.

1 Wheway, Rob, Millward, A (1997) Child's Play: facilitating play on housing estates. Coventry, Chartered Institute of Housing.

2 DCMS Getting Serious about Play

3 CAFE What would you do with this space? (2006) CAFE

4 NPFA/PLAYLINK/Children's Play Council (2001) Best Play, London NPFA

5 Mental Health Foundation (1999) Bright Futures: promoting children and young people's mental health, Mental Health Foundation

5. The barriers to play

5.1.1 There are growing concerns about the restrictions on children playing, which have been confirmed in the consultation process undertaken this summer 2006.

Nationally this is reflected in a number of ways including restrictions on:

- independent activity¹
- enjoyment of public space²
- independent mobility – distance from home, particular activities, not crossing roads or going to places alone³
- parents' free time due to changing work-life balance.⁴

The references included above provide a more in depth understanding of the barriers and restrictions than can be expected here.

5.1.2 Parents and the wider community believe that children have fewer opportunities to play than when they were children.

Children are spending more time on computers, watching television, doing homework. Again this is borne out by the Plymouth consultation 2006.

5.1.3 A recent letter published in the Daily Telegraph from over 100 professionals and academics wrote...

'...we are deeply concerned at the escalating incidence of childhood depression and children's behavioural and developmental conditions. They still need what developing human beings have always needed, including real food, (as opposed to processed junk), real play (as opposed to sedentary, screen based entertainment), first hand experience of the world they live in, and regular interaction with the real-life, significant adults in their lives'⁵

1 Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) (2003) Passing time, London IPPR

2 Hood, S (2004) The State of London's Children, London Mayor of London

3 GLA, January 2004 cited in Mayor of London (2005) Guide to preparing play strategies

4 Petrie, P (ed) 2000 Out of School Lives, Out of School Services, the Stationery Office

5 Letter to the Editor from Baroness Susan Greenfield et al 12 September 06 Daily Telegraph page 23

6. The need for a play strategy

6.1 Plymouth City Council is not the only direct provider of play opportunities but its actions are a key influence on and support for others. By developing a play policy the Council will reinforce that children are acknowledged as members of the community, with a right to have their needs taken into consideration. It will give a clear lead to all departments within the Council to address current shortcomings in existing strategies and policies that relate to play.

6.2 The Children and Young People's Plan 2006 – 2008

6.2.1 From April 2006 Education and Social Care Services combined into the Department for Children's Services and the first Children and Young People's Plan was published with the aim of identifying gaps and joining up services to meet the needs of children, families and carers living in Plymouth.

6.2.2 Detailed information collected for the Plymouth Children and Young People's Plan 2006-2008 identifies a number of key statistics about children and young people some of which have an important impact on the development and delivery of play services. These include:

- the key areas of deprivation
- the number of vulnerable families
- information about the health of children and young people
- the number of children supported by the Youth Offending team
- the number of children with Special Educational needs

- the number of schools, early years settings, family centres, Sure Start programmes and children centres.

6.2.3 In addition to data collection there were a number of events where children and young people were consulted about their vision for Plymouth in 2006. The results confirmed the findings of a previous consultation undertaken by the Children's Fund in 2004.

The key messages for improving living in Plymouth are:

- To reduce crime including fear of crime; 17% said cut down crime, but also vandalism, security equipment, street lighting and concerns about gangs should be taken into account a total of 33% of the total responses concerned crime.
- To address environmental issues, in particular litter and dog mess, which were high on the list of responses. A total of 26% of the responses were about litter and presentation of the city. Dog litter was a particular concern for children from the St. Budeaux ward.
- That play parks and play areas are very important. There was concern about lack of play equipment in parks, the vandalism and the quality of play equipment. In particular the play equipment for disabled children was mentioned. A total of 26% of the responses concerned play parks, parks and play equipment.

Information from Children and Young People's Plan pages 13 and 14

6.2.4 The Plan also identifies three key principles for working with children, young people and organisations in the future:

- Communicate and engage openly
- Consult and involve fully
- Coordinate and connect effectively.

Children and young people suggested the following ways to achieve the principles above:

- to ask children and young people what they would like before a service is offered;
- to find new ways of asking young people what they would like, not just ticking boxes;
- to listen to children and young people more carefully.

6.2.5 The introduction of a Play Policy and Strategy which has actively engaged with, and listened to, children is clearly important if the principles above are taken on board. It is now recognised that the impact of modern society on children's lives is significantly restricting their opportunities and that the creation of high quality 'compensatory' play provision is essential if the Council is going to meet the targets outlined in the Local Area Agreement, e.g. HCOP1, SSC8¹. The development of the Strategy is an opportunity for children themselves to demonstrate that having opportunities to play is fundamental to the Every Child Matters Outcome - Enjoy and Achieve.

'A good play strategy will address all these issues by developing more and better play spaces and opportunities and also a more child friendly public realm and greater recognition of the importance of play across the range of policy areas that have an influence on children's lives'²

1 Plymouth 2020 Partnership (2006)Local Area Agreement for Plymouth 2007 -2010. Plymouth City Council

2 Voce, A. (2006) Planning for Play. Children's Play Council and the BIG Lottery

7. Developing a Play Policy and Strategy for Plymouth

7.1.1 Plymouth City Council has an important role. In line with Every Child Matters, the Local Authority is taking a leadership role establishing a representative body, known as the 'Plymouth Play Partnership' that will take responsibility for the detailed action planning, prioritising, identifying and securing of resources as well as the monitoring and evaluation of the Play Policy and Strategy.

7.1.2 The present national focus on play includes money being available through the Big Lottery Fund to support play initiatives. In order to access the funds allocated to Plymouth Local Authority (£578,791) a new Play Policy and Strategy is required. To facilitate this process Plymouth City Council has recruited the services of a play consultant who was commissioned to work alongside Plymouth Play Association to research the present play provision in Plymouth, identify gaps in this provision and draft the Plymouth Play Policy and Strategy.

7.1.3 It was not however anticipated that the delivery of the Play Policy and Strategy would rest with the Local Authority alone, but would involve a multi-agency approach. Plymouth City Council identified a number of key organisations and departments as having an important role in the development of this strategy.

7.1.4 Representatives from the key organisations and departments involved in the delivery of play were brought together for an exploratory meeting at the end of May 06.

These included:

- Early Years Development and Childcare
- Parks Services
- Corporate Consultation
- Youth Offending Team
- Public Health
- Plymouth Parent Partnership
- Plymouth Schools
- Community Safety
- Community Learning
- Sutton Play
- Children's Information Service
- Inclusion Childcare Support Services
- Police Service
- YMCA
- Youth Parliament
- Active Communities
- Extended Services
- Youth Services
- Race Equality Council
- Sure Start
- The Children's Participation Project
- Plymouth Play Association
- The Children's Fund
- Devon Childminding Association
- Stonehouse Playspace Association
- Local Network Fund
- Pre-school Learning Alliance
- North Plymouth Playschemes
- Plymouth Development Projects
- Plymouth Housing Services.

7.1.5 In addition to the list above, local community and voluntary groups working within the play and youth sector were also invited to assist in the development of a Play Policy and Strategy for Plymouth. Councillors Pauline Purnell and Valentine Hiromeris have also taken an active role.

7.1.6 The initial meeting was well attended and it was agreed that an audit of current provision that included informal and casual play activities for children and young people 0-18 should be carried out over the summer period. It was felt important to establish priorities that focus on what children would like to do for themselves rather than what adults would like them to do. Actions agreed were:

- Plymouth Play Association would carry out informal consultation with children and young people at National Playday in Central Park
- there would be consultation with service providers, other agencies and stakeholders including parents and that a variety of mechanisms would be used including questionnaires, consultation days and the website
- information would be gathered about current levels of provision including fixed playgrounds, play equipment, etc in conjunction with Council departments and play organisations in Plymouth
- consideration would be given to the development of a children and young people's user group to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the Plymouth Play Policy and Strategy in the long term; this would be in association with the Children's Participation Coordinator, young people and members of the Youth Parliament (MYP)
- confirmation would be needed on who is responsible for planning for play within the Local Authority and that provision is embedded in the Local Plan Planning Guidance and the Local Community Plan
- further consideration should be given to the need to influence policy and planning decisions relating to housing and loss/creation of play provision;
- greater acknowledgement is required of children's need for formal and informal spaces to play;
- further consideration is to be given to the introduction of quality standards in all aspects of play provision (i.e. children's access to space, opportunities, facilitation and the role of playwork/youth work services)
- further consideration is to be given to the infrastructure for the improvement and development of children's play services
- there should be strong links between play services and other corporate policies, strategies and community plans in the future
- the Play Policy and Strategy should be linked to local policies and plans as well as national initiatives;
- a coordinated approach is needed across all agencies both in the public and voluntary sector for the best possible play facilities and opportunities for children and families in Plymouth.

A timetable for the development of the Plymouth Play Policy and Strategy is included in Appendix 5.

8. Values and Principles

8.1.1 The Plymouth Play Partnership steering group recognises the significance and value of play and the need for improvement of play opportunities more generally. The Partnership is committed to providing a strategic overview for the creation and maintenance of quality, accessible and inclusive play opportunities for the children and young people of Plymouth in the age range 0-18 years.

8.1.2 Members have jointly considered the value base on which good play provision should be developed and have adapted the 'Best Play Objectives'.¹ These are the widely acknowledged as the benchmark for describing outcome objectives for play provision.

8.1.3 Play in Plymouth should:

- extend the choice and control that all children and young people have over their play and use of free time, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it
- recognise the need for all children and young people to test boundaries and respond positively to that need
- manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children and young people safe
- maximise the range of play and free time opportunities for all children and young people
- foster independence and self-esteem
- foster respect for others and offer opportunities for social interaction and their involvement in the decision-making process through participation and

consultation

- foster well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and the capacity to learn in children and young people
- promote inclusion and access for disadvantaged and disabled children and young people
- challenge bullying and promote anti-bullying policies
- challenge racism and promote anti-racism policies.

8.1.4 The statement of principles and values has been compiled as a result of the consultation which has taken place, and takes on board the Audit Commission's Best Value Performance Indicator for Play 115.

8.1.5 Plymouth recognises the significance and value of play and the need for improvement of play opportunities in the general environment. Plymouth Council and their partners are committed to ensuring that all children and young people have access to rich, stimulating challenging and adventurous environments, both in and out of doors, free from unacceptable risks, thereby offering them the opportunities to explore through their freely chosen play, both themselves and the world. This Policy and Strategy is based on the understanding that every child needs opportunities to play both on their own and with others.

¹ NPFA, PLAYLINK, CPC(2001) Best Play London, NPFA

8.1.6 Plymouth is committed to ensuring that environments, services and provision for play, whoever is the provider, are attractive, welcoming, safe and accessible to every child and young person irrespective of age, gender, background or origin or of individual capabilities.

8.1.7 The Play Policy and Strategy will provide a framework to develop targets and plans, to increase play opportunities and eliminate barriers to the take up of play activities by disabled children and those with specific needs. It is recognised that separate provision may sometimes be a valuable resource for particularly vulnerable children. Use of a range of specialist services should only be at the choice of the child or their advocate and all mainstream services must be welcoming and accessible to all children and young people.

9. Children in Plymouth – the local context

9.1.1 Plymouth has a residential population of 256,817 (2001 Census data) with an estimated young population of 60,982. This represents 23.7% of the population who are

19 years or younger. This compares to the national average of 25%. The number of children by age in Plymouth is shown below:

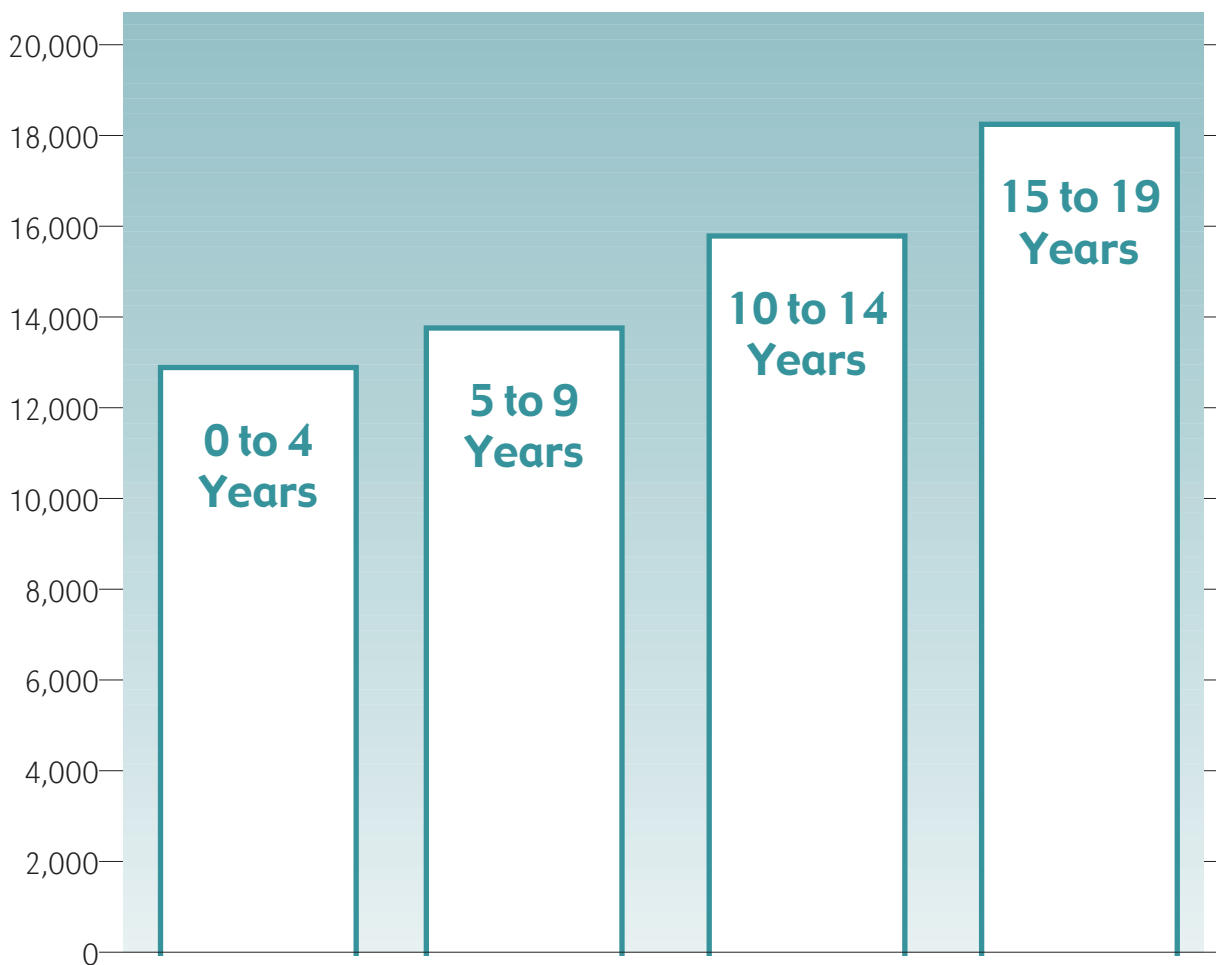


Figure 1

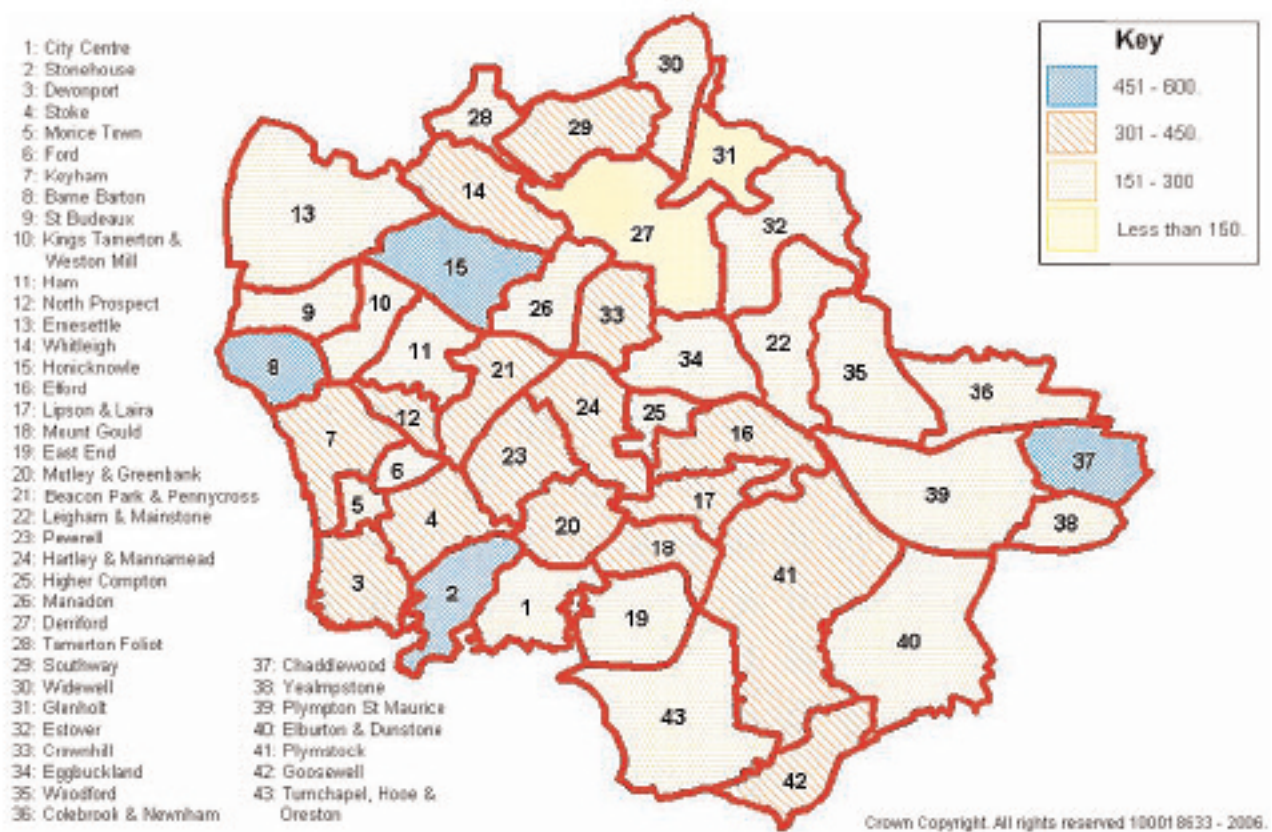


Figure 2 Numbers of children aged 0-4 years old. (Source data: PHDU 2005).

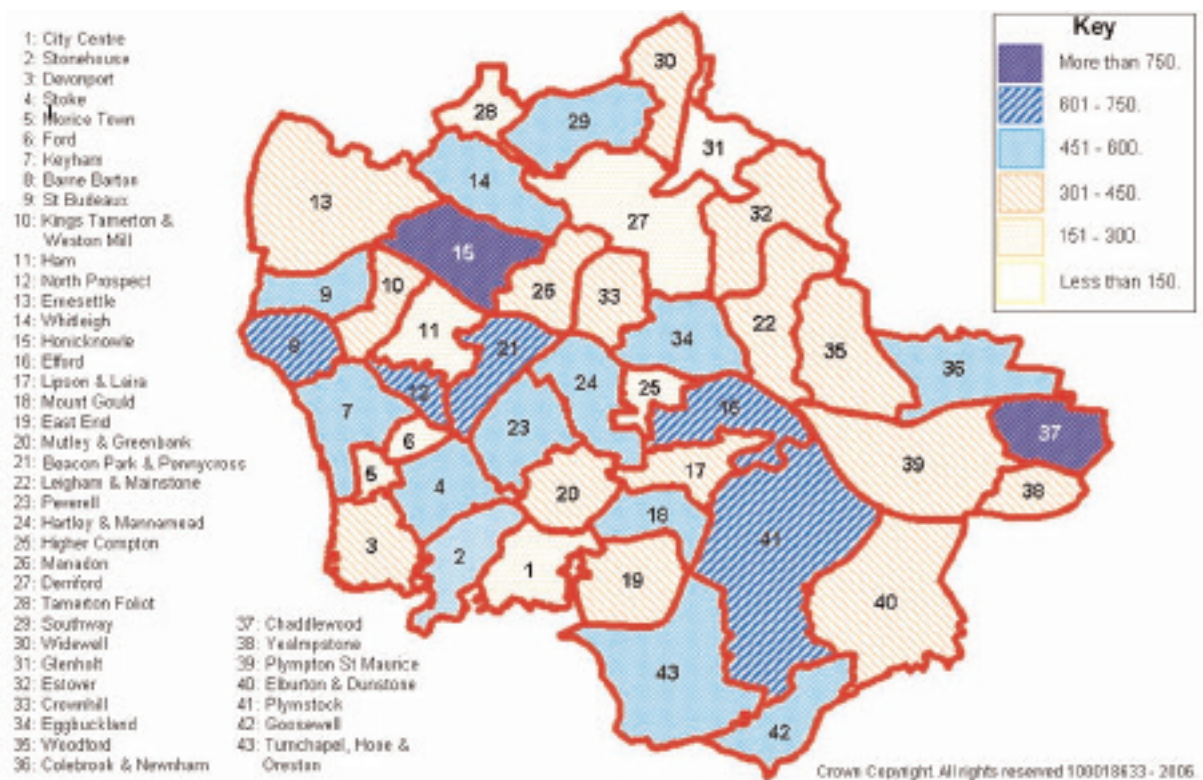


Figure 3 Numbers of children aged 5-11 years old. (Source data: PHDU 2005).

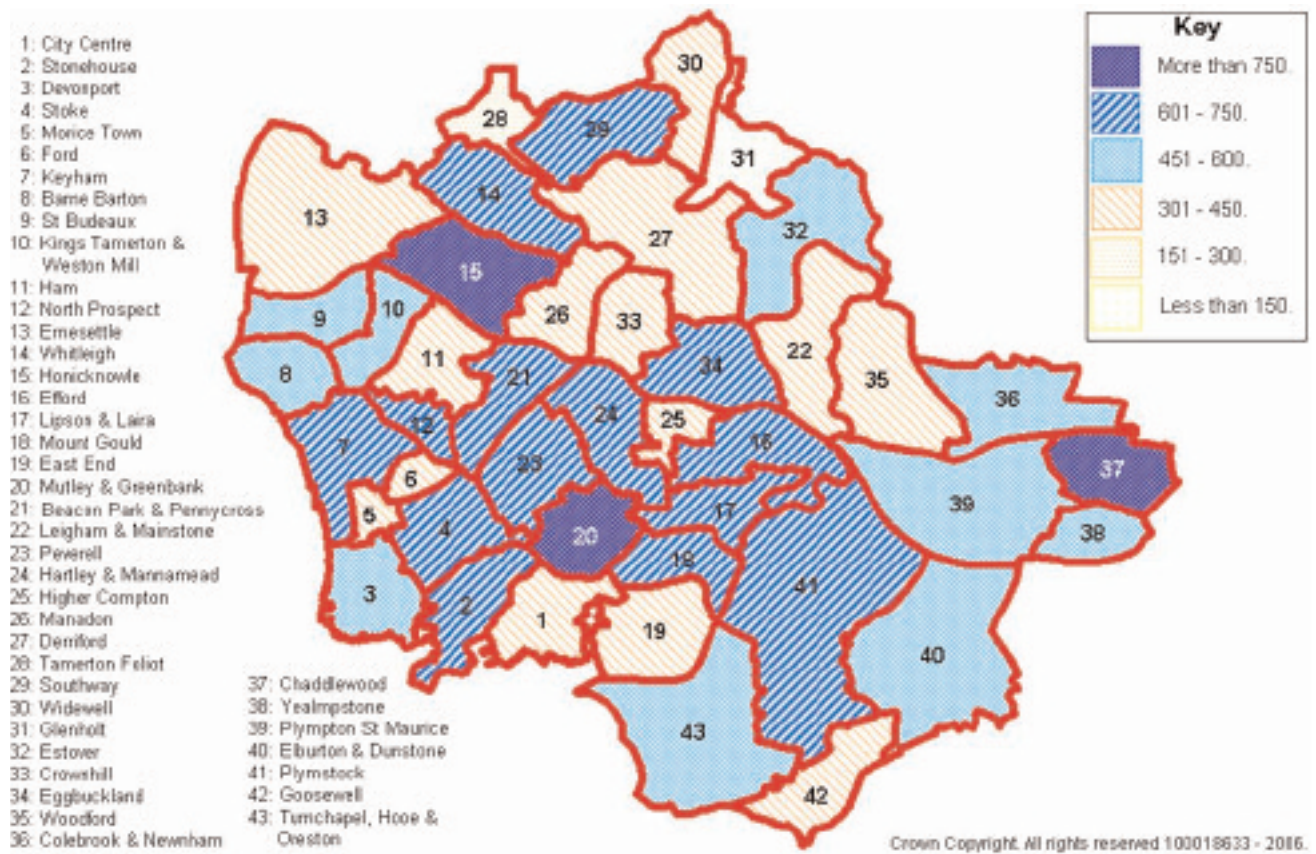


Figure 4 Numbers of children aged 12-18 years old. (Source data: PHDU 2005).

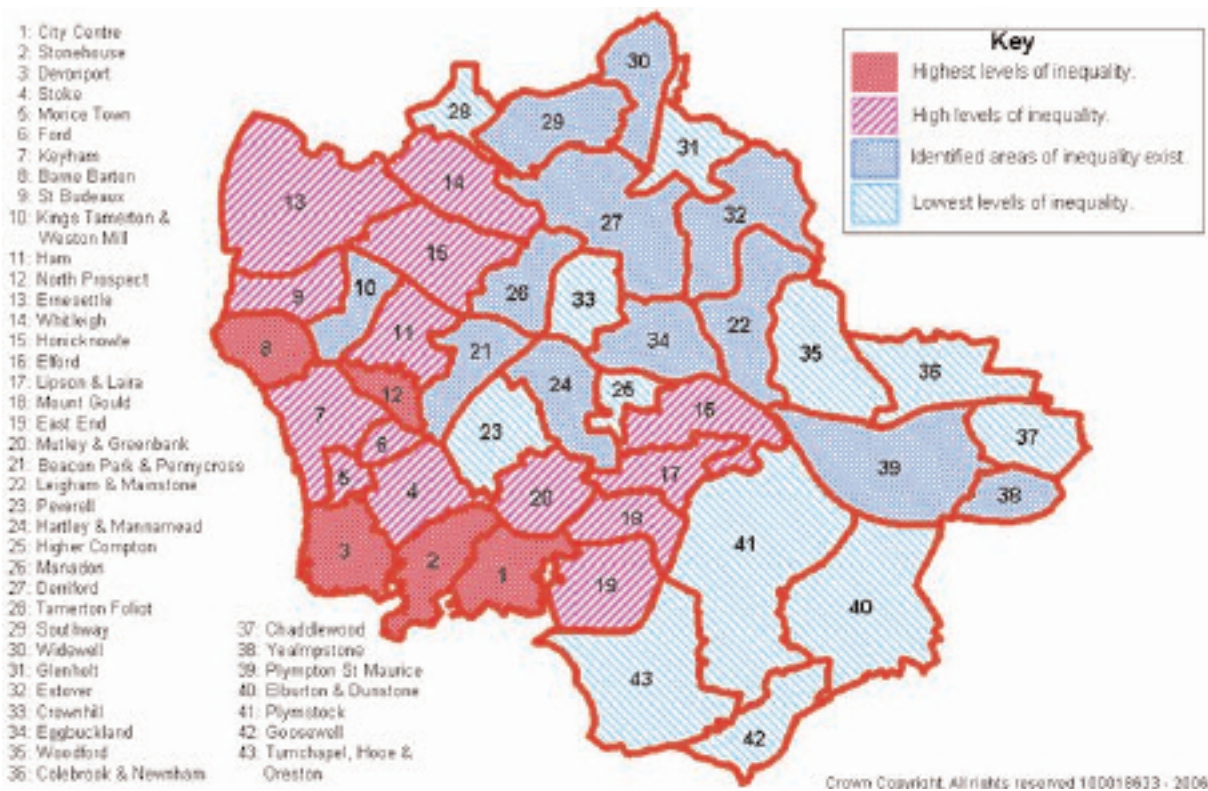


Figure 5 Areas of Inequality. (Source data: Plymouth 2020 Partnership (2005)).

9.1.2 The vast majority of children and young people are white British with 2.6% children and young people from a wide variety of black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

9.1.3 Plymouth is rated the 57th most deprived Local Authority in the country. However, Plymouth has a mix of both affluent areas and those of significant deprivation. This represents challenges in terms of how services are delivered to children. There is a high population of low income households and in some areas life aspirations are low. The overriding priority for children and young people's services is to focus on 'narrowing the gap' across the city in terms of health, economic, social and educational outcomes.

9.1.4 The figures 2-4 show the concentration of children living in Plymouth neighbourhoods. Figure 2 shows the number of children aged 0-4 years. Figure 3 shows children aged 5 - 11 years and Figure 4 shows young people aged 12 - 18 years. Figure 5 shows the neighbourhoods and the levels of inequalities that exist.

9.1.5 Putting this information together we can identify the areas with the highest density of children and the most significant levels of inequality. The following areas all have a population of over 1,200 children aged 0-18 years and high levels of inequality: Stonehouse, Stoke, Keyham, Barne Barton, North Prospect, Whitleigh, Honicknowle, Efford, Lipson and Laira, Mount Gould, Mutley and Greenbank. Areas where there are significant levels of deprivation also include Devonport, Ernsettle, East End and Morice Town.

9.1.6 Other significant numbers of children live in areas where there are pockets of deprivation. These include: Southway, Estover, Plymstock, and Chaddlewood.

10. Current Play Provision in Plymouth

10.1 Play areas

10.1.1 In 1997 Parks Services managed over 180 play areas throughout the City. These varied greatly in both condition and their suitability and as a result the Council was receiving a high number of insurance claims. In 1999 a review was undertaken by a multi-disciplinary team which included a condition survey and risk assessments. It was proposed that there should be a change in the reactive management process to one that harnessed a more proactive system and a programme of refurbishments was prioritised.

10.1.2 An extensive development programme involving £3.4 million since 1997 has now taken place and a number of play areas have been refurbished or removed. Examples of these include:

- Fletmore Road, St. Budeaux-*removed 2001*
- Norwich Avenue, Kings Tamerton and Weston Mill-*refurbished 1999*
- Blackstone Open Space, Elburton and Dunstone-*refurbished 2002*
- Mount Street, Devonport *2003*
- Ham Drive, Ham-*refurbished 2003*
- Central Park - *refurbished 2002/3*
- Bladder Meadow, Manadon-*refurbished 2004*

10.1.3 In 2006 the number of play areas managed by Parks Services is 139 and there is a continuous programme of development. The recent Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requires providers to include disabled people and make 'reasonable adjustments' to the physical features of their premises to overcome barriers to access.

10.1.4 Plymouth Council conducted a DDA audit of all play areas. Park Services also use condition surveys as a benchmark for improvement, hold regular consultation sessions with key stakeholders, liaise with schools and Police, and have a comprehensive maintenance programme. Staff conduct weekly inspections and have a comprehensive maintenance programme.

10.1.5 The steps to achieving inclusive play include:

- working with the local community – for example, workshops and organised visits to existing play areas;
- targeting specific user groups – for example, the Beckley Centre;
- assessing route ways into play space;
- identifying the needs of local children and young people;
- developing more exciting landscapes – tree planting, bulbs, etc; and
- improving access and infrastructure for example, parking for mobility minibuses, etc.

10.1.6 As a result of these approaches Plymouth City Council is mentioned in the publication produced by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as an example of good practice. Developing Accessible Play Space is a good practice guide that recognises the need to focus on specific issues rather than identify obstacles to play and think about ways to circumvent them for any child who might want to access the play space¹.

¹ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister ODPM (2003) Developing Accessible Play Space – a good practice guide, ODPM

‘Plymouth City Council held a competition inviting schools and local groups to send in designs and paintings about a play area that everyone could use. The winner of the competition was helped to produce a design brief that was sent out to a range of play manufacturers and landscape design firms who came up with schemes which were assessed on how closely they met the child’s brief. This play space is now widely enjoyed by disabled children in Plymouth. Taking display buses out to schools has also been found to work well in involving disabled children in consultation:

“The kids like to be able to wander around them. We use a lot of photographs of equipment and also layouts and landscapes. We get them to stick stars on kit they like and then we take it all back to mull over. We put out flyers letting children know how they can get their views across. I go down and speak to kids in a new playground – or staff and I do – just to get their views to see if there’s anything we’ve missed or where we’ve gone wrong possibly, things like that. Ten minute consultations with parents waiting to collect children from schools can work surprisingly well.”

Developing Accessible Play Space page 29

10.1.7 The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) has a five point scale of accessibility ranging from totally accessible to totally inaccessible. In Plymouth there are some showcase accessible play spaces – strategically placed local centres of excellence and some sites that cannot be made accessible for any reasonable cost. The important consideration for Park Services is making noticeable changes in the short, medium and long term.

10.1.8 As a result of the DDA audit there is now a list of recommendations for each of the 139 play spaces in Plymouth and a schedule for improvements. The areas highlighted as in need of development are:

- Armada Way, City Centre (New George Street needs new location),
- Trefusis Park, Lipson,
- Miller Way in Estover,
- Saltash Passage, St Budeaux,
- Cookworthy Green, North Prospect,
- Radford Avenue, East End,
- High Street Flats, Stonehouse,
- Devonport Park, Devonport,
- Foulston Avenue, Barne Barton,
- Buckwell Street Flats, City Centre,
- Granby Green Flats, Devonport.

10.2 Other play provision in Plymouth

10.2.1 There is a range of facilities provided by the private and the voluntary/charitable sector.

10.2.2 Plymouth has for many years had a tradition of local play projects running schemes through the holidays on a voluntary basis staffed by local parents. However, the increasing cost of running these and the development of childcare and extended services has resulted in a reduction of services.

10.2.3 The collection of information on play provision across Plymouth was undertaken in conjunction with Plymouth Play Association and forms part of the primary research phase. Details of information collected can be found in Appendix 6.

10.2.4 The consultation and primary research phase behind the Plymouth Play Policy and Strategy highlighted the need for a more detailed audit of 'other play provision' particularly relating to provision made by the voluntary sector and to play opportunities which are open access, low cost or free and where the opportunities are freely chosen by

children and young people.

10.2.5 Of particular note are the Play in the Parks project, the Play Ranger, school lunch time sessions and North Plymouth playschemes.

10.2.6 Formal childcare that includes play

There is a range of formal childcare available to parents throughout the Plymouth area. The range includes:

- after school clubs
- breakfast clubs
- holiday care
- crèches
- childminders
- playgroups.

Most of these services include opportunities for children to play and a full list is included in Appendix 6.

11. Links to other Plymouth City plans

11.1 Links between the Play Policy and Strategy and the following plans have been identified:

- City of Plymouth Corporate Plan 2006-2009
- City of Plymouth Best Value Performance Plan 2005-2006
- Plymouth Children and Young People’s Plan 2006-2008
- City of Plymouth Sports Plan 2020.

11.1.1 City of Plymouth Corporate Plan 2006-2009,

Best Value Performance Plan 2005-2006

The Corporate and Best Value Performance Plans provide the link between the City Strategy and the Council’s contribution, as a service provider, to the longer-term social, economic and environmental well-being of the city. The Best Value Performance Plan provides an annual assessment of the Council’s performance against its aims, priorities and targets at a corporate level and the contribution to the City Strategy goals.

11.1.2 The Corporate Plan details four visionary goals and eight strategic objectives with which the Play Policy and Strategy aims and objectives must comply:

Four Visionary Goals			
A healthy place to live and work	A city which creates and shares prosperity	A safe and strong city	A location for learning, achievement and leisure

Eight Strategic Objectives			
Improving health and well-being	Developing a prosperous economy	Promoting community safety	Raising educational achievement
Promoting inclusive communities	Developing an effective transport system	Maintaining a clean and sustainable environment	Stimulating culture and leisure activities

11.1.3 The Corporate Plan details five corporate objectives to shape its future corporate and service planning and the Play Policy must fit with these objectives.

Corporate Objectives				
Building Plymouth's future	Providing excellent and efficient services	Putting the customer first	Ensuring access for all	Improving our capacity to deliver together

11.1.4 The Corporate Plan also identifies three important groups to receive extra priority in the delivery of services, namely: children and young people, older people and those living in the most deprived wards. Children and young people aged 0-18 years are the group prioritised in the Play Policy and Strategy.

11.1.5 The Play Policy and Strategy sits below the Corporate Plan in the hierarchy of Local Authority plans and will ensure that its aims and objectives do not conflict with those of the Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan provides broad guidance for the Play Policy and Strategy.

11.1.6 Specific corporate objectives, priorities and action points with which the Play Policy and Strategy must fit are tabled below (Table 1).

Table 1: Showing corporate objectives which impact on the development of a Play Policy and Strategy

Strategic Objective 1: Improving health and well-being		
Corporate Objectives	Priority	Measures of success/action
Building Plymouth's future	<p>1.8 Safeguard the health, safety and well-being of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children</p> <p>1.10 Encourage physical exercise and lifestyles that prevent disease and promote health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children access a range of healthy activities in their own communities • Implement the Children's Services post inspection plan in relation to safe and healthy outcomes for children and young people • Attendance at sport, leisure and play facilities • Ensure the continued promotion of initiatives to promote physical activity

Strategic Objective 3: Promoting community safety

Corporate Objectives	Priority	Measures of success/action
Building Plymouth's future	3.1 Promote safer, cohesive communities and help prevent crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour	
Providing excellent and efficient services	3.2 Safeguard vulnerable adults, children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue multi-agency training and work to ensure that risk to vulnerable people is minimised
Putting the customer first	3.8 Use cultural and leisure activities to actively promote purposeful alternatives to crime and anti-social behaviour amongst young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop regular diverse activity sessions across city neighbourhoods for young people

Strategic Objective 5: Promoting inclusive communities

Corporate Objectives	Priority	Measures of success/action
Providing excellent and efficient services	5.4 Ensure young people enjoy, achieve and make a positive contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in and outcomes from youth work
Putting the customer first	5.5 Engage residents, including those who may be 'hard to reach', in the design and delivery and access to services to promote user focus and diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and carers are informed about the services available
Ensuring access for all	5.6 Strengthen partnership working with the voluntary and community sector to promote and further empower residents in service delivery and regeneration initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The findings of "Voice of the Child" are implemented and evaluated • Implement the Children's Participation Strategy

Strategic Objective 6: Developing an effective transport system

Corporate Objectives	Priority	Measures of success/action
Building Plymouth's future	6.1 Facilitate convenient transport choices for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in and outcomes from youth work
Providing excellent and efficient services	6.3 Improve the condition of roads, footpaths, streetlights, car parks, cycle paths and public rights of way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve condition of our roads • Condition of surface footway • Footpaths and rights of way easy to use by public • Number of streetlights with defects found on random inspections
Putting the customer first	6.4 Respond locally to customer's views about traffic management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out area based traffic reviews
	6.6 Provide safe and easy to use transport services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a programme of Local Safety Schemes as set out in LPTP2
Ensuring access for all	6.7 Make appropriate provision for people with a range of mobility issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a programme of measures to assist those with a range of mobility needs as set out in LPTP2

Strategic Objective 7: Maintaining a clean and sustainable environment

Corporate Objectives	Priority	Measures of success/action
Building Plymouth's future	7.1 Provide cleaner, safer streets, green parks and open spaces initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and bring forward a programme of enhancements to the city's streets and public spaces • Seek external funding to support those environmental enhancement projects with the highest priority

Strategic Objective 8: Stimulating culture and leisure activities

Corporate Objectives	Priority	Measures of success/action
Building Plymouth's future	8.1 Regenerate cultural and leisure facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade and improve playgrounds • Approval for Central Park Life Centre Project • Develop and deliver projects to enhance the Hoe and foreshore and Devonport Park
Providing excellent and efficient services	8.2 Provide good value cultural and leisure services that meet recognised quality standards 8.3 Plan the future development of sport, museum, arts, library, play, green space, etc across the city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review leisure management arrangements to meet audit commission recommendations • Complete cultural strategy • Produce an agenda to deliver the Creative Plymouth agenda
Putting the customer first	8.5 Provide leisure and cultural activities that meet the needs of our customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction with leisure and arts venues, etc
Ensuring access for all	8.6 Promote greater access to leisure and cultural facilities or events 8.7 Work in partnership with public, private and voluntary sector to develop rich and diverse leisure and cultural opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop IT systems to enable effective marketing of leisure and arts and promote greater access

11.1.7 The City of Plymouth Best Value Performance Plan details the Local Authority's strategic objectives and priorities for a given period, how the City Council is addressing its priorities for improvement and the City Council's performance. As such it does not specifically refer to play provision and the importance of play in Plymouth children and young people's lives.

11.1.8 However, the Best Value Performance Plan sits alongside the Corporate Plan and reports on:

- performance against specific indicators
- play related areas of spend such as the opening of the new skate park in Central Park.

11.2 Plymouth Children and Young People's Plan 2006–08

11.2.1 The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) is a single, inter-agency strategy that covers services for all children and young people living in Plymouth. It sets out:

- the vision that Plymouth has for its children and young people;
- the key priorities and action Plymouth commits to undertaking in partnership
- the improved outcomes we want to achieve for children and young people.

11.2.2 The CYPP makes a commitment to working with all organisations that provide services to children and young people. Through partnership working services will focus on the Government's Every Child Matters: Change for Children that is founded on five key outcomes:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Achieving economic well-being.

The Play Policy and Strategy for Plymouth can make a significant contribution to this agenda.

11.2.3 The CYPP lays down guidance on what support children and young people need, including their concerns about play related issues (e.g. worries about vandalism and gangs, dog litter and the lack of quality play equipment in park). The consultation phase of the Play Policy and Strategy confirms these findings and sets out how they may be addressed.

11.2.4 In line with CYPP guidance, the Play Policy and Strategy has started working with Plymouth services through the formation of the Plymouth Play Partnership Steering Group. It has also consulted with children and young people through questionnaires distributed to schools, childcare facilities, play settings and completed during National Play Day.

11.2.5 The Play Policy and Strategy reflects the ethos of the CYPP, recognising that it has specific key principles and outcomes that link directly to children's play (e.g. 'Lead the delivery of safer, cleaner, greener public spaces...'). These outcomes have been considered in the development of the Play Policy and Strategy shown on the following table.

11.2.6 There are also indirect links with the CYPP, through areas such as improvements in social housing and improvements in life expectancy, where play may have a role. For example, the development of play spaces and opportunities for children living in social housing.

11.2.7 Priorities for the Children and Young People's Block of the Local Area Agreement have been derived from the Children and Young People's Plan which has been developed in close involvement with the Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) through Routeways. Routeways hosts the Children's Information Service and is also represented on the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

CYPP ref no.	Children's and Young People's Plan focus & action	Play related outcome
1.5 1.6	Meet the standards set out in the National Service Framework including reducing inequalities, improving life expectancy, reducing infant mortality and reducing childhood obesity. This includes: increasing the take up of active sports through extended schools activities; reducing the number of children and young people developing avoidable illnesses such as obesity and diabetes, ensuring school activities and curriculum support healthy lifestyles	Children and young people encouraged towards healthy lifestyles through play
2.3	Review processes to safeguard children	Children and young people provided with safe environments
3.11	Transitions are well managed and seamless. Shared priorities agreed with multi-agency partners	Playworkers have a key role to play to support children in transition
4.4 4.5	Engage children and young people in consultation in strategic planning. Children and young people encouraged to participate in decision making and in supporting the community. This should include black and minority ethnic children and young people and disabled children.	Children and young people are consistently involved in consultation in strategic planning and service improvements plans
4.8	Lead the delivery of cleaner, safer and greener public spaces and improvement of the quality of the built environment in deprived areas and across the country, with measurable improvement by 2008	Children and young people and families report increased satisfaction with local parks and common spaces
4.9	Develop the Youth Offer. Implement recommendations from Youth Service Inspection 2006.	Young people report that there are greater opportunities for them to enjoy their leisure time and high quality places to go
5.4	Demonstrate progress on increasing the employment rate, jointly with HM treasury; increase the employment rates of disadvantaged groups (lone parents, ethnic minorities, people over 50, those with the lowest qualifications and those living in the local authority wards with the poorest initial labour market position); significantly reduce the difference between the employment rates of the disadvantaged groups and the overall rate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of ethnic minority childcare workers • Increased take up of childcare delivering services in areas of identified disadvantage • Ofsted inspections of childcare provision identify provision of childcare that meets the diversity of need
6.4	Develop children's centres to provide the core offer	Play and play services are a fundamental part of the core offer
6.5	Develop robust process to ensure the participation of children, young people and their families/carers in the development, monitoring and evaluation of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, young people, parents and carers shape the development of children's services • Their involvement is recognised in external inspections

11.3 City of Plymouth Sports Plan 2020

11.3.1 The Sports Plan 2020 shares a vision of how Plymouth will ‘...change things for the better...in order to deliver high standard sports and recreational activities.’

11.3.2 The Sports Plan 2020 defines sport as: ‘all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aims at improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships, or obtaining results in competitions at all levels’; this can be seen to overlap with the outcomes of play, which often takes the form of casual participation in an activity such as ‘kick about’ football.

11.3.3 The Sports Plan 2020 recognises that sports development work must complement programmes at sports facilities and be effectively linked to play and early years based activity.

11.3.4 Primary research in development of the Plan included consultation with the Plymouth Play Association, thus recognising the significant overlap between sport and play. Although sport and play should not be confused children traditionally spend a significant amount of time in playgrounds that can be dull and uninspiring. Since 2001 the Government has supported the creation of Zoneparcs to transform primary school playgrounds and improve opportunities for children to take part in physical activity.

11.3.5 Through links with the Sports Plan 2020, the Play Policy and Strategy recognises the Playing Field Strategy which might impact on areas traditionally used for play, or establish new areas suitable for play and not just formal sporting activities.

11.3.6 In recognition of the links between sport and play the department is represented on the Play Policy and Strategy steering group.

11.3.7 The Sports Plan 2020 covers some sports which have a strong play element, notably roller-skating/skate boarding/BMX and outdoor activities. These areas provide opportunities for Sports Development Officers to work with other staff to ensure the best development for Plymouth.

11.3.8 Section 3.4 of the Sports Plan 2020 refers specifically to play, referring to it as the ‘...sport of children’. The section refers to established links between Sport and Leisure and Play development in Plymouth.

11.3.9 Section 6.3 of the Sports Plan 2020 refers to links with play and makes a commitment to “...develop and strengthen links between play and mainstream sports and recreational activity”. The adoption of a Play Policy and Strategy will enhance these links by recognising the overlaps between play, sport, and leisure, identifying areas where joint working will ensure best use of resources.

11.3.10 Sport and play overlap in the minds of those consulted with during the research phase of the Play Policy and Strategy. Thus, the consultation exercise yielded information that will be of use to Plymouth Leisure and the Sports Development Unit. A good example is provided by the sport of swimming, which was cited as one of the most popular play activities undertaken by children aged 0-11 years.

There was also much concern from parents/carers and young people over the lack of local swimming pools, especially in Plymstock. This has already been identified in the Sports Plan 2020 but the results from the play consultation may help identify the level of priority to give this potential development.

11.3.11 It can be seen that the Sports Plan 2020 could impact significantly on play development. The representation of Sport and Leisure on the Play Policy and Strategy steering group will help ensure a sharing of ideas and concepts and development of provision that facilitates both sport and play.

11.4 Links to other strategies

There are clear links to a number of other strategies including Extended Services, Health, Culture, Transport, Planning, the Community Plan and Open Spaces. Some of these are in the process of being developed and members of the Plymouth Play Partnership Steering Group are clear about the value of maintaining close links. The key aspects of the Steering Group's role is making sure that there is

- on going and careful planning for development and sustainability
- the fullest possible range of services cater for play
- financial resources are pooled and maximised
- a champion for children's play promoting understanding about the importance of play in children's development and creating greater access for children across the city.

11.5 Workforce reform

There is a vision in Plymouth for a multi-agency children's workforce that works together to:

- Increase recruitment
- Develop and retain more people
- Strengthen inter-agency and multi-disciplinary working
- Promote stronger leadership, management and supervision.

Currently work is in progress to develop more detailed workforce data across the whole of the children's workforce. There are a number of priority areas that will impact on playworkers, including the development of integrated qualifications and the move towards Common Core training and Transitional Modules. Strong links are in place with Playwork Partnerships, the Regional Centre for Playwork Education and Training to ensure training and qualification opportunities are up to date. The Play England Regional Manager is based at Playwork Partnerships at the University of Gloucestershire and is working closely with the local authority to support capacity building and the long term strategic and sustainable provision for play. One of the plans being put in place is a south west regional development to support specialist training for play rangers which is one of the features of developing Plymouth Play Portfolio being submitted to the BIG Lottery. It is anticipated that the newly appointed Play Officer will contribute to the Plymouth Children's Workforce Reform Group on a quarterly basis.

11.6 Quality assurance

Plymouth City Council is committed to an improvement and management framework. This links strategic and individual priorities to a process of monitoring that ensures consistency of practice and continuous improvement. The direction of travel is to focus on areas of poor performance and need and help to promote better outcomes for children and young people in Plymouth over the next three years. Each priority area is linked to a member of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Executive who champions the work to achieve improved outcomes. The Play Policy and Strategy for Plymouth identifies 8 outcomes for children and young people (see page 41) which will be monitored throughout the life of the Plan as part of the overall quality assurance process. The Plymouth Play Partnership Steering Group that has taken responsibility for developing the Play Policy and Strategy is committed to the inter-departmental approach in line with the Best Value Performance Indicator LIB 115 – see Appendix 8 page 67. A monitoring and evaluation sub-group is now in place to take this work forward. The Play Policy and Strategy will be reviewed annually with a comprehensive review every five years.

12. Consultation Summary

12.1.1 During the development of the Plymouth Play Policy and Strategy a full consultation plan was developed between June and September 06. The following groups were targeted:

- children and young people
- parents
- play providers and playworkers
- councillors and senior officers.

12.1.2 During a consultation exercise the views of approximately 1,000 people from Plymouth were sought to find out what they thought of play in Plymouth and its development.

The analysis of over 650 questionnaires from children, young people, parents and carers, and play providers revealed some key elements which are summarised below. For the more detailed analysis see Appendices 1 – 4.

12.1.3 What the children said:

Play means

...laughter, having fun, and being happy

...mucking about with family and friends

...football, or another sport that I do with friends, in the park or in a club

...hanging/chilling out with friends, getting along and making new friends

...being outside, enjoying fresh air and burning off energy

12.1.4 What do children and young people do in their free time?

- children aged 0-11 years like to play in a range of places, including the home, the garden, the playground, the park and at the beach
- young people also like to spend their free time at a range of places including at home, at friends' houses and in the park
- children aged 0-11 years like to go swimming and to play computer games, as well as a large range of traditional activities and games
- young people like to chill out with friends, both having fun and/or simply unwinding
- they also enjoy time going to town to look around the shops and meet in cafés.

12.1.5 When do children and young people like to have free time?

Both children and young people like to play or spend free time during the early evening, holidays and weekends, all year round.

12.1.6 What play developments do children, young people, parents/carers and providers want?

- more local meeting places for young people aged 12-18 years
- more public access sports areas, for example, basketball/netball courts, football pitches
- more good quality local parks and play areas offering a wide range of activities for the whole family to access
- more local swimming pools.

12.1.7 What concerns are there about children's play?

Common concerns for children, young people and parents/carers included:

- the difficulty in accessing good places to play/chill out in
- too much homework to do
- equipment in play areas is unsafe/run down
- play spaces are not safe due to strangers, bullying and/or presence of dogs
- computer games and TV play a significant part in the lives of children and young people.

12.2 Consultation at National Playday

12.2.1 Additionally a consultation exercise on Play in Plymouth was carried out at this year's National Playday, coordinated by the Play Association as part of the development of the Play Policy and Strategy.

12.2.2 The mobile unit supplied by Stonehouse Playspace Association proved to be an ideal base for this. A variety of methods were used to gain information from the children and young people.

12.2.3 A range of activities took place outside the Mobile Unit with the promise of pictures to colour and prizes. This was staffed by members of the All Children First and the Strategic Partnership Team and assisted by members of the Consultation Team. The Children's Fund Consultation and Participation Team ran a Little Brother Tent where children and young people were filmed being questioned around the topics on the questionnaires.

A team of pairs of consulters, who had already been briefed, were equipped with polo-shirts, clipboards, pens, paper, questionnaires and hand stamps and dispatched to gain completed questionnaires. This team included young people, Children's Centre staff, the Extended Schools Adviser, members of Plymouth Inclusion Project and Outreach Workers from North Plymouth Playschemes. From all aspects the day was a great success. In the region of 5,000 people came along, many of them making a day of it, some with families of 3 generations. A full report is included in Appendix 7.

13. Resulting Strategic Themes

13.1 Key themes

From the consultation the following priorities were identified for future development.

13.1.1 Providing more facilities for young people (10 – 18)

This came out as the key area where more resources and attention is required. Facilities include indoor and outdoor facilities, youth zones and chill out spaces. This has been identified in previous surveys and is confirmed by staff in Parks Services.

Although the questionnaires focussed on young people over 12 years it was generally felt that providing facilities which included children from ten years old would be more inclusive and a more realistic approach to everyday life. It would also support young people in the transition phase from primary to secondary school.

13.1.2 Developing and improving more local neighbourhood play opportunities

The locality of parks and open spaces featured in all the adult consultations as a priority. Many parents found it difficult to take children to the park due to distance/transport, etc. They felt play spaces should have a wide range of interesting equipment and opportunities for freely chosen play.

It is recognised that development is likely to involve a rationalisation of existing local authority play facilities to ensure that the facilities provided are located in the most appropriate place, are accessible, well maintained and meet the needs of the local community. This includes new residential areas and social housing improvements.

13.1.3 Providing more supervised play opportunities

The consultation also revealed that children, young people and parents were particularly interested in local Play in the Park opportunities, parent and toddler facilities and city wide park Play Rangers. Play in the Park opportunities are already a successful feature of Stonehouse Play Association.

Supervised opportunities are suggested both to increase the feeling of safety and to facilitate opportunities for challenging activities. Although children can play without the involvement of adults the consultation confirmed the benefit of a passive presence such as a play ranger, particularly the younger age groups.

13.1.4 Developing access to play facilities for disabled children

Parents of disabled children were more in favour of city wide projects.

13.1.5 Improving access to local play and sport facilities especially swimming

In the consultation parents and young people were concerned about their sedentary lifestyles and the need to be involved in energetic physical activity. Swimming was one of the most popular activities and depending where you live in Plymouth is sometimes difficult to access.

13.1.6 Ensuring cleaner play areas and public spaces

This was highlighted by all ages of respondents.

13.1.7 Raising the profile of play

The consultation revealed the need for mechanisms to share good practice.

13.1.8 Capacity building for voluntary groups and playworkers

The popularity of local play events highlighted the need to build on the potential for voluntary organisations to respond to the needs of the communities they serve.

13.2 The way to do it...

The results also highlighted that it was important to put in place a process by which these developments could be realised:

13.2.1 To continue to plan together across agencies and departments to develop and ensure quality provision

The resulting themes clearly highlighted the need to develop a more inter-departmental approach and greater community involvement in the designing and building of play areas and open spaces for young people.

This includes:

- consulting children and young people about future play provision – this consultation process showed children and young people want to be fully involved before a service is offered and that there is both open dialogue and effective coordination
- more cross department research and development; recognising that information can already exist in other departments
- jointly adopting best value performance models; for example safety considerations, play value, monitoring, maintenance and stewardship Best Value Performance Indicator LIB 115; Planning Guidance Standard 106 see Appendix 8.

- recognition of the value of cross-departmental working to address the barriers identified earlier, such as working to improve road safety and the quality and safety in parks. The Plymouth Play Partnership is committed to meeting on a regular basis to realise the Play in Plymouth Action Plan 2007-2010.

13.2.2 To encourage more adults to support children's play

The recognition of the significance and the value of play needs greater awareness. This can be developed by

- Providing support to Friends of the Park groups
- Providing training to support parent led groups
- Developing play opportunities in schools; younger children identified school breaks as a key opportunity to play. There is an ideal opportunity for cross – agency development, the development of Zoneparcs.

13.2.3 Risk Management

For any new development there is a risk element and as part of the development of this plan consideration has been given to the issues, risks and dependencies both for the quality and quantity of delivery, but also in terms of timescales. See Appendix 9 Risk Analysis.

14. Action Plan 2007 – 2010

Outcomes	Action/Target	Lead Agency	Partners See key p.41	When	Cost	Source
1 Children and young people aged 10-18 years from six local communities will have more choice and independence about places to go by 2010	1.1 Develop appropriate provision for young people (in hot spots) such as Chill Out Zones and Youth Shelters Areas identified during consultation include: Chaddlewood; Plymstock; Hooe; Keyham; Leigham; Southway	Parks	3, 4, 10, 16, 20, 28, 30, 33, 40	2008/09	£38,000 (approx five sites depending on location)	Big Lottery
	1.2 Provision of mobile climbing wall – citywide	Extended Services	35	2007	£25,000	Extended Services
2 By establishing Friends of the Parks groups and links to local schools 500 members of the local community, including young people, will have taken part in developing, designing, planning and running play spaces in seven different locations across Plymouth by 2009	2.1 Upgrade areas to include: • Victoria Park • Barne Barton • Beaumont Park • Tothill	Parks	6, 8, 14, 25, 26, 28, 32	2008/09	£100,000 £210,000 £27,000 £120,000	Stronger Safer Communities Fund (SSCF) SSCF Section 106 Section 106
	• Woodford	Parks		2007	£30,000	Section 106
	• Yealmpstone			2007	£12,000	Section 106
	• Devonport	Parks		2008/09	£250,000	Devonport Regeneration Company Partnership /Heritage Lottery Fund
	2.2 Enhance an existing park at Tothill to provide a showcase play park which is a model of inclusive provision for children and young people. This development will be complementary to park upgrade outlined at 4.3, below	Parks	3, 12, 14, 23, 30, 31	2007/09	£135,000	Big Lottery
	2.3 Investigate the development of Home Zones	Early Years Service	5, 13, 24, 28	2007	Nil	Early Years Service
3 5000 more children and young people will have access to play in streets, parks and open spaces whilst being kept safe from harm by 2010	3.1 Develop and deliver Play Ranger Services	Early Years Service	18, 20, 26, 35, 36, 40	2007/10	£270,000	Big Lottery
	3.2 Run National Play Day	Early Years Service and Plymouth Play Association	7, 14, 17, 20, 25, 28, 29, 30, 33, 37	2007	£4,000	Early Years Service
	3.3 Encourage groups to join Plymouth Play Association	Early Years Service	26	2007	£500	Early Years Service

Action Plan 2007 – 2010 continued

Outcomes	Action/Target	Lead Agency	Partners See key p41	When	Cost	Source
4 1,500 children experiencing barriers to free play will have access to provision in the 14 Plymouth areas where there is the greatest need by 2010	4.1 Identify play needs of disabled children and young people directly (survey)	Inclusion Officer	2, 4, 8, 10, 11, 14, 21, 23, 26, 38, 30	2007	Nil	Early Years Service
	4.2 Identify play needs of disabled children from parents/carers views also from disabled parents/carers in respect of their particular needs (survey)	Early Years Service			Nil	
	4.3 Develop an inclusive neighbourhood play park in Victoria Park to complement the showcase facility - see 2.3 above to improve access in different places across the city	Parks		2009	£18,000	Big Lottery
	4.4 Improve access to specialist facilities in the community – e.g. sensory rooms	Extended Services		2007	£1,000	Extended Services
	4.5 Develop and deliver an inclusive Play in the Park programme in Barne Barton, North Prospect, Honicknowle, Efford, Lipson and Laira, Devonport, Ernesettle, East End, Chaddlewood, Plymstock, Southway, Estover and Morice Town	Early Years Service and Plymouth Inclusion Childcare Support Services		2007/10	£42,000 (over 3 years)	Big Lottery
5 By improving the access to local play, arts, sports, community and leisure facilities 1800 children and young people will engage in informal play opportunities by 2010	5.1 Develop opportunities to deliver supervised informal play opportunities in Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs)	Extended Services	19, 25, 26, 32, 34, 38, 39	2007	£5,000	Extended Services
	5.2 Explore the development of a volunteer programme for young people to work in play settings			2010	£18,000	Big Lottery
	5.3 Develop training programme for young people and other volunteers to work as lifeguards	Extended Services	3, 8, 34, 40	2007	£2,000	External Funding
	5.4 Supervised swimming sessions using Extended Services facilities (single pilot project first)	Extended Services	32, 33	2007	£2,000	Extended Services
	5.5 Explore the possibilities of a creative play project building on the experience of Plymouth Arts and Plymouth Play Association	Plymouth Play Association	1, 27	2007/8	£1,000	Plymouth Arts
6 By 2010, more children and parents will express satisfaction in public play areas because they are cleaner and safer	6.1 Investigate the possibilities of revising Plymouth City Council By-Laws to be more relevant and enforceable	Early Years Service	5, 6, 9, 20, 28	2007	Nil	Early Years Service

Action Plan 2007 – 2010 continued

Outcomes	Action/Target	Lead Agency	Partners See key P41	When	Cost	Source
7 Communities will have a greater awareness of the value of play for children and young people resulting in a 25% increased membership in Friends of the Park groups by 2010	7.1 Develop the web page for Play in Plymouth	Early Years Service	All agencies	2007	£6,000	Early Years Service
	7.2 Develop mechanisms to share good practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play on relevant websites • Develop Play Forum Newsletter • Run Play Conference (one per annum) 					
	7.3 Invest in Friends of the Park groups and support their engagement with younger members of the community	Parks, Early Years Service Extended Services	3, 5, 6, 11, 12, 25, 26, 31	2007/10	Nil	Parks and Early Years Service
8 Through training, workforce development and capacity building more members of local communities will have access to playwork training to develop the skills needed to support children's play	8.1 Provide training to support volunteer playworkers and local community groups	Early Years Service	26, 40,	2007	£2,000	Early Years Service, LSC and other training sources of funding

Key Partner Organisations

1. Barefoot Project
2. Beckly Centre
3. Children and Young People
4. Children's Fund
5. Community Groups
6. Councillors
7. Devon Childminding Association
8. Early Years Service
9. Environmental Services
10. Extended Services
11. Faith Groups
12. Friends of Park
13. Housing Department
14. Inclusion Officer
15. Library Service
16. Members of Youth Parliament
17. Music Zone
18. North Plymouth Playschemes
19. NVQ Centre
20. Parks
21. Parent Partnership
22. Parent Support Advisors
23. Plymouth Inclusion Childcare Support Services
24. Planning Department
25. Play Rangers
26. Plymouth Play Association
27. Plymouth Community services - Arts*
28. Police
29. Pre School Learning Alliance
30. Race Equality Council
31. Residents Groups
32. Schools
33. Sports Development Unit (Culture, Sport and Leisure)
34. Culture, Sport and Leisure
35. Stonehouse Playspace Association
36. Sutton Play Project
37. Voluntary Organisations
38. Woodlands Community Special School
39. Workforce Development Team
40. Youth Services

* Plymouth Arts will also link with other organisations including Creative Partnerships and the Barbican Theatre

The Outcomes for Children and Young People

- 1 Children and young people aged 10-18 years from six local communities will have more choice and independence about places to go by 2010
- 2 By establishing Friends of the Parks groups and links to local schools 500 members of the local community, including young people, will have taken part in developing, designing, planning and running play spaces in seven different locations across Plymouth by 2009
- 3 5,000 more children and young people will have access to play in streets, parks and open spaces whilst being kept safe from harm by 2010
- 4 1,500 children experiencing barriers to free play will have access to provision in the 14 Plymouth areas where there is the greatest need by 2010
- 5 By improving the access to local play, arts, sports, community and leisure facilities 1800 children and young people will engage in informal play opportunities by 2010
- 6 By 2010, more children and parents will express satisfaction in public play areas because they are cleaner and safer
- 7 Communities will have a greater awareness of the value of play for children and young people resulting in a 25% increased membership in Friends of the Park groups by 2010
- 8 Through training, workforce development and capacity building more members of local communities will have access to playwork training to develop the skills needed to support children's play

Distribution of proposed developments 2007-2010

