

Time to Play

A Play Policy for Cambridgeshire



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Foreword

Time to Play – A play policy for Cambridgeshire.

Children and Young People benefit from access to rich play opportunities. Play is intrinsic to children's quality of life; it is how they enjoy themselves and is essential to their development. Research increasingly shows that for children and young people to stay healthy, be safe, enjoy their childhood, achieve their potential, contribute to society and achieve economic well-being they must have opportunities for free play and informal recreation, throughout their childhood.

In Cambridgeshire we have a vision that children and young people are able to access a variety of play provision to meet their needs. In some areas this is achieved by staffed play provision, elsewhere by adventure and school playgrounds, local open spaces, parks, sports areas and informal spaces.

Play England's national campaign to raise the profile of play and for stakeholders to strive to offer best play opportunities for children and young people has informed the development of the Cambridgeshire approach to play and underpins the vision.

Our vision is further endorsed by the document 'Staying Safe' produced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. This document proposes to launch a new communications campaign to encourage parents to let their children play outside in safe environments and take part safely in positive activities.



Cllr Jill Tuck
Cabinet Member for Children's Services



"You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation."

Plato



"The purpose of the policy is to inform the county council's work with children and young people and how we work with other stakeholders."



Introduction

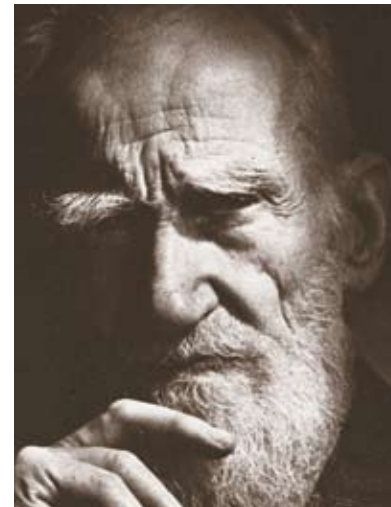
The Play Policy 'Time to Play' promotes the development of play for all children and young people wherever they live in Cambridgeshire. Cambridgeshire County Council recognises the importance of play and is committed to achieving the services that are inclusive, accessible and appropriate to age and need. Cambridgeshire's Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership sets out in 'The Big Plan' 2006 –2009, the Partnership's role in ensuring all children and young people achieve their potential. The Big Plan highlights as a priority the need to create more play opportunities for children and their families, with a particular active focus on children and young people who do not/are not able to access current provision on a regular basis.

The purpose of the policy is to inform the county council's work with children and young people and how we work with other stakeholders (see footnote page 9). In addition, this play policy can be adopted by any organisation in Cambridgeshire concerned with, interested in or able to influence the development of children and young people's play services. It is relevant to those providing play provision for children and young people up to the age of 18. However it is recognised that play does not stop at any particular age.

This policy will guide us in establishing the principles for a County Play Partnership that will develop a County Play Strategy – 'Space to Play' (to replace the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership publication 'Time and Space to Play' 2004).

It is essential that the County Play Strategy interfaces effectively with District Play Strategies as the funding and responsibility for the majority of provision lies with the district councils. (See back cover.)

The County Play Strategy will incorporate key features such as a review of community engagement, an examination of local provision and the development of local standards that will result in an action plan. The revised County Play Strategy will be developed as a Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership document.



"We do not stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing."

George Bernard Shaw





"Play is what I do
when everyone
stops telling me
what to do."

Meera aged 10

What is play?

The Children's Play Council defines play in the following way: "Play is an essential part of every child's life and vital to their development. It is the way children explore the world around them and develop and practise their motor skills. It is essential for physical, emotional and spiritual growth, for intellectual and educational development, and for acquiring social and behavioural skills. Play is a generic term applied to a wide range of activities and behaviours that are satisfying to the child, creative for the child and freely chosen by the child. Children's play may or may not involve equipment or have an end product. Children play on their own and with others. Their play may be boisterous and energetic or quiet and contemplative, light-hearted or very serious".

In brief play can be:

- freely chosen and controlled by the child
- spontaneous
- motivated from within the child
- light-hearted or very serious
- extremely good fun
- social
- solitary, and is a process not a product

Play can and does happen anywhere!



Why play?

Play is fundamental to our lives. Most of us have happy memories of playing as a child. Play enables children to understand and be a part of the world, it gives children an opportunity to be someone or something else.

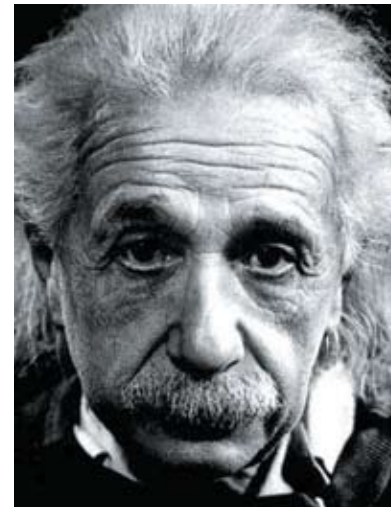
Through playing with others, children can define who they are and how they develop relationships. Play fosters social inclusion. It helps children understand the people and places in their lives, learn about their environment and develop their sense of community.

Play does not necessarily have an end product, such as a painting or a rocket ship from recycled materials. Through play children develop physically, emotionally, creatively, socially, and intellectually.

Whilst playing children may be:

- boosting self esteem
- physically active
- socialising with others
- occupying themselves and others
- discovering new skills
- taking risks
- facing challenges
- learning
- belonging
- being involved
- problem solving
- co-operating
- finding confidence
- developing as an individual
- developing a sense of humour
- discovering new ideas
- forming opinions
- thinking
- exploring the world around them
- just being themselves

This policy outlines the importance of providing accessible and good quality play opportunities for children and young people to support the work undertaken by a range of stakeholders. It supports a 'Positive Action' approach to inclusion that seeks to understand the needs of children who might be excluded, and actively address them.



"Play is the highest form of research."

Albert Einstein



"Play is the
highest
expression of
human
development in
childhood, for it
alone is the free
expression of
what is in a
child's soul."

Fredrick Froebel



Policy Aims

Cambridgeshire County Council's Play Policy aims to:

- raise awareness about what play is and the benefits
- set a standard for an ethos that supports good quality play
- provide a framework for agreed values and principles
- encourage all relevant parties¹ to take account of the Cambridgeshire Play Policy when planning services.

Policy Statements

Cambridgeshire County Council intends to achieve the overall aims of the policy by seeking commitment to the following statements:

- ◆ **children and young people's health and well-being are supported and promoted through the provision of good quality play opportunities** (See guidance document – Health and Well-being)
- ◆ **all children and young people are fully included in, and have equal access to, universal play opportunities and specialist provision as required** (See guidance document – Equality and Inclusion)
- ◆ **children and young people are adequately and meaningfully consulted when developing play opportunities and spaces** (See guidance document – Consultation with Cambridgeshire's Children and Young People)
- ◆ **children and young people are able to access varied and good quality play opportunities that are safe and offer challenge and risk** (See guidance document – Quality Play)
- ◆ **children and young people's play is valued in the wider communities to which they belong** (See guidance document – Communities)
- ◆ **children and young people's play facilities comply with all legislative requirements, are environmentally sustainable and take account of any potential climate change issues.** (See guidance document – Legal Requirements and Good Practice)

¹**Stakeholders and relevant parties include:** District and parish councils working to develop play services, local play networks, partnerships and associations, childcare providers, youth services, extended services, highways and transport services, educational establishments 0-19+, playwork and early years trainers, hospitals, prisons, arts and culture services, sport, leisure, open access play schemes, recreational activities, housing and regeneration and the voluntary sector.



"If you want creative workers, give them enough time to play."

John Cleese





"It is in playing,
and perhaps
only in playing,
that the child
is free to be
creative."

D.W. Winnicot



Policy Implementation

Cambridgeshire County Council will implement the Play Policy by:

- developing a County Play Partnership and Strategy
- working with the district councils to develop a local strategy that builds on the policy statements of the County Council Play Policy
- working with partner agencies and organisations to support them in offering children and young people access to play spaces
- working with providers to help ensure that legal requirements are met
- working with providers to help ensure that the Key Standards for Safeguarding Employment and vetting procedures for staff are fully implemented
- providing support and guidance
- developing and implementing a project plan
- monitoring and evaluating provision and use the information gathered for further improvement.

National Framework

Cambridgeshire County Council takes account of the following national documents in implementing its policy.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Play is recognised as a child's right under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Article 31

"States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts."

Article 12.1

"States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child."

Article 23.1

"States Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community."

Article 24.1

"States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest standard of health...."

Ratified by the UK Government, 1991



"Play is recognised as a child's right under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child."

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child





"Enjoying and
Achieving:
Getting the most
out of life and
developing the skills
for adulthood."

Every Child Matters



National Framework

Every Child Matters - Improving outcomes for children (2003)

Every Child Matters: A national framework for local change programmes to build services around the needs of children and young people in order to maximise opportunity and minimise risk.

Every Child Matters outlines five outcomes that matter the most to children and young people:

Being healthy: Enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle.

Staying safe: Being protected from harm and neglect.

Enjoying and Achieving: Getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood.

Making a Positive Contribution: Being involved with the community and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour.

Economic well-being: not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life.

Staying Safe

In 2007 the government launched the Staying Safe consultation to raise awareness of the issues that affect the safety and well-being of children and young people today. They also wanted to learn how to strike a balance between keeping children safe and allowing them to grow, explore and enjoy their childhoods

The government recognises that more can be done to enable children and young people to play and take part in positive activities to help children and young people learn about taking risks in a safe environment.

The proposal is to 'launch a campaign to encourage parents to let their children play outside in safe environments and take part in positive activities safely'.

Getting Serious About Play

A major national play review, chaired by Frank Dobson MP in 2004, sets out in 'Getting Serious About Play', how to best invest the £200m lottery fund pledges made by the Labour party in 2001, for improving play opportunities.

Part of the report highlights the common elements of many successful play opportunities. These are probably best captured in the acronym VITAL- Value based, In the right place, Top quality, Appropriate and Long term.

Value based projects - where

- children and young people's interests and rights are respected
- all children and young people, whatever their ability or background welcomed especially those from disadvantaged groups
- children and young people's competences and abilities are respected.

In the right place - play is

- close to children and young people's homes and schools on well-used travel routes in safe locations
- located in places children and young people and the wider community are happy with.

Top quality – play opportunities are

- safe and welcoming and providing choice and variety
- well designed in relation to the surrounding space and community
- well-managed.

Appropriate – play is

- shaped by local needs and circumstances
- complements other local opportunities
- takes account of all of the local community
- well planned.

Long Term – play is

- sustainable beyond the lifetime of the NOF (Big Lottery) programme set up to be valued and respected as a part of the neighbourhood.



"Play is set up to be valued and respected as a part of the neighbourhood."

Getting Serious About Play





"All children
should have equal
access to play
opportunities and
services."

Children's Play Council



National Framework

Children's Plan 2007

In December 2007 the government released The Children's Plan. It sets out how the Department for Children, Schools and Families intends to make this country the best place in the world to grow up by putting the needs of families, children and young people at the centre of all they do.

The Children's Plan highlights the importance of children's play and has recognised that parents want safe places for children to play outside. The government has pledged to spend £225 million till 2010 to:

- offer every local authority capital funding that would allow up to 35,000 playgrounds nationally to be rebuilt or renewed and made accessible to children with disabilities
- create 30 new adventure playgrounds for 8 to 13 year olds in disadvantaged areas, supervised by trained staff; and
- publish a national play strategy by the summer of 2008.

The Play Charter

Children have the right to play

All children and young people have the right to play and need to play: free to choose what they do – lively or relaxed, noisy or quiet – with the chance to stretch and challenge themselves, take risks and enjoy freedom. The right to play is enshrined in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Every child needs time and space to play

All children and young people – disabled and non-disabled – whatever their age, culture, ethnicity or social and economic background, need time and space to play freely and confidently with their peers, free of charge, indoors and outdoors, somewhere they feel safe. Play provision should actively include the widest range of children and seek to engage with those from minority groups.

Adults should let children play

Parents, carers and other adults can support children and young people's play by respecting the value and importance of all types of play, playing with their children and by creating opportunities and allowing time for children to play independently with their friends, inside and outside the home.

Children should be able to play freely in their local areas

Children have the same right to use and enjoy public space as others. Local streets, estates, green spaces, parks and town centres should be accessible for children and young people to move around in safety and offer places where they can play freely, experience nature, explore their environment and be with their friends.

Children value and benefit from staffed play provision

Children should have access to a choice of staffed facilities where children's play rights and needs are the first priority, such as adventure playgrounds, play centres, holiday play schemes, after-school play clubs, breakfast play clubs, toy libraries, play buses and play ranger services.

Children's play is enriched by skilled playworkers

Qualified, skilled playworkers are trained to put children's play needs at the centre of their work in a variety of settings, enhancing the range and quality of play experiences for all children. They are the best people to run staffed play provision for school-aged children. The role of the playworker is as important as that of any skilled professional working with children and should be respected and rewarded accordingly.

Children need time and space to play at school

The school day should allow time for children to relax and play freely with their friends. 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.

Children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play

Children and young people living away from home or visiting unfamiliar or controlled environments such as hospital, prison, immigration centres, and residential homes and schools, sometimes experience fear, anxiety and discomfort. For these children it is especially important to ensure they have good play opportunities facilitated by trained staff and volunteers.



"It is becoming increasingly clear through research on the brain as well as in other areas of study, that childhood needs play."

Tina Bruce, Professor,
London Metropolitan University



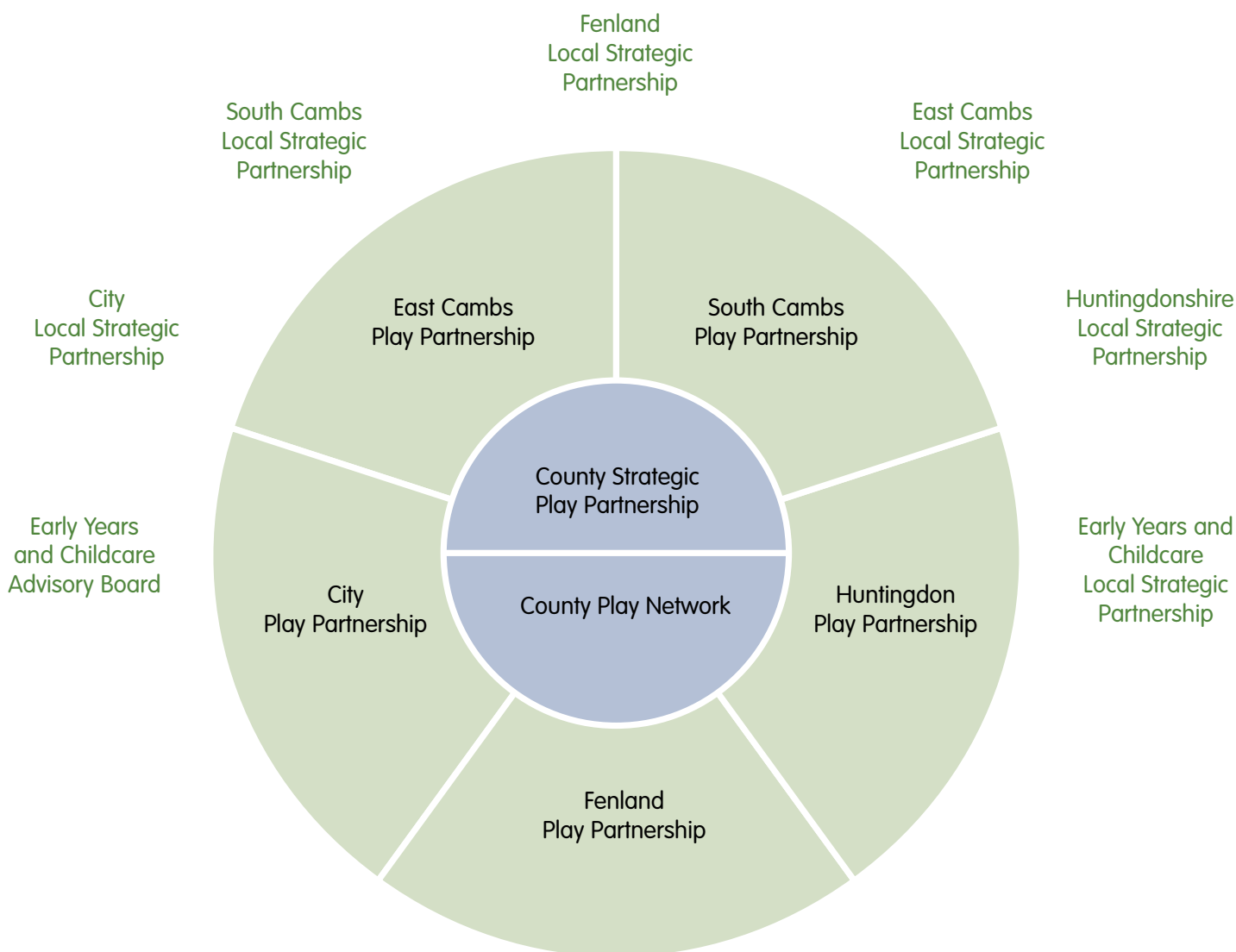
County Play Partnership Interface

Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

City and South Cambs Area Partnership

Fenland and East Cambs Area Partnership

Huntingdonshire Area Partnership



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Early Years and Childcare Service
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