



BIG on PLAY



A Summary of the
Warwick District Play Strategy

2007-2012



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Foreword

As both Chairman of Warwick District Council and also its Children's Play Champion, I am delighted to introduce this Summary of the Play Strategy for Warwick District 2007–2012.

The Strategy was developed following extensive consultation with not only children and young people but also their parents and carers and confirms our commitment to ensuring that all children of the District are able to access a wide and varied range of play opportunities.

Play makes a considerable contribution to the lives of children and young people and the Strategy identifies a series of actions that we will undertake to improve the public realm as a child friendly environment, helping in the process to make Warwick District a great place to live, work and visit.

**Councillor Mrs Judith Falp, Children's Play Champion,
Chairman of Warwick District Council.**

1. Introduction

The right to play is a child's first claim on the community. Play is nature's training for life. No community can infringe that right without doing deep and enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens.

David Lloyd George 1926

Play is essential for children's healthy development and well-being. As children grow up, the ability to meet up with friends, to visit the local park, leisure centre or shops under their own steam, is central to their developing competence. Being able to have fun in public spaces and participate in cultural life is one of the hallmarks of a vital and vibrant community and the District of Warwick has much to offer.

Yet a recent consultation exercise with parents, carers and the wider adult community has revealed that whilst great importance is placed on the ability of children and young people to play, in today's society, there are many barriers that prevent this from being a reality.

Children and young people of the District have also told us, that whilst they themselves place a considerable emphasis on having a wide and varied range of different play experiences, fears for their own personal safety and their inability to access play environments of quality have restricted their right to just be themselves at the heart of their own community.

The Play Strategy for Warwick District 2007–2012, has been developed to address the issues and barriers that prevent children aged 0–19 from playing naturally and to support the establishment of quality play environments for all of the District's children and young people.

The strategy looks at the term play

in relation to all activity children and young people partake in for their own intrinsic enjoyment and as such it is recognised that play environments of quality can be extremely diverse in their setting.

Research has indicated that children more than anything like their play space to be visible and readily accessible, to be at the heart of their community and the environments in which they are familiar and where they feel socially secure. Whilst this could relate to physical play on purpose built structures, it is also about having access to natural play environments such as green and wooded spaces or simply the right to play safely on the street, within the vicinity of their own home.

Picture the impact that David Attenborough would have if he argued that children out of doors are just as good an indicator of the quality of their habitats as wild salmon are of theirs, and deserved just as much protection.

Tim Gill

2. How did we develop the Play Strategy ?

The development of the Play Strategy began during the summer of 2006 when an initial launch workshop was held with the Play Strategy Steering Group. Comprised of a range of Elected Members, Council Officers and representatives from partner organisations, this group had previously worked together as the Young Persons' Facilities Working Party. During the initial launch event the scope, key principles and objectives for the Play Strategy were agreed together with the establishment of a project plan to ensure that the development process remained focused and timely.

2.1 What is the Play Strategy?

The Play Strategy for Warwick District was developed by Warwick District Council and its partners with the support of a number of agencies working both within Warwick District and across the county of Warwickshire.

It provides a series of key actions that are supported by policies and based on the needs, wishes and ideas of children, young people, parents, carers and adults living and working within the District.

The play strategy encompasses all aspects of play in children's and young people's lives and will be delivered within the strategic framework of the following documents:

- **Community Plan for Warwick District 2005–2020.**
- **WDC Corporate Strategy 2008– 2011**
- **Children and Young People's Plan for the County of Warwickshire 2007–2008**
- **Play Policy for the County of Warwickshire 2007**





3 What are the Aims and Objectives ?

The fundamental aim of the Play Strategy is to improve children and young people’s play opportunities and experiences. This will be achieved by Warwick District Council and its partners working together to achieve the following key objectives

Objective 1

Improve the public realm as a child friendly environment, ensuring that all parks, thoroughfares, housing estates and other public spaces within the District, are as conducive as possible to play.

Objective 2

Promote the importance of play in relation to children and young people’s health, well-being and personal development, to all those that have an influence.

Objective 3

Develop a joined up approach to the distribution of play resources, striking a balance based on need between supervised and unsupervised provision.

Objective 4

Work to reduce the barriers that prevent form accessing and playing in the general public domain

Objective 5

Aim to offer all children and young people the chance to encounter acceptable risks in stimulating and challenging play environments

3.1 Who is the Strategy for?

Everybody within the community will benefit from an environment that supports the development and welfare of children. Predominately however, the Play Strategy is for:

- All children and young people between the age of 0-19, their parents, carers and families.
- Elected members and officers of Warwick District Council who have an influence over children and young people’s opportunities to play.
- Those who directly offer services, staff and volunteers, to children and their families, including; nurseries, child minders, play schemes, out of school groups, play buses, open access schemes and youth clubs.
- Those persons, agencies or groups who have an interest in the development of quality play and play services for children and young people.

4 Setting the scene

4.1 What is Play?

Children and our own childhood experiences tell us that play includes but is not necessarily limited to:

Running, climbing, skipping, hiding, playing with ropes, jumping, practising cartwheels, throwing and kicking balls, making friends, falling out, growing things, telling stories, climbing trees, taking risks, getting wet, exploring nature, building dens, getting dirty, dressing up, keeping animals, digging holes, swinging on tyres, shouting, fighting, inventing games, making things, painting pictures, talking with friends or just sitting.

Although we all recognise it when we see it, play is actually very difficult to define. The national occupational standards of the play work, childcare and early years professions define play as:

“freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. It can be fun or serious... by playing, children learn and develop as individuals and as members of the community”.

The DCMS report 2004 “Getting serious about play” uses the straightforward description of play as:

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

4.2 What are the benefits of Play ?

- Play is a Part of Education
- Play allows children the chance to explore their environment, to learn how it works and how they relate to it. Play benefits as an activity, which fosters the development of a range of personal and social skills.
- Play presents a child with the opportunities of choice, freedom and control as well as a wide range of physical, social and intellectual experiences.
- To a child, play can present benefits both at the time of play or as the play evolves. Over time play can enhance self-esteem, respect, social inclusion, wellbeing, healthy growth, creativity, knowledge and understanding.
- Play is Essential for the Physical and Mental Health of the Child
- Play is an active and healthy pursuit enabling and promoting physical mobility. It is a means by which children develop, learn basic motor skills and improve co-ordination, balance and dexterity.
- Play can allow children to deal with certain situations and feelings using play in a spontaneous way to work through emotions, possibly retelling and sometimes reworking experiences through their pretend play, story creation and artwork.
- When playing, a child demonstrates independence and imagination to present themselves and their character. Play allows children to test themselves and become aware of their physical strengths and limitations.
- Play is an Essential Part of Family and Community Life
- Play is a social activity that allows for interaction with other children and adults. It helps children integrate with others and gain understanding through experimentation with different social roles. This has benefits to the child in sharing ideas and responsibilities whilst also communicating their thoughts and feelings for desired outcomes.
- The benefits of child's play extend to the wider community, having a positive impact on issues such as anti social behaviour, community safety, youth crime and other common community problems.

- Play can also bring community benefits in terms of employment, volunteering and training for those working with children and young people.

4.3 What are the barriers to Play ?

Children are being poisoned by a “junk culture” of processed food, computer games and over-competitive education. There is less room for reading, for dreaming, for music, for drama, for art, and simply for playing.

Michael Morpurgo, children’s author

The existence of 32 million vehicles has been the single biggest impact on children’s freedom.

K Worpole, Places to Play, National Conference, Oct 2006

Children and young people commonly identify many barriers to play, recreation and their enjoyment of public space. These include fears for their safety, especially from bullying, traffic, dirty, boring or run-down play areas and parks, lack of choice and lack of access.

Parents and the wider community strongly believe that children today have fewer opportunities to play than they did as children, and are spending too much time watching television or using computers. This is a serious concern for many adults.

Studies show dramatic decreases in children’s independent mobility, a major factor in their access to play opportunities. For example, the proportion of seven and eight-year-olds walking unaccompanied to school fell from 80 per cent in 1971 to nine per cent in 1990.

While fear of ‘stranger danger’ is often cited as a major reason, other studies have shown that traffic is the more significant factor. One study demonstrated that, where traffic is slower, parents allow their children to play outdoors in much greater numbers than in similar streets where it is faster.

Children and young people themselves talk about being prevented from playing out in public.

In the 2003 Playday Survey of 7 to 16-year olds, two-thirds said they like to play outside daily, mostly to meet friends, but:

- four in five said they had been told off for playing outdoors
- half said they had been shouted at for playing outdoors
- one in three aged 7 to 11 said being told off stopped them playing outdoors
- 11-year-olds said they were told off more than any other age group.

The following list of barriers preventing play were provided by delegates at the Play England Places to Play Conference, October 2006, and strongly reflect the views expressed by children, young people and adults living within the District.

1. Cars – the biggest threat to children’s freedom to play
2. No Ball Games, no dens, no tree houses, no rope swings, no play!
3. New developments that leave out play space
4. Play areas that are built without consulting children
5. Play areas designed solely for the under eight’s
6. Complaining neighbours.

7. Parks and gardens departments who don't appreciate the value of natural play
8. School playgrounds – lack of understanding and willingness to allow children to Play
9. Isolated playgrounds that are havens for vandals and children who bully
10. Lack of funding

4.4 Inequalities and social exclusion

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

Alison John, for Kidsactive and the Better Play Awards

For disabled children, negative attitudes and inaccessible physical environments compound the general problems experienced by most children, creating enormous social and physical barriers to the enjoyment of their right to play independently. Throughout the UK, there is evidence that disabled children do not enjoy equality of access to play and leisure activities. A recent survey of 1,000 parents of disabled children demonstrated how their children were excluded from ordinary leisure opportunities. Parks and playgrounds were the least user-friendly, with few facilities for disabled people.

People from minority ethnic communities represent 7.1 per cent of Warwick District's population. The largest community is of people of Indian descent, but there are also sizeable populations of Pakistani, Afro-Caribbean and Chinese families.

Research has shown that certain minority ethnic groups are disproportionately excluded from play provision. For example, Asian children – and girls in particular – are widely discouraged from attending mainstream play services owing to a range of cultural pressures.

4.5 Negative perceptions about young people

Groups of children or young people 'hanging out' in the public domain are often characterised as posing a threat or a nuisance, even when they are simply enjoying being together. Many children and young people complain that they do not have access to space that is theirs, or which they are welcome to share with adults, and that they are consequently scapegoated.

We want young people to flourish and if we want to divert [them] from anti-social behaviour, thinking about what the community can provide really counts. Some adults perceive teenagers on the streets as a problem and teenagers want safe spaces to hang out. Surely we must somehow be able to square that circle.

Margaret Hodge, Former Minister for Children and Families

Young people are often represented as the perpetrators of crime, and yet it is clear that in terms of parks and green spaces they see themselves as the victims. They suffer anti-social behaviour in the form of bullying from other age groups but also on the part of adults – ranging from the possibility of attack in unlit areas to adults allowing their dogs to roam loose in children's areas. Contrary to expectations, young people are also very concerned about issues of maintenance in parks and green spaces.

A report by Groundwork for the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce, 2002



5 Managing Risk in Play

Sensible health and safety is about managing risks, not eliminating them all. The HSE is not in the business of stamping out simple pleasures wherever they appear and at whatever cost. We recognise the benefits to children's development of play, which necessarily involves some risk, and this shouldn't be sacrificed in the pursuit of the unachievable goal of absolute safety.

Health and Safety Executive, 2005

There is an increasingly growing culture of blame and litigation.

This has left providers of play facilities more and more concerned about minimising the chances of even minor accidents for fear of being taken to court.

It is widely recognised that play facilities which offer no challenges cannot contribute much to a child's development, quickly become boring, under used and ultimately a waste of valuable resources.

Worse still, this scenario could cause children to seek excitement elsewhere often at much greater danger to themselves and other people. This is an obvious possible result when play facilities lack challenge, are closed because of fear of litigation or because insurance premiums have been increased.

Consultation carried out as part of the Play Review 2004 revealed strong concern about the damaging impact of an overly cautious approach to safety.

The fundamentals of play involve creativity of thought, challenge, fun and excitement for those engaged. Play fosters a degree of risk and experimentation which will actively involve children and young people for large periods of time. However, with growing concerns about children's safety, play providers are becoming lost amidst increasing fears of litigation from even the most minor of accidents.

This fear has a jeopardising effect on children's play opportunities and child development, as a play area with no element of challenge will hold no benefit to its users.

Play areas may become so boring that children seek excitement elsewhere often at a much greater danger to themselves and other people

Getting serious about play DCMS 2004

Children and young people need and want to take risks. Concepts of acceptable risk and unacceptable risk are critical to making informed judgements about what constitutes the best possible play environment.

Warwick District supports the Play Safety Forums statement "Managing the Risk in Play Provision" and strives to ensure that risks are managed and controlled so far as is reasonably practicable while allowing the potential benefits to be delivered.



5.1 Summary Statement, 'Managing Risk in Play Provision'

All children and young people both need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities. It is the job of all those responsible for children at play to assess and manage the level of risk, so that children are given the chance to stretch themselves, test and develop their abilities without exposing them to unacceptable risks. If we do not provide controlled opportunities for children to encounter and manage risk then they may be denied the chance to learn these skills. They may also be more likely to choose to play in uncontrolled environments where the risks are greater.

Therefore it is acceptable that in play provision children may be exposed to the risk of minor and easily-healed injuries such as bruises, grazes or sprains.

Providers should strike a balance between the risks and the benefits. This should be done on the basis of a risk assessment. Crucially, this risk assessment should involve a risk-benefit trade-off between safety and other goals, which should be spelt out in the provider's policy.

Play Safety Forum



6 Where are we now in relation to Play?

Within the District there are a wide variety of agencies that are involved in children’s play. These include Warwick District Council, Warwickshire County Council, Parish Councils the voluntary and private sectors.

In terms of general opportunities for outdoor recreation, Warwick District Council provides:

- **475 hectares of open space**
- **47 Fixed Play Areas**
- **4 Skate parks**
- **6 Multi-Use Games Areas**
- **2 BMX Tracks**
- **7 Teen Shelters**
- **22 tennis courts**
- **6 bowling greens**
- **8 local nature reserves**
- **40 outdoor sports pitches**

In order to assess the current position in relation to play opportunities that are available within the District, an integral part of the review process was to establish a basis against which performance could be measured.

In order to achieve this we concentrated on 3 main themes.

6.1 How accessible and inclusive is current Play provision ?

How easy is it for all children and young people within the District, to play naturally within their own community?

Children and young people’s play and informal recreation takes place in a wide variety of facilities and spaces, some of which are specifically designed for the purpose or have a different function but have become naturally adopted as a play space by local children.

Warwick District Council shares the view of the Children’s Play Council that the primary aim of investment in and support for play, should be to increase the numbers and frequency of children and young people, from all social groups, playing freely in their local neighbourhood.

Whilst it is accepted that private fee charging play provision has a role within the community, the aim of the play strategy for Warwick District is to ensure that wherever they live or spend the majority of their free time, children and young people should have access to spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation, which meet the three frees test, and as such:

- **are free of charge, where they are free to come and go and free to choose what they do whilst there**
- **are accessible, welcoming and engaging for all, including those who are disabled or have specific needs and wishes**
- **allow for the differing needs of people of different ages and with different interests**

6.2 What is the quality of the various Play opportunities ?

Quality of play opportunities can be very difficult to define as children will play in an extremely wide and diverse range of areas. For the purpose of this Play Strategy however, quality was measured against:

- The criteria for an enriched play environment provided within the Audit Commissions Best Value Performance Indicator 115.
- The Seven Best Play Objectives as developed by the Children’s Play Council and published in Best Play: What Play Provision should do for Children. 2001
- Judgments based on levels of use.

BVPI 115

Judgements about quality in provision will be based on the degree to which children are provided with opportunities to experience directly:

- the natural elements – earth, air, fire and water
- fabricated and natural materials and tools – consumables, ‘loose parts’
- challenge – in the physical environment, in the social context and in private
- free movement – running, jumping, climbing, rolling, balancing
- emotions – both painful and pleasurable, the chance to validate a range of feelings
- a variety of stimulation to the senses – hearing, taste, smell, touch, sight
- play with identity – drama, dressing up, role plays, masks, face painting
- varied social interactions – freely chosen across the age, ability, gender, ethnic and cultural barriers, co-operating, resolving conflict, chatting,
- change – building/demolishing, transforming environments, the effect of the seasons and weather, growth and decay, predicting and planning, interesting physical environments – plantings, varied levels, enclosed/open spaces, mounds, steps, walls, shelters, surfaces, platforms, seating, privacy, vistas, flexibility.



Audit Commission Seven Best Play Objectives

Objective 1

Extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.

Objective 2

Recognises the child's need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need.

Objective 3

Manages the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.

Objective 4

Maximises the range of play opportunities

Objective 5

Fosters independence and healthy self- esteem

Objective 6

Fosters the child's respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction

Objective 7

Fosters the child's wellbeing, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn

6.3 Quantity

How many play opportunities both formal and informal are currently available and their position in relation to where children and young people live?



7 Consultation

We will involve partners and the public in Council business to help inform decision making.
Warwick District Council, Corporate Strategy 2003 – 2007

During the autumn and winter months of 2006, a widespread programme of consultation with the community took place and involved the distribution of 1200 questionnaires to children and young people within school and leisure settings, 120 questionnaires to parents and carers, 1000 questionnaires to members of the Citizens panel, 18 questionnaires to all the rural Parish Councils and 4 questionnaires to the Town Councils.

In addition, meetings took place with representatives of organisations supporting play opportunities for children and young people with disabilities and special needs, interviews were held with senior officers of Warwick District Council and meetings were held with officers of Warwickshire County Council.

Play England also organised a regional seminar that actively involved representatives of the County Council, Play England and other play strategy leaders and Play Champions within the County of Warwickshire.

7.1 Results and Findings of the Consultation Programme Children and Young People's Questionnaire

1200 questionnaires were distributed to schools, young people's activity events and leisure centres, with the aim of establishing the most popular free play areas and activities, and the barriers that prevent children and young people from making full use of play opportunities.

Summary of findings from the Children and Young People's Questionnaire Where do children and young people most like to go in their free leisure time?

The survey identified that the most popular place for children and young people to go in their leisure time was their friend's house, which accounted for 39% of the responses. This was then followed by the local park and recreation ground 15%, the street near to their house 12%, the local play area 12%, the local shops 8.5%, woods or canals 6.5%, the skate park 4% and the BMX area 2.7%.

What did they most like to do when there?

The most popular response was to meet and chat with friends, which accounted for 18% of responses. This was followed by riding bicycles 17%, inventing games 14%, playing ball games 13.5%, exploring 13%, building dens 10%, climbing trees 10% and skateboarding 4%.

How often do they go to their most favoured place to play?

61% of the children and young people questioned said that they went to their favourite place more than once per week with 39% saying less than once per week.



What was the main reason for choosing this location?

29% said having many things to do was the main reason for going to their favourite location, home 24%, catching up with friends 23%, easy to get to 12% and a feeling of safety 12%.

How often do children and young people visit their local play area?

45% of children and young people said that they visit the local play area less than once per week, with 29% saying that they don't use the local play area. 26% of children responding said that they use the play area more than once per week.

What stops children and young people from visiting the local play area more often?

43% of those who took part in the survey said that the main reason for not wanting to go to the local play area was boring or limited facilities. This was followed by the play area being too far away 27%, not looked after very well 18%, and not feeling safe 12%.

How often do children and young people visit their local park or recreation ground?

50% of children questioned said that they visit the local park less than once per week. 34% said that they that they visit more than once per week whilst 16% did not visit the local park.

What was the main reason for not visiting the local park more often?

45% of those questioned suggested that boring or limited facilities was the main reason for not visiting the local park. This was followed by 26% who said that it was too far away, 15% who said that they didn't always feel safe and 14% felt the park wasn't looked after very well.

What stops children and young people from feeling safe when playing outside with friends?

A fear of gangs, 29%, and strangers, 29%, were the main reasons for children and young people not feeling safe when playing outside. This was closely followed by fears about road traffic, 25%, fear of bullying, 9%, and being told off by adults, 8%.

What would be the most important feature if children and young people could design their own perfect place to play?

41% of children and young people questioned, suggested that an interesting landscape where they could run, jump, hide, make dens etc, would be the most important feature of a perfect place to play. This was followed by being away from cars and traffic, 24%, lots of play equipment, 22%, and an adult to keep an eye on things 11%.

Should parents/carers be encouraged to support and join in their children's leisure activities?

68% of children and young people thought that parents and carers should be encouraged to join in their leisure activities.



Age profile

73% of the children and young people questioned were between the age of 5 and 11. 20% were between the age of 12–14 and 7% between the age of 15–19.

Gender

Male 52%
Female 48%

Parent and Carers Questionnaire

This survey aimed to identify how much emphasis parents and carers place on their children being able to play outside, the barriers that could prevent this, the role of parents and carers in supporting children's play and how Warwick District Council could more effectively support children's play

Summary of findings from the Parents and Carers Questionnaire

Do parents and carers think that being able to play outside is important to children and young people?

100 % of the parents and carers questioned thought that it was important for children and young people to play outside.

What are the main barriers preventing children and young people from playing outside

52 % of parents and carers believed that safety was the most significant barrier preventing children and young people from playing outside, citing road traffic, fear of strangers and bullying as the main reasons.

Following this 20% of parents and carers thought that computer games and television were another significant barrier followed by busy life styles, vandalism to facilities and play time taken up by the need to do homework.

Did parents and carers think that they themselves should have a role in supporting and encouraging children's play?

100% of parents and carers said that they should have a role in supporting play, particularly by encouraging children to play outside, 24%, joining in play activities with their children, 18%, setting an example, 10.5%, supervision, 10%, supporting more imaginative and creative play, 8.5% and helping children to become more street wise 6%.



Could Warwick District Council do more to encourage children's play? If so, what should the Council be doing?

17% of responses suggested that Warwick District Council should provide more organised play events, repair vandalised play areas faster 14.5%, increase parks supervision 13 % make play areas more age appropriate and challenging, 11%, provide better cycle paths 6.5% and more natural play areas using sand logs etc 5%. Other comments included better control of dogs and make play areas more family friendly,

Citizens panel

As part of the consultation programme questions relating to children and young people were sent to the citizen panel which features 1000 members.

When asked if they thought there should be more opportunities for young people to enjoy constructive activities outside of school hours 82% of those responding thought that this was important.

When asked if they thought enhancing young people's feeling of safety in the public environment should be a council objective, 80% said this was also important.

7.2 Consultation – Double R Play Scheme

Most children can play on a variety of normal play equipment but all children can play on equipment designed for special needs' let's really make a difference

Parent and Committee member

The Double R Play scheme is run specifically for disabled children between the ages of 4 to 18 in the Warwick District area. As part of the consultation programme, in order to establish the level of provision of play opportunities for disabled children, meetings were held with members of the group and also a number of written responses were received.

There was a very strong feeling amongst the group that play opportunities for children with disabilities were not being adequately catered for within the District. Issues around access were a common problem as was the choice of play equipment in many of the main play areas, including the recently refurbished Jephson Garden facility which lacked an all inclusive play item.



8 Audit of Play opportunities

In order to arrive at a sound understanding of children and young people's play opportunities within the District to help guide the development of the Play Strategy a thorough audit was undertaken which identified the range of play provision available

8.1 Equipped Play facilities

These facilities are located in the following areas.

Fixed Play Areas

Kenilworth

- Abbey Fields Play Area – Abbey Fields
- Bates Memorial Park – Hermitage Way
- Castle Farm Play Area – Fishponds Road
- Farmer Ward Play Area – Ebourne Close
- Glendale Avenue Play Area – Glendale Avenue
- Red Lane Play Area – Red Lane
- St John's Play Area – Guy Road

Warwick

- Canalside Play Area – Greenway
- Hatton Park – Barcheston Road
- Mander Grove Play Area – Mander Grove
- Millbank Play Area – Millbank
- Pattens Road Play Area – Pattens Road
- Priory Pools Play Area – Lyttleton Road
- Saltisford Common Play Area – St Michaels Road
- St Nicholas Park – Banbury Road
- Twycross Walk Play Area – Twycross Walk
- Warwick Gates (East) Play Area – Othello Avenue
- Warwick Gates (West) Play Area – Ophelia Drive

Leamington

- Avonside Play Area – Riversleigh Road
- Calder Walk Play Area – Danesbury Crescent
- Cubbington Waterworks Play Area – Cubbington Road
- Eagle Recreation Ground – Eagle Street
- Elizabeth Road Play Area – Elizabeth Road
- Fallow Hill Play Area – Sydenham Drive

- Guys Cliffe Open Space – Guys Cliffe Avenue
- Kennedy Square Play Area – Kennedy Square
- Mason Avenue Play Area – Mason Avenue
- Midland Oak Open Space – Lillington Road
- Mill Gardens – Mill Road
- Newbold Comyn (Paul Putz) – Newbold Comyn Country Park
- Newbold Comyn (Public House) – Newbold Comyn Country Park
- Redland Road Recreation Area – Redland Road
- Roxburgh Croft Play Area – Roxborough Croft
- Rushmore Street Play Area – Rushmore Street
- Saxon Meadows Play Area – Saxon Meadows
- Shrublands Play Area – Bury Road
- Stamford Gardens Play Area – Stamford Gardens
- The Dell Play Area – Beauchamp Hill
- The Holt Recreation Ground – The Holt
- Victoria Park – Archery Road
- Villiers Street Recreation Ground – Villiers Street
- Windmill Road Play Area – Windmill Road
- Wych Elm Drive Play Area – Wych Elm.
- Cox's Orchard Play Area – Anthony Gardner Crescent, Whitnash
- Weston Under Wetherley – Sabin Drive

Skate Parks

- KSAG Castle Farm SK8 Park, Castle Farm Recreation Ground. Kenilworth
- St. Nick's Skate Park, St. Nicholas Park. Warwick
- Newbold Comyn Skate Park, Newbold Comyn Park

- Acre Close Skate Park, Acre Close Park. Whitnash

BMX Tracks

- Champion Hills. Clarendon
- St. Nicholas Park. Warwick

Multi- Use Games Areas

- Hatton Park
- Budbrooke
- Radford Semele Recreation Ground. Radford Semele
- Bubbenhall Recreation Ground. Cubbington
- Leek Wooton Recreation Ground. Leek Wooton
- Bishops Tachbrook Recreation Ground.
Bishops Tachbrook

- Acre Close Recreation Ground. Whitnash

Teen Shelters

- Guy Road. St Johns
- Barford Recreation Ground. Budbrooke
- Castle Farm. Kenilworth
- St. Nicholas Park. Warwick
- Bishops Tachbrook Recreation Ground. Bishops
Tachbrook
- Acre Close Recreation Ground. Whitnash
- Mason Avenue Sports Area. Crown

Fixed play provision within the District has recently undergone a major refurbishment programme which followed a widespread programme of public consultation. However, further recent consultation with parents and children as part of the play strategy development process revealed a number of issues about the quality of fixed play areas. In response to these concerns, a detailed audit was carried out by experienced playground inspection personnel.

This audit identified that 19 sites suffered from vandalism and misuse on a regular and frequent basis. When asked if they would consider letting their own children visit the play areas, the staff carrying out the audit said:

- Yes, 13 sites
- Yes, but with adult supervision, 20 sites
- No, 14 sites





9 What did we find ?

Consultation with children, young people, parents carers and representative groups has provided a wealth of information in respect of the quality, quantity and accessibility of play opportunities within the District.

9.1 Barriers preventing Play

Personal safety

Safety is one of the main factors and the only way to ensure that play areas are safe from gangs, strangers etc would be to have them patrolled (even on a parent rota)

Parent

The most significant message arising from consultation programme was how fears about safety were preventing children and young people from accessing the general public domain and in particular places to play. Busy roads and fears about strangers and gangs featured strongly in the responses particularly from parents and carers.

In support of this finding, other studies have demonstrated that children play outside far more when traffic speed is restricted and that the fear of abduction was actually an effect of children not being able to play rather than its cause.

If children and young people within the District are to experience a full range of play opportunities, steps need to be taken to address fears about safety.

In the vast majority of cases however statistics indicate that such fears are a perception rather than a reality and raising awareness of this, together with promoting the need for children and young people to play will have a positive outcome.

There is also a need to consider increasing the levels of adult supervision particularly on main recreation areas and providing more in the way of organised play events.

9.2 Equipped Play facilities

We never go to our nearest play area because there is little to play on and lots of dog mess and mud.

Bubbenhall play area is great, not very big but lot's of a variety and a mini adventure course.

Parent comments

Despite a recent £1,000,000 refurbishment programme and an acknowledgment from the audit commission that play areas contained 'quality innovative play equipment' many children and young people felt that equipped play facilities were boring.

Fears about litigation and consequent close adherence to European Safety recommendations have resulted in play facilities that offer little in the way of challenge or excitement. The effect of this has been to stop children from enjoying a healthy range of play opportunities and therefore limiting their enjoyment.

Parents and carers also cited vandalism of play areas as a significant issue and this itself is one of the consequences of play facilities that lack interest and challenge.

Consultation with representatives of the RR Play Scheme raised a number of issues regarding the quality of play areas in terms of their use by children with disabilities and as such will be treated as a priority within the strategy action plan.

- **The information provided by the audit, consultation and the playground inspectors evaluation raises a number of issues regarding the value of many fixed play sites within the District and as such warrants a further in depth review.**

9.3 Parks, open spaces and natural areas for play

Although they play on the equipment provided, they spend a lot of time in some trees (hiding, dens etc.). Some rough ground as well as cut grass is therefore a good idea

I think that play areas are a bit tame. I usually take my kids to Crackley Woods or The Common where they can charge about, climb trees, play 'army'.

Natural and simple environments are good too. Recently my kids played for ages on some fallen logs in Priory Park, Warwick.

Parents' comments

Consultation has revealed that natural play environments where children can run around, hide, make dens, explore etc. are extremely popular with children and consultation with parents revealed that they support these type of activities. It is also recognised that parks, open spaces and woodlands etc can provide many of the play experiences featured within the **BVPI 115** criteria for an enriched play environment.

Natural play facilities also have the advantage of being considerably less expensive to provide than equipped play areas and can have other advantages for example, helping to support biodiversity. However, the same fears around personal safety and the need for more adult supervision will still be relevant.

9.4 Parish Councils

Parish Councils are responsible for provision of play opportunities within their own individual area and whilst technical and expert support is available from officers of the District Council, requests are on a generally ad hoc basis. There is an opportunity therefore to develop a more effective partnership between the Parishes and the District Council.

This will ensure greater co-ordination of resources and offer other advantages, for example, the exchange of ideas and information in relation to developing better play opportunities.



10 How are we going to implement the Play Strategy?

10.1 Play Development Group

To ensure an efficient and effective strategic delivery of play services, a Play Development Group will be created that is co-ordinated by a designated lead officer, and consist of representatives from both Warwick District Council, Warwickshire County Council and other local children and youth organisations.

The aim of the group will be to act as the District's lead body and reference point for all services making decisions that may have an impact on children and young people's play; and to be responsible for implementation and monitoring of the play strategy.

The Play Development Group will be responsible for:

- Raising the awareness of play
- Publicising, promoting and disseminating the play policy and strategy
- Developing a coherent, cohesive and co-ordinated approach to the development of play opportunities
- Ensuring all services providing play experiences will make decisions with reference to the play policy
- Encouraging and supporting all play providers to adopt and implement the play policy and strategy
- Developing partnerships across different forms of provision and between departments, sectors, organisations and projects
- Identifying additional funding sources for play and disseminating funding information to relevant groups
- Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the play policy and strategy
- Carry out reviews of arrangements for the management of operations within a department, between departments interested in or involved in the development of play and make recommendations
- Stimulating the creation of joint projects and partnerships in support of children's play



11 Summary of the Play Strategy Action Plan

Objective 1

Improve the public realm as a child friendly environment, ensuring that all parks, thoroughfares, housing estates and other public spaces within the District, are as conducive as possible to play

- Carry out a review of fixed play facilities and the processes involved in their establishment, management and maintenance
- Identify options to increase adult supervision at key sites
- Improve number of play orientated organised activities through Play Ranger initiatives
- Develop natural play features within Parks and Open Spaces
- Increased use of landscape features, logs, sand, mounds.
- Provide improved access to woodlands etc as areas for play
- Establish dog free play zones in parks and open spaces
- Improve play opportunities for disabled children and young people
- Review the use of the six acre standard in determining play facilities with greater emphasis on need and quality
- Consult with disabled children representative organisations on their use of parks, open spaces and play areas
- Ensure that when planning permission is sought for play facilities the needs of disabled users are addressed
- Develop a local standard in relation to play opportunities
- Negotiate wider use of school grounds for local groups
- Seek external funding streams in order to resource the development of new projects including Big Lottery Woodland Grants
- Develop an effective communication network between all who provide play opportunities
- Provide and share clear, accurate information about play activities and facilities

Objective 2

Promote the importance of play in relation to children and young people's health, well-being and personal development, to all that have influence

- Promote the adoption of the play policy throughout the Council etc, in particular to those who could have an impact on the quality of play opportunities
- Promote and distribute the play strategy to local organisations and interested parties
- Develop a charter for play based on objectives and circulated across the district
- Develop a play website providing further consultation opportunities and disseminating district play information
- Develop stronger working relationships with Parish Councils in relation to play opportunities
- Raise the awareness and value of play to all voluntary sector groups through networks and neighbourhood partnerships
- Campaign to raise the importance of play with parents, carers and the wider community

Objective 3

Develop a joined up approach to the distribution of play resources

- Ensure that all decisions taken within the Council that could effect children's right to play are referred to the Play Development Group for comment prior to endorsement
- Identify all expenditure on play within Warwick District Council with the aim of maximising play value from available resources
- Develop and effective partnership with the County Council in respect of play provision
- Establish a district wide Play Forum for Parish and Town Councils

Objective 4

Work to reduce the barriers preventing children and young people from accessing and playing in the general public domain

- Prioritise traffic-calming measures in residential areas
 - Explore the development of 'Home Zones'
 - Promote road safety initiatives
 - Review policies and procedures regarding, ball games, den building, rope swings tree climbing by children and young people

Objective 5

Aim to offer all children and young people the chance to encounter acceptable risks in stimulating and challenging environments

- Adopt and incorporate the Play Safety Forum's statement into individual policies
- Review risk assessment mechanisms ensuring a balance between risk and benefits





This information can be made available in other formats, including: large print, cassette tape, CD or other languages if required.
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