



Policies and play

The impact of national policies on children's opportunities for play

Dr Sacha Powell and Dr Ian Wellard
Canterbury Christ Church University

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Glossary of terms and abbreviations

Big Lottery Fund (BIG) Children's Play initiative	A strategic programme for children's play supported by an allocation of £155 million from the Big Lottery Fund
BV(PI)	Best Value (Performance Indicator) is a statutory mechanism by which local authorities monitor and review their economy, efficiency and effectiveness
CABE	Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
CCCU	Canterbury Christ Church University
CPC	Children's Play Council (London)
CYPP	A statutory Children and Young People's Plan summarises key targets and priorities for improving children and young people's health, safety, achievements, positive contribution and economic well-being
DCA	Department of Constitutional Affairs
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media and Sport
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DEFRA	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DfT	Department for Transport
DH	Department of Health
ECM	Every Child Matters is a new government approach to supporting children's well-being through joined-up working towards five broad outcomes for every child
EU	European Union
Extended school	An extended school is one that provides a range of activities and services, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community (www.teachernet.gov.uk)
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
HMT	Her Majesty's Treasury
HO	The Home Office
Home zone	Home zones are an attempt to strike a balance between vehicular traffic and everyone else who uses the street, i.e. the pedestrians, cyclists, business people and residents. Home zones work through the physical alteration of streets and roads in an area (www.homezones.org)
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
JAR	A joint area review assesses what a local council and its partners are doing to improve outcomes for children and young people
LA	Local authority
LAA	Local Area Agreements are a voluntary, three-year agreement between central government, local authorities and their partners, which are designed to deliver national outcomes in a way that reflects local priorities (www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)
LAP	Local Area for Play
LEAP	Local Equipped Area for Play
LSP	A Local Strategic Partnership is made up of representatives of the public, private, community and voluntary sector within a local authority area
MUGA	Multi-Use Games Area

NATLL	National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries
NCB	National Children's Bureau
NEAP	Neighbourhood Area for Play
NECF	National Evaluation of the Children's Fund
NPFA	National Playing Fields Association
NRF	The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund is a special non-ring-fenced grant which has been made available to England's most deprived local authorities to enable them, in collaboration with their Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), to improve services, narrowing the gap between deprived areas and the rest of the country (www.neighbourhood.gov.uk)
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now incorporated into DCLG)
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
OPSI	Office for Public Sector Information
PAG	Policy Analysis Grids (designed for use in this study)
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PPG/PPS	Planning Policy Guidance/Planning Policy Statements are government statements about their policies in relation to planning
PSA	Public Service Agreements outline what government departments aim to deliver in return for the investment being made
ROSPA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
Section 106 Agreement	Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows a local planning authority (LPA) to enter into a legally binding agreement or planning obligation, with a land developer over a related issue (www.idea.gov.uk)
SS	Sure Start is the government programme intended to deliver the best start in life for every child by bringing together, early education, childcare, health and family support
TfL	Transport for London
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
VCN	Participants (in this study) from voluntary, community and national bodies

1. Summary and recommendations

Explanatory note

The analytical processes that were undertaken for this study are underpinned by an assumption that, unless otherwise stated, the word 'play' articulates children's activities that fundamentally are freely chosen, self-directed and intrinsically motivated. No particular age has been ascribed to a time when such activities cease to be called 'play', but it is also recognised that many older children and young people would not themselves refer to their activities as 'play'. As such, the phrase, 'informal recreational activities' has been used to generalise about the activities of older children and young people when these are freely chosen, self-directed and intrinsically motivated.

1. Background

- 1.1 Commissioned and funded by the Children's Play Council/Play England, the National Policy Play Impact Assessment project ran from September to December 2006.
- 1.2 The aim of this study was to assess the impact of national policies and legislation on children and young people's opportunities for play and informal recreational activities in England.
- 1.3 The researchers analysed a sample of 44 policy documents (2000 to 2006) from all relevant government departments. These included Acts of Parliament, statutory and non-statutory guidance, departmental reports, plans and strategies.
- 1.4 Twenty-four people (representing local authorities' play services, the voluntary and community play sector and national organisations with an association with play) took part in interviews or completed questionnaires about their experiences of the impact of policies on opportunities for play and informal recreational activities.

2. What the research showed

- 2.1 Recreational activities for children and young people regularly feature as an element of policies and legislation, but play is not always mentioned, even when policy documents are uniquely about children's free-time activities.
- 2.2 There appears to be no single, coherent government message about how play is understood and constructed. On the one hand, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport defines play in a similar way to the explanatory note above. But, on the other hand, play is also described in policy documents as 'adult-led' (which it cannot be if the definition is to be followed) or child-initiated or free (both of which are tautological descriptions and imply that play can be something other than child-led). This undoubtedly reflects the complexities and ambiguities of play that have been debated for decades, if not centuries.
- 2.3 Those working in local authorities with responsibility for promoting and providing play opportunities revealed that the allocation of Big Lottery funding was the single most significant, recent development in support of play. Interviewees expected this to have greater impact than any other national initiative, in spite of it not being linked to a statutory duty.
- 2.4 The potential exists for government publications about play to help promote and legitimise its importance as a discrete service for children and young people. Those publications that appear to be having the greatest impact are those over which play advocates and lobbyists

(including Play England) have had some influence. Government publications could also support the inclusion of play in the development of local and regional strategies and planning for children's services as a whole, and help to secure additional funding for play. However, there is insufficiently strong government drive and monitoring to ensure that mechanisms support consistent implementation of such measures. Implementation is dependent on local circumstances, primarily the interest and commitment of local personalities.

- 2.5 While the importance of play appears to be recognised to some extent by government departments, its value is predominantly seen to be instrumental – a means of achieving adult-derived outcomes and targets for children and society, demonstrating how the benefits of play can contribute to departmental priorities and targets. An alternative view is of play's intrinsic value to children, their daily lives and their enjoyment of childhood, where play is seen as an end in itself. This view is less frequently supported by government policy documents, but is seen as imperative by play specialists.
- 2.6 The way in which policy makers and providers interpret the value of play appears to shape the types of play experience that children are offered. Where an instrumental value is dominant, provision tends towards activities that are planned and led by adults (but which may be described by them as play). Where the intrinsic value prevails, provision seems more often to be in the form of providing opportunities where play can be freely chosen by the players themselves (as far as is possible within the boundaries of accessible spaces and resources).
- 2.7 The high profile accorded to the early years and childcare, and associated regulations for qualifications, training and provision have impacted on playwork and had a knock-on effect on play opportunities. There is an insufficiently clear distinction between the purposes of childcare and the purposes of provision for play and playwork, and this has led to inappropriately qualified personnel being responsible for children's play provision, which can itself lead to restricted or controlled experiences for children.
- 2.8 Even though they carry no statutory duty, government publications and guidance documents referring to play can be useful tools for promoting and legitimising the status of play, both as an important range of activities and as a discrete service for children. Such publications also have the potential to support play's inclusion in the development of local and regional strategies and planning for children's services as a whole, and may help to secure additional funding.
- 2.9 However, in government policy documents¹, play and informal recreational activities are relatively rarely promoted, whilst structured activities, primarily chosen and led by adults, are more commonly endorsed. Some exceptions to this do exist, but tend to appear when policy documents refer to children in the early years (birth to five or, less often, eight years) and even these include descriptions of 'play' as planned, purposeful or adult-led.
- 2.10 Play and informal recreational activities specifically for children aged eight and above are not mentioned in any policy document.² Where reference is made in policy documents to recreational activities for children and young people above the age of eight, this either relates to 'positive' activities for teenagers or structured activities in extended services provided by schools.
- 2.11 The term 'positive activities', referring to structured programmes for young people, by default can denigrate informal recreational activities, implying that they are *not* positive.

¹ This report was written prior to the government's *Children's Plan* being published in December 2007.

² When considering this finding, it should be noted that the study did not include analysis of policy documents pertaining to the Children's Fund, which covers the 5 to 13 years age bracket and may refer to play. But interviewees also highlighted this issue as being problematic in their experience.

This does not help to promote the importance to children and young people of opportunities for activities that are freely chosen, self-directed and intrinsically motivated.

- 2.12 The policy to develop extended school services offers extensive opportunities to make space for play – literally and metaphorically. However, there appears to be an emphasis on adult-initiated, structured activities. This can result in more children having fewer opportunities for play, partly because they may be involved in the structured activities and partly because the provision of such activities can jeopardise the existence of community-based alternatives that do offer play (e.g. open access provision).
- 2.13 Policy documents that do not relate solely to children and/or young people, but that nevertheless mention play, more strongly support the notion of play as a universal human right, thereby helping to support the UK's requirement to fulfil its UNCRC obligations.
- 2.14 Some policy documents aimed at those working in education or childcare mention the importance of play (generally its instrumental value), but at the same time appear not to recognise play as those activities/behaviours that are *uniquely* those which are freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated, either because space for such activities is not provided or because play is understood also to be 'adult-led'.
- 2.15 Although various activities for children are repeatedly mentioned in policy documents, provision of play opportunities appears hampered by the lack of a statutory requirement and/or lack of emphasis on its importance in government policy and guidance. This inhibits local providers' abilities to:
- make available and accessible a range of play opportunities for all children, including those who are often marginalised or socially excluded
 - sustain good-quality provision
 - provide opportunities for safe but challenging play and informal recreational activities
 - enable providers of play opportunities to gain an equal platform with other children's services in the development of cross-departmental and multi-agency plans and strategies
 - combat the continued attitude among some (non-play) professionals, parents and other members of communities that play is less important or valuable than other childhood activities, or is a nuisance or threat.
- 2.16 Policy and legislation are not always effective in combating discriminatory practices and attitudes towards children who are often excluded because of particular physical or socio-cultural attributes. This fact, together with a lack of specialist provision, means that there is unequal access to play opportunities for all children.
- 2.17 The provision of play opportunities by an array of local government departments and partnerships can lead to:
- differing understandings and interpretations of play (often according to the priorities of the central government department to which they are primarily accountable)
 - problems in ensuring that a range of play opportunities exist for all children and young people, whatever their circumstances
 - difficulties in working together
 - an incoherent approach to provision.
- This is being addressed to some extent by the development of local play strategies, but those responsible cannot always satisfactorily influence colleagues in other local authority tiers.
- 2.18 The increase in childcare provision is not complemented by government leadership, through the DfES, in promoting play that is freely chosen by children as a core element of extended services, particularly those aged five and over. This, and the lack of coordination

across local government, appears detrimental to the sustainability of free, open access play provision.

- 2.19 The high profile accorded to the early years and childcare provision, and associated regulations for qualifications, training and provision, have impacted on playwork and had a knock-on effect on play opportunities. There is an insufficiently clear distinction between the purposes of childcare and the purposes of provision for play and playwork, and this has led to inappropriately qualified personnel being responsible for children's play provision, which can itself lead to restricted or controlled play experiences.

3. Conclusions from the research

- 3.1 The publication of government reports on play and the allocation of Big Lottery funding are leading to some demonstrable, positive outcomes in terms of strategic planning for play. It is too early to say whether these have also resulted in more and better play opportunities per se.
- 3.2.1 Given that provision for play and informal recreational activities is not a statutory requirement, it is encouraging to note that some policies recognise the importance of play and make reference to play or recreation. On the whole, however, the more extensive references to play tend to be found within non-statutory policy documents. Where reference to play does appear in documents that convey statutory requirements, it tends to focus on the instrumental value rather than recognising play's intrinsic value and its status as a universal right of every child.
- 3.2.2 The Every Child Matters, Youth Matters and community regeneration policies provide a potentially supportive framework for increasing and improving play and recreational services for children and young people. However, these appear to be leading to an emphasis on particular spaces for play and types of play-based activities because of:
- a lack of government-led supportive mechanisms to ensure that frameworks for children's services equally encompass the many different types of play and informal recreational activities; this includes issues related to performance measurement and to understanding what quality means in terms of opportunities for play and informal recreational activities
 - a history of neglect, underfunding and lowly status of provision for play that inhibit those working in the (local authority and voluntary) play sector gaining a 'voice' alongside their colleagues from other (statutory) children's services in the development of multi-agency or multi-service strategies and initiatives
 - the emphasis by many academics of the importance of play's instrumental value as a means to ensure its inclusion in policy
 - the differing departmental priorities and understanding of the instrumental value of play as a vehicle for contributing to their own targets, thereby meaning that play is differently constructed and facilitated (or not) across government
 - the need for government departments to show measurable outcomes, which in itself does not sit easily with definitions of free play and its intrinsic value
 - public attitudes towards childhood(s), fuelled by the mass media, which may often construct children and young people's informal play and recreational activities as threatening or deviant, partly due perhaps to a lack of integrated play facilities and spaces
 - the decrease in the number and quality of accessible play spaces because of the sale of many open spaces, fears of litigation, parental anxiety, children and young people's own worries, and the limited access by communities to school facilities for informal activities
 - a lack of involvement by children and young people in planning and delivering services and, therefore, a lack of understanding of their needs and recognition that these evolve and change over time.

- 3.3 While many playful adult-led activities will give rise to developmental benefits for children, a lack of opportunities for play could result in its value (intrinsic and instrumental) being wasted. In order to derive benefits from play, the activity that is promoted must actually *be* play.

4. Implications for policy and practice

- 4.1 Emphasising the instrumental value of (particular forms of) play is both helpful and harmful because it can raise the status of play, but also only acknowledges any value when it can be seen to contribute to specific outcomes, such as physical or cognitive development of the child, or to the improvement of community cohesion. Such outcomes are predetermined and measured and appear to contradict the commonly accepted view that play that is freely chosen and controlled by the players is without external goals or targets.
- 4.2 The lack of a strongly supportive mechanism, for example a statutory requirement, for ensuring that (free) play opportunities are included in Children and Young People's Plans could lead to the marginalisation of provision for play, or the inclusion only of provision for more structured activities that aim to meet departmental priorities but do not necessarily benefit children and young people.
- 4.3 Ensuring that appropriate, qualitative evidence is part of performance measurement criteria can assist in developing meaningful data on the value of play opportunities for children and young people. The inclusion of such data as standard in assessments of children's services can help to ensure that free play opportunities are more likely to be included and that services are better able to respond to changing needs as well as to identify why (rather than whether) particular individuals or groups feel that services are inaccessible or inappropriate for them.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 Consistent constructions of play need to be explicit in all national policy documentation and should be supported by strong implementation and monitoring mechanisms.
- 5.2 A clear distinction needs to be made between the *purpose* of childcare and the *purpose* of play provision and playwork, in each case supported by appropriately qualified staff and relevant regulatory standards and procedures.
- 5.3 Further longitudinal research could be undertaken to explore the drivers of various policies and their impact on play opportunities, taking into account the instrumental/intrinsic value dichotomy.³
- 5.4 Further research could usefully explore the extent to which planning for public spaces can facilitate or impede play and informal recreation.⁴
- 5.5 Since this research identified that policy documentation generally fails to make reference to play in relation to children aged 8 to 13 years, it would be relevant to explore as a discrete project the extent to which the Children's Fund has impacted on play opportunities for this age group, and with what outcomes.
- 5.6 Evaluation of the impact of the Big Lottery Fund's Children's Play initiative funding will be required to show the extent to which this funding stream has increased and improved access to good-quality play for all children and young people – and as distinct from early education and childcare provision.

³ Play England is currently commissioning research into the impact of staffed play provision on children, families and communities.

⁴ Demos published *Seen and Heard* in November 2007; research commissioned by Play England, into the impact of the design and management of public space on play and informal recreation opportunities for children and young people.

- 5.7 Linked to the above recommendation, it is suggested that research is undertaken into the impact of national policies on playwork training and qualifications and the role of playworkers in developing and sustaining play opportunities (such as holiday and after school schemes, play ranger services and adventure playgrounds). Further research could assess the impact of policies on the development of playwork and the role of adults in facilitating children's play.⁵
- 5.8 Greater recognition of the contribution that play can make to all the outcomes of Every Child Matters is needed in national and regional policies and local strategic planning for children's services.
- 5.9 Local managers of play services need to explore where play sits within their own authorities and how provision for play can contribute to national, regional and local agendas.
- 5.10 Commissioners of children's services need to be made more aware of the value of play (intrinsic – complying with the UNCRC; instrumental – contributing to ECM outcomes). Play England could lead this process by providing guidance for commissioners.
- 5.11 Local (education) authorities could usefully explore the nature and extent of play opportunities that are offered in extended schools provision.
- 5.12 Play England should continue to support the educational/informative processes required to fulfil recommendations 5.6 to 5.11.

⁵ Play England is discussing this recommendation with SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council for Playwork.

2. Research methodology

2.1 Introduction

Commissioned and funded by the Children's Play Council/Play England, the research was conducted by Canterbury Christ Church University between September and December 2006. Final edits and amendments to this document were made in June 2007 following comments on a first draft by the project Advisory Group.

The research consisted of document analysis and fieldwork. The latter involved discussions with people working in the play sector or in organisations with an interest in play. In undertaking such a project, the research team was mindful of ethical and data protection issues and developed, in consultation with CPC, a protocol outlining what participants could expect from the researchers and from their involvement in the project (see Appendices). The team based its approach to project work on fundamental principles of respect and integrity, rigour and authenticity.

2.2 Project aims and objectives

The overall aims of the project were to:

- identify the *current* impact of central government policy and legislation on children and young people's play and informal recreational activity
- identify the *potential* impact of central government policy and legislation on children and young people's play and informal recreational activity.

As such, it was necessary first to be clear about what was meant by 'policy' and how its impact could be assessed. Policy was understood to be dynamic, developed and manifest in various ways at macro (national), meso (regional) and micro (local) levels. First, it was agreed that government publications represented statements of policy intent. Secondly, it was believed that the ways in which representatives of local authorities and other organisations reacted to, used and implemented, modified or perhaps ignored these statements would result in 'mediat(ion of) a messy relationship between policy and people's livelihoods...the interface where policy and people meet' (Pasteur, 2001).⁶ These individuals could, therefore, offer insights into the impact of such policies (represented by policy statements and underpinning resources where relevant) on their own professional practice, and the resulting accessibility and variety of play opportunities for which they held some responsibility in the local area.

Since impact can result in multiple outcomes (good and bad), it was intended that the impact of national policies should be explored in terms of:

- individual and organisational processes that may facilitate (or hinder) play
- accessibility of different kinds of play opportunities
- individuals' constructions of play.

2.3 Sources of policy documentation

An expert advisory group, which was appointed by Play England, was invited to identify policy documents or policy areas that were deemed to have the potential to impact on play opportunities. The researchers drafted an extensive, preliminary list of policy documents on the basis of the advisory group's recommendations. Comments from one group member are shown below as an example of the range of policy areas that were included:

⁶ Pasteur, K (2001) *Tools for Sustainable Livelihoods: Policy Analysis*. University of Brighton: Institute for Development Studies. Available at: <http://www.livelihoods.org/info/tools/pas-PA01.rtf>

- Anti-Social Behaviour and the Respect Action Plan and programme – a cross-government initiative, but both the Respect Unit and Anti-Social Behaviour Unit sit in the Home Office
- Consultation on *Outdoors for All*
- Audit Commission – looks occasionally at community safety issues (they've published two thematic reports on the issue), which relate to the implementation of the anti-social behaviour laws/policies
- Youth Justice Board – annual MORI Youth Justice Survey includes interesting material about the ways and circumstances in which young people feel or do not feel safe
- Defra – The Environmental Protection Amendment Act (2006) and Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 (and associated consultation papers) deal with penalties for environmental offences that affect people from the age of 10, and seem to encourage the use of things like gating orders
- New equalities legislation (the Equality Act 2006), which is very new and therefore needs to be tested in court, but could theoretically be used to contest situations in which children and young people are discriminated against as a group because of their age (e.g. child curfews or signs saying no children allowed in this public space, etc.).

In practice, it was simply not possible within the project's time span to analyse documents relating to all the recommendations. It was agreed, therefore, to focus the analysis on policy areas or documents that were most commonly cited (see Chapter 3). Clearly, some policy areas that were not analysed could also have an impact on opportunities for play.

During the initial period of desk research, documentation was collected from a range of sources. These were predominantly government departments, but also included a range of government agencies and units, from which numerous policy documents were collected: Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG, formerly Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, ODPM), Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Department of Health (DH), Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT), Home Office (HO), Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA), Department for Transport (DfT), Natural England, Forestry Commission, Commission for the Built Environment (CABE), and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Documents from non-governmental organisations and charitable and academic bodies with an interest in play and/or public spaces also provided a valuable source of background information: National Playing Fields Association (NPFA), Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), SkillsActive, 4Children, Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA), The Children's Society, Groundwork UK, PLAYLINK, Kids and the National Children's Bureau (NCB).

Electronic copies of policy documents were gathered from searches of web pages of the government departments, their agencies, units or programmes and from the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI).

The policy documents included: government legislation (Acts of Parliament), the associated guidelines on their implementation, strategies or action plans, published departmental research reports and copies of ministerial speeches. Regional or local policy documents were not included (since the project's remit was to assess national policy impact). However, reference is made in this report to some local Children and Young People's Plans (analysed by an NCB team in association with this project) and to some London-based policies that were mentioned by interviewees.

Some of the policy documents included statements of statutory requirements and others did not. Clearly, the potential for impact was likely to be more far-reaching where statutory duties were involved. This factor is discussed in Chapter 3.

The broad array of topics reflected the ways in which the advisory group members believed that play opportunities can be shaped by many different factors and can take place in many different contexts. In total, 44 major documents were analysed. In some cases more than one document was read and analysed under the heading of one policy area, e.g. National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (five separate documents); PPG17 and its companion notes (two documents); the Children Act and notes (three documents); Health and Safety Executive recommendations (three documents); Young People and Transport (two documents, including Involving Children and Young People Action Plan); Planning Obligations Circular and Guidance (two documents).) Unless there were significant differences between the themes and key words in the linked or subsidiary documents, these were grouped under one heading in the policy analysis grids (and in terms of the findings). Most had been published since 2000. Twenty-two documents were directly related to children and/or young people, and the other 22 related to the population as a whole. Five were Acts of Parliament, two of which concerned children.

2.4 Sources of impact evidence

Interviews with representatives from nine local authorities were planned to obtain evidence on the impact (positive or negative) of national policies on opportunities for play and informal recreational activities. One local authority was selected from each of the nine local government regions, taking into account various factors such as type of local authority (for example, unitary or second tier) and geographical location (for example, rural or urban). Table A shows the list of authorities included in the sample, with details of the English region, type of authority, the associated CYPP and, where relevant, the Big Lottery funding allocation for play.

Table A: Details of local authorities sampled for participation in the study

Authority	Region	Type	CYPP	£ Big Lottery
Canterbury	S East	City (second tier)	Kent	282k
Plymouth	S West	Unitary	Plymouth	578k
Hackney	London	Borough (single tier)	Hackney	863k
Mid Suffolk	East	District (second tier)	Suffolk	200k
Birmingham	W. Mids	Met City (Unitary)	Birmingham	3.35m
	E. Mids ⁷			
Wirral	N. West	Met borough (Unitary)	Wirral	881k
Tynedale	N. East	District (second tier)	Northumberland	200k
Hull	York & Humber	City (top tier)	Hull	N/A

Fourteen local authority officers took part in the research. In one authority (Plymouth), the researcher was also invited to attend a meeting of the Play Strategy Group. The researchers also sought to include at least one representative from the voluntary and community sector for each of the areas visited. The aim was to ensure that this sector had a voice in the research and to provide an alternative, non-statutory perspective on policy impact. In practice, the voluntary sector was represented by participants in six of the eight local authority areas included in the final project sample: Plymouth, Hackney, Birmingham, Wirral, Tynedale and Hull. In Canterbury, a representative of a parish council responsible for managing a successful, voluntary 'Street Runners' scheme was included in the enquiries. Four national organisations with an interest in play were also included in the research. These were CABESpace, 4Children, SkillsActive and the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA). Representatives of other organisations were invited to take part, but were unable to do so.

⁷ No authorities from this region took part in the research. Although one initially agreed, staffing issues subsequently prevented their participation. A second authority was sampled and agreed to participate but was then obliged to withdraw prior to interview.

2.5 Research methods

The project consisted of an initial period of desk research during which policies were identified, gathered, analysed and summarised. A semi-random sample of participants for the fieldwork was selected, and interviews were arranged where possible. Semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for the researchers to explore a number of areas of interest without closing down the introduction of themes that were considered important to the interviewees themselves. Using a thematic interview schedule (see Appendix A), which included a list of policy documents analysed during the period of desk research, the interviews provided a rich, in-depth source of information on the processes and outcomes of providing play and informal recreational opportunities in the context of current national policies and legislation. The interviewers employed largely open-ended questions and prompts, which allowed the participants the opportunity to bring their own emphases to the thematic areas as well as introduce others that might not have been expected by the research team. All interviews were tape recorded and subsequently transcribed in preparation for analysis. Three participants (from CABESpace, 4Children and Littlebourne Parish Council) opted to respond to the questions in writing and one was interviewed by telephone (SkillsActive). A copy of the interview schedule was modified to enable participants to respond by email. In these cases the evidence was not as extensive as that collected through face-to-face interviews but was valuable nonetheless.

2.6 Analysis of policy documents

The analysis of national policy and legislation documents was initially deductive, seeking to catalogue the key aims, remit and priorities of each, the relevance to play and potential impact on play opportunities. The systematic analytical process consisted of:

- reading each document at least once and discussing it with another researcher
- systematically searching for references to play and informal recreational activities within each document (see Table B)
- logging relevant excerpts in policy analysis grids (PAG)
- summarising each policy document in the PAG
- identifying and recording key themes and potential impact in the PAG.

Table B: Policy document analysis – systematic search/analysis procedure

For more general documents
i. First search for any references to 'child' (as this should pick up both the words 'child' and 'children').
ii. Repeat the above for 'young', 'youth' and 'kids'.
iii. Carry out steps i.–viii. as per documents about children.
For documents about children
i. Search electronically for all references to 'play'. Only make a note of any that are about play as an activity rather than other sense/uses of the word. Note the page number (and section number if relevant).
iii. If there are no references to play ⁸ at all, write 'No references to play' in the comments column on the policy analysis grid.
iv. Search electronically for all references to 'leisure' and follow the same procedures as for play.
v. Search electronically for all references to 'recreation' and follow the same procedures as for play.
vi. Search electronically for all references to 'activity/activities' and follow the same procedures as for play, but only include references that seem to be relevant to playing or recreational activities.
vii. Search electronically for all references to 'care' and follow the same procedures as for play, but only include references that are relevant to childcare or daycare. NB: If the document

⁸ Or, 'no references to leisure, recreation, activity, etc.' as appropriate to the search being done.

is specifically about childcare or daycare, do not conduct this search as it is the nature of that care (i.e. whether there's any play involved) that is of interest.

viii. Search electronically for all references to 'space' and follow the same procedures as for play, but only include references where these pertain to spaces for play, leisure or recreation.

Following thematic analysis, the policy documents were sorted into groups of those that:

- were specifically concerned with children and/or young people
- were about the general population.

They were then 'ranked' according to whether they:

- included only a brief reference to play
- included more than a brief reference to play (i.e. more than one reference or a reference that was greater than a sentence or two)
- did not include reference to 'play' but did refer to recreational activities
- made no mention of either play or recreational activities.

2.7 Analysis of interview transcripts and questionnaires

The synthesis of findings from the analysis of policy and legislation documents was illuminated by evidence from the interviews with local authority officers and representatives of the voluntary and community sector and independent organisations. The analysis of interview transcripts and questionnaires was both deductive (in terms of actively seeking themes related to the provision or facilitation of play opportunities) and inductive in terms of generating new themes from the transcripts of interviews (or from questionnaire responses as applicable).

2.8 Ethics

The fundamental principle of ethical research is that research is not simply a matter of collecting information, but is also concerned with the rights, dignity and well-being of those taking part. Ethics were, therefore, a central feature of this research, informing each stage of the research process.

Following established good practice, the gaining of informed consent preceded any data gathering activity. Two essential principles underpinned consent/assent:

- it was provided freely (i.e. no force or pressure had been applied)
- it was based on accurate information of both the benefits and potential risks of the research.⁹

Therefore all participants in the evaluation programme were fully informed of the study's aims and procedures verbally and in writing, they were assured that their participation was voluntary, and that they had the right to withdraw from the activity at any stage. They were provided with a simple summary of the research aims and processes (see Appendix B) and were invited to comment or ask questions about these.

Confidentiality, or what happens to the information gathered during the research, is of utmost importance in a study of this kind. Anonymity of individual participants was guaranteed (unless participants specifically wished to be identified), and they were assured that their involvement with the research would not adversely affect them. The research team also worked in accordance with the National Children's Bureau's *Child Protection Policies and Procedures* and *Diversity Policy*.

⁹ Jago, R and Bailey, RP (2001) 'Ethics and Paediatric Exercise Science', *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 19, pp. 527–535.



3. Findings from analysis of policy documents

3.1 Background

The policy documents selected for analysis were those that the researchers, project manager and advisory group believed could impact on children and young people's opportunities for play and informal recreational activities, whether or not their focus was children or their play. The sample was not exhaustive, and it is entirely feasible that documents pertaining to other policies could have been included.¹⁰ Since the study was concerned with the impact of national policies, the sample did not include any regional or local policy documents.

The sample included statutory and non-statutory policy statements. Clearly, those that included statutory requirements had the potential for more far-reaching impact than those that were not statutory. It should also be noted that some documents had been produced in association with the Children's Play Council or other play 'advocates' or lobbyists. In other cases, these organisations and individuals had had some influence over the final text. This is acknowledged where relevant in this report since the findings are, to some extent, shaped by this factor.

Documents were sourced from many different government departments and agencies and the histories, priorities and targets of each are believed to have conditioned and shaped their policy statements. As a whole, they covered a broad range of policy areas (including education, health, well-being and active living, community regeneration and social cohesion, crime and anti-social behaviour, equality and diversity, respect, social inclusion, transport, re/employment and childcare, leisure, risk and safety, child protection and well-being, rural and urban issues, as well as play itself and playwork). In most cases the policy intent (i.e. the views of the government's departments or agencies made public through documents) was analysed. In a minority of cases there was also documentation that could be classed as macro policy implementation (i.e. laws or other measures to guide or enact the operation of the government's policy visions). Some documents – where they set out a vision and provided (statutory) guidance on developing structures and processes to enact the vision – fell into both categories. Since policy implementation can occur at macro (national), meso (regional) and micro (local) levels, the next chapter explores the impact of policy intent on local authorities and voluntary bodies, as well as on the implementation of policies locally and outcomes for play opportunities as a result.

¹⁰ One important omission was documentation pertaining to the Children's Fund. This funding strand has provided a range of services for children aged 5 to 13 years and, of the £450 million allocated to projects in the first national wave, it is reported that 20% (i.e. £90 million) was for play and play-related provision.

3.2 Findings

The process of gathering and analysing revealed a vast array of policies and legislation with differing degrees of relevance to play. In some cases there was little reference, if at all, specifically to play. However, in some cases, the lack of reference to play was significant in itself.

Table C lists all the policy documents that were analysed and about which interviewees were invited to comment. Table C highlights those that are particularly about children and young people, those that refer to play and/or recreation in some detail (scoring 2), those that briefly refer to play or recreation (scoring 1) and those that make no reference to play or recreation (scoring 0). Clearly *Getting Serious about Play*, *Time for Play* and Health and Safety Executive publications on playground safety all made repeated references to play and were scored as such. Also, legislation that applies to the general population, such as the Disability Discrimination Act, Equality Act and Compensation Act, would not necessarily be expected to refer to play (and none did).

As shown in Table C, not all policies that referred to play were uniquely about children and not all policies about children and young people referred to play or recreation.

3.2.1 Policies about children: good reference to play/recreation

Twenty-two of the policies analysed were related directly to children and/or young people. Twelve of these dedicated good or reasonable attention to play or recreational activities. Six had play as their focus, and the Children's Play Council or its associates had been influential in the development of five of them (see Table C, italicised titles). Additionally, the *Youth Matters* Green Paper (DfES 2005) focused on ways to engage young people aged 13 to 19 in a variety of 'positive activities' inside and outside their educational settings (scoring two under 'recreation' in the ranking). Among the other five, three were predominantly about young children (mainly birth to five, but also birth to eight years). These were *Out of School Care: Guidance to the National Standards*, (Ofsted 2001); *Early Years Foundation Stage Direction of Travel Paper* (Sure Start/DfES 2006); and *Sure Start Guidance 2004–6: Overview and Local Delivery Arrangements* (DfES 2003). The other two all had children and young people within their remit and referred in some detail to both play and recreation. These were the *Guidance on Children and Young People's Plans* (DfES/ECM 2005) and *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services* (DH 2004).

Table C: Policy documents that refer to play and recreation

Policy Documents Ranking	About children	Includes 'play'	Includes recreation
<i>Design Guidance for Play Spaces (2006), Rope swings, dens, treehouses and fires (2006), Growing Adventure (2006) Forestry Commission¹¹</i>	Yes	2	0
<i>Getting Serious About Play: A review of children's play (2004) DCMS</i>	Yes	2	1
<i>Time for Play: Encouraging greater play opportunities (2006) DCMS</i>	Yes	2	1
<i>HSE Report: Playgrounds – risks, benefits and choices (2002)</i>	Yes	2	0
<i>Developing Accessible Play Spaces (2004) ODPM</i>	Yes	2	2
HSE Local Authority Circular: Safety in Children's Playgrounds (2001)	Yes	2	0
Youth Matters Green Paper (2005) and Next Steps (2006) DfES	Yes	0 ¹²	2
National Service Framework for Children, YP & Maternity Servs (2004) DH	Yes	2	1
Out of School Care: Guidance to the National Standards (2001) Ofsted	Yes	2	0
Guidance on Children and Young People's Plans (2005) DfES / ECM	Yes	2	1
Sure Start Guidance 2004–2006: overview & local delivery (2003) DfES	Yes	2	1
Early Years Foundation Stage Direction of Travel Paper (2006) SS / DfES	Yes	2	0
Every Child Matters Green Paper (2003) DfES	Yes	1	1
ECM: Joint Area Reviews of Children's Services (2005) Ofsted / DfES	Yes	1	0
Planning and Funding Extended Schools: a guide...(2006) DfES	Yes	1	1
Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (2004) DfES	Yes	1	1
Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children (2004) HMT, DfES etc	Yes	1	0
Childcare Act (2006) DfES	Yes	0	1
<i>Children Act (2004) DfES</i>	Yes	0	1
Every Child Matters: Change for Children in Schools (2004) DfES	Yes	0	1
Young people and transport: understanding their needs...(2006) DfT	Yes	0	1
10 Year Strategy for Childcare: guidance for LAs (2005) Sure Start	Yes	0	0
Our Towns and Cities: the future (Urban White Paper, 2000) ODPM	No	2	1
Companion Guide to PPG17 (2002) ODPM	No	2	1
Sustainable Communities: building for the future (2003) ODPM	No	2	1
<i>Creating Opp's: Guidance for LAs on Cultural Strategies (2000) DCMS</i>	No	2	1
Home Zones – Challenging the future of our streets (2005) DfT	No	2	1
Living Places – Cleaner, safer, greener programme (2003) ODPM lead	No	2	1
Outdoors for All – Draft Diversity Action Plan (2006) DEFRA	No	0	2
Our Countryside: the future (Rural White Paper, 2000) DEFRA	No	1	1
Planning Policy Guidance 17: Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2002)	No	1	1
Planning Obligations Circular 5/2005; Planning Guidance (2006) DCLG	No	1	0
Choosing Activity: a physical activity action plan (2005) DH	No	1	1
Local Area Agreements Guidance for Round 3 (2006) ODPM	No	1	1
Liveability – DCLG PSA Target 8 (2004 Spending Review)	No	1	0
Respect Action Plan (2006) Home Office	No	0	1
Best Value Performance Indicators Guidance (2005/6) Audit Commission	No	0	0
Compensation Act (2006) Dept of Constitutional Affairs	No	0	0
Equalities Act (2006)	No	0	0
Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their Future (2005) ODPM	No	0	0
Disabilities Discrimination Act (2005 amendment)	No	0	0
Sustainable Communities: homes for all (2005) ODPM	No	0	0
Walking and Cycling: an action plan (2004) DfT	No	0	0
Neighbourhood Warden's Scheme Implem. Plan Guidance (2003) HO	No	0	0

¹¹ CPC and associates-influenced development of policy documents shown in italics.

¹² Understandably the term 'play' was not found in the *Youth Matters* Green Paper as this is not a term that young people commonly use to explain their recreational habits.

3.2.2 Policies about children: brief reference to play/recreation

Nine documents about children made brief references to play and/or recreation. These included the Childcare Act (2006) and the Children Act (2004), neither of which uses the word 'play'. The Children Act, which refers to *all* services for children, includes the provision of 'recreation' as a duty of the Children's Commissioner and of children's services authorities. Although the Act's explanatory notes do not mention play either, the *Summary of Statutory Requirements and Government Expectations for Local Action* (DfES 2004) reveals that play *is* seen as an element of recreation because the Summary states that local authorities must include play organisations in their partnership arrangements and integrated front-line delivery of services for children and young people. It is noteworthy that lobbying by play advocates had led to the inclusion of recreation in the Act.

The Childcare Act also mentions recreation in relation to children's well-being. This Act provides a legislative spine for the government's 10-year childcare strategy, *Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children* (DfES 2004) describing commitments to make early years provision for children from birth to five and out of school (childcare) provision for children up to 14 years (older if they have special needs). The childcare strategy itself has disappointingly few references to play and the majority that are included, relate to very young children. For older children 'a range of activities' is to be provided with (seemingly secondary) 'opportunities for rest, play and socialising'.

The Every Child Matters Green Paper (DfES 2003) and associated *Joint Area Reviews of Children's Services* framework document (Ofsted/DfES 2005) make scant reference to play. Similarly, *Every Child Matters: Change for Children in Schools* (DfES 2004) mentions recreation briefly and *Planning and Funding Extended Schools* (DfES 2006) makes surprisingly few references to play, given its focus on providing out-of-school activities and services for children, young people, their families and communities. This is undoubtedly related to the fact that the *Extended Schools Prospectus* (DfES 2005) includes a core offer of services in which play does not feature. Likewise, the earlier *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* (DfES 2004), which highlights the plan to develop a broad and rich school curriculum together with more out-of-school opportunities, also has few references to play and these are related to children from birth to five, whereas for older children references tend to be to 'enrichment' or 'enjoyable' (structured) activities. All of these policies have the Department for Educational and Skills as their lead body.

From the Department for Transport, the report on *Young People and Transport: Understanding their Needs and Requirements* (2006) focused on children and young people in terms of their transport requirements and ways of involving them in planning transport services to meet their needs. The report makes several references to access to leisure activities (such as youth clubs or shopping) and notes that this is a particular problem for disabled young people.

3.2.3 Policies about children: no reference to play/recreation

One policy document that was about children did not mention play or recreational activities at all. It was surprising to find that the *Ten Year Strategy for Childcare: Guidance for Local Authorities* (Sure Start 2005) mentions neither play nor recreation given that the guidance relates to *Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children* and the Childcare Act, and the former describes good-quality childcare as allowing 'children to learn, develop social and emotional skills and explore through play', while in the latter, recreation is integral to children's well-being. This omission appeared to show inconsistency in promoting play as an integral element of childcare.

3.2.4 Policies about the general population: good reference to play/recreation

Among the 22 policy documents that were about the population in general, rather than specifically about children and young people, seven made good or reasonable reference to play and to recreational activities. The earliest, chronologically, of these is *Creating Opportunities: Guidance for Local Authorities in England on Local Cultural Strategies* (DCMS 2000). Although not a statutory requirement, the guidance stated that the government expected local cultural strategies to be developed. Play is clearly outlined as an element of culture. Play and informal leisure pursuits were expected to be included in the cultural strategies and the strategies to be monitored and reviewed using Best Value Performance Indicators (although none within the culture block appear to have related to informal play activities). In the same year, the urban White Paper, *Our Towns and Cities: the future* (ODPM 2000) was published. With the aim of improving the quality of life of urban residents, the paper devotes a section to parks, play areas and public areas and describes a 'comprehensive programme' for their refurbishment, installation or upgrading. The paper not only raises the issue of children's play but also addresses some of the barriers to play, including traffic calming measures and the introduction of home zones.

Continuing the theme of improving the quality of local environments, the *Living Places – Cleaner, Safer, Greener* programme (ODPM lead 2002) lists children's play as one of its six priorities, together with aims to improve access, quality, safety and appropriateness of play spaces/facilities. Simultaneously, and as promised in the urban White Paper, a revised *Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation* (2002) was published. The Guidance and its *Companion Notes* (ODPM 2002) both make references to play, but the *Companion Notes* are much more comprehensive. The former includes in its typology of open spaces, 'provision for children and teenagers – including play areas, skateboard parks, outdoor basketball hoops and other more informal areas (e.g. "hanging out" areas, teenage shelters)'; and the latter contains a section (A12) on planning for children and young people. This includes recommendations for the combined use of qualitative and quantitative performance measures, and suggests that planning departments consult the Children's Play Council's publication on planning for outdoor play.¹³

In 2003 the ODPM launched an action programme, *Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future* that included plans for improvements to parks, playing fields and play areas, including money to be provided from the 'Liveability Fund', the creation of CABESpace, more protection of country parks and the countryside and contracting Groundwork to assist communities in undertaking local projects, some of which could facilitate play opportunities. Two years later, a report on the Home Zones Challenge projects, *Home Zones: Challenging the Future of our Streets* (DfT 2005) cited many examples of the ways in which Home zones could and had provided opportunities for formal and informal play spaces, as well as pointing out some of the difficulties to be overcome in developing a Home zone. One recommendation was that children and young people should be involved at all stages so as to encourage inter-generational understandings and promote children and young people's play and recreational needs.

While many of the aforementioned policies concern urban areas, *Outdoors for All: Draft Diversity Action Plan* (DEFRA 2006) reported a review of the diversity of people who access the countryside. It found that particular groups were under-represented and these included young people. Although the Action Plan does not mention play, it states that, 'We consider it essential that all children get some outdoor recreation experience.' Young people are also included as a target group for increasing their numbers in future countryside visits for recreational purposes.

¹³ National Children's Bureau and Children's Play Council Members (2005) *More than Swings and Roundabouts: Planning for Outdoor Play*. London: National Children's Bureau.

3.2.5 Policies about the general population: brief reference to play/recreation

Seven of the 22 policy documents about the general population made some reference to play and/or recreation, but to a lesser extent than those mentioned above. The rural White Paper, *Our Countryside: the Future* (DEFRA 2000) expressed the government's aim to 'sustain and enhance the...English countryside for the benefit of all' and made 25 references to children and young people. However, few of these were concerned with opportunities for play or informal recreational activities. The references that were found included a recommendation for sharing community facilities for a range of uses, including playgroups; capitalising on school facilities for community purposes such as after-school clubs (not specifically play); and an example of a Sure Start mobile play and learning centre.

A further four of the eight documents in this category were published by the ODPM/DCLG. The first, *Planning Policy Guidance 17 (2002)* was mentioned previously in conjunction with its companion guide that provided more expansive notes on play. Other planning policy documents (grouped as one in Table C) that made brief mention of play were the *Planning Obligations Circular 5/05* (ODPM, 2005) and associated *Planning Guidance* (DCLG, 2006). The *Circular*, which explains the regulations for negotiation of 'Section 106' agreements between local planning authorities and developers, does not itself mention play, recreation or leisure but makes three references to open space. However, the more recent *Planning Guidance* provides advice on Section 106 agreements and gives examples of good practice, some of which relate to play spaces. The *Guidance* provides a case study citing Waveney Borough Council's quality/safety policy for the provision of play areas by developers, which requires that open space and equipment conforms to minimum standards (developed locally). No guidelines or examples for such standards appear in the *Planning Obligations Circular* or the *Planning Guidance*.

The DCLG *Public Service Agreement Target 8* (Liveability) (PSA8) from the 2004 Spending Review is about improving public areas in a variety of ways, one area of which is to create 'attractive and welcoming parks, play areas and public spaces'. This is a positive framework for improving opportunities for play and informal recreational activity but the performance measures that apply to PSA8 may not be sufficiently supportive to ensure that such opportunities are accessed and enjoyed in practice. First, DCLG needs only to be successful in three of its first five (of seven) performance indicators, the fifth of which is satisfaction with local parks and other public spaces. Consequently, the department could achieve its PSA8 target without necessarily seeing improvements to play areas. Secondly, the methods used¹⁴ to assess performance on this subject may not identify children and young people's views of the areas' play value.

Three other documents also made brief references to play. *Choosing Activity: a Physical Activity Action Plan* (DH 2005) sets out the government's plans to encourage and coordinate the action of a range of departments and organisations to promote increased physical activity across England. One key target group is children and young people and the Action Plan acknowledges that, 'Children and young people need to experience a wide range of formal and informal activities...from walking to school...(to) active free play in well-maintained open spaces' (p.14). How this is to be realised is not clarified. *Local Area Agreements Guidance for Round 3* (ODPM 2006) describes the nature of a Local Area Agreement (LAA) and lists the mandatory and optional outcomes to be achieved by local partnerships. None of the mandatory outcomes and indicators pertains to play or informal recreational activities. However, two of the optional indicators are concerned with safe play areas and opportunities, and the number of 11- to 19-year-olds accessing sports and leisure facilities (under Enjoy and Achieve). CYPPs form part of LAAs and it is intended that not only should these include play but they would also need relevant associated indicators.

¹⁴ Percentage increase in the number of local authorities with at least one park or space that meets Green Flag standard and the percentage increase of residents satisfied with local parks and open spaces (measured by the BV119e satisfaction survey), for example.

It is possible that these may emanate from the 'Knowledge for Improvement Project' (DfES), which is reviewing ECM data collection measures and indicators to produce a revised outcomes framework in April 2007. Also published in 2006, the *Respect Action Plan* (Home Office) is cross-departmental and targets families and young people. Chapter 2 specifically focuses on activities for children and young people, although these appear to be structured activities such as volunteering or sporting pursuits rather than informal play or recreation. The activities are considered in terms of their potential outcomes for the community.

3.2.6 Policies about the general population: no references to play/recreation

The remaining eight policy documents about the general population made no references to play or to recreation. It should be remembered, however, that three of these were the Compensation Act (2006), the Disability Discrimination Act (1995/2005), and the Equality Act (2006); these were not expected to make specific references to play but were included in the analysis because it was assumed that their provisions could impact on the accessibility and nature of play opportunities. The fact that the other five documents did not refer to play was a little more unexpected though. These were the *Best Value Performance Indicators Guidance* (Audit Commission 2005/6), *Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their Future* (ODPM 2005), *Neighbourhood Wardens Scheme Implementation Plan Guidance* (Home Office 2003), *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All* (ODPM 2005) and *Walking and Cycling: an Action Plan* (DfT 2004). This appeared to show that although play may be promoted by government to some extent through specific publications (such as *Time for Play*), the mechanisms to support its implementation are patchy (i.e. excluded from performance indicator guidance for local authorities) and opportunities to promote play are missed (i.e. when developing walking and cycling action plans locally, or instituting Neighbourhood Warden schemes that could facilitate play in the community/streets).

3.2.7 Play and policy documents including statutory duties

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the potential for impact of the different policy documents varied and it was recognised that documents describing statutory duties were more likely to have a far-reaching impact than those without. Policies to support children's general well-being – in terms of fair access to public services such as health and education – made no statutory requirement for the provision of play opportunities, except in terms of the duty to form partnerships with local play or childcare providers (Children Act). None of the policy documents that conveyed statutory duties, or guidance on their implementation, was specifically about play or *informal* recreation. All those that made more than a brief reference to play did so with reference to particular outcomes (see section 3.4 below).

3.3 Social constructions of play and recreation

Where the terms 'play' and 'recreation' were used in policy documents, they did not always describe the same types of intentions or activities. Also, some documents that referred to 'activities' for children and young people were clearly stating or implying that these were structured and did not necessarily discuss the provision of opportunities that could be classed as 'free' play or informal recreational activity. The approach to delivering activities and descriptions of play appeared to rely upon the relevant departments' constructions of play (and childhoods) and their key policy drivers. For most this construction appeared to be instrumental, and so play was described as a vehicle for various outcomes. This was also the case for a range of activities (whether 'positive', 'enhancing' or 'enjoyable'). Few references stated or implied that provision for play opportunities would be made to fulfil children's right to play and/or that play means that the player has chosen and has power over the activity. Table D contains brief descriptions of the ways in which play appears to be constructed in the relevant policy documents (n=35).

Table D: Constructions of play within policy documents

'Policy'	Construction of play/recreation
Childcare Act (DfES 2006)	Recreation as contributor to well-being
Children Act (DfES 2004)	Recreation as contributor to well-being
Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children (HMT, DfES, DWP, DTI 2004)	Play (well-planned and supported) as foundation of development and learning; intellectual and social goals
Choosing Activity: a physical activity action plan (DH 2005)	Active, free play as a major contributor to physical activity and, in turn, good health
Companion Guide to PPG17 (ODPM 2002)	Play for enjoyment and according to children's interests and needs
Creating Opportunities: Guidance for LAs on Cultural Strategies (DCMS 2000)	Play as an element of culture which can promote well-being and be effective in 'tackling social exclusion, contributing to regeneration, to promoting safer communities, encouraging healthier lifestyles, providing opportunities for voluntary and community activity, and stimulating lifelong learning'
Design Guidance for Play Spaces (Forestry Com.2006)	Children's engagement with the natural environment through their own choices of activities in active play
Developing Accessible Play Spaces (ODPM 2003)	Outdoor play has developmental and therapeutic benefits; equal access to play opportunities is every child's right
Early Years Foundation Stage Direction of Travel Paper (SS/DfES 2006)	Play for development/learning (outcomes designated) including freely chosen play that is potentially instructive
ECM: JARs of Children's Services (Ofsted/ DfES 2005)	Play as an aspect of recreational activities to be available for all children to enjoy (under Enjoy and Achieve outcome) as part of overall well-being
Every Child Matters Green Paper (DfES 2003)	Engagement in recreational activities helps build the fabric of communities and increases young people's skills, confidence and self-esteem
Every Child Matters: Change for Children in Schools (DfES 2004)	Recreational activities to be provided to enable parents to go out to work and to help 'pupils' engage and achieve
Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (DfES 2004)	Play for learning, to prepare children for school; enriching, exciting and enjoyable activities to promote personal development and active citizenship, and to enhance young people's personal, social and educational development
Getting Serious About Play: A review of children's play (DCMS 2004)	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'
Guidance on Children and Young People's Plans (DfES/ECM 2005)	Range of play/recreational opportunities with consideration of impact on children's lives by many LA depts (e.g. housing) suggests play in different contexts; involvement in cultural, sporting and play activities for well-being
Home Zones – Challenging the future of our streets (DfT 2005)	Formal and informal play as a component of the rights of residents to enjoy attractive and safe home environments; contributing to community cohesion and well-being (may implicitly be to reduce anti-social behaviour)
HSE Local Authority Circular: Safety in Children's Playgrounds (2001)	Play equipment that is safe but also challenging and stimulating
HSE Report: Playgrounds – risks, benefits and choices (2002)	Play equipment that is safe but also challenging and stimulating; need for safer environments where children can play
Liveability – DCLG PSA Target 8 (2004 Spending Review)	Appropriate, safe and clean play facilities for children and young people to enjoy (may implicitly be to reduce anti-social behaviour)
Living Places – Cleaner, safer, greener programme (ODPM lead dept 2002)	Appropriate, safe and clean play facilities for children and young people to enjoy (may implicitly be to reduce anti-social behaviour)
Local Area Agreements Guidance for Round 3 (ODPM 2006)	Recreation appears secondary to other ECM outcomes as performance indicators are optional but relate to safe play areas and opportunities and the number of 11- to 19-year-olds accessing sports and leisure facilities – these fall within the Enjoy and Achieve broad outcome

Table D continued

'Policy'	Construction of play/recreation
National Service Framework for Children, YP & Maternity Servs (DH 2004)	'Children visiting or staying in hospital have a basic need for play and recreation that should be met routinely...this includes siblings'; play as an intrinsic need; play as vehicle for health promotion, pain management and recovery, children's understandings of treatment, and for other therapeutic purposes; play as part of socialisation for disabled children
Our Countryside: the future (Rural White Paper) (DEFRA 2000)	Play as integral to community life – shared facilities and resources in country villages and towns, for example to develop and sustain the economic and social fabric of countryside
Our Towns and Cities: the future (Urban White Paper) ODPM 2000)	Provision of safe and attractive parks and children's play areas (and Home zones, traffic calming measures)...and recreational and sporting areas improve the attractiveness of urban areas and help promote a healthier lifestyle...and enhance the quality of urban environments and quality of lives
Out of School Care: Guidance to the National Standards (Ofsted 2001)	Recognises children's needs to initiate play and make choices; promotes provision of a range of play opportunities, including free play (although not as strongly emphasised as planned play activities); play for learning and for enjoyment; daycare enabling parents to work
Outdoors for All – Draft Diversity Action Plan (DEFRA 2006)	Outdoor recreation for enjoyment purposes
Planning and Funding Extended Schools: a guide... (DfES 2006)	Activities (including play schemes) to be provided (implicitly to enable parents to go out to work); most activities are structured and play is not often mentioned; appears to be secondary to other activities such as study support
Planning Obligations Circular 5/2005 and Planning Guidance (DCLG 2006)	Play in local areas a right for children in development terms; play areas should be based on minimum standards so appropriate and not badly sited
Planning Policy Guidance 17: Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2002)	Informal play and 'hanging out' recognised as aspects of open space planning needs; includes under health and well-being the importance of open spaces for the social development of children through their play
Respect Action Plan (Home Office 2006)	Structured activities to help engender respect, community cohesion and reduced anti-social behaviour
Sure Start Guidance 2004–2006: overview & local delivery (DfES 2003)	Targeted services to improve children and families' outcomes in health and education through provision of childcare and family support with aim of getting more parents into paid employment; 'the promotion of child development through a range of means including the promotion of 'children's access to play, including outdoor play'; reducing inequalities
Sustainable Communities: building for the future (ODPM 2003)	Provision of safe and attractive parks and children's play areas (and Home zones, traffic calming measures)...and recreational and sporting areas; improve the attractiveness of urban areas and help promote a healthier lifestyle...and enhance the quality of life for all, including children; ultimate aim appears to be economic regeneration
Time for Play: Encouraging greater play opportunities (DCMS 2006)	Play is of fundamental importance for children and young people's health, well-being and learning; good play opportunities are essential to children's development; play provides enriching experiences that can help develop children's emotional and social skills...Play provision can help stimulate economic growth and build social cohesion; it can empower parents and carers and help the development of self-supportive community networks; arts and creative activities can be structured for specific learning outcomes, as well as providing child-initiated play activities
Young people and transport: understanding their needs... (DfT 2006)	Acknowledges importance of young people's voices and choices in terms of transport to access leisure activities
Youth Matters Green Paper (DfES 2005)	Provision of positive (structured) activities to benefit young people and empower them to make choices, as well as for diversionary purposes to reduce youth crime and anti-social behaviour

3.3.1 Instrumental or intrinsic value of play

On the whole, the many benefits that children and young people can accrue from play and recreational activities were highlighted. In the majority of documents the instrumental value of play was shown to be the primary way in which it has been constructed by central government departments. This instrumentalism tended to be linked to the particular priorities of individual departments. So, for the Department for Education and Skills, with lead responsibility for delivery of the Every Child Matters programme, early years and childcare provision, and development of extended schools services, recreation is seen as a contributor to children and young people's general well-being, but also as also a tool for learning and achieving a range of developmental outcomes. However, there was also a distinction between 'free' play and other play-based or recreational activities. The latter were more structured and adult-initiated, applied to children and young people over the age of eight, and were linked to outcomes that were to benefit society more generally – such as reducing youth crime and anti-social behaviour (a cross-departmental issue) as well as enabling parents to find paid employment, thereby improving economic prospects and social inclusion for all. There was recognition (*Early Years Foundation Stage Direction of Travel Paper*, Sure Start December 2005) based on research evidence from the EPPE¹⁵ study that (young) children's development benefits from a combination of child-initiated play and play that is scaffolded by sensitive adults. In both respects play activities are intended to take place within contexts where provision for children's play and learning has been carefully planned on the basis of observations of children's own interests and preferences and professionals' knowledge and expertise in child development. Although the document recognises on the one hand that play is the foundation for young children's development and learning, the text separates 'play and learning', which could be unhelpful in promoting the nature of play as encompassing learning. The *Out of school Care: Guidance on the National Standards* (Ofsted 2001) makes similar statements, recommending that providers plan play experiences and offer a wide range of activities to give children choice. They are encouraged to 'support' and to monitor their progress. Progress for young children in 'educare' settings, for example, is measured against six areas of learning and development. However, tracking movement along a developmental continuum (albeit important for departmental outcomes) appears in conflict with a notion of free play.

For the Department of Health, which clearly recognised children's biological urge to play, there were also many ways in which it was noted that play could be harnessed to improve children's experiences and understandings of health care procedures (National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services 2004). The Department also emphasised the important contribution that informal, active play can make in boosting children's levels of physical activity thereby reducing the risks of obesity in childhood, and heart disease and other illnesses in adulthood.

Among the policies that were published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – now the Department of Communities and Local Government – there was less emphasis on the beneficial outcomes of play than on the provision of safe, accessible, good-quality play and recreational opportunities for children and young people's enjoyment and quality of life. With the exception of *Developing Accessible Play Spaces* (which promotes equal access to play spaces as a right, but also for developmental and therapeutic benefits) the ODPM/DCLG policy documents were not specific to children. The broad aims therefore applied to all members of society, although developing and improving play areas for children was seen to be a key priority for the Department.

¹⁵ Sylva, K et al (2003) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Findings from the Pre-school Period*. London: Institute of Education.

The DEFRA policies reviewed were fewer than those of the departments mentioned above. However, these tended also to construct recreational activities as a right and an integral aspect of family and community life which needed to be supported and encouraged through appropriate government action to enhance people's enjoyment and quality of (outdoor or country) life.

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport, which was responsible for two publications focusing on play, was the only department that offered a definition of play in the policies reviewed for this project. The definition states that 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' (*Getting Serious about Play: a Review of Children's Play*, 2004). Although play is constructed in terms of providing many benefits to children, the definition appears to shun the application or measurement of progress towards pre-determined goals or outcomes to play activities (set by anyone other than the child). In *Time for Play* (2006) the benefits to society more widely are also recognised; these include helping to 'stimulate economic growth and build social cohesion'. A similar message emerges from the *Guidance to Local Authorities on Cultural Strategies* (2000), which positively includes play as an element of culture and states that 'culture services can promote well-being, but also be effective in tackling social exclusion, contributing to regeneration, to promoting safer communities, encouraging healthier lifestyles...and stimulating opportunities for lifelong learning.' As with DCLG's policies, this guidance does not solely refer to children and young people though.

The documents that were analysed from the Department for Transport ranged from making very limited reference to recreational activity (*Young People and Transport*, 2006) to much more extensive discussion of developing play opportunities in Home zones. In both cases, though, play and recreation appear to be constructed as informal activities initiated and chosen by children and young people, that contribute to their enjoyment and quality of life. There are also implications that these activities can benefit community cohesion and well-being.

3.4 Different types of play

Where a distinction was made between different types of play, there was a tendency for this to be very general: energetic or quiet play, outdoor or indoor play, loud play areas, equipped playgrounds, unsupervised playgrounds, planned and purposeful play, adult- or child-initiated play, free play and open access play. The definition of play found in the policies that were analysed was extremely helpful for determining the department's (DCMS) construction of play and how provision for this type of activity is supported or promoted. In policies from other departments it was not always clear what was meant by the use of the terms 'play' or 'recreation'.

A differentiation was also found between play and other activities for children and young people: play tended to relate to children under the age of 11, but was more often used where documents referred to children in the early years (birth to eight). No specific reference was found to play opportunities for children in the 8 to 12 years age group; provision for these children appeared to be subsumed into more general references to play for all children. Similarly, some policies emphasised the need for accessibility of (all types of) provision for children with additional needs.

Overall the policies appeared to show a positive government view of play and recreation, and evidence that play is valued for the benefits that it can bring to children and to society more generally. However, there were some discrepancies between departmental policies in relation to play:

- First, there was no single definition or construction of play or recreation across all departments.

- Secondly, where play was included in one departmental policy, it was not always followed up in another policy from the same department on the same subject. This was particularly noticeable in the case of the DfES Ten Year Childcare Strategy and the guidance to local authorities on the Strategy. It was also noticeable that while the DCLG-led Liveability programme and the DfES-led Every Child Matters programme included play and recreation within their aims, there were not always sufficiently supportive or appropriate outcome measures to ensure that the provision of play and recreational opportunities and services were meeting national or local goals.
- Thirdly, children's right to enjoy informal play and recreational activities is generally supported by policy rhetoric, but the provision of such play opportunities is seemingly often subsumed beneath other pressing departmental priorities or targets.
- Fourthly, provision for informal play or recreation appears to be better supported when linked to recreational activities for the population as a whole and quality of life for everyone (except in the case of *Getting Serious about Play*).

A summary of the main points of each policy document, key themes and areas of their potential impact on opportunities for play and informal recreational activity can be found in the policy analysis grids (see Appendices). The next section presents the findings from the fieldwork phase of the project, which sought to gather examples of evidence of the impact of these national policies on opportunities for play and informal recreational activities at local level.

4. Findings from local authorities

4.1 Contextual information

The participants included in the project sample represented different departments, divisions, services and directorates within local authorities, but all were involved in some way in the provision of opportunities for play and informal recreational activity. The types of play opportunities for which the participants' services were responsible varied and were not comprehensive. This was because 'play opportunities' within local authorities covered indoor and outdoor, staffed and unsupervised play, playcare, playwork training and staff development, strategic planning and policy development relating to play, advisory services, and quality assurance, for example. The participants' services were generally responsible for some of the above examples, while colleagues in other services (not included in the study), or at county level, held responsibility for others. Consequently, their views on play and on the impact of national policies and legislation reflected, to some extent, their specific roles and remits.

Not all participants had the word 'play' in their job titles – in fact, this was true only among those working in unitary authorities.

In all cases, the participants' own responsibilities or those of their service had changed in recent years. For example, two participants (LA3 and LA4) reported losing or gaining 'youth services' respectively. This was mainly due to the creation of Children, Young People and Families departments and whether the play service was included in them or not (in county or unitary authorities). Others reported that they were working more strategically and collaboratively with colleagues in different services or departments and with the voluntary and community sector (see later under Big Lottery).

4.2 Play opportunities provided

The types of play opportunities provided, as reported by the participants, obviously depended on the type of authority and the service in which they worked. All were asked about the opportunities provided by their specific service and by the authority more generally. During the discussions it became clear that while some services were not directly *delivering*¹⁶ particular play opportunities, they were nevertheless indirectly involved in the provision because they offered support services, such as advice and training, to those who were directly involved in providing such opportunities, or had a role in monitoring or assessing quality assurance of the provision.¹⁷

Participants were asked to identify and distinguish between the types of play opportunities provided by their service or department or by another department in their local authority as a whole (see Table E).

¹⁶ For example, by directly employing playworkers or by providing grant aid to community projects that would otherwise not have existed.

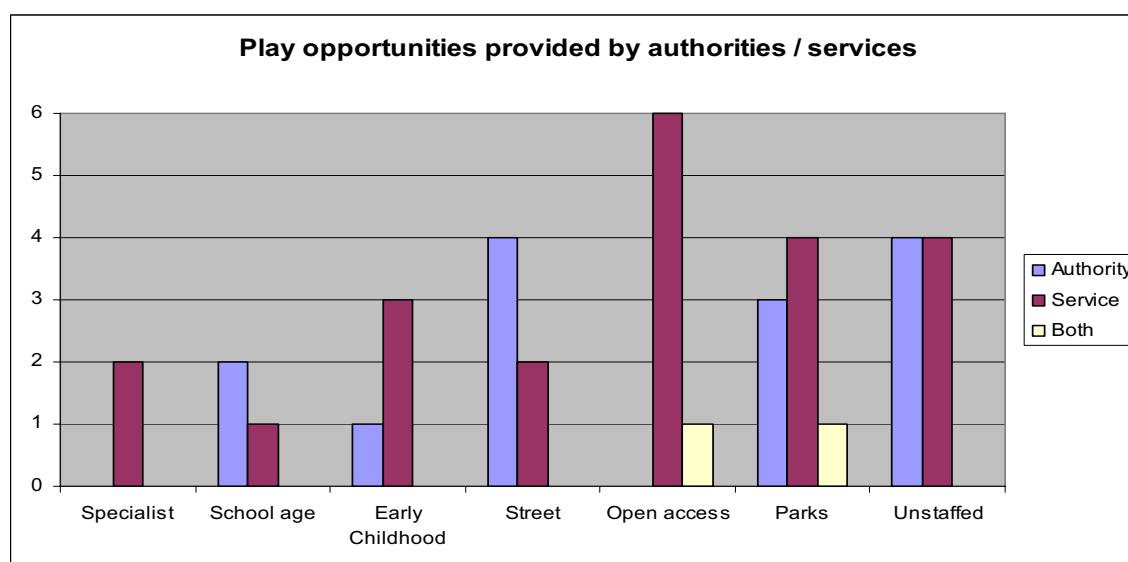
¹⁷ The term 'provision' is used in the report to cover all the types of play opportunities described in Table E.

Table E: Types of play opportunities – extracted from interview schedule

Types of Play Opportunities	a) the local authority	b) your service or department
Play in the street near home		
Play in local parks and open spaces		
Play in playgrounds and other types of unstaffed provision (e.g. skate parks, ball games areas, etc.)		
Open access, staffed play provision like play centres or adventure playgrounds		
Play in school-aged childcare or extended schools provision		
Early childhood provision in children’s centres or childcare		
Specialist play provision for children with specific needs		

Although there were discussions about what constituted play and play services, on the whole the descriptions of the different play opportunities included in Table E were unproblematic for respondents. However, one participant felt that ‘play centres’ was not an appropriate term for open access provision. In her experience, ‘play centres’ were staffed *childcare* facilities and were entirely different from adventure playgrounds and other examples of open access provision. Participants’ responses to questions about types of play opportunities provided are shown in Figure 1 below. Participants from district or parish councils generally did not have responsibility for providing or facilitating play in school-aged childcare or extended schools settings as they had no remit for education services (which lay with the county). This factor affected the numbers of participants who were able to report providing such services and should be taken into account when assessing the overall quantity of provision. One district council reported providing grant aid to children’s centres. The types of play opportunities most frequently provided by services and/or their authorities as a whole were those that took place in designated spaces such as parks (8) and playgrounds (8) that were usually unstaffed. Play in staffed sites (such as open access centres and adventure playgrounds) was also commonly reported.

Figure 1: Play opportunities provided by services or authorities (or both)



Five authorities also reportedly provided opportunities for play in the street near home. One authority facilitated this type of play by having a roaming playbus and two reported having (a small number of) home zones or areas that had been specifically designated for children’s play. Play in other public spaces (such as town centres) was not listed and this may be why it was infrequently mentioned. However, one participant commented that, in her experience, while there were no areas or facilities specifically intended for children or young people to play or ‘hang out’ in town, they made use of existing facilities (such as

benches or other structures and spaces) and this tended to cause friction with older members of the community. The least commonly provided discrete play opportunities were for children with specific needs. However, accessible and inclusive play opportunities were more commonly facilitated.

'We have to be quite instrumental sometimes, not only for our owned play areas, making sure they are accessible, but also ensuring that any of the community projects that we are funding have thought about the rights and needs of children with disabilities and enforcing...or reinforcing that.' (LA2)

'We grant aid specific sports for children with special needs, play-schemes, so we grant aid some of the special schools. Part of our grant aid money is allocated for children with specific needs but within inclusive sites so the sites need to make sure that they're inclusive in order for them to access the grant aid.' (LA4)

In order to provide or facilitate the play opportunities described above, the participants also reported undertaking strategic roles both within their own authorities and more widely within Local Strategic Partnerships and other networks. This enabled them to promote play and its benefits in cross-departmental or multi-professional networks as well as to lead or support groups whose remit was more specifically related to provision for play and recreational activities.

4.3 Local circumstances

It was generally agreed that the role of local authorities was to operate so as to address, as far as possible, the specific needs of local communities. Priority or target groups of children and young people for children's services as a whole were highlighted in local Children and Young People's Plans¹⁸ as well as more specifically in play strategies. These included those with special needs or disabilities, looked after children, young carers, children from minority ethnic groups, those in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, in sparsely populated areas, newly arrived children or those with an unsettled home base, children in hospitals or with long-term illnesses, and traveller children.

The geographical features, population density and economic wealth of the local area were also factors in determining the range and nature of play opportunities that local authorities could provide or facilitate. Two participants felt that the relative wealth and high house prices locally yielded income for the authority that ultimately benefited play (compared with less well-off areas). Conversely, those dealing with large, economically deprived populations felt that some targeted funding (through Sure Start or Neighbourhood Renewal) was actually constraining their abilities to provide open access play opportunities rather than playcare, but they also acknowledged other benefits of such programmes.

Others had particular accessibility challenges that arose as a result of a child population that was spread over a large geographical area and/or with some extremely sparsely populated pockets with few transport links or local play options. Those whose local communities comprised a range of multi-ethnic groups also acknowledged the need to identify the different understandings of play, of what was deemed safe and acceptable for the different cultural groups, and the specific barriers to play for these children.

The local circumstances in which participants were working seemed to influence their feelings about the relevance (or irrelevance) of national policies and legislation and the impact of those selected on local opportunities for play and informal recreational activities.

¹⁸ For more details, see Section 6 on Children and Young People's Plans for the participating areas.

For some participants, national policies were relevant only if they were related to very specific outcomes or held the possibility for obtaining funding of some sort.

4.3 Impact of policy and legislation – background

For the assessment the researchers asked participants to provide examples of their best or 'hardest' evidence of the impact of policy and legislation (Godfrey 2005).¹⁹ This is not evidence related to particular, pre-determined targets or outcomes. It is evidence that participants feel is relevant to their work and their local circumstances, which cannot always be reflected as 'hard' measures or fixed (often predetermined) categories. Nevertheless, there were many cases where participants expressed their general feelings about policies but did not provide evidence of any kind of impact on play opportunities. Clearly, without a universal baseline against which to measure the impact of a particular policy over time, it was difficult to make comparative judgements about the relative influence of policies on play opportunities across the sample. This should be more realistic in future in terms of evaluating the impact of the Big Lottery Play initiative (although this is not government funding).

The list of policies and legislation that was incorporated in the interview schedule was fairly extensive and all the participants indicated that they were not aware of all of them. This was to be expected (as was explained during the interviews) as the range was intended to reflect the different services represented and roles that the participants undertook as a whole rather than individually.

The participants who had agreed to meet the researchers in person (14 officers in eight authorities) were sent the interview schedule in advance so that they could reflect on the list of some 41 policies, consider whether they felt that any of them impacted on play opportunities, and provide examples of evidence. The questions sought evidence of positive impact, negative impact (or both) and allowed for no perceived impact to be recorded as well. As a group, the participants recognised 40 policies, although one was unfamiliar to all bar one participant; this was the *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services* (DH 2004). None of the participants was familiar with *Involving Children and Young People Action Plan* (DfT 2003). However, the number of policies familiar to participants in each case ranged from 9 to 14 (average 11.7, median 11).

There were more frequent positive remarks about policies than there were negative ones, but not all comments (positive or negative) provided examples of impact evidence relating to play opportunities. Some were participants' reflections on policies in general, and others provided examples of impact that were not specifically about play. In some instances, the policies in question attracted mixed comments and participants sometimes were able to provide examples of both positive and negative impact.

Some participants identified a few policies that they thought were making no perceptible impact (see Table F). In most cases participants felt that this was because the policies were too new to have made a difference to their work as yet. In each case only one participant ticked the 'no impact' column, but it is possible that other participants felt the same but did not comment. None of these policies was routinely identified as having no impact as there was always at least one other participant who ticked the negative or positive impact columns for each of the policies listed in Table F.

¹⁹ Godfrey, R. (2005) *Cost and Value at Sure Start Millmead*. Available from Sure Start Millmead.

Table F: Policies reported by some participants to be having no impact on play

Policy	None
Choosing Health: a Physical Activity Action Plan (DH 2004)	1
Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future (ODPM 2003)	1
Youth Matters Green Paper/Next Steps (DfES 2005/6)	1
Time for Play (DCMS 2006)	1
Living Places – Cleaner, Safer, Greener programme (ODPM 2002)	1
Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (Draft) (DfES 2006)	1
Respect Action Plan (Home Office 2006)	1

4.4 Attitudes towards policy in general

In discussing the documents listed, participants also revealed their attitudes to national policy in general and its impact in terms of their workloads.

'I suppose what I really think is that there's too much coming at us at the moment...all the time you're getting different plans and different strategies and different things for consultation and different things for targets and it's really difficult to keep up with. I think that's what people are feeling about this (*the play strategy*). So I'm sending it out saying, "Can you have a look at it?" But if it was me, and play wasn't really high on my agenda, I would just think, "Well, I haven't got time for that."' (LA1.ii)

Some participants felt that the appearance of new policies either failed to acknowledge or even undermined their existing practices and prior work in certain areas.

'We have been doing these things in spite of the legislation, in spite of the Children Act. We already had systems in place within the local authority and so, in some sense, sometimes when guidelines are put in place that you have to comply with it can have an adverse impact on what we're doing because it doesn't acknowledge what we've already got in place; it wipes it away and then you have to conform...I think a lot of legislation doesn't always acknowledge the good practice that's already going on.' (LA4.i)

'You know, if you do your job properly they (*policies*) are not relevant, they are just a vehicle to enable you to do something, it just puts a context on it that's all. You don't sit here thinking, "Thank God for that", and now go out and do something. It's not how it works. It's there anyway – the needs are there anyway.' (LA1.i)

Others were concerned about the impact (particularly on play) of working within an 'outcomes driven culture' that made their work more difficult.

'I think because the policies are devised by people sitting in London, they don't realise the needs of rural communities and they're still asking us to play the numbers game....we haven't got funding for the community and voluntary sector any more because that, as an output, seems to have been lost because it is very difficult to measure.' (LA2.i)

'Within this...outcome driven kind of framework, you're kind of thinking, "well, where does play fit in?" So I was feeling a little bit reticent to put in things where people at the end of the day can't measure it, because we all know that what can't be measured won't get funded.' (LA3.ii)

'I mean the world we operate in currently is everything we do is measured and if it's not measured it doesn't get done...we operate in a very performance management culture and unless there's something that features in some framework that we're measured on that's to do with play, by default it's likely to become less of a priority...there's so many competing demands. If we want to maintain the momentum we have to find ways of embedding it in things that get measured.' (LA3.i)

But some participants also felt that policies, on the whole, were positive in terms of developing services for children and young people.

'I think these things have come across as being really positive. I've not come across anything that's taking us back a step... you just feel that Every Child Matters, for example, and *Youth Matters*, they're all putting young people at the heart of planning and preventative work.' (LA6.i)

'I think sometimes it (*policy*) does tend to crystallise the thinking.' (LA7.i)

4.5 Impact evidence

This section of the report gives details of the negative and positive impact of policies on play opportunities respectively, as reported by the participants. Beginning with the negative examples, Table G lists the relevant policies, the number of comments from participants overall, and the number of these comments that actually disclosed impact evidence. Each policy is then addressed in turn and examples of impact provided by participants are included. Subsequently, the positive examples are outlined, first in Table H and then with a discussion of each policy and impact examples. Positive comments were divided into those that were overt examples of impact evidence and those that suggested positive impact by implication only (see, for example, Home zones). It is the authors' belief the participants' local circumstances, particular role, experiences and constructions of play (see later) will have shaped their views.

Impact could generally be divided into two distinct categories: the ways in which a particular policy affected the working practices and/or structures within local authorities and therefore on play opportunities provided by them; and a direct impact on play opportunities in the community. In addition to the policies analysed by the researchers, the participants occasionally identified additional policies that they felt impacted on play and these have been included where appropriate.

4.6 Negative impact evidence

On the whole, participants' made fewer negative than positive comments about policies' impact on play opportunities.

In each case where negative comments were made the policies in question received favourable comments from other participants. The different opinions were believed to be the result of local circumstances: priorities within their area, individuals' roles, their service's remit and the roles and remits of other local authority departments and voluntary providers in relation to play.

Table G shows the policies that participants identified as leading to negative impact on play opportunities or about which they made negative remarks.

4.6.1 The Childcare Act 2006

One participant (LA 4.i) felt that there were negative elements within the Childcare Act related to constructs of play and care that could jeopardise open access provision. Although she did not provide evidence of negative impact, she commented that she was concerned about a lack of definition of the term 'childcare', which could lead to confusion about which services were included and which were not. Given that the Childcare Act had

very recently become statute, she was unable to provide concrete examples of evidence but foresaw problems in the future.

4.6.2 Cultural strategies

One participant (LA 7.i) commented that the local cultural strategy had not been finalised because of a difficulty in defining what was meant locally by 'culture'. However, her comments were not specifically related to the impact of this on opportunities for play.

Table G: Policies attracting negative comments

Policy	Number of negative comments	Number of examples of negative impact evidence related to play
The Compensation Act	5	5
Planning and Funding Extended Schools	6	4
Every Child Matters Green Paper	2	2
Guidance to the Standards for Out-of-School Care	2	2
The Disability Discrimination Act	2	2
6 Acre Standard (NPFA, 2001)	1	1
School Travel Planning	1	1
Local Strategic Partnerships	1	1
Guidance on CYPPs	1	1
Local Area Agreements	1	1
(Best Value) Performance Indicators	1	1
Home zones	1	1
Ten Year Childcare Strategy	1	0
Childcare Act	1	0
Guidance on Developing a Local Cultural Strategy	1	0
The Children Act (2004)	1	0
Children's trusts	1	0

4.6.3 The Compensation Act and Health and Safety Regulations

The issue of providing play opportunities that balanced safety and risk arose when participants were invited to reflect on the Compensation Act. They linked this to Health and Safety Regulations and risk assessment policies and procedures. In one example, given below, the participant's comments revealed an interesting sub-theme that was related to parents' differing attitudes about the professional competence of school and play-centre staff in relation to activities that they perceived to contain an element of risk to the children. Another (not included below) simply commented that health and safety issues meant that they simply did not provide the same opportunities that they used to (LA7.i).

'I think there's a big hang-up generally that play equipment in parks can't be above a certain height, due to an EU ruling. (For) a summer programme I did I brought in a mobile skate park. Some of these skate ramps are five feet high and somebody did break their arm, but because we had a risk assessment then the parents had to sign a form and there had to be a certain level of staffing and good practice was maintained. But, then accidents happen. If I'd known about all the health and safety I would never have gone out and hassled for the £10,000 it cost to buy those skate ramps.' (LA 1.i)

'For one of these activity groups we decided to take the theme of survival. Pretty safe activities, but in the last week we decided to take the kids on a clearing activity on the canal. The water board staff managed the sign-up letters for the children and they mentioned some water borne diseases that can be picked up from the canal. To my astonishment twenty out of forty two children's parents refused to allow their children to go. But I know for a fact that in school time the school were taking children up there all the time to that play centre for the children to go canoeing. So health and safety only became an issue because of the context of the activity and of course parents didn't have the kind of trust of play staff that they would of school staff.' (LA 1.i)

'The council actually endorses the recommendations of the Play Safety Forum about balancing risk and safety. That is going to be a huge change in the area if it can be managed; because of the fear of getting sued a lot of policies are in place that are about protecting the council, not about protecting the children.' (LA 4.i)

'We used to take a whole load of equipment to an open space and let the children play, you know, so there were loads of things. All of that's gone because of the kind of obsession with health and safety and the obsession about the compensation culture. Like, you know, "if my child falls down them I'm going to sue you"...it's so restrictive, it's such an obsession now....you have to do a risk assessment before you do anything and I kind of understand it but I'm not sure whether it's about safety of children and staff or more about making sure that if something happens you're not liable.' (LA 1.ii)

4.6.4 Extended schools

Although there were some positive predictions relating to extended service or 'community' schools in terms of the possibilities for providing more spaces (physically and metaphorically) for play, four participants identified ways in which the policy of opening up schools to their communities were already proving problematic, and impacting on play opportunities. These related to the mechanics of such an operation, and to the DfES core offer of services. In addition to these views, one other participant (LA 3.i) commented that schools would need to look at ways to modify their environments to facilitate play more broadly if schools were to include this in the services they provided. Another participant's experience showed that attitudes about play among some education professionals were a potential barrier to the inclusion of play services within extended schools provision (LA1.i).

'We have encouraged all schools in the area to open for community use but there are still lots of problems with doing that because you are talking about access to a school site with all the issues that brings. We are engaged in constant discussion with county in how we make that easier because it depends who you talk to in county. We found a friend in one department who will do her utmost to ensure that insurance isn't an issue...but then someone else comes to us with the problem (*insurance*) and we'll say, "have you talked to this person?". "No, we talked to someone else" and they are totally anti it, so even the county don't seem to have come to a decision.' (LA2.i)

'I think the main issue is the core offer in terms of the range of opportunities for children to access which, at the moment, doesn't include play. Although we have discussions about it there is no kind of statutory obligation actually to do that and...I think we need something more in there...I'm disappointed in the fact that although we have an extended school (*they*) are unwilling to give over some of their resources (*for play*).' (LA 7.i)

'I feel that (play) can quite easily be swallowed into other agendas. I certainly feel, from local experience and with the emphasis on everything in community schools, there's a big tension there because some of the funding tends to be through schools from the Local Area Agreement, from PSA1. And because it's county's money...it's kind of the driver, pushing it through education. But there can be a tendency with local education officers, headteachers, sitting round multi-agency tables, for it (play) to be pushed in that direction and you have to fight a bit to do the out-of-school activities, the fun stuff. I think that needs protecting a bit.' (LA 6.i)

'There is a level of resistance in some schools to opening up their facilities for the community and altering that mindset can take time.' (LA8.i)

4.6.5 Standards for daycare and out-of-school care (Ofsted / DfES, 2001)

Two participants identified a negative impact in relation to the new Daycare Standards. For the first (LA4.i), her opinion had been shaped by what she saw as the marginalisation of open access play. She also related this to the Ten Year Childcare Strategy. This may, however, have related to the specific circumstances within the council whereby funding for play tended to come via the Early Years and Childcare Service, rather than directly to play, and to a local situation whereby the need to meet Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) targets for getting people (parents) back into employment was already creating a pressure to provide more childcare places where previously there had been open access sites. The possibility to draw down funding for childcare places was an incentive for managers of under-funded open access sites to change their provision. Other negative comments came from a participant whose work regularly involved her in helping childcare settings to ensure that their provision met the quality assurance requirements of the Daycare Standards. She saw this as being detrimental for play because the emphasis was on meeting targets rather than on the quality of play opportunities.

'We've got 15 (*open access*) play centres in (*the area*) and there's apparently 225 playcare sites...within four areas there aren't any play centres'...'because of the increase in child care, you know, there might be the drive to take away or erode further the open access provision and turn it into playcare, which is actually putting services in for parents and not for children.' (LA4.i)

'We've had enough problems trying to get people to understand the Standards. I mean (*we've run*) loads of workshops...and what's really come out of it is that nobody's really read the Standards...one of our main briefs is to support them so they pass Ofsted, so that's really why we focus on that (*the Standards*), it's not necessarily what I think is the best, and if we had more time and more staff I would like to focus more on the activities and the range of play opportunities for children. But at the moment we want to make sure people pass their Ofsted so we kind of focus on making sure those things are in place.' (LA 1.ii)

4.6.6 The NPFA Six Acre Standard (2001)

One participant explained that the Six Acre Standard had previously been used by the council for assessing the amount of space that it should dedicate to play areas according to local population sizes. But it was now felt that this was inadequate for meeting play needs and, as a result, the council had developed its own system for looking both at quantity and at the quality, play value and accessibility of play spaces.

'I think that without a doubt we are being clear in terms of what's required from the amount of open space and the type of open space, in terms of its design as well....Six Acre Standard was the document that pretty much everybody in the country would pick up in the absence of anything better I suppose. But we're moving away from that now and basing our policies and strategies on what we think works here, which is the best approach I think.' (LA6.ii)

4.6.7 School travel planning

Although one participant felt that this was positive (see later), another identified ways in which school travel planning was having a detrimental effect locally on children and young people's ability to access play opportunities. With large numbers of the child population living in rural areas with few transport links, ongoing reductions in the numbers of school and other buses meant that children would be unable to stay on after school to take part in

clubs or to travel to towns where facilities were available that simply did not exist where they lived because the population was too sparse.

'County at the moment seem to be reducing rural services of all descriptions, they are refusing to subsidise them...from next year this lack of funding will mean the demise of youth services and probably the demise in numbers participating in out-of-school activities because there is not the transport home afterwards.' (LA3.i)

4.6.8 The Children Act (2004)

There were several negative comments that participants assigned to different policies developed under the auspices of the Children Act 2004 as having a positive impact. However, these are shown here under the policy headings by which they were categorised by the participants.

One district council participant (LA6.i) highlighted that the Children Act (2004) failed to make the provision of direct play services to children a statutory duty for all local authorities. She felt that this was neglectful, but did not provide specific examples of how this failure had impacted on her service. Instead she commented that the council was 'ambitious' and continued to make efforts to provide for play in spite of there being no statutory requirement to do so.

4.6.9 Every Child Matters

Acknowledging the push from central government to ensure that children and young people were consulted about their services, one participant (LA2.ii) revealed that a lack of time and coordination meant that consultation was sometimes proving detrimental, rather than providing a good experience and positive outcomes for the children and young people involved. Another participant (LA 3.i) also felt that developing new partnerships meant that a lot of time was spent talking to colleagues about what the service actually was and could offer, rather than getting on with delivering the services themselves although, more positively, he also saw this as a way of raising the profile of the service in new arenas.

This Every Child Matters stuff...if you're employing anybody to work with young people you should have young people on the (interview) panel and there's a group that's been set up for things like this and that's what they do all the time...what's also happened is there's a sudden 'Oh God, we've got to be in on this interview' and the young people are given no guidelines, ground rules or whether their voice is ever actually going to be heard – but it ticks the box. They've got to the place where they were saying unless they (*county*) give us proper warning, and that we've got time to train young people...they were starting to refuse to find young people for this because they say it's just a bad experience for young people.' (LA2.ii)

'The downside of the partnership working is it's very time consuming, you know we spend more time talking to other people about our business (*play*) and educating each other about what's important so that's quite demanding time wise.' (LA 3.i)

Children's trusts

All the participants who commented on children's trusts felt it was very early days and that the trusts were still in a developmental phase. One participant (LA 1.ii) felt that the experience of trying to work in partnership with professionals from other agencies was so problematic that it did not bode well for creating a multi-agency approach to the area's play strategy. One district council officer commented that the *Guidance on Developing Children and Young People's Plans* had not had a positive impact in terms of opportunities at district

level because, despite being consulted about the development of the CYPP, there was no mechanism for it to link to their work and she felt that the plan would ultimately 'sit on shelf a somewhere'. (LA2.i)

Children's trusts – ours is in the developmental stage still. You know, all this thing about multi-agency working: in my view it's going to take years for it to become a reality. At the moment, for example, getting some of the health staff to work in the children's centres, they haven't even moved in yet and they're arguing about who has which desk and who has which room. I don't disagree with it but I think it's really easy to say and much, much harder to do it.' (LA1.ii)

Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements

As part of her role, one participant (LA 6.i) reported that she sat on the Local Children's Consortium (strategic partnership group) and that this was a multi-agency group that comprised a very broad mix of partners. Given that many had no idea of the importance of play, she felt that the wide range of partners could further marginalise play, being non-statutory. Similarly, the inclusion of play within the Local Area Agreement tended to depend on the nature of the central characters involved.

'You can include anything and leave anything out, which is right in one sense as you need the local picture, but you just wonder if you get people round the table who just don't see the value of play or don't understand it, it could quite easily be left off as the "luxury bit", which it isn't.' (LA 6.i)

'It depends who influences the Local Area Agreements...and it depends whether it all links up. I'm thrust forward on all this stuff...I get to sort of influence what's included and how the negotiations go and I think that if it's segregated, I think it (*play*) might struggle because it is one of those areas that people can quite easily brush aside and say, "Well, it's play, they can go and do that anyway".'

4.6.10 Performance indicators

While three participants saw the positive side of Best Value Performance Indicators, one participant (LA2.ii) felt that existing indicators recommending an acceptable distance of 20 minutes from home to leisure facilities was wholly unrealistic for the area for which she was responsible. Among largely rural communities, a 20-minute standard was unachievable, although she also commented that she would like there to be such facilities within reach of all children. However, the low population figures meant that it was very difficult to fund provision with already stretched resources.

'When you're talking about (*leisure*) facilities and benchmarking them, one of the key factors was a quality assured facility within 20 minutes' drive. In this area! You know, if you look at a map of this area and the population, you are not going to get a quality assured facility within 20 minutes' drive, it's ridiculous; they just don't relate to this area.' (LA2.ii)

4.6.11 Disability Discrimination Act

Generally comments about the DDA were positive, but one participant (LA2.i) had mixed views and highlighted ways in which the Act could have a negative impact in terms of ensuring non-discriminatory provision for play opportunities. A colleague in the same authority also explained how installing inclusive, DDA compliant equipment had not been

successful in the case of a local playground; she believed it was necessary to 'get your head' around all the complexities of inclusion rather than simply following the DDA to the letter.

'I think the issue is that the DDA was imposed on the community voluntary sector with nothing to back it up, so there's no extra funding and that is, of course, a real issue for village halls...in fact they've withdrawn the money.' (LA2.i)

'If you're talking about playgrounds, I think our preferred model is that you can get (disabled children) in there and it's not what the equipment offers but more that they can access the space...I know of one place where they have a nice bright swing that you can put a disabled child in and, I don't want to shock you, but the locals call that the "spocker swing" and no-one wants to use it because of the stigma and although it's been put there for the best possible reasons, it didn't actually meet anybody's needs at all.' (LA2.ii)

4.6.12 Home Zones

Few of the participants had any direct experience of home zones and the possibilities for creating play spaces within them. However, one participant who was familiar with two home zones in her local area generally felt that policies supporting the creation of such spaces were positive, but did not go far enough to address the provision of good-quality play opportunities.

'One of the problems of the home zone is that it looks nice but in terms of what it actually sets out to do in terms of play value, I don't think it's achievable.' (LA7.i)

4.7 Positive impact evidence

There were many more positive comments about policies' impact on play than there were negative ones. This may have been partly because there existed, at the time of interviewing, an opportunity, through the Big Lottery Fund, for second tier and unitary authorities to apply for funding for play, meaning that most were working on developing a play strategy and action plan that they acknowledged was creating an optimistic atmosphere and raising the profile of play more generally. In methodological terms, participants were given equal opportunities to provide negative or positive comments and were assured of anonymity in the report. It is not thought that their role as officers of local government prevented them from being open in criticising national policies and legislation, had this been their genuine opinion. Table H lists the policies about which participants made favourable comments and shows the number of comments about each one, as well as the number of those comments that were examples of impact evidence. Where there is a difference between the first and second figure, the difference is the number of comments that were either general remarks that provided no evidence of impact, or were examples of impact that did not relate specifically to play.

Table H: Policies attracting positive comments

Policy	Number of positive comments	Number of examples of positive impact evidence
Section 106 Agreements (Planning Obligations)	6	5
Every Child Matters	5	5
Sure Start	4	3
Disability Discrimination Act	4	3
Extended Schools	3	3
Physical Activity Action Plan	4	2
Planning Policy Guidance 17	4	2
Youth Matters	3	2
Local Strategic Partnerships	3	2
Local Area Agreements	3	2
Walking and Cycling Action Plan	2	1
Joint Area Reviews of Children's Services	1	1
Forestry Commission Guidance on Play Spaces	1	1
Home Zones (Section 268, Transport Act 2000)	1	1
Equality Act and Race Relations Amendment Act	1	1
Getting Serious About Play	5	4
Time for Play	2	1
The Children Act 2004	3	0
Cultural Strategies	3	0
Best Value Performance Indicators	3	0
Our Countryside: the future (Rural White Paper)	2	0
Ten Year Childcare Strategy	1	0
Childcare Act 2006	1	0
Travelling to School: an action plan (DfES/DfT 2003)	1	0
Sustainable Communities: building for the future	1	0
Neighbourhood Wardens Implementation Plan	1	0

4.7.1 Section 106 agreements

There were no directly negative comments relating to either the use of Section 106 monies for creating play opportunities or about the guidance for supplementary planning gain. However, some participants (LA7.i, LA3.i, LA6.i) did reflect that in developing or updating an audit of play facilities for their play strategies, they could better allocate Section 106 money to areas where there was a shortage of facilities, which was seen as a positive step, implying (or stating) that there had previously been an uneven spread of resources. Six participants commented positively about the way in which Section 106 developers' funds could increase the facilities for play in local communities.

'We've always been quite good on the trigger if say more than 10 houses are being built then they have to provide facilities – recreation, play facilities and so on. And then providing it's within the cash limit for that development, then the local community can apply for some money to develop play if it's not part of that development.' (LA8.ii)

'(for) planning in the Section 106 monies we've been looking at some of the best practice...it's about having a ten year sustainable plan...it will all become centralised and there will be strategic ways of reviewing and looking at where play areas are. That is a huge change to what it was six months ago so we know those are not impacting yet but will do.' (LA4.ii)

'We also have the working group for the open space and recreation strategy. We looked at any application that comes for developers' funds...we've already adopted the Open Space Strategy, which is for fixed play... we've just done a supplementary planning document where we've revised sport and play contributions. So it used to be five houses or more; we've now increased it to single dwellings.' (LA2.ii)

4.7.2 The Children Act 2004

Five participants made positive comments about Every Child Matters and three of them also spoke positively about the Children Act (2004). One described a community project that had arisen from consultations with children and young people who wanted a local play area and had been successful in lobbying the council for this. The participant felt that, although there were some ways in which children's views had been integrated in community projects for some time, the success of the project had been a result of Every Child Matters adding greater strength and legitimacy to their request for a play area (LA2.ii). Another participant who had been successful in ensuring that play was an integral part of the local Children and Young People's Plan felt that ECM was a positive force for having brought children into the spotlight, for creating programmes like Sure Start, and for bringing previously disjointed services together to 'speak in one language for children' (LA7.i).

In addition to commenting on ECM and the Children Act, some participants also referred to *Youth Matters* (3), local strategic partnerships (3) and Local Area Agreements (2) linked to the Children Act and the duty for authorities to cooperate to develop services for children and young people supported by a Children and Young People's Plan (2). In addition, one participant (LA3.ii) commented that the Joint Area Review (the inspection that will contribute a score for the children and young people's services aspect of the Common Performance Assessment) had had a positive impact because the (open access) play services had been included, thereby raising their profile and linking them into the ECM outcomes framework.

'For (*colleague running play service*) to get a platform, to go to the Children and Young People's Strategic Plan Board, where people from the fire service to Connexions through to the Youth Offending Service are learning about the merits of play, that's really positive.' (LA3.i)

'I've seen a change in (*area*) from *enjoy* and *achieve* being about enjoying school and enjoying education and the turn around to it becoming enjoying play and enjoying recreation. Because we know that everybody has to deliver on Every Child Matters outcomes, then the fact that you can link how certain aspects of play help you achieve that, then it is a vehicle for raising the profile of play.' (LA4.i)

'When I first looked at 3.6, the (*ECM Outcomes Framework*) indicator for play, and what it should be – that every local authority should have a play provision and that they have to evidence that – that's the closest thing I've ever seen to a statutory duty to provide play.' (LA4.ii)

'Within the Local Area Agreement, a lot of what was mentioned was playcare, not open access. It's people that are putting things in place at the initial stages, if they're not aware of what...open access play is...it's not always acknowledged. But as these are more and more being rolled out, the more people that are getting involved...in the long term it should have a positive impact.' (LA4.ii)

'Every Child Matters and *Youth Matters*, they're all putting young people at the heart of planning and preventative work.' (LA 6.i)

'Apart from the fact that it doesn't touch on our age bracket we've got to link with *Youth Matters* in terms of the strategic approach...it would be interesting to see what young people are asking for...we've been to all these European conferences on the importance of listening to young people and now our government have added the weight behind it so it's been legitimised...and our Youth Parliament was significant for the first time in (local) history (because) we'd actually got young people who were in the Council Chamber with elected members, making it pretty clear what they were looking for. Now members are going to get those thoughts and observations and it'll go into a plan as a commitment to feed back to the young people what it is we can and can't do.' (LA3.i and ii)

'Local Area Agreements – I'm on a couple of working groups at county level looking at how we get the community voluntary sector more involved actually in delivery of services and link it with mainstream provision, and the Local Strategic Partnerships obviously support this; it's very successful.' (LA2.i)

'I know some of the Partnerships we have formed and some of the joined up working we have been doing has had a huge impact.' (LA4.ii)

4.7.3 Sure Start

The Sure Start programme attracted positive comments from four participants. Partnership and understanding community needs were themes that arose from comments about Sure Start centres in particular. Some related to improved authority-community links, leading to more extensive or coherent provision (LA2.i). One participant outlined the ways in which Sure Start funding not only was enabling more inclusive provision but also more playwork training.

'Sure Start have had a huge impact...in terms of the good work that has happened, it has created a lot of good but how we would measure that, again that is a long term thing in terms of play.' (LA7.i)

'From our Sure Start general grant we provide some funding to make our holiday play-schemes and nurseries and things more accessible so, for example, we employ play support workers to work in the holidays so that children with special needs and disabilities can access our provision. A lot of things we do are funded by the Sure Start general grant. What it has done is enable us to support the sustainability of the providers, it's enabled us to provide a lot more training and give a lot more funding to groups so they can improve, to provide more inclusion, to develop children's centres. It has also hugely raised the profile of the importance of the early years.' (LA1.i)

'(Sure Start) recognise what families' needs are...because play has been within communities, sometimes based within community centres, a lot of satellite activities have happened within those facilities so immediate links evolve. My older child now goes to the open access but my younger one goes to the 'play and learn' with Sure Start – it's that whole kind of approach I guess.' (LA3.ii)

4.7.4 Extended schools

Among the three participants who spoke positively about the extended schools agenda, two spoke for rural communities that they represented, and felt that a schools' facilities were particularly important for the more isolated communities, although transport was an issue.

Two participants also identified ways in which the development of extended schools, while providing additional services for local communities, were causing repercussions that could be problematic. In one case the schools' success in attracting funding had prompted local children to begin to look for support to revamp their local playground. In another case, the opening up of a school's facilities had caused a downturn in the use of other local community facilities. All three participants agreed that schools held the key to much needed resources that could be harnessed to provide play and recreational activities, as well as childcare, for the local communities.

'We work with a school that's just got specialist sports status and have been in discussion with them about how we can help them develop their facilities...on the proviso that it's not just for the school children, the facilities could be opened up for the wider community. Because in some of these more remote areas there isn't the access to facilities so the school could provide good facilities... the government's extended schools approach (is) particularly important in a rural area with limited facilities and limited access given the transport issues.' (LA8.i)

'We have a school who are very busy developing all sorts of funding avenues for opportunities to provide a multi-use games area, a family room in school and a play area on the school site and they have really taken the ball and run with it ...and in the meantime you've got this little group of children on a housing estate who have a decrepit playground and they are seeing the success of the school and saying, "well now we want to be developed" and it's creating waves in a very small community like this. And that's initiated by the extended school programme.' (LA2.i)

'We've done quite a lot of stuff in play in school fields and some of that is learning...sometimes that is the only green space there is in an area, or substantial green space where you can do bigger games.' (LA3.ii)

4.7.5 Ten Year Childcare Strategy

Only one participant (LA1.ii), whose role encompassed play, early years and childcare services, felt that the *Ten Year Childcare Strategy* was having a positive impact in relation to play. Although she did not provide evidence, she commented that by raising the importance of childcare, she believed that the strategy also helped to put a spotlight on play.

4.7.6 Outdoor and physical activity strategies

Two participants reported that the *Walking and Cycling Action Plan* was positive and one of these, together with three other participants, commented positively about *Choosing Activity: a Physical Activity Action Plan*. In one case the *Walking and Cycling Action Plan* had led to local plans to develop a network of footpaths and cycle pathways, 'to connect places up in a way that's easy for children to access' (LA4.ii). Discussions between the Play Service and the officers responsible for these pathways were underway to forge a link with the Play Strategy. Referring both to the *Walking and Cycling Action Plan* generally and to School Travel Plans more specifically, one participant could envisage that journeys to school on foot could lead to the development of better relationships between pupils as they talked and played en route (LA3.ii). Other links were forged between Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and play services as a result of the local physical activity plans and play strategies. But even though this was seen as a positive way of reinforcing the message that play can help tackle obesity and raise levels of fitness, there was no evidence that the PCTs were facilitating more play opportunities as a result (as yet) (LA3.i and LA). Nevertheless, in two other areas participants felt that the importance of outdoor play had been reinforced by the *Obesity Strategy* and gave examples of their successes in gaining support and funding for developing outdoor play areas for children's centres (LA1.ii, LA 6.i).

'One of the things that I've done a lot of stuff on is developing outdoor play.'
' – because of the *Physical Activity Plan*?'

'I think, yeah, there's more of an awareness...of the importance of outdoor play and the importance of physical activity for children from when they're really young.' (LA1.ii)

In relation to outdoor leisure and play activities, when asked whether he felt that *Outdoors for All* (Draft Diversity Action Plan, DEFRA, 2006) had made any impact, one participant was prompted to report that the Forestry Commission's *Design Guidance for Play Spaces* (March 2006) had positively impacted on the area's play rangers who were undertaking training and would, as a result, be better equipped to provide challenging outdoor play activities (LA3.ii). Another participant (LA7.i) commented that the Home zones in her area had had a positive impact in terms of providing outdoor spaces for active play, and that two further zones were planned (although she also had some reservations about the play value, as described earlier).

4.7.7 Planning Policy Guidance 17 (for Open Space, Sport and Recreation)

Three participants felt that PPG 17 had positively impacted on opportunities for play because their councils had reduced the number of buildings to which Section 106 monies applied, in one case to single dwellings. As a result, more funding had become available for creating play spaces or supporting provision in other ways. Simultaneously, GIS audits of local open spaces and play areas for the play strategies or Recreation and Open Space strategies showed areas that lacked play facilities and, as a result, monies could be more strategically targeted to filling gaps in provision.

4.7.8 Cultural strategies

Three participants (LA2, 3 and 4) reported links between their play service and the Cultural Strategy. In one authority, which had had a long history of play policies and action plans, play had been embedded within the Cultural Strategy. In another with a more recent history of developing a play strategy, the focus of the Cultural Strategy and related economic policies were on tourism and leisure, rather than play, but the new play strategy was being linked to both the Cultural and the Open Space strategies, ensuring coherence and avoiding duplication. This was evidenced by the use of existing working groups for the development of the play strategy, augmented by new members who were considered to be play experts. Furthermore, all strategies were overseen by one officer who was able to link grant applications into all three. The third participant also reported links between the Play and Cultural strategies and said that this was happening more and more as colleagues were beginning to recognise the importance and benefits of play. However, none of the participants reported that these strategic links were, as yet, resulting in more or improved play opportunities.

I went to a meeting this morning...the Head of Arts and Events approached me. There's the Cultural Strategy they're putting together for (this area), and as they're going through it there was somebody from Sports that sits on the Cultural Strategy group and the Play Strategy group. People are making connections. This person said, "You need to feed the Play Strategy into the Cultural Strategy" so now I've been invited to sit on the Cultural Strategy Group.' LA4.ii

4.7.9 Anti-discriminatory policies

One participant (LA4.i) felt that the Equalities Act, Race Relations Act and the Disability Discrimination Act had all had a positive impact on the way the authority managed and delivered its services, including its play services.

'We can provide information in relation to how we're achieving and what work we're doing in relation to the Equalities Act. So some of the local PIs are linked into Best Value Performance Indicators so that we don't have to keep on going to centres or they don't have to keep filling out proformas to say "please evidence your work".'

'The Race Relations (Amendment) Act was a key driver to ensuring that you approved; one looking at the recruitment of staff and selection within the council, making sure it was representative; the other was about how we actually work with groups and making sure that what we do is addressing inequalities. So for me the RRAA was a key driver that we could use to improve services.'

'...we're pushing for open access so you can be flexible on who you work with and if particular groups of marginalised children are not accessing your service you can go out and should always have space to be able to accommodate them. Some of the centres do have specific open evenings and target children or families they feel are not accessing a service and they will go out and outreach. I would say most of the centres are pretty inclusive now and if they're not, they're acknowledging this and will look for support to be more inclusive. There's more of that taking place now than ever before.' (all LA4.i)

Three other participants also commented on the DDA, and felt that it had positively impacted on play opportunities by forcing services to reassess the provision they funded or monitored to ensure it was compliant with the Act. Two were able to offer evidence of how they had changed their practice in an effort to become more inclusive.

Another one that will have an impact on play in a positive way is the Disability Discrimination Act. We've done quite a lot around reasonable adjustment. Certainly we do a fair amount of training, we're getting stronger and stronger in terms of our inclusion agenda and getting a clear message across that whatever we do is for all young people...we'd gone through a number of different stages. The initial stages were, "Well what's this all about?" to now a stage where people are saying, "Well why wouldn't we do this and why wouldn't we include youngsters?"...So we've worked hard in terms of accessibility.' (LA3.i)

'Disability Discrimination Act...well that's an interesting one because we've changed our policy because now, in grant aid projects that come to us, we need to ensure that they are aware of the DDA and that we will pay for access. Basically that's now contained within every grant.' (LA2.i)

4.7.10 Best Value Performance Indicators and monitoring service delivery

Three authorities (LA2, 5 and 6) indicated that they believed Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) had a positive impact on play opportunities. However, in discussions with them and others, none identified BVPIs that were particularly related to play or informal recreational activities, except in terms of its accessibility. None recognised BV119a/e (satisfaction with sport and leisure facilities/parks and open spaces). Some had set key local performance indicators and others talked about BVPIs in general. All had monitoring systems to ensure the quality of their provision.

'Best Value Performance Indicators – yes, we've got that...everything we do feeds into the performance indicators...actually, the only one we've got, I think, is about disability; the number of organisations that we fund or assist for people with disabilities. I'm not actually sure about play, whether we've got any. That is something we ought to get.' (LA2.i)

'We've got in place a performance management system, a database, where (play) sites...are meant to fill out registration forms for each one of the users and that information is fed directly into a database system and we've also set local performance indicators on what we feel they should be providing and evidencing and that's monitored and reproduced with quarterly reports on how they do.' (LA4.i)

'And the other thing that I think is really useful, although we might hate it, (is) performance monitoring and performance management. As an authority we're quite tight on that. So the fact that this (the Play Strategy) was an O and S [overview and scrutiny] piece of work in the beginning means every now and then you have to get back to O and S, they want an update. So it doesn't just sit on a shelf.' (LA6.i)

4.7.11 Getting Serious About Play and Time for Play

Not all participants commented on *Getting Serious about Play* (2004) but all referred to the fact that Big Lottery funding was being made available for play (to second tier/district, unitary, borough and metropolitan authorities). Some discussions about the development of play strategies stemmed from mention of *Getting Serious about Play*. Table I shows in more detail the responses related to this policy document.

Table I: Recognition of and comments about *Getting Serious about Play*

Authority	Recognised the policy	Commented about the policy
LA1	Vaguely	Said she 'may have flicked through' the document
LA2	Yes	Would lead to pump priming through BIG
LA3	Yes	Raised profile of play
LA4	Yes	Raised profile of play
LA5	Yes	None
LA6	Yes	Had a good tradition of supporting play anyway
LA7	Yes	National document, helped when developing strategy
LA8	Unknown	None

Three participants felt that *Getting Serious about Play* had had a direct positive impact on their work because it was a document produced by central government that had raised the profile of play nationally. One other participant indicated that the policy would indirectly impact positively on play opportunities because it had led to the allocation of Big Lottery money, which in itself would act as focus for funds to be attracted from other sources for

play. Among the remaining three authorities, two made no comment and the third (LA6.i), reflecting on local circumstances, said that, 'I think there is a genuine interest now in providing for play, not for its other sake, not because of Whitehall shouting...I think that's the case' adding that the council's history of supporting play was good anyway, although conceding that the development of the Play Strategy (originally prompted by the promise of New Opportunities Fund (NOF) funding for play) had led to many improvements (see later).

Time for Play (2006) was less well known by the participants and only two (LA4 and LA7) commented on it. This may have been because it had been published just two months prior to the interviews. However, in both cases the participants felt positive about the document's publication; one believed it was already making an impact and the other felt that in future its impact would be felt in terms of raising the profile of play.

'*Time for Play* I see as a really useful tool for my role really to bang on people's doors saying, "This is what we should be doing!"' (LA7)

4.8 Big Lottery Fund Children's Play initiative

All authorities that participated in the study were invited to reflect on the Big Lottery Fund Children's Play initiative, a funding programme that has allocated £124 million to local authority areas across England. To apply for the funding, local authorities are required to develop a play strategy in conjunction with local play partnerships or networks. Guidelines produced by the Children's Play Council (*Planning for Play*, 2006) are intended to support this process, and these refer to the guidelines produced for the London Plan by the Mayor of London (*Guide to Preparing Play Strategies*, 2005).

The participants talked about the processes involved in developing their strategies. Some had made more progress than others at the time of the interviews. For many, the responsibility for the play strategy was new to their role and/or their service and reflected much of the general organisational restructuring that was reported. Through the discussions, many identified a range of ways in which the developmental work was impacting on their role, their service, other departments and organisations, and on play opportunities. As a result, the process was triggering organisational change as well as the anticipated funding allocation. But attitudes towards the process varied. For some more than others, the responsibility for creating a strategy was a burden and they highlighted how the process was time consuming and, at times, a battle.

'Comments from one of the adventure playgrounds on the strategy were that they wanted me to take out every reference to childcare...whereas for me we've got to provide opportunities for children to play even if they are in childcare and even if that goes against the open access agreement/free play ethos...it's this old debate about what is really play and what isn't. Everybody focuses on their bit.' (LA1.ii)

'People are coming with some very different expectations about what they perceive as their role and there's this thing of where does play end and the youth stuff begin...it hasn't been discussed before so it's actually quite a challenge, but at least the lid's being taken off and that process has started...but you could talk and talk and talk about what's the definition of play. But having that debate is great.' (LA2.ii)

For others, the activities they were undertaking to write their strategy were challenging, but led to new learning and development.

'We're challenging some of what we offer as a service, but it's promoting us more and we're becoming acknowledged and valued in relation to what we should be offering.' (LA4.i)

Without exception, all those who discussed their play strategy reported that its development was a vehicle for raising the profile of the play service and the benefits of play to a wider audience. This often comprised people who previously had no particular knowledge of the service or of how other agendas (their own) might benefit from the inclusion of play.

'Already we've had a number of seminars and that brought together 60 people from different agencies across the statutory and voluntary sectors and it's pulling people together and making people think about play not only in strategic terms but also in terms of impact.' (LA3.i)

'I was looking through the Children and Young People's Plan, the Area Plan and the Corporate Plan and I don't think they mentioned play once, so I'm really hoping that the things that will come out of this is some kind of better education and better cross-working so that children's play is looked at in all kinds of things and there does become some awareness so that people think of it... for example, when you're designing a housing estate.' (LA1.ii)

Another key issue was the way in which the strategy was bringing new (or renewed) coherence to the management and delivery of a range of play opportunities provided or facilitated by authorities and their community partners.

'It's maybe a little bit ad hoc...projects have been viewed on merits but not necessarily linked to whatever else is available or going on in the pipeline, so hopefully this will add more structure to it.' (LA8)

'That's one of the reasons we had the strategy. It was very disparate across lots of different parts of the organisation...the whole thing was very disjointed.' (LA6.i)

This in turn was impacting in various ways: first, the play services and their partners were working in a more strategic and joined-up way to oversee provision. One participant reported that this relationship was beneficial in terms of better links with the community and other partners, and the information and knowledge sharing that brought. It has also resulted in these partners effectively acting as external consultants whose advice was improving existing practices within the service itself.

'Since the (play strategy) partnership group are getting some others on board, it has actually made a lot of changes to things like application forms, report forms, I mean they are a lot more socially inclusive now.' (LA4.i)

Secondly, new information gathered through audits of existing facilities and consultations with children and young people meant that the play services were armed with an evidence-base for developing their strategic approach to delivering needs-based, appropriately located, good-quality provision. This allowed them to be more proactive in working with planners, for example, to fill gaps in provision using the developers' funds (Section 106 money), and to have a stronger case to seek council funding for new initiatives.

'The process, this has just started, involves bringing a group of young people together to work with the interested adults...it's a way of re-engaging the young people back into the community so you are not just ending up with a village that has a play site but you are having a village that has a play site and a group of young people that feel it's theirs.' (LA8)

'I think we are giving them clear direction now in terms of what's required through research and strategy, whereas before we were almost guessing what was required.' (LA6.ii)

'I'd like to harp back to ...when our planners have said, "there's people delivering on play and open space issues. What do you require? What do we go into battle with?" and I suppose we haven't been in a position to tell them. Whereas now we are saying, "Well actually we don't want that, we want this" because we've identified the differences.' (LA6.ii)

Thirdly, the need for a strategy gave some of the play services a greater sense of legitimacy for their work, and was a way of linking in with several other council plans and impacting on them and the work of other departments or services.

'I think the strategy has sort of refreshed things...raised the level of interest...it (play) does seem to have more of a place now and it feels quite comfortable I guess, in terms of where we're moving. It seems we've got a direction.' (LA3.i)

'The strategy was great because it sets the scene; it demonstrates and proves the case for play...and we have managed to get that through the committee here and that's now been endorsed as well.' (LA6.ii)

'We can actually see attitudes changing in other departments. I mean the other week we had a meeting with some architects and landscape planners...they were talking about putting home zones in and really changing the way things are being planned and we were given an input into that so already it seems that cross-departmental, joined-up working is starting.' (LA4.ii)

All the participants who talked about developing their local play strategies referred to the involvement of a working group dedicated to this purpose. In most cases these groups were newly constituted, but many were formed from existing groups or networks into which new members had been invited. The group enabled the formalisation of otherwise informal relationships.

Some participants reported that the strategy needed to be widely representative as it was not intended to be a plan for which the authority would have sole ownership and responsibility, but one that drew in and involved voluntary and community workers, and members of the private sector as well as other statutory sector officers. The groups had a mix of skills and knowledge and, where the officer responsible for the strategy was not a 'play expert' the constitution of new groups enabled them to call upon the requisite expertise. Similarly, where officers responsible for the strategy were the 'play experts', they benefited from the multi-agency and multi-professional nature of the groups as well as the opportunities presented by the groups to share their knowledge about play with the professionals and to permeate new networks to get across the message about the importance of play. There was also some evidence that the multi-agency nature of the groups was in itself a powerful mechanism for lobbying for play opportunities.

I think one example for it (multi-agency partnership), which has had an obvious impact, is the XXXX Children's Centre. We approached the council basically to get the donation of the use of the land. It's on prime housing land and was the first part of the (bigger) development, which is a bit of a coup really. Although I've been lead officer on it, the request came from the multi-agency partnership. What struck me was how willing members were to allocate a decent amount of land for outdoor play...and not only members, but other senior council officers in terms of planning, estates and things like that... and the thinking behind it is that play itself is being taken seriously.' (LA6.i)

Commenting on the aim of accessing the funding allocation from the Big Lottery Fund, many participants welcomed the funding and thought it provided an incentive to other departments or organisations to become involved in developing the strategy.

'We've managed to raise the profile particularly with the fact that there's some finances attached to it. I mean that will attract people's interest, won't it? Maybe it's just my imagination coming fresh to it, but certainly it's captured people's imagination and there's a lot of commitment.' (LA3.i)

'It's difficult enough doing the strategy and getting enough comments from people and getting enough people to come to meetings, but there is something when the people know there is a bit of money.' (LA1.ii)

They also saw ways in which the money would enable them to provide more or better quality play opportunities, some of which were not immediately obvious. For example, three participants hoped that the process and funds could be partly used to begin to develop better cross-sector and cross-generational understanding, thereby tackling the negative attitudes that sometimes presented barriers to play and informal recreation for children and young people.

'I think there's a difference between the play strategy and the recreation and open space strategy because the (latter) is about physical play areas whereas the play strategy is slightly softer, because that is where we could potentially get play development workers on "how do we play together?" It's informal space and it's where we could perhaps get over this issue of old people not having respect for younger people and vice versa, and also we've got this issue of bullying in one play area and (there could be) some sort of development work around bullying.' (LA2.i)

'I'm hoping that an action from the play strategy (will) be some way of trying to get across a better understanding and why play is important. You know – why the children should be able to play in an after-school club and it shouldn't be, "you're all going to sit down and make a paper aeroplane and after that you're all going to run around outside and then you're going to do this and that"...' (LA1.ii)

However, some were cautious about being too ambitious with their plans as they felt that the short-term nature of the funding somewhat restricted the kinds of opportunities they would be able to provide; this particularly related to those that could have high maintenance costs in the future (such as adventure playgrounds). One participant also felt that the short-term funding was problematic in terms of linking different plans that made provision for play (such as Open Space strategies) as her authority was making much longer-term plans in relation to the use of Section 106 monies in line with good practice guidance. Some participants were concerned, therefore, about the ability to sustain, in the longer term, the play opportunities that the funding would facilitate, although others indicated that they saw the fund as start up money to help attract more funding.

Other more critical comments related to the cost of developing the strategy, action plan and portfolio and to the fact that it required a lot of additional work to meet the application requirements, even where authorities had existing play policies and strategies.

'We had funding for a conference which launched our *play plans*...then the information came out about the Big Lottery funding and so it actually put the Play Strategy Group on a more formalised basis because the goalposts changed because we had certain criteria to meet...and the lottery funding won't meet all of the organisations that we've mentioned in the *play plan*.' (LA4.ii)

One participant felt that the guidance for developing a strategy was too prescriptive and, therefore, limiting. Some participants reported that the development of the play strategy did not fit within their service plan. Finally, two participants felt that the Big Lottery Fund initiative would not necessarily result in creating play opportunities for children.

'That funding from the Big Lottery is not meant to be the be-all and end-all, it's always meant to be pump-priming and all these things are supposed to be about community self-regeneration...by providing play for working parents primarily, to obviously provide people with more economic opportunities.' (LA1.i)

'It (*Big Lottery Fund application process*) doesn't acknowledge the expertise that's already there, so you've got all of these new bodies and all this money that's going into an infrastructure for this. The angst is taking the money away from the children by putting a massive infrastructure in place so it's giving people jobs...it's minimal impact on increasing play opportunities for children.' (LA4.i)

In addition to interviewing representatives of local authorities, those working in the voluntary and community sector or for national organisations associated with play were also invited to participate in the study. The views of those who took part in the enquiries are discussed in the next chapter.

5. Findings from voluntary, community and national organisations

5.1 Contextual information

For each local authority area visited, it was intended that the research should also include the views of a representative from the local voluntary and community play sector. In practice, visits were made to eight of the nine government office regions and discussions took place with representatives of the voluntary and community sector in six of these eight areas: Birmingham, Hackney, Hull, Plymouth, Tynedale and the Wirral. In addition, the researchers sought participation from several national bodies with an interest in or responsibility for creating, facilitating or supporting play opportunities. Unfortunately the response rate was poor, and only four such organisations participated: 4Children, CAFE Space, the National Playing Fields Association (now known as Fields in Trust) and SkillsActive. The reason for the poor response rate is not known, although the short time frame for the project and for gathering responses may have been a causal factor.

5.2 Policy impact evidence

Participants were, once again, invited to reflect on whether, in their experience, particular policies had a positive or negative impact on play opportunities and to provide examples of evidence where possible. As was the case with the local authorities, these participants made fewer negative than positive comments about policies. In general there was a tendency for the individual participants from voluntary, community and national (VCN) organisations to comment on fewer policies than their local authority colleagues. But this was understandable because several of the listed policies were designed for use by local authorities. Overall, however, there was only one policy about which none of the VCN participants commented and this, ironically, was not uniquely aimed at local authorities. It was DEFRA's *Outdoors for All: Draft Diversity Action Plan* (2006).

A minority of participants made comments about policy in general and its relationship to play. These referred to a lack of funding or resourcing for play and problems associated with play's status as a non-statutory service. However, participants also remarked that other factors, such as parental or media attitudes about 'stranger danger' and other perceived risks had a significant impact on children's abilities to access free play opportunities.

'When local authorities are retrenching generally and sort of considering priorities, some of which are mandatory – and play clearly is not – then it means that play's in a fairly fragile position.' (VCN1)

'Play is now increasingly recognised as an important aspect of support for improving outcomes for children. Mechanisms and services to deliver that support remain inconsistent.' (VCN2)

'If we're all being realistic about things, it's about time we all start working together and having the same agenda.' (VCN3)

5.3 Negative impact evidence

Not all negative comments were supported by evidence of impact on play opportunities. Table J below shows the number of negative comments and the number of examples of evidence of negative impact against particular policies.

Table J: Policies attracting negative comments from VCN participants

Policy, Legislation Strategy, Plan, Guidance	Negative comments	Evidence of negative impact
The Compensation Act	3	2
The Disabilities Discrimination Act	3	2
Extended Schools	3	2
Daycare Standards	2	2
Guidance on Children and Young People's Plans	2	1
Home Zones – Challenging the future of our streets (2005)	1	1
The NPFA Six Acre Standard	1	1
Planning Guidance (Section 106 money)	2	0
Planning Policy Guidance 17	2	0
The Children Act 2004	1	0
Every Child Matters: the next steps	1	0
Youth Matters	1	0
Sure Start	1	0
Ten Year Childcare Strategy	1	0
Childcare Act 2006	1	0
Children's trusts	1	0
Local Area Agreements	1	0
Local Strategic Partnerships	1	0
Joint Area Review	1	0

5.3.1 A compensation culture

In the discussions held, the Compensation Act was inextricably linked to health and safety issues and, while participants did not have negative comments to make about the Health and Safety Executive's circulars per se (in fact some were positive about these), some linked general fears about safety with a fear of litigation. This was seen to impact negatively on provision of stimulating play opportunities and to lead to provision of 'boring' playground equipment or the demise of (adventure) playgrounds. One participant commented that many local authorities had been prompted to take equipment away because of health and safety issues.

In another participant's experience, some local authorities were becoming over-reliant on or developing partnerships with play equipment suppliers whose equipment they knew to meet health and safety standards. This practice was leading to standardisation of playgrounds throughout LA areas, meaning that there was a 'bland, formulaic approach to the design of public play areas'.

'Fear of litigation is limiting what authorities will accept in a play space...(but) there is a growing desire/interest in creating alternative types of play space...although this seems to be thwarted by concerns over safety (litigation) and a lack of skills and knowledge about what an alternative play space might be like.' (VCN4)

'There's a bit of a barrier with our (local authority) parks department I would say. They are very hung up in health and safety. I had a conversation with one of their heads and he just has a totally different attitude...they put playgrounds in and they don't consult with the play service, which I find bizarre...in the summer we had one of our (play in parks) sites next to a playground...they weren't using the fixed play equipment because the children get bored with it really quickly. So I was speaking to the (parks department) lads and saying, "I can save you lots of money, let's just put bushes in etc", and he was saying, "How are we going to maintain it? If someone breaks their ankle on that we'll get sued".' (VCN6)

Individuals' knowledge and understanding of play were also thought to be a key factor in determining whether play areas were formulaic or not. One participant had noted that while one local authority was disinclined to install interesting and challenging facilities, another was finding creative ways to develop safe facilities that included elements of managed risk. Another participant commented that personnel who did not understand the fundamental principles of playwork, which are based on child agency and children's rights, were less likely to offer challenging play opportunities or understand the parameters of these.

5.3.2 Access and inclusion

There were mixed views about the Disability Discrimination Act, particularly in relation to developing inclusive provision where local providers were sometimes reluctant to make reasonable adjustments. This was particularly the case where there was disagreement about the nature of 'reasonable' in situations where the providers could not afford the proposed adjustments. There were also comments that although the legislation provided a supportive framework for developing inclusive sites, unwelcoming and discriminatory public attitudes were a very big barrier to disabled children's access to 'inclusive' provision.

'The DDA has had both a positive and negative impact and the reason I say negative is that in some situations people have chosen not to do things because of the cost...in one case where I had one club I challenged them about being in a portacabin. I struggled to get up the steps from the playground...when I asked them about what would happen if there was a fire and you had somebody in a wheelchair...basically they said, "we'd get four members of staff, pick them up and carry them out." So I said, "Well, what about the need to put in ramps". "Oh, we're not going to do that, can't afford to do that".' (VCN5)

'The DDA, it should be positive as long as it's not just about getting an accessible toilet, which is obviously really important, and getting a ramp...there's certain things that needed changing (in the building) and we changed them but I don't know if it's had a positive impact...there's nobody here who's got a physical impairment.' (VCN6)

5.3.3 Extended Schools

Although several participants felt that it was really too early to understand fully the impact of extending schools' services, two did express concerns about the impact of services on existing community provision, perhaps revealing a lack of collaboration or coordination between the education services and the voluntary and community sector. Another saw this as a potentially negative outcome of after-school provision. One participant was worried

that the cost for some extended schools services was prohibitive for some families and, therefore, the provision was not accessible to all, while another felt that free services would impact on other local providers (who charged for their services). Two commented on the nature of the extended services.

'One of our extended schools is next to our adventure playground and our workers rolled out a programme and it was all free; but when the extended school service started our figures went down because the children went to that instead...but this summer it was sixty quid a week and the school's workers were saying they were busy but they weren't full of the local children from that estate...they're a deprived area (who couldn't afford to pay).' (VCN6)

'Well, I think this was another debate which is..."what kind of play is it?" and we have a school (with) lots of potential, really to the detriment of the sports pavilion, which is a community run facility across the road, and possibly the village hall will erode.' (VCN7)

'Extended schools – that should be a positive but *potentially* I can see a negative. The potential negative is that play loses its focus and it becomes education. I'm not against education. However, I think that if this is aimed at being an after-school service it doesn't have to be an extension of the school and the curriculum, which potentially it could be. And also if it's provided free there's going to be some providers in the locality that, if they're not involved in the provision, are going to be hit by that. It's important to involve people. (VCN5)

5.3.4 Qualifications and standards for early years, childcare and playwork

Two participants talked about their experiences of the Ofsted requirements for daycare providers and were concerned that these standards were not ensuring good-quality play experiences nor were inspectors necessarily very knowledgeable about play. One participant felt that self-assessment was better for maintaining a high level of quality play experiences. However, it was also recognised that parents often felt reassured by the Ofsted 'rubber stamp'. One participant was concerned that the new Child Care, Learning and Development (CCLD) qualifications strand of the Children's Workforce Strategy was having a negative impact on play provision in at least two ways. First, the universality of qualifications recognised as acceptable by the DfES (and Ofsted) meant that some employers saw the CCLD qualification as a panacea, enabling them to fulfil Ofsted qualifications standards. But as the playwork unit of the CCLD is only optional, there was no guarantee that those working in playwork settings with older children (rather than 'educare') were appropriately qualified. The lack of a requirement for Ofsted inspectors to be trained in the principles and practice of playwork also meant that this was not necessarily recognised in the monitoring of play schemes by Ofsted.

'We go to an after-school club and they're working to the Daycare Standards and sometimes they find it difficult to believe that you can actually improve upon the national standards. They think, "Wait a minute, but isn't Ofsted the be-all and end-all?" You could put it this way: that the national standards are the foundation on which you start. You cannot build a house without a foundation; you cannot provide playcare without the foundation of Ofsted and national standards. Then quality comes in and assists you in looking at and building the house upon the foundations. Sometimes that is difficult for some people because what we ask for in quality is usually well above what Ofsted are asking and requiring.' (VCN 5)

'Oh no, don't give me Ofsted! I think from using self assessment and monitoring it's possible to use the tools that are out there – *Quality in Play* and *First Claim*...for me those two documents probably give a better impression of the quality of play than an Ofsted report gives...I know quite a lot of inspectors and they're not keen to inspect open access play because it's an unknown quantity that they maybe aren't familiar with. For example, one of my schemes was inspected and the recommendation was about the fact that the girls' toilet was next to a fire escape and the children are not monitored going to the toilet. And I'm thinking, "But it's an open access play scheme so, yes, they could leave through the fire escape!" She then took it a step further and wanted the girls to put up their hands if they wanted to use the toilet and we would have to escort them. I mean that's just not workable.' (VCN6)

5.3.5 Section 106 Agreements

Two participants indicated that although developers' funds were a useful source of funding for play spaces and equipment, they also had some concerns about the money. These related to experiences of inequalities in funds yielded. Neither provided concrete examples of impact evidence, but one commented that, 'Part of the problem with the Section 106 agreement type situation is that it's market driven so if you're in the south east and you've got a development, the work of that development may be substantially more (lucrative) than if you're in a poor part of Bradford and therefore your ability to negotiate larger sums and larger maintenance sums over a large period is going to vary a lot' (VCN 1).

5.3.6 Planning Policy Guidance 17

There were two negative comments about PPG17, which referred to insufficient or inadequate guidance about play facilities. Once again these comments were general reflections on the policy rather than specific examples of impact. One felt that, 'Even though planning guidance was revised in 2002...it wasn't comprehensive enough in terms of outdoor facilities for sport, play and recreation generally or for children in particular; children didn't really get a mention' (VCN1). The other commented more specifically that the recommendations in the guidance for the use of open space typologies, 'separates play as a function and reinforces the idea of separate, designated play spaces, rather than integrating play into the public realm' (VCN 4).

5.3.7 Home Zones

In contrast to the idea of segregated play, home zones were recognised by some participants as providing play spaces in the heart of communities. However, one participant reported that she had had a negative experience in trying to initiate the development of more home zones in her area and that the process may be inhibiting.

'The home zones that we've got have quite a positive impact and that's worked quite well. There's not enough as far as I'm aware and I've looked into the possibility of (developing more) in an area. I rang our local road safety people and got laughed at. I presume there's a whole process and quite a lot of restrictions.' (VCN6)

5.3.8 The Children Act and joined-up services

One participant recognised the potential for positive impact resulting from the Children Act, Every Child Matters and Youth Matters, but reflected that guidance (such as Children and Young People's Plans, Joint Area Reviews on children's centres, childcare and extended schools) were insufficiently specific about play (other than the draft *Early Years Foundation Stage* guidance) and were dependent on positive local action. She commented that the legislation 'provides a framework to positively implement the opportunity to demonstrate and deliver opportunities for children's play as an integrated offer (but without) individuals and authorities to positively take it forward...the strategic plan can be set in a way that doesn't embrace the delivery of play as a core means to supporting outcomes... (and) without guidance from the centre...play remains only a potential development among many' (VCN2). Another participant, providing evidence that substantiated the former's view, acknowledged that the local Children and Young People's Plan did include mention of play – but that this was not because of the guidance on their development but because of the actions of one very committed individual in the local authority.

'Your CYPP includes play' (interviewer)

'Yeah, but with the twist of an arm; the first draft didn't have play but then (name) hammered on the door of our Head of Children and Young People's Services and then he included it.' (VCN 6)

Two participants concurred and felt that while there had been a positive impact for some of the youngest children (as a result of Sure Start programmes), there had not been enough emphasis on play within Every Child Matters for it to impact positively on older children without individual, local champions ensuring its inclusion in Children and Young People's Plans and Local Strategic Partnerships (VCN 3). The same participant felt that Youth Matters was unhelpful for play, however, because it made an unnatural distinction according to age rather than individual circumstances. He commented that, 'Everyone's needs and aspirations are completely different, regardless as to their age, culture, ability, gender and everything else. So there's a kind of fluid journey that children and young people go on. I don't feel that needs to be so structured and defined in a sense as to, "play stops there – BANG – the youth activities start there"' (VCN 3).

Commenting on the development of the Children's Workforce – a key priority of the Every Child Matters agenda – one participant reflected on its impact on qualifications and training for playwork, and the resulting impact on play experiences.

The high profile of the Child Care, Learning and Development qualification is a direct result of the emphasis on early years resulting from Every Child Matters, the Children Act and Victoria Climbié. Clearly, child protection is very important and it has raised the profile of care and safety in children's services. But this often stifles the desire or recognition that children need risks and challenges in their play and in their lives. The development of early years qualifications (in the Child Care, Learning and Development qualifications strand) is said to be suitable for people working with children up to the age of 16...but the playwork unit in level 3 is optional. I have been hearing anecdotally that people qualified to work with, say three-year-olds, are working with older ones and there's a big difference between a three-year-old and an eight-, 10- or 13-year-old. CCLD is not suitable for play-based provision, such as holiday playschemes, adventure playgrounds or play rangers. Playworkers are trained *not* to organise activities unless there's an obvious need or desire by children to be organised. But staff (not playwork trained) now over-organise and are not allowing children to play freely.' (VCN 10)

5.3.9 NPFA Six Acre Standard

Only one participant referred to this Standard and qualified the negative comments made by saying that a problem lay in its continued (mis)use by local authorities. This participant also believed the problem was compounded by the fact that many local authorities had not developed locally relevant standards despite requirements to do so since 2002.

‘Although the Standard has helped ensure locally relevant play space is provided, which is positive, on the negative side it has led to a formulaic approach to the provision of play that is based on numbers of pieces of play equipment, surrounded by standard fencing. Although this is partly due to a misinterpretation and misuse of the Standard, it encourages quantity over quality and has led to the creation of many unsuitable play areas in housing developments that are poorly sited, poorly designed and unimaginative. It also reinforces the idea that play is to be segregated from other areas.’ (VCN 4)

5.4 Positive impact evidence

As was the case for the local authority responses on policy impact, the representatives of voluntary, community and national organisations generally made more positive than negative comments about policy impact. However, there were far fewer examples of positive impact evidence than there were positive comments. Details of the numbers of comments and numbers of examples of evidence are shown in Table K below.

Table K: Policies attracting positive comments (from VCN participants)

Policy, Legislation Strategy, Plan, Guidance	Positive comments	Examples of positive impact
The Disabilities Discrimination Act	6	2
Every Child Matters	3	2
Local Strategic Partnerships	3	2
Choosing Health: a Physical Activity Plan	3	2
Living Places – Cleaner, safer, greener programme	3	1
Planning Guidance (Section 106 monies)	3	1
Youth Matters	2	1
Local Area Agreements	2	1
Respect Action Plan	2	1
Sure Start	1	1
Walking and Cycling: an Action Plan	1	1
Planning Policy Guidance 17	1	1
School Travel Planning	1	1
Home zones	5	0
Getting Serious About Play	5	0
The Children Act 2004	3	0
Time for Play	3	0
Our Towns and Cities: the future	2	0
Sustainable Communities: building for the future	2	0
Involving Children and Young People Action Plan	1	0
Equality Act	1	0
(Draft) Early Years Foundation Stage	1	0
Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners	1	0
National Service Framework for Children Young People and Maternity Services	1	0
Our Countryside: the future	1	0
Children’s trusts	1	0
Best Value Performance Indicators	1	0
Joint Area Reviews of Children’s Services	1	0

5.4.1 The Disability Discrimination Act

Six participants felt that the DDA had had a positive impact on play opportunities, although three of these had also seen negative aspects of its influence on play provision (discussed earlier). Two participants made specific reference to work that they had undertaken to ensure inclusiveness of play opportunities and how this was informing their current thinking and practice.

'The conclusions that came out of that (*project about disabled children's play opportunities*) were basically that what disabled children and their carers needed first and foremost was as much to do with attitudes as anything else...welcoming places that (are) local to where they live.' (VCN 1)

'We manage a mix of projects, one of which is an inclusive after-school club...we set up a management committee, parent group, children and young people parliament group and all the rest of it. It's now prosperous and really thriving in that it's full to its maximum quota... (*it complies*) with the DDA. It's accessible for children and young people with a whole vast and different mix of needs...within that we also coordinate an inclusive play network to support children with additional needs, whether mental or physical...it's about looking at the whole picture. We also have to look at parental needs and the needs of the children...to ensure they can access play.' (VCN 3)

Two other participants, one of whom cited examples of negative impact, also felt that having a legal framework was a positive measure on which to build inclusive and accessible provision and to begin to tackle negative or indifferent attitudes towards (inclusion of/provision for) disabled children.

5.4.2 Getting Serious About Play and Time for Play

Five participants welcomed these two central government publications that focus on play. One in particular highlighted the difference that these documents made because they thrust play into the limelight rather than subsuming it within other agendas. 'I think *Getting Serious About Play* and *Time for Play* recognise the importance of play and that's play for what it is; it's not just about education and learning' (VCN 5). Another saw ways in which the publications could be used by the play sector. '*Getting Serious about Play (and Time for Play)* – a really positive impact, really useful document. I think it can be accessed by play workers to see how they can put (things) into practice'(VCN 6).

5.4.3 Cleaner, Safer Greener Programme (Liveability)

Although three participants indicated that they thought the Liveability agenda was having a positive impact on play opportunities, only one participant commented in any detail, reporting that the Liveability Fund (2003) pilot programme had led to the creation of better play areas. There was also acknowledgement of the DCLG's efforts to promote cleaner, safer and greener public spaces through guidance for local authorities, which mentions play spaces.

'Many authorities improved play areas via (*the Liveability*) fund although there were no checks or requirements about design quality.' (VCN 4)

5.4.4 Home Zones

Although five participants commented that, in their view, home zones were a positive measure in terms of providing more spaces for children's outdoor play and recreation close

to their homes, none cited any evidence of this. Rather, there was a general impression that home zones were to be encouraged and the numbers should be increased if there was to be a significant impact on providing local places to play and places that were integral to, rather than segregated from, the rest of the community and its facilities.

5.4.5 The Children Act/joined-up working

Positive comments have been linked here under the heading of the Children Act as this was how participants talked about them. Two participants believed that Every Child Matters and its resultant partnership structures had enabled play to gain a higher profile.

'The most significant things is actually the partnership work and us, as a play sector, being included in what people are doing and (them) realising that it's important...when it's come to a child concern issue I know playworkers who've been involved...so with that we've got a higher status as professionals and that presumably reflects that people are seeing play as more important, especially for children over the age of five. So Every Child Matters, yeah, positive.' (VCN 6).

'*Youth Matters* – how can I put it? That overlaps with some of the work we do, especially play in parks, so I think that has a positive impact on what we're doing and gives it more credibility.' (VCN 5)

'The Local Area Agreement – people have been working very hard to make sure these go ahead. I would say it's having an impact because people are talking about it...play is higher up on the different agendas and there is a representative of play on the Partnership Board.' (VCN 3)

'I know about Local Strategic Partnerships because...(we've) got a place on that...I think that's definitely a positive impact on getting play on the political agenda and making people aware of the work we're doing.' (VCN 6)

Other comments revealed ways in which participants linked their work to policies in order to gain some greater sense of legitimacy or to access funding for their projects. One participant believed (as was mentioned previously) that the Children Act and ECM provided a framework for the inclusion of play in core services for children and young people, and that the Early Years Foundation Stage recognised the importance of play. One participant indicated that the existence of Sure Start, grounded within local communities, provided an opportunity to access existing structures and networks and to influence and extend the play opportunities they offered. While this in itself was an example of positive impact of the existence of the Sure Start programme, the participant also revealed that the ongoing work had leaned very heavily on personal networks. This implied that, in her experience, the existence of the Sure Start programme per se was not necessarily enabling the widening of play opportunities.

'We're actually doing quite a lot of work with Sure Start centrally in the support team and trying to work with local projects. We're going to run the play spaces from one of the indoor venues – a children's centre, an active children's centre actually...there's a little bit of a personality thing going on there ...one of my good friends is the manager...so that made it easy for us to get in there. But then that positively encourages other centre managers so I think there's definitely scope for further involvement.' (VCN 6)

5.4.6 Physical Activity Plans

Overall there were six positive references to plans that encouraged or promoted physical activity: *Choosing Activity: a Physical Activity Action Plan*, *the Walking and Cycling Action Plan* and *School Travel Planning* and these (as with local authority participants) were often linked. In one area the voluntary sector participant recognised that policies had impacted on the statutory sector, but that there had also been other outcomes for the voluntary sector, such as supporting or adding credibility to existing practice. Another participant recognised the possibilities for harnessing the high profile of the obesity strategies to 'express concern and to argue for retention and improvement, protection and improvement of (play) facilities and the resources that go behind them' (VCN1).

'Making an impact – *Walking and Cycling (Action Plan)* – yes. This whole healthy school agenda thing at the moment...and there are loads of different cycle programmes... (And) yes, children are playing as well...*School Travel Planning* – I know that statutory said they did something on that about a year ago, looking at the ways and means which children travel to and from school but I'm not sure if it's made an impact; I suppose it has because it's supported the bikes and walking campaign, so I would say yes. In the statutory sector (the *Physical Activity Action Plan*) has made a big impact on the early years sector but within play...no, within play I feel we were already doing a lot around supporting children's physical needs but I think that the obesity agenda has enhanced what was already in place, so I would say it has made a positive impact.' (VCN 3)

5.4.7 The respect agenda

Two participants believed that the 'respect agenda' was positively impacting on play. One (VCN 3) provided an example of the increase in community based, multi-faith, multi-ethnic activities that were being encouraged and taking place as a result. While this example was not specifically about play and informal recreational activities nor targeted particularly at children and young people, these activities were indirectly helping to promote community interactions and understandings that could facilitate an environment comprising positive attitudes and supportive of play for all children

5.4.8 Planning guidance

Three participants felt that the Section 106 monies impacted positively on play opportunities by providing a fiscal resource for local authorities to develop play areas. One added that the revised (2002) *Planning Policy Guidance* (PPG) 17 was enabling some authorities to become more locally focused and evidence based in their policies and provision for play and to link this to their developers' funds.

'PPG17 is encouraging (some LAs) to consider how they provide for children's play in public spaces' and that some authorities were 'working across departments to develop policies and consulting the public about needs. Some authorities are using this process to update planning policies on developer contributions to new play spaces on new developments and adopting them as supplementary planning documents.' (VCN 4)

6. Findings from analysis of Children and Young People’s Plans

6.1 Background

A team from the National Children’s Bureau undertook an analysis of 31 Children and Young People’s Plans to run simultaneously with and be linked to this assessment of policy impact. The NCB team provided the CCCU team with summaries of the Children and Young People’s Plans (CYPPs) for eight of the nine areas that were invited to take part in the impact assessment work. One additional area’s plan (Kent) was analysed by the CCCU team. In practice, only eight areas were represented and this section reports the findings from the CYPPs linked to the areas involved in this study. The eight CYPPs were from:

Birmingham	Hackney
Hull	Kent (Canterbury)
Northumberland (Tynedale)	Plymouth
Suffolk (Mid Suffolk)	Wirral

6.2 General findings

Although the *Guidance on Children and Young People’s Plans* states that these plans should link in with a range of others, including their local play strategies, not all of the relevant plans analysed included any mention of play strategies. The Children Act (2004) also requires that children’s services authorities should cooperate with partners to provide services for children and young people. In doing so, it could be expected that representatives of statutory and voluntary sector play services would be invited to participate in the development of CYPPs. However, the full range of play opportunities that could exist for children and young people do not appear to be included in all plans, especially opportunities for ‘free’ play. In brief, three of the CYPPs (Birmingham, Hull and Kent) made reference to play strategies; six of the CYPPs (Hackney, Hull, Kent, Northumberland, Plymouth and Suffolk) made provisions for fulfilling requirements outlined in the *Youth Matters* Green Paper; six of the CYPPs (Birmingham, Hull, Kent, Northumberland, Suffolk, Wirral) made specific mention of providing play opportunities for children and young people.

However, on close inspection of the plans themselves it was found that objectives or priorities relating to play and informal recreational activities did not always have targets or performance measures that were relevant. In all of the relevant areas the plans were divided into actions to be carried out for each of the five Every Child Matters outcomes. The findings relating to play and informal recreational activities are therefore grouped in this way. Tables L to P shows the play-related objectives and priorities of each area’s plan under the five outcome headings, as appropriate, and the targets or measures that show how progress towards the objectives or priorities will be monitored.

Table L: Play-related objectives under the ‘Being Healthy’ outcome in CYPPs

	Being Healthy – objectives and measures related to play/recreation
Birmingham	<p>Objective: Children and young people in Birmingham are healthier.</p> <p>Targets include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the percentage of children and young people (5- to 16-year-olds) taking part in an hour of moderate intensity sport and physical activity on three or more days per week • increase the percentage of young people participating in swimming, cycling and walking • increase the number of young people (7- to 15-years-old) using sport and recreation activities • increase the number of children accessing play and other out of school activities to engage in physical activity • introduce street games into appropriate areas of the city.
Hackney	<p>Objective: Children and young people will have greater opportunities to choose nutritious food and take part in physical activity.</p> <p>Performance measures: None relate to free play or informal recreational activities. Closest are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48% of school students participate in at least two hours of high-quality PE and sport • 45% of Year 3–6 students access at least one sports activity per week outside school hours • 97% of schools being supported to meet national healthy school status • all KS1 pupils have access to free fruit, and 60% schools are developing breakfast clubs.
Hull	N/A
Kent	<p>Key actions: All Kent schools to be engaged in the healthy schools initiative by 2009 and promote the benefits of healthy eating, physical activity and sport to children and families.</p> <p>Impact measures: None relate to free play or informal recreational activity specifically. Closest are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase in proportion of children and young people walking or cycling to school • positive children’s views • targets for schools engagement in healthy schools achieved.
Northumberland	<p>Objectives: Tackling obesity by encouraging children and young people into healthy lifestyles – eat healthily, take part in more physical activity, choose not to smoke or drink alcohol</p> <p>Targets: None relate to play or informal recreational activities directly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of children under 4 who are obese • % of schools achieving the healthy schools standard.
Plymouth	N/A
Suffolk	<p>Key priorities: Improve provision of inclusive and affordable sports and activity programme across the county.</p> <p>Targets: Reduce the numbers of children and young people identified as obese.</p>
Wirral	<p>Objectives/Key priorities: Provide opportunities to take exercise and keep fit/Form local alliances to develop opportunities to access sport and recreation.</p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • percentage of 5- to 16-year-olds spending a minimum of two hours each week on high- quality PE and school sport (current 75%; target 81.7%) • survey numbers of young people accessing sport opportunities.

Table M: Play-related objectives under the ‘Staying Safe’ outcome in CYPPs

	Staying Safe – objectives and measures related to play/recreation
Birmingham	<p>Objectives: Children and young people in Birmingham are safer.</p> <p>Targets: None specifically about playing, but could impact on barriers to play.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the percentage of children and young people who feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds, family groups and different lifestyles can get on well together • reduce children and young people’s fear of crime and anti-social behaviour • focus road safety campaigns on dangerous locations and on vulnerable groups, working closely with schools and communities to raise awareness of road safety and redesign the layout of local roads to reduce risk and improve safety • reduce the number of children killed or seriously injured in road accidents by 50% over the next 10 years.
Hackney	<p>Objectives: Children and young people are safe in Hackney; Children and young people will feel and be safer in our streets, parks, open spaces and travelling about Hackney, with reduced risks of attack and injury.</p> <p>Performance measures: None specifically about playing, but could impact on barriers to play. Proposes to measure through looking at number of 0- to 15-year-olds injured or killed in road traffic accidents; and fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.</p>
Hull	<p>Objectives: Target work to the 13 to 16 population through an extended Young People’s Support Service (a <i>Youth Matters</i> initiative).</p> <p>Performance measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more children and young people report they feel safe, less fearful in school and playing outside • an increase in the number of road safety measures (i.e. 20mph zones and cycle paths) • improved take up of the practical cycling training and practical pedestrian skills training programme in primary schools.
Kent	<p>Priority 9: Ensure children and young people are safe and feel safe in the communities where they live, go to school, play, work and travel.</p> <p>Key actions (46): To be developed locally to reflect priorities of CDRPs and district councils, likely to include safe and accessible play, recreation, transport, road safety and implementation of Kent anti-bullying strategy.</p> <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction in children and young people as victims of crime • feedback from children and young people • reduction in road accidents involving children • reduced levels of bullying.
Northumberland	<p>Key priorities: Include the following questions in surveys of children and young people’s perceptions: I feel safe from bullying; I feel that bullying is not a problem where I live; I know what to do to keep myself safe; I feel safe in the community where I live; I know that bullying is dealt with effectively in the community.</p> <p>Targets: No quantitative measures – survey will provide qualitative evidence.</p>
Plymouth	N/A
Suffolk	<p>Objectives: Safe environments are provided for children, young people and their families; Children and young people are protected from crime, anti-social behaviour or bullying.</p> <p>Key priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide safe areas within communities where children can play • continue the development of diversionary activities for young people both through extended schools and projects organised by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Anti-Social Behaviour coordinators. <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend the ‘20’s Plenty’ campaign to reduce the speed of cars outside schools through the creation of school safety zones • deliver a range of road safety initiatives aimed at children and young people including ‘Walk to School Week’ and Junior Road Safety Officer scheme • provide resources and advice for schools and pre-school settings on road safety issues

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as part of the development of the Suffolk Play Strategy, increase the range of dedicated outdoor play areas and supervised play provision • ensure that local streets, parks and open spaces feel safe and are designed with children and young people in mind • reduce fear of crime and anti-social behaviour amongst young people; reduce the number of recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour
Wirral	<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce the number who sustain injuries, including road traffic accidents • increase children's confidence that they will be safe in the community <p>Key priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop the scheme for child safety equipment vouchers • promote home safety, road safety and fire safety information and advice • deliver road safety schemes, which are proven to be effective, across Wirral • implement the Police–Schools Agreement • support the deployment of Community Patrol and Park security staff. <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of children and young people taken to A&E (current 13,743; aim for reduction) • number killed or injured in traffic accidents (current 30; aim for reduction) • percentage of children and young people saying they feel safe (by survey)

Table N: Play-related objectives under the ‘Enjoy and Achieve’²⁰ outcome in CYPPs

	Enjoy and Achieve – objectives and measures related to play/recreation
Birmingham	<p>Objectives: Children and young people in Birmingham enjoy and achieve.</p> <p>Targets: (include)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop appropriate neighbourhood play facilities and open spaces • promote, through libraries, reading as an essential life skill and a source of pleasure and enjoyment as part of support for informal learning opportunities • make sure that looked after children and young people are aware of choice and accessibility opportunities in the city for broader learning • implement the recommendations in Birmingham’s Play Strategy • improve access for disabled children and young people to sport, leisure, arts and cultural opportunities.
Hackney	<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children and young people achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation • children and young people are able to become involved in a range of positive activities through extended schools. <p>Performance measures: Take up of sporting activities by 5- to 16-year-olds, and the take up of cultural and sporting activities by over 16-year-olds</p>
Hull	<p>Objective: Promote opportunities for all children and young people to have fun and enjoy life.</p> <p>Performance Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take up of sporting opportunities by 5- to 16-year-olds • take up of cultural and sporting opportunities among over 16-year-olds • responses from the lifestyle questionnaire of children and young people • increase in the number of children and young people with disabilities accessing activities in the city. <p>The linked Community Strategy high level indicators are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to reduce the crime rate within the City • to improve residents’ feeling of safety in their neighbourhoods • the percentage of residents surveyed satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live • the percentage of people surveyed who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area.
Kent	<p>The CYPP reports findings of consultations with children and young people who indicated a range of things that mattered to them. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be more teachers and school play equipment. • There should be more safe opportunities to play. <p>Despite this, the priorities listed under ‘enjoy and achieve’ make no mention of play or other recreational activities.</p>
Northumberland	<p>Key priorities: Create a network involving all stakeholders, including district councils and voluntary organisations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the quality of playgrounds and places for children to play and young people to meet • increase awareness of the importance of play in all its forms • encourage and support play activities. (This is a priority in the Local Area Agreement Children and Young People ‘block’.) <p>Performance measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the number of youth drop-in services and clubs, by encouraging activities in extended schools, improving youth service provision, and implementing Youth Opportunity Funds managed by young people (this is a priority in the Local Area Agreement). • all disabled children and their families are entitled to ‘Max Cards’ for free or reduced admission to historical and cultural places of interest; leisure service providers and district councils have agreed ‘Max Card’ holders will also be entitled to reduced cost activities in leisure centres • include the following questions in surveys of children and young people’s perceptions: I can easily take part in activities outside school; I can see my friends when I want to; I can choose the activities I want to take part in; I can make friends. And these questions specifically for children and young people with

²⁰ In the CYPP for Hull actions for Enjoy and Achieve are separated into two distinct categories.

	<p>learning difficulties or disabilities: I can join in activities outside school as much as I want to; I can join in whatever activities I want to outside school; I choose what activities I want to do outside school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other questions about safety in the community for children and their parents are also relevant to play.
Plymouth	N/A
Suffolk	<p>Priority EA3: Access to informal learning, leisure and recreation services for children and young people are improved.</p> <p>Key priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve access to sporting, cultural and recreational opportunities for children and young people in their free time • provide access to a range of activities for young people including music, sport and holiday activities through the development of extended schools • through Collective Opportunities, enhance support for children and young people at risk of being excluded in participation in sport and recreational activities by providing funding for transport, equipment and other costs • improve the provision and quality of information to young people about the range of activities available to them locally. <p>Targets (include):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the percentage of school children involved in at least two hours of physical activity • increase the number of schools offering access to a wide and varied range of leisure, educational and recreational activities • increase the number of schools and pupils involved in the Playing for Success programme.
Wirral	<p>Objectives: Provide a wide range of opportunities for sports, recreation and leisure, especially for disadvantaged groups.</p> <p>Key priorities: Develop more strategic planning and joined up working in use of libraries, sports centres, schools, play schemes and youth clubs.</p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of young people accessing holiday activities in leisure centres (increase) • number accessing disability/special needs holiday sports programmes (increase) • take up of reading groups in libraries (increase) • number of children on registered play schemes (current 1,946; target 2,206).

Table O: Play-related objectives under the ‘Making a Positive Contribution’ outcome

	Making a Positive Contribution – objectives and measures related to play/recreation
Birmingham	<p>Key priorities: None specifically about playing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children and young people are better able to respond to challenges • children and young people are helped to develop socially and emotionally • develop opportunities for children and young people to become involved in their communities and neighbourhoods and encourage them to undertake voluntary work • reduce offending, re-offending and anti-social behaviour. <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build the self-confidence and esteem of children and young people through sport, arts and cultural work • develop a range of youth work interventions and opportunities that help young people to understand and explore their own and others’ faith, spirituality and values • increase the level of participation in community activities by young people, particularly amongst groups at risk of social exclusion.
Hackney	<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • young people are supported to be active, responsible and engaged members of the community • the quality and choice of activities and opportunities for all young people are increased with the development of the Hackney Youth Offer • proposes to measure through take up of sporting activities by 5- to 16-year-olds, and take up of cultural and sporting opportunities by over 16-year-olds, as well as levels of voluntary and community engagement • more opportunities provided for participation in sports, arts and volunteering for children and young people including opportunities linked to the 2012 Olympics. <p>Performance Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take up of sporting activities • levels of voluntary and community engagement.
Hull	<p>Objectives: Not specifically about play but about positive activities Ensure that children and young people are valued within our family-friendly city.</p> <p>Key priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement a participation strategy and a children and young people’s charter • ensure that the positive contribution which children and young people make is actively promoted in the various local media • hold a Youth Enterprise Summer School as one of 12 national pilots with young people from Hull, Rotherham and the East Riding • celebrate the achievements of our enterprising young people and encourage more participation by young people and businesses in Youth Enterprise • support those from BME communities and refugees who wish to develop their enterprising ideas • support those young people who wish to establish an enterprise using fair trade products.
Kent	<p>Priority: 15 (LAA 7): Improve participation and engagement by all children and young people and their families in youth, cultural and community activities.</p> <p>Key actions: (74) Implement Youth Matters, including the development and implementation of district youth strategies and ensure effective engagement of young people in the design and delivery of ‘youth offers’ and the distribution of the youth opportunities and capital fund. (75) Develop and implement district play strategies to provide opportunities for all ages to participate in safe recreational activities, out-of-school hours clubs and holiday play schemes.</p>
Northumberland	<p>Objectives: Ensuring children and young people’s views inform service development.</p> <p>Key priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct statistically significant representative surveys of at least 2,000 children and young people annually using the questions derived from children and young people and listed in this plan • encourage district councils to share the learning from these activities so that the views collected contribute to everyone’s understanding of children and young people’s perception • include a standard about participation of children and young people in the Families and Children’s Trust (FACT) Mark award (the FACT Mark can be awarded to any

	<p>service in the public, private or voluntary sectors.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> take steps to encourage more young people to volunteer and become involved in their communities, and promote, in particular, peer mentoring, sustained civic service and a stronger culture of volunteering in schools and colleges develop mechanisms to feed back to children and young people how their views influence plans and services. <p>Performance measures: Qualitative survey evidence.</p>
Plymouth	<p>Key priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase the % year on year of residents satisfied with local parks develop leisure facilities for children and young people across the city implement the recommendations of the external review of youth services January 2006 to develop consistent management of youth services across the city. <p>Targets include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> children, young people and families report increased satisfaction with local parks and common space provision of a consistent high-quality youth service that ensures that <i>Youth Matters</i> is implemented in the city
Suffolk	<p>Key priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide opportunities for young people to undertake volunteering activities in the countryside for both personal development and health benefits support young carers in maintaining their learning and leisure activities alongside their family commitments develop youth service programmes for the promotion of positive relationships and to combat bullying and work with local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to highlight the propensity of young people to be victims rather than perpetrators of crimes of violence. <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase the percentage of young people aged 13 to 19 reached by publicly funded youth services and seek to involve increased numbers of young people in the qualitative review of these services increase year-on-year the numbers of young people undertaking at least 100 hours of volunteering activity increase the identification of young carers, and provide resources to alleviate their responsibilities and support them to access education and leisure activities increase the number of young carers who make use of local youth services.
Wirral	<p>Objectives (include):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide opportunities for personal and social development of children and young people engage more vulnerable children and young people in youth and community activities promote beneficial and tolerant relationships between children, young people and older generations. <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> number of young people achieving Duke of Edinburgh Award and Civic Award (current DEA 598; target 648; current CA 700; target 733) number of organisations evidencing the involvement of children and young people in personal development opportunities (increase by 20%) number of looked after young people and young people with disabilities accessing youth services (increase) percentage of young people re-convicted of offences (current 63.5%; target 53.5%) number accessing Youth Sports Nights regularly (increase) number of children and young people accessing volunteering opportunities (increase) Citizens Panel report on perception of young people.

Table P: Play-related objectives under the ‘Economic Well-being’ outcome in CYPPs

	Economic Well-being – objectives and measures related to play/recreation
Birmingham	N/A
Hackney	N/A
Hull	<p>Objectives: Ensure there are good levels of accessibility to safe transport and that they are planned in regard to changes in education and the employment sectors.</p> <p>Key priorities: Provide free transport to children and young people up to age 19, young people up to 24 leaving care, and young people up to age 25 with learning difficulties, and their carers, as appropriate.</p>
Kent	N/A
Northumberland	N/A
Plymouth	N/A
Suffolk	N/A
Wirral	N/A

What is particularly interesting to note is that play-related objectives are placed under the full range of ECM outcomes, but also differ across the eight regions’ plans. This would appear to show how play is differently constructed and that its potential contributions to the overall well-being of children and young people are not viewed in the same way in all areas.



7. Discussion of findings from all aspects of fieldwork

7.1 Introduction

The analysis of evidence from the fieldwork phase of the project revealed that, overall, there was a greater sense that national policies were positive in terms of their impact on play opportunities. The participants from the statutory and the voluntary sectors were equally familiar with the extensive list of policies that were presented to them for consideration. In both groups there were more positive than negative comments about policies, and a general sense that the recent publication of *Getting Serious About Play* and *Time for Play* had not only helped to raise the profile of children's play and play services, but had also given a sense of legitimacy to the work of play professionals. Furthermore, the announcement of Big Lottery Fund awards for play and the development of play strategies by local authorities had resulted in a number of positive outcomes. These included a stronger evidence base for play provision gained through consultations with children and young people and audits of existing provision, and a more coherent, strategic approach to delivery of play opportunities, even before authorities had accessed any of the Big Lottery funds.

Several common themes related to the impact of particular national policies emerged from the analysis of all the participants' transcripts, questionnaire responses and the Children and Young People's Plans. These are discussed below and references to policies are made as applicable, according to those that were highlighted by the participants.

7.2 Constructing and defining play

The participants' responses revealed a variety of constructions of play. For some it was acceptable for play to encompass childcare provision, whereas for others true play could only happen in contexts where children were able to have free rein over the choices they made about what to do, when, where, with whom and with what.

There was also inconsistency in terms of whether play could be harnessed as a vehicle for the agendas of others and, therefore, be 'measured' by the associated performance criteria. The Children and Young People's Plans were an obvious example of how, for some, it was acceptable for play to be measured in terms of health outcomes. For others, however, play represented a way in which children could enjoy their lives. The former appeared to represent a more functional construction of play, whereas the latter seemed to recognise play's intrinsic value.

For the participants whose constructions of play were better represented by open access sites or other 'freely chosen' activities, policies that encouraged play within educational and 'educare' settings were problematic and were seen as a threat to the possibilities for maintaining or increasing open access sites. This was partly because the policies in question appeared to have a different (functional) emphasis in their constructions of play and, in the participants' views, thus decreased the chances of play that children can choose to engage in, shape and relinquish of their own volition. These included the extended schools and Sure Start programmes (although less so for very young children), the Childcare Act, the guidance on out of school care and the acceptable (DfES) qualifications for work with children up to the age of 16 years (Child Care, Learning and Development qualifications). Extended schools in particular were a cause for concern because they were seen to be providing more structured activities and fewer choices through free play opportunities. This was exacerbated by the relatively low policy profile of playwork and play provision compared with childcare, and the lack of a statutory distinction in the qualifications required for playwork.

The varying constructions of play may have related to the location of participants' services within their authorities as a whole. Those whose services were not linked to education were less likely to think of play primarily in instrumental terms. But there was also some evidence that participants' own backgrounds, knowledge and experience of play were also important factors in determining the ways in which they constructed play and sought to make provision accordingly. Those with a playwork background were more likely to construct play from a rights-based perspective, also emphasising children's agency.

7.3 Segregation and containment of play and recreation

A recurrent theme was also the attitudes towards play of people working outside the play sector, of parents and of the public in general. Negative attitudes were repeatedly cited as a barrier to play opportunities, whether in terms of children's:

- access to play spaces (because of fears over 'stranger danger', health and safety issues, or traffic)
- ability to engage in good-quality and challenging play opportunities (again because of health and safety issues and fear of litigation or because of comparative lack of trust in play professionals)
- access to inclusive play (because of discrimination)
- or simply being allowed to play in their local communities (because of public perceptions of anti-social behaviour or intolerance of noisy play).

These negative attitudes appeared to compound the already prevalent tendency to segregate children's play within particular spaces, or to frown upon children and young people whose play and informal recreational activities moved outside these boundaries to more public areas. *Planning Policy Guidance 17* was cited as an example of policy that perpetuated the habit of corralling children into contained play spaces.

7.4 Differentiation according to children's ages and circumstances

Participants generally thought that Sure Start offered positive play opportunities for very young children and, to some extent, funding to develop play centres for older children. However, it was also felt that there was insufficient emphasis on play through Every Child Matters to ensure sufficient opportunities for older children (aged 8- to 12-years). The distinction at policy level between play and other activities provided for children appeared to be made at age five (or, to a lesser extent, eight) years. Consequently, there was a tendency for greater opportunities for structured recreational activities for children of primary school age and teenagers. The separation of youth services from play and the publication of *Youth Matters* were seen to draw an unnatural line between play and other activities. With little policy referring to freely chosen play for children older than five, some participants felt that this age group were under-represented in provision.²¹ Once again, there were, concerns that the extended schools programme would result in children of primary school age spending more time involved in structured activities and less time on free play.

7.5 Inequalities in provision

The use of developers' funds to create play spaces was viewed both positively and negatively, but there was evidence that the market-driven nature of planning policy could lead to inequalities in provision nationally. It was also evident that, despite many efforts to develop inclusive provision as a result of the Disabilities Discrimination Act, Equality Act or Race Relations (Amendment) Act, disabled children were still unlikely to be able to access

²¹ Although since the desk research had not included Children's Fund documentation, this was not included in the list of policies for interviewees and so they may have failed to recall this funding, which provides services for children from 5-13 years.

as many play opportunities as their non-disabled peers. This was partly because a lack of funding meant some providers were unable or unwilling to adapt their settings physically, but mainly because discriminatory attitudes meant that settings were unwelcoming. Added to this there were few examples of specialist provision being made.

7.6 Standards and measures

There were several negative references to a variety of standards and measures and a recurrent theme was that these were inhibiting the quality of play opportunities. The Standards for Out-of-School Care were reportedly giving rise to maximum rather than minimum standards for play and not taking sufficient account of play value. The lack of distinction in qualifications required for childcare and playwork were also leading to play schemes being staffed by personnel without playwork qualifications or training. The NPFA Six Acre Standard was said to be responsible for quantitative rather than qualitative approaches to designing play spaces. Health and Safety Standards were seen to impose overly cautious restrictions on play or lead to the development of local policies that were of greater benefit to local authorities than to children. The use of quantitative measures for Best Value Performance Indicators and for allocating funding to play and recreational services, and to transport provision, were not supporting the quality or accessibility of play experiences for all children and young people. A lack of appropriate national or (in some areas) local standards for the assessing the quality and value of play provision was believed to create a barrier to good-quality play opportunities for all children. Despite a government requirement since 2002 for local authorities to develop local standards, it was reported that not all authorities had done so. Furthermore, as the Outcomes Framework for Every Child Matters dedicated little attention to play it was thought that, without concerted efforts at local level, play could easily be excluded and further marginalised from (other) children's services.

7.7 Partnerships

The development of new partnerships was often seen as a positive opportunity to network with new people and promote play in different arenas, but efforts in this respect were met with varied outcomes. For some, participation in multi-agency working groups had led to more cohesive planning for play and recognition of the impact of the work of various departments on play opportunities (and vice versa). But for other participants the experience had been less positive. Some felt that partnerships were unequal because play was not a statutory service, or that the time spent explaining and promoting play, and developing shared understandings or goals, was not rewarded by increased play opportunities. On the whole, partnerships that resulted from Every Child Matters were seen to offer positive chances to raise the profile of play. But extended schools partnerships were not always thought of in positive terms. Some participants were worried that ineffective or unequal partnership would not only result in more adult-led, structured activities for children out-of-school hours, but could also jeopardise the existence of open access and other community-based play schemes.

The next section of the report draws conclusions from the findings that emerged from the analysis of the policy documents and participants' evidence.



8. Conclusions

8.1 Constructions of play and children's rights

Although there is no national policy for children's play and informal recreational activities in England, many of the current government's policies appear to provide a supportive framework for play to be promoted and included in improving all services for children and young people. Furthermore, recent publications such as *Getting Serious about Play* (DCMS 2004) and *Time for Play* (DCMS 2006) have helped to raise the profile of play as an important aspect of children and young people's lives and to show how it can lead to many positive outcomes for them and, indirectly, society more widely. The allocation of Big Lottery funding for play initiatives is also a positive indication of the government's acknowledgement of the importance of play. However, despite the very positive creation of a cross-Whitehall group on play, there does not appear to be consensus (as yet) among the government departments about what play is and why provision for play should be made. This can lead to different approaches to delivering and monitoring local provision as well as different attitudes towards, and interpretations of, national policy.

The instrumental value of play and informal recreational activities (both for children, young people and society as a whole) appeared to be prioritised over its intrinsic value to children and young people. This applied to all age groups.

The contexts in which children and young people's play occurs also seem to determine *how* they can play. This is because the contexts are governed by the remits and priorities of different departments. So if play is to occur in school settings, for example, the political goals of the Department for Education and Skills will impact on the nature of what is deemed acceptable and useful in 'play' terms. Play and recreational activities are likely to be underpinned by a cognitive and socio-behavioural development agenda; play in hospital and other healthcare settings by a recuperative and therapeutic agenda; and play in public spaces by an agenda of community regeneration, cohesion and social inclusion. All of these are infinitely positive agendas, but they may diminish the value and status of play that is freely chosen and directed by children and young people for their own purposes and without specified outcomes.

The types of play opportunities that are offered also appear to relate to whether policies are definitively aimed at children and young people or are for everyone. Those policies that include adults' access to recreational activities (in parks, the countryside or town centres, for example) seem more supportive of freely chosen recreational activities, which suggests that adults' rights to informal recreation are (perhaps unconsciously) given greater value than children and young people's. Unlike play provision for younger children, informal recreational pursuits for adults are more valued for the enjoyment that they can offer rather than their function in developmental terms or as diversionary tactics.

8.2 Positive and negative impact of policies on play and informal recreational activities

The most obvious policy for children, the Children Act (2004), does not make play a statutory service (or even use the word 'play'). However, it demands that local authorities cooperate with other partners whose activities have an impact on children's lives to support and improve all children's well-being in relation to the five broad outcomes of the Every Child Matters (2003) framework. More recently, *Youth Matters* (2005) accentuated the goal to provide positive activities for young people in their teenage years and has plans and funding streams attached for this purpose. *Liveability*, as promoted by the *Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener* (2002) programme, includes places for play as one of its six priorities, and the *Respect Action Plan* (Home Office 2006) also aims to provide constructive and purposeful activities for children and young people. Both are supported by

designated funding. Play is recognised as vital to very young children's development and learning, as evidenced by its emphasis in the new *Early Years Foundation Stage* (DfES 2006) for children from birth to five years, and references to play in the *Guidance to the National (Daycare) Standards* (2001). The allocation of developers' funds (Section 106) monies to the provision of (outdoor) play areas is a step towards ensuring that new housing developments include areas for children and young people's informal recreation. This is supported by the need for local authorities to develop open space strategies and local planning policies that include areas for play and recreation, based on local assessments of need. It is also encouraging to note that the companion notes to *Planning Policy Guidance 17* (PPG17, *Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation*) not only dedicate a section to provision for children and young people, but also recognise how reliance on simple, quantitative measures has previously been problematic. The *Companion Guide* recommends that local authorities familiarise themselves with the Children's Play Council's work, *Planning for Play*, and that when planning groups are working to assess local needs they should include representatives of children's play interests as well as children and young people themselves.

However, not all systems that would enable an assessment of existing play opportunities – whether outdoor or indoor, 'free' play or directed/assisted play in open access, childcare or other settings and spaces – appear to be strong enough to provide evidence that the supportive policies are achieving their positive goals. For example, the *Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework* (Ofsted) makes a brief reference to play within the broad 'Enjoy and Achieve' category whereas all other criteria under this outcome are related to educational attainment. Since the only evidence required to demonstrate that children and young people are enjoying the provision for their play and recreation is that there must be 'safe and accessible places where children can play and socialise', there appears to be no requirement to find evidence that children are actually *enjoying* using these places (or others) or being with other users; the latter may be particularly important where the inclusion of children who often experience discrimination is concerned.

It is unclear, therefore, how the many play opportunities provided by local authorities and their partners are to be recorded. Furthermore, there are no Best Value Performance Indicators specifically for children or young people's play or informal recreational activities. Those most closely related to play refer generally to satisfaction with cultural and recreational services (BV 119a to BV 119e, which may not include children's play and do not necessarily reflect play in streets or other public spaces). Although there is government support for consulting with children and young people's and their participation in decision-making about the services that affect them, it is unclear whether children and young people have any meaningful input into the survey that records public satisfaction with local facilities or to the decision to make a Green Flag award. In fact, both of these are already limited as to the kinds of play opportunities they can reflect. The appropriateness, accessibility, popularity, continued appeal and value of play opportunities (or other terms that children and young people themselves might identify as representing 'Best Value' are not monitored and recorded unless local authorities develop their own key local indicators for the range of play and informal recreational activities made available (and involve children and young people in the process). It is encouraging to note that some local authorities involved in this study were including more qualitative approaches to gathering evidence to monitor their plans' progress in their CYPPs. Surveys asking children and young people about whether they feel safe and happy where they play will give a more rounded picture of the nature of an area's children and young people's services and facilities, including those for play and informal recreation, than will simple counts of the numbers using particular facilities.

The participants involved in this research project were familiar with the majority of the policies about which they were invited to comment. All revealed a broad and extensive knowledge of current policies and legislation. However, there were some instances where it appeared that the finer details of some policies and legislation had not been recognised or had been misinterpreted. This may have been because of the amount of policy documentation that LA participants felt they had to read and digest, particularly since play

provision is made by many different departments and services (e.g. play, early years, community, regeneration, leisure, housing) and is affected by many other factors (including economic, social and environmental policies, transport, housing and health and safety issues, and social constructions of childhoods). Some participants' narratives linked health and safety issues to litigation and this in turn was linked to compensation and the Compensation Act. An assumption appeared to be made that the Act promoted, rather than attempted to minimise, a litigious culture. Such misinterpretations may create barriers to challenging and stimulating play opportunities if they result in the provision, for example, of tried-and-tested, formulaic playground equipment on the basis that such measures will reduce the risks of injury and of being sued. The driver for the creation of some LA risk and safety policies and procedures appears primarily to be protection of the LA from litigation rather than the protection of and benefit to children and young people.

The research project also showed that this potentially positive and supportive policy framework does not necessarily yield more or better play opportunities that meet the needs of *all* children and young people. This project's participants revealed that a lack of sufficient, guaranteed, long-term funding is one of the main barriers to developing enough good-quality opportunities for all children to play (indoors and out) within easy reach of their homes. Where play is concerned the processes required to deliver the Every Child Matters outcomes are interpreted in different ways by local authorities. But this was also the case for the implementation of policy by local employers: qualifications for childcare, for example, were seen as acceptable for playwork and led to some inappropriately qualified and trained staff in play provision. The Children Act (2004), Every Child Matters and the associated guidance and resultant mechanisms (such as children's trusts and Joint Area Reviews) have caused local authorities to reorganise their services to promote and protect children's well-being. The drivers for the Children Act (2004) would appear to be predominantly to improve child protection procedures through joint working and sharing of information (prompted by the inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié) and to reduce child poverty by helping more parents into paid employment (it was recently reported that 15.4 per cent of UK children are living below the poverty line).²² However, play services, or those responsible for play in other named services, are often on the periphery of or outside children's services, but the duty to cooperate to provide for play has meant that those responsible for play recognise the opportunity presented by the restructuring. Many are endeavouring to have play included in CYPPs and are linking their play strategies to them. The drive tends to come from play officers and professionals to their colleagues in other departments, rather than vice-versa. Were it not for their persistence and drive, it is possible that play would continue to be marginalised or excluded and, therefore, some authorities might fail strategically and operationally to fulfil their statutory duty under Section 10 of the Children Act to 'make arrangements to promote cooperation between the authority' and 'such other persons or bodies as the authority consider appropriate, being persons or bodies of any nature who exercise functions or are engaged in activities in relation to children in the authority's area'.

The range of play opportunities varies from one authority to another and depends on the type of authority, its local socio-economic and demographic circumstances and priorities, its structural history and its links with other play providers. In the children's services authorities in particular, but also to a lesser extent in the district councils, responsibility for delivering or facilitating play opportunities can be found within different services and departments. In addition, the responsibility for maintenance of some provision, such as that in playgrounds, has been devolved to parish councils. This has been a barrier to developing a clear overview of the extent and range of play opportunities or a coherent approach to ensuring that play opportunities are not only comprehensive but are also appropriately tailored to the needs of different communities. The relatively low profile and status of play has also hindered play officers' endeavours to ensure that other services' plans and processes takes into account the needs of children and young people in terms of their opportunities for play and informal recreation.

²² UNICEF (2005) *Poverty in Rich Countries*. Florence. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

The funding for play comes from a number of sources and leads to different opportunities. Provision is made in accordance with the key aims of each source and whether funds have been ring-fenced for particular purposes (such as the training or professional development of playworkers). This means that planning for play is dependent on a number of other services' priorities, which restricts the extent to which play services themselves can appropriately respond to local needs identified through audits or consultations. The funding is also somewhat unpredictable, making it difficult to plan for and deliver long-term and sustainable, good-quality provision or to change provision according to evolving play priorities.

None of the LA participants indicated that they were able to offer a range of play opportunities for *all* children and young people in their areas (particularly those living in densely populated, economically deprived urban areas, sparsely populated rural areas, children with disabilities and with other special needs). Although collaboration with partners in the voluntary and community sector did enable more and varied opportunities to be made available, it would still appear that not all needs can be met. The type of play that was found to be most commonly supported is play within designated spaces. The type of play that was least well supported (as reported by participants) was play for children with special or additional needs, such as disabled children. But the opportunities for play in public spaces (such as in town centres or streets) appears to be largely under-developed. The attitudes of some adult members of society towards children and young people's play and informal recreation seems to be a significant barrier to play in public space that is not designated for play, but can even hinder 'loud' play in spaces that are intended for recreational activities, such as MUGAs.²³ Attitudes are also a major barrier to developing fully inclusive provision in the sense that frequently excluded children feel welcomed. Much of the money that is spent on making facilities comply with the DDA may be wasted because public attitudes towards disabled children are at least as great a barrier as the physical characteristics of a non-inclusive play site.

For local authorities this not only means that they are unable to contribute to the government's goal that *every child's* enjoyment of play matters (integral to the five outcomes of ECM and identified in the *Outcomes Framework for Joint Area Reviews*); it also means that the government is unable to show that *in practice* it fulfils the responsibility to ensure, 'That every child has the right 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' in accordance with Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Programmes to improve the quality of the lives of children in deprived areas, such as Sure Start and neighbourhood renewal initiatives, sometimes – but not always – benefit play opportunities and not necessarily all types of opportunities. They do release some funding for play but the aim of both is first and foremost about economic regeneration. Therefore, childcare (to enable parents to go out to work) is a priority over other types of play provision, especially open access (and some might argue that childcare is not provision for play). Consequently, play as a right of the child and as a priority appears more difficult to support and sustain through programmes such as Sure Start, as these programmes are underpinned by a 'back to work' ethos that primarily supports parents and in which children's play is secondary.

The use of quantitative measures to develop a basis on which to fund play spaces can be a barrier to provision for children and young people who live in sparsely populated areas. Such approaches may only attend to the rights of larger groups of children in more densely populated. The targeting of funds to those living in areas of economic deprivation can also be unhelpful for these children. The public misconception that children in rural areas have plenty of play spaces belies that fact that many such spaces are inaccessible, dangerous or

²³ Multi Use Games Areas

isolated. Where decisions about funding transport are also based on quantitative analyses of population demographics, rural children may find that they not only have few local places to go or other children with whom to play, but also have little transport to enable them to access play opportunities further afield.

In relation to play difficulties result from an 'outcomes driven culture'. Although it is possible to measure how many people use a play facility, this does not necessarily reflect its play value (and its differing value to different children and young people). Although children may vote with their feet in open access and playgrounds, this also depends on what else is available to them (and this is less likely to be a possibility in childcare settings). Measures used tend to be adult measures of 'quality'. Involving children and young people in developing their own measures was planned within one local authority visited for this study, but does not appear to be a widespread practice. Within daycare settings, inspection criteria (for meeting the Standards) also do not necessarily reflect the play value to children as they will make the best of what is available to them (so inspectors may believe that the children are 'enjoying and interested in' what's available – and tick off that Standard) but the Standards are in danger of being made a maximum rather than a minimum level of quality.

Although several policies specifically refer to play and recreation, 'free' play and informal recreation that is child-initiated is not so well supported or is less apparent in national policy. Where 'free' play is mentioned or implied, it tends to be in relation to equipped playgrounds or Home zones, for example. These policies have been influenced by issues of health and safety and, where young people are concerned, minimising anti-social behaviour through diversionary tactics. These policies lead to containment within bounded spaces or in designated sites such as teen shelters. The notion that play should be separated from other public activities and spaces does not help to promote play and recreation, or help develop better inter-generational understandings nor does it recognise play as a right.

Opportunities for play for the youngest children are recognised in policies. In the draft *Early Years Foundation Stage* (EYFS) for children from birth to five (DfES 2006), play is cited as a vehicle for learning but 'planned purposeful play' is given greater weight than 'free play'. This is despite the emphasis on the need for a balanced approach recommended in the *Birth to Three Matters Framework* (DfES/Sure Start 2002) upon which the EYFS is partly based and the *BERA Early Years Review*²⁴ (2004). For teenagers, new recreational opportunities are to be provided as a result of *Youth Matters*. However, the emphasis is once again on structured activities within specified domains. Play for those in middle childhood is less obvious in the policy documentation that was reviewed. Although it is proposed that all primary schools, in partnership with their community organisations, will offer extended services by 2010, there is no policy recommendation that the core services should include play. Once again the proposed activities are structured and largely adult initiated and led. A recent research report on full service extended schools (Cummings et al. 2006²⁵) also shows that in practice (primary) schools are focusing on providing childcare. But the report makes little mention of play, particularly for children in the 5 to 11 years age group. The Children's Fund, which was established in 2000 with an initial fund of £450m and with an overall aim of filling the gaps in statutory provision with preventive services through partnership work, also makes some provision for children aged 5 to 13 years. In 2003, 20 per cent of all services in operation were providing leisure and extra-curricular activities, such as 'sports, play schemes and specialist play, arts and crafts, dance, drama, music, outdoor pursuits...' (NECF 2003).²⁶ This is a positive addition to those services and facilities already provided by local authorities. But this fund is targeted in at least two ways. First, only those areas with the greatest levels of need attract funding.

²⁴ British Educational Research Association Early Childhood Special Interest Group.

²⁵ Cummings, C et al (2006) Evaluation of the Full Service Extended Schools Initiative, Second Year: Thematic Papers. DfES Research Report RR795.

²⁶ National Evaluation of the Children's Fund (2003) Developing Collaboration in Preventative Services for Children and Young People. The National Evaluation of the Children's Fund First Annual Report 2003. DfES Research Report 528.

Secondly, once established, the services themselves target children at greatest risk of 'social exclusion'.

For other non-statutory services, the Children, Young People and Families (CYPF) Grant programme 'funds voluntary organisations to undertake work of national significance in improving opportunities and life outcomes for children, young people and their families' (ECM 2006). In 2006 the funding body (DfES) received 1,400 applications of which 67 were successful in attracting some of the £17m of financial support that had been made available. Among the successful applicants the work of just two focused specifically on play (SkillsActive Playwork Unit and NATLL for Toy Libraries), although others are working in areas that could help promote play opportunities (such as 4Children's work in developing extended schools childcare provision). The large numbers of applicants would suggest that many voluntary sector organisations are in need of additional funds to work towards delivering the ECM outcomes, but few have been able to access the CYPF grant to date and few of those that have are improving play opportunities.

The consultations that were conducted for this project revealed that in the majority of cases perceptions of the impact of recent and current policy on the delivery or facilitation of play opportunities tended to be positive. But among local authorities the impact was more often described as being on organisational structures and working practices than it was in terms of increased play opportunities. Nevertheless, the evidence from discussions with participants suggested that, on the whole, this was due to the relatively recent introduction of a new Every Child Matters framework for the planning, commissioning and delivery of services for children and young people. It was also the result of developing play strategies to acquire Big Lottery funding. Once these new processes become embedded, it seems likely that they will provide more strategic planning for play and, therefore, should lead to play opportunities that are more appropriate, accessible and better situated, even if they are not greater in number.

Above all, the publication of *Getting Serious about Play* has had a positive impact, helping to raise the profile of the sector's work by enhancing its legitimacy as a service for children and young people. It has also promoted the importance of play beyond those working in the sector. The subsequent allocation of £155m of Big Lottery funding for play initiatives has itself resulted in numerous positive outcomes even before successful bids for funding have been made. Although there are some local authorities in which the officer responsible for leading development of the play strategy is not a play 'expert', concerted efforts are being made to ensure that concepts of play are debated and that professionals from the play sector are included in these discussions to ensure that there is 'expert' contribution to this strategic planning for play. This will be vital for ensuring that the playwork principles (see <http://www.skillsactive.com/playwork/principles>) are taken into account when developing a local play portfolio. The process has also brought together diverse members of local authorities and the voluntary and community (and private) sectors, thereby reinforcing or formalising existing links as well as forging new ones. This has enabled those delivering play services to promote play more widely and to connect the play strategy with the other local authority plans or strategies as well as to gather information about existing voluntary and community organisations' work. This more coherent approach to planning and delivering play opportunities is now linking into education, health, planning, housing, transport and other local authority departments whose services can impact upon play (and vice versa when the many benefits of play are recognised). Although there is some evidence that cross-organisational and cross-sector links existed before the Big Lottery play strategy processes that are under way, the dedicated funding and the central government recognition of play has undoubtedly facilitated the greater coherence that is now reported. It is also indicative that until now play has been largely ignored or marginalised in the development of other local plans and policies.

Added to the improved collaboration is the stronger evidence base upon which decisions for play provision are being made. Together with consultations with children and young people about their play and recreation, audits of existing playgrounds, open access sites,

skate parks and other facilities are helping to provide clearer priorities and goals for the play strategies as well as for the use of developers' funds and other monies that can be accessed for play and recreation. It is too early to say whether the Big Lottery funding has led to more or better play opportunities in communities, but most participants in this project were optimistic that this would happen in the future.

Another positive outcome of Big Lottery funding for play has been the increase in the numbers of play rangers. These 'outreach' playworkers represent a clear distinction between childcare and playwork and make some contribution towards rebalancing the emphasis on childcare in national policy.

What is less positive is that the Big Lottery allocations are comparatively small and provide only short-term funding. This, and the application guidelines, have restricted what each bidding authorities' portfolio can contain. The play strategy portfolios require considerable work, with contributions from a large number of individuals representing many departments and external organisations. It is important that the developmental processes yield extraneous benefits (such as improved links, more coherent planning and an improved status for play) to outweigh the costs incurred in formulating the play strategies. It is also important that these benefits are recognised by all those involved.

Where multi-agency teams have been developed, these often include play sector officers and professionals. However, the extent to which play is included and valued appears to depend on the views about play of the key person(s) responsible for convening these teams (for example, for Local Area Agreements). Where the play sector is represented there can be positive outcomes. It enables play to be 'put onto the political agenda' and be better promoted to a wider group of professionals from a diversity of agencies and organisations. But the mechanics of developing effective 'joined-up' working practices can themselves prove time consuming and problematic. Some play sector representatives feel that they are welcomed and valued by other professionals and believe that involvement in the multi-agency context has raised their status (and that of play as a service), while others feel that they have to battle to be included and to promote the positive nature of play and status of playwork(ers), particularly to professionals from the education sector (and to parents).

Work for play between county, district and parish councils can be problematic. Difficulties may arise from localisation of facilities or devolution of powers to different levels of government. In two-tier authorities, where planning is not always joined up, it may be difficult for district councils to have any sway over colleagues in county councils (e.g. highways, education) whose remits impact on the possibilities for maximising play opportunities. Where ownership of playgrounds has been devolved to parish councils, district councils are now receiving applications for grant aid to cover the costs of maintenance that the parish councils cannot themselves afford to incur. Where audits of the quantity and composition (i.e. LAPs,²⁷ LEAPs and NEAPs, etc.) of existing facilities are being carried out, these too require a considerable degree of coordination between different council tiers. It is also problematic that (optional) Best Value Performance Indicators for the quality of children's play areas do not apply to those owned by parish or town councils.

Recent government publications can be said to have put play 'on the map' in central government terms, which is encouraging. Play is also mentioned in a range of policy documents emanating from a variety of government departments. This suggests that acknowledging the importance of children's play is multi-departmental. The existence of a cross-Whitehall group is further positive evidence of macro-level consideration of play. There is also overt evidence that play and playwork are receiving more attention through the funding (albeit by Big Lottery) of initiatives at local and regional level – as well as

²⁷ LAP = Local Area for Play, LEAP = Local Equipped Area for Play, NEAP = Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NPFA).

nationally through Play England – and through further professionalisation²⁸ of the play workforce. However, the failure to promote play in all documents about children's free time or to show clarity in the purposes of play across all government documentation reveals that play is still not centre stage or fully recognised both for its instrumental and intrinsic benefits.

Definitions of play still remain problematic. This seems, in part, to be related to the priorities of government departments (which are not play, per se), and also to the ambiguous constructions of childhood in today's society: a child as vulnerable (the Children Act 2004) and child as deviant (ASBOs and media reports). In both extremes, the more structured activities that are labelled 'play' or 'recreation' can be seen to be used as a means of controlling the behaviour of children and young people.

The attempt to establish a clear definition for play in *Getting Serious about Play* (DCMS 2004) is extremely positive. *Time for Play* (DCMS 2006) also makes a distinction between play and sport and between play for its own sake and for the benefits it can provide for children and society. This distinction also seems to have been supported by the allocation (via DCMS) of Big Lottery funds for 'free play' initiatives. This is a most welcome and concrete acknowledgement of a child's right to play, but it is not government funding – and is short-term.

The references to opportunities for children and young people's play and informal recreational activity that happen spontaneously or informally and without particular associated goals can be found in policy emanating from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Under its former nomenclature as ODPM, research was commissioned into the accessibility of play spaces for disabled children.²⁹ The Department has also endeavoured to provide spaces and places for play through its 'Liveability' policies (PSA8) by, for example, supporting Groundwork to help communities improve their local environments, and to change attitudes towards children and young people's street play or 'hanging out' through the Liveability pilot fund and the Neighbourhood or Street Wardens schemes. The latter may be helping to address some of the factors that children and young people and their parents have said inhibit play (such as fear of bullying and other crimes). It may be that the underlying impetus for these activities is social cohesion, and reduced crime and anti-social behaviour. However, references to play in DCLG policies appear generally to be less outcome-oriented than those of other departments. DfES talks about play in relation to its ability to foster cognitive and social development, DH in relation to its role in reducing obesity and improving physical and mental health. While these are undoubtedly important outcomes, there appears to be little acknowledgement of children and young people's right to play for reasons that children and young people themselves would say were important, such as being with friends. There is much that can be learnt from the activities of local Children's Fund programmes where consultations with children and young people are embedded in practice and continuously inform and steer the development of activities.³⁰

Finally, the range of play opportunities that does exist seems to rely heavily on the dedication and creativity of play professionals working in the statutory and voluntary sectors. Without their commitment and drive it seems likely that play would be excluded from the plans and strategies of many local areas. Their proactive work is to be commended and recognised for having ensured that play is not forgotten as one of the core services for all children.

²⁸ New occupational standards and training pathways (see SkillsActive for details).

²⁹ ODPM (2004) 'Developing Accessible Play – Final Research Report. www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1128501

³⁰ See www.ne-cf.org.uk for local evaluator reports as well as www.dfes.gov.uk/research for published reports of the national evaluation team. For a multi-sensory model for young children's participation see: <http://www.kentchildrensfund.net/2/uploads/docs/67Yes%20You%20Can%20website.pdf>



Appendix 1

Children’s Play Council/Play England Policy Play³¹ Impact Assessment Interview Schedule

Context:

1. Could you describe the main features of your role(s)?
2. Could you tell me about your department’s key responsibilities and priorities?
3. Where does your role/department sit within the council structure?
4. Looking at the list below, which type of play opportunities do the activities of a) the local authority, b) your service or department, affect?

Types of play opportunities	a) the local authority	b) your service or department
Play in the street near home		
Play in local parks and open spaces		
Play in playgrounds and other types of unstaffed provision (e.g. skate parks, ball games areas, etc.)		
Open access, staffed play provision like play centres or adventure playgrounds		
Play in school aged childcare or extended schools provision		
Early childhood provision in children’s centres or childcare		
Specialist play provision for children with specific needs		

History of play:

5. Could you describe how the council’s involvement in local opportunities for play has changed in the last few years?
6. Do you have a play policy/strategy?
 - a. *(If yes)* Please can you talk us through the development of your play strategy – who and/or what instigated it (within or outside the council)?
 - b. *(If no)* Please can you tell us the reasons for this?

Policy impact and best evidence:

7. In this section we have listed a range of different policies, initiatives and schemes as well as legislation and reports that have come from central government departments and their agencies. Please look at the list in the policy impact grid and complete as indicated below:
 - i. add (under ‘Other’) any additional policies, guidance (statutory or non-statutory), action plans or legislation that you come across in your day-to-day work;
 - ii. tell us, in your experience, which policies impact negatively or positively on opportunities for play locally by placing a tick (or ticks) in the appropriate column(s) next to the policies that you know about. If you do not recognise a policy, leave the impact columns blank. If you recognise a policy but feel it has no perceptible impact, please tick the ‘no impact’ column next to the policy.

³¹ All references to ‘play’ relate to unstructured/free/child-initiated play as well as supervised provision and equipped facilities and to informal recreational activities for children from birth to eighteen.

Policy impact grid

Policy, legislation strategy, plan, guidance	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	No Impact
'Our Towns and Cities: the future' (Urban White Paper 2000)			
'Sustainable Communities: building for the future' (2003)			
'Liveability' – Cleaner, safer, greener'			
'Home Zones – Challenging the future of our streets' (2005)			
Neighbourhood (<i>and Street</i>) Warden's Scheme Implementation Plan Guidance (2000)			
'Streetscape Guidance' (e.g. TfL)			
'Involving Children and Young People Action Plan' (Dept for Transport)			
'Walking and Cycling Action Plan' (DfT)			
The Compensation Act			
Equalities Act			
The Disabilities Discrimination Act			
The Children Act 2004			
Every Child Matters: the next steps			
Guidance on Children and Young People's Plans			
Youth Matters			
Sure Start/children's centres			
(Full-Service) Extended schools			
Daycare register(s)			
Early Years Foundation Stage (Consultation)			
Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (DfES)			
Ten Year Childcare Strategy			
Childcare Act 2006			
Getting Serious About Play			
Time for Play			
The Cultural Strategy			
The Obesity Strategy and/or Physical Activity Plan			
National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services			
The Respect Action Plan			
Our Countryside: the future (Rural White Paper 2000)			
Outdoors for All – Diversity Action Plan (Defra)			
Countryside and Rights of Way Act			
Children's trusts (Services/Directorate)			
Local Area Agreements			
Local Strategic Partnerships			
The NPFA Six Acre Standard			
Supplementary Planning Gain/Section 106 monies			
Best Value Performance Indicators (e.g. BV119)			
Common Performance Assessment			
Planning Policy Guidance, e.g. (PPG) 17: 'Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation'			
Planning Policy Statement, e.g. (PPS) 3: Housing 'Better Places to Live by Design'/ 'Planning for the Communities of the Future (2006)			
School Travel Planning			
Other(s)			

- iii. After completing the table, we would like you to provide (verbally) some examples of the impact in each case for the policies that you have ticked (negative or positive impact).
- iv. Can you identify the main factors that facilitate or impede play opportunities with regard to the examples you have given?

Local circumstances:

8. Can you tell us your priorities concerning the specific (play-related) needs of your local communities?

Maintenance, monitoring and evaluation:

(NB: Some issues may have been covered in examples already provided)

9. How does the council audit and review spaces, resources and facilities for play and informal recreational activities?
 - a) How do you balance need and supply?
10. Do you use any criteria or standards to assess the appropriateness, accessibility and the quality of opportunities you provide (i.e. spaces, resources and provision)?
11. (How) do you assess the sustainability of the range of play opportunities you provide?

Future:

12. Bearing in mind that our research is particularly focusing on the impact on play of policies (national, regional or local), is there anything that you believe will change the way you will provide opportunities for play and informal recreational activities in the future?

Any additional comments (participants')

Documentation we would like to gather, if possible:

- Copy of Play Strategy/Policy or related documentation (if relevant)
- Copy of evidence from consultations with children and young people
- Supporting evidence of impact of policies and/or Play Strategy
- Other documentation as deemed appropriate by participants.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Appendix 2

Policy play impact assessment list of policy analysis grids

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1b	<i>Children Act (2004) Explanatory notes</i>	
1c	<i>Summary of Statutory Requirements and Government Expectations for Local Action (DfES 2004)</i>	
2	<i>Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: a Ten Year Strategy for Childcare (HM Treasury, DfES, DWP, DTI 2004)</i>	99
3	<i>Ten Year Strategy for Childcare: Guidance for Local Authorities (Sure Start March 2005)</i>	101
4	<i>Out of School Care: Guidance to the National Standards (Ofsted, 2001)</i>	102
5	<i>The Compensation Act (2006) Dept of Constitutional Affairs</i>	104
6	<i>Disability Discrimination Act (Amendment 2005)</i>	105
7	<i>Equality Act (2006)</i>	106
8	<i>Planning and Funding Extended schools: a Guide for Schools, Local Authorities and their Partner Organisations (DfES 2006)</i>	107
9	<i>Guidance on Children and Young People's Plan (DfES/ECM 2005)</i>	109
10a	<i>Neighbourhood and Street Wardens Scheme Overview (Home Office and ODPM Initiative 2002; information at www.renewal.net)</i>	111
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11	<i>Sure Start Guidance 2004–2006: Overview and Local Delivery Arrangements (DfES 2003)</i>	112
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21	<i>Getting Serious About Play: a Review of Children's Play (DCMS 2004)</i>	123
22	<i>Time for Play: Encouraging Greater Play Opportunities for Children and Young People (DCMS 2006)</i>	124
23	<i>Respect Action Plan (Home Office Jan 2006)</i>	125
24	<i>Choosing Activity: a Physical Activity Action Plan (DH 2005)</i>	126

25	<i>Every Child Matters Green Paper</i> (DfES 2003)	127
26	<i>Every Child Matters Change for Children in Schools</i> (DfES 2004)	128
27	<i>Every Child Matters: Joint Area Reviews of Children's Services</i> (Ofsted/DfES 2005)	129
28	<i>Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners</i> (DfES 2004)	130
29	<i>Early Years Foundation Stage Direction of Travel Paper</i> (Sure Start/DfES 2006)	131
30a	<i>National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services. Core Standards</i> (DoH 2004)	132
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30c	<i>Getting the Right Start: National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Part 1. Standard for Hospital Services</i> (DoH 2004)	133
30d	<i>National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Disabled Children and Young People and those with Complex Health Needs</i> (DoH 2004)	134
30e	<i>National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: the Mental Health and Psychological Wellbeing of Children and Young People</i> (DoH 2004)	135
31	<i>Local Area Agreements Guidance</i> (for Round 3) (ODPM)	136
32	<i>Walking and cycling: an action plan</i> (DfT 2004)	137
33	<i>Best Value Performance Indicators Guidance for 2005–6</i> (Audit Commission Feb 2005)	138
34	<i>Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their Future</i> (ODPM Dec 2005)	139
35a	<i>Planning Policy Guidance 17</i> (Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation) (ODPM 2002)	140
35b	<i>Companion Guide to PPG17</i> (ODPM 2002)	
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44a	<i>Sector Information Minute</i> (Health and Safety Executive 2004)	156
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44c	<i>Playgrounds – Risks, Benefits and Choices</i> (Health and Safety Executive 2002)	157

Policy/Paper/Scheme Children Act (2004) Children Act (2004) Explanatory Notes Summary of Statutory Requirements and Government Expectations for Local Action (DfES 2004)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Children's Commissioner</p> <p><i>Sections 1–9</i> provide for the establishment of a new Children's Commissioner for England, who will also have a role across the UK for reporting on non-devolved matters, working closely with counterparts in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Commissioner's job will be to raise awareness of the best interests of children and young people and to report annually to Parliament, through the Secretary of State, on his findings.</p> <p>Children's services in England</p> <p><i>Section 10</i> establishes a duty on local authorities to make arrangements to promote cooperation between agencies in order to improve children's well-being, defined by reference to the five outcomes and a duty on key partners to take part in those arrangements.</p> <p>It also provides a new power to allow pooling of resources in support of these arrangements.</p> <p><i>Section 11</i> creates a duty for the key agencies that work with children to put in place arrangements to make sure that they take account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when doing their jobs.</p> <p><i>Section 12</i> allows further secondary legislation and statutory guidance to be made with respect to setting up databases or indexes that contain basic information about children and young people to help professionals in working together to provide early support to children, young people and their families.</p> <p><i>Sections 13–16</i> require that local authorities set up statutory local safeguarding children boards and that the key partners take part.</p> <p><i>Section 17</i> and the associated repeals in Schedule 5 establish a single Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) to replace a range of current statutory planning. Details of what the CYPP should cover will be set out in further secondary legislation and supported by guidance.</p> <p><i>Sections 18 and 19</i> require local authorities to put in place a Director of children's services and Lead Member to be responsible for, as a minimum, education and children's social service functions. <u>Local authorities have discretion to add other relevant functions, for instance leisure</u> or housing, to the role if they feel it is appropriate.</p>	<p>Mechanisms for the delivery of education and social care services, in partnership with other agencies. <u>Play and leisure</u> services may or may not be included in children's services – LAs to decide. Consequently, Children and Young People's Plan may or may not include play, and likewise the Joint Area Review of children's services.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Child protection, Well-being.</p> <p>Partnerships and sharing information to safeguard children.</p>	<p>Although the Act makes reference to recreation as a duty of the Children's Commissioner and children's services authorities, there is no statutory duty for play services to be included in children's services and so these could be marginalised (and fail to be inspected with other children's services in a Joint Area Review, or to be included in the CYPP).</p> <p>It is a statutory requirement that local authorities set up partnership arrangements to promote cooperation, to improve well-being, to assess, plan and commission services that deliver better outcomes for children and young people. This duty should result in the development of children's trusts (by 2008). The Act itself and its explanatory notes do not mention <u>play</u>; however, the Summary of Statutory Requirements (DfES 2004) on setting up partnership arrangements and integrating frontline delivery states that partnerships are expected to include as a minimum a range of organisations, including <u>play</u> organisations. In integrating front-line delivery, LAs are expected to ensure the involvement of a range of providers, including the voluntary and community sector and 'where appropriate' culture, sports and <u>play</u> organisations. (It is not clear what is meant by appropriate.) Section 10 of the Act:</p>

<p>Sections 20–24 require an integrated inspection framework to be established by the relevant inspectorates to inform future inspections of all services for children. They also make provision for regular Joint Area Reviews to be carried out to look at how children’s services as a whole operate across each local authority area.</p> <p>Additional sections concerned with fostering and with <u>daycare</u>.</p> <p>Source: Summary of the Children Act 2004 (DfES – 1106 – 2004)</p>		<p>Cooperation to improve well-being states that, ‘The arrangements are to be made with a view to improving the well-being of children in the authority’s area so far as relating to’ various services including: <u>education, training and recreation</u>.</p>
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Policy/Paper/Scheme

Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: a Ten Year Strategy for Childcare
(HM Treasury, DfES, DWP, DTI 2004)

Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Acknowledges the difficulties of balancing work and family life and problems parents may encounter, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> childcare can be very expensive some mothers feel they have to return to work too soon after their child is born it can be difficult to find the right kind of childcare new parents can feel isolated fathers aren't able to spend as much time with their children as they would like parents are worried about the quality of childcare. <p>The Ten Year Strategy for childcare sets out how these problems will be tackled. New policies will mean that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> parents will have greater choice about balancing work and family life parents will be able to access an affordable, flexible and high-quality childcare place for children up to the age of 14 that meets their needs the childcare available will be among the best in the world, with a highly skilled workforce families will be able to afford high quality childcare. <p>This will be through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> extending paid maternity leave to nine months from April 2007 with a goal of 12 months by the end of the next Parliament a new right for mothers to transfer some of their maternity pay and leave to fathers extending the right to request flexible working arrangements (currently available to parents of young children) to parents of older children. <p>An affordable, flexible, high-quality childcare place will be available for all families who need one:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> by 2010, affordable before and after school care all year round for children aged between three and 14 by 2010, a Sure Start children's centre in every community more hours of free early education and care for three- and four-year-olds so that from 2006 all three- and four-year-olds to get 12.5 hours free for 38 weeks a year, up from 33 weeks now starting in 2007 this will be extended to 15 free hours a week in the longer term, it will be increased to 20 free hours a week parents will be able to spread their free childcare entitlement flexibly over a minimum of 	<p>Childcare for children from birth to five and out-of- school care for children from birth to 14 (older if children have additional/ special needs).</p> <p>Parents' ability to go out to work.</p> <p>Numbers of children accessing nursery places.</p> <p>Core professional standards for those caring for children.</p> <p>Quality of childcare through reforms to regulation and inspection.</p> <p>Themes Work-life balance, Early intervention/prevention, Employment, Improving, social inclusion for disadvantaged children/families, Affordability and accessibility of childcare Equality, Role of government, childcare providers, LAs and families in caring for children (role of fathers also highlighted),</p>	<p>Not many references to play but those that are particularly relate to younger children (birth to five).</p> <p>Play is seen as the foundation of development and learning for children from birth to five.</p> <p>Holiday provision: Emphasis appears to be on planned, structured activities with opportunities for (free) play seemingly secondary.</p> <p>Play is fundamental to <u>quality</u> provision in childcare.</p>

three days.'

The Strategy outlines the ways in which parents and others can contribute towards giving children the best start in life and recognises that this can be more difficult for those on low incomes. Acknowledges the important role parents play in their children's development and learning:

'2.14 Parents and the home environment will always have the most important impact on a child's development. Where parents are actively engaged in activities with their children, they demonstrate better intellectual, social and behavioural development. Activities such as reading with children, teaching songs and nursery rhymes, drawing and playing with letters and numbers, all have a positive impact on children's intellectual and social development. The quality of these interactions between parents and their children is more significant for child outcomes than parental income or social background. However, evidence suggests that parents living in poverty are likely to face risk factors that make their role as parents harder, such as lack of material goods like toys and books, lack of space for play...' (p.13)

Explains the provision of free nursery places within settings that are guided by the Foundation Stage Curriculum (*for children three to five years, to be replaced in 2008 by the new EYFS for children from birth to five*). The Foundation Stage is a broad, balanced and purposeful curriculum, delivered through well-planned play. Through this supported play, children can explore, develop and use their curiosity and imagination to help them make sense of the world in a secure environment.' (p.30) The new single framework (EYFS) will be 'underpinned by a play-based approach to promoting children's development and learning, building on children's experiences to help them extend their skills and develop their understanding and confidence. (p.55)

On holiday provision for older children 'The Government's commitment for school-age childcare will extend to cover the school holidays, from 8am to 6pm on weekdays... Holiday provision will provide an exciting range of things for children to do, including sport, arts, music and cultural activities as well as opportunities for rest, play and socialising with peer groups.' (p.45)

Defining what quality means, the document states that, 'A modern childcare system should deliver high quality services for children that enable them to learn, develop social and emotional skills, and explore through play.' (p.50)

Policy/Paper/ Scheme

Ten Year Strategy for Childcare: Guidance for Local Authorities (Sure Start March 2005).

Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>To help LAs deliver the childcare strategy and provide a timeline of activities. Builds on the Sure Start Guidance (04–06 and 06–08). LAs will have four key roles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. joining up access to services for families 2. addressing affordability and sustainability 3. raising quality 4. brokering and partnership working. <p>Involves, for example: ‘Working with your partners, increasingly through Children’s Trusts arrangements, local authorities will have a central role in commissioning and coordinating the delivery of integrated early years and childcare services’ and the ‘active involvement of parents and the local community in the planning and delivery of services’.</p> <p>In 2005–6 LAs should be taking action to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Develop with parents and partners an early years and childcare vision for the locality including integrated early education and childcare, health, advice and support to parents, adult learning and support for employment, and outreach to all parts of the community. – With parents, partners and childcare providers, review the supply and demand of childcare in the locality. – Expand and roll out children’s centres and extended schools. – Develop local plans and programmes with parents and partners, based on Sure Start Guidance 2006–2008 (to be issued in the autumn), to increase capacity, sustainability and quality of services. – Ensure plans and service provision reflects the needs of the local population, including disabled children and those from black and minority ethnic communities. – Ensure these plans are an integral part of the local authority’s wider Children and Young People’s Plan. – Develop a programme to grow the local childcare workforce and improve their qualifications and training to meet the commitments in ‘Choice for Parents: the Best Start for Children’. – Develop a programme to improve the skills of strategic and operational managers to deliver the integrated early years and childcare services. – Review current arrangements for provision of advice and information to parents, including services delivered by children’s information services.’ <p>Provides information about the development of extended schools (services), ‘parents with children aged 5–11 will be offered the guarantee of affordable school based childcare between the hours of 8am–6pm’</p> <p>And about disabled children, ‘Disabled children and their families should have access to the full range of childcare options which are open to other families.’</p>	<p>LA early years and childcare services, children’s trust partners, childcare providers and Sure Start programmes, play providers.</p> <p>Children and Young People’s Plan.</p> <p>Increased opportunities for childcare places.</p> <p>Improved quality of childcare.</p> <p>Improved information for parents.</p> <p>Indirectly, should be more play opportunities, particularly for younger children due to increase in childcare places, but this would depend on the nature of the provision.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Childcare</p> <p>Partnership</p> <p>Quality</p> <p>Affordability</p> <p>Sustainability</p> <p>Inclusion</p> <p>Diversity</p>	<p>Makes no mention of play/play sector but does mention partnerships with, e.g. local voluntary and community services.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Out of School Care: Guidance to the National Standards (Ofsted 2001)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>There are 14 standards which are the same for all types of daycare and childminding, whereas the criteria differ according to different types of childcare – full daycare, sessional daycare, crèches, out-of- school care (including holiday play schemes) and childminding.</p> <p>This guidance to out-of-school care accompanies the National Standards. Standard 3 is specifically about play. To meet the Standard 3,</p> <p>‘The registered person meets children’s individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children’s emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.’ (p.15)</p> <p>‘Children’s care, learning and play are supported best where the registered person and staff are clear about <u>the main purpose of the provision</u>. The development of children’s emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities is promoted effectively when they <u>take part in a wide range of activities</u>. Staff meet children’s needs through sensitive and appropriate interactions which promote children’s self esteem. They plan first hand experiences which enable children to make <u>choices</u> when developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. Children’s care, learning and play are supported well by staff who monitor children’s progress regularly and use this information to <u>provide for their individual needs</u>.</p> <p>In inspection, the inspector will make judgements based on a range of factors, one of which is the extent to which children are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – involved in a broad range of activities (where appropriate); – <u>making their own decisions and choices about their play and learning</u> (p.17) – <u>involved, interested and enjoying their play</u> and professionals: – provide an interesting and stimulating balance of activities, allowing for more <u>active play</u>.’ <p>Standard 5 gives guidance on resources: Toys and play equipment.</p>	<p>Play in daycare and open access settings/sites.</p> <p>Children’s choices and preferences for play.</p> <p>Professionals’ skills.</p> <p>Safety and range of play resources.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Individualised, child-centred approaches to delivering a service.</p> <p>Fostering children’s development through provision of planned and free play opportunities based on observation and monitoring of children’s interests and developmental progress.</p> <p>Children’s abilities to make choices in their play.</p> <p>Enjoyment Achievement</p> <p>Safety</p> <p>Social equality and justice</p>	<p>Many references to play – underpinning much of the focus of the daycare and open access provision.</p> <p>No mention of <u>play value</u> as such or spaces or resources.</p> <p>Distinguishes between types of play opportunities and to meet Standard 3 professionals must ‘<u>consider</u>’ providing both free play and planned play opportunities. This could mean that some providers do not necessarily provide opportunities for free play but could still meet the Standard (theoretically).</p> <p>Recommends a mix of active and quiet play, indoors and out.</p> <p>Highlights children’s needs to play independently and initiate activities (and professionals’ need to be sensitive to this).</p> <p>Encourages a range of play opportunities, and promotes active, energetic play.</p> <p>Encourages professionals to think carefully about use of space (there is a formula for calculating the amount of space required per child).</p> <p>Encourages the inclusion of quiet, rest areas.</p> <p>Encourages a risk assessment for use of outdoor space (Standard 6 re safety).</p> <p>Requirements for space for toilets is recognised as being something that may be difficult to meet without compromising play space. Guidance implies that play space is more important and compromises for toilets are possible.</p> <p>Checking outdoor play areas each time they are used promotes safety, but could deter some from offering such opportunities.</p> <p>Provides guidance on sandpit</p>

<p>Recommends that these reflect multicultural societies, include natural materials, are safe and clean, promote children’s development and offer an element of <u>challenge</u>.</p> <p>The inspector will look for whether the provider has enough equipment to ensure children can <u>play together</u>. Also whether children are interested in what is available for them to <u>play with</u>. Other outdoor <u>play areas</u> should be checked each time they are used to ensure they are safe. (p. 22)</p> <p>Requires professionals to keep an eye on the state of unsupervised playground equipment they may use, and report any faults to owners.</p> <p>Professionals’ awareness of legislation and provision of play that promotes equality and justice.</p> <p>Provides guidance on anti- discriminatory good practice and suggests a range of measures, including using resources which reflect diversity such as books, role play and equipment.</p> <p>ANNEX A PROVIDES GUIDANCE FOR OPEN ACCESS SCHEMES</p> <p>‘The focus for Annex A</p> <p>Children attending open access schemes <u>have a right to play in a safe and suitable environment</u>. This is best achieved where staff, with appropriate training and <u>experience in playwork</u>, actively plan to ensure children are not put at risk. <u>Staff plan</u> a programme of activities and take account of children’s own preferences and <u>choices</u>. They talk to and <u>play with children</u>, establishing good relationships. Although children are able to leave unaccompanied, the registered person has effective systems for managing access and informing parents of arrangements.</p> <p>Relationships based on perceptive and knowledgeable staff who can ‘both direct play activities when needed and to stand back and allow free play where appropriate.’ (p.59)</p> <p>Requires that when play is in public spaces it should be ‘kept under close control.’ (p.61)</p> <p>ANNEX B OVERNIGHT CARE makes no references to play.</p>	<p>Right</p> <p>Choices</p> <p>Playwork</p> <p>Safety</p> <p>Suitability of environment</p> <p>Good relationships</p>	<p>cleanliness that is not prescriptive in terms of regularity of cleaning, but promotes hygiene.</p> <p>Open access play emphasises children’s <u>right</u> to play in a safe and suitable environment.</p> <p>As before, recommends planned play activities based on children’s interests and good relationships.</p> <p>Balance of adult- directed play and free play opportunities.</p> <p>Supervision of play in <u>public spaces</u>. (Balancing access to public space and providing boundaries to the play activities?)</p>
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Policy/Paper/ Scheme		
The Compensation Act (Department of Constitutional Affairs 2006)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>The Act is divided into three sections, which are:</p> <p>Part 1: Standard of Care</p> <p>Part 1 contains provisions relating to the law of negligence, breach of statutory duty and damages for mesothelioma.</p> <p>Part 2: Claims Management Services</p> <p>Part 2 contains provisions relating to the regulation of Claims Management Services.</p> <p>Part 3: General</p> <p>Part 3 contains technical provisions, including provisions about commencement and extent.</p>	<p>If correctly interpreted and understood this Act could support the promotion of risk assessments and standards of 'reasonable care' which in turn could promote the provision of more stimulating and challenging play environments.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Addresses misconceptions about the disproportionate risk of litigation.</p>	<p>The aim of Part 1, section on negligence, and breach of statutory duty aims to 'address what was suggested by the Better Regulation Task Force (BRTF) report of May 2004 (<i>Better Routes to Redress</i>) to be a common misperception, that can lead to a disproportionate fear of litigation and consequent risk-averse behaviour'.</p> <p>The Guidance notes state that litigation is only viable when there has been a breach of duty to undertake reasonable care where there is a duty of care. The ordinary standard of care is 'reasonable care' and the courts would determine what this standard was according to the particular circumstances.</p> <p>Guidance also states that Section 1 provides that in considering a claim in negligence or breach of statutory duty, a court may, in determining whether the defendant should have taken particular steps to meet a standard of care (whether by taking precautions or otherwise), <u>have regard to whether a requirement to take those steps might prevent an activity which is desirable from taking place</u> (either at all, to a particular extent, or in a particular way), or might discourage persons from undertaking functions in connection with the activity.</p> <p><i>This has relevance to the provision of playground equipment, for example, which appears to have been in decline or to be 'formulaic' partly due to a fear of litigation. Implication seems to be that providers need to take reasonable care but also to be able to offer elements of risk and challenge if that is part of the nature of the provision.</i></p>

Policy/Paper/ Scheme		
Disability Discrimination Act (Amendment 2005)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Updates the 1995 DDA and 1999 amendments to the 1995 Act.</p> <p>These include:</p> <p>Section 3: introduces a new duty on public authorities requiring them, when exercising their functions, to have due regard for the need to eliminate harassment of and unlawful discrimination against disabled persons, to <u>promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons, to encourage participation by disabled persons in public life, and to promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;</u></p> <p>Section 13: imposes a duty to provide reasonable adjustments on landlords and others who manage rented premises;</p> <p>Section 18: amends the definition of disability in respect of people with mental illnesses; deems people with HIV infection, multiple sclerosis, or cancer to be disabled for the purposes of the DDA; and clarifies that there is no implied limitation to the scope of the regulation-making power which enables people to be deemed to be disabled.</p> <p>Source: Explanatory notes.</p>	<p>LA and other play providers;</p> <p>Choice, accessibility and inclusion for children and young people with disabilities.</p> <p>Themes Anti- discrimination, anti-harassment, social inclusion, reasonable adjustment.</p>	<p>Section 3 applies, therefore, to the play services and play spaces provided or maintained by the LA. Has implications for accessibility of e.g. public open spaces and playgrounds for disabled children and young people where they may experience discrimination or harassment. (Employment of suitably trained Park Rangers could facilitate inclusion?)</p> <p>Section 13 would seemingly apply to play areas and play centres operated by Residential Social Landlords if these areas are classified as part of the 'premises'.</p> <p>Broadening the definition of disability has implications for ensuring access to play opportunities for children with long-term illnesses such as cancer or MS. This has implications for hospital and other play staff.</p>

Policy/Paper/ Scheme		
Equality Act (2006)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Explanatory notes state that the Act's main provisions are to:</p> <p>Establish the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) and define its purpose and functions;</p> <p>Make unlawful discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the provision of goods, facilities and services, education, the use and disposal of premises, and the exercise of public functions;</p> <p>Enable provision to be made for discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services, education, the use and disposal of premises and the exercise of public functions;</p> <p>and</p> <p>Create a duty on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity between women and men ('the gender duty'), and prohibit sex discrimination and harassment in the exercise of public functions.</p> <p>The Act is in five parts and has four schedules.</p> <p>Part 1 including Schedules 1, 2 and 3 establishes the CEHR and sets out its duties, etc.</p> <p>Part 2 sets out provisions prohibiting discrimination on grounds of religion or belief <u>in the provision of goods, facilities and services</u>, education, the use and disposal of premises and the exercise of public functions.</p> <p>Part 3 allows provision to be made by regulations prohibiting discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation <u>in the provision of goods, facilities and services</u>, education, the use and disposal of premises and the exercise of public functions.</p> <p>Part 4 sets out provisions prohibiting sex discrimination in the exercise of public functions, and to promote equality of opportunity between women and men.</p> <p>Part 5 including Schedule 4 contains general supplementary material including repeals, Crown application, commencement and extent.</p>	<p>As per the DDA, RRA and SDA could highlight services' need to ensure access of play provision for <u>all</u> children.</p> <p>Would also be relevant to equalities in the employment of staff in the play sector.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Anti- discrimination, equality.</p>	<p>This Act is relevant to play in that the provision of services and facilities, etc. should be accessible to <u>all</u> children and young people regardless of their gender, sexual preferences, religion, impairments, etc. and that services should counter unlawful harassment and inequalities.</p> <p>The newly formed CEHR will undertake duties of the CRE and DRA in relation to racial and disability anti-discrimination work as well as promoting harmonious relations and understandings between different groups of people. (This could include children/young people and adults, therefore, where there is a lack of understanding, particularly in relation to young people's use of public space for informal recreational activity.)</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme

Planning and Funding Extended Schools: a Guide for Schools, Local Authorities and their Partner Organisations (DfES 2006)

Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>The guidance was written to support people and organisations that are involved in planning, funding and setting up extended services in schools. It follows on from Access to Services and Opportunities for All (June 2005), which outlined the DfES's vision for extended services and outlined the programme of support, including £840 million of funding.</p>	<p>Potentially enormous impact on children and young people's leisure time and the range of activities and spaces available.</p> <p>Could offer more choice for children, but could also restrict their choices depending on nature of services offered.</p> <p>Although guidance says services should complement existing ones, there is a possible impact on sustainability of existing local services (especially childcare, open access, sport and leisure facilities, other community activities such as Scouts, etc. – whether in partnership or not) – will depend on rigour of audits/knowledge of existing services and effectiveness of partnership working.</p> <p>Inclusiveness will depend on charging and whether special arrangements are made, e.g. for children from low income families.</p> <p>Themes Services for children, young people, their families and community members; partnerships with other statutory and community organisations Particular messages for schools are:</p>	<p>Stems from Every Child Matters Agenda and links to Youth Matters through the pilot Youth Opportunity Cards programme.</p> <p>References to play or (unstructured) recreational activities are very few despite the focus on providing services for children and young people (and their families) outside normal school hours.</p> <p>One case study reports that 'In secondary schools, <u>activities</u> were used as a reward for good behaviour' and there were fewer conflicts in the classroom and <u>playground</u>. (p.23) In this example, the 'adventure-based learning programme' effectively defines positive activities as a reward rather than a right and so are clearly not accessible to all.</p> <p>On childcare: 'Some schools have found that introducing charges has actually increased take-up, as they have been able to enrich their offer by using their new revenue to provide additional resources, such as new <u>play</u> materials, and extend their hours of opening.' (p.23)</p> <p>A case study: 'Franche First School provides education for children aged 3-9 from a range of social and economic backgrounds, but also offers access to a range of extended opportunities including childcare, <u>play</u> and many extra-curricular activities.' (p.28)</p> <p>Kingsdown High School is an 11 to 16 secondary school with specialist status for business and enterprise. The school has long hosted a Young Persons' Centre, which began as a <u>playgroup</u> and has developed into a hub for childcare in the area, offering daycare, out-of-hours clubs, and holiday care. (p.30)</p> <p>Re. using the delegated budget: 'a <u>play</u> scheme during school holidays is <i>not</i> eligible for funding from the delegated budget if its purpose is mainly childcare, and is therefore a community facility. A school may, however, use its delegated budget to buy a place in an educational activity within that holiday programme for a child, such as a trip to a museum.' (p.46) There is no mention of play activities as such in relation to the delegated budget so presumably these could be classed under 'childcare' and, therefore, parents would be eligible for the costs. This may also mean that there would be no subsidies for lower income families? Where schools work in partnership with external partners, the latter are not liable for inclusion in the school's charging and remission policies so could also be exempt from means-costing activities. 'Many working parents worry about their older children being alone at home for long periods of time, particularly during the holidays, and would like greater confidence about where they are than 'drop in' <u>activities</u> can provide.' (p.29). This could be detrimental to (the view and use of) Open Access sites.</p> <p>'We are also piloting the development of Youth Opportunity</p>

	<p>Attainment and personalisation, Planning and partnership working, New (government) relationship with schools, Consultation and accountability, Sustainability and charging: (Benefits to) Children and young people from low income families, the reliability of services, particularly children who have disabilities or special educational needs,</p>	<p>Cards in local authority areas this year. These cards will offer discounts for community <u>leisure</u>, sport and other services, and young people from deprived households will have their cards ‘topped up’ by the Government. Schools could offer discounts to young people who use their cards to access <u>activities</u> for which charges are normally made.’ (P.30) The fact that it is not compulsory to make discounts could mean that some young people will be excluded.</p> <p>Referring to looked after and vulnerable children, local authorities, ‘have a general duty under section 10 of the Children Act 2004 to make arrangements with other agencies that work with children (including schools), with a view to improving children’s wellbeing in relation to, amongst other matters, their education, training and <u>recreation</u>.’ (p.21) Recommends study support and activities for looked after children, e.g., but does not promote play opportunities as such.</p> <p>‘Many schools already offer a range of <u>activities</u>, holiday provision and other extended services, because they have seen at first hand the benefits that these can bring. A good range of such services should be central to every school’s improvement strategy, as we build together a school system to ensure that every child can achieve his or her full potential.’ (p.4) Emphasis is on provision of services for children’s achievement rather than enjoyment.</p> <p>‘Additional activities and services enable children to pursue wider interests, develop new skills and access any specialist help that they might need to resolve difficulties and fulfil their potential.’ (p.4) Again emphasis is on achievement (future) rather than enjoyment (current).</p> <p>p.5 reference to activities p.6 reference to study support activities (as per p.4 reference) p.6 activities – to be designed to support school improvement (as this helps raise attainment) p.7 activities – refers to staffing p.8 successful activities rely on early, thorough consultations with LAs, families and communities (but does not specifically say with children and young people here. Does mention consulting children and YP on p.16) pp.11–12 School Standards Grant (SSG) funding can be accessed for ‘catch up’ activities (e.g. literacy and numeracy) for most disadvantaged children. This does not promote opportunities for these children to choose the activities they would prefer to access if they are only subsidised to do certain types of activities. This also is likely to encourage schools to provide these kinds of catch up activities as a) they can access funding, and b) they will potentially improve their overall performance in national tests. p.17 summarises the core offer and has no mention of <u>play</u>.</p>
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Policy/Paper/ Scheme		
Guidance on Children and Young People's Plan (DfES/ECM 2005)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>This guidance 'supports the fulfilment of both the co-operation and safeguarding duties (of the Children Act 2004). The regulations... require local authorities to work with partners to produce a strategic plan describing the actions and provisions by which they will achieve the five outcomes for children and young people.'</p> <p>Section 2.3</p> <p>'There will only be a single CYPP, not a local authority plan and a separate plan for partners. The CYPP should be the single, strategic, overarching plan for all services which affect children and young people in the area, provided by the local authority and all relevant partners; the local authority should prepare the CYPP jointly with those partners. This refers not just to those under the duty to co-operate, such as local health and certain youth justice bodies, but also others like</p> <p>schools, colleges, culture, sport and <u>play and recreation organisations</u>, registered social landlords and the voluntary and community sector (VCS)'. </p> <p>Section 2.4</p> <p>Recognises that play and leisure services are the responsibility of district councils whereas CYPPs are developed at county level and that this may lead to difficulties. But relevant departments or sections of them should be involved in planning the CYPP.</p> <p>Section 2.19</p> <p>States that many other plans must link to the CYPP and these include planning documents on community safety, housing and homelessness, traffic, transport and accessibility, culture, leisure, sports, green spaces, open spaces, fire and rescue services and the wider public realm need to be taken into account insofar as they affect children and young people.</p> <p>Section 3.13 on needs assessment</p> <p>'The improvements in outcomes which will be at the heart of the CYPP, and the priorities agreed locally, must be based on an accurate and comprehensive assessment of the current position. Such a needs assessment will be carried out in partnership by all involved in the planning process, including the voluntary and community sector and private sector providers of services. It will cover data as wide ranging as educational attainment, public health inequalities, teenage conception, youth offending, substance misuse and involvement in cultural, sporting and</p>	<p>Play in streets/ Play in open spaces – more choice and local opportunities</p> <p>Integration with other services to provide better/more access</p> <p>Partnerships to enable multi-professional understandings of play provision (and its benefits).</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Partnership</p> <p>Synergy</p> <p>Integrated planning and delivery</p> <p>Needs/evidence-based services</p> <p>Consultation</p>	<p>The new duty to develop a CYPP replaces seven statutory and 12 non-statutory plans, one of which is the <u>Youth Service Plan</u>, thereby including this provision in statutory plans from September 2005.</p> <p>Plans to be linked to the CYPP include <u>play strategies</u>.</p> <p>Since the plan is not restricted to LAs and includes other partners so as to include <u>all</u> services which affect children and young people, it should include <u>play</u> and recreational services. It also includes services that impact on access to play and recreation (and other services), such as housing and transport.</p> <p>Section 2.4 emphasises the inclusion of (district or county level) play and leisure services or sections in developing the CYPP.</p> <p>Section 2.27 recommends consultations with VCS organisations including those providing play and leisure services to ensure the plan is rooted in community needs.</p> <p>Section 3.13 states that involvement in <u>play activities</u> is to be included in needs assessments, providing baselines against which the plan can be developed. It is not clear what is meant by 'involvement in play activities' but its inclusion seems positive.</p> <p>Section 3.20 involves partnership with planning for housing services and highlights the need for play spaces and safe streets. If properly enacted this would provide more opportunities for children and young people to <u>play locally and informally</u>.</p> <p>The plan could provide good opportunities to ensure both diversity and continuity of play and recreational opportunities being provided for all children</p>

<p>play activity.’</p> <p>3.20 ‘Issues which would most benefit from joint planning are those concerning housing support packages for children and young people’ these include ‘the provision of quality <u>open spaces for play and recreation, the safety of local streets and neighbourhood spaces</u>’</p>		<p>and young people from birth upwards. Could ensure that there are not gaps in provision for certain age ranges and for traditionally disadvantaged or marginalised groups of children. Plan could link play and playworkers in with a range of other services, such as extended schools, PCTs, etc. to ensure play can be accessed in many different contexts.</p> <p>The inclusion of services such as housing and transport could help to link these with play services and to bring play more into the public realm (rather than it being segregated).</p>
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Policy/Paper/ Scheme

**Neighbourhood and Street Wardens Scheme Overview (Home Office and ODPM initiative 2002)
(Information at www.renewal.net)**

Neighbourhood Wardens Scheme Implementation Plan Guidance (Home Office 2003)

Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Street wardens fulfil a similar role to neighbourhood wardens (NW). They will provide highly visible uniformed patrols in town and village centres, public areas and neighbourhoods.</p> <p>They will build on the Neighbourhood Wardens Programme. Their emphasis will be on caring for the physical appearance of the area. They will tackle environmental problems such as litter, graffiti and dog fouling. They will also help to deter anti-social behaviour; reduce the fear of crime; and foster social inclusion.</p> <p>*****</p> <p>The 'guidance is based upon the findings of the PAT 6 report on Neighbourhood Wardens. It also takes account of the Fundamental Principles developed by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) convened group, "Working the Beat", which sets out the basis on which it considers the police can engage with the development of warden-type schemes. It also draws upon the Policing and Reducing Crime Unit (PRCU) report, "Neighbourhood Warden Schemes: an overview", which supports the work of PAT 6 by providing an overview of current neighbourhood warden schemes and what is known about their effectiveness.'</p> <p>Section 4.7.8 requires checks to ensure that prospective wardens are e.g. not unsuitable persons to work with children and young people.</p> <p>Section 5.3.4 suggests that one possible performance indicator could be measurements against a baseline of the number of complaints about young people causing a nuisance.</p>	<p>Possible positive impact if wardens have good understanding and relationship with young people. Could build bridges between young people and older members of the community. Could also reduce incidences of anti-social behaviour and bullying. However, also possible negative impact if wardens are seen to be policing young people's informal recreational activities.</p> <p>Themes Crime prevention; Tackling fear of crime; Improving local environment; Reflecting local needs; Regeneration</p>	<p>Schemes are set up after collection of baseline data on a range of local problems and needs. A range of possible problems is listed, one of which is 'youth nuisance' (classified as a form of anti-social behaviour). Para 2.4.1 says that there should be genuine community engagement at an early stage of the process of setting up a NW scheme. Does not mention consultation with children and young people and mentions survey methods that could be inappropriate for consulting them anyway.</p> <p>Scheme builds in checks such as CRB and so takes into account the wardens' role in relation to children and young people.</p> <p>Nothing specific about consulting with or possible benefits to children or young people. Only mention of young people is negative in relation to anti-social behaviour and in relation to employment of wardens who have CRB checks in place.</p>

Policy/Paper/ Scheme

Sure Start Guidance 2004–2006: Overview and Local Delivery Arrangements (DfES 2003)

Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>The Sure Start framework brings together early education, childcare, health and family support. It encompasses targeted services in disadvantaged areas and universal services for all children <u>aged 0 – 16</u>, early education and out of school provision.</p> <p>Emphasises need to build on previous successes. Some changes made to management and delivery arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local authorities can develop partnership working and planning in a way that makes sense locally • transparent performance management framework giving feedback, facilitating focused support • simplified direct grant: the General Sure Start Grant • allocation of targets and funding at a local level up until 2006 • <u>capital funding for children’s centres and out of school</u> in disadvantaged areas • new elements of the programme: children’s centres, extended schools, • childcare for students, Jobcentre Plus childcare partnership managers, sustainability grant, LA out of school scheme, home childcarers, Support Childminders • funding for nursery education for three year olds routed through local authority EFS <p>Specific responsibilities for the lead body running Sure Start programmes include the promotion of child development through a range of means including the promotion of <u>‘children’s access to play, including outdoor play’</u>.</p> <p>Stresses the importance of the VCS in providing local and accessible services. Links Sure Start to other government initiatives (Appendix 2).</p> <p>On employment: Sure Start contributes specifically to the aim of reducing the number of children living in low-income households and the target to have 70% of lone parents in employment by 2010.</p> <p><u>‘Play and sport</u>: The Government aims to increase children’s opportunities to access arts, sport and play, and Sure Start activities can actively support this agenda.’ (p.23)</p>	<p>Access to early years and childcare places for children from birth to 16 and free nursery places for children aged three and four.</p> <p>Parents’ employment, training and education and career prospects.</p> <p>Themes Targeted and universal services. Reducing <u>child poverty</u> by half by 2010 Getting parents (back) into paid employment, education and training.</p>	<p>Parents can now access (part-time) free childcare places for children as young as three (was four). Means more children may be able to access opportunities to play in early years settings (although quality of play will clearly vary).</p> <p>Extended schools agenda could offer more places and opportunities for play and recreation if partnership arrangements encourage this. Potentially, though, this could lead to more children doing more desk-based and/or structured activities outside school hours.</p> <p>Sure Start management responsibilities include reference to play, including outdoor play. (p.9)</p> <p>Encourages partnership with VCS, which could be positive in terms of involvement of play sector organisations/play workers.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme Youth Matters Green Paper (2005/6) and Youth Matters Next Steps (DfES)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>For young people aged 13 to 19.</p> <p>‘The proposals aim to address four key challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – how to engage more young people in <u>positive activities</u> and empower them to shape the services they receive; – how to encourage more young people to volunteer and become involved in their communities; – how to provide better information, advice and guidance to young people to help them make informed choices about their lives; and – how to provide better and more personalised intensive support for each young person who has serious problems or gets into trouble.’ <p>Reform is based on six underpinning principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – making services more responsive to what young people and their parents want; balancing greater opportunities and support with promoting young people’s responsibilities; – making services for young people more integrated, efficient and effective; – improving outcomes for all young people, while narrowing the gap between those who do well and those who do not; involving a wide range of organisations from the voluntary, community and private sectors in order to increase choice and secure the best outcomes; and – building on the best of what is currently provided. <p>Also reports that, ‘when young people are involved in activities and are busy they are less likely to drift into trouble, cause a nuisance or commit crime.’</p> <p>There will be ‘statutory guidance for Local Authorities setting out a new set of national standards for the activities that all young people would benefit from accessing in their free time. This would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – access to two hours per week of sporting activity; 	<p>Specific age range – young people from 13 to 19 years.</p> <p>Appropriateness and choice: could have significant impact on young people’s ability to decide what activities should be available and those that they would choose to access.</p> <p>Intended to impact on all the five ECM outcomes.</p> <p>Sub-text is also to impact on levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>Potential for greater accessibility of activities for young people from low income families (through YOC top-ups).</p> <p>Potential to increase the range of places in which young people can take part in activities, although does not mention public spaces.</p> <p>Themes Positive involvement in a range of activities to promote well-being; reduce crime; improve social inclusion and future opportunities.</p>	<p>Aims to positively engage young people in a range of activities intended to benefit them in many ways, and also to empower them to be involved in the design and delivery of appropriate local services.</p> <p>Includes Youth Opportunity Card (YOC, which subsidises activity through discounts), which could improve accessibility.</p> <p>Also intended as a diversionary programme to decrease incidences of young people becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>There is, therefore, a certain conflict because the Green Paper states the YOC ‘subsidy would be withheld from young people engaging in unacceptable and anti-social behaviours and the card suspended or withdrawn’. But this could then lead to these young people having even fewer positive activities in which to engage, less support, etc. and perhaps getting into even more trouble.</p> <p>There is also a competitive element to the YOC, and a sense in which it is not a right but a privilege to access positive activities because the Green Paper also says that, ‘Top-ups could also be used to reward young people for volunteering or for making progress in improving their situation.’</p> <p>The aim to make statutory a range of minimum entitlements to various activities and to places to spend time is very positive. It is a pity that this is limited to young people and does not include children as well. Does not mention public spaces being made readily accessible for young people simply to meet and chat – appears to be places that are ‘boundaried and designated</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – access to two hours per week of other constructive activities in clubs, youth groups or classes; – opportunities to contribute to their communities through volunteering; – a wide range of other recreational, cultural, sporting and enriching experiences; and – a range of safe and enjoyable places in which to spend time. 		<p>for youth activity purposes – e.g. sporting venues.</p> <p>This policy does seem to focus both on the <u>present</u>, in terms of young people’s engagement and enjoyment of activities as well as their futures. The activities appear to be an end in themselves as well as a means to an end.</p>
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Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Living Places – Cleaner, Safer, Greener Programme (OPDM lead 2002)		
Description	Impact	Comments/ relevance to play
<p>PM made speech at Groundwork Trust in 2001 and outlined importance of 'liveability' in towns and cities. In 2004, the HO and ODPM (as was) funding was merged into the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund, worth at least £660m over three years with specific outcome to make cleaner, safer, greener public spaces.</p> <p>This programme 'unites 8 government departments...through the Inter-departmental Ministerial Group, in action to make measurable improvements in local liveability and a noticeable difference in quality of life in every community by 2008.' DCLG is leading and coordinating delivery of the programme's six priorities, which are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <u>create attractive and welcoming parks, play areas and public spaces</u> – improve the physical fabric and infrastructure of places – make places cleaner and maintain them better – make places safer and tackle anti-social behaviour – engage and empower local people and communities – provide appropriate provision for children and young people, and tackle inequalities. <p>These liveability issues affect people most of all in the following areas: cities, towns and local centres; streets and neighbourhoods; parks and play areas.</p> <p>Targeted improvements to the local environment, parks and public spaces are provided through a number of programmes including sponsorship of Groundwork and launch of CAFE Space in May 2003.</p> <p>Delivery is focused in most deprived areas. This is to be achieved by DCLG through PSA8 (Liveability) and is supported by other 2004 Spending Review PSAs (Public Service Agreements) within DCLG (e.g. PSA1 tackling disadvantage), PSA3 Fire reduction, PSA4 (local govt performance) and PSA5 (balancing housing supply and need) and within other depts: Home Office PSA1 (crime reduction) and PSA6 (increasing community participation); DCMS PSA3 (increasing take up of cultural and sporting opportunities by adults and young people); DoH (PSA4 halting the rise in obesity among children and population as a whole); Defra PSA1 (promoting sustainable development).</p>	<p>Children and young people's access to play opportunities; Quality of play opportunities; Safety; Appropriateness/range of play opportunities; Social inclusion for play; Reduced inequalities for play.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Cleanliness Safety Attractiveness Inclusion Access Empowerment Quality of life Regeneration</p>	<p>This is very relevant to play as it specifically mentions play in its six priorities.</p> <p>It also intends to reduce some of the barriers to play such as access, quality, safety, appropriateness of provision.</p> <p>p.13 of the report says, 'high quality green spaces go a long way to encouraging people to pursue healthier lifestyles through exercise such as walking, cycling and <u>active children's play.</u>'</p> <p>p.13–16 of the report identifies committed leadership, strong partnerships, active community involvement, the desire for quality and innovation and better communication and sharing of ideas as key components to driving forward improvements to parks, play areas and pedestrian facilities etc. (p.13) Also recognising and responding to changing communities.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme

DCLG Public Service Agreement Targets

(Available at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1503442>)

Description	Impact	Comments/ relevance to play
<p>PSA1 – tackle social exclusion, deliver neighbourhood renewal, narrow gap in health, education, crime, worklessness, housing and liveability outcomes between the most deprived areas and the rest of England.</p> <p>PSA2 – Sustainable improvements to economic performance in all English regions.</p> <p>PSA3 – Reduce fire-related deaths.</p> <p>PSA4 – Improve effectiveness and efficiency of local government in leading and delivering services to all communities.</p> <p>PSA5 – Achieve better balance between housing availability and demand while protecting countryside and sustainability of towns and cities.</p> <p>PSA6 – Planning system to deliver sustainable development outcomes, including through achievement of best value standards.</p> <p>PSA7 – Bring all social housing into a decent condition and make decent homes for vulnerable families in private sector.</p> <p>PSA8 – Lead delivery of cleaner, safer, greener public spaces.</p> <p>PSA9 – Reduce race inequalities and build community cohesion.</p> <p>PSA10 – Bring about measurable improvements (with other departments) in gender equality.</p>	<p>Inequalities Economy Death from fire Local government performance Housing Sustainable development Public spaces/quality of life</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Equality Prosperity Quality of life Safety Effectiveness of local government Community cohesion</p>	<p>PSA8 is directly relevant to play because it is about open spaces (see below for detailed description) and also about local environments in which children will be playing.</p> <p>PSA5 also relevant because about protecting countryside.</p> <p>PSA7 relevant because about standard of housing.</p> <p>PSA4 relevant because about delivery of services locally.</p> <p>Others also have relevance to greater or lesser extent.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme

DCLG SR04 PSA Target 8 Liveability

(Including its performance measures)

Available at www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1123014

Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>This target covers the following priorities in England: Creating attractive and welcoming parks, play areas and public spaces; Improving the physical fabric and infrastructure of streetscapes; Making places cleaner and maintaining them better; Improving people's perception of the quality of their local environment</p> <p>Performance measures are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Reduce percentage of LAs with unacceptable levels of litter and detritus (measured through BV199)ii. Reduce number of abandoned vehicles (measured by difference from baseline in 2002–3)iii. Increase percentage of LAs with at least one park or space that meets Green Flag standardiv. Increase percentage of LAs who receive a Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for the environment block to receive a score of two or betterv. Reduce percentage of households living in poor quality environments (measured by English House Condition Survey – assessing vacant sites, litter and rubbish, neglected buildings, graffiti, gardens and landscaping, levels of traffic and nuisance from street parking (could be relevant)vi. Increase percentage of residents satisfied with local parks and open spaces (measured with BV119e satisfaction survey)vii. Increase percentage of households satisfied with quality of places where they live (measured through Survey of English Housing). (Could be relevant if survey asks about play facilities.)	<p>Availability of places and spaces for play; Quality of these spaces; Perceptions of these places</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Quality and safety of public spaces and local environments and people's enjoyment of them.</p>	<p>Relevant to the attractiveness, safety and cleanliness of public environments in which children play.</p> <p>Possible discrepancy between six aims of Cleaner, Safer, Greener and what PSA8 aims to do – latter is not as wide-ranging and there may be some areas that are not being measured? Unless they are covered by other PSAs in other departments? Also unsure that the performance indicators for PSA8 will ensure enough, good-quality, safe (but challenging – i.e. appropriate) spaces for play/recreation.</p> <p>In the performance measures there is no specific measure for play as such. There are measures that relate to play but, for example, the survey of English Housing would ask about a range of factors. If people were mostly satisfied but there was still a shortage of play spaces, this might not cause the overall 'score' to be one of dissatisfaction. So the play element might not show up?</p> <p>Note: DCLG needs to be successful in three of indicators i–v and one of either vi or vii for the PSA to be deemed to have been met. So it could be met without, for example, having the Green Flag parks or households satisfied with quality of places they live.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Sustainable communities: building for the future (ODPM 2003)		
Description	Impact	Comments/ relevance to play
<p>This is an action programme that sets out the policies, resources and partnerships needed to ‘tackle the challenges of a rapidly changing population, the needs of the economy, serious housing shortages in London and the South East and the impact of housing abandonment...’ (p.3)</p> <p>Key areas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sustainable communities (includes reference to safe and healthy local environments with well-designed public and green space; good quality local public services, including education and training opportunities, health care and community facilities, especially for leisure; p.5); £201m for local environment /liveability – Housing supply: Planning Bill to streamline planning system ‘protect countryside’; ‘all development...to respect the principles of sustainable development and address potential impacts on the environment...’ p.33 – New growth areas – Decent homes: Liveability Fund £89m over three years to support LA-led projects to improve parks and public spaces; New Best Value and Comprehensive Performance Assessment indicators to include liveability issues In addition to £201m Liveability funding, £50m for Neighbourhood Warden Schemes Improve PPG to provide clearer framework for provision, protection and enhancement of open spaces and playing fields. £41m over three years to support CABI in driving up design standards including skills; launch CABI Space in April 03. Develop national quality standards and measurable targets for urban parks and green spaces and expand Green Flag Partnership (pp.20–21); £40m over three years to Groundwork and £30m through Groundwork for Community Enablers for local groups that ‘wish to take action to improve their local spaces and play areas’. Encourage LAs to develop Home zones as a model for residential streets. p.21 Continue to support innovative new community-based schemes – such as the ‘Idea Stores’ – that offer community leisure services, ‘healthy living’ centres, community sports and local leisure centres; (re crime and ASB) ‘pursue plans for neighbourhood and street wardens’. p.22 – Countryside and local environment: ‘we will promote more and better publicly accessible green space in and around our communities, for example through the creation of new country parks and networks of green spaces within towns and cities.’ 	<p>Housing, local environment, local authority powers, planning, open and green spaces, new growth areas, community safety</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Regeneration</p> <p>Growth</p> <p>Sustainability</p> <p>Environmental protection</p> <p>‘Liveability’</p> <p>More powers to LAs</p> <p>Skilled planning and design workforce</p>	<p>Many references to open spaces, improved urban areas;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Children: only two references (in relation to homeless families and housing) – Parks: referred to in relation to Green Flag Standards, Liveability Fund, CABI space, protection of countryside and country parks, support for local authority led projects to improve parks – Play: improved play areas (p.17), PPG 17 and playing fields (p.22), Groundwork and its work including play area improvements (p.23) – Recreation: only referred to on p.55 about developments in the Ebbsfleet growth area.

Policy/Paper/ Scheme		
Sustainable Communities: Homes for All (ODPM 2005)		
From the recommendations of the Barker review (2004, HMSO)		
Available at www.communities.gov.uk/pub/488/SustainableCommunitiesHomesforAll_id1500488.pdf		
Description	Impact	Comments/ relevance to play
<p>This is the second of two five-year plans from the ODPM (now DCLG), its 'sister plan' being Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity. The document describes the next phase in delivering the Sustainable Communities Plan. Its focus is on (affordable) home-buying and tackling homelessness.</p> <p>The plan has various aims, which include (p.7) to:</p> <p>'Create sustainable, mixed communities in both rural and urban areas, with the jobs, services and infrastructures they need to thrive' and to</p> <p>'Protect and enhance the environment, our historic towns and cities and the countryside'.</p> <p>ODPM will invest £1.1 million in homes and infrastructure over three years with contributions from other departments. To create new communities in London and the South East. 'We will invest in new schools, hospitals, jobs and transport' (p.8).</p> <p>New Green Belt Direction being introduced to protect green belt – requires referral to Secretary of State for some development plans.</p> <p>(p.65) 'We will continue to encourage local authorities to designate green spaces...and protect them'.</p>	<p>Possibility for more green spaces/protection of existing green belt to reverse earlier decline.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>(Building homes)</p> <p>Sustainability</p> <p>Integration</p> <p>Fairness</p> <p>Accessibility of housing and housing market</p>	<p>This is not really relevant except in its references to protecting environments, and to ensuring families with children are no longer housed in B&B accommodation.</p> <p>No mention of play or recreation even with reference to developing new services (mentions schools) – refers readers to 'sister plan' re home environments.</p> <p>Attached to this plan is a Code for Sustainable Building (2005); it refers to environmentally friendly, sustainable building practices but is (a) not statutory, and (b) makes no mention of providing open spaces.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Home Zones: Challenging the Future of our Streets (DfT 2005)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Home zones aim to extend the benefits of slow traffic speeds within residential areas and give greater priority to non-motorised users.</p> <p>They use design to limit vehicles to very low speeds, well below 20mph. The aim is to improve the quality of life in residential roads by making them places for people, instead of just being thoroughfares for vehicles. The intention is to encourage people to use streets in different ways.</p> <p>The drive for this type of approach came from organisations (such as the Children's Play Council and residents' groups) who were concerned that children in particular were denied the opportunity to play safely around their houses where they could be easily observed and supervised.</p> <p>One of the key objectives of home zones is to increase the opportunity for children to play in the streets. Formal and informal play spaces have been encouraged.</p> <p>Formal play spaces have been developed as segregated areas with play equipment sited where they are well overlooked and cater for a range of ages. Has Plymouth as case study.</p>	<p>Example cited of area in Plymouth, which has seen improvements to local community.</p> <p>Many examples of increased play opportunities in home zones case studies cited in the document. Play is both formal and informal.</p> <p>Children's involvement in planning is crucial to developing shared understandings of needs of different age groups.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Safety</p> <p>Community</p> <p>Increasing play opportunities</p> <p>Sharing spaces</p>	<p>Includes <u>more than 40 references to play</u>.</p> <p>One of the key objectives of home zones is to <u>increase the opportunity for children to play in the streets. Formal and informal play spaces have been encouraged.</u></p> <p>Everyone has a right to live in a decent neighbourhood, a place <u>where children can play safely</u>, and where there is a sense of community. (p.4)</p> <p>On identifying local concerns: Home zones are not primarily safety improvement schemes, but the real or perceived road and personal safety concerns of residents, particularly with respect to <u>children and outdoor play</u>, are important. (.p.7)</p> <p>Some residents were concerned about the <u>lack of children's play facilities and inadequate facilities for young people</u>. However, once the consultation process was underway, <u>residents usually opted not to provide formal play facilities</u> or facilities for young people. (p.14)</p> <p>Key objectives for those involved in the Challenge projects included <u>increasing play</u> and other activities (in their streets). (p.30)</p> <p>Section specifically on 'Accommodating Play'. How/whether to include formal and informal play areas was a contentious issue. Need to be sensitively sited.</p> <p>Section on parking states that, 'Even without formal play spaces; the creation of a less formal street can encourage play and outdoor activities where it would otherwise have been unacceptable.' (p.71)</p> <p>Section on wider impacts of home zones states, 'The aim of home zones is to improve the quality of life in residential communities by developing streets that are shared equally between vehicles and people and encouraging different uses of the streets, especially play'. (p.81)</p> <p>Section on children states, 'Children can be seen as key to the success of home zones.'</p> <p>One of the main objectives is to <u>provide safe play opportunities</u> in the street. However, concerns about children playing in the street can cause tensions within a community. It is therefore <u>crucial that they are involved</u> in the whole process.</p> <p>Informal play is often the answer and just providing a safe space within the street may be all that is needed. Children will use their imaginations to transform features of the environment. (p.86)</p> <p>At the Peasedown St John scheme, the home zone project led to funding for <u>play rangers to help develop children's play activities</u>. (p.87)</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme Involving Children and Young People (Action plan) (DfT 2003–2004) Young people and Transport: Understanding their Needs and Requirements (DfT September 2006)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Initial consultation programme exploring young people's (11 to 19) transport needs.</p> <p>The 2006 document reports the findings of the document and focuses upon: travel patterns, choice, use of public transport, cycling and walking, car use, parental concerns and transport providers.</p> <p>Accessibility problems for those who took part in the focus groups were mainly in respect of leisure related travel. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of public transport to the youth clubs young people wanted to attend • the cost of public transport in getting to other cities/towns for leisure or shopping • the inability to access out-of-town leisure activities independently of parents, as most are only accessible by car • late night travel back from parties/clubs could be difficult, when public transport is not available, parents may be unwilling to arrange lifts and taxis are too expensive. 	<p>As report is just out – it makes a number of suggestions about further research and consultation, mainly based on themes mentioned.</p> <p>One impact is that there is recognition of importance of acknowledging the voices of young people in transport planning.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Safety</p> <p>Use of Community</p>	<p>Consultation strategies adopted not most appropriate for engaging with young people. (They used questionnaires and large focus groups.)</p> <p>Acknowledges importance of young people's voices and choices in terms of transport to access leisure activities.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme

Child Pedestrian Exposure and Accidents – Further Analyses of Data from a European Comparative Study (Road Safety Research Report No.56) (DfT September 2005)

Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Although Great Britain's overall road safety record is very good in comparison with other countries, throughout the 1990s the accident rate for child pedestrians was higher than average for the European Union (EU) countries. The report explores the reasons for these differences through a comparative study of child pedestrian accidents and exposure to risk in Great Britain, France and the Netherlands. The study was commissioned in 1997 and completed in 1999.</p> <p>The aim of the research was to understand the differences in exposure and accident rates of 5- to 15-year-olds within similar road environments and, by identifying the factors that might explain higher accident rates in Great Britain, to assess the implications for policy.</p> <p>The relevant section on playing/hanging about on the streets explored the less specific aspects of 'playing' or 'hanging about' in the road environment – which does not involve any specific journey and may include more or less walking as opposed to staying in one place, but it involves the child or young person's presence close to roads and the nature of the play itself may reduce a child or young person's awareness of traffic dangers, so it is very pertinent to the consideration of child pedestrian safety.</p>	<p>Could be useful in terms of the way that LAs are made aware of the way that children and young people use everyday community spaces (such as pavements and roads) as play areas.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Safety</p> <p>Use of Community Spaces</p> <p>Definition of 'play' and 'hanging about'</p>	<p>Interesting comparative data between UK, Netherlands and France.</p> <p>Have mentioned themes – play and hanging about – but is interesting that DfT acknowledge hanging about' as a form of play.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Getting Serious About Play: a Review of Children's Play (DCMS 2004)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Report presents findings of government sponsored review of children's play. Play review launched in 2002 following £200million funding (through New Opportunities Fund) allocated for children's play.</p> <p>Aim to improve play opportunities for children and young people age 0 to 16.</p> <p>Report identifies facilities for play as one of the most important aspects to address.</p> <p>Define common elements of successful play opportunities – VITAL</p> <p>Value-based</p> <p>In the right place</p> <p>Top quality</p> <p>Appropriate</p> <p>Long-term</p>	<p>Review confirmed need for more strategic approach – a stronger focus on play at national and local level.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Play in its own right</p> <p>Risk as an element of play</p> <p>Safety</p> <p>Access/ facilities</p>	<p>Define play:</p> <p>Different people have different definitions of play. From an early age, play is important to a child's development and learning. It isn't just physical. It can shape cognitive, imaginative, creative, emotional and social aspects of development. It is the main way most children express their impulse to explore, experiment and understand. Children of all ages play. Some may need support to get the best out of play.</p> <p>Whilst few young people would describe what they do as play, they need the time, space and freedom associated with play for younger age groups. For the purposes of the review, play meant what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas, in their own way and for their own reasons.</p> <p>Define play provision:</p> <p>Play provision can be a space, some facilities or equipment or a set of activities intended to give children the opportunity to play as defined in paragraph 6 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, guidance or supervision. The children and young people may themselves choose play involving certain rules.</p>

Policy/Paper/ Scheme Time for Play Encouraging Greater Play Opportunities for Children and Young People (DCMS 2006)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>The focus of this document is on government action to encourage the promotion of greater play opportunities for children and young people. It concentrates on the importance of play, as well as some of the key issues relating to it.</p> <p>Adopts definitions described in Getting Serious about Play (2004).</p>		

Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Respect Action Plan (Home Office 2006)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Cross-departmental strategy to deliver Respect programme (specifically relating to community respect, behaviour and citizenship) in key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • constructive and purposeful activities for children and young people (expansion of YOF, pilot Youth Opportunity Cards, Sports Champions mentoring programme, national youth voluntary service) • improving behaviour and attendance in schools • supporting families And developing parenting services (National Parenting Academy) • strengthening communities (face the public briefing sessions) • effective enforcement and community justice. <p>Resources to be provided through £155m Safer Stronger Communities Fund, £45m additional funds for the Youth Justice Board, £140m for Single Non-Emergency Number, £80m for additional resources.</p>	<p>Early days – although measures are far reaching.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Values Behaviour Community</p>	<p>Target is families, children and young people. Chapter 2 specifically focuses upon activities for children and young people – although this is in terms of community activities such as volunteering. Sporting activities are promoted, but there is no mention of play or leisure activities.</p> <p>Activities are considered in terms of their potential outcomes for the community.</p> <p>There is the possibility that play could be interpreted as an activity which contributes to community respect.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Choosing Activity: a Physical Activity Action Plan (DH 2005)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Document sets out government's plans to encourage and coordinate the action of a range of departments and organisations to promote increased physical activity across England. It provides a summary of how the commitments presented in White Paper Choosing Health: Making Healthier Choices Easier will be delivered.</p> <p>Outlines key target areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children and young people • active communities • active healthcare system • activity in the workplace • activity at local, regional and national level <p>Aim of document to promote physical activity, in accordance with evidence and recommendations set out in the Chief Medical Officer's report At Least Five a Week.</p> <p>Chapter 3 is significant as it looks at children and young people.</p> <p>'Children and young people need to experience a wide range of formal and informal activities both in and out of school from walking to school, to community dance initiatives and active free play in well-maintained open spaces.' (Point 4, p.13)</p> <p>'We will need to ensure that children in children's centres through to young people in further and higher education are encouraged to build activity into their daily lives through play, Physical Education, sport and through increased walking and cycling opportunities.' (Point 7, p.14)</p> <p>'Recent findings suggest that outdoor play makes a major contribution to children's overall level of physical activity, including playing in the street.' (Point 18, p.15)</p>	<p>Early to say – but potentially significant impact.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Physical activity</p> <p>Health</p>	<p>Recognising role of play as important aspect in the lives of children and young people.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Every Child Matters Green Paper (DfES 2003)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Document sets out government aim to ‘ensure that every child has the chance to fulfil their potential by reducing levels of educational failure, ill health, substance misuse, teenage pregnancy, abuse and neglect, crime, and anti-social behaviour among children and young people.’</p> <p>Measures to be addressed through five key outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being Healthy • Staying Safe • Enjoying and Achieving • Making a Positive Contribution • Economic Well-being. <p>There is little reference specifically to play or recreation.</p> <p>– Children’s centres will signpost families to other services and facilities, for example, <u>local play spaces</u>, childcare for older children and children’s information services. (p.31)</p> <p>– Reference in case study example to a <u>playworker</u> being part of a behaviour and education support programme team. (p.66)</p> <p>– Estimates of current FTE numbers of people working with children and young people include:</p> <p>Youth work: 7,000 youth workers <u>Play</u>: 30,000 play workers. (p.89)</p> <p>– On building strong and vibrant communities the Green Paper reports that, ‘A consistent theme of consultations with children and young people is the importance of having communities where there is “somewhere safe to go and something to do”. This not only provides <u>recreational activity</u> for children and young people, but helps build the fabric of communities and increases young people’s skills, confidence and self-esteem.’ (p.37)</p> <p>Case study example of multi-agency project that includes the opportunity for optional <u>recreational activity</u>. (p.66)</p>	<p>Policy has broad and far-reaching implications and impact. However, it is difficult to identify specific impact in relation to play.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Promoting opportunities and life chances</p> <p>Improving social inclusion</p> <p>Protecting children’s well-being</p>	<p>Focus of policy appears to be related to tackling ‘problem’ children and criticisms could be made that it does not tackle deeper rooted social problems. In terms of incorporating play through ECM, focus needs to be made on interpretations of well-being and enjoyment as significant parts of childhood development – and the way that play can contribute to emotional well-being and, consequently, good citizenship.</p>

Policy/Paper/ Scheme		
Every Child Matters Change for Children in Schools (DfES 2004)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Document outlines the ways in which ECM will be incorporated in schools. Suggests principle of personalisation and the work schools are already doing to raise educational standards by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● encouraging schools to offer a range of extended services that help pupils engage and achieve, and building stronger relationships with parents and the wider community ● supporting closer working between universal services like schools and specialist services so that children with additional needs can be identified earlier and supported effectively. <p>Play mentioned only briefly in terms of recreation.</p>		

Policy/Paper/Scheme Every Child Matters Joint Area Reviews of Children's Services (Ofsted/DfES 2005)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Children Act 2004 makes requirement for Joint Area Reviews between 2005 and 2008.</p> <p>Set up to assess how five outcomes in ECM are being addressed.</p> <p>Sets out key judgements to be used in assessments.</p> <p>Play is specifically referred to in Annex A, Outcomes and key judgements, under Enjoy and Achieve:</p> <p>'All children and young people can access a range of recreational activities, including play and voluntary learning provision.'</p>		<p>Mention of play – but still not addressing role that play has in child's life – and as an aspect of well-being.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (DfES 2004)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Summarises educational progress in last 60 years and outlines plans for changes to system for children's services in coming years.</p> <p>'Five key principles of reform will underpin our drive for a step change in children's services, education and training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater personalisation and choice, with the wishes and needs of children, parents and learners centre-stage. • Opening up services to new and different providers and ways of delivering services. • Freedom and independence for frontline headteachers, governors and managers with clear simple accountabilities and more secure streamlined funding arrangements. • A major commitment to staff development with high-quality support and training to improve assessment, care and teaching. • Partnerships with parents, employers, volunteers and voluntary organisations to maximise the life chances of children, young people and adults.' 	<p>All children, young people and their families and communities. The impact of changes to education and other services will be far-reaching. Could provide many positive opportunities for play and recreation but the emphasis appears to be on structured activities and so could be detrimental to free play opportunities if these are not promoted alongside others.</p> <p>Themes Access Raising standards Partnerships Choice Tailoring delivery of services to meet the needs of children and learners</p>	<p>Very few references to play and those that exist relate only to the youngest children. Although there are several references to positive activities for 14- to 19 year-olds, these appear to be structured activities. There is little mention of any recreational activities for primary school age children. The words recreation and leisure do not feature at all.</p> <p>Re early years – Children's centres will provide information, e.g. about local <u>play</u> facilities. Children learn through <u>play and exploration</u> and making a distinction between education and childcare is unhelpful. Re the Foundation Stage (for children aged three to five) '<u>teaching methods which use play</u> to prepare children for later learning'.</p> <p>Re primary schools: Tackling obesity through healthy schools using sport, PE and <u>playground activities</u> (not specified). Wraparound childcare provided through schools will offer '<u>enrichment activities</u> and study support'. Primary pupils will need to have a rich curriculum that includes a, '<u>wide range of in- and out-of school activities</u> like dance, sport and drama, and the chance to study music and a foreign language.'</p> <p>Extended services in primary schools should offer, 'A wide range of <u>study support activities</u> – including sports clubs, societies, clubs, visits and events.'</p> <p>Offer to 14- to 19-year-olds includes: A broad and rich curriculum with more choice and a wider set of out-of-hours opportunities – including much higher levels of sporting activity, as well as <u>clubs ,societies and residential activities</u> High-quality advice and guidance to help young people make good decisions, and <u>a wide range of positive activities</u> for young people outside school or college The integrated youth offer will aim to promote personal development and active citizenship and the offer will include: <u>Access to exciting and enjoyable activities</u> in and out of school or college that enhance young people's personal, social and educational development and reflect what they want to do – <u>including sport, outdoor activities and residential opportunities</u>... The chance for young people to have a say in developing local support and activities. A wide range of positive activities for young people will be available in every area, integrated with excellent advice, guidance and support The long-term aim is that by 2008 'Every young person (will be) engaged in <u>positive activities</u> outside school and college.'</p> <p>Looked after children: 'We want to see more personalized support <u>and better access to activities</u> and opportunities for looked after children.'</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme

Early Years Foundation Stage Direction of Travel Paper (Sure Start/DfES 2006)

Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>EYFS will begin to be delivered in settings from September 2008 onwards.</p> <p>Implementation will be phased and flexible. Practitioners will receive appropriate training and CPD. New statutory framework for children from birth to five will be based on a combination of the existing Birth to Three Matters Framework and the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage. The EYFS will be relevant to children from birth to five years.</p>	<p>Children from birth to five in childcare settings.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Personalised development and learning.</p> <p>Planned activities based on observations of children's interests and progress.</p>	<p>Contains 23 references to play.</p> <p>The most effective approach, and one which will be at the core of EYFS, is both 'teaching' and providing <u>freely chosen yet potentially instructive play activities.</u> (p.4)</p> <p><u>Well-planned play</u> will continue to be central to children's development and learning, ensuring that learning is both <u>challenging and fun.</u> (p.6)</p> <p>Practitioners should plan a <u>wide range of play opportunities for children to learn both indoors and outdoors,</u> based on what children already know about and can do. Planning should recognise individual children's different interests, needs and levels of support. (p.6)</p> <p>Re assessment:</p> <p>Assessment arrangements 'will focus on practitioners assessing children's needs by observing their play. (p.3)</p> <p>'We want to ensure that all practitioners are trained and able to plan for the development of children in their care in the most effective manner, whilst ensuring that the child's experience is fun and feels like play.' (p.7)</p> <p>The <u>activities should be based on learning through play</u> and be appropriate to the age and stage of development of each child in the setting. (p.9)</p> <p>Remainder of references to play largely in case study examples provided on children's learning and development, but also refers to play promoted in Birth to Three Matters and to the Foundation Stage which is '<u>delivered through planned and spontaneous play activities</u> to help ensure all children learn with enjoyment and challenge' on which the new EYFS will be based.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme

National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services

Comprising a series of documents:

1. **Core Standards (DH 2004)**
2. **Children and Young People who are ill (DH 2004)**
3. **Getting the Right Start: National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Part 1. Standard for Hospital Services (DH 2004)**
4. **Disabled Children and Young People and Those With Complex Health Needs (DH 2004)**
5. **The Mental Health and Psychological Wellbeing of Children and Young People (DH 2004)**

Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
Core Standards (DH 2004)		
<p>In total there are 11 Standards. The National Service Framework (NSF) sets out standards for health and social care services working with children and young people, and looks at the interface between those services and others, in particular education. It covers children from pre-birth to their nineteenth birthday. The NSF also stretches back before birth to include maternity services. It also reaches across the transition into adult life and adult services.</p> <p>1. This is the core document of the NSF and contains the first five Standards. At the heart of this NSF is a fundamental change in thinking about children and young people's health. It advocates a shift with services being designed and delivered around the needs of the child or young person. Services are child-centered and look at the whole child – not just the illness or the problem, but rather the best way to pick up any problems early, take preventive action and ensure children and young people have the best possible chance to realise their full potential. (p.4)</p> <p>The first five standards are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting Health and Well-being, Identifying Needs and Intervening Early • Supporting Parenting • Child, Young Person and Family-Centered Services • Growing Up into Adulthood <p>Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children and Young People.</p>	<p>Impact All children and young people in terms of health promotion and access to a range of services, whether universal, targeted or specialist, and including leisure, play and recreational activities. PCTs and LAs to have responsibility.</p> <p>Themes: Child protection Health and welfare promotion Early intervention/prev ention Holistic approaches to service delivery Child-centred services Seamless services Inclusion Participation</p>	<p>1. Under section on Health Promotion (Standard 1) the document says, 'Local authorities have a key role in providing <u>safe and accessible outdoor play spaces and other recreational facilities.</u>' (p.56)</p> <p>Primary Care Trusts and local authorities ensure that local plans and services provide children and young people with a <u>range of recreational facilities</u> and opportunities to build physical activity into their daily lives (e.g. play schemes, "school travel plans"). These may need to be adapted for those in rural communities. Children and young people are involved in planning local activities and amenities. (p.58)</p> <p>Ensure as far as possible that accommodation allocated by local authorities to families with children is not damp or cold...<u>has adequate space for play and privacy</u>, and at least one working smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector, where appropriate (p.61).</p> <p>Under section on informing and educating parents (Standard 2): document states, 'the importance of creating <u>play opportunities for learning;</u>' (p.71)</p> <p>Under section on gaining consent (Standard 3) children and young people are offered choices wherever possible, for example, in the location of care or treatment, treatment options or the gender of the professional that they see. <u>Play techniques</u> can help children understand the options and exercise choice. (p.94)</p> <p>Under health promotion for young people (Standard 4), local authorities must reduce injuries to, and deaths of, children and young people through local initiatives such as action to reduce drowning, and traffic calming and <u>careful siting of public play areas.</u> (p.132)</p> <p>Under framework for effective intervention (Appendix 1) it says that children and young people should have <u>universal access to leisure services</u> and that there should be <u>specialist play therapy services.</u> (p.174)</p>

Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
Children and Young People who are ill (DH 2004)		
<p>Standard 6: Children and young people who are ill. This standard addresses the requirements of children, young people and their families when they have an acute illness or injury and also children and young people who have (or are at risk of) a long-term condition which is not disabling.</p>	As above	<p>2. (Standard 6) Only two references to play. On pain management: Where procedures are planned and pain can be predicted, <u>children are prepared through play and education</u>, and plans are made for pain relief for use during the procedure.</p> <p>Children are helped to manage pain through <u>the use of psychological therapies, including play, distraction, coping skills and cognitive-behavioural approaches.</u> (p.35)</p>
Getting the Right Start: National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Part 1. Standard for Hospital Services (DH 2004)		
<p>Standard 7: The standards included in this document cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design and delivery of hospital services around the needs of children and their families. • The safety of children while they are in hospital. • The quality of services for children in hospital. • The suitability of hospital settings for the care children receive. 	As above	<p>Standard 7. This document devotes a discrete section to play and recreation and makes several other references to play.</p> <p>The section on play and recreation states, '<u>Children visiting or staying in hospital have a basic need for play and recreation that should be met routinely</u> in all hospital departments providing a service to children. This applies equally to the <u>siblings</u> of patients, and so is also a consideration for neonatal units. <u>Play</u> may also be used for therapeutic purposes, as part of the child's care plan, and as a way of helping the child to: assimilate new information; adjust to and gain control over a potentially frightening environment; and prepare to cope with procedures and interventions. There is evidence that <u>play hastens recovery</u>, as well as reducing the need for interventions to be delivered under general anaesthesia. It has been recommended that all children staying in hospital have <u>daily access to a play specialist</u>. The use of <u>play techniques should be encouraged across the multidisciplinary team</u> caring for children, including in A&E, with play specialists taking a lead in modelling techniques that other staff can then adopt. The team should be able to offer a variety of <u>play interventions</u> to support the child at each stage in his or her journey through the hospital system (guidelines are available from the National Association of Hospital Play Staff (pp.19–20).</p> <p>Also, the section on sharing information with children recommends, 'Where admission to hospital is planned, children should be prepared through <u>pre-admission play and information.</u>' (p.21)</p> <p>On giving children choices, '<u>Play techniques can help children and young people understand the options and exercise choice.</u>' (p.22)</p> <p>On developing child-centered hospital departments, hospitals should 'with local authorities, where appropriate, review the availability of, and access to social services; to <u>age-appropriate play equipment and staffing,</u></p>

		<p>and the provision of education for children in hospital.'</p> <p>On quality and safety, referring to pain management recommends use of <u>play</u>. (p.31)</p> <p>On day surgery, recommends that <u>play specialists</u> be available. (p.33)</p> <p>Facilities should also be available for more <u>active play, if the child wishes</u>, and their condition allows. (p.41)</p> <p>All departments that provide a service to children and young people, including A&E departments, all imaging facilities, outpatient clinics, and other daycare facilities, should ensure that there are appropriately equipped, baby and child-friendly treatment or imaging rooms; and that waiting areas <u>have suitable play and recreational equipment</u>.</p> <p><u>Disabled children should be able to access play and recreation facilities</u> with toys and equipment suitable to their age and individual needs. (p.41)</p>
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
Disabled Children and Young People and Those With Complex Health Needs (DH 2004)		
<p>Standard 8: This standard relates to disabled children and young people and/or those with complex health needs, including children and young people with learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders, sensory impairments, physical impairments and emotional/ behavioural disorders.</p>	As above	<p>4. Standard 8 states:</p> <p>Local authorities, primary care trusts and NHS trusts ensure that there is a multi-agency strategy in place to improve the provision of childcare services that can be used by families with disabled children. The strategy includes a range of things and those relevant to play are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – development of accessible play and leisure services – ensuring childcare provision complies with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (p.12) <p>On Access to Services</p> <p>Disabled children often use specialist services that are not provided in the communities in which they live, often resulting in them <u>not having opportunities for play and socialisation with non-disabled children</u>. (p.13)</p> <p>On Access to Housing, Equipment and Assistive Technology</p> <p>These factors support optimal development and help children to enjoy childhood activities such as play. (p.19)</p> <p>Recommends that PCTs and LAs together should be 'using the Government guidance <u>Developing Accessible Play Spaces</u> to make parks and other open spaces accessible for families with disabled children; Making <u>holiday play schemes</u>, other holiday activities and after-school clubs accessible to all children, and</p> <p>Local <u>transport being accessible</u> and flexible so that <u>disabled children can attend the events and services they wish to go to</u>, and <u>Youth services</u></p>

		<p>provision is inclusive of disabled children and young people; access strategies ensure that services are fully accessible to them.' (p.21)</p> <p>Recommends use of a range of interventions <u>including play therapy</u>. (p.25)</p> <p>States that, 'Local Authorities, Primary Care Trusts and NHS Trusts ensure that: Families are offered a range of appropriate family support services, through multi-agency packages of care, (including domiciliary care, community nursing and other health support, <u>play, leisure, childcare</u> and skills training.' (p.28)</p>
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
The Mental Health and Psychological Wellbeing of Children and Young People (DH 2004)		
<p>Standard 9 This Standard addresses the mental health needs of children and young people and should be read in conjunction with Standards 1–5. Standards 1, 2 and 4 describe further mental health promotion interventions for children, young people and their families. Standards 6 and 7 describe the additional mental health needs of children and young people who are ill or who are in hospital.</p> <p>Standard 10 Medicines for children and young people</p> <p>Standard 11 Maternity services</p>	As above	<p>Standard 9: only one reference to play (except in a definition of mental health difficulties).</p> <p>Under section on accessibility and safety of settings: Services require appropriate facilities including furniture, telephones, IT and audiovisual equipment, oneway screens and <u>play material</u>. (p.40)</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Local Area Agreements Guidance (for Round 3) (ODPM March 2006)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>A Local Area Agreement (LAA) is a three-year agreement, based on local Sustainable Community Strategies, that sets out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government, represented by the Government Office (GO), and a local area, represented by the lead local authority and other key partners through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). (p.7)</p> <p>The guidance note covers the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is an LAA? 2. The LAA Outcomes Framework 3. Roles and responsibilities 4. LAA Performance Framework 5. LAA Funding streams 6. Enabling measures (formerly known as freedoms and flexibilities) 7. The LAA Reward Element 8. Equality and Diversity 9. The LAA Agreement Process 10. Templates <p>A separate toolkit exists and is intended to accompany the Guidance.</p> <p>Details of mandatory and optional outcomes and indicators are provided. These cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Children and Young People – Safer and Stronger Communities – Healthier Communities – – Older People and Economic Development <p>Mandatory indicators relate to improving health, reducing crime and fear of crime, and empowering local people. Others are linked to specific funding streams that pertain to particular areas (such as Neighbourhood Renewal) and include BV199 indicator relating to cleaner, safer, greener environments (less litter and detritus, etc.) and Green Flag awards to parks as well as public satisfaction with parks and open spaces (these are also optional indicators for areas not in receipt of the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund).</p> <p>Optional outcomes include number of children to access museums and libraries, sport and leisure facilities (latter for 11- to 19-year-olds).</p>	<p>If play is included it could be an opportunity to promote play as a local priority. If not, it could be further marginalised or excluded from area wide plans and aligned budgetary arrangements.</p> <p>The Children and Young People's Plan forms part of the LAA with reference to the Children and Young People's Block of the LAA. If play is included in the CYPP with appropriate outcomes indicators, this would be positive. But play could also be swamped by the large number of other foci and priorities.</p> <p>Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local planning Local priorities Joined-up planning Better, more appropriate services 	<p>The Outcomes Frameworks for the LAA are divided into blocks. One of these blocks is <u>Children and Young People</u>. A range of outcomes is identified together with possible indicators. Two (additional) indicators that were not included in the ECM outcomes framework (and identified as such in this document) are about <u>safe play areas and opportunities</u> and the number of <u>11- to 19-year-olds accessing sports and leisure facilities</u>. These fall within the Enjoy and Achieve broad outcome.</p> <p>However, these are <u>not mandatory</u> indicators, they are optional. All of the optional outcomes and indicators are eligible for reward element. The mandatory outcomes and indicators relate to health, educational attainment but none of these refer to play or recreational activities.</p> <p>Mentions that ECM data collection measures and indicators are being reviewed (Knowledge for Improvement Project, DfES – revised framework due April 2007). There may be potential for ECM indicators (and therefore those of LAAs Children and Young People's Block) to include more indicators related to the Enjoy part of Enjoy and Achieve outcome – i.e. <u>relevant to play</u>.</p>

Policy/Paper/ Scheme		
Walking and Cycling: an Action Plan (DfT 2004)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Part of government's action plan for increasing levels of walking and cycling in England. Walking and cycling considered important as they have the potential to make a positive contribution to many key public policy priorities, including health, liveability and urban congestion.</p> <p>The plan is directly relevant to Choosing Health?. It also reflects the work of the cross- government Activity Co-ordination Team (ACT), which is charged with advising Ministers on increasing levels of physical activity across the board.</p> <p>There is no direct reference to play. Focus is upon walking and cycling as activities to combat potential health risks associated with lack of exercise – as well as addressing possible alternative forms of transport. Leisure is mentioned briefly in broad terms.</p>	<p>Themes</p> <p>Health</p> <p>Transport</p>	<p>Document appears to take all potential fun out of walking and cycling.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme Best Value Performance Indicators Guidance for 2005–6 (Audit Commission Feb 2005)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>According to the document, its purpose is to establish good management practices in LAs which, in turn, provide good services for local communities.</p> <p>The PSA Target 4 is to, by 2008, 'improve the effectiveness and efficiency of local government in leading and delivering services to all communities'.</p> <p>The report lists new and amended BVPIs, none of which relate to play.</p>	<p>Leisure and sports facilities – local government performance.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Local government performance</p> <p>Community services</p>	<p>There was no specific mention or reference to play.</p> <p>Focus on those services that have a statutory obligation.</p> <p>Among old BVPIs, 119 includes <u>sport and leisure services, and parks and open spaces</u>, and BV199 refers to cleanliness of streets (which could be relevant) and includes other areas such as <u>recreational sites (unless these are owned by a parish or town council)</u>.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme

Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their Future (ODPM Dec 2005)

Description	Themes	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and community strategies were introduced as a result of the Local Government Act 2000. LSPs are now established in all areas and are intended as a means to establishing a common vision and collaborative working in order to further develop coherent service provision and genuinely sustainable communities.</p> <p>Sets out aims as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To be the partnership of partnerships in an area, providing the strategic coordination within the area and linking with other plans and bodies established at the regional, sub-regional and local level. 2. To ensure a Sustainable Community Strategy is produced that sets the vision and priorities for the area agreed by all parties, including local citizens and businesses, and built on a solid evidence base. 3. To develop and drive the effective delivery of their Local Area Agreements. 4. To agree an action plan for achieving the Sustainable Community Strategy priorities, including the LAA outcomes. <p>In two-tier areas we expect:</p> <p><i>County-level</i> LSPs to agree the LAA and relevant action plan, taking into account priorities identified by district local authorities and LSPs in their Sustainable Community Strategies.</p> <p><i>District-level</i> LSPs (and their Sustainable Community Strategies) to be fully considered and involved in the drawing-up and implementing of the county-wide Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA. Relevant LAA outcomes should also be reflected in the district LSPs' action plans and future iterations of all district-led plans, including Local Development Frameworks.</p>	<p>Local services</p> <p>Accountability</p> <p>Partnership and sharing information</p>	<p>No reference to play.</p> <p>As with Best Value Performance Indicators (above) this document focuses on services which have statutory obligations to fulfil.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme Planning Policy Guidance 17 (Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation) (ODPM 2002) and Companion Guide to PPG17 (ODPM 2002)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>This PPG describes the role of the planning system in assessing opportunities and needs for sport and recreation provision and safeguarding open space which has recreational value.</p> <p>The guidance observes that it is part of the function of the planning system to ensure that through the preparation of development plans adequate land and water resources are allocated for organised sport and informal recreation.</p> <p>It says that local planning authorities should take account of the community's need for recreational space, having regard to current levels of provision and deficiencies and resisting pressures for development of open space which conflict with the wider public interest.</p> <p>It discusses the role of all levels of plan, planning agreements, and the use of local authority land and compulsory purchase powers. It discusses provision in urban areas, the urban fringe, the Green Belts, and the countryside and particular sports including football stadia, water sports and golf. (Source Planning Portal.)</p> <p>Recommends that audits of local spaces be undertaken using both quantitative and qualitative measures.</p> <p>Recommends that standards should be set locally and should include a distance threshold. Recommends the protection of open spaces and minimising the traffic flows around them. Particularly highlights for protection (point 11) 'small areas of open space in urban areas that provide an important local amenity and offer recreational and play opportunities.'</p> <p>States that planning obligations should be used to ensure that there is sufficient open space for amount of (new) housing or improvements are made to existing spaces.</p> <p>A typology of open space is given which is broader than that in the Town and Country Planning Act (1990). This includes areas for children's play and recreation.</p>	<p>Spaces and facilities for outdoor play and recreational activities as owned by local authorities.</p> <p>Planning for play in more accessible places and with better play value (if use Companion Guide recommendations).</p>	<p>Open spaces are said to deliver a range of outcomes that support the government's agenda to improve quality of lives for all. Includes under health and well-being the importance of open spaces for the social development of children through <u>their play</u>.</p> <p>Use of <u>qualitative measures</u> to audit and assess local needs could help to ensure that facilities address <u>play value</u>. Use of distance thresholds is <u>not</u> helpful for isolated rural communities or those with poor access to transport and, when related to walking, for those with disabilities.</p> <p>Includes in its typology of open spaces:</p> <p><u>'provision for children and teenagers – including play areas, skateboard parks, outdoor basketball hoops, and other more informal areas (eg 'hanging out' areas, teenage shelters).'</u></p> <p>The typology of indoor sport and recreational facilities does <u>not</u> make any references to <u>play centres</u> (includes things like swimming pools and places where more structured activities tend to take place).</p>

Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
Companion Guide:		
<p>The Guide:</p> <p>Seeks to build on examples of existing good planning practice, while also taking account of the recommendations of the Government's Urban Green Spaces Taskforce and the need for local authorities to prepare Community and Cultural Strategies.</p> <p>Sets out how local authorities can use the planning system to help deliver accessible, high- quality and sustainable open spaces and sport and recreation facilities which meet local needs and are valued by local communities.</p> <p>Relates directly to the Best Value regime and the management and maintenance of publicly owned open spaces or sport and recreation facilities.</p> <p>Section A12 is specifically about the needs of children and young people. Refers to CPC guidance on planning for play.</p>		<p>Companion Guide refers to use of quantitative measures in assessments of play equipment on open spaces. This will not record their play value. However, also recommends use of qualitative tests such as whether people enjoy using the facilities. This is a step towards recognising the <u>play value</u> for different groups of users of particular open spaces and playgrounds but more could be recommended.</p> <p>Recommends that assessments of local needs include children's <u>play interests</u> and young people generally.</p> <p>Recognises that <u>play strategies</u> will have land use implications and these should be taken into consideration when planning land use and auditing existing spaces.</p> <p>Mentions that the high costs of maintenance that have led to removal of <u>playground equipment</u> have caused departments responsible for Open Space strategies to question planning policies. Implies need for integration but could also be detrimentally suggestive that these facilities are too expensive to maintain.</p> <p>Incorporates a section specifically about planning for children and young people and recommends use of qualitative standards and of CPC's guidance on planning for outdoor play. Recognises limitations of use of NPFA LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Outdoors for All: (Draft) Diversity Action Plan (DEFRA 2006)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>In 2000, the rural White Paper stated that, 'By 2005, we will carry out a full diversity review of how we can encourage more people with disabilities, more people from ethnic minorities, more people from the inner cities, and <u>more young people to visit the countryside</u> and participate in country activities.' (p.9)</p> <p>The 10-year action plan is based on the findings of a review of the diversity of people who access outdoor recreation in the countryside, carried out between September 2002 and December 2005 by the Countryside Agency. The plan will be reviewed after two and five years.</p> <p>The review found that particular groups did not access the countryside as much as others. These were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – disabled people – people from ethnic minorities (black and Asian people) – people from inner cities – young people. <p>And this was because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – they did not get the right information – transport was a big problem – they lacked confidence – they did not feel welcome – services were not good for disabled people – it costs too much money. <p>To address these problems the plan will develop the professional skills of those working with visitors to the countryside and provide better information, and better and cheaper transport.</p> <p>Central to realising this vision is action to enable the under-represented groups identified in the Diversity Review to make informed decisions about visiting the countryside and taking advantage of the recreational opportunities it provides – for example, a quiet walk, family fun with the children, or more adrenaline-fuelled adventure activities. (p.10)</p> <p>An aim of service planning is to:</p> <p>Improve quality of life for children, young people, families at risk and older people. (p.28)</p>	<p>Better accessibility of outdoor spaces and countryside.</p> <p>More accessible to those traditionally not using these spaces, especially young people.</p> <p>Those employed to work with visitors to the countryside who will receive training.</p> <p>Local authorities' developments of green spaces and information for potential visitors to countryside.</p> <p>Transport facilities (for accessing countryside, particularly from inner cities).</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Equality</p> <p>Accessibility</p> <p>Affordability</p> <p>Choice</p> <p>Information dissemination</p> <p>Raising professional standards</p>	<p>Although there are many generic references to recreation, there are <u>no references to play</u>. However, the plan does highlight its aim for children:</p> <p>'We also consider it essential that all children get some <u>outdoor recreation</u> experience so that they know what it is about and can make their own decisions as adults.' (p.5)</p> <p>Also recommends use of Lottery money for development of <u>schools' projects</u> that will access countryside (but does not imply free play rather implies structured activities).</p> <p>The kinds of recreational activities that it is said could be undertaken in the countryside are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – walking – eating a picnic with family or friends – climbing a hill – going for a bicycle ride – bird-watching.

Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Childcare Act (2006)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>1. The Bill was introduced into Parliament in November 2005 following the publication of the Government's Ten Year Childcare Strategy in December 2004. The accompanying Work and Families Act received Royal Assent in June. It has extended statutory maternity pay and allowances to nine months from April 2007 and provides entitlements and flexibilities for fathers.</p> <p>2. The Childcare Act places duties on English local authorities to improve the outcomes for young children and reduce the gaps between them; to secure sufficient childcare to enable parents to work; and to provide information to parents about childcare and a wide range of services that may be of benefit to them in bringing up their children.</p> <p>3. The Act also includes provisions to reform the regulation and inspection regime for childcare in England, meeting a commitment set out in the government's Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: a Ten Year Strategy for Childcare. The provisions include the establishment of an early years register for childcare for children up to the age of five and a register for childcare for children aged five and over (the Ofsted Childcare Register).</p> <p>4. The Act provides for the establishment of a high-quality learning and development framework for young children – the Early Years Foundation Stage. All providers registered on the early years register will have to work to this framework which will support the work to improve outcomes for young children. (Source: DfES)</p> <p>The Childcare Act has four parts: duties on local authorities in England (Part 1), duties on local authorities in Wales (Part 2), regulation and inspection arrangements for childcare providers in England (Part 3), and general provisions (Part 4). Key provisions are as follows.</p> <p>Sections 1–5 require local authorities and their NHS and Jobcentre Plus partners to work together to improve the outcomes of all children up to five and reduce inequalities between them, by ensuring early childhood services are integrated to maximise access and benefits to families – underpinning a Sure Start Children's Centre for every community</p> <p>Sections 6, 8–11 and 13 require local authorities to assess the local childcare market and to secure sufficient childcare for working parents. Childcare will only be deemed sufficient if it meets the needs of the community in general and in particular</p>	<p>Children from birth to five and five to eight in childcare settings and families of children up to age of 20 in relation to family support services.</p> <p>(New) Curriculum for children from birth to five years which is play-based will impact on educate providers.</p> <p>Registers (x2) and inspections of educate providers.</p> <p>Employment</p> <p>Childcare costs and availability.</p>	<p>No reference to <u>play</u>.</p> <p>One reference to recreation in relation to children's well-being:</p> <p>(2) In this Act 'well-being', in relation to children, means their well-being so far as relating to:</p> <p>(a) physical and mental health and emotional well-being;</p> <p>(b) protection from harm and neglect;</p> <p>(c) education, training and <u>recreation</u>.</p>

<p>those families on lower incomes and those with disabled children. Local authorities take the strategic lead in their local childcare market, planning, supporting and commissioning childcare. Local authorities will not be expected to provide childcare direct but will be expected to work with local private, voluntary and independent sector providers to meet local need. Section 7 re-enacts the duty for local authorities to secure a free minimum amount of early learning and care for all three- and four-year- olds whose parents want it.</p> <p>Section 12 extends the existing duty to provide information to parents, to ensure parents and prospective parents can access the full range of information they may need for their children right through to their 20th birthday. Local authorities will be required to ensure that this service is available to all parents and that it is pro-active in reaching those parents who might otherwise have difficulty accessing the information service.</p> <p>Sections 39-48 introduce the Early Years Foundation Stage, which will build on and bring together the existing Birth to Three Matters, Foundation Stage and national standards for daycare and childminding. This new framework will support providers in delivering quality integrated early education and care for children from birth to age 5.</p> <p>Sections 31-38 & 49-98 reform and simplify the framework for the regulation of childcare and early education to reduce bureaucracy and focus on raising quality and standards. All providers caring for children up to age 5 will be required to register on the Early Years register and deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage (unless exceptionally exempted). Childcare settings providing for school age children will be judged against a streamlined set of Ofsted Childcare Register standards. These criteria will be compulsory for all settings caring for children under 8. Other providers may join the register on a voluntary basis.</p> <p>Sections 99-101 allow for the collection of information about young children to inform funding and support the local authority duties under the act. (Source: Sure Start)</p>		
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Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Children's Trusts (DfES/ECM Information 2005)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Children's trusts bring together all services for children and young people in an area, underpinned by the Children Act 2004 duty to cooperate, to focus on improving outcomes for all children and young people. They will support those who work every day with children, young people and their families to deliver better outcomes – with children and young people experiencing more integrated and responsive services, and specialist support embedded in and accessed through universal services.</p> <p>People will work in effective multi-disciplinary teams, be trained jointly to tackle cultural and professional divides, use a lead professional model where many disciplines are involved, and be co-located, often in extended schools or children's centres. Children's trusts will be supported by integrated processes. Some processes, like the Common Assessment Framework, will be centrally driven, whereas others will be specified at a local level. While integrated delivery can be fostered in many ways, and at many levels, making sure the system overall is meeting the right needs for the right children and young people requires effective integrated strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a joint needs assessment • shared decisions on priorities • identification of all available resources • joint plans to deploy them <p>This joint commissioning, underpinned by pooled resources, will ensure that those best able to provide the right packages of services can do so. All of this requires arrangements for governance that ensure everyone shares the vision and give each the confidence to relinquish day-to-day control of decisions and resources, while maintaining the necessary high-level accountability for meeting their statutory duties in a new way. Across the whole system there are some unifying features which help to link the various elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership at every level, not just the director of children's services, but at the front line. • Performance management driving an outcomes focus at every level, from area inspection to rewards and incentives for individual staff. • Listening to the views of children and young people – on the priorities at a strategic level, and on how day-to-day practice is affecting them personally. (Source DfES/ECM). 	<p>LA play services</p> <p>Voluntary and community sector</p> <p>Play in hospitals</p> <p>Play for all children</p>	<p>As Children Act (2004) requires that Trust arrangements include play these are vital to the future development of play services in children's trusts areas.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme Circular 5/05 Planning Obligations (ODPM 2005) and Planning Guidance (DCLG 2006)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Section 106(1) of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 provides that anyone with an interest in land may enter into a planning obligation enforceable by the local planning authority identified in the instrument creating the obligation. Such an obligation may be created by agreement or by the person with the interest making an undertaking. The use of the term 'planning obligation' reflects the fact that obligations may be created other than by agreement between the parties (that is, by the developer making an undertaking). Such obligations may restrict development or use of the land; require operations or activities to be carried out in, on, under or over the land; require the land to be used in any specified way; or require payments to be made to the authority either in a single sum or periodically.</p> <p>The obligations may end with the period of planning permission or may continue for a longer period. The obligations are enforceable and must be written into an agreement. The Circular provides details of all the many subsections to Section 106.</p> <p>Planning obligations (or Section 106 agreements) are private agreements negotiated, usually in the context of planning applications, between local planning authorities and persons with an interest in a piece of land (or 'developers'), and intended to make acceptable development which would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms. Obligations can also be secured through unilateral undertakings by developers. (p.9)</p> <p>What is acceptable depends on sustainable development policies and priorities.</p> <p>Planning obligations may be used to mitigate for loss of open space.</p> <p>This document provides guidance to local authorities and planners about planning and contributions to be made where appropriate by developers to local priorities. The guidance provides good practice examples and was issued in addition to Circular 0/05 on Planning Gain (ODPM 2005).</p> <p>Key aim of government planning policy is to provide affordable housing.</p> <p>Planning Gain Supplement: 'The Government has recently consulted on the introduction of a Planning-gain Supplement (PGS) as recommended in the Barker Review of Housing Supply. The PGS would capture a modest portion of the land value uplift that results from</p>	<p>Affordable local housing Providing resources for developing play areas and open spaces Maintenance of play areas and equipment Local planning policies Developing local standards for equipped play areas</p>	<p>No reference to play, leisure or recreation. Three references to open space (in Circular).</p> <p>Implications for contributions to development of play spaces. If contributions are in kind then LPAs must ensure that developers have appropriate expertise and knowledge (or are given relevant guidance) to ensure that play spaces that are developed are not:</p> <p>a) badly sited b) formulaic and uninteresting to children and young people c) likely to lead to clashes with local residents if they provide loud play areas.</p> <p>One example of good practice in the Guidance states that in terms of quality/safety standards, <u>where play areas are provided in kind</u> the policy requires that the open space and any equipment provided conforms to <u>minimum standards</u>, which are set out in some detail in the appendix of the case study authority's guidance (Waveney Borough Council) – not included in the DCLG guidance though. These standards are developed locally.</p>

<p>the granting of planning permission. The PGS forms part of the Government's package of measures aimed at improving housing affordability. As recommended by the Barker Review, the PGS consultation paper proposes that if a PGS was introduced, planning obligations would be scaled back to cover only those matters relating to the physical environment of the development site and affordable housing provision'. (p.4)</p> <p>Circular 5/05 requires that local development frameworks outline the types of (developers') contributions that should be made. In practice these vary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in-kind and financial contributions • one-off payments and phased payments • maintenance payments • pooled contributions. <p>Guidance states that LPAs should consider the nature of local priorities to be served by planning obligations (e.g. education, <u>community</u> and <u>open space</u>) and what type of contribution or combination of contributions would be best.</p> <p>States that where developers are providing obligations in kind they must have the ability to do so.</p> <p>An example of good practice is use of pooled contributions. Contributions are sought from all developments of 10 or more dwellings, to enable the provision of equipped children's play areas, playing pitches, allotments and casual/informal open areas. Where on-site provision is not appropriate, for example in smaller-scale developments where a full-size play area or pitch cannot be provided, financial contributions are sought. Such contributions will be used by the council to acquire and lay out open space or enhance existing areas. (p.17)</p> <p>The guidance recommends consultations with the local communities to ensure that planning obligations are appropriate and meet local priorities. An example of good practice given states that, 'The Broadland Primary Care Trust, Aylsham Care Trust and Anglia Housing Association were seeking planning permission to redevelop the existing and listed hospital site into a mixed-use development. The applicants were offering to provide obligations towards library provision, a financial contribution towards fire hydrants, <u>on-site open and play space with a commuted sum for maintenance</u>, a managed community centre, financial contributions towards highways and affordable housing with a local lettings policy...the identified priorities of the residents influenced the final agreed level and mix of planning obligations that were proposed and accepted by the Council.'</p>		
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Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Creating Opportunities Guidance for Local Authorities in England on Local Cultural Strategies (DCMS 2000)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>The guidance states that, 'cultural services play a crucial role tackling social exclusion, contributing to regeneration, to promoting safer communities, encouraging healthier lifestyles, providing opportunities for voluntary and community activity, and stimulating lifelong learning.' (p.2)</p> <p>Cultural strategies are important to providing a constructive, strategic approach to cultural services.</p> <p>The guidance provides a 'coherent set of guidelines' with provision for local flexibility to be built in. The guidance stems from original draft guidance (1999), findings from the process of developing pilot strategies in 14 local authorities, and a consultation process.</p> <p>The development of a local cultural strategy is expected of all LAs (not parish or town councils) but is not a statutory duty. The LA is expected to take the lead in partnership with public, voluntary and private agencies and communities in partnership.</p> <p>The overarching aim is to promote cultural well-being, to be measured by BV114. Culture is understood to be a complex and contested term. The strategy should give 'a clear rationale why the local authority funds, manages, supports, encourages or regulates certain services and activities; it provides the basis from which an authority can best determine its own contribution to the cultural well-being of the community.' (p.8)</p> <p>The strategy will help the Big Lottery funding bodies to identify priorities.</p> <p>The intrinsic and instrumental benefits of a strategy are outlined and include equality, diversity, encouraging participation and innovation, providing a framework for performance review and acting as a funding lever.</p> <p>Identifies the principles that should underpin strategies.</p> <p>The main function of the strategy is as a working document for local authorities and their partners.</p> <p>Local authorities may wish to work across boundaries (e.g. district, county and unitary working together across a region). Where districts and counties, for example, are producing separate strategies these should link with each other.</p> <p>States that strategies need to show how they contribute to central government departments' priorities:</p>	<p>Including play as part of culture but progress in delivery will only be measured if there are BVPIs or KLIs that recognise play as part of the strategy.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Quality of life</p> <p>Sustainability</p> <p>Partnership</p> <p>Inclusion</p> <p>Diversity</p> <p>Cross-cutting</p>	<p>Includes <u>play</u> as an element of culture and states that it should be included in cultural strategies as should <u>informal leisure pursuits</u>.</p> <p>Clearly separates children's play from sports, museums, libraries, parks, countryside recreation, arts and crafts.</p> <p>Recommends monitoring and reviewing the strategy implementation should be linked to Best Value. This could lead to development of key local indicators if none exist, but could also lead to use of inappropriate BVP indicators if those for museums or sports. etc. are used.</p> <p>In terms of scope, 'culture' should be taken to include such activities as arts, sports, libraries, museums, heritage, archaeology, archives, architecture, crafts, children's play, reading, parks, tourism, countryside recreation, etc. Other activities such as, entertainments, design, fashion, food, media, visiting attractions and other informal leisure pursuits will also be part of at least some local cultural strategies. (p.6)</p> <p>States that culture has different dimensions:</p> <p>Culture has a value dimension and a material dimension, the latter involving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the performing and visual arts, craft and fashion – media, film, television, video and language – museums, artifacts, archives and design – libraries, literature, writing and publishing – the built heritage, architecture,

<p>DCMS – quality, raising standards, cultural sector jobs and – particularly – access.</p> <p>DETR (as was) – thriving, prosperous regions and communities, better transport, better housing, a better environment, safer, healthier surroundings; and prudent use of natural resources and that LAs are providing Best Value for local people in delivering their services.</p> <p>Should link with and support the (statutory Local Government Act 2000) community strategies. The Local Strategic Partnership that develops an area's Community Strategy should link with that developing the Cultural Strategy. (p.19)</p> <p>The Cultural Strategy will also be influenced by to the Department of Health's Health Improvement Programmes and Quality Protects Management Plans, the Home Office's Community Safety Plans, the DETR's Local Transport Plans and the Department for Education and Employment's Education Development Plans, and the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal.</p> <p>The Regional Cultural Consortia provide a context within which the cultural strategies are to be developed.</p> <p>Strategy should link to other statutory and non-statutory strategies and service plans.</p> <p>Section B of the guidance outlines developmental processes and management issues.</p> <p>Provides details on the development of an action plan that will inform the monitoring process. Will involve Best Value reviews of services and BV114. Most plans will have a five-year life span.</p>		<p>landscape and archaeology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – sports events, facilities and development – parks, open spaces, wildlife habitats, water environment and <u>countryside recreation</u> – <u>children's play, playgrounds and play activities</u> – tourism, festivals and attractions – <u>informal leisure pursuits</u>
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Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Our Towns and Cities: the Future (Urban White Paper) (ODPM 2000)		
Description	Impact	Comments/ relevance to play
<p>This is one of two white papers, the other being Our Countryside: the Future (2000).</p> <p>It <u>aims</u> to address the need for more housing, to encourage people to stay in or move back to towns and cities; improve the quality of life and opportunities in some urban areas; improve economic performance of some parts of towns and cities; reduce the impact of urban living on the environment.</p> <p>The government's <u>vision</u> is of an urban renaissance and protected countryside.</p> <p>Aim to create high-quality towns and cities that are attractive, clean and safe. Introduces Home zones to be funded in nine areas – have traffic calming measures and create areas for children to play. Already have devolved power to LAs to introduce traffic calming measures – 20mph zones around schools and other places where children may be more at risk.</p> <p>Chapter 4, Section 6 '<u>Looking after the environment better: Parks, play areas and public spaces</u>' states that,</p> <p>'1. Well-managed public open spaces such as greens, squares, parks, <u>children's play areas</u>, allotments, woodlands and recreational and sporting areas improve the attractiveness of urban areas and help promote a healthier lifestyle... They are therefore vital to enhancing the quality of urban environments and the quality of our lives.</p> <p>2. We want everyone to have access to well-maintained and safe parks, <u>play areas</u> and other open spaces close to where they live and work. For many people, such spaces will be provided within the town or city, but for some, these spaces may be more accessible on the urban fringe and in the countryside.</p> <p>3. ...Last year's report on public parks by the House of Commons Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Select Committee raised concerns over the future of our parks and called for action to reverse the decline. We share the Committee's concerns about the state of <u>parks and open spaces</u>, and agree that some aspects of the way in which they are managed and maintained need to be improved.</p> <p>4. Action already being taken to help includes:</p> <p>new sources of funding – by the end of 2002, £96m from the New Opportunities Fund GreenSpaces and Sustainable Communities Programme will have been made available to create and improve green spaces which are of importance to local communities in England. £255m will also have been made available from the Heritage Lottery Fund Urban Parks Programme (see page 72, paragraph 3);</p> <p>preventing the loss of school playing fields – by making it necessary for all state schools to get the approval of</p>	<p>Parks and open spaces</p> <p>Play areas</p> <p>Play in streets and local neighbourhood spaces</p> <p>Home Zones</p> <p>PPG17 revision</p> <p>Community Strategies</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Urban renaissance</p> <p>Protect countryside</p> <p>Diversity</p> <p>Partnership with communities</p> <p>Strong leadership</p> <p>Integration of economic, social and environmental measures</p> <p>Inclusion</p> <p>Opportunity</p> <p>Quality of life</p>	<p>This document refers to children's play areas and has a section on parks, play areas and public areas. The paper describes how parks, play areas and open spaces need to be made more attractive, safer, etc. and the 'comprehensive programme' (with a range of measures) to be undertaken to address these issues, including the new Green Flag award.</p> <p>PPG17 to be revised.</p> <p>Culture, leisure and sporting activities to be promoted through new schemes such as creative partnerships for schools and Space for Schools and the Arts.</p> <p>Also introduces Home zones and states that these are areas where children can play.</p> <p>Mentions traffic calming measures for areas where children may be at greater risk.</p>

<p>the Secretary of State for Education to change the use of any field which has been used for sports in the last five years...</p> <p>raising standards of local services – encouraging improvements in the quality of service standards in the provision and management of parks and open spaces by local authorities through the Best Value regime; and</p> <p>taking environmental action – by enabling and funding environmental and voluntary groups such as the Groundwork Federation...through a number of initiatives including the Environmental Action Fund, the Special Grants Programme, and the Environment Task Force option of the New Deal.</p> <p>5. ... The challenge for us all is to find ways of <u>improving the quality of parks, play areas and open spaces</u> and make them cleaner, safer and better-maintained places... We will take action in three key areas.</p> <p><u>We must lead and develop a shared vision for the future of our parks, play areas and open spaces.</u></p> <p>A DETR Minister will be directly responsible for overseeing the development of a vision and proposals for the sorts of parks, play areas and open spaces we want to see created in the future and how they should be managed. ... We will appoint an 'Advisory Committee', which will...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <u>review evidence of the current state of parks, play areas and open spaces and the ways in which they are managed and maintained;</u> – consider how different types of open spaces can best meet the needs of people in urban areas; - examine innovation in the design, creation and maintenance of open spaces in different areas of this country and in other countries. <p>We will identify opportunities for building and supporting partnerships for managing public open spaces and the countryside in and around towns and cities, in particular, those involving local business, including agricultural businesses, and resident communities.</p> <p><u>We must improve information on the quality and quantity of parks and open spaces, and the way in which they are used and maintained.</u> We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – improve the comprehensiveness of the database of local authority parks being developed jointly by Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage and DETR; – commission a programme of research to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <u>examine ways in which parks and open spaces are used and by whom</u>, what users want from them, what they currently provide, and their wider benefits to the quality of urban environments; – examine roles and responsibilities in relation to managing and improving the public realm; and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – assess alternative approaches to managing and maintaining the public realm, in particular, public open spaces and approaches involving the local community and business groups. 		
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<p>We must also improve the way we plan and design <u>new parks, play areas and public spaces</u>, and the way we manage and maintain existing ones. We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – in partnership with the Urban Parks Forum, develop a programme for identifying and spreading good practice on the management and care of parks, play areas and open spaces to parks staff, professionals and user groups; – <u>develop the Green Flags Awards scheme as a national award for excellence in the provision, management and care of parks, children's play areas and open spaces</u> (along the lines of the European Blue Flag awards for beaches). The scheme will also help to define and promote quality service standards; – <u>revise Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Sports and Recreation</u> to give local planning authorities a clearer framework for assessing their needs for open spaces, making good deficiencies and protecting what is valued, and ensuring that everyone has adequate access to open space. It will also aim to ensure that existing spaces are protected from development where appropriate and that new open spaces are well designed; and – work with a range of partners including the Countryside Agency, Local Government Association, Civic Trust and Groundwork UK to develop proposals for raising awareness of the importance of caring for parks, play areas and public spaces and places (including town and local centres), encouraging 'local champions' and identifying opportunities for involving local people in looking after local places and spaces better.' 		
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Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Our Countryside: the Future (Rural White Paper) (DEFRA 2000)		
Description	Impact	Comments/ relevance to play
<p>The government's <u>vision</u> in the White Paper is for:</p> <p>1. A living countryside, with thriving rural communities and access to high- quality public services through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – support for vital village services – modernisation of rural services – providing affordable homes – delivering local transport solutions. <p>2. A working countryside, with a diverse economy giving high and stable levels of employment through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – rejuvenation of market towns and a thriving local economy – setting a new direction for farming. <p>3. A protected countryside in which the environment is sustained and enhanced, and which all can enjoy through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – preserving what makes rural England special – ensuring everyone can enjoy an accessible countryside. <p>4. A vibrant countryside which can shape its own future and with its voice heard by government at all levels through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – giving local power to country towns and villages – ensuring rural needs are taken into account. <p>The government's <u>aim</u> is to sustain and enhance the distinctive environment, economy and social fabric of the English countryside for the benefit of all. (pp.1–8)</p>	<p>Children and young people living in rural areas.</p> <p>Transport in rural areas.</p> <p>Play and leisure services (local authority' and voluntary and community).</p> <p>Schools (developing community use of facilities).</p> <p>Open spaces.</p> <p>Parish and town council plans and power.</p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Access</p> <p>Sustainability</p> <p>Environmental protection and enhancement</p> <p>Rural economies</p> <p>Local power for local service providers</p>	<p>25 <u>references to children</u> all found within small case study examples of existing good practice in rural areas, ranging from community use of school facilities to a Sure Start mobile play and learning centres to transport solutions thereby enabling children in isolated areas to attend after-school clubs and access other play opportunities.</p> <p><u>References to play and leisure:</u></p> <p>Operating community services recommends using a range of public facilities such as churches, pubs,. etc. for community uses including <u>playgroups</u>. (Chapter 3 p.26)</p> <p>Shared and community use of school facilities states these can provide a location for sports clubs, <u>after school clubs</u>, neighbourhood learning centres, libraries, <u>play schools</u> and <u>nurseries</u> and lunch clubs for pensioners. (p.29)</p> <p>Preserving and enhancing our countryside includes a section on open space:</p> <p><u>'open spaces like parks and play areas are especially important to quality of life in towns and villages.</u> We will be issuing a new planning framework which will help safeguard existing recreational open spaces and create new ones where necessary.' (Chapter 9, p.106)</p> <p>Local power for country towns and villages suggests how a good parish council would operate, stating that, 'The quality parish council, working with partners, including the voluntary and community sector, will undertake services funded from its own resources – looking after the village environment (litter, bus shelters, village green, cemeteries etc) and provide <u>public facilities such as playgrounds and village halls</u>.</p> <p>It will help to draw up a town or village plan, and support local biodiversity action plans. To promote inclusive communities it will support community transport schemes and childcare provision; seek suitable sites and projects for affordable housing, and <u>help develop youth activities</u> and services for the elderly.' (Chapter 12. p.147)</p> <p>(This is to be measured through amended Best Value framework which will allow parish/town councils to make proposals on service delivery on behalf of principal authorities, p.153.)</p> <p>Re town and village plans: a town or village plan is also about much more than design and land use issues. Developing or safeguarding local services such as shops and <u>leisure facilities</u> and addressing community needs such as the availability of space for <u>playgroups</u> or a meeting room are issues which</p>

		<p>a comprehensive plan can tackle. The plan is an opportunity to develop community agreement on local priorities. (p.151)</p> <p>Section 12.5.1 highlights the role of the voluntary community sector in providing a range of services, including:</p> <p><u>'organising leisure activities'... community transport schemes, play groups etc'</u> (p.151)</p>
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Policy/Paper/Scheme		
Local Authority Circular about Safety in Children's Playgrounds (2002–2005)		
(Health and Safety Executive/Local Authorities Enforcement Liaison Committee (HELA) 2001)		
Description	Impact	Comments/ relevance to play
<p>Gives figures for playground accidents. Says DCMS sponsored the Play Safety Forum to take forward the debate on safety and HSE is a member of the Forum. Mentions European Standards (1176 and 1177) and says they are not retrospective and not legally binding but that all play providers should have them in mind when making decisions about playgrounds. Circular says all providers (e.g. L.A.s) should meet the requirements of the EN standards. They should carry out risk assessments, comply with the Standards and Health and Safety legislation, and should take account of the siting of the playground. Discusses inspectors and says that, 'It is unlikely that inspectors will have the necessary experience or specialist equipment to inspect fixed playground equipment against current European standards...Good evidence of competence would be membership of the Register of Play Inspectors International Ltd (RPII).' (Unclear what requirements for membership are.)</p>	<p>Playground equipment design, maintenance, siting.</p> <p>LA inspections of playground equipment.</p> <p>Children's safety and abilities to take moderated risks and access challenges in LA playgrounds.</p>	<p>These circulars are relevant to play because they are specifically about the safety of playground equipment for children.</p> <p>Recommends use of risk assessments together with compliance with European Safety Standards EN1176 and EN1177.</p> <p>Inspections should be intermittently conducted by registered inspectors from the RTPi.</p>

Policy/Paper/Scheme		
HSE Sector Information Minute (2004)		
Description	Impact	Comments/ relevance to play
<p>Sector Information Minute (goes out with Circular to LAs such as the one above, but this one is more recent (2004) and lasts until 28/6/08). The SIM provides information on current European Standards for outdoor playground equipment and highlights the need to avoid unnecessary replacement of existing equipment that is safe although not in compliance with the latest standards. (<i>Could be confusing</i>). Says inspectors, based on the advice of a competent person, should assess whether or not existing items of equipment should be removed but need not necessarily do so simply because they don't comply with Standards, unless they are hazardous. Says LAs should not rely solely on compliance with EN 1176 and 1177 and BS7188 alone to determine equipment safety as this is not enough in law (cites <i>Balding vs Lew Ways Ltd, 1995</i>). Should monitor accident trends and condition of equipment and may need to make modifications or some replacements. A deviation from the standards does not necessarily constitute a hazardous condition. Should do risk assessment as required by Health and Safety legislation. Mentions risk and suggests reading 'Managing Risk' (but this means that it is open to great deal of different interpretation of what constitutes risk and safety as this document doesn't prescribe risks. However the approach is endorsed by the Play Safety Forum. Also recommends using Inspector from RPII to do additional annual check.</p>		
HSE Press Release 2002		
<p>Press release 23/04/2002 on the publication of research report <i>Playgrounds – risks, benefits and choices</i> by Professor David Ball. Identifies major risk factors in playgrounds as behaviour, equipment height and body orientation in falls to the ground. Playground injuries are not decreasing despite safety measures such as IAS (surfacing – see BS EN1177). Raises questions about what other measures could and should be taken to produce a positive benefit in reducing unacceptable risk in playgrounds. (<i>So application of BS EN1177 is not enough.</i>)</p>		

Policy/Paper/Scheme		
HSE Playgrounds – risks, benefits and choices (2002)		
Description	Impact	Comments/relevance to play
<p>Report makes recommendations, one of which (p.77) is based on a view that children are safer in playgrounds than in their environment and there needs to be a strategic approach to making the whole environment safer rather than simply attending to safety within the playground. Also makes interesting points about the Standards and the Health and Safety at Work Act, saying that these taken to the letter can end up restricting people's thoughtfulness in carrying out risk assessments. System was designed to engender thoughtfulness by introducing a guiding principle – ALARP, which says, 'To summarise, risks may be divided into three tiers according to their magnitude. In the upper band, risks are regarded as so high as to be totally unacceptable and must be reduced even at very high cost or, if this is not possible, the activity must cease. On the other hand, for very small risks (in the region marked 'broadly acceptable'), it is not normally required that further significant expenditure be committed in the name of even greater safety. The intermediate region is one in which decisions on whether or not to go ahead with a risk-reducing expenditure are made with reference to the principle of ALARP (as low as reasonably practicable). The ALARP principle implies that, in making safety decisions, there is a need to carry out risk assessment and to subject the outcome to risk management decision making...' (pp.99–100) (On p.99 the examples are illustrated with a diagram which is the 'HSE framework for assessing tolerability of risk'.</p> <p>www.hse.gov.uk/research/crr_pdf/2002/crr02426.pdf</p>		

Policies and play

The impact of national policies on children's opportunities for play

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Recreational activities for children and young people regularly feature as an element of policies and legislation, but play is not always mentioned, even when policy documents are uniquely about children's free-time activities. The aim of this study was to assess the impact of national policies and legislation on children and young people's opportunities for play and informal recreational activities in England.

This report is based on an analysis of a sample of 44 policy documents (2000 to 2006) from all relevant government departments. These included Acts of Parliament, statutory and non-statutory guidance, departmental reports, plans and strategies.

Twenty-four people (representing local authorities' play services, the voluntary and community play sector and national organisations with an association with play) took part in interviews or completed questionnaires about their experiences of the impact of policies on opportunities for play and informal recreational activities.

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