

More and Better Play for Gloucester



Gloucester's Play and Free time Strategy
2010 to 2012

play 4 life

 Gloucester
Partnership

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Foreword by Gloucester's Play Champion

Introduction

Gloucester has a long and proud history of community play provision, dating back to 1982 when White City Adventure Playground was opened. Since then, open access play projects have provided many hours of free play activities to thousands of Gloucester's children and young people.

This Play and Free Time Strategy is a refreshed version of the Gloucester Partnership's Play Strategy for Children and Young People (2006). It has been created by a play working group from CYPAG - a Children and Young People's Action Group that meet regularly and report directly to the Gloucester Partnership. Play and positive activities are one of Gloucester Partnership's priority actions which makes this Play and Free Time Strategy important and timely.

Progress made in the first strategy from 2006 to May 2010 is recorded in Appendix One - Then and Now.

This strategy for play intends to build on Gloucester's existing successes as well as develop more and better play across the city. We need to provide quality play opportunities for children and young people of all backgrounds and abilities in both supervised play provision, unsupervised spaces and the public realm.

The desire for more and better play is threatened by the current climate of public spending cuts. All Gloucester's open access play providers face possible closure due to funding cuts over the next 18 months.

The strategy focuses on the needs of children and young people aged 0-18 years, acknowledging that play and free time needs change as children become teenagers, progress into adulthood and become parents.

This strategy acknowledges frequent use of the excellent information contained in Planning for Play - Guidance on the development of a local play strategy (National Children's Bureau /Big Lottery Fund: 2006)

CYPAG: Play Working Group: July 2010

Examples of what play and free time means to children and young people



**Play in the park:
Meeting Friends**



**Play in the park:
Swings**



**Arty Play:
Painting**



**Challenging Play:
Fires**



Cold Play!



**Active Play:
Bikes**



**Teen Play:
Hanging Out!**



**Arty Play:
Pavement Chalking**



**Active Play:
Informal Sport**

Executive Summary

- Gloucester has a long and proud history of community play provision dating back to 1982 when White City Adventure Playground was established
- The City currently has a good mixture of supervised play and unsupervised play facilities, used by thousands of Gloucester families each year
- This is an update of Gloucester's 2006 Play and Free Time Strategy, and has been created by a working group that reports to the Gloucester Partnership via CYPAG (Children and Young People's Action Group)
- Play and positive activities are one of Gloucester Partnership's priority actions
- This strategy intends to build on Gloucester's many existing successes to continue to provide 'More and Better Play' for children, young people and families
- It is recognised that over the next few years, public sector funding cuts and the recession are likely to threaten Gloucester's supervised play provision. Currently play provision in Coney Hill, Matson, Podsmead and White City is funded by Gloucestershire County Council's Prevention Fund. All Play Ranger activity in the eight Gloucester priority areas is funded by the Big Lottery Fund Children's Play Programme.
- Unsupervised play improvements have been made under the previous Government's Playbuilder programme. This funding stream is unlikely to be repeated.
- The strategy focuses on the play needs of children and young people up to 18 years of age, acknowledging that these needs change as children become teenagers, progress into adulthood and become parents themselves
- The Charter for Children's Play have been used as guiding principles. These recognise that children have the right to play; need time and space to play; that adults should let children play; that children should be able to play freely in their local areas; that children value and benefit from staffed play provision; that children's play is enriched by skilled playworkers; that children need time and space to play at school; and that children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their play
- Gloucester have four priorities for play and these are aligned with the Gloucestershire Play Strategy to maximise effectiveness. These are: 1- More places to play in Gloucester 2- Promoting the value and importance of play 3- Providing resources for play 4- Promoting quality and best practice
- Progress made between 2006 - 2010 is significant and clearly mapped in terms of each Neighbourhood Partnership area. Currently, eight out of the nine areas have both unsupervised and supervised play opportunities. Westgate is the only area that currently has no supervised play

About Play and Free Time

What is Play?

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

Meera, aged 10

This strategy defines play as 'children and young people following their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons, having fun whilst respecting themselves and others'.

(DCSF: The Play Strategy)

A more detailed definition, often used by the playwork sector is:

'play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. Play can be fun or serious. Through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter'.



Scope of this play and free time strategy

In line with the age definition adopted in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Every Child Matters: Change for Children agenda, this strategy applies to planning supervised play services and unsupervised play environments for children and young people up to the age of 18. Unless a particular age group is specified, all references to either 'children', 'young people' or to 'children and young people' should be taken to include this full age range.

This strategy recognises the diversity of play for children and young people from pre-school through their middle years, into teenage years and beyond into adult and parenthood.

It also acknowledges that teenagers rarely refer to their free time as 'play'. They are more likely to refer to it as 'hanging out' or 'free time'. Nonetheless, teenagers still like and need to play and it is an important social and physical activity for them.

Why children's play matters

Play is of fundamental importance for children and young people's health and well-being, friendships and relationships, their development and their informal learning. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) gives all children the right 'to rest and leisure; to engage in age-appropriate play and recreational activities.'

"Can you remember digging in the mud for worms? Or making perfume from rose petals? Or just hanging out with friends, talking about things, listening to music? Or walking with your eyes closed to see what it felt like? Climbing trees? Playing pranks on grown-ups? Doing things you knew you shouldn't? Making things, reading, dreaming, hanging out, running, jumping, making yourself dizzy, pretending to be someone else?"

Gloucestershire Play Policy (2005)

Play and Disadvantage

Play can help mitigate the effects of poverty, and in Gloucester free supervised play provision is targeted at the priority areas experiencing high levels of poverty and disadvantage.



Play and Health

Play is crucial to health and development throughout childhood, contributing to social, physical, intellectual, cultural, emotional and psychological development.

The chief medical officer advises that 'children and young people should achieve a total of at least 60 minutes of at least moderate-intensity physical activity each day'.

Play has a key contribution to make to the Change4Life programme - a national campaign to help families 'eat well, move more and live longer'. Active play helps families to more active lifestyles.

Play and the environment

"Children are losing their connection with the natural environment and their well-being and environmental quality are inextricably linked. The worse a local environment looks, the less able children are to play freely".

Thomas and Thompson, A Child's Place, Demos, 2004



Playing outdoors in good quality public open space is an important way of connecting children to the natural environment.

Inclusive play

An essential feature of this play strategy should be that it promotes inclusion and access for all children regardless of disability, race or gender.

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

Alison John, Kidsactive

Enjoyment of the public realm can be difficult for many black and minority ethnic children who still report experiencing overt and implicit racism.

When and where children play

Children and young people spend only one quarter of their time in school curriculum activity. The rest of the time they like to play - often outdoors for many hours. Given the chance, they also play before, after and on the way to school. In fact, children will play anywhere and everywhere. See appendix Two: Types of Play Places and Spaces.



The Importance of Risk in Play

“Children need and want to take risks when they play and good play provision should enable this by offering stimulating and challenging opportunities and environments. The level of risk should be managed to ensure that children are not

exposed to unacceptable risks or dangers such as death or serious injury”.

(‘Managing Risk in Play Provision’, endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive)

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) states that:

“We recognise the benefits to children’s development of play, which necessarily involves some risk, and this shouldn’t be sacrificed in the pursuit of the unachievable goal of absolute safety.”



Links to National & Local Initiatives

In recent years, play has featured more prominently in government policy, initiatives and strategy. Appendix Three has details on Every Child Matters, Playbuilder and other play specific initiatives, Gloucestershire specific and Gloucester focussed strategies and plans.



Gloucester Play and Free Time Strategy Action Cards 2009-2012

Aim 1: More Places to Play in Gloucester We will increase access to free, inclusive play places close to where children live. We want these places to be exciting and stimulating for children and families – a place where they can share and enjoy leisure time. We have prioritised this because there is increasing evidence that play can improve the health and wellbeing of children, young people and other family members.			
Action Plan	Partners	Timescales	Outcomes & Indicators
Facilities: Install new and improve existing community play spaces under the Playbuilder, Gloucester City Council capital investment programme and other funding streams	Gloucester City Council With local community groups	2010-11 2011-12	2 completed playbuilder funded playgrounds by April 2010 2 completed playbuilder playgrounds by April 2011
People: Support community and residents groups to develop local play opportunities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervised Play Provision such as indoor Play Centres and After School Clubs, and outdoor provision such as Adventure Playgrounds and Play Rangers • Unsupervised Spaces 	CYPAG & members of Play Working Group	2010-11 2011-12	Play Gloucestershire providing 6 Play Ranger sessions per week during term time; 8 Play Ranger full days per week (2 teams) during school holidays
Schools and Children's Centres: Develop opportunities for play in schools and Children's Centres such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playful Lunchtime Supervisors • Play Ranger visits at playtime • Play Pods 			Play Gloucestershire training Junior Play Rangers to be playful peer mediators at Moat School, Matson
Inclusion: Provide free and accessible local play opportunities for all children including disabled children, vulnerable children, children living in poverty and children from minority groups in the community			Supervised play activities provided in 8 Gloucester priority communities throughout the year

Aim 2: Promoting the Value and Importance of Play

We will promote the value and importance of play to people and organisations who can contribute to it. We want people to understand and support the benefits of play for children and young people, families and communities and make sure that play is included as a higher priority in local strategies and plans. We have prioritised this to help sustain existing provision and create new opportunities.

Action Plan	Partners	Timescales	Outcomes and Indicators
Identify and appoint a Gloucester Play Champion			Feedback from Champions re activity
Deliver an annual programme of events promoting value and importance of play in all Neighbourhood Partnership areas			Event promoting play in all 9 Neighbourhood Management areas
Gloucester Play Strategy adopted by Gloucester Partnership and members of CYPAG and officially launched			Organisations adopt Gloucester Play Strategy
Promote importance of play to key stakeholders including Housing Associations, Residents Associations, Neighbourhood Partnerships and the Healthy City Partnership			Increased awareness and commitment Play included in plans & strategies
Ensure that play is included in Gloucester wide and local community strategies and plans			

Aim 3: Providing Resources for Play

We will seek the commitment and financial support of a wide range of people and organisations to ensure that existing play places are sustained and improved and new places are developed. We have prioritised this because without funding supervised play opportunities will close and unsupervised places will not be adequately maintained.

Action Plan	Partners	Timescales	Outcomes and Indicator(s)
Identify needs & give practical support to existing play providers and other organisations wanting to develop new play opportunities			More projects developing Number of successful grant applications Wider range of funding sources
Raise awareness of funding requirements to sustain existing and develop new provision			Funding secured Wider range of funding sources.
Develop & promote ways that help children and families to give us their views about local play provision			Amount of consultation involving CYP Satisfaction of CYP –TellUs etc Play Ranger performance indicators
Inform the Gloucestershire Children's Plan Annual Needs Analysis of Gloucester play needs			Information used in Needs Analysis, plans and strategies.
Annual Review of Gloucester Play Strategy			Produce Annual update via Gloucester CYPAG

Aim 4: Promoting Quality and Best Practice

We will work to improve the quality of play provision in Gloucester and share our best practice with people, organisations and partnerships. We have prioritised this to improve the quality of play spaces and the play workforce and share knowledge of what works well.

Action Plan	Who?	When?	Outcomes and Indicator(s)
Mapping of Gloucester's public open spaces and publish updated audit	Lead: Gloucester City Council		Needs to show improvements
Gloucester play providers share best practice and provide regular updates through reports, newsletters, events and websites			Feedback from events Projects implementing guidance Diversity of organisations New contacts Consultation feedback
Gloucester play providers develop their workforce through training opportunities and work experience			
Play providers achieve Quality Assurance standard			Quality in Play Level One achieved by 3 local play providers by March 2011