

# Stafford Borough Play Strategy

Summary (Draft)

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## Definition of Play

There are a number of possible definitions of Play and for the purposes of this strategy we have adopted that provided by the National Voluntary Council for Children's play, that is:

“Play is an essential part of every child's life and vital to the processes of human development. It provides the mechanism for children to explore the world around them and the medium to which skills are developed in practice. It is essential for physical, emotional and spiritual growth, intellectual and educational development, and acquiring social and behavioural skills.

Play is a generic term for a variety of activities that are satisfying to the child, creative for the child and freely chosen by the child. The activities may involve equipment or they may not, be boisterous and energetic or quiet and contemplative, be done with other people or on one's own, have an end product or not.

Play services are the means by which opportunities for play are enabled, provided and created.”

## Introduction

This is a summary of the key principles, issues, and findings of the Stafford Borough Play Strategy. The full strategy document, which provides the statistics and rationale leading to these conclusions, is available from the Borough Council Play Development Officer, Sally McDonald.

## Vision, Aims and objectives of the strategy.

### *Vision Statement*

The vision Statement for the Stafford Borough Play Strategy is:

**“Working in partnership to ensure all children in Stafford Borough have fair access to Quality Play opportunities”.**

### *General Aims.*

The aims of the strategy are:

- To enable the provision of an integrated range of high quality informal opportunities in play that is sufficient to meet the needs and aspirations of the Borough’s children and young people.
- To ensure that such provision is effectively planned and co-ordinated.
- To ensure that the strategy supports the aims of the Stafford Community Plan and Cultural Strategy.

### **Objectives**

- To ensure that accessible play opportunities and facilities are provided to meet demand, encourage participation and enable children and young people “to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child” (Article 31 UN Convention).
- To audit play services and to provide evidence of the need for both play facilities (Playgrounds & Youth Facilities) and other services (Playschemes, activity programmes etc). To identify shortfalls and surpluses in provision so as to enable an informed approach to the provision of future play services.
- To produce an Action Plan to meet the identified needs and priorities over the next 5 years.

### **General Principles**

- The Strategy is for Stafford Borough as a whole – not just the Borough Council. It will aim to encompass the roles and contributions of all partners involved in Play in the district.
- The scope of the strategy will be sufficiently wide to encompass informal facilities and activities for children and youth (Playgrounds, Youth facilities, playschemes and informal activity programmes).
- Consultation will be a key element and will aim to be as extensive as possible (involving direct consultation with children and young people).
- The strategy will place local issues in the context of relevant local strategy, regional strategy and the national agenda.

## **The Case for Play**

### **The General Case for Play**

The importance of Play can be illustrated from two perspectives:

- The benefits of Play for children
- The wider social benefits

### **The benefits of play for children**

It is widely accepted that play is a vital activity in relation to healthy child development, for example, Play:

- Provides children with opportunities to enjoy freedom, and exercise choice and control over their actions.
- Offers children opportunities for testing boundaries and exploring risk.
- Offers a very wide range of physical, social and intellectual experiences for children.
- Fosters children's independence and self-esteem.
- Develops children's respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction.
- Supports the child's well-being, healthy growth and development.
- Increases children's knowledge and understanding.
- Promotes children's creativity and capacity to learn.

### **The Social Benefits of Children's Play**

Play is now widely recognised to have a significant wider role for society and research has indicated that play:

- Helps reduce the involvement of children and young people in anti-social behaviour, in the short term; and plays a part in promoting social cohesion in the longer term.
- Supports families and communities, by providing a focus for informal networks of family support, and by allowing children autonomy within an environment which parents feel secure about.
- Makes an important contribution, in parallel with education, in developing adults who are creative and effective in the social and economic sphere
- Offers opportunities for exploring cultural identity and difference

The Stafford Borough Play Strategy recognises these benefits and on this basis the Borough Council and its partners believe it is important to invest in Play services within Stafford Borough.

## Policy Statements

The key Policy statements for the Play Strategy (structured in line with the 5 key themes of the Stafford Cultural Strategy are:

	<b>Theme 1 - Accessibility and equality of opportunity.</b>
<b>P1</b>	The Council endorses the principle of Equity within its delivery of Play Services. It will ensure that its policies, practices and procedures do not disadvantage or discriminate against any individuals or groups, and that positive actions are taken to encourage participation by all sectors of the community.
<b>P2</b>	The Council will utilise the Play Strategy Facility Criteria to identify and determine priority facility needs for the Borough with the aim of achieving an equitable mix and distribution of appropriate Play and Youth Facilities across the Borough.
	<b>Theme 2- Social and economic regeneration.</b>
<b>P3</b>	The Council recognises the potential of Play to contribute to the wider social and economic regeneration of the District and will take actions to realise this potential (and encourage other relevant bodies to consider the role of Play in their local strategies and plans).
<b>P4</b>	The Council will seek to develop initiatives to maximise the potential of Play to provide opportunities for training and employment.
	<b>Theme 3 - Healthy lifestyles and a high-quality environment.</b>
<b>P5</b>	The Council recognises that Play and Informal Activity Programmes have a vital part to play in improving the health and well-being of children and young people through the promotion of active and healthy lifestyles. It will seek to establish partnerships to maximise the potential of Play to link with other health initiatives in the Borough.
<b>P6</b>	The Council will seek to protect and enhance Play and Youth Facilities in the Borough and encourage appropriate management regimes to minimise conflicts of use and improve the quality of provision.
<b>P7</b>	The Council will seek to maximise the potential of planning obligations and agreements with developers in order to facilitate the improvement and enhancement of Play and Youth Facility provision and to support its future maintenance.
<b>P8</b>	The Council recognises the role that Play and Informal Activity Programmes play in enriching the lives of young people and in offering them stimulating and rewarding alternatives to anti-social behaviour and activity causing nuisance (to the benefit of the whole community).
	<b>Theme 4 - Lifelong learning.</b>
<b>P9</b>	The Council will publish 'Best Value' strategies for the provision of its Play services and will further develop partnerships and joint working with relevant agencies, and across and within Council departments.
<b>P10</b>	The Council will continue to directly promote Play through Playschemes, holiday activity and out-of school programmes and indirectly through appropriate support to the voluntary sector.
<b>P11</b>	The Council will encourage schools and other partners to provide or increase access to Play facilities by the local community, ideally regulated by the adoption of a community use agreement.
	<b>Theme 5 - Communication and awareness.</b>
<b>P12</b>	The Council will ensure that its Play services are effectively promoted and publicised throughout the Borough, and will act in liaison with its partners to ensure effective inter-agency communication.
<b>P13</b>	The Council acknowledges the vital role played by Parish Councils and the Voluntary sector in relation to the provision of play opportunities and wherever possible will work in partnership to support their efforts.
<b>P14</b>	The Council recognises the essential need to consult and involve Children, Young People and local residents in the planning and delivery of play opportunities and youth facilities across the Borough

## **Section 1 – Background and Policy Context.**

### **Introduction – Local Profile**

Stafford Borough covers an area of 230 sq miles of mid-Staffordshire and it serves a population of 127,000<sup>1</sup> people. There are two main areas of settlement namely Stafford (57,000) and Stone (15,000), which are surrounded by extensive countryside and attractive villages. The Borough is well served by a comprehensive network of road and rail links. The M6 provides easy access from north and south of the country.

The overall population of Stafford Borough is projected to fall over the next ten years by 0.6% (this is against the trend across the County of a small population increase). Reflecting national trends, the number of children and young adults are projected to fall the most, whilst there is expected to be a growth of the middle-aged and elderly population. Currently the highest distribution of children and young people are found in the wards of Highfields, Weeping Cross, Penkside and Chartley.

Stafford Borough has the second highest youth unemployment rate in the County (after Cannock Chase).

### **Stafford Borough Council's Aims (2003/2007).**

#### **Overarching Aim and Vision.**

**We will concentrate on the core services and responsibilities of the Council set to locally determined standards within a framework of robust financial and business management. Our vision is to lead a community and Borough which is Prosperous, Safe, Healthy, Clean and Green.**

#### **Key priorities.**

The Council has adopted 4 key priorities for 2003 to 2007:

- Prosperity.
- Community Safety.
- The Management of Public Space.
- Waste Management.

The Play Strategy has a contribution to make to all of these themes (even waste management as the strategy includes consideration of a Play "Scrapstore" which recycles Paper, Card and other materials which would otherwise become landfill). The Action Plan has been structured so that the role of Play Services towards the achievement of the priorities can be easily identified.

### **The Stafford Cultural Strategy.**

The Stafford Borough Local Cultural Strategy (2001 to 2006) looks at cultural and leisure services in their entirety across the whole Borough and across agencies. It was prepared by the Cultural and Leisure Services of the Borough Council in partnership with Staffordshire County Council, Stafford District Arts Council and

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<sup>1</sup> 1998 figures used throughout the strategy as 2001 census figures not available at ward level at time of writing.

Stafford Borough Sports Council. It also has the support and the co-operation of a wide range of other community organisations and local and regional agencies.

### **Vision Statement**

The strategic vision for cultural development in Stafford Borough is:

To offer a better quality of life for individuals and communities by building partnerships which:

- Provide more choices and opportunities for people to enjoy their leisure time.
- Promote prosperity and healthy living.
- Attract support (money, skills, facilities) from as many sources as possible.
- Encourage local innovation, creativity and excellence.

### **Key Themes.**

The cultural strategy focuses on 5 main themes:

- Theme 1. Accessibility and equality of opportunity.
- Theme 2. Social and economic regeneration.
- Theme 3. Healthy lifestyles and high-quality environment.
- Theme 4. Lifelong learning.
- Theme 5. Communication and awareness.

The Play Strategy is structured so that the contribution of Play to the Key Themes of the strategy is clearly demonstrated.

### **Other Relevant Council Strategies.**

The Play Strategy also takes into account the key findings of:

- The Stafford Borough Local Plan
- The Stafford Borough Open Space Strategy
- Stafford Borough Community Safety Strategy (2002-2005).
- A Local Agenda 21 Strategy for Stafford Borough.

### **National Context**

The strategy has taken full note of:

- *Safety standards and legislation* - New European safety standards for playgrounds – EN1176 and EN 1171 – that have now been in place since 1999.
- *The Health and Safety at Work Act*
- The Revised National Playing Field Association *Six-Acre Standard* (2001)
- *More than Swings and Roundabouts* (Children's Play Council - 2002).

## **Section 2 – Consultation**

### **Review of Research and Consultation**

The strategy has taken note of the most relevant research and consultation completed prior to the commencement of the strategy process, that is:

- Citizens Panel Survey (undertaken by MORI)
- Playscheme survey (parents) for the 2002 playscheme programme.

### **Strategy consultation.**

An additional programme of consultation has been undertaken as part of the strategy process itself. This involved:

- A survey of children (through seven schools within Stafford Borough).
- A parents survey (playscheme users).
- A survey of young people (13-16) attending the half term Chillout programme.
- A survey of local residents associations.
- A survey of town and parish councils.
- A survey of Council members.
- Internal Officer Consultation

In addition meetings have been held with:

- Local skateboarders and bladers.
- Staffordshire Police Service.
- Staffordshire Youth and Community Service.
- Staffordshire County Council (Early Years Partnership).
- MENCAP (disability playscheme and inclusive schemes).

We also met with young people through the Stafford District Youth Forum.

Finally, a consultation draft of the strategy was circulated to key partners including the County Council, Parish Councils and the Police, following which the Strategy was re-drafted (based upon feedback received).

### **Key Issues**

Taking into account the consultation undertaken, discussions with officers, and knowledge of current play issues on the local and national agenda the following issues were identified as being of particular importance:

- Reviewing the overall supply and demand of playgrounds and youth facilities across the Borough.
- Considerations relating to the distribution and location of play areas, and the potential for a strategic provision of larger playgrounds.
- Issues concerning the quality of existing play areas and potential for improvements.

- The need for improvements/amendments to playgrounds in relation to access for disabled children (Disability Discrimination Act).
- The need for playgrounds and youth facilities to address the needs of different age ranges.
- The production of appropriate local standards for playgrounds and youth facilities that are sufficiently robust to secure adequate developer contributions in relation to housing and retail development.
- The need for facilities for older children and young people such as skateparks, MUGAs, and youth shelters.
- The potential for expansion of youth programmes such as Chillout in partnership with the youth service and other partners.
- Identifying potential areas for external funding to improve play facilities and services.
- The development of agreed criteria in relation to prioritising expenditure on playgrounds and youth facilities (refurbishments and new projects).
- Further exploring the role of Town & Parish Councils, Residents Associations and the voluntary sector in relation to future play provision.
- Strengthening partnerships between those involved in play and youth provision.
- Improving consultation with children, young people and local residents.
- Exploring the potential for the dual use of school sites in relation to children's play.
- Reviewing the need for capital and revenue funding to improve play services in the Borough.

## **Section 3 – Playgrounds and Youth Facilities**

### **1. Introduction – Equipped Play Areas**

The Borough has three town parks and 75 children's play areas/youth facilities. A very limited number of the public open spaces/play areas contain senior (teenage) facilities – BMX tracks, youth shelters, skateboard parks and Multi-Use Games Areas.

In summary this comprises:

- 65 "Traditional" Play Areas (3 with Ball Play areas)
- 3 Wheel Play Areas (2 Skateboard Parks & 1 BMX Track)
- 4 Youth shelters/Youth Areas
- 4 Multi-Use Games Areas & 5 Sports Walls

There are approximately 24,700 children (under 16) in the Borough, representing about 20% of the total population of 127,000 (1998 figures). This is a relatively high proportion of children – the average for England and Wales being 16.2%. National Research has indicated that 80% of use of public open space is by children and young people.

The Borough Council Play/Youth Areas are situated:

- In the towns of Stafford & Stone
- In the larger villages (15)
- In the smaller villages & hamlets (21)

In addition there are 15 playgrounds managed by Parish Councils across the Borough, some of which have additional kick-about areas and informal youth facilities.

### **Supply of Play Areas**

#### ***Stafford Town - Main Conclusions***

There are many areas in the town that do not have access to equipped play areas in accordance with the walk time criteria of the NPFA six acre standard.

Distribution is inequitable with some areas such as Castle, Holmcroft and Weeping Cross wards relatively well provided for (at least in terms of quantity) while other areas such as Highfields and Tillington wards towards the west of the town are poorly provided for. There is a strong argument that children in more deprived areas frequently have a greater need for play opportunities outside the home environment and as such additional weight is added to the case for improvements to access to play facilities in the Highfields and Coton wards.

The proposed Rickerscote Home Zone will involve improvements for play facilities in parts of the two wards of Manor and Penside.

#### ***Stone – Main Conclusions***

As with Stafford Town there are some areas in the town that do not have access to equipped play areas in accordance with the walk time criteria of the NPFA six acre standard (though this is not so striking as with the case in Stafford).

The north of the town is the least well served with the ward of Stonefield & Christchurch having only 2 play areas to serve its population of 700 young people. This ward is also the most deprived ward in Stone. In terms of priority therefore it can be concluded that provision and refurbishment of Play Areas in Stonefield & Christchurch ward should be regarded as a high priority.

As with Stafford it needs to be noted that this analysis does not take into account the quality of existing playgrounds.

### **Rural Areas – Main Conclusions**

In accordance with the NPFA advice, towns or villages with populations of over 1000 should aim for provision of a network of Local Areas for Play (LAPS), Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPS), and Neighborhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPS) in accordance with the 6 acre standard. On this basis other than Little Haywood and Colwich all of the 6 largest settlements (Gnosall, Meir Heath & Rough Close, Eccleshall, Blythe Bridge, and Great Haywood) fall short of the standard.

In terms of priorities for new provision Blythe Bridge and Great Haywood are high priorities, as currently they have no equipped play areas. Gnosall, Meir Heath and Eccleshall also have a strong case for new or improved provision. Of these Gnosall may be regarded as having the strongest case in virtue of its higher number of young people.

In the case of the smaller villages there is no equipped play areas in Tittensor, which therefore has a strong case for new provision. Yarnfield, Derrington, Fulford, Great Bridgeford, Weston, Brocton and Woodseaves all have a case for improved play areas (in relation to the rural standard suggested by the NPFA). Regarding the smaller villages and Hamlets, NPFA rural standards would suggest that all those with a population of over 100 should have some form of equipped play area and those with less than 100 at least a LAP. Additional funding for small rural settlements is required and could be obtained via changes to the calculation of section 106 agreements or possible introduction of a tariff system from all new dwellings.

### **Demand - Qualitative factors**

The consultation process indicated a wide degree of consensus that:

- Provision of playgrounds is a high priority.
- Children do make use of playgrounds.
- Quality of existing playgrounds is no better than average. There is a need for more interesting equipment (and facilities for children with disabilities).
- Play areas should have separate areas for different age groups.
- Need to maintain access to playgrounds close to home.
- There is a particular need for facilities for 9-17 year olds.

*This indicates a clear local demand to retain playgrounds and to ensure access close to home; a need for a general refurbishment and improvement programme; a need where possible to provide playgrounds with segregation for different age groups; a need for more facilities for teenagers; and greater consideration for children with disabilities.*

### **Supply and Demand – Overall Conclusion**

*In terms of the NPFA standard and from the results of the consultation process there is little justification for any further “rationalisation” of sites as there is little evidence of over-provision in any particular areas of the Borough. Nor is there any indication from children or parents of a preference for more investment in fewer sites to raise quality at those sites at the expense of access to sites locally. The council should therefore not allow for any further closures or deletions of sites unless an alternative site of comparable size and quality is provided, and which relates directly to the needs of the communities being served by the existing provision.*

*It is also suggested that the Council should undertake a study of all vacant land space to assess its availability for use as children’s play/youth space. Where appropriate suitable pieces of land should be designated as playspace in the recreation chapter of the Local Plan when it is next reviewed. Where necessary, the Council should give consideration to acquiring such pieces of land.*

## **2. Youth facilities.**

It is important not to overlook provision for older children/young people in relation to the need for and demand upon public open space.

### **What are youth facilities?**

When we refer to facilities for youth we are thinking of facilities primarily aimed at the 13+ age range, but which will in reality be likely to cater, in addition, for children and young people at either end of this target group. Such facilities include:

- BMX tracks.
- Skateboard ramps and pipes.
- Kickabout areas.
- Street basketball facilities.
- Floodlit multi-use games areas.
- Youth shelters/Purpose-built outdoor meeting areas for young people.
- Games walls
- Graffiti walls
- Mobile Skate Park

### **Youth Facilities in Stafford Borough**

#### **Current provision - supply.**

There is relatively little provision of Youth Facilities across the Borough and the majority of the Borough Council sites are in Stafford town. Some of the parish councils have also provided facilities for youth (primarily kickabout areas and meeting points). The provision is summarised below:

All provision in Stafford and Stone is Borough Council managed.

#### **Local need - Demand.**

Consultation with young people through the survey at Chillout; direct discussion with young people at Chillout; a Wheeled Sports Youth Focus Group; feedback from the District Youth Forum; and the consultations with parents and residents associations revealed that:

- Of all age groups young people from 12-16 are most in need of new facilities.
- In terms of neighbourhood provision the most important demand is for recognised informal outdoor meeting places/youth shelters for local young people (need for active youth involvement in design and siting).
- A demand for a central Skatepark facility in Stafford Town and provision of a replacement facility for Stone. Need for a greater tolerance of wheeled sports on Car Parks and for exploring the potential for agreed access to some of these (under strictly regulated conditions).
- Need for a network of MUGAs in Stafford and Stone.
- Need for Youth Facility Provision in Rural Settlements.

### **3. Local Standards**

The following local standards are suggested:

#### **Stafford & Stone**

In relation to new housing developments and as an aspiration for provision in existing areas a network of play/youth facility areas should be provided in accordance with the following local standards<sup>1</sup>:

#### ***Casual Play Area (amended from the NPFA LAP)***

Location	Two minutes walking time from home – straight line distance 120m
Target age group	Accompanied four to six-year-olds.
Purpose	low-key games, imaginative/social play, French cricket or play with small toys.
Equipment/Landscaping	Equipment not necessary but if included small-scale and appropriate for younger children; seating and dog fencing. Landscaping to maximise play value.
Area	Activity zone minimum 100sq m and (to avoid disturbance to neighbours) buffer zone of at least 5 m from the nearest residential property. Buffer zone landscaping to include child-friendly planting (eg natural scent, colour and texture).

#### ***Junior Equipped Play Area (amended from the NPFA LEAP)***

Location	7 minutes walking time from home – straight line distance 300m.
Target age group	Accompanied five to eight year-olds and unaccompanied eight to eleven-year-olds. Consideration should also be given to accompanied younger children (segregated area).
Purpose	A Junior Play Area should cater for a large range of play activity, including an area for informal ball games.
Equipment/Landscaping	In the 5-8 years area at least five types of play equipment to include challenges in balancing, rocking, climbing or agility, sliding and social play. In the Under 8s area equipment included should be small-scale and appropriate for younger children. Should also have seating for accompanying adults and be fenced to exclude dogs. Landscaping to maximise play value.
Area	Activity zone minimum of 500 sq m. Buffer zone where practicable of approximately 25 m between the edge of the activity zone and residential property. The buffer zone should include footpaths and planted areas. Buffer zone landscaping to include child-friendly planting (eg natural scent, colour and texture).
Consultation	Refurbishment or new provision to be designed through consultation with local

<sup>1</sup> This is a short summary of the standard – further quality details are found in the proposed draft supplementary planning guidance.

	children, parents, and residents.
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### ***Teenage Activity Area (amended from NPFA NEAP)***

Location	within 20 minutes walking time from home – straight line distance 800m
Target age group	Unaccompanied and unsupervised 12 – 16 year-olds.
Purpose	to provide challenging and stimulating play opportunities and youth facilities
Equipment/ Facilities/ Landscaping	<p>2 separate Areas as below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A minimum of eight types of equipment comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 1 item for rocking, social or developmental play</li> <li>• At least 2 items for sliding, swinging, or moderate climbing.</li> <li>• At least 5 items to encourage more adventurous climbing, swinging or gliding (eg aerial runway).</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Hard surface Multi-Use Games Area of at least 465 sq m.</li> </ol> <p>The 2 areas should also be fenced to exclude dogs. Landscaping to maximise play value.</p> <p>Also to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seating for adults.</li> <li>• Youth shelter/seating/meeting area for teenagers.</li> </ul> <p>The site may also include additional youth facilities (as defined above) in line with consultation with local young people.</p>
Area	Total Activity zone minimum of 1000 sq m. Buffer zone where practicable of approximately 30 m from activity zone to nearest residential property (50m if skateboarding facilities included).
Consultation	Refurbishment or new provision to be designed through consultation with local children and young people, parents, and residents.

### **Rural Settlements**

For Rural settlements the following standards are suggested (amended from the 2001 NPFA guidelines and based upon the local standards outlined above).

1. For settlements of 2000 people or more there should be full provision of Casual Play Areas, Junior Play Areas, and Teenage Activity Areas.
2. For settlements of 1000 – 2000 people there should be provision of Casual Play Areas and Junior Play Areas plus a MUGA and Neighbourhood Youth Meeting places.
3. For settlements from 500 – 1000 people there should be provision of Casual Play Areas and Junior Play Areas (with priority being given to a Junior Play Area) plus a Youth Meeting Place.
4. For settlements from 100 - 500 there should be provision of a Junior Play Area plus for new developments Casual Play Areas. A youth Meeting Place should also be provided. The facilities should be located as close to the centre as possible.
5. For settlements with less than 100 people there should be provision of a Casual Play Area.

## **Limitations of standards.**

It is worth, finally, stressing the need for flexibility in relation to the application of standards. If standards are applied too rigidly without consideration of local circumstance the approach can have certain disadvantages. For example, the process:

- May discourage creativity.
- May be inflexible and unable to take account of local circumstances.
- The application of standards may be difficult in areas where land uses are largely fixed.
- May be applied automatically without checking against local needs or wishes.
- May work against local participation.
- Can be difficult to capture some important factors (is such as location).
- May take less account of quality considerations.

The approach taken in this strategy aims to address these deficiencies by placing consultation specifically within the standards process. It is therefore important in all cases to fully embrace the consultation methodology providing sufficient flexibility to ensure that provision is in line with the needs and aspirations of local children, young people, and residents.

## **4. Shared and dual use arrangements for children's play areas**

Many groups besides Borough and Parish Councils provide opportunities for children's play. Often these facilities are used for relatively limited periods of time, leaving spare capacity for different purposes, or by other groups of children. The shared use of such facilities can help provide additional public access to play facilities.

Opportunities for shared use can be found at schools, public houses, private sports clubs, play groups, hospitals, garden centres, caravan sites, and commercial fun parks.

*It is suggested that the Borough Council identify opportunities for shared use arrangements, particularly in the rural areas that suffer from a lack of play facilities. A pilot project at a rural school should be identified and implemented prior to exploring the potential for wider application of this principle.*

## **5. Prioritisation of projects**

In developing and reviewing the Strategy Action Plan a method will need to be devised for choosing between and reconciling the competing claims of different projects for resources.

The first element of this is in drawing up priority wards and settlements on the basis of:

- Availability of Play Areas/Youth Facilities in the area
- The number of children/young people within the catchment
- The degree of deprivation in the relevant ward or settlement

On this basis the priority Wards/Settlements suggested by this approach are:

- **Stafford Town** : Highfields, Coton, Penkside, Tillington and Manor Wards.
- **Stone** : Stonefield & Christchurch Ward
- **Rural Settlements** : Blythe Bridge, Eccleshall, Gnosall, Great Haywood, and Meir Heath.

Other Parishes with demand and a clear desire to develop and improve provision are **Berkswich, Brocton, Church Eaton, Creswell and Hixon.**

Following on from this, a framework for prioritisation is suggested as follows:

Priority Rating	Definition
<b>High Priority</b>	Projects which: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>address deficiencies in the Borough's Play/Youth Facilities infrastructure either in respect of acute local deficiencies in provision (or strategic gaps in provision for Youth/Wheeled Sports Facilities) or for replacement or renewal of such facilities which would otherwise result in a major deficiency in provision, <b>and</b>:</li> <li>include facilities for Youth.</li> <li>are to the benefit of Priority Wards/Settlements as identified in the strategy.</li> <li>can clearly demonstrate active ongoing commitment by local stakeholders (eg children, young people, residents, Town/parish council or local school).</li> </ol>
<b>Medium Priority</b>	Projects which: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>address deficiencies in the Borough's Play/Youth Facilities infrastructure either in respect of local deficiencies in provision or for replacement or renewal of such facilities which would otherwise result in a major deficiency in provision, <b>and</b>:</li> <li>can clearly demonstrate active ongoing commitment by local stakeholders (eg children, young people, residents, Town/parish council or local school).</li> <li>are to the benefit of Priority Wards/Settlements as identified in the strategy.</li> </ol>
<b>Low Priority</b>	Projects which: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>address deficiencies in the Borough's Play/Youth Facilities infrastructure either in respect of local deficiencies in provision or for replacement or renewal of such facilities which would otherwise result in a major deficiency in provision, <b>and</b></li> <li>can clearly demonstrate active ongoing commitment by local stakeholders (eg children, young people, residents, Town/parish council or local school).</li> </ol>
<b>Non Priority</b>	Projects that duplicate existing provision and which might create a surplus of supply and result in under-use of existing facilities.

*In addition the Play Strategy suggests that the Council should draw up a set of guidelines for partners preparing play/youth facility proposals to ensure they have subjected their plans to detailed scrutiny and analysis in terms of:*

- *Local Consultation*
- *Demonstration of need and local demand*

- *Management arrangements*
- *Long term sustainability*
- *Local fundraising*

### **Play/youth facility Development Programme**

*In line with the local demand for improved quality of play/youth facilities detailed earlier and the adoption of local standards it is essential to maintain a long-term Capital Programme. This would enable a planned refurbishment of playgrounds in response to local demand in line with these local standards and prioritisation criteria.*

In relation to new facilities it is likely that additional resources will be required and potential sources include provision in relation to planning obligations resulting from development, NOF lottery funding for Play, and the Heritage Lottery Fund (Public Parks Initiative).

## **6. Play safety and Play Area Management**

### **Stafford Borough Council**

The strategy concludes that in general terms the Council's management of its play areas, and procedures for ensuring health and safety of users is sound. Specific points raised are:

#### ***Prompt response arrangements.***

*In terms of good practice it may be that the council wishes to nominate a responsible officer/s who could be contacted out-of-hours via the council call centre in response to serious risk of danger from equipment damaged between inspections, after hours or weekends (for example, through vandalism).*

#### ***Disability Discrimination Act 1999***

The Disability Discrimination Act is to cover Playgrounds from 2004. In the light of this the Strategy process included a site-by-site assessment of access for disabled children. *It is recommended that these assessments are reviewed and that a programme of improvements is produced in response to the assessments.*

*Additionally it is recommended that a Playgrounds Access Review group is established and that MENCAP, and Staffordshire Social Services are invited to join to help with this review (MENCAP have indicated their willingness to advise the council in this respect).*

### **Parish Councils**

Play safety procedures differ considerably from one parish to another (though all parish councils operating playgrounds are aware of the importance of safety precautions).

*It is therefore suggested that the Borough Council may wish to consider working with the Parish Council's to convene a Play Safety seminar to help clarify responsibilities and procedures and to encourage good practice.*

### **Further Support to Parish Councils**

Many Parish Councils believe that provision in Stafford and Stone is unbalanced when compared to provision in the rural areas. A number of Parish Councils have identified a local demand and need for improved or new provision in relation to play/youth facilities, yet have insufficient resources to meet this local need.

*It is suggested that in establishing Capital Budgets for refurbishments/new provision of play/youth facilities the Council may wish to consider a system of Grant-aid for Parish Councils to enable partnership working to address priority needs for new provision/improvements in line with strategy conclusions.*

*In addition, or as an alternative, it is suggested that the Council consider methods by which advice and guidance to Parish Councils can be improved in relation to their securing external funding for play/youth projects.*

*Finally it is suggested that where the Borough Council currently provides Play facilities in Parish Council settlements the local Parish Council should be given the opportunity to take responsibility for local provision (by transfer of ownership from the Borough to the Parish). In such cases the Borough Council should ensure that the play area is brought up to the relevant local standard prior to transfer.*

## **Section 4 – Playschemes and Informal Activity Programmes**

### **1. Playschemes and Informal Activity Programmes**

The Borough Council organises a summer playscheme each year operating Monday to Friday for four weeks over the school summer holidays. The scheme ran from 21 centres in 2002, generally caters for up to 2000 children per annum (under the supervision of about 150 play leaders). While all children attending the scheme are registered, daily attendance is organised on a first-come first-served basis. Schemes are operated free of charge to the children.

In response to local demand for informal activities for older children (13 to 18 year-olds) the Borough Council has worked with the Staffordshire County Youth Service to develop such a scheme (called “Chillout”). This operated for the first time during the summer of 2002 and during the 2003 February half-term. This scheme has proved successful and popular with young people and the police have welcomed it as a scheme likely to reduce the incidence of antisocial behaviour and disorder from young people. The scheme is discussed in more detail below.

#### **Playschemes - Stafford Town**

There were 8 playscheme venues in Stafford Town in summer 2003. The playschemes are generally well distributed across the town to enable local access by children. Looking at the distribution alongside a consideration of the numbers of young people across the town and indices of deprivation the playscheme venues are also well sited to ensure access by the largest number of children (and those in the more deprived areas).

*The only evident gap in provision of playschemes is in the Forebridge Ward which currently has no scheme and it is therefore recommended that consideration be made of identifying a venue within the Forebridge Ward in future years (ideally sited so as to also provide access to the north of Penkside Ward).*

#### **Stone and the Rural Areas**

Stone and Rural playschemes are also quite well distributed across the Borough. Looking at the distribution alongside a consideration of the numbers of young people within settlements and indices of deprivation the playscheme venues are also fairly well sited to ensure access by the largest number of children (and those in the more deprived areas).

*There are, however, 2 larger settlements that currently do not have local access to schemes, that is, Blythe Bridge and Yarnfield and it is therefore recommended that consideration be made of identifying venues within these settlements for provision in future years. There is also a specific demand and desire for support to playschemes/activity programmes in Berkswich Parish.*

#### **Pre-Registration and Charging for Playschemes?**

Local consultation with parents was not conclusive as to the preference for pre-registration for playschemes. Currently all children are registered for each scheme at the beginning of the scheme but then attendance is casual on a day to day first-come first-served basis. There is no fee charged for attendance. The majority of parents

indicated that they believed a small charge of £1-£2 per session would be reasonable.

The existing system has worked well over the years and was developed on the principle that no child should be excluded from attendance on the basis of a family's financial ability to pay. As the schemes are specifically provided on the basis of their recreational value to children (and not as childcare provision for working parents) this principle remains sound and should be adhered to.

It would still be possible to maintain this principle if free or subsidised places were offered at initial registration on the basis of evidence of family disadvantage (for example, being in receipt of benefit). Internal audit have advised that a satisfactory simple ticket based system implemented by play leaders could be put in place though this would carry an associated administration cost (they also stated that such a system was intrinsically limited in relation to security). Other systems involving pre-registration and pre-payment could well be more expensive and further disadvantage low-income families.

The savings to the scheme could be in the order of £5,840 if prices were set at the £1 per session level that most parents believed reasonable. Up to 2000 local children attend the summer playscheme and the total number of attendances in 2002 was 17,299.

### Charging

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Would provide income in the order of £13,840 (£17,299 less 20% in relation to subsidised places).</p> <p>The income (minus costs of collection noted in the adjacent column) could be used to extend playschemes or for other play projects. <b><i>The overall savings could be in the order of £5,840.</i></b></p> <p>Setting a charge may reinforce the value of playschemes to the local community.</p>	<p>Even with free or subsidised fees children of low-income families may not attend due to stigma.</p> <p>Collecting fees each day adds administrative and security burden to play leaders.</p> <p>Cost of collecting fees would be in the order of £8,000</p> <p>Ticket system is intrinsically open to abuse and any other system is expensive and administratively burdensome.</p> <p>Limited security for cash collected on site.</p> <p>Security issues for staff regularly carrying cash to pay into council offices/bank.</p>

Given that a small charge of £1 per session could produce an overall saving in the region of £5,840 introducing a charge for playschemes is worthy of further consideration. A first step might be to introduce a system of voluntary donations and monitor the impact. The balance of advantages and disadvantages is fairly evenly balanced and it is suggested that members be invited to make a final decision on this matter following the monitoring of the voluntary donation scheme.

*It is therefore recommended that the policy of casual access rather than pre-registration for playschemes be retained but that in the light of the fine balance*

*between the advantages and disadvantages of charging members should take a final decision on this matter.*

## **2. Out of school care schemes.**

Information provided by the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent children's information service indicates that there are at least 23 out of school care schemes operating across Stafford Borough. These provide out of school care primarily for children from the ages of 5 to 11. Most of these schemes operate independently under a variety of management arrangements ranging from charitable trusts, schools, through to private commercial organisations.

In general such schemes provide care before and after school and during school holidays (though some of these schemes do not operate during school holidays). All such schemes register through the Staffordshire County Council Early Years Unit and are associated with the Staffordshire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

While the schemes may initially be supported in their development through the EYDCP, in the long-term they need to be commercially sustainable through charging fees to users.

*It is proposed that the Borough Council and the EYDCP review the potential for Playschemes to provide a day-long care service. Such an arrangement would require pre-registration and fees would need to be charged to cover the additional costs required to provide such child-care places.*

*It is suggested that a pilot project is identified whereby at least 1 playscheme is identified for child-care extension.*

## **3. Youth Service Play Clubs**

The Youth Service operates a number of "Play Clubs" for 5-10 year olds in Stafford. These operate in the early evenings and provide a range of informal activities for local children.

*It is suggested that the operation of these be reviewed by the Youth Service, in liaison with the Borough Council, to assess their future development and management arrangements.*

## **4. TOP Play/TOP Sport**

The aim of this lottery funded programme is to ensure that every child under 11 receives a quality introduction to sport by providing access to high quality sports equipment through the community based sport programmes TOP Play and TOP Sport.

This scheme is run in Stafford Borough through the Sports Development section and there is good communication between Sports and Play Development in this respect.

## **5. Playschemes and Arts Development**

The Playscheme programme includes a large and varied range of Arts and Crafts activities. In the past, however, there appears to have been relatively little formal contribution from the Council Arts Developments initiative into the playscheme.

*It is therefore suggested that Play Services liase with Arts Development to explore the potential for playschemes to benefit from Arts Development initiatives (on a regular annual basis).*

## **6. Chillout**

Chillout is an informal activity programme aimed at 13-18 year olds. It ran first in the summer of 2002 organised by the Youth Service, then in the February half term in partnership with the Borough Council (for which Community Safety funding of £15,000 was secured). Both schemes were very popular with young people and regarded as a success by the partners and the Staffordshire Police Force in terms of a constructive contribution to Community Safety.

The youth service is the lead partner for this project, though at present its longer-term future is uncertain, as the scheme is not established in relation to ongoing budgets of either the Youth Service or the Borough Council. Given that the results of consultations with parents, council members, and young people themselves demonstrate conclusively an overwhelming view that provision for this age group is a high priority it must be a high priority to secure the ongoing continuation of this project.

*It is therefore recommended that the Youth Service and the Borough Council agree to jointly support this project on a minimum three-year pilot basis. Funding for this would need to be secured from elements of youth service, Borough Council and if possible Police Force budgets, plus any external funding that might be secured from external funding in relation to its contribution to Community Safety.*

## **7. Children with Disabilities**

For the past 7 years, children with disabilities have been able to access playschemes through provision via:

- The MENCAP Special-needs summer playscheme (Marshlands School)
- Marshlands Special Care playscheme (for children with profound multiple disabilities).
- Integration onto Stafford Borough Council playschemes.

In broad terms it is suggested that:

- The priority for the Borough Council should be to improve the inclusiveness of its Playschemes for children with disabilities.
- Staffordshire Social Services should provide greater support to the MENCAP Special Needs and Special Care playschemes.
- The vital role of MENCAP in terms of the effective delivery of both inclusive Borough Council Playschemes and the Special Needs and Special Care playschemes should be acknowledged.

*The following action is therefore recommended:*

- *Stafford Borough Council liaise with Staffordshire Social Services and MENCAP with the aim of providing a more secure base for the schemes.*
- *Stafford Borough Council work in partnership with MENCAP with the aim of providing more integration of children with special needs into the Borough Council playscheme.*
- *Staffordshire Social Services should explore the potential for increased financial support for the Special Needs and Special Care playschemes, for example, by the use of Quality Protects funding.*

### **8. The role of the Voluntary Sector/Parish Councils.**

The provision and organisation of playschemes is extremely varied over the country. The direct provision of playschemes by the local Borough or District Council is fairly common, but in many rural areas the voluntary sector and Parish Councils play a major role (often with financial and professional support from Borough Council play or leisure officers). In many rural areas, holiday playschemes are organised on a community led basis with the Borough Council playing an enabling role in terms of training, insurance, and grant aid. Rural Community Councils sometimes take on this role also.

This approach may enable the provision of playschemes in rural areas that currently have no such provision. It is therefore suggested that, as a pilot, approaches be made to Parish Councils/ Community Associations in rural areas to ascertain the potential for developing one or two short community led playschemes, initially in the Easter holiday period.

Priority rural settlements for community-led playschemes are:

- Fulford
- Tittensor
- Great Bridgeford
- Brocton
- Woodseaves
- Clayton
- Swynnerton

*In addition it is suggested that the potential for the Voluntary Sector to take responsibility for the delivery of rural playschemes on a community-led basis (with financial support from the Borough Council) should be further explored.*

### **Scrap stores/play resource centres.**

In a number of areas across the UK Scrapstores/play resource centres have been supported by the local Council, frequently in recognition of the Council's enabling role for play and community organisations.

A Scrap store is simply a means by which material which would otherwise be disposed of for landfill, such as paper, card, material etc, is recycled for use by children and community organisations. A play resource centre may additionally hire play, sport, and arts equipment for use by children and community organisations.

There is a Scrapstore in Stafford (Playaway) organised by Staffordshire Rural Community Council. It is suggested that the Borough Council and its partners may wish to help to promote its availability in virtue of its value to local play and community organisations (as well as its contribution to the objectives of Agenda 21).

*It is also suggested that the Borough Council liaise with the Scrapstore to explore its potential role in supporting rural community led playschemes as noted above.*

## **9. Concluding Remarks**

The Council's Play Services have been working on the basis of sound Play Development principles for many years. Indeed, the Stafford Borough Playscheme can, in many respects, be taken as a model of good practice. It is highly regarded both by the child users and their parents.

There is a clear demand for informal activity programmes for the over 13s such as the Chillout programme and this is regarded as a high priority by key partners. At present the ongoing delivery of such a programme is not secure and it remains a priority for the partners to consolidate this programme through agreement of ongoing responsibilities and funding.

Finally, there is a general need to develop improved ongoing working relationships between key partners such as the Borough Council, the Youth Service, the Early Years Partnership, MENCAP, and Playaway. This will help to ensure that the partners will be able to offer a more co-ordinated and complementary range of play services, with all key players having clear roles and responsibilities.

# Implementation and Action Plan

## Introduction

Financial constraints mean that it is unrealistic to expect that all of the Play needs and aspirations of local children and Young People can ever be fully met. However, by making the best use of available resources the Council can ensure that Play services of the highest possible quality and value are made available to local children and young people.

The benefits and contribution of Play and Youth Facilities to the achievement of wider social, health, educational, economic and environmental objectives described in this Strategy form a sound argument for continued investment by the Council. The recognition of these benefits by Government and other agencies provides a basis for the inclusion of Play projects in bids for additional external funding, such as Lottery funds, Single Regeneration Budget and New Deal for Communities, and in multi-agency partnerships and holistic approaches to regeneration and social renewal.

Even so it is of great importance that sufficient core resources are secured for Play Services within Council budgets to enable this important role to be developed. At present the Council cannot meet the expectations of local children and young people, or indeed of central government and strategic partners, in terms of maximising the contribution of Play to key corporate priorities and the wider social agenda. There is a particularly strong demand to improve services to the 13+ age range and children with disabilities. In terms of attracting external funding it will also be important to ensure that provision takes particular note of those areas showing evidence of social and economic deprivation.

*If the council is to effectively respond to these needs, aspirations and opportunities there is a case for additional staff resource in Play Services aimed at addressing these priority issues. It is also important that the Council allocates sufficient financial resources to enable an effective playground refurbishment programme and to allow for local partnership funding, which is crucial to the success of external funding bids.*

The Action Plan is produced as a separate document as it likely to be reviewed on an annual basis. Copies are available from the Stafford Borough Council Play Development Officer.

## Appendix 1 – Options for Implementation of the Stafford Borough Play Strategy

### Option 1 – Full implementation

#### 5 year Capital programme

Action	Need met	Cost £k p/a
Maintain capital rolling programme for play area refurbishment	Upgrade existing sites to BSEN 1176/7	75
Refurbishment programme for disabled access (Play Areas)	Required by Disability Discrimination Act	15
Develop Youth Facilities	High Priority from Strategy	35
Play Area/Youth Facility Grant-aid for Parish Councils (50% max).	Enable strategic development of rural facilities (High Priority)	30
	<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>

#### 3 year Revenue Programme

Action	Need met	Cost £k p/a
Temporary Post (3yr) – Assistant Play Officer	To secure external funding, support to Parish Councils and Voluntary Sector, develop partnership working etc (High Priority)	12.5 <sup>1</sup>
Promotion of Play Areas and Youth Facilities	To increase use of play areas and youth facilities (High Priority)	0.5
Partnership funding for Chillout Youth activity programme	High Priority from Strategy	3 <sup>2</sup>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>

**Total annual Cost (Capital and Revenue) = £171,000**

Option One enables the Implementation of all elements of Action Plan including:

- Support and advice to Parish Councils and the Voluntary Sector (including support for external funding bids).
- Partnership work with Youth Service, Early Years Police and MENCAP.
- Implementation of requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.
- The development of Youth facilities on a strategic basis.
- Securing funding from external sources eg to allow for Victoria Park refurbishment.
- The continuation and development of the Chillout Youth Activity Programme. Promotion of Play Areas and Youth Facilities.
- The Establishment of a 50% maximum grant-aid programme to enable the Strategic development of Rural Play Areas and Youth Facilities.

<sup>1</sup> Potential to secure match funding from NOF play programme

<sup>2</sup> Potential to secure match funding from County Council

## Option 2 (Partial Implementation)

### 5 year Capital programme

Action	Need met	Cost £k p/a
Maintain capital rolling programme for play area refurbishment	Upgrade existing sites to BSEN 1176/7	75
Refurbishment programme for disabled access (Play Areas)	Required by Disability Discrimination Act	15
Develop Youth Facilities (reduced programme)	High Priority from Strategy	18
	<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>

### 3 year Revenue Programme

Action	Need met	Cost £k p/a
Temporary Post (3yr) – Assistant Play Officer	To secure external funding, support to Parish Councils and Voluntary Sector, develop partnership working etc (High Priority)	12.5 <sup>3</sup>
Promotion of Play Areas and Youth Facilities	To increase use of play areas and youth facilities (High Priority)	0.5
Partnership funding for Chillout Youth activity programme	High Priority from Strategy	3 <sup>4</sup>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>

### Total Annual Cost (Capital and Revenue = £124,000)

Option 2 enables partial implementation of the Action Plan including:

- Support and advice to Parish Councils and the voluntary Sector (including support for external funding bids).
- Partnership work with Youth Service, Early Years Police and MENCAP.
- Implementation of requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.
- Reduced programme of Youth facilities provision.
- Securing funding from external sources eg to allow for Victoria Park redevelopment.
- The continuation and development of the Chillout Youth Activity Programme. Promotion of Play Areas and Youth Facilities.

It excludes Grant-aid programme to Parishes and reduces the capacity to develop Youth facilities.

<sup>3</sup> Potential to secure match funding from NOF play programme

<sup>4</sup> Potential to secure match funding from County Council

### Option 3 – Consolidation

#### 5 year Capital programme

Action	Need met	Cost £k p/a
Maintain capital rolling programme for play area refurbishment	Upgrade existing sites to BSEN 1176/7	75
Refurbishment programme for disabled access (Play Areas)	Required by Disability Discrimination Act	15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>

#### 3 year Revenue Programme

Action	Need met	Cost £k p/a
Promotion of Play Areas and Youth Facilities	To increase use of play areas and youth facilities (High Priority)	0.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0.5</b>

#### **Total Annual Cost (Capital and Revenue) = £90,500**

Enables minimum implementation of the Action Plan, that is, only those aspects requiring no additional staff or financial resources, plus:

- Implementation of requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and promotion of play areas.

It excludes:

- Support and advice to Parish Councils and the Voluntary Sector (including support for external funding bids).
- Increased partnership work with Youth Service, Early Years Police and MENCAP.
- Development of Youth facilities.
- Securing funding from external sources eg to allow for Victoria Park refurbishment.
- The continuation and development of the Chillout Youth Activity Programme.
- Grant-aid programme to Parishes.

## Appendix 2 - Stafford Borough Play Strategy – Borough Council Action Plan (2004-2009)

Policy Statement Council Aims	Actions Proposed	Lead Dept/ Organisatn	Partners	Additional Resource	Timescale
<b>Theme 1. Accessibility and equality of opportunity.</b>					
P1  Prosperity  Public Space  Comm Safety	1. Review staffing structure in Play & Parks Team & secure additional funding for 1 temp (3 year) f/t post (to enable Development Work, partnership work, support to Parish Councils & Voluntary Sector, and to maximise external funding)	Cultural Services	NOF Play fund	£12.5k p/a (50% of cost)	04 - 07
	2. Review the site Disability Access Audit and establish a 5 year programme of enhancements to improve Access (requirement of Disability Discrimination Act). Establish Access Review Group with external partners eg MENCAP & Social Services.	Play Dev	MENCAP, Social Services	£15k p/a	04 - 09
	3. Convene working group with Social Services and MENCAP to secure the ongoing provision of the Special Needs playschemes and improve arrangements for integration into the Borough Summer Playscheme.*	Play Dev	MENCAP, Social Services	None	04
	4. Increase the number of Children with disabilities integrated within Borough Council Playschemes (from 4 in 2002 to 12 by 2009)	Play Dev	MENCAP, Social Services	?	04 - 09
P2  Public Space  Comm Safety	1. Re-instate capital rolling programme for play area improvements/refurbishments.	Play Dev	Stafford BC	£75k p/a	04 – 09
	2. Establish an additional Capital rolling programme of £35,000 p/a for developing Youth Facilities.	Play dev	Stafford B C	£35k p/a	04 - 09
	2. Adopt the Play strategy facility prioritisation criteria and develop a 5 -year Plan for Capital projects. Immediate Priority wards/settlements for provision/improvement are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highfields and Coton wards, Stafford.</li> <li>• Stonefield &amp; Christchurch ward, Stone (in partnership with Stone Town Council)</li> <li>• Blythe Bridge, Eccleshall, Gnosall and Great Haywood (in partnership with parish councils)</li> </ul>	Stafford BC	County Council, Police, Parish Councils, Voluntary Sector	None	04

Policy Statement Council Aims	Actions Proposed	Lead Dept/ Organisatn	Partners	Additional Resource	Timescale
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### Theme 2. Social and economic regeneration

P3 Prosperity Comm Safety Public Space	1. Take a lead role in the Rickerscote Home Zone project in respect of improved play area provision.	Play Dev	Stafford BC	None	04/05
	2. Submit funding bid to Heritage Lottery Fund in relation to improvements to Victoria Park, Stafford, including play/youth facilities.*	Cultural Services	Local Community	?	05
	3. Prepare funding bids for new NOF Children's Play Fund as appropriate when details are released.*	Play Dev	As appropriate	?	05 – 08
	4. Present Play Strategy to the Community Partnership to demonstrate the value of Play to social and economic regeneration.	Play Dev	Community Partnership	None	04
P4 Prosperity	1. Provide training for Playleaders in relation to the Summer Playscheme, and provide support and advice to maximise benefit of work experience for career development.	Play Dev	Training Providers	None	04 – 09
	2. Provide work placements as appropriate within the Play and Parks Team	Cultural Services		None	04 - 09

### Theme 3. Healthy lifestyles and high-quality environment.

P5 Comm Safety Public Space	1. Present the Play Strategy to the local Primary Care Trust to highlight the role of Play to the Health agenda.	Play Dev	PCT	None	04
	2. Provide a playscheme programme that has a balanced range of activities for health, exercise, and creative child development.	Play Dev	Community Venues	None	04 – 09
	3. Provide quality play areas and youth facilities that encourage healthy and creative outdoor activity.	Play Dev	Parish Councils, Youth service	As P2.1	04 - 09
P6 Public Space	1. Avoid the closure or deletion of local play areas unless alternative sites or provision is provided appropriate to local circumstances.	Play Dev	Local Community	None	04 – 09

	<p>2. Undertake a study of all vacant land/open space to assess its potential for play/youth space. Where appropriate designate such land as such in the Local Plan.*</p> <p>3. Nominate a responsible officer/s to respond to out-of-hours notification of serious safety risk from equipment arising from vandalism or other causes.</p>	<p>Planning</p> <p>Play Dev</p>	<p>Play Dev</p> <p>Cultural Services</p>	<p>?</p> <p>None</p>	<p>?</p> <p>04</p>
P7 Public Space	<p>1. Adopt the Local Standards proposed within the strategy for play/youth provision and work towards the provision of facilities to meet those standards.</p> <p>2. Adopt Supplementary Planning Guidance to ensure appropriate Play/Youth provision and maintenance in relation to all Housing developments and appropriate Retail/commercial developments and to include provision within small rural settlements.</p>	<p>Stafford BC</p> <p>Planning</p>	<p>Planning, Play Dev</p> <p>Play Dev</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p>	<p>04</p> <p>04</p>
P8 Comm Safety	<p>1. Present the Play Strategy to the Community safety Partnership to highlight the contribution of play/youth provision to reducing anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>2. Provide high quality play/youth areas and playscheme/activity programmes to provide constructive low-cost activities for children and young people.</p> <p>3. Work with the Youth service and Police to consolidate the Chillout programme as a budgeted 3-year partnership project.</p>	<p>Play Dev</p> <p>Play Dev</p> <p>Youth service</p>	<p>Community Safety Partnership</p> <p>Parish Councils, Youth Service</p> <p>Play Dev, Police</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>£3k p/a</p>	<p>04</p> <p>04 – 09</p> <p>04 - 07</p>

#### Theme 4. Lifelong learning.

P9 Public Space	1. Work with Parish Councils to convene a Play Safety Seminar to help encourage good practice in relation to the management and maintenance of local play areas.*	Play Dev	Parish Councils	None	05
Comm Safety	2. Work with the EYDCP to review the potential to provide summer day care via playschemes. Identify and implement 1 playscheme day-care project as pilot.*	Play Dev	EYDCP	None	05 – 09
	3. Work with the Youth Service to review the operation and management of Youth Service Play Clubs.	Youth service	Play Dev	None	05
	4. Explore the potential to provide community-led playschemes in the rural areas with Parish Councils, Residents/Community Associations, and the Playaway Scrapstore. Identify 1 scheme as a pilot and support its delivery.*	Play Dev	Parish Councils, RAs, CAs, Playaway	?	05/06

P10 Comm Safety	1. Review Borough Council Playscheme venues and provide Playschemes in Forebridge Ward (Stafford), Blythe Bridge and Yarnfield.	Play Dev	Local Venues and partners	None	05
	2. Introduce a small voluntary donation for playscheme attendance to highlight the value of playschemes and to provide income for improvement/expansion. Introduce system to safeguard attendance by low-income and disadvantaged families.	Play Dev	Internal Audit	None	05
P11 Comm Safety	1. Prepare a plan for the development of shared-use arrangements for Play provision, particularly in the Rural areas, with schools or other partners in the public or private sector. Identify a rural school and implement a pilot dual-use play project.*	Play Dev	County Education, Local schools	None	06 - 09

**Theme 5. Communication and awareness.**

P12 Comm Safety Public Space	1. Review promotion and publicity for play/youth facilities, playschemes and Chillout. Explore the potential for joint promotion by partners.	Play Dev	Cultural Services, other partners	None	05
	2. Produce and distribute leaflet promoting Play areas and Youth facilities.	Play Dev	Cultural Services	£0.5k	05
P13 Public Space Comm Safety Waste Management	1. Establish a Parish Play/Youth Facility Capital grant-aid budget of £30,000 (maximum of 50% towards Parish led provision/refurbishments).	Play Dev	Parish Councils	£30k p/a	05 – 09
	2. Support local parish councils to enhance play area provision in smaller rural settlements. Priority rural settlements are Tittensor, Yarnfield, Derrington, Fulford, Great Bridgeford, Weston, Brocton and Woodseaves.*	Play Dev	Parish Councils	?	06 – 09
	3. Promote the availability of the Playaway Scrapstore.	Playaway	Play Dev, Agenda 21	£0.5k	05
P14 Public Space Comm Safety	1. Maintain and develop local consultation in relation to playground and youth facility developments	Play Dev	Local communities	None	04 – 09
	2. Consult with the Stafford District Youth Forum on a six-monthly basis regarding all play and youth issues.	Youth Service	Play Dev	None	04 – 09

\* Dependent upon additional staff resource.