

# Taking Play Forward 2016-2019



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## **Foreword**

Within our parks and open spaces in York we are lucky to have a wide range of play provision, which our children and young people have enjoyed for generations. In 2002, the city adopted a play policy and this latest version recognises the continued importance of play in the healthy development of our children.

We are committed to supporting excellent play provision across the city and promoting the access and availability of play to all children and young people. Our 2016 policy takes a more localised approach to the development of play. It aims to empower and encourage communities to help ensure all children are able to access quality and locally based play opportunities.

**Cllr Keith Aspden, Deputy Leader of City of York Council and Executive Member for Community Engagement (including Play)**

## **Introduction**

Taking Play Forward was first written in 2002 and has been refreshed a number of times and now again in 2016. Over the years the play policy has become increasingly focused on developing play at a neighbourhood and community level.

City of York Council has a longstanding commitment to support the development of play provision across the city. National and local initiatives have contributed to locally-developed schemes which have helped inform the policy through each version. We are continually reviewing how, as a local authority, we can enable communities to develop their opportunities for play in the best way possible to ensure that play is embedded and sustainable with communities.

## **York's Play Policy**

Taking Play Forward is the name for the ever-evolving collective vision and strategy for play in York. It provides a framework and a focus to direct, respond to, and enable the development of play and to identify relevant support and resources. The policy outlines a strategic approach which recognises that play opportunities should be developed where there is a need, taking into consideration the importance of community involvement and being reflective of best practice. Taking Play Forward aims to:

- Clarify the Council's commitment to supporting the development of play. The play policy is a working tool to enable the development of children's play environments.
- Commit to supporting high-quality play experiences for all children and young people across the City of York.
- Illustrate how the Council will enable communities to develop their play provision and adopt best practice.

## **York's Mission Statement on Play**

- We will enable our communities to provide the best possible play opportunities, activities, events and environments, which are safe, appropriate, easy to access, stimulating and above all fun!
- We want more people to understand the value and benefits of play, not only as a worthwhile activity, but as an essential part of every child's development.
- We will respect the right of children to play freely and safely on their own or in their interactions with other children, adults and carers. In each context, we must be responsive to choice, suitability and accessibility.

## **The 9 Better Play Objectives:**

Taking Play Forward is based on the 9 Better Play Objectives for York, which provide a framework for developing and monitoring the quality of play. They draw upon the national better play criteria (see Annex x).

**Objective 1:** The provision extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it

**Objective 2:** The provision recognises the child's need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need

**Objective 3:** The provision manages the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm

**Objective 4:** The provision maximises the range of play opportunities

**Objective 5:** The provision fosters independence and self-esteem

**Objective 6:** The provision fosters children's respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction

**Objective 7:** The provision fosters the child's well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn

**Objective 8:** The provision meets the necessary legislative requirements

**Objective 9:** The organisation involves users in decision making and consultation

Through the Better Play Objectives we aim to:

- Raise the standards of play provision
- Make sure children and young people know and exercise their rights to play, culture, rest and leisure

- Encourage genuine communication and interactions between children and young people, individuals and services with interests in play
- Create flexibility in the use of play resources
- Identify accessible criteria for funding and developing play opportunities
- Increase public recognition of the importance of play and enable relevant legislative requirements to be met
- Better manage play environments and increase recognition of the complex resources needed to provide stimulating children's play opportunities. (This is as important in settings such as schools as it is in open natural play spaces)

### **York's Play Successes Since 2013**

- The Council has worked collaboratively with community groups and volunteers to develop and improve play opportunities at a neighbourhood level, including Aaron Place, Cornlands Road, Grange Lane, Clarence Gardens and phase 2 of the Rawcliffe County Park Bike Track
- Through the Better Play Grants (2013-2016) the Council has distributed up to £87K per year worth of funding to voluntary and community play sector organisations in York to improve the quality of play experiences and help support groups.
- The city celebrates National Play Day annually hosted by voluntary sector organisations
- Secured £120k worth of funding to upgrade Rowntree Park Skate Park facilities – work to commence 2016

## **Evidence for the Development of the Policy**

### **Key Messages**

It is recognised that play affects, influences and benefits many other agendas. Below are key messages from a number of prominent strategies that highlight the need for play and its far reaching impact.

#### **Health, Well Being and Play**

The Chief Medical Officer recommends that: All children and young people should engage in moderate to vigorous physical activity for at least 60 minutes and up to several hours every day. This improves cardiovascular health, maintains a healthy weight, improves bone health, improves self confidence and develops new social skills. Through promoting the values and benefits of active play we will improve health outcomes for our children and young people.

#### **City of York Child Poverty Strategy 2011 – 2020**

Priorities in the plan include – Ensure all children and young people have access to local, safe and freely available quality play experiences that are within easy walking distance, and that communities are involved in the development of this equipment.

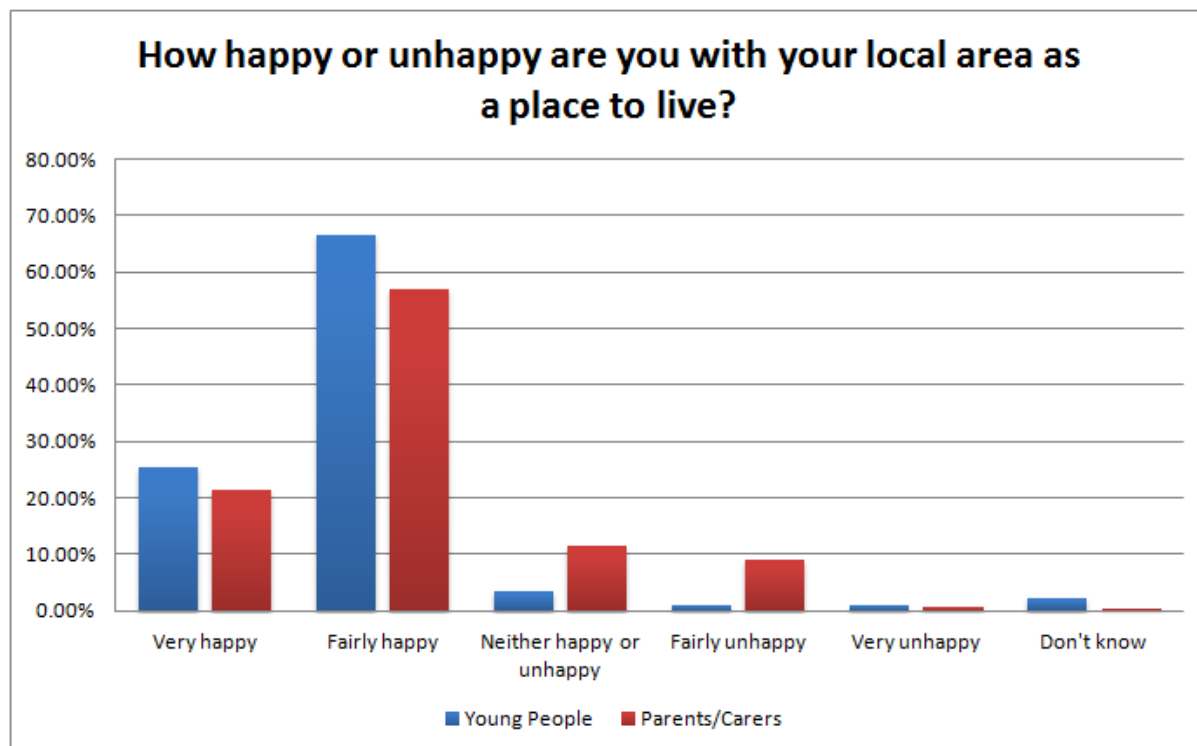
#### **Children and Young People’s Plan 2016-2019**

Involving children and young people and hearing their voice is a well-established part of how York works to deliver the best possible outcomes for families. The voices of children, young people, families and practitioners have played a pivotal role in the development of the new Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP).

The annual “Review of Voice”, completed in April 2015, brings together key messages from young people gathered through one-to-one work, participation groups, surveys and consultations. This knowledge of existing messages has formed a critical role in shaping the priorities for the new Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP).

The existing messages taken from the “Review of Voice” represent messages from thousands of children and young people. The direct consultation work engaged around 200 further young people, 400 parents and 184 practitioners and groups.

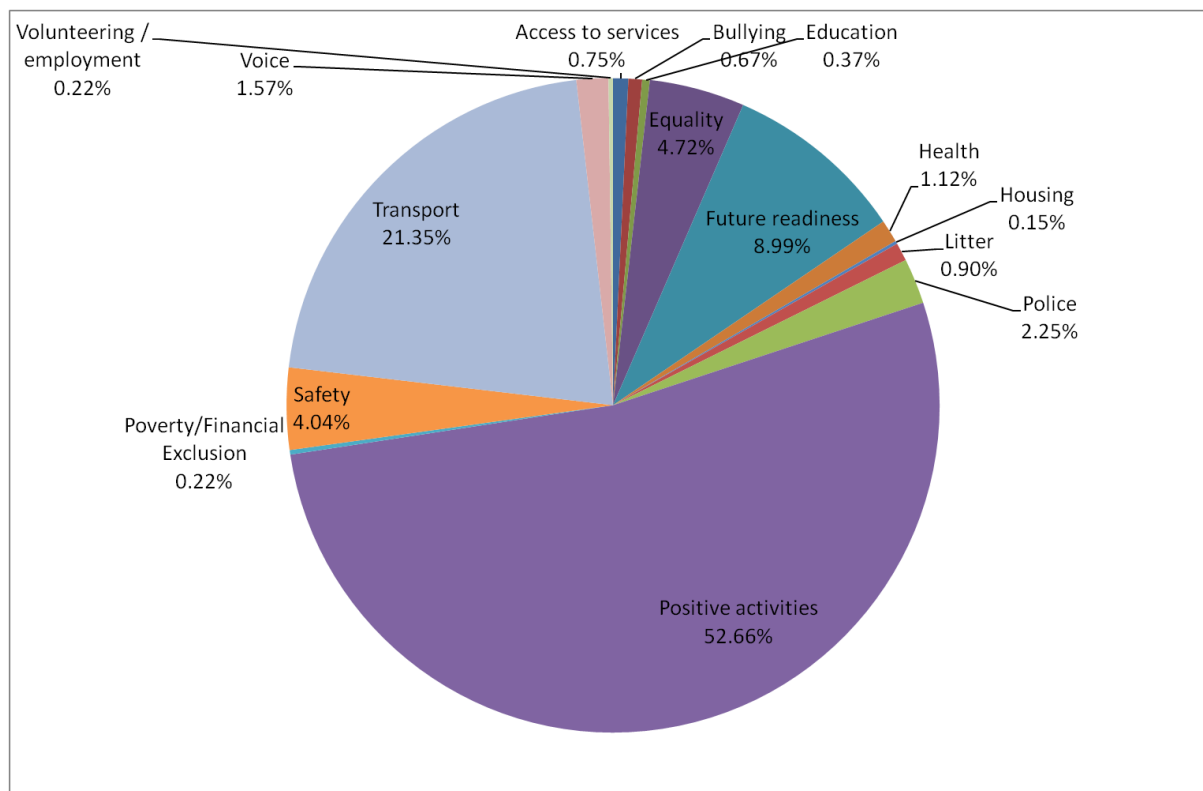
We can see from the direct consultation work that took place to inform the development of the new CYPP that generally people feel positively about York as a place for children and young people to live. The figure below shows how happy children and young people and parents or carers are with their local area.



There are many comments from children, young people, parents and carers which paint a positive picture of York as a safe and happy place to live.

Children and young people broadly endorsed the priorities set out in the Children and Young People's Plan (early help, narrowing gaps, health and well-being, whole family work). In addition to these core priorities children and young people also identified a sizeable set of additional priorities. These represent a diverse range of priority areas which are summarised in the chart below.



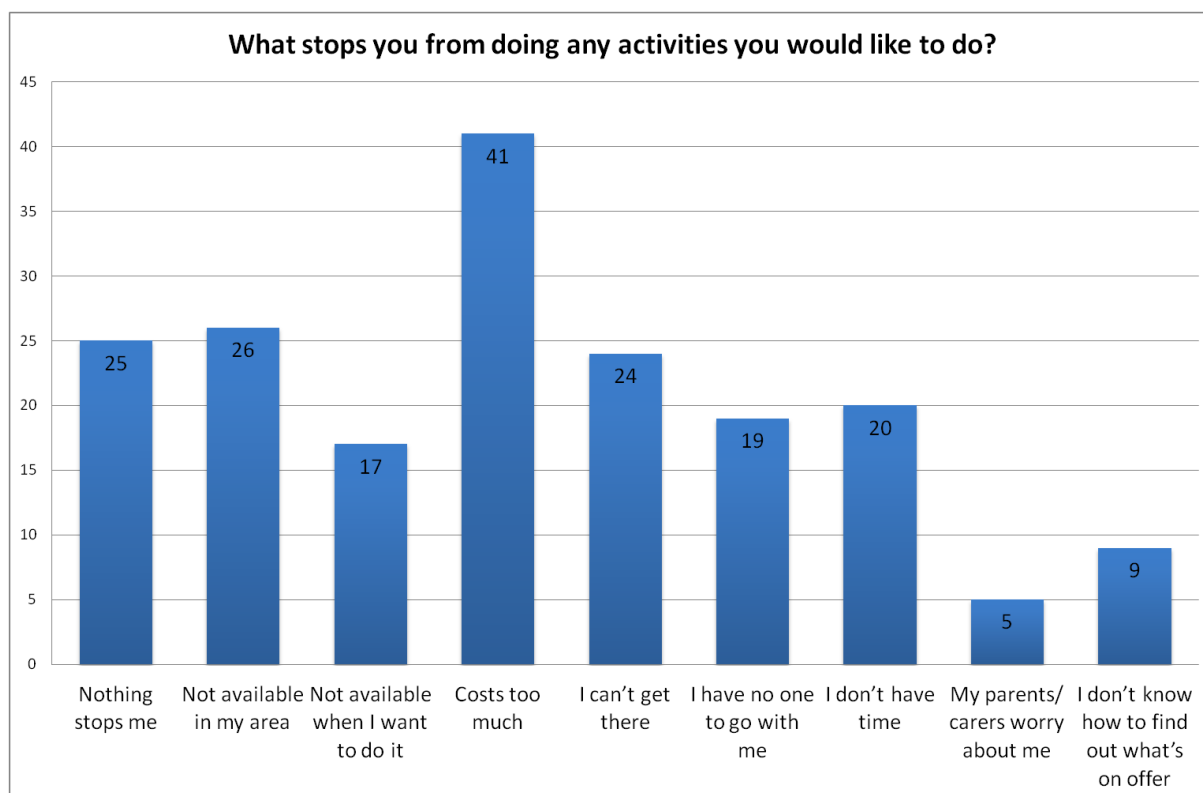


It can be seen that a significant number of the comments from focus groups related to positive activities. A broad range of feedback from children and young people is reflected under this category. For example:

- More places to hang out with friends.
- Cheaper access to things like cinemas, bowling alleys and gyms for children and young people.
- More activities aimed at young people who identify as LGBT.
- More support for disabled young people to be social. For example carers not available to support them to go out in an evening or see friends.

An issue which was closely related to positive activities was transport. The main theme emerging under this category was the cost of transport to get around York and the surrounding villages. This was particularly highlighted as an issue where children and young people wanted to access activities outside of their local area.

From the online consultation the main barriers identified to accessing positive activities were cost, availability in the local area or transport costs. The barriers to activities identified by young people are shown in the chart below.



The feedback gathered by young people who completed the online consultation generally echoed messages given through the focus groups. The table below shows in descending order what children and young people feel would **make their life better**.

What would help make your life better	Count
More help to plan for my future	36
More places where I can go to spend time with my friends	32
More ways I can volunteer or help people	23
More organised activities and things to do	21
Less bullying	20
More chance to have a say in how things are run at school or in the local area	20
More interesting school lessons	16
Someone I can always talk to	11
More help to do better at school	11
More advice about being healthy	6
More help to feel safer at school and in the local area	5

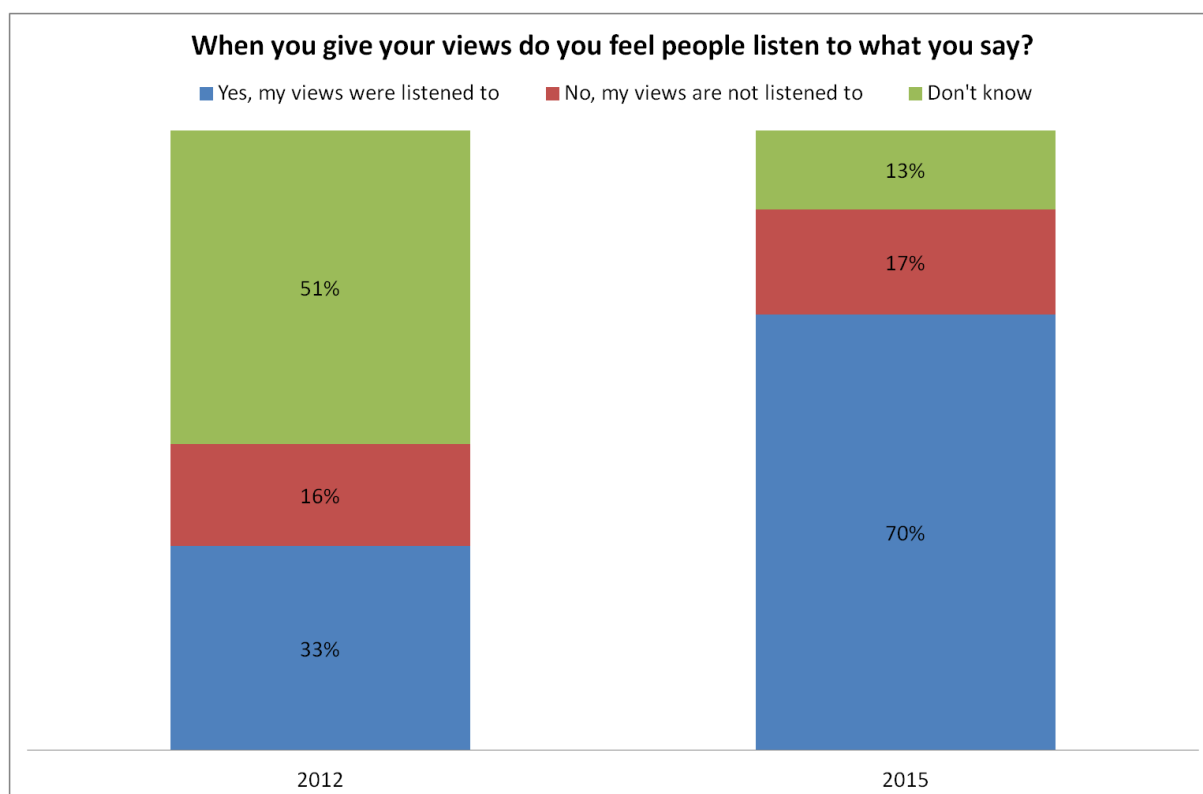
What would help make your life better	Count
Something else	5
More support to attend activities	3
None of these	3
Don't know	2

Key differences are that the online respondents placed a greater priority on planning for the future and ways to volunteer than those in focus groups.

## Having a Voice

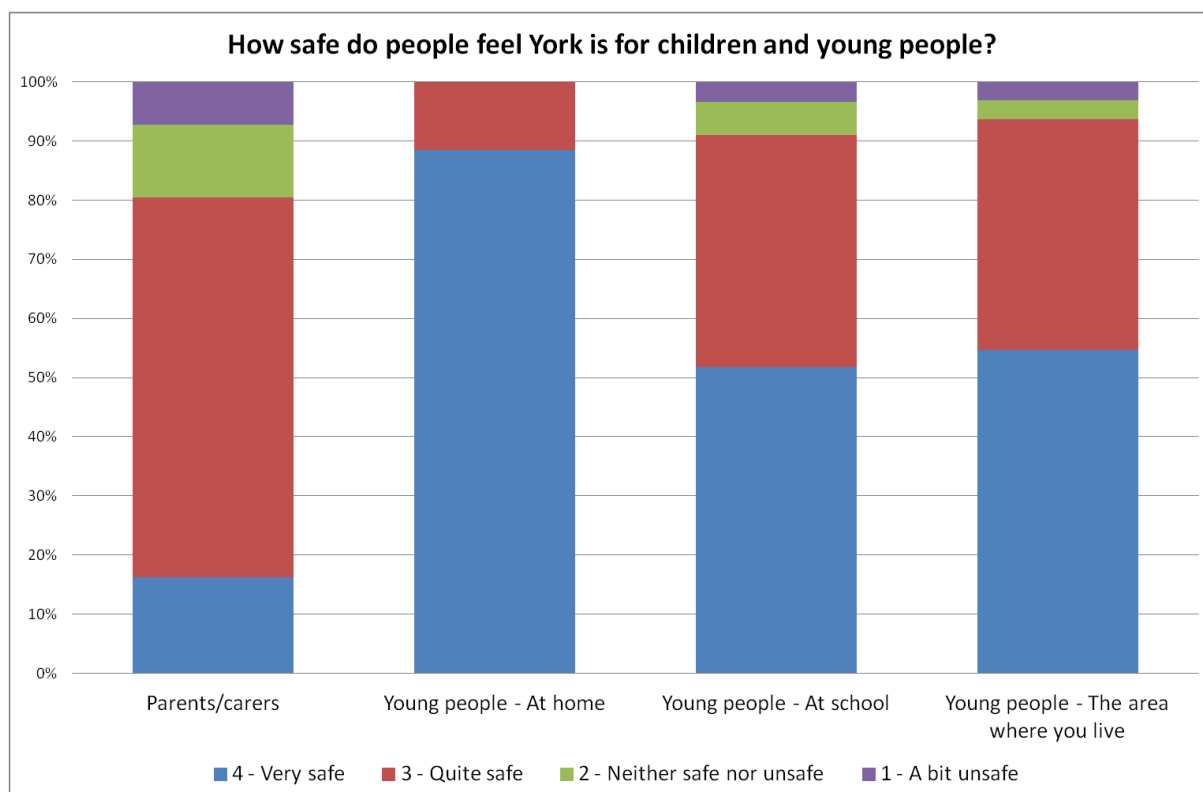
A high priority for all partners in recent years has been on developing the quality and breadth of opportunities for children and young people to have a voice and be involved in service design and delivery.

Encouragingly some clear progress is shown when asking children and young people if they feel their views have been listened to. This is shown in the chart below comparing responses in 2012 to 2015.



The proportion feeling their views were not listened to has remained fairly static (16% in 2012 and 17% in 2015). However the percentage who feel their views have been listened to has increased significantly (33% in 2015 to 70%) now.

Generally young people, parents and carers feel that York is a safe place and a good place to live and grow up. This general sense of feeling safe is shown in the chart below.



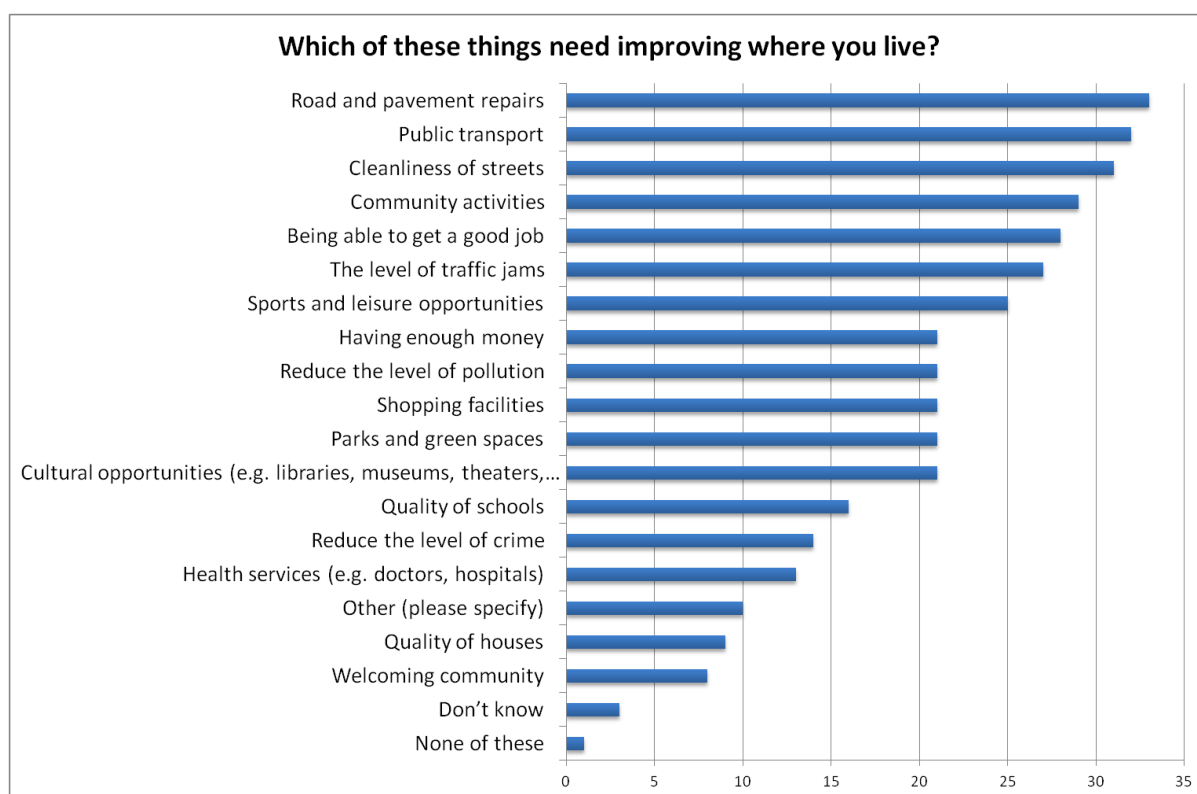
This is generally encouraging and reflects on feedback gathered through existing surveys undertaken with children and young people. For example the table below is taken from the 2014 Stand Up For Us survey where children and young people were also asked about how safe they felt in different locations.

	School building	On school grounds	With other pupils	On public transport	With adults in school	In the local community
<b>Primary</b>	93.5%	92.5%	94.0%	93.6%	94.9%	-
<b>Secondary</b>	94.4%	94.3%	96.3%	87.8%	-	95.5%

## Priorities

The consultation showed a huge range of additional areas that matter to children, young people and families. Examples include:

- Many children and young people wanted improvements to the cleanliness and condition of roads and pavements in their local area.
- Transport around the city was also highlighted as an issue. Particularly traffic and the cost of transport to access activities or services not available in the local area. This is demonstrated by the chart below which shows what things children and young people would most like to see improved in their local area.



These key messages have helped shape the 2016 Children and Young People's Plan which sets out 4 priority areas.

### Priority 1 – Early Help

Early help has been a priority for the YorOK Board since its inception in 2003, and at the core of all our children and young people's plans. The principle of intervening early to prevent problems emerging at a later

date is widely accepted; during the consultation, it was strongly endorsed by families and by practitioners. Children, young people, parents and carers said that they valued strong and supportive communities and access to activities and services.

## **Priority 2 – Emotional and Mental Health**

National estimates suggest that one in ten children needs support or treatment for mental health problems ranging from short spells of depression or anxiety through to severe and persistent conditions that can isolate, disrupt and frighten those who experience them. Mental health problems in young people can result in lower educational attainment and are strongly associated with behaviours that pose a risk to their general health, such as smoking, drug and alcohol abuse and risky sexual behaviour.

## **Priority 3 – Narrowing Gaps in Outcomes**

York is a relatively prosperous city: most children and young people are healthy and achieve well in their education. However, this is not the case for all of our communities, particularly those on low incomes where the evidence suggests that there is a risk of multiple poor outcomes. We also know that early gaps in speech, language and educational achievement tend to widen during a young person's childhood. It therefore remains a key priority for us to address gaps in educational achievement and in health, working across the YorOK partnership to this end.

Children and young people confirm that health and educational achievement are important to them. During the consultation, many talked about the importance of active lifestyles and healthy eating. Others mentioned the importance of friendships, and the need for self-esteem.

## **Priority 4 – Priority Groups**

Our final priority area is different from the preceding three in that what we want to do is shine a spotlight on five specific groups of children and young people. This would arguably not be necessary if we were to achieve every outcome outlined in the previous sections; however, experience suggests that the following groups of children and young people have particular needs that may require targeted support. Many of

the groups below are the subject of a separate, focused strategy; the job of this plan is not to duplicate that, but simply to ensure that the needs of these groups remain prominent in the minds of the YorOK partners, and that the actions to support them are coherent.

## **The Way Forward: Developing Play in the Community**

Taking account of the evidence presented above it is intended that the 2016-19 policy takes a more localised approach to supporting the development of play in the city and that ideas for projects should be progressed based upon 5 key principles, building on the priorities from the 2013 policy, which will form the basis for both identifying the need to develop play, right through to the implementation and delivery of the project.

### **The 5 Key Principles**

Play provision should:

1. Meet a clearly identified need
2. Be developed through inclusive involvement and participation that empowers and encourages the community to take a lead
3. Be based on the right of the child to access inclusive, quality and locally-based play opportunities
4. Promote and recognise the benefits of play and its impact on health and development of the child
5. Be reflective of best practice

### **Projects**

To aid the development play projects it is recommended that the following practical considerations are taken account of alongside the 5 key principles:

- Resources: Is the necessary funding for staffing, buildings, equipment etc. in place to enable the project to happen?

- Land ownership: Are permissions in place to let the project take place?
- Ongoing costs: Is the project sustainable in the long-term e.g. in terms of its maintenance and staffing costs?
- Need: Do relevant local, regional and national strategies and research evidence the need for the project?
- Local demographics: Again, do these demonstrate current and ongoing need?
- Support from partner organisations, groups and the wider community: Is the necessary support in place to ensure that the project is sustainable?
- Routes to play: Can the project be easily accessed through, for example, footpath, cycle paths, and roads with crossing points?
- Monitoring: Are arrangements in place to ensure that the views of children and young people, parents/carers, the community and other stakeholders are visible and used to inform further development and help the project to develop and continue?

### **Equipped Play Areas**

There are currently at least 76 equipped play areas in York. These are managed by a variety of organisations including the City of York Council, local Parish and Town Councils, Housing Trusts and developers.

The Council will support the improvement and ongoing care of the city's play areas through advice, supporting grant applications and provision of funding, including the application of section 106 payments. Where improvements are needed those sites with the most need will be prioritised for attention. Factors such as usage, previous investment and resident engagement will be taken into account when establishing a priority of need.

To ensure that Council-managed play areas remain safe and well cared for, all equipped play areas will be inspected at least fortnightly by a National Playing Fields Association Inspecting Playgrounds qualified assessor. Sites with high use e.g. Rowntree Park will be inspected



weekly. The assessor not only checks for safety issues but also carries both routine and emergency repairs and maintenance.

## **Street Play**

*“Playing out on a street near their homes is vital to children’s health and wellbeing.”* (Play England).

City of York Council is committed to supporting communities in developing street play opportunities where there is sufficient need and neighbourhood will to see opportunities created. We are committed to challenging traffic dangers and parent’s confidence as barriers to children playing out. Support and guidance is available for any community or group in the city who wish to work towards creating fun, safe spaces and opportunities for play within the urban environment.

## **Play Settings**

There are 52 staffed Out of School Club settings in York. These settings work to support the Taking Play Forward ethos and are registered with Ofsted, who regulate the quality of provision by ensuring compliance with regulations to safeguard and support children's welfare. The Council support these providers to maintain and improve the quality of their provision through a range of support that is tailored to their level of need. This may include advisory visits, out of school network meetings, advice and support to enable disabled children and young people to access the provision, access to training, and advertising through the Shine programme.

## **Playwork**

The council’s Workforce Development Unit produces an annual Early Years and Out of school club training offer. This supports the staff in settings to become capable, confident and competent professional practitioners, which is critical in ensuring that high quality provision is available to children and young people within York. A range of cross-sector courses are offered and at least one Playwork specific training course is offered per year to the workforce. This training is accessible to all playworkers working across the city, not just those in Ofsted regulated provision. The Council also has a role in signposting playworkers to

training providers who are able to offer more formal Playwork qualifications at level 2, 3 and 4.

### **Raising the Quality of Play Opportunities at a Neighbourhood Level**

To aid the development of play, the Council is also there to support and signpost play organisations, communities and individuals in the following ways to help support the development of play opportunities:

- Funding advice/signposting
- Consultation methods
- Current data and ward profile information
- Inclusivity advice
- Health and safety
- Links to transport and planning information
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Best practice and learning from other projects

## **Useful Resources**

### **General:**

Yor-OK is York's portal for information and resources for anyone working with children and young people, parents and young people themselves. Here you will find York's Children and Young People's Plan and the Child Poverty Strategy 2011-2020. <http://www.yor-ok.org.uk>

Play England's vision is for England to be a country where everybody can fully enjoy their right to play throughout their childhood and teenage years. The website provides resources and information on play in schools, street play, parks and open spaces and playwork.

<http://www.playengland.org.uk>

National Play Day is the national day for play, traditionally held on the first Wednesday in August. <http://www.playday.org.uk>

Playing Out provides ideas, advice and support to residents wanting to bring about change in their street or neighbourhood. <http://playingout.net>

### **For Out-of-School Providers:**

Information to support quality improvement of Ofsted registered Out of school provision in York - <http://www.yor-ok.org.uk/workforce2014/Childcare%20Strategy/out-of-school-clubs.htm>

The Out of School Alliance (OOSA) provides information and support to individuals and organisations setting up and running out of school clubs, including breakfast clubs, after school clubs, holiday clubs and play schemes. [www.outofschoolalliance.co.uk/](http://www.outofschoolalliance.co.uk/)

### **Safeguarding:**

The City of York's Safeguarding Children Board (CYSCB) is a statutory inter-agency forum for agreeing how different services co-operate to protect children in York. We seek to ensure that the children of York are protected from all forms of abuse and neglect by ensuring that everybody working with children works effectively together.

<http://www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk>