

Taking Play Forward

A Play Strategy for York

By the City of York Councils Play Team and partners

Taking Play Forward is a vision and strategy to develop scope for play in York, so that every child can experience a wide range of play activities in varied settings and develop their sense of playfulness, which enriches life for the whole community



'You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than a year of conversation' - Plato

Second Draft Revised Edition 2007

Taking Play Forward

A REVISED POLICY 2007 FOR PLAY IN YORK

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Executive Summary

York has had a growing focus on the importance of play for a number of years. Recent national strategies for childcare and play have given rise to further initiatives, all raising the profile of play and play-related activities, and York has a wide range of play environments and expertise.

The City of York Council's continuing commitment to play is through the formation of a designated play team based in the Early Years and Extended Schools Service of the Learning Culture and Children's Services Directorate, who are best placed to further consult and develop links with the play sector.

However, the quality of play opportunities varies. We need to do more to demonstrate the benefits of play and how it contributes to wider local and national social agendas. Play is part of every community, and its far-reaching benefits need recognition.

This document introduces a policy and strategy for play titled **Taking Play Forward**. It sets out the background, purpose and context within the York community. It looks for better management of play environments and increased recognition of the complex resources needed to enable children's play.

Taking Play Forward also sets out a strategic direction for 'York the Play Friendly City', a collective vision for play opportunities which is already developing. We are promoting the rights of children and young people to be both seen and heard in all aspects of play and leisure opportunities.

Taking Play Forward offers a context for meeting the challenges of recognising play as part of our wider culture. It will help build a shared understanding of children's needs, and a consistent approach to challenging any obstacles that restrict play opportunities for children, as they learn and develop as valued members of our changing community.

This is a valuable opportunity to bring together everyone concerned with play. For a realistic and holistic approach, we need to develop a shared vision, with agreed guidelines, principles, accessible information, and reviewing of procedures

Agreed and endorsed by the following in 2002 (with previous roles in brackets where appropriate)

David Atkinson	Chief Executive of City of York Council
Patrick Scott	Director of Learning Culture and Children's Services (Director of Education and Leisure)
Peggy Sleight	Chair of Early Years and Extended Schools Partnership (Chair of Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership)
Pete Dwyer	Chair of Joint Children's Services Management Group
Cllr Janet Looker	Shadow Executive Member for Corporate Services (Executive Member Education)
Cllr Charles Hall	(Shadow Executive Member Education)
Cllr Alan Jones	(Executive Member Leisure and Heritage)
Cllr Quentin MacDonald	Executive Member for Corporate Services (Shadow Executive Member Leisure and Heritage)

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Introduction

In 1998, City of York Council signed up to the UN Convention on The Rights of the Child. Amongst other things, this states that:

- every child has a right to experience a wide range of play activities in a number of settings
- every child has the right to a sense of playfulness, which enriches all our lives.

Why is this so important? The Children's Play Council (1998) states that:

'Through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationships with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter. By playing, children learn and develop as individuals and as members of the community.'

Taking Play Forward is the name for the ever evolving collective vision and strategy for play in York, commissioned initially by the Play sub-group of the former Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, now the newly renamed Early Years and Extended Schools Partnership (EYESP). It is a living, flexible approach, relevant to all children and young people up to 18 years old, all adults, whether or not they are parents/carers, and all organisations involved directly or indirectly with play. (In line with the age definition adopted in the UN Convention the Rights of the Child, and the remit of the Every Child Matters: Change for Children agenda, this policy applies to planning services and environments for children and young people under the age of 18)

In September 2002, a paper presented to the Executive members for Education requested:

- the use of the Best Play objectives for evaluation and continuous improvement of play provision
- strategic support for the proposed framework of **Taking Play Forward** as a City of York Policy and Strategy for Play.

It was at this meeting that Taking Play Forward was adopted as a policy and vision for play.

In revising the policy 2006/07, York aims to embrace local and national documents and policies.



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What is play?

- 1 Play is essential to children's quality of life and exploration of their culture and can be defined in the following ways:
 - 'Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. Play can be fun or serious.' (Best Play)
 - 'What children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons'. (Getting Serious About Play)
- 2 Children have a need and natural tendency to play anywhere. This has an impact on formal play provision and wider local authority services. In all forms of city planning and organisation, all relevant authorities need to consider and give positive support to the play environment and recognise the complex range of resources which allow children's play to happen freely. Play opportunities are more than swings and roundabouts, holiday entertainment or out of school care.
- 3 Current Playwork encourages a set of standards that are based on a set of assumptions and values that underpin good practice in Playwork. (These are outlined in Annex 1). Best Play also describes different types of play. (These are detailed in Annex 2).

"Play is a thing where you can roam free and do what you want" - Anon girl from York age 9 (10 in 1month!)



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Why a policy for play?

- 4 The national Children's Play Policy Forum gained the commitment of three government departments (Department of Culture, Media and Sport – DCMS, Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions - DTLR and Department for Education and Skills – DfES) to better understand good quality play and play provision. The creation of local cultural strategies offers a major opportunity to put play on the agenda, within the broader context of quality of life issues, and to respond to children and young people's needs and wishes with new, creative initiatives. The DfES directed the former Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) to look at play alongside care and education, drawing together initiatives including out-of-school childcare, Sure Start and Neighbourhood Nurseries.
- 5 The former play sub-group of York's EYDCP commissioned the **Taking Play Forward** project in June 2001, to develop a collective vision and strategy for play within the city. In its revised form it is intended to be a flexible philosophy for all children, young people up to 18 years old, parents and organisations involved with play.
- 6 The policy aims to establish the value of play within our wider culture. As a policy, it invites a signed-up commitment to a joint vision, common principles and agreed guidelines for all those involved in, or able to influence, play spaces and places.
- 7 The policy accepts the principles of both the 'Charter for Play' (Children Now 2004) and the "New Charter for Children's Play" (2004), which has been developed through the Children's Play Council.
- 8 A corporate play policy, along with a process that involves every individual and organisation concerned with play, aims to clarify the council's commitment to and understanding of play. The play policy is a practical working tool to help deal with issues concerning children's play environments.
- 9 The play policy is complementary to the Community Planning demanded by government, which aims to improve public services by putting citizens' wishes and needs at the heart of decision-making. The play policy can contribute to shared objectives under the Local Development Framework theme Culture and Tourism.
- 10 A play policy is not a one-off, short-term project. **Taking Play Forward** is reviewed annually and with set priorities. It is agreed that the policy should be revisited and revised every five years in line with new legislation and actively involving all children without discrimination of any kind.

**'Play is when you play with your friends'
Anon York girl aged 7**

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Taking Play Forward

Policy Purpose

Play is an essential part of each child's culture and quality of life, and has far reaching benefits. Through the development of play opportunities and cultural initiatives, there is vital potential for promoting a sense of place, of belonging and of civic pride, as well as both individual and community self esteem and self confidence.



The policy aims to provide the framework to:

- raise the standards of play provision
- Promote inclusive and accessible play for all children and young people
- 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.

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The Better Play Objectives:

- 11 In 2000, play professionals developed a set of child-centred objectives for play provision. These offer a set of outcomes to help clarify the role that play provision should have in the lives and development of children and young people.
- 12 The **Taking Play Forward** policy adopts the nationally recognised 7 Best Play objectives which are commended as a framework which shows how children benefit from play and quality play services. York has also included two further objectives in line with Ofsted regulations, which are referred to in this document as the Better Play Objectives and are detailed below.

Better Play: Objectives for play provision

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

Best Play objectives can also form the basis for evaluation and continuous improvement of play provision. See the 'Better Play' Criteria listed in Annex 3. National Playing Fields Association, Children's Play Council and PLAYLINK: (2000) *Best Play: What play provision should do for children*. NPFA

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Implementation

- 13 In developing the Taking Play Forward Policy the following points are key to its implementation.
- The objectives should be considered by all individuals and organisations making decisions which affect (directly or indirectly) the rights of children to play and to be consulted.
 - It is recognised that in developing the **Taking Play Forward** policy with play settings signing up to its values, each organisation may wish to further develop the policy to be specific to their own settings.
 - The former Play Sub Group has developed into the Taking Play Forward Partnership which encourages a citywide involvement from the play sector and offers support and guidance.
 - Each organisation is also encouraged to contribute to the development of York's Children and Young People's plan led by the Children's Trust.
 - Opportunities to create open, inclusive and accessible free play and adventure play in the general environment should be priority.
 - Methods of collating and communicating good practice through newsletters is already established through the Shared Foundation Newsletter as well as other publications.
 - Shared initiatives for potential joint funding bids will be sought as appropriate.



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Responsibilities

- 14 It is the responsibility of the City of York Council's Play Team based in the Early Years and Extended Schools Services to oversee the development and co-ordination of the policy in conjunction with play partners, relevant internal and external organisations, children and young people, families and communities.
- 15 Play settings signing up to the **Taking Play Forward** policy are also responsible as individuals and organisations claiming to offer all children good quality play opportunities, to be able to show how the above play objectives underpin the play environment.



The Case for Play

- 16 We want more of our community to understand and value play, not only as a worthwhile activity, but as essential for each individual's well being. The challenge is to provide the best possible play opportunities, activities, events and environments, which are safe, suitable, easy to get at, affordable, stimulating, varied and, above all, fun. What we provide must respect the right of children to play freely and safely on their own, or interact with other children, adults and carers. In each context, it must be relevant to children's stage of development and physical and mental capabilities, responsive to their choices, opinions, reactions and respect equality.
- 17 The UN Convention on The Rights of the Child was ratified by the UK Government in 1991. The Convention confers on all children, without discrimination of any kind, (Article 2.1) the following rights:
 - the right to play (Article 31)
 - their right to be consulted on matters which affect them (Article 12)
 - the right to express their views (Article 13)
 - the right to meet with others (Article 15)
 - the right to be protected from harm and abuse (Article 19)
 - the right to services developed in their 'best interests' (Article 3.1) and
 - the right to provision of an agreed standard (Article 3.3).

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- 18 Initially, children do not distinguish between 'play' and 'work'; it is a natural aspect of their culture and quality of life. Play is first and foremost undertaken for enjoyment, but the benefits are far-reaching, as it plays a natural part in individual and community development. Children playing and adults taking part in cultural and leisure activities are both learning about social values, beliefs and traditions. Through play and cultural initiatives, people can develop a sense of place, and civic pride, as well as community self-esteem and confidence. This type of understanding is more 'caught' than taught. It is the difference between being able to recite a moral code and learning to live by one. From this perspective, play and culture are not so much activities as ways of 'being'.
- 19 Thinking about play as a cultural experience can help bring people together and encourage them to have their say in decisions which affect their neighbourhoods. Play opportunities can enhance the provision of leisure, housing, transport routes, education and a range of other services for adults as well as children and young people.



Historical Perspective

- 20 The EYDCP Play sub-group appointed a part-time play policy development worker in September 2001 who initiated various consultative activities, submitted papers for the Executive and Scrutiny, and drew up action plans and guidelines for the Play sub-group. Organisations and discussion groups which have contributed to consultation are identified in Annex 4
- 21 Questionnaires were mailed to all early years and childcare settings registered with the York Children's Information Service. Replies received were constructive, confirming the relevance of the Best Play objectives and the proposed play policy framework.
- 22 Discussion groups were held which focused on the Best Play objectives and allowed over 100 participants the opportunity to identify the barriers and wishes for play with key comments (see Annex 5).
- 23 Since 2001, voluntary sector groups have accessed the Council's Better Play Grant, which links their current play opportunities against the Best Play objectives to enable them to access funding. This emphasises City of York Councils continuing commitment to play through this annual Voluntary and Community Sector funding.

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Financial Picture for Play

- 24 There are a variety of discretionary grants available from City of York Council to support activities for children and young people. Voluntary organisations are able to obtain funding for leisure activities from other leisure services budgets and specific service level agreements, including Schools Out, and from ward committees.
- 25 As previously mentioned in point 23, the 'Better Play' budget currently funds play sector projects set against the 'Better Play' objectives. Applicants are asked to describe how their current play opportunities meet at least 5 of the 9 objectives. Officers from the Play Team shortlist against the objectives and select appropriate projects that meet local need. It is the responsibility of the Policy Development Worker to visit organisations in receipt of the grant for monitoring and evaluation purposes using the Better Play criteria (Annex 3).
- 26 As with many grant awarding processes, demands on the Better Play budget exceed supply. If organisations are to develop sustainable play opportunities, then the case for play needs to be constantly brought to the attention of relevant council bodies to encompass both the amount and purpose of the Better Play budget. Cost effectiveness of Service Level Agreements and grants are constantly reviewed to ensure a more sustainable play sector.

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- 27 Yorkash is a development of the cities 50k Fund project first launched in 1989/99, in which applications were completed by, for the benefit of, and monitored and assessed by young people. This innovative project was further enhanced in 2006 to include funding from the Youth Opportunities Fund and Youth Capital Fund. As part of the process, young people involved on the panel are able to attain an Assessment and Qualifications Alliance award. This project is facilitated by Play Team and Youth Service officers.
- 28 In response to the findings of 'Getting Serious about Play' (2004) the national play review undertaken for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Big Lottery announced its commitment to the sector through the launch of its Children's Play programme. The Play Team welcome and fully support this initiative and will take the lead in coordinating with partners the spending of the allocation against the **Taking Play Forward** policy which will in turn contribute to achieving IS8 corporate objective – Improving the experiences of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families in the City.
- 29 In the short-term, play organisations need to be encouraged to regularly carry out meaningful consultation with children and young people to ensure appropriate service development and best use of resources. The Play Team work to support the play sector in providing information relating to other funding streams.
- 30 The Best Value regime adopted by central government has placed a duty on local authorities to ensure that all services purchased by them on behalf of their clients provide the Best Value both in terms of money and the quality of the services provided. This is regardless of whether the services are provided by the Statutory, Voluntary or Private Sector.

Play Today In York

- 31 The councils Play Team lead on seven projects for children and young people in conjunction with York's play sector. In addition the team also organise a number of celebrations including National Play Day, which offer numerous opportunities to consult with children, young people, families, communities and the play sector. Further details of play team projects and initiatives can be seen in the Play Team booklet.
- 32 The play sector in York is made up of a wide variety of providers which the Play Team currently supports through funding, offering advice and information. Meetings between the play sector and the Play Team are held on a regular basis through the Taking Play Forward Partnership. Historically key partners include York Playspace, York ChildCare, SNAPPY and Bell Farm Adventure Playground.
- 33 The national themed annual Playday and other local events with associated play partners, provides an opportunity to celebrate and raise the importance of play both locally and nationally

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Play's Strategic links

Links to Policy and Strategy

- 34 In revising and developing the Play Policy the process requires identifying links with other policies. The Play Team are committed to seeing that the views, needs and interests of play, childcare and education providers are reflected within all policies, practices and service plans (Annex 6). This involves consultation with children and young people, parents, the community and other stakeholders and ensures that the community is informed of services.
- 35 Since the Taking Play Forward Policy was written in 2002 a number of key policies and documents have been written both locally and nationally. Through out the revised document the policy aims to make clear links to these strategic documents and highlight the importance of play in the context of other services internally and externally to the council.
- 36 York's 20 year vision and community strategy took two years to develop and was agreed by public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations and key partners across the city. Led by the Without Walls Executive Board, the development of the vision and the result of widespread consultation with residents, local public services, business and community and voluntary groups regarding their views for the future, through what was themed a 'Festival of Ideas'. Hundreds of residents and visitors took part, including many whose views are not normally heard. Activities included live public debates and ward based community events and 'postcards for the future'. (York's Local Area Agreement, version 1, 2006).

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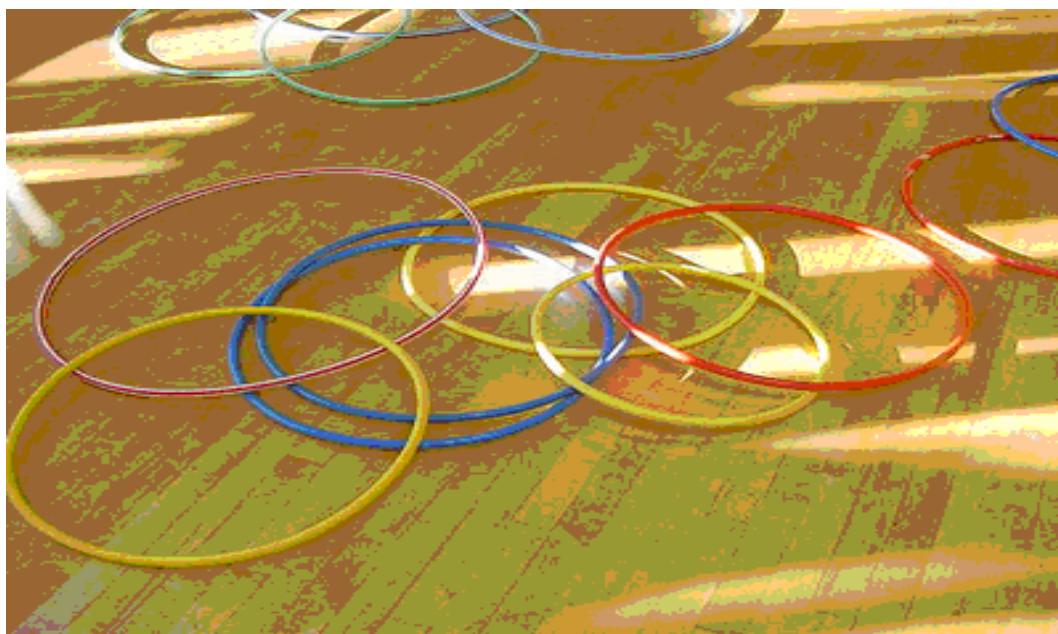
Local Area Agreement

- 37 York's Local Area Agreement makes clear links between the city's strategies guided by consultation. The document sets out York's key priorities in 4 blocks, one of which is Children and Young People, which is detailed against the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes. The Play Team has linked to this policy documents a performance indicator which tracks the number of play providers signing up to the *Taking Play Forward* policy.

Priorities for Children and Young People – York's Local Area Agreement

Being Healthy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage more children and young people to be more physically active. • Improve the eating habits and diet of young people • Reduce the level of teenage pregnancy • Promote healthy lifestyles
Staying Safe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing accidents on the roads involving young people • Protect children more effectively • Ensure more looked after children are in secure stable places
Enjoying and Achieving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise standards of achievement • Provide high quality early years experience • Support parents in helping their children to enjoy and achieve • Improve enrichment opportunities for children and young people • Ensure that people with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities receive appropriate support and advice
Making a Positive Contribution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve life chances for young people • Increase active involvement of young people • Reduce offending by young people
Achieving Economic Well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of young people actively engaging in education and training • Enhance skills of young people at 16 and at 18 • Reduce poverty levels and the impact of poverty on the lives of children and young people

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Play Partners

Learning, Culture and Children's Services

- 38 The Play Team sit within the Early Years and Extended Schools Service, part of the Lifelong Learning and Culture service arm, which is part of the newly formed directorate that is Learning Culture and Children's Services. The benefits of this ensure that play is at the heart of the children and young peoples agenda and can make strategic links with teams such as Library Services through the Schools Out and Arts and Culture through the GRAB Scheme. The formation of the new directorate has proved to be invaluable in further strengthening links with internal partners.

Taking Play Forward Partnership – local involvement

- 39 In developing York's play scene, partnership working is key. The Play sub-group has now evolved into the Taking Play Forward Partnership, where strategic and grass roots play issues are discussed. Participants in this group are from varied play backgrounds with specific remits such as open access play, out-of-school childcare, the arts, parks and open spaces, library services and sports. Its broad membership encourages freedom to initiate debate, consider and comment on issues affecting play and leisure opportunities and help make national and regional play recommendations a reality by challenging local barriers. Annex 7 provides details of the Partnerships Mission Statement and a list of current play providers and partners within the City.

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York Early Years and Extended Schools Partnership (EYESP)

- 40 The council has statutory responsibility for convening and checking on the York EYDCP in its plans to enhance the care, play and educational experience of young children, the care and play experiences of children up to the age of 14 years including those with special educational needs, and those with disabilities up to the age of 16 years. This changed in 2003 to operate as the EYESP as a consultative forum. The Play Team regularly presents and provides information, as well as evoke discussion topics relating to play at these meetings, which are held 6 times a year.
- 41 The national introduction of the Foundation Stage curriculum encourages those working with three to five year olds to plan and organise new learning experiences in ways which build on, support and extend children's spontaneous play. Children under five have the choice of a range of educational settings which meet the requirements of the Foundation Stage. The Shared Foundation Partnerships are clusters of childcare organisations based round a school, and work together to provide well-planned, play-based environments which can meet a variety of local needs for care and early years education of younger children. Seamless transitions between settings is an important part of this strategy. This work has been recognised through the presentation of a National Excellence Award.



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Extended Schools

- 42 The provision of extended services in schools under the nationwide Every Child Matters policy will result, by 2010, every school offering:
- High quality 8am – 6pm childcare, either on the school site or through other providers
 - A varied menu of activities for children and young people – including study support, homework clubs, sports, music, arts and crafts etc.
 - Parenting support
 - Swift and easy referral
 - Wider community access to school facilities.
- 43 Play is at the heart of this agenda. If children and young people are to be given the opportunity to access activities outside of the established school day, it is critical that those longer hours in school provide activities which pay close regard to the philosophy of play as a fundamental right, and that those providing these additional activities value and have an understanding of the different types of play and how to support them. To do any other would bring instances of play deprivation for individual children and for the community in the future. The extended schools agenda gives City of York a real opportunity to plan activities in consultation with children and young people which will empower, excite and inspire them, and allow a continuous debate between them and adults and mean a Best Value approach. This is a very serious agenda – it is about bringing fun centre stage into local communities because it is only when people are happy that they can relax, learn and work together.
- 44 Play and leisure are critical – indeed, “ Leisure consists of all those virtuous activities by which people grow morally, intellectually and spiritually. It is that which makes life worth living.” - Marcus Tullius Cicero.

Voluntary and Community Sector

- 45 The voluntary and community sector is recognised as a key partner with the council in providing important services to the community, many of which are complementary to those of the public sector. York’s Voluntary Sector Compact seeks to establish consistency in the way the council and voluntary sector work together, and must be kept in mind in any play policy developments.
- 46 The Play Team works closely with the current 0-19 Children and Young Peoples and Families Officer, based at the Council for Voluntary Services. It further develops the links the Play Team can utilise to filter information to and from York’s community and voluntary sector.

Regional Support

- 47 A member of the Play Team is a Director of Yorkshire Play, a regional company limited by guarantee with a remit to promote access to excellent play opportunities for all children and young people in the Yorkshire and the Humber region by:

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- Supporting play providers to develop high quality, diverse and inclusive play environment
- Supporting the development of a qualified play workforce
- Advocating the right of all children and young people to play, through lobbying at local, regional and national levels
- Promoting a play friendly approach within all services for children and young people and those services that impact on play

This enables feedback of information and a direct link to strategic decisions about play in the Yorkshire and Humber Region.



Children's Trust Unit

- 48 In 2003 the green paper 'Every Child Matters' and the Children Act 2004 described Children's Trusts as the governments preferred model for achieving a local integration and improvement to services for children and young people. In York the Children's Trust preventative model is **YorOk** which provides an organisational vehicle for services to work to meet identified needs of children and young people in the city. The Children's Trust Unit, with the support of a multi agency management board, also leads on the development of the City's Children and Young People's plan.
- 49 The Play Team form an integral part of both the development and delivery of the **YorOk** initiative which is a city wide strategy aimed to support services to work more closely and effectively together. The Play Team actively encourages and promotes the involvement of the play sector to be part of the **YorOk** community and also feeds into the Children and Young People's Plan. In the near future, this will involve groups registering as quality providers on the **YorOk** service directory and website, currently in development by the Children's Information Service. The service directory and website aims to act as a hub of information for parents/ carers, practitioners, children and young people and will hold a comprehensive database of a range of relevant information, including play provision in the City.

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Parks and Open Spaces

- 50 Government guidance (PPG17) recognises the importance of open space, in delivering a number of key objectives. Open space in York includes approximately 480 hectares of parks and open spaces. This includes pitches for sport, formal and informal parks, riverside walks, strays, woods, lakes and ponds and around 76 children's play areas. (City of York Local Development Framework (LDF), June 2006).
- 51 The quality and location of open spaces across the city is variable with 3 of the city's parks being awarded Civic Trust Green Flag status (Rowntree and West Bank parks and Glen Gardens). The percentage of equipped playgrounds in York that meet National Playing Fields Association standards LEAP (Local Equipped Area for Play) and LAP (Local Area for Play) standard is 36%. The target for 2006/2007 is 42%, which is an increase from only 13% in 2001.
- 52 In response, York's LDF outlines that, 'the council currently places a strong emphasis on the protection of existing open spaces', and recognises, 'that certain areas of the city do not have ready access to either children's play areas or good quality amenity open space and aims to address the issues of access.'
- 53 The Parks and Open Spaces section of the council holds a comprehensive map of the city's parks and open spaces, along with information relating to types of equipment at each play area. An improved audit is being commissioned to comply with the requirements of PPG17, which will look in more detail at open space distribution, its use and for the first time in any detail, its quality.
- 54 The Parks and Open Spaces section have a responsibility for the design, installation and upkeep of the play equipment in parks and play areas within their ownership across the city. New housing developments are subject to planning permission and there is a statutory requirement to incorporate a new play area if it is feasible to do so. Alternatively, when it is not feasible, make a contribution to improve an existing, local play area as part of the 106 agreement appropriate to that development. These are part of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) which include obligations on land owners to provide a facility for example an access road or play area. It has been negotiated that the Play Team are informed and will have a contribution and influence on the design and nature of any new development that will be funded through 106 payments

Sport and Active Leisure Strategy for York 2003

- 55 "Active York" is the city's sport and active leisure strategic partnership and has representation from across the sector including the local authority, Higher Education and Further Education institutions, schools, voluntary sector sports clubs, governing bodies, the 2 professional clubs, the PCT, the media, and the private sector. "Active York" published the first Sport & Active leisure strategy for York in 2003. Under the title "Making a Difference" it set out sporting aspirations for the city. Since then much has been achieved and a new "blueprint for change" has been adopted by the partnership. This aims to help the sector rise to the challenge of "helping York to be a city that offers the widest range of

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opportunities for active leisure so that citizens may benefit from better health, enjoyment, and the achievement of individual potential."

- 56 In addition to the more traditional sporting fayre, activities such as active play, and parenting programmes are also key to the success of this strategy. Promoting a foundation for participation in physical activity, healthy lifestyles, tackling obesity and lifelong learning extends from engaging children in active play to encouraging the need for "everyday exercise" throughout family life. Through the promotion of facility improvement (e.g. creche provision and play space), programme development (e.g. APEL, and Schools Out programmes), meaningful community consultation and fostering of effective working partnerships (e.g. the EYDCP), Active York aims to ensure that rates of participation in sport and active leisure increase across all age groups.



Library Services

- 57 City of York Library Services are for everyone who lives, works or studies in the York, each year lending 1.5 million books, videos, CDs and DVDs and having over 850,00 visits. These services are delivered in partnership across the City in every community through York Central Library, 13 community libraries, a mobile library and at Askham Grange Prison.
- 58 Libraries are great arenas for play and learning. Learning is at the heart of libraries' offer and new builds in community libraries are linking with schools or incorporating flexible learning spaces as part of library learning centres. The link between fun and learning - at any age - is well supported by libraries' core offer of safe, welcoming places to meet; a huge range of books, music, films and other materials to use and take home; exciting activities to take part in, and friendly people to help.
- 59 All services to children under 12 are free and most things are free after that. There are children's areas in every library - having their own special place can help children feel part of a community that values them. There are under fives' story and toy sharing sessions in all libraries, plus a baby Book Crawl activity. Libraries are ideal places for children to play together and parents and carers to meet. Families can take part in shared activities, by getting to know their local library as a place to choose and use books and toys, tell stories together, and use the computers free. Friendly staff will help you find your way round, and make the most of what's on offer.

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- 60 Libraries also offer year round activities, most of them free, through Read Write York, Bookstart, School's Out, Summer Reading Challenge and much more. Many activities, such as Bookstart, also happen outside library buildings. Activities are all listed on Yortime, where you can find information on interest groups throughout the city, or have help to set one up.
- 61 Libraries are working closely with partners and increasingly with customers, to develop services. For example in the offer for Children's Centres, with Adult and Family Learning groups and with Youth Services over provision for and with young people. More targeted work is planned here. Library web pages give details of much more, for example the Free Music Scheme, Imagine York, Enquire 24 hour live online enquiry service, and online information sources for Library members. There are opportunities for everyone, from birth onwards, to 'explore, dream and discover'.

Neighbourhood Pride Unit

- 62 The Neighbourhood Pride Unit sits within the Councils Neighbourhood Services Directorate. The Play Team liaise with the Unit in relation to the planning of activities for children and young people at a ward level to ensure the best use of available resources.

Youth Service

- 63 The Youth Service works in partnership with the Play Team in order to promote activities and opportunities for young people to have access to spaces, activities and services for them to use in their leisure time. The Youth Service works to engage young people in developing and designing the services and facilities that are available to them and take an active part in planning activities and services. This enables maximum access to these facilities and ensure they are safe, of a high standard and celebrates the diversity of young people across the City. The youth service works to create opportunities for young people to develop their knowledge, abilities, skills, interests and friendship.
- 64 There is a growing recognition of the importance of helping 8 to 12 year olds make a successful transition from a play environment to a youth setting and early discussions will lead to a joined up approach in taking this forward.

Arts Service

- 65 The Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Arts Council recognise the role that the Arts has to play in providing opportunities for children and young people to explore and discover the real and imagined world through creative play. Within Arts and Culture there is a range of opportunities both for child-initiated play activities or more structured play and learning outcomes. At the Performing Arts Centres out of school activity covers the range of Dance, Drama and Music for all ages from 4 upwards. Children can experiment with the texture of sound, movement and character and while they learn about the specific art form, they are gaining social and performing skills. We have plans to redevelop the Performing Arts Centres so that the scope of the provision covers visual arts, film and media as well as one off projects and a master class programme.

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66 At our summer school courses each year, young people have the chance to write their own songs, devise their own drama performances and create their own props and costumes, as well as experiencing a whole variety of visual arts. The self-esteem that these young performers acquire is immeasurable.

67 Within our community arts provision, we work in partnership to develop creative play with a wide range of communities, neighbourhoods and organisations. Our GRAB (get really arty boxes) scheme allows all sorts of groups to work with an artist to kick start their creativity. The group then keeps the box for 6 weeks to allow them to really unleash their creative potential. There are all sorts of different art forms to choose from, and no limit on how many different boxes groups can apply for.

We also work in partnership with many local arts and cultural organisations to develop work with families, children and young people in their own venues.

Local Transport Plan

68 The Local Transport Plan 2006 – 2011 outlines its vision for the City to build a sustainable and safe transport network. At the heart of the strategy is a commitment to the governments shared priorities which are:

- **Tackling congestion**
- **Improving accessibility**
- **Road safety** – “to improve levels of safety for all forms of travel and enhance community safety” and “to address the school run, as well as providing safer routes for schools”
- **Addressing air quality issues**
- **Other quality of life issues** “to promote healthy living through increased levels of physical activity and wider access to health and social care”

69 The Play Team contributes to this agenda through links with the Sustainable Travel team which promotes safe and accessible travel around the city to children and young people, including, through the Schools Out programme, promotion of :

- YOzone – a bus proof of age card that offers substantial travel discounts to 11 – 16 year olds.
- Cycle training and free York cycle route map

70 The Play Team also contributes to the promotion of healthy living through increased level of physical activity by direct provision through its services, namely the Active Play Equipment Library, Street Sport York and Schools Out.

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Dissemination and consultation

- 71 All interested parties and organisations that have an impact on children's play are involved in the process of policy formation. The views of those consulted are used to illustrate good practices or priority needs.
- 72 Through the development of **Taking Play Forward**, the Play Team strive to consult with representatives from other internal departments to drive forward the impact on play and leisure environments.
- 73 To help children and young people to make significant contributions to developing play, leisure and cultural priorities in their local communities, the Play Team encourages those already working with 0 – 19 year olds to develop both their own consultation skills and those of the children and young people. To recognise the importance of consultation, York has it set as one of its own Better Play Objectives.



- 74 Within the Children's Trust, there is a sub group called the 'Involvement Group'. This brings together professionals from across York working with children and young people aged 0-19. It works to promote the involvement of children, young people and families in design, delivery and evaluation of services. Information from pieces of consultation work is kept on a data base which can be used by services to develop and inform practice.
- 75 As part of the development of the new Children and Young Peoples Plan, the Children's Trust and Play Team carried out a consultation exercise with the cities children, young people and parents over the summer of 2006. 2,000 postcards were distributed through events and gatherings of children and young people specifically on the content of the Children and Young Peoples Plan. The postcard also appeared in the summer edition of the School's Out publication which was distributed to all York schools, Libraries and Community Centres. In addition the Play Team devised a video diary room at the National Play Day Event to gain views on Play in the City.

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76 As a result of the wider consultation also involving parents, the Trust received over 6300 responses with six priorities emerging as strong themes which appear in the 2007 – 2010 Children and Young People's Plan. These are:

- Success for all
- A healthy start in life
- A safe place to grow up
- Children and young people in their Communities
- A good deal for disabled children and young people
- Knowledgeable adults

Comments from the Children and Young people included:

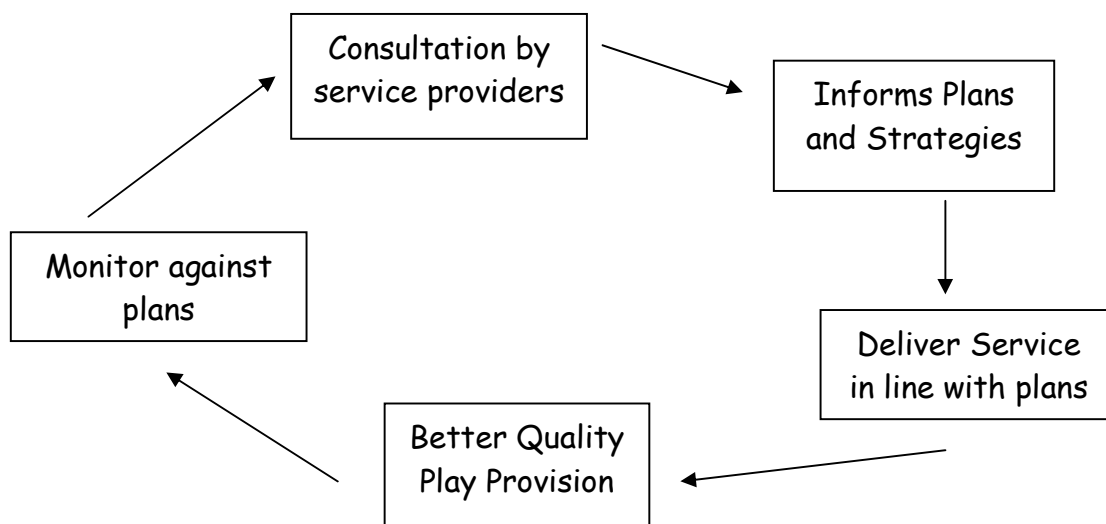
'Don't give too many sweets, have more healthy food'

'More things to do like basketball nets – skate parks where we can play – especially in the village...swimming.... good exercise for families'

'Better places for little ones by putting parks in places that aren't being used.'

77 As part of the process, the Children's Trust has produced a document that encompasses all consultation work carried out in the City of York from 2004 – 2006 called 'Messages from Children and Young People'. It is this document that is used by the Play Team to inform service development.

78 The diagram simply demonstrates the flow of information between children and young people and how consultation is utilised to ensure service providers deliver better quality play provision in the city.



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Ensuring good quality play

- 79 In the mixed economy of play, care, education and leisure, many good local play practices go unrecognised. The 'Steps to Quality' scheme has been developed in York and North Lincolnshire to offer a quality assurance award for day care providers which is helping to address this. One of the main principles of the scheme states that "play forms the basis of children's daily experience". Steps to Quality provides a framework to recognise and develop good quality play provision, and is now in use in four local authorities within the Yorkshire and Humber region. Some play organisations also measure their settings against other standards such as 'Aiming Higher' from 4Children and London Play's 'Quality in Play'.
- 80 Steps to Quality is proving to be a popular quality assurance scheme with some 59 settings working towards or having already achieved the various steps. These include childminders, nurseries and out of school clubs.
- 81 The Taking Play Forward policy also recognises and promotes the Criteria for an enriched play environment outlined in Best Play, What Play Provision Should do for Children, published by the National Playing Field Association, March 2000. (See Annex 8).

Risk in Play

- 82 The Play Team recognises that children need to challenge their boundaries and barriers when they play. The Play Safety Forum, which is a group of national agencies involved in play safety, has produced *Managing Risk in Play Provision*, to support the work of those involved in play provision of any kind including local authorities.
- 83 This document is fully supported and endorsed by key national organisations with an interest in play and safety including the Health and Safety Executive. The official summary statement is as follows;

Children need and want to take risks when they play. Play provision aims to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. In doing this, play provision aims to manage the level of risk so children are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury.

The City of York Council recognises and adopts the full document as our position statement.

- 84 Utilising the Play Teams work in the City, along with the play sector through the Taking Play Forward Partnership and consultation, it is apparent that the Play Team needs to support and develop its services, and that of other play providers, to offer increased opportunities for risk and adventure play across the City.

In just a single generation the home habitat of a typical 8 year old - the area that a child can travel around on their own - has shrunk to one ninth of its original size. Children's Play Council, 2004

Training

- 85 The play sector has an ongoing concern in the recruitment of Playworkers, early years workers, childminders, volunteers, and voluntary management groups. This continues to restrict the development of both new and established play and childcare provision. Staff retention is also difficult due to working hours, terms and conditions, pay-scales in relation to job responsibilities, demands of bureaucracy, limited development opportunities and limited bursaries for training.
- 86 To encourage growth and development within the play sector, there are a number of initiatives to help combat some of the issues mentioned in the previous paragraph. These include:
- a programme of training for Playworkers, childminders and early years practitioners is offered by the Training and Development Unit, NCMA development workers, York College, Workers in Education Association, York and North Yorkshire voluntary sector learning and skills network, Family Learning and York and North Yorkshire Playwork Assessment Consortium to mention a few
 - support offered through the Children's Information Service to assist settings in recruiting staff and support potential childcare workers and promotion at relevant job fairs.
 - agencies such as York Childcare regularly advertise job opportunities through their website and newsletter.



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Developing opportunities

- 87 It is recognised that some steps have already begun to be made in supporting and developing the play sector work force. The following steps can ensure that this continues.
- Training needs identified through the play sector will be fed back to appropriate training providers including the Training and Development Unit.
 - We will encourage the use of **Taking Play Forward** to put into context the local play agenda in any play sector training that promotes the values of play.
 - We promote funding opportunities to enable play workers to achieve relevant skills and qualifications to meet legal requirements and promote anti-discriminatory practices.

'Play is when you have fun'
Anon boy from York, aged 6

Reviewing and monitoring

- 88 In reviewing the policy, the play team are committed to regular reviewing and monitoring:
- The Play Team in conjunction with the Taking Play Forward Partnership will carry out annual monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the policy in the absence of an independently constituted play forum.
 - We will provide formal and informal opportunities for children, young people and play partners to express their views and give feedback on their comments
 - We will link evaluation and monitoring to the Best Play guidelines.
- 89 All monitoring and reviewing will be part of the annual service plan produced by the Play Team linked to corporate Council plans including the Children and Young People's Plan
- 90 A review and update of the 2002 **Taking Play Forward** action plan has taken place to see that the policy and procedures are put into practice and priority needs are met. (Outlined in Annex 9).

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- 91 The performance of all councils is rated by the Audit Commission under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework. The rating for York's core services is updated each year based on performance indicators. The Play Team directly works towards a number of performance indicators linked to the Council Plan (and Best Value Performance Plan) 2006/07. These include:
- CYP1 – Number of community groups working in partnership with the council to deliver the young peoples holiday programme
 - CYP2 – Number of young people taking part in the holiday activities programme
 - CYP4 – Number of holiday activities

In December 2005 York was judged to be a 3 star council.

- 92 All grievances or complaints about play provisions should be dealt with in line with procedures of individuals organisations. Where concerns are expressed in relation to **Taking Play Forward**, the City of York Councils complaints procedure will be followed.



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Recommendations

- 93 In revising the policy 2006/07, the Play Team invites members of the play sector to embrace the policy and sign up to its values. We recognise that the **Taking Play Forward** policy is an ever evolving document. We encourage a shared vision through consultation and welcome feedback.
- 94 Partners are invited to offer strategic support for **Taking Play Forward** at a senior level in their organisations or departments through agreement to the development of a shared and collective vision for play.

Taking Play Forward Policy Recommendations:

- the need for strategic, corporate support for **Taking Play Forward**
- to promote quality, inclusive play at all formal and informal play settings
- to utilise the results of consultation with children and young people to inform service development
- the celebration of good play practices
- using Best Play objectives as a framework for evaluating play opportunities
- to encourage the play sector to sign up to the values of **Taking Play Forward** including a visible statement displayed in each setting
- the identification of consistent funding priorities for play and play development
- the use of **Taking Play Forward** to inform and influence all aspects of play, leisure and culture city wide
- the development of local play resources for training, adventure and equipment
- a cross-directorate commitment to include play, leisure and culture matters
- seek out, support and promote relevant training opportunities for the play sector
- support opportunities for risk and adventure play across the City

