
Meeting of the Executive Member for Children
and Young People's Services

9 November 2010

Report of the Assistant Director (Communities and Culture)

Taking Play Forward 2010 - A Refresh of York's Policy for Play

Summary

1. Since 2002 the Taking Play Forward policy has continued to be an ever-evolving document reflective of the changes that have occurred at a national and local level within the play sector. The new policy looks to embrace the learning both from recent local play initiatives as well as from national good practice in order to aid the development of play in the City.
2. The purpose of this report is to:
 - a) Provide details of significant progress made since the last policy in 2007
 - b) Highlight the key changes in the 2010 policy
 - c) Seek approval from the Executive member for the 2010 Taking Play Forward policy

Background

3. In 2002, the authority formally launched the 'Taking Play Forward', play policy, a collective vision for play for the City. In its conception, the policy actively consulted with many interested groups, organisations and individuals to ensure that the dreams and aspirations were realised for the play sector.
4. The policy document was again updated in 2007 to ensure that the authority drew down Lottery and Playbuilder funding streams. The 2007 version reflected and included a number of key legislative documents and significant bills which were introduced, including Every Child Matters. The local policy was developed inline with other strategic documents including our Children and Young People's plan which had fully incorporated feedback from city wide consultations with York's children and young people.
5. The 2010 refresh has been shaped by a number of initiatives as well as a number of consultation events and activities.

Consultation

6. Consultation for the new policy has captured the views of a number of boards, organisation, groups and individuals, including children and young people.

These have included the YorOK Children's Trust Board, the Taking Play Forward Strategic Board, the Out of Schools Club Network as well as an online questionnaire through the YorOk website. Children and young people have also provided a number of images and photographs as a result of "Shine", the summer holiday programme, which will be included in the new document.

7. Feedback asked for the policy to include, a shorter easy read version, and valued newly introduced sections including, case studies, the role of parents and carers and support for the play work force.

Purpose and reasoning for the 2010 refresh

8. Since 2007 a number of local and national drivers have prompted the update of the policy. These have included the following initiatives that have contributed significantly to changes within the new policy document.

Learning from Lottery and Playbuilder Funding:

9. In 2007 the authority was awarded Lottery funding to develop 4 projects within the city, over a 3-year period. Following the previous Government's launch of the national Play Strategy and Children's Plan in 2009, the authority was also allocated £1,165,391, through the Playbuilder initiative, for the development of 22 play areas across the city, primarily aimed at children 8 – 13 years old.
10. To date, the city has benefited from 15 new or upgraded play areas, including climbing boulders at Rawcliffe Country Park and an environmental play project, operating at 5 sites across the city, through the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. These projects were developed in conjunction with local children, young people and communities.

Playshaper training:

11. In 2009, York hosted a nationally developed Playshaper training event which brought together multi agency representatives including Police, Housing, Parks and Open Spaces, the voluntary sector, City Strategy, Transport and Planning. The training focused on child-friendly design, planning and management of public space and enabled local authority colleagues and other stakeholders to come together and consider how a number of topics affect play, including:
 - The design, planning and management of public space are fundamental to children's quality of life.
 - Consideration of children's play and active travel can help deliver on a range of local priorities including community cohesion, health targets and regeneration aims.
 - Addressing the needs of children, young people and their parents in the built environment can potentially reduce crime, fear of crime and accidents.
12. There were a number of outcomes from this event which included new partners committing to a number of pledges to assist in the development of play opportunities in the city and the formation of a new strategic board to

ensure the development and implementation of the Taking Play Forward policy. These outcomes have enabled strategic ownership for development of play at a local level, with a much broader perspective from a wider range of partners that have a vested interest in play.

Setting priorities

13. Through this intensive period of consultation and project development a number of key issues and challenges have been identified:
 - Sustainability of a structured play sector including Out of School Clubs: There are limited funding streams available to support this sector, as recent funding has focused on the Early Years sector.
 - Perceptions of some parents' including safety concerns about traffic, stranger danger, older children and bullying: it is unsafe to let children out to play.
 - Workforce – Recruitment & Retention of play workers: Again there is limited funding to support training in this sector of the children's workforce.
 - Safe places to play – outdoor and risky play: A perception on the part of some parents and some local residents, identified through Playbuilder, that allocated play spaces are not in themselves safe.
 - Competition within the sector – more choice is now available: The extended services agenda has increased the range of opportunities available to children and young people in some cases to saturation point jeopardising the viability of providers.
 - Requirements through newly introduced frameworks including the Early Years Foundation Standards: Standards have been introduced to improve outcomes for 0-5s. They have to be adopted by any setting e.g. an out of school club, that takes under 5s even if most of the children are over 5
 - The sometimes negative perceptions of children and young people by local residents: Again raised through the development of the Playbuilder schemes.

14. From feedback we are able to set clear priorities for the city, which are included in the 2010 policy. These include:
 - Embedding play in other strategic documents: So that children's play needs are taken into consideration in all key strategies
 - Raising quality and inclusiveness of play provision: So that all settings are confident to assess individual needs, adapt working practice, and make the young person feel involved
 - Making listening to children and young people common place throughout the authority: So that children's views on play are explicitly acknowledged and reflected in all relevant plans, services and future play provision
 - Setting a new key local indicator for play: So that all children and young people and communities have access to and are involved in the development of, local, safe and freely available, quality play experiences that are within easy walking or cycling distance

- Training to improve skills and quality: So that each play setting in York will have a workforce trained to the new Playwork standards
- Supporting risk and challenge in all play activities: So that settings (including the involvement of parents/carers) can be confident in providing activities that excite and allow children to test boundaries and assess risk for themselves

15. It is the responsibility of the City of York Council's Play Team based in the Communities and Culture service to oversee the development and co-ordination of the policy in conjunction with the Taking Play Forward Strategic Board, play partners, relevant internal and external organisations, children and young people, families and communities.

Key changes to the policy document

16. The 2010 policy has a number of improvements and changes from the previous version. These include:

Changes within the 2010 policy	Policy reference
Celebrates achievements since the last policy document	Page 7
Sets clear play priorities for Play in the city	Page 8
Case studies of good practice	Page 18, 20, 21
The introduction of an action plan against the priorities	This will be web based to allow progress to be tracked
New section including	
Promoting risky play	11 & 12
Active play	12 & 13
Developing Outdoor Play	13
Important Role of Parents/carers	16
Workforce Development	18 to 21

Options

17. The Executive Member can:
- Approve the new policy and its action plan
 - Amend the new policy document and its action plan

Analysis

18. The document as written aims to provide a clear steer for play in the city and enables the authority to develop play opportunities against defined priorities to ensure that limited resources are maximised in the changing climate. In addition the policy has the support of a growing range of partners that will help achieve the priorities. The comments of the Executive Member are invited.

Corporate Objectives

19. The scheme contributes to the following Corporate Objectives:
- Sustainable City – by promoting the creation or improvement of local places to play
 - Inclusive City – by involving children, young people and their community in the design of their spaces
 - Healthy City – by improving and promoting the outdoor places for children and young people to enjoy healthy and active lifestyles

Implications

20. **Financial:** Although there are no financial implications the Taking Play Forward policy set out the priorities that dictate the allocation of the Better Play Grants to the voluntary and community sector.
21. **Equalities:** The Taking Play Forward policy advocates and promotes inclusive practice through the document.
22. There are no HR, Legal, Crime and Disorder, Information Technology or Property implications.

Risk Management

23. The main risk to the scheme is not delivering all of the remaining 10 play areas within the aspirations of the initial scheme. These risks are heightened at times of financial constraint but the partnership strategy's emphasis on existing as well as new provision reduces those risks.

Recommendations

24. The Executive Member is asked to approve the new 2010 Taking Play Forward and Action Plan

Reason: To progress the development of play in the city for the benefit of our children and young people.

Contact Details

Authors:

Mary Bailey
Head of Play and Young People's
Cultural Entitlement
Tel. 01904 553426

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Charlie Croft
Assistant Director (Communities & Culture)

Report
Approved



Date 28 October 2010

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

Annex 1 – Taking Play Forward Policy

Annex 2 – Taking Play Forward Action Plan

Background Papers:

Meeting of Executive Members and Children's Services Advisory Panel, Taking Play Forward - Local and National Priorities for Play - January 2008