NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

PLAY STRATEGY

REFRESH 2016

January 2016
If you would like to discuss this report further or raise any pertinent issues please contact Dr Christine Fiddler using the contact details given above.
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1. Executive Summary

Refreshing the 2008 Play Strategy - Purpose and Scope

The North East Lincolnshire Play Strategy was developed during 2007 and published in 2008. It was produced by a steering group which brought together North East Lincolnshire Council, local partners and young people who worked with a local consultancy to identify the needs, wants and issues that the area faced in respect to children’s play and play provision. It was also used to secure funding, that was available at that time and enabled a number of play areas within North East Lincolnshire to be updated and re-developed.

In 2015, the same consultancy was approached to undertake a short refresh of the 2008 Play Strategy. The key aims were to bring the information contained within the 2008 Strategy up to date in terms of policy changes, resources available and the changing interests and wishes of the children and young people within the district. It is intended the 2015 refreshed Play Strategy will not replace the 2008 Play Strategy but will update it in terms of current policy, local views, policy links and provide a snapshot of play facilities within the district.

Vision for Play

Based on consultation with the local authority, partners and parents as well as changes to policy, including resources now available, the vision which was included in the 2008 Play Strategy has been revised in 2015 to reflect the changing circumstances that the local authority and its partners now operate within. Play and the provision of play areas is not a statutory requirement for the local authority, and with budget constraints and no funding now available for play areas, the local authority find themselves in a difficult position.

Nevertheless, local authorities do have a duty, under the Children’s Act 2004 (revised 2014), to work across their service areas and with other organisations to promote the well-being of all children and young people. This duty includes promoting children and young people’s well-being. Therefore, local authorities can only be sure local children are well provided for if they adopt a strategic approach to the development, delivery and support of appropriate and quality spaces and facilities.

It is clear that in North East Lincolnshire the Council and its partners fully recognise the benefits that play brings to a child and are fully committed to work with others to ensure play remains part of the local community. The local authority and its partners fully recognise that play has a key role in improving and developing a child’s cognitive functions (convergent thinking, problem-solving ability, divergent thinking, language development); social adjustment (integration and communication); emotional development and health. Therefore in 2015:-

North East Lincolnshire Council and its partners, recognise that play is an essential part of every child’s life, and is vital to their social and cognitive development as well as to the child’s health and wellbeing. The Council and its partners therefore will work with others in the local area to support the provision of play and play areas that is inclusive, quality, safe, accessible and stimulating for children and young people.
Challenges

The North East Lincolnshire area has some significant challenges which the local authority, partners and other agencies are working towards addressing. The Play Strategy seeks to contribute by linking and exploring the positive impact play can have on the lives of children and young people in North East Lincolnshire.

In today’s economic climate with budget constraints the local authority still feel they are justified in spending on play areas. Whilst the local authority does not have a statutory requirement to undertake this role, they do have a duty to ensure the health and wellbeing needs of the children in the area are being met. Therefore, they and their partners fully recognise that the impact and value that play brings is worth the investment.

There is a clear disparity in play provision across North East Lincolnshire with some of the more socially deprived areas having fewer play facilities. With limited resources within the local authority, certainly investment must be targeted at areas where there is the most need and the greatest benefits to be achieved from that investment.

The area is unique, in that it also has a beautiful shoreline which attracts visitors from across the UK and play is also important to ensure the area is attractive to these visitors and their children. However, North East Lincolnshire also has areas of severe social and economic deprivation. Therefore, the future provision of play should be targeted and focused on meeting the needs of communities where there will be a greater positive impact.

Parents and their children

Parents and their children still require the same in 2015 as they did in 2008:- that is safe, appropriately equipped play areas that are accessible and meet their needs. Whilst there has been investment in some parks and play areas, some still do require updating and improving.

The statistics show that the number of children in North East Lincolnshire has fallen, more now play indoors on their computers and ipads and parents appear to be even more concerned now about allowing their children to play outside of the family home. More parents tend to take their children to a park rather than allow their children to go on their own.

Concerns

Concerns are still being raised by some parents who participated in the 2015 survey for this updated report, about inappropriate uses of the parks, bullying by older children, drug and alcohol use by users of the parks and cleanliness. Whilst the survey sample size was small, it did give some significant results and parents reported key issues that were of concern to them and impacted on the way their children play.

Local Authority Response

The Local Authority have acted on some of the concerns prior to the survey. A Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), Controlled Drinking Zone, came into force April 2015. This gives North East Lincolnshire Council the power to control the consumption of alcohol across all the Wards in North East Lincolnshire.
The PSPO has been implemented in seven wards across the borough in response to concerns which have been raised by North East Lincolnshire Council Elected Members regarding the prevalence and visibility of drinking alcohol in public places and the associated anti-social or nuisance behaviour. These wards are: East Marsh, West Marsh, Heneage, Park, South, Sidney Sussex and Croft Baker. This Order is not a total ban on drinking in public places but makes it an offence to carry on drinking alcohol when asked to stop by a Police Officer or to fail to surrender alcohol or a container for alcohol when requested. This power should only be used in circumstances where anti-social behaviour is occurring or is likely to occur.

The order means that a request can be made to individuals or groups to stop drinking or hand over alcohol if they are involved in drinking related anti-social behaviour. If they refuse to do so they could be served with a fixed penalty notice of £100.

Therefore, measures are now in place across some wards to address the issues raised by parents in the survey.

Number of parks

In addition, whilst the number of children living in North East Lincolnshire has fallen the number of parks and play areas has remained more or less constant. Despite the statistics showing the overall area has too many parks to numbers of children, there remains disparities, with some areas having more parks and play areas than others.

There is certainly a disparity in distribution of parks and play areas across North East Lincolnshire, with some of the more socio-economic deprived areas lacking facilities for play. Added to this is the reduction in the numbers of children and young people using the parks. With most parents taking their children to play areas, there is a need to really focus now on quality not quantity and provide parks and play areas that not only meet the needs of the child but also its parents and carers.

What is clear, from the consultation undertaken for the Play Strategy is that the identified benefits that parks and play areas bring to North East Lincolnshire, certainly enable users of the parks to experience positive changes and a difference to their quality of life as a result of investment made.

Findings show that parents want somewhere that they can go to that is safe, clean and accessible for their children. They also want facilities that are suitable for the child’s needs. Parents should also be catered for at the parks and playing areas and facilities and activities that are inclusive and meet the adult needs should also be considered.

Audit of the parks and play areas

There appears to be a good number of facilities, parks and play areas and whilst a number have been updated some still do require some attention or updating.

Overall in terms of parks and play areas there still remains some gaps in provision and whilst overall the area has more than the national average of play areas, based on the criteria in 2008, nearly 50% of the wards fall below this average. Therefore, given budget constraints there is a need to undertake a more focused review of play areas to ensure they meet the needs of both the current and future users of the facilities and to ensure the parks and play areas are safe to use.
There should also be an open and frank discussion on how future funding can be sorted or maintenance provided by alternative sources and also whether the number of play areas should be reduced with an emphasis on quality rather than quantity of provision.

Further work needs to be undertaken to address the issues raised by parents in the survey whose children use the parks, but with limited resources and budget constraints these issues need a different approach and remedy. The Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) may help but clearly CCTV is not the deterrent hoped for. Perhaps a physical presence within the parks or a park warden or activity worker needs to be explored further. However, what is clear, and given the socio-economic issues of some areas within North East Lincolnshire, that a more focused and targeted assessment of the parks and play areas needs to be undertaken. This should be based, not just on the technical aspects of the parks and play areas but also on the positive impact a park or play area will have on the children and young people within a community.

Policy Links - At a national, regional and local level children and young people’s play and informal recreation is now integral in many policies which are aimed at improving and developing the social, health and economic well-being of children and young people.

Overall the health of people living in North East Lincolnshire is worse than other people living in England and therefore services and provision that can help alleviate and address these issues, particularly starting at a younger age, are key to the future wellbeing of the population in the area.

Play cannot necessarily address and solve the wider socio-economic issues that exist within a community on its own, but play, by its very nature, can contribute, influence and impact on a number of social, health and wellbeing measures. The provision of inclusive, good quality play provision brings benefits and clearly adds value to the delivery of a number of policies. Therefore, its cross cutting impact can be used to support action aimed at addressing some of the social and wellbeing issues identified in North East Lincolnshire.

Play therefore has clear linkages to a number of local strategies aimed at addressing health and wellbeing challenges across North East Lincolnshire. This includes the:

- North East Lincolnshire Final Playing Pitch Strategy December 2011
- Shaping the Future – North East Lincolnshire Community Strategy Update 2010

Key Recommendations

The area has some significant challenges, which the local authority and its partners are clearly committed to and are working towards addressing. Play, whilst not a statutory requirement, is nevertheless a key activity that could be used to address some of these issues, focusing on both the child and also the family. Therefore, play and the play activities it generates is a key factor in the future wellbeing of the population within North East Lincolnshire.
It is no longer just about park standards but it is also about meeting the needs and improving the lives of children and young people in North East Lincolnshire. With limited resources available there is a requirement to better assess and manage the number of parks and play areas based on the positive impact a play area will have on the children and adults who live there. With a disparity in park numbers across the area and limited resources, the Council and its partners must ensure the focus is on targeting the limited resources available to gain the maximum impact possible.

Therefore, it is recommended that the Council and its partners use an assessment based on the social impact and value that each park and play area contributes to an area to ensure resources are focused and targeted at those areas where there will be a positive social impact.

It is further recommended that the Council and its partners use this review to have a frank and open discussion about the future of parks and play areas to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the people and areas that are most at need of such facilities.

The Play Strategy

The 2008 Play Strategy was firmly founded on the identified needs and wants of children and young people, their parents and carers, and other agencies or organisations that provide support or activities for children and young people. It still remains, even in 2015, a comprehensive consultation of the needs and wants with regard to play facilities, of children and young people in North East Lincolnshire.

Play is an important activity within society. In play, children expand their understanding of themselves and others, their knowledge of the physical world, and their ability to communicate with peers and adults. Play is fundamental to children’s health and well-being throughout their childhood and during their transition into adulthood.

At a national, regional and local level children’s and young people’s play and informal recreation is now integral in many policies which are aimed at improving and developing the social, health and economic well-being of children and young people.

Play cannot necessarily address and solve the wider socio-economic issues that exist within a community on its own, but play, by its very nature, can contribute, influence and impact on a number of social, health and wellbeing measures. The provision of inclusive, good quality play provision brings benefits and clearly adds value to the delivery of a number of policies. Therefore, its cross cutting impact can be used to support action aimed at addressing some of the social and wellbeing issues identified in North East Lincolnshire.

The strategy will be owned by the local authority, the people, the organisations it is intended to influence and the children and young people it will serve.

Play crosses a number of policy areas but is mainly focused on developing and supporting the health and wellbeing of children and young people in the North East Lincolnshire area.
There must be commitment to deliver this strategy and it is recommended that it becomes the ownership of the Health and Wellbeing Board who adopt the principles and recommendations to ensure play and play areas are developed and maintained in a way that not only meet the needs of the current population but also the future. Given the recommendations made within the Healthy Patterns for Healthy Families: Removing the Hurdles to a Healthy Family 2014, regarding play and the links to obesity prevention, it is only right that the Play Strategy is driven by health and wellbeing.

It is also suggested that a Plan of Action be developed to ensure the Priorities and Aims below are delivered.

Some difficult choices may have to be taken in order to meet these needs and further focused discussion should take place in order to ensure the correct actions are taken to safeguard the parks and play areas that traditionally have met the needs of children and young people in the area.

**Vision**

North East Lincolnshire Council and its partners recognise that play is an essential part of every child’s life, and is vital to their social and cognitive development as well as to the child’s health and wellbeing. The Council and its partners therefore aim to work with others in the local area to support the provision of play and play areas that is inclusive, quality, safe, accessible and stimulating for children and young people.

**Key Priorities:**

**Priority 1: Improving inclusivity, access and opportunities for play**

Key Aims

1. To work together with partners and local people so that every child and young person in North East Lincolnshire has access to good quality and safe playgrounds and play areas which meet their needs for variety, accessibility, choice, open space, adventure and play aspirations
2. To consolidate and focus the opportunities for play so that they fully meet the needs of children and young people
3. To promote inclusion and access for disadvantaged and disabled children and young people.

**Priority 2: Staying Safe**

Key Aims

1. To reduce incidences of bullying and anti-social behaviour to zero
2. To work together with partners and local people to address issues of vandalism and to provide play areas that are of sufficient quality that meet the needs of children and young people

**Priority 3: Promote and support a range of quality provision for year round local supervised open access play**

Key Aims

1. To review the existing provision to ensure it fully meets the needs of current and future users
2. To increase local partnership working
**Priority 4: Meet the needs of current and future users**

Key Aim
1. To address the disparities of provision and ensure that investment is targeted and focused on areas where this investment will have the greatest impact

**Priority 5: Focused investment and new ways of working**

Key Aim
1. To explore different approaches to funding and management of parks and play areas
2. Introduction

2.1 Refreshing the 2008 Play Strategy - Purpose and Scope

The North East Lincolnshire Play Strategy was developed during 2007 and published in 2008. It was produced by a steering group which brought together North East Lincolnshire Council, local partners and young people who worked with a local consultancy to identify the needs, wants and issues that the area faced in respect to children’s play and play provision. It was also used to secure funding, that was available at that time and enabled a number of play areas in the Borough to be updated and re-developed.

In 2015, the same consultancy was approached to undertake a short refresh of the 2008 Play Strategy. The key aims are to bring the information contained within the 2008 Strategy up to date in terms of policy changes, resources available and the changing interests and wishes of the children and young people within the district. It is intended the 2015 refreshed strategy will not replace the 2008 Play Strategy but will update it in terms of current policy, local views, the resources available and provide a snapshot of play facilities within the district.

Therefore, the refresh of the 2008 Play Strategy includes the following:

- Define what play means in 2015 and the impact of any changes since 2008
- Review and update the links to current policy locally, regionally and nationally
- Review current national standards and inspection criteria for play
- Review local standards for the quality, quantity and accessibility of play provision and environments for play and place this within the context of current facility management within North East Lincolnshire
- Snap shot and desk review of current play provision highlighting where possible changes in facilities available, condition and accessibility from those identified in 2008
- Review the current range of play provision and whether local children and young people feel this is adequate to meet their needs
- Identify gaps and key issues around current demands and aspirations, ensuring facilities and services are targeted at the greatest need
- Link to key policy documents
- Identify how the social impact and value parks and playing areas bring can be measured
- Make recommendations for the development of children’s play including options for the future management of facilities and play in general.

At the heart of both the 2008 Play Strategy and the refreshed Strategy in 2015, it is acknowledged that children and young people are the main stakeholders and careful consideration has been given to the nature and extent of their involvement. Whilst in 2007/8 we were able to fully consult with children and young people, in 2015 and due to the nature of the work required plus budget constraints we have done our best to gather those views via the parents and carers of children living in North East Lincolnshire.

Key Activities

With the cross-cutting nature of play provision, thought has also been given within the methodology as to involvement of both the local authority and voluntary/community
sector agencies and groups. Therefore the following has been undertaken:

- Meeting with local authority departments – integrated family service; children’s centres; children’s disability team; parks, planning including the officers involved in the development of the Local Plan and proposed Playing Pitch and Sports Facility Strategy, and a Green Space and Play Area Audit.
- Meeting with other agencies and organisations involved with or that have a link to play or play areas, including the Police, Public Health, the Civic Society.
- Questionnaire survey with parents and carers to ascertain the needs and wants of their children in respect to play. This was undertaken both on-line and paper based using mediums such as Facebook through the Parent Participation Group, Carers Society, Neighbourhood Hubs and individual parents. This has given a good cross section of views from across North East Lincolnshire, including parents and children from the disability sector that may have specific needs around play.

**Vision for Play**

In 2008 the local authority developed a vision about play, this was:

> North East Lincolnshire Council recognises that children and young people in North East Lincolnshire have the right to inclusive, quality, safe, accessible and stimulating play provision and aims to work with partners to improve and deliver play opportunities for its children and young people.

Based on consultation with the local authority, partners and parents as well as changes to policy, including resources now available this vision has been revised in 2015 to reflect the changing circumstances that the local authority and its partners now operate within. Play and the provision of play areas, is not a statutory requirement for the local authority, and with budget constraints and no funding now available for play areas, the local authority find themselves in a difficult position. Nevertheless local authorities have a duty, under the Children Act 2004, to work across their service areas and with other organisations to promote the well-being of all children and young people. This duty includes promoting children and young people’s well-being.

Local authorities can only be sure local children are well provided for if they adopt a strategic approach to the development, delivery and support of appropriate and quality spaces and facilities. Within North East Lincolnshire, the Council and its partners fully recognise the benefits that play brings to a child and aim to work with others to ensure play remains part of the local community. The local authority and its partners fully recognise that play has a key role in improving and developing a child’s cognitive functions (convergent thinking, problem-solving ability, divergent thinking, language development); social adjustment (integration and communication); emotional development and health.
Therefore in 2015:

North East Lincolnshire Council and its partners recognise that play is an essential part of every child’s life, and is vital to their social and cognitive development as well as to the child’s health and wellbeing. The Council and its partners therefore will work with others in the local area to support the provision of play and play areas that is inclusive, quality, safe, accessible and stimulating for children and young people.

2.2 Play Provision

In 2007/08 a full audit of play facilities, play areas and services that deliver play activities was undertaken, including local authority and community/voluntary sector provision and informal provision that was identified by the children and young people of the area. This remains an important piece of work and whilst there has been some changes, with loss of some provision, the document produced in 2007/8 and now updated in 2015 (Appendix 1) remains a very comprehensive review of provision within North East Lincolnshire. The desk review we undertook included matching parks and play areas that we audited against a list and audit undertaken by the local authority in 2011 – attached at appendix 2.

The play provision mapped and included in the updated audit at Appendix 1 were all:

- Free of charge
- Where children are free to come and go (other than where safety is an issue for children with particular needs), and
- Where they are free to choose what they do

2.3 Outline of Content

The Play Strategy acknowledges the importance of play across the generations and the role that play can have in contributing to the social well-being, health and quality of life of the 36,0571 children and young people aged 0 – 19 years as at 2014, that make up over 23% of the total population (159,804) in North East Lincolnshire. The number of children and young people aged 0 – 19 years, has fallen from the 2001 census and which was included in 2008 strategy when there was 42,9452 children and young people aged 0 – 19 years. However, with the planned increase in housing that is being built in the area the numbers of children in the future may well increase significantly.

2.4 Definition of Play

The definition of Play used within both the 2008 Play Strategy and the refresh in 2015 is:

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

Source: Best Play – what play provision should do for children

1 Source Census – mid term 2014, ONS www.ONS.gov.uk
2 Source: Census 2001, ONS, Neighbourhood Statistics
3. **The Case for Play**

3.1 **Value and Significance of Play**

In play, children expand their understanding of themselves and others, their knowledge of the physical world, and their ability to communicate with peers and adults. Play is fundamental to children’s health and well-being throughout their childhood and during their transition into adulthood.

Play is essential to development as it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social and emotional wellbeing of children and youth. Play offers an ideal opportunity for parents and carers to engage fully with their children. Play is so important to optimal child development that the right to play is recognized by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a right of every child.

Yet, despite the benefits derived from play for both children and parents, time for free play has been markedly reduced for some children and whilst some may consider play to be trivial and simple, and even a waste of time, "play is not wasted time but rather time spent building new knowledge from previous experience".

The aim of this play strategy is to consider play in its broadest sense, to address the issues surrounding play, taking into account current provision and ensuring that the importance of play is considered by all partners, in areas of policy that have an influence on children’s lives and development. The Play Strategy explores and develops the reasons as to why play is important to children, their families and carers as well as to the community at large. It also supports the child’s rights, needs and interests to participate fully in leisure, recreation, physical activity and is informed in its development through the views of children and young people who have been listened to.

3.2 **Contribution Play makes to the wider agendas**

The multi-faceted benefits associated with Play and its subsequent contribution to the wider agendas include its influence and contribution it has to the following policy areas:

- **Health and fitness** - The chief medical officer advises that 'children and young people should achieve a total of at least 60 minutes of at least moderate-intensity physical activity each day'. There is growing research evidence that increased opportunity for free play is the most effective way to ensure this for children, and that a range of increasing health problems are associated with the decline in play opportunities. NHS Choices recommends active play, such as using a climbing frame, riding a bike, playing in water, chasing games and ball games, as being the best way for toddlers to get moving.

- **Childhood obesity** – this is a serious problem with profound health and social consequences. In 2011, nearly one in three boys and more than one in five girls aged...

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4 Ibid
6 Ginsburg, K. 2006
8 Source: [http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/physical-activity-guidelines-for-children.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/physical-activity-guidelines-for-children.aspx)
between two and 15 are overweight or obese. Play encourages physical activity in children, building a healthy heart and developing strong muscles and bones. Increased physical activity amongst children burns more calories and has additional health benefits such as improved cardiovascular and gross motor benefits. It is estimated that up to 25 per cent of children in the UK are overweight or obese, a figure that has been rising steadily over the past 20 years. However recent reports state that whilst the rise in childhood obesity may be beginning to level off. Researchers examined trends in child and adolescent rates of overweight and obesity using electronic GP records from 1994 to 2013. The data shows there was a significant increase in child and adolescent overweight and obesity rates every year during the first decade from 1994 to 2003. Overall, annual rates did not increase significantly during the second decade, 2004 to 2013. However, when split by age category, the results showed there was still a significant upward trend in overweight and obesity rates for the oldest age group (11 to 15 years) – albeit with less of an increase than there was in the first decade. At its maximum in recent years, overweight and obesity has affected almost two-fifths of adolescents in this age group.

North East Lincolnshire had the second highest prevalence rate for reception year children at risk of obesity in the region and this has hardly changed over the past three years. However there has been 2.7% decline over the last three years in those children in year 6 at risk of obesity. This was the third lowest prevalence rate in Yorkshire & Humber and is 0.5% lower than regional and national figures. (National Child Measurement Programme: England 2013-2014 Health and Social Care Information Centre).

Participation rates in physical activity of reception and year 6 children show that North East Lincolnshire has exceeded the target of 85%. 2011/12 participation rates for children in reception and year 6 (99.1% and 97.9%) were the highest in the region.

- **Mental Health** – The Mental Health Foundation (A New Way Forward Sept 15) 1 in 10 children and young people between the ages of 5 -16 years have a diagnosable mental health condition and 75% of mental health problems set in by the age of 24. Play is now widely recognised as being beneficial in the emotional development of children and can lead to improvements in the cognitive, emotional and social well-being of children who play. Research suggests that free play and exploration may be the means by which children learn to solve their own problems and control their own lives.

- **The Environment** - People living in deprived areas have the least access to green spaces and also poorer health. (CABE Space (2010) Urban Green Nation: building the evidence base Commission for architecture and the built environment.

The report by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges: Measuring Up (2013) gives 10 recommendations one of which is that Public Health England should provide guidance to Directors of Public Health in working with Local Authorities to encourage

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9 NHS Choices:Britain the Fat man of Europe, accessed November 2015
10 BBC News Report, Friday 30th January 2015
12 JNSA 2012
13 Play Therapy UK
14 psychologytoday.com Peter Gray Ph.D The Decline of Play and Rise in Children's Mental Health Disorders posted Jan 26 2010
active travel and protect or increase green spaces to make the healthy option the easy option. In all four nations (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), local authority planning decisions should be subject to a mandatory health impact assessment, which would evaluate their potential impact upon the populations’ health.

By allowing children access to the outdoors, the child’s confidence in moving through the larger world is much improved. Children’s out of school experiences play a critical role in shaping lifelong attitudes, values, and patterns of behaviour toward natural environment, whereas fear of their environment means that children are much less likely to connect with wider ‘green’ environmental problems.

- **Education** – Play contributes to the learning process, as during play children repeat, adapt and refine all types of movement in various combinations, thereby improving not only their physical skills but also their social and educational skills. Play is recognised\(^\text{15}\) as a major route to learning, particularly in children’s early years. Play can support and consolidate learning from both informal and formal school settings and is widely seen as having an important role in children’s cognitive development, although it must be noted that much of the existing evidence relates to the pre-school age group. The benefit of play to the wellbeing of children, from better health outcomes to higher academic performance and improved social skills, was acknowledged by the UK Chief Medical Officer in her 2012 Annual Report - *Our Children Deserve Better: Prevention Pays*.

- **Transport** - Heavy traffic is the main reason given by parents for a sharp decline in outdoor play. Every day in 2011, an average of 7 children between 0-15 were killed or seriously injured on the roads.\(^\text{16}\) ‘Many children appear to have less time being physically active…because of the increase in car use and the heightened concern about potential risks of unsupervised play outdoors’.\(^\text{17}\) Furthermore with a shift from unstructured to structured events children are walking less and according to the Centre for Transport Studies\(^\text{18}\), ‘play is one of the best things that parents can do for their children’s health’.

- **Inequality and exclusion** – Play provides social benefits for children and young people. At an individual level it allows them to mix with their peers, exercise free choice (to some extent) and by doing so improve their self-confidence and feelings of self-worth. However Play can also have a benefit at a community level through encouraging the use and development of local community facilities, play provision can have a strategic use in bringing more widespread social benefits including greater social cohesion improving and the building of community networks. For example, Play opportunities can create more inclusive play, opening up the environment to disabled and non-disabled children and children from different ethnic communities.

There is a clear relationship between childhood obesity and deprivation; the prevalence of childhood obesity in the most deprived areas is almost double that in

\(^\text{15}\) National Playing Fields Association, 2000  
\(^\text{16}\) Healthy Patterns for Healthy Families: Removing the Hurdles to a Healthy Family, a report by the All Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood 2014  
\(^\text{17}\) The Government White Paper, Choosing Health, 2004  
\(^\text{18}\) Centre for Transport Studies, UCL, 2004
the least deprived areas\textsuperscript{19}.

- **Crime and anti-social behaviour** – Anti-social behaviour covers a vast list from environmental issues including litter, graffiti, abandoned cars through to people begging, drinking or causing a problem in the city centre at night, including problems in neighbourhood areas such as ‘neighbours from hell’. Some children and young people who hang about in groups are also seen as posing a threat to the wider community.

In a letter to the Times on the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill, July 2013 from Play England raising concerns that the new bill would ‘merely serve as another barrier stopping children from playing outdoors with their friends in the street the park or other public spaces further jeopardising the physical and mental health of children’.

However, projects in schools have demonstrated the practical benefits of freely chosen play to the wellbeing and behaviour of children.\textsuperscript{20}

Play opportunities can assist in promoting community cohesion and support regeneration particularly through an inclusive approach to developing play opportunities that create attractive and welcoming parks and public spaces which cater for children, young people and families.

### 3.3 Social Impact and Value

"Theory of Change provides a framework for evaluating social impact, by making explicit the relationships between activities and desired outcomes, and by describing the ‘chain of events’ that relates one outcome to another."\textsuperscript{21}

Play cannot necessarily address and solve the wider socio-economic issues that exist within a community on its own, but play, by its very nature, can contribute, influence and impact on a number of social, health and wellbeing measures. The provision of inclusive, good quality play provision brings benefits and clearly adds value to the delivery of a number of policies. Therefore its cross cutting impact can be used to support action aimed at addressing some of the social and wellbeing issues identified in North East Lincolnshire.

The benefits that parks deliver for health and wellbeing are well researched and documented. Research suggests that regular physical activity in a natural environment can reduce the risk of experiencing poor mental health by as much as 50%.\textsuperscript{22} As a result of these proven benefits the Government wishes to increase the proportion of adults making one or more visits to the outdoors per week.\textsuperscript{23} As well as improving and

\textsuperscript{19} National Child Measurement Programme: England 2013-2014 (Health and Social Care Information Centre)
\textsuperscript{20} Healthy Patterns for Healthy Families: Removing the Hurdles to a Healthy Family, a report by the All Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood 2014.
\textsuperscript{22} Regular physical activity in natural environments halves risk of poor mental health | Centre for research on environment, society and health http://cresh.org.uk/2012/06/20/regular-physical-activity-in-naturalenvironments-halves-risk-of-poor-mental-health/
\textsuperscript{23} Increase the proportion of adults making one or more visits to the outdoors per week
sustaining physical and emotional health and wellbeing, parks deliver many other tangible benefits.\textsuperscript{724}

There have been a number of studies undertaken that assess the social value parks and play areas bring. These include the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which in 2011 looked at the Social Value of Public Spaces. CABE has also undertaken a similar exercise in 2012. Edinburgh Council have looked specifically at how its parks provide social value and have drawn together a set of criteria that can be used to measure impact.

The Government has also drawn together criteria\textsuperscript{25} that can be used to measure social value and this includes indicators very similar to those used by Edinburgh.

3.3.1 Edinburgh Council

Edinburgh Council have looked at social value both in terms of impact and return on investment. Projections from the results of each of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) analyses were applied to predict the overall social, economic and environmental value of all of City of Edinburgh Council’s one hundred and forty four parks. The Council have been able, through consultation, to identify stakeholders that use the park and assign both outcomes and a monetary value to those outcomes in order to identify the impact and social value parks bring. The summary report from Edinburgh Council is attached at Appendix 3.

3.3.2 Social Value and North East Lincolnshire

The social return on investment (SROI) for parks and play areas in North East Lincolnshire is certainly an exercise that the authority should consider in order to clearly show the impact and value parks and play areas have on the community and the services the local authority and its partners provide.

\begin{quote}
It is clear, from the research and the consultations undertaken for the Play Strategy that the identified benefits that play, parks and play areas bring to North East Lincolnshire do enable users of the parks to experience positive changes and a difference to their quality of life as a result of investment made. Therefore it is recommended that a more in-depth review using SROI measures is undertaken to fully identify the value that parks have on the people that use them.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{24} Source: http://www.csd.org.uk/uploadedfiles/files/value_of_green_space_report.pdf
\textsuperscript{25} http://www.bigsocietycapital.com/impact-matrix
4. **Context**

4.1 **Play in local, regional, national and international context**

At an international, national, regional and local level children and young people’s play and informal recreation is now integral in many policies which are aimed at improving and developing the social, health and economic well-being of children and young people.

Though in recent years structural changes and austerity measures have pushed public funding towards ‘hard’ economic outputs concerns over public health an obesity have kept it high on the agenda.

This section sets out the main international, national, regional and local drivers for play:

4.1.1 **International Context**

**UN Convention on Human Rights**

Article 31 of ‘The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child’ states:

‘That every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. That member governments shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.’

In 2013, the UN issued a General Comment on Article 31 of the convention, clarifying that this means that governments have obligations to ‘promote, protect and fulfil’ children’s right to play by means of appropriate ‘legislation, planning and budgets’.

4.1.2 **National Context**

**Our Children Deserve Better: Prevention Pays**

In 2013 the Chief Medical Officer published her 2012 Annual Report and its focus was on the challenges to the health and wellbeing of our children and young people. What happens early in life affects health and wellbeing later in life and we are not doing as well as we should be to achieve good health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people. Children and young people are failing to meet physical exercise guidance. The long-term costs of obesity in England are £588 – £686 million per annum\(^\text{26}\).

The benefit of play to the wellbeing of children, from better health outcomes to higher academic performance and improved social skills, is acknowledged by the UK Chief Medical Officer. She suggests that Public Health England should work with local authorities, schools and relevant agencies to build on current efforts to increase participation in physical activity and promote evidence based innovative solutions that lead to improved access to existing sports facilities.

\(^{26}\) Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer 2012, published 2013
**Education Select Committee - The role and performance of Ofsted**

A Skills Active Memorandum submitted to an Education Select Committee enquiry, ‘The role and performance of Ofsted’ suggests that Ofsted should also be looking at how the school provides for the wellbeing of its pupils as regards attitudes towards play and break-time. Evidence has shown the importance of freely-chosen play to children and recent projects in schools have demonstrated the practical benefits of freely chosen play to the wellbeing and behaviour of children.  

**Healthy Patterns for Healthy Families: Removing the Hurdles to a Healthy Family 2014**

This is a report by the all-party parliamentary group on a fit and healthy childhood its recommendations for play are, in summary:

- The Government should follow the lead of the Welsh Government by introducing a ‘play duty’ as part of a new national Play Strategy, adopting a Whole Child approach, to promote healthy development through play and other activities….. to recognise the role that schools can assume in supporting children and families to adopt healthier lifestyles, including through an improved understanding and provision of outdoor play.
- Government to develop guidance to Local Authorities to include strategies …within their Local Development plans, placing the child’s need to have safe, free access to suitable natural places to play before traffic issues and profit from development.
- Department for Education to introduce training and guidance in the enablement of free play for all professionals with responsibility for children, including Ofsted.
- Local Authorities to work with Primary Care providers, schools and others to offer guidance and support to families in facilitating freely chosen play.
- A new legal duty on public health bodies to work with schools and local government to ensure that all children have access to suitable play opportunities within close proximity to their home and at school.
- Public Health England to produce guidance to local Public Health commissioners on how projects and schemes that promote free play can be supported as part of local obesity prevention strategies and to work with Natural England to develop its Natural Play programme to extend opportunities for active outdoor play, partnering with Museum and Heritage organisations where appropriate.

**Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 section 11(3)**

The Welsh Government has introduced section this measure, widely known as the ‘play duty’, requiring Local Authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas and addressing gaps in provision as far as is reasonably practical. They must publish details about where facilities are located and what they offer.

**Children and Families Act 2014**

The Children’s Act 2004 (revised 2014) provided the legislative framework for new statutory duties and clarified how the new Children’s Services would work and be

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27 Healthy Patterns for Healthy Families: Removing the Hurdles to a Healthy Family, a report by the All Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood 2014
accountable. One specific change was that it placed a duty on all statutory bodies to cooperate in the delivery of children’s services.

The Children and Families Act 2014 gives greater protection to vulnerable children, better support for children whose parents are separating, a new system to help children with special educational needs and disabilities, and help for parents to balance work and family life. It also changed the adoption system so that children could be placed faster.

**2010 - 2015 Government Policy: Young People**

The policy paper (updated May 2015) is focused upon increasing the quality of education for young people so that they are well prepared for further education, higher education and work; and high quality options for young people to undertake both academic and vocational education, including apprenticeships and traineeships.

Actions are focused on improving the quality of education available to young people at school and improving the quality of what young people study after the age of 16.

Wider opportunities build on Positive for Youth - A new approach to cross-government policy for young people aged 13 to 19 published by the Labour government in early 2010.

**Education Act 2011 and subsequent Education and Adoption Bill 2015 -2016**

The Education Bill in 2011 removed the obligation on schools to cooperate through Children’s Trusts and the requirement for local authorities to set up Children’s Trust boards. Alongside this the requirement to produce Children and Young People’s Plans was also removed. Instead local authorities have been encouraged to find their own solutions to fulfil the basic duty to cooperate.

The Education and Adoption Bill 2015 -2016 is currently progressing through the House of Lords. The bill sets out measures to turn all schools deemed to be failing into academies.

**Play Strategy**

Building on previous policy (‘Getting Serious about Play’ (2004) Time for Play (2006)). The Department of Culture Media and Sport then developed the Government’s ‘Children’s Plan’ and its consultation document ‘Fair Play’ (2008) which set out a new agenda on how government departments should work together to support children to play alongside £235 million of investment to be spent between 2008 - 2011 for public play areas, including spend via 20 large scale pathfinder local authorities.

Since 2010 there has arguably been no national play strategy and funding has been cut.

**Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17)**

This guidance requires that each local planning authority must take account of the needs of its community for recreational activity and children’s play and to identify where there may be deficiencies in such provision. The guidance note suggests that each local authority should decide upon its own standard of provision. PPG17 states that ‘the broad objective for play facility provision is to ensure that children and young people have opportunities to interact with their peers and learn social and movement skills within the
vicinity of their home environment. For planning purposes, provision requirements are most appropriately specified using accessibility and qualitative standards’.


The policy recognises that playing sport helps to keep people healthy and is good for communities. Playing sport at school or in a local club is also the first step to competition at the highest level which helps improve our reputation as a sporting nation, and contributes to economic growth. When people leave school they often stop playing sports, which means people can’t fulfil their sporting potential, and can lead to a less healthy lifestyle. The government wants to get more people playing sport safely from a young age, and help them keep playing sport throughout their life, no matter what their economic or social background.

The government continue to fund the Primary Sport Premium, however the Primary Sport Premium only benefits those children who are already active and it is likely that overweight children may seek out opportunities to avoid involvement in sporting activities.

**4.1.3 Regional Context**

**Abolition of Regional Government**

In June 2010 the Coalition Government announced its intention to abolish the ‘considerable network of organisations, offices and policy-making responsibilities at a regional level in England’, with the vast majority ceasing to exist by 2012.

The Regional Development Agencies were abolished and strategic documents such as the Regional Economic Strategy ceased to have any effect. RDA responsibilities were mainly returned to central government, for example all skills funding is now routed through the Skills Funding Agency (The White Paper Local growth: realising every place’s potential details the destinations of the RDAs functions.)

The Regional Assemblies were abolished and the Regional Spatial Strategy, the regional strategic planning policy was revoked in February 2013. This will be replaced by the Humber Spatial Plan. Other strategies produced by the assemblies: Regional Housing Strategies, Regional Waste Strategies, Regional Transport Strategies and other strategy documents, on matters such as culture, the environment, minerals, and skills, “ceased to have any effect with the abolition of the RSS’s and The RDA’s Regional Economic Strategies”

The decision to abolish Government Offices was made in 2010 and they were closed in 2011.

**The Humber Local Economic Partnership**

Much of the Regional Development Agencies economic development responsibilities were replaced by smaller scale locally-owned partnerships between local authorities and businesses - Local Enterprise Partnerships. North East Lincolnshire is a member of the Humber LEP.

The focus of the LEPs is to promote economic growth in a much more tightly defined way than the previous Regional Development Agencies.
Humber LEP led by the Hull & Humber Chamber of Commerce has following strategic priorities:

- A skilled and productive workforce
- An infrastructure that supports growth
- Thriving successful businesses.

LEPs manage the European Social Investment Funds

**The Humber Strategic Economic Plan**

The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) is the overarching plan for growth through to 2020, setting the overall context and priorities for other more detailed plans and strategies that help to achieve the three key ambitions for the Humber.

The ambition is to maximise the potential offered by the Humber Estuary, leading the Humber to become a renowned national and international centre for renewable energy and an area whose economy is resilient and competitive. Its vision is centred around:

**Economy** - a thriving renewables sector, with ambitious capital schemes well underway and a growing reputation for excellence and expertise.

**Skills** - a skills system that is better aligned with the current and future needs of the economy.

**Place** - visitor economy will be stronger than ever, civic pride will have risen and a stronger sense of ambition and self-confidence will be evident across the LEP area.

These are supported by strategic enablers which each have an objective and a set of priorities for delivery via the Growth Fund.

- Creating an Infrastructure that Supports Growth - Access will be enhanced to strategic sites and along key growth corridors. Upgrades will be made to the passenger and freight rail infrastructure.

- Creating an Infrastructure that Supports Growth - Businesses access to the expert support and appropriate finance they need to grow, create jobs and take advantage of new investment opportunities.

- A Great Place to Live and Visit - The Humber will be recognised as a great place to live with the range and quality of homes for a growing workforce. Work will be undertaken with a broad range of partners to ensure that the Humber has a vibrant and distinctive cultural, leisure and visitor offer that creates new business opportunities.

- A Skilled and Productive Workforce - Businesses will be able to access the skilled workforce they need to grow. Residents will access good quality employment opportunities, to progress in work and/or to set up their own enterprises.

- Flood Risk and Environmental Management - investment in flood and coastal risk management. Sustainable development activities to sustain the natural environment.
Play potentially sits within the context of a ‘Great place to live and visit’. ‘Quality of place’ in order to attract and retain a larger labour market of higher skilled workers’ and ‘transforming the cultural, retail, leisure and visitor offer especially the priority to ‘transform and reposition neighbourhoods with poor quality urban fabric to ensure they have a sustainable future role.’

**North Bank Partnership**

Within the Humber LEP there is a North Bank Partnership which promotes action important to business in the Humber LEP area which is outside the strategic priorities of the Humber LEP. This North Bank Partnership promotes action on Tourism, Business Support, Housing, Place Shaping, Transport, Planning and Rural Issues.

**Hull and Humber City Deal**

The City Deal maximises the opportunities linked to the growth in the offshore wind and green energy sectors by equipping local people and businesses to take advantage of these opportunities.

This includes provision for 1500 adults to take up relevant courses.

**Employment and Skills Strategy 2014 - 2020**

‘To deliver an appropriately skilled, motivated and productive workforce to drive economic growth and sustainability for the Humber region. Utilising our diverse assets of people, place and products and recognising our unique potential in the Estuary and its ability to act as a catalyst in regeneration and innovation.’

The objectives cover the following:

- Raising employer commitment and investment in skills at all levels.
- Fostering an inclusive, LEP-wide approach with all key stakeholders.
- Influencing provision to better meet local economic needs.
- Improving the quality, accessibility and dissemination of labour market information and careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG), empowering employers and local people to make informed choices.
- Supporting people in finding and sustaining employment, in progressing at work and/or setting up their own enterprises.
- Maximising the use of funding, including capital, to develop excellent learning environments and facilities, leading to a more highly skilled current and future workforce.
- Extending residents’ aspirations to gain higher level academic and vocational skills, including progression to Higher Education.

**The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Programme 2014-2020**

This includes three European funds; European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) and European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The LEP was notionally allocated £87.67m million for ERDF and ESF and a £2.24 million allocation of EAFRD.
European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy in May 2014. It describes local needs and opportunities, desired outcomes and the rationale for proposed projects and programmes. It has five strategic programmes:

- The **Growth and Innovation Programme** will support SMEs throughout all phases of their lifecycle helping them to innovate and remain competitive
- The **Skills Programme** will support the development of Humber residents at all levels to close the productivity gap and create a workforce ready to take advantage of new private sector investment
- The **Sustainable Communities and Social Innovation Programme** will make sure families and individuals that face disadvantage can access the support needed to help them out of poverty
- The **Change and Environmental Protection Programme** aims to stimulate economic development through further investment in flood and coastal risk management
- The **Infrastructure Programme** will see funding for transport schemes that will help to stimulate investment and generate employment while making sure we protect the environment as we grow

The ESIF programme in the Humber LEP area started in March 2015 with the launch of a first round of calls.

### 4.1.4 Local Context

**Local Plan**

The Regional Spatial Strategy was revoked in February 2013 which has meant that the North East Lincolnshire Local Plan (Draft Strategy Document) provides the overall planning policy framework. The Strategy Document is the key document within the Local Plan setting out the overall planning framework for development in North East Lincolnshire. It sets out how much development is likely to come forward by 2029 and includes general policies guiding developments of different types including new housing, commercial and retail uses.

**North East Lincolnshire Local Investment Plan 2011-2016**

The local investment plan sets out the vision for housing in North East Lincolnshire which includes the creation of new open public space (though not necessarily suitable space for play) at Freeman Park and Freeman Street District Centre. The East Marsh Neighbourhood Renewal area action plan includes increasing green space, Freshney Green includes a community eco garden and creation of a gateway square.

**Children and Young People’s Plan 2014-16**

“North East Lincolnshire will be a place where children and young people are given opportunities to enable them to live independently and get the skills for getting the job they want.”

The new priorities and actions in the plan were developed through consultation with a number of groups of children and young people and a number of youth groups have taken on the task of co-delivering this plan in partnership. The actions will be delivered by the Children’s Partnership Board and youth groups. Their priorities are:
Skills and employability - Young people enjoy meaningful work experience; Training and education to be matched to the jobs available; Young people are supported to be ready for work and young people are inspired by success;

Local employment - More apprenticeships, sponsorship and training opportunities; Combat youth unemployment;

Independence - Young people have the skills for life; Children and young people enjoy positive activities; Young people are enabled to manage their money and promote how to talk to young people

Active people in the community - Young people promote North East Lincolnshire; Young people have voice and influence; honest communication

Healthy lives - Young people have positive sexual health; children and young people make positive choices based on positive messages and children and young people enjoy emotional health and well-being

Safety - Young people promote good behaviour; young people are kept safe online and on social media; Young people are protected from bullying and exploitation; children have someone they trust that they can talk to.

There were a number of additional priorities identified that will form part of the 2015-2018 plan:

- Children do well at school;
- Young people earn living wage and fewer children suffer poverty;
- Children can go to kids clubs;
- Children can go to activities that encourage healthiness;
- Young people understand the impact of alcohol;
- Children know basic first aid;
- Children are able to play out safely.

The Children and Young People’s Partnership Board

The Children and Young People’s Partnership Board (formerly the Children’s Trust) focus commissioning activity around the key priorities detailed within the Children and Young People’s Plan and is the method by which the partnership will deliver improved outcomes.

Local Safeguarding Children’s Board (LSCB)

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has been in the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how organisations in the local area will cooperate to safeguard children and young people and to ensure the effectiveness of the work. The work of the LSCB ensures welfare and safety of children and young people is at the centre of every agency’s work in order that the LSCB can achieve the very best for children and young people in the borough through partnership working.
Interim Children’s Workforce Strategy and Action Plan 2011-2014

To deliver the Children and Young People’s Plan 2011-14, the children and young people’s workforce needs to have the knowledge and skills to be able to work with children and young people and their families to tackle the issues and barriers that they face. North East Lincolnshire Council wants to fundamentally change the way it works by adopting 4 different practices to safeguard vulnerable children and improve the long term outcomes of those children and young people. The Creating Stronger Communities programme aims to bring together the 4 principles of: Restorative Practice, Signs of Safety, Outcomes based accountability and Family Group Conference Models. It wants to provide training, consultation, impact evaluation, materials and resources to build and secure a self-sustaining Restorative Principles culture.

A full rewrite of the Strategy is expected at the end of 2015.

North East Lincolnshire’s Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy 2014-16 Improving lives, improving outcomes

The plan has 7 strategic outcomes and priorities:

Outcome 1: Families in North East Lincolnshire are resilient, independent and autonomous
Priority One – Getting Information, Advice and Guidance Right
To develop the resilience and autonomy of families, reducing their reliance on public services, by making sure they can easily and independently access information, advice and guidance

Outcome 2: Babies and children in North East Lincolnshire have effective social, emotional and communication skills
Priority Two – Promoting positive development
To promote the development of babies and children through specific support for social, emotional and communication skills

Outcome 3: North East Lincolnshire citizens have a strong learning and skills base and positive aspirations
Priority Three - Focus on aspiration
To support the development, learning and skills base of all North East Lincolnshire’s citizens, particularly promoting the motivation, aspiration and development of skills for employment of children and young people in education.

Outcome 4: Parents and carers in North East Lincolnshire have effective and positive parenting skills
Priority Four – Ensuring positive parenting
To improve parenting skills throughout the child’s journey through evidence based programmes and through evidence based support

Outcome 5: All communities in North East Lincolnshire have a voice and use their strengths to support their populations
Priority Five – Building community capacity
To develop stronger community support networks to ensure that communities have a voice, have a place and have the wraparound support they need to reduce reliance on public services and use their strengths to support the development and positive aspirations of their populations
Outcome 6: Prevention and early intervention systems and structures are fully embedded across North East Lincolnshire.

Priority Six – Moving resources upstream
To shift resources from late intervention towards earlier intervention and prevention, ensuring that the health, education and wellbeing of children and families is promoted and the social, emotional and mental health of families is improved. (Supported by North East Lincolnshire Children's Centres as a key facility for providing the services that families need.)

Outcome 7: The North East Lincolnshire Children, young people (CYP) & families workforce delivers effective prevention and early intervention.

Priority Seven – Transforming the workforce
To prepare, support and remodel the workforce for the changes that will be needed in order to deliver a successful, transformative and integrated prevention and early intervention strategy.

Shaping the Future – North East Lincolnshire Community Strategy Update 2010

The plan built on the Local Area Agreement that the North East Lincolnshire Strategic Partnership (now both defunct). The strategy aims to establish plans to improve the health and well-being of local people. It outlined a single shared set of outcomes and priorities for the area shaped and influenced through extensive community engagement.

The strategy’s mission is: “to develop and establish, with the community, both a sustainable vision for North East Lincolnshire and the means to achieve it.” in order to:

“To create the conditions where investment shapes ambition and where aspiration is reflected in the improved quality of life and place that makes us all proud to live, work and welcome visitors to North East Lincolnshire “

The Strategy’s priorities are:
• Sustaining work and business
• Supporting Children and families
• Reducing health inequality
• Making Communities safer

The Strategy includes targets relevant to play, for example:
• Reducing children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents
• Tackling childhood obesity
• Emotional health of children
• Children’s and young people’s participation in high quality PE and sport

North East Lincolnshire Final Playing Pitch Strategy December 2011

This was adopted in September 2013 and is currently being refreshed in 2015…

Vision

North East Lincolnshire work to create a carefully planned network of playing pitch facilities that are well managed and maintained and which through community participation contribute to enhancing the quality of life and sense of well-being of all sections of the community.”
Objectives

- To maximise community access to all outdoor facilities across North East Lincolnshire
- To address quantitative deficiencies to meet existing unmet demand and plan for new provision
- To address qualitative deficiencies and enhance existing provision to support high levels of participation
- To support the development of local leagues and clubs to meet their needs within North East Lincolnshire

Supporting these are a list of 19 Management Objectives which need to be implemented in order for the objectives and ultimately the vision to be met. There are also specific actions to address deficiencies in football, rugby union, rugby league and cricket.

**Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for North East Lincolnshire 2013-2016**

The Strategy is based upon ‘Healthy People in Healthy Places’ which acknowledges the impact of place on people’s lives and the inter-relationship between people and place in the creation of health and wellbeing. By working with individuals and communities to improve opportunities for adults and children to enjoy a healthy, safe and fulfilling life, the impact on health and wellbeing will be greater.

**Priorities:**
- Places people inhabit – by reducing poverty and impacting on wider determinants of health
- Services people access – by commissioning more “joined up” and aligned equitable services and solutions
- Lifestyles, people live – so we can impact more effectively on life expectancy and healthy life expectancy through greater focus on prevention and earlier detection.

**Relevant actions include:**
- Healthy Places: Improve links between spatial planning and health to support healthier environments
- Healthy Lives: Ensure all partner organisations and commissioned services have consistent policies for healthier lifestyles and wellbeing across all organisations, partners and services.

**4.2 Profile of North East Lincolnshire Council area**

North East Lincolnshire is a unitary authority located on the east coast of England and consists of three linked but distinct areas, namely Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Immingham, which lie along the river and coastline.

The area is mixed rural and urban and is bordered to the north by the river Humber, to the west by the unitary authority of North Lincolnshire and to the south by the county of Lincolnshire. Inland there are small rural villages in the Lincolnshire Wolds; the area is designated as urban regarding the rural economy indicator.

North East Lincolnshire is one of socio-economic diversity with prosperous coastal and rural areas and disadvantaged urban localities. The main traditional industry of fishing and food manufacturing has declined and has been replaced by the clusters -
construction, sustainable energy, chemicals and petro-chemicals. Grimsby is the UK’s seafood capital with over 100 processing related companies and around half of the UK Offshore wind market is located in the southern North Sea close to Grimsby.

Whilst the number of jobs has declined there is now some 71.5% of people aged 16 – 64 years in employment. This figure is lower than the England average for the same period (July 2014 – June 2015), which stood at 73.3%. However, the numbers in employment in North East Lincolnshire is higher than when the Play Strategy was produced in 2008, when at that point the figure was 68.6%.

North East Lincolnshire was created from the boroughs of Cleethorpes and Great Grimsby on 1st April 1996 on the abolition of Humberside and is located within the governmental region of Yorkshire and the Humber.

4.2.1 Population

There have been some changes to demographics since the last Play Strategy was produced in 2008. North East Lincolnshire now has a population of some 159,804 people, of which 36,057 (22.56%) are aged between 0 – 19 years. The area has a higher proportion than the England average of children aged 0 – 7 years and higher than the England average of young people aged 15 – 19 years.

A breakdown by age group can be seen below:

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38 Source: ONS – mid term 2014
The numbers of children aged 0 – 19 years has dropped since the 2008 Play Strategy when the total number of children and young people aged 0 – 19 years was 42,945 (27.26%). In addition there have been changes within age groups with a marked fall in the 10 – 14 year age range but an increase in the 0 – 4 years.

The total resident population of North East Lincolnshire has increased by 1.1% from the 2001 Census total of 157,979 to the 2011 Census total of 159,616. The mid-term estimate in 2014 shows the population has increased slightly to 159,804. It is expected that the population will continue to increase by a further 2.86% by 2035. It is also expected that residents aged 65 years and older will continue to grow to 46.79% of the population by 2035.

The decline has been seen mainly in the younger adult population and an increase in the number of 75 plus age group. The number of people aged 65 years (male) and 60 years (female) is higher at 20.7% than the Yorkshire and Humber average of 19.4% and the England average of 19.2%. This trend of outward migration of younger, more mobile and potentially more prosperous residents may lead to further increased concentrations of poorer residents in poorer health in the inner urban areas of the authority.

Indeed Sidney Sussex and South wards are the largest populated areas, both with around 12,500 residents, whilst Waltham and the Wolds are the least populated with 6,900 and 7,400 respectively. West Marsh ward has over 36% of residents aged 25 – 49 years. The top three wards with children aged 0 – 15 years are South (24.4%), East Marsh (22.6%) and Sidney Sussex (22.4%). All three areas also display high levels of deprivation.

In 2011 the vast majority of people living in the area were white British with 95.3% considering themselves within this category. However around 5% of school children are from an ethnic group29.

4.2.2 Vulnerable children

In September 2005, North East Lincolnshire Child Care Services had a population of 900 Children in Need, which included 161 Looked after Children. In 2012 the number of children in care (Looked after) was 145.

Vulnerable children present their own individual care needs. In September 2014, North East Lincolnshire Council produced the ‘Local Offer’ to meet the changed system for caring for disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs brought about by the Children and Families Act 2014. From September 2014 all local authorities are required to publish and keep under review information about services they

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29 Source: www.chimat.org.uk – Child Health profile March 2012
expect to be available for children and young people with special educational needs aged 0-25. This is called the Local Offer and provides information for parents, in a single place, which helps them to understand what services they and their family can expect from a range of local agencies - including their statutory entitlements. A further key role for the local offer will be to inform the joint commissioning for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities by setting out in a single place what is available locally.

It was reported in 2006/07 that in North East Lincolnshire, there were over 6,500 children and young people identified as having some form of special educational needs. Children with disabilities make up 4.5% of the population.  

4.2.3 Deprivation

There are 42 LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas) in North East Lincolnshire and the borough is ranked amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England. 38.5% of the population in the borough reside in the top 20% areas of deprivation in England, of these 64% are working age (aged 16 – 64 years).

North East Lincolnshire shows relatively high levels of deprivation and children in poverty, with the highest deprivation scores being concentrated in Grimsby. Most children and young people live within the urban centres.

The level of child poverty is worse in North East Lincolnshire than the England average with 28% of children under 16 years living in poverty. In total there are some 8,500 children aged 0 – 16 years living in poverty within the borough. This is higher than the England average.

Most children and young people live primarily in the most deprived areas of income deprivation, with a large number living in households dependent on means-tested benefits.

There are 6,587 lone parent households with dependent children in North East Lincolnshire.

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30 North East Lincolnshire Children & Young People’s Plan, 2006 - 07
31 The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 (IMD 2004) is a measure of multiple deprivation which has been produced at the level of the 2001 Census Super Output Areas (SOA) for the whole of England. SOAs are a continuous geography of areas of approximately equal population size (the mean SOA population being approximately 1500). Output areas aggregate to both SOA level and statistical ward level and both SOAs and wards aggregate to local and unitary level. Although the majority of SOAs nest within wards a number do not adhere to this norm. Summary measures of the IMD 2004 are presented at district level, county level and Primary Care Trust (PCT) level. The SOA level Domain Indices and IMD 2004, together with the district, county and PCT level summaries, are referred to as the Indices of Deprivation 2004 (ID 2004). The new ID 2004 are based on the approach, structure and methodology that were used to create the previous ID 2000. The ID 2004 updates the ID 2000 in two key ways: first, more up-to-date data has been used; and second, new measures have been incorporated as new and improved data sources have become available. The population denominators presented in these data were created specifically for the Indices of Deprivation 2004. They relate to an estimate of the total population ‘at risk’ of experiencing a given type of deprivation. Therefore they do not represent total population counts or population breakdowns for areas and should not be used as such. (Source: ONS)
32 Source: CLG, 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2011
33 Census, 2011, ONS
34 Source: Chimat.org.uk Child Health Profile, March 2012
36 The English Indices of Deprivation, 2004 (revised)
37 Census, 2011, ONS
4.2.4 Health

The health of people living in North East Lincolnshire is generally worse than the England average\textsuperscript{38}. Estimates based on the socio-demographic characteristics of the local population suggest that the borough has a relatively high percentage of smokers and obese adults and a significantly lower than average proportion following healthy eating guidelines.

Male life expectancy in North East Lincolnshire has improved only gradually in recent years, falling further behind the national average. Life expectancy is 12.9 years lower for men and 7.9 years lower for women in the most deprived areas than in the least deprived areas.

Child health is an issue in the borough. In the school year 6, 19.1\% (311) of children are classified as obese. The rate of alcohol-specific stays among those under eighteen was 71.8 (rate per 100,000 of population), worse than the average for England. This represents 25 stays per year. Levels of teenage pregnancy are also worse than the England average\textsuperscript{39}.

North East Lincolnshire residents are more likely than the England average to be undergoing treatment for drug misuse (1,302 people in 2014) and to be registered as having diabetes (8,906 cases in 2014). Smoking related deaths are also higher than the England average. In addition the number of cases of self-harm stands at 323 cases, which is higher than the England average\textsuperscript{40}.

Overall the health of people living in North East Lincolnshire is worse than other people living in England and therefore services and provision that can help alleviate and address these issues, particularly starting at a younger age, are key to the future wellbeing of the population in the area.

4.2.5 Education

The school provision in North East Lincolnshire has changed considerably since the Play Strategy in 2008. In 2008, there were 3 nursery schools either provided separately or within an infant school, 15 infant schools, 15 junior schools, 29 primary schools, 12 secondary schools, 2 independent schools, 2 special schools and 2 pupil referral units.

In 2015 there are 10 Secondary Academies; 26 Primary Academies; 15 Primary Schools; 2 Junior Academies; 1 Junior School; 1 Infant Academy; 2 Infant Schools; 2 Specialist Academies; 2 Pupil Referral Units and 3 Independent Schools. There are also two colleges and two of the Secondary Academies also offer sixth form provision.

In 2008, there were four Children’s Centres offering fully integrated services within the Council wards of East Marsh, West Marsh, South Ward and Heneage. By 2010, the plan was that North East Lincolnshire Council would establish a further 8 Centres bringing the total to 12 Children’s Centres in the borough. This was to be done in partnership with other public, private, and voluntary agencies working with families and young children.

\textsuperscript{38} Public Health England, Health Profile 2014
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid
\textsuperscript{40} Public Health England, Health Profile 2014
However, following public consultation and in response to budget cutbacks the children’s centres have become ‘Family Hubs’ - offering advice and support for families with children 0 - 19 years. The hubs have brought together family support services including children’s centres, health visiting, school nursing, integrated family services and some of the youth provision. They will work much more closely with other services, partners and the community.

The hubs have created five geographical cluster areas and the services provided in each will be linked to each local community need. The services provided in each cluster are linked to each local community need, with an aim of reducing inequalities.

Each cluster area has one designated children’s centre and also provides a network of family hubs that are easily accessible to all families. The Clusters are as follows:
Cluster 1 - East Marsh and Central
Cluster 2 - Immingham and the Wolds
Cluster 3 - West Marsh, Queensway and Riverside
Cluster 4 - Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park, Broadway and Scartho
Cluster 5 - Reynolds and Highgate

Educational Attainment

**Key Stage 2 Results: Percentage of Pupils achieving Level 4 or above in English**

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Data suppressed due to boycott in 2012, English was calculated from reading test results and writing teacher assessment. Progression in 2012 is, therefore, not comparable to previous years.

**Key Stage 2 Results: Percentage of Pupils achieving Level 4 or above in Mathematics**

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Data suppressed due to boycott in 2012, English was calculated from reading test results and writing teacher assessment. Progression in 2012 is, therefore, not comparable to previous years.
Percentage of pupils progressing by 2 levels in English between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2

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In 2012, English was calculated from reading test results and writing teacher assessment rather than from reading and writing tests as in previous years. English progression in 2012 is, therefore, not comparable to previous years.

Percentage of pupils progressing by 2 levels in Maths between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2

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GCSE and equivalent results, percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Mathematics

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<td>29.6</td>
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<td>53.5</td>
<td>58.9(r)</td>
<td>59.4(r)</td>
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Educational attainment in North East Lincolnshire is variable. According to Ofsted the secondary schools in North East Lincolnshire exceeded the national level in their GCSE examinations against the national benchmark, including English and mathematics in 2012. However pupils in North East Lincolnshire attending a primary school, are among those least likely to attend a good or better school, with North East Lincolnshire being within the lowest 20% of local authority areas nationally.

In the North East Lincolnshire area, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is high and the attainment gap between pupils that are and those that are not eligible for free school meals is wider than the national level in primary schools and widens further still by the time pupils leave secondary school. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 2012, in North East Lincolnshire, the gap was 10% or more than the national figure.\(^\text{41}\)

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\(^{41}\) Ofsted – Annual Report 2012/13 – North East, Yorkshire & Humber Regional Report
4.2.6 Overview

Overall, North East Lincolnshire shows relatively high levels of deprivation and children in poverty, with the highest deprivation scores being concentrated in Grimsby. Most children and young people live primarily in the most deprived areas of income deprivation, with a large number living in households dependent on means tested benefits.

The area displays a falling resident population particularly amongst the 15 – 34 years age group but also shows an increasing population in the number of people aged 65 plus.

Health and wellbeing is a key area for support with lifestyle choices being key issues in the cause of ill health. Smoking, drug use, diabetes and self-harming are all key issues.

Child health and that of young people remains a concern from 2008. With obesity, alcohol abuse and teenage pregnancy an issue within the borough.

Educational attainment has improved at secondary level but further improvement is required at Key Stage 2 and the Council plus the Academies, which now run many of the schools in the area are working to address these issues.

Therefore the area has some significant challenges which the local authority and other agencies are working towards addressing. Play, whilst not a statutory requirement, the local authority do have a duty to ensure to work across their service areas and with other organisations to promote the well-being of all children and young people. Therefore play and the activities it supports is key to the future well-being of the population in the area.
5. Consultation - Findings and Conclusions

5.1 Approach and Methodology

The refresh of the 2008 Play Strategy represents a snap shot of parents, children and agencies needs and desires in respect to play in 2015. The work undertaken does not replace the 2008 Play Strategy, but rather brings the strategy up to date and links with current events, activities and policy changes.

5.1.1 Methodology

- Informal round table consultation with key agencies and departments from the local authority, Public Health and the Police
- Interviews were undertaken with representatives from the Civic Society to ascertain their views from a heritage perspective. This was particularly important as a number of parks in the area have significant heritage aspects.
- Interviews with parents, using a semi-structured questionnaire
- Facebook consultation through the Parent Participation Group using an online survey
- Paper based questionnaire survey with parents and children from the Neighbourhood Hubs.
- Paper based questionnaire Survey with the Carers Centre
- Desk based review of changes to the parks from the 2007/8 audit
- Visits to a sample number of parks across North East Lincolnshire to photograph changes and physically review.
- Update and re-write of the policy links and demographics relevant to the refreshed Strategy.

The findings from the round table consultation, key points from the Civic Society and the questionnaire findings are detailed below.

The updated policy links and demographics can be found in Sections 3 and 4 of this report. The review of the parks and play areas can be found in Section 6 and also at Appendix 1.

5.2 Informal Round Table Consultation

This brought together key individuals from within the local authority and its partners to discuss how they defined play in 2015 and how the definition of play does and could contribute to the target outputs within their department or organisation. We also asked the question ‘what difference does play make?’ A copy of the consultation questions can be found at Appendix 4. The group included representatives from Parks, Leisure, Environment (Liveability), Strategic Planning, Planning and Development, Children’s Services/Neighbourhood Hubs, Children’s Disability Service, Outdoor Learning, Public Health, Police (Crime Reduction).

The impact that play has was discussed in much detail and it was recognised that play had an impact on a number of service areas outcome indicators and performance measures. This included: health and wellbeing, pathway to sport, economy; safety, social development and learning/skills.
A question was posed to the group...‘what would happen if there were no play areas?’

In today’s economic climate with budget constraints the local authority still feel they are justified in spending on play areas. The role of the local authority was discussed in terms of its statutory duty to provide and maintain parks. Whilst the local authority does not have a statutory requirement they do have a duty to ensure the wellbeing of its children (Children’s Act 2004 – revised 2014) to undertake this role, they do feel that the impact and value that play brings is worth the investment.

Nevertheless, within the parishes, where much of the new housing development is taking place investment in parks and play areas could be maintained by an increase in the parish precept. It is within the urban and more socio-economically deprived areas of inner Grimsby where investment should be focused and this is a discussion for the local authority to have in the future. With limited resources within the local authority, certainly investment must be targeted at areas where there is the most need and benefits to be achieved from that investment.

It was clear that the group felt play and play areas gave much by way of benefits and value to the development of children’s health and wellbeing. However further work needs to be undertaken to fully identify this social return on investment and where this investment should be targeted within North East Lincolnshire.

The definition of play from 2008 was discussed in some detail and it was felt that the definition should be changed to recognise that play is not a right given there is no statutory requirement. However, local authorities have a duty, under the Children’s Act 2004 (revised 2014), to work across their service areas and with other organisations to promote the well-being of all children and young people. Local authorities can only be sure local children are well provided for if they adopt a strategic approach to the development, delivery and support of appropriate and quality spaces and facilities. Therefore the Council and its partners fully recognise the benefits of play and its positive impact on children and young people and it was suggested that the definition from 2008 be slightly amended. These suggestions have been taken on board and the following definition is now proposed...

North East Lincolnshire Council and its partners recognise that play is an essential part of every child’s life, and is vital to their social and cognitive development as well as to the child’s health and wellbeing. The Council and its partners therefore will work with others in the local area to support the provision of play and play areas that is inclusive, quality, safe, accessible and stimulating for children and young people.

5.3 Key points from the Civic Society

The two representatives that we met from the Civic Society do cover most of the parks but the information they receive depends on where the members live. Their main role is commenting on planning applications that may impact on the heritage of the area.

The people we interviewed live adjacent to People’s Park and many of the views given concern this park. Key findings from the meeting included:

- People’s Park had received a Heritage Lottery Fund grant, which had been used to bring the park back to its former glory, including the restoration of the rose garden. The grant had also funded a Park Manager, but sadly as the
A grant ended so too did the role of the manager focused solely on the park. There is still a manager, but this person covers all the parks but is still based at the People’s Park. The Civic Society feel that without the manager the upkeep of the park is sometimes not as it should be but they understand the budget constraints of the Council and accept why this has happened.

- People’s Park – issues raised: café - although it is within the park it is opened at odd times and now an ice cream van is parking within the park. They feel that the café should be opened more often to meet the needs of people, many of whom are visitors to the area. The café is run by a social enterprise; dog fouling – although dog walkers are supposed to only use the outside areas of the park this is not happening, especially early in a morning, and the park has issues with dog fouling; grass cutting - this is undertaken by the local authority who leave the grass cuttings on the grass, this covers up the dog fouling and children, who run through the grass, get it on their shoes; Activities and events such as a teddy bears picnic – these increase usage but very little is now organised; vandalism – gangs of young people tend to hang around in the park and there has been broken glass in the past.

Overall the Civic Society accept that budget cutbacks have had an impact on the way parks and play areas are maintained. There are no longer active volunteer groups that support the parks, therefore this is not an option at this present time for the local authority to work with local people to ensure the cleanliness of the parks and play areas. If this was to be re-surrected then the local authority must be involved in kick starting it.

The Civic Society feel that other ways of supporting the parks should be explored including business sponsorship. They also feel that the Council should initiate an open discussion about the future of parks, as it is clear that they cannot continue to support every park within the borough and therefore the focus should be on target parks and areas.

5.4 Questionnaire findings from both the on-line and paper based surveys

The questionnaire (Appendix 5) was developed following a number of attempts to undertake consultation with parents and children. After discussing the issue with people involved with the target groups it was felt a better approach would be an online survey using Facebook and paper questionnaires of the online survey, which could be circulated through the Carers Centre and the Neighbourhood Hubs. The survey was to gain a snap shot and assess whether there had been changes to the way children played since the last survey in 2007/8. The questionnaire used followed those used in the last survey in order to gain some comparison. Therefore, the findings are shown to also emphasise any changes found.

5.4.1 Findings

Some ninety parents responded to the survey, either on line or using the paper based questionnaire. The age range of children, whose parents answered the survey was between 0 – 19 years with the majority in the 0 – 5 years and 6 – 10 year age range.
32% or respondents considered one or more of their children to have a disability.

The parents responding came from across the North East Lincolnshire with the majority from the DN35 (Cleethorpes) and DN32 areas (0.6 miles from the town centre). This may well have skewed the findings as these parents tended to only use the parks local to them. However, the findings do still highlight particular issues that concern parents, certainly in these areas.

Q1. What activities does your child or children undertake outside of school?

In the main children took part in swimming, played on their computer, went to the park or the library. It was mainly the 0 – 5 year age group that went to the park or the library. Other activities included: army cadets; ballet, squash, badminton, dog walking, walking, hockey, horse riding, tennis, archery and trampoline.

Q2. Do you allow your child or children to play outside unsupervised at the...the local park; the local play area; in the street; local grass area/playing field; leisure centre?
Q3. If your child or children go to the local park...do you accompany them?

81% of respondents accompany their child/ren to the local park.

Q4. If your child or children do play outside unsupervised...approximately how close is this to your home?

Over 45% of respondents allow their children to play 50 metres or less from their home. However a similar number do not allow their children to play outside the home.

Q5. If they do not play outside unsupervised is it because...

Unsafe  Bullying  Live near a main road  Frightened they may get abducted
Parents that responded appear to feel that their child/ren playing outside their home is unsafe or that they may get abducted.

Q6. Does your child or children use the local park more or less now than they did 12 months ago?

Nearly 56% do not use the park more or less than they did 12 months ago.

Comments as to why people don’t use the park included…

- There isn’t a local park on Scartho Top
- Less - drug usage at Sidney Sussex park by older teenagers and adults
- It is run down, glass all over, bad area
- I now have two children and it is unsafe to take them both to my local park Sussex rec as the play area is not fenced off and is close to a main road. Due to the ability level of my kids I can’t manage two safely in an unconfined space. Other safer parks are further away so we visit these less
- Dirty, full of teenagers so can’t play on equipment
- Drugs, alcohol and youths
- Antisocial behaviour, bullying and gangs

Comments about play areas in North East Lincolnshire…

- There are some good play facilities, BUT where are the facilities in Scartho Top - must be largest area for lack of children's facilities.

- There are widely different offerings around the town with regard to quality and quantity of play equipment. Main parks and tourist areas of high quality, more residential areas less choice and quite bleak play areas - Oxford St near Strand School for example. As my child gets older/taller the play areas are unsuitable although playing on equipment is still wanted.

- Play areas are very limited, run down nothing else close by

- I find it difficult to take both my children to my local park as it is not secure and I find it highly stressful when they both run off in different directions and due to their age and disability they are not capable of understanding danger or following instructions. I also have to closely watch them as they both like to put things in their mouth and at our local park Sussex rec that could include
cigarette butts, glass or even a used condom. My autistic son also likes to wander around the building there but would if I let him splash around in what is graffitied as piss corner. He also enjoys walking around near the trees but has always ended up with dog poo on him. We do really enjoy visits to other parks which don't seem to have the same issues but are further away. Haverstoe park and Weelsby Woods are both great.

- Play parks are a nightmare because all the teens are usually there stopping younger ones playing. There is nothing suitable for my youngest and eldest who have disability to use all too big they have dyspraxia. All equipment for my 6 year old are unsuitable apart from baby swings there is only one slide in my area that is small enough but has the climbing wall or pole no ladders that's on Sidney park I don't drive so sometimes hard to get to next park if only out for short time before tea after school.

- Equipment is chosen for best price vs least accident likely. Much of the equipment is designed to keep the parents fit not the children!! For example the kids sit, the parents push. Also the new idea of putting gym equipment in for older people has simply not worked. It doesn’t seem to get used.

- Not many decent ones (play facilities)

- Lack of facilities (youth clubs) for children with disabilities - highlighted by parents whose children have Aspergers/Autism

### 5.5 Overview

As in 2008, the main issues raised by parents and children are around vandalism, unsafe and dirty play areas, older children bullying or using equipment meant for younger children, inappropriate behaviour by adults (drug use/alcohol) and inappropriate equipment, particularly for those children with disabilities.

However, the sample size was smaller than that in 2008 but nevertheless these were still issues that concerned parents in 2015. In addition, whilst the parents responding came from across the North East Lincolnshire the majority came from the DN35 (Cleethorpes) and DN32 areas (0.6 miles from the town centre). This may well have skewed the findings as these parents tended to only use the parks local to them. However, the findings do still highlight particular issues that concern parents, certainly in these areas.

Children and young people, surveyed in 2008, led a far more active lifestyle, whereas in 2015, whilst some children are being taken to activities such as swimming, more are staying at home playing on IT equipment. In 2008 many children were restricted through their perception and that of their parents with respect to safety and in 2015 this is still a big issue. Parents are concerned for their children’s safety and are scared children will get abducted if they play by themselves or too far from their home. Despite the parks installing or upgrading CCTV, many parents report issues with the parks and their perception of danger is quite high.

In 2008, parents appeared to take children to activities or accompany them to play/sport activities or facilities. In 2015, most parents take their children to the park and therefore more activities or facilities need to be made available at the parks to meet the needs of parents and carers.
In 2008, children and young people with disabilities had particular problems with bullying and access to facilities and play areas, sadly in 2015, this issue still seems to be apparent.

Findings show that parents want somewhere that they can go that is safe, clean and accessible for their children. They also want facilities that are suitable for the child’s needs. Parents should also be catered for at the parks and playing areas and facilities and activities that are inclusive and meet the adult needs should also be considered.
6. **Local Provision Examined – The Audit Refreshed**

The audit of play provision in the area in 2008 focused on spaces and facilities that were:

- Free of charge
- Where children are free to come and go (other than where safety is an issue for children with particular needs) and
- Where they are free to choose what they want to do

The audit also included:

- Fixed play equipment and areas
- Play areas
- Play facilities such as skate board parks, MUGAs
- Pre-school provision
- Pre and after school provision including drop-in centres, libraries and youth facilities

The work undertaken to produce the audit was reviewed in 2015, along with a physical visit to a sample number of play areas to update the audit. This was based on information received from the Local Authority which detailed which parks had been updated (Appendix 2). From reviewing the parks, some physically and also as a desk based exercise there appears that whilst some parks and play areas have been updated a number have undergone very few changes from 2008. Whilst some have had new or updated equipment installed, some parks have had equipment removed as it was unsafe or outdated. However, with limited resources now available, the Local Authority have found themselves removing unsafe or damaged equipment and having to wait until the appropriate budget is available to replace the equipment. Therefore, despite budget cuts the local authority are doing what they can to maintain the parks and play areas.

A full audit of parks can be found at Appendix 1.

CCTV is installed in a number of parks but even in the parks where it is installed parents consulted have mentioned issues around inappropriate use of parks, this was particularly an issue at Sidney Park.

In 2008 the main issues raised about parks and play areas were: not enough equipment; poor security; bullying, inappropriate usage, poor lighting, and lack of facilities such as toilets, café.

In 2015, many of these issues are still being raised and with limited resources, different ways of meeting these needs are required.

### 6.1 Parks and Play Areas

In 2015, there are 60 parks and play areas within North East Lincolnshire. All but 4 are owned and managed by North East Lincolnshire Council which also undertakes the maintenance of play areas and parks.

North East Lincolnshire Council provided a report that gave an overview of parks and open spaces, in North East Lincolnshire as at September 2015. It also provides an understanding of external funding that has been secured by the local authority since
2004 and how that funding has been used to benefit the parks and play areas across the borough.

*Liveability programme*

In 2004 parks in Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Immingham secured £2.4 million from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to improve nine parks and open spaces. The aim of the project was to upgrade the parks making them safer and cleaner for families to visit and enjoy and to restore civic pride to the local communities.

Improvements included the installation of six state of the art play grounds, new and upgraded sports facilities, improvements to existing buildings.

Sites that benefited from the Liveability improvement programme were:

- Grant Thorold Park  
- Trinity Field Open Space  
- Weelsby Woods Park  
- Sidney Park  
- Bradley & Dixon Woods  
- Cleethorpes Country Park  
- Haverstoe Park  
- People’s Park  
- Homestead Park

*WREN*

North East Lincolnshire Council in partnership with the Friends of the Freshney later secured £137,000 WREN funding to install a new play area and teen shelter at the Duke of York Gardens, which in turn attracted additional funding to the site.

*Playbuilder Programme*

Following the production of the 2008 North East Lincolnshire Play Strategy the local authority successfully secured £1.1 million in April 2009 from the Government's Playbuilder programme.

This was to be used for the development or upgrade of at least 22 play areas over a two year period. A variety of freely accessible, innovative, exciting and stimulating play facilities were developed targeting the 8-13 year age range specifically.

However, following the Government’s capital spending programme review the grant allocation for year two was reduced from £500k to £374k.

Nevertheless between 2009 and 2011 around £1 million has been invested in the parks throughout the borough to create or upgrade innovating and exciting outdoor play spaces.
Sites that benefited from the Playbuilder funding are:

**Year 1**
- Ford’s Avenue Play Area, Healing
- Roval Drive Play Area, Immingham
- Butt Lane, Laceby
- Neville Turner Way, Waltham
- Capes Recreation Ground, Grimsby
- St Christopher’s Open Space, Humberston
- Barrett's Recreation Ground, Grimsby
- Quantock Park, Scartho
- Sutherland Park, Grimsby
- Sussex Recreation Ground, Cleethorpes
- Wingate Parade, Grimsby

**Year 2**
- People’s Park, Grimsby
- Nunsthorpe Recreation Ground, Grimsby
- Hardy's Recreation Ground, Grimsby
- Albion Street Play Area, Grimsby
- Sixhills Play Area, Grimsby
- Carver Road Play Area, Immingham
- Scartho Recreation Ground, Scartho
- Kingston Gardens Play Area, Grimsby
- Ainslie Recreation Ground, Grimsby

Two new areas were created. One was the Play Trail in Cleethorpes including the maze on the seafront and the other was the creation of a destination park at the Cleethorpes Sandpit, adjacent to the boating lake in Cleethorpes.

The budget for each site varied according to the location, size, need etc.

**Sites removed:** Gloria Way, Wybers

### 6.2 Parks in 2008 and now

We visited a number of these sites that had received funding and images of before and after can be found below. More images can be found at Appendix 1 – which has an updated version of play areas found in North East Lincolnshire.

Some parks and play areas seem to have changed quite substantially, whilst others have been made safer with improved CCTV and fencing. For example:

Cleethorpes Sand Pit, which adjoins the Boating Lake on the seafront, in 2008 had within it a slide. It is used not only by children from the borough but also visitors to the area. It now has a pirate boat and climbing frame along with other equipment on the grassed area around it as can be seen below:-
Image of sand pit and surrounding area in 2007/8

Cleethorpes Sand Pit - Pirate boat – 2015
Cleethorpes Sand Pit - Climbing frame – 2015
Cleethorpes Sand Pit –Equipment around the sand pit – 2015

A Seaside Play trail and maze was also developed in Cleethorpes through the PlayBuilder funding…this is what it looks like in 2015…
Sussex Recreation Ground has also undergone a transformation from this in 2007/8

To this in 2015…

6.3 Alternative Play Areas

In 2008, whilst North East Lincolnshire had a number of green spaces and fixed play areas, it did not have any designated play streets and no staffed outside adventure playgrounds. Nor did it have any mobile or outreach play services. This has not changed in 2015.

However, what is unique to North East Lincolnshire is that its children and young people do have access to a shoreline, with a beach and other natural areas within Cleethorpes and this is used by not only local children and young people but also visitors and tourists to the area.
6.4 Overview - Parks and Play Areas in 2015

There are 56 parks owned by the local authority (see Appendix 1) and 4 parks owned and managed by Town or Parish Councils. These are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Owned and Managed by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wendover Park</td>
<td>Humberston</td>
<td>Humberston and New Waltham</td>
<td>Humberston Parish Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Station Road</td>
<td>Stallingborough</td>
<td>Wolds</td>
<td>Stallingborough Parish Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Grove</td>
<td>Laceby</td>
<td>Wolds</td>
<td>Laceby Parish Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homestead Park</td>
<td>Immingham</td>
<td>Immingham</td>
<td>Immingham Town Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are 7 MUGAs (Multi Use Games Areas) at:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freeman Street Resource Centre</td>
<td>Freeman Street Resource Centre, Grimsby</td>
<td>East Marsh</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clee Playing Fields</td>
<td>Clee Playing Fields, Heneage</td>
<td>Heneage</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King George V</td>
<td>King George V, Heneage</td>
<td>Heneage</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is 1 operational skate board park in North East Lincolnshire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skate Board Park</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freeman Street Resource Centre</td>
<td>Freeman Street Resource Centre, Grimsby</td>
<td>East Marsh</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are 4 BMX tracks. Only one, at New Waltham is purpose built, this was in 2011. The BMX tracks are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BMX Tracks</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freeman Street Resource Centre</td>
<td>Freeman Street Resource Centre, Grimsby</td>
<td>East Marsh</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*New Waltham BMX Track – see below</td>
<td>Greenlands Pavilion, St Clements Way, New Waltham</td>
<td>Humberston and New Waltham</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Pleasant</td>
<td>Mount Pleasant, Waltham</td>
<td>Waltham</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Street Playing Fields &amp; Cycle Track</td>
<td>Spring Street Playing Fields &amp; Cycle Track, Immingham</td>
<td>Immingham</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King George V</td>
<td>BMX Track</td>
<td>Heneage</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The project engaged young people and the wider community in New Waltham who helped to design and as well as create a state of the art BMX Race Track built to British Cycling Federation standards. The BMX track at New Waltham has given the project group - Giving Young People Opportunities (GYPO) the opportunity to deliver positive activities with young people in the area.

GYPO were granted a licence to run a weekly race night once a week at the BMX race track and by providing this activity, they have engaged with the young people of New Waltham and further afield to provide them with positive activities that raise their self-esteem and confidence. The race nights are open to members only and encourages all members of the community to join a structured club and benefit from having Chris Stanforth, British BMX Race Champion as their mentor.

6.4.1 Green Spaces

In 2004 the North East Lincolnshire Council was successful in attracting three major funding packages for green spaces. The Heritage Lottery Fund awarded funds towards the development of a restoration project for People’s Park, Grimsby. The New Opportunities Fund awarded funding for improvements to the management of open spaces in the more deprived wards of Grimsby and Immingham. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister awarded Liveability funding for the improvement of green space management focused on ten specified green spaces throughout the Borough. Together these funding packages have so far injected a total of almost £4.5m into the green space management and development budget. Services are still being realigned to help deliver the improved service that is an essential outcome of the awards.

Small “Parks Friends” groups were formed, mainly to address specific developments or problems.

With the award of Liveability42 funding the Council was committed to establishing Friends groups for all of the parks specified in the funding package, however it appears that by 2015 these groups are no longer very active, if at all.

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42 Parks that have been or will be updated include: Weelsby Woods; Bradley Woods; Cleethorpes Country Park; Trinity Fields; Haverstoe; Sidney; Grant Thorold; People’s Park; Homestead.
It was intended that the groups may “take ownership” of delivery of the management plans through a direct involvement in the decision making process and operational delivery. Clearly this project and approach needs resurrecting to ensure the parks and green spaces are there for future generations.

In 2004, as part of the review of green spaces in the area a consultation exercise was undertaken with local people. This showed that most people walked to parks that are under a mile from home. Their principle activities are walking, children’s play and exercising dogs. The majority of those questioned visit the park at least once a week. Principle deterrents to using parks were identified as dog fouling, drugs/drink abuse and vandalism, although a majority said they felt safe within the park. Two thirds of respondents on the 2004 survey thought that the parks and green spaces were not well looked after, and nearly as many felt the parks did not offer the facilities they needed. The facilities that were seen as most likely to encourage greater use were toilets, more seating, better play areas, more litter and dog bins, and the presence of park wardens. Linked to this, the eradication of anti-social behaviour was identified as a priority. More activities for young people were thought desirable. A slight majority thought there was insufficient variety of green space types available.

The survey and subsequent audit undertaken in both 2008 and in 2015 for the Play Strategy has identified similar findings to the 2004 survey. Whilst some work has been undertaken within the parks and clearly CCTV has been installed or upgraded, many parents report issues with vandalism, bullying, drug and alcohol by users in the parks, as well as dog fouling.

Further work is needed to address the issues raised by parents whose children use the parks, but with limited resources and budget constraints these issues need a different approach and remedy. Clearly CCTV is not the deterrent hoped for and perhaps a physical presence within the parks or a park warden or activity worker should be explored further.

6.4.2 Audit Parks and Play Areas

The audit of parks and play areas for the Play Strategy undertaken in 2008 used a comprehensive pro-forma that built on the requirements in respect of the classifications identified by the National Playing Field Association. The National Playing Fields Association is now known as the Fields in Trust and have recently (2015) released new guidance for outdoor sport and play. However they are still consulting as to the standards that should be used and included in future guidance.

Nevertheless from the consultation they undertook it has clearly demonstrated that the previous recommendations of ‘Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play’ (2008) remain very relevant in the context of current provision in England and Wales.

In addition Play England, who also produced guidance in 2008, to support the previous Government's play pathfinder and Playbuilder programme have not revised this guidance.

43 North East Lincolnshire Green Space Strategy – May 2005
44 Source: http://www.fieldsintrust.org/guidance
Therefore, until further guidance is issued, we have continued to use the criteria that was used in 2008 to review the parks and play areas in North East Lincolnshire.

However what is clear, and given the socio-economic issues of some areas within North East Lincolnshire, that a more focused and targeted assessment of the parks and play areas needs to be undertaken. This should be based, not just on the technical aspects of the parks and play areas but also on the positive impact a park or play area will have on the children and young people within a community.

6.4.3 Quality

In 2008, most provision within the area was of poor quality, lacked facilities such as toilets, cafes or seating and had little in terms of play equipment. In 2015, whilst some parks have been improved with grant monies there are still a number that require updating. The local authority regularly inspect each play area and should equipment be damaged, it is removed to ensure the play area is safe. Mostly, this equipment is not replaced, due to budgetary constraints.

ROSPA checks for 2015, are available for each site from the Local Authority, upon request.

6.5 Analysis of provision relative to needs and population

Despite having higher than England levels of children and young people aged 0 – 7 years and 15 – 19 years, there has been nearly a 5% decrease in the child population aged 0 – 19 years since 2003. This is expected to continue for the next decade. However, with planned house building in the area, the figures may well increase in the future.

In 2015 there are 24,329\textsuperscript{45} children aged 0 – 12 years living in North East Lincolnshire. In 2008, there were 25,952.

Despite the Audit Commission, Best Value Indicators no longer existing, they were used in 2008 to identify the ratio of parks to children aged 0 – 12 years. In 2008 there were 2.35 children per 1,000 aged 0 – 12 years for every park and play area within North East Lincolnshire. This was above the recommended national average which is 2.25 play areas per 1,000 under 12s\textsuperscript{46}. In 2015, using the same ratios there are now 2.46 children per 1,000 aged 0 – 12 years for every park and play area within North East Lincolnshire.

Therefore, the number of parks and play areas is far more than the best value indicator used in 2008.

However, as was shown in 2008, when broken down to ward level, some wards have higher than both the national and local average for parks and play areas per 1000 children aged 0 – 12 years, as can be seen from table below:

\textsuperscript{45} Census,2011
\textsuperscript{46} Audit Commission, Best Value Indicators
**Ward** | **Population 0 - 12 years** | **No. of parks/play areas** | **Ratio/play areas per 1,000 of 0 - 12 years**
--- | --- | --- | ---
Croft Baker | 1,678 | 2 | 1.19
Haverstoe | 1,329 | 5 | 3.76
Sidney Sussex | 2,570 | 2 | 0.78
East Marsh | 2,203 | 5 | 2.27
West Marsh | 1,502 | 2 | 1.33
Heneage | 2,073 | 6 | 2.89
Park | 1,721 | 3 | 1.74
South | 2,713 | 5 | 1.84
Yarborough | 2,148 | 4 | 1.86
Freshney | 1,563 | 3* | 1.92
Humberston & New Waltham | 1,209 | 4 | 3.31
Scartho | 1,251 | 2 | 1.60
Waltham | 1,008 | 4 | 3.97
Immingham (including Habrough) | 1,961 | 9 | 4.59
Wolds | 1,023 | 5 | 4.89
**Total N E Lincs** | **25,952** | **61** | **2.35**

*NOTE: In 2015, Freshney ward only has two parks not three, but for the purposes of illustration regarding ward level distribution of parks, the number has been left at 2008 levels.

A number of wards fall below the standards set in 2008 for parks to ratio of children aged 0 – 12 years living in that area. Some wards such as Sidney Sussex in Cleethorpes, Croft Baker also in Cleethorpes and West Marsh, fall well below the national average for numbers of parks and play areas per population size.

Furthermore, whilst some wards in the area have above average parks and play facilities in terms of quantity, in terms of quality they fall below suitability, in most cases, with regard to safety of the environment and quality of equipment and the accessibility of children with disabilities.

Also, whilst there is now an increased emphasis on physical activity, it appears, certainly from the survey findings, that although some children are active, the main focus is on computer games etc used within the home.

There is certainly a disparity in distribution of parks and play areas across North East Lincolnshire, with some of the more socio-economic deprived areas lacking facilities for play. Added to this is the reduction in the numbers of children and young people using the parks. With most parents taking their children to play areas, there is a need to really focus now on quality not quantity and provide parks and play areas that not only meet the needs of the child but also its parents and carers.
6.6 Informal Play Areas

Young people and children also use informal play and meeting areas to both play and ‘hang out’. This includes back of shopping centres, backs of houses, grassed areas on estates and near main roads.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘We use trees as goal posts’</th>
<th>Parkway Cinema</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grassed area – Weelsby Road</td>
<td>Cleethorpes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.7 Youth Clubs, Facilities and Activities

Youth Provision

In 2015, Youth Work in North East Lincolnshire is delivered in a wide variety of ways to accommodate the diversity and needs of young people. Most work is delivered as group work because experience has shown the benefits of young people learning through sharing with and understanding their peers. High quality Youth Work is supported by a Youth Work Curriculum.

Across North East Lincolnshire there are a number of facilities that provide this support, including six Young People’s Centres located in Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Immingham. These centres are open in the evenings and during the holidays for a range of positive activities for young people. Each centre has a different focus as activities are developed in response to the needs of the local young people. All centres are fully accessible.

There is also street based teams of youth workers who work with young people where they are located, this area of work is also supported by two mobile units. The service also has a range of projects which provide learning and development opportunities for disadvantaged or disaffected young people, and targeted work focuses on those who have the greatest need. The type of activity undertaken ranges from outdoor sporting activities that encourage risk-taking within a safe environment to creative arts that encourage self-expression.

Two youth centres that are not council run or owned also offer good quality youth provision – these are Shalom, which is located within East Marsh, and the YMCA.
The Council run youth centres that remain in 2015 are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Facility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clee Young People’s Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immingham Young People’s Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity Young People’s Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunsthorpe Young People’s Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Young People’s Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitgift Young People’s Centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.8 Overview

Overall the area is well served for parks and play areas. However, the number of youth facilities that serve the needs of young people with play and youth activities as well as supporting their emotional and developmental needs has declined due to the resources available.

There are no designated Play Streets and this was not identified as a priority in the 2008 Play Strategy, nor within the Road Safety Play 2006 – 2011, however the Council will continue to review this situation.

Overall in terms of parks and play areas there still remain some gaps in provision and whilst overall the area has more than the national average of play areas, based on the criteria in 2008, nearly 50% of the wards fall below this average. Therefore, given budget constraints there is a need to undertake a more focused review of play areas to ensure they meet the needs of both the current and future users of the facilities.

There should also be an open and frank discussion on how future funding can be sought or maintenance provided by alternative sources and also whether the number of play areas should be reduced with an emphasis on quality rather than quantity of provision.

It is no longer just about park standards but it is now more about meeting the needs of children and young people in North East Lincolnshire in a more managed and targeted way. Therefore, it is recommended that the Council and its partners use an assessment based on the social impact and value that each park and play area contributes to an area to ensure resources are focused and targeted at those areas where there will be a positive social impact.
7. Recommendations

The 2008 Play Strategy was firmly founded on the identified needs and wants of children and young people, their parents and carers, and other agencies or organisations that provide support or activities for children and young people. It still remains a comprehensive consultation of the needs and wants in respect to play facilities, of children and young people in North East Lincolnshire.

The audit of existing play facilities and services which was undertaken, included both formal local authority provision and informal provision which was identified by the children and young people of the area. This audit is still relevant in 2015.

The refresh of the Play Strategy in 2015, provides a snapshot of changes that have taken place since 2008, both in respect of the needs of parents and children and also the parks and play areas.

**Play** - In play, children expand their understanding of themselves and others, their knowledge of the physical world, and their ability to communicate with peers and adults. Play is fundamental to children’s health and well-being throughout their childhood and during their transition into adulthood.

**Parents and their children** still require the same in 2015 as they did in 2008: that is safe, appropriately equipped play areas that are accessible and meet the needs of their child.

However, the number of children in North East Lincolnshire has fallen, more now play indoors on their computers and ipads and parents appear to be even more concerned now about allowing their child to play outside of the family home. More parents now tend to take their child/ren to a park rather than allow their child to go on their own.

Concerns are still being raised in 2015 about inappropriate uses of the parks, bullying by older children and cleanliness. In addition, whilst the number of children has fallen, the number of parks and play areas has remained more or less constant. Despite the statistics showing the overall area has too many parks to numbers of children, there remains disparities, with some areas having an abundance of parks and play areas, whilst other fall well below the required number.

There is certainly a disparity in distribution of parks and play areas across North East Lincolnshire, with some of the more socio-economic deprived areas lacking facilities for play. Added to this is the reduction in the numbers of children and young people using the parks. With most parents taking their children to play areas, there is a need to really focus now on quality not quantity and provide parks and play areas that not only meet the needs of the child but also its parents and carers.

What is clear, from the consultation undertaken for the Play Strategy that the identified benefits that parks and play areas bring to North East Lincolnshire, certainly enable users of the parks to experience positive changes and a difference to their quality of life as a result of investment made.
Findings show that parents want somewhere that they can go that is safe, clean and accessible for their children. They also want facilities that are suitable for the child’s needs. Parents should also be catered for at the parks and playing areas and facilities and activities that are inclusive and meet the adult needs should also be considered.

The audit of the parks and play areas

Whilst there appears to be a good number of facilities, parks and play areas and whilst a number have been updated some still do require some attention or updating.

Overall in terms of parks and play areas there still remains some gaps in provision and whilst overall the area has more than the national average of play areas, based on the criteria in 2008, nearly 50% of the wards fall below this average. Therefore, given budget constraints there is a need to undertake a more focused review of play areas to ensure they meet the needs of both the current and future users of the facilities.

There should also be an open and frank discussion on how future funding can be sort or maintenance provided by alternative sources and also whether the number of play areas should be reduced with an emphasis on quality rather than quantity of provision.

Further work needs to be undertaken to address the issues raised by parents in the survey whose children use the parks, but with limited resources and budget constraints these issues need a different approach and remedy. The Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) may help but clearly CCTV is not the deterrent hoped for. Perhaps a physical presence within the parks or a park warden or activity worker needs to be explored further. However, what is clear, and given the socio-economic issues of some areas within North East Lincolnshire, that a more focused and targeted assessment of the parks and play areas needs to be undertaken. This should be based, not just on the technical aspects of the parks and play areas but also on the positive impact a park or play area will have on the children and young people within a community.

Policy Links - At a national, regional and local level children and young people’s play and informal recreation is now integral in many policies which are aimed at improving and developing the social, health and economic well-being of children and young people.

Overall the health of people living in North East Lincolnshire is worse than other people living in England and therefore services and provision that can help alleviate and address these issues, particularly starting at a younger age, are key to the future wellbeing of the population in the area.

Play cannot necessarily address and solve the wider socio-economic issues that exist within a community on its own, but play, by its very nature, can contribute, influence and impact on a number of social, health and wellbeing measures. The provision of inclusive, good quality play provision brings benefits and clearly adds value to the delivery of a number of policies. Therefore its cross cutting impact can be used to support action aimed at addressing some of the social and wellbeing issues identified in North East Lincolnshire.

Play therefore has clear linkages to a number of local strategies aimed at addressing health and wellbeing challenges across North East Lincolnshire. This includes the:

Key Recommendations

The area has some significant challenges, which the local authority and its partners are clearly committed to and are working towards addressing. Play, whilst not a statutory requirement, is nevertheless a key activity that could be used to address some of these issues, focusing on both the child and also the family. Therefore, play and the play activities it generates is a key factor in the future wellbeing of the population within North East Lincolnshire.

It is no longer just about park standards but it is also about meeting the needs and improving the lives of children and young people in North East Lincolnshire. With limited resources available there is a requirement to better assess and manage the number of parks and play areas based on the positive impact a play area will have on the children and adults who live there. With a disparity in park numbers across the area and limited resources, the Council and its partners must ensure the focus is on targeting the limited resources available to gain the maximum impact possible.

Therefore, it is recommended that the Council and its partners use an assessment based on the social impact and value that each park and play area contributes to an area to ensure resources are focused and targeted at those areas where there will be a positive social impact.

It is further recommended that the Council and its partners use this review to have a frank and open discussion about the future of parks and play areas to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the people and areas that are most at need of such facilities.
8. Delivering the Strategy

The strategy will be owned by the local authority, the people, the organisations it is intended to influence and the children and young people it will serve. It will be delivered in partnership with other agencies and local people.

Play crosses a number of policy areas but is mainly focused on developing and supporting the health and wellbeing of children and young people in the North East Lincolnshire area.

The area is unique, in that it also has a beautiful shoreline which attracts visitors from across the UK. Play is also important to ensure the area is attractive to these visitors and their children.

There must be commitment to deliver this strategy and it is recommended that eventually it is delivered by the Health and Wellbeing Board who adopt the principles and recommendations to ensure play and play areas are developed and maintained in a way that not only meet the needs of the current population but also the future. Given the recommendations made within the Healthy Patterns for Healthy Families: Removing the Hurdles to a Healthy Family 2014, regarding play and the links to obesity prevention, it is only right that the Play Strategy is driven by health and wellbeing.

It is also recommended that a Plan of Action be developed to ensure the Priorities and Aims below are delivered.

Some difficult choices may have to be taken in order to meet these needs and further focused discussion should take place in order to ensure the correct actions are taken to safeguard the parks and play areas that traditionally have met the needs of children and young people in the area.

Vision

North East Lincolnshire Council and its partners recognise that play is an essential part of every child’s life, and is vital to their social and cognitive development as well as to the child’s health and wellbeing. The Council and its partners therefore will work with others in the local area to support the provision of play and play areas that is inclusive, quality, safe, accessible and stimulating for children and young people.

Key Priorities:

Priority 1: Improving inclusivity, access and opportunities for play

Key Aims
4. To work together with partners and local people so that every child and young person in North East Lincolnshire has access to good quality and safe playgrounds and play areas which meet their needs for variety, accessibility, choice, open space, adventure and play aspirations
5. To consolidate and focus the opportunities for play so that they fully meet the needs of children and young people
6. To promote inclusion and access for disadvantaged and disabled children and young people.
Priority 2: Staying Safe

Key Aims
3. To reduce incidences of bullying and anti-social behaviour to zero
4. To work together with partners and local people to address issues of vandalism and to provide play areas that are of sufficient quality that meet the needs of children and young people

Priority 3: Promote and support a range of quality provision for year round local supervised open access play

Key Aims
3. To review the existing provision to ensure it fully meets the needs of current and future users
4. To increase local partnership working

Priority 4: Meet the needs of current and future users

Key Aim
2. To address the disparities of provision and ensure that investment is targeted and focused on areas where this investment will have the greatest impact

Priority 5: Focused investment and new ways of working

Key Aim
2. To explore different approaches to funding and management of parks and play areas
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