

London Borough of Ealing

Ealing Play Strategy 2014 -18

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1. Foreword

This Play Strategy will support the development of play in the Borough by planning universal access to opportunities for play in child-centred, stimulating and enjoyable environments while supporting local and a national targets to improve the physical and emotional development of children and young people.

Ealing Council endorses Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires states to

'Recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child'.

It also supports a Governmental objective:

*'To make this the best country in the world for children to grow up. Children, young people and their parents all recognise that play is a vital ingredient of a happy and healthy childhood, supporting children's physical, emotional, social and educational development.'*¹

Echoing this, the aims of Ealing's Children and Young People's Plan is to:

*"Create a great place for every child and young person to grow up"*² and Ealing has adopted a Vision for Play where:

*"Every child in Ealing is able to access and shape a variety of high quality, fun and challenging play opportunities close to where they live"*³

2. Definition of Play

Children playing is a primary need linked to their innate desire to express themselves, explore, learn about and make sense of their world. Its benefits for

¹ The Play Strategy (2008) DCSF

² Ealing Children and Young Peoples Plan 2011 to 2014

³ Ealing Play Strategy 2010

children derive from choosing and "doing it" for themselves, the adult's role is to enable rather than direct.

Published in 2008, The National Play Strategy defines Play states:

*"Children and young people following their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons, having fun while respecting themselves and others"*⁴

3. Statement of Intent

The first Ealing Play Strategy was adopted by the Council in December 2005 and launched in January 2006 with a second in 2010. This document follows on, considers and develops these strategies and will extend the implementation of their key principles through to 2018.

Ealing is committed to promoting good quality play opportunities for all children in the Borough. Ealing's Play Policy (2005), continues to commit the Borough to provide, and work in partnership with others to provide, a range of play services to the highest standards, offering children the opportunity to explore their world, to aid their social and educational self-development and encourage integration into the wider society. (See Appendix 1)

Ealing's new Play Strategy outlines how policies promoting play can be implemented to support the Council's objectives and provides a practical Development Plan for the improvement of play in Ealing up to 2018.

Importance of Integrated Service delivery

The borough recognises and values the contribution of all agencies, statutory and non-statutory, in providing quality play services to families. The private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector continues to make an invaluable contribution to this strategy both through strategic planning and direct service provision.

⁴ DCSF Op Cit

Following the Children Act 2004, Ealing Children's Board was set up as a partnership of local agencies working together to improve the wellbeing of children and young people.

The essential features of the partnership arrangements are: a child-centred, outcome-led vision for all children and young people, with inter-agency governance, joint planning and commissioning and pooled budgets. It is within this spirit of co-operation and partnership working that the current strategy is drawn.

4. Children and young people in Ealing

The Borough's population has increased by nearly 10% in the last decade with children and young people showing a much larger growth than others.⁵

4.1 Key characteristics of children & young people's population

Ealing is a unique and highly diverse borough with a young and growing population.

In terms of population, Ealing is the third largest Borough in London; 1 in 3 residents do not have English as their main language. Nearly half Ealing's residents were born outside the UK with one quarter coming in the last 10 years. One in five Ealing Families who have dependent children have three or more⁶.

Growing population and age structure

Ealing has a relatively young population with those under the age of 25 making up 30.6% of the residents⁷. The Corporate Plan states that one of the largest

increase in the Borough population has been in the number of preschool (0 to 4 year) children which increased by 32% during the period 2001 to 2011⁸

The child population in Ealing continues to grow, in 2012:

- There were 5,847 live births
- There were 26,200 children aged 0 to 4 (7.7% of the total population of the borough)
- There were 85,100 children and young people aged 0 to 19 (25% of the total population of the Borough)
- This is projected to increase to 91,900 by 2020

The highest number of children (0 to 12) live in Greenford Broadway ward and the lowest Ealing Broadway.

Diversity

Ealing is the third most ethnically diverse authority in the country with over 100 languages are spoken in Ealing schools.

- In 2014 83% of school children in Ealing were from a minority ethnic group.⁹

Childhood Obesity

Child activity levels and obesity rates continues to be an issue in Ealing:

- Over 10% of children in Reception (aged 4 to 5 years of age) in Ealing are classed as obese
- This increase to over 20% obese by year 6 (children aged 10 to 11)
- Ealing has a average percentage in Reception but a considerably worse obese percentage by year 6.¹⁰

⁵ Ealing Corporate Plan 2014-18

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Children and Young Peoples Plan Op Cit

⁸ Corporate Plan Op Cit

⁹ School Census January 2014

¹⁰ Public Health England: Child Health Profile March 2014: Ealing

The transfer of public health to local government provides an opportunity to align health outcomes with Council services. Ealing corporate Plan states we should, “ use our public health, leisure and parks resources to make a significant positive impact on the health of the population” (page 12).

Special Needs

Many Ealing children have additional needs. In the 2011 Spring School Census, 21.75% of maintained school pupils were identified as having special educational needs.

Child Poverty in Ealing

In 2010 Ealing was ranked on deprivation: 61st out of 326 English Authority Districts. Of the 195 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) in Ealing, 13 are in the 10% most deprived in the country.¹¹ Children from deprived backgrounds often lack spaces to play and socialise which can affect their development. In 2011 24.6% of children under 16 in Ealing were living in poverty. Entitlement to free school meals stand much higher than the national average at 23% in Primary schools, 26% in High and 40% in Special Schools¹².

There are great disparities between areas of the Borough with the proportion of children in poverty ranging between 2.5% and 57.9% per ward. For example: in the East Acton Ward four in ten children experience poverty (40.2%) as opposed to only one in ten in the Northfield Ward (10.7%). The highest level of poverty in Ealing (57.9%) is in one area of the Cleveland Ward and lowest at 2.5% in an area of the Hanger Hill Ward.¹³ There is a 54% difference in income between the lowest ward (Southall Green) and the highest: Walpole. Dormers Wells had an LSOA in the most deprived 1% in the

Country¹⁴. There exists a correlation between a large population of children and deprivation particularly in Northolt West End, East Acton and Southall Green wards and parts of Northolt Mandeville, Greenford Broadway and South Acton (See Map 1).

Ealing Child Population¹⁵ (0-12years) by Ward 2012

Greenford Broadway	3511
Northolt West End	3328
East Acton	3072
Northolt Mandeville	3066
Southall Green	2818
Hobbayne	2703
Perivale	2686
Greenford Green	2622
Elthorne	2616
Cleveland	3198
South Acton	2567
Hanger Hill	2566
Dormers Wells	2553
Acton Central	2548
North Greenford	2538
Southall Broadway	2459
Norwood Green	2401
Lady Margaret	2267
Northfield	2252
Walpole	2186
Southfield	1992
Ealing Common	1749
Ealing Broadway	1743

¹¹ LBE: State of Ealing November 2011

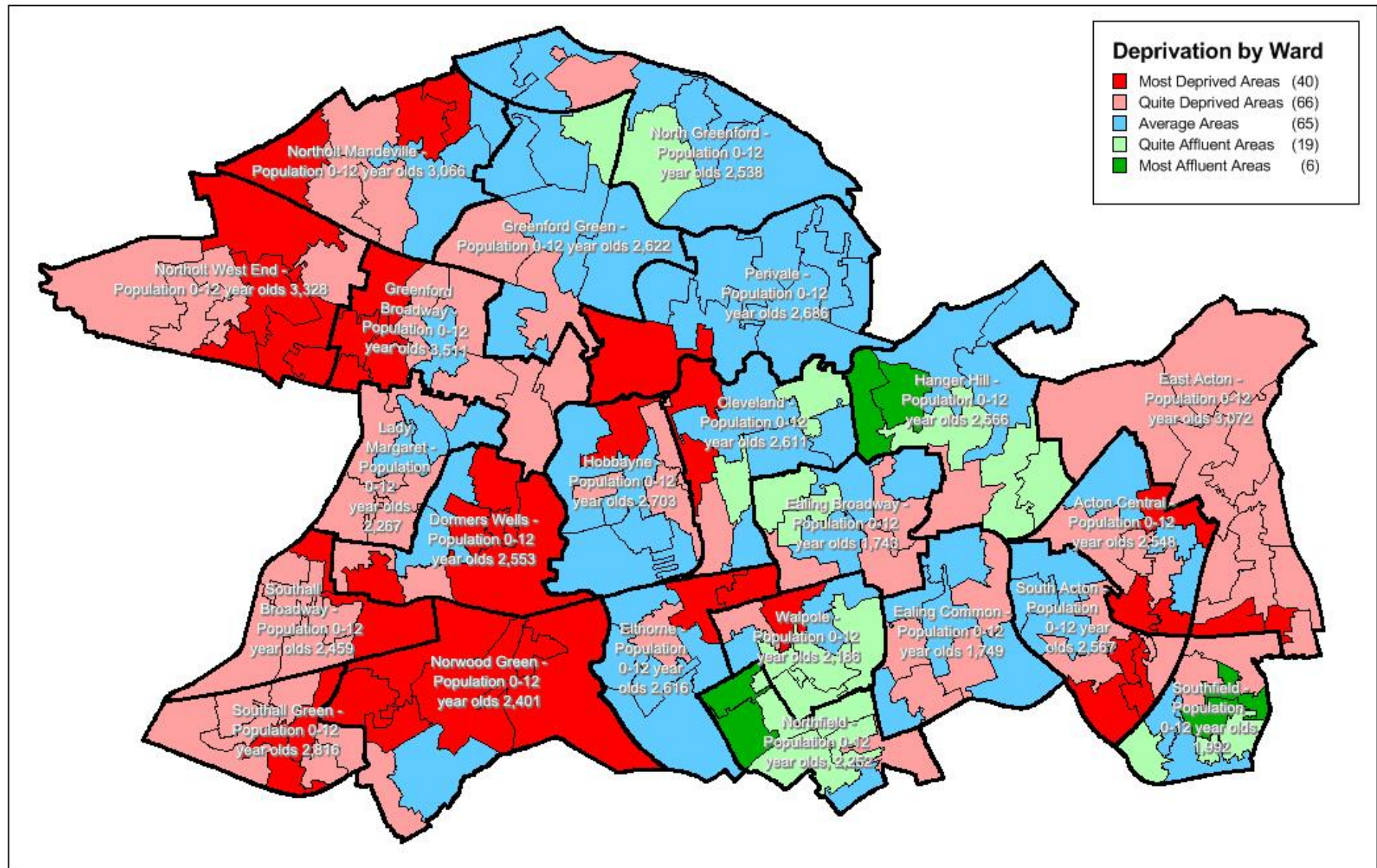
¹² School Census op cit

¹³ Corporate Plan op cit

¹⁴ LBE State of Ealing, Op Cit

¹⁵ Ealing Research and Consultation, Policy and Performance, June 2014

Map 1: Child population by ward and deprivation by Lower super output area.



5 What influences Play Provision?

5.1 National Developments

The National Play Strategy (2008)

The Children's Plan (2007) was followed by the launch of the first National Play Strategy¹⁶, which sets out a vision and plan for delivery under five headings:

- More places to play
- Supporting play throughout childhood
- Playing safely
- Child-friendly communities
- Embedding play in local priorities.

These headings provide the framework for Ealing's local strategic aims for 2010-2013 and continue to provide direction underpinning this strategy.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

Enacted a duty on Local Authorities (LA) to secure adequate facilities for recreation, social and physical training for children under the age of 13 and access sufficient educational and recreational leisure time activities for the improvement of the well-being of young people aged between 13 and 20 (25 if the young person has a learning disability). This included activities which are for the improvement of their personal and social development. The legislation also requires LAs to establish young people's views about:

- current positive leisure time activities and facilities;
- the need for further provisions and the accessibility of provision.

Childcare Act 2006

The Childcare Act 2006 placed a legal duty on local authorities to improve outcomes for all young children and allows for statutory targets for children's outcomes at age 5. Ofsted introduced a framework alongside the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) from September 2008 which proved challenging for play workers working with younger children, as the ethos of play work is to facilitate play opportunities that are chosen freely by the child.

Children and Families Act 2014

Has provided greater protection to vulnerable children, a new system for those with special educational needs/disabilities and help for parent/carer to balance work and family life. It also encourages the childcare sector by allowing child-minders to work with agencies and easier for school to provide flexible extended services. The statutory role of the Children's Commissioner now has a legal duty to promote and protect children's rights.

Ofsted

Play providers in Ealing, supported by the borough's Out of School Development team, have been working to address the EYFS in play orientated services and increasing understanding and quality within play services. Ofsted have produced guidance outlining their role in regulating play-based provision.

However, new guidance published in April 2014, and coming into effect on September 1st 2014, removes the requirements for Out of School providers, such as after school, breakfast and holiday clubs, to meet the learning and development goals of the EYFS and reduces the qualification and child/staff ratio requirements. The consequences of these changes on the quality of service provision will need to be monitored during the period of this strategy.

¹⁶ The Play Strategy, 2008, DCSF

Aiming High for Disabled Children

This government initiative promotes the principle that disabled children and young people have the same opportunities to develop and fulfill their potential as other children. In particular, it supports universal children's services to be more genuinely inclusive of disabled children, including those with complex needs. Resources have been made available nationally and Ealing has developed its Short Break Services which provide opportunities for disabled children and young people to spend time away from their primary carers including day, evening, overnight and weekend activities.

Change4Life

Play provision can support health objectives. Change for Life is a campaign aimed at reducing obesity by encouraging everybody to 'Eat well, Move more, Live longer'. It is primarily a marketing campaign with a sub brand, Play4Life, promoting the health benefits of play.

5.2 Local Drivers for Play

The Corporate Plan 2014-18

As the last four years has been characterised by a focus on efficiency, the new Corporate Plan emphasises effectiveness and prioritisation. A Key Target group is young people. Two of the Plan's priorities are directly supported by Play:

- Health, Wellbeing and Independence
- Place and Public Realm

The provision of play services also supports a Safe Borough by diverting anti social behaviour, reducing crime and supporting the safeguarding of children.

Ealing's Children and Young Peoples Plan

The fifth update encourages the refocusing of provision to deliver community cohesion and better meet the

needs of the Borough's young and diverse population. It also promotes the delivery of better outcomes for children through integrated working across organisational boundaries to ensure children and young people receive the most appropriate services when and where they need them.

Ealing Community Strategy 2006/16 (revised 2011) also lists relevant priorities and objectives:

Health: improve child health outcomes with a particular focus on reducing obesity.

Safety: prevent and reduce youth crime and anti-social behaviour.

Prosperity: reduce child poverty by increased employment levels.

Quality of life: promote the Borough's leisure and cultural offering and provide clean and green neighbourhoods.

Ealing Green Spaces Strategy 2012 to 2017

The original Ealing Parks Strategy identified play areas as one of the most important elements within parks, but at that stage they were judged not in a good condition. Nearly 10 years of investment has been targeted at Play facilities, bolstered by the Play Builder programme in 2010, it now states "Play Areas in the Borough's green spaces are of a high quality". The latest Open Spaces Strategy indicates there are 77 play areas in Parks, 31 MUGAS (multi use games areas) and 14 Fitness areas. (see Map 2 on page 17). Housing sites are not included in this total.

The Borough is generally densely populated and despite it green spaces has an average density of 55 residents per hectare of open space, 7 more than the London average. There is a high proportion of play space distributed across the Borough but is not evenly spread: there is lower density of play opportunities through the centre of the Borough, and in parts of East Acton.

Ealing Play Strategy:

The Borough's Play Strategy has enabled the Council to achieve key strategic objectives across a wide range of areas:

Examples of this include:

- Influencing strategic planning and provision of services for children and young people.
- Ensuring the rights and needs of children and young people are taken account of in the built environment
- The design of play areas and the open spaces are influenced by the Strategy's Design Guidance which has been used by Planning, Parks, Housing, Children's Services, Major Projects and others
- The nature of service delivery to children promoting choice, opportunity to express themselves and explore their world.
- The increase in number and improved quality of Out of School childcare in Ealing

The Play Strategy has also proved to be influential for other local strategies and is cited in funding applications to justify various services such as those supported by the Borough's grants funding, out of school childcare and specialist services for referred children and those needing short breaks.

There have been a significant number of local developments in services.¹⁷ The Play Builder projects were guided by the 2010 Strategy and built new and/or refurbished 22 play grounds across the Borough

Play Streets

A new initiative is for temporary Play streets. These can be either an informal model where residents organised themselves to create after school or weekend play clubs in a quiet street or temporary/periodic events which require road closure. An example has been

implemented in Acton recently (2013) by Highways and similar schemes planned for other areas. A more permanent possibility entails securing Play Street Status using the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

6 The need to develop Ealing's Play Strategy

6.1 The benefits of Play to the development of children and young people

- **Play is fun!**

Play is an enjoyable experience – it encourages exploration, novelty and creativity. The play experience allows children to think in a broad flexible manner and generates psychological resources by promoting resilience, endurance and optimism.

- **Play develops learning skills**

Play allows children to learn and consolidate previous experiences through curiosity, invention and persistence. Within play, children are free from the normal pressure and tension associated with formal education. Play also develops the creative process and growth of problem solving skills, which will help children to achieve.

- **Play helps children to develop a sense of wellbeing**

Play helps to develop a sense of wellbeing by allowing children to experience who they are or might be. Through play children can question, learn to speak for themselves and form their identities.

- **Play helps children develop emotional responses**

Children express the primary emotions (anger, surprise, disgust, happiness and sadness) through play. Within play, children also learn to control these primary emotions as play ensures they learn appropriate social emotions.

¹⁷ Ealing Play Strategy 2010 to 2013

- **Play improves children's interpersonal skills**

Play with other children provides enjoyment, accomplishment and belonging. It supports the development of interpersonal skills, such as empathy, trust and the ability to express ideas. Play, particularly pretend play, is linked to creativity as it involves a range of divergent skills and thinking.

- **Play can help prevent obesity**

Research has found that doing 15 minutes a day of moderate exercise (enough to get a child a little out of breath) lowers children's chances of being obese by almost 50 per cent. Play is one of the best ways for children to become active and increasing the amount of time children spend playing contributes to reducing obesity.

- **Play can help to increase community cohesion**

Children playing outdoors and establishing relationships with other children in their community can positively affect community cohesion. The more social networks children have in a neighbourhood the greater parents' perceptions of safety in that area. Parents also establish their own networks through their children, more than any other means.

- **Natural environments help increase children's sense of independence**

Play in natural spaces is more likely to be perceived by children as free from adult agendas and thus open to more opportunities for choice allowing children to assert their independence and practice decision making. Contact with nature can also reduce problems caused by growing up in a predominantly urban environment.

6.2 Children's opportunities to play are still under threat

6.2.1 The emergence of a risk averse society

In 1971 eight out of ten children aged seven or eight years went to school on their own. By 1990 this figure had dropped to less than one in ten and has since decrease further. Again, in 1971 the average seven-year-old was making trips to their friends or the shops on their own. By 1990 that freedom was being withheld until the age of ten, meaning that in just 19 years children had 'lost' up to three years of freedom of movement.

Tim Gill, former director of the UK Children's Play Council and author of *No Fear: Growing Up in a Risk Averse Society*¹⁸ believes adults no longer ask themselves whether children can cope before stepping in and taking control.

"Over the past 30 years, activities that previous generations of children have enjoyed without a second thought have been re-labeled as troubling or dangerous, and the adults who permit them branded as irresponsible," he goes on to say that: *"Childhood is being undermined by adults' increasing aversion to risk and by the intrusion of that fear into every aspect of their lives. The knock-on effect is extremely serious."*

6.2.2 Work and educational pressures on parents and children reduce play opportunities

A survey commissioned by Play England in 2009 found that more than half of parents (52%) feel that work, or other unavoidable commitments, limits the time to support their children to play. The

¹⁸ Growing up in a risk averse society: Tim Gill: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (2007).

research also found that children are facing pressures on their time, with homework and extra-curricular activities impacting heavily on children's free time. A third of children (34%) and a quarter of 7-8 year olds (25%) report that homework often stops them playing. Children told researchers that being denied time to play makes them feel bored, unhappy and miss their friends.¹⁹ The consequences both for children's immediate quality of life and for their long-term health and development are serious. While the decline in play opportunities affects children generally, the impact is disproportionately greater on disabled children and those living with other forms of social or economic disadvantage, for who access to free, safe and enjoyable play spaces is especially important.²⁰

This pressure of limited time to support their children to play is intensified by the fact that half of parents say there aren't enough places where they live, for children to play safely without an adult.²¹

6.2.3 Traffic

The above research by Play England also showed that regularly playing outdoors near home is much less common for today's children than for previous generations. Play England found 71 per cent of adults played outside in the street or area close to their homes every day when they were children, compared to only 21 per cent of children recently. Both children and adults considered traffic to be the main factor that prevents children and young people playing or spending time in the streets or areas near their homes, with nearly one in four children and 35 per cent of adults listing it as one of their top three barriers to street play.

¹⁹ Play England Survey : Play Day, 2009

²⁰ State of London's Children Report , Mayor of London, 2004

²¹ Play England, 2009, Op Cit

6.2.4 Fear of Strangers and Bullying

Parents spend much more time looking after their children or arranging for their children to be supervised by others, than in previous generations. According to a 2006 report from the Future Foundation, the amount of time has quadrupled in just 25 years, from 25 minutes per day in 1975 to 99 minutes in 2000, and one of the reasons for this is a fear of letting children play unsupervised.

*"We need to recognise that 'modern living' is not the problem: whether it be affluence, new technologies, greater mobility or academic pressures, none of these is a problem in and of itself. The problem lies with adult society, and the extent to which the culture of fear that dominates today's society is holding children back. Adults should stop projecting their fears and uncertainties on to children"*²²

Young people say bullying is among their top concerns. Bullying can make the lives of victims a misery; it can undermine their confidence and self-esteem and can destroy their sense of security. Young people who have been bullied can become anxious and withdrawn, depressed or aggressive. Some turn to substance misuse as a way of dealing with the emotional impact of bullying. At worst bullying has been a factor in suicide.

29 per cent of under-18s and 39 per cent of adults said that more play spaces would make children and young people play in open areas near their homes more often.²³

²² Reclaiming Childhood: freedom and play in an age of fear; Helene Guldberg, 2009 Routledge

²³ Play England 2013 Op Cit

7. Ealing Play Policy

In July 2005 the Cabinet adopted a Play Policy setting out values and objectives for play provision in the borough. The full document is attached as Appendix 1. This policy provides a framework of principles to help increase the quantity and enhance the quality of play in Ealing to reflect the importance the Borough places on services for its children. It aimed to be a practical working tool, to be referred to whenever decisions about children need to be made and is applicable to all Council services which include the provision of play opportunities, and the Voluntary, Private and Independent (VPI) sector. This new Play Strategy has been developed in accordance with the values and principles of the adopted Play Policy and its key objectives.

7.1 Values and Principles

Children's play opportunities should be of high quality, accessible in every locality, respect diversity in the community and meet the needs of all children. It should provide for a wide age range and includes all those up to 18 years of age.

Ealing and its partners are committed to ensure that public spaces are safe, well maintained welcoming and designed with children in mind.

Play provision should be varied and interesting, include movement and the ability to manipulate equipment and materials, stimulate the senses, allow children to encounter natural environments and promote social interaction. The policy recognises children need and want to explore limits, have new experiences and develop their capacities. Children's play provision need to assess and manage the level of risk rather than attempt to eliminate it and make spaces unappealing.

In addition children with disabilities have an equal if not greater need for opportunities for challenging play since

they may be denied the freedom of choice enjoyed by their non-disabled peers.

Ealing believes play should be seen alongside formal education in enabling children and young people to engage positively with the complex world around them and recognises that play has a direct positive impact on children's ability to meet educational goals.

Play provision should be welcoming to every child, irrespective of gender, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities. In meeting the play needs of all children, it may require some children to be given additional support to ensure that they can access universal play opportunities and that others with additional needs will want to have specialist as well as inclusive provision.

In decisions about play, children and young people, should have their opinions taken into account, they must be recognised as an integral part of the community and have a right to be provided for in public spaces to the same degree as adults.

7.2 The Play Policy and Every Child Matters (12).²⁴

Ealing's Play policy outlines how play can assist in achieving the five key outcomes of Every Child Matters and, supporting the Corporate Plan and Council partners in the implementation of the Children and Young People's Plan.

Be Healthy

Ealing's objective: Encourage healthy lifestyles

Play is crucial to health and development throughout childhood, contributing to social, physical, intellectual, cultural and emotional development. The physical activities involved in energetic play provides children with exercise and the opportunity to experience a range of

²⁴ Ealing Play Policy 2005

emotions in a safe way, promoting resilience and fostering self-esteem.

Stay Safe:

Ealing's objective: Ensure that Ealing is a safe place for children to grow up

The fear of strangers, traffic and bullying combine to stop children playing out as much as they would like. Good play provision protects children through reducing unacceptable levels of danger. However it also enables children to undertake challenges, to think through decisions and gain increased self-confidence and resilience.

Enjoying and Achieving

Ealing's objective: Encourage children in Ealing to learn and achieve their full potential

Enjoyment is the essence of play, its what children choose to do and from which they take intrinsic rewards. When playing children define their own goals, decide what is success and failure.

Play's enjoyment is linked to the level of control and choice they are able to exercise and the personal satisfaction they derive from this. Play also allows for the development of problem solving, language and literacy skills as children develop socially and express their emotions. Play is also vital to the development of children's imaginations and creativeness.

Making a Positive Contribution

Ealing's objective: Create a thriving voice for children and young people in Ealing

Play Involves decision-making and taking responsibility. In supervised play provision the play workers usually involve children in decisions about activities, resources and planning. Through consultation children are able to make a positive contribution to their free time needs and ensures provision, such as play areas, reflects their requirements, helps them develop skills and knowledge and a sense of belonging,

Achieve Economic Well-being

Ealing's objective: Ensure all young people have the opportunity to become successful, independent adults and take full advantage of learning, employment and training.

Play develops skills useful in the workplace such choice, assessing risk and physical dexterity. Supervised Play Services include an element of childcare, which aids parent/carers working or training by knowing their children are safe and happy. Play provision, especially for the younger age range, can also provide parent/carers with the opportunity to meet and socialise with other adults.

8. Design Principles for Play Spaces

8.1 Playground Design

Due to the high levels of demand for housing in London, many children are growing up in homes that do not benefit from an outside space. Ealing has population of nearly 350,000 and is the third most densely populated outer London Borough. In addition, concerns around safeguarding, bullying and the perception of risk by adults makes it more important than ever to create sufficient Play opportunities that are appealing to both children and their families.

The Mayor of London's Planning Guidance states residents "Need a mixture of more formal play spaces such as play grounds and of playable places where the most important play equipment is a child's imagination"²⁵. This document also sets a challenge for the Boroughs to retain and increase the provision of play and informal recreation and to develop their own local standards.

The Guidance promotes a proactive approach to children and young people in

²⁵ Play and Informal Recreation: Supplementary Planning Guidance Mayor of London 2012

the built environment including the concept of “Lifetime Neighbourhoods” and the importance of recreational opportunities for residents at every stage of their life: “Public spaces and the public realm in general should be designed and managed to offer real opportunities for recreation and socialising to a wide range of potential users” (page 19).

Supporting the Mayor’s initiative and Ealing’s previous Play Strategies, as a general approach play areas should ideally be designed to be social spaces with play features rather than simply being an area with some fixed equipment designated as a ‘playground’.

The Play Service has adopted the principles set out in Play England’s Design for Play Guidance and applies where successfully designed play spaces :²⁶

- are ‘bespoke’
- are well located
- make use of natural elements
- provide a wide range of play experiences
- are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children
- meet community needs
- allow children of different ages to play together
- build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge
- are sustainable and appropriately maintained
- allow for change and evolution.

The annual risk of a child sustaining an accident involving playground equipment and requiring attendance at an accident and emergency is 0.5%²⁷. Play grounds are among the safest of places for children, much safer than home or participating in sport. Making play areas as safe as practicable does not mean making them mundane and sterile, the European Standard for fixed play equipment states that it is concerned with

²⁶ Play England, Design for Play Guidance, 2008.

²⁷ Play England: Managing risk in Play: Implementation guide

balancing risk and benefits. Considering two goals concurrently: protecting children from avoidable harm and providing them with stimulating and exciting play opportunities.

8.2 Development of Play Areas

The Mayors Supplementary Planning Guidance ²⁸ should be utilised by those planning and implementing play opportunities, as a guide to service standards for Ealing. It categorises spaces according to their size and sets out a maximum desirable distance that Londoners should travel in order to access each category of open space.

The Borough has adopted a typology of play space:

Doorstep playable space: are ‘bespoke’ home suitable for younger children

Local playable space: make use of natural elements for children up to 11 provide a wide range of play

Neighbourhood playable space: are accessible to both disabled where there are additionally facilities for over 11s meet community needs

Youth space: where young people 12 and above can meet and take part in informal or sport based activities build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge

It promotes innovative approach to play provision, location and design including the need for natural features and the opening of school play facilities to community use. are sustainable and appropriate

The Mayor of London stated “The planning system is one of the key mechanism for making sure that play spaces are secured and protected from encroachment” ²⁹

Development proposals that include housing should make provision for play and informal recreation based upon the expected child population generated by the schemes This should apply to all

²⁸ Mayor of London, Op Cit

²⁹ Ibid page v

developments with estimated child occupancy of ten children or more³⁰. Standards should reflect local circumstances including existing provision but the Greater London Authorities' benchmark is for a minimum of 10 sqm of dedicated play space per child as basis for assessing provision in an area. This benchmark should consider all open space which is genuinely playable and may count toward play space provision.

Well located places for play are those that are connected to the wider built environment. They should be near or have easy access to well used routes and adjacent to popular areas/buildings for a level of informal community supervision.

Disabled children and young people have the right to play and access in and around play spaces is often of the most significant barrier that excludes disabled children from play spaces. The existence of steps, lack of drop kerbs or smooth level paths around and leading to play equipment often prevent disabled children and their families from accessing and using play space.³¹ Narrow gates can also present a barrier and bright colours help the visually impaired.

Teenagers enjoy socialising and have a legitimate claim on the public realm. Different age ranges: children, teenagers and adults, will use a space both at the same time and separately at different times of the day. Such spaces can therefore foster informal sociability between generations. Both design and management practice should attempt to support the cross generational use of available spaces.

8.3 Current Practice

³⁰ Ibid page 57

³¹ Playing Outdoors, Disabled Children's Views on Play Spaces, KIDS 2010

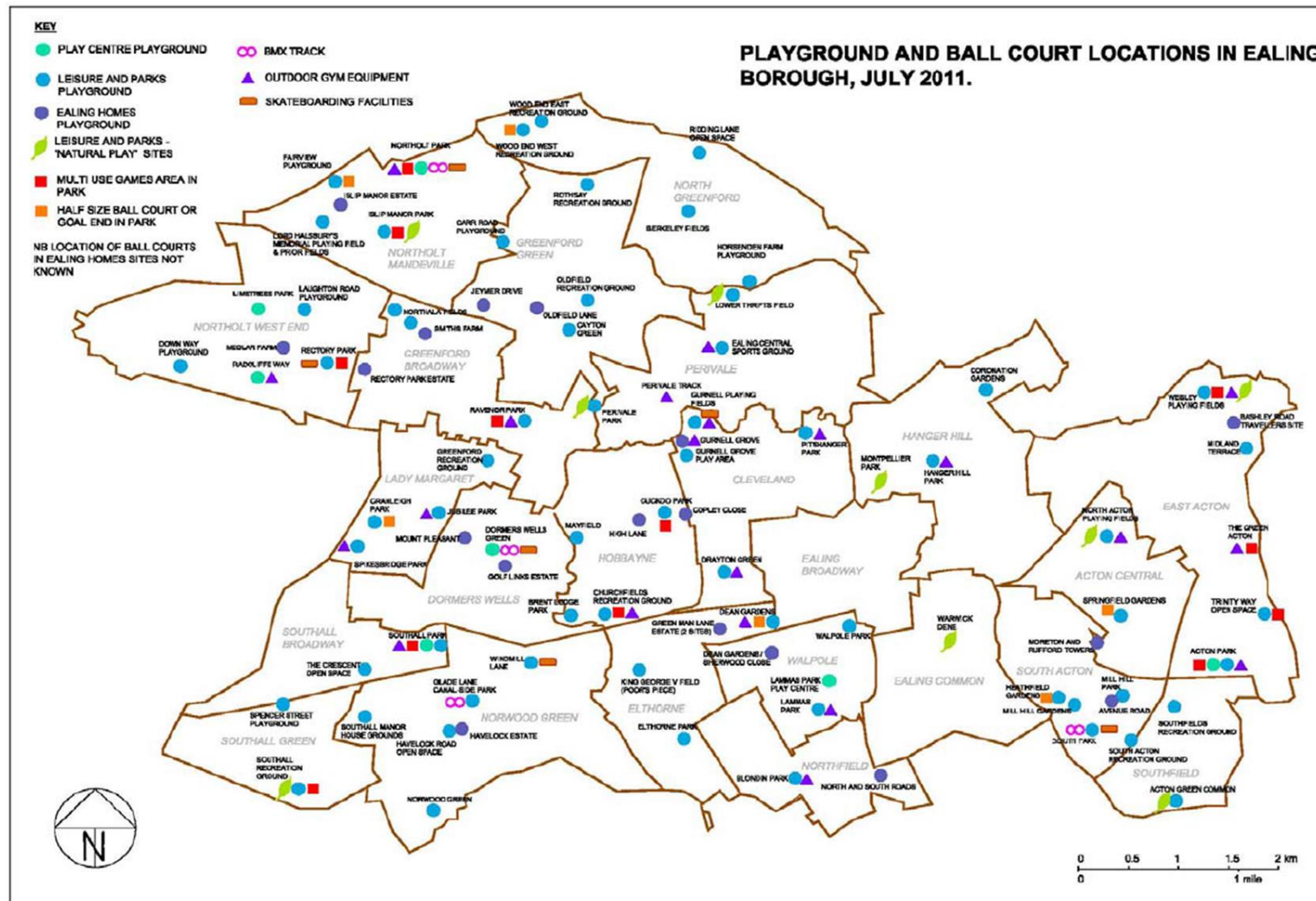
The Play Service, Parks and Landscape Architects strategically plan to develop high quality bespoke Play facilities across the Borough in public spaces. Each project is designed to provide the broadest possible range of Play activities whilst being sympathetic to the surrounding environment and offer a mixture of conventional Playground equipment such as swings, climbing frames and slides set in a landscaped environment in order to create a flexible social space. With input from local communities through consultation and design workshops, the Borough has been able to design challenging, safe and aesthetically pleasing Play environments that appeal to the broadest possible range of users.

8.4 Management and Maintenance

Successful places for play will only remain successful if an effective management and maintenance regime is in place. This is often not considered, particularly in new developments. All space will require a degree of ongoing inspection and maintenance and the responsibility for this should be clearly determined at the outset of any proposals.

Design solutions can be used to reduce maintenance costs; for example: grass can be left to grow longer in some areas creating different textures and mounds can be left to grow long. Choice of landscaping shrubs, trees and plants needs consideration, to be sturdy with low maintenance. A mixture of materials, within a soft green setting, can be included to reduce maintenance requirements including stones, rocks and tree trunks, to create a more attractive space. For maintenance and inspection, Parks and the Play Service have common inspection and maintenance practices but other public space are of variable quality.

Map 2: current play spaces in Ealing



9 Issues and Proposed Solutions

9.1 Identified areas and proposed interventions supporting strategic goals

Ealing's Corporate Board (Feb 2014) noted that due to budget pressure, the next four years needs to be about prioritisation and effectiveness with a rationalisation in the number of strategies and the number of priorities so that funding is effectively spent.

In this section we will set out the pressing issues that need addressing during the next four years as a result of the details set out in the previous sections of the strategy. Broad areas of intervention are identified, which are expanded in greater detail in the next section: the Strategic Goals for 2014-2018.

Issue	Intervention	Reference to Objectives
Increasing Child Population	Continue the strategic planning, support and development of play provision to meet growing demand, ensuring sufficient play opportunities for the children and young people in their local area, including staffed services, and maximising funding opportunities.	Ealing Play Objective 1 & 2
Diverse and mobile child population	Actively promote play orientated approach to services among diverse communities and ensure the workforce reflects the Borough population	Ealing Play Objective 2 and 9
Rising Child Poverty	Increase availability of childcare, including for school aged children, and promote integrated working to increase low cost or free services, choice and quality. Support workforce development and increase training opportunities.	Ealing Play Objective 10
Increase parental awareness and opportunities for engagement in play with their children	Ensure information on the practice and benefits of playing with their children is disseminated to parents/carers. Encourage parents to facilitate play with their children through setting aside time and providing play supporting stimulation Promote and provide better information and guidance for play practitioners and those working with children generally.	Ealing Play Objective 2 and 3
Risk Averse Society	Ensure relevant professionals, practitioners and parent/carers are informed about the true levels of risk and need for challenge and excitement in play opportunities. Provide training for practitioners and guide parents to reassure them and help retain a realistic perspective	Ealing Play Objective 5 & 6
Fear of Bullying and Criminal activity	Promote a child friendly public domain and work with Safer Neighbourhood and Environment teams to address public realm issues and targeted interventions.	Ealing Play Objective 5, 7 and 8

Family Support	Provide diversionary and developmental activities and services to identified areas of need and increase the amount and quality of childcare, especially for school age children	Ealing Play Objectives 1, 9 and 10
Opportunities for children with disabilities and complex needs to participate in play opportunities	Promote the expansion of accessible play services and sites and develop specialised support to encourage universal providers to offer opportunities for children with disabilities and other health needs	Ealing Play Objective 1 ,3 and 4
Integrated working	Ensure a co-ordinated approach to service planning and the design, installation and maintenance of facilities with an increased involvement from the voluntary sector	Ealing Play Objective 5 and 9
Enabling children and young people to help shape play services and their local environment	Promote children's participation in decision making to enable local children to influence their neighbourhoods and develop a sense of belonging.	Ealing Play Objective 7 & 8
Workforce development	Increase training opportunities for those working with children, develop specialised training practitioners, and escalate qualification levels in the Borough's Childcare/Play.	Ealing Play Objective 10
Clearer information for practitioners, parents and children	Update annually the Children and Families Activity Guide and adopt a proactive marketing approach including Young Ealing and Children's Centre web pages.	Ealing Play Objective 1, 3 and 4
Address identified deficiencies in services and facilities	Statutory agencies and partners from the PVI Sector working co-operatively to provide increased opportunities for children and young people within the Borough through integrated working, maximising and pooling resources	Ealing Play Objective 9,11 & 12

10. Strategic goals for Play and Strategy Objectives

Strategic Goal

MORE PLACES TO PLAY

Responding to children's demands for high-quality play spaces in every area

Ealing Play Objectives

1. To increase the quality, quantity and accessibility of all forms of play provision and ensure that all children's service providers promote the values and objectives of the Play Policy.
2. To create new opportunities for children to play in a variety of settings including open spaces, schools, leisure sites, community facilities, within new building developments and childcare settings

Strategic Goal

SUPPORTING PLAY THROUGHOUT CHILDHOOD

Improving provision through a range of settings for children of all ages and from diverse backgrounds

Ealing Play Objectives

3. To raise awareness of the importance of children's play in supporting learning, promoting health and encouraging social interaction among all section of the community.
4. To ensure that children and young people with disabilities have access to the widest possible range of play opportunities.

Strategic Goal

PLAYING SAFELY

Providing safe, accessible and stimulating places for children to play

Ealing Play Objectives

5. To promote safer neighborhoods through attractive tailored play provision, with safe and easy access, and ensure design, installation and maintenance are to the highest standards
6. Ensure that play provision is varied and interesting and allows for children to influence activities; it should also provide exciting opportunities, which challenge children without incurring unacceptable risks.

Strategic Goal**CHILD-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES***Engaging communities and involving children in decisions***Ealing Play Objectives**

7. To ensure that children and young people are able to play and meet within shared public space on equal terms to adults but without hindering other users of that space.
8. To conduct appropriate consultation with children and young people to inform planning and decision-making.

Strategic Goal**EMBEDDING PLAY IN LOCAL PRIORITIES***Ensuring leadership and effective delivery in every local area***Ealing Play Objectives**

9. To create partnerships including a wide range of statutory, voluntary and private sector providers to maximize Play opportunities for the children of Ealing.
10. To promote supervised provision in a variety of settings and the development of a qualified workforce.
11. To promote play across the Borough and the Play Strategy within the Council's wider strategic plans.
12. To access appropriate funding to implement the principles of the Play Policy and the Play Strategy

11. Delivery Plan 2014 to 2018

Strategic Goal MORE PLACES TO PLAY <i>Responding to children's demands for high-quality play spaces in every area.</i>					
Ealing Play Objective 1. To increase the quality, quantity and accessibility of all forms of play provision and ensure that all children's service providers promote the values and objectives of the Play Policy.					
	Action Plan	Lead	Delivery Partners	Actions In Year1 2014	Actions Year 2 2015 onwards
1.1	Access resources to maximise the opportunity for the development of local play opportunities both staffed and unstaffed	Play Service	PVI Parks /Leisure Funding Unit	Seek external funding to maximise new projects and major improvement schemes	Prioritise areas identified as deficient in provision or those play areas most in need of improvement or development
1.2	Maintain the printed and develop an online borough play site map, with play site descriptors, and support the production of the Children and Families Activity Guide	Play Service	Parks Landscape Early Years	New hard copy map completed and distributed to key agencies. Online map available on line Publish guide annually	Review and updates of maps undertaken periodically
1.3	Facilitate a Play Space Design Group to influence and guide the building and commissioning of play provision and to produce guidance for planning, developers and regeneration projects	Play Service projects/Parks	Service Departments PVI reps	Forum convened and objectives agreed, forum meets termly Design guidance updated	Guidance published Forum meets termly
1.4	Provide guidance to ensure staffed play provision is high quality and conforms to national guidelines	OOS Team	Play Service PVI	Develop and publish guidance for staffed provision/workshops	Guidance updated Annual training programme
1.5	Provide increased opportunities for play by developing accessible and affordable out of school childcare facilities to meet demand.	OOS Team	PVI Sector	Map provision Fill identified gaps in childcare provision for school aged children.	Improve Ofsted inspections to minimum level of good

Ealing Play Objective 2. To create new opportunities for children to play in a variety of settings including open spaces, schools, leisure sites, community facilities, within new building developments and childcare settings.

2.1	Plan new Play facilities where a geographical deficiency has been identified and where a demand has been established through consultation and implement proposals subject to identifying finance.	Service Departments Positive Activities	Parks PVI Major Projects	Identify further space where play provision could be developed	Implement proposals to address shortfalls identified for staffed and unstaffed provision.
2.2	Support Mobile Services particularly providing services on Estates	PVI sector Play Service	Play Service Acton CF Youth Service	Secure funding to provide mobile play project on estates	Sustainability funding to continue programme
2.3	Seek greater access to school buildings and grounds in school holidays and at weekends	Extended Services	Schools	Promote use of school facilities out of school hours	Promote use of school facilities as a community asset.

Strategic Goal **SUPPORTING PLAY THROUGHOUT CHILDHOOD**
Improving provision through a range of settings for children of all ages and from diverse backgrounds.

Ealing Play Objective 3. To raise awareness of the importance of children's play in supporting learning, promoting health and encouraging social interaction among all sections of the community.

	Action Plan	Lead	Delivery Partners	Actions In Year1 2014	Actions Year 2 2015 onwards
3.1	Work with other agencies to increase among all the Borough's communities, the importance of playing with their children in and outside the home.	Play Service	Parenting Team PVI Sector	Parenting classes at Children's Centre	Provide 2 parenting classes per annum, developing parental play knowledge and skills
3.2	Organise training for the children's work force emphasising the importance of play for a child's development	Play Service OOS Team	Early Years	1 Seminar Organised	1 Seminar per year related to play and parental engagement
3.3	Encourage practitioners to support parental engagement and awareness of the value of play ensuring accessibility to the Borough's diverse communities	Play Service	OOS Team Early Years Team	Play guidance for professionals produced	Guidance for Professionals updated

3.4	Work with Health to ensure the importance of play to children's general health and activity levels are promoted.	Positive Activities	Health Active Ealing	Information produced and meeting with PCT to establish MOU to promote health benefits of play	Promotion of play as beneficial to health and access funding to support
3.6	Promote the importance of children's play through events in the community.	OOS Team	FIS PVI Sector	Promote National Play Day events across the Borough Identify other community events suitable to promote the Play perspective and services available	Organise Borough events each year to promote National Play day. Participate in a range of year round special events to promote Play

Ealing Play Objective 4. To ensure that children and young people with disabilities have access to the widest possible range of play opportunities.

	Action Plan	Lead	Delivery Partners	Actions In Year1 2014	Actions Year 2 2015 onwards
4.1	Utilise Short Breaks funding and other funding streams to maximise play provision for those with additional needs	ESCAN	PVI Service Departments	Maximise opportunities for play through accessing funding for those with additional needs	Implement play projects including holiday provision where funding is available
4.2	To support the children's workforce by providing training programmes to create more accessible universal services.	OOS Team	PCT ESCAN	Courses provided as part of training programme	Courses on accessibility continue to support workforce development
4.3	Maintain and support the Children with Additional Needs Activity Group to ensure strategic planning and the best use of available resources	ESCAN	Service Departments PVI	Regular meeting held to plan services and utilise resources	Continued joint working to achieve positive outcomes for all children and young people with additional needs
4.4	Support play, childcare and recreation providers in ensuring their services are inclusive to children and young people with disabilities and complex health needs	Play Service	OOS Team Active Ealing PVI Sector Parental Forum	Training programme to increase confidence of existing providers Mystery shopping exercise for holiday and after school services	Undertake 2 workshops Support improvements in enhanced services through the commissioning processes Continue monitoring offer
4.5	Consideration given to accessible/inclusive			Complete and accessibility audit	Implement a process to review

	equipment and gates as part of replacement/refurbishment of any play facilities			of all areas and equipment	accessibility in new designs and increase the overall percentage of accessible equipment to no less than the percentage of disable children in the borough.
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Strategic Goal **PLAYING SAFELY**

Providing safe, accessible and stimulating places for children to play.

Ealing Play Objective 5. To promote safer neighborhoods through attractive tailored play provision, with safe and easy access, and ensure design, installation and maintenance are to the highest standards

	Action Plan	Lead	Delivery Partners	Actions In Year1 2014	Actions Year 2 2015 onwards
5.1	Both the safety of children and promoting community interaction should be considered in the design and location of new facilities	Service Department	Leisure Regeneration Planning	Promote the idea of community spaces rather than designated play areas	Investigate the improvement of community spaces in selected estate neighbourhoods
5.2	Analyse where children play and travel routes to play locations, identify perceived hazards and seek solutions that can be utilised universally	Service Departments	Housing Parks Highways	Plan/commission research	Disseminate outcomes and implement recommendations
5.3	Seek children and young people's views on crime and the fear of crime and how this acts as a barrier to accessing play facilities	Safer Neighbourhood Team	Play and Youth Service PVI Sector	Carry out consultation	Disseminate outcomes and implement recommendations
5.4	Ensure a Play Space Design Group is formed and consulted on any new proposals for spaces for children and young people and that a co-ordinated approach to playground inspection and maintenance is implemented across departments.	Play Service Project Team	Service Departments	Ensure Play Design Group meets Implement co-ordinated approach to inspection and maintenance through a joint contract	Develop a staged improvement programme for play spaces based upon external inspections Integrate all service departments in one Inspection and maintenance procedure

5.5	Create and maintain a deficiency map of play provision in the Borough to help identify areas of need and prioritise developments.				
Ealing Play Objective 6.	Ensure that play provision is varied and interesting and allows for children to influence activities, it should also provide exciting opportunities, which challenge children without incurring unacceptable risks.				
6.1	Ensure all new developments undertake proper consultation and support the principles of play including adventurous opportunities and choice	Play Service	All project leads	New projects assessed by PIES group	New projects assessed by PIES group
6.2	Organise training for children's workers to promote the importance of challenge in play experiences	OOS	Play Service	1 seminar per annum	1 seminar per annum
6.3	Through promoting the design guidelines ensure play facilities are exciting, challenging and attractive to children	Project Teams	Commissioning departments	Update guidelines, circulate and make available on line	Update annually
6.5	Produce information to facilitate parental understand on the importance of challenge in children's play.	Play Service	Family Information Service	Documentation produced and distributed	Documentation refreshed
Strategic Goal	CHILD-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES <i>Engaging communities and involving children in decisions.</i>				
Ealing Play Objective 7.	To ensure that children and young people are able to play and meet within shared public space on equal terms to adults but without hindering other users of that space.				
	Action Plan	Lead	Delivery Partners	Actions In Year1 2014	Actions Year 2 2015 onwards
7.1	Plan for play facilities to be multi generational community spaces where possible and break down barriers to participation and social interaction	Play Service	Service Departments PVI Sector	Promote use of the Strategy. Promote the concept of multi generational use and opening up play spaces	Seek funding for multi-generational play facilities.
7.2	Increase understanding of children and young people's use of the public realm and ensure that play services are suitably designed and sited.	Play Service	Housing Highways	Commission research	Disseminate outcomes and implement recommendations

			Parks		
7.3	Promote temporary Play Streets across the Borough and help sustain those working to provide these opportunities	Highways	Play Service Environment	Introduce temporary Play Streets at new locations.	Promote community leadership for temporary road closures
Ealing Play Objective 8. To conduct appropriate consultation with children and young people to inform planning and decision-making.					
8.1	Carry out annual consultation exercises seeking children's perception around current services	Play Service	OOS Team Project Team Parks	Design consultation	Implement first consultation and then continue annually
8.2	Utilise the satisfaction surveys from Out of School providers to measure progress on strategy objectives	OOS Team	PVI Sector Play Service	Undertake analysis Disseminate outcomes and implement recommendations	Undertake analysis Disseminate outcomes and implement recommendations
8.3	Engage with and seek feedback from children, Ealing's Youth Mayor and Youth Advisory Group regarding play and progress of the strategy	Positive Activities	Youth Service	Establish consultation mechanism	Submit reports as appropriate

Strategic Goal EMBEDDING PLAY IN LOCAL PRIORITIES

Ensuring leadership and effective delivery in every local area.

Ealing Play Objective 9. To create partnerships with a wide range of statutory, voluntary and private sector providers to maximize Play opportunities for the children of Ealing.

	Action Plan	Lead	Delivery Partners	Actions In Year1 2014	Actions Year 2 2015 onwards
9.1	Adopt an integrated approach across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors to promote the need for play and its perspective in services provision.	Play Service	Council Departments PVI Sector	Circulate strategy and provide briefings	Regular briefing and information publications.
9.2	Encourage the potential contribution to be made by the private and voluntary sectors, including partnership working, to provide new services.	Play Service	PVI Contractors	Explore potential partners	Commence new partnership arrangements

9.3	Provide and update the strategy guidance for planning , housing and others on the principles for play provision within built developments	Play Service project team/Parks/ Landscape	Environment	Initial guidance within strategy Circulate guidance	Update as necessary
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Ealing Play Objective 10. To promote supervised provision in a variety of settings and the development of a qualified workforce.

10.1	Establish a list of available Play Workers in the Borough who can be used by service providers	Play Service	VPI Providers Council Departments	Create list and protocols for use	Update staff available
10.2	Encourage the professional development of play workers in all sectors by providing an annual training programme and increasing levels of qualification available	OOS Team	Training Team Training providers PVI Sector	6 unqualified to qualified 6 level 2 to 3 4 level 3 to 4	6 unqualified to qualified 6 level 2 to 3 4 level 3 to 4 All per annum
10.3	Work with providers to offer a progression route for those who wish to work in play or children's services, including parents.	Play Service	Training Team OOS Team PVI Sector	Implement volunteering opportunities and establish a training progression route Appoint apprentices	Assess developments and develop offer further

Ealing Play Objective 11. To promote play across the Borough and the Play Strategy within the Council's wider strategic plans.

11.1	Maintain a high profile for play through publicity, annual events and other promotional activities including working proactively with members of the Council	Play Service	Environment OOS Team Project Team	Adopt and publish Strategy in an easily read format Promote services among members including site visits	Update materials and ensure Play events are widely promoted.
11.2	Keep the Children's Board informed of new developments	Play Service and others	Service Departments PVI Sector	Adopt strategy Report to Board	Reports to Board and other bodies as appropriate
11.3	Continuously monitor the progress of the Play Strategy and its outcomes against agreed objectives	Play Service	Service Departments PVI Sector	Undertake monitoring and produce annual update	Undertake monitoring exercise and produce report

Ealing Play
Objective 12.

To access appropriate funding to implement the principles of the Play Policy and the Play Strategy

12.1	Work with a variety of agencies and the external funding unit to identify all available potential funding streams	Play Service Project Team	External Funding Unit Other Council Departments PVI Sector	Seek additional funding sources to meet the play strategy's objectives Plan with e PVI sector joint working and funding bids	Seek additional funding sources to meet the play strategies' objectives
12.2	Support PVI groups by promoting partnership working and signposting funding opportunities	Play Service	Council Departments PVI Sector	Circulate funding opportunities to PVI including on line access.	Online information distributed to Borough organisations
12.3	Organise funding and business development workshops for PVI groups	OOS Team	PVI Sector	2 events	2 events per annum
12.4	Secure funding and commission services to meet the Play Strategy's objectives	Play Service and others	Service providers Departments PVI sector	On going assessment of funding opportunities with Funding Unit and others 2 applications	On going assessment of funding opportunities Commission services 2 applications each year

Appendix 1: A Policy for Children's Play in the Borough (adopted by Council 2005)

Ealing Council endorses Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires states to:

'Recognise the right of the child 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.'

Statement of Intent

Ealing is committed to promoting good quality play opportunities for all children in the Borough. It also recognises the significance and value of play and the existence of a shortfall in play opportunities for some children in the Borough.

The Play Policy commits the Borough to provide, and work in partnership with others to provide, a range of provision to the highest standards, offering children the opportunity to explore their world, to aid their social and educational self-development and encourage integration into the wider society.

1. Why is a Play Policy Needed?

"Both my department and the Department of Education and Skills believe that play, recreation and leisure outcomes sit equally alongside the others that authorities and their partners need to consider when making decisions about the provision of coordinated children and young people's services"

Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, April 2005

The Play Policy demonstrates that Ealing Council is committed to enhancing the lives of all local children by providing opportunities for play to help compensate for the changes in society which restrict play opportunities including the growth in traffic, reduction in open space and concerns for the social safety of children.

The objective of the Play Policy is to provide a framework of principles to help increase the quantity and enhance the quality of play in Ealing to reflect the importance the Borough places on services for its children. It aims to be a practical working tool, to be referred to whenever decisions about children need to be made and is applicable to all services which include the provision of play opportunities. The policy shall be taken into account whenever decision's need to be made that may have an impact on play including planning, new building development, children's services, implementing government priorities for children, leisure time activities, childcare, transport policy, parks and open spaces. The Council will also seek to implement the principles of this policy when exercising its statutory powers and duties under the Children Act (1989 and 2004), the Local Government Act (2000) and other legislation in providing services to children and families in the Borough.

This Play Policy has been developed in conjunction with a range of public and voluntary providers of services to children and illustrates the Borough's commitment to working in partnership to ensure the best possible facilities. In addition, as it is integral to most types of service for children, this policy and play provision generally can act as a catalyst in the establishment of co-ordinated children's services following Every Child Matters.

2. What is Play?

Play describes a variety of activities which are freely chosen, creative and satisfying to the child. They may or may not involve play equipment but can be encouraged by a child friendly play environment and the active support of both the Borough and the wider community. A child's capacity for positive development will be inhibited if denied access to a range of stimulating play opportunities.

Play is one essential way children and young people come to understand themselves and the world around them. Play is essential for physical and emotional growth, for intellectual and educational development and independence. Through play children and young people explore their environment, learn how to deal with others and stay active and healthy. The best play provision is designed to offer children and young people access to a range of experiences including challenges and some level of risk. Play also provides children with the chance to meet their friends, let off steam and have fun.

While Play is a central part of children's own culture, it is different from structured activities such as sport, art, music and dance. Given the opportunity, children play wherever they are. It is what they do when they are allowed free time and space to use in their own way and for their own reasons.

3. Values and Principles

Children's play opportunities should be accessible in every locality, respect diversity in the community and the special needs of some children. It should provide for a wide age range and will include all those up to 18 years of age. Ealing and its partners are committed to ensure that public spaces are safe, well maintained welcoming and designed with children in mind.

Play provision should be varied and interesting, include movement and the ability to manipulate equipment and materials, stimulate the senses, allow children to encounter natural environments and promote social interaction. This policy recognises children need and want to explore limits, have new experiences and develop their capacities, children's play needs to assess and manage the level of risk rather than attempt to eliminate it. In addition children with disabilities have an equal if not greater need for opportunities for challenging play since they may be denied the freedom of choice enjoyed by their non-disabled peers.

Ealing believes play should be seen alongside formal education in enabling children and young people to engage positively with the complex world around them and recognises that play has a direct positive impact on children's ability to meet educational goals. In collaboration with other agencies, the Council will encourage

children's play opportunities in educational settings within formal learning, during break times and outside of school hours.

Play provision should be welcoming to every child, irrespective of gender, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities. It should meet the play needs of all children, this may require some children to be given additional support to ensure that they can access play opportunities and that others will need and want to have specialist as well as inclusive provision. In decisions about play, children and young people (including younger children), should have their opinions taken into account, they must be recognised as part of the community and need to be provided for in public spaces to the same degree as adults.

4. Links with other Plans, Policies and Strategies

The Play Policy will support a wide range of plans, policies and strategies including: The Children and Young Peoples' Plan, The Cultural Strategy, The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, the Sports and Physical Activity Strategy, the Local Preventative Strategy for Children and Young People, the Children's Centre Strategy and other policies supporting social inclusion, health promotion and anti-racism.

The principles of the Play Policy will also help regeneration, reduce anti-social behaviour and risk of crime, support families and the community and help achieve the key outcomes of Every Child Matters.

Under the Children Act 2004, local authorities are responsible for making arrangements for all those persons and bodies involved with services for children to cooperate to help achieve the key outcomes for all children and young people in their area. Within this statutory requirement is the responsibility, through direct service provision and the duty to cooperate, to consider provision for children's play and recreation.

Play helps achieve the Key Outcomes of the Act:

- **Be Healthy:** Play is crucial to health and development throughout childhood, contributing to social, physical, intellectual, cultural and emotional development. The physical activities involved in energetic play provides children with exercise and the opportunity to experience a range of emotions in a safe way, promoting resilience and fostering self-esteem.
- **Stay Safe:** The fear of strangers, traffic and bullying combine to stop children playing out as much as they would like. Good play provision protects children through reducing unacceptable levels of danger. However it also enables children to undertake challenges, to think through decisions and gain increased self-confidence and resilience.
- **Enjoying and Achieving:** Enjoyment is the essence of play, it's what children choose to do and from which they take intrinsic rewards. When playing children define their own goals, decide what is success and failure. Play's enjoyment is linked to the level of control and choice they are able to exercise and the personal satisfaction they derive from this. Play also allows for the development of problem

solving, language and literacy skills as children develop socially and express their emotions. Play is also vital to the development of children's imaginations and creativeness.

- **Making a Positive Contribution:** In supervised play provision the play workers usually involve children in decisions about activities, resources and planning. Through widespread consultation undertaken before the construction of play areas children are able to make a positive contribution to their free time needs. This ensures provision reflects their requirements, helps them develop skills and knowledge and a sense of belonging,
- **Achieve Economic Well-being:** Play enables children to develop and practice their employability skills such as collaboration, decision making, problem solving, creativity, communication etc. Play Services often include an element of childcare, which aids parent/carers working or training by knowing their children are safe and happy. Play provision, especially for the younger age range, can also provide parent/carers with the opportunity to meet and socialise with other adults.

5. Play Objectives

The Policy's key objectives should guide the formulation of strategies for play and other relevant children's plans within the Borough:

- i. To increase the quality, quantity and accessibility of all forms of play provision within Ealing and to ensure that Children's Services promote the values and objectives of the Play Policy.
- ii. To raise awareness of the importance of children's play in supporting independence, learning, promoting health and encouraging social interaction.
- iii. To work in partnership with a wide range of statutory, voluntary and private sector providers to maximise Play opportunities for the children of Ealing.
- iv. To promote the idea that Play provision should be varied and interesting and allow for children to make choices and influence activities. It should also ensure stimulating and exciting opportunities for play, which challenge children without incurring unacceptable risks.
- v. To create new opportunities for children to play in a variety of settings including schools, leisure sites, community facilities, open spaces and within new building developments.
- vi. To ensure that children and young people with disabilities have access to the widest possible range of play opportunities.
- vii. To promote safe journeys to play locations and to provide children and young people with easy and safe access.
- viii. To ensure that children and young people are able to play and meet within shared public space on equal terms to adults but with due regard for other users of that space.

- ix. To conduct appropriate consultation with children and young people to inform planning and decision making.
- x. To identify a Play Champion and support the work of an Ealing Play Association.
- xi. To promote a range of supervised provision in a variety of settings, including large playgrounds, and the development of a qualified workforce.
- xii. To access appropriate funding to implement the principles of the Play Policy and the Play Strategy

6. Conclusion

The Mayor's Children and Young People's Strategy (2004) stated children should be able to play within their local neighbourhoods and have safe attractive play spaces within easy walking distance of their homes.

Ealing is committed to providing every child with a range of quality facilities to maximise their opportunities for play. It will promote exciting but safe play provision and will support children to influence their own environment.

Borough services will listen to what children, their families and communities say about local play provision and plan strategically across departments and with other local organisations to promote the principles of the Play Policy. The Children and Young Peoples Plan will include play in its strategic approach to services but the Borough will also need to involve partners to develop a framework of long term support for high quality play provision.

The Play Policy is also the guiding document for the creation of a corporate Strategy for Play, which will be developed in partnership with local community organisations and in consultation with children and their families. Based upon the principles in the Play Policy, an audit of current services and consultation, the Strategy will have a detailed implementation plan and evaluation process to measure the impact of play against a variety of targets and the Outcomes Framework.