

Foreword

For many years play has been under valued in society, but now it is very much back on the agenda with a national organisation created dedicated to play and local play teams within county boroughs. These factors along with good partnership working and solid consultation can create better play opportunities, providing safe and secure environments letting all children take risks that will give them greater confidence in preparation for every day life. This will also be the key to developing children's social, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional skills that they will then use more effectively on a day-to-day basis.

This strategy will now provide a solid backbone for the future of play within the Borough for years to come, benefiting thousands of local children and young people on the way.

I would like to personally thank and congratulate The Children's Grand Council and the Youth Forum of Blaenau Gwent for their work on the boroughs Play Strategy. Their efforts have made sure that the general views of all children and young people throughout the Borough have been carefully considered by all partners who sit on the strategy group and as a result are directly reflected within the strategy. This involvement has resulted in a play strategy, which is needs-led, fit for purpose, and reflects the concerns of children, young people and their families.

Cllr. Gill Clark

Blaenau-Gwent Play Strategy and Action Plan

Introduction

This strategy had been developed in recognition of the importance of play in the lives of children and young people in Blaenau-Gwent. It aims to raise the profile of play, and provide a platform from which future play opportunities can be developed. Blaenau-Gwent Play Strategy will be a tool for ensuring that children's play is included and considered in the work of all agencies operating in the county borough. The strategy is intended to be a working document that sets out guiding principles and issues to be addressed through future work.

The objectives in this strategy have been developed as a result of the participation of a variety of professionals in the voluntary and statutory sector that are involved in play provision. Parents/carers, children and young people and wider community have participated through consultation, discussion groups, questionnaires and their active participation in an action-research project initiated in summer 2005. This was a pilot open access project operated on an outreach basis, where staff provided enhanced play opportunities in 4 local play areas. This project was known as "Play in the Park."

On a national level, this strategy has been developed to reflect the Welsh Assembly Government's Play Policy Implementation Plan and implement this plan on a local level. Since producing the Play Policy in 2002, the Welsh Assembly Government established a Play Policy Implementation Group to develop further recommendations on the direction of play in Wales. Play in Wales - The Assembly Government's Play Policy Implementation Plan was launched on February 15, 2006.

Blaenau-Gwent's Play Strategy has been developed in line with, and is committed to supporting, the principles and values outlined in the Play Policy. This reflects the importance of play in childhood and the importance of children in our society. It makes clear a commitment to ensure children and their needs are central to policy making and that provision is made to meet those needs.

By valuing play, we value children and young people

WHAT IS PLAY?

Play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental; and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live.

Welsh Assembly Government, 2006

Play is a fundamental right and is enshrined in the United National Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which the UK is a signatory. This means that every child in the UK has a right to 'engage in play and recreational activities'.

Play is an essential part of children's lives. When playing, children and young people choose what they want to do themselves, how they want to do it and why they want to do it. It is an integral part of healthy emotional and physical development, for society as well as children themselves. Play is the means by which children explore their environment, their world, their roles and relationships.

Play provides opportunities for problem solving, language development, creativity, communication, negotiation and listening skills. It provides an opportunity to learn about risk which is an essential element of confidence building.

Play can also be therapeutic and gives children the chance to deal with difficult or painful circumstances. Play provides children and young people with the opportunity to let off steam and have fun! These are important experiences that are needed to develop emotional literacy essential for promoting positive mental health in our future generations.

The right to play is the child's first claim on the community. Play is nature's training for life. No community can infringe that right without doing deep and enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens.

David Lloyd George, 1928

WHAT IS PLAY PROVISION?

Play provision is any space or facility, staffed or unstaffed, which provides children with play opportunities. It should also provide them with the freedom of opportunity to play by themselves or with other children of all abilities. When using play provision, children should be free to decide for themselves what they want to do, why they are doing it and how they go about it.

A quality play provision should offer children a rich stimulating environment free from inappropriate risks, and full of challenge, providing them with the opportunity to explore themselves and their world.

The environments that provide play provision for children is varied and include parks; fixed play equipment; play clubs, holiday Playschemes; crèches, playgroups, out of school childcare schemes. This provision is provided by both the statutory and voluntary sector and all should be adaptable to suite the needs of all children.

Styles of Service Provision

Currently play opportunities are provided in a number of different ways, in response to local pressures, needs and ages of the children concerned:

- **Open Access - Staffed play provision**

Local staffed play provision operated on the foundations of playwork principles by suitably qualified staff, employed to facilitate quality play opportunities.

The term “open Access” does not apply to the process of play or how it is facilitated by playwork, but to the level of care provided to children within a staffed setting. It does not describe provision that is un-staffed, for example fixed equipment playgrounds, skateboard ramps, multi-use games area, playing fields, etc. Therefore, open access provision is any provision in which the process of play is facilitated by staff, In settings where children, including those under 8, are free to come and go as they please, free to decide for themselves what they want to do, why they are doing it and how they go about it. There is no contract of formal care between the playworkers and parents/cares for any duration whiled the child is there.

In recognition that this provision provides informal childcare to local parents/carers, it is imperative that parents/carers ensure children and young people have a safe place to go, if they choose to leave the setting. Most will place no limit on numbers and will not require formal arrangements for bringing and collecting children. (As far as is practicable – in some instances alternative arrangements are made for children with impairments such as one to one workers and/or higher staff ratios)

The provision of emergency contact details is required for the protection of children. Staff will keep registration details for this purpose. Staff will not compel children to stay; the provision operates on a “drop-in” basis. This provision may operate with or without a building and is usually free to local children.

“Open access facilities offer a valuable resource because they add to the variety of services available and their more informal nature may offer children as they grow older, more scope to develop confidence and social skills” Children Act 1989 para 6.51

CSIW States: “The main purpose (of open access play provision) is to enable children to learn and develop through play opportunities in a safe environment in the absence of their parents”

- **Restricted Access**

This provision accepts children on a first come, first served basis in the same way that an open access scheme would, but conditions are imposed on how the children are allowed to leave. Usually this will mean that the children will be collected from the site and should not be allowed to leave unaccompanied. These conditions are usually in place for children under 8 to comply with the Care Standards regulations.

- **Play care**

Play care combines the childcare needs of parents with the importance of offering high quality play opportunities to the child. The child has no choice about attending and the provider usually contracts to collect the child from school, supply them with refreshments and look after them until they are collected by a particular adult. This service can be offered out of school or by play projects on a sessional basis.

- **Stay and Play**

This is provision where parents and carers will bring and stay with their child and activities are geared to the interaction between them, either in family groups or as a whole. This type of provision is ideal for consulting with parents as well as offering them the opportunity to support their child's play experiences. Examples of this type of provision are Parent and Toddler groups, Sure Start family support groups and Play Days.

- **Crèche Provision**

This is provision usually for children under 8 to be cared for on a sessional basis to allow their parents to engage in activities i.e. meetings, training, family support activities and leisure activities.

- **Fixed Play Areas**

These offer children the opportunity to play in parks and open spaces on equipment designed to physically challenge them and provide risks in a controlled environment. The play habits of older children (11+) are often perceived to be a nuisance with the communities where they live. Experience suggests that young people of this age are

Play in Blaenau-Gwent

Blaenau-Gwent is a highly deprived county of Wales, incorporating the 3 valleys of Ebbw Fach, Ebbw Vale and Tredegar. It has 12 electoral wards in total and 10 of these have been designated Communities First areas, due to the amount of deprivation in existence in the borough. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WMID) 2005 is the official measure of deprivation for small area in Wales. Within this index, Super Output Areas (SOA's) measures the deprivation of the population in specific areas of Wales. Of the 47 SOA's in Blaenau-Gwent, all but 3 fall into the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. The remaining 3 SOA's fall into the next 20% most deprived in Wales.

The 2001 Census identified 17, 635 children 0 – 18 living in Blaenau-Gwent.

The range of play opportunities available in Blaenau-Gwent is provided through sports centre-based playschemes, out of school childcare, day nurseries, childminders, family centres, community centres, Fixed equipped play areas, playgroups, parks and open spaces, outreach playworkers, forest schools, etc. However, provision for children's play and playwork in the borough has suffered from a historical lack of consideration and development. Therefore, play opportunities

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CONCLUSION

There is recognition amongst providers and the Play Strategy Group that children and young peoples play has been traditionally under-resourced financially in the county borough of Blaenau-Gwent. Some of the recommendations and objectives in this Strategy will be realised by a change in practice and sharing of resources. However, it must be noted that appropriate levels of funding are critical to the delivery of this Strategy.

This Play Strategy will help the Framework Partnership realise its 5 Strategic Aims and subsequent Key Priorities for actions by:

Reducing families living in poverty

- Play is critical for developing children's emotional literacy. The Mental Health Foundation estimates that at any time 20% children experience psychological problems, that include stress and anxiety. Opportunities for graduated risk-taking in unsupervised play build children's self-confidence and resilience. These are key protective factors for mental health promotion.
- Outreach playworkers based in local communities can facilitate and enhance local opportunities in close proximity to where children live. Therefore, they are not dependant on adult members of their family to provide transport for them to access play opportunities.
- Open access play session provided on an outreach basis are free from

- Effective play relationships are fostered between parents/carers so they attain essential skills that both contribute to their children's development and also supports them by giving them good parenting skills.

To support families/parenting

- The Children's Information Service is the ideal point for parents/carers to gain information of children's play services and information to support their children's development through play. Also, to provide "toolkits" for local community groups who are interested in developing local play facilities. To improve access and availability of multi-agency guidance and support services
- Open access play provision not only provides children with play opportunities to promote their development, but informal childcare and respite for short periods. This can relieve the strain of keeping children entertained, whilst they are domestic tasks to perform. Many parents, and grandparents, looking after energetic children whilst parents are working, appreciate somewhere safe for the children to go and meet up with their friends to play.

To promote healthy lifestyles

- Play provision promotes physical, mental and social well-being. Outreach community –based playworkers contribute to the creation of safe and healthy environments for children as they offer , r

To support children and young people in need

- This strategy will improve coordination of service for children and young people at a strategic level and ensure that specific groups are targeted and consulted to ensure that play provision is inclusive for all children
- Although the strategy reflects play in the same context as the Welsh Assembly's Play Policy Implementation Plan, it also realises that there will sometimes need to be a process of engagement before some groups feel comfortable to access open access play provision which is inclusive, freely chosen, personally directed and self motivated.
- It is important that the strategy is flexible and puts actions in place for there to be a successful process for specific groups to gain confidence through playing within their own environment and then slowly being integrated into inclusive open access play provision.
- The strategy will help put measures in place so that services that work closely with children and young people will have the opportunity to develop through training, and therefore will have more of a capacity to integrate children with specific needs into their setting.
- These settings will be easily identifiable to children, young people and their families through displaying a quality mark, which they will receive through taking part in the training given.

It is anticipated that it will also support the delivery of the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services, which contains key action points in relation to children's play:

- 2.38 – Safe play areas which are accessible for children
- 2.43 – provide services and an environment that supports active play and physical activity
- 2.44 – include services and facilities to encourage social interaction of children and young people with their peer, which includes play facilities, appropriate to the needs of the community.

PLAY STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

The Leisure Division has developed its own strategy for 2004 onwards, in relation to

The number of out of school childcare places available has increased through funding directed at this purpose, since 1999. These places provide safe play environments before and after school, and during school holidays, while helping parents with childcare. The Childcare Strategy, "Childcare is for Children" is clear that children need access to high quality environments. The Assembly Government is not interested in supporting care that merely warehouses children. Quality out of school care should provide children with opportunities for freely chosen play, and therefore make a significant contribution to this plan. In 2006/07, 9.6% of the Framework Partnership's funding is directed at developing childcare within Blaenau-Gwent. It is therefore important to ensure that this money is spent on developing quality care environments, which provide a range of quality play opportunities.

The quality of play provision is important and the Playwork profession has developed a quality self-assessment process for playworkers that has been endorsed both by the Assembly Government and the Care Standards of Inspectorate for Wales (CSIW). It would be important that planning for staffed play provision incorporates this quality self-assessment process, "The First Claim". Where some staffed play provision has met standards set out in the regulations issued by CSIW in relation to childcare provision and open access play provision, this is not necessarily a guarantee for the quality of play opportunities on offer to children and young people. Therefore, it would be important to encourage current and future play provision to undertake the quality assessment as set out in this document. The quality assessment would complement any Quality Assurance system that current play provision may already have in place. It would ensure that a range of quality play opportunities is offered to children and young people.

Recommendations:

- That a mapping exercise is completed in relation to the current play, leisure and recreational facilities and activities for children and young people. This will identify any gaps in current provision in relation to addressing to the play needs of children and young people of Blaenau-Gwent.

Action Plan:

ACTION	Date	Monitoring	Who
<p>A map of current play, leisure and recreational facilities and activities for children and young people is carried out to illustrate the range of play opportunities available in the borough</p>	<p>August 2007</p>	<p>Production of map</p>	<p>Play Strategy Group B-G Research Officer CIS/YIS Estyn Mapping and Auditing Group</p>

An audit of issues relating to current play facilities /services is carried out. E/g accessibility, kitemark introduced as part of new Cymorth initiative fa Eli4NS \ f 24NSd24l'Sa24NSc246Sh24NSi2WS 24NSd2ren with d wUab

purposes and would be best facilitated with a whole school approach, to include both teaching and non-teaching staff.

Recommendations:

- That the development of an Outdoor Play Task Group is continued as a priority. This group should include members who have a responsibility/stakeholder interest for developing the school grounds that may come from a variety of differing agendas. This would ensure clarity of approach and understanding of other agendas impacting on schools. It would also give a more strategic emphasis towards the improvements/enhancements made to school grounds in order to make them both fit for purpose and accessible for play opportunities in and out of school hours. Working in this way has the potential to make a bigger impact/influence on schools that may be resistant to opening up their school grounds to the wider community. Through this task group, a variety of issues can be explored and potentially overcome.
- That the Play Development Officer continues to give support to schools and school improvement service for advice/guidance in relation to improving children and young people's play opportunities within these settings. It should be recognised that however, the Play Development Officer has limited capacity. A Play Development Worker has been appointed and will be able to assist with supporting schools around the play agenda. Funding opportunities will be continually explored to further develop this work (including Big Lottery Fund and Community Focussed Schools).
- The potential of monies available through Community Focussed Schools need to be clarified for the provision of a pilot playscheme project "Play in the Playground."
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- Short courses about play are made available to school staff so that play can be implemented more effectively in the playground

Action Plan:

ACTION	Date	Monitoring	Who
Develop Outdoor Play Task Group	June 2007	Establishment of regular meetings	Play Development Officer Schools Improvement EYDCP
To promote, monitor and report on the promotion of play provision within community focussed schools, appropriate to community need in order to inform future development	March 2007 On going	Play opportunities offered after school Community access to school grounds	Play Strategy Group Play Development Officer Community Focused Schools Officer
Pilot "Play In the Playground" in 2 local Schools over the summer 2006 Ensure a range of appropriate	Sept 2006	Report on pilot	Play Development Officer

OBJECTIVE THREE: Play in the Community

Aim:

- **To ensure that children and young people's play needs are considered on a local level and planning for any new developments/regeneration considers it's impact on children's play**
- **That play provision is locally appropriate and best meet the play needs of children and young people**
- **To ensure that children, young people and their parents/carers participate in the process of planning for play locally**

The state of Play:

Currently, The Six Acre Standard, developed by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) is used to advise local authorities when planning for play areas. These standards do not reflect the current and diverse needs of the wider community. As a result, the Authority takes a targeted approach to provide static play areas in line with Leisure Services Play Action Plan.

The local authority provides traditional fixed play equipment areas. Within Leisure's Play Strategy, a ratio for the provision of fixed play areas has been identified as 1 play area per 250 children, aged 0-14 in ward in the county borough. It also identified that play areas would only be removed once they had reached the end of their functional life and on safety grounds. The costs for the removal of play areas are found within existing revenue budgets. There is no capital money available for the replacement/renovation of these traditional fixed play structures. External funding

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and young people within this provision. The purpose of this work is to ensure equity of access to the play opportunities on offer. Also, it is anticipated that inclusive support will be given to the most local disabled children and young people, in order to provide reasonable access to the Playwork outreach project, known as “Play in the Park”.

A community vehicle is being purchased by the Authority and will be used for providing play sessions on an outreach basis in communities where play provision is limited and further play opportunities can be developed. The provision will provide early years play opportunities during school hours, targeting parents with under 5s. After-school play session will be provided for 5 –14 years in a variety of locations across the borough.

Recommendations:

- To include in the mapping exercise the production of a map that identifies land designated for children’s play, including land where fixed play equipment has been removed in line with the Health and Safety issues. This map should also identify “Green Spaces” that can be used to provide outdoor informal play opportunities locally.
- That a map produced to identify land for children’s play should identify which local authority department holds responsibility for the land, and also land that may be available for future developments.
- The map produced is used as a tool to identify any accessibility issues to identify and account for how children travel to the provision. The provision of “safe routes to play” will contribute to the use that children make of the provision. This “whole park” approach should contribute to the identification of play areas designated for removal/renovation.
- A robust maintenance regime of playgrounds, play areas and public spaces is maintained and that adequate funding is available from the local authority to provide capital costs for equipment, and also the regular inspection and maintenance of such areas.
- When traditional fixed equipped areas are removed, it is important to maintain the designation of use for children’s play space. Maintaining the grounds

removal so the area maintains its recognition and usage within local communities for the purpose of children's play.

- Where any suitable land is available for sale, that this land is available for consideration by the Play Strategy Group, in order that pockets and areas of open space, wasteland and woodland, where children and young people already play, can be protected.
- To ensure that appropriate local play facilities are provided where new housing developments are being planned, and this consideration is incorporated into strategy relating to housing/regeneration developments.
- To recommend and ensure that a broad range of play opportunities (i.e. staffed provision, adventure playgrounds) is considered within Section 106 Agreements.
- Mechanisms to ensure the participation of local children and young people are included in all new developments and plans relating to children's play provision.
- All play providers providing outdoor play space include in their plans maintenance programmes which address the problems of litter, in particular dog mess and broken glass..
- Better use of school facilities should be made for out-of-hours community play
- The community vehicle will enhance local community play opportunities through providing outreach play sessions for children and their families.
- The Play Strategy Group identifies esGrhApAof"TTWf [SA24'S2So24Si2WSc24'SO66246S

ACTION	Date	Monitoring	Who
<p>To produce map identifying children's play areas</p> <p>Green spaces available for informal outdoor play opportunities</p>	<p>Jan 2007</p>	<p>Production of Map</p>	<p>Grounds Maintenance and Countryside Manager</p> <p>Planning/Education/Leisure</p>
<p>Funding secured and ensured for capital cost, regular inspection and maintenance routines</p>	<p>March 2007</p>	<p>Continue to implement a regular robust inspection and maintenance regime</p> <p>Continue to develop a high quality maintenance service of all play areas</p>	<p>Leisure division</p>
<p>To identify local groups currently active in the pursuit of developing local play provision</p>	<p>February 2007</p>	<p>Report produced from Voluntary Sector Network to Play Strategy Group</p>	

OBJECTIVE FOUR: A Playwork Profession

Aim:

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these new materials. These materials are being developed to address some of the issues prevalent in developing a qualified children's workforce.

Historically, temporary recreation assistants have staffed the Sports centre based schemes and no training has been provided. These schemes typically attract students who are looking for holiday work, to fit in with their academic studies. The provision of training for these staff was identified within the Leisure's Division Play strategy.

Also, Playworkers who provide support for disabled children and young people were

sessional workers were employed to work as outreach playworkers in multi-disciplinary teams in the Play in the Park project. They all took part in the pre-summer playwork training that was an accredited course, enhancing the professional development and qualifications of these staff.

The development of a Play Forum to support local playworkers and volunteers would help support best practice and promote sharing of ideas/information gain. The Youth

CPCCKC are well placed to encourage, promote and deliver playwork taster sessions to young people

- The delivery of new play training materials developed by Play Wales needs to be supported locally.
- Continue work to support the professional development of those staff involved in face-to-face work with children and young people across a range of settings and disciplines to develop a common core of skills and knowledge, including the knowledge and understanding of children's play and quality playwork. Locally, this would promote the understanding of the unique role of a playworker in facilitating children and young people's play within the community.
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- A quality assurance mechanism needs to be developed locally to ensure that play providers are providing both quality care and quality play for all children in attendance. The EYDCP has developed a local Quality Assurance Scheme, which provides a stepping-stone to umbrella organisations (e.g. CPCKC, MYM, WPPA) own Quality Assurance Schemes. This can be developed further to include the playwork quality self- assessment Tool, “The First Claim” to also ensure that there is a quality of play opportunities offered within such a quality assurance scheme.
- All play providers would need to be encouraged to adopt such a scheme, both for closed-access and open-access provision, and funding for play provision should be directed at that provision that can demonstrate a commitment to adopting such a Quality Assurance Scheme.

Action Plan:

ACTION	Date	Monitoring	Who
Complete a training audit of all employed playworkers within the local authority area	Jan 2007		
Review audit			

Appoint a training officer to provide appropriate play training opportunities	Jan 2007 Summer 2007 Ongoing	Officer in post Range of progressive playwork courses provided No of playwork courses No of students attending	EYDCP Flying Start co-ordinator Training Officer Play Development Officer
Develop a common core of skills and knowledge in relation to children's play to all staff involved in face-to-face work	Summer 2007	Increased capacity for delivering staffed play provision No of professional development playwork training opportunities	Training Officer Play Development Officer
Develop professional development training opportunities	Summer 2007	Increased opportunities for children's play	Play Development Officer Training Officer
Develop Voluntary Sector Play Network	May 2007 Ongoing	Play Forum established Regular meetings	Play Development Officer GAVO
Audit of registration of closed-access/open access provision	Jan 2007	Nos of registered after-school/holiday provision – both closed/open access	EYDCP CIS Officer
Further development of local Quality Assurance scheme to include Quality in Play opportunities	October 2007	Nos of setting achieving quality assurance Nos of settings using First Claim	EYDCP Play Development Officer

<p>Service specification developed for access to influence funding for play provision- open/closed access</p> <p>Reference only given for external funding if quality assessment in Play achieved</p>	<p>April 2007</p>	<p>Nos of registered settings Nos of setting achieving quality assurance</p>	<p>EYDCP</p> <p>Play Strategy Group</p>
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OBJECTIVE FIVE: Managing Risk and Parental Concerns

Aims:

- **To raise the profile of play**
- **To promote the importance of play for children's development.**
- **To gain a balanced judgement of risk in play provision. This is in order to recognise the importance of the need for children and young people to take risk in their play. Sensibly managed risk-taking is essential for the contribution it makes to children and young people's development.**

The state of Play:

Children and young people living in Wales have become sheltered from the environment that might support their developmental play needs. Many are driven to school and leisure time activities, are watched when at play and never experience the freedom of playing without constraining supervision. As a result, they have fewer opportunities to explore the world they live in, to choose their own friends, to learn independence and to gain knowledge of the characteristics of their community.

Parents and carers have genuine concern for the safety for their children within an environment affected by modern traffic conditions. Sometimes, there is a perception within local communities that permission for children to 'play out' will be interpreted as poor parenting. Within Blaenau-Gwent there is a high perception of crime and disorder. This does not necessarily tally with a relatively low crime rate within the County Borough.

The Play Development Officer established strong links with the Parent Link Forum in April 2005. Research carried out by the Parent Link Co-ordinator in January 2005 found that over 80% of parents who participated in this research were concerned with the "lack of safe areas to play".

An "Information Day" was developed by the Play Development Officer to explore this issue further, in partnership with the Parent Link Forum.

This information session was developed for 2 purposes:

1. To raise the profile of play and the importance of play for children's development amongst local parents and community members – to give

Play providers can find it difficult to meet children's needs in the light of increased insurance premiums. Part of the reason for the higher premiums is the cover against

ACTION	Date	Monitoring	Who
To actively promote this strategy to other divisions/organisations to better enable them to consider impact of their decisions/delivery plans on children's play.	March 2007 Ongoing	Events/workshop/	

OBJECTIVE SIX:

- The Play Strategy Group strongly recommends that the Framework Partnership

Methodology

A multi-agency Play Strategy Group has been in existence since 2004. This group developed the post of Play Development Officer, whose key tasks are:

- To identify and highlight gaps in provision via the Children and Young People's Framework Partnership structure.
- To develop a comprehensive play strategy for Blaenau-Gwent County Borough
- To work in partnership to develop and expand accessible staffed open access play opportunities.

The Play Development Officer came into post in April 2005.

Initially, The Play Strategy Group's membership was reviewed to ensure a multi-agency approach to the development of a play strategy. Individuals and organisations that have contributed to the development of this strategy and action plan are listed below. Once the group had been established, terms of reference were developed to the Children and Young People's Framework Partnership.

At this point, the group began to explore the recommendations made by the Play Policy Implementation Group to the Welsh Assembly, for the purpose of informing the development of a national play strategy. All 24 of the recommendations made by this national multi-agency group were incorporated into the Welsh Assembly Government's national play strategy, which was launched in February 2006. The national strategy is known as "Play in Wales: Play Policy Implementation Plan.

The group decided that a Blaenau-Gwent play strategy should echo this national strategy, and look towards the implementation of this on a local level, using the themes used in this document, i.e. Encouraging More Play Provision, Play in School, Play in the Community, A Playwork Profession, Managing Risk and Parental Concerns and finally, Play across the Council.

The objectives in this strategy have been developed as a result of the participation of a variety of professionals in the voluntary and statutory sector through discussions and interviews. Parents/carers, children and young people and wider community have participated through consultation, discussion groups, questionnaires and their

active participation in an action-research project, "Play in the Park", initiated in summer 2005. This was a pilot open access project operated on an outreach basis, where staff provided enhanced play opportunities in 4 local play areas.

Other discussions have been held with agencies, such as Community Safety, Local Health Board, Healthy Schools, Community First, who recognise the impact that their services have on play provision, and likewise, the potential benefits that play could bring to their provision.

Desk research was undertaken in relation to play and playwork and a variety of national/local strategies/initiatives.

Parents/carers of disabled children and young people, including non-disabled siblings and disabled children and young people were consulted through their participation in an event organised by Barnardos in February 2006.

Consultation with primary school children was undertaken in May 2007 through the schools Grand Council at Georgetown Primary School in Tredegar.

Further consultation with stakeholder groups will take place once the Children and Young People's framework Partnership have approved the draft strategy for consultation. A series of workshops and seminars will be held so that participants can explore the key objectives and their implications.

Appendix One: Playwork Principles

These Principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork and as such must be regarded as a whole. They describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children

Appendix Two: PI for Play Strategy

Development and implementation of a corporate play policy: assessing you progress

A	<p>The policy is widely scoped, including any local authority services that might directly or indirectly affect children’s play opportunities.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Advanced</p> <p>The policy clearly identifies the range of authority services with relevance to play and their respective responsibilities. Supporting guidance is provided to the relevant staff in these departments to ensure that the policy is implemented in practice.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Established</p> <p>The policy clearly identifies the range of authority services with relevance to play and their responsibilities.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Emerging</p> <p>The policy broadly identifies services that have relevance to play.</p>
B	<p>The play policy clearly identifies the importance of play</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Advanced</p> <p>The policy includes a clear assessment of the specific needs and priorities for the local area, identifying, for example, particular locations where action is required. It displays a clear understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child’s right to play, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child • Why a variety of play opportunities is important. • Defines play, play opportunities, children and acceptable risks. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Established</p> <p>The policy includes a broad assessment of needs and priorities for the local area, but does not identify specific areas of action. It displays a broad understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Child’s right to play • Why play is important. It defines play, play opportunities, and acceptable risks. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Emerging</p> <p>The policy shows an understanding of why play is important, and defines what ‘play’ and ‘play opportunities’ mean. The policy is not couched in general terms and does not identify the specific requirements and priorities of the local area.</p>

		including appropriate representation from black and minority ethnic groups, traveller families and children and families with disabled children.	appropriate representation from black and minority ethnic groups, traveller families and children and families with disabled children.	
E	The policy has been endorsed by the chief executive and/or members of the relevant committee	Advanced Yes and engaged for the future	Established Endorsed	Emerging No
F	The play policy is based on a clear baseline assessment of local needs and identifies current provision and opportunities for play	Advanced In developing the policy, the authority has carried out and included an assessment of the current range of provision throughout the authority area. The policy identifies specific local needs and how these are addressed by the current provision, and/or where there is a shortfall.	Established The policy includes a broad assessment of the needs and priorities of the local area, but does not identify specific areas for action. The authority has not carried out and included an assessment of the current range of provision throughout the area, and how this relates to identified needs.	Emerging The policy is couched in general terms and does not identify the specific requirements and priorities of the local area. The authority has not carried out and included an assessment of the level and suitability of the current provision.

G	<p>The play policy provides a clear framework for the implementation and delivery.</p>	<p>Advanced</p> <p>The play policy identifies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key principles and a clear framework for the planned development of play opportunities • Short, medium and long-term priorities and target delivery dates. • Resource implications and allocation • Mechanisms to monitor and review arrangements 	<p>Established</p> <p>The play policy identifies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key principles and a clear framework for the planned development of play opportunities. • Short, medium and long-term priorities and target delivery dates. • Mechanisms to monitor and review arrangements. <p>It does not clearly identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource implications and allocation. • A plan for stakeholder involvement. 	<p>Emerging</p> <p>The play policy identifies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General principles and a outline framework for the planned development of play opportunities <p>It does not clearly identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short, medium and long-term priorities and target delivery dates. • Resource implications and allocation. • A plan for stakeholder involvement. • No mechanisms have been identified to monitor and review arrangements.
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H	A play policy working group with key partners has been established for delivery.	<p>Advanced</p> <p>Yes, with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear terms of reference • Allocated resources and the authority to drive the policy forward. 	<p>Established</p> <p>Yes, with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear terms of reference. • A commitment to secure resources and responsibility to drive the policy forward 	<p>Emerging</p> <p>Yes, with clear terms of reference. However, no resources have yet been committed nor any action plan identified.</p>
I	A framework is in place for monitoring progress and regular reporting on plans.	<p>Advanced</p> <p>A framework is in place that ensures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery against targets and objectives is monitored and on minimum of a quarterly basis. • Progress is reported back to management and stakeholders. • The policy/strategy is reviewed annually, with a comprehensive review at least every five years. 	<p>Established</p> <p>A framework is in place that ensures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery against targets and objectives is monitored on at least a quarterly basis. • Progress is reported back to management and stakeholders. • There are no plans in place for the review of the policy. 	<p>Emerging</p> <p>There is no framework in place.</p>