

time for play

a framework for children's play
in north lanarkshire 2012-2015





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Our Vision

High Quality Children's Play in Every Community in North Lanarkshire

Introduction

Welcome to North Lanarkshire's first Framework for Children's Play. The framework is for everyone in North Lanarkshire and especially the 63,171 children under the age of 16 years old who live in North Lanarkshire. It highlights the importance of play in the lives of our children as well as setting out the way forward to ensure that there is 'High Quality Children's Play in Every Community in North Lanarkshire'. This framework and the accompanying action plan, available on the council's website, will assist us in delivering the priorities outlined in North Lanarkshire Partnership's Community Plan and in North Lanarkshire Council's Corporate Plan through providing better opportunities for children to play.

The needs of children and young people are central to play development, provision and evaluation, as are those of their families and carers. Play will be accessible to individuals and communities and designed to support families. We will work in partnership to develop play further where it is needed: at home, at school, out of school, in the streets, in parks and in open spaces.

'Play is one of the most powerful and important elements in children's enjoyment of their childhood, well-being, health and development. It is a natural and instinctive behaviour which should be encouraged and supported throughout childhood. The value of play and the need to ensure that children have places and opportunities for play has been broadly recognised in the Scottish national and local policy. The Scottish Government's Early Years Framework recognises the importance of providing for play, as do guidance documents relating to the planning, development and maintenance of local streets and open spaces.'

— Play Scotland: The Power of Play



Credit: Malcolm Cochrane; Grounds for Learning

Play is therefore an essential part of every child's life and vital for the enjoyment of childhood as well as the development of the child. The vital importance of play in children's lives was recognised internationally when it was enshrined as a fundamental right for all children in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which was ratified by the UK Government in 1991. Article 31 states that:

'State parties 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.'

'State parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.'

"Play is a child's first claim on the community" – David Lloyd George (1926)

We are committed to making sure that children are able to achieve their potential by using effective partnership working to improve outcomes for all children. In developing this framework, North Lanarkshire Partnership recognises its responsibility together with parents, carers, volunteers and the wider community to make sure that children have the opportunity to play freely in a variety of ways.

"It takes a whole village to raise a child"
– African Proverb

This first framework draws on the actions of council services and North Lanarkshire Partnership partners to support children's play and it will be monitored through the Early Years Sub group of the Improving Children Services Group and the Children's Services Partnership. It acknowledges the input of other organisations to children's play and invites others to contribute to the framework's vision.



What is play?

All children and young people need to play and play is vitally important to children's development, health and learning. Play is frequently described by playworkers as behaviour which is "freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated" (Bob Hughes, 1982) i.e. performed for no external goal or reward. Play can be indoors or out, alone or with others, physical, imaginative and creative. It can have rules or be unstructured and totally spontaneous. From listening to children, it may be their work or what they do when everyone else has stopped telling them what to do.

"Mum takes me to so many things that I don't have time to play." – 9 year old boy

Albert Einstein viewed play as the highest form of research and Plato said that the most effective kind of education is that children should play amongst lovely things. This open-ended learning through play is beneficial to a child's development. When children play they are developing social, physical, and cognitive skills. Through play children develop skills such as resilience, perseverance and tolerance that are difficult to develop through formal education. British Medical Journal (vol. 322) published research confirms that children burn more calories "just playing" than they do in PE or sport. Play reduces obesity and helps to keep our children fit and well.

The impulse to play is innate and starts at birth. The family is critical in a child's life and sharing play time within the family has wide ranging benefits including strengthening parent/family bonds and communication. Play is a particularly good vehicle for developing attachment, empathy and emotional literacy. There are also benefits to intergenerational understanding when older people, such as grandparents, play with children.

As children get older the term play tends to be lost but the behaviour is still there and can be referred to as informal recreation: what teenagers do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons. This framework covers children from birth up to 16 years old.

"We don't stop playing because we grow old: we grow old because we stop playing."
– George Bernard Shaw

If play is essential for a child's well-being then play provision should be judged on whether it enables children to play and have a better childhood rather than on longer-term benefits such as becoming a better adult.



Credit: Malcolm Cochrane; Grounds for Learning



Benefits of play

Children in North Lanarkshire are already benefitting from a wide range of play opportunities. The local authority is recognised as being an innovative leader in play provision however there is always room for improvement if we are to achieve our vision throughout North Lanarkshire for all children.

The Go Play Outcome and Evaluation Framework produced by Evaluation Support Scotland and Inspiring Scotland, funded by the Scottish Government, identifies the following outcomes and benefits of play.



Outcome from any form of play	Outcomes from chosen play
Children's lives are enriched Increased confidence and self-esteem Increased resilience Improved skills in risk assessment Increased creativity and problem solving	Increased activity More opportunities to interact with others Improved language and communication skills Improved physical health Increased ability to be part of a social group
Outcome for families	Outcome for communities
Reduced family stress Improved family relationships	Stronger connections between people in the community Improved image of young people Children and young people diverted away from anti-social behaviour Greater appreciation of space and place



Barriers to play

Children play whenever and wherever they have the opportunity but the environments children find themselves in today are far less conducive to play than they were in the past. Our children are suffering from the result of reduced access to and poorer quality play opportunities, mainly due to the loss of open spaces, increased traffic and parental fears for the safety of their children. Action needs to be taken to improve play opportunities for children in North Lanarkshire if we are to provide them with the full benefits to their education, health and well-being of high quality play experiences. A childhood without play is a deprived childhood.

The Scottish Government published “Do the Right Thing” in 2008 in response to the United Nations Monitoring Committee’s concerns that the child’s right to play was not being fully implemented in Scotland. The committee expressed concerns on poor play infrastructures, reduction in playgrounds and the child’s right to play not being fully enjoyed by all children, disabled children particularly. Other barriers identified included perceptions of risk, finding time to play, local vandalism, rural and disadvantaged communities. In North Lanarkshire we will work towards removing these barriers and encouraging our communities to play through the development of a stronger play infrastructure, with a wide range of accessible and inclusive play opportunities, for children up to 16 year olds.



Children want to take risks in order to explore, try new experiences and develop their capacities. This is a natural part of learning about the world around them. Without taking risks a child would not learn to walk or ride a bike. A part of childhood is learning about risk and how to manage it. A lack of risk taking opportunities in childhood will have consequences in later life. We want children to come into contact with graduated risks in a controlled environment so that they can get the learning benefit of managing these situations. We want to encourage parents to appreciate the benefits of such experiences for children and their natural development.



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

Summary Statement – Managing Risk in Play provision (DCSF, 2008)



Strategic Objectives

A working group have drawn together knowledge from various services that impact on children's play to feed into this framework. These principles and goals have emerged from various consultation work on play provision both with adults and children.

Our principles and goals

Play services should be:

- 1 Child and young people centred,
- 2 Inclusive,
- 3 Stimulating, exciting and fun,
- 4 Varied and extensive,
- 5 Safe and protective,
- 6 Rooted in the community,
- 7 In partnership,
- 8 Developing individuals, and
- 9 Developing communities.

From these we have developed the following six broad themes to form the basis of the strategic priorities for the play framework.



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| Theme 1 | Play Aware
Raise awareness of the critical importance of play in children's lives. |
| Theme 2 | Planning for Play
Involve children and communities in the planning and provision of quality play environments and experiences. |
| Theme 3 | Playing Out
Develop and improve the quality and access to outdoor play facilities and natural or other green spaces for play. |
| Theme 4 | Play Choice
Develop the range, distribution and quality of supervised play provision, aiming to create inspiring free play environments. |
| Theme 5 | Risky Rewarding Play
Raise awareness of the benefits of risk in children's play. |
| Theme 6 | Working at Play
Ensure that the skills of adults are sufficiently well developed to provide quality play services and environments. |

Theme 1

Play Aware

Raise awareness of the critical importance of play in children's lives

There is now a strong body of evidence and expert opinion that demonstrates the crucial role of play in children's lives, particularly in their enjoyment of childhood, and their health, wellbeing and development. This is not necessarily fully appreciated throughout the local authority and all partnership partners or by all parents, carers and the wider community. It is important that there is improved understanding of the value of play for children by all of those whose actions impact on children playing. We will use a variety of means, such as celebrating the child's right to play with an annual national Playday event, to promote the importance of children's play.



North Lanarkshire Children's Services Partnership is fully committed to the national campaign for 'Play Talk Read'. Local plans are in place to use the key message contained within the campaign to support parents in realising that they are the first teachers who can share the benefits of play with children, starting early and staying active for life.

The implementation of 'play@home' in North Lanarkshire supports the earliest intervention, promoting play and its benefits to provide the best possible start to life and providing parents with information and ideas to establish play with their child during the early years.

Midwives and Health Visitors provide guidance to parents, grandparents and carers who are encouraged to play, talk and read with their children every day using everyday experiences and materials that are found at home. It gives little ones the essential skills, motivation and abilities that will make it easier for them to keep learning throughout their lives. Doing this daily in the early years will have a positive impact not just on children, but on families and communities.

We will:

- 1.1 Use the play framework to raise awareness of the benefits of play.
- 1.2 Identify play champions in each relevant service as a lead officer for the implementation of the play framework.
- 1.3 Ensure that surveys about the quality of life in North Lanarkshire include children's play.
- 1.4 Develop opportunities to promote the importance of children's play through all partners.

Theme 2

Planning for Play

Involve children and communities in the planning and provision of quality play environments and experiences

We aim to involve children and local communities in the planning and provision of play facilities and services. This links into the outcomes for children and young people, and to community engagement: cross cutting themes of the North Lanarkshire Partnership Community Plan, and key to the way many services within the local authority work. Services such as Roads and Transport, and Housing are becoming more aware of the needs of children playing in the development of their services.



The Play Services team consult with communities on the development of new play provision and on the upgrading of local play facilities to ensure that we are meeting the aspirations and needs of that community. This includes consultation with local children, usually through contact with schools or local children's clubs. We will continue to consult with both the adult community and children on the installation and upgrading of play facilities. We will also evaluate new and upgraded play facilities to check if we have got it right and to learn from any issues that arise.

In North Lanarkshire there are a number of successful community play area developments built as a partnership between a community group and the local authority. This utilises local knowledge and with wider community consultation has helped us to achieve play areas that meet the community's needs and aspirations. This approach has proved to be beneficial in reducing the level of vandalism in those communities, due to community participation and stakeholder buy in. This will continue to be the prime means of developing local community play facilities.

We also consult on the removal of play facilities as agreed by the Learning and Leisure Services Committee (12 May 2009).

We will:

- 2.1 Consult with children and the wider community on the renewal and development of new outdoor play facilities before the development commences and following completion to evaluate the success of the development.
- 2.2 Ensure that the policy on community consultation prior to the removal of play areas is adhered to.
- 2.3 Involve children in the strategic development of play through consultation.
- 2.4 Take the needs of children playing into consideration when developing regeneration schemes and generally in the development of the public realm.

Theme 3

Playing Out

Develop and improve the quality and access to outdoor play facilities and natural or other green spaces for play

The framework recognises the importance of outdoor learning and play. The council develops and maintains a range of exciting, safe, modern, public outdoor play facilities, which include skate parks, multi use games areas and a parkour course, as well as the more traditional play areas (i.e. swing parks). There are 191 play facilities and details can be found on the council's web site.

In recent years there has been a concentration of capital resources (£160,000 per year) on the development of large, destination play areas at existing leisure facilities and there are now 7 major destination play areas at Strathclyde Park, Drumpellier Country Park, Palacerigg Country Park, Colzium Lennox Estate, Airdrie Leisure Centre, Belhaven Park, and Brandy Park. The Cumbernauld Community Park play area is due for completion in 2013.



In addition there are 12 large play facilities that have been developed as a partnership between the local community and the council in order to access additional external grant funding that is not available to the council and to meet the community's aspirations. This has had a major impact on the replacement of local play facilities in communities such as Abronhill, Glenboig, Auchinloch, Rochsoles, Allanton and Holytown.

New and refurbished play facilities will continue to be designed to meet the current European Safety Standards, EN1176 and 1177. Old play facilities that do not meet these standards will be phased out over time, either as they are replaced or removed as excess to requirement.

The future distribution of play facilities will be based on the recommendations from the Open Spaces Audit research carried out in 2007, which highlighted that residents preferred newer, bigger, well equipped play areas to older, poor condition local play facilities and were prepared to travel further to access a better play facility. The community play area projects also illustrate that communities want larger, high quality play facilities with a range of play activities.

A standard of 10 minutes walk (equivalent to 750m) to play areas for children and 15 minutes walk (equivalent to 1,000m) to teen's facilities as the future standard for the catchment area of play facilities was approved at the Learning & Leisure Services Committee of 13 May 2010. It was agreed that we aim for a range of play facilities from major destination play areas at leisure facilities, including town parks, to local play facilities distributed throughout the residential areas in North Lanarkshire at a density in line with the catchment areas above.



Following on from the success of pilot play projects in primary schools, the options for developing shared outdoor play facilities in or adjacent to schools are being investigated further, particularly with new school building projects. This adds a further facility in developing the school as a centre for community activity and maximises the use of the play facilities.

Our nurseries are leading the way in Scotland in outdoor education and play. They are encouraging children to spend time outside and incorporating natural features in the playground to improve the play and learning opportunities. Again, in primary schools, North Lanarkshire is leading the way with a natural playground development pilot project in primary schools with Grounds for Learning, funded by the Go Play Fund. Three primary schools have benefitted from the fund and Thornlie Primary School, in particular, is being held up nationally as an example of good practice. The council funded additional loose parts play training alongside the natural play area development to maximise the benefits of the new facility for our children. We aim to roll out this widely acclaimed approach through in-service training.

Play areas are designed to provide a range of activities so that there is something for everyone to play on. It is not possible to design a play area that provides challenge to a range of ages and abilities but where all pieces of play equipment are accessible to all. The intention is that all children should find something to play with within their local play area. The play area that has been designed to be the most accessible play facility for children with a physical disability is at Drumpellier Country Park.

Our current approach to disability is based on the social model rather than the medical model i.e. disabled children are children first and they need the same opportunities for play, variety, socialising and challenge as other children. It is about meeting all children's needs in the same place in a variety of different ways, including using activities that appeal to the senses. This is applied to all new play developments.

'No Ball Games' signs can be seen as an attack on children's right to play near to their own home. They are advisory, not enforceable and have no defined area of coverage. In 2007 North Lanarkshire Council took the decision to restrict the erection of these signs to locations where there is a road safety hazard and maximum benefit gained. The erection of signs is resisted where there are minimal road safety implications.

We will:

- 3.1 Provide a range of inspiring, inclusive, modern, well maintained outdoor play facilities and spaces for children and young people.
- 3.2 Continue to work with local community groups to access external funding to develop new and improved play facilities.
- 3.3 Improve school / nursery grounds for play, including natural play elements and play facilities shared with general public use.
- 3.4 Take children's need to play into consideration in planning policy and guidance, and when developing road and footpath/cycle path networks.



Theme 4

Play Choice

Develop the range, distribution and quality of supervised play provision, aiming to create inspiring free play environments



Credit: Malcolm Cochrane; Grounds for Learning

Opportunities for children to play have benefits for both the family and the community. Playing with children is known to reduce conflict and assist in family cohesion. Parents of young children are being encouraged to spend time with their children through the government's Play, Talk, Read campaign. This links into other government supported initiatives available in North Lanarkshire such as Bookbug and Play@Home. Older children similarly benefit from organised play activities with parents or other adults such as playworkers, as well as free play.



There are a variety of organised play activities in North Lanarkshire, offered by a range of statutory organisations such as council services and the NHS (e.g. Bookbug sessions in local libraries, Play@Home with resource materials available from health visitors and model play sessions provided by various workers, and a major Playday event). There are other play providers which include voluntary organisations (e.g. holiday playschemes) and the commercial sector (e.g. indoor soft play providers). Some of these, such as out of school childcare organisations, provide a service where play is the main activity for children within a care setting. The North Lanarkshire Council area is fortunate in having two local play ranger services, organised by voluntary groups (Parents Action for Safe Play in Kirkshaws and Cumbernauld YMCA). These groups currently have financial support from the government's Go Play funding to Inspiring Scotland. Play Rangers projects aim to get children outside to play in their local community.



The council provides grant support to holiday playschemes, which may also be out of school projects, as well as direct holiday play provision such as Play Services' Pop Out to Play sessions and Summer Fundays, part of a mobile play service during the school summer holidays. NL Leisure also provides outdoor play events during the summer which are play based. Other services such as libraries, museums, community arts, countryside ranger service and sport and outdoor education all provide after school and holiday activities related to their specialist areas where play is a structural element in the learning process.



We will:

- 4.1 Support family play opportunities.
- 4.2 Support the development of community organised play opportunities.
- 4.3 Provide organised play opportunities as part of council service provision.
- 4.4 Work to maximise the quality and use of school / nursery grounds and neighbourhood green open space as a local play space.



Theme 5

Risky Rewarding Play

Raise awareness of the benefits of risk in children's play



In common with the Scottish Government's Early Year's Framework, an aim of the North Lanarkshire Play Framework is to support children to experience risk through challenging play opportunities. Managing risk is a critical skill that children learn through play and they naturally seek out risk in order to develop and improve their skills when given the opportunity.

Play is one of the few areas where the Health and Safety Executive have accepted that it is desirable to have some degree of risk i.e. where the benefits to the child outweigh the potential harmful effects.

In *Managing Risk in Play Provision* (2002) the Play Safety Forum states that:

'...safety must be considered at all stages of play provision but inevitably there will be risk of injury when children are playing, as there is risk in life generally. We must not lose sight of the important developmental role of play for children in pursuit of the unachievable goal of absolute safety.'

The council uses risk-benefit assessment as a means of assessing play facilities both at the design stage and on a regular basis when they are in use. We make sure that any potential hazard is clear, the likelihood of a serious injury is extremely low and use practical ways such as safer surfacing in play areas to manage reasonable risk.

Managing Risk in Play Provision (DCMS, 2008) points out that:

'Wheel Parks [i.e. skate parks and BMX tracks] may be inherently risky, but the benefits to children who use them, and the reduction in accidents taking place in other more potentially dangerous environments, justifies their use.'

This thinking underpinned North Lanarkshire Council's decision to build a parkour course in West End Park in Coatbridge as well as skate park provision.

The Council will provide training, guidance and advice to those involved in delivering children's play to ensure that the risk assessment of play opportunities, environments and provisions takes appropriate account of the benefits to all children of acceptable levels of risk, challenge and stimulation.

We will:

- 5.1 Provide training, guidance and advice on risk assessment to those involved in delivering children's play.
- 5.2 Support school staff to risk assess in a way that provides children with challenging play opportunities while minimising unreasonable risks.
- 5.3 Develop parents understanding of the importance of play and the benefits of controlled risk taking within the play setting.
- 5.4 Design outdoor play facilities to incorporate appropriate levels of challenge and risk for the benefit of children's development.



Theme 6

Work at Play

Ensure that the skills of adults are sufficiently well developed to provide quality play services and environments.

High quality playwork practice is inclusive and allows freely chosen and personally directed play to happen. Although play takes place in a variety of settings and with a diverse range of children, competent playwork follows underlying principles that stem from legislation. In 2005 a set of succinct playwork principles were developed by the Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group (Cardiff) and these are given in appendix 1. Our play training aims to use this professional and ethical framework for playwork which is also incorporated into the national occupational standards for playwork.



We aim to promote these principles as the more people who know and understand the principles of play and playwork, the more children and young people will be allowed the time and space to play.

We need to support those who work with children to share knowledge and good practice but we also need to persuade through training those whose actions influence play times and play spaces of the critical importance, need and right of children for good quality play experiences. These people may be parents and carers or professionals whose actions affect the time and space for children to play.

We will:

- 6.1 Provide a play training service.
- 6.2 Organise play training to support nurseries, childminders and out of school care providers.
- 6.3 Promote to all schools and nurseries the importance of having trained staff and or volunteers with playwork skills.
- 6.4 Promote the benefits of play training to other council services, statutory bodies and the voluntary sector who have staff that work with children and families or who influence children's play opportunities.



Performance Monitoring and Measuring Impact

The framework will be systematically reviewed against the action plan to see how well we are doing and the impact this is having on children and young people. This will link into the Community Plan and particularly the outcomes for children and young people which include:

- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.
- Our Children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.
- We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk.



The framework covers more outcomes than just those above. It includes:

Community Engagement

- Improved residents' involvement in community life.

Regeneration

- Strong sustainable communities and more attractive places to live and visit.

Community Safety

- Enhanced community safety and wellbeing within our local communities.

We will report to the Children's Services Partnership via the Early Years Sub-group of the Improving Children's Services Group on a quarterly basis on key developmental actions from the action plan. This will be achieved through the use of Perform NL.



Self evaluation for continuous improvement will be used to answer the questions outlined in the Improving Children's Services Plan 2012-2015 i.e.

How good are we now?
How do we know?
How good can we be?

These are the basic principles behind How Good is Our Community Learning and Development, How Good is our Culture and Sport and How Good is Our School 3, all of which cover services within the framework.

We will use a variety of consultation processes to find out what people (and particularly children and young people) think of our services.



Appendix 1

Playwork Principles

Developed by the Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group, Cardiff 2005

These principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork. They provide a playwork perspective for working with children and young people and describe what is unique about play. They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.



North Lanarkshire Council endorses these values and principles and they are used to underpin the North Lanarkshire Play Framework.

1. All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well-being of individuals and communities.
2. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.

3. The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
4. For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.
5. The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
6. The playworker's response to children and young people is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
7. Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people.
8. Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and wellbeing of the children.







This information can be made available
in a range of languages and formats,
including large print, braille, audio,
electronic and accessible formats.

如果你需要用其他语言或者其他格式表示这些信息，请与我们联系
以便讨论你的要求。

Jeżeli potrzebujesz tą informację w innym języku lub formacie, proszę,
skontaktuj się z nami, żeby przedyskutować Twoją potrzebę.

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