

Report of the Director of Children & Families

Report to Executive Board

Date: 20th March 2019

Subject: Review of Leeds Play Strategy and a future Commitment to Children's Play



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. Play is a fundamental and vital part of childhood and many council services have a role in supporting the facilitation of children's play across the city.
2. The Leeds Commitment for Children's Play identifies three intended outcomes. In Leeds we will:
 - Increase opportunity for children to play
 - Create time and space to play
 - Ensure the recognition and understanding of children's play
3. The establishment of a citywide play partnership will steer the delivery of the Leeds Commitment to Children's Play.

Recommendations

4. Executive Board is recommended to:
 - a. Note the progress made to date against the objectives outlined in the Leeds Play Strategy (2007)
 - b. Endorse the updated version of the Play Strategy – The Leeds Commitment to Children's Play.
 - c. Approve the establishment of a citywide play partnership to steer the delivery of the Leeds Commitment to Children's Play. The responsible officer for this will be the Strategic Play Officer on behalf of the Children and Families Directorate.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Executive Board of the progress made against the objectives outlined in the Leeds Play Strategy, which was written in 2007.
- 1.2 The report seeks approval for the Authority to retain its commitment to Children's Play; specifically by protecting and supporting article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) the child's right to play; by endorsing the updated version of the Play Strategy – The Leeds Commitment to Children's Play.
- 1.3 The report also seeks approval to establish a citywide strategic play partnership to develop an action plan and steer the delivery of the Commitment to Children's Play.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Approval was given to the Strategic Play Officer at the end of 2016 to take a lead in co-ordinating and facilitating a review of the existing Play Strategy. The document had been produced in 2007 in partnership with Public Health and other key stakeholders and it was felt that it no longer adequately reflected how play opportunities in Leeds can contribute to improving outcomes against the priorities set out in the current Children and Young People's Plan and wider council plans.
- 2.2 Since then an informal Play Partnership made up of a group of interested stakeholders from a diverse range of services and organisations and a smaller working group made up of representatives of LCC Children and Families Services and Leeds Beckett University have met on a regular basis to consider what has been achieved in relationship to the existing strategy in the last 10 years and; taking into account changes to local and national policies; what the priorities for the next 10 years should be. The draft revised document has been renamed the "Leeds Commitment to Children's Play".
- 2.3 The review and future commitment recognises that play is a fundamental and vital part of childhood and many council services have a role in supporting the facilitation of children's play across the city.
- 2.4 Children's play is any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled and structured by children themselves; it takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise. Play itself is non-compulsory, driven by intrinsic motivation and undertaken for its own sake, rather than as a means to an end.
- 2.5 Play involves the exercise of autonomy, physical, mental or emotional activity, and has the potential to take unlimited forms, either in groups or alone. These forms will change and be adapted throughout the course of childhood. The key characteristics of play are fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity.

2.6 The National picture for play services has changed significantly over the past 10 years with a move from funding capital playground projects and schemes e.g. Playbuilder funding to now exploring how we incorporate play into the way we plan and design our city, our living and open spaces recognising the impact all departments and organisations have on children's ability to play freely in the city.

3 Main issues

3.1 In 2007 a Strategy for Play was introduced in Leeds. The changes and developments in Leeds over the past 10 years have been significant; including our ambition to be the best city in the UK by 2030 and a Child Friendly City. We are proud of our commitment to children and young people and the realisation of Leeds being a Child Friendly City and a playful city. Child Friendly Leeds is embedded in United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the initiative continues to grow and gain momentum. We want Leeds to be the best city for children and young people to grow up in.

3.2 Since the 2007 Play Strategy, Leeds has consistently invested in services and children's play to ensure that our children are happy and healthy and have fun growing up in the city but there is still more to be done to ensure that we are creating opportunity and supporting the child's right to play.

3.3 Following the review of the existing strategy a **Commitment to Children's Play** has been developed to support children's play in Leeds; aligning future plans to Child Friendly Leeds, Best City plans and UNCRC in particular protecting Article 31; the child's right to play.

3.4 The document outlines our vision for the Leeds Commitment to Children's Play - that we want; Leeds to be the best City for all children and young people to grow up in, as a city we will realise and protect article 31 of UNCRC and a child friendly city where spontaneous play is a necessary and vital daily experience that is recognised and valued.

3.5 The document also includes a review of Play over the last 10 years, including good practice examples from council and 3rd Sector partners. It illustrates how Play contributes to Leeds City Plans, specifically linking to Child Friendly Leeds and children's 12 wishes. The award winning Leeds Play Streets initiative is highlighted as recognised nationally an example of good practice enabling children to play safely in our city.

3.6 The Commitment identifies three intended outcomes that will safeguard article 31 of UNCRC, grow our Child Friendly City and create opportunity, time and space to for children's play. Leeds commitment to children's play will be to:

- Increase opportunity for children to play
- Create time and space to play
- Ensure the recognition and understanding of children's play

3.7 A citywide Play Partnership will support the delivery of the Leeds Commitment to Children's Play. The Play Partnership will report annually to the Children and Families Trust Board supporting the Children and Young Peoples Plan outcome "Children have fun growing up". Membership of the play partnership will consist of a diverse range of stakeholders including Leeds City Council, Leeds Universities,

and third sector play organisations across the city working collaboratively to develop and deliver the action plan.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 The voices of over fourteen thousand children and young people informed and developed the Child Friendly City priorities for Leeds. 12 wishes were produced with children and young people stating what would make Leeds a child friendly city and these are essential for the city to deliver a child friendly city. They told us they want Leeds to be a clean, safe and friendly city that is easy to travel around, where there are lots of places and spaces to play and things to do, and where they have opportunity to express their views, feel listened to and respected.
- 4.1.2 The Play Strategy review and future Commitment for Children's Play has been developed in consultation with partners across LCC departments and third sector organisations.
- 4.1.3 Play partners, including Playful Leeds and Leeds Play Network have been involved throughout the development of the the strategy and have contributed a significant amount of evidence and case studies for the content of the review.
- 4.1.4 Consultation has taken place with children and young people through community youth summits, events and citywide consultation demonstrating the value children place on play opportunities, outdoors and green space.
- 4.1.5 The My Health my School survey undertaken by over 17,000 children and young people in 2017/18 measures how many hours a week children play out. Only 29.8% of primary school and 25.72% of secondary age children playing out more than 4 hours a week and 75.61% primary and 66.38% secondary age children visited a park or play area in the past 4 weeks.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 The Leeds Commitment to Children's Play will support the council's ability to meet its responsibilities with regard to Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – for all children to have the right to play.
- 4.2.2 The key function of the Play Partnership will be to bring partners and stakeholders together to design and implement an action plan that will ensure there is a diverse range of opportunities across the city for all children to engage in Play.
- 4.2.3 Community Play projects such as Play Streets promotes and encourages cohesion and integration of children and their families by bringing them together in an informal setting.

4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 The play strategy review and the future Commitment to Children's Play support the delivery of Best Council Plan – Child Friendly City Priority, Children and Young Peoples Plan, Health and Wellbeing Plan establishing our ambitions and

priorities for the city. Play has a significant contribution to make in meeting these ambitions and enabling children's inherent need and right to play.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 The establishment of the Commitment to Children's Play and the development, formalisation and membership of the citywide Play Partnership will ensure partnership work is at the centre of delivering the commitment.
- 4.4.2 Financial resource across departments and opportunity to attract external funding will be maximised through the play partnership.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 There are no legal implications in the development and delivery of the review and future commitment for children's play.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 Without a clear universal commitment to children's play and a recognised partnership to drive the agenda forward the provision and opportunities for children in Leeds to play could be limited and/or inconsistent across the city.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 Since 2007 when the Strategy for Play was introduced in Leeds much has been achieved. Leeds has consistently invested in services and children's play to ensure that our children are happy and healthy and have fun growing up in the city but there is still more to be done to ensure that we are creating opportunity and supporting the child's right to play.
- 5.2 The Leeds Commitment to Children's Play will support the council's ability to meet its responsibilities with regard to Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – for all children to have the right to play and ensure all stakeholders recognise and have an understanding of the importance of Play.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Executive Board is recommended to;
 - a. Note the progress made to date against the objectives outlined in the Leeds Play Strategy (2007)
 - b. Endorse the updated version of the Play Strategy – The Leeds Commitment to Children's Play included with this report.
 - c. Approve the establishment of a citywide play partnership to steer the delivery of the Leeds Commitment to Children's Play. The responsible officer for this will be the Strategic Play Officer on behalf of the Children and Families Directorate.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.