



The Play England section of this edition includes updates on play pathfinder projects in Enfield and Lambeth, and the launch of the children's version of the Charter for Children's Play.

### The play legacy

Now that we have seen the first wave of new play spaces open in the capital it is time to stand back and reflect on some of the wider aspects of the national Play Strategy. Alongside the creation of 3,500 new areas for children to play the strategy outlines a series of principles derived from the *Fair Play* consultation which underpin the play pathfinder and playbuilder programme. When I re-read it two principles stood out: ensuring that all new play spaces are inclusive and ensuring better links between the play sector and planners. In this edition we look at two London boroughs, each with new approaches on tackling these issues: Enfield on inclusion and Lambeth on planning.

Play England has also published *Nature play: Maintenance guide*, a guide on introducing natural play into play spaces according to the principles outlined in *Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces*. The guide is aimed at those responsible for developing, delivering and maintaining innovative natural play spaces including housing associations, designers of play spaces and maintenance staff. It highlights the need for commissioners and designers to consider

the management and maintenance implications at the start and throughout the development of a new play space. The guide can be downloaded from the Play England website: [www.playengland.org.uk/resources](http://www.playengland.org.uk/resources).

The aspirations and principles inherent in the national Play Strategy must be reflected in the play pathfinder and playbuilder programme if there is to be a legacy for play. For when this funding stream runs dry it is the links that we have made with other agendas such as planning, housing, highways and community safety, that will be critical. Along with creating new play spaces, we must also aim to secure commitments from all those who impact on children's play to continue this vital work after 2011.

**Paul Durr, Regional Programme Manager, Play England – London**

### Enfield: reaching out to disabled children and young people

One of the conditions of funding for play pathfinders and playbuilders as laid out in the national Play Strategy is that they develop project plans which 'ensure better access and experiences for disabled children.' Twelve percent of the 9,409



Sensory features at Boxers Lake

children who responded to the *Fair Play* consultation were children with disabilities and their message was loud and clear: they wanted somewhere to play with their friends and they expected the new play spaces would reflect this in their creation.

Enfield is in the enviable position of being the only local authority in the capital which is a joint Aiming High for Disabled Children pathfinder and play pathfinder. As a member of the national joint pathfinder group supported by Play England, the borough has made the increased inclusion of disabled children and young people in play opportunities a key priority.

Disabled children's charity KIDS has been working with the borough to make their new play areas inclusive. The charity has produced a briefing paper called *Inclusive*

*Design for Play*, which contains a series of principles necessary to make play spaces inclusive and accessible. The briefing states that inclusive design in relation to play is 'a way of thinking and a way of working to produce attractive, functional environments that can be enjoyed equally by everyone.'

Alex Mills from KIDS visited the new pathfinder sites in Enfield that opened earlier this year and was particularly impressed with the sensory features at Boxers Lake. As well as elements of physical challenge the space includes a glockenspiel, a huge round archway that is fully reflective, round steel spheres embedded in the ground which heat up and sound chimes. These features fulfil a key recommendation of *Inclusive Design for Play* which states inclusive play equipment should be 'tailored to those with different

physical and sensory impairments with something that everyone can enjoy.'

Another key principle in the KIDS guidance concerns the use of surfacing. The guidance states that new play spaces should employ 'imaginative use of surfaces including the use of natural resources' which chimes with the natural play ethos in the national Play Strategy. But clearly loose bark and wood chippings are not easy surfaces for wheelchairs and buggies to navigate. In Enfield they have addressed this by using bonded tiger mulch at some of their sites which according to Ricky Williams, Play Development Manager, is 'very natural looking but you can wheel wheelchairs across it.'

For Ricky another major barrier to inclusion is transport. *Inclusive Design for Play* recommends that play sites should be located within residential areas 'with safe, accessible routes to the site'. One way of achieving this is creating play spaces which are near community facilities which disabled children already use. With this in mind new pathfinder sites in Enfield include Bramley Road next to Chickenshed, the inclusive theatre company, and in Wave 2, Aldersbrook Avenue next to Cheviots Children's Centre.

To order *Inclusion by Design: a guide to creating accessible play and childcare environments* tel. 020 7359 3073 or email your details to [publications@kids.org.uk](mailto:publications@kids.org.uk). Cost £20 (statutory and commercial sector) or £10 (voluntary groups and individuals). The *Inclusive Design for Play* briefing can be downloaded for free from the KIDS website: [www.kids.org.uk](http://www.kids.org.uk).

### Lambeth: planning for play

The national Play Strategy places significant emphasis on the importance of planning to the

## PLAY SHAPER

CREATING CHILD-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

Play Shaper, a cross-professional training programme, is now up and running with the borough of Bexley being the first local authority in the capital to take part in the programme. Play Shaper is aiming to train a diverse range of professionals including health professionals, the police and planners on the importance of their roles in facilitating children's play.

To find out more please visit:

[www.playengland.org.uk/playshaper](http://www.playengland.org.uk/playshaper) or contact the team:

[playshaper@ncb.org.uk](mailto:playshaper@ncb.org.uk)

Please also contact the team for Play Shaper logo requests.

success of the play pathfinder and playbuilder programme. Forty four percent of those who responded to the *Fair Play* consultation said: 'It was important to get planners to understand play and what makes a good play area' and twenty six percent said 'It was important to involve playworkers and other play professionals early in planning.' This is especially important when the creation of innovative play spaces impacts on the established planning system.

Lambeth became a play pathfinder this year, receiving £2.5m to develop at least 28 new play sites by 2011. With this tight timescale in

mind it is imperative that the borough's play department works hand-in-hand with the planning department. This process has been made a lot easier by the involvement of Beth Thackray, Lambeth Council's senior planner at the Play Partnership group. Beth is a key contributor to the wider development of play in Lambeth and is in a perfect position to influence colleagues in planning on the importance of children's play and the links between the planning agenda and the play agenda.

It is hoped having Lambeth's senior planner onboard from the start will help ensure a smoother delivery for the play pathfinder programme. Lambeth's flagship project is Max Roach Park where the existing adventure playground will be integrated into the wider park by the summer of 2010. With their new appreciation of play it is hoped that the planning department will take a balanced view of any concerns that are raised against the new plans by other groups that use the park. It also allays any fears of delays and blocks on the project as Clovis Bergère, Lambeth's Project Manager for Play and Sports, said: 'Because we are getting that input from planners we are more confident with our planning applications which means avoiding delays at planning stages.'

Ultimately the partnership between play and planning in Lambeth is a two-way process: the play team is now having an influence on how the planning system works and is actually taking a key role in planning

decisions. The Play Partnership is involved in the allocation of Section 106 funding and Clovis Bergère attends the Major Cases Review, the group which assesses major building projects in the borough. With these strong links in place it seems that Lambeth is laying sound foundations for a more playful future.

### Charter for Children's Play

A children's version of the *Charter for Children's Play* has been launched by Play England. The colourful pocket-sized resource explains the eight charter statements in a child-friendly format and can be used by people working with children and young people as a tool to help with consultation on play services. Play England has also produced a children's version of the A2 charter poster and has published *Making it Happen*, a practical guide for those using the charter and promoting its messages. For more information about the charter, and to order your copy, please visit: [www.playengland.org.uk/charter](http://www.playengland.org.uk/charter).

### Changes to London team

Play England – London are pleased to welcome Ashley Rogers and Richard Joslin to the team as Regional Development Officers. We are all very much looking forward to working with them. Stephanie Nelkin, Play England – London's temporary Regional Development Officer, has left the regional office to become the new Play Shaper Programme Manager at Play England's central office in Wakley Street. We wish Stephanie all the best for the future.



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