

Policy summary

The Play Strategy

This briefing paper summarises the main commitments announced in the government's Play Strategy for England¹, published in December 2008. This 10-year strategy sets out the government's vision to deliver more and better play opportunities for children in England.

The government's vision

The strategy sets out a vision for play, which sees:

- supervised and unsupervised places for free play areas in every residential area
- local neighbourhoods that are safe, interesting places to play
- routes to children's play space that are safe and accessible for all
- parks and open spaces that are attractive, well maintained and well used
- children and young people having a clear stake in public space
- children and young people play in a way that respects other people and property
- children and communities take an active role in the development of local play spaces
- play spaces that are attractive, welcoming, engaging and accessible for all local children.

The Play Strategy sets out five overarching areas of action to improve play opportunities for all children and young people.

More places to play

DCSF are funding 3,500 new or refurbished play areas. The new investment will fund the delivery of 20 public play spaces and one adventure playground in 30 play pathfinder local authorities. £1.5 million is to be made available to help refurbish existing third sector adventure playgrounds.

To support this expenditure, DCSF, DCMS and Play England have published *Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces*², and *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide*³ to help local authorities develop play spaces that attract and excite children and young people.

Supporting play throughout childhood

Government will be working with partners to ensure that children's centres and schools offer good quality play provision. Sure Start Children's Centres will deliver good practice in play design and provision. They will also provide information about play provision in the local area, for parents, carers and others.

The Building Schools for the Future (BSF) capital investment programme will have clear requirements about play spaces in schools. Links will be made between BSF and the playbuilder and the play pathfinder capital expenditure programme to develop high quality play provision and promote out-of-hours and community use of school play facilities. The DCSF and Ofsted plan to integrate play into school inspections.

Playing safely

DCSF will explore models and good practice in joint working between neighbourhood police and the play sector. Trials running until 2010 with selected play pathfinders will inform government guidance for local authorities, police teams and others on how to support children's play.

DCSF is also investing £1 million in play pathfinder pilot schemes, between 2008 and 2011, to develop models of volunteering in support of local play opportunities. Local authorities are also being encouraged to implement properly planned 20mph zones around places and spaces where children play. A new communications campaign will be launched, aimed at building public understanding of child safety.

Child-friendly communities

A new communications campaign will be launched, aimed at building public understanding of child safety. Play Shaper, a £3.2 million cross-professional training programme, will be made available to professionals who have a role in making neighbourhoods more child-friendly. Government will work to ensure children's needs are reflected in guidance to planners and highway officers. Government will also work with the social housing sector to ensure play is supported in some of the most deprived areas.

Embedding play in local priorities

A new performance indicator will be introduced into the National Indicator Set from April 2009. The indicator measures children's satisfaction with local parks and play areas. In addition, the government has produced updated statutory guidance for Children's Trusts⁴ setting out the roles and responsibilities of Directors of Children's Services in relation to play and will be publishing guidance to Children's Trusts on implementing the Play Strategy.

To support workforce development, the government is funding 4,000 playworkers to achieve a Level 3 playwork qualification by 2011 and supporting the continuous professional development of leaders and managers in the play workforce by developing a new playwork management qualification.

Further information

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)

For further information and to access a copy of *The Play Strategy* and supporting documents, please visit the DCSF website: www.dcsf.gov.uk/play

Play England

As the national delivery partner, Play England supports the delivery of the Play Strategy by providing advice, support and promoting good practice in play provision:

www.playengland.org.uk

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¹ DCSF (2008) *The Play Strategy*. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families and Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

² Shackell, A, Butler, N Doyle, P, and Ball D (2008) *Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play space*. London: DCSF, DCMS and Play England.

³ Ball, D, Gill, T and Spiegel, B (2008) *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide*. London: DCSF, DCMS, Play England, and Play Safety Forum.

⁴ DCSF (2008) *Statutory Guidance to Children's Trusts: Statutory guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve well-being of children, young people and their families*. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

