Getting it Right for Play
Children’s Play in Scotland: the policy context
Foreword

Play Scotland works to promote the importance of Play for all children and young people, and campaigns to create increased Play opportunities in the community.

As a result, Play Scotland was delighted to receive funding from the Go Play Fund in 2010 to develop a Template and Toolkit for Play. The Toolkit and supporting documents are aimed at Local Authorities to help improve the design and provision of places and spaces for all children, so that they can feel safe and confident playing outside in their neighbourhoods.

Play Scotland appointed Issy Cole-Hamilton to lead the process and write the documents. The process for developing the Toolkit and supporting documents was very straightforward. A Reference Group was established to support the process which also involved a number of consultation events throughout Scotland in 2010/11. After taking full account of the Play Sector’s views at these events, Play Scotland developed two types of Indicators: Play Sufficiency indicators and Child Friendly Community indicators. The four tools that were developed to illustrate the indicators were piloted in Aberdeen, North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire Local Authority areas in 2011.

All the Indicators and Tools are relevant to Local Authorities. However, the Children’s Survey and the Quality Assessment Tool can also be used by community groups to help them assess play opportunities and spaces in their local community.

Children’s Play in Scotland: the policy context, outlines the Scottish Government’s commitment to Play in policy and guidance and acts as a supporting document to the Getting It Right for Play Toolkit. Also available in pdf is The Power of Play: an evidence base which provides a comprehensive literature review of the benefits of Play to children and the wider community. A Summary document is also available.

Play Scotland is confident that this practical and easy to use Toolkit and supporting documents will improve children’s quality of life through play, and help make the Child’s Right to Play a Reality in Scotland.

Marguerite Hunter Blair
Chief Executive

“Children need the freedom to play. Play is not a luxury. Play is a necessity”
Kay Renfield Jamieson

“Play stands at the centre of human development, especially in the formative years, but its importance has to be defended by each generation anew, often on different grounds”
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Children’s play is one of those things we take for granted.

“It’s only when it starts to disappear that we realise how important it is. Because it’s when they’re out to play that children develop independence, learn how to make risk assessments and grow in self-confidence and self esteem. It’s where they learn to get along with other children, developing the social skills to be neither bully nor victim in the future.

It’s how they become physically fit and develop the coordination and control that allows them to sit and learn in a classroom. And it’s also where they learn, through first hand experience, about the world they live in – the common-sense understanding that underpins the lessons they learn at school.” (Sue Palmer)
## Summary of policies affecting provision for play

National policies in Scotland broadly recognise the importance of play in children’s lives. The accompanying guidance to Local Authorities and their partners is intended to support increased opportunities for a range of play experiences for children from birth to 16 years old. This document summarises the key areas of national policy and guidance most likely to impact on provision for play locally.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy areas affecting play opportunities</th>
<th>National guidance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Community Planning Partnerships</td>
<td>Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) are the mechanism through which Local Authorities and their partners are expected to plan and deliver local services. They are expected to share resources, work in partnership, involve the voluntary and community sector, and work closely with local people to deliver successfully integrated services. The Early Years Framework (2008) encourages Community Planning partners to ensure their approach to planning and service provision is focused on children’s needs rather than on existing processes.</td>
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<td>Single Outcome Agreements (SOA)</td>
<td>Single Outcome Agreements are the mechanism through which Local Authorities achieve better integrated services. The Single Outcome Agreement in each area should link closely to more detailed plans for children’s services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involving children, young people and other community members in decisions affecting them</td>
<td>Planning Advice Note 81: Community Engagement – planning with people (PAN 81) offers planners advice on how they can involve local people, listen to their expressed needs and wishes and incorporate these into local developments. If people are involved early in the planning process, they are more likely to feel respected and heard and may be less likely to object at a later stage. The Early Years Framework (2008) emphasises the importance of engaging and empowering children, families and communities in service development and delivery. Planning Advice Note 65: Planning and Open Space (2008): The development of open space strategies and audits should take account of the needs of all population groups including those who might not normally be involved in community consultations, and those with different interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equality of opportunity</td>
<td>Planning Advice Note 81 on community involvement, describes different types of “communities” and offers advice and information to help ensure that everyone, no matter what their age, gender, or cultural background, can participate in ways that suit them in the planning decisions that affect their environments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early childhood provision</td>
<td>Early Years Framework (2008) aims to “Improve outcomes and children’s quality of life through play” and to ensure there are “High quality outdoor play opportunities in every community” and “increased outdoor play and physical activity”. (page 26) Getting it Right for Every Child provides a detailed framework for the development of a range of services to children and young people.</td>
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### Policy areas affecting play opportunities

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<th>Planning and developing residential areas</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Early Years Framework</strong> (2008) recognises the importance of housing services in addressing the needs of children and promoting their well-being.</td>
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<td><strong>Scottish Planning Policy</strong> (2010) states that “Providing play space and other opportunities for children and young people to play freely, explore, discover and initiate their own activities can support their development. Access to good quality open spaces can encourage people to be physically active and aid health and well-being.” (para 149). Planning authorities are urged to “support, protect and enhance open space and opportunities for sport and recreation” (para 149).</td>
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<td><strong>The National Planning Framework</strong> 2 (2009), the overall policy direction for housing, spatial planning and transport in Scotland, aims to “help build safer, stronger and healthier communities, by promoting improved opportunities and a better quality of life.” (para 44) and the planning system must provide adequately for children and young people (alongside other groups) when considering provision for housing, transport and community facilities. (para 32) This involves promoting “development which helps to improve health, regenerate communities and enable disadvantaged communities to access opportunities.”</td>
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<td><strong>Planning Advice Note 67</strong> (2003) suggests that open space and outdoor play facilities should be designed into the network of movement routes in a housing development and not hidden out of sight on otherwise useless pieces of land.</td>
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<td><strong>Planning Advice Note 77 (PAN 77)</strong> Designing Safer Places offers guidance on the design and location of outdoor play areas in housing developments. It emphasises the need for careful thought in the planning and provision of children’s outdoor play spaces and facilities for young people. (page 10)</td>
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<td><strong>Secured by Design</strong>, a UK police initiative designed to help create safer, more secure environments proposes core principles of: environmental quality and sense of ownership; natural surveillance; access and footpaths; lighting and open space provision and management; all of which can be applied to spaces where children might play. (page 14)</td>
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<td><strong>Planning Advice Note 65</strong> (2008) recommends that agreed standards for open spaces, including outdoor play spaces, should include the three elements of quality (with a benchmark against which quality can be measured); quantity expressed in relation to the number of houses or people; and accessibility looking at distance thresholds and barriers to access. A Geographic Information System (GIS) is recommended for mapping outdoor play spaces. Although it suggests the use of Fields in Trust’s <strong>Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play</strong> (2008) as a guide for spatial standards for outdoor play space, it says that any standards should be carefully adapted to meet local circumstances.</td>
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| **Designing and managing local streets in residential neighbourhoods** | **Scottish Planning Policy** (2010) states that: “New housing developments should be integrated with public transport and active travel networks such as footpaths and cycle routes... New streets should connect well with existing streets and with walking and cycling networks.” (para 79) Also that, as a priority, opportunities for walking and cycling should be planned into all new residential areas, making urban areas more attractive and safer for pedestrians and cyclists (para 169).  
**Designing Streets** (2010) policy guidance on the design of residential and “lightly trafficked” local streets and roads, states that one of the primary aims of street design is to allow for and encourage social interaction and that streets should be inclusive social spaces where children can play and others socialise (page 38). At the same time street design should aim to integrate natural landscaped features and encourage biodiversity (page 50). Planners should pay as much attention to walking and cycling as to motor vehicles and the design of the street structure should consider pedestrians, including children playing, above motor vehicles (para 15).  
**Planning Advice Note 65**: Planning and open space (2008) suggests that Local Authorities consider creating “Home zones”, giving street space in residential areas to pedestrians and preventing motorised traffic from dominating an area. Home zones offer children places to play on their door-steps. |
| **Parks and open spaces** | **Early Years Framework** (2008) Developing outdoor play spaces, and play opportunities for children and removing barriers to outdoor play is a priority. This has wider implications for development planning and particularly provision of open space and green space”. (page 18)  
**Designing Places** (2001) offers the policy context for planning policy, design guidance and advice on developing the built environment. **Policy Advice Note 65, Planning and Open Space (PAN 65)**, (2008) on implementing Designing Places, covers most spaces where children might play.  
**Planning Advice Note 65**: Planning and open space (2008) recommends that each local planning authority complete an Open Space audit and strategy, covering all types of public and private open space. This should assess the current and future needs of the population and protect all spaces that help meet these needs. The audit should take account of the quality, community value, accessibility and use of existing open spaces as well as the quantity. A strategy should then be drawn up to develop open spaces in a way that best meets community needs. This audit and strategy should consider spaces for children’s outdoor play. |
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<td><strong>Staffed outdoor play provision</strong></td>
<td>The Early Years Framework (2008) aims to ensure that, in every community, children and families have access to integrated pre-school and childcare services.</td>
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| **Schools**                              | Early Years Framework: through the Curriculum for Excellence will, with local partners, continue to promote play-based learning, including in early primary education.  

Early Years Framework (2008): HMIE, is to focus on the quality of energetic and outdoor play in all its inspection activities. In the medium-term, nurseries and schools are expected to support outdoor play and to try out innovative approaches such as “nature kindergartens”. (page 26)  
The Government review of Equally Well (2010) recommends that community planning and school colleagues work together to prioritise and plan jointly to support the health and well-being needs of the local community. |
| **Safeguarding children**                | The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland: (2010) provides a national framework for the development of local child protection policies and procedures. The local Child Protection Plan is developed by a Child Protection Committee as part of the Community Planning process.  
The Early Years Framework (2008) commits the Scottish Government, the Care Commission, Play Scotland and the police to lead a debate on understanding and balancing the benefits of play against the risks. In his foreword to the Play Scotland publication Managing Risk In Play provision, the Scottish Minister for Education and Early Years Adam Ingram, stated “Through the debate on risk and in order for play to be truly accepted by our communities, we have a responsibility to ensure that practitioners, parents and even the children themselves know the benefits that play and risk can bring to their education and wellbeing — we all have a part to play in promoting risk management rather than risk aversion.”  
The risk-benefit approach to assessing spaces and opportunities for children’s outdoor play has also been endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive. |
| **Community safety**                      | Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) bring together representatives from the Local Authority, police service and other relevant agencies, often including health, education and other public services. They aim to reduce anti-social behaviour and fear of crime and to promote safer, more inclusive and healthier communities. |
| **Public health**                         | Start Active, Stay Active: A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries’ (2011). Makes detailed recommendations for physical activity levels for children including active outdoor play.  

Child mental health indicators for Scotland include two Play Indicators relating to “imaginative, spontaneous indoor and outdoor play”. |
Section 1

Introduction
Getting it Right for Play: Children’s Play in Scotland: the policy context

It is now widely acknowledged that free play is essential for the well-being of children and for their healthy development. There is also a growing body of evidence demonstrating the benefits to children (and adults) of spending time in environments with natural features. This seems to have a positive effect on mental health as well as fostering a respect for nature and the natural world. However, there is also considerable evidence that children’s opportunity for free play, especially outdoors, is often severely curtailed, and that children in Scotland in the early 21st century do not have the same opportunities for free play as their parents and grandparents had.

In its response to the UN Committee’s 2008 assessment of the UK’s implementation on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Scottish Government also acknowledged that there were some groups of children, including disabled children and children in gypsy and traveller families, who were especially disadvantaged in relation to their right to play. Since then, the Scottish Government has begun consulting on proposed legislation to ensure that all government Ministers give due regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in all policy and legislation. The Rights of Children and Young People Bill is currently under consideration. The Children’s Services Bill which is also under consideration may also strengthen the Scottish Government’s commitment to early years and play.

Although playing freely is a natural and intuitive part of children’s behaviour, from a very young age, lack of understanding of the benefits often results in parents and other adults curtailing children’s play – both consciously and inadvertently. Research by Play Scotland indicates that play providers and parents are very concerned about this.

Across the UK, including in Scotland, children’s play opportunities and experiences are restricted by their parents’ and their own fears of traffic, “stranger danger”, and of other, usually older, children and young people. These fears are compounded by the neglected and poor quality of many public parks and open spaces, the presence of fast-moving and parked cars in residential streets, and in some areas, an almost total lack of open space. In addition, from almost as soon as they start moving independently, adults start to curtail children’s instincts to play, move around and take risks. “Don’t do that” often becomes a mantra as children start to run, jump, climb, and swing.
There is an extensive group of organisations and people whose activities have an impact on children’s play opportunities and experiences.

These include parents, carers, local authorities, playworkers, extended families, teachers, schools, head teachers, local communities, media, manufacturers, landowners, charities, childminders, out-of-school care providers, funders, environmental organisations, planners, volunteers, nurseries, tourism, shopping centres, developers, colleges, trainers, social workers, fiscal bodies, researchers, neighbours, governments, playschemes, nature trusts, park staff, playground supervisors, health workers, play groups, foster carers, housing associations, health boards and police officers.5

Providing for, and facilitating play contributes not only to children’s well-being and enjoyment of their childhoods, but also to their healthy development – physical, emotional and social; their cognitive development and learning and their safety.

It also contributes to community safety and cohesion; provides attractive environments from which everyone benefits, and mitigates against the damaging effects of poverty and deprivation.
If they are allowed to, children play wherever they are. At home, in the streets and neighbourhoods near their homes, in local parks and open spaces, on their journey to and from school, in playschemes and staffed play provision, at clubs and groups, in early childhood provision, and at school.

This paper, therefore, looks at the policies and guidelines, both national and local, which can and do have an impact on Scottish children’s play opportunities and experiences. It discusses briefly how these can be used to support the work of the public, voluntary and private sectors in promoting children’s opportunities and enjoyment of free play, especially outdoors.

Recent wide ranging discussions with a diverse group of people interested in children’s play, identified the design and planning of places to play as one of the seven areas requiring action if children’s Right to Play was to be fully realised in Scotland. Children’s play is, therefore, an issue for policy makers, planners and providers across a number of government and Local Authority policy areas. These include:

- Parenting and family support
- Designing and managing local streets in residential neighbourhoods
- Parks and open spaces
- Social housing
- Schools
- Staffed play provision
- Out-of-school provision
- Early childhood provision
- Safeguarding children
- Public healthcare
- Community safety
- Community development
- Anti-poverty strategies

When considering the impact of their policies and activities on children’s play opportunities, these departments and agencies need to consider their role in ensuring that children have time, space, suitable environments and encouragement to play freely, and free of charge in their own neighbourhoods.

In Scotland, a number of policy documents from government departments recognise and acknowledge the importance of children’s play in planning and service delivery, offering Local Authorities and their partners the support they need to put good practice in providing for children’s play high up their local agendas.

For disabled children, restrictions on their potential independence and freedom to play can be even more acute.

Policy and practice should ensure that the support they and their families need is available, to assist them in having the best start in life, and enhance their life chances. The UK Equality Act of 2010 describes a person as having a disability if, “he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”, and this description has been adopted by the Scottish Government.
**Staffed play provision**

The Early Years Framework aims to ensure that, in every community, children and families have access to integrated pre-school and childcare services (part 2, page 26).

Quality, affordable, flexible childcare is essential to allow parents and carers to work or train, knowing their children are enjoying themselves and being well cared for. This contributes to national priorities for increasing employment and reducing worklessness. It is in the least deprived areas that childminding, playgroups and out of school care is prevalent, whereas crèches, children and family centres, sitter services and holiday playschemes are more commonly found in the most deprived areas.36

However, the overall number of registered childcare centres has decreased in the past 3 years.36 In fact a recent Children in Scotland report59 found that Scotland had significant gaps in childcare supply with only a fifth of local authorities having enough childcare for working parents and only 10% having enough provision for children outside normal office hours.

The staffed childcare and play provision sector provides play opportunities, learning, development and socialisation that may not be readily available for children elsewhere. Staffed provision includes out of school care clubs, childminders, playgroups, nurseries and holiday playschemes etc. Recent research by Play Scotland found that Play is an important part of the service provided by staffed provision with 70% of respondents saying that children spend at least 80% of their time in the service, playing.37 In addition, 88% reported that their service routinely provided opportunities for outdoor play. So the loss of staffed provision and resulting inadequacy of provision is also a loss of outdoor play experiences for children.

Recommendations from the Scottish Play Commission suggest that a well-trained, qualified workforce is required.1 In 2010, 74% of the pre school education and daycare staff (excluding childminders) surveyed had a qualification at SVQ3 level or above.36 In contrast, the Play Scotland research, “Play in Staffed Provision” found that 20% of respondent settings did not offer any Induction training37 and training on Play was limited with only 45% of staff learning about the Playwork Principles and an even lower, 30% of volunteers.
Section 2

Play in Scotland
The definition of ‘play’ widely accepted by the play sector in Scotland and quoted in Raising the Bar is that “Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. Play can be fun or serious. Through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter. By playing, children learn and develop as individuals, and as members of the community.”

To address this problem of reduced play opportunities, the Scottish Play Commission proposed that:

- Places where children can stretch and challenge themselves physically, socially and emotionally, need to be created
- Children’s independent mobility should be promoted, for example by improving road safety and promoting positive messages about children’s rights in public space
- There should be greater recognition of the important role of outdoor play in promoting health and well-being and of contact with nature’s restorative powers
- Schools should be encouraged to support more free play, and outdoor nature nurseries should be developed and supported

The types of initiative resulting in spaces offering good play opportunities might include, for example, home zones, traffic calming, play rangers, mobile community play services, open space in new housing developments, providing semi-supervised spaces, removal of ‘no ball games’ signs, supporting community ownership of suitable spaces, and guidance on the design of community spaces.

The provision of spaces and places for children’s play in Scotland lies primarily with the 32 Local Authorities, over two thirds of which considered play to be a priority service area when asked in a 2006 survey. At that time, nearly four in ten Local Authorities reported having either a play policy or a play strategy, with about one in six having both. The survey also demonstrated a wide variation in approaches to play across Local Authorities in Scotland.
Section 3

National policy framework
The Local Government in Scotland Act (2003) sets the framework for all Local Authority provision. Amongst its requirements is the need for continuous improvement of local services using a “Best Value” model to promote efficiency and effectiveness. It also promotes Community Planning with local partners using Community Planning Partnerships, and confers on Local Authorities the power to do whatever they consider necessary to promote or improve the health and well-being of the people living, working and going to school in the area. Examples of provision to improve well-being include:

- promoting sustainable development
- tackling poverty and deprivation
- promoting local culture and heritage
- tackling inequalities
- improving community safety.

All of these functions have an impact on children’s play opportunities. The current Government’s programme is described in the Programme for Government, which is updated and reported on annually.

The three overarching national policy documents, agreed by the Scottish Government and COSLA, and aimed at improving the lives of people in Scotland by tackling poverty and poor health, are:

- Equally Well
- Achieving Our Potential
- The Early Years Framework.

A review of these policies, undertaken in 2010, considered them still to be the best approach to delivering better health and well-being to the people of Scotland, including children and young people.

Equally Well; Achieving Our Potential and The Early Years Framework

These three Scottish policy frameworks complement each other, and the importance of a child’s early years and family income are central to the policies they promote. Key priorities include:

- improving circumstances and environments that influence children’s health and life chances
- reducing children’s experiences of damaging environments which lead to inequality in health and well-being
- valuing early childhood as crucial in children’s health, well-being and life chances
- providing effective routes out of poverty and damaging lifestyles
- regulating for or providing improved services
- providing mainstream funding rather than project funding.

Achieving Our Potential discusses the Scottish Government’s commitments to children affected by poverty. It considers that the provision of high quality childcare is crucial to supporting parents into work and tackling the poverty and inequality experienced by the 370,000 children in the poorest 30% of the Scottish population. Child poverty is clustered in areas of concentrated multiple deprivation and the government’s Child Poverty Strategy sees the provision of safe places and facilities for play and recreation in disadvantaged areas as contributing to improvements in these areas. Any provision should be sustainable for the long term and address the aspirations of local people. In England, the provision of high quality play spaces in deprived areas has been seen as one approach to reducing the negative impact of poverty on children.
The Early Years Framework recognises the value of play to children’s lives and healthy development, stating:

“Play is central to how children learn, both in terms of cognitive skills and softer skills around relating to other people.

It is a fundamental part of children’s quality of life and a right enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Outdoor play in particular can also be a major contributor to outcomes around physical activity and healthy weight.

Developing play spaces, and play opportunities for children and removing barriers to play is therefore a priority. This has wider implications for development planning and particularly provision of open space and green space”.

The Early Years Framework is also seen as one of the key strategies and approaches required to address the longer-term drivers of poverty, including the need to provide children with the best possible start in life by focusing on policies that support parenting, providing better access to spaces to play and addressing pre-school and school family learning.

The Early Years Framework supports the development of local partnerships designed to provide simplified, streamlined services, especially for young children. It also aims to develop models of service delivery where the public sector works alongside its partners towards common objectives. It emphasises the importance of using the strength of universal services to “deliver prevention and early intervention” and to help meet the needs of children and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

As part of its commitment to the Early Years Framework, the Scottish Government funded the Go Play programme, administered by Inspiring Scotland in 2009, with funding of £4m over two years. The programme aimed to increase opportunities for children aged 5-13 years to engage in free play activities. Go Play targeted specific local authority areas where children were least likely to have opportunities to develop through play and aimed to improve the infrastructure of the play sector at local, regional and national level. It also funded the development of the Go Play Outcomes and Evaluation Framework to support play providers in evaluating their services.
One of the stated aims of the *Early Years Framework* is to “Improve outcomes and children’s quality of life through play” and, in the longer-term, to ensure there are “High quality play opportunities in every community” and “increased play and physical activity”. (page 26)

The medium-term priorities include the need for nurseries and schools to support outdoor play and to try out innovative approaches such as “nature kindergartens”.

The *Framework* highlights the need to develop outcome indicators, data collection methods and tools to assess the success, or otherwise, of local services.14

**Working with partners, Scottish Government is developing a Getting it Right for Every Child practice briefing setting out how the GIRFEC approach applies to disabled children.**

All children should be supported in fulfilling their potential across the whole spectrum of well-being indicators. Universal services, such as education, play and leisure, need to be truly universal and operated from a basis of equal access for all. The costs of inclusion of disabled children and young people should be an integrated element of planning for the well-being of all children and young people.4
National guidance on implementing the *Early Years Framework* and supporting and working with children and young people in Scotland, is provided in detailed practice guidance *Getting it Right for Every Child*.\(^6\) This is designed to ensure parents, carers and professionals work effectively together to give children and young people the best possible start in life and to improve their life opportunities.

The approach to service planning and provision described in *Getting it Right for Every Child* focuses on the importance of establishing children and young people’s needs and wishes and ensuring they get better coordinated help to support their well-being, health and development. All services for children and young people – social work, health, education, police, housing and voluntary organisations – are expected to improve and strengthen their partnership working to ensure children get appropriate help when they will most benefit from it.

The *Getting it Right for Every Child* approach is underpinned by common values and principles which apply across all aspects of working with children and young people. These are:

- Promoting the well-being of individual children and young people
- Keeping children and young people safe: emotionally and physically
- Putting the child’s views at the centre of decision making;
- Taking a whole child approach
- Building on strengths and promoting resilience
- Promoting opportunities and valuing diversity
- Providing additional help that is appropriate, proportionate and timely
- Supporting informed choices in children, young people and families
- Working in partnership with families;
- Respecting confidentiality and sharing information whilst safeguarding children and young people’s right to confidentiality
- Promoting the same values across all working relationships
- Making the most of bringing together each worker’s expertise
- Coordinating help for the child and family
- Building a competent workforce to promote children and young people’s well-being.

*Getting it Right for Every Child* also has a major focus on supporting parents. Parenting styles can influence children’s health, well-being and life chances, and parenting skills and styles can be influenced by many factors. The Scottish Government is currently working with partners to develop comprehensive programmes and advice to support parents throughout the different stages of childhood.

One such programme is the *Play-Talk-Read* programme aimed at parents with young children.\(^7\)
Planning policy
Planning policy

The framework for planning policy in Scotland is described in the Scottish Government’s 2010 document Scottish Planning Policy, which is the statement of the Government’s views on nationally important land use planning matters. The National Planning Framework is the strategy for long-term spatial developmental. Local Authority planning is guided by a series of Planning Advice Notes (PANs) which offer advice on good practice and other useful information. There are a number of PANs, relating to open space planning, community engagement, transport, housing, residential streets and small town development which all have an impact on children’s play opportunities.

Scottish Planning Policy states that “Providing play space and other opportunities for children and young people to play freely, explore, discover and initiate their own activities can support their development. Access to good quality open spaces can encourage people to be physically active and aid health and well-being.” (para 149). Planning authorities are therefore urged to “support, protect and enhance open space and opportunities for sport and recreation (para 149). It also highlights the importance of developing policies and services that promote a “strong, healthy and just society”. (para 35)

The National Planning Framework

The overall policy direction for housing, spatial planning and transport in Scotland is described in the National Planning Framework 2, one of the key aims of which is to “help build safer, stronger and healthier communities, by promoting improved opportunities and a better quality of life.” (para 44) Well-developed social and cultural facilities are essential elements of this and the planning system must provide adequately for children and young people (alongside other groups) when considering provision for housing, transport and community facilities.

One of the main elements of the spatial strategy to 2030 is to “promote development which helps to improve health, regenerate communities and enable disadvantaged communities to access opportunities.”
Involving people

A number of national policy documents illustrate the Scottish Government’s commitment to ensuring local people are involved in decision making that will influence them and their communities. In general it expects the involvement of the public to be “meaningful” and to start early on in the planning process. Detailed guidance in Planning Advice Note 81: Community Engagement – planning with people (PAN 81) offers planners advice on how they can involve local people, listen to their expressed needs and wishes and incorporate these into local developments. It illustrates ways in which local people should be consulted throughout the planning process.20

- The Equally Well Review (2010) highlights the importance of involving children and young people in the development of services aimed at them and suggests that up-to-date technology should be harnessed to do this. It also recommends that new ways of consulting end-users should be built into national policy-making, complementing the existing practice of local agencies and partnerships. There is also the expectation of a “shift from a culture of clienthood to one of active citizenship whereby people expect less from the state and more from themselves, their families and their communities.”21

- The Early Years Framework emphasises the importance of engaging and empowering children, families and communities, in part by identifying where workers with broader skills can add value to existing services.22 This can be particularly important for children who are disabled as it is clear that they frequently feel disempowered and at the receiving end of decisions made by what seem to be distant authorities. A commitment from the National Review of Service for Disabled Children is to engage fully with children and young people who are disabled both in the actions recommended in the review and the ongoing development and delivery of services.14

- The Child Poverty Strategy recognises that the involvement of young people should be an integral part of the development and delivery of local support and services. Young people should be encouraged to become involved in their local Community Planning Partnerships, enabling them to influence decisions that directly impact on them.9

Planning Advice Note 81 describes different types of “communities” and offers advice and information to help ensure that everyone, no matter what their age, gender, or cultural background, can participate in ways that suit them in the planning decisions that affect their environments. It discusses how each community will have different wants and needs that may have to be balanced against the needs of other communities, and acknowledges that if people are involved early in the planning process, they are more likely to feel respected and heard and may be less likely to object at a later stage.20
Housing policy

The nature of the homes children live in and the environment surrounding those homes, has a major impact on their play opportunities and experiences. Although in general Scottish people consider the area where they live to be a fairly or very good place to live. In the most deprived areas, where there is most social housing, only 23% of those questioned as part of the 2009 Scottish Household Survey thought their area was “very good” and there was a direct relationship between satisfaction with the local area and the degree of deprivation in that area.

The characteristics that most influence satisfaction with the local area are:

- the pleasantness of the environment, including nicely landscaped open spaces and no or little traffic
- the safety of the environment
- the public transport
- the general amenities, including good facilities for young people
- the friendliness of local people.

In the most deprived areas, people were least likely to say their neighbourhood was pleasant, safe or had a sense of community, and 13% said there was nothing they liked about the area where they lived. This compared with 3% in the rest of Scotland.

The Early Years Framework recognises the importance of housing services in addressing the needs of children and promoting their well-being. Scottish Planning Policy highlights the importance of creating places “with a distinct character and identity, promoting a well integrated mix of land uses ...” and encouraging and enabling “the creation of successful places which contribute to the identity of the area”. Planners are referred to Planning Advice Note 67 on housing quality, which in discussing how the policy guidance Designing Places can be applied to new housing developments, highlights the three main goals of the planning system as social justice, economic competitiveness and environmental quality. It also emphasises the need for careful planning to create a sense of neighbourhood in suburban as well as urban developments.
Children’s play opportunities can be determined by the layout and design of housing developments, and in the way in which the design of public spaces and streets influences patterns of movement, safety and privacy. The layout of buildings, travel routes, open spaces and play facilities, and the siting and design of road junctions, all influence potential opportunities for children’s play. Planning Advice Note 67 suggests that open space and play facilities should be designed into the network of movement routes in a housing development and not hidden out of sight on otherwise useless pieces of land. It also recommends that streets are designed and “furnished” as spaces for general public use, incorporating appropriate traffic calming and management measures, not merely viewed as traffic routes.

Planning public space

One of the most effective ways of improving children’s play opportunities is to ensure that public open space, especially in residential areas, is attractive, feels safe and offers a variety of play experiences to children with different interests. In addition, discussion with different groups of people across Scotland has highlighted the importance of creating public spaces which support inter-generational mixing.5

Quoting other sources, the Scottish Household Survey report Scotland’s People,28 points out that access to good quality green space is associated with higher levels of physical activity, improved quality of life, better health and well-being. And when people are happy with the quality of local green spaces, they are more likely to feel more satisfied with their lives, trust others more and feel more a part of their communities (page 121). However, in 2009/10, nearly one in three Scottish households reported not having access to “safe and pleasant” parks or green spaces in their local area and in the most deprived areas this rose to almost a half. In these areas people were also less likely to use local open spaces for recreational activity. (Table 11.14)

The Scottish Household Survey asked questions in 2009/10 about opportunities for children to play in their neighbourhood. Fewer than half the households had access to play areas within their neighbourhoods, and only just over half had access to a local park. Fewer than one in four households in the most deprived areas had a “natural environment or wooded area” in their neighbourhood, compared with 45% in the rest of Scotland, and only four in ten had a playground in their neighbourhood. (page 62)

The design of public spaces in Scotland is guided by the 2001 policy statement Designing Places.30 This document sets out the policy context for planning policy, gives design guidance and advises on professional practice and education and training relating to the built environment. It is aimed at politicians, developers, planners and designers. The six design qualities of a successful place are:

- identity
- safe and pleasant spaces
- ease or movement
- a sense of welcome
- adaptability
- good use of resources.

They also adapt to changing circumstances, make the best use of scarce resources, and help to promote “greener” lifestyles. Good design creates places people value and want to use, and is dependent on planners and designers working with the local community to understand the context of the space and the needs of that community.
Supporting the implementation of *Designing Places, Policy Advice Note 65, Planning and Open Space (PAN 65)*\(^\text{31}\) recognises the importance of open spaces for supporting personal and community well-being. The types of open space discussed in *PAN 65* include most spaces where children could play, for example:

- public parks and gardens
- private gardens or grounds (e.g., school grounds)
- amenity green space (which may have no designated purpose but separates buildings and provides attractive landscaped areas)
- designated play spaces
- “green” corridors
- natural or semi-natural green spaces providing natural habitats for vegetation and wildlife
- civic space – usually with hard landscaping.

Open space audits and strategies should be undertaken by planning authorities to support the long-term approach to the management of open spaces. These should assess current and future needs and protect all spaces that help meet these. The audit should include all types of open space, public and private, and take account of the quality, community value, accessibility, and use of existing open spaces as well as the quantity. A strategy should then be drawn up to develop open spaces in a way that best meets community needs.\(^\text{18}\)

The development of open space strategies and audits should take account of the needs of all population groups including those who might not normally be involved in community consultations, and those with different interests.\(^\text{31}\)

The proper provision, management, and maintenance of open space are key aspects of good design creating opportunities for all sections of the community to interact, promote a sense of place and community pride, and offer opportunities for involving local people. One example of how to do this is given in *Planning Advice Note 65* which suggests that Local Authorities consider creating “Home zones”, giving street space in residential areas to pedestrians and preventing motorised traffic from dominating an area. Home zones offer children places to play on their door-steps.

In earlier guidance, now superceded *Planning Advice Note PAN 76: New Residential Streets*, a home zone was defined as, “a street, or group of streets which are designed to give informed priority to pedestrians and cyclists rather than vehicles. Based on the “woonerf” concept, developed in the Netherlands over 30 years ago, the aim is to improve the quality of life for a local community by turning their streets into public spaces rather than being simply movement corridors. Home zones generally include measures such as soft landscape, seating, play equipment, and speed constraints to create the particular sense of place, and in the process keep traffic speed down to around 10mph.”

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**Open space strategies allow local authorities to identify and address short-comings in the provision of open spaces, for example children’s play.**

The audit might identify restrictions on children’s play as well as opportunities. The strategy should consist of a vision and strategic framework; an audit of existing provision; an assessment of current and future requirements and a strategy statement giving clear priorities and actions.\(^\text{31}\)
Getting it Right for Play: Children’s Play in Scotland: the policy context

Streets and roads designed for people

One of the places frequently cited as somewhere children would like to play is the street or road outside their home. However, for vast numbers this is not possible, as traffic and parked cars make it too dangerous. Road safety also has an impact on whether or not children walk or cycle to school.

In 2009 around half of Scottish children walked or cycled to school on a regular basis. In small towns the proportion rose to 65% but dropped to 26% in remote rural areas (Table 8.4) Children were more likely to walk or cycle if they lived within 2km of their school, with 90% of those living within 0.6 km walking or cycling (Figure 9.9).

Street design and traffic flows can have a major impact on children’s active travel and play opportunities, and this is recognised in Scottish Government guidance to traffic and highways planners and engineers. For example, paragraph 79 of Scottish Planning Policy states that:

“New housing developments should be integrated with public transport and active travel networks such as footpaths and cycle routes... New streets should connect well with existing streets and with walking and cycling networks.”

Paragraph 169, on transport policy, states that as a priority, opportunities for walking and cycling should be planned into all new residential areas, making urban areas more attractive and safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

In 2010, Designing Streets policy guidance on the design of local streets and roads, was published (replacing previous guidance). It is aimed primarily at the design of residential and “lightly trafficked” streets, although the principles can also be applicable to other types of street, including rural and high streets.

Designing Streets recognises that streets have an important role to play in supporting a range of social, leisure and other functions, as well as facilitating traffic movement, and can be used as a material consideration when planning applications and appeals are being considered. One of the primary aims of street design should be to create a sense of place which takes into account the local distinctiveness of the area; what the space will look like and its potential to encourage both social and economic activity. Streets should also be designed to allow for and encourage social interaction and be inclusive social spaces where children can play and others socialise (page 38). At the same time street design should aim to integrate natural landscaped features and encourage biodiversity.

When considering movement through streets planners should pay as much attention to walking and cycling as to motor vehicles.

Designing Streets says that when designing the street structure, the street user hierarchy should consider pedestrians, including children playing, above motor vehicles (para 15).

It also says that streets should be designed to reduce traffic speeds to ensure the streets are safe for all and that in residential streets a 20 mph speed limit should normally be the objective.
Section 5

Schools
One of the short-term actions specified in the Early Years Framework is that the Scottish Government, through the Curriculum for Excellence will, with local partners, continue to promote play-based learning, including in early primary education. In addition, the schools inspectorate, HMIE, is to continue to focus on the quality of energetic and outdoor play in all its inspection activities. In the medium-term, nurseries and schools are expected to support outdoor play and to try out innovative approaches such as “nature kindergartens”.

The Curriculum for Excellence is currently being introduced across Scotland for all children and young people aged 3-18 years old. It places particular emphasis on the knowledge and skills essential for children’s learning and health, making literacy, numeracy, health and well-being the responsibility of all practitioners working with children and young people. The Government’s review of Equally Well recommends that community planning and school colleagues work together to prioritise and plan jointly to support the health and well-being needs of the local community.

Schools grounds are “an inexpensive yet versatile resource, which offer a unique setting to promote positive health and well-being, understanding of the environment, citizenship and physical activity for our school children.” Yet, in 2005, only one in eight primary school grounds were being used by community-based organisations. Secondary school grounds were more likely to be used by other groups. This may be particularly important for children who are disabled, as school grounds tend to be more accessible to them.

Schools

In many areas, both urban and rural, there are very few places where children can play freely, so one important proposal is that school grounds should be open and accessible to children from the local neighbourhood out of school hours and during the school holidays.
Section 6

Safeguarding children
Safeguarding children

Safety in the public realm

Fear for children’s safety in their local neighbourhood is frequently cited as one of the main reasons why they do not play outside more often. The Scottish Household Survey of 2009 showed that adults in the most deprived areas were most likely to report that children felt unsafe when walking, playing and cycling in their local neighbourhood. Similar findings were found in the large urban areas. (Table 7.7) There was also greater concern that children in these areas would be bullied whilst out playing (Table 7.9). Children were considered to be at greatest risk from other adults when they were playing in natural or wooded areas. This was especially true for those living in the most deprived areas. The general consensus was that children should be 9-10 years old if they were to play out without an adult present, although those from the most deprived households gave a slightly older age (Table 7.11).38

Crime and anti-social behaviour impact disproportionately on deprived communities, particularly on young people within these communities, and the government has expressed its commitment to creating and supporting safer and stronger communities where people live, work and play. This includes action to reduce antisocial behaviour and violence and promote more positive behaviour. The CashBack for Communities programme uses the proceeds of crime to fund diversionary activities and positive opportunities for young people, and the government is developing guidance, support and tools for practitioners through the Safer Communities Programme.9

Designing Safer Places suggests that:

“To prevent damage, facilities and fittings should be robust, suitable for their intended use and securely fixed. Play provision for older youths should not be located immediately adjacent to housing but facilities such as kick-about pitches should still have a high level of natural surveillance not only from a child safety point of view but also to deter antisocial behaviour”. (page 10)

Secured by Design, a UK police initiative designed to help create safer, more secure environments, proposes core principles of:

- environmental quality and sense of ownership
- natural surveillance
- access and footpaths
- lighting
- open space provision and management.

All of the above can be applied to spaces where children might play.40
Risk and challenge in play

It is frequently asserted that children’s opportunities to challenge and extend themselves through play are inhibited by adults’ fears for children’s physical safety. In research for the Scottish Play Commission, discussions with people in the play sector, and others with an interest in children’s play, identified risk management and risk aversion as an issue that needed addressing if children were to be offered the best possible play opportunities. In addition, the National Review of Services for Disabled Children concluded that there was a need to achieve the right balance between risk assessment and the promotion of children and young people’s autonomy, resilience and ability to grow.


The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recognises the importance of play in children’s lives and for their opportunities to learn about risk. HSE is pleased to commend the Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide. Its application of risk-benefit assessments is a sensible approach to the health and safety management of play provision.

Endorsement by the Health and Safety Executive

Risk – benefit assessment for play provision will now be adopted by the UK Government and as health and safety legislation and guidance applies across the UK, is relevant in Scotland. Consolidation of the Scottish Government’s acceptance of this approach was secured by Play Scotland in 2010 when the Minister for Children and Early Years issued a statement endorsing the Implementation Guide and highlighting the importance of promoting risk management rather than risk aversion.

“I recognize and value the long term benefits of play and exposure to risk – both in terms of physical health and in developing resilience and mental wellbeing. Through the debate on risk and in order for play to be truly accepted by our communities, we have a responsibility to ensure that practitioners, parents and even the children themselves know the benefits that play and risk can bring to their education and wellbeing” – Adam Ingram MSP.

The Early Years Framework also commits the Scottish Government, the Care Commission, Play Scotland and the police to lead a debate on understanding and balancing the benefits of play against the risks.
In 2010, Lord Young of Graffham, published the report *Common Sense, Common Safety* following a review of the operation of the health and safety laws. Amongst his recommendations, Lord Young said:

“I believe that with regard to children’s play we should shift from a system of risk assessment to a system of risk-benefit assessment, where potential positive impacts are weighed against potential risk.

These ideas inform the play programme developed by the Department for Education, and Department for Culture, Media and Sport and I would like to see them developed more widely. Furthermore we should consider reviewing the Health and Safety at Work etc Act to separate out play and leisure from workplace contexts.” (Lord Young of Graffham, 2010)

The *Early Years Framework* also commits the Scottish Government, the Care Commission, Play Scotland and the police to lead a debate on understanding and balancing the benefits of play against the risks.

The recommendation for risk-benefit analysis and the other recommendations in Lord Young’s report have been accepted by the UK government and in a letter to the chair of the *Play Safety Forum* it was stated that “the Health and Safety Executive supports the view that risk is an integral element of children’s play” and that the HSE suggest that the risk/benefit analysis approach to risk assessment, proposed in *Managing risk in play provision: Implementation guide* is a “powerful approach” which “consciously balances the benefits of an experience against the intrinsic risk”.

An appropriate person should make the judgement as to whether the balance between risk and opportunity is appropriate.

**Child protection guidance**

In 2010, the government published detailed guidance on child protection for all those working with children and young people and highlighted the importance of being vigilant and providing robust support in safeguarding children. The guidance provides a national framework within which agencies and practitioners, including those providing for children’s play opportunities, can understand and agree processes for working together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It also emphasises the need for agencies and services to encourage and support parents, carers, families and communities in protecting children from abuse from both adults and other children.

Planning has a vital role to play in helping to create well-managed, attractive environments that help to discourage unacceptable behaviour. *Planning Advice Note 77 (PAN 77) Designing Safer Places* offers guidance on the design and location of play areas in housing developments. It emphasises the need for careful thought in the planning and provision of children’s play facilities, suggesting that designed play areas for younger children should be small-scale and situated close to dwellings – offering the maximum opportunity for surveillance.
Section 7

Public health policy
In 2011 the Chief Medical Officers (CMO’s) for the four UK nations published guidance for physical activity levels in children and young people. Based on evidence, the CMO’s stated that “physical activity, especially in the form of play, is a basic and essential behaviour that must be fostered and encouraged during the first five years of life. Conversely, opportunities for young children to be sedentary should be limited and replaced with more physically active options”.46

As children grow up, physical activity occurs throughout most days and in numerous settings and active travel to school, outdoor play in the park and indoor play in dedicated play centres are important contributors to this. The CMO’s also point out that younger children begin their active lives through play, with their parents having a crucial role, but as they grow up children become increasingly independent and are more influenced by friends and external role models.47

In order to be sufficiently active, the CMO’s recommend that children from 5-18 years should engage in moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity for at least 60 minutes and up to several hours every day, and that vigorous activities, including those that strengthen muscle and bone, should be incorporated at least three days a week.

These activities might include for example, bike riding, playground activities, fast running, swinging on playground equipment, hopping and skipping and sports. Young children who are capable of walking unaided should be physically active daily for at least 180 minutes (3 hours), spread throughout the day. This likely to occur mainly through unstructured active play, for example climbing on a frame or riding a bike, running and chasing games, walking or skipping when out and about, but may also include more structured activities.

For children who are not yet walking, physical activity should be encouraged from birth, particularly through floor-based play and water-based activities in safe environments. This might include time spent on the stomach including rolling and playing on the floor, reaching for and grasping objects, pulling, pushing and playing with other people.
Section 8

Delivering better services
Delivering better services

The *Early Years Framework* is being delivered through the *Getting it Right for Every Child* approach, which aims to work across education, social work, health, police and the community and voluntary sector through partnership, a shared language and common tools. The *Equally Well Review* highlighted the need for early intervention at different times of life, including, for example, family support, education and learning support, community policing and services targeted at specific groups whose circumstances make them vulnerable to disadvantage. Locally agreed outcomes for services are developed by Community Planning Partnerships and their delivery mechanisms are described in Single Outcome Agreements.7

Community Planning Partnerships

Community Planning Partnerships, are the mechanism through which Local Authorities and their partners are expected to plan and deliver local services. The Scottish Government’s 2010 review of *Equally Well*, looking at the implementation of the key Scottish policy frameworks *Achieving Our Potential*, the *Early Years Framework* and *Equally Well*, recommends the need for a more collaborative approach across public services to identify the diverse circumstances that need to be addressed if individual and community well-being is to be improved.

Community Planning Partnerships (CPP’s) are expected to share resources, work in partnership, involve the voluntary and community sector, and work closely with local people to deliver successfully integrated services. Single Outcome Agreements are seen as the essential mechanism to achieve these better integrated services.

Single Outcome Agreements

In order to plan and allocate resources to services that contribute to the Scottish Government’s outcomes for local people, Local Authorities and their partners are expected to develop Single Outcome Agreements to identify priorities and desired outcomes. The Single Outcome Agreement in each area should link closely to more detailed plans for children’s services.

The medium-term priorities outlined in the *Early Years Framework*, include the need for nurseries and schools to support outdoor play and to try out innovative approaches such as “nature kindergartens” so this aspiration could also be included in documents such as the Single Outcome Agreement.

The *Early Years Framework* encourages Community Planning partners to ensure their approach to planning and service provision is focused on children’s needs rather than on existing processes22 and McKendrick, in his report on Local Authority roles in play provision, suggests that Community Planning Partnerships might develop and implement localised play strategies as central to the support and development of more vibrant, cohesive communities.6
In 2006, of the 26 Local Authorities responding to a survey about strategic planning and provision for play, eleven mentioned play in their Integrated Children’s Services plans, three in their Corporate plans, three in their Departmental strategies, three in their Community plans and three in their Sports and Recreation Strategy. 6
Section 9

Monitoring and measuring the value of services
Monitoring and measuring the value of services

National Performance Framework

The guiding principles for developing indicators for a new performance framework for services in Scotland was outlined in a multi-agency discussion paper published in 2007. The best public services were considered to be: user focused and personalised – meeting the needs of users and citizens rather than service providers, and designed to improve quality and encourage innovation, with continuously improving standards. Measures of success for local services should be based on outcomes and appropriate indicators, rather than the actions of providers. A series of national outcome statements with 45 National Indicators, which make up the National Performance Framework, were agreed.

The Early Years Framework, and the associated priorities relating to children’s play, support many of the national outcomes including, for example:

- Children having the best start in life and being ready to succeed
- Young people being successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens
- Improved life chances for children, young people and families at risk
- More and better employment opportunities for Scotland’s people
- A better educated, skilled successful population, known for research and innovation
- People living longer, healthier lives
- Tackling the significant inequalities in Scottish society
- People living their lives safe from crime, disorder and danger
- The existence of strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others
- A populous proud of their strong, fair and inclusive national identity
- Public services that are of high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people’s needs

The National Performance Framework requires that Local Authorities gather information on the quality and efficiency of their services and report on the outcomes they are achieving for their residents – focusing, as far as possible, on outcomes rather than outputs.

Each performance measure should be:

- Attributable: a result of action taken by the provider
- Relevant to local and national priorities
- Clearly defined – describing what, why, how, when and where
- Robust – statistically valid and able to withstand scrutiny
- Proportionate – the benefits of collecting the data should outweigh the costs
- Consistent and comparable with other services over time
- Verifiable by external agencies
- Complementary and compatible
- Timed so as to allow comparison over time or with others.
Recording, reviewing and learning from experience

In Scotland, regular assessment of local services is done through Best Value Audits which provide an overall assessment of the council’s performance and its corporate management. At present, audits are descriptive and are not always comparable between authorities.49

The *Equally Well Review* also recommends the use of more evidence based outcomes frameworks and contribution analysis information that will:

- help the full range of community planning partners determine respective activities to deliver those outcomes
- allow short and medium-term progress to be identified and managed
- help evidence the connections between *Equally Well* and the contribution being made by other central and local government initiatives to the full range of national outcomes.

Examples of effective local projects should be shared nationally, and information about what works should be widely shared through peer learning and challenge.50

The *Scottish Play Commission*, in its report *Raising the Bar*¹, recommended that the Scottish Government create a national play indicator, with minimum actions and standards, national monitoring and resources to support its implementation across all local authorities. This recommendation was accepted by the Government and a national indicator is to be incorporated into the *Early Years Framework*.

The *Early Years Framework* highlights the need for developing systematic methods of “recording, reviewing and learning from innovation and evidence” (page 29).

As part of this it identifies a need to ensure that local and national indicators, datasets and dissemination complement each other.22

**Go Play Outcomes and Evaluation Framework**

The *Go Play Outcomes and Evaluation Framework* has been designed to help play providers in evaluating the success of their provision. The model offered aims to help the play sector describe the needs of the children, families and communities they are aiming to address, what they are doing to address these needs and the difference they are actually making. The model describes the range of activities and outcomes that might be achieved across the play sector, not just by individual projects.51

**How good is our culture and sport?**

*How good is our culture and sport* is a quality improvement tool developed and being piloted in Scotland, including by the play service in Glasgow. The aim of the process is to support continuous improvement in local provision by working with stakeholders to evaluate services and develop improvement plans. The self-evaluation tool asks the questions:

- How are we doing?
- How do we know?
- What are we going to do now?

Assessments are based on information collected by assessing outcomes, evaluating documentation, eliciting the views of stakeholders, and observing provision.
Developing indicators for play opportunities

The Government’s *Improving Local Outcome Indicators Project* requires that indicators chosen to track performance of Single Outcome Agreements need to be relevant and practical. Indicators must be:

- Relevant and unambiguous: associated with at least one of the high level outcomes
- Harmonised with other frameworks and concepts
- Timely and accessible: published to tie in with other reporting arrangements
- Statistically Robust: precise enough to measure change with data collected from a representative sample
- Affordable: the value of the data should outweigh the cost of collecting it.

The *Early Years Framework* identifies the need to develop a balanced approach to indicators, allowing for the possibility of measuring positive elements that support resilience as well as negative experiences that highlight increased risk to children and their families. One indicator identified in the *Early Years Framework* is “Children’s involvement in play and physical activity.” Another is “Inclusion/outcomes for disabled children and those from minority communities.”

Although the focus of indicators should be on the outcomes for children, families and communities, the *Early Years Framework* recognises that there is a role for measuring inputs and processes “where these are seen as key to delivering improved outcomes.” (page 33)

Local partners need to decide which measures are appropriate for their area.

The discussion document published by the Scottish Executive and its partners on the *National Performance Framework* describes the seven stages to agreeing a performance framework as:

- agreeing guiding principles
- agreeing areas of service, activity and outcomes
- identifying design requirements
- agreeing key features of each measure
- agreeing performance measures
- developing methodologies for data collection, reporting and monitoring.

Another project looking at possibilities for evaluating services related to play, the Play@Home project, examined the feasibility of an Outcome Evaluation Framework for the Scottish project. The aim was to assess the impact on the scheme’s main objectives of physical activity, movement skills, cognitive/language development, and parent-child bonding. The project concluded that although it was not straightforward, it was possible to undertake an outcome based evaluation of each of the aims amongst four and five years old, but not with children younger than three years old. Suggested measurement tools included accelerometers to measure physical activity and a series of previously validated questionnaires and assessment tools to measure the other outcomes.
Section 10

Conclusion
Recommendations of the Scottish Play Commission include the need to create a national play indicator, with minimum actions and standards, national monitoring and resources to support its implementation across all local authorities. It also recommends building the capacity of communities to support a wide range of play opportunities. The National Play Indicator should identify specific measures to record, monitor play opportunities in terms of accessibility, inclusion, affordability, quality and children’s and parents’ satisfaction with provision.5

The Getting It Right for Play toolkit identifies eight play indicators which can be combined into an overall Local Authority Play Sufficiency Assessment.

The play indicators can be measured using four tools. So there is now a national, consistent way to assess children’s satisfaction, children’s access to play, children’s views of the quality of play experiences and the child friendliness of Scottish communities.

An issue identified by the Scottish Play Commission was the need to develop baseline information to allow providers to benchmark the quality of their provision, measure changes over time and compare their achievements with those of other providers5. The Getting It Right for Play toolkit provides the opportunity for providers, neighbourhoods and Local Authorities to now be able to do this.

Another problem, highlighted by Play Scotland research56 was the difficulty for Local Authorities to establish basic counts of playgrounds, playing fields and other spaces for play. The Open Space audits conducted by all Local Authority areas have gone some way in overcoming this problem. The results have been drawn together in The Second State of Scotland’s Greenspace Report57, which presents a progress report and provides initial national benchmarking on greenspace quantities. Figures on the overall amount of play space reported are disappointing – less than 1% of greenspace in every Local Authority area.57

More detailed mapping of play spaces with corresponding quality assessment has been undertaken by some Local Authorities as part of the creation of their local Play Strategy. This approach is commended by Tam Baillie, Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People:

“The low priority given to play and open spaces in planning, and the trivialization of play by those who do not understand how critical it is for child development, all point to the need for a strategic approach to play.” 58

The Getting It Right for Play toolkit offers guidance, and the tools necessary, to enable Local Authorities to develop Play Strategies which can enable the aspiration of “High quality play opportunities in every community”14 to be realised for Scotland’s children.
Getting it Right for Play

Endorsements

Message from the Minister

Most of us carry great memories of playing outside as a child. However we regularly hear in the media and through research about how little time today’s children spend playing outdoors. Outdoor activities that were part of growing up when I was young feature less and less in children’s lives today. The Scottish Government recognises that Play is central to how children learn and develop, and how they are motivated to be physically active.

I am very pleased to endorse Play Scotland’s seminal publication, Getting it Right for Play, which has been funded through the Scottish Government’s Go Play initiative.

Getting it Right for Play is a timely and practical resource for everyone involved in providing increased quality play opportunities for children and young people in Scotland.

There are three parts to Getting it Right for Play, a strategic review of the evidence base outlining the benefits of play to children and the wider community; a comprehensive Scottish Play Policy context; and a Toolkit aimed at Local Authorities, to stimulate improvement in the design and provision of play opportunities for children to play outside in their neighbourhoods. Community groups and schools which are interested in their local neighbourhoods will also find some of the tools very useful.

The aspiration of Getting it Right for Play, is that:

“Wherever they live, children and young people of all ages, abilities and interests, should be able to play in a variety of ways, in high quality spaces, within sight of their homes or within easy walking distance, where they feel safe whether or not they are accompanied by adults.”

Developing play spaces and play opportunities for children, and removing barriers to play is a priority in the Early Years Framework. I commend Play Scotland for their work in this area and I recognise the important contribution that Getting it Right for Play can make to improving children’s quality of life through play.

I hope that Local Authorities and Community groups will use this practical toolkit to deliver improved play opportunities for our children and young people as part of our mission to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up.”

Aileen Campbell, MSP
Minister for Children and Young People
Endorsements

Message from the Funder

Supporting the development of Play in Scotland

Play makes a tremendous contribution to a child having a happy and healthy childhood, in turn making them much more likely to grow up into happy and healthy adults. It is abundantly clear that a child’s early years has a huge influence on their later life and the role of Play during this time is vital.

Inspiring Scotland launched Go Play in 2009, in partnership with the Scottish Government, to increase the opportunities for Play for children aged 5 to 13 years and support the play sector to develop and grow. Since then, I have been impressed by the work that has enabled so many more children to benefit from Free Play.

I am also delighted with the range of work undertaken to support the development of Play across Scotland. The Play Scotland, Getting it Right for Play Toolkit and supporting documents has been designed with this very much in mind. The Toolkit will help Local Authorities assess the opportunities for Play in their areas, and provide a strong rationale for promoting play provision and the opportunities for Play across a range of areas. This complements other work developed from within the Go Play portfolio, including the Go Play Outcome and Evaluation Framework, which helps to support the sector to articulate the benefits of Play and assess when play organisations can have the most impact.

I am confident that together these resources will be a lasting legacy of Go Play and will ensure more children in Scotland have the opportunity to grow through Play.

Andrew Muirhead
Chief Executive, Inspiring Scotland
I am pleased to support the Toolkit produced by Play Scotland which in my view is a valuable and much-needed resource that will help everyone who engages with children to understand the importance of promoting good opportunities for play.

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I believe the Toolkit has the potential to promote a wider understanding of the importance of play, particularly outdoor play. As such, it will be a useful complement to NHS Health Scotland’s mental health indicators for children and young people, which identified the need to develop better measures around the access children and young people have to play opportunities.

Tam Baillie
Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People
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