

Play Strategy 2007 – 2012



Rochford District Council Play strategy 2007-2012

Contents

Introduction & Background	Page 2
Essex Play Policy definition of play	Page 5
Why do we need a play strategy	Page 6
The national policy context for play	Page 6
Local policy context for play	Page 7
Managing risk in play provision	Page 13
What do we currently offer/do	Page 14
Audit & Mapping	Page 17
Consultation	Page 19
Executive Summary & Key Themes	Page 20
Action Plan	Page 21
Glossary & Document list	Page 28

Appendix Contents:

- A. 2006 Health & Safety Audit
- B. Holiday Activity Consultation Results
- C. Play Partnership Terms of Reference
- D. Play Equipment Audit
- E. Supporting Children & Young People in Essex consultation results

Play Strategy

Introduction to Rochford District

Rochford is a small district located in southeast Essex. It is bounded by the River Crouch to the north and the urban areas of Southend and Castle Point to the south. The district has three main towns, Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley. Much of the remaining area is rural, green belt land with a large area of Foulness, under Ministry of Defence control. London Southend Airport straddles the district's southern boundary with Southend. The district has a population of 79,700 people, 3% non white British, living in 33,700 households. The population is predicted to rise to 80,300 by 2011, with a forecasted large increase of those over the age of 85 years. The area is relatively affluent, ranking 316 out of 354 most deprived authorities nationally. The most deprived ward, Foulness and Great Wakering East, ranks 2,680 of 8,414.

The Council's vision is to make the District "the place of choice in the County to live, work and visit". We're about change for the better, we're about services, we're about communities, we're about the environment, the economy and heritage, we're about the quality of life. We aim to achieve our vision through focusing on our 6 corporate aims around – quality, effective services; creating a safer and caring community; providing a greener and more sustainable environment; encouraging the local economy to thrive; improving the quality of life across the District and enhancing local heritage.

This vision and our 6 corporate aims translate into the things that we do – our key strategic documentation such as this Corporate Plan, the Local Plan and the emerging Local Development Framework; the services we deliver and the facilities we provide.

They also fit well with our original Community Strategy, which was produced with partner organisations in 2004 and is outlined in the next section. The vision and the 6 corporate aims are to be found in our badging, our committee agendas and paperwork and our website etc.

We're also part of the Thames Gateway initiative, the largest regeneration project in Europe and within that context, we're establishing ourselves as the "green" part of the Gateway. In the context of the Gateway, what does "green" mean? It means green belt; it means woodlands; coast and areas for outdoor recreation and leisure; it means quality built up areas; it means cleanliness; it means good parks and open spaces; it means a safe and healthy district; in other words, these aspirations fit well with our overarching vision.

Rochford District & Play

Both nationally and locally there has been a growing recognition of the importance of play for, not only, the emotional, physical and mental development of children, but also the impact on residential, commercial and cultural strategic development. The play review 'Getting Serious About Play'

defines children’s play as “What children and young people do when they follow their own ideas, in their own way, for their own reasons. We have adopted this definition for our strategy development.

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.

From Best Play – what play provision should do for children
NPFA/PLAYLINK/Children’s Play Council (2001)

Rochford District Council owns or manages formal and informal public open spaces, sports fields, open spaces, sports fields and gardens in the district comprising of a total of over 300 hectares. Some of the play spaces contain within them play grounds with play equipment which total approximately an additional 170 hectares.

Through engagement in play, recreational and informal educational activities, children and young people can enjoy themselves, develop self-confidence and self esteem, learn to get on with others, and to value themselves as individuals. Learning through play is also crucial to younger children and those who are vulnerable or have complex needs. Taking all this into consideration and for the purposes of this strategy we will be considering children to be 0-18 yrs, although this may increase for young people with special needs. The Council recognises the importance of the ‘family unit’ in play, therefore we consider play in its widest sense involving siblings, parents or guardians and other relatives or carers.

Nationally interest has grown through the lottery fund ‘Big Play’ pledging £15 million to develop meaningful play across the country.

Locally play and many partners, including RDC Sports & Arts Development Team, Extended Schools Programme, Star Partnership, community groups, religious groups, leisure facilities and local parishes, are involved in the provision of leisure activities.

Demographics-Number of 0-5 year olds in each parish & play spaces with equipment in that area

Ward & Area	Play Spaces with Equipment	Number of 0-5 year old in area
Foulness & Gt. Wakering	High Street (toddler to senior), Seaview Drive (Infant to junior), Morrins Close (Toddler to infant), Glebe Close (Toddler to infant), Church End (Toddler to infant)	424
Barling & Sutton	Barling (Toddler to junior)	142
Ashingdon, Canewdon & Paglesham	Ashingdon Road (Toddler to senior), Althorne Way (Toddler to infant), Rowan Way (Infant to junior)	285

Rochford	Doggetts (Toddler to senior), Warwick Drive (Toddler to senior)	575
Hawkwell South Hawkwell North Hawkwell West	Clements Hall (Toddler to senior), Hawkwell Common (Toddler to junior), Magnolia Road (Infant to junior)	843
Hockley Central Hockley North Hockley West	Betts Wood (Infant to junior), Hockley Woods (Toddler to senior), Plumberow mount (Toddler to junior), Elizabeth Close (Infant to junior)	622
Lodge		261
Rayleigh Central Whitehouse Wheatley Trinity Grange Sweyne Park	Bedford Close (Infant to junior), Causton Way (Infant to junior), Elsenham Court (Infant to junior), Fairview (Toddler to junior), Fyfield Path (Toddler to infant), Grove Wood (Toddler to junior), Hartford Close (Toddler to junior), St John Fisher (Toddler to senior), Boston Avenue (Toddler to infant), Sweyne Park (Toddler to senior), King Georges (Toddler to senior)	1607
Downhall & Rawreth	Rawreth Lane (Toddler to senior)	338
Hullbridge	Pooles Lane (Toddler to senior)	380

(Demographic information from Early Years & Childcare for the proposed Children's Centre placement 2006) Figures for 5yr old+ are not available in ward breakdowns, however please see note below regarding % of population.

Rochford District population is made up of approximately 38,139 males and 40,350 females. The total population is made up of 19.7% 0-15 year olds, 62.5% 16-64 year olds and 17.8% over 64 year olds.

The data collected from the 2001 census shows that Rochford District has a higher than average percentage of people aged 65 and over, with the proportion of people in the 0-15 and 16-64 age ranges lower than the county, region and national averages.

As part of Rochford District Council's commitment to the development of play, a play partnership has been set up to give stakeholders and partners a voice with this project. These include RDC officers from Planning, Leisure, Waste & Recycling, the Extended Schools co-ordinator, Primary Care Trust, Housing, Police, local Parish & Town Councils, Early Years & Childcare, library service and national charities that have a local interest. The aim of the group was to ensure that any consultation was taken to as wide an audience as possible, ensure that outcomes were true to the local community needs, market the group to increase membership of key stakeholders, recruit children and young people representatives to sit on the group, review the action plan and targets,

assist in the production of a Children & Young Persons version of the strategy and promote the strategy through their groups and via their websites.
Rochford Play Partnership-Terms of Reference (Appendix C)

Rochford District Council has been working closely with Children's Fund Essex, and the other Councils in Essex, to develop an 'Essex Play Policy' that will underpin this strategy. It is in its final draft stage and, as part of the action plan of this strategy, a final copy will be publicised. Art and drama consultations have been undertaken across Essex, see www.essexplay.com for full results, with local outcomes forming part of the consultation for this document. The group is also planning to create an independent charitable body that will develop play provision in the County. Rochford District Council, along with the other authorities will have a role in this group.

Essex 'Come Out & Play' logo

Essex Play Partnerships agreed that:

Play...

- is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child and young person
- can be fun or serious. It is sometimes joyful; sometimes risky; often memorable
- is a natural impulse and is what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons.
- is the natural way for children and young people to learn and develop in their own time and in their own way
- is an essential and intrinsic part of growing up

Essex agrees the following key elements of Play:

- *It can take place alone or with others*
- *It does not rely on equipment or resources but may be enhanced and extended by these.*
- *It usually begins as spontaneous action or behaviour, but some children and young people may need support to play*
- *It helps children and young people to learn social and cultural norms and roles*
- *Children and young people can learn from their own and others' play*
- *Humans of all ages play*
- *'Play needs' change with age - for example teenagers often prefer socialising and hanging out and adults engage in sports or art*
- *Play often involves humour*
- *Play can provide catharsis and aids psychological development*
- *Play serves as an outlet for emotions*
- *Play allows children and young people develop as individuals and as members of the community.*

Play has the power to re-engage disaffected children and young people

For more information

Why do we need a play strategy?

This document sets out the importance that Rochford District Council places on play. As a council, with the support of the Parish & Town Councils, the strategy will formulate the 'plan' for play in the next 5 years. The Council acknowledges the impact that play can have across many areas of work, therefore the partnerships that are created through this document, and as a consequence the ongoing work, are vital in its success.

The key elements of a successful play strategy that will focus the resources available, and in turn create, a successful play 'offer' are captured in the acronym **VITAL** Value based, In the right place, Top quality, Appropriate and Long term. Full details can be found in the document 'Getting Serious About Play'.

Value Based: All children and young people, whatever their ability or background, are welcomed, especially those from disadvantaged groups.

In the Right Place: Close to children and young peoples homes and schools, on well used travel routes and in safe locations.

Top Quality: Safe, welcoming, and providing choice & variety, well managed

Appropriate: Shaped by local needs, taking into account all sectors of the local community.

Long Term: Set up to be valued and respected parts of the social fabric of the neighbourhood.

To ensure our play offer meets the **VITAL** standards this strategy has been developed taking into account each of the key elements.

The national policy context for play

The policies that are shaping play are now very much part of the 'wider picture'. Listed below are key documents that have helped shape our thoughts on play.

Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport said;

'We recognise that play can impact positively on a range of issues and we will continue to...ensure that it is recognised as having an important contribution to the 'Change for Children Programme', the 'Physical Activity Plan' and the 'Cleaner, Safer, Greener' agenda. We will be considering how to take forward a more strategic cross cutting departmental policy for play.

Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport 2005

The Play Review-Getting Serious About Play, a review of children's play

This review made key recommendations, the main point detailing that the local authority or a local partnership should be responsible for drawing up proposals...prepared in partnership with other local agencies, children, young people and local communities.

Frank Dobson MP, Chair of the Play Review 2004

Every Child Matters and Change for Children

The governments 'Every Child Matters' framework and 'Change for Children' programme identify the enjoyment of recreation, including play, as a key outcome for children and young people and should be considered in the preparation and implementation of Children & Young People Plans under the Children's Act (2004).

Further information about the objectives of Every Child Matters can be found at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

National Childcare Strategy

The Extended Schools initiative-(part of the National Childcare Strategy to offer 'wrap-around care' for all children up to age 14)- is to look at opening school grounds and premises for out of school activities, including children's play. These are expected, as a priority, to provide leisure facilities for all children in a locality, including disabled children, and not only those who go to a special school.

Regeneration

The development of the play strategy should reflect the new focus on liveability, emphasising the role of play space in regeneration, neighbourhood renewal and in delivering the 'Cleaner, Safer, Greener' urban renaissance called for by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

Further information can be found on www.odpm.gov.uk

Planning Policy

Planning policy guidance note 17, Open Space, Sport & Recreation (PPG17) aims to safeguard open spaces and playing fields. It was revised in 2002 to become much more focussed in assessing the need for different types of open space. This new legislation also lowered the threshold (from 0.4ha to 0.2ha) above which the local planning authorities are required to consult Sport England about developments affecting playing fields.

The local policy context for play

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010 (Annual Review)

Completed in October 2006 and covering the period above, it provides a clear statement on the Council's medium term priorities. The Plan has not been developed in isolation and has taken account of national, regional and local priorities. To inform the Council in setting priorities we use a range of information and intelligence, including the results of public consultation exercises undertaken in the District

The recent residents survey has confirmed that Rochford District Council is in the top 25% for overall satisfaction. The survey places Rochford 2nd out of all Essex authorities for overall satisfaction with the Council's performance. Residents stated in the satisfaction survey that the following are important in making a community a good place to live:

- Level of crime
- Health services
- Clean streets
- Education
- Affordable housing

The Council's Corporate Aims

As outlined earlier, the Council has 6 corporate aims that directly support the Community Strategy themes, reflect our areas of responsibility and seek to improve Council services.

- Provide quality, cost effective services
- Work towards a safer and more caring community
- Provide a green and sustainable environment
- Encourage a thriving local economy
- Improve the quality of life for people in our district
- Maintain and enhance our local heritage

In agreeing our priority areas we have to reconcile different expectations, in particular the needs and views of the people of the District, national priorities identified by central government and partnership priorities, which have been agreed as part of the Community Strategy or LAA processes. Although all of the six key priorities can be linked to play and its development the key aims that we will specifically link to the development of play are:

Work towards a safer and more caring community-develop initiatives for young people and tackling drugs and alcohol abuse or anti social behaviour. Seek to engage with younger residents who are frequently missing from consultation exercises.

Improve the quality of life for people in our district-Provide New Opportunities for Leisure (including play)

A full copy of this document can be found at www.rochford.gov.uk

Community Plan 2004

The Community Strategy consultation has shown that residents like the district due to its quietness and rural nature. Parks, countryside, open spaces and woodland were priorities that the local community would like to see enhanced. The consultation also highlighted a need to increase facilities for young people across the whole district.

A full copy of the Rochford Local Strategic Partnership Community Plan can be found on www.rochford.gov.uk

Social Inclusion Policy (December 2003)

Rochford District Council's Social Inclusion Policy details the Council's commitment to ensuring that all services are accessible to all members of the

community. Specifically for play the Council will progress the programme of works to Council-owned facilities to ensure access for people with mobility problems, and develop and improve our communications and information for people with hearing, sight and language difficulties.

A full copy of this document can be found at www.rochford.gov.uk

The Essex Children's & Young Peoples Plan 2006-2009

The Essex Children's and Young People's Plan 2006-2009 was published in April 2006. It is the overarching strategic plan that sets out the priorities to improve the lives of children and young people in Essex. The plan was prepared after lengthy and detailed consultation process with children, young people and their families and partner agencies including Rochford District Council.

One of the underpinning themes of the plan that can be addressed in this play strategy is:

- Engagement with children, young people, their families and communities in the development of services

A robust framework will be used to monitor the performance of all partners, including Rochford District Council.

The plan links into the five priorities of Every Child Matters (Be healthy, Stay safe, Enjoy and achieve, Make a positive contribution, Achieve economic well-being). Specific outcomes from this action plan link into the strategy for play in Rochford District, and they are:

Be Healthy

Priority 1 – Reduce the percentage of obese children who are between the ages of 5 and 10 years

Children are healthy and able to enjoy their childhood and develop.

How we will know whether this is achieved?

By 2009 halt the increase in the percentage and numbers of obese children who are 5 to 10 years of age.

Action Plan

Partners' Activities:

...'Promote healthy eating, exercise through play'

...'Promotion of play and recreation.'

Safe and accessible areas for play and recreation. Increase the number of supervised and unsupervised high quality sports and play activities

The Essex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is overseeing research into childhood obesity; conclusions arising from this will be incorporated into this action plan. A strategy will be developed and multi-agency support will be co-ordinated by the Essex Strategic Health Authority and the Children's Trust arrangements via the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership network.

Stay Safe

Priority 6 – Reduce the number of children and young people who have been the victims of crime and antisocial behavior e.g. bullying

Children and young people are able to develop socially, emotionally and Educationally without fear of harm.

How we will know whether this is achieved?

Children and young people are able to enjoy their childhood and adolescence and develop.

Action Plan

Borough and district councils should provide supervised safe play and leisure facilities.

Extended Schools and other voluntary/community groups should endeavor to provide Safe out of school activities.

Enjoy & Achieve

Priority 7- Raise educational attainment

Children and young people achieve their potential

How we will know whether this is achieved?

Activities organised through extended school programmes.

Increasing informal learning opportunities through play.

Summer schools and extended school activities.

Priority 8- Raise the achievement levels of children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities

Children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities fulfill their potential

Action plan

Voluntary and community groups organizing holiday play schemes

Make a positive contribution

Priority 9 – Increase the confidence and community participation of children and young people through positive play, leisure, cultural, recreational, volunteering and community activities

Children and young people enjoy play, recreation and informal educational opportunities and have increased confidence and positive attitudes and behaviours.

How we will know whether this has been achieved?

Specifically around play:

- a) Initially agreeing a baseline by identifying and analysing the data on children and young people participating in community, play and recreational activities and then setting targets on the basis of this baseline.
- b) Positive community recognition of the contribution of young people to the community.
- c) Improved health of children and young people.
- d) Increased community safety and the pride of children and young people in local areas.
- e) Improved education and literacy of children and young people.
- f) By 2009 all local delivery groups offer extended services that include play, sport, and recreation.
- i) Increased community involvement of children and young people.
- j) Improved quality of the local environment through the activities of children and young people.
- k) By September 2007 all borough and district councils to have a play strategy arising from a play partnership.

- l) Young people contribute to the development and implementation of a volunteer strategy.
- m) Young people develop a pattern of lifelong engagement with volunteering.
- n) Implement the action plan of the Sports Development Plan.
- o) Increase by 6% by 2009 the number of children and young people participating in cultural and leisure activities.

Action plan

There are also links to Priority 10 *where the development of positive behaviours should enable young offenders to become engaged in voluntary and community activities.*

We want to:

- a) build on the consultations with children and young people in order to achieve the *Hear by Right* standards for the active involvement of children and young people;
- b) target disadvantaged areas and disadvantaged groups e.g. hard to reach groups such as Travellers and other minority ethnic groups of children and young people where there is a lack of facilities.

Although there are no direct links to Achieving Economic Well Being, we consider all areas to be of equal importance and will review the impact play can have in this area, and should it be highlighted that a specific target can be met we will introduce the area to the partnership for consideration.

How are we going to achieve the actions for Every Child Matters?

Borough and district councils will:

- Establish partnership initiatives for play,
- Increase the number of affordable play, cultural and leisure opportunities for children and young people, including partnership agreements with schools and other publicly owned facilities.
- Ensure that play facilities and activities within localities are accessible to children and young people with disabilities, and the facilities are clean and well maintained.
- Establish safe play facilities and activities that are self-directed and fun, and provide supervision as necessary.
- Encourage new housing developments have accessible play facilities.
- Aid and assist voluntary and community groups to develop holiday play schemes that meet the needs of their community.

For more information see www.essexcc.gov.uk

“Building a winning future together in Essex” A Strategy for Sport in Essex

Sport contributes to the health and fitness of the nation, a crucial quality as research reveals repeatedly that our children are worryingly unfit; it generates local and national pride in our champions; it contributes to a well-rounded education, as a vehicle for learning physical and all-round life skills; it is an economic force, returning to the public purse seven times what it receives in grants and subsidies.....but sport, and this includes play as physical

activity, is its own justification; vital, exciting and fun. It is simply part of our lives.

Yet in Essex we have the lowest participation rate in the East and one of the lowest rates in England (Active People Survey, December 2006). Something is not right. The answer has to be to start with sport for our young people, to make sure they all have positive experiences of playing sport. It is those early experiences that shape a child's attitude to sport in later life – to opt in or to opt out.

Whilst the Strategy will deliver a range of outputs, the ultimate impact on play will be through:

- Increasing quality opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity in a range of settings
- Specifically increased recreational participation attracted to sport by its promotion of the health and social benefits and promote opportunities for sport in non-formal settings and in alternative activities.
- Ensure that transport is not a barrier to increasing participation.
- School children across Essex being exposed to a compelling physical education curriculum, taught by enthusiastic teachers with the requisite training and enjoying vibrant competition, value is added to the PESSCL strands with work with the School Sport Partnerships, Key Performance Indicator: 85% of schools achieving the 2 hours of quality PE and sport entitlement through the curriculum by 2008, Key Performance Indicator: All schools achieving the 4 hours of quality PE and sport entitlement through the curriculum and after school sport provision by 2010.
- Increased recreational participation, A physical activity strategy is produced with outputs around a number of active recreation themes e.g. Exercise referral schemes, programmes in country parks and open spaces, coastal activity schemes, health at work programmes, Key Performance Indicator: 1% increase in participation monitoring the impact on: Obesity, smoking, safer and stronger communities, economic regeneration and the work of the Community Sport Networks

And

- Providing an effective method of impact measurement. Work together to create a single system, which collates data from a range of agencies, and to identify weaknesses in order to present the most robust case for long-term support and increased investment

For more information please see www.eeda.org.uk

Managing risk in play provision:

The Play Safety Forum, a grouping of national agencies involved in play safety, has produced *Managing Risk in Play Provision* to support the work of those involved in play provision of any kind. The statement has equal relevance to children and young people of all ages from 0 to 18, and it uses the term 'children' to cover the whole age range. It focuses on physical injuries resulting from accidents. However, the overall approach, namely that a balance should be struck between risks and benefits.

We consider *Managing Risk in Play Provision* to be an important document that will contribute to the debate on the provision of children's play. It articulates the balance between the benefit and the need for children to play against the duty of play providers to provide safe play. It makes clear that the safety must be considered at all stages of play provision but that, inevitably, there will be risk of injury when children play, as there is risk of injury in life generally. We must not lose sight of the important developmental role of play for children in the pursuit of the unachievable goal of absolute safety. The important message is though that there must be freedom from unacceptable risk of life-threatening or permanently disabling injury in play.' *Health and Safety Executive*.

A full copy of this document can be found at www.ncb.org.uk

Rochford District Council engages a Health & Safety Advisor annually to assess all of its play spaces and report on the findings. See Appendix A.

What do we currently offer/do?

Rochford District Council has had a long-term commitment to play for many years. A rolling capital programme looks at play areas to provide new equipment that increases the play value in existing play spaces. Rochford District Council Officers work closely with Members, other officers, local community and industry specialists to ensure value for money and endeavour to increase play opportunities. Rochford District Council maintains Health & Safety standards with annual repairs and maintenance; the parish councils can replace equipment when it is past its safe and useful life.

The Council's grounds maintenance contractor, Service Team (part of the Veolia Group), complete daily inspections of play areas and are also responsible for the hire of the districts many parks and open spaces particularly in relation to football pitches.

Arts & Sports Development

The Arts & Sports Development Team works closely in partnership with various agencies providing opportunities for play throughout the district. This list is by no means exhaustive but merely a taste of the activities available. Some partners offer other free play options, although some of the activities offered by the groups below are charged for, where this is the case a £ has been added to the list.

Library Activities

Essex Libraries run many activities for children including youth events such as music and quiz nights as well as family events, and activities throughout the summer including the big summer read

Wild Woods Day

A large free Family event including walks, performance artists, workshops for all ages and entertainment. This is a partnership between the Council's Woodlands Leisure and Recycling departments using arts and leisure activity to educate about the woodlands and conservation issues

Footprints

Projects have included one off public Art Projects weekly youth Club at St Marks Hall Rochford as well as evening activities including Boxercise and Holiday activities in Partnership with Extended Schools. £

Holiday Activities

Rochford District Councils runs a variety of Arts and Sports Holiday activities mostly for children 8+ including visual Arts Drama, Dance and other performance skills. £+Free Sessions

Extended Schools

Working with partnership organisations and schools to provide many out of schools activities for young people and for families

The Star Partnership provides community projects across the district. Such projects are particularly relevant in areas of deprivation, where there is a real need. A range of health related projects are held across the district, in partnership with Rochford District Council, and other organisations. Rochford District Council works closely with extended schools to provide school sport provision, during and after school times. Sessions provided include, boxercise, dodgeball, football and multi sports.

Disability Play Scheme

The Rochford and District Disability Playscheme was registered with OFSTED in October 2003. Based at Hockley Community Centre, the scheme runs during school holidays, providing full day care for children with physical disabilities and learning difficulties. Those who attend are aged between five and 16. Qualified staff work on a one to one ratio with the children, all of whom live in the District of Rochford. £

Social Services arrange assessments for all children that attend, to establish their needs and whether the scheme is suitable. Rochford District Council has the role of organising the venue, staffing and suitable equipment.

Activities will vary, dependent upon the needs of those that attend. Examples of supervised activities include sensory play, bouncy castle and ball pond, outdoor play, cookery, role play, play station, art and craft and much more.

Disability Activities at the Warehouse

Weekly sessions are provided for children and teenagers, with special needs, to enjoy a range of sport and social activities. Sessions are free of charge, hosted by The Warehouse Centre, Rayleigh.

Those participating are accompanied by a parent or carer, to support the needs of the young person. Sessions are supported by Social Services.

Holiday Activities with Virgin Active

Outdoor Action is a chance for children age 5 + to join in the fun with the Ace Action Team.

It takes place in the local Rochford area offering a wide range of activities, which include arts and craft, face painting, cricket, tennis and other team games.

It's a chance for children to make new friends and meet up with existing friends through the summer holiday.

Children are fully supervised by qualified members of the Ace Action Team and encouraged to play, try sports and practice existing hobbies.

HYPER

HYPER is an after schools programme, run at Great Wakering Sports Centre, Clements Hall Leisure Centre and Rayleigh Leisure Centre. Each venue provides a range of free supervised play, sports and arts activities for children and teenagers. The scheme is supported by a number of partners, including,

Rochford District Council, Extended Schools, Virgin Active and Children's Fund Essex.

The scheme has been a real success in providing opportunities for young people to be positively engaged in exciting activities, in a typical week up to 300 young people participate in the programme.

HYPER has also worked with the Youth Service, Connexions and Victim Support, to provide structured sessions to further support young people with their personal development. Such sessions have been fully supported by staff at each centre, who have encouraged young people to be responsive to all support work.

Audit & Mapping

Currently Rochford District Council does not have an open spaces strategy, this has greatly impacted on the auditing of play spaces for this strategy. Bearing this in mind a sample number of parks was chosen to audit in regards to usage and play value. The sample was taken from across the district from the East to the West of the district. Further audits will take place to look at the other play spaces during the course of this plan.

The purpose of the audit and mapping exercise was to look at the spread of facilities across the district and to look at the specific areas and rate them according to equipment, access, educational value etc. The exercise was carried out in November 2006, future audits will be carried at various times of year to ensure even coverage.

The council owns and manages many formal and informal public open spaces, sports fields and gardens in the district comprising a total of 305.183 hectares. For the purposes of this study skate parks, leisure centres, schools and miscellaneous areas including woodland have also been included (any space where informal and formal play can take place). We can see from the spread of residential areas and play space allocation that the district is well served with fixed play spaces. See map at front of strategy and list of play spaces on pages 3+4.

A safety audit (using the guidelines set out by RoSPA) of ALL of the formal play spaces was carried out in early 2006, as part of an annual exercise, the results of which can be seen in Appendix A.

In order to show the correlation between the play spaces and their usage a sample number of play spaces were audited for visits.

Conclusions to usage audit

The audit has shown a significant number of visits to play spaces in the mid afternoon. Generally younger children (0-8years) attended with parents/guardians. Young people (10-15years) arrived later in the afternoon/evening. The play spaces that are en-route to school/play school are popular in the mornings, their location making it easy to stop on the way. Larger play spaces attract dog walkers in the morning and not so many children taking part in play activity. The larger play spaces are also generally set back from the road so 'popping in' en-route to school is not always viable. This audit was undertaken in November & December, therefore usage may be lower than average due to weather conditions.

Conclusions to play equipment value audit

An audit of the quality of the sample play spaces was undertaken to consider the 'play value' of the equipment and area and can be seen in the table below. The spaces were given a score on various items including: balancing, crawling, rocking sensory items, educational play, seating, shade, ground graphics and inclusiveness. They were also given a score for the site itself, looking at, fencing, ground contours, shelter and sustainability and various

other points. The play spaces were split into age range appropriateness- Toddler-Infant, Infant-Junior & Junior-Senior.

Potential site changes will also be scored using this rating system and will be detailed in the action plan.

The scoring sheet has been developed with an industry-leading manufacturer of play equipment (a sample copy of which can be found in Appendix D)

Play Space	Score Equipment	%	Score Site	%
Fyfield Path, Toddler-Infant	9 out of 46	20%	9 out of 29	31%
Clements Hall, Toddler-Senior	9 out of 39	23%	8 out of 29	28%

Conclusions to equipment audit

The audit of the current play provision highlighted that although the equipment is of very high quality, safe and well maintained, the 'play value' is low. The target audience for the equipment needs to be considered alongside the 'quality' of the equipment. The areas are age relevant but do not consider the need to push differing boundaries at the various ages (climbing to higher heights at an older age, crawling through tunnels, balancing at different levels etc). Links to educational values have not been a high priority in the past and local characteristics have not been included in design. More consideration is needed to include the surrounding environment, use of trees for shade, raised shrub beds instead of boundary fencing etc. More design thought could be used in how the 'family' unit can play together, seating for all 'family members' needs to be considered, but especially for the parent/carer, current provision is disproportionately under offered and no spaces offer shade. Generally play spaces are not accessible to all, use of some surfacing would make it difficult for children with mobility issues to use the areas, and additionally a parent/carer would also have difficulty. Some consideration has been given to using inclusive equipment and how children and adults use the space. Rochford District Council has maintained its play spaces to a very high level and is continuing to develop and evolve the spaces through the rolling programme of works. With the inception of the Play Partnership and through the work of this strategy further work will be undertaken with the Engineering & Architecture Section to develop the understanding of play and the links it can have to the wider agenda.

Consultation

As part of the Essex Play Group work, and funded by the Children's Fund Essex, a large scale consultation of school children and parents was undertaken in 2006/2007. Over 1000 young people were asked their views on play, where they like to play, what they like to play with, what would they like to play and much more. Called Play4Play the consultation was in the form of art and drama workshops in schools within the district. A full copy of the consultation results can be found at www.essexplay.com

We also undertook targeted consultation with the parents and young people who took part in Rochford District Council's Holiday Activity Scheme, in 2006 and 2007, via questionnaires results of which can be found in Appendix B. Our art classes also told us their views with a range of pictures, some of which have appeared on the pages in this document. The young people were aged between 8 and 16 years and were taking part in activities ranging from dodgeball to drama, archery to ballroom dancing.

As part of the Essex Play 4 Play project, workshops were organised for schools for children with special needs, including those with profound and multiple disabilities. It was felt that it was essential to work with all children across the county and that there was a potential gap in play facilities where children have special needs. With this in mind, consultations took place in several special needs schools in order to gain their students' opinions. Workshop leaders received additional training addressing key issues including communication, assumptions and use of space. The planned workshops were adapted according to the children's needs. Workshop leaders were encouraged to make the sessions more holistic encouraging use of the senses, such as touch, sight and sound to stimulate responses from participants, 243 children and young people in 7 special schools were consulted.

Supporting the Well-Being of Children and Young People in Essex 2007
Essex County Council also undertook a large consultation with children aged 7 to 11 and 12 to 18

The results are the compilation of data collected from a sample of primary pupils and secondary pupils in Essex during the Spring term 2007, in total 6869 children were consulted. The work was commissioned by Essex County Council and its partners as a way of collecting robust information about children and young people's lifestyles. This information is being used to set baselines and targets and help with action planning for the Children and Young People's Plan, which this strategy will help achieve. Schools were invited to complete the questionnaire as an online exercise. Schools were also provided with a paper version of the questionnaire.

Various questions were asked around activity and physical activity, when asked for the one thing that would make children's lives better, the top answers for primary pupils were more/better play areas and an end to bullying. For secondary pupils, the top answers included more clubs and facilities.

A full copy of the data can be found in Appendix E

For further information about this questionnaire please email
cypplan@essexcc.gov.uk

In total over 1300 children, young people and parents & carers gave us their opinion of play provision in Rochford District and many more across the county. The children and young people will receive their own version of the results detailing the results of the consultation and what happens next. The schools that took part will also receive a copy this strategy listing the action points that have been developed from their responses and how we will feedback to them in future.

Executive Summary & Key Themes

The over riding response was that the young people enjoy the parks and open spaces of the district taking part in physical activity, playing with sports equipment and static play equipment. It was important to the children and young people that they play with other people, be that friends or family, and they liked to play whenever they could! The adults wanted the children and young people to take part in sport/physical activity close to home, and possibly supervised play in the parks. Safety was very important to them and they wanted to see a greater range of activities and/or equipment near to their homes.

The general response to barriers to participating was safety, location of activities, age range, vandalism, older children/teenagers and availability of facilities and/or activities. Whether these fears are projected fears or an experienced fear is unknown.

There was a definite ambition of the young people to have some large scale play options within the district, for example an Ice Skating Rink and swimming pool in the west of the district. See appendix B, E and www.essexplay.com for full details of conclusions to consultations.

Rochford District Council Play Strategy Bibliography, Glossary & Location of Documents

- Getting Serious about Play:
<http://www.culture.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/21762951-E07E-4439-8BA3-04C6ECE510A3/0/ReviewofChildrensPlay.pdf>
- Essex Play Policy:
www.essexplay.com
- Play 4 Play Consultation Results
www.essexplay.com
- Children's Play Council/ National Children's Bureau: Planning for Play: Guidance on the development and implementation of a local play strategy. 2006.
- Children's Play Council. Managing Risk in play provision: A position statement
- Government publication: Every Child Matters 2003.
- Major of London Fund: Guide to Preparing Play Strategies. Planning inclusive play spaces and opportunities for all London's children and young people. 2005.
- Kids: Planning for Inclusion: Making Your Play Strategy Inclusive. 2006