

South Somerset District Council Play Strategy

2007 - 2012

Increasing the quality and quantity of play opportunities in South Somerset



2007-2008
*Neighbourhood and
Community Champions:
The Role of Elected Members*

2006-2007
*Improving Rural Services
Empowering Communities*

2005-2006
Getting Closer to Communities

making a difference where it counts



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Foreword

By SSDC Leisure & Culture Portfolio Holder



We are entering a new era in play provision with welcome recognition at all levels of the government of how important play is to happy, healthy and active children and how this in turn is essential to developing and maintaining safe and cohesive communities.

South Somerset District Council, with the support of the national play support organisation PLAYLINK, has been working with a multi-agency steering group to develop a comprehensive **Play Policy** for South Somerset that sets out our shared values and principles that we believe should underpin the work of all services that provide, or have an impact on, play opportunities for children and young people in South Somerset. The Play Policy sets out of vision of all children and young people having access to a range of play opportunities.

How we plan to achieve our vision is set out in the fo llowing **Plan Strategy**. It is a strategic approach to improving play opportunities across South Somerset and forms a framework for all those involved in play to work together to maximise the use of resources, share expertise and avoid duplication of services.

The challenging goals, set out in the strategy offer great benefits to the community, but can only be achieved with the full support and cooperation of many partner organisations involved in play.

I look forward to working with you to make this era one full of opportunities for children to have exciting, challenging and happy experiences, which will leave cherished memories for life.

I hope you will give this strategy your full support.

Councillor Sylvia Seal

Foreword

By SSDC Play Champion



Now is the time to look at the opportunities we offer young people and children in South Somerset. Children are entitled to safe play areas, which are fun, challenging and exciting. The skill of planning such areas requires us to look closely at how children play and how they learn in an active play environment.

Young children do not differentiate between play and work. At play a child is learning how to solve problems, make decisions, experiment and acquire new skills. They practice how to play alone or in groups, they begin to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their own body and by trial and error how to play safely. They are developing social, emotional, physical and mental skills.

We need to plan imaginatively and creatively. We need to capture more excitement in playscapes than modern trends have allowed. Children need vibrant open space where they can meet friends and access high quality play environments. Creative design and more use of natural materials, which reflect the diversity of our environment can have huge play value.

We have to plan for a wide age range, offering a variety of equipment and opportunity. The BMX tracks, skate parks, multi-use games areas and youth shelters have done much to improve facilities for our young people. Also, there are already many excellent examples of structured play equipment for young children in place. However there is still work to be done as all children have a right to good play facilities (both structured and informal) so that they encounter new experiences and extend their skills.

Well planned play is a key way in which children learn with enjoyment and challenge, developing confidence, good self esteem and a healthy body.

Councillor Ann Campbell

Summary of the Play Policy

This section provides a summary of the play policy on which this strategy is based.

The overriding aim of the play policy and strategy is to increase the quantity, and enhance the quality, of children's play opportunities in South Somerset. The play policy shall be taken into account whenever decisions have potential to have an impact on children's play opportunities.

In collaboration with other organisations South Somerset District Council (SSDC) will create play opportunities that will allow children and young people to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment in challenging settings free from unacceptable levels of risk, regardless of race, economic and social circumstances, gender or range of abilities. The emphasis is always to be on the children's choice and control over their own experience.

SSDC recognises play as equal to formal education in terms of its fundamental role in enabling children and young people to engage positively with the complexities of the world around them.

SSDC believes that every child needs opportunities to play. It is therefore critical that play provision is welcoming and accessible to every child, irrespective of gender, economic or social circumstances, background or origin, or individual capacities and abilities.

SSDC intends that play provision should meet the play needs of all its disabled children and young people within inclusive provision. Where this is judged not possible or desirable, full reasons will need to be given. It is SSDC policy that children and young people's services want to ensure accessibility to a wider range of children and young people than is currently the case.

SSDC has adopted the Play Safety Forum's Position on Managing Risk in Play Provision. SSDC is committed to ensuring that play providers are given play specific training and support to enable them to conduct risk assessments.

SSDC affirms that its play provision, and that which it supports, will work to the **Seven Play Objectives** set out in Appendix Two.

Summary of the Play Policy continued...

All the children's services aiming to provide for their play should assess and develop their provision by reference to the **Criteria for an Enriched Play Environment** set out in **Appendix Three** and the **Seven Play Objectives**.

In collaboration with other agencies, SSDC will encourage measures to be taken that will enhance children's free play opportunities within educational settings during and after school.

This policy does not prescribe age ranges for play provision. Subject to local discretion and conditions, there should be a presumption in favour of children, young people and adults of all ages having access to quality play opportunities.

Introduction

In the autumn of 2004 South Somerset District Council (SSDC) set out to develop a **PLAY POLICY** that would establish the principles and values of how play should be provided in South Somerset. From the outset it was decided to consult and engage fully with the people of South Somerset and relevant organisations that have an impact on play.

Through the process of developing the play policy a multi agency Play Steering Group was established. This steering group has developed the play strategy, which is intended to be a practical and evolving document used with reference to the play policy. It is the intention that this strategy will be used by people involved in play to provide focus and direction when delivering play services to the people of South Somerset.

The Strategy is made up of seven broad objectives, each one followed by the 'critical activities' we have identified as being essential to bringing the objective into reality on the ground.

A detailed **Implementation Plan** will follow, as roles and responsibilities amongst our partners are established and details of projects are built up.

The play strategy is designed to run until 2012, however an annual review will provide the opportunity to amend the strategy, to ensure it responds to changes in play services, and to the needs of children and young people in our community.

Definition of play

SSDC has adopted the following definition of play, which it believes best represents the most succinct description of this complex subject.

“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.”

Source: Best Play (2001)



How did we consult?

In November 2004 the consultation process started by gathering the views of young people on existing play opportunities across the district. This was done through a Play Roadshow on the Community Activity Bus. The bus visited 16 venues covering different age groups and different types of communities. At the same time the Roadshow provided the opportunity to consult with many parents and local play providers and generated invaluable feedback on play provision.

In May 2005 a series of Play Policy workshops were held and facilitated by a consultant from PLAYLINK. PLAYLINK is a not for profit organisation that works with local authorities, organisations and groups that want to create the best possible play opportunities for children and young people. They do this by offering advice, information and services which includes assisting local authorities with the formulation and adoption of play policies and strategies.

Representatives from 15 organisations involved in play attended the workshops and sought to establish the importance of play and how risk should be managed in play provision.

Using the data generated through the two consultation processes and drawing on their national experience in developing play policies, in June 2005 Playlink produced the first draft of a play policy for South Somerset.

In developing the play policy it was recognised that play provision in South Somerset involves many different organisations, departments and individuals. Therefore to ensure the policy reflected this diverse range of provision, in June 2005 a SOUTH SOMERSET PLAY STEERING GROUP was established which included a cross section of voluntary and local authority representatives. Over the following months the Play Steering Group developed the PLAY POLICY and also created this PLAY STRATEGY.



Aim of the Play Policy & Strategy

“To increase the quantity, and enhance the quality, of children’s play opportunities in South Somerset”

Objectives

ONE

TWO

THREE

FOUR

FIVE

SIX

SEVEN

**Bringing
people
together**

Frameworks

**Increasing
provision**

Sustainability

**Supporting
adults**

**Create a
Flagship
Play
Space**

Commitment



Bringing people together



South
Somerset
District
Council

PLAY STRATEGY

Objective One

Establish the people and organisational structures that are required to ensure effective implementation of the play policy and strategy.

The Critical Activity:

- Create a multi-agency Play Strategy Implementation Group (PSIG) with representatives from agencies that have formally adopted the play policy and strategy.
- Secure resources to appoint a Community Playscheme Officer, managed by PSIG and hosted by SSDC
- Review play services to ensure gaps in service provision are noted and addressed.
- Identify financial resources & investments needed to underpin and maintain services

When will activity occur?

2007/8

2008/9

2009/10

2010/11

2011/12





Frameworks



South Somerset District Council

PLAY STRATEGY

Objective Two

The SSDC Best Play Objectives and Enriched Play Environment Criteria to form an integral part of the design brief when assessing, developing or improving play environments.

The Critical Activity:

- Publish and distribute the Best Play Objectives and Enriched Play Environment Criteria to ensure those who develop or improve play environments are fully aware of them.
- Incorporate the Best Play Objectives and Enriched Play Environment Criteria into the evaluation of SSDC community grants applications.
- Create a framework that will enable local play audits to be completed.
- Ensure communities are consulted and young peoples views are actively sought & considered.
- The Play Safety Forum position statement is taken into account when making judgements on managing risk in all play provision.
- Create a generic framework that assist in the consultation of communities in relation to play.

When will activity occur?

2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
--------	--------	---------	---------	---------

✓ →

✓ →

✓

✓ →

✓ →

✓



Increasing provision



South Somerset District Council

PLAY STRATEGY

Objective Three

Target resources to the areas of greatest need for play improvements

The Critical Activity:

- Map current play provision in South Somerset to identify communities that have no play provision, and where over provision may be occurring
- Undertake four community play audits each year, focusing on those communities in greatest need.
- Working closely with and listening to communities, create four local community play plans each year using the information generated through the play audits for reference.
- All play agencies to work together, through PSIG, to target their resources effectively in delivering the community play plans.
- Continue to support existing play provision and respond to local need where appropriate.

When will activity occur?

2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
	✓			
	✓	→		
	✓	→		
	✓	→		
	✓	→		

✓

✓ →

✓ →

✓ →

✓ →



Sustainability



South Somerset District Council

PLAY STRATEGY

Objective Four

All providers should ensure adequate resources are made available for maintenance of designated play space, shared public space and supervised play.

The Critical Activity:

- Review existing budgets and staff levels to establish if adequate resources are currently in place to deliver community play plans.
- Identify new funding and develop financial plans for areas not adequately resourced.
- Share good practice with other play providers on the costs involved in properly maintaining play spaces and delivering supervised play opportunities.

When will activity occur?

2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
--------	--------	---------	---------	---------

✓ →

✓ →

✓ →





Supporting Adults



South
Somerset
District
Council

PLAY STRATEGY

Objective Five

Increase opportunities for adults to support the play of children & young people.

When will activity occur?

2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
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The Critical Activity:

- Organise a Play Roadshow in priority parishes that will be identified by the play audit. These will promote the importance of play opportunities in local communities.
- Organise a programme of training events that will provide adults with the knowledge and skills required to develop & manage play spaces.
- Organise a programme of training events that will provide adults with the knowledge and skills required to manage community play schemes and that will also enable them to train others in this activity.
- Provide start up grant support to assist voluntary groups that benefit play, giving priority to innovative projects assessed against the Enriched Play Environment Criteria.
- Develop web-based resources that provide knowledge and practical information on play.
- Work in partnership with other agencies to increase access to play opportunities for children with disabilities.

	✓			
✓	→			
✓	→			
✓	→			
✓	→			
✓	→			



Create a Flagship Play Space



South
Somerset
District
Council

PLAY STRATEGY

Objective Six

Working with partners create a Flagship Play Space that models best practice and incorporates appropriate levels of supervision during peak use times.

The Critical Activity:

- Identify a location for a Flagship Play Space and seek approval for its positioning.
- Carry out a feasibility study that looks at the viability of a Flagship Play Space.
- Identify and apply for outside funding to create and staff a Flagship Play Space.

When will activity occur?

2007/8

2008/9

2009/10

2010/11

2011/12

✓

✓

✓





Commitment



South Somerset District Council

PLAY STRATEGY

Objective Seven

Ensure the play policy and associated guidelines are fully incorporated and adopted into planning, transport, community safety policy and others as appropriate.

The Critical Activity:

- Put forward Play as a theme to be included in the Local Strategic Partnership's Community Strategy.
- Incorporate the play policy and strategy documents into SSDC's Development Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents all of which should form integral parts of the Local Development Framework.
- Create and publish additional detailed play & open space guidelines for new developments that can be established as Supplementary Planning Documents and incorporated into the Local Development Framework.
- Create a template legal agreement that reflects the requirements of the play and future open space policy.
- Ensure the Enriched Play Environment Criteria are included in the development control process when design briefs on new developments are established.

When will activity occur?

2007/8 2008/9 2009/10 2010/11 2011/12

✓	→
✓	→
✓	→
✓	→
✓	→

Play Strategy

Annual Review & Performance Monitoring

Annual Play Strategy review

The world around us is constantly changing and to ensure this strategy does not become outdated it is an expectation that the strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis. The annual review will provide an opportunity to reflect on the progress made and lessons learned. At this stage the opportunity to consider and amend the Play Strategy will be realised so that it reflects the needs and demands expected of play services at that time.

Performance monitoring

To establish the effectiveness of this strategy a performance monitoring system will be established. Baseline data will be calculated so that changes can be measured over time. Goals and measures will be developed against each objective and then reviewed on a regularly basis against the baseline data.

Quarterly meetings of the (South Somerset) Play Strategy Implementation Group (PSIG) will enable adjustments to be made to service provision if performance is less than expected. The annual review will enable goals and measures to be amended and new approaches to delivery to be considered if old ones are not being effective.

Acknowledgements

Participants in the Play Strategy development process

Name	Group	Schools
Cllr Ann Campbell	SSDC Ward Member & Play Champion	Ansford Community School, Castle Cary
Cllr Sylvia Seal	SSDC Portfolio holder Leisure and Culture	Westfield Community School, Yeovil
Robert Parr	SSDC Senior Play and Youth Facilities Officer	Stanchester Community School, Stanchester
Hannah Aitken	SSDC Young Peoples Officer	Fairmead Special School, Yeovil
Steve Joel	SSDC Sport, Arts & Leisure Manager	Chard Young People's Centre
Michael Hammond	Somerset Children's Fund	Abbas and Templecombe C of E School
Rachel Chainey	Somerset Play Forum	Grass Royal Junior School
Ruth Miller	Templecombe Holiday Play scheme	Hazelbury Plucknett C of E First School
Trish Harper	South Petherton Holiday Playscheme	Curry Rivel C of E School
Judy Turner	Do It All Club, Long Sutton	Mudford Pre-School
Mrs Ovenden	St John's & St Andrew's Holiday Club	Chard Schools Out
Kay Strode	East Coker Playgroup	St. Mary's Pre-School
Tracey Derrick	St Mary's Pre-school, Barrington	Sunshine Morning Nursery
Lee Constable	Somerset County Council, Grounds & Landscapes Section	
Sarah Love	EYDCP Childcare advisor	Play Providers Survey April 2005 - Respondents
Katie Binding	Yeovil Healthy Opportunities Programme	Martock Junior Youth Club
P Docherty	EYCDP Childcare Inclusion officer	Do It All club Playscheme
Janet Legg	Children's Centre Project Worker	Pitney Fun for All Playscheme
Dana King	South Somerset Play Association	Shepton Don't Drop Out Drop In Youth Group
Charlotte Jones	Compton Dundon Village Hall Committee	Parcroft Out of School Playscheme
Dave Crisfield	SSDC Community Development Officer	2nd South Petherton Scout Group
Sandra Hutchings	SSDC Outreach Officer, Community Resource Service.	YoYo Youth Group, Langport
Pat Hacker	SSDC, Community Resource Service Manager	Kids Out, Out of School Club
Adrian Moore	SSDC, Play & Youth Facilities Officer	Somerton Guides
Stephen Barnes	SSDC, Play & Youth Facilities Officer	Yeovil Scout Group
Stephen Boarder	SSDC, Play & Youth Facilities Ranger	Milford Holiday Club
Bernard Speigal	PLAYLINK	1st Martock Guides
	Parent & Toddler Groups	1st South Petherton Brownies
	Little Steps Toddlers Group,	Barrington Youth Club
	Little Wheelers Toddler Group	Kingsbury Episcopi Playscheme
	Merriott Pre-School Toddlers Group	Chard & District Special Needs Holiday Club
	Compton Dundon & Littleton Toddlers Group	Tatworth Church Holiday Club
		Somerton Holiday Fun
		Milford Park Holiday Activities
		Barton St David Playscheme
		The Jam Club Playscheme

**Appendix One
Endorsement of the Play
Policy and Strategy**

Name of Organisation:

Address:

.....

.....

.....

I / my organisation hereby fully endorses this play policy and strategy and where possible will endeavour to support its implementation.

I / my organisation would/would not like to have representative on the Strategy Implementation Group.

Signed:

Print Name:

Position in Organisation:

E-mail:

Date:

Please return completed forms to the following address.

Hannah Aitken, Young People's Officer, South Somerset District Council, The Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil, Somerset, BA20 2HT.

Appendix Two

The Seven Play Provision Objectives

The objectives that follow are broad statements, which are intended to set out how the definition of play and the underpinning values and principles should be put into practice. They form the basis against which play provision can be evaluated.

The objectives take account of those published in 'Best Play: what play provision should do for children', the outcome of a partnership between PLAYLINK, Children's Play Council and the National Playing Fields Association.

South Somerset District Council affirms that its play provision, and that which it supports, will work to the seven 'Best Play' objectives. These are set out below.

Objective One: The provision extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.

Objective Two: The provision recognises the child's need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need.

Objective Three: The provision manages the balance between children and young people's need and want to play and the need to keep them from being exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury.

Objective Four: The provision maximises the range of play opportunities.

Objective Five: The provision fosters independence and self-esteem.

Objective Six: The provision fosters children's respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction.

Objective Seven: The provision fosters the child's well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.

Appendix Three

Criteria for an Enriched Play Environment

SSDC wants to ensure that the enriched play environment criteria are taken into account when planning, designing and maintaining places where children and young people should be able to play. This will require a new emphasis on the natural environment, natural materials and play friendly art works and structures.

The examples given in each section are in no sense exhaustive, merely indicative.

A varied and interesting environment. Examples: things at different levels, spaces of different sizes, places to hide, trees and bushes, open spaces, made things, places to inspire mystery and imagination.

Challenge in relation to the physical environment. Examples: activities, which test the limits of capabilities, rough and tumble, sports and games, chase.

Experiencing the natural elements - earth, water, fire, air. Examples: campfires, digging, playing snowballs, flying kites.

Movement - e.g. running, jumping, rolling, climbing, balancing. Examples: beams and ropes, soft mats, bike riding, juggling equipment, ladders, space.

Manipulating natural and fabricated materials. Examples: materials for art, cooking, making and mending of all kinds; building dens; making concoctions; using tools; access to bits and pieces of all kinds.

Stimulation of the five senses. Examples: music making, places where shouting is fine, quiet places, different colours and shapes, dark and bright places, cooking on a campfire, rotting leaves, a range of food and drink, objects that are soft, prickly, flexible, large and small.

Experiencing change in the natural and built environment. Examples: experiencing the seasons through access to the outdoor environment; opportunities to take part in building, demolishing, or transforming the environment.

Social interactions. Examples: being able to choose whether and when to play alone or with others, to negotiate, cooperate, compete and resolve conflicts. Being able to interact with individuals and groups of different ages, abilities, interests, gender, ethnicity and culture.

Exploring identity. Examples: dressing up, role play, performing, taking on different kinds of responsibility.

Experiencing a range of emotions. Examples: opportunities to be powerful/powerless, scared/confident, like/disliked, in/out of control, brave/cowardly.

Appendix Four

How This Strategy Links Into The SSDC Corporate Plan

South Somerset District Council's Corporate Plan sets out the broad things the organisation seeks to achieve between 2005 and 2012. Within the Corporate Plan are many aims, objectives and critical activities that are directly linked to the provision of play. The Play Policy and Strategy has not set out to attempt to directly respond to this list but rather ensure that the requirements of the Corporate Plan are addressed as part of a more holistic approach to play.

Contents of the Corporate Plan which relate to play: -

Play supports the following Corporate Aims: -

Aim Three - Improve the health and well-being of our citizens

Aim Four – Ensure safe, sustainable and cohesive communities

Aim Five – Promote a balanced natural and built environment

Play supports the following Corporate Objectives: -

Objective 11 – Work in partnership with others to improve the health prospects for all.

Objective 14 – Maintain above 90 per cent the people who generally feel safe in their communities.

Objective 15 – Increase to 65 per cent by 2010 the people who feel engaged in and can influence decisions that affect their communities.

Objective 16 – Maintain above 80 per cent the people satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.

Objective 18 – 80 per cent of residents the quality of the local, natural and built environment by 2012.

Play relates to the following Critical Activities of the Corporate Plan: -

(Relating to Objective 11) Develop by the end of 2007 a strategy, which supports parishes and town councils in the provision of opportunities and facilities (e.g. sport, play areas and village halls) that promote the health and well-being of local communities.

(Relating to Objective 16) Provide with partners one new facility or activity each year for young people from 2005/06.

(Relating to Objective 18) Development and implementation of management plans for countryside, open spaces and associated assets, with clear intended outcomes, by 2nd quarter 2007.

(Relating to Objective 18) Promote, on average, one new community-based wildlife conservation project or one new built environment enhancement/conservation project each year from 2005 to 2012.

Appendix Five

Every Child Matters and the Five Outcomes

Every Child Matters: Change for Children is a Government Programme that sets a new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19. The aim is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, is to have the support they need to:

Be healthy

Stay safe

Enjoy and achieve

Make a positive contribution

Achieve economic well-being

The Government sets out an agenda for all local authorities to work together with their partners, through Children's Trusts, to deliver integrated services that help children and young people achieve these Five Outcomes.

Further details can be found on the website: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

This Play Strategy sets out a programme of action that will contribute significantly in helping children and young people in South Somerset achieve each of these five outcomes .

The South Somerset Play Steering Group is working closely with the Somerset Play Forum, who are working to ensure that Play is represented in the Somerset Children and Young People's Partnership, and is established as an integral part of their Somerset county wide Implementation Plan.

This Play Strategy is consistent with and builds upon, the Somerset Play Policy Framework developed by Somerset Play Forum and adopted by the Somerset Children's and Young People's Partnership in December 2005.

Appendix Six

Summary of Strategy Funding Position & Links to the Corporate Plan and Every Child Matters

Objectives		Outcomes for Young People					SSDC Corporate Plan Outcomes					Funding	
		BEING HEALTHY	STAYING SAFE	ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	ECONOMIC WELL-BEING	WELL MANAGED SERVICES	INCREASE ECONOMIC VITALITY	IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	SAFE, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES	BALANCED ENVIRONMENT	Existing SSDC Resources	New Resources Needed
1	Establish the people and organisational structures that are required to ensure effective implementation of the Play Policy & Strategy.	√	√	√	√			√	√			√	
2	The SSDC Best Play Objectives and Enriched Play Environment Criteria to form an integral part of the design brief when assessing, developing or improving play environments.	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√		
3	Target resources to areas of greatest need for play improvements.	√	√	√	√	√		√	√			√	
4	All providers should ensure adequate resources are made available for maintenance of designated playspace, shared public space and supervised play.	√	√	√	√	√		√	√			√	
5	Increase opportunities for adults to support the play of children & young people.	√	√	√	√			√	√		√		
6	Working with partners, create a Flagship Playspace that models best practice and incorporates appropriate levels of supervision during peak use times.	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√		√	
7	Ensure the Play Policy and associated guidelines are fully incorporated and adopted into planning, transport, community safety policy and others as appropriate.	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√		

