

The Highland Council
Education Children and Adult Services Committee
18 May 2016

Agenda Item	3.
Report No	ECAS 30/16

Highland Play Strategy 2016 - 2020

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

This report outlines the content of the Highland Play Strategy 2016–20, updates Members on the progress of the Play Improvement Group/Play Highland, and introduces the winners of the 2016 Highland Council/Play Highland Community Play Award.

1. Background

- 1.1 Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities. This is translated into the vision for the Scottish Play Strategy as ‘We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. A nation which values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all our children and young people; in their homes, nurseries, schools and communities.’
- 1.2 Access to good quality, ‘free’ self-directed play, increases children’s ability to socialise and learn ‘the rules’. It ‘creates a brain that has increased flexibility and improved potential for learning in later life’.¹
- 1.3 The Highland Play Strategy 2012–16 ‘Play Matters’ was developed through intensive consultation with children and young people. It has been implemented by the Play Improvement Group/Play Highland, which is one of the Improvement Groups that deliver the improvement actions of *For Highland’s Children 4*. The Group is a multi-agency group which includes the Council, NHS and the third sector (including CALA, High Life Highland, Everything Baby).

2. The Highland Play Strategy 2016 – 2020

- 2.1 The Highland Play Strategy 2016 – 2020 has been circulated separately to Members. It builds on the work of ‘Play Matters’ and sits alongside an active For Highland’s Children Play Improvement Plan (**Appendix 1**).
- 2.2 The work of the Strategy covers four key areas:
 - Involvement;
 - Communication;
 - Access; and
 - Child centred play.

¹ Lester & Russell, 2008 in Play Strategy for Scotland, Edinburgh, Scottish Government.

3. Developing a Public Awareness Campaign

3.1 The first improvement priority in the plan is to 'Develop a Public Awareness campaign – increase awareness and share good practice to improve societal: acceptance of appropriate risk taking; expectation of being outside in different weather conditions; recognition of the importance of self-directed free play for children and young people of all ages; and Challenge gender stereotyping in play.' The group have:

- A well-attended Play Seminar targeting practitioners was held in Inverness in 2013;
- Training delivered (as focus of Equalities Training) to Early Years staff in May 2014;
- Commissioned Room 13 to develop and deliver 'Tales of Mud and Mischief' events held in July and August 2015 in Fort William and Inverness. The events were supported by Ward Discretionary funding;
- Maintained the [Play Highland](#) Website;
- Circulated a regular Play Matters newsletter (currently 402 subscribers). Members are encouraged to sign up to this via the Play Highland Website;
- Had a presence on Twitter (1,539 followers), Facebook (321 'Likes') and Pinterest (68 followers);

3.2 On social media, we see a steady rise in post reach and engagements (likes, comments and shares/retweets) from a range of other play organisations.

3.3 Annual Play Award

3.3.1 The Group has identified good practice through the Highland Council/Play Highland Community Play Award. This recognises:

1. Promotion/implementation of the Highland Play Strategy
2. Promotion of free play
3. Innovation
4. Promotion of inclusion
5. Can we learn from it – is it transferrable?

3.3.2 The Award has previously been won by:

- The Ormlie Community Association for the development of play opportunities for the under 7s and young families in the local area. They achieved this by providing a "no frills" good quality play activity programme using local resources and skills; the range of activities included messy play and wet and wild days.
- Afters@TRACC for the introduction of low cost innovative play using drainpipes. These are used by children in a variety of imaginative ways without adult direction.

3.3.3 More details are provided at: <http://www.playhighland.co.uk/news-from-around-the-region.asp>)

3.3.4 The 2016 award will be presented at Committee to the Smithton Outdoor Explorers After School Club and Green Leaf Garden.

3.4 Improving Access and quality of existing and new spaces for play and increase the number of quality spaces for play

3.4.1 Community Guidance is currently being developed to support communities who wish to develop or adopt spaces for play. This is being developed with the third sector (Highland Third Sector Interface), Care and Learning, Community and Development and Infrastructure Services. This will be presented to a future Committee for approval.

3.4.2 The Group have been looking at opportunities to promote community use of school playgrounds outwith schools hours and consultation work is taking place in Ullapool to take this forward.

3.5 Involving children, young people, parents and professionals meaningfully in decision making and planning.

3.5.1 CALA carried out Community Asset Mapping (CAM) with children over one year to gather children's views about their local communities and share this with interested parties in Highland. The areas were chosen to cover rural and town bases and work was carried out in school and non-school settings. Areas included were: Ardersier, Culbokie, Inverness (Culloden, Drakies, Hilton and Kinmylies), Nairn, North Kessock and Tain. A total of 158 children participated in activities that included walk testing, activity workshops, consultation (adapted from Play Wales Sample Survey Questions) and CAM Comparison. The full report can be found here:

<https://calachildhoodpractice.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/cam-report.pdf>

3.5.2 HLH has consulted with older young people to find out what play means to them. There were 3 key questions:

- What 'play' means for young people?
- What spaces in their communities are important to the young people?
- What are the barriers to young people accessing these spaces?

3.5.3 Responses were received from a good mix of area youth forums - Thurso, Portree, Skye Young Carers' group, Plockton, Nairn, Inverness Millburn, Inverness High School, Culloden, Fortrose and Dingwall, and these are currently being analysed by the Group.

3.5.4 The play events noted in paragraph 3.2.1 directly involved children, and also collected stories from adults about their play experiences as children. The consultation in Ullapool noted in paragraph 3.4.2 has involved children, young people and their families.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1
- A play event is planned for 2016. This will involve closing part of Church Street in Inverness on a Sunday to promote free play.
 - The Community Guidance will be completed, consulted on and distributed.
 - The public awareness campaign will continue to be implemented.
 - The outcome of the Ullapool consultation will be analysed and actions developed.
 - Work with Highland schools to explore how to safely enable community

access to play spaces outwith school hours will continue.

- Consultation with children and young people will continue to be a focus of the work of the Group.

5. Implications

5.1 **Resource:** The Strategy can be implemented within existing budgets.

5.2 **Legal:** The Play Strategy assists the Council and its partners to meet UNCRC Article 31.

5.3 **Equalities, Gaelic and Rural:** The Strategy aims to ensure that all children, including those in rural locations and those in Gaelic medium education, have access to good quality play. This includes those who have “protected characteristics” under the Equality Act 2010 or experience disadvantage, for example being a young carer or living in areas of deprivation. Specific consideration is given to the needs of children with additional support needs.

5.4 **Climate Change/Carbon Clever:** There are no climate change/carbon clever implications resulting from the Strategy.

5.5 **Risk:** The Strategy promotes appropriate risk taking in play, as supported by the HSE Chief Executive, and the use of risk benefit analysis.

6. Recommendation

6.1 Members are asked to:

- Approve the content of the Highland Play Strategy 2016 – 20;
- Note the progress of the Play Improvement Group/Play Highland;
- Agree to sign up to the Play Highland Newsletter; and
- Agree to commend the winners of the 2016 Highland Council/Play Highland Community Play Award.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 9 May 2016

Author: Sandra Harrington, Senior Manager, Early Years

Play Improvement Group

Date of Plan – August 2015

BRAG Key:

On time - **Green**Significantly delayed - **Red**Not yet started - **White**A little behind time - **Amber**Completed - **Blue**

FHC4 Outcome 2, 3,4,5,6,10				
Improvement priority: 1. Develop a Public Awareness campaign – increase awareness and share good practice to improve societal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acceptance of appropriate risk taking • expectation of being outside in different weather conditions • recognition of the importance of self-directed free play for children and young people of all ages • Challenges gender stereotyping in play 				
Actions	Measures / evaluation	Timescale	Lead	BRAG
Host an annual Play Seminar/Event	Tales of Mud and Mischief 4 th July Fort William, 1 st August Inverness	August 2015	Health Improvement Policy Manager (HIPM)	
Identify best practice in Highland through an Annual Play Award	Number of entries increases (2013 - 14 applications) Notification December 2014 Deadline 28.02.15	4 Applications Winner After @ TRACC	HIPM	
Increase awareness of issues including play, free play, and risk taking through the Play Highland Website, Play Matters Newsletter, Twitter and Facebook accounts. Papers from Play Improvement Group on website.	Increase in subscribers to Newsletter (April 2014 - 244) Increase no. of followers on Twitter (April 2014 – 811) Increase no. of likes on Facebook 'likes' (April 2014 – 145)	Ongoing – review June 2015: Newsletter 361 Twitter 1098 Facebook 230	Social Media and Website CALA	

Develop links through the council websites, GLOW and Highlife Highland. Improvement Plan on For Highlands Children Website.	Links will be in place	May 2015	HIPM	
Develop actions to challenge gender stereotyping in play (unless part of free play)	<p>Training delivered (as focus of Equalities Training) to Early Years staff 25.06.14</p> <p>Add page on gender stereotyping to website</p>	Ongoing Review May 2015	HIPM Play Highland Web Administrator	
Final evaluation and future priorities				

FHC4 Outcome 3,4,5,6,7,10				
Improvement priority: 2. Improve Access and quality of existing and new spaces for play and increase the number of quality spaces for play				
Actions	Measures / evaluation	Timescale	Lead	BRAG
Work with Community Services, Planning, Education and partners to develop an improved corporate approach which includes an agreed standard for all spaces for play.	Agreed standard in place	April 2016	HIPM	
Specific work to encourage community access to schools grounds out: identify school grounds to test how this needs to be developed, including the implications of community access. Identify Test School – potential for community work in Ullapool Contact Orkney Education Authority to explore good practice Develop generic risk assessment form	Community consultation in Ullapool	April 2016	HIPM	
Develop Risk Benefit Analysis tool for development of community access school grounds.	Mechanism in place	December 2015	Estates Officer	
Increase the number provisions who are: 1. able to provide free access to the outdoors; and 2. report that children have daily access to the outdoors	Play IG Survey	Annually – April 2015: 1. 177 2. 197	Resource Manager Early Years	
Develop partnership with SNH/Forestry Commission and map their provision of spaces for play	Play space provision will be mapped	April 2016	Forestry Commission	
Seek out and promote ways in which we can improve multifunctional intergenerational leisure space	Increase in the number of intergenerational play spaces	To be agreed	To be agreed	
Proposed action to be confirmed: All outdoor learning sessions will provide an opportunity for free outdoor play.			Ranger Service	

FHC4 Outcome				
12				
Improvement priority:				
3. Involve children, young people, parents and professionals meaningfully in decision making and planning.				
Actions	Measures / evaluation	Timescale	Lead	BRAG
Disseminate relevant national and international research and good practice to staff and community groups	Number relevant items on Play Highland Website	Ongoing – Review annually	Social Media and Website CALA	
Youth Voice participation at Community Councils (specific DVD project).	To be developed	To be agreed	Youth Convener	
Explore use of 'Playspotter' for potential of ongoing consultation with young people.	Highland play spaces identified by young people	October 2015	Youth Convener	
Review the needs of children and young people with additional support needs in relation to access to stimulating, active play	To be developed	To be agreed	To be agreed	
Develop/update a mechanism to support / enable community groups to develop spaces for play locally using an asset based approach (linked to improvement action 2.1).	See 2.1	See 2.1	To be agreed	
Final evaluation and future priorities				