



## Children and Young People Select Committee

### **Report title: Lewisham Play Strategy.**

**Date:** 22 September 2022

**Key decision:** No

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All Wards

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### **Outline and recommendations**

The purpose of this report is to seek Select Committee views on the draft Lewisham Play Strategy 2023 – 2028. The strategy captures and demonstrates Lewisham's commitment to play and promotes social inclusion.

It is recommended that the CYP Select:

- Reviews and comments on the draft Play Strategy for the period 2023 – 2028

## Timeline of engagement and decision-making

- In late 2021, Lewisham commissioned London Play to support the development of the Borough's first Play Strategy, to carry out an audit of Lewisham's fifty parks and Adventure Playgrounds
- In January 2022, a Play Strategy Steering Group was formed with members from across Children and Young People directorate and other Council departments, including: James Lee, Director of Communities Partnerships and Leisure, Vincent Buchanan, Head of Parks and Leisure, Katy Brown, Young Mayors Team, Michael Grant, Early Intervention Business Manager, Helen Buttivant, Public Health Consultant, Nikki Sealy, Head of Early Years, Paul Hocker, London Play, Gill Amas, Communications Team, Sara Rahman Director of Families Quality and Commissioning
- Late January 2022, Play audit commenced and concluded 31 January 2022
- In February 2022, borough wide consultation with children in primary and special schools commenced
- In March 2022, consultation concluded
- In April 2022, steering group review of the draft play strategy
- April –July 2022, draft play strategy was with Members

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 The Play Strategy is to be launched in the same year that Lewisham was named Borough of Culture by the Mayor of London. This unifying honour celebrates the borough's history and rich diversity through public arts, music, dance and more. Play is likewise a universal creative act. Through play children discover the differences between themselves, others and the world in which they live. These discoveries help them become individuals and independent, self-sufficient and autonomous.
- 1.2 The Council has a statutory duty to secure adequate leisure and recreation facilities for children and young people . The strategy in its entirety, captures and demonstrates the borough's ongoing commitment to Play for all its residents. This is the borough's first five year Play Strategy that covers 2023 to 2028.
- 1.3 The Play Strategy aims to highlight the opportunities for play in the borough, reflecting an audit of current play provision and spaces, and resident's views gathered during a month of public engagement and consultation and will set in motion a 5-year plan that will put Lewisham on track to be a borough leader on play. The Council acknowledges that not everything can be achieved at once, but the strategy is a mechanism to set out what can be done within a short to medium term, and to take stock of opportunities and barriers for going further.
- 1.4 Following comments from Select Committee and future approval from Mayor and Cabinet, a five year plan will be developed outlining actions to ensure progress is made towards accomplishing Lewisham's vision for play.

## **2. Recommendations**

2.1 CYP Select Committee is asked to:

- Comment and share views on the draft Play Strategy for the period 2023 – 2028

## **3. Policy Context**

3.1 Article 31 of the United Nation Convention on the rights of Child ‘Every Child has the right to rest, relax, play and to take part in cultural and recreational activities’<sup>1</sup>. Children need time, place and resources to play in the best way they know how, and want to express themselves.

3.2 Prevalence of Childhood obesity data from Public Health England 2020/21 -14.4% of reception age children (age 4-5) are obese, with a further 13.3% overweight. At age 10-11 (year 6), 25.5% are obese and 15.4% overweight. It is acknowledged that the impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic have greatly influenced this data however, this highlights the importance of promoting physical play opportunities and support for children and young people and their families, to embrace play as an essential need for childhood development.

3.3 The statutory Children’s Trust guidance 2008 stipulates:

“To improve local play offers requires a strategic approach to play across the local area, with the full involvement of children, local communities and the third sector in decision-making. Delivering excellent outdoor play opportunities for all children will require working closely with the broader Local Strategic Partnership on issues such as town and highways planning and the management and maintenance of public space, in order to promote communities that are more child-friendly”<sup>2</sup>

3.4 The Play Strategy is also in line with Lewisham Corporate Strategy and its ambition in ensuring that Children and Young People have the best start in life.

3.5 The Lewisham Parks and Open Space Strategy 2020 contains a commitment to preserve and, where possible, enhance the quality of existing green and open spaces, to deliver eco-system service and a range of benefits – including ‘play’ habitat creation, landscape improvement and flood storage<sup>3</sup>.

## **4. Background**

4.1 This is the borough’s first Play Strategy.

4.2 The Strategy captures and demonstrates the borough’s commitment to play, and promotes social inclusion whilst meeting the play needs of its children and young people. The play strategy aims will guide the council and its partners in defining a framework for the borough’s investment in play workforce development, finance and action plan from 2023 until 2028. It further highlights the opportunities for Play in the borough, reflecting views gathered from residents through engagement and consultation.

4.3 It includes an audit of quality, utilisation and accessibility of Lewisham current play offers and ongoing plan to develop play in the borough.

## **5. Audit and Consultation on the Play Strategy**

5.1 The first audit focussed on fifty Lewisham’s parks and open spaces whilst the second audit looks exclusively at the borough’s five staffed adventure playgrounds along with a cost benefit analysis of the funding options. Full details of the findings and

recommendations can be found in Appendix 1 of the Play Strategy.

5.2 Some of the recommendations from the audit include:

- Provide more details on signage to advertise existing play opportunities
- Widen play opportunities to include riverbanks, forest school activities, nature trails and incorporate more natural play elements
- Celebrate popular or successful playgrounds and their play offer via social media
- Provide basic structures to support youth fitness such as pull-up bars and wooden rings
- Increase adventure playground provision – offering self-led play opportunities for local young people along with inspiring mentors and role models on staff
- Develop opportunities in existing large green spaces to cater for observational or thoughtful activities such as nature study, reading and exploring

### 5.3 Consultation and Engagement

Consultation and engagement for the play strategy was undertaken between February and March 2022.

Views were sort from a variety of groups and sources including:

- Adult and children online survey monkey
- Engagement with schools
- Schools competition
- Council citizen space
- Vox pops consultation at Lewisham shopping centre
- Engagement with Council Members
- Engagement with internal council officers from SEND, Public Health, Early Years, Young Mayors and Young Advisors
- Children and family centres

5.4 Consultees where asked to answer five key questions on the location, accessibility, barriers, quality and benefits of play.

1. Where do you like to play?
2. Is this close enough to walk from home?
3. Is there anything that puts you off playing where you want to?
4. What new play things would you like to see in Lewisham?
5. Why is play important to you?

5.5 Nine hundred and two (902) responses in total were received. The vast majority of the respondents reported that they appreciate and regularly use Lewisham play spaces. Some of the other issues highlighted were in relation to feeling safe in the play area, increasing the opening hours of play spaces and the maintenance of play spaces. These results will be taken forward as part of the action plan resulting from this strategy. Details on the responses and comments are set out in the play strategy Appendix 1

## 6. Play Strategy 2023 – 2028

6.1 Lewisham's vision for Play is that children and young person in the borough should have

a variety of supervised and unsupervised safe and well maintained places for play, within walking distance from home, and play offers are welcoming, engaging and accessible to all including children with SEND, and children from minority ethnic groups in the borough. Play as a key offer is well promoted and children and young people, their families and community through consultations, will play a key role in the design and development of local play spaces.

## 6.2 Aims and Objectives

The aims of the strategy are:

- To oversee the development of a high quality, accessible play service
- To ensure that all residents have play facilities within walking distance
- To make sure that all play developments are created in consultation with users

## 6.3 Objectives:

- Create a Play Advocacy Group that identifies budgets and regularly reports on Play Strategy aims
- To create a holistic cross-cutting approach to play, coordinated across all Lewisham Council departments.
- Develop a consultation model which can be applied to all new developments
- Develop a cost-benefit analysis plan which outlines the most cost-effective way of managing adventure playgrounds
- Add recommendations for creating play opportunities to existing council guidance for new developers

## 6.4 Scope

The strategy acknowledges the variety of play opportunities available and enjoyed by children and young people every day, however, it does not have the scope to include other equally important exponents of Lewisham play offers such as:

- Play street sessions
- Soft play centres or commercial play facilities
- Stay & play or baby & toddler groups
- Play in schools and libraries
- Play in children centres
- Play on screens
- Non-designated or incidental play spaces such as scraps of undeveloped land or shopping precincts (although play undoubtedly occurs there too)
- Sports

6.5 As well as outdoor play, children and young people also spend significant amount of time engaging in play at home. Appendix 3 of the Play Strategy provides play ideas to explore at home.

## 6.7 Key recommendations from the play strategy

- We are committed first and foremost to developing and promoting play opportunities in the borough, and in doing so, we will ensure that this is undertaken through ongoing consultation and co-production with children and

young people and their families, on design and development of new play provision and play spaces.

- Ensure that our current play provision and spaces, including the adventure playgrounds, are in locations where they are needed, and for the Council to consider how best to manage, maintain and drive their utilisation including financial and legal implications and community engagement.
- To ensure that consideration is given to 'play' in all plans, designs, and developments within the borough and making sure play is always in mind across all council activities.

## **7. Financial implications**

7.1 Any expenditure to maintain/repair play equipment will need to be managed from within existing budget, the expenditure for the current playgrounds is paid within the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract. Should additional costs over and above the budgeted level arise over the life of the strategy a further report with the appropriate financial implications will need to be considered.

## **8. Legal implications**

8.1 Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises engagement in play as a fundamental right of all children.

8.2 The Education Act 1996 imposes a duty on local authorities to secure adequate leisure and recreation facilities for children and young people.

8.3 The Childcare Act 2006 introduced a general duty on local authorities to improve the wellbeing of young children in their area.

8.4 Through the Childcare Act 2016, working parents of three and four-year-old children will have their free childcare entitlement extended from 15 to 30 hours a week.

8.5 Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities should provide services designed to minimise the effect of children's disabilities, to give disabled children the opportunity to lead lives which are as normal as possible, and to assist individuals who provide care by giving them breaks from caring.

8.6 Under the short breaks regulations, local authorities have a legal duty to provide short breaks for disabled children and their families, and these should meet a range of needs.

8.7 The Children and Families Act 2014 sets out how support should be offered to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). For children with SEND, local authorities should secure provision specified in an Education, Health and Care plan. For young children this could include support with play at nursery, or the development of certain skills through play.

8.8 Through the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities have to publish a Local Offer to provide information about the services they expect to be available for children with SEND in their area. This should include play services.

## **9. Equalities implications**

The Equality Act 2010 requires the Local Authority, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation; advance equality of

opportunity; and to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not (“the Public Sector Equality Duty”).

An Equalities Assessment has been conducted for the strategy and is attached as Appendix 2.

The Equality Impact Assessment has found no negative impact for groups with protected characteristics.

## **10. Climate change and environmental implications**

- 10.1 The Play Strategy ensures families and young people have good quality places to play within walking distance of their home, this will reduce the need to travel by vehicle to play, and therefore the collective carbon footprint (748 residents asked in the consultation phase said they were able to walk to their favourite play space while only 125 said they could not). Making play a local feature across the borough, and that play is possible on the doorstep via play streets, and in the built environment through all future public space designs to incorporate play features and initiatives will contribute to Lewisham’s aim to be a leading borough in the provision of play and therefore the development of all Lewisham children.
- 10.2 Ensuring natural elements and sustainable materials are the key characteristics of all the council’s future play construction are also a direction the Play Strategy encourages.

## **11. Crime and disorder implications**

- 11.1 The correlation between crime and anti-social behaviour where play provision is limited or non-existent is under researched, however what available evidence exists suggests that “play deprived children become disturbed, aggressive and violent adults” (Hughes, 2003, Insights and understandings: Developments in playwork theory.).
- 11.2 A 2011 academic paper (Lauer , Play Deprivation: Is It Happening In Your School Setting?) concludes:  
Negative effects resulting from play deprivation include an increase in violent crimes, decreases in brain and muscle fiber development, and reduction in communication, problem-solving, and social skills.
- 11.3 Lewisham’s Play Strategy is ambitious and serious in its plans to ensure play sufficiency across the borough. Exploring ways to reinvigorate their Adventure Playgrounds will re-establish a reliable and regular opportunity for young people to enjoy an exciting space where their creativity, physical abilities and social skills can be honed and shaped through activities provided by skilled playworkers.
- 11.4 The Mayor of London recognised the importance of keeping London’s young people engaged in after-school activities. In 2019 the Mayor announced London’s Violence Reduction Unit would fund:
- 11.5 Expanding after-school provision in high-crime areas - data shows that violent incidents involving young people aged 10-16 are more likely to happen at the end of the school day.

## **12. Health and wellbeing implications**

- 12.1 The Strategy recognises that play is integral for child development, psychological well-being, and physical health.
- 12.2 Play is also proven to be extremely beneficial to psychological wellbeing and mental health in children. Through play, children develop their emotional intelligence; learn how to express their feelings, build self-esteem, and understand emotional aspects of life.

- 12.3 Lewisham's Play Strategy, in line with the Council's corporate strategy is committed to ensuring that Children and Young People have the best start in life.

## 13. Glossary

Table of Glossary

Term	Definition
Adventure Playground	A free to use play setting, staffed by playworkers, where children can play with friends in a purpose-built environment. Lewisham has five Adventure Playgrounds.
Play Streets	A play street is a resident-led initiative supported by local councils. It enables residents to close their road to through traffic for several hours on a regular basis (weekly/fortnightly/monthly), to create a space for children to play on their doorstep as well as an opportunity for neighbours to socialise.
Free Play	Spontaneous play that children engage in outside of structured activities or prescribed environments.

## 14. Report author(s) and contact

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## 15. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Lewisham Play Strategy 2023-2028

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment