

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education, Culture and Sport
DATE	30 May 2013
DIRECTOR	Gayle Gorman
TITLE OF REPORT	Aberdeen Play Policy
REPORT NUMBER:	ECS/13/027

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report brings to the attention of the Committee the updated Aberdeen Play Policy. This policy takes account of recent local, national and international developments including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Policy interprets this information and seeks to provide a context for the provision and development of high quality play spaces and opportunities for all children in Aberdeen City.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (a) Approve the contents of the Aberdeen Play Policy document and agree and endorse the vision, priorities and principles enshrined within it.
- (b) Note the intention of Aberdeen Play Forum, in partnership with other agencies, to arrange a launch of Aberdeen Play Policy at Duthie Park on June 21st 2013.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Aberdeen Play Policy complies with all equalities legislation. All appropriate risk management/ assessment procedures are in place.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

The current version of the Aberdeen Play Policy, whilst fit for purpose, has been overtaken by new local, national and international priorities and legislation including:

- (a) Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which formally enshrines the rights of all children to play. This is further clarified by a “general comment” which clarifies and explains the importance of play, recreation, cultural and artistic participation to the growth, wellbeing and development of all children. Aberdeen City Council adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1996.
- (b) Getting it Right for Every Child includes an emphasis on the promotion of resilience within individuals, families and communities. The participation of children, adults and communities in play significantly increases awareness of how children can be protected and can protect themselves.
- (c) The National Early Years Framework (2008) sets out the vision of the Scottish Government and COSLA as:
 - that children should be valued and provided for within communities.
 - the importance of strong, sensitive relationships with parents or carers.
 - the right to a high quality of life and access to play.
 - The need to put children at the heart of service delivery and
 - Irrespective of circumstances, all children should experience positive outcomes.

The National Early Years Framework includes as one of its key elements of transformational change, “Improving outcomes and children’s quality of life through play”.

Local interpretation of these national priorities are included within the Integrated Children’s Services Early Years Framework Implementation Plan. Key local actions include:

- Continue to embed free play/ children’s self directed play within all early years and childcare provision.
 - Extend appropriate spaces for play taking account of new national policy and guidance and the needs of all children.
 - Extend play as community development and engagement for children and adults
- (d) In January 2012 the Scottish Government committed resources via The Early Years Change Fund to accelerate the conversion of the high level principles set out in the Early Years Framework into action. It aims to deliver tangible improvements in outcomes and reduce inequalities for Scotland’s vulnerable children, whilst at the

same time shifting the balance of public services towards early intervention and prevention by 2016, intending to sustain this change in service delivery to 2018 and beyond.

The Scottish Government's intention is that all partners represented at Community Planning Partnership level will:

- Consider how they can support universal services to deliver better outcomes for children in their early years and their families.
- Raise public awareness of the significance of the early years to children's healthy development, and consider how they can build the capacity of families and communities to secure better outcomes for themselves.
- Engage in positive cross cutting discussion and service delivery aimed at delivering the aspirations of the Early Years Framework.

Aberdeen Play Policy represents an important overarching statement of how a significant proportion of these outcomes can best be delivered within Aberdeen City.

(e) The Curriculum for Excellence explicitly encourages active learning through play. Active learning is learning which engages and challenges children's thinking using real-life or imaginary situations. Opportunities for such learning are presented by:

- Spontaneous play
- Planned, purposeful play
- Investigation and exploration
- Events and life experiences

Quality active learning builds on children's previous experiences and provides differentiation and challenge. It allows for different learning styles and children's independence but is supported by adults who help to structure the environment and intervene sensitively to extend children's learning.

(f) In terms of its development, Aberdeen Play Policy was subject to extensive consultation processes. The consultation was undertaken as a series of one-to-one interviews with pre-school children in nurseries; group questionnaires in schools and out-of-school clubs; group discussions with young people in a Skills for Work class and an after-school sports club; one-to-one interview with children/young people with significant disabilities; one-to-one interviews and independent questionnaires for parents/guardians/carers; online surveys with professionals involved in the childcare and play sectors.

Children and young people aged 4 – 15 years were involved.

A total of 85 children and young people, 34 parents/guardians/carers, and 82 professionals participated in the consultation.

In summary the conclusions of this survey were:

- Play is the stimulus for physical, intellectual, emotional and social development.
- Play is fundamental to human development.
- Children play can be for both enjoyment and creative expression.
- Play is the medium by which children learn.
- Play is an essential part of everyone's life.
- Play should be freely chosen and self directed.

The key message in the revised Aberdeen Play Policy is the importance of supporting free play opportunities; where children are encouraged to define their own priorities within their own play in high quality play spaces. This priority should apply to all children, but include specific services targeted at more disadvantaged, marginalized or vulnerable groups and individuals within the city.

6. IMPACT

An EHRIA Assessment has been carried out and is attached as an appendix.

For Aberdeen's Children, The Integrated Children's Services Plan 2011 – 2015 reinforces existing commitments to improving outcomes for children, young people and their families and closing the gap between children in need and their peers. It focuses on improving outcomes for children in their early years, children who are looked after, have additional support needs, disabilities or social, emotional or behavioural needs. This plan recognises the crucial role of parents, carers, families and volunteers in improving outcomes for children and young people; that all children and young people need to have a sense of belonging and to be enabled to make a positive contribution to their communities.

The Integrated Children's Service's Plan is the high level plan that sets out the Aberdeen City Council and partners' commitment to work together to deliver high quality services, improved outcomes and achieve better value. The plan is overseen by the Integrated Children's Services Partnership and links directly to addressing desired Single Outcome Agreement priorities.

Aberdeen Play Policy forms a key element in defining the context and scope of integrated, multi agency approaches to enable the achievement of Single Outcome Agreement priorities.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Activities associated with this policy will be delivered by a wide range of organisations and agencies. All of these activities must have been appropriately risk assessed before delivery. Any organised play activities will have been subject to appropriate and comprehensive risk benefit analyses and risk assessments. Staff and participants will also be comprehensively and fully covered by appropriate liability insurances.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Aberdeen Play Forum Website www.aberdeenplayforum.org.uk.
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
Getting it Right for Every Child- Scottish Government (June 2006).
National Early Years Framework – Scottish Government and COSLA (December 2008).
Equally Well – (June 2008).
Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland - Scottish Government (March 2011).
National Parenting Strategy - Scottish Government (October 2012).
Early Years Taskforce Shared Vision and Priorities – NHS, Scottish Government and COSLA (March 2012).
Achieving Our Potential – A Framework to Tackle Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland – Scottish Government (November 2008).
Curriculum for Excellence – Building the Curriculum 2 – Scottish Government and Partner Organisations (2007).
For Aberdeen’s Children – Integrated Children’s Services Plan 2011 – 2015.
Integrated Children’s Services – Early Years Framework Implementation Plan (2012-2013).

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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