



Aberdeen City of Play

Aberdeen is a city where all children and young people have a right to play freely every day and have access to quality play opportunities



Aberdeen City Play Policy and Strategy adopted 2018



Foreword

Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeen Play Forum recognise that play is central to the health and wellbeing of our children and to enjoyment in their lives. Access to high quality play opportunities leads to the development of confident young people who are better able to lead their own learning, fully participate in their own communities and make a full and active contribution to society.

Our vision is to develop high quality innovative and inclusive services in partnership with the community, children and young people and all agencies involved in the delivery of play.

"Aberdeen is a city of play where all children and young people are empowered to play, are encouraged to direct and define their own play spaces and have access to high quality play opportunities and resources at home, in early learning, childcare and school and in the community".

The right to play is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and applies to all children and young people up to the age of 18. It is essential to their health, development and well-being. The principle of inclusion underpins this policy as all children and young people need play as part of their daily lives. This policy also recognises that while we should do all we can to protect children and young people from risk of serious harm, they need challenging and adventurous play experiences to develop confidence, resilience and social skills.

Through play... children learn by doing; they explore and experience the world around them; experiment with new ideas, roles and experiences.¹

Aberdeen has made a commitment to see, hear, listen and respond to children playing in our communities therefore encouraging healthy community activity with active and positive contributions from all generations.

The Play Policy and Strategy 2018 shows the value of freedom to play in the lives of our children. It is our responsibility to ensure the freedom to play is a right upheld in Aberdeen and we are committed to this as part of our aspiration to become a UNICEF accredited Child Friendly City.

The Play Policy and Strategy 2018 will also contribute to the realisation of the National Health and Social Care Standards, the Community Planning Partnership's Local Outcome Improvement Plan and the Children's Services Plan priorities to ensure that *"children have the best start in life"*.

A key feature of this Play Policy and Strategy 2018 is to work together with our existing and future partners to best meet the needs of children, families and communities in Aberdeen.

Signed

Councillor John Wheeler
Convener
Education and Children's Services Committee

Signed

Councillor Lesley Dunbar
Vice Convener
Education and Children's Services Committee

¹ Committee on the Rights of the Child, (2013) General comment No. 17 on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (art. 31)

Introduction

The Aberdeen City Play Policy and Strategy 2018 updates and replaces the Play Policy launched in 2013. It makes a commitment to *all* children and young people in Aberdeen to support their right to play regardless of their needs, background or abilities. It acknowledges the significance of children's rights in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which was approved by the UK Government in December 1991 and adopted by Aberdeen City in 1996.

The purpose of the Play Policy and Strategy is:

- To reaffirm our commitment to play in the city;
- To celebrate our achievements since 2013;
- To set out our priorities for continuing to improve the quality of current and future play opportunities in Aberdeen; and
- To highlight the links between play and other local and national policies and strategies for improving outcomes for our children and young people.



What do we mean by Play?

Play is the stimulus for physical, intellectual, emotional, linguistic and social development – it is fundamental to human development. Children play for enjoyment and creative expression, but through play they learn about the world around them. Play is fun and is an essential part of everyone's life.



Since 2013 for Aberdeen we have...

Aberdeen Play Forum National Playwork Award Winner 2014
 Enabled that it Council Policies and Strategies support the Award for Play

300+ No Ball Games Signs Removed
 Promoted the use of Indoor and Outdoor Play Areas, Parks

Provided Valuable Learning Opportunities for Children Living at the Clinkerty Traveller Site

Supported Communities to Improve Play Spaces

Ensured that Children and Young People with Disabilities had Access to Quality Play Opportunities
Boo to Poo

Commentation as City of Play (Care Inspectorate 2015)
 Promoted Positive Attitudes Towards Outdoor Play in both Children and Adults

As part of the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan and plans to become a UNICEF Child Friendly City, 120 children and young people took part in a workshop to explore their ideas for making the city a more welcoming place for people of their age

Play on Pedals
 Ensured Relevant Training and Qualifications were Available to those involved in Play Activities

Schools & OOSCs Engaged with Loose Parts Training and Play Sessions
 Consulted with and Provided Feedback to Children

Play Sessions Provided throughout Aberdeen
 Provided Play Opportunities Accessible for All Children within the City that are Wee Green Spaces

Aberdeen Play Forum Play Ranger Award
 Provided Information to Planners and Developers so that Play is Considered during Community Planning

PLAY ON THE LONGEST DAY
UK NATIONAL PLAY DAY
 Hundreds of Children and Families Attended National Play Day Events

101 Play Areas Refurbished £3.3 million Spent

From this Partnership Approaches

To this

Logos: Play For All, Play For All Scotland, Aberdeen City Council, Inspiring Scotland, NHS Scotland, VSA, Sport Aberdeen, Family Information Service, abnigative, Early Start in Scotland, Scmqa, play talk read, POSSIBLE, XPLAY SCOTLAND, abernour, Play For All, Play For All Scotland, Aberdeen City Council, Inspiring Scotland, NHS Scotland, VSA, Sport Aberdeen, Family Information Service, abnigative, Early Start in Scotland, Scmqa, play talk read, POSSIBLE, XPLAY SCOTLAND, abernour.

Play Policy and Strategy Development and Implementation

This Play Policy and Strategy was developed by a short-life working group which met throughout 2017. The group was made up of a wide range of partners and stakeholders. Consultation was carried out with children, young people and families and professionals who work with children.

Accompanying plans will be developed identifying actions to ensure progress is made towards our vision for play. These plans will be reviewed and up-dated periodically.

Rather than the responsibility of one organisation or department, many individuals, professions and establishments share the responsibility to ensure children and young people enjoy their right to play.

Aberdeen's Play Policy directly links to:

- Scottish Government: Health and Social Care Standards
- Aberdeen Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)
- Aberdeen City Council National Improvement Framework Action Plan
- Aberdeen's Children's Services Plan
- Nurtured Outcome Group Improvement Plan



Aberdeen: City of Play

Partnership working has gone from strength from strength in recent years with Aberdeen being commended as a City of Play in the Report of a Joint Inspection: Services for children and young people in Aberdeen City, published by the Care Inspectorate in March 2015.

'The City of Play partnership was working effectively to ensure that children in Aberdeen City were empowered to play, were encouraged to direct and define their own play spaces and have access to high quality play opportunities and resources. The foundation for this was the implementation of the Aberdeen Play Forum comprehensive play policy launched in 2013 and based around Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 32 recognises that every child has the right to rest and play and to have the chance to join in a wide range of activities. Considerable investment had been made to improve play areas around the city. Innovative approaches to play had been adopted and there was evidence that a joined-up approach from staff, effective community engagement and an understanding of the importance of play was benefitting children. Take up of service had increased significantly.'

Care Inspectorate: Joint Inspection, March 2015

Aberdeen's Play Policy and Strategy follows the four themes used in the Play Strategy for Scotland. Each theme describes what we are aiming to achieve (outcomes) along with our priorities for action.

The four themes are:

- Play in the Home
- Play in Early Learning & Childcare and School
- Play in the Community
- Positive Support for Play.

Key UNCRC Articles

3, 12, 23, 29, 31

The priorities within each of these themes are specific to Aberdeen and have been agreed as part of the development and consultation process.

Play in the Home

Our homes and family environments are places where our children and young people enjoy plentiful play opportunities, indoors and out, appropriate to their age, stage, ability and preferences.

We will:

- 1.1 Support families in exploring the benefits of play
- 1.2 Promote family friendly neighbourhoods and opportunities to reclaim streets for play
- 1.3 Encourage intergenerational opportunities for play

Play in Early Learning & Childcare and School

All of our children and young people enjoy high quality play opportunities, particularly learning via outdoor free play in stimulating spaces with access to nature, on a daily basis in all early learning and childcare settings and school.

We will:

- 2.1 Encourage all settings to adopt and promote the Play Policy and Strategy, demonstrating that they value play and understand the vital role this has in supporting children's holistic development.
- 2.2 Promote play friendly approaches in all settings and in all weathers
- 2.3 Balance benefit and risk to enable challenge and learning through play for all children, building resilient and confident individuals
- 2.4 Encourage the development and use of more natural play spaces

Community

All our children and young people have sufficient time and space for playing within their community and have contact with nature and outdoor spaces in their everyday lives. Play is valued, encouraged and supported in communities.

We will:

- 3.1 Promote play opportunities to improve health and wellbeing
- 3.2 Make community and public green spaces clean, inclusive and accessible to all
- 3.3 Empower communities to 'come out and play'

Positive Support for Play

Aberdeen provides a positive environment for play through: a professional workforce and strong and visionary leadership; a well-resourced third sector and infrastructure; and a supportive and informed media.

We will:

- 4.1 Promote Aberdeen as a City of Play
- 4.2 Embed children's right to play in policies and strategies
- 4.3 Communicate effectively to ensure all children and young people understand that this policy is for them
- 4.4 Nurture partnership working to support play throughout the city

What do we mean by 'high quality play opportunities'?

By its very nature 'high quality' is difficult to define, and will look different in different circumstances and locations. However, in terms of the provision of play opportunities and environments, in general we might expect 'high quality opportunities' to happen when:

- » the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are put into practice
- » the environment provides stimulus for play to flourish
- » if adults are involved, they work to established ethical and professional standards.

Of course, given the nature of play, children do have high quality play experiences out with the view of adults and in circumstances and locations that were not intended for play.²

²Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan (2013) Source: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0043/00437132.pdf>

What Stops us Playing?

In order to support children's play opportunities and promote the benefits of play within the context of their lives, it is important to understand that there are competing elements for children's leisure time and other challenges that can make play opportunities difficult to deliver, these include:

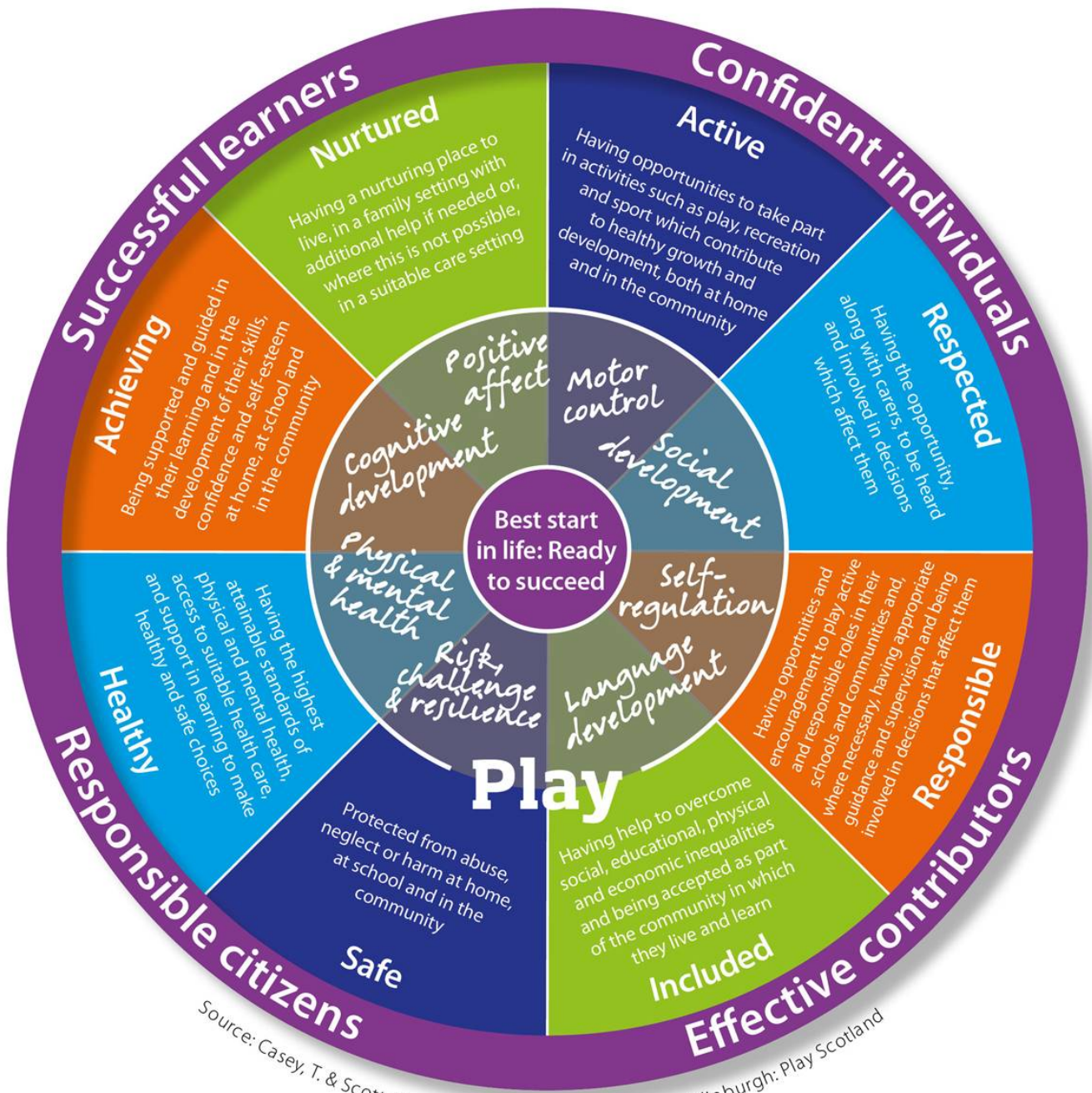
1. The importance of the suitability, attractiveness and children's feelings of "ownership" relating to where they play. Everyone has a right to enjoy play spaces that are clean, attractive and safe. Parents, children, schools and communities should be encouraged and supported to share ownership and responsibility for their local play spaces.

2. The weather. A shift in attitude towards the weather and outdoors is needed. This teamed with education and support about obtaining and using appropriate outdoor clothing is part of making all weather outdoor play more attractive. "There is no such thing as bad weather – only inappropriate clothing".

3. The dark. Aberdeen is always going to be dark in the winter. We need to find ways to play in the dark and also to make the most of our short daylight hours by ensuring our children get out to play during the day (including the school day) when possible. Initiatives such as "Play on the Shortest Day" and staff training using resources such as head torches and glow sticks in order to encourage children to play out in the dark can help extend children's play times in the winter.



Getting it right through Play



By demonstrating a sustained commitment to the vision of Aberdeen as a City of Play and create opportunities and environments for our citizens to have a more active life, we can work together to improve the wellbeing of children and families and get it right for every child. Not only will this improve the quality of life for children, young people and families, it will also assist Community Planning Partnership partners in achieving wider benefits for the whole community in the longer term. An action plan will accompany this Play Strategy to set out how we will deliver on the priority themes for play within the city.



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