



**Name of meeting:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 27 June 2017

**Title of report:** Request to approve revised play strategy and delivery

### Purpose of report

This report is requesting approval of a new play strategy, to then undertake a public consultation on revising play provision as described by the strategy for the district, and to deliver this model.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?</b> | <b>Yes</b><br>All Wards impacted.                              |
| <b>Key Decision - Is it in the <a href="#">Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)</a></b>                                    | <b>Yes - Adoption of Play Strategy for Kirklees</b><br>12/4/17 |
| <b>The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?</b>   | <b>Yes</b><br>If no give the reason why not                    |
| <b>Date signed off by Strategic <u>Director</u> &amp; name</b>  | <b>Naz Parkar - 19.06.2017</b>                                 |
| <b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director, Finance and Transactional Services?</b>   | <b>Debbie Hogg - 16.06.2017</b>                                |
| <b>Is it also signed off by Service Director Governance and Commissioning Support?</b>  | <b>Julie Muscroft - 19.06.2017</b>                             |
| <b>Cabinet member <a href="#">portfolio</a></b>   | <b>Cllr M Khan - Highways and Neighbourhoods</b>               |

**Electoral wards affected:** All  
**Ward councillors consulted:** No  
**Public or private:** Public

### 1. Summary

The service has developed a revised play strategy that is reflective of both the present budget pressures and a need to redefine the play offer in the district, decoupling play from a purely equipment centric activity based on defined locations, to a philosophy of play that includes equipment as one element but is a far broader concept promoting the development of social and personal skills like resilience, physical resource, robustness, risk management, cooperative and competitive strategies and so on, and further look to provide a forum for social cohesion, and community engagement.

In order to ensure that the right provision is available across the district a comprehensive engagement programme will be undertaken with all key stakeholders.

## 2. Information required to take a decision

- 2.1 The play strategy was last reviewed in 2006, and it is to those identified priorities that the refurbishment and management of formal play provision for children/teenage play has been undertaken since then.
- 2.2 There are a number of reasons for revisiting this strategy and looking again at play provisions across the district;
- Making sure demographic provision is right now and projecting forward
  - Changes in play philosophy since the last review
  - Ongoing budget pressures to find further appropriate efficiencies.
- 2.3 The benefits of play are strongly linked to early intervention and prevention with well-designed play facilities allowing learning opportunities, improvement in motor skills, the development of good risk judgment and management, a habit of physical activity, socialisation and adaptive communication skills in the users, and it is to address these needs that the strategy is targeted.
- 2.4 Play will be better integrated within our public spaces, and that journeys from home to a destination will form part of the play experience. Appropriate rights of way will be identified and developed as part of this play network; these routes will be interspersed with playable spaces - some of which may be equipped and some may not.
- 2.5 To arrive at a revised model of play delivery from the present provision it is proposed to undertake a tiered consultation and engagement process. This will start with a desk study looking at the demographic data, physical impactors and social information that influence these sites and use that information as a baseline alongside the local plan and the public open space assessment. This information will be considered without condition of the sites taken into account, as this is to start the process of the best and most suitable play provision in the district.
- 2.6 There will then be ward councillor clinics as was prototyped for the initial changes to grounds maintenance service standards. Each ward will be sent the desk study information, with the data sets overlaid on the ward and surrounding area to give context, and a clear split between information sharing and consultation. This information will be used to inform a discussion between Councillors and officers on what the best provision possible is and how that will be achieved.
- 2.7 The ward councillor discussion will then be used to amend what is taken out to the public, which will be a mix of on line/social media information and responses that can be collated along with public meetings that that will be publicised widely.
- 2.8 Alongside the ward based workshops will be discussion with other identified stakeholder groups such as KNH, young people's service, private play providers and children's play charities, to get a picture in the round of stakeholders resources and views.

- 2.9 The engagement process is intended to last 5 months. It is anticipated that by the end of October (autumn half term end as a shut off) we should have all the data to decide both the sites that will be affected and how, and based on the revised condition survey a priority list to roll out the programme, and a costed model.
- 2.10 There will be a further Cabinet report in spring 2018, setting out the costed implementation plan reflecting the previously agreed philosophy to give a schedule of works to deliver the strategy. This schedule will cover a range of options for sites, and it is likely that most of our sites will see some changes to how they are currently. The changes involved will range from removal of play equipment and re profiling of these areas into play spaces, changes of management regime to create play routes and through to changes to equipped play areas to give, where possible, enhanced adventurous and multi-age play to cater for as many children, young people and adults as possible.

It is acknowledged that further consultation, particularly with communities local to the sites, will be required to ensure that the final outcome for some sites matches the needs of the current and future users. It is also acknowledged that some sites will require more intensive further consultation. This will be, amongst other factors, dependent on the catchment of the site, the locality of the site, the general interest in the site by the current and future users, as well as those sites which already have considerable stakeholder interest.

This further consultation will be carried out under the recommendations included within the Cabinet report proposed for Spring 2018, and will not allow for changes to be made once the 2018 report is approved.

- 2.11 There will be a strong push alongside this with our third sector partners such as Natural Kirklees, and their constituent members, to both promote the concept of play beyond enclosed play areas and where possible to look at co production of work to realise this vision There are also opportunities, through partnership working, to seek to increase active community involvement in the management and maintenance of these play spaces going forward.

### **3. Implications for the Council**

#### **3.1 Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP)**

This strategy is intended to give enhanced opportunities to all for physical and social activity which sits inside the EIP agenda.

#### **3.2 Economic Resilience (ER)**

Well managed play spaces will help attract and retain inward investment to the district, and suitable resourced provision will also allow targeted development within the service to maximise return on investment, and free capacity for other works.

#### **3.3 Improving Outcomes for Children**

As outlined in both this report and the strategy itself this is focussed on better provision of play to enhance life opportunities for children, as set out in 2.3 above.

### **3.4 Reducing demand of services**

Changed play design will reduce the number of inspections needed, and the amount of maintenance required, especially of consumables such as bark safety surfacing, this will release capacity to deliver other projects.

Partnership working to deliver the outcomes will be strongly pushed as part of the model with friends groups being involved in the production of both the models and the delivery of them, with a clear focus on the group itself fund raising, undertaking public consultation, and working to deliver the final product.

### **3.5 Legal/Financial or Human Resources**

Legal - The works will enhance and modernise play provision, ensuring it meets with statutory compliance requirements, meets the requirements of the UN Convention on Rights of the Child Article 31 and supports our record on safe play provision. There were 7 number of claims in the last 4 years, 2013 to 2017 of which 0 were successful.

Financial - The revised play model will have a capital cost to implement, but until the engagement process is complete the scope and scale of this is not known

HR - no impact

## **4. Consultees and their opinions**

The Consultation process is outlined above in points 2.5-2.9, with this engagement capturing views from elected members, users and stakeholders, this is integral to implementation.

## **5. Next steps**

If approved undertake a desk study and engagement process detailed design, then implement this engagement exercise, compare the outcomes of that with the condition survey and produce an implementation plan.

## **6. Officer recommendations and reasons**

It is requested that Cabinet accept the report and give delegated responsibility to the Service Director, Commercial, Regulatory and Operational, to approve the detailed engagement process and subsequent delivery model, on how play will be specifically delivered in the district according to the principles held within the strategy document.

## **7. Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendations**

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Musarrat Khan, is in agreement for the report to proceed to Cabinet and would ask, that Cabinet accept the report and give delegated responsibility to the Service Director, Commercial, Regulatory and Operational, to approve the detailed engagement process and subsequent delivery model, on how play will be specifically delivered in the district according to the principles held within the strategy document.

**8. Contact officer**

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**9. Background Papers and History of Decisions**

Appendix 1 – Play Strategy  
Appendix 2 – risk and mitigation matrix  
Appendix 3 – Skate park sufficiency survey

**10. Director responsible**

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Living Play **2020**

Play Strategy

**DRAFT**







## 1.0 Introduction

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# 1.0

## Introduction

Here in Kirklees we understand what a large and important role play has in a child's development, not just their physical development but their social and cognitive development too. Children play in many different ways and at many different times and places. For children and young people, play is more than just 'letting-off steam'; it is what they do in their own time, for their own reasons. Through play, children are able to explore the world around them and to learn to take responsibility for their own choices.

**We want to encourage play wherever possible, by providing well designed, diverse and high value opportunities that will attract and capture the imagination of all ages, giving everyone the scope to play in new, exciting and more creative ways.**

### 1.1 Purpose of the Play Strategy

The purpose of the strategy is to evaluate and assess the quality of the current play provisions within Kirklees, to identify areas of improvement and enable the development of an action plan.

The aim of the play strategy is to address the play needs within Kirklees by producing a detailed breakdown and analysis of the current provisions within the council's ownership, focusing on among others, the quality; compliance and play value. Alongside an engagement programme focused on discussion and information gathering, the analysis will be used to produce an action plan that will enable a restructure of the current play provision, resulting in a new approach to play in Kirklees, one that prioritises play value and maximises economic resources. The strategy will act as guidance on the standards of play provision within Kirklees, which can be used to ensure future needs are met.

## 1.2 Scope of the Play Strategy

The scope of the strategy will be limited to play opportunities located within the Kirklees district.

While the Council understands that importance of play opportunities at home and within schools, these experiences are not under the control of the council and therefore will not be included within the play strategy; nor will it include any commercial play activities; these stakeholder parties will however, be included within the engagement process.

In addition to equipped play areas, the strategy will include all Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGA's), wheeled sports areas, basketball pods and single goal ends, teen shelters and outdoor fitness areas currently owned and maintained by the council. This is because they are considered play provisions as they are intended for free play as opposed to organised sport. The strategy will not include sports pitches or clubs as these are primarily used for organised sports and the focus of the strategy is on play exclusively. Free play is different from structured activities like sport, it is what children and young people do when they are allowed free time and space to use in their own way, for their own reasons and for no external outcome, reward or goal. The strategy will however, include recreational grounds because, while historically they have not been considered play areas they are, and have the potential to be, playable spaces.



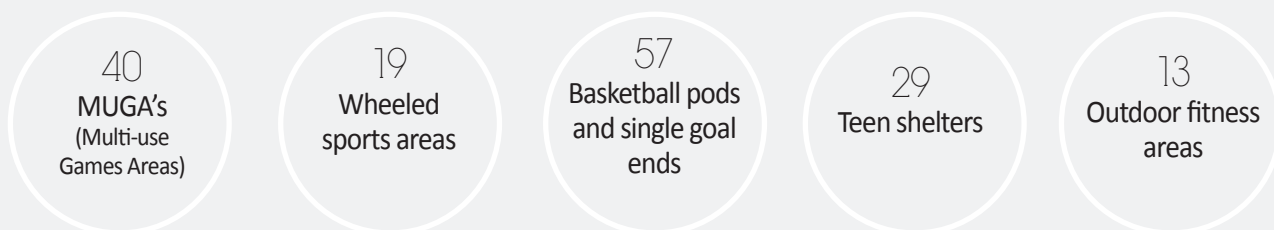
\*Photo by and used with the kind permission of Emma Mills.

# 2.0 Play in Kirklees

The latest Kirklees Open Space Demand Assessment published in 2015 revealed that parks are the most frequently visited type of open space within Kirklees, with 61% of respondents visiting parks once a week or more. We believe this to be a reflection of the important role and usage of parks within our communities.

## 2.1 Current Play provisions in Kirklees

Kirklees currently has a total of 342 play areas of which, 309 are equipped play areas and a further 6 are awaiting legal transfer under Section 106 planning agreements. In addition to equipped play areas, there are:

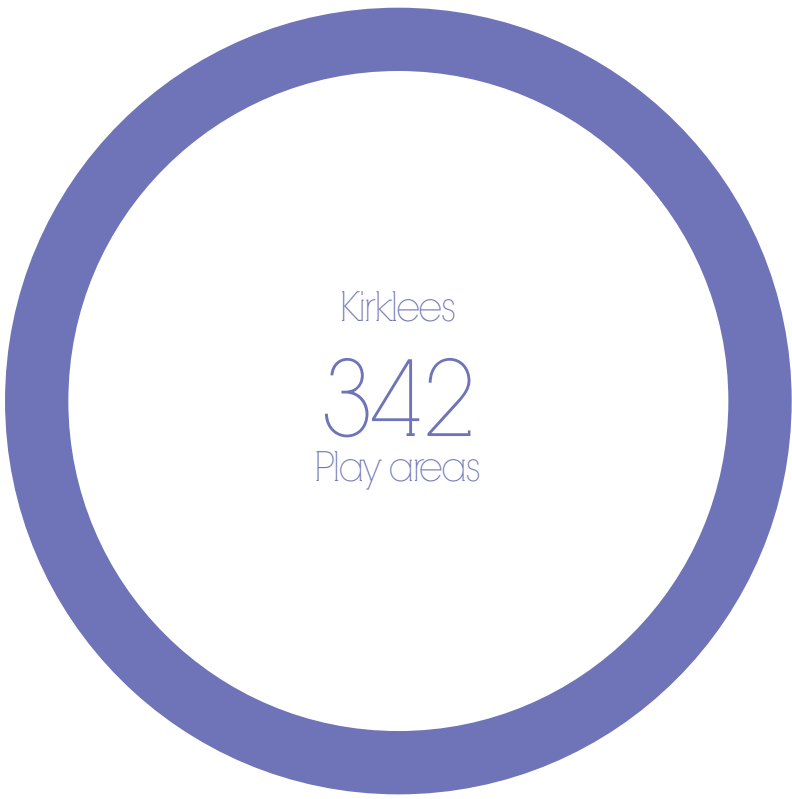


all of which are maintained by Kirklees Council.

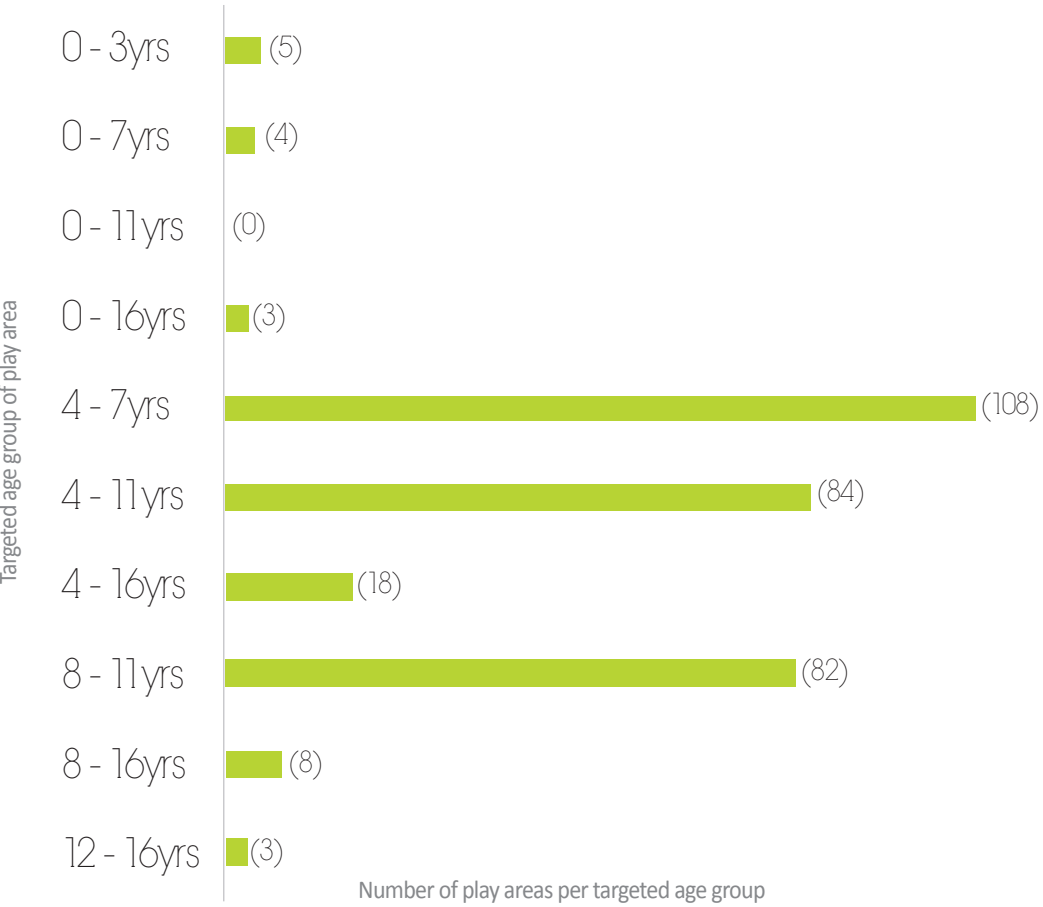
To get a true representation of the play provisions available within our district, we should also consider the 27 play areas that are owned and maintained by third parties such as Meltham Town Council and private management companies that have been appointed directly by housing developers.

The quantity of play areas and civic space rated positively in the Open Space Demand Assessment, with most respondents stating they were very or quite satisfied with the availability of provisions.

An overview of play provisions within the Kirklees district shows a noticeably high number of play areas within Kirklees when compared to neighbouring authorities. With a current total of 342 play areas, Kirklees offers 1 play provision per 1252 people; Bradford, the local authority with the next highest number of play areas offers 1 play area provision per 3162 people. This would suggest that there is little deficiency in play provisions across the district, however this does not take into consideration planned or future developments.



Much of the play provisions within Kirklees rely heavily on the use of manufactured play equipment and often it is the design of this manufactured play equipment that is used to target a particular age range. When we consider the age in which the current play areas are targeted, there is a clear bias towards provisions designed for 4-7 year olds. There is also an obvious lack of play areas targeting through-age play with only 3 play areas designed for 0-16 year olds. It is worth considering that whilst manufactures may specify the age range to which their equipment is suitable, it is ultimately the parents and the children themselves that assess the level of risk and challenge posed and this can lead to the equipment more often being used by children of a younger age than that specified by the manufacturer.



“Nationally, much public play space currently relies primarily on the design and installation of manufactured play equipment” (Adrian Voce, Play England 2008)

## 2.2 Why we need a Play Strategy

While we have tried to ensure that, in Kirklees, our play areas have the highest play value possible, historically, there has been a preference for manufactured equipment. Much of the manufactured play equipment is designed with a primary focus on safety and as a result offers very little opportunity to explore more adventurous play that considers risk and challenge. Upon reflection, Kirklees Council feel that this past preference for equipped play areas has led to a rather narrow view of play. While we understand the importance and appeal of manufactured play equipment, we believe that it should no longer be the sole focus of a play area, instead equipment should be used creatively and combined with more natural, free methods of play to create fresh, meaningful, diverse and more inspiring play spaces that recognise and respond to children's needs, offering them the fullest possible play experience.

The latest guidance from Play England, published their document 'Design for Play' concluded that the best practice should strive for accessible through-age provisions, meaning children of all ages could enjoy the same quality of play. The Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 and the Equality Act for 2010 also require inclusivity in the design and provision of play equipment meaning that where possible, play areas should cater for all ages and all abilities. Upon review Kirklees has a high number of play areas that meet neither the DDA or Equality requirements nor those set out within the industries best practice.

In addition to the heavy reliance on manufactured play equipment and increasing concerns for non-compliant provisions; past developments of play areas has seen a prolific use of non-play infrastructure such as hoop top boundary fencing and motorised gates; these alongside the manufactured play equipment are required to be inspected on a 4-6 week cycle. The on-going demands and the growing cost of maintenance and repairs of both the equipment and the non-play infrastructure means the current play provisions are becoming increasingly financially unsustainable.

The need for a play strategy becomes apparent when we consider that these growing costs are for potentially poor quality play provisions. The purpose of the strategy will be to assess what we have, and what is wanted by the stakeholders and come up with an action plan that will result in a network of diverse, high quality and financially sustainable play provisions that appeal to, and can be enjoyed by, all across Kirklees.

## 2.2.1 Barriers to play

The Kirklees Open Demand Assessment (2015) revealed that the main reason preventing visits to open space provisions, behind “lack of public facilities (e.g. toilets, cafe)” was that people are “too busy”. Further to this, fear of crime/personal safety and car parking problems were the next most common reasons given for not using provisions.

With a lack of free time and a lack of available car parking being highlighted as common barriers to play, there needs to be a review of how accessible play is within Kirklees and what play provisions are available. While the quantity of play provisions within Kirklees is currently greater than other neighbouring districts, the quality of play or lack of play value offered locally may be discouraging people from using local provisions in favour of provisions further afield, that require car travel and consequently discouraging further visits due to a lack of sufficient parking.

Open Space Demand Assessment also highlights anxiety as one of the main barriers to parks and open spaces, the report suggests that there may be a link between people’s perception of quality of the provisions and how they perceive the level of personal security.



\*Photo by Green Man Learning.



## 2.3

### Why is Play important?

**We recognise that play is so much more than an equipped play area, the essence of play is that it is child-led and initiated and not directed by adults.**

**Play is a vital part of our everyday lives, not only is it an enjoyable pastime, it can be a tool to achieve positive development and positive changes.**

#### 2.3.1 Physical Activity

Opportunities for outdoor play can increase levels of physical activity among children and adults.

Bristol University, recently conducted a research project that highlights the impact play opportunities have on a child's physical activity levels. Using accelerometry and GPS data to measure activity levels in children who were presented with increased outdoor play opportunities in the form of designated road closures, and compared to data taken during 'regular school days'. The results showed that children were outside 70% of the time during the street closures compared to less than 20% on an average school day. The data showed that children who participated in outdoor play spent 25% more of their time in moderate to vigorous physical activity.

The Kirklees Open Space Demand Assessment found that parks and open spaces can also help increase physical activity in adults. It revealed that 79% of people thought that green spaces helped them keep fit and healthy and 60% said more green spaces would help improve physical health. It was also suggested that the provision of open spaces can help remove barriers to participation and reduce health inequalities.

In 2014 UKActive published their report 'Turning the tide of inactivity' in which they concluded that there is no direct correlation between the amount of greenspace and inactivity; however Yorkshire is characterised by large areas of open space, with 59% compared to the national average of 46%, despite this, levels of inactivity in the Yorkshire region is reported to be 30%, this is higher than the national average. As previously discussed, play is an excellent tool against inactivity at all ages and this suggests that as a region, we should be better utilising our existing parks and greenspaces by exploring and maximising their potential for play.

**25%**

more of their time in moderate to vigorous physical activity during outdoor play

**79%**

of people in Kirklees believe green spaces helped them to keep fit and healthy

**60%**

of people in Kirklees believed that more green spaces would help improve physical health

**59%**

of Yorkshire is large open space, higher than the national average.

### 2.3.1.1 Inactivity in children

Current national guidance (UKActive) recommends that children over 5 years old should engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity every day. Children under 5 that are able to walk unaided should be physically active for at least 3 hours spread throughout the day.

The UKActive's study found that across England, only 24% of girls and 32% of boys aged between 2 years old and 15 years old were meeting these recommendations and this is having a huge impact on children's health.

### 2.3.1.2 Physical Activity in Kirklees

Physical inactivity is a major problem in Kirklees. Defined as participation in less than 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week, physical inactivity represents 10% of total societal costs when compared against other top-tier public health concerns such as smoking, obesity and drug and alcohol misuse.

In 2014 UKActive estimated that 12.5 million people in England are physically inactive; this equates to 1 in 4 people, and is despite the fact people could achieve their 30 minutes in three 10 minute bouts.

Out of 150 local authorities, Kirklees ranks 114 for lowest inactivity levels. (Where 150 is most inactive and 1 is least inactive).

114<sup>th</sup>  
Kirklees

### 2.3.1.3 Children's health in Kirklees

The National Child Measurement Programme Headline Data from 2015/2016 showed that within Kirklees 13.3% of children in reception were measuring as overweight; this equates to 1 in 8 and is higher than both the national average of 12.8% and the regional average of 13%. In total, 22.2%, roughly 1 in 5 children of reception age in Kirklees measured either overweight or obese.

Of the year 6 children (children aged 10 to 11 years) measured in Kirklees, 15.1% were considered to be overweight (1 in 7). This is higher than the national and regional average of 14.3%. 20.7% measured as obese, which is again higher than the national average of 19.1% and the regional average of 20.3%. In total, 35.9% (1 in 3) year 6 children in Kirklees were measured as either overweight or obese.

Most Inactive

150<sup>th</sup>  
Manchester



**1 in 5**

Reception age  
children are  
overweight or obese  
in Kirklees

(UKActive, 2014)

**1 in 3**

Year 6 children are  
overweight or obese  
in Kirklees

(UKActive, 2014)

**£20,750,766**

cost of inactivity  
to Kirklees

(UKActive, 2014)

#### 2.3.1.4 Health implications of inactivity

Regular moderate physical activity, including walking and active play, can help prevent and reduce the risk of a number of chronic conditions including coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, cancer, obesity, mental health problems and musculoskeletal conditions; and can be achieved in many different forms, most of which can be provided through the provision of play opportunities.

#### 2.3.1.5 Financial implications of inactivity

UKActive's report 'Turning the tide of inactivity' suggests that reducing physical inactivity by just 1% a year over a 5 year period would save local authorities £1.2billion. The same report published a study of 150 local authority districts across the UK and ranked them according to levels of inactivity. Kirklees ranked 114 out of 150 with nearly 32% of people considered inactive, the associated cost of this inactivity to Kirklees was estimated to be £20,750,766.

### 2.3.2 Mental Health and Well-being

In addition to the positive effects physical activity can have on mental well-being. Outdoor play provisions can also be beneficial to mental health and well-being by providing important opportunities to interact with nature. The positive effect interaction with nature has on our mental well-being has been well documented. Spending time in green environments whether combined with physical activity or for passive relaxation is said to have restorative qualities which help the human body recover from the demands of modern everyday life.

Children with easy access to nature are more able to cope with a stressful life than those in urban habitats lacking green space. It can improve cognitive function and has been shown to improve a child's ability to direct their attention. This re-iterates the importance of outdoor play provisions, especially in more urban areas, and their potential to provide a link between children and nature.

Playing outdoors allows children to learn about risk assessment and risk taking. Children that are exposed to acceptable levels of risk at a young age are less likely to make bad judgements in the future.

Furthermore, access to natural play areas in particular has been proven to enhance peace, self-control and self-discipline in children as well as reducing stress among highly stressed children. Contact with nature has also been shown to significantly reduce symptoms of ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) in children as young as five.

The benefits to mental well-being potentially provided by outdoor play provisions are not limited to children, but could also benefit, parents, carers and all users of parks as further studies by The National Trust, Play England, NICE and the NCT have shown that living in urban areas that possess more green areas, on average lowers mental distress and increases overall well-being.



\*Photo by Green Man Learning.

### 2.3.2.1 Health benefits of exposure to nature

Increasing a child's exposure to nature through outdoor play opportunities could potentially offer some additional health benefits. Children with more exposure to diverse natural environments are more physically active. They also tend to be more aware of nutrition, more civil to one another and more creative.

Studies by Cambridge University have also shown a link between times spent outdoors and reduced rates of near-sightedness in children, suggesting that spending time outdoors has a beneficial effect on eyesight.

Again, these benefits are not just limited to children, as experiencing nature in the short and long term has a significant impact on the heart rate and blood pressure. The sun alone provides up to 90% of Vitamin D required.



\*Photo by Green Man Learning.

## 2.3.3 The importance of play in other Kirklees strategies.

### 2.3.3.1

#### Kirklees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS)

This strategy sets out the vision for improving the health and wellbeing of local people while reducing inequalities at every stage of people's lives. It specifically mentions the role of open spaces in encouraging physical activity and supporting positive emotional well-being. The play strategy will review and revise the current stock of play provisions to ensure Kirklees offers high quality and diverse play opportunities for all, providing equal opportunities to improve and maintain both physical and mental health.

### 2.3.3.2

#### Everyone Active: Kirklees Physical Activity and Sport Plan 2015-2020

The vision of the plan is that by 2020 everyone will be physically active. It adopts a life course approach based on aims of starting to be active, staying active and achieving ambitions at all life stages. The play strategy will review the role of play in helping to achieve these goals and how it can be used as a tool to target all life stages.

### 2.3.3.3

#### Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) FOR Kirklees 2010 -2020

The plan is intended to identify changes to the public rights of way (PROW) network in line with government aims for better provisions. It recognises and acknowledges the different uses and demands of a PROW network to meet social and recreational needs. The play strategy will explore the potential of incorporating play into the PROW network to form 'play-scapes' to further increase interconnectivity and improve community cohesion within Kirklees.



\*Photo by Green Man Learning.



# 3.0

## Our Vision

### 3.1 Increasing diversity of play

The distance in which children can explore unsupervised has decreased by 90% in the last 40 years, in stark contrast to the way many parents today grew up, and this has undoubtedly had a huge impact on how children play. A recent YourGov poll commissioned by the Wildlife Trust reported that a quarter of children have never built a sand-castle, and a third has never climbed a tree. When considering that 11 – 15 year olds now spend an average of 7.5 hours a day in front of a screen, you can see how the current trend in play is changing. Only 10% of parents believed that their child spends more time outdoors than they did.

The Wildlife Trust has also reported that over the last four generations, children have become increasingly disconnected from nature and suggests that our generation of children is growing up “at arms-length from the natural world”. This was emphasised by a recent poll revealing only 1 in 10 children have played in ‘wild places’, this is despite 91% of parents believing that having access to nature and wildlife is important for their children and 78% expressing concern that their children do not spend enough time interacting with nature and wildlife.

Through a revised play strategy we want to help reinstate and facilitate ‘wild’ play and diversify play opportunities throughout Kirklees. By combining manufactured play equipment with more natural play equipment, introducing mud kitchens, imagination stations and simply opening up play areas to their natural surroundings, the aim is to make nature more accessible for children. Play in nature is important as it affords possibilities and challenges for children to explore their own abilities. Children feel more comfortable being in the natural environment and their knowledge about nature increases.



\*Photo by Green Man Learning.

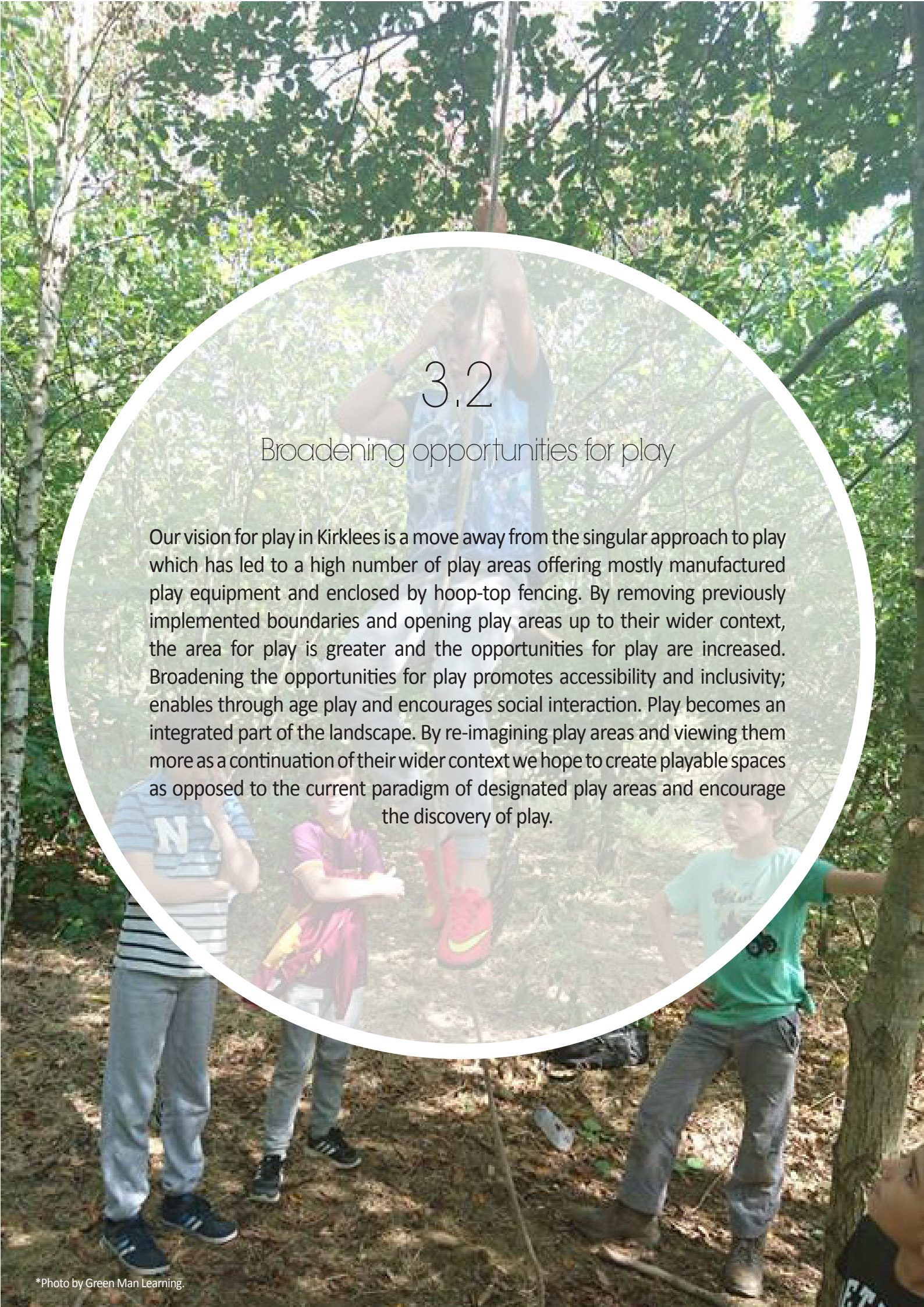
Forest Schools are becoming increasingly popular in Kirklees as the importance of wild play and a child’s connections with nature are appreciated. By providing more natural environments for play, not only are potential platforms for Forest Schools increased so too are the opportunities for children to re-enact and further explore wild play as well as allowing them the opportunity to share their experiences with others.

Allowing children to explore outside the reach of parents is also an important part of their development as it allows them the opportunity to develop a greater sense of responsibility and independence at a younger age. This in turn attributes to their well-being, letting them test their abilities and challenge themselves, while further developing a greater sense of self. With rising parental anxieties and the distance in which children are allowed to 'roam' decreasing, the opportunities for independent play have fallen. Research suggests that this has gone hand in hand with further increasing fears of 'stranger danger' and rising road traffic accidents. We believe one of the first steps in breaking this cycle and helping parents regain confidence in children's ability to navigate their natural world and explore their local surroundings is to provide a more diverse experience of play closer to home.

Diversifying play opportunities and providing more opportunities for wild play within a community can also benefit the community as a whole. Research suggests that by allowing children to play outdoors enables them to establish relationships with other children in their community and this can have a positive effect on community cohesion. Research also suggests that the more social networks children have in a neighbourhood, the greater the confidence parents have in the safety of that area. Parents too can establish their own networks through their children, meaning that play also supports community cohesion amongst adults.

95% of children have visited a park with a parent, carer or grandparent according to the same YourGov poll, this highlights the importance of our existing parks and play areas and the potential of these spaces to diversify and improve the quality of play across Kirklees. Our goal is to broaden the view of how children play by offering a multitude of diverse play environments and to maximise children's exposure to nature by re-introducing 'wild' or 'natural' play into our existing playable spaces.





## 3.2

### Broadening opportunities for play

Our vision for play in Kirklees is a move away from the singular approach to play which has led to a high number of play areas offering mostly manufactured play equipment and enclosed by hoop-top fencing. By removing previously implemented boundaries and opening play areas up to their wider context, the area for play is greater and the opportunities for play are increased. Broadening the opportunities for play promotes accessibility and inclusivity; enables through age play and encourages social interaction. Play becomes an integrated part of the landscape. By re-imagining play areas and viewing them more as a continuation of their wider context we hope to create playable spaces as opposed to the current paradigm of designated play areas and encourage the discovery of play.

We want to decouple the perception that play requires manufactured equipment and encourage imagination and creativity in play. The hope is to introduce areas that promote more explorative play, where children are encouraged to explore and engage with their immediate surrounds, spot wildlife, look for particular sights or sounds that may be present and reflect the nature of the area. The hope is to revise attitudes towards play, not of the children but more so the parents that play can be found anywhere and is not just limited to designated equipped play areas.



Broadening the view of play releases the potential of existing, as yet under utilised play opportunities throughout Kirklees and sits hand in hand with a number of other council initiatives. 'Green Streets' for example, is a council initiative that looks at the promotion and practical methods of integrating trees and other green features in urban settings such as residential streets. The focus is on but not limited to, areas of deprivation and job growth as well as along transport corridors such as cycle routes in order to maximise impact and benefits of such provisions. It promotes the need to link new developments to existing green spaces through for instance, tree lined routes. This could provide a greater level of local aesthetics and a sense of place in areas. Further to the associated health benefits, it would also provide a number of natural, more explorative play opportunities nested within residential areas.

Where there may be physical barriers to play such as busy roads, these will continue to be taken very seriously and, where necessary, will be addressed with careful consideration and creativity within the design of play spaces. In regards to parental anxieties such as 'stranger danger' the council understands that there will always be parental anxieties, and while we can't eliminate them, the hope is that by encouraging and introducing volunteer Park Rangers and Street Play Wardens, communities will actively regain confidence in their local green spaces. Through a number of duties such as litter picking, monitoring dog fouling, regular patrolling and coordinating routine street play sessions, volunteers and the council can work collaboratively to plan provisions and reduce anxieties. The hope is that these volunteering opportunities will act to draw families out to participate, help to combat social isolation and increase public confidence, in turn, improving the wellbeing of communities.



### 3.3 Making the most of our landscape

As a district Kirklees covers a multitude of differing landscapes and we believe we should be celebrating our unique setting by making it easier for everyone to enjoy. By designing play spaces that utilise the existing landscape or in some cases, re-instating original topological and ecological features we hope to create play spaces that reflect and enhance the natural diversity of Kirklees while promoting explorative 'wild' play.

Whereas previously an area may have been levelled in order to build a play area, moving forward we want to utilise the natural landscape and its landform and encourage it to become an integrated part of play. Emphasising and enhancing natural landscapes can provide endless playing opportunities; changes in ground levels, playful arrangement of mounds, ditches and hollows all provide numerous opportunities for exploring, climbing, hiding and chasing. When using manufactured play equipment this will be seamlessly integrated within its natural setting, with no sense of where the play space begins and ends, making it feel far more inviting to explore than the current model of a fenced layout.

Play spaces benefit from a process of ongoing change and refurbishment. This is especially important because children grow up and change fast, whilst the fixed equipment in their local equipped play space tends to stay the same. Moving away from the idea of designated play areas and opening up the opportunities for play into the wider context, we believe will also encourage through age play. Combining manufactured equipment that targets a specific age range and combining this with more natural and imaginative forms of play to create opportunities for everyone. Play areas that have every corner defined, so that there is nowhere for children to invent their own play activities, can become dull very quickly, especially as children get older. The use of non-prescriptive features encourages users to find their own uses; it puts play in the control of the players and encourages creativity and imagination. Our goal is to create play spaces that have different uses for different ages but a use for everyone.

Embracing the natural landscape creates endless diversity in play as every play space will be different and different landscapes can offer different opportunities. Not only will each play space be different, by inviting in and incorporating the natural surroundings, each play space will change throughout the year, offering new and exciting play opportunities with the changing seasons.

Through creating a greater diversity of playing opportunities, there is also the hope that this will encourage people to explore other areas of the district, as each landscape will offer something new.

In addition there is the hope that by retaining the existing landscapes and incorporating natural elements into play spaces, existing and returning wildlife will be encouraged. This will not only benefit the immediate and surrounding areas in terms of biodiversity it can also provide added learning opportunities.

## 3.4 Creating a network of play

Through broadening our view of play, the potential for play opportunities increases and allows play spaces to take many forms and work at many scales. We want to move away from the perception of play areas as designated spaces, and instead design play to be a fully integrated thread within the fabric of our district, providing accessible enjoyment, stimulation and adventure for all.

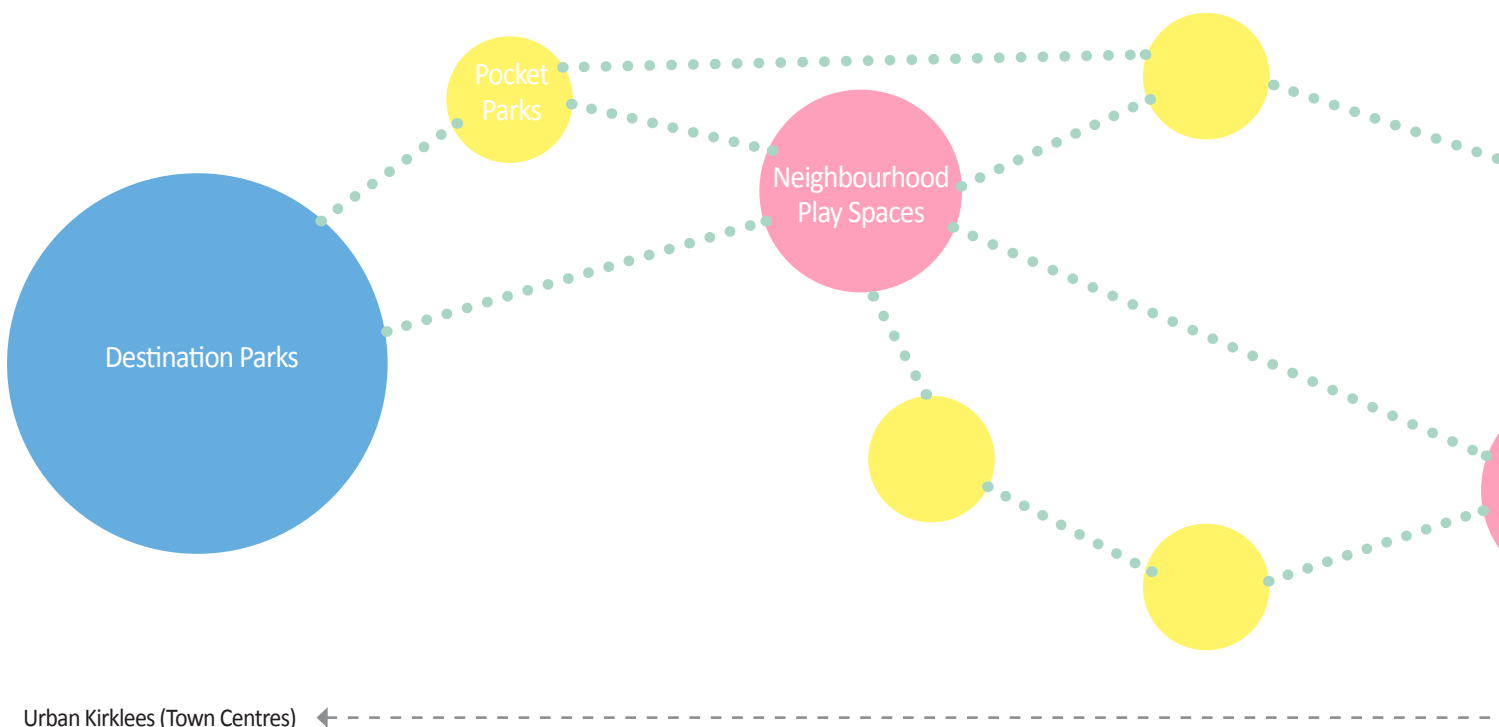
### 3.4.1 Play infrastructure

Parks and green spaces can exist in a variety of scales and forms and by exploring and celebrating this, they can be used to connect people and places to their wider context helping to blur the lines between the natural and the built environment.

As part of the Open Space Demand Assessment, a consultation highlighted a lack of connectivity between green spaces. A recurring theme throughout the consultation was the desire and potential for a better connected and quality network. We believe there is the potential to use playable spaces to form these linkages and provide useable, visually attractive environments, play-scapes, which are not only easily accessible but become an important element of the Kirklees infrastructure.

By creating a network of play spaces throughout Kirklees, presents the potential to create corridors of play that tie together the inner urban areas of Kirklees to the more rural. The goal is to create an overall structure of play that offers diverse, high quality play at all scales within and throughout the district.

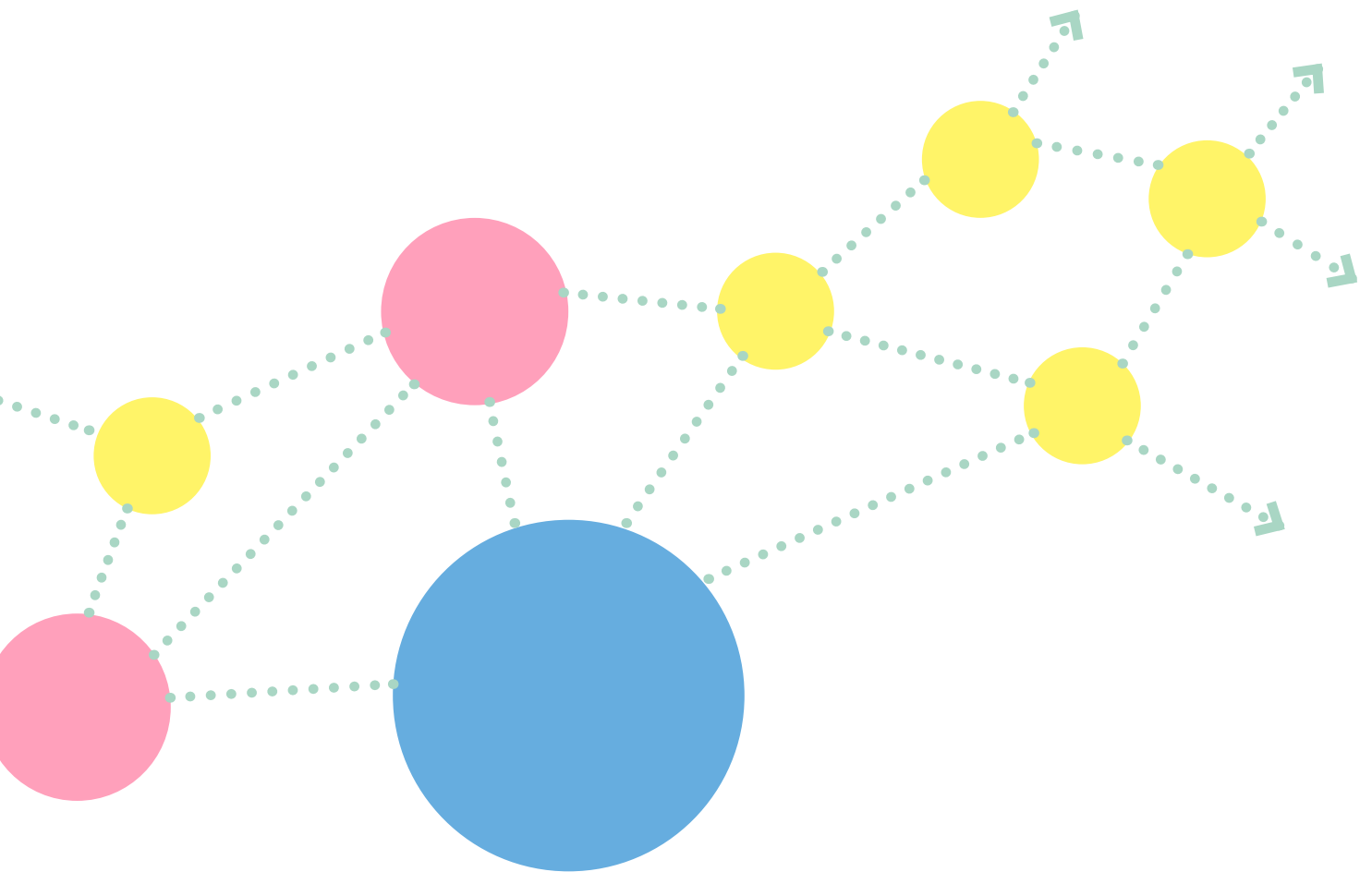
Designing play spaces to be an integrated part of Kirklees infrastructure, expanding the existing network of green spaces, in turn, it will offer the added benefits of creating green corridors and potentially increase bio-diversity.







\*Photo by Green Man Learning.



### 3.5 Provide neutral spaces

The council understands how important play is for parents and carers as well as children as an opportunity to meet and socialise. Play spaces have particular social value for parents and carers of young children, as places for both the adults and children to meet informally, taking away some of the pressure of individual childcare responsibilities. As social creatures, we crave social engagement and spending time in parks and other green spaces increases the likelihood of social interaction, whether it be through chance encounters or organised activity, it also offers the opportunity to explore and develop hobbies and interests all of which play a part in maintaining our mental well being.

As previously discussed, outdoor play can have a positive effect on community cohesion as it allows children to establish relationships with other children in their community. Outdoor play spaces allow adults to establish their own networks through their children. In Finland, over 70% of parents regarded their local play area to be somewhere where they can get support and help with issues concerning their children.

A key outcome of the play strategy is to provide through-age play, while historically, play has been targeted at 0-16year olds; we want to create spaces that are welcoming to all ages, not just the young but the young at heart. By providing spaces that are designed to appeal to all ages we hope to encourage social interaction not just within a generation but also across generations. Social interaction is important to maintaining mental health and there are many examples of how cross-generational engagement has benefits to all involved.

Playgrounds for senior citizens have already become a hit across Europe and Asia, inviting older generations to get outside and into the fresh air and there is a growing trend of cross-generational play spaces that target multiple generations. In contrast to many existing playgrounds that provide only benches or walking paths for adults, multi-generational playgrounds include equipment for people of all ages, in addition to traditional manufactured play equipment that targets children, these parks are packed with low impact exercise equipment such as stationary equipment for stretching and balance and brainteasers designed to keep mental abilities keen, offering senior citizens an opportunity to exercise at their own pace, while offering the added benefit of socialization.

Aside from encouraging exercise in older generations, these multi-generational playgrounds bring varying ages together for socializing, exercise, and fun. Through the enjoyment of play and exercise, the children and seniors mix together, forming social bonds that have been proven to reduce stress, anxiety and loneliness.

Our goal is to create neutral play spaces that provide a platform for social cohesion while appealing to all ages and abilities; providing optimal opportunities to play, grow and learn.

### 3.6 Future proofing play spaces

We recognise that, for children, play evolves quickly as interests and abilities change and we believe that play spaces should reflect this. In addition to designing spaces that target through-age play, we understand the need to embrace technological advances in play and welcome them into our green spaces to ensure their on-going appeal.



# 4.0 The Strategy

## 4.1 What does the strategy mean for Kirklees

### 4.1.1 For the residents

#### 4.1.1.1

##### Locally

Kirklees benefits from a large number of existing play areas, this grants us an excellent opportunity to diversify our play provisions and improve the quality of play at all scales. We are keen to increase the number of play opportunities throughout Kirklees by broadening the view of what play is, in order to ensure the highest play value we will be assessing the play value of equipped play areas and redesigning the existing provisions to better utilise the existing stock of manufactured play equipment.

The initial assessment of existing play provisions will determine the quality of local play areas; this will play a part in informing the future role of individual play areas within the play strategy. No existing play spaces will be removed, however there may be items of manufactured equipment removed or relocated to other play areas within the local catchment. Areas where manufactured play equipment is removed will be redesigned into playable spaces and areas that include manufactured equipment will benefit from safer, higher quality and compliant equipment. Careful and considerate redesign of all play areas will provide diverse, inclusive and improved play value across the ward.

## 4.1.1.2

### Across Kirklees

While a reviewed approach to play may see a reduction in manufactured play equipment across the district and less 'designated' play areas, there will be an increase in natural play provisions and this will result in more natural looking landscapes. Implementation of the strategy will result in an increase in play quality and more play opportunities which will provide more learning opportunities throughout Kirklees.

Encouraging 'wild' play and providing more natural playable spaces will not only make nature more accessible, it will increase the biodiversity and the ecological base of Kirklees. Increasing areas of natural play areas will increase the level of through-age play provisions within Kirklees, providing more play opportunities for older generations and more multi-generational opportunities.

## 4.1.2

### For the Council

Broadening the view of play, decoupling the view that play requires manufactured play equipment and understanding the importance of 'wild' play, will result in fewer equipped play areas and a greater number of natural playable spaces. Reducing the need for manufactured play equipment presents the opportunity to remove aging equipment and better utilise the existing stock of manufactured play equipment.

There is currently a very high number of play areas that consist solely of manufactured play equipment and include an abundance of non-play infrastructure, such as hoop top fencing and mechanised gates, these require a robust inspection and maintenance programme to be carried out by a team of qualified BTEC level inspectors. Fewer items of manufactured play equipment and less infrastructure has the added benefit of fewer inspections, less maintenance and lower associated costs, enabling resources to be targeted better to the remaining equipped destination facilities.

We understand the importance volunteering has on community cohesion and mental well-being, moving away from specialised equipment and exploring other methods of play opens up volunteering opportunities such as volunteer park rangers and street play co-ordinators.

Increasing the provisions of natural play increases opportunities for through-age play, potentially improving physical and mental health and social cohesion across Kirklees.

## 4.2 Process and timescales

The first stage of the strategy will be to assess and analyse the current play provisions within Kirklees. This will be done through a comprehensive desktop study.

### Condition Surveys

Each play area will be inspected by a BTEC qualified play inspector. Each individual item of play equipment and each element of the play area (ie. gate, surfacing) will be inspected and assessed for its Health and Safety standard. Using a traffic light system of red, amber and green, where red indicates high risk of accident or injury; amber indicates some damage or wear that may lead to risk but does not require immediate attention and green which indicates no or minimal risk. Alongside this, the level of rectifying works that may be required is also recorded. This can range from cleaning or repainting to removal or full refurbishment.

As well as assessing the standard of the existing play areas, the quality inspections will also provide a record of what equipment is present within each play area which will go toward assessing the overall play value.

Conditions surveys, while vital to assess the current play provisions, are only able to assess the existing equipped play areas and not what we feel are potential playable spaces. For this reason, information gathered in these surveys will be combined with information gathered through a mapping exercise to form a comprehensive desktop study.

### Mapping

Parallel to the conditions survey will be a mapping exercise by which specific criteria can be accurately recorded. This will enable a more in-depth assessment and analysis of the existing play provisions within Kirklees at the micro, meso and macro scales. This information can then be used as a baseline alongside the Public Open Land Assessment and will be a key tool in developing and implementing the overall play strategy as well as a useful method to monitor Kirklees play provisions in the future.

Mapping will include but may not be limited to:

- Location of existing play provisions
- Proximity to other existing play provisions
- Frequency of existing play provisions
- Approximate size of the existing provisions
- Potential for extending/developing existing provisions
- Physical barriers to the existing provisions (ie. main roads)
- Local land use
- Topography
- Local amenities (ie. shops, schools, PROW's, Forestry)
- Planned developments
- Demographic data
- Social information
- The Local Plan

## Ward Councillor Clinics

Each ward will be sent the desktop study information, with the data sets overlaid on the ward and the surrounding areas to give context. This information will be used to inform a discussion between councillors and officers on what the best provision possible is and how that will be achieved.

## Public Consultations

The ward councillor discussions will then be used to inform public consultations. The purpose of this will be to discover up-to-date views on the existing play provisions in Kirklees and gain information such as where young people most enjoy playing, how children and young people like to play, as well as an opportunity to gauge the level of agreement with the proposed themes. The public consultation will be conducted through a combination of online questionnaires, which can be collated alongside information and responses gathered through public meetings, all of which will be widely publicised.

## Consultations with key stakeholders

Alongside the ward-based workshops, there will also be consultations held with other identified key stakeholder groups. This will provide them an opportunity to give their views on play in the district, to help shape and direct the play strategy and to make sure the priorities reflect the needs of the community.

The consultation process is due to be conducted over a 5 month period, projected to conclude in October 2017 with the Autumn half-term being the cut-off date.

All information gathered will then be used to develop a strategic and robust action plan, the hope is that this will then be submitted to cabinet in early 2018.



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| Risk                                   | Impact   | Mitigation   |
|--|--|--|
| Public opposition.                     | Reputational risk to the council.                        | Early engagement.  |
|  | Insuffiecnt information to inform consultation.          | Have plenty of case studies.                             |
|  |  |  |
| No stakeholder engagement.             | Insufficient information to inform designs/restucturing. | Creative engagement to show people are intent.           |
|  |  |  |
| Resistance to change past practices.   | Resistance to changing duties/buy-in.                    | Management process.                                      |
|  |  | Provide case studies of success stories from UK.         |
|  |  | Additional training required?                            |
|  |  |  |
| Benefits take too long to be realised. | Reputational risk to the Council.                        | Prioritise implementation program based on early return. |
|  |  | Beaumont Park can be used as an early example.           |
|  |  |  |
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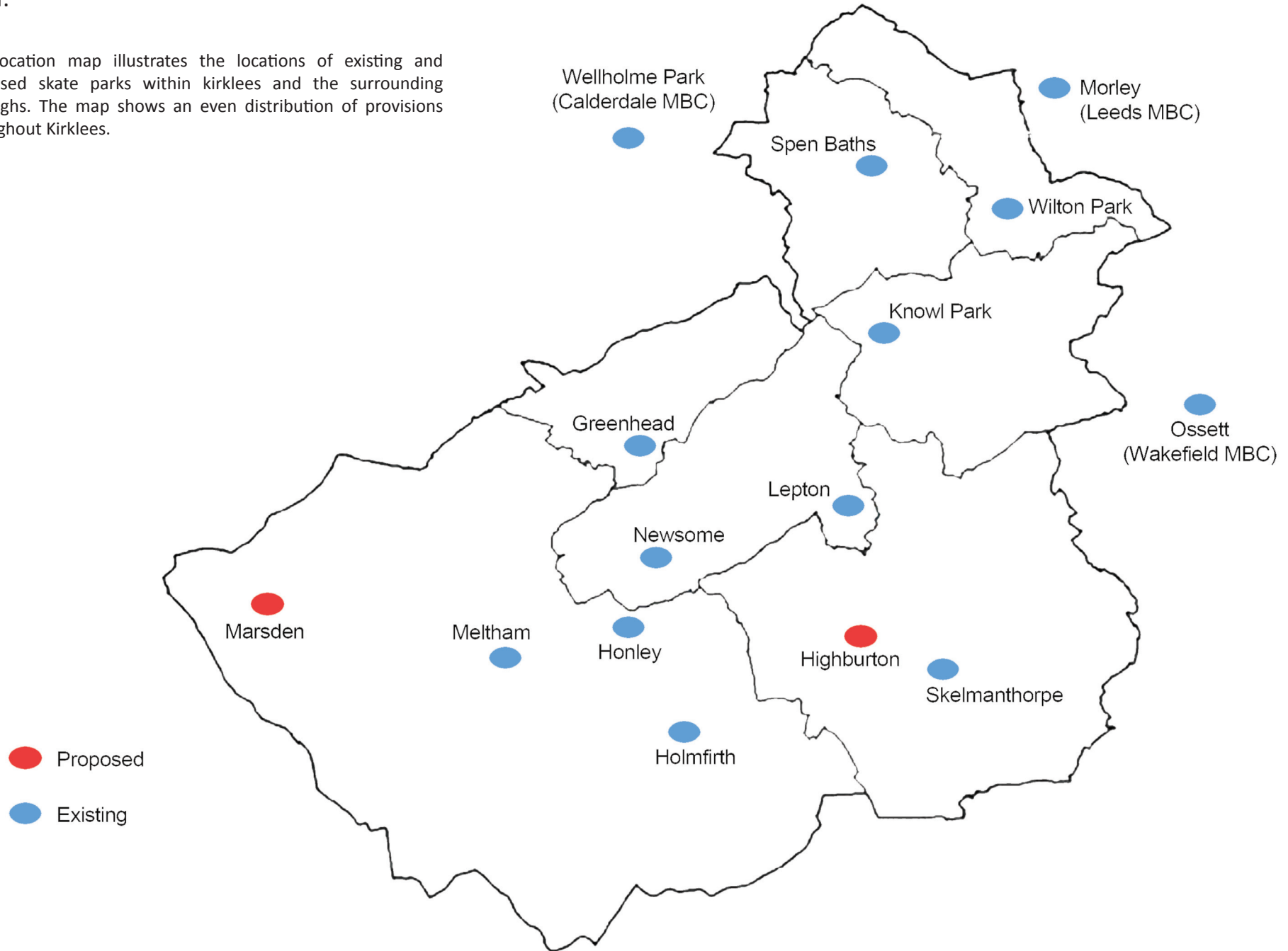
## Sufficiency Survey: Skateparks

Mapping the provision of Skateparks within Kirklees.

Date produced: April 2017

## Location:

The location map illustrates the locations of existing and proposed skate parks within Kirklees and the surrounding boroughs. The map shows an even distribution of provisions throughout Kirklees.



## Provisions compared to neighboring LAs

As of April 2017 Kirklees Council manage 10 skate parks with a further 2 in development, due to be completed this year. With a population of 428,300 people, the 12 skate parks offer one provision per 35,692 people in Kirklees. Leeds City Council, the largest neighboring Local Authority currently has 8 skate parks under their management. With a population of 766,399 people (figures correct as of 2014) this equates to 1 skate park per 95,800 people. The results of this comparison would suggest that Kirklees is advanced in its existing provision of stake parks.

## Accessibility to provisions - travel times & public transport

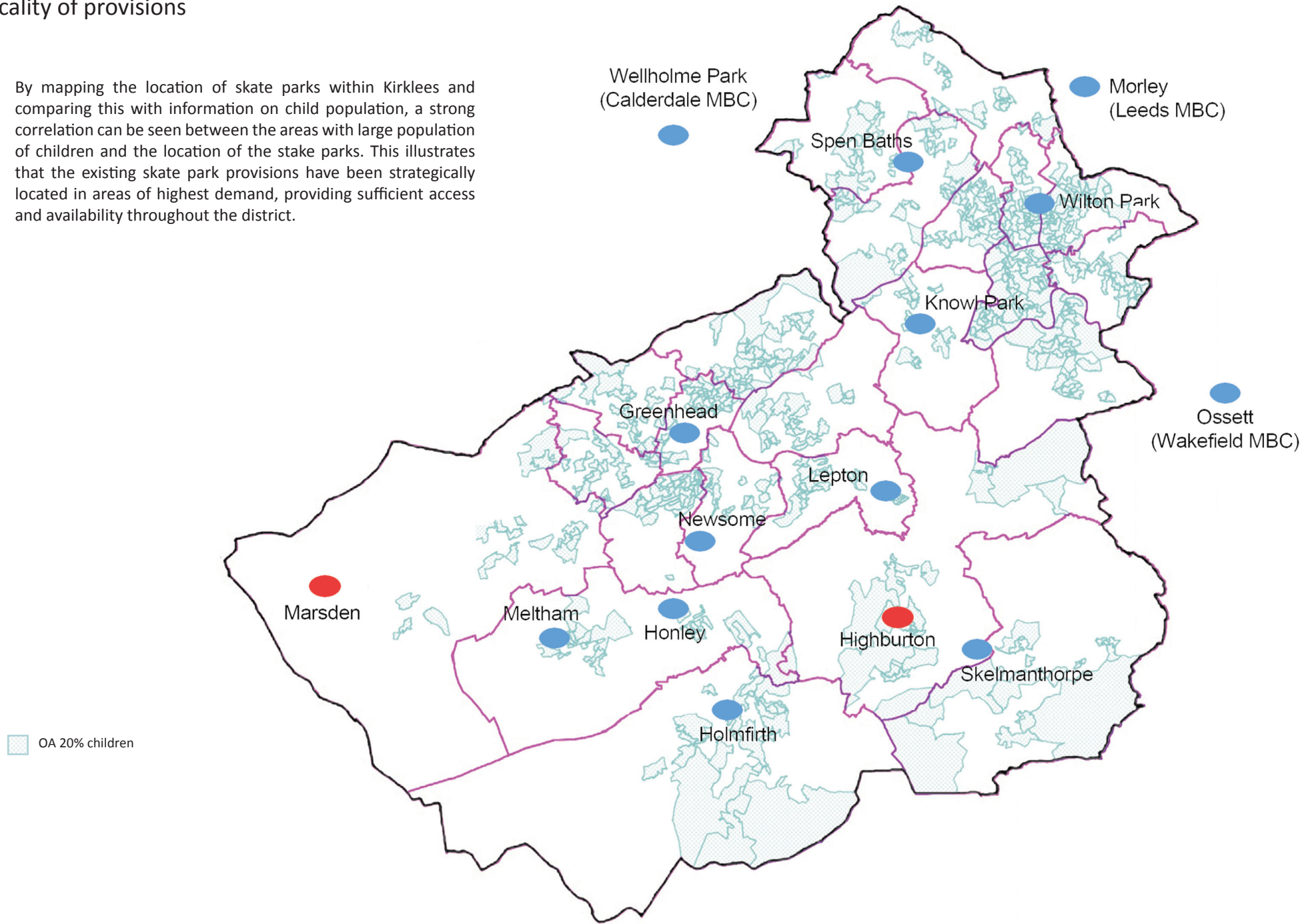
| Skatepark         | Nearest Railway Station (miles) | Nearest Bus Stop |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Spensorough Baths | 3.4m                            | 0.1m (1 route)   |
| Wilton Park       | 1.6m                            | 0.1m (7 routes)  |
| Knowle Park       | 0.5m                            | 0.1m (3 routes)  |
| Greenhead         | 1m                              | 0.1m (13 routes) |
| Newsome           | 1.1m                            | 0.1m (4 routes)  |
| Lepton            | 3.8m                            | 0.1m (3 routes)  |
| Meltham           | 4.2m                            | 0.1m (3 routes)  |
| Honley            | 0.8m                            | 0.1m (2 routes)  |
| Holmfirth         | 1.9m                            | 0.1m (6 routes)  |
| Skelmanthorpe     | 2.3m                            | 0.5m (6 routes)  |
| In development:   |                                 |                  |
| Highburton        | 2.6m                            | 0.2m (4 routes)  |
| Marsden           | 0.3m                            | 0.2m (7 routes)  |

## Usability of provisions - skill levels

All skate parks within the district have been designed to appeal to all skill levels from novice to advanced. This is with the exception of Wilton Skate park that is designed more for beginners and those with moderate skill levels. Greenhead Park is designed to appeal to those with moderate skill levels and the more experienced users.

## Locality of provisions

By mapping the location of skate parks within Kirklees and comparing this with information on child population, a strong correlation can be seen between the areas with large population of children and the location of the stake parks. This illustrates that the existing skate park provisions have been strategically located in areas of highest demand, providing sufficient access and availability throughout the district.





## Areas of deprivation

By mapping the location of skate parks within Kirklees and comparing this with areas of deprivation it can be seen that there is no relationship between the location and the varying levels of deprivation. It can also be seen that there are a number of provisions located within or within close proximity to areas of high deprivation suggesting there is sufficient access and availability throughout the district.

