

Kirklees Council

Playable Spaces 3 Year Operational Plan

2019-2022

1. Introduction

Kirklees Council recognises the huge significance of high quality, accessible playable spaces in encouraging and enabling people to play out. Whilst we have a large number of play areas, they differ considerably in quality and variety of what they offer in terms of play value and many do not provide the broad range of play opportunities that they could. The Playable Spaces Strategy has been prepared to address this lack of variety in and access to quality play opportunities across the district – and the associated socio-economic impacts - as well as to propose a more financially sustainable model for the future.

A capital improvement programme to redevelop the portfolio of Kirklees play areas is a key recommendation of the Playable Spaces Strategy. The existing profile of the Kirklees stock of play areas, as highlighted by the research undertaken in the development of the Strategy, demonstrates the need for a significant investment in order to:

- bring the majority of sites in line with the new classification system to create a diverse play offer across the district;
- enable the implementation of the Kirklees Play Standard across the district; and
- address the ageing nature of our play area stock.

It is also important that we are able to:

- understand local inequalities in play;
- identify physical and social barriers to accessing playable spaces; and
- enable communities to gain the maximum opportunity to access these spaces and to benefit from the wellbeing benefits delivered by active, imaginative and environmentally engaged play.

A period of three years is proposed as a time frame for the delivery of an improvement programme with the aim of ensuring that no fixed play equipment in our portfolio is older than 15 years on completion of the programme. In conjunction with the other recommendations of the Play Strategy this would create a network of play provisions across the district that is safe, fit for purpose and financially sustainable.

2. Vision and Aims

Our vision is a district where all are able and encouraged to access a range of opportunities to play outdoors, benefitting their physical and mental health and well-being as well as encouraging intergenerational interaction and community cohesion.

To achieve this vision the Playable Spaces Strategy aims to:

- provide a diverse range of high quality play spaces for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to access challenging opportunities for play, physical activity, contact with nature and social development close to home;

- encourage active play to help build physical strength, increase fitness and teach children vital life skills such as planning, negotiating, being creative and managing risk;
- improve the overall quality of the play offer throughout Kirklees, and the financial sustainability of the network, by reducing the number of equipped play areas with poor play value while maintaining the number of playable public open spaces; and
- provide a more effective approach to ongoing maintenance and management both within the Council and by fostering greater citizen involvement.

The Playable Spaces Strategy makes five main recommendations which together meet these aims and which have been developed on the basis of national, regional and local research and engagement. These are detailed in full in this Operational Plan.

The recommendations are that Kirklees Council implements:

1. a new **classification of existing play sites**;
2. a **Play Standard** to guide all future play area developments;
3. a **three year improvement programme** to our play area network;
4. a **play engagement programme** to be delivered in conjunction with site redevelopments; and
5. a revised framework for ongoing **risk management and maintenance**.

3. Outcomes and Objectives

A series of outcomes and measurable objectives for this Operational Plan have been developed based on the vision and recommendations of the Playable Spaces Strategy. These are presented below and have been grouped into four themes as follows:

- Focus on quality.
- Financial sustainability.
- Access for all.
- Citizen satisfaction and wider economic benefits.

A framework for measuring these objectives is set out later in this document.

Theme 1: Focus on quality

Outcomes	<p><i>1a) Increased quality and play value of equipped play areas and doorstep playable spaces across the whole Kirklees district.</i></p> <p><i>1b) Improved management and maintenance ensuring future retention of the high quality playable space network into the future.</i></p> <p><i>1c) Citizens encouraged to look after their local green space or play area and to become future stewards or Play Area Guardians.</i></p> <p><i>1d) Improved quality of sites and increased local involvement deters future anti-social behaviour and associated damage to sites.</i></p> <p><i>1e) Improved local understanding of perceptions of the quality of playable spaces and the barriers in access which this may present to local communities.</i></p> <p><i>1f) Equitable quality of playable spaces across Kirklees.</i></p>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that, by the end of the improvement programme, all play

	<p>equipment in Kirklees under Council management is less than 15 years of age, which will be achieved by renovating 107 play areas in line with the new Kirklees Play Standard, and converting a further 137 currently equipped play areas with limited play value into high quality playable public open space.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enable rapid reporting of problems by the public through the introduction, over the period of the improvement programme, of appropriate signage at all equipped play areas. • To ensure equipped play areas are maintained as effectively as possible, given available resources, through the implementation of a rationalised inspection and routine maintenance programme. • To provide an engagement programme at a minimum of 20 sites following renovation to embed positive and creative use of sites and foster a culture of local stewardship by recruiting future Play Area Guardians. • To adopt the Kirklees Play Standard for all future play area redevelopment.
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Theme 2: Financial sustainability

Outcomes	<i>2a) Increased efficiency within the Parks and Greenspace Service due to reduced revenue expenditure for ongoing maintenance and replacement of equipment, and better capacity to maintain play areas to a high standard.</i>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create a network which incorporates both equipped play areas and non-equipped high quality playable public open space, thereby reducing liability for equipped play areas by approximately 40% over the period of the recommended improvement programme and increasing the quality and play value of all playable spaces. • To ensure equipped play areas are inspected and maintained efficiently and in line with industry standards through the implementation of a rationalised inspection and routine maintenance programme.

Theme 3: Access for all

Outcomes	<p><i>3a) Maximising the potential physical and mental health and well-being gains of increased physical activity, intergenerational interaction, and contact with nature – for all citizens, regardless of location within the district and socio-economic status.</i></p> <p><i>3b) Citizens better able and more motivated to move between play areas and playable spaces, and access them on foot from pedestrian centres, owing to improvements to identified playable routes.</i></p> <p><i>3d) Equitable access to playable spaces across Kirklees, and improved local knowledge and understanding of the social and physical barriers to play spaces within different communities in Kirklees.</i></p>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide access within 720m (15 minutes' walk) for 90% of residents to a diversity of safe but challenging play opportunities encompassing manufactured play equipment in a range of materials as well as natural play features such as boulders, logs, appropriate planting and variation in

	<p>terrain/landscaping.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that all redeveloped equipped play areas are DDA compliant, where reasonably practicable, to facilitate use by a wide range of ages and abilities. • To ensure that all redeveloped equipped play areas offer opportunities for users to engage with nature where practicable. • To create playable routes where possible in conjunction with site redevelopments by assessing local access routes and including small sculptural play elements or appropriate planting; this will encourage access on foot and offer the opportunity for people to extend their play journey beyond the sites themselves. • To incorporate into the ongoing play engagement programmes activities catering for the whole community, including hard to reach groups, and research work with local communities about the barriers to access that they face.
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Theme 4: Citizen satisfaction & wider economic benefits

Outcomes	<p><i>4a) Citizens more satisfied with the play opportunities available to them with resultant improvements in public perception of the Council as a whole.</i></p> <p><i>4b) Increase in external visitors to Destination Parks due to increased quality and play opportunities, with resultant increased spend within the local economy.</i></p> <p><i>4c) Improved sense of civic pride by communities in their local playable spaces because they 'co-produce' play provision improvements.</i></p>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve citizen satisfaction with our play areas so that by the end of the improvement programme at least 80% of users report 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with our play areas, to be assessed by follow up survey and evaluation work.

4. Strategy Implementation

4.1 Site classification

The Playable Spaces Strategy set out a recommendation for reclassifying play spaces into three categories: Doorstep Playable Space, Community Play Area and Destination Parks. The Operational Plan will implement the site classifications within the improvement programme set out below.

4.2 Kirklees Play Standard

The Play Standard for Kirklees, as set out in the Playable Spaces Strategy document and as detailed in Appendix H, will be implemented throughout the improvement programme. All playable spaces which are to be re-designed as part of the programme will be done so in line with the guidance set out in the Play Standard. This will include a commitment to provide playable spaces which are:

- designed for all user groups and all ages (not just for children);
- designed within the context of their environment;
- well connected with the wider community;
- encouraged to be smoke free;
- designed to complement other local play spaces, such as to offer a diverse range of play opportunities across the whole of the district.

The Standard also offers guidance on other key design considerations when refurbishing or designing new play spaces, including issues relating to risk, boundaries, equipment choice, accessibility, natural features and playable routes.

4.3 Improvement programme

4.3.1 Improvement programme deliverables and costs

The recommended three year improvement programme will deliver the following:

- Full improvement programme with **244** play areas redeveloped over a three year period.
- All play areas reclassified based on the recommendations in the Playable Spaces Strategy.
- Fulfils all of the aims and objectives of the Playable Spaces Strategy.
- Reduces the current equipped play area stock from 314 to **177** thus reducing maintenance liabilities.
- Provides play engagement sessions at a minimum of 20 sites.
- Requirement for total investment of **£9,565,000**

By the end of the three year programme 244 equipped play areas would have been redeveloped, with 107 of these retained as equipped sites and upgraded in line with the Kirklees Play Standard (Appendix H), and a further 137 currently equipped sites with limited play value converted into high quality doorstep playable public open space. 70 currently equipped play areas would be omitted from the programme due to them having been recently upgraded and or being within the recommended 15 year lifespan. On completion of the programme there would therefore be a total of 177 Council operated equipped play areas in Kirklees along with numerous doorstep public open spaces with playable features and space.

All Council maintained equipped play areas would be included in the programme. Sites with no play area but alternative play provision (e.g. a multi-use games area (MUGA), a skate/wheel park, a basketball hoop/goal end, a teen shelter, or a trim trail/outdoor gym) will be considered at the same time as the nearest play area; a list of these sites is provided in Appendix G. Where play areas are located within housing developments subject to Section 106 (S106) agreements all legal commitments set out within associated documentation would be adhered to.

The Council would continue to allocate S106 monies to play areas and playable spaces based on the criteria set out within planning policy. Where S106 capital monies are available for a site redevelopment these would be used in preference to any corporate borrowing capital.

The three-year programme would require a total investment of **£9,565,000**. The breakdown of costs is shown below together with the number of sites to be redeveloped per year. Sites will be prioritised across the three year programme based upon their age and the needs of the communities in which they sit.

It is envisaged, due to the volume and timescales involved, that the design, construction and management of the individual sites will be contracted externally. The costings include an additional sum to employ a Project Manager to oversee the implementation of the full improvement programme.

Overall Cost of 3 year Playable Spaces Programme

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	TOTAL
Doorstep Playable Space	£ 250,000	£ 580,000	£ 540,000	£ 1,370,000
Community Play Area	£ 1,315,346	£ 2,699,920	£ 2,492,234	£ 6,507,500
Destination Park	£ 172,500	£ 379,500	£ 1,000,500	£ 1,552,500
Staff	£ 45,000	£ 45,000	£ 45,000	£ 135,000
TOTAL	£ 1,782,846	£ 3,704,420	£ 4,077,734	£ 9,565,000

Year 1 2019/20

Doorstep Playable Space	25	£ 250,000	£ 1,737,846	46 Sites
Community Play Area	19	£ 1,315,346		
Destination Park	2	£ 172,500		

Year 2 2020/21

Doorstep Playable Space	58	£ 580,000	£ 3,659,420	100 Sites
Community Play Area	39	£ 2,699,920		
Destination Park	3	£ 379,500		

Year 3 2021/22

Doorstep Playable Space	54	£ 540,000	£ 4,032,734	98 Sites
Community Play Area	36	£ 2,492,234		
Destination Park	8	£ 1,000,500		

Total number of sites by type within programme

Doorstep Playable Space	137
Community Play Area	94
Destination Park	13
TOTAL	244

Total number of sites which do not require updating as part of the programme

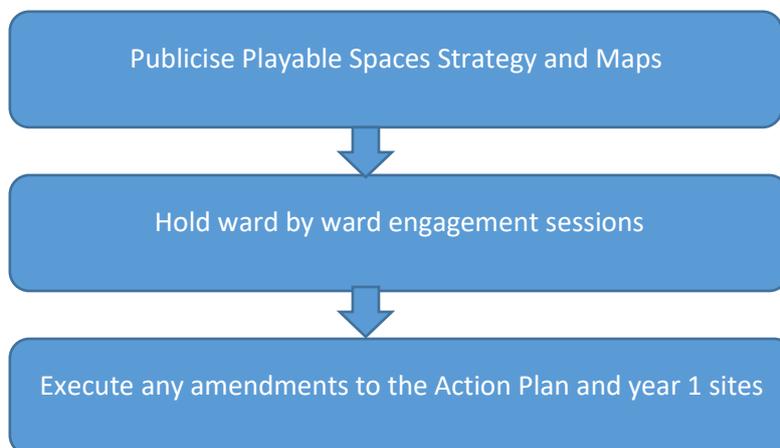
Doorstep Playable Space	0
Community Play Area	70
Destination Park	0
TOTAL	70

Final number of Equipped Play Areas on completion of programme

Community Play Area	164
Destination Park	13
TOTAL	177

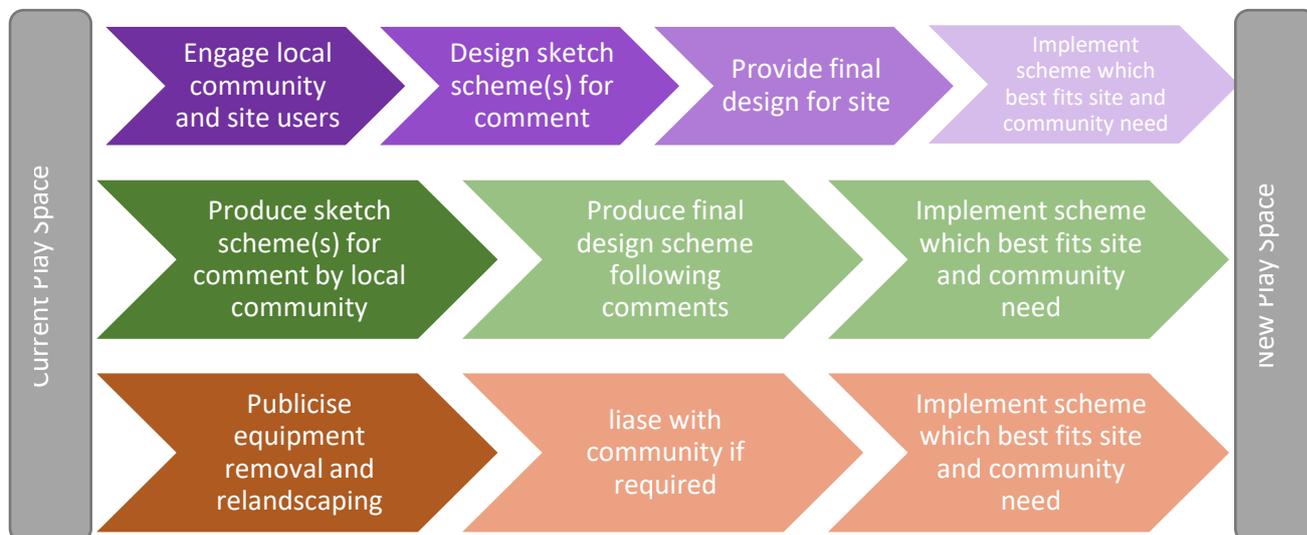
4.3.2 Implementation of improvement programme

Following approval by Kirklees Cabinet we propose to publicise the Strategy and engage with local ward members, community representatives and partner organisations to gather feedback on the Action Plan and proposed sites for year one, enabling any changes to be made.



Once site redevelopments commence, community and partner engagement will be undertaken on a site by site basis however the nature and extent of this will vary depending on site type and the number of sites to be delivered in that year as part of the Improvement programme.

Engagement process – Destination Parks, Community Play Areas and Doorstep Playable Spaces



4.4 Play engagement programme

The Playable Spaces Strategy recommended an ongoing play engagement programme to be delivered at selected play area or playable space sites in conjunction with their redevelopment. A minimum of 20 of these projects will be run over the three years of the improvement programme, at least six per programme year. These projects will focus on sites identified as potentially gaining the most benefit from such an approach; the identification of these key sites will take place during the district-wide Playable Spaces Strategy launch and engagement exercise at the outset of the improvement programme. These projects will be delivered either internally, through working with other Council departments, or by external organisations, enabling each site and local community to benefit from a bespoke approach.

Play engagement projects will be utilised at different points in a site's redevelopment depending on the needs of the site. Some sites will benefit more from engagement in the run-up to a site redevelopment, as part of the development of the capital project, whereas for other sites an engagement project will deliver most benefit run as a follow-up to redevelopment. In both cases a range of activities will be offered to encourage the whole community to engage with local sites in new and creative ways, and each project will also aim to gain a better understanding of local perceptions of play spaces and the barriers faced by local communities in accessing these. Where possible the projects will also aim to recruit and train local volunteers as Play Area Guardians who will be supported on an ongoing basis by existing volunteer networks and Kirklees Council Volunteer Officers.

4.5 Ongoing risk management and maintenance

The Playable Spaces Strategy highlighted the need for an improved and rationalised playground inspection and maintenance regime, implemented alongside the improvement programme, to ensure efficient and effective ongoing maintenance of the network of improved play spaces. Implementation of the proposed new Playground Inspection Policy (Appendix I) will take place throughout the first programme year with the aim that the new regime is fully up and running by the end of this period. Implementation will involve:

- working with grounds maintenance staff to enable them to undertake routine visual inspections of play facilities which do not require the level of expertise needed for operational inspections (which will continue to be undertaken by qualified play inspectors);
- development of a routine maintenance programme based on an audit of all our play equipment assets;
- improvements in IT provision for play inspectors to enable effective scheduling, reporting and data storage; and
- rollout of signage at all equipped play areas to encourage citizen reporting of problems.

5. Action Plan

The below action plan sets out the tasks and timescales required to implement the Operational Plan.

No.	Action	When	By whom
YEAR 1 SITES			
1.1	Employ a fixed term Project Manager for three years	By July 2019	Parks Services Manager
1.2	Identify and involve key stakeholders internal and external to the council – e.g Communities Plus, community organisations etc	April-September 2019	Project Manager, Parks Development Officers
1.3	District wide engagement programme on ward by ward basis	April-September 2019	Project Manager, Parks Development Officers with elected members
1.4	Create system to share design proposals and programme information.	April-September 2019	Project Manager, Parks Development Officers, Communication Team
1.5	Identify key sites for play engagement schemes	April-July 2019	Parks Development Officers
1.6	Write design brief, specification and tender documents for three year design and build contract	April-August 2019	Project Manager, Landscape Architect Team, Parks Development

	with break clause included		Team, Play Team
1.7	Write brief and specification for play engagement contract and/or develop brief with other Council departments	April-August 2019	Project Manager, Parks Development Team
1.8	Review tender submissions and appoint contractor	September 2019	Project Manager, Landscape Architect Team, Parks Development Team, Play Team
1.9	Review tender submissions for play engagement and appoint contractor and/or confirm specification with other Council departments	October 2019	Project Manager, Parks Development Team
1.10	Review design for each Year 1 site and sign off	January 2020	Project Manager, Landscape Architect Team with Parks Development Team and Play Team
1.11	Publicise proposals for each site; design and start dates	January-June 2020	Project Manager, Parks Development Team
1.12	Complete 46 site redevelopments	By August 2020	External Contractor and Construction team
1.13	Design and install new signage at refurbished sites	By August 2020	Project Manager, Graphics department, Parks Development Officers, Landscape Architects and site contractors
1.14	Implement new management and maintenance regime	Ongoing	Parks Development Officers with Play Team and Grounds Maintenance
1.15	Roll out play engagement schemes at 6-8 key sites	November 2019-October 2020	Project Manager, Parks Development Officers with external contractors/Council service
1.16	Commission DDA audit of redeveloped sites following completion	August 2020	Project Manager, Parks Development Officers with external contractor
1.17	Financial monitoring of capital delivery	Ongoing	Project Manager
1.18	Prepare, issue and analyse feedback questionnaires	By September 2020	Project Manager
1.19	Review Year 1 programme in	On completion of	Parks Services Manager

	terms of process and delivery of objectives and produce report	each scheme and on completion of all yr1 sites	
YEAR 2 SITES			
2.1	Review design for each Year 2 site and sign off	April - August 2020	Project Manager, Landscape Architect Team with Parks Development Team and Play Team
2.2	Publicise proposals for each site; design and start dates	June – September 2020	Project Manager, Parks Development Team
2.3	Roll out play engagement schemes at 6-8 key sites	April 2020 – March 2021	Project Manager, Parks Development Officers with external contractors/Council service
2.4	Complete 100 site redevelopments	By March 2021	External Contractor and Construction team
2.5	Install new signage at refurbished sites	By March 2021	Project Manager, Parks Development Officers and site contractors
2.6	Commission DDA audit of redeveloped sites following completion	April 2021	Project Manager, Parks Development Officers with external contractor
2.7	Financial monitoring of capital delivery	Ongoing	Project Manager
2.8	Prepare, issue and analyse feedback questionnaires	April 2021	Project Manager
2.9	Review Year 2 programme in terms of process and delivery of objectives and produce report	April 2021	Parks Services Manager
YEAR 3 SITES			
3.1	Review design for each Year 3 site and sign off	April - August 2021	Project Manager, Landscape Architect Team with Parks Development Team and Play Team
3.2	Publicise proposals for each site; design and start dates	June – September 2021	Project Manager, Parks Development Team
3.3	Roll out play engagement schemes at 6-8 key sites	April 2021 – March 2022	Project Manager, Parks Development Officers with external contractors/Council

			service
3.4	Complete 98 site redevelopments	By March 2022	External Contractor and Construction team
3.5	Install new signage at refurbished sites	By March 2022	Project Manager, Parks Development Officers and site contractors
3.6	Commission DDA audit of redeveloped sites following completion	April 2022	Project Manager, Parks Development Officers with external contractor
3.7	Financial monitoring of capital delivery	Ongoing	Project Manager
3.8	Prepare, issue and analyse feedback questionnaires	April 2022	Project Manager
3.9	Review Year 3 programme in terms of process and delivery of objectives and produce report	April 2022	Parks Services Manager
3.10	Overall programme review	April 2022	Parks Services Manager

6. Operational Plan Monitoring and Review

6.1 Improvement programme review and monitoring

The improvement programme will be reviewed annually to ensure organisational learning and continuous improvement of our delivery practice to achieve more efficient and effective projects, reporting to SLT and Cabinet portfolio holders. As part of each year's Action Plan a review process will take place to consider:

- Budget:
 - Are site redevelopments being achieved to the desired standard within the available budget?
 - If not, where can savings be made?
 - Where there is underspend, can these be reallocated elsewhere?
- Engagement:
 - Are local communities and partners engaging with us?
 - How many people are engaging with us?
 - If not, or not enough, then why not and how can we be more effective?
- Workload and timelines:
 - Is the workload of site improvements manageable?
 - How many sites redevelopments have we achieved in a programme year?
 - Are site redevelopments being delivered on time?
 - If not why not and how can we tighten up our delivery timescales?

6.2 Operational Plan outcomes monitoring

In addition to monitoring of the capital improvement programme a monitoring framework will be put in place for the Operational Plan as a whole to enable measurement of its wider outcomes and objectives, as set out below.

Theme 1: Focus on quality - increased quality and play value of equipped play areas and playable doorstep public open space across the district, improved management and maintenance and improved citizen engagement in future stewardship of spaces.

Objective	Performance indicator	When will this be monitored	By whom
To ensure that, by the end of the recommended improvement programme, all play equipment in Kirklees under Council management is less than 15 years of age, which will be achieved by renovating 107 play areas in line with the new Kirklees Play Standard, and converting a further 137 currently equipped play areas with limited play value into high quality playable public open space.	Number of sites refurbished in line with Play Standard.	Annual review	Parks Services Manager and Parks Development Officers
To enable rapid reporting of problems by the public through the introduction, over the period of the recommended improvement programme, of appropriate signage at all equipped play areas.	Number of signs installed. Number of public contacts made.	Annual review	Parks Services Manager and Parks Development Officers
To ensure equipped play areas are inspected and maintained efficiently and in line with industry standards through the implementation of a rationalised inspection and routine maintenance programme.	Adherence to new management and maintenance regime.	Ongoing Annual independent RoSPA inspection	Play Team Area Supervisor
To provide an engagement programme at a minimum of 20 play areas following renovation to embed positive and creative use of sites and foster a culture of local stewardship by recruiting future Play Area Guardians.	A minimum of six engagement programmes delivered per year at key play areas or playable spaces and evaluation built into each programme. Level of public engagement with these sites determined pre- and post-intervention by questionnaire. Number of Play Area Guardians recruited.	Annual review	Parks Services Manager and Parks Development Officers in conjunction with delivery staff

To adopt the Kirklees Play Standard for all future play area redevelopment.	Number of play areas redeveloped to the standard	Annual review	Parks Services Manager
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Theme 2: Financial sustainability - increased efficiency within the Parks and Greenspace Service, and better capacity to maintain play areas to a high standard.

Objective	Performance indicator	When will this be monitored	By whom
To create a network which incorporates both equipped play areas and non-equipped high quality playable public open space, thereby reducing liability for equipped play areas by approximately 40% over the period of the recommended improvement programme and increasing the quality and play value of all playable spaces.	Reduction in revenue expenditure as the programme progresses and/or greater amount of work undertaken with the same budget.	Annual	Play Team Area Supervisor
To ensure equipped play areas are inspected and maintained as efficiently as possible through the implementation of a rationalised inspection and routine maintenance programme.	Number of reactive pieces of work on play areas – this should decrease as problems are detected earlier and pre-emptive scheduled maintenance work routinely undertaken.	Quarterly	Play Team Area Supervisor

Theme 3: Access for all – to enable all citizens and communities to benefit physically, mentally and socially from increased outdoor active play.

Objectives	Performance indicator	When will this be monitored	By whom
To provide access within 720m (15 minutes' walk) for 90% of residents to a diversity of safe but challenging play opportunities encompassing manufactured play equipment in a range of materials as well as natural play features such as boulders, logs, appropriate planting and variation in terrain/landscaping.	Number of sites refurbished in line with Play Standard.	Annual	Parks Services Manager
To ensure that all redeveloped equipped play areas are DDA compliant, where reasonably practicable, to facilitate use by a wide range of ages and abilities.	Number of equipped play areas that are DDA compliant.	Annual external assessment of all sites	External contractor
To ensure that all redeveloped	Number of citizens	Annual	Parks

equipped play areas offer opportunities for users to engage with nature where practicable.	reporting improved opportunities to engage with nature in annual 'how are we doing' questionnaires.		Development Officers
To create playable routes where possible in conjunction with site redevelopments by assessing local access routes and including small sculptural play elements or appropriate planting; this will encourage access on foot and offer the opportunity for people to extend their play journey beyond the sites themselves.	Number of Playable Routes created.	End of programme	Parks Services Manager
To incorporate into the ongoing play engagement programmes activities catering for the whole community, including hard to reach groups.	Age and profile of citizens involved in activities as measured by registration forms and evaluation questionnaires.	Annual review	Parks Services Manager and Parks Development Officers in conjunction with delivery staff

Theme 4: Citizen satisfaction & wider economic benefits – citizens and wider park visitor base more satisfied with the play offer

Objectives	Performance indicator	When will this be monitored	By whom
To improve citizen satisfaction with our play areas so that by the end of the improvement programme at least 80% of users report 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with our play areas, to be assessed by follow up survey and evaluation work.	Citizen satisfaction with play facilities measured through annual 'how are we doing' questionnaires.	Annual	Parks Development Officers

Findings from this review and monitoring process will be disseminated within the organisation, including to elected members, as well as used to continually refine the Operational Plan delivery. During the final year of the improvement programme planning for the successor Operational Plan will commence, which will be informed by a review of the performance of this Operational Plan and the extent to which it has met its objectives.