

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

CABINET

17 APRIL 2008

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ORGANISATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO LEADER: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

PLAY STRATEGY

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To propose the adoption and publication of the Play Strategy.

2. Recommendations

- 1.2 That Cabinet note the Play Strategy for Cannock Chase District and that the Play Strategy attached as Annex 1 to this report be adopted and offered for publication.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 In 2006 the Big Lottery announced a fund that allocated specific amounts of funding for each local authority to spend on play.
- 3.2 As part of their commitment to play and to manage the funding available Play England were established.
- 3.3 Cannock Chase Council has been awarded £220,000 to be spent throughout the District on play over a maximum of 3 years.
- 3.4 To be able to access the funding each local authority has to produce a play strategy for their authority.
- 3.5 In addition to producing the strategy each local authority has to establish a play partnership for their area to plan and guide the future of play.
- 3.6 Considerable work and research has been undertaken and as a result a play strategy has been produced, in conjunction with partners involved in the play and sports partnership.

4. **Play Partnership**

4.1 External partners who are part of the play and sports partnership meeting:

- Staffordshire Youth Service
- County School Sports Partnership
- Community Learning Partnership
- Play England
- Partnership Development Unit

5. **Consultation**

5.1 Partners involved in the Chase Play and Sport Partnership were involved in developing the Play Strategy so the Strategy was made available for a short consultation period whereby partners could contribute any additional items for consideration.

5.2 Children & Young People Select Committee on 5 September also recommended that the Play Strategy be made available for public consultation, this public consultation period ended on 29 February 2008.

5.3 Only the Youth Service passed comment on the Strategy and that was to emphasise that play was relevant and directed at children up to the age of 19 – this is reflected in the actual strategy.

REPORT INDEX

Background	Section 1
Details of Matters to be Considered	Section 2
Contribution to CHASE	Section 3
Section 17 (Crime Prevention) Implications	Section 4
Human Rights Act Implications	Section 5
Data Protection Act Implications	Section 6
Risk Management Implications	Section 7
Legal Implications	Section 8
Financial Implications	Section 9
Human Resource Implications	Section 10
Conclusions	Section 11
List of Background Papers	
Annexes	

Section 1

Background

In 2006 the Big Lottery announced a fund that allocated specific amounts of funding for each local authority to spend on play, as part of this commitment to play and to manage the funding that had been made available Play England were established.

To be able to access the funding each local authority had to produce a play strategy for their area, in addition to producing the strategy a local play partnership had to be established.

As a result considerable effort has put into engaging partners to form the Chase Play and Sports Partnership which is currently in its infancy but will develop over the coming months.

Section 2

Details of Matters to be Considered

- The action plan and priorities identified within the strategy

Section 3

Contribution to CHASE

The play strategy will contribute to all of the objectives identified under the CHASE acronym:-

- Children & Young People
- Healthier Communities & Older People
- Access to Skills, Economic Development & Enterprise
- Safer & Stronger Communities
- Environment

**Social Inclusion:** Play should be available to all children no matter what their background or circumstances are and as part of this Council's equality and diversity policy everyone should have equal access to facilities and services.

**Community Involvement:** Through providing local venues for play be it formal or informal can create and strengthen community identity and enhance the social fabric of the area.

**Lifelong Learning:** Many important social attributes can be learnt through play. Young people can develop a range of skills and attributes ranging from risk-taking through to social and behavioural skills.

**Healthy Living:** The health benefits of participation in play are well documented. Facility provision is important in ensuring that effective development work can take place.

Section 4

Section 17 (Crime Prevention) Implications

The creation of strategically placed facilities and access to quality open spaces will allow for future activities and the development of more play opportunities and help to create more diversionary activities for children and young people.

Section 5

Human Rights Act Implications

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states:

*1. States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.*

*2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic and leisure activity.*

Section 6

Data Protection Act Implications

There are no identified implications in respect of the Data Protection Act arising from this report.

Section 7

Risk Management Implications

Cannock Chase Council does not currently have an adopted play strategy.

The risks associated as a result of not having an adopted strategy are:

- Difficulty in prioritising any future facility development or provision
- Difficulty in making any future investment decisions.
- It will also be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to attract any external funding without an adopted play strategy.

The risks of adopting the strategy are:

- A commitment to undertaking the work that has been identified in the action plan that will need to be resourced.
- Funding is for a maximum period of 3 years and consideration towards the end of year 2 will need to be given to establish whether the project is valued sufficiently to be continued and alternative sources of funding will have to be identified.

## Section 8

### Legal Implications

The Council by using its powers under the Local Government Act 2000 s.2 may allocate resources for the social well being of its citizens. The adoption of the strategy provides a framework for the discharge of those powers in relation to play and offers a clear link between the Sustainable Community Strategy, the LAA and the Council's exercise of the powers of well being.

## Section 9

### Financial Implications

As referred to in the Risk Management Implications any costs of adopting the Strategy will need to be contained within the £220,000 grant awarded for the three year period. If the Strategy is to be continued beyond this 3 year period then additional/alternative sources of funding will need to be identified and secured.

The Human Resource Implications refer to Play Rangers being appointed on fixed term contracts to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011. If no further funding has been secured at this point in time, any redundancy costs will need to be contained from within the grant or other existing budgets. Should additional funding be secured which continues the period beyond 2011 then the costs of redundancy, augmentation and actuarial strain costs will need to be contained within the grant, additional funding or existing budgets.

Further reports will need to be submitted for future consideration by Members once details of each of the "Play Projects" and costs are known, including any revenue implications (including the Employee termination costs referred to in the previous paragraph) and how they are to be funded.

Any new capital projects will need to be considered and approved as part of the General Fund Capital Programme.

**Section 10**

**Human Resource Implications**

The Play Rangers will be appointed on fixed term contracts to 31 March 2011. If no further funding is available after this 3 year period the Council will need to commence redundancy procedures or find other suitable redeployment opportunities.

As the employees will not have 3 years service with Cannock Chase Council at 31 March 2011 the costs will be limited to the redundancy payments. However, should there be any further temporary extension to funding after 31 March 2011 the Council would need to set aside budget for possible augmentation and actuarial strain costs.

**Section 11**

**Conclusions**

Having an adopted play strategy for the District will allow for a planned and coordinated approach to the future development of facilities for children's play.

**Background Papers**

Planning for Play – Children's Play Council  
Appendices to Play Strategy available upon request

**Annexes**

Annex 1 – Play Strategy 2007-2012

**Cannock Chase Council**

**Play Strategy 2007-2012**

**Making a difference - through play**

# Contents

## Section 1

1. Introduction
2. Strategic Scope
3. The Cannock Chase Play Strategy Mission and Objectives
4. Definitions of Play
5. The seven best Play objectives
6. Enriching Play
7. Benefits of Play
8. Barriers to Play
9. The Impact of Play Deprivation
10. Values and Principles
11. Rights of the Child
12. National Context
13. Strategic Links and Key Considerations
14. Local profile
15. Local background for Play
16. Assessing district needs
17. Managing the Strategy
18. CHASE IT - PLAY

## **19. Appendices & bibliography\***

### **20. Appendices\***

- i. Cannock Chase District Community Sports and Play Network
- ii. Childhood Obesity, Cannock Chase Practice Based Commissioning Group -Local Epidemiology
- iii. CHASE IT consultation samples
- iv. List of partners
- v. Examples of workforce development

\* *NB. Not included - available on request as background documents*

## **Section 2**

### **1. Action Plan**

# Cannock Chase Council

## Making a difference - through play

### 1. Introduction

This Strategy sets out our commitment to play within the District of Cannock Chase and recognises the potential and value of play in supporting all children to have fun, to extend their learning potential and to fulfil their healthy development.

The Strategy provides the direction for the future; it identifies the national and local play context alongside the underlying principles of quality play provision, and sets out the priorities for the planning and delivery of play, identifying strategic links and partners

It builds upon previous work, reviews and evaluations undertaken by Cannock Chase Council, and it also draws upon guidelines produced by the Children's Play Council.

The Play Strategy will be underpinned by the overarching vision for Children and Young People's Service in Staffordshire:

*"Children, young people and their families experience Staffordshire as a great place to live, play, learn and achieve in, and that they will be supported to be healthy and safe from harm."*

*Staffordshire Children and Young Peoples Plan April 2006*

The following high-level priorities of the Children and Young People's Plan, Local Children's and Young People's Trust and Every Child Matters legislation will also help guide the Play Strategy, these are:

- Being healthy;
- Staying safe;
- Enjoying & achieving;
- Making a positive contribution;
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

The development and implementation of this Play Strategy will require strong linkages with other plans and strategies; its success and sustainability will depend on developing improved practice and partnership with employees and stakeholders who have responsibilities for services relevant to play. It will also depend upon high level advocacy for play, and for this reason Cannock Chase Council has appointed its Portfolio Leader for Children and Young People as its Champion for Children and Young People.

Cannock Chase Council have led in the formulation of The Chase Community Sports Network and Play Partnership (Terms of Reference at Appendix 1) and will champion the right to play and bring together key services from all sectors to develop and support play activities and provision. The central focus of the Partnership and the Strategy will be the involvement and participation of children and young people. Indeed, one of the key strategic priorities is to “improve the engagement and involvement of children, young people and families in the delivery and design of play activities and provision”.

It is recognised that this Strategy will need to evolve as it responds to the changing local and regional needs, new information, legislation and greater involvement by key stakeholders over the next five years. The dynamic nature of the document will be achieved by regular reviews and annual evaluation of targets, and through the process of adapting priorities to respond to the changing needs and circumstances of children, young people and our communities.

The Chase Community Sports Network and Play Partnership recognises that:

*“Play is so critically important to all children in the development of their physical, social, mental, emotional and creative skills that society should seek every occasion to support it and create an environment that fosters it. Decision making at all levels of government should include an impact of those decisions on children’s opportunities to play”.*

Welsh Assembly Government Play Policy

## **2. Strategic Scope**

The Cannock Chase Play Strategy is inclusive of all children and young people from the age of 0 to 19 years, whatever their differing needs.

We will work towards developing provision of an enriched play environment (see section 5), including any opportunity where children or young people have the chance to explore their surroundings and create their own enjoyment.

It covers the wide range of play provision and opportunities across the whole district:

- Parks and Open Spaces
- Outdoor play equipment in parks
- Outdoor play equipment on housing developments
- Outdoor play equipment in commercial sector, such as public houses and restaurants and in also the voluntary sector

- Outdoor play equipment in visitor attractions
- Outdoor play equipment at specialist play providers, schools, nurseries and youth clubs, including youth shelters, seating and skate parks
- Staffed or non-staffed adventure playgrounds
- Indoor play equipment in commercial and voluntary sector premises
- Indoor play equipment at specialist play providers, schools, nurseries and youth clubs
- Supervised and unsupervised adventure playgrounds
- Play opportunities in school holidays and through extended schools
- Play opportunities in museums, leisure centres, children’s centres, toy libraries and mobile play facilities
- Streets
- Undesignated places where children play

### **3. The Cannock Chase Play Strategy Mission and Objectives**

#### **3.1 Mission statement**

Our mission is “To make a difference through play”

#### **3.2 Strategic Aim**

Over the five years of this strategy our strategic aim is:

“To work in partnership to improve and extend the quality and quantity of play provision and opportunities across the district.”

This aim supports the Council’s Corporate Vision that:

“ By 2015, Cannock Chase District will be recognised as a place where everyone’s lives are enriched by a strong cultural identity, vibrant local economy and pride in the outstanding natural environment”

#### **3.3 Strategic Objectives**

Our strategic objectives for the life of this strategy are to:

- Develop a cluster approach to play development through working with extended schools, parents and organisations in local areas
- Widen and develop play opportunities and activities across the district, maximising local resources and ensuring quality provision
- Improve engagement and involvement of children, young people and families in the delivery and design of play activities and provision

- Maximise opportunities for children and young people with disabilities and special needs to further benefit from play activities and services
- Reduce barriers to play, particularly targeting identified areas of deprivation, where young people and families face difficulties accessing play spaces, activities and provision
- Raise the profile and importance of play and improve understanding of the importance of play with parents carers and local community members, partnerships and key stakeholders

These six objectives will be met through the achievement of the activities detailed in the strategic action plan.

#### 4. Definitions of Play

In order to establish an effective Strategy for Play it is important to have a common and agreed understanding of play and its importance.

We will adopt The Children's Play Council definition of play:

***“Play is an essential part of every child’s life and vital to their development. It is the way children explore the world around them and develop and practice skills. It is essential for physical, emotional and spiritual growth, for intellectual and educational development, and for acquiring social and behavioural skills. Play is a generic term applied to a wide range of activities and behaviours that are satisfying to the child, creative for the child and freely chosen by the child. Children’s play may or may not involve equipment or have an end product. Children play on their own and with others. Their play may be boisterous and energetic or quiet and contemplative, light-hearted or very serious.*”**

There are a number of additional definitions now used by play practitioners, academics and organisations and these create useful foundation stones for this strategy.

*“Play is freely chosen; personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child ... Play can be fun or serious. Through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter.”*

*Best Play 2000*

*“Play is what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons.”*

*Getting Serious About Play 2004*

*“Play is intrinsic to children’s quality of life: it is how they enjoy themselves. It is also a key component of a healthy lifestyle enabling good physical, emotional mental and social development. Strong, vibrant communities have at their heart a variety of places to play. Children and young people should feel confident and safe to play freely– indoors and out - in a manner appropriate to their needs and interests.”*

*Children’s Play Council Briefing 4 2005*

*“The right to play is a child’s first claim on the community. Play is nature’s training for life. No community can infringe that right without doing deep and enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens.”*

*David Lloyd George*

The concept of play can appear a vague one. It could include games, art, drama, singing, dancing, tree climbing, knock and run, collecting things, board games, talking, and playing alone, with an imaginary friend or in groups. The possibilities are endless and the same activity could be classified as play one minute and not the next!

Consider the game of cricket in the street with friends and compare this with the coaching session at the local cricket club. If this leaves you confused about play, it may help to think about the definition of play as “freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated”.

Play is different from the structured cultural activities like sports, art, music and dance. It is what children and young people do, with space to use, in their free time, in their own way, for their own reasons. Play has no external goal outcome, reward or goal but it has an intrinsic value to children’s development, with the process being more important than the end result. The crucial component of play is that it is under children’s control.

The key criteria for play are embodied in “The Three Frees” which state:

**Play should be:                      Free of charge**  
**Children should be:                Free to come and go**  
**Children should be:                Free to choose**

Cannock Chase Council will, with its partners endeavour to meet these key criteria through the actions within this strategy.

## 5. The Seven 'Best Play' Objectives

The seven 'Best Play' objectives set out how the definition of play and the underpinning values and principles should be put into practice. They form the basis against which play provision can be evaluated. Our play provision, and that which we support, will work to these objectives;

**Objective One:** extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.

**Objective Two:** recognises the child's need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need.

**Objective Three:** manages the balance between children and young people's need and want to play and the need to keep them from being exposed to unacceptable risks of life threatening or permanently disabling injury.

**Objective Four:** maximises the range of play opportunities.

**Objective Five:** fosters independence and self-esteem.

**Objective Six:** fosters children's respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction.

**Objective Seven:** fosters the child's well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.

## 6. Enriching Play – A Quality & Challenging Environment

We want to create play opportunities that children and young people can enjoy, which offer challenge and variety, and enable interaction, movement and stimulation.

When planning, designing and maintaining supervised or non-staffed places where children and young people play, or should be able to play, we will take into account the following guidelines published in 'Best Play: what play should do for children':

**A varied and interesting environment.** Examples: things at different levels, spaces of different sizes, places to hide, trees and bushes, open spaces, made things, places to inspire mystery and imagination.

**Challenge in relation to the physical environment.** Examples: activities which test the limits of capabilities, rough and tumble, sports and games, chase.

**Experiencing the natural elements - earth, water, fire, air.** Examples: campfires, digging, playing snowballs, flying kites.

**Movement - e.g. running, jumping, rolling, climbing, balancing.**  
Examples: beams and ropes, soft mats, bike riding, juggling equipment, ladders, space.

**Manipulating natural and fabricated materials.** Examples: materials for art, cooking, making and mending of all kinds; building dens; making concoctions; using tools; access to bits and pieces of all kinds.

**Stimulation of the five senses.** Examples: music making, places where shouting is fine, quiet places, different colours and shapes, dark and bright places, cooking on a campfire, rotting leaves, a range of food and drink, objects that are soft, prickly, flexible, large and small.

**Experiencing change in the natural and built environment.** Examples: experiencing the seasons through access to the outdoor environment; opportunities to take part in building, demolishing, or transforming the environment.

**Social interactions.** Examples: being able to choose whether and when to play alone or with others, to negotiate, co-operate, compete and resolve conflicts. Being able to interact with individuals and groups of different ages, abilities, interests, gender, ethnicity and culture.

**Exploring identity.** Examples: dressing up, role play, performing, taking on different kinds of responsibility.

**Experiencing a range of emotions.** Examples: opportunities to be powerful/powerless, scared/confident, like/disliked, in/out of control, brave/cowardly.

Decisions about what constitutes a quality play environment too often assume that play equipment, usage levels and children's apparent enjoyment of the facilities on offer is synonymous with quality play opportunities.

By working with other providers and partners we will broaden the choice and range of the play environment. For example we will build on our existing and excellent partnership with the Forestry Commission to maximise the use of Cannock Chase Forest and Heathland as a healthy play resource.

This kind of approach will help to facilitate a greater diversity of opportunities with emphasis on the natural environment, natural materials and play-friendly art works and structures.

## **7. The Benefits of Play**

There is a multitude of research that demonstrates that play is central to children's healthy development and quality of life. It is a key element in supporting healthy life-styles and enables good physical, emotional, mental and social development.

Play can have a positive impact on the lives of children by:

- supporting learning;
- improving health and well-being;
- developing social skills;
- promoting physical fitness;
- encouraging confidence and self-esteem;
- promoting emotional well-being;
- developing conflict resolution skills;
- developing skills in assessing risk;
- developing creativity;
- developing skills in problem-solving;
- developing team-work skills and co-operation;
- increasing abilities to make decisions.

Play is not only beneficial to children, but it can have a huge impact on adults, families and communities by:

- reducing stress within families;
- enabling adults and children to participate in enjoyable activities together and supporting family learning;
- creating safer communities through keeping children and young people safe and by diverting some of them from engaging in anti-social behaviour;
- encouraging social cohesion and social inclusion;
- creating volunteering, training and employment opportunities for those living in the local community.

## **8. Barriers to Play**

### **8.1 Barriers in Cannock Chase District**

A M.O.R.I. Survey across Cannock Chase District in 2003, which identified that 'activities for young people' was the single most requested improvement in local services according to adults.

Across the Cannock Chase District there are pockets of severe deprivation. Whilst being tackled through the work of the Council and its partners in the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), deprivation levels still serve to exclude many young people from enjoying play provision,

Barriers range from mobility and cost to communication. For example the urban rural split (60% of the district is rural) means that public transport is not universally available; the result of the demise of the coal industry means many parents are still unemployed and in receipt of benefit. There are many children in the district who have very low educational attainment levels. There are high levels of adult illiteracy meaning that traditional methods of communicating the range of services is not always successful.

We recognise these barriers and through the activities detailed in the Strategic Action Plan we will be working to reduce and wherever possible remove them.

## **8.2 Parents' anxieties**

Even for the children of financially secure parents there are many things that can interfere with their rights to play. Today, opportunities for children to play are significantly restricted, despite the growing recognition of the importance of play.

*"The overwhelming cry from both parents and young people is around the lack of activities and facilities... the thing they say would most improve family life is the provision of places to go and things to do... where they can spend their leisure time with their friends."*

**(Margaret Hodge, Minister for Children and Families, January 2005)**

Parents' anxieties about stranger danger, bullying, child abuse and other crime, limit children and young people's lives and prevent them from exploring their neighbourhood and environments.

*"Many children appear to have less time being physically active because of the increase in car use and heightened concern about the potential risks of unsupervised play outdoors."*

**Government White Paper, Choosing Health (2004)**

This fear of crime reduces opportunities for play in Cannock Chase as local research shows:

*"Overall 47% of people are either very afraid or afraid of becoming a victim of crime..... with females tending to be very afraid."*

**The State of Cannock Chase Report Volume 2 Perception Data (2004)**

### 8.3 Lack of mobility and freedom

There is a dramatic decrease in children and young people's independent mobility and this has a major impact on access to play opportunities. The proportion of seven and eight-year-olds walking unaccompanied to school fell from 80% in 1971 to 9% in 1990 (One False Move: A Study of Children's Independent Mobility 1990).

The Childhood, Urban Space and Citizenship: child-sensitive urban regeneration study (2000), found that parents allow children to play outside more when traffic is slower and also that the fear of abduction was more of an effect of children not being allowed to play outdoors than its cause.

Children may not always have the freedom to experience a full range of play opportunities, including risky and challenging activities, due to a fear of safety and a litigious society. The growth of 'no win, no fee' culture and a fear of litigation has led to many examples of children's play being restricted, including not playing in snow, not making daisy chains, wearing face masks to play conkers and the removal of play equipment.

*"Sensible health and safety is about managing risks, not eliminating them all. HSE is not in the business of stamping out simple pleasures wherever they appear and at whatever cost. We recognise the benefits to children's development of play, which necessarily involves some risk, and this shouldn't be sacrificed in the pursuit of the unachievable goal of absolute safety."*

**Health and Safety Executive, 2005**

Through this Strategy the Council's Culture and Leisure teams will work with its Economic Regeneration and Planning teams to identify funding to improve the location, quality and quantity of play provision within new and existing developments through, for example, the targeted use of Section 106 monies and European funding.

### 8.4 Poverty

Poverty has a huge impact on access to play opportunities. A report by Barnardo's, Playing it safe – Today's Children at Play concluded that:

*"Children who live in areas of high deprivation are more likely to be denied the opportunity to have play experiences which are both exciting and relatively safe. Parents on low incomes have little choice but to keep their children restricted, with consequences for their future health and development".*

It is recognised that this is a barrier to play in Cannock Chase and, for the last four years, through our Children's Fund "CHASE IT" programme, we have been working closely with partners to provide a fully inclusive range of activities for

children from families in receipt of benefit, low income families, those with little or no access to public transport.

We are currently exploring ways of extending this scheme and by making a bid to the BIG Lottery we would be able to run a separate free play programme for children and young people across the district, in partnership with the Community & Learning Partnership (C&LP) and Local Strategic Partners (LSP).

### **8.5 Lack of tolerance**

Lack of tolerance of children and young people, by many adults, can also restrict the development of play opportunities and play space at a community level. Groups of children and young people hanging around on streets are often perceived as a threat even when they are simply enjoying themselves. In play surveys children often complain about being told off for playing outdoors and state they do not feel welcome in public spaces.

*“If we want young people to flourish and if we want to divert (them) from anti-social behaviour, thinking about what the community can provide really counts. Some adults perceive teenagers on the streets as a problem and teenagers want safe spaces to hang out. Surely we must somehow be able to square that circle”.*

**Margaret Hodge, Minister for Children and Families 2005.**

We will harness the combined resources of the LSP, C&LP and our partners in the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and Youth Services, to work with children and young people to raise the profile of play and endeavour to change peoples' perceptions of children and young people gathering together.

### **8.6 Cultures, Attitudes and Prejudice**

There are many examples, which demonstrate that inequalities exist in relation to the take up of play opportunities by girls and young women particularly in outdoor play. Parental attitudes and fears lead to girls having less freedom to roam and therefore less access to the same play opportunities afforded to boys.

Children with learning difficulties and disabilities also face significant barriers to play. Negative attitudes and inaccessible physical environments, added to parent's worries of bullying and concerns for safety create enormous barriers for children with disabilities to enjoy play spaces.

*“Enabling all children to play, and to play together, is about a benefit to the whole community. It is not about overcoming legal hurdles or making expensive provision for a small section of the community. If any child is prevented from playing then it diminishes the play experience of all.”*

Through this Strategy we will work to raise the profile of play and communicate its importance to all our partners and the local community.

## **9. The impact of Play Deprivation**

Exclusion from play can lead to the concept of play deprivation. This may arise if children do not have access to a broad range of quality play opportunities. A range of research suggests that this has a huge negative impact on children's development and could include the following:

- poor ability in motor tasks;
- lower levels of physical activity;
- childhood obesity;
- limited ability to deal with stressful or traumatic situations or events;
- lack of coping skills e.g. conflict and bullying;
- poor ability to assess and manage risk;
- limited social skills;
- less knowledge and awareness of the wider world;
- low tolerance levels of individual differences.

Through this strategy this Council will work with partners, such as Sure Start and the Staffordshire Youth Service to support the children of the district in transition from childhood to adulthood. In this way we will be able to embed play as a natural and important part of growing up.

## **10. Values and Principles**

Since children and young people are the main beneficiaries of our Strategic Action Plan, we will be guided by the following values and principles for children and young people that are:

- entitled to respect for their own unique combination of qualities and capabilities.
- should have their opinions and reactions taken into account.
- are part of, and contribute to, the cultural life of their communities.
- have a right to be seen, heard and provided for in shared public space to the same degree as adults.
- have a right to play environments that offer challenge, stimulation and delight but are free from unacceptable levels of risk.

- must see the connection between stated policy and what actually happens so that they feel part of a community of trust and co-operation.
- should be able to take control of their own play activity, enriching their experience and enhancing their development.

## **11. Rights of the Child**

As a partnership we endorse Articles 12 and 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and will try to empower children and help them increase their choices wherever possible. Their views shall be taken into account when making decisions about play opportunities.

Article 12, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 states:

*‘...all children have the right to express views on all matters of concern to them and to have those views taken seriously’*

Article 31, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 states:

*‘State Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child ...’*

Through this strategy we will improve the engagement and involvement of children, young people and families in the delivery and design of play activities and provision.

## **12. National Context**

Increasingly, play is recognised as being important not only in its own right but also for the contribution it can make to other strategic programmes and plans.

This is clearly identified within the “Every Child Matters: Change for Children” 2004 framework, in which the government identifies the enjoyment of recreation including play, as a key outcome to be considered in the planning and implementation processes of the Children and Young People’s Plan.

The five key outcomes described as key to wellbeing in childhood and later life are:

- Being healthy;
- Staying safe;
- Enjoying & achieving;
- Making a positive contribution;

- Achieving economic wellbeing.

The National Childcare Strategy identifies the Extended Schools Initiative as a key vehicle for promoting play opportunities with expectations that school grounds and premises become open for out of school activities including children's play.

Early Years and Childcare partnerships have been issued guidance and encouraged by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to promote play as an integral part of childcare plans stating that:

*“Partnerships have a crucial role in the promotion and development of good quality play opportunities.”*

Play and recreation are important factors in the development of healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities. There is increasingly a need to focus on play in regeneration, neighbourhood renewal and green space plans. Also, open space is a significant cultural resource and children's play is a distinct activity for inclusion in local cultural strategies.

At a regional level the Regional Forum for Extended Schools may also bring a greater degree of influence over the opening up of schools for play provision.

### **13. Strategic Links and Key considerations**

A number of drivers exist for the development of play at a national level but there are also a number of local drivers, which need to be considered within this strategy.

The District Council has recently established its Locality Board for Children and Young People. It has reorganised its Cabinet Portfolios to include Children & Young People as a discrete area of work, reflecting the growing importance of the subject area at the District Council. A key consideration will be to ensure that play is considered alongside the following district-wide plans and strategies

#### **13.1 Corporate and Performance Plan 2006 – 2009**

The Council's Corporate Priorities are embodied in the CHASE acronym:

Children and Young People  
Healthy Communities, Housing and Older People  
Access to Skills, Economic Development and Enterprise  
Safer Stronger Communities  
Environmental cleanliness, safety and sustainability

The Corporate Plan identifies a number of priorities and subsequent actions for the District that the successful implementation of the Play Strategy could influence:

- Increasing participation in cultural and sporting activities.
- Developing a healthy community.
- A vibrant economy, a job for everyone and learning opportunities for all.
- Reducing inequalities.
- A clean, safe and sustainable environment.

### **13.2 Children and Young People's Plan**

The Every Child Matters framework has led to the development of Children and Young People's Services; play can impact significantly on each of the following outcomes:

- Being healthy;
- Staying safe;
- Enjoying and achieving;
- Making a positive contribution;
- Achieving economic well being;

### **13.3 Local Area Agreement**

The Local Area Agreement (LAA) has prioritised outcomes, which will make a real difference to the residents of Cannock Chase and through focusing on the objectives and outcomes we will continue to transform the District.

Implementation of the Play Strategy will assist in the delivery of the five LAA blocks and their priorities.

- Children and Young People.
- Safer and Stronger Communities.
- Healthier Communities and Older People.
- Economic Development and Enterprise.
- Sustainable Development.

The Play Strategy will embed the LAA priorities and actions as central themes and priorities, while it is also important to attempt to embed play within local area agreements.

### **13.4 Housing Developments**

It is important again at this point to consider play in its widest form of streets and open spaces and not just play areas. The Children's Play Council Manifesto for Play calls for:

“A major focus on local streets, neighbourhoods, parks and open spaces, to make them safe, attractive play places for children and young people.”

This also means a consideration in future of the creative use of section 106 planning gain agreements, developer contributions and a change in thinking within all services will be required to make a difference for children and young people's play opportunities in the long term.

### **13.5 Safer Communities**

The Local Strategic Partnership has identified 5 key priorities for the District:

- Less crime
- More visible policing
- A reduction in anti-social behaviour
- To feel safer
- Safer roads

Play provision in its most simplistic form can be viewed as diversionary activities or spaces. Playwork can have a huge impact on crime statistics by engaging children and young people in purposeful and enjoyable activities. It can also play a part in challenging and forming young people's behaviour and views. The positive relationships and trust, which can develop between playworkers and children, can support improved behaviour in the long term.

### **13.6 Children's and Young People's Health and well-being**

Health and well-being are huge concerns both nationally and across the district in relation to childhood obesity, mental health, teenage pregnancies and drug use.

At a national level, for example, the study by the Centre for Transport Studies at the University College London found that:

“Children get more physical activity from kicking a ball around in the park or playground than from PE lessons. The effort of unstructured play burns more calories than the average 70 minutes a week of formal games that pupils get in schools”.

The Mental Health Foundation also stated that:

“The increasingly limited amounts of time children have to play outside or to attend supervised play projects is a causative factor in the rise of mental ill-health in young people”.

Cannock Chase Council is a Beacon Authority for Healthier Communities and has a successful track record of using innovative methods of engaging children and young people in the health agenda. It has been highly commended for its work in using the Arts as a tool for community engagement around the issues of Healthy Eating (with Sure Start) teenage pregnancy, smoking, sexual and mental health and physical activity in partnership with the Forestry Commission and South Staffordshire Primary Care Trust (PCT).

As a local authority we are committed, though a PSA target set in 2004, to “Halt the year-on-year rise in obesity among children under 11 by 2010 in the context of a broader strategy to tackle obesity in the population as a whole” (See Appendix 2 for Childhood Obesity – Local Epidemiology)

As such, the Authority is ideally placed to ensure that the fun and informal education aspects, which form the very basics of play, are used in promoting both healthy lifestyles, for both children and adults and assisting in the meeting of the above PSA target.

Indeed, the South Staffordshire PCT continues to support the Council in the local delivery of “Choosing Health”, by funding a range of health issue based Arts activities in the district, many of which fall into the category of play.

Our successful track record over the last 4 years of delivering the Children’s Fund funded CHASE IT scheme for 5 –13 year olds, has meant that we are experienced in using many of our play and fun activities to deliver health messages. For example PCT dieticians have been working on our play schemes to promote healthy lunchboxes and the benefits of physical activity. One of our existing CHASE IT leaders posts is a dedicated healthy lifestyle co-ordinator.

We have adopted an integrated approach to delivery using not only our Arts Development Team, but also our Sports Development and CHASE IT teams, and have existing and strong partnership with the Schools Sports Partnership including delivery of our Out of School Hours Learning activities.

## 13.7 Cultural Strategy

The Cannock Chase Cultural Strategy 2007-2010 seeks to maximise the opportunities, which result from having a co-ordinated approach to the development of cultural facilities and services for residents across the district.

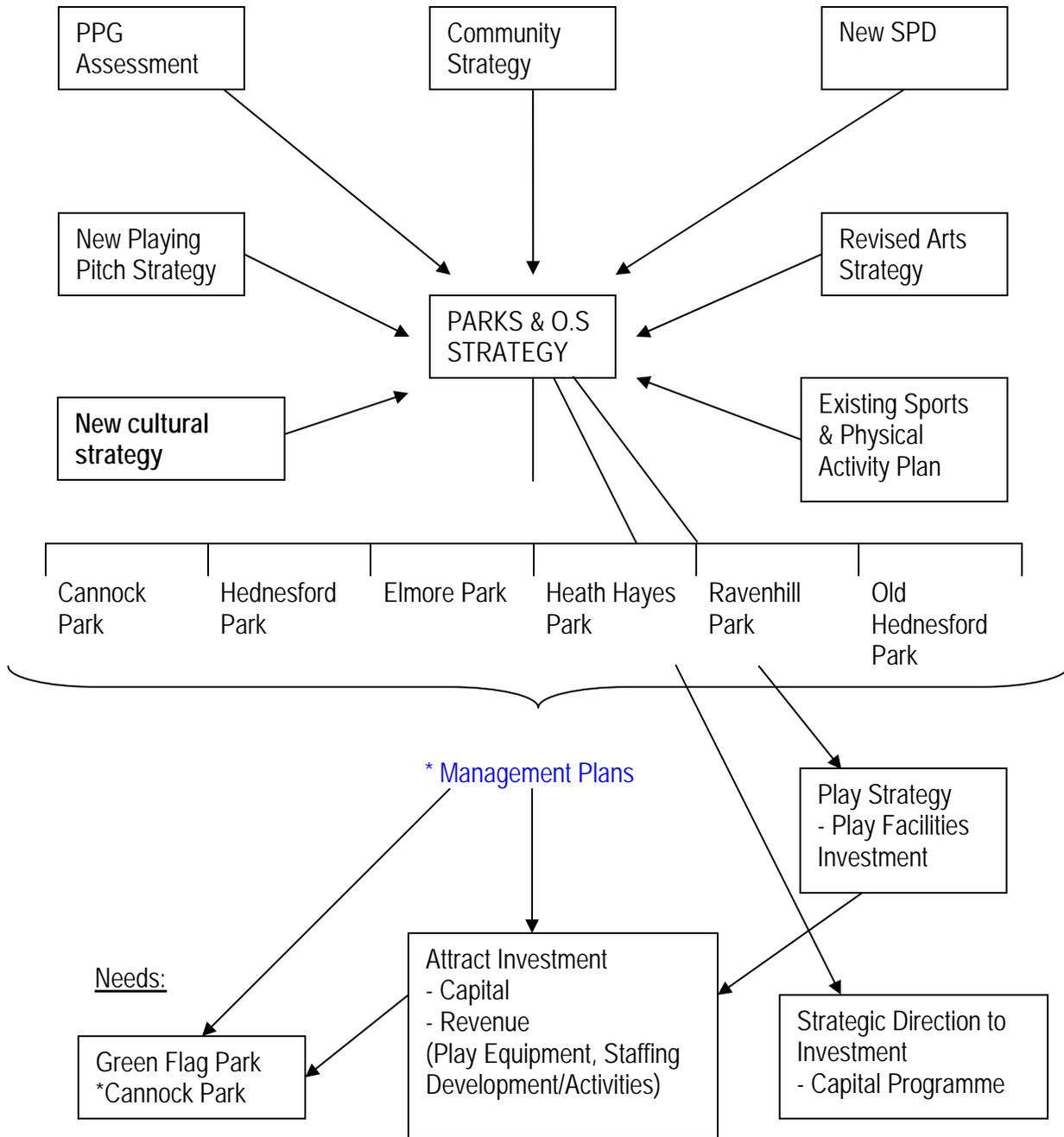
It further seeks to offer direction to all local cultural providers through the whole district and ensure the full potential for developing culture is realised by:

- Developing a shared vision for the development of cultural opportunities across the district
- Maximising existing resources and promote their effective use to develop cultural opportunities to benefit Cannock Chase
- Encouraging a co-ordinated approach to the development of cultural provision
- Encouraging debate about local cultural provision and needs

The overarching aims are to:

- Protect and enhance the environment
- Enhance economic prosperity
- Assist individual and community development
- Promote good practice
- Improve access to cultural activities
- Develop effective partnerships
- Maximise available resources
- Increase and broaden participation
- Develop a network of facilities to accommodate cultural activity
- Protect and enhance the natural and built heritage
- Encourage development of cultural events and festivals
- Develop cultural activity to support personal, community and economic development
- Promote and publicise culture
- Demonstrate the value of culture

**Fig 1. Cultural Strategy and its strategic fit with wider strategies and management plans currently under development**



## **14. District Profile**

### **14.1 Geography**

Cannock Chase District Council is situated on the fringe of the West Midlands conurbation in the south, extending through the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, to the River Trent flood plain in the north covering 7,800 hectares.

Many of the towns and communities developed because of Coal Mining, 40% of the District can be described as urban. The Cannock Chase Forest separates the old industrial urban areas with 60% of the District being Green Belt; a large proportion of which is also within the AONB (3,008 hectares).

### **14.2 Social and Demographic Change**

The District has an estimated population of 93,300 (mid 2002 Population Estimates, Office for National Statistics), which is evenly split by gender. The Office for National Statistics population projections suggests the District's population will increase to 95,100 by 2010.

. Mid 2002 population estimates indicate that: -

- 21% of the population is aged fewer than 16.
- 63% are of working age.
- Just 16% of residents are aged over 60 for females and 65 for males (although this age group is increasing).

The District's relatively youthful age structure means that provision of play facilities and activities continues to be a key priority for this Council. Current capital programme expenditure on upgrading and provision of parks open spaces and play areas is just over £1million.

### **14.3 Deprivation - The English Indices of Deprivation 2004 (IOD2004)**

Cannock Chase is the most deprived local authority in Staffordshire (excluding Stoke-on-Trent) in respect of its average score of 20.25. It therefore features at 134<sup>th</sup> out of 354 local authorities making it within the 38% of most deprived local authorities in England.

The District ranks 10<sup>th</sup> most deprived in the West Midland Region, ranking within the 29% most deprived local authorities.

It is the 3<sup>rd</sup> worst income deprived Local Authority in Staffordshire with 11,289 income-deprived persons, representing 12% of the District's population.

Employment deprived persons number 6,104, representing 11% of the working age population, leaving Cannock Chase ranking as the 2<sup>nd</sup> most deprived LA in Staffordshire (excluding Stoke-on-Trent).

### **14.3.1 The indices of Multiple Deprivation and Small Area Index**

A more detailed picture of deprivation has been built up by Cannock Chase Council's Research team and is published in a Document entitled "The State of Cannock Chase". In addition to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, this document also enables the drilling down to pinpoint smaller areas of deprivation, known as Lower Super Output Areas. Cannock Chase Council uses these indices to inform all its service planning and provision.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD2004) is the overarching indicator of deprivation, beneath this are 7 deprivation domains; Income, Employment, Health and Disability, Education Skills and Training, Barriers to Housing and Services, Crime and the Living Environment.

In addition, two indices – Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index and Income Affecting Older People Index have been developed. These are separate to the IMD but have been compiled using data contained within the index.

The small area index is based upon 37 indicators of deprivation. Whereas the Indices of Deprivation 2000 was based upon 15 wards, the 2004 index is based upon 60 Lower Super Output Areas (SOAs) providing a much more detailed picture of deprivation.

Whilst this level of detail already informs our provision of services for local children, we are aware that the Department of Communities and Local Government proposes the introduction of a Child Wellbeing index in late 2007. This will provide evidence of wellbeing and economic deprivation, material wellbeing of children, child health, educational attainment, crime, victimisation, housing, environment, access and children in need.

This will enable us to further target our services and provision into areas of greatest need.

### **14.3.2 Lower Super Output Areas (Lower SOAs)**

The District has 12 Lower SOAs, which rank within the worst quartile (25%) in England. These are spread across 8 of the District's wards:

- Cannock North (3 Lower SOAs)
- Etchinghill and the Heath
- Hednesford North
- Norton Canes
- Cannock East (2 Lower SOAs)
- Cannock South (2 Lower SOAs)
- Hagley
- Brereton and Ravenhill

### **14.3.3 Deprivation Themes**

The points below set out the geographical coverage of deprivation ranking within the worst quartile in England, within the Cannock Chase District:

- Education, skills and training deprivation has the greatest geographical coverage, covering just half the District's Lower SOAs.
- Employment is a close second within 43% of the District's SOAs.
- Health deprivation covers just under a third of the District
- Income deprivation affecting older people affects 27% of the District's SOAs
- Income deprivation for all people 20%
- Income deprivation affecting children 17%.

This latter point impacts on children's ability to access play provision. It is for this reason that we are currently working with the Community Sports Network and Play Partnership C&LP, LSP and other partners to widen provision across the district, by developing a cluster model for play based around the districts schools.

It is envisaged that we will establish a team of Play Rangers to work in schools raising awareness of the value of and opportunities for play across the district. We intend to make a bid to the BIG Lottery in order to pump prime this activity.

## **15. Local Background for Play**

### **15.1 Chase Sport and Play Partnership**

Chase Community Sports Network and Play Partnership evolved as a result of a comprehensive consultation exercise between the major play and sport providers. There was an impetus to create a play partnership and a community sports partnership. Consideration for the formation and development of these

two bodies coincided and at the initial meeting all partners unanimously agreed to have one group rather than two separate groups.

It was also agreed at the initial meeting that sub groups would evolve to deal with the differing aspects of work, but it was equally important that the two main areas of work remained close together as there were significant benefits to be gained.

The following organisations were represented at the initial steering group of the Chase Play and Sport Partnership and will remain as partners leading on both play and sport:

- Community Learning Partnership
- Play England
- County Sports Partnership
- South Staffordshire PCT
- Staffordshire Police
- Cannock Chase Community Volunteer Service
- Cannock Chase District Council
- School Sports Partnership
- Age Concern
- Staffordshire County Council
  - Youth Service
  - Staffordshire Early Years & Childcare
  - Extended Years Coordinator

Support has been available throughout the process of developing the strategy and the Chase Sport and Play Partnership from both Play England and CABA Space. A more comprehensive list of current partners is attached at Appendix 4.

The Community Sports Network and Play Partnership will report to the District Locality Board to help raise the profile of play and to improve coordination of play work across the district.

## **16. Assessing District needs**

A range of research and consultation has been undertaken and continues to take place to identify gaps in provision and also good practice, which can be built upon.

A full audit and needs assessment of Parks and Open Spaces has been undertaken by this council as part of its work on PPG 17 to prepare the Green Space Strategy and Indoor Facilities Report and to begin work on Parks development and management plans.

As part of this work the Youth Parliament was consulted at a meeting chaired by Dr. Tony Wright MP for Cannock Chase.

We have also been working with a group of young people to undertake a consultation exercise in our local parks. This involved the young people working with a local film company to produce a DVD about a day in the life of the parks. The finished film will inform future parks management and development plans.

As part of CHASE IT we carry out ongoing evaluation and consultation exercises to ensure that participants' views and wants are taken into account when planning new activities. Sample satisfaction sheets from CHASE IT are attached at Appendix 3.

We consult local people through our Citizens' Panel and use the annual Local Democracy Week as a vehicle for consulting children and young people: for example over 200 children were consulted in order to ascertain their views on a major new play area.

We use the "State of Cannock Chase" research to enable us to target our CHASE IT activities at the greatest area of deprivation within certain wards

The Arts Development Officer is currently working with our Housing Service and Beth Johnson Housing Association, to use the Arts as a tool to break down barriers to engagement with a group of hard to reach young people, in order to gain their views and incorporate these into provision within a new joint management housing development .

Research into the play needs of the District was also undertaken by Staffordshire County Council as part of the formulation of the County Council Play Strategy.

Information gained through CHASE IT work has also revealed gaps in provision for children with disabilities and special needs.

We have used "Playtrain" to train a team of young consultants to carry out work at the Museum of Cannock Chase, the findings of which we used to introduce a Toys and Games Gallery and to inform our Toys and Games Education Pack.

Staffordshire Youth Service also undertakes a wide range of consultation with young people.

### **Gaps in provision.**

The County Council's research identified Preschool care as being in quite a healthy state across the district supported by Sure Start, with the over 12's being identified as the age group targeted by Staffordshire Youth Service.

The County Council's research highlighted gaps mainly around holiday, weekend and twilight provision for the 8 – 12 year olds. The need for a holiday play service was also an area that was specifically highlighted

In addition to our CHASE IT programme there is another widely recognised and respected group providing activities in Norton Canes – KONCAS (Kids of Norton Canes Activity Scheme) provides a dedicated facility year round, with holiday activities for children and young people in that area.

There does however need to be wider provision for the district as a whole. Research work undertaken as part of the audit of green spaces for the Open Spaces Strategy identified a lack of open spaces generally across the district, but specifically in areas where deprivation was most prevalent.

The Key recommendations relating to children and young people arising from the Green Spaces Strategy work were as follows:

- Improve provision for young people and toddlers through a wider range of equipment
- Introduce equipment that caters for children and young people with disabilities
- Introduce signage on all sites with site details and contact numbers
- Increase maintenance improvements
- Remove evidence of vandalism quickly
- Involve children and young people in the design and choice of provision
- Develop a strategy for young people's provision that provides a balance between active and passive space that is formal, well designed and provided in areas that are safe for young people whilst not causing a nuisance for residents.
- Aim to provide good quality sites as a minimum

The CHASE IT' programme currently offers the 5-13 age group a range of trips around the West Midlands and also activities based at the Council's major facilities. However, whilst some of these activities are offered free for Children with access issues, under the Children's Fund criteria, we do charge for other activities within the programme.

Cannock is fortunate to have within its district "SNAP" a Special Needs Adventure Playground that specifically caters for the play needs of disabled children, but a fee is charged for this service. Through our CHASE IT programme we can only offer some free tailor made activities for those with special needs.

We need to undertake more consultation with children and young people as our Citizens' Panel does not capture the views of children or young people under the age of 16, and so reflects adult perceptions of what children need. We also know

from our Citizen's Panel that only 27% of respondents heard about CHASE IT in schools.

### **Closing the gaps**

We have begun to close gaps in Council provision through CHASE IT, our Capital Programme Scheme to improve play provision and parks and open spaces and Out of School Hours Learning work etc.

It is expected that the Community Sports Network and Play Partnership will enable us to work with partners to *“widen and develop play opportunities and activities across the district maximising local resources and ensuring quality provision”*

Our extensive local knowledge gained from delivering and working with partners; for example the Primary Care Trust and Sure Start, (list of current partners at Appendix 4) confirms that many children and parents do not know how to play, and in many cases where to play.

Through our Strategic Action Plan, where it is not possible to provide new open spaces, we intend to provide activities on other sites, particularly school play grounds, to encourage children and young people and their families to re-engage with play, in their parks and open spaces - *“developing a cluster approach to play development through working with schools, parents and organisations in local areas”*.

Across the wider district there have been less opportunities for disabled children and young people to engage in play activities. Another of our strategic priorities will be *“to ensure that children and young people with disabilities are further enabled to access play opportunities, services and facilities.”* We will strengthen our partnership with SNAP, the districts two special schools and the voluntary sector.

Through our Leisure Development work we have identified and worked with a range of Voluntary sector partners, to ensure a range of opportunities for children and young people and skills development and accreditation (previous case studies at Appendix 5)

There is a range of Private sector play provision within the district; this ranges from play barns attached to public houses to private cycle hire firms on Cannock Chase. Where the latter type of organisations can assist us in delivering our objectives we may commission them to provide services for some of our play work, For example “Kids on Bikes”, Horse riding, Go-Karting etc.

It is our intention through the implementation of The Play Strategy, particularly through our proposed CHASE IT – PLAY project, to build upon the success of

the current CHASE IT brand and programme. We will offer free play activities through extended schools and out of school activities, working with partners and organisations within defined cluster groups. This will enable us to access areas where we can best engage with our target age group, build new partnerships and create capacity to provide play opportunities. (Details of our CHASE IT -PLAY project proposal to the Big Lottery Fund can be seen section 15 of this document).

Through targeting primary school age children CHASE IT - PLAY will, by supporting children and young people in transition, close the gap in provision between Sure Start and Staffordshire Youth Service.

Through CHASE IT – PLAY we intend to raise the profile and importance of play to everyone in the district. We wish to celebrate what we already do well and disseminate our best practice amongst partners and stakeholders.

Building on our Beacon strengths we will ensure play is part of the healthy development of local children. We want to establish aspirational and culturally diverse festivals and events, creating new challenging and exciting spaces. We hope to offer employment opportunities for local people through our proposals for Play Rangers; we will provide consistent equality practice and play work training. We will consolidate and improve consultation, and engagement with children and young people.

### **Inclusion and Equality**

Cannock Chase Council is committed to inclusion and equality.

The Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) Community within Cannock Chase is very small representing 1.4 per cent of the total population. Through this Play Strategy we will work with a range of partners to raise awareness of diversity and to celebrate different cultures.

We will highlight targeted groups and areas of disadvantage throughout the district to ensure inclusion and equality of access to play opportunities.

As part of any new capital or revenue investment in any service we will undertake extensive impact assessments and monitoring, as part of the corporate equality policy.

### **Workforce Development**

Cannock Chase District Council is committed to workforce development and is a registered Investor in People. We will recognise the following qualifications available to individuals working in the play sector:

- Take 5 for Play – Volunteers
- NVQ Level 2 in Play work – Assistant play worker, play worker, holiday play scheme worker
- NVQ Level 3 in Play work – Senior Play worker/co-coordinator, play work leader
- NVQ Level 4 in Play work – Play work manager, play work development officer.

We will encourage and support all staff working in the play environment to gain or hold play qualifications, and we will actively encourage volunteers to develop their skills and qualifications through training.

There are several groups of workers around the District who interface with local children and young people and it is proposed to offer training in conflict resolution to them:

- Park Keepers
- Community Support Officers
- Street Wardens
- Arts Development Team
- Sports Development Team
- Countryside Rangers
- Local clubs and associations

This training will raise the awareness of the needs of children and young people and encourage them to use parks and open spaces to play.

## **17. Managing the Strategy**

We will measure success against the Play Strategy Action Plan as set out in section 2.

We will measure progress against targets and this will be reported on to the Children and Young People's Select Committee, and be published as part of the Council's Corporate and Performance Plan.

We will use the Council's performance management system "CorVu" to gather information and record our progress. We will also use partners' indicators within their various service specific plans covering activities for children and young people.

In addition, we await the outcome of the proposals for adoption of the 4 indicators for play, currently being piloted for the Children’s Play Council and Play England, as set out below:

### **Indicator 1 – Participation**

- The percentage of children and young people aged birth to 16 from all social and ethnic groups, including those who are disabled, who play for at least four hours each week.
- Method of Generation – School and Household Survey.

### **Indicator 2 – Access to a variety of facilities and spaces**

- The percentage of children and young people aged birth to 16 that have access to a dedicated place for play and informal recreation, which is within appropriate walking or cycling distance.
- Method of Generation – The open space and play strategy audit. GIS mapping.

### **Indicator 3 – Quality of facilities and spaces**

- The proportion of facilities and spaces meeting the quality criteria for “excellent” or “good”.
- Method of Generation – Assess against standards based on agreed quality criteria.

### **Indicator 4 – Satisfaction**

- The percentage of children and young people from all social and ethnic groups, including those who are disabled, who think that the range and quality of play facilities and spaces they are able to access in their local neighbourhood is good/very good.
- Method of Generation – School and Household Survey.

### **BVPI 115 – Extend Play Strategy Development**

The Audit Commission has developed a voluntary performance indicator BVPI 115 on the development of local play policies. This is summarised below: -

#### **Services/practice (from BVPI 115)**

Every county, unitary and district authority should have an agreed play policy and strategy: -

- The play policy should be widely scoped, including any local authority services that might directly or indirectly impact on children's play opportunities.
- The play policy should clearly identify the importance of play.
- The policy should be integrated with other relevant community, corporate and departmental plans.
- The policy should be developed drawing on consultation with a range of relevant stakeholders.
- The policy should be endorsed by the Chief Executive and/or members of the relevant committee.
- The play policy should be based on a clear baseline assessment of local needs and identify current provision and opportunities for play.
- The play policy provides a clear framework for implementation and delivery.
- A play policy working group with key partners should be established to oversee the implementation and delivery of the policy.
- A framework is in place for monitoring progress and regular reporting of plans.

The BVPI provides a detailed method of quantifying how far a local strategy goes in terms of meeting each of these key elements and an overall score can be calculated.

We will take into account any changes made by the Audit Commission regarding the roll out of a new set of National Indicators in 2008.

### **Quality Assurance**

Wherever possible we will ensure the use of relevant standards or accreditation to assess and assure the quality of provision as we do with Quest Accreditation for our Leisure Centres and Sports Development, Museum Accreditation and Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme for Museum Services etc.

As part of our Cultural Services plan we are working "Towards An Excellent Service" (TAES Accreditation), and we aim to gain Green Flag status for our key parks. The cumulative effect of Green Flag status will be to ensure attractive, vibrant spaces in which children and young people feel safe to play.

We will also be guided by the seven Best Play Objectives (as detailed in Section 5) in order to raise the standards of play provision in the district.

## Managing Risk

We endeavour to offer quality play provision, which offers a challenging, enjoyable and safe experience. Management of risk is a priority for this council and this is reflected through the risk assessment and risk management policies.

It is proposed that we adopt the Play Safety Forum's 2002 position statement "Managing Risk in Play Provision" as follows:

*Children need and want to take risks when they play. Play provision aims to respond to these needs and wished by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities, In doing this, play provision aims to manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury*

## 18 CHASE IT - PLAY

Cannock Chase Council has a successful track record of partnership working, particularly around delivery of activities for children and young people, through its current CHASE IT programme.

In order to maximise opportunities for play it is proposed to submit an application to the BIG Lottery Fund to support the establishment of a separate play initiative.

It is felt that the use of the existing well known and widely respected CHASE IT brand will guarantee the highest profile for play amongst our target audience of children, young people and their families. We will, therefore, be submitting our bid under the banner of CHASE IT – PLAY, the focus of which will be develop, with our partners, a cluster approach to play provision, working around parks, open spaces and other venues and extended schools to provide opportunities for children and young people to enjoy the "THREE FREES" of Play: -

<b><i>Play should be:</i></b>	<b><i>Free of charge</i></b>
<b><i>Children should be:</i></b>	<b><i>Free to come and go</i></b>
<b><i>Children should be:</i></b>	<b><i>Free to choose</i></b>

## Cannock Chase Strategic Objectives

Our strategic objectives for the life of this strategy are to: -

**Develop a cluster approach to play development through working with schools, parents and organisations in local areas.**

Task	Action	Outcome	Resources/Partners	Lead	Timescale	Indicators	Reference
Establish a cluster model for district and build on CHASE IT brand.	Work with CLP, CSN and Play Partners, internal department to develop model linked to extended schools, parks and open spaces to develop year round activities.	Clusters around key areas: Cannock, Hednesford, Rugeley, Heath Hayes and Norton Canes.	CCC – Officer time CLP Community Sports Network and Play Partnership.	CCC Leisure Strategy Manager	Begin October 2007	Cluster model established and formalised with 5 clusters across district by Summer 2008	<b>Play strategy Page:</b> <i>Please note page numbers are left blank until all final consultation is complete</i>
	Identify new private and partnership provision.	Increased partnership working to develop play and increased participation in the above extended school cluster areas. support children and young people in transition from Sure Start to Youth Service		Community Recreation Officer.	October 2007		
	Evaluation.				March 2008 onwards		
					By 2013	Number of children and Young people supported through transition	

Task	Action	Outcome	Resources/Partners	Lead	Timescale	Indicators	Reference
Develop District Play Team to work in clusters to extend CHASE IT brand to include free play projects to connect children with play environments and opportunities	Work on team structure/management arrangements.	.Job descriptions prepared	CCC	CCC – Leisure Development Manager.	August 2007	Team in place for Spring 2008.	Page
	Write job descriptions		CCC	Leisure strategy Manager			
	Gain approvals.		CCC	Head of Service			
	Make application to BIG lottery fund.	£220,886	BIG lottery funding bid for play.	. Leisure Development Manager	September 2007.		Page
	Recruit team	Team comprising Senior Development Officer and 5 Play Rangers	CCC Management costs (office space, IT costs etc) to be absorbed in CHASE IT.	Leisure Development Manager	January 2008		
Source additional partnership funding and support		E.g. LSP, CLP, Extended Schools, Children's Fund etc.	Leisure Development Manager.	March 2008.			

Task	Action	Outcome	Resources/Partners	Lead	Timescale	Indicators	Reference
Provide training for Play Rangers	Set up a range of training sessions	6 Play workers trained.	Staffordshire County Council funding £1062	Staffs. County Council	March 2008	Team of 6 trained.	Page
Identify play champions in local schools.	Work with CLP and play rangers to identify children and young people in target schools and to provide training as play champions to include equality and diversity and personal safety	Sustainable play legacy and dissemination of good practice.  Individual children and young people supported by play training  Raised awareness of equality and diversity safety	Play rangers.	Senior Play Development Officer.	June 2008 onwards.	5 play champions in year 1 (2008)  25 by year 3 (2010)	Page

Widen and develop play opportunities and activities across the District, maximising local resources and ensuring quality provision.

Task	Action	Outcome	Resources/Partners	Lead	Timescale	Indicators	Reference
Adopt and extend a play value assessment tool to assist in the provision of play areas.	Develop system for CCC needs  Train staff in types of play.	Increased knowledge and awareness of value and use of play assessment.	Officer time.	Quality and Programming Officer.	March 2009.	Tool used in the design of play areas to ensure play equipment and sites provide high play value	Page
Update records of play provision and develop closer working relationship with play providers.	Map play in all areas. including voluntary and private sector	Improved knowledge of existing play provision and equipment, location ball game signs, appropriate surfactng etc.	Officer time.	Parks Manager.	March 2010.	Accurate list of play areas equipment and provision which can be used by all sectors for target groups	Page
Work with partners to increase opportunities for informal and formal play provision in parts and open spaces	Produce Parks Development Plans with integrated approach to play.	Gain 'Green Flag' awards to improve parks & open spaces access	Officer time. Finance and capital programme.	Parks Manager.	March 2008.  March 2009.  March 2010.	1 park accredited  1 further park accredited.  1 further park accredited.	Pages.

Task	Action	Outcome	Resources/Partners	Lead	Timescale	Indicators	Reference
Continue to seek funding for improvement of play provision	<p>Work with planning/finance officers to carry out review of Section 106 Agreements</p> <p>Continue to make bids for capital programme schemes</p> <p>Source external funding</p>	Revised 106 Agreements to use to improve play provision through targeted approach areas of deprivation	Officer time.	Leisure Strategy Manager/ Development Manager	April 2008 ongoing	<p>New process in place by 2010</p> <p>Play provision in capital programme</p> <p>External funding sourced and applied for</p>	Pages

Improve engagement and involvement of children, young people and families in the delivery and design of play activities and provision.

Task	Action	Outcome	Resources/Partners	Lead	Timescale	Indicators	Reference
Further develop the consultation process for young people aged 12-18.	<p>'Planning for Real' for Play.</p> <p>Gain Council Approval.</p> <p>Adopt "Hear by Right" Standard for all age groups</p> <p>Develop CCC website with young people to increase web access</p>	<p>'Citizens Panel' for under 16's.</p> <p>.</p> <p>CCC website developed &amp; links to websites e.g. "myspace"</p>	<p>CCC Officer time.</p> <p>Youth service time.</p> <p>LSP partners.</p>	<p>CCC PR &amp; Marketing Office/Senior Play development Officer</p>	<p>2009.</p>	<p>'Citizens Panel' in place and working.</p> <p>Standard adopted for all age groups.</p> <p>% Increase in people accessing information via internet</p>	<p>Pages</p>
Develop an engagement process for children aged 5 - 11	<p>Design and commission on line surveys and activities and "Help yourself to play" pack.</p> <p>Use Play Rangers to establish children's focus groups with partners</p>	<p>As above</p> <p>Set up team of young play consultants</p> <p>Hold family workshops</p>	<p>Play Rangers Team</p> <p>Arts and Sports Dev't officers</p> <p>Big Lottery Fund</p>	<p>Senior Play Development Officer</p>	<p>Summer 2008</p> <p>Summer 2008</p>	<p>As above</p> <p>5 young consultants teams set up around clusters</p> <p>2 workshops</p>	<p>Pages</p>

Develop and produce a child friendly version of the play strategy	Work with children and young people to identify main parts of strategy and develop their own version	Child friendly play strategy produced by children and young people	Officer time	Senior Play Development leader	July 2008	1 play strategy produced and  Distributed to all schools in cluster	Pages:
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Maximise opportunities for children and young people with disabilities and special needs to further benefit from play activities and services.

Task	Action	Outcome	Resources/Partners	Lead	Timescale	Indicators	Reference
Encourage the voluntary and community sector to play an active role in the partnership.	Invite SNAP to participate in partnership.	Increased awareness of issues facing partners providing play	Officer time.	Leisure Strategy Manager.	December 2008.	Attendance at relevant meetings e.g.; Community Strategy Theme Groups and LAA sub groups etc	Page.
Identify Opportunities for integrated approaches to Playwork	Strengthen other partners' knowledge and shared capacity to support targeted children and young people with disabilities and special needs  Work with existing partners to identify gaps and use Play workers in both sectors	Play Rangers working in Voluntary sector organisations and Voluntary organisations officers working with CCC	Officer time CVS officer time SNAP officer time  CLP CSNPP	Senior Play Development Officer	September 2010	Number of partners sharing capacity  Number of children supported through targeted activities	Pages

**Reduce barriers to play, particularly targeting identified areas of deprivation, where young people and families face difficulties accessing play spaces, activities and provision.**

Task	Action	Outcome	Resources/Partners	Lead	Timescale	Indicators	Reference
Facilitate use of GIS mapping of parks and open spaces.	Identify areas lacking in provision in order to target resources.  Review areas at cluster level	Refresher courses for staff trained to use GIS Additional staff trained to use GIS	Officer time.  Financial	Parks Manager.	March 2010.	Number of Play activities delivered in area of deprivation All play areas listed on website	Pages
Increase number of play opportunities in targeted wards.	. Use mapping system to identify areas and introduce play opportunities  Play rangers to visit extended schools/ GP's surgeries/ children's centres/ etc in areas of deprivation to promote benefits of free play and "choosing health"	Play rangers training and working with parents in clusters. Provide training and support for staff and volunteers  Teachers/GPs/nurses aware of health benefits of play and opportunities for play.	.Play Rangers  Senior Play Development Officer time PCT CSNPP	.Senior Play Development Officer  Senior Play Development Officer	.	Number of parents engaged in play work volunteering.  Number of staff and volunteers supported  (CIF funded PCT Health Trainers Working to promote play opportunities – <i>dependent upon CIF funding</i> )	Pages  Pages
Minimise conflict between operators and children and young people using parks and open spaces.	Offer training in conflict resolution to operators, local organisations etc.  Identify funding.	Increased awareness of needs of children, increased skill levels.	Officer time.  Grounds Maintenance contractors  CDRP/JOG/CAT funding	Leisure Strategy Officer.	July 2008 and ongoing.	2 training courses provided.	Pages.

Improve understanding of the importance of play with parents, carers and local community members, partnerships and key stakeholders.

Task	Action	Outcome	Resources/Partners	Lead	Timescale	Indicators	Reference
Use play as an access to skills and employment	Work in partnership with college, to put play qualifications on the curriculum.	Course provided by college Play Rangers and volunteers to assist in mentoring students	Officer time.  Financial	Senior Play Development Officer	September 2009	New Course introduced.	Pages
Celebrate best practice to build on Beacon and CHASE IT and engagement in relation to play	Provide activities under the banner "inspiration through innovation".	Showcase achievements within LSP CLP CSNPP Community Forums etc	Senior Play Development Officer time.	Leisure Strategy Manager.	May 2008-2013	5 showcase events.	Pages
Assist in meeting PSA target to reduce obesity.	Provide active play opportunities on Cannock Chase and work with South Staffs PCT & PBCs to reduce obesity levels.	Reduce obesity levels and raise awareness of Cannock Chase as healthy resource.	Officer time. Financial. Forestry commission Cannock Chase AONB  PCT and PCBs	Leisure Development Manager.	2011	Contribution to PSA target met.	Pages

Task	Action	Outcome	Resources/Partners	Lead	Timescale	Indicators	Reference
Adoption of CCC Play Strategy.	Submit strategy to Cabinet and Children and Young People Select Committee and Play Partnership.	Strategy adopted by CCC And approved by play partnership.	Officer time.	Leisure Development Manager.	September 2007.	Strategy submitted and adopted by all.	Page
Identify play as a priority area of work for the Children and Young People's Locality Board.	Presentation to Children and Young People's Board and Partners.	Play identified as a priority for future work of Board.	Officer time.	Leisure Strategy Manager.	March 2008.	Invitation to make presentation.  No of presentations	Page
Organise event to launch Play Strategy and successful bid.	Plan event and invitation list.	Awareness of Play Strategy and future opportunities available.	Marketing Team.	Leisure Strategy Manager.	December 2007.	Event held in May. Stakeholders involved.	
Identify champion for play CCC.	Report to Cabinet.  Support Play Champion to raise awareness with other members	Member level champion for play. Regular briefing session	Officer time.	Leisure Strategy Manager.	August 2007.	Champion identified - Councillor Mick Grocott Leader for Children and Young People	

Task	Action	Outcome	Resources/Partners	Lead	Timescale	Indicators	Reference
Hold annual events to celebrate play and support Annual Play Day.	Identify partnership funding.  Launch child friendly play strategy at first event	Annual Play Day. Celebration. Events.	Play Rangers and partners' time.  Big Lottery Funding And other partners.	Leisure Strategy Manager.	3 events: 1. August 2008 2 August 2009 3. August 2010	Events planned and promoted. Participants set to increase 2% per year Strategy produced	Pages.
Promotion of play throughout the District.	Produce and distribute flyers to promote the benefits of play and offer information on play providers.	Leaflets produced and distributed.	Officer time and finance.	Leisure Strategy Manager.	June 2008.	1,000 flyers distributed year 1 Year on year increase. Measure response.	Page
	Develop Council web site to promote play and play opportunities and work with KONCAS, Forestry Commission etc.	Specific site available for play with relevant links etc.	Officer time.	Leisure Strategy Manager.	March 2008.		
		Offer information on existing parks and play areas giving details of equipment and the age groups the equipment is designed for.	Officer time.	Leisure Strategy Manager.	March 2009.	Site available – measure the number of hits.	

### **Key to Abbreviations:**

<b>AONB:</b>	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<b>CAT:</b>	Community Action Team
<b>CCC:</b>	Cannock Chase Council
<b>CDRP:</b>	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
<b>CLP:</b>	Community Learning Partnership
<b>CSNPP:</b>	Chase Sports Network and Play Partnership
<b>CVS:</b>	Community & Voluntary Services
<b>GIS:</b>	Graphic Information System
<b>JOG:</b>	Joint Operations Group
<b>LAA:</b>	Local Area Agreement
<b>LSP:</b>	Local Strategic Partnership
<b>PBC:</b>	Practice Based Commissioning
<b>PCT:</b>	Primary Care Trust