

Children's Play Strategy

Summary

2016-2021



Guildford Borough Council is one of the main local providers of play provision and facilities. We have a play strategy to help us to ensure that our playschemes and our play areas are of a high standard and are what is needed by families who live in Guildford.

We want our children and young people to have the space and freedom to play in Guildford, and would like to see more children playing, more often.

Children all have a natural desire to play. They play because it is fun, it makes them happy and they enjoy it. Children's play needs are varied and people have different ideas of what play is. We believe that children and young people decide what, how, and where they play, by following their own ideas and interests. It is what they often choose to do in their spare time. When children play, they can be who they want to be, and play how they want to play. Their imaginations are endless and have no boundaries.

Play is necessary for the healthy development and well-being of children and young people, and of communities.

What are the benefits of children playing?

Active play can help to keep children's bodies fit and healthy. Running, jumping, climbing, skipping and riding a bike all help to keep bodies well. Play is good for thinking too: it helps children to make sense of the world and to work out who they are. Playing out where they live can help children meet new people and make new friends. Children are fitter, happier, more social, become more confident and learn to make better decisions, all through playing.

Barriers to play

Sometimes there can be things that stop children from going out to play. We asked dozens of children and young people from Guildford what stops them from playing. Many said they are too busy to go out to play, that the weather is often too bad or because of dangers like bullies or busy roads. Over half said that their parents worrying about possible dangers stopped them from playing outside. Some potential solutions to these barriers are in the strategy action plan.

Why do we need a play strategy?

There are some 'rights' for children that England is bound by. They are the UN convention on the rights of the child. By committing to this strategy, we will ensure that we are following section 31 of these rights.

We recognise that play is an extremely important part of a child's development and wellbeing. It is something adults take for granted that children do naturally - and they do. Yet children's lives are often very busy and there can be few opportunities for them to play freely.



Our vision for play in Guildford

- we have play spaces that are attractive, welcoming, challenging and accessible
- our parks and open spaces provide opportunities for a wide range of play
- our communities have a range of spaces for play
- local communities are safe and have interesting places to play freely
- adults within our communities welcome children's play
- children, young people and their parents take an active role in the development of local play spaces
- the need to create child friendly communities is understood by the people who design and plan for community spaces.



Influences on children's access to play

It is important that play opportunities for all children are thought about. Different individual and family circumstances need to be planned for, including those with special educational needs, disabilities, learning delay and poverty.

Adults can affect children's play with what, where, when and how they allow children to play. These adults could be parents, teachers, neighbours, or other people in the community. Playschemes provide adults who are qualified and experienced in supporting the play needs of children and can therefore provide a valuable place for children's play to happen.



Our playschemes

The Council has a team who encourage outdoor play, called **Playrangers**. They can give children and young people ideas or new ways to play and create challenging spaces where they are able to explore. Playrangers are out in parks across Guildford every day after school. They support children in how they want to play, and ensure they have the type of equipment they want to play with; such as various materials for den building, go karts, a water slide, a giant football or a fire bowl. If the Playrangers have not got a particular item the children ask for, it is possible they might have it by the following week!

In addition, the Council has a holiday playscheme for 10-16 years olds, called **FISH** (Fun in the School Holidays). There are lots of opportunities for young people to hang out with their mates playing games, to be creative, to be adventurous and to make new friends.

We asked children and young people from Guildford how they like to play. They told us they like to be active in their play; to run, swing, play ball games, and chase. Another favourite way to play is to be adventurous; to be daring, swing high and to climb. They also liked to play with wheeled toys, such as bikes, scooters and skateboards. Our playschemes aim to offer these types of opportunities.

Our play areas

Play can happen in many different places. We asked Guildford's children and young people where they like to play. They said their favourite places were in a local park or grassy area or in their garden or a friend's garden. We are very lucky in Guildford to have many parks and green spaces, these are very flexible places for playing in, for exploring and enjoying the natural environment.

Play areas were also a very popular choice to play in. When asked, people in Guildford said that natural features such as plants, rocks and sand being in our play areas are an important feature. We want our play areas to be nice places to visit with good equipment that is fun to use. As well as being attractive places to visit, we want our play areas to have good equipment that is fun to use. When we update a play area we ask the local people what they want and try to include these requests in the new plans.

We have to replace our play equipment every few years so we have to plan the order in which improvements to the play areas will be done based on need. We have checked all our play areas against a list of key items for that type of play area and this has set the priorities in the plan.

There are a number of organisations offering advice and guidelines for play area design and development, which the Council follow. These organisations include *Play England* and *Fields in Trust*. We will encourage and support parish council's to use the same guidance for their play areas.



Challenge and risk

Play areas need to offer children some challenges and risks to be fun. Parents and other local people supported having increased challenge in play areas. If play areas do not offer children this they will play elsewhere, possibly in places which are not as safe. Experiencing risk is an essential part of ensuring children grow, develop, and have the skills they will need as an adult. We weigh up the potential risk involved in a play area or item of play equipment against the potential benefit to children's play.

The views of parents and children are incredibly valuable to delivering a successful play area. Good design for play requires local knowledge. Our play areas will be developed using these key approaches:

1. designed to enhance its setting
2. located in the best possible place
3. close to nature
4. designed so that children can play in different ways, incorporating different ages, abilities and interests
5. designed so that disabled and non-disabled children play together
6. loved by the community
7. a space where children of all ages have the opportunity to play together
8. a space where children can challenge themselves in every way
9. continue to provide the best opportunities for children's play whilst also protecting the play environment from damage
10. a space that evolves as children grow

Our themes

We group together the important bits of what we are trying to achieve and call these themes. These themes will help us to focus on doing specific things to make playing in Guildford better:

Widening accessibility and participation in play

Increasing people's awareness of opportunities to play

To advocate for play

Advising adults why children should play

Improve children's health and wellbeing through play

Encouraging children to get more active through their play.

Balancing risk in play

Helping children to measure the risks within their play.

Measuring Success

We have developed an action plan and a play area development plan. These will be reviewed every year.

The Play and Youth Development Officer is here to:

- provide advice on children's play for the Council
- design and manage play projects
- promote opportunities for play within Guildford
- provide information, advice and support to community groups

The Parks Team are here to:

- develop play spaces
- undertake improvements of play sites
- develop areas identified as not having enough play space
- inspect, maintain and manage attractive play space that children want to play in



To tell us anything about play in Guildford



you can email us, but please ask permission from a parent or guardian first.



So what are you waiting for?

Go out and experience
your next adventure.



Contacts

Play and Youth Development Officer
playdevelopment@guildford.gov.uk
01483 444764

Parks Team
parks@guildford.gov.uk
01483 444718

The full version of the play strategy 2016-2021, action plan and appendices are on our website
www.guildford.gov.uk/playstrategy