



Proposed development of a Play Strategy for Midlothian

Report by Mary Smith, Director Education Communities and Economy.

1. Purpose of Report

To provide an update on the progress of developing a Play Strategy for Midlothian and to agree to the Play Strategy being produced.

2. Background

The Scottish Government published Scotland's first National Play Strategy in June 2013. This set out a vision for play and highlighted the Scottish Governments role in ensuring a happy, healthy childhood and its importance in children's development. Their vision is

Play is fundamental to children and young people's quality of life but first and foremost it is a child's right and one which the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC) is keen to see actively applied. The Scottish Government has responsibility for implementing the UNCRC in Scotland, addressing the UNCRC Committee's recommendations appropriate to local requirements. One of the ways in which they will be implementing it is through the Play Strategy.

- 2.1 One of the tasks from the Scottish Governments Play Strategy Action plan is the development of a Play Policy and play strategy action plan in every Local Authority.
- 2.2 To achieve the above task the intention is for Midlothian Council through the Childcare and Workforce Development Officer, Early Years Team, to work closely with Midlothian Association Play (MAP) to develop a Council-wide Play Strategy.
- 2.3 A report was presented to CMY in November 2014 and a cross Council and voluntary sector working group was set up with the aim: to create a Play Strategy for Midlothian which would work towards making Midlothian a great place to play for all children and young people.
- 2.4 The Midlothian Play Strategy has been developed along with an Action plan to take forward its implementation. A further meeting will be held with the Head Teacher Executive to plan for the implementation of the Strategy at school level.
- 2.5 The reporting on the progress of implementing the action plan will be done through the Early Years sub group of the GIRFEC Board which reports to the Community Planning Partnership Board.

There will also be the development of a Midlothian Play Forum that will monitor the implementation of the action plan and provide support to developing play opportunities for children and Young People and families in Midlothian. The Play Forum will look to include representation from Primary and Secondary schools, Health, Land and Countryside as well as the voluntary sector.

3. Report Implications

The aim of the Play Strategy is to raise the profile of Play across Midlothian and to ensure all departments of the Council who play a role in this are able to assess the impact and effect on children's play on decisions made.

In the wider context, Scottish Government say play matters because play is crucial to Scotland's wellbeing socially, economically and environmentally. The implementation of the Play Strategy in Midlothian is designed to link the national aspirations for play to our local context.

3.1. Resource

Funding is being made available from the Early Learning & Childcare budget for the launch. This will include production and launch the document. The launch is planned at Midlothian Association of Play's annual Conference on 19 November 2016. Further funding will be required to implement the actions but funding the funding will be part of the tasks associated with each action. Further funding may be required to implement all the actions and this will be monitored and reported to the Girfec Early Years group.

3.2. Risk

The development of nation which values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all children and young people; in their homes, nurseries, schools and communities is part of the vision of the Scottish Government. To help achieve this every Local Authority is being encouraged to produce its own local Play Strategy and Action Plan.

If Midlothian does not engage with this initiative it may be seen as not supporting play as an essential part of healthy, happy children.

3.3. Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☒ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

3.4. Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

The benefits of Play are well documented and play is an essential element of children's development. Play is crucial in ensuring that we achieve the long and medium term objectives set out in the Single Midlothian Plan: every child in Midlothian has the best start in life and is ready to succeed; children in their

early years and their families are being supported to be healthy, to learn and to be resilient.

This work also ties in with the Single Midlothian Plan's GIRFEMC outcome of children and young people are supported to be healthy, happy and reach their potential

3.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The successful implementation of a Play Strategy could further improve the quality of children's lives across Midlothian and help with child health and education. Improving children's readiness to learn will help to raise their educational attainment and ultimately improve positive destinations and contribute to the economic wellbeing of Midlothian.

As a result it will also have an impact on the six agreed national priorities of Single Outcome Agreements

- economic recovery and growth
- employment
- early years
- safer and stronger communities, and reducing offending
- health inequalities and physical activity
- outcomes for older people

3.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The provision of high quality play opportunities strongly aligns with the National Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and Early Years agendas. Play also links to our work towards the Early Years Collaborative stretch aims, Building the Ambition, the National Parenting Strategy, the Child Poverty Strategy and Curriculum for Excellence.

3.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Consultation has been carried out with all stakeholders including: children, parents and professionals working with children. Further consultation will be included as part of the task for implementing the Action Plan. A further meeting will be held with the Head Teacher Executive to plan for the implementation of the Strategy at school level.

3.8 Ensuring Equalities

The provision of play opportunities is a universal service. One of the Themes of the Play Strategy is Play for All looks to ensure all children and young people have equality of opportunity to access play with the support they require.

3.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

Assessments will be carried out as the policy is drafted/of any specific proposals such as building new play parks

3.10 IT Issues

No IT issues.

4. Summary

Midlothian has developed a Play Strategy and Action Plan in line with the Scottish Government action for all Local Authorities to implement a Play Strategy Action Plan.

This is an opportunity to strengthen our commitment to making Midlothian a great place to play. “By investing in all our children and young people now we can strengthen their ability to achieve their full potential” - Play Strategy for Scotland.

5. Recommendations

- (a) Note the content of this report
- (b) Agree in principle contents of the Midlothian Play Strategy and Action Plan
- (c) Agree the monitoring and reporting structure for the Play Strategy and Action Plan

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Background papers

- Midlothian Play Strategy and Action Plan
- Play Strategy for Scotland: Vision and Action Plan
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/early-years/parenting-early-learning/play>
- EQIA

