



For Highland's Children

# HIGHLAND PLAY STRATEGY

2016 - 2020

# FOREWORD

Play is how we first begin to explore the world. I remember when I was young having great opportunities to be out and about with my friends, having great fun, taking risks that would be frowned upon today, building dens and generally testing our boundaries. I worry that so many young people do not have these opportunities today with parents thinking that they are safer in their rooms watching TV or on their computers.

Play is the main form of physical exercise for children. It is how we learn to learn. To ensure our children experience healthy physical, social and intellectual development we need to understand that, whilst adults can go some way to nurture and teach, the company of other children is essential to enable them to establish who they are and who they will become.

I am happy to endorse this Strategy because if we want the best for our children, we must let them play.

*Drew Millar  
Chair of the Education, Children and Adults Committee, The Highland Council*



# BACKGROUND

The vision for Scotland's Play Strategy is:

*We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. A nation which values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all our children and young people; in their homes, nurseries, schools and communities.*

This document translates this vision into a Highland context where our aim is to make Highland the best place to grow up. It builds upon the success of the previous Highland Play Strategy *Play Matters 2012 – 15*.



## WHY IS PLAY IMPORTANT?

Every child has the right to rest, leisure, play and recreation and to take part in cultural and artistic activities under Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This means that:

- Children and young people must have space and time for play, recreation and relaxing;
- Children and young people must access play to help them stay safe, healthy and happy;
- Statutory organisations and their partners must find ways to get rid of things that get in the way of play.

Access to good quality, 'free' self-directed play, increases children's ability to socialise and learn 'the rules'. It 'creates a brain that has increased flexibility and improved potential for learning in later life'<sup>1</sup>.

# THE STRATEGY

This strategy aims to positively impact upon opportunities for play in the home, in early learning and childcare, in school and in the community. It continues and builds upon the aspirations of *Play Matters*.

There are 4 key areas:

## 1. Involvement

Children and other stakeholders are meaningfully involved in the decision making and planning around play.

## 2. Communication

Highland is actively promoted as a play friendly place, where adults give value to and understand the benefit to children of freely chosen, challenging play. Efforts will be made to increase awareness and share good practice and improve societal acceptance of appropriate risk taking; expectation of being outside in different weather conditions; recognition of the importance of self-directed free play for children and young people of all ages; and challenge gender stereotyping in play.

## 3. Access

Communities will be supported to develop and manage spaces for play. Informal spaces for play will be recognised as important spaces for children and young people and opportunities to promote multi-generational use spaces will be explored.

## 4. Child Centred Play

Children are supported to access opportunities for freely chosen play (reflecting their own views and aspirations), which may be challenging and or creative.

# IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation will be led by the For Highland's Children Play Improvement Group/Play Highland who will translate the vision contained in this Strategy into a Play Improvement Plan. [www.forhighlandschildren.org](http://www.forhighlandschildren.org)

# EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

We aim to promote play for children and young people of all ages, including those who have 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010, or experience disadvantage, for example, being a young carer or living in areas of deprivation.

<sup>1</sup> Lester & Russell, 2008 in *Play Strategy for Scotland*, Edinburgh, Scottish Government.

**For more information visit the Play Highland Website:**

[WWW.PLAYHIGHLAND.CO.UK](http://WWW.PLAYHIGHLAND.CO.UK)