



Planning and organising a successful play scheme

Adapted from original document written by Rebecca Ball, Children and Young People's Strategic Co-ordinator, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council.

What is Play?

Play is something children do when they want to, because they want to. They choose how when and why they play. Play can be serious or fun, through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationships with them.



Why is play so important?

Everyone needs to play it is part of growing up, Children and young people need different opportunities to play in different ways at different times. Their play may vary depending on their age, culture, ability and circumstances.

Play is the fundamental way that children enjoy their childhood. It is essential to their quality of life as children.

- Playing is fun: it is how children enjoy themselves.
- Play promotes children's development, learning, imagination, creativity and independence.

- Play can help to keep children healthy and active.
Play allows children to experience and encounter boundaries, learning to assess and manage risk in their lives; both physical and social.
- Play helps children to understand the people and places in their lives, learn about their environment and develop their sense of community.
- Play allows children to find out about themselves, their abilities, their interests and the contribution they can make.
- Play can be therapeutic. It helps children to deal with difficult or painful circumstances such as emotional stress or medical treatment.
- Play can be a way of building and maintaining important relationships with friends, carers and family members.



How can adults support play?

It is useful to consider the question 'What do children need in order to play?'

The answers are relatively simple:

A welcoming play environment where they can make choices;

- Play materials of varied kinds and sufficient resources so that children do not have to tolerate long waits;
- Play companions - both children and adults.

The Environment

For a play scheme to be successful the environment is key, it needs to be welcoming with a wide range of resources and activities that are suitable for the needs of different children . Ideally there should be access to outdoor space and different types of space such, as a sports hall and smaller more intimate rooms for creative or imaginary play. A kitchen is always a bonus to enable you to provide refreshments and if appropriate cooking opportunities. Remember the play spaces all need to be accessible to disabled children.

It is always a good idea if you can have one main entrance to register children in and out.

Play environments should provide opportunities for:

- A varied landscape, access to range of experiences inside and out.
- Challenge- rough and tumble, sports and games.
- Playing with the elements, water, earth, fire and air.
- Movement- beams, ropes, mats, biking, skateboarding.
- Using materials- cooking, arts and crafts, scrap, tools.
- Using the senses- making sounds, music, using smells and taste trying different foods. Taking photos and sketching, seeing in different ways, touch and feeling.
- Playing with identity- dressing up and role play.
- Examination of different concepts- time

As a worker you have the responsibility to make sure the spaces you work in offer the best experiences for the children.



Types of Play Schemes

Holiday play scheme

- Usually for children aged 4-16yrs
- They are run by a variety of organisations, churches, schools, uniformed associations, volunteers etc.
- The times and number of days will vary from scheme to scheme.
- There will be a range of play opportunities available.
- Sometimes lunch is provided.

Adventure schemes

- Can involve, canoeing, water sports, abseiling etc. – staff need specialist qualifications for this type of work.
- Children choose to participate in highly structured activity (with special regard to health and safety)
- Staff have specialist qualifications and equipment is provided.
- School groups, Youth groups, play services and individuals use these services.

Family holiday play schemes

- Some leisure companies offer play opportunities for children on holiday.
- These are often known as children's holiday clubs.
- The play opportunities will vary but are usually structured.

Open access, play rangers etc.

- An open access scheme is available for children from 5 years of age to play freely in a stimulating and safe place. There is security for children whilst on 'the premises' to ensure they are not put at risk .
- Children are able to come and go unaccompanied and there is an emphasis on free play.
- Some open access sites ask that an adult remains with the child.

Adventure playgrounds

- Traditionally open access, where children will come and go.
- Children do not need to be pre booked into the play ground.
- There is supervision but the emphasis is on self directed freely chosen play.

Inclusive play settings

- An inclusive play setting is a play project that actively works to include all children, both disabled and non-disabled.
Any after-school club, holiday scheme or youth group can be inclusive with a positive approach from staff.
- It is not necessary to have lots of specialist equipment.
- There are usually structured and free play opportunities.

Breakfast Clubs

- Usually cater for 4-14yrs between 7.30-9am.
- Parents book children in and bring them to the club.
- Children can have breakfast and staff take them to school.
- Some activities provided, free play is encouraged.

After School Clubs

- Usually cater for 4-14yrs from 3-6pm.
- Parents book children in; Staff collect children from school and parents collect children from club.
- Staff organise some activities but children always have a choice.
- Most clubs have refreshments.
- There will usually be free play opportunities.
- There will be a charge.

Youth Groups

- Youth groups cater for various age groups usually from 8 yrs up until late teens or early twenties.
- Venues may vary from purpose but facilities to church halls, schools and community centres.
- Opening times will vary.
- Some activities and events are organised by the staff.
- Most groups encourage young people to determine and design the programme and the activities themselves.

The age ranges

There are different requirements for different age groups .If you are working with under 8's you will need to make enquiries to OFSTED to get registered. However there are certain exceptions to this which are worth investigating. With older children it is important to think of their needs and what they may be interested in, you could have the age groups split or have a mix of children but ensure you meet all their needs with the types of activities you are providing.

The staff

It is important that you have a good mix within your staff team and you need to ensure you meet the recommended ratios of staff to children.

If registered with Ofsted you will need to meet requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Childcare Register;
For under 8's this is 1:8

If unregistered, there is an expectation that a sufficient number of persons will be present at all times on the premises to ensure the safety and welfare of the children, bearing in mind ages, types of activity and needs of the children.

All staff must have an enhanced DBS check.

Things to remember if you are a member of staff.....

Knowledge

- Take part in training and development opportunities
- Observe children at play to build on your understanding.

Skills

- Be a good team member
- Only make promises (or threats) you can keep
- Help to clear up and only leave when everything is put away.

Attitudes

- Be punctual
- Have a positive approach

Values

- Be caring and considerate- talk to parents and carers
- Respect children's individuality and diversity
- Work co-operatively, be a good role model

Child Development

The most important element is to give the children attending a wide range of exciting play opportunities that meet all of their development needs. There needs to be opportunities for:

Social development

Play helps children to learn to make good relationships and practise social interactions. Playing with friends helps learning about give and take, negotiation and co-operation.

Physical development

From a very early age children learn to practise through play the ways their bodies move. Physical play helps children to develop, co-ordination, strength and agility. Physical activity releases oxygen to the brain.

Intellectual challenge

Play stimulates children to think, learn and be inspired. It helps them gain information and knowledge. When playing, children set up problems for themselves and check out whether they have come up with the right solutions.

Creative and Cultural play

Through play, children are able to follow up their imagination, ideas and instincts. They can explore materials and develop their skills. Through play they can explore their identity and build self esteem and self belief.

Environmental /Emotional development

Children use play to understand, recognise and deal with their feelings and emotions. Through play they can come to terms with difficult situations, by going over them again and again or by taking on different roles. Children can find security and safety through play



Children benefit from a wide range of play resources, certainly not all commercially produced toys. Different settings can offer a range of materials and resources that enable children to:

- Construct and build, from small scale to larger scale chosen projects, often using recycled materials and the scope of the outdoor area as well as indoors;
- Resource their imaginative play with basic dressing up materials (not all predetermined outfits), domestic child size equipment and simple props to create pretend settings such as an office, a garage, a space station.
- Explore creative activities such as arts and crafts, working with tools, gardening or cooking.

Remember having lots of materials that can be used for many different things have much more play value.

For example large cardboard boxes, large pieces of fabric, pegs etc etc.

Children need a setting in which they can play in emotional and physical safety and adults are responsible for addressing avoidable accidents. But children cannot play and learn if adult fears about 'what if....' have created an atmosphere of 'watch out', 'stop that' and 'it'll have to stop right now.';

Health and safety

For all activities with your play scheme you must ensure you have carried out a simple risk assessment, other things to consider may include:

- First aiders and first aid equipment
- Access for cars and safety around the car park
- Daily safety checks
- Safe and clean equipment
- Signing children in and out of the scheme.
- Registration and consent forms.
- Fire drills and wardens.

All staff must have a good awareness of the importance of child protection as well as a clear understanding of the procedure and who they need to go to if they have a concern.

Excessive risk control removes the enjoyment of play. Playful activities and resources need an element of uncertainty and challenge: too safe is boring.

Policies and procedures

You will need to have policies and procedures in place to support good practice in your playscheme and to meet Ofsted and funding requirements where necessary. some suggestions for policies are:

- Child protection/safeguarding
- Staff Recruitment procedure
- Administering medication
- Equal Opportunities policy
- Health and safety policy
- Lost/left children policy

A range of information to support the operation of your playscheme including policies, procedures and other record keeping documentation can be found on the Out Of School webpage: www.leics.gov.uk/oosresourcepage

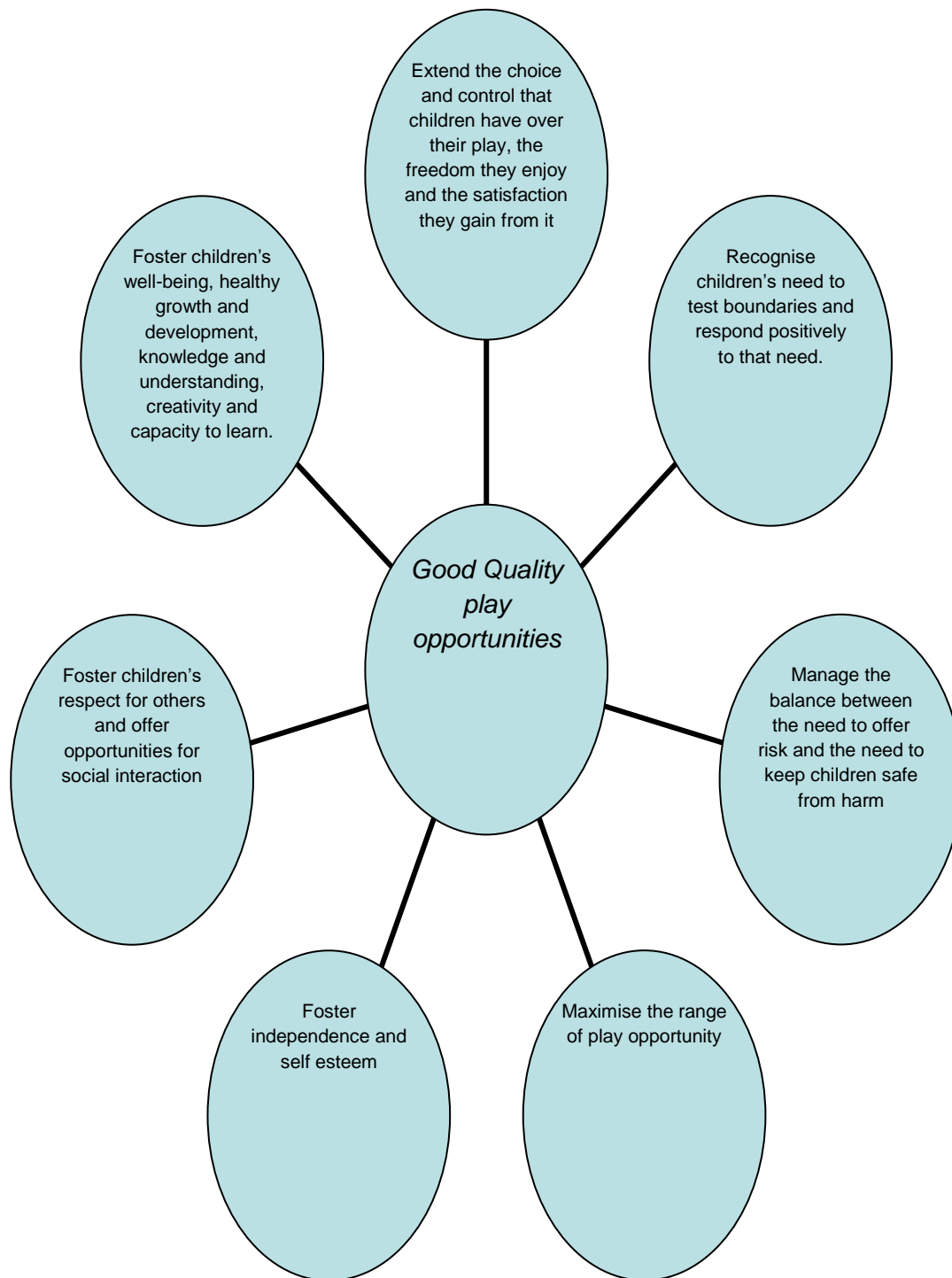
Insurance

You must ensure you have public liability insurance, insurance for employees and volunteers.

Funding

Some play scheme funding is available in 2015 through the Early Learning and Childcare Service. For details go to: www.leics.gov.uk/eyplayschemes

Good Quality Play opportunities should....



What makes a Quality setting?

- Children and young people are unique and are of central importance in all settings.
- All children and young people should feel included, secure and valued.
- Children and young people should be consulted and encouraged to participate in decision making.
- Children and young people have the right to an environment for play and learning that is secure, safe, and stimulating.
- There is respect for the central role of parents in their children's lives, which recognises and values parents' knowledge and relationships with their own children.
- All children, young people and their families should be positively acknowledged and respected.
- An effective setting for children and young people is where adults learn through reflection, development and continuous training. There is respect and appreciation for the contribution of other adults, colleagues and professionals.
- Adults working with children can enhance the opportunities for children and young people's play, learning and care and thorough the provision of appropriate environments.
- Workers should choose an appropriate intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play and learning. The intervention should balance risk with the developmental benefit and wellbeing of the child.