



SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Cabinet Report

Report of: Simon Green: Executive Director PLACE

Date: 16th October 2013

Subject: **Inclusive Play Policy: Parks and Green Spaces:**

Author of Report: James Barnes (2053786) / David Cooper (2734350)

Summary:

This report seeks Cabinet approval for the Council to adopt the Inclusive Play Policy for parks and green spaces.

Inclusive Play is primarily about all children and young people having equal access to participate in play. The principles of equality and inclusion for play apply to children of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

This Policy reiterates and further promotes Sheffield's on-going commitment to lead using best practice and actively create more inclusive play opportunities for children and young people within the City's network of parks and green open spaces.

Reasons for Recommendations:

To date, best practice and guidance has been followed in making playgrounds accessible and inclusive. The implementation of an 'Inclusive Play Policy for Sheffield's Parks and Green Spaces' will further improve these approaches to engage and consult with communities and stakeholders and create play opportunities that are more inclusive regardless of a child's age, background or ability.

The Policy will inform and guide future decision making regarding the provision of inclusive play opportunities in publicly accessible parks and green spaces. It will also provide a model of best practice to assist and guide other play space providers.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

- R1: Approves the adoption of the Inclusive Play Policy for parks and green spaces to provide a framework for future decision making about maintaining existing and creating new play opportunities.

R2: Notes that the Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport and Leisure will agree the further development of the Policy, procedures and other items referred to within this report, including the establishment of a city steering group by January 2014, in accordance with the functions reserved to her in the Leader's Scheme of Delegation.

Background Papers:

Appendix A: Inclusive Play Further Background Information

Appendix B: Inclusive Play Assessment Toolkit

Category of Report: Open

Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

Financial Implications
NO
Legal Implications
YES – Andrea Simpson
Equality of Opportunity Implications
YES – Ian Oldershaw
Tackling Health Inequalities Implications
YES
Human rights Implications
YES
Environmental and Sustainability implications
NO
Economic impact
NO
Community safety implications
NO
Human resources implications
NO
Property implications
NO
Area(s) affected
City Wide
Relevant Cabinet Portfolio Leader
Cllr Isobel Bowler
Relevant Scrutiny Committee if decision called in
Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee
Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?
YES
Press release
YES

INCLUSIVE PLAY POLICY FOR PARKS & GREEN SPACES

1.0 SUMMARY

Inclusive Play

Inclusive Play is primarily about all children and young people having equal access to and equal participation in local play. The principles of inclusion apply to children and young people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities

The Inclusive Play Policy reiterates and further promotes Sheffield's on-going commitment to lead with best practice and actively create more inclusive play opportunities for children and young people within the City's network of parks and green open spaces.

2.0 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SHEFFIELD PEOPLE

2.1 The Inclusive Play Policy:

- Further promotes Sheffield's parks and green spaces as places where different sectors of the community, and where children and young people of all ages, backgrounds, cultures and abilities can come together to play.
- Aims to ensure that Sheffield's parks and green spaces are welcoming, accessible and continue to match local needs for safe and challenging play opportunities for all abilities through their planning and design
- Reiterates and advances Sheffield's commitment for greater Fairness through increased diversity and inclusion in Sheffield's network of parks and public open spaces – all helping to make Sheffield a Great Place to Live.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Sheffield's Green and Open Spaces Strategy (2010-2030) seeks to ensure that the full diversity of Sheffield's population is out there enjoying our local green and open spaces which are safe, clean and accessible in all areas to meet the "Sheffield Standard" for quality – that these spaces are enlivened with a range of activities, events and facilities contributing to the health and well-being of our city. Opportunities for Inclusive Play within our parks, open spaces and play areas are key to this ambition.

3.2 To date, the Parks and Countryside Service have followed best practice and guidance in making playgrounds accessible and inclusive for all ages and abilities. (see Appendix A for further details)

3.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires service providers to take reasonable steps, to tackle physical barriers to access for disabled people. We are committed to ensuring consideration is given to the accessibility of all new play provision and to identify potential changes that would improve

accessibility in existing settings.

- 3.5 Key factors which encourage parents and carers to bring children to a particular site are the site's accessibility, the range of equipment available and its associated facilities in order for provision to be fully inclusive the barriers to inclusion of children with differing and diverse needs must be identified and addressed" This will be achieved by using an Inclusivity Assessment Toolkit to assess and evaluate the potential for inclusion in play areas. (see Appendix B).
- 3.6 The inclusivity assessment toolkit (attached as appendix B) can be used to identify the issues that may be preventing disabled children from accessing a play area, and recommend ways in which new and future play areas could be adapted and designed to be more inclusive.
- 3.7 The Parks and Countryside Service is developing this approach further to make sites more accessible through the Green and Open Space Strategy/ Sheffield Standard site assessments that include the wider Inclusive/Accessibility Audits to map and gap current provision
- 3.8 Good design of public play spaces is needed in order to make inclusive play possible. Each child is different - not every play experience in a space needs to be accessible to every child but access to the social experience of play is important.

4.0 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 In identifying this policy a range of stakeholder groups and organisations have been consulted including the Access Liaison Group, SCC Access Liaison Officer, the Children, Young People & Families Service, Sheffield Parents Forum, Green and Open Spaces Strategy Core Management Group, , the Council Housing Service, Hallam University, Sheffield Wildlife Trust, Green Estate. A key element to deliver the policy will be the formation of a new City Steering Group made up of representatives from the key stakeholder interest groups.
- 4.2 The most important people to consult are children, so the perspectives of disabled children and their non-disabled peers are vital to the development of good quality accessible play space. The best way to design an inclusive play space is by working with disabled children, parents/ carers, to find out what they need and want.
- 4.3 Our work will be further informed by the annual Every Child Matters survey, parks, playground and other user surveys. To ensure fairness and positive outcomes for all, the key to the success of implementing an Inclusive Play Policy will be continuing with this approach to fully engage and consult with users, communities and stakeholders to develop play opportunities that are inclusive. .

5.0 OUTCOME AND SUSTAINABILITY

- 5.1 The Inclusive Play Policy will further the Council's ambition for a better life for children and young people, and improve the City's parks and green open spaces for play, wherever investment is available. This approach will continue to significantly improve the quality of outdoor play experiences for children and young people in Sheffield, as new opportunities arise.
- 5.2 The Policy will enable future decisions to be made by the appropriate decision-makers on the provision of inclusive play opportunities in Sheffield's parks and green spaces. Putting this policy into practice will contribute to a number of the Council's key ambitions and outcomes including: making Sheffield Fairer and a Great Place to Live.

6.0 INCLUSIVE PLAY POLICY FOR PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

- 6.1 The Inclusive Play Policy for Parks and Green Spaces further advances and promotes Sheffield's commitment to improve play opportunities for all children and young people, regardless of their age, background or ability.
- We will seek to comply with all best practice and national guidance in making playgrounds more accessible and inclusive, (for example Play England and the KIDS national charity supporting disabled children and their families).
 - We will engage and consult with children, families and relevant organisations to develop play opportunities that are inclusive.
 - We will establish a city steering group to advise and influence the city's approach to inclusive play.
 - We will conduct and publish an annual assessment of existing playgrounds in terms of inclusion and this will inform priorities for any available investment in future years.
 - We will ensure that inclusion is a priority consideration in the design of all new play provision.
 - We will ensure that all relevant staff are fully trained on inclusive play.
 - We will agree a joint approach to inclusive play with our partners and contractors that inclusive play is a priority.
- 6.2 Key to advancing the Policy will be the establishment of the city steering group. Invitations will be sent to representatives of the consulted stakeholder groups highlighted in 4.1 to initiate the establishment of a wider more representative forum. This should include the Sheffield

Parent / Carer Forum and other key stakeholders identified. The Steering Group will then formulate the terms of reference and inform the development of the action plan accordingly. The first meeting of this new group will be held within the next three months / no later than January 2014, subject to stakeholder availability.

- 6.3 All future practice and expenditure on play space provision within parks and green spaces will be guided by the Inclusive Play policy to enable new opportunities to be realised. For example this will include consideration when any play equipment is being replaced as well as when new play areas are commissioned and designed.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Council's parks and open spaces are held under the powers of the Public Health Act 1875 and the Open Spaces Act 1906. Under the 1875 Act they are held for the purpose of being used as public walks or pleasure grounds. Under the 1906 Act the council has a duty to hold and administer them in trust to allow, and with a view to, the enjoyment thereof by the public as an open space within the meaning of the Act and under proper control and regulation and for no other purpose.

- 7.2 The Equality Act 2010 imposes the public sector equality duty on local authorities. The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 7.3 The functions to which the public sector equality duty applies include those relating to the Council's parks and open spaces. The Inclusive Play Policy for Parks and Green Spaces takes account of the duty with regard to the needs of children with disabilities, disability being a protected characteristic within the Equality Act.

- 7.4 The right to play is a fundamental human right. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says that all children, including disabled children, have the right to play.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Inclusive Play Policy has no direct additional financial implications.

- 8.2 The assessment of sites for inclusivity will inform priorities for any available investment in future years.

9.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 To date, the Parks and Countryside Service have followed best practice and guidance in making playgrounds more accessible and inclusive wherever resources have permitted. The development of an agreed Inclusive Play Policy and framework will provide an even more coordinated approach to this work through a new City Steering Group. It will encourage more opportunities for inclusive play opportunities to be fully considered in the design and future provision of Sheffield's parks and green spaces. The assessment of sites will also put us in a position where we can consider options and recommend parks and green spaces where any potential funding or adaptations can best provide for more inclusive play opportunities. This more coordinated and collaborative approach to Inclusive Play is considered to be the best option overall.

10.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The implementation of an Inclusive Play Policy will be continuing and advancing our approach to more fully engage and consult with users, communities and stakeholders to develop play opportunities that are inclusive regardless of a child's age, background or ability.
- 10.2 The Policy will inform and guide future decision making regarding the provision of inclusive play opportunities in publicly accessible parks and green spaces. It will also provide a model of best practice to assist and guide other public space play providers.

11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- R1: Approves the adoption of the Inclusive Play Policy for parks and green spaces to provide a framework for future decision making about maintaining existing and creating new play opportunities.
- R2: Notes that the Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport and Leisure will agree the further development of the Policy, procedures and other items referred to within this report, including the establishment of a city steering group by January 2014, in accordance with the functions reserved to her in the Leader's Scheme of Delegation.

Attachments:

- Appendix A: Further Background Information
- Appendix B: Inclusive Play Checklist

APPENDIX A:

INCLUSIVE PLAY POLICY FOR PARKS & GREEN SPACES

FURTHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Recent Best Practice, Consultation & Feedback

- The Parks and Countryside Service have demonstrated this approach to Inclusive Play over a number of years few years, working with Special Needs Schools, the Sheffield Parents Forum, a group of parents of children with disabilities, who acted as an advisory group for the recent Rivelin Splash consultation and provided their network of contacts for questionnaires and surveys.
- The Parks and Countryside Projects Team worked with the Ryegate Centre in consulting on the playground improvements at Endcliffe Park. The children of the parents/carers completing the questionnaires had a range of special needs including ADHD, autism or Downs Syndrome including associated learning difficulties and hearing impairments.
- The comments of these children, parents/carers gave a very good view of the child/carers perspective of a visit to the park and their needs outside of the specific equipment e.g. toilets, parking, handling siblings, need for a quiet space visible from the rest of the playground, the likelihood of balance problems and many safety issues, including seating areas near the equipment, for close supervision of the children. The results from this consultation have been invaluable to inform improvements to other playgrounds across the City.
- 'Rivelin Splash', opened earlier this summer and is the most recent example of our on-going approach to create innovative new Inclusive Play opportunities. The former paddling area in Rivelin Valley Park has now been improved with a new filter system; a Splash Pad with brightly-coloured areas of water jets, sprays and interactive water play features. One of the pools has been kept for paddling, but now has a wheelchair accessible ramp. The water play area is accessible to people of all abilities and special aqua wheelchairs are available for loan to disabled children and their carers. Some of the funding for this development has come from the Aiming High for Disabled Children initiative, which aims to make services for disabled children and their families better. The toilets have also been improved to make them more accessible, with surplus space being converted into a *Changing Places* facility, to meet the needs of disabled children and their parents or carers. Parents from the Sheffield Parent Carers Forum were consulted about the

design of the water play area. Our combined efforts here are already receiving positive feedback from disabled users and carers. For example:

“A gentleman called to say that he thinks that the Rivelin Splash Play Area is absolutely fantastic! He said his daughter (Lottie) is disabled and in a wheel chair and he had taken her there on Saturday and really enjoyed it. He’s really pleased with the equipment and said that everyone there seemed to be having a great time and that it is meeting the public’s needs.”

Source: Parks Service Switchboard Message 30th July 2013

B) **Towards an Inclusive Play Policy - Background**

- All children are morally and legally entitled to play within their own community whatever their culture, impairment, gender, language, background, behaviour or need. Inclusive play means that all children and young people have equal access to good quality local play provision. This means that they can play with others or alone as they wish in a rich environment that supports their play needs and gives them access to a range of play opportunities.
- Inclusive access and play value is important in respect the social and physical benefits our playgrounds offer to children, and in tackling some of the problems of childhood obesity via active play.
- Inclusive play is primarily about all children and young people having equal access to and equal participation in local play..
- A play environment cannot be designed or adapted to allow for every need or impairment, however, the goal is to try and provide as much variety as possible - in terms of access, challenge and sensory stimulation.
- Although the terms ‘accessible’ and ‘inclusive’ are often used interchangeably, it is important to understand the differences. Inclusion relies on a lot more factors than simply getting into an area. ‘Access is getting in, inclusion is feeling wanted’. For example, accessible toilets, transport, supervision, appropriate signage and a welcoming atmosphere are important considerations when developing new play areas, these factors need to be considered to ensure disabled children are genuinely included.
- Despite the range of legislation and guidance supporting the child’s right to play and to be included, disabled children still face many barriers, both social and environmental. Environmental barriers that exclude children with impairments, such as uneven surfaces and narrow gates, can be changed and are not

necessarily expensive. Social barriers such as fear, embarrassment or discriminatory attitudes also need to be tackled so that an accessible play space is also an inclusive one in which disabled children and their families feel welcome.

- It is important to take into account the experience of children with different physical and sensory impairments. However, a play environment cannot always be adapted or designed for every need. Nor will every item of play equipment be suitable for all children. It is important to recognise that there is unlikely to be a 'one size fits all' solution to providing play opportunities for children with disabilities because the type and complexity of their disability can vary widely from one child to the next.
- Even if they have similar impairments children will have different abilities. Above all, good design is about retaining a sense of balance, and trying to ensure that the most diverse range of children and families can access a play site and have choices and opportunities for challenging and adventurous play.
- The issues to consider fall into two categories of social issues and technical/physical factors. Reviewing social issues involves thinking about how to create opportunities for disabled and non-disabled children to play together. A focus on technical and physical characteristics, involves considering such issues as safety and maintenance, car parking, shelter and toilets.
- Inclusive play is about providing social spaces for children to be together in the ways they choose. Disabled children often have non-disabled siblings and friends they want to play with and good practice means providing play spaces children can use together.

APPENDIX B: INCLUSIVE PLAY CHECKLIST

Cover Sheet

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