

Routes to play

A guide for local authorities

How to ensure children and young people can get to play spaces actively and independently



Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity. Our vision is a world in which people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. Every day we are working on practical, innovative ways of dealing with the transport challenges that affect us all.

To find out more visit or call:

www.sustrans.org.uk

0845 113 00 65

Head Office
Sustrans
2 Cathedral Square
College Green
Bristol
BS1 5DD

© Sustrans August 2009
Registered Charity No. 326550 (England and Wales) SC039263 (Scotland)
VAT Registration No. 416740656
ISBN: 978-1-901389-80-7
Design www.trmvs.co.uk

Sustrans would like to thank Play England, Living Streets, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Department of Health, the Department for Transport and our contacts for each of the case studies for their input.

Sustrans would also like to thank everyone who has contributed photography including its own staff, Bristol City Council, Cracknell, Derby City Council, Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust, Felix Road Adventure Playground, Play England, Plymouth City Council, Shepway District Council, Geoff Gilbert, Paul Kirkwood and A Paraskos.

For permission to reproduce any material from this document, please contact the Active Travel and Play South West programme, Sustrans.

0117 926 8893
play@sustrans.org.uk
www.sustrans.org.uk/play

Play England aims for all children and young people in England to have regular access and opportunity for free, inclusive, local play provision and play space. Play England, the leading national play organisation in England, is part of the National Children's Bureau and is supported by the Big Lottery Fund. Play England supports the aims of Routes to Play and was happy to be involved as a reader of this guide. www.playengland.org.uk



Making space for play

Supported by the
Department of Health

Sustrans is pleased to be
a Change4Life partner



Contents

	Page
Foreword	4
Executive summary	5
Introduction	6
Space for play	8
How to improve active access	12
Active travel and play in local strategic planning	13
Involving children and young people	14
Walking and cycling to play spaces	15
Cycling in open spaces used for play	16
Traffic speeds	17
‘Playable’ routes	18
Local maps and information	20
Case studies	21
Useful reading, practical guidance and references	31

Foreword



“Children and young people’s freedom to play and be active outdoors has been restricted in recent decades, and the rising levels of childhood obesity now highlight the crucial role of physically active play.

Children themselves identify traffic as the main barrier to outdoor play and there is a clear need to ensure they can walk and cycle – where they live – and that they have access to traffic-free spaces for play.

This won’t happen without rethinking the way our public spaces are planned and managed, to prioritise walking and cycling access over motorised mobility. Children should be able to travel actively and independently, when visiting friends or going to the park: play and active travel are interwoven and sometimes indistinguishable.

Sustrans welcomes the investment now going into children’s play and play space development. For this to make a real difference however, council departments, especially Children’s Services, Planning and Transport, need to work together.

Routes to play offers practical guidance to local authorities on achieving this cultural change. It will help them address the need and basic right of children and young people to play outdoors and move more freely around the areas in which they live.”

Malcolm Shepherd, Chief Executive, Sustrans



“From the available evidence it is clear that children benefit from opportunities both to be physically active and to develop their independence through active travel. However, poor walking and cycling access and fear of traffic encourage parents to drive children to where they need to go, discouraging informal play, independence and socialisation.

At the same time, the consequences of a car-dominated approach to transport fall disproportionately on those most disadvantaged in society. Across the UK, child pedestrians from less prosperous socio-economic groups are up to five times more likely to be injured in road crashes than children from wealthier groups.

We must now take a healthier approach to transport policy, and one which addresses the needs of children to travel actively and play outdoors. Planning and transport professionals should create safe routes to schools, play areas and green spaces by reducing traffic speeds and re-allocating road space to walking and cycling. This will automatically mean more active and healthier children, as well as safer roads, and a reduction in pollution and emissions causing climate change.”

Dr Gabriel Scally, Regional Director of Public Health for the South West



Executive summary

With access to outdoor play more limited than ever and growing concerns around weight-related health problems in childhood, the need to ensure that children and young people can play actively and travel independently around the areas in which they live has never been more important.

This guidance builds on earlier work on the space available for play through the *Places to Go* research report produced by Sustrans and Play England in 2008. *Routes to play* offers practical steps local authorities can take to improve children and young people's ability to access play spaces independently through walking and cycling, both within the Government's play capital programme and in the general provision of play space.

The success of a co-ordinated approach to active travel and play at the local level depends in the first instance on incorporating them across local strategic planning, with a common understanding of the term 'access' to mean children and young people's ability to reach a given facility actively and independently. To fully appreciate their specific needs in terms of travel and transport, and to be able to respond to local issues and interests, the involvement of children and young people is also a vital component of the delivery and management of play facilities.

Surrounding streets can present significant obstacles to children and young people's ability to reach a play space by walking, cycling or using a mobility aid. Overcoming these physical barriers, creating active travel-friendly environments and reducing traffic speeds increases the safety of the routes and the likelihood of children and young people being allowed, having the confidence and wanting to travel actively and independently.

Traffic-free routes, including those within the National Cycle Network, offer fantastic opportunities for active play as well as providing good access to other play spaces. Promoting and enhancing play features along these routes offers the potential to increase children, young people and families' enjoyment of the routes themselves as linear play spaces.

Some of the existing good practice in planning active travel into play space development is provided in a selection of case studies. Approaches such as these will help to ensure that more children can travel and play actively near to where they live. This will add value to the investment the Government and local authorities are making in play space improvement, and will help to develop co-ordinated local practices which incorporate active travel as a priority intrinsically linked to active play.



Introduction



The development of local as well as national play strategies, the Big Lottery Fund's Children's Play programme and the Government investment provided through the play capital programme have significantly raised the profile of play. The importance of play and active travel is now beginning to be recognised in a range of strategic priorities across the health, education and community safety agendas, including their contributions to each of the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes⁽¹⁾. Local authorities have a clear role in providing the infrastructure to support this.

The *Places to Go* report published by Sustrans on behalf of Play England in 2008 highlighted concerns around traffic as a key barrier to children and young people's access to play spaces⁽²⁾.

In the first national Play Strategy for England in December 2008 the Government committed to addressing this issue⁽³⁾. The Strategy calls on local authorities to provide safe routes to play space as part of the local delivery of the Government's play capital programme and highlights the expectation that they will continue to consider travel in their ongoing strategic planning for play.

Similarly, statutory guidance to Children's Trusts emphasises the need for neighbourhoods where children live to be accessible on foot and by bike, and for a

range of high quality opportunities for outdoor play and recreation⁽³⁾. Consideration of traffic calming is included as part of the Children's Trusts' safeguarding responsibility and transport and planning departments should take account of forthcoming guidance, *Implementing the Play Strategy*, to be published by DCSF and Play England in autumn 2009.

In response to this requirement, Sustrans produced a checklist in 2008 to help Play Pathfinder and Playbuilder local authorities improve access to play facilities. As announced in *The Play Strategy*, Sustrans has now further developed this into more detailed guidance and *Routes to play* suggests practical steps local authorities can take to help children and young people get to play spaces actively and independently. Whilst this is particularly useful to councils in England for their delivery of the play capital programme, the guidance is applicable to play space development and management in general and the approaches recommended here can be used within local planning for play on an ongoing basis. We also hope that local authorities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will find it useful.



Space for play



It is essential that local highways authorities and built environment planners take account of road safety in all environments where children are, including around schools, residential areas and play spaces.

The Play Strategy, Department for Children, Schools and Families and Department for Culture, Media and Sport, December 2008

Wider environmental factors also have a huge impact upon children's and young people's ability to stay healthy. For example, walking or cycling to school or play areas is a key way to improve children's health and to reduce obesity, at the same time reducing pollution, and increasing road safety and community cohesion.

Healthy lives, brighter futures: The strategy for children and young people's health, Department of Health and Department for Children, Schools and Families, February 2009



Children love outdoor play

Children and young people instinctively love to play outdoors. Having the time, space and freedom to run, jump, climb and have fun with friends is essential to a happy, healthy childhood. Active play is free, unstructured, spontaneous and involves children following their own interests and ideas. It can take place in many different places, from designated play areas to green open spaces, woods, beaches, the streets where children live and on the way to places where they go. For children there is no clear distinction between play and active travel. Walking and cycling provide excellent play experiences in themselves as well as allowing children and young people to get to play spaces and recreational facilities under their own steam.

Reduced opportunities to play outside

The growing dominance of the car in residential streets, along with concerns about road safety and anti-social behaviour, restrict the space and opportunity for active outdoor play. As it has become more difficult for children to walk and cycle around the areas they live, so their access to outdoor active play has become more limited.

A survey of 1,000 children in Leicester found that 94% of children wanted to spend more time out of the house⁽⁴⁾. Research has also found that 67% of children aged between 8 and 10 and 24% of 11 to 15-year-olds never go the park or shops alone⁽⁵⁾. An ICM opinion poll showed that 71% of adults played outside in the street or area close to their homes every day when they were children, compared to just 21% of children today⁽⁶⁾.



Active play keeping children healthy

Alongside reduced opportunities for play, childhood obesity and other health problems associated with less active lifestyles – such as heart disease and diabetes – have risen significantly. Outdoor play is an excellent way for children to burn calories and to achieve the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day.

Walking, cycling and active play allow children to develop risk awareness, independence and social skills, and to test their personal, physical and environmental boundaries. Guidance from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence calls on councils to review any elements of their Local Transport Plans which may discourage children and young people from walking and cycling⁷.

Tackling road safety issues

The Play Strategy's vision includes the aspiration that 'routes to children's play space are safe and accessible for all children and young people'⁸. The consultation on the play strategy, *Fair Play*, highlighted road safety as a key barrier for children being able to get to play areas and to play en route and showed traffic was a key factor in adults not allowing children out to play⁹. Safe routes were also reported as a priority for improving access for children with disabilities⁸.

This is addressed by the Government's play capital programme in England which requires local authorities to develop sites with 'safe access routes which encourage active and healthy journeys', not just for the Playbuilder and Play Pathfinder sites but as part of a strategic approach to improving play opportunities locally. The growing onus on local authorities to consider active travel as part of their ongoing management and strategic development of play space is strengthened further by the introduction of National Indicator 199 from April 2009 which measures 'children and young people's satisfaction with parks and play areas'.

Recent research undertaken for DCSF by Ipsos MORI found that whilst the priority for parents in safety terms was the journey their children take to play spaces, local authorities' safety focus was on issues within the play space itself¹⁰. This has highlighted a need for additional guidance to help local authorities adjust their approach to incorporate travel planning into their play provision.

On launching *The Play Strategy for England*, the Government wrote to all Directors of Transport to highlight the importance of child-friendly road safety and planning measures that support local play opportunities⁸.



Designing a play-friendly built environment

The Play Strategy calls on planning and highways authorities to ensure that the needs of children and young people to play outside and travel to play spaces are reflected in their decision-making⁽⁸⁾. For new developments, and for any streets being re-designed, the good practice in *Manual for Streets* in England and Wales, and *Designing Streets* in Scotland, should be followed⁽¹¹⁾⁽¹²⁾.

Manual for Streets offers guidance on design which emphasises the ‘place’ function of streets, making them more people-centred. This kind of approach can help improve walking and cycling routes to play spaces and, done well, should also make the street itself more ‘playable’. Key measures should include restricting traffic speeds to 20 mph or below in residential streets through good design, as well as making crossing and junction improvements. Home zones in urban areas and Quiet Lanes in rural areas, along with projects such as Sustrans DIY Streets, encourage a better balance between different types of road users with low traffic volumes. This can also help to create an environment that encourages children to play outdoors.

Improving active access to play

In many areas playgrounds have become synonymous with designated fenced-off

spaces containing fixed play equipment. The Government’s play capital programme presents an opportunity for local authorities to redress some of the barriers to play which have emerged over past decades and develop new ways of working to improve play.

This document develops our earlier checklist for local authorities and their partner agencies into more detailed guidance in providing play opportunities. We hope that lead officers for play, along with parks, leisure, green space, built environment, community development, highways and transport planning teams in particular, will use this as a practical guide. It is intended to help ensure that walking and cycling are incorporated as a core part of play space development and that playability is considered in the design of other spaces to which children and young people have access.

We suggest that the guidance and recommendations given here should be used by local authorities as part of the refurbishment and maintenance of existing play spaces and the development of new ones. These can be applied to many types of play space, from traditional play areas with fixed play equipment to public open spaces. This approach will help maximise children and young people’s opportunities to walk, cycle and travel independently to places for play.

A young child is the central focus, wearing a yellow and black life jacket and a matching helmet. The child's face is covered in mud, and they are smiling. The background shows a wet, paved surface and the legs of other people, suggesting an outdoor activity area.

How to improve active access

Accessibility through active travel

The terms 'access' and 'accessibility' are sometimes used synonymously with 'inclusion', referring to all children and young people participating in an activity irrespective of disability, gender, faith, and ethnic or cultural background. It is vital to consider children's different needs and abilities when designing play spaces and the emphasis on this within the Play Strategy is very welcome.

In many cases, however, the actual ability of children to get to or 'access' places they want to go, especially under their own steam, has been overlooked. There is a need to clarify this and reach a common understanding across local authority departments that 'access to' and 'accessibility of' a site includes the ability of children to reach it using an integrated transport system which prioritises walking, cycling, and public transport. Children and young people should not have to rely on other people for transport because of distance, lack of appropriate highway and transport infrastructure or safety concerns.

Adherence to this definition across local strategic plans will help to ensure it is applied in practical schemes.



Active travel and play in local strategic planning

A co-ordinated approach at a local strategic level is vital. Children's Trust Boards, Local Strategic Partnerships and Play Partnerships (amongst others) are well placed to ensure a collaborative approach to promoting active play and active travel across the broad range of local strategic plans and within Local Area Agreements.

Key infrastructure strategies, including Local Transport Plans, Local Development Frameworks and Green Infrastructure Strategies, need to make provision for formal and informal play space and the routes children and young people will use to reach them. *The Statutory Guidance to Children's Trusts* calls on them to influence infrastructure planning, including Local Transport Plans, to ensure they reflect the needs of children, young people and their families³.

Similarly, strategies impacting on children's services such as Play Strategies and Children and Young People's Plans need to ensure that walking and cycling are planned in and given priority. Involving highways, transport and planning colleagues will make it easier to develop real joint solutions to overcoming barriers to

active travel for children and young people.

This joined-up approach is supported by the Play Shaper cross-professional training programme, being developed by Play England with Playwork Partnerships and SkillsActive. This will bring together professionals who plan, design and manage public space and transport infrastructure with children's delivery partners, including the play sector, and will be rolled out to local authorities in England from 2009 to 2011.

Recommendations:

- Local Transport Plans should prioritise walking, cycling and public transport access to play spaces as well as recognising residential streets and local routes as places where children should be able to play
- Local Transport Plans should link with local Play and Green Infrastructure Strategies
- Local Development Frameworks should incorporate formal and informal play spaces and routes to these through active travel
- Local Play Strategies and Green Infrastructure Strategies should take walking and cycling into account as the best way for children and young people to reach play spaces and opportunities independently and play freely in their local neighbourhoods.



Involving children and young people

The importance of involving children and young people in the planning and delivery of local services is now widely recognised. Statutory guidance to Children's Trusts highlights the need to involve children in local decisions on play services⁽⁹⁾. Involvement and participation are also central to the local delivery of the play capital programme.

Consulting with children and young people is essential to well-planned neighbourhoods that allow children to walk, cycle and play. This approach helps to identify the routes they take to access a site, the modes of transport they use and any specific safety concerns or other barriers to walking, cycling or taking public transport. Including children with disabilities, children who are carers and children from different cultural backgrounds in any consultation will help to ensure their different needs are taken into account.

Children and young people are also very adept and creative in suggesting solutions to access issues and involving them will help to give any project a distinctive local flavour. Including them in the decision-making process can promote a sense of ownership of a particular site, helping to prevent future problems such as vandalism. Wherever possible, this involvement should be activity-based rather than discussion-based (e.g. through trialling possible changes in the actual environment and allowing children to explore and comment).

Working with youth services, schools, local play ranger teams or voluntary sector groups offering services for children and young people will help to devise the most appropriate ways of getting children involved.

Recommendation

- In the design of new play spaces and the management of existing ones, councils should involve children and young people in decision-making around transport and safe access.

Resources

- For ideas on how to engage young people in travel and route planning see Sustrans' *School Travel Initiatives – a practical guide to pupil participation*. This is available to download from www.saferoutestoschools.org.uk
- *Spaceshaper* is a practical toolkit developed by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) for improving local parks, streets or squares. Facilitated workshops bring together residents and community groups with those responsible for designing and managing spaces to discuss what works well in the space and what needs be improved. CABE is developing a version of the tool for 9 to 14 year-olds - *Young Person's Spaceshaper*. For further information email the team at spaceshaper@cabe.org.uk www.cabe.org.uk/spaceshaper
- The charity KIDS has produced a multi-media toolkit on involving young people with disabilities in youth and leisure services. The toolkit, entitled *Nothing Special*, is available from ndd@kids.org.uk or for more information visit www.kids.org.uk
- Participation Works and Play England have produced a guide entitled *How to involve children and young people in designing and developing play spaces*.



Walking and cycling to play spaces

A play space reaches beyond its boundary. The surrounding street environment should be assessed to identify barriers to walking, cycling, using a mobility aid or taking public transport.

Transport planners, highway engineers and built environment colleagues should work with play services on selecting play space locations and be involved in planning new areas and in managing existing ones. This will provide local technical expertise to find solutions to access issues and will help to source funding contributions, including through Local Transport Plans.

Monitoring the routes in and out of parks and gathering information on how children travel to them may provide useful evidence to support walking, cycling and wheelchair access improvements.

For both new and existing play areas, the following should be considered on a site-by-site basis:

- are suitable pedestrian and cycle crossing points and dropped kerbs provided on routes to parks, playgrounds, open spaces and other spaces used for play?
- are existing walkways and cycle routes (especially traffic-free routes) already linked to or extended into parks, playgrounds, open spaces and other play spaces? Are there plans to do so?
- is there sufficient lighting and casual surveillance of the site (e.g. from nearby homes) to permit safe access throughout the year?
- are play facilities appropriately signed along all relevant walkways and cycle routes so that people know that

those routes can be used to reach play spaces?

- consider suitable signs for people who cannot sight-read – for example using symbols and contrasting textured surfaces
- are larger play spaces easily accessible by public transport? Is the route from the nearest bus stop to the park suitable for wheelchairs and prams? The frequency and wheelchair accessibility of bus services need to be considered, along with the routes they serve
- are pavements wide enough and free from clutter, with parking restrictions regularly policed? This will help to ensure wheelchair users, people with prams and buggies and families with more than one child can reach the play area without having to go into the road.

Recommendation

- Transport and Planning departments and the police should collaborate with parks, open spaces and play services on practical solutions to improve active access to play sites.

Resources

- The Sensory Trust offers guidance on the inclusive design of outdoor space www.sensorytrust.org.uk
- The charity KIDS has produced *Inclusion by Design* – a guide to creating accessible play and childcare environments – along with several briefings on inclusive play space www.kids.org.uk
- Sustrans produces information for professionals on walking and cycling infrastructure, including technical guidelines for those involved in construction and maintenance www.sustrans.org.uk/resources



Cycling in open spaces used for play

Cycling restrictions

Many parks have cycling restrictions in place. This is sometimes in response to a site-specific issue but in some cases it is part of an area-wide policy or practice – or even down to local officer preference.

Children need space and freedom to play actively and public parks and open spaces can be ideal places for them to learn to ride and have fun on bikes with their friends. Whilst a designated play area within a park may require some restrictions, it may not be necessary to apply them across the whole park. Park-wide restrictions are likely to minimise children and young people's free play opportunities and can contribute to a culture of discouraging cycling in general.

Parks departments should review their cycling restrictions to ensure that they are not being applied unnecessarily; outdated signage restricting cycling should be removed.

Cycle parking

Installing good cycle parking facilities at playgrounds, and other spaces in which children and young people spend time, will give them more confidence that their bikes are secure. The presence of cycle parking can also help to develop an accepted culture of cycling to play spaces.

Parks departments and play area managers should install cycle parking in prominent places where casual surveillance is possible and which are sheltered, well lit, accessible and easy to use.

Cycling-related events

Parks teams, play services, youth services, play ranger teams and voluntary sector play organisations should work together to arrange cycling-related events within play spaces and parks. This will help to support and encourage a culture of cycling and allow children and young people to have fun on bikes with their friends in a traffic-free environment.

Activities could include bike maintenance projects (see case study 5 - Southmead Adventure Playground) or a bike hire scheme (see case study 3 - Felix Road Adventure Playground).

Get in touch with schools in your area to find out about cycling events they are organising which could use local parks and play spaces as a venue. If you have a Sustrans Bike It officer working locally, you may want to invite them to get involved in activities you are running.

Recommendations

- Parks departments should review cycling restrictions in parks
- Parks departments should provide cycle parking at play spaces
- Youth and play services teams should run cycling-related events within open spaces used for play

Resources

You may wish to consult the following, produced by Sustrans' School Travel team, available to download from www.saferoutestoschools.org.uk

- *Cycle Parking for Schools* – an information sheet providing practical tips on installing cycle parking
- *Pedal Pack* – which is full of ideas for those organising cycling related events for children.



Traffic speeds

Over 100 public health and other bodies have signed the call for action *Take action on active travel*⁽¹³⁾, which petitions national and local governments to invest more in walking and cycling and to create environments in which children can play in the street and adults can be more physically active. It includes the ambition to make 20mph or lower speed limits the norm for residential streets and for streets of importance for children's play.

In the Play Strategy consultation 74% of adult respondents supported the proposition that '*a number of general traffic calming measures would allow children to play more safely in and around their streets and on the way to play areas*'⁽⁶⁾. A review of 250 20mph schemes across the UK showed child accidents had fallen by 67%⁽¹⁴⁾.

Traffic speeds near play areas, residential areas and other places where children and young people are likely to go should be reduced to 20mph, and even lower where possible. Introducing chicanes and reducing road width, for example, will help to limit speeds. This will improve the safety of routes to play spaces, enable children to travel more actively and more independently and will also increase the likelihood of children's journeys being playful experiences in themselves. Road safety awareness and skills training for children and young people will further increase their confidence and ability to travel safely.

Speed limitation and more careful driving can also be achieved through 'psychological traffic-calming' measures. Ideally these are adaptations which enhance the public realm, rather than simply restricting movement (e.g. through speed humps and bollards). Road markings

which appear to narrow the road and removing signs and road markings at junctions, for example, can make drivers more cautious. For particular speeding problem areas, further enforcement should be discussed with the local police.

Recommendations

- Local authorities should implement authority-wide 20 mph default limits in all built-up areas.

Resources

Through the DIY Streets programme Sustrans has produced a pocket guide and a series of design information sheets on ways to improve the safety of residential streets while enhancing the public realm. These are available to download at www.sustrans.org.uk/diystreets



‘Playable’ routes

Consider how parks and play spaces can be extended into their surrounding environments through the creation of playable routes.

The National Cycle Network already offers 12,000 miles of traffic-free paths, quiet lanes and traffic-calmed roads, providing good walking and cycling links into open green space, woodlands, parks and specific play and leisure facilities. The Alvaston BMX Park in Derby (case study 4), Stoke Skate Plaza and Felix Road Adventure Playground in Bristol (case study 3), are examples of play spaces directly located adjacent to the National Cycle Network.

Much of children’s play involves moving and travelling with no purpose other than to play. In addition, opportunities to play on the way to school, the park, the shops or to visit friends can be improved through creating more child-friendly environments and children can be further encouraged by installing play features along the routes they are likely to use.

Installing and developing features along a traffic-free route offers excellent opportunities for spontaneous and creative play. These may be natural features, such as earth mounds, trees or streams, or they may be artworks such as interactive sculptures, paint on the path’s surface, seating or items of fixed play equipment.

Artworks can enhance the play experience for children and young people, allowing them to use their imaginations and enjoy the route itself as a linear play space. They can often provide good value play installations, when compared with the cost of more standard fixed play equipment, and have very broad

appeal, engaging the interest of all age ranges using the path. Commissioning an artist in the process of creating play features along a route also opens up the opportunity to design very individual pieces which reflect and interpret individual aspects of the route such as local heritage, culture and the surrounding landscape. A series of playable artworks along a path can help to draw walkers and cyclists along the path, encouraging them to travel from one piece to the next. The pieces can also be multi-functional, such as providing seating or waymarkers.

Recommendations

- Transport planners and green space teams should work with colleagues in youth and play services and arts development to enhance the play potential of traffic-free routes through the installation of artworks, play equipment and natural play features
- Find out about development plans for traffic-free routes in your area, including the National Cycle Network, through joint discussions with local authority transport planners and Sustrans regional staff. Contact details for Sustrans are available at www.sustrans.org.uk

Some examples of interactive art stimulating diverse types of play on the National Cycle Network are shown here, and in Case Study 7 – Spen Valley Greenway.

1 Genome Stripes



1 Genome Stripes by Katy Hallett, National Cycle Network Route 11, Cambridge.

There are over 10,000 brightly coloured stripes laid in a sequence representing the genetic code for the human gene BRCA2. The stripes stretch for a mile of the route and enhance the experience for both children, young people and adults. The sequence encourages cyclists to ride from start to finish, as if cycling through their own DNA, and invites many other play interpretations.



2 Sound Poles by Jony Easterby, National Cycle Network Route 46, Tredegar, Wales

Twelve larch poles each capped with a brass bell form a linear sound installation. Each bell is linked to a sensor which cyclists or walkers can choose to ride over or stand on which activates the ringing of the bell. Each bell is tuned differently and children and adults alike are tempted to step on each sensor and have fun by ringing the different bells.



2 Sound Poles

3 Jolly Drivers Maze by Andy Goldsworthy, National Cycle Network Route 7, Consett, County Durham

This bike maze was designed to encourage path users to journey to the heart of the maze and onwards. The maze's crescent mounds are like ripples gently radiating out across the surface of a pond or even rays of sunlight emitting from the sun, represented by the maze centre.



3 Jolly Drivers Maze



Local maps and information

Many local authority departments produce walking and cycling maps and other information on play and recreational opportunities for children and young people, both printed and online. These include Cycling Officers, Rights of Way Officers and leisure services colleagues who may be organising health walks. Making sure play spaces are clearly marked on any maps produced, and that good routes to play spaces are clearly shown, can help to encourage active access to play.

Many schools, for example, are already working with School Travel Advisers and Co-ordinators to produce active travel maps as part of their school travel plan work, and this could be extended to include play opportunities.

You may also want to consider working with groups of children and young people to produce specific local maps of smaller areas (e.g. neighbourhoods) which illustrate walking, cycling and public transport routes to play spaces and other places they might want to go to.

Include all types of play space and games areas, cycle parking facilities, public toilets and pedestrian and cycle crossings, along with familiar points of reference which will help children navigate around, such as prominent buildings, leisure centres, schools and youth clubs.

Maps can help children and their parents to find routes to play space avoiding major roads, busy junctions and other traffic hazards.

Illustrating and logging the routes to local play spaces will also be useful in helping to inform strategic planning for play, and is a useful tool in planning the development of the local walking and cycling infrastructure.

Information produced to publicise play and leisure facilities offers a good opportunity to encourage children, young people and their families to walk and cycle. This can be reinforced by including active travel directions and through the images selected for any publicity.

Recommendations

- Transport and leisure teams should show routes to play spaces on local walking and cycling maps they produce
- Take all opportunities to reinforce walking and cycling messages in printed and online publicity of play and leisure.

Case studies





Case study 1

Streets for Living: Broadgreen Home Zone, Swindon

Reason for inclusion	Traffic-calming of local streets around a community centre, playground and 'kick about' area to improve 'liveability', promoting social inclusion and crime reduction.
Location	The project area is located in central Swindon, and covers four ethnically diverse residential streets between Manchester Road and Broad Street, including the streets surrounding Broadgreen Community Centre
Description	<p>Four parallel streets were completely redesigned in a 'doughnut' formation. Two outer streets now form a 20mph zone inside of which is located a two-street home zone. Features include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20mph zone and home zone signage across the area • gateways at each end of the streets, formed by bollards • shared use of the road by drivers, pedestrians and cyclists • improved crossing points, street trees and planters • a herringbone design parking layout. <p>Alleyways had low level street lighting installed to promote safety. New fencing replaced older, more imposing fencing around the green space and, along with additional landscaping, this helped to improve the attractiveness of the play and kickabout areas to children, young people and their families. In addition, a new entrance to the green space and the deliberate omission of some fencing has vastly improved accessibility and created a general sense of place.</p>
Interesting features	An artist worked with children at the nearby school to design the brightly-painted bollards, helping to reinforce that these streets are child-friendly spaces and subtly emphasising to drivers the need to take special care. Street-based design activity was also undertaken with local children to ensure their opinions were taken into account. The intensive community involvement process meant that concerns that a new entrance to the park might increase anti-social behaviour could be countered with evidence suggesting the opposite would actually occur.
Funding/ partnerships	The home zone and 20 mph zone were developed through a community aided design (CAD) process, led by Sustrans in association with Swindon Borough Council, Building Research Establishment and the Wiltshire Constabulary. 'Streets for Living' was jointly funded through INTERREG IIIb, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Swindon Borough Council.
For further information	<p>Liveable Neighbourhoods team, Sustrans liveableneighbourhoods@sustrans.org.uk www.sustrans.org.uk/liveableneighbourhoods</p>



Case study 2

Spa Fields park and play space, Islington

Reason for inclusion	Extensive youth consultation process and improvements to a pedestrian and cycle route which had previously separated the park from the playground.
Location	Within Spa Fields Park, Clerkenwell, London.
Description	An Islington Council and New Deal for Communities project to regenerate a formerly neglected park that suffered from severe anti-social behaviour and ensure that suitable links improved access to it. The quality and accessibility of the park have been turned around by this sensitive development and it now meets the needs of many different age groups within the local community.
Interesting features	<p>Spa Fields encompasses a number of adjacent green spaces, most notably the park and the playground. Prior to this development these two sites were separated by an old road that had been blocked off for pedestrian and cycle use only. This road has now been redesigned to create a better and safer link between both parts of the park, and allows free and safe access between the park and playground, creating unity between the previously severed sites.</p> <p>A number of routes from adjacent neighbourhoods have also been incorporated into the wider New Deal for Communities regeneration project, resulting in a number of neighbourhoods now being able to safely access this valuable inner city play space. A new zebra crossing is being installed linking the Finsbury Estate to Spa Fields.</p> <p>Extensive public consultation was undertaken to ensure the design met the residents' needs. This involved adults, local teenagers and children. The resulting design is one that serves many different sectors of the community and brings them together in a much valued and cared for shared space.</p>
For further information	Islington Council www.islington.gov.uk



Case study 3

Felix Road Adventure Playground, Bristol

Reason for inclusion	Cycling initiatives within an adventure playground.
Location	Felix Road Adventure Playground is situated in the ward of Easton, a deprived and ethnically diverse area just east of Bristol city centre. The playground is located less than 400m from the Bristol to Bath traffic-free route.
Description	The adventure playground includes a large open space with wooden structures, a tarmac area, outdoor stage, grassed area, small nature area and a sand pit. One senior play worker and four part time staff supervise the 100-150 children (with an age range of 5-19 and a gender split of 60/40 boys to girls) who turn up on a typical day.
Interesting features	<p>The playground currently has a number of bikes that children can use free of charge whilst at the centre. There is one playworker who does basic maintenance and repairs with and for the children. The playground provides a traffic-free environment with its own cycle track for children to practice cycling skills and allows children to experience cycling when they may not have access to a bike at home.</p> <p>Cycling to the playground is also encouraged by the provision of secure cycle parking and the loan of D-locks if required. Off-site organised activities have included led rides for children along the Bristol to Bath traffic-free route. There are plans to further extend the playground's cycling activity to include a community bike hire scheme.</p> <p>By introducing children to cycling in a safe and playful environment, and by encouraging travel by bike, the playground may help to encourage further cycling among the children and young people who use the facility.</p>
For further information	Felix Road Adventure Playground www.felixroadplayground.org



Case study 4

Alvaston BMX track and skate park, Derby

Reason for inclusion	Site well served by cycling infrastructure and identified on cycle maps.
Location	Derby BMX Park is situated in Alvaston Park, just south east of the centre of Derby where National Route 6 of the National Cycle Network crosses Regional Route 66. These routes allow attractive and safe access to local schools. Lakeside Primary School is situated on Route 6 and St John Fisher Primary School is on Route 66. These routes both allow the children to access the park via traffic-free cycle paths. In addition, over 10 further schools can ride to the track on traffic-free routes.
Description	The BMX and skate park has recently been revamped and facilities upgraded to national standard. It has excellent connections to local cycle routes which have made it a popular place for Derby's young people to engage in active play through BMXing and skating.
Interesting features	<p>Derby is a Cycle Demonstration Town and as such has an infrastructure enabling people to travel by bike. To complement this, the local authority has produced maps which show how the National Cycle Network and cycle infrastructure link up to facilities such as the BMX track.</p> <p>This encourages children and young people, who may not choose to cycle for transport purposes normally, to access the park by bike rather than being driven by parents or carers. This promotes independence and may further inspire a culture of cycling for travel among young people.</p>
Funding/partnerships	The BMX track has recently been revamped through a grant of £85,000 from Cycling England. Derby City Partnership's grant scheme, 'Small Change', also donated £4,200 to create an identity for the new BMX club and purchase equipment to enable those who do not have a bike to participate in the activities. This funding allowed a popular club to be established which now has 58 members.
For further information	<p>Derby City Council www.derby.gov.uk Cycle Derby www.cyclederby.co.uk</p>



Case study 5

Southmead Adventure Playground, Bristol

Reason for inclusion	Bicycle maintenance programme.
Location	This site is situated in Southmead, a large local authority housing estate in the north of Bristol.
Description	The playground has a long history of providing a bicycle maintenance service. The programme keeps a store of bicycle parts, some of which are collected from abandoned or donated bikes. This store allows mechanics to repair and maintain children and young people's bikes as needed.
Interesting features	Many children arrive at the centre by bike. However, bikes are often in a state of disrepair and unsafe. The service not only repairs bikes but also educates children and young people as to how to service their bike themselves. By keeping more bikes roadworthy, this project helps to encourage children and young people in the area to cycle and adopt a healthier lifestyle.
For further information	Bristol City Council www.bristol.gov.uk



Case study 6

Lower Leas Coastal Park: the 'Fun Zone' adventure playground, Folkestone

Reason for inclusion	Direct access to the National Cycle Network and cycle parking facilities.
Location	The 'Fun Zone' adventure playground is located in Lower Leas Coastal Park, a mile-long stretch of landscaped undercliff parkland in Folkestone, Kent.
Description	Built as part of Folkestone's seafront regeneration, the Lower Leas Coastal Park is home to a large adventure playground. The playground has a number of facilities that encourage active play including a climbing wall and aerial runway, a sandpit and areas made specifically accessible for wheelchair users or those with mobility difficulties. The park's excellent facilities have been recognised by its receipt of a Green Flag award 2 years in a row.
Interesting features	<p>National Cycle Network Route 2 runs directly through the park and is adjacent to the adventure playground. This largely traffic-free route allows for safe family access on foot and by bike to the coastal park and playground.</p> <p>The playground also has good cycle parking, allowing families to access the park by bike and then safely secure their bikes to play and explore. Being part of a park the cycle route also enables children to cycle as a play activity in a safe environment.</p>
For further information	Shepway District Council www.shepway.gov.uk

Case study 7

Spen Valley Greenway, West Yorkshire

Reason for inclusion	A series of artworks along the route offering varied play experiences.
Location	The Spen Valley Greenway runs between Bradford and Dewsbury in West Yorkshire along eight miles of disused railway line and passes through rural, urban and former industrial areas.
Description	The artworks project was developed in partnership with the Spen Valley Greenway Forum (a local group) and a steering group including local authority officers. Five artists were given a brief to create installations for the route, including a number of functional installations such as seating, entrance columns and mile posts. The installations were all inspired by the heritage of the area and information gathered from local people on use of the path at different times of day. All artworks were loosely based on an industrial theme and on the use of metal.
Interesting features	<p>A variety of artworks can be seen along the route. These encourage walkers and cyclists to progress along the route and to explore. As well as enhancing the enjoyment of the route for adults, for children they form a linear play space and offer a broad range of play interpretations.</p> <p>The installations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  • <i>Seats and Gateways</i> by Jason Lane, which includes seating made from old diggers which children enjoy climbing into  • <i>We All Walk The Same Path</i> by Sally Matthews comprising 11 life size sheep made from scrap metal, ambling along the path sited on top of an embankment  • <i>Rotate</i> by Trudi Entwistle - a fifteen metre diameter circular path within a series of 30 giant metal hoops.
For further information	Art and the Travelling Landscape, Sustrans www.sustrans.org.uk



Case study 8

Gun Wharf Home Zone, Plymouth

Reason for inclusion	A housing development which improves the environment for play in a residential area through people-centred design.
Location	The Gun Wharf housing development is in the Devonport area of Plymouth.
Description	<p>Gun Wharf was formerly a run-down post-war estate which has now been redeveloped, with intensive involvement from the local community, into an award-winning housing development. The use of home zone principles has significantly improved the environment on the estate. Street design indicates the priority of pedestrians over vehicles. Roads are shared by drivers, pedestrians and cyclists.</p> <p>Traffic calming is achieved through the choice of road surface materials, a twisting road layout and the positioning of bollards and planters. Traffic speed is restricted by the built environment, producing an average of 12mph that significantly improves safety for pedestrians, cyclists and children playing. Careful consideration of the space allocated to parking has freed up more space for pedestrians.</p>
Interesting features	A large circular communal open space is provided near to and in view of housing and can be reached by steps or by a slope. This provides a popular and varied children's play space. It is also open to a wide range of uses without any segregation through signage or fencing. Plenty of seating is also provided, along with a level area for parking pushchairs.
For further information	Plymouth City Council www.plymouth.gov.uk



Case study 9

Hailes Quarry Park, Edinburgh

Reason for inclusion	A large public park with good walking and cycling access.
Location	The park is in the south west of Edinburgh, surrounded by residential areas - Wester Hailes, Longstone, Dumbryden and Parkhead.
Description	<p>Hailes Quarry Park is a former quarry and was subsequently a landfill site, now redeveloped as a neighbourhood park. It was regenerated as part of a 'placemaking' pilot led by Greenspace Scotland and the Project for Public Spaces, with significant involvement from local people to ensure it was developed to meet their needs and interests.</p> <p>The park improvements involved a strong element of walking and cycling access. The development has included improvements to existing paths, the creation of new cycle paths, a play area and new entrance features. It is now a popular venue for holding community events.</p>
Interesting features	<p>Increased use of the park by walkers and cyclists has been achieved by creating over 2km of new walking and cycle routes within the park. Entrances to the park have been significantly improved to encourage people to use it. The park now provides a walking and cycling route between the surrounding communities, a safe route to local schools and the Hailes Quarry play area, and an opportunity for children to play in a cycling-friendly traffic-free environment on the way.</p> <p>The Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust has carried out extensive community engagement over the past three years, with a strong emphasis on increasing outdoor physical activity, such as cycling and outdoor play, and improving environmental awareness. This has resulted in increased usage and also helped to identify additional improvements, such as a new bike track through one of the woodland areas, to be installed during August 2009. The Trust will also be carrying out cycling related activities in the Park during autumn 2009, targeted at schools and families.</p>
For further information	Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust www.elgt.org.uk

Useful reading

Department for Children, Schools and Families and Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2008 The Play Strategy

Department for Children, Schools and Families and Department of Health, 2009 Healthy lives, brighter futures: The strategy for children and young people's health

Foresight, 2007 Tackling obesities – Future Choices

Department of Health, 2008 Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives

Department of Health, 2009 Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: One Year On

Department of Health, 2009 Be active, be healthy: a plan for getting the nation moving

Sustrans and Play England, 2008 Places to Go

Sustrans, 2009 Active Play and Travel: the benefits of independent active play and active mobility in childhood

Sustrans and Association of Directors of Public Health, 2008 Take action on active travel

Practical guidance

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, 2007 Spaceshaper: a user's guide

Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008 Children's Trusts: Statutory guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve well-being of children, young people and their families

Department for Children, Schools and Families and Play England, (forthcoming) Implementing the Play Strategy

Department for Transport, 2006 The Quiet Lanes and Home Zones (England) Regulations 2006

Department for Transport, 2007 Local Transport Note 01/07 Traffic Calming

Department for Transport, 2007 Manual for Streets

KIDS, 2008 Inclusion by Design – a guide to creating accessible play and childcare environments

Mayor of London, 2008 Supplementary Planning Guidance: Providing for Children and Young People's Play and Informal Recreation

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 2008 Physical activity and the environment

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 2009 Promoting physical activity for children and young people

Participation Works and Play England, (in press) How to involve children and young people in designing and developing play spaces

Play England, 2008 Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play space

Play England, 2008 Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide

The Scottish Government, (forthcoming) Designing Streets

Sustrans, DIY Streets Pocket Guide

References

- 1 Department for Education and Skills, 2003,** Every Child Matters
- 2 Sustrans and Play England, 2008,** Places to Go
- 3 Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008,** Children's Trusts: Statutory guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve well-being of children, young people and their families
- 4 Department for Transport Local Government and the Regions, 2002,** Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Open Spaces, Urban Research Report
- 5 Home Office and Department for Education and Skills, 2005,** 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: Top level findings from the children and young people's survey
- 6 Play England, 2007,** Research to support Playday: Our Streets Too
- 7 National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 2009,** Promoting Physical Activity for Children and Young People
- 8 Department for Children, Schools and Families and Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2008,** The Play Strategy
- 9 Department for Children, Schools and Families and Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2008,** Fair Play
- 10 Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009,** Children and Parents' Experiences of Recently Improved Play Areas
- 11 Department for Transport, 2007,** Manual for Streets
- 12 The Scottish Government, (forthcoming)** Designing Streets
- 13 Sustrans and Association of Directors of Public Health, 2008,** Take action on active travel
- 14 Transport Research Laboratory, 1996,** Report 215, Review of Traffic Calming Schemes in 20 mph zones

They're free range too.

