

Appendix 3 - Play Strategy consultation report

1. Introduction

This appendix provides information and views provided by various stakeholders including children and young people, Cheshire West and Chester Council, local town and parish councils, and play and youth organisations across the Borough.

The Appendix is structured into six main parts:

- Stakeholder workshops (borough-wide and four locality based)
- Survey of children and young people
- Youth and play - key stakeholders
- Local play and youth organisations
- Access to play and youth provision for disabled children
- Summary of key issues

The information and findings in this section have been taken forward in the Tier 1 Play Strategy.

2. Stakeholders workshops

2.1 Key stakeholders workshop (borough-wide)

A borough-wide stakeholder's workshop was held in December 2015. The broad aims of this workshop were:

- To provide a briefing and overview of the Play Strategy.
- To secure a range of stakeholders' views on issues and future options for Play and Youth facility provision in Cheshire West and Chester.

Key points from the workshop session are highlighted in the table below:

Key issues and challenges	Strengths, assets, opportunities and aspirations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play area design needs to meet local needs • Maintenance costs/replacement of equipment – maintenance and aftercare is key • Close co-operation with Council Planning Team is required • Safety and parents' attitudes towards safety • Winter (low use)/lighting of play areas • Fundraising can be complex and time consuming • Apathy from local community • Legalities of use e.g. co-ordination and clarity of legal notices and enforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking note of local information and knowledge • Involving children at an early stage • Skill exchange • Creation of a hub for play best practice • Smoke free play areas • Natural play and Forest Schools • Learning from other areas • Community involvement - health benefits, reduces anti-social behaviour etc. • Could old equipment be re-used?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog control • Managing expectations 	
<p>Priorities for the future</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve accessibility, including disabled access and safer (and sustainable) routes to play • Identifying available funding and best practice in applying • Use of natural play – less costly and can be more engaging than fixed play • Fusion between budgets within and outside of the council • Adding resources to school play areas for community use • Perhaps fewer, better, bigger equipped play areas – multi-functional facilities • S106 funding - properly thought through and allocated to the right place • Risk assessments often seem onerous, which can put off volunteers or others involvement in managing/developing play sites 	<p>Stakeholder roles and responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a Play Forum for play related dialogue – could act as a mechanism for developing the Play Strategy • Developing the Play Strategy as a 'live' document that is accessible to all • Engaging with the community e.g. Friends Groups to foster 'ownership' • Encouraging volunteers • Let children lead – use local knowledge and involve parents • Investigate if existing green space could be re-used or even sold

Summary of all comments from workshop session (collated from each group's flip-chart)

Key issues and challenges

- Ongoing maintenance - maintaining quality (safety inspections, cleaning, repairs and replacement when needed)
- Creating/maintaining safe areas – issues are dog fouling and drug use
- Funding – play areas can be costly to install and maintain. Fund raising can be complex and time consuming (time constraints are an issue)
- Leadership
- Parent's needs - attitudes and experiences, can be over protective. Culture is risk adverse
- Dark nights/winter and issues associated with lighting play areas
- Links to Ward Plans
- Suitable sites with suitable equipment - the design of play areas needs to be site specific and take account of local issues/meet local needs. Teenagers often want somewhere to 'hang-out' rather than play
- Apathy from the local community
- Managing expectations – children's expectations are higher now for their play equipment
- Dog control/dog fouling

Strengths, assets opportunities and aspirations

Strengths

- Smoke free play areas, forest schools, safe (and good quality) youth parks, natural play near allotments (allotment users police), 'You're Welcome' status on buses and knowledge gained through stakeholders and listening to local communities

Opportunities/aspirations

- Set up a Play Forum to share ideas
- Use of school play areas for community use
- Involve children and young people at an early stage which encourages 'ownership' of play areas so they are better respected and looked after and you are providing what children actually want.
- The benefits of community involvement/volunteering and involving children include health benefits, learning, life skills, reducing anti-social behaviour and improving community cohesion.
- Joint working - making use of knowledge within Cheshire West and Chester (CWAC) and beyond – skill exchange, review what other areas have done
- More natural play areas – cheaper and can be more engaging
- Establish an activity buddy system e.g. Friends groups
- Sponsorship from responsible local businesses
- Name informal play sites
- Ground graphics e.g. hopscotch that have play value but are less costly to install and maintain
- Play corridors e.g. along footpaths, making the walk to school more interesting
- The play strategy should be a practical resource and regularly updated
- Could old play equipment be re-used?
- Rationalisation of sites – selling land or establishing a Community Land Trust.

Priorities for the future

- Play areas should be free
- Identifying funding for play – what is available? Who has responsibility? How to apply for funding?
- Maintenance budgets need to be long term
- Play Area design – play provision/choice of equipment and final approved design should meet the needs of the locality
- Safe and sustainable access to get to play areas e.g. cycle paths, public transport, pedestrian crossings, lighting, signposting
- Access to play areas and play areas themselves should be suitable for disabled
- Location – is it in the right place? Identify gaps
- More natural play and making use of school play areas for community use
- Manage risk and risk/benefit assessments. Risk assessments are often seen as onerous which could deter volunteers/others in managing or developing play sites
- Sharing good practice and details of who to contact for advice
- Developing play guidance for all – including influencing developers to provide good quality play space that meets local need
- Better mapping data
- Perhaps fewer but bigger, better play areas that are multi-functional so communities can engage together

- Joint working/ collective buy – for example in joint procurement agreements and S106 funding allocated to the right place (liaison between CWAC and local parish councils is needed)

Stakeholder roles and responsibilities

- Engaging with the community and encouraging community ownership – look at support structures
- Set up a working party/forum for play
- Encouraging volunteers e.g. youth/sixth formers Duke of Edinburgh award
- Friends of groups – bring in added security but need longevity e.g. when key individuals leave
- Need a co-ordinator/leadership
- Joint working is key e.g. collective buy-in re procurement of equipment
- All associations should adopt the strategy – it should be accessible and regularly updated

2.2 Locality based workshops

Workshops were undertaken in each of the four Locality Areas during February 2016, with the aim of identifying measurable criteria/priority factors that can be applied to all outdoor play areas/potential sites to provide a framework to guide future improvement works for the Locality Play Improvement Plans.

Locality Officers from each area invited key stakeholders to attend the workshops, and each of the workshop sessions were led and delivered by Ethos Environmental Planning/LandE.

The workshop sessions involved brainstorming different priority factors/criteria with the group, followed by a discussion around the practicalities of measuring each priority factor. Once a list of easily measurable criteria/ priority factors had been produced, individuals were asked to vote for their favourite – participants had a total of 5 votes each, and could place all of their votes on one priority factor or spread them out across different options.

Following analysis of findings from the four workshops the following priority criteria were agreed with the Play Strategy Steering Group.

Scoring criteria

Table 7 provides an example of how each of the recommended priority factors will be scored and ranked, in order to prioritise each play area. The scoring will be finalised before the prioritisation work begins. It should also be noted that the weighted ranking for each priority factor may need to be refined during the process of play area prioritisation.

Table 7 Desktop assessment criteria

Priority Factor/Criteria	Scoring	Weighted Ranking
Existing Quality	Rank A (excellent quality site): score 0 Rank B: score 1 Rank C: score 2 Rank D (Poor quality site): score 3	4
Potential Quality	Rank A (high potential to improve): score 3 Rank B: score 2 Rank C: score 1 Rank D (no/limited potential to improve): score 0	5
Child Obesity (Health)	>5% of children with excess weight: score 0	2

	6-10% of children with excess weight: score 1 11-15% of children with excess weight: score 2 >16% of children with excess weight: score 3	
Demographics	>10% of population aged 0-15: score 0 11-20% of population aged 0-15: score 1 21-30% of population aged 0-15: score 2 31%> of population aged 0-15: score 3	4
Child/youth deprivation	>10% most deprived: score 3 11-20% most deprived: score 2 21-30% most deprived: score 1 31%>: score 0	2
Rural Deprivation	>10% most deprived: score 3 11-20% most deprived: score 2 21-30% most deprived: score 1 31%>: score 0	2
Proximity to schools	>600 metres: score 0 Within 600 metres: score 1 Within 400 metres: score 2 Within 200 metres: score 3	3
Proximity/access to other play areas	>600 metres: score 3 Within 600 metres: score 2 Within 400 metres: score 1 Within 200 metres: score 0	3

Priority scores

The total score for each play area is calculated by multiplying the score by the weighted ranking and then adding the weighted rankings for each of the criteria from Table 7 to give an overall score. The range of total scores for each site will be used to group the play areas into 4 priority categories:

- High priority for improvement
- Medium priority for improvement
- Low priority – no action recommended
- Consider for alternative open space use

3 Children and young people's survey

For the 2016 Open Spaces study a survey was developed in liaison with the Cheshire West and Chester Youth Service Team. The team promoted the survey via an online system as well as distributing and collecting hard copies. 240 responses were received from young people from 11 to 20 years old. The main findings are provided below.

3.1 Current use

The results from the children and young people's survey show types of facilities currently used by children and young people.

- Local parks are the most commonly used kind of open space (nearly 78%)
- The other most common areas of open space currently used are local equipped playgrounds (48%); grass kickabout areas and wheeled sports facilities (40%)
- A high proportion of children and young people (over 57%) play and hang out "on the street", in their city/town/village (42%) and near local shops (48%) - indicating the wider importance of planning for a child-friendly public realm

Other kinds of outdoor open spaces used by young people include fields, countryside and woods; marsh land; water parks; ponds; back gardens; "dog walking places"; "the Tesco bench"; the zoo; and tracks for bike riding.

3.2 Quantity, quality and access

The survey asked young people whether there were enough play areas and youth facilities, what they thought in general about the quality of current play/youth facilities and about access to such provision.

Results from children and young people's survey showed their views on quantity, quality and access.

Quantity

- 70% of children and young people thought that there was a need for more outdoor youth facilities and spaces for young people (13+) to meet in their local area
- By contrast, a small majority (54%) of children and young people thought that there **are** enough play areas for younger children in their local area

Quality

- 54% of children and young people agreed that play areas for younger children are well maintained and of good quality
- By contrast, a clear majority (65%) of children and young people thought that youth facilities and spaces for young people to meet are **not** well maintained or of good quality

Access

- 88% of children and young people said that they would be prepared to walk further than normal to somewhere that had more to do and was more interesting

3.3 Priorities for improvement

The survey asked young people to prioritise the kinds of open spaces and outdoor facility provision that they would most like to see improved by ranking all the different kinds of open space provision in priority order.

Some observations on the most commonly chosen top three priorities are noted below:

- 46% of young people highlighted improvements to parks as being one of their top three priorities (of which 23% chose it as their top priority)
- 33% chose provision of skateboard, BMX and wheeled sports facilities as being one of their top three priorities (of which 17% chose it as their top priority)
- 33% chose provision of youth shelters and outdoor seated areas as one of their top three priorities (including 14% of which chose it as their top priority)
- Other commonly prioritised spaces/facilities were local equipped playgrounds (28%); Multi-Use Games Areas (26%); play areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers (25%); wild natural green spaces (24%); and outdoor gyms (24%)

Other priorities and future consultation

A number of young people suggested other priorities that should be considered: a trampoline park; outdoor toilet facilities; playing fields - for tennis and football; places for just teenagers and not little kids; and playground equipment for younger children under two (like swings and sandpits).

Finally, 88% confirmed that they would like to have a say in how new open space facilities for young people should be built and how existing spaces can be improved.

3.4 Other comments

There was an opportunity at the end of survey for young people to make additional comments. Examples of these are noted below

General Comments

- It would be good to consult young people and get us more involved with planning and volunteering locally
- Need somewhere where teens can meet with adults around to supervise
- BMX/mountain biking is a fantastic idea and sport to get kids into. It has helped a lot of my friends of all ages
- The local park with the skate park is a great facility but there could be a indoor centre with a youth club for different age groups or if there is it could be better advertised. We would like an indoor skate park

- An outdoor gym would keep people healthy. We need more outdoor fitness facilities
- We really need more outdoor gyms and free running/parkour areas
- We need more places to sit/use specifically for teenagers, where others aren't really allowed. I think a main issue for young people is feeling judged or disapproved of by small children's parents or the elderly
- Need more cycle lanes
- There are lots of small parks but these don't receive enough attention
- Parks and open spaces need doing up - they should be locked up at night. Parks need to be improved a lot
- I would use the MUGA if it was better maintained
- Wherever we go we just get told to move but there's nowhere safe to go; we're tired of getting moved on
- Where I live is a main road so not a lot of space. I can't go to any other outdoor spaces apart from on a walk
- Parks should have better toilet facilities
- Need more things that are suitable for disabled people
- Some parks are filled with teenagers who just seem to go there to take drugs, assault people and vandalise or steal property. Nothing seems to be getting done to fix the problem and the police don't seem to be all that concerned
- All of the parks need better security as yobs seem to be running rampage and causing trouble, which makes them an extremely unsafe place for anybody to go, young or old
- Stop people destroying things
- Within any area, graffiti needs to be removed from walls and local parks with swings, roundabouts etc. as there are lots of small children playing and graffiti could contain unsuitable language for them to read. There are park benches engraved with unsuitable messages which children could read
- The outdoor facilities are all destroyed and there is no where people can go to have fun and there needs to be supervision on all new places for kids/teenagers
- Thank you!

Local issues and specific needs

The survey also provided young people with the opportunity to highlight specific local issues, needs and aspirations.

4 Youth and Play - key stakeholders

4.1 Cheshire West and Chester Council

Total Environment

The team is currently working with Place Operations on developing a borough-wide Play Strategy. This strategy will cover all publically accessible outdoor play and youth facilities (not simply the Council's own sites). The strategy's scope does not include staffed play and youth provision.

The team also undertake planning work which relates to the allocations of developer contributions and policy requirements for new developments. This is an important area within the Strategy and for the Total Environment team.

Place Operations

A meeting was held with the Place Operations officers who are responsible for the Council's play space management.

- The Place Operations Team is responsible for providing the overall strategy for play and youth facility provision across the borough
- Place Operations are responsible for the operational management of the Council's own play areas and outdoor youth facilities
- There are currently 127 Council managed play areas/youth facilities in Cheshire West and Chester. The quality of the Council's play spaces is very variable across the borough
- Other providers of play areas include town and parish councils; housing associations; and schools. There is potential for schools to open up their facilities more, particularly MUGA type provision in the rural areas. Some of the Council's own sites are adjacent to schools
- In the light of budgetary restraints the primary aim currently is to improve and maintain existing Council play sites to achieve a satisfactory quality standard rather than create additional play spaces
- As regards access, the approach is to develop inclusive play spaces that are accessible to all by providing good paths to and within play areas; ensuring there is sufficient space between items of play equipment; providing seating nearby; and choosing play equipment that is usable for varying levels of ability. There is still work to be done to achieve this at all of the Council's sites
- Place Operations are in the process of implementing a prioritised Play Space Improvement Plan covering the Council's own play areas and outdoor youth facilities. This is using existing funding including secured S106 balances. The aim is to have a planned rolling programme of play space improvements from 2016
- It is important that play spaces have a site specific design. For example there will be different opportunities for landscaping; fencing may or not be needed depending on the site; play equipment will need to be sufficiently robust to suit the local area; and local consultation may result in different choices of equipment, locations, and design ideas
- The Total Environment team are currently working with Place Operations in developing a borough-wide Play Strategy. This will be helpful in future reviews of the prioritisation of investment in the Council's own sites
- Management of dogs and fouling on play sites is a common issue where clear guidance would help. For example, rather than fence in all play areas (which often reduces play value) and banning dogs

from parks (difficult to enforce) consider things like: provide a fenced exercise area for dogs; require dogs to be on a lead in parks and recreation fields; provide poop-scoops and containers (empty them regularly); request owners to remove faeces; provide clear signs; and develop publicity and education programmes

- The Locality Teams also propose play area and youth facility developments and if funding can be secured Place Operations can provide advice and guidance as to the practicalities of the implementation of local improvements
- Barriers to improving play areas include a general lack of resources (financial and staff); and a lack of clear policy and strategy (soon to be remedied)

The Locality Teams - general overview

Cheshire West and Chester Council provide many local community services within a Locality Area framework. The four locality areas are:

- Chester
- Ellesmere Port
- Northwich and Winsford
- Rural

The majority of Cheshire West and Chester is parished and all town and parish councils were surveyed to enable them to provide their views on open space needs (see 6.3.3 below). Unlike the rest of the borough, however, Chester and Ellesmere Port do not have City/Town Councils.

To provide a local input on known play and youth facility issues the locality managers were therefore contacted to provide an overview.

Locality Managers' overview

Ellesmere Port

Table 23 Locality Managers' comments regarding Ellesmere Port

Facility/Aspect	Issues/comment/observations
Children's play areas	<p>Naylor Green: Part of new Rivacre Village development. Concerns over entry point due to proximity of two lane roundabout. Possible safety barrier needed between pavement and road.</p> <p>Blackstairs Road: Part of new Rivacre Village development. Large round swing removed after play area opened due to anti-social behaviour (ASB). Unfortunately it was located in an inappropriate position and was far too close to a property. Also had problems with children kicking balls against fence lines. Additional signage and planting to help manage issue which seems to be working.</p> <p>Rivacre Village: There will be additional informal greenspaces within this development though none are listed as having play facilities. The original plans indicate installation of a MUGA next to Wharf Lane play area though there are concerns that this will be too close to properties if it goes ahead.</p>

	<p>Hillside Drive/Plantation Drive: This play area is in an unacceptable state and concerns have been raised about the site on numerous occasions over the last few years. The facility is located in an area of predominantly older people but is the only play area on this side of two busy main roads (Rossmore Road West and Rivacre Road/Netherpool Road)</p> <p>Festival Road Park: This park includes a football pitch, play area and large green areas used by dog walkers. The park is a shortcut and therefore has a large footfall on a daily basis. It is subject to regular fires, litter issues and fly tipping on the Festival Road side of the park. The large round swing has been burnt on 2 occasions and has not been replaced. Play equipment is of a wooden design (less for slide) with a sand base. This remains unpopular due to lack of regular swings and play equipment.</p> <p>Luton Road Park: This park has a MUGA, Basket Ball Hoop, 2 Youth PODS, fenced in Children's Play Area and open green space used for dog walking. This park is subject to some ASB and youth nuisance issues. Some equipment was recently lost due to fire.</p> <p>Heath Lane: Nice small park and play area that is locked at night by local residents. This has helped reduce incidents of ASB.</p> <p>Whitby Park: Contains a large children's play area which is well used. Whilst this play park has managed to avoid being vandalised, offensive graffiti is reported from time to time.</p> <p>Elm Grove: This park contains no play equipment. Two consultations have been held with residents regarding the installation of play equipment but there is no support for this.</p> <p>Seacombe Drive: The park has recently been refurbished and improvements made.</p> <p>Bebington Road Play Park: The park is accessed via a pathway between two properties and is kept reasonably well. No reports of vandalism or complaints about its upkeep.</p> <p>Wenlock Lane: The park contains a few items of play equipment. The park has suffered from severe flooding in the past and is not well used due to the proximity of Seacombe Park.</p> <p>Parkour (free running) Zone: a new Parkour facility has been provided in Whitby park.</p> <p>General Comment: Most play areas in Ellesmere Port are subject to complaints regarding general maintenance and vandalism. Residents would also like a mix of equipment for all ages in all areas.</p>
Teenage facilities	The town has a well-used BMX track and Skate Park and is about to have a

(e.g. skate parks)	<p>purpose built Parkour facility. However, more activities and teenage targeted facilities are always requested.</p> <p>The Skate Park has had some vandalism (mostly small fires) and the bending of the safety barriers.</p>
Multi-Use Games Areas	<p>Whitby Park has a well-used MUGA.</p> <p>Seacombe Park has a well-used MUGA which has had fire damage to the surface in the past (now repaired).</p> <p>General Comment: The key issues and complaints regarding MUGAs relate to improper use, litter and noise.</p>
General	<p>It was also noted that most complaints regarding play areas fall into three areas: general maintenance (grass cutting/bins emptied/dog fouling); graffiti; and poor/dated equipment and upkeep. Most complaints regarding green space relate to the upkeep and maintenance of areas.</p>

Chester

Table 22 Locality Managers' comments regarding Chester

Facility/Aspect	Issues/comment/observations
Children's play areas	Sandy Lane Aqua Park/Play area, Great Boughton and Boughton Wards – an options appraisal has been commissioned to investigate the potential future management arrangements of the space.
Teenage facilities (e.g. skate parks)	Young People are extremely keen to have a designated city centre skate park as they feel that 'The Cop' skate park (located in the Garden Quarter Ward) is inadequate and is out of sight from the road etc.
General	It was also noted that generally, local residents often feedback about the poor condition of open spaces and play areas.

Northwich and Winsford

Table 24 Locality Managers' comments regarding Northwich and Winsford

Facility/Aspect	Issues/comment/observations
Children's play areas	Key issue is on-going maintenance from both the Council and Parishes.
Teenage facilities (e.g. skate parks)	Regular issue is a request for a skate park in Weaverham.
Multi-Use Games	Weaverham community centre want to improve their MUGA but struggling to

Areas	<p>find funding.</p> <p>Have picked up some minor issues but don't get regular complaints.</p> <p>Glebe (Winsford) MUGA needs a net to cover the top to stop the ball going over.</p> <p>Castle MUGA needs upgrading.</p> <p>Cuddington muted about wanting a MUGA near the playing pitches.</p>
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Rural Locality area

Table 25 Locality Managers' comments regarding the rural locality area

Facility/Aspect	Issues/comment/observations
Children's play areas	<p>Pulford Playing Fields – currently applying for funding to deliver a children's play area¹.</p> <p>Stoak – seeking funding for additional/replacement play equipment - they currently only have one slide and this has been identified as needing repair work.</p> <p>Thornton le Moors – TLM Parish Council would like to develop the land adjacent to the Village Hall to provide a children's play area.</p> <p>Norley – The Norley Hill Top group would like to make some renovations to their play area and install some equipment for older children (table tennis etc).</p> <p>Johnson's Recreation (Willaston) –Planned phase 2 of the children's play area in 2016/17.</p> <p>Sutton Weaver Play Area – currently seeking funding to secure the children's play area as there have been ASB issues.</p> <p>Frodsham – Frodsham Town Council are currently assessing play areas and have plans to renovate/provide new equipment to some of their existing provision.</p>
Teenage facilities (e.g. skate parks)	<p>Elton – Elton Parish Council are exploring the option of having a skate park at the rear of the community centre, as there is little provision for older children/youth.</p>
Multi-Use Games Areas	<p>Saughall – plans to build a sports pavilion (subject to funding) to have a multi-purpose building to host and encourage sport within the area.</p> <p>Elton – assessing provision for older children, currently they have 1 basketball hoop, but the Parish Council have aspirations to install a MUGA or something</p>

¹ WREN Funding bid successful in early 2016 to match secured S106 funding, works scheduled to commence summer 2016

	<p>similar. The Elton area has lots of children so this is an area which requires more play equipment especially for the 10+ age group.</p> <p>Helsby – currently working on plans for an outdoor gym near to the Library.</p> <p>Stanneyfields Park (Neston) – Town Council is currently investigating proposals for an outdoor gym.</p>
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Cheshire West and Chester Council Public Health Team

It is important to understand to what extent outdoor play and youth facility provision is valued by the public health service. For example, there is potential to secure increased public health funding for potential play developments.

The Cheshire West and Chester Council Consultant in Public Health was contacted and provided the following information and key points:

Overview

- Cheshire West and Chester Council has a statutory role for Public Health (supported by funding previously allocated to the NHS for this purpose).
- There are two NHS Clinical Commission Groups (CCGs) in Cheshire West and Chester (West Cheshire and Vale Royal) and the Council have a place on these boards to represent a public health interest.
- The key strategy guiding the delivery of Public Health services in Cheshire West and Chester is the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2014-19 produced jointly by the Health and Wellbeing Board and the West Cheshire Strategy Board.
- The strategy is based on the evidence supplied in the Cheshire West and Chester Integrated Needs Assessment (ISNA). The ISNA provides:
 - An analysis of current and future health and wellbeing outcomes;
 - An understanding of what people need from their services; and
 - A view of the future, predicting and anticipating potential or new unmet need.
- Many Council services have important links with public health e.g. Planning, Total Environment, Place Operations, Housing, Regeneration, Highways and the Locality Teams. The Council Public Health Team has strategic links with all of these services.

Key points

- The Public Health Team fully understands and values the important role that access to well managed play spaces and youth facilities provide in relation to reaching health and wellbeing targets for Cheshire West and Chester.
- The team is currently developing a strategic Eat Well, Be Active Framework. This is a partnership framework aiming to promote healthy eating and increase physical activity by 'creating a structure which addresses lifestyle, behaviour change, our physical environments and issues of access to healthy food and green space'.
- There are three elements within the framework, one of which is particularly relevant to the Play Strategy - Place and Planning. Within this element one of the three main strands is directly linked to

play spaces: 'planning our environments to promote eating well and being physically active' and a detailed action plan for Place and Planning is currently being developed.

- Providing safe and accessible space for children's play and outdoor youth facilities is very important. Reducing childhood obesity is a key target for public health in Cheshire West and Chester.
- As well as providing a strategic framework for public health service delivery the Public Health team also develop local pilot projects aimed at testing practical projects to improve health and wellbeing.
- The Public Health Team is working with the Mersey Forest and the Total Environment Team to develop the idea of a commissioned 'Natural Health Service' - to provide 'health products' making use of the Natural Environment as a key element of health care or improvement. Examples could include initiatives such as Green Gyms, and Forest School provision.
- The Team have recently prepared an innovative expression of interest for a residential housing development in Ellesmere Port becoming a pilot in the national NHS Healthy New Towns initiative².
- The Council Public Health Team also supports the principles set out in Public Health and Landscape - Creating healthy places³ which demonstrates how important open spaces and play areas are in relation to promoting health and wellbeing.

Children's Emotional Health and Wellbeing

- This is a key strand in the Public Health Team's work in Cheshire West and Chester.

Eat Well and Be Active

Physical activity and obesity.

- While encouraging children and young people's participation in sport is often highlighted in relation to public health the value of play to children's health and wellbeing is often not fully recognised.
- Encouraging and supporting active play to become part of everyday life can be a significant factor in relation to enhancing children's emotional health and wellbeing. Having easy access to good quality play areas is a key element of this.
- Research has shown that in key stages of children's lives e.g. transition from primary to secondary school many children suffer from anxiety and stress and enabling outdoor play and access to green spaces can be an important factor in helping reduce negative health impacts.

Growth Strategy Manager

The importance of play to the Growth Strategy and Economic Regeneration:

- A population/workforce that is fit and well - physically and mentally - is a key foundation of a vibrant local economy. Adult health and wellbeing tends to be correlated with childhood health and wellbeing. Having access to outdoor play contributes significantly to children and young people's health hence is key to future economic success.
- Outdoor play is also often a family activity so can contribute to all of the family's health and wellbeing.

² This initiative provides NHS funding related to residential housing developments in which a key aim is to "put health at the heart of new neighbourhoods and towns across the country".

³ Landscape Institute Position Statement (2013)

- Provision of green infrastructure including play space and youth facilities is a key element of good residential design and high quality provision is an important factor in maintaining the value of land and housing. Provision of play spaces therefore contributes to the value of the local housing market.
- High quality green infrastructure and play spaces is also important in relation to attracting and retaining families/workforce in an area and hence a supporting factor in maintaining the local economy.
- The strategy should consider providing supplementary planning guidance for developers in relation to the requirements of providing high quality play spaces and green infrastructure.

Youth Services

- There is a general shortage of wheeled sports and MUGAs across the Borough.
- Wheeled sports, MUGAs etc - while active participation currently tends to be predominantly boys, more girls are getting involved. Also these sites are used extensively by both girls and boys in fairly equal numbers in relation to recognised meeting places. In this respect the design of these areas should consider providing seats/spaces to meet.
- Quite a few schools have MUGAs and ATPs but these are not always available outside of school hours. Opening up community use, particularly of free to use MUGAs would be a great help.
- Youth shelters/meeting places are the key requirement for all young people - places that are recognisably 'theirs', where they won't get moved on from. There is a real shortage of these.
- More generally public open spaces and other public areas need to be more accommodating of children and young people - and designed with this in mind.
- Outdoor gyms seem to be quite popular with young people so provision of these is valuable - they are a resource for all ages - children to adult.
- Consultation and engagement with young people should take place as early as possible in relation to potential play/youth facility improvements. The youth workers could be a valuable resource in such work.

4.2 Town and Parish Councils

Within Cheshire West and Chester there are 95 parish/town councils. Surveys were sent to all parish councils together with two reminders to chase responses as needed⁴. In total 59 parish councils responded. If we did not receive a town/parish council survey response from a town council or key service area parish we reviewed the latest neighbourhood/parish plan in relation to identified play/youth issues and plans/aspirations.

The survey included issues relating to the quantity, quality and accessibility of play spaces and youth facilities. There was also an opportunity for the local councils to highlight any priorities they might have for new or improved provision.

Responses were received from the following town/parish councils:

- Allstock Parish Council
- Anderton With Marbury Parish Council
- Antrobus Parish Council
- Malpas Parish Council
- Mouldsworth Parish Council
- Moulton Parish Council

⁴ To ensure responses from the Town Councils and the ten key service centre parishes, telephone reminders were also made.

- Ashton Hayes and Horton-cum-Peel PC
- Barnton Parish Council
- Christleton Parish Council
- Cuddington Parish Council
- Darnhall Parish Council
- Delamere and Oakmere Parish Council
- Dunham on the Hill Parish Council
- Dutton Parish Council
- Farndon Parish Council
- Frodsham Town Council
- Great Barrow Parish Council
- Great Boughton Parish Council
- Great Budworth
- Guilden Sutton Parish Council
- Hargrave and Huxley Parish Council
- Helsby Parish Council
- Kelsall Parish Council
- Kingsley Parish Council
- Lach Dennis Parish Council
- Little Leigh Parish Council
- Neither Peover Parish Council
- Neston Town Council
- Northwich Town Council⁵
- No Mans Heath and District Parish Council
- Rushton Parish Council
- Saughall and Shotwick Park Parish Council
- Sutton Weaver Parish Council
- Tarporley Parish Council
- Tarvin Parish Council
- Thornton le Moors Parish Council
- Tilston Parish Council
- Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall Parish Council
- Threapwood Parish Council
- Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish Council
- Weaverham Parish Council
- Whitegate and Marlin Parish Council
- Whitley Parish Council
- Wincham Parish Council
- Winsford Town Council

Quality factors - open space provision

We asked the parish councils to highlight what they thought, in general, were high priorities as regards qualitative factors of recreational open spaces.

The quality factors most commonly deemed to be of a high priority as regards recreational public open spaces are that:

- They should be safe and secure for those using them
- Equipment and grounds should be of high quality and well maintained
- They should be clean and free from litter and graffiti
- They should be easy to get to (and get around within) for all members of the community

It is also thought important by many parish councils that there should be adequate opportunities for dog walking (and freedom from dog fouling); and that there should be control of noise and anti-social behaviour.

Other aspects of quality specifically highlighted included:

- Provision of seating
- Ensuring that recreation spaces are attractive, of high quality, well maintained, accessible and provide opportunities for informal exercise, play and sport for all residents
- Opportunities for informal recreation
- Quality of landscaping and nature conservation
- Opportunities for adequate planting of trees in order to enhance rural character
- Increasing in biodiversity, including additional trees or substantial bushes of green areas

⁵ Northwich Town Council referred us to the Draft Neighbourhood Plan - see 6.3.3 below.

Need/aspirations for improvements/new facilities

The table below provides a summary of responses from the parish councils that responded indicating those who identified a need for new and/or improved play spaces and youth facilities.

Summary of responses from parish councils re play and youth facilities

Town/Parish Council	Multi Use Games Areas	Children's play areas	Teenage facilities (e.g. skateparks)
Allstock			
Anderton With Marbury		X	
Antrobus	X		X
Ashton Hayes & Horton-cum-Peel	X		X
Barnton			X
CHRISTLETON PARISH COUNCIL			
Cuddington Parish Council		X	X
Darnhall			
Delamere and Oakmere		X	
Dunham on the Hill	X	X	
DUTTON PARISH COUNCIL		x	
Farndon	X	X	
Frodsham		X	
Great Barrow	X	X	
Great Boughton			X
Great Budworth			
Guilden Sutton	X		
Hargrave and Huxley			
Helsby	X		X
Kelsall Parish Council	X		X
Kingsley Parish Council	X	X	X
Lach Dennis Parish Council			
Little Leigh	X		
MALPAS PARISH COUNCIL	X	X	X
Mouldsworth			
Moulton (Cheshire)		X	X
Neither Peover		X	
Neston Town Council			

No Mans Heath and District		X	
Northwich		X	X
Rushton Parish Council	X	X	X
Saughall and Shotwick		X	X
Sutton Weaver Parish Council		X	
Tarporley Parish Council		X	X
Tarvin Parish Council	X		X
Thornton le Moors		X	X
Threapwood Parish Council			
Tilston		X	
Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall			
Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish		X	
Waverton		X	X
Weaverham	X	X	X
Whitegate and Marlin Parish Council		X	
Whitley Parish		X	
WINCHAM			X
Winsford Town Council		X	
TOTALS:	14	26	19

The table covers issues of quantity, quality and access for a range of facilities. For parish/town councils in Cheshire West and Chester the aspects of most common concern are:

- Not enough areas for teenagers e.g. skate parks, shelters etc. and the quality of existing play areas.
- The need for additional Multi-use Games Areas in some parishes

Parish specific issues (survey)

The detailed parish responses relating to aspects of quantity and quality of play spaces and youth facilities are provided in the table below.

Parish council responses regarding the need for new and improved provision

Parish	Need for new/improved provision and other issues/comments	New Provision
Anderton with Marbury	Play Spaces: We would like CW&C to provide and manage a play area. Neighbourhood Plan currently under production.	✓play
Antrobus	Play Spaces: Looking at an extension of provision at the existing play area. Youth facilities: The Parish Council has an aspiration to extend the current play area to accommodate wider age groups, including adults e.g. outdoor gym.	
Ashton Hayes & Horton-cum-Peel	MUGA/youth facilities: New facilities required. There is a lack of facilities for teenagers. However their needs have yet to be established e.g. MUGA	✓youth
Barnton	Youth facilities: currently planning to replace our skate park. Also need adult sport equipment to complement child based equipment.	
Christleton	An outside gym at King George's Fields would be ideal	✓youth
Cuddington Parish Council	Play Spaces: Play area improvements particularly needed at Norley Road Playing Fields Youth facilities: The Parish Council is currently trying to fund a skate park. Cuddington Parish Council would request that CW&C consider to financially	✓youth

	<p>(under S106) enhance a tired and dated play area at Norley Road Playing Fields Cuddington CW8 2LA. The playing field is owned by Cuddington Parish Council, and leased to Cuddington and Sandiway Parish Playing Fields Association Ltd who maintain it from an annual grant they receive from the Parish Council. This is a popular space amongst the local community and is used regularly. The Parish Council held an initial public consultation as part of the Village Plan, this included consultation with pupils at the village Primary schools. This showed high levels of use and satisfaction with the current facilities, but with a number of suggestions for new facilities. The play area caters for children of all ages. Existing play equipment needs replacing and further play equipment is required to create a more pleasant area for children to play.</p> <p>In view of the Parish Council and Playing Field Association's commitment to high quality play provision within the village at Norley Road, Boundary Lane Green, and Weaverham Road and acknowledging the absence of any new sites for play or public open space we would propose that the 106 funding is identified to enable the Parish Council and the PFA to undertake a planned programme of improvement and renewal of the existing facilities which are:</p> <p>Installation of gate and metal fencing to prevent small children from running into the car parking area. Sand pit improvements, creation of a barrier including seating at the edge of the sandpit/play area. Creation of a paved areas around the sandpit and Wendy House area to improve disabled access. Five further seats would be provided around the play area/ safety matting renewal to meet requirements of the inspection regime.</p>	
Darnhall	<p>Parks/recreation grounds: Restoration of site of Darnhall for public use to include tennis courts/MUGA</p> <p>No open play space in parish for either young or old</p>	✓play
Delamere and Oakmere	At this present time the Parish Council are no longer interested in taking a lease for the play area at Little Wood as the way the Special Expenses Levy is calculated may be amended by Cheshire West and Chester Council.	
Dunham Hill	<p>Play Spaces: Improvements needed.</p> <p>MUGA/youth facilities: Tennis/MUGAs needed.</p>	✓youth
Dutton parish council	Play Spaces: new play area needed. Potential for children's play / recreation area on land owned by the parish council.	✓play
Farndon	<p>Play spaces: Recent requests from young people – 200+ new homes built or to be completed shortly with many new families into the village. Older children's play area needed.</p> <p>Youth facilities: Older children are not catered for – good quality rustic play equipment is desired.</p> <p>The Parish Council is at the beginning of a partnership project to take ownership of Farndon Sports and Social Club for the benefit of the village. A major renovation of the building and facilities is planned along with a new model for managing and running the club.</p>	✓youth
Frodsham	<p>Play spaces: Planned improvements just been carried out at Churchfields. Similar improvements planned for Townfield but dependent on funding. See Frodsham Play Strategy.</p> <p>Neighbourhood Planning underway which is establishing a Leisure, green spaces and the environment Working Group – early days.</p>	
Great Barrow	<p>MUGA: Survey within village showed support for a Multi Use Games Area</p> <p>Youth facilities: Good for younger aged children less for older children.</p>	✓youth
Great Boughton	General – our surveys and consultation have shown the need to increase and improve facilities particularly for teenagers and children's play was highlighted.	?
Great Budworth	There is a play area in the grounds of Great Budworth Primary School for use by the community.	
Guilden Sutton	MUGA/Tennis: School has some facilities which could be improved but not available for public use.	

	Neighbourhood Plan has aspirations for facilities for all age groups e.g. bowling green/tennis courts. Not yet got to the stage of locations.	
Helsby	MUGA/tennis: one was planned for the new Helsby Community Sports Club (HCSC) but budget constraints saw it withdrawn from the scheme Youth facilities: Parish Council is looking at possibilities e.g. outdoor gym	✓youth
Kelsall Parish Council	MUGA/tennis: in hand. Youth facilities: currently none; this may not be possible to accommodate at current green. Older children are not well served by current playground. Many have commented that they would like a skate / bike park. Some have started organising to make this happen but this is in the early stages. Adults of all ages would benefit from fitness trail / equipment. Teenagers in Kelsall have started discussing and getting organised to look into the feasibility of a skate park. Location unknown at present.	✓youth
Kingsley Parish Council	MUGA/tennis: We have a small one but it is in a remote area of the field and not particularly well used. Play spaces: Need for more play equipment such as a zip wire and some resurfacing where there is wear and tear. Play spaces: we are hoping to explore the need for additional play equipment at the playing field. Youth facilities: Some support for a skate park and BMX track. Parks/recreation grounds: We are currently looking to lease the Middle Lane playing field from CW&C. Discussions are currently taking place between CW&C and the parish council. We carried out a playing field survey in 2014 to make a case for grant funding for a perimeter path and outdoor gym. 79% supported the gym project. We're happy to share the results of both surveys with you if required. We had lots of other interesting ideas such as a separate dog walking area, a zip wire and a climbing wall.	youth✓
Lach Dennis	Due to a very recent boundary change, the neighbouring village (Lostock Green) has now become part of our Parish. It is in this village the play area and football pitch is sited. I am unsure as yet if there are any aspirations relating to this among residents.	
Little Leigh	MUGA/tennis: New facilities needed. Play spaces: CW&C manage a modern one in Shutley Lane. Youth facilities: Grass area needed. Older young people need an open space / playing field. This is an aspiration in our parish plan and village design statement.	✓youth
Malpas parish council	MUGA/tennis: Improvements at existing sites. Play spaces: enhance and improve existing play area. Youth facilities: skate park/bike park at Malpas Recreation Ground.	✓youth
Moulton	Play spaces: Needs updating. Youth facilities: Needs updating. Parks/recreation grounds: In need of refurbishment. Our aim is to provide high class facilities for all.	
Neither Peover	Play spaces: Local people would love to see the play area on Swan Green extended and seating areas created. Youth facilities: Nothing in the area for young teenagers.	✓youth
Neston Town Council	General: See Neighbourhood Plan.	
Nomansheath and District	Play spaces: The Borough Council manages the play area at Littlers Croft .The play area needs to be updated with new equipment . The greater play area needs to be graded to make it suitable for a junior football pitch. The formal boundary has sections with barbed wire that need removing and some low level fencing that needs replacing with something higher to protect against wayward footballs.	

Northwich TC	General: See Draft Neighbourhood Plan. Specific: need for new play areas in Winnington, Lostock, and Leftwich. Need for refurbishment in Danefields.	✓play
Rushton Parish Council	MUGA/tennis: currently working on project to provide this. Play spaces: no play area for children. Currently working on project to provide this. Youth facilities: some facilities will be provided within the play area. Parks/recreation grounds: currently working on picnic area project. Projects were set out in the Rushton Parish Plan.	✓youth ✓play
Saughall and Shotwick Park	Play Spaces: the Parish Council owns a MUGA, an Aerial Runway, a Junior Multi-Play Unit, Swings, a Sputnik Roundabout, a Gullwing Seesaw, a Spring Rocker, Basketball/Goal Combination End and a Spacenet. Play Spaces and Youth Facilities: there are well developed plans for improvements to play spaces and youth facilities. Documents provided.	?
Sutton Weaver	No field available within the parish for children eg to play football etc. Play area needed.	✓play
Tarporley Parish Council	Play Spaces and Youth provision: currently the Parish Council is in the process of setting up a new recreation field on Brook Road in Tarporley including play and youth provision. Outline planning has been approved the full application should be submitted before summer. Documents provided. The Parish Council also manages a play area next to the Community Centre playing field. The field itself is managed by the Community Centre Committee.	✓play ✓youth
Tarvin Parish Council	MUGA/tennis: A new Multi-use Games area is needed, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One full size football pitch, which can be adapted for the various formats detailed by the FA • A half size, floodlit all weather multi use pitch suitable for football training, 5 a side and other team games • Changing rooms, including showers and disabled facilities, for both sexes. Facilities of this type would make it possible to provide open air sport activities for the disabled, something which is not possible in the village at the present time. Youth facilities: there are currently very limited facilities suitable for teenagers and there is a need for a BMX park. This has been clearly demonstrated because on more than one occasion the young people have constructed their own BMX trails in the Community Woodland. Due to concerns over liability in the case of a serious accident the Trust has had to remove these trails. A custom made facility is urgently needed. The building of new homes in Tarvin is expected to lead to an influx of young families into the village. Proposals are being developed as part of the Tarvin Neighbourhood Plan.	✓youth
Thornton le Moors	Play spaces: require complete refurbishment and updating of play areas Youth facilities: limited planning for skate parks due to demands on land available Restricted usage by all groups of people due to facilities offered. We are trying with limited budget to upgrade our open spaces and recreation.	✓youth
Tilston	Play Spaces: Tilston Parish Council does not run the playing field in Tilston. It is run by the Tilston Playing field Association. The Association have plans to further improve the facilities.	
Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish	Play spaces: there are no children's play areas in either of the main villages in the Parish, although there is a primary school. This also has minimal play equipment. We would like to provide proper play equipment for young people in Utkinton Village. The Parish Council hopes to use some land owned by Utkinton School to provide	✓play

	some basic play equipment. The lack of any play areas for children was mentioned in our Parish plan.	
Waverton	Play Spaces: new play area needed. Youth Facilities: new BMX track needed. We have a Parish Council sub group that has an aspiration to build a new play area for all age groups. A full parish consultation has been undertaken. Plans have been submitted for planning permission with CWAC. There is a £120k budget for the full plan. Fund raising is the major challenge and is underway; assistance with this project from CWAC would be appreciated.	✓play ✓youth
Weaverham	Multi Use Games Areas : requires additional investment due to poor state of repair. Children's play areas: existing facility in good state of repair but additional play facilities would be beneficial to the community. Teenage facilities: skate park and BMX park are identified as in demand. Need for improved activities for the Youth of the Village- Weaverham Parish Plan.	✓youth
Whitegate and Marlin	Play spaces: improvements needed. Parks/recreation grounds: improvements needed.	
Whitley Parish	Play spaces: expansion of an existing children's play area needed. Parks/recreation grounds : village green/community focus Play and recreation areas serving the needs of younger children and teenagers are not well provided for.	
Wincham	Youth facilities: there is space in the Linnards Lane playing field that could be used as a skate park. It would be very popular. Young people need somewhere to meet. There is a large housing development (the Wincham urban village) that is taking place.	✓youth
Winsford Town Council	Play spaces: the Town Council is now in the final year of an 8 year rolling programme to upgrade all is Play Areas and recreation Grounds. Work is due to start shortly on upgrading the play area and developing an outdoor gym at the Wharton Recreation Ground. The Town Council recently assumed responsibility for management of the Town Park. We propose to bring it up to a standard whereby it is fit for purpose.	

Neighbourhood and Parish Plans, Town Councils and Service Centres

Tattenhall and District Parish Council (service centre) did not complete a survey but referred us to their Neighbourhood Plan. Relevant extracts are noted below. Northwich Town council did complete a survey but also referred us to their Neighbourhood Plan.

Northwich Town Council

Northwich Neighbourhood Plan (Draft)

Open Spaces

2.2.35 There are a variety of open spaces in Northwich, each fulfilling a different role: formal urban parks, such as Verdin Park or Vickersway Park, which serve a recreation purpose and are used for town events; sports grounds, such as Moss Farm, which are used for football, rugby, cricket, amongst other sports; country parks with marked paths and cycle ways, such as the Northwich Community Woodlands. As well as providing an important recreational function, these are also ecologically important; unmanaged open spaces, such as the Dane Valley, which are no doubt enjoyed for their stunning views, but primarily fulfil an

ecological role.

2.2.36 According to the consultation, the town's open spaces were the second-most valued element of Northwich's environment.

Proposed Policies (draft)

NBE5 Protected Green Space and Key Views

The identified "green spaces" listed in Appendix 5.4 should not be lost or harmed by development except in exceptional cases. In such cases, development should fit with the purposes of the green space, and enhance the recreational value of the site. Major developments should enhance existing green spaces and create new green spaces. New developments should protect the key scenic and distinctive views into and out of Northwich.

Tattenhall and District Parish Council

Tattenhall and District Neighbourhood Plan

Objectives

- Protect greenspace, the landscape and support nature conservation.

Strategy

- Important green spaces are to be protected as are strategic views within the Parish and into and out of the village of Tattenhall (Important views are listed at Appendix A). Green wildlife corridors are promoted along Keys Brook and Mill Brook through, and around Tattenhall.
- Improved walking and cycling connections are promoted, as an early action, from the hamlets to Tattenhall via new footways.

Local Facilities

Community Feedback

- Provide facilities for young people – 91%

Open Space facilities

- Open spaces include the Park with its children's play area; a rollerblade and skateboard centre, The Boneyard, is situated in Newton-by Tattenhall.

Policy 6

The areas listed below are designated 'Local Green Spaces' which are protected from new development unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated:

Sites of sport, recreation and amenity value

These are sites valued for their open access for sport, recreation and amenity. They are areas where residents can come together both informally and where community events are held

- b1 Castlefields play area
- b2 The Park playing field
- b3 Sport Tattenhall playing fields (Recreation Club)

New development in the Parish should:

- Support the creation of a network of greenspaces for sport and outdoor recreation.

Plan Delivery and Implementation

Local Facilities:

The Parish Council will work with local organisations and the Borough Council to improve facilities and services for local people.

4.3 Voluntary sector organisations

Mersey Forest

- Mersey Forest (MF) work with local councils, the education sector, organisations and groups on many play related projects.
- Over the years they have worked with local councils to develop natural play sites in public open space as well as developing and managing many school grounds in partnership with the education sector.
- Examples of successful natural play provision in public open spaces include Euclid Park in Grappenhall, Warrington (with the Parish Council); Glazebury natural play space, Warrington (working with local Community Play Area Committee); and Ilchester Park on the Wirral (with Wirral MBC).
- In their play space development work they follow the principles set out in Design for Play, Managing Risk in Play Provision etc. In particular each design is site specific using the natural features on site. In providing natural play features site specific benefit/risk assessments are very important.
- MF highlight that natural play features and design tends to be a lot cheaper to provide initially and that they allow for more flexibility in providing and changing play opportunities over the years.
- There is also no evidence in their experience to suggest that the maintenance of natural play sites need be more expensive than a "traditional" equipped play area. Indeed they can be less costly to maintain.
- MF are aware that many well designed school grounds offer play opportunities but that they are often not available for wider community use. If more community use could be encouraged this would be of great benefit to local children, young people and their families.
- They also point out that over the years Cheshire Education has established a strong reputation for creative and innovative design of school grounds, initially providing a ground breaking guidance document in 1993 - From Giant Sweets to Sponge Floors.
- MF also support Forest School initiatives as well as working to increase accessibility to and the educational interpretation of woodlands.
- CWAC sites known to be used for Forest School activities include: Marshalls Arm LNR; Rivacre Valley LNR; Marbury Country Park; Willaston Meadow; Grozone, Old Danes Nursery, Northwich; Tarvin Community Woodland; Countess of Chester Hospital Grounds and Caldry Valley.
- Non CWAC sites used include: Delamere Forest; Pumphouse Wood; Broomheath Plantation, Tarvin; Pettypool; Trafford Hall Woodland; Church Wood, Whitegate; and Fox Howl

Groundwork

- Groundwork aim to promote healthy living through the provision of new play and youth facilities. They are keen on natural play – using the landscape and natural features to promote interaction between children.
- Services include: play area design; natural play design; Multi-use games area; BMX / skate parks; ball court areas; outdoor gyms; user group consultation; and maintenance schedules.
- Groundwork were the borough Council's lead partner in the development of the new Parkour facility in Ellesmere Port. They also submitted the successful Landfill Tax bid.
- They have also been involved in the development of a number of other recreation areas/sites and routeways in Ellesmere Port in partnership with the Council and the local community (including play areas and a BMX track).
- Produced a play strategy for/with Frodsham TC.
- Currently assisting Waverton Parish Council, Kingsley Parish Council, Tarporley PC and Frodsham Town Council with the development of their play areas/ recreation areas.
- Administer the Tesco Local Community Scheme (Bag Levy) - potential 8 to 12k grants (could be for play).
- Keen to be an active partners with the borough Council and others on future play projects and the implementation and further development of the CWAC play strategy.
- Possess expertise on natural play, good design, risk/benefit assessment, inclusion, funding bids, and community engagement.

Weaver Vale Housing Trust (WVHT)

- WVHT currently manage 5 play areas and 3 MUGAs (details sent) in the Northwich and Winsford areas. These are all open access public sites that can be used by all.
- There is also a teen shelter and small skate ramp at one of their sites.
- Many of the play areas are 20 to 25 years old and in need of refurbishment. Weaver Vale are currently preparing an asset management plan that will also include looking at potential play area developments.
- Recently WVHT worked with local estate residents in Winsford to develop a new play facility - the Brecon Way play area. External funding was secured by the community group with the support of WVHT. The play area and how it was developed is a notable example of good practice. It involved consultation with children and young people, ongoing community engagement, site-specific design using natural landscape features; and generally following good practice in relation to design and risk/benefit assessment.
- When looking at potential improvements to open spaces and play areas the trust also considers the potential for providing natural play opportunities. The need for fencing and barriers is considered on a site by site basis.
- WVHT is also committed to partnership working. For example, they have recently been involved in helping to improve a Borough Council play site that is of recognised benefit to their residents.

- The Trust has a community engagement team which can work with partners such as the borough Council in relation to potential refurbishment projects (on their own or borough Council sites that benefit their residents).
- WVHT was aware that Muir Housing Trust also managed at least one play area but did not think many other CWAC housing associations owned or managed play areas.

Woodland Trust

The Woodland Trust highlight that woods are important spaces for informal play.

"As highlighted in the **Public Health White Paper** (Healthy Lives, Healthy People; Nov 2010), there are tremendous opportunities for native woodland to contribute positively towards delivering improved mental and physical health. Research shows that woodland can provide benefits for air quality, urban heat island cooling, physical exercise provision and relief from mental illness".

The National Trust

On a national level the Trust has produced a number of key reports on children's play and other general guidance, which influence their work in Cheshire West and Chester and across the country.

Two reports reflecting the increasing need to re-engage children with the outdoors have been published: Natural Childhood and Reconnecting Children with Nature. A nationwide campaign '50 things to do before you're 11 ¾' has been established and a 'kids council' recruited to help influence future plans and programmes.

5 Views from local play and youth organisations

Play and youth organisations survey

Local play and youth organisations were surveyed via an online questionnaire. Responses were received from 25 groups. 80% reported that they make direct use of outdoor play equipment or areas of open space. Some of the main findings are noted below.

Quantity

Groups were asked whether they thought there were enough play facilities for children aged 12 and under, and youth facilities for teenagers.

A small majority (54%) consider that there are insufficient play spaces for younger children and a significant majority (73%) highlight a need for increased provision for teenagers.

In more detail, respondents were asked for their views on provision for the different age ranges:

Types of provision for children (12 and under)

For children aged 12 and under the survey asked for views on whether there are enough of the following types of open space and outdoor sports facilities for children.

Responses show that:

- 46% of respondents felt that there was adequate provision of informal natural play spaces for children of 12 years and under (compared to 42% who thought there were not enough)
- The provision of traditional equipped play areas and outdoor sports provision are considered less well provided for with a majority (54%) answering that there were not enough of either kind of facility.
- 31% thought there were enough equipped play areas but only 19% agreed there were enough outdoor sports facilities).

The table below details other comments relating to the provision for under 12s when asked the following question: "if you don't think there are enough of any of the above facilities/open space areas, why not/what would you like to see more of?"

Comments from play and youth organisations survey relating to the provision for under 12's

Organisation	Comments
Christ Church Preschool	Better quality more modern equipment.
Upton Village Preschool	There is no play park at this end of Upton for the use of the children. An adventure play park with more natural climbing things would be brilliant - such as the amazing play park in Calderstones Park in Liverpool where I take family because Chester does not provide for us. On a personal level I visit little villages on holiday which can provide skate board parks and biking areas

	but Chester seems to be so lacking in such things.
Cheshire West Youth Service	There are not enough pitches and MUGAs, just plenty of parks. Need more sport layout areas to use and encourage sports.
Christ Church Preschool	More safe equipped play areas. More open areas.
Integrated Early Support	We have MUGAs in our area and parks but no natural play areas.
The Beeches Pre School	Outdoor play area specifically for younger children, eg Recreation Ground in Malpas not fit/safe for under-5's to play freely - big open sandpit which is left uncovered and therefore contains faeces, rocks, boulders for climbing, but which have sharp edges and drops which are unsafe for the younger age group, etc.
Live!	There should be more places for children with disabilities and adapted play equipment.
Cheshire West and Chester Youth Service	Both formal and informal play spaces where a variety of structured sports and creative spaces where children can use their imaginations to play and have adventure.
Frodsham Youth Association	There is only one all weather pitch in Frodsham and it is very old and under sized.
Winsford Youth Forum	MUGAs are limited to certain areas within Winsford - very popular, should be extended. Need for `bowl` designed skateboard/ scooter/bmx sites - easy/cheap to maintain, across the area Plain `kicking walls` , sand covered playing areas, however this would need to maintained/supervised.
Dodleston Pre-school	More areas for children to explore naturally e.g. tunnels, ramps etc. The areas are very basic and could be modernised. Eg. the roundabout in the park can be dangerous - could do with being one that is embedded in the ground instead of being raised.
Kidzone	More play spaces for all ages, possibly a skate park area
Cheshire West and Chester Youth Service	Trees / Wooded Areas
Young People's Service	Open space areas, skate parks in rural areas
Cheshire Young Carers	I think open spaces should offer several options to young people, such as play areas, exercise / sports areas and natural, open space

Provision of facilities for teenagers

Similarly for teenagers, groups were asked whether there were enough of various types of open spaces and sports facilities for young people.

- From the results it was very clear that the quantity of youth and teenage provision for teenagers is not considered satisfactory
- Responses are relatively consistent across all types of facility, although dissatisfaction with the provision of wheeled sports type facilities and informal hangout areas are the most notable

Again, respondents when asked the question 'If you don't think there are enough of any of the above facilities/open space areas, why not / what would you like to see more of?' gave additional feedback:

Additional feedback from teenagers in play and youth organisations survey

Organisation	Comment
CW&C Youth Service	Again, improved quality and better equipped.
Christ Church Preschool	Skate parks, biking areas , hang out areas, football pitches that are looked after rather than run down, basketball pitch on one court.
Integrated Early Support	In the areas I cover there are very few facilities for young people outside. Weaverham, Kingsmead and Leftwich have nothing specifically for young people. The MUGA in Weaverham is in a bad state but with some work it has good potential. Northwich could do with more bike/skate park facilities. There is a lack of youth shelters where it is light and safe. This is why young people often meet outside shops where they feel safe, but often get moved on for being in large numbers.
The Beeches Pre School	Don't think there are any of the above in Wharton.
Live!	I don't believe there are equipped areas for older young people.
Frodsham Youth Association	As above, parks and play areas do not cater for young people with disabilities.
Winsford Youth Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth shelters attached to skate parks. • MUGAs and astroturf facilities so they can play sports formally and informally. • Safe spaces where young people can hang out! Most importantly there are already some of these facilities but they are in a bad state of repair, in the wrong location and not maintained regularly. Building a facility is not enough - ensuring it is glass free and safe to use is just as important.
Kidzone	I don't know of any safe, informal spaces in Frodsham for teenagers to hang out. Youth Shelters are an interesting idea but I think the design and location are important to ensure success.
CW&C Youth Service	As for the U12's - Teen shelters should be sited to support other play areas.

Young People's Service	In the area that I am thinking about (Doddleston) there does not appear to be any of the above for teenagers and space for them is limited.
Cheshire Young Carers	No bike/skate facilities - there has been some work towards building one but still some way off Playing fields ok for football but no other activities Park equipment aimed at younger children - outdoor gym equipment may be good idea
Upton Village Preschool	More facilities for teenagers to 'hang out' in and around.
Cheshire West Youth Service	Teenagers are not catered for in the Northwich area.
Integrated Early Support	Skate parks in rural areas.
Live!	More areas shelter, spaces and premises for youth groups
Frodsham Youth Association	Youth Shelters.
Winsford Youth Forum	Could be more outdoor MUGAs.

Quality

We asked for views on the overall quality of open space and outdoor facilities of general interest to children and young people and responses are illustrated in the chart below.

- Cheshire West and Chester's grass kickabout areas and equipped playgrounds scored the highest satisfaction levels with local groups, with nearly 80% rating them as least as "adequate". Of the 80%: 48% rated kickabout areas as good or very good and 46% rated play areas similarly.
- There were much lower levels of satisfaction with "challenging" teenage play spaces and wheeled sports facilities. Over 80% rated the former as being poor or very poor and 65% similarly for the latter.
- The quality of outdoor gyms and basketball facilities was also deemed to be poor/very poor by over 80% of the groups.

An option to add specific observations and comments was given and these are noted below:

Specific comments and observations from play and youth organisations survey

Group	Comment
Upton Village Preschool	Chester needs to think about its young residents rather than just the tourists - sorry but I have always been amazed at Chester's decision to ignore children's needs then when they do hang around the streets they are considered a nuisance.

Cheshire West Youth Service	Great to see a survey being done that young people are directly getting included in.
The Beeches Pre School	Am only commenting on Malpas and local area.
Cheshire West and Chester Youth Service	Most of these areas suffer from poor maintenance, they are not promoted - some young people do not know they exist and their location not always great.
BASE 18 Youth Club	I have answered these looking at what is within our area.
Winsford youth forum	Notice that the bigger towns/cities in the UK now developing their existing facilities/sites to be all embracing, catering for all ages, making these family friendly sites. Not forgetting places for parents to sit/meet, for supervising etc - with all provision!
Dodleston Pre-school	Maybe I am not aware of these facilities being around but do live in Chester and think areas for walks are now limited as well as places for teens to be.

Priorities for improvement

Respondents' most commonly highlighted priorities for improvement are

- youth shelter/hang out areas (56% highlight this as one of their top 3 priorities); and wheeled sports provision (48% similarly).
- Other common high priorities are Play areas with challenging equipment for teenagers (44%) and MUGAs (36%).

Organisations were also provided with the opportunity to suggest other priority needs as noted in the table below.

Other suggested priority needs from play and youth organisations survey

Organisation	Other suggestions for improvement priorities
Upton Village Preschool	Natural Play Parks with wooden climbing equipment.
Live!	Accessible equipment or adapted play equipment for people with disabilities
Frodsham Youth Association	Full size all weather pitches
Winsford youth forum	Sheltered areas for parents, sand based activity sites water fountain challenges
Dodleston Pre-school	Picnic areas and seating in the parks that we do have.
Young People's Service	Smooth paths for rollerskating

Some specific needs and initiatives aimed at improving play provision were noted in the table below.

Comments regarding specific needs and initiatives from play and youth organisations survey

Organisation	Specific need/known initiative
Winsford youth forum	Multi use concrete `bowl` designed skateboard/scooter/bmx freestyle areas open space for `kite flying` and power kite activities!
Cuddington and Sandiway Youth Club	BMX / Skate facility adjacent to Cuddington playing fields
CW&C	Space for playing football near Elton
Young People's Service	Elton youth group have been fundraising for goal posts + nets and are trying to establish an u15 football team

There was also an opportunity for groups to add any other points or comments, which are noted in the table below.

Additional comments from play and youth organisations survey

Organisation	Additional Comments
BASE 18 Youth Club	When designing these areas meaningful consultation with young people is required and then follow up every year to ensure it is still meeting the needs and wants of young people. Usually when these facilities are built they are then forgotten about and allowed to fall into disrepair or not modified to meet young people's changes in tastes, wheeled equipment especially, when young people have mastered the equipment they need more of a challenge that needs to be considered when designing and building. We need to ensure they are safe, well-lit spaces for young people to congregate and not shoved away so that they are undesirable to the majority of young people.
Dodleston Pre-school	Make sure not all improvements are done in Chester!!
Young People's Service	Provision is good where available, e.g. Upton 7C, but not available in all areas.
Cheshire Young Carers	There are definitely not enough outdoor open places for young people, more spaces need to be created.
CW&C Youth Service	There are some exceptional park areas and spaces but then in other areas equipment is often damaged and appears to have gone unrepaired or not made safe for some time. Good luck!

6 Access to Play and Youth Provision for Disabled Children

6.1 Cheshire West and Chester Senior Access Officer

The Borough's Senior Access Officer highlighted a number of issues relating to access to play and youth facilities by disabled young people:

- For play areas it is important that access paths to play equipment is good; that there is adequate space between items of play equipment; that seats are provided nearby; that the equipment is designed to be accessible for a wide range of ability levels and so forth.
- The Open Space Study could recommend that the Council adopt good practice guidance, potentially to be included in an Open Space Supplementary Planning Document. These could include the guidance provided by KIDS⁶: Inclusive Design for Play.

6.2 Disabled young people's views - inclusive access to leisure - national research

Information below relates to the issue of improvements for disabled young people to facilities, part of a valuable research study undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Disabled teenagers' experiences of access to inclusive leisure (Pippa Murray, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2008)

Leisure is a key area in paving the way towards full community inclusion and participation. It takes on an additional significance for disabled young people when barriers to full participation in education and employment result in them having more time for leisure pursuits whilst simultaneously experiencing greater difficulty in accessing leisure services, activities, and pastimes. This research project consulted with over 100 disabled teenagers to uncover their experience of 'inclusive leisure'. The teenagers said that:

- Disabled young people felt that their experiences at school/college strongly affected their access to friends and leisure outside school.
- Many young disabled people described their lives being tainted with the experiences of isolation, loneliness and exclusion.
- Whereas professionals viewed inclusive leisure as a means of learning life skills, increasing independence and/or self-esteem, young people focused on friendships and fun.
- Whilst wanting to participate in ordinary, mainstream leisure activities, disabled young people welcomed the opportunity to meet with each other in order to share their mutual experience.
- Lack of appropriate support (such as transport, personal assistance, and support to facilitate and/or interpret communication) was a major barrier to the participation of disabled young people in ordinary leisure activities. This was particularly apparent for disabled young people with complex impairments and high support needs.
- Beyond the specific experience of exclusion due to impairment, the interests and concerns of disabled young people are no different from those of non-disabled teenagers.

⁶ KIDS is a national charity supporting disabled children and young people; and their families. One of its aims is to: "assist local authorities and other organisations in making their facilities accessible and welcoming to all disabled children and young people".

7. Summary of Key Issues

Children and Young People - Key Findings

Quantity

- Youth play provision is generally considered underprovided for across the Borough with 60% of the 2015 Citizens Panel/household survey answering that there were not enough facilities for older children and teenagers.
- 70% of children and young people in the youth survey agreed that there was a need for more outdoor youth facilities and spaces for young people (13+) to meet in their local area. Play and youth organisations also highlight a shortage of teenage provision.
- A shortage of wheeled sports facilities and youth shelters/hang out spaces are particularly notable with 73%/69% of play/youth organisation respondents stating there were not enough of such facilities.
- 59% of Citizen's Panel/household respondents thought there **were** enough play areas for younger children (12 and under). A majority (54%) of children and young people agreed that there are enough play areas for younger children in their local area. 54% of play/youth organisations respondents were also satisfied with the quantity of formal equipped playgrounds for younger children (under 13's).
- A clear majority of and play/youth organisations also highlight a need for more Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs).

Quality

- In general residents are reasonably happy with the quality of equipped play areas across the borough (50% of the Citizen's Panel/household respondents rated them as being very good or good - 35% adequate. However, 15 % rated them as poor or very poor).
- Cheshire West and Chester's grass kickabout areas and equipped playgrounds scored the highest satisfaction levels with local play and youth groups, with nearly 80% rating them as least as "adequate". Of the 80%: 48% rated kickabout areas as good or very good and 46% rated play areas similarly.
- There were much lower levels of satisfaction overall with outdoor youth facilities. The Citizen's Panel/household responses indicated that only 12% rated them as good or very good compared to 48% who rated them as poor or very poor.
- 54% of children and young people in the youth survey agreed that play areas for younger children are well maintained and of good quality. By contrast, a clear majority (65%) of children and young people thought that youth facilities and spaces for young people to meet are **not** well maintained or of good quality.
- Play and youth organisations further confirmed these observations with most kinds of youth facilities being rated as poor or very poor most notably "challenging" teenage play spaces and wheeled sports facilities. Over 80% rated the former as being poor or very poor and 65% similarly for the latter.

Access

- 88% of children and young people in the youth survey said that they would be prepared to walk further than normal to somewhere that had more to do and was more interesting.
- Organisational respondents noted the difficulty with access to local provision in some more rural areas – citing poor public transport, long walks or general inaccessibility as barriers to access.

- The Senior Access Officer noted that for play areas it is important that access paths to play equipment is good; that there is adequate space between items of play equipment; that seats are provided nearby; that the equipment is designed to be accessible for a wide range of ability levels and so forth.

Priorities for improvement

- Other than improving parks in general the most commonly chosen top priorities for young people (youth survey) were provision of skateboard, BMX and wheeled sports facilities and shelters and outdoor seated areas.
- For youth and play organisations the most commonly highlighted priorities for improvement are youth shelter/hang out areas (56% highlight this as one of their top 3 priorities); and wheeled sports provision (48% similarly).
- Other common high priorities for youth and play organisations are play areas with challenging equipment for teenagers (44%) and MUGAs (36%).

Other Issues / General Observations

- Stakeholders highlight the importance of ensuring that when new play spaces and youth facilities are developed, or investment made into improvements, it is essential to ensure that ongoing budgetary provision is sufficient for maintenance.
- Many town and parish councils have an interest in play and youth facilities and there is potential for them to take more responsibility for providing local play spaces.
- There is potential for improved communication systems and partnership working between CWAC and housing associations in relation to developing and improving play and youth facilities in the borough.
- Many stakeholders highlight the importance of involving children and young people in all aspects of play and youth facility provision e.g. location, the kind of provision most needed, design, access issues etc.
- Children and teenagers play and hang out regularly “on the street”, on amenity and natural green space, near local shops, etc. as well as on spaces specifically planned for play and youth facilities. The study should therefore highlight planning related issues aimed at making the wider open space and residential environment more child-friendly.
- A key barrier to teenagers’ use of “public” open space is that they are often moved on by nearby residents and authorities such as the police. They need more tolerance and places recognised as “theirs”.
- Play England provide excellent guidance on play and spatial planning; play space design; a Quality Assessment Tool for play spaces; and managing risk in play. Some of these could be adopted as guidance and supplementary planning documents.