

South Dublin
County Council

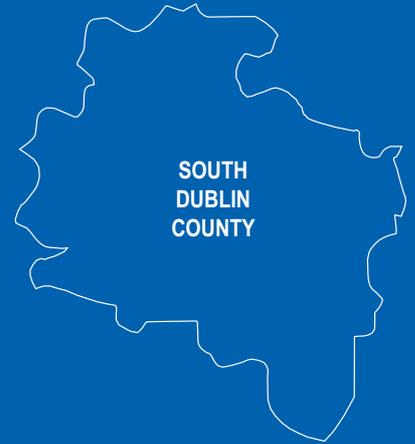


Comhairle Contae
Átha Cliath Theas

Developing Play

in

South Dublin County



2006 - 2009

Countywide Policy on
The Development & Management of Playgrounds and Play Areas



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Foreword

by Mayor of South Dublin County Council

As Mayor of South Dublin County it gives me great pleasure to introduce the South Dublin County Council Play Policy which outlines the future development of and management of playgrounds and play areas in South Dublin County. The Play Policy which was formulated and agreed by the Sports, Recreation, Community and Parks Strategic Policy Committee was formally adopted by the Council on July 10th 2006.

I am pleased to see significant progress in the provision of Parks and Playgrounds within the County and this policy is the blueprint for progress for the next five years. The policy is reflective of the views of people, both young and old, who have reason to use the play facilities within the County.

The policy ensures the commitment of South Dublin County Council to provide adequate facilities for children and young people aged 0-12 years. The Play Policy is focused on improving existing facilities and working with communities to provide additional play opportunities within the County.

As Mayor of South Dublin County Council, I look forward to the improvements the implementation of the policy will bring to the children of the County.



Eamonn Molloy Mayor

South Dublin County Council aims to create a county that is child friendly and actively supports and encourages the development of a wide variety of good quality opportunities for children's play.



Foreword

by the Chairperson of the Sports, Recreation, Community and Parks
Strategic Policy Committee

*"cherishing all of the children of the nation equally
and oblivious to differences"*

This quote from the proclamation of the Irish Republic 90 years ago is an often quoted but rarely taken seriously. In public life we elected politicians have been guilty of putting those who vote for us first on our agendas. This is thus mirrored in the response of officials to us in policy. What this document tries to do is recognise officially that it is a Childs right to live happily and the primary way that this can be done is by play.

As Chairperson of the Sports, Recreation, Community and Parks, Strategic Policy Committee it gives me great pleasure to see the Council adopt its first ever Play Policy for the County. I believe that this Policy, together with the Planning Framework to be produced under Action 1 of the Policy is a positive step forward to increasing the number of Play Facilities and Play Areas available to the children of this County. Partnership with other relevant agencies will enhance this provision.

The Policy Aims to:

- ◆ Promote the importance of Play for children
- ◆ Recognise and actively support all children having the right to Play (as stated in the 1998 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)
- ◆ Enable all children in local communities across South Dublin access to good quality play opportunities
- ◆ Provide a framework by which play provision for children in the County can be developed and expanded.



The adoption of the Policy is timely in that increasing focus is being placed on the rising levels of obesity in children, which has been identified as an emerging public health problem, particularly in the Western World. Data from recent surveys indicate that one in five Irish boys and girls are overweight and one in twenty are classified as obese. Worryingly the age of onset of obesity in children across the World is falling and a child is twice as likely to be an obese adult if obese in childhood.

Therefore an increase in the range and type of play facilities and play areas within the County needs to be addressed in order to reverse this trend and I believe this Play Policy is a good starting point in that direction.

This document gives us all a challenge. If it is to be implemented it requires the support of communities in welcoming play facilities and being active in ensuring they thrive. It requires the Council to direct funding into children's play in the face of pressures on finance or external bodies and to recognise the true value of positive impacts on children.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow members of the Sports, Recreation, Community & Parks, Strategic Policy Committee and the members of the Council for their valuable input into the Policy at various stages and to the working group (comprised of representatives of the Parks, Community & Planning Departments of the Council along with members drawn from the SPC) for putting together the document that you now have before you.



Mark Daly MCC



Introduction

Statement from County Manager

We live in an extraordinary time of economic growth and well being. South Dublin County Council has benefited greatly from the new wave of prosperity that has swept the Country in the last number of years. The challenge of ensuring an improved quality of life for all our citizens requires constant action on the part of the Council. In this regard, a core value of the County Council is “placing people and their needs at the centre of our activities” and our activities affect all who live, work, visit and invest on our County.

This document focuses on the specific needs of children up to 12 years old. The purpose of our Play Policy is to set the context through which the needs of this group can be met and the implementation of the policy can be achieved over the coming years.

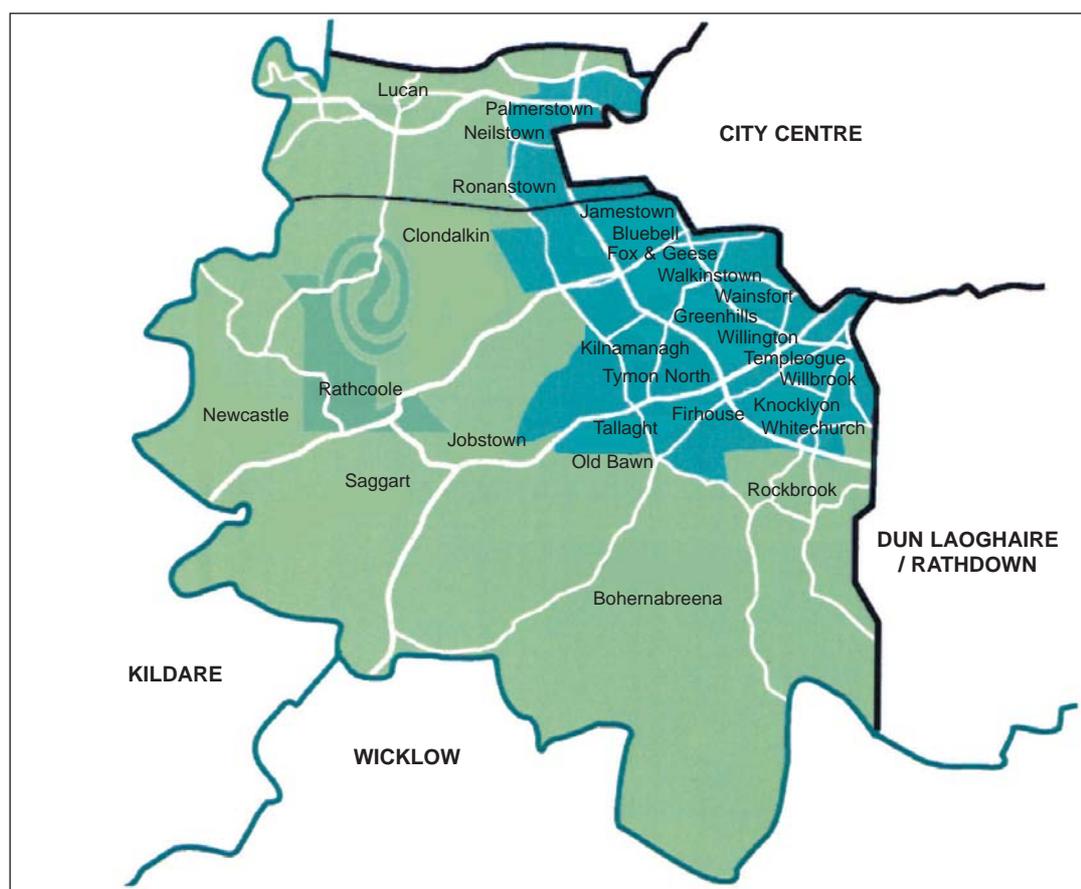
I believe that this is another step in delivering a quality of life for the young people of South Dublin County.



Joe Jordan County Manager

Profile of South Dublin County

The area of South Dublin covers 222.74 SQ kilometers, and lies about 10 miles south west of the Capital. It is bounded by the Dublin Mountains to the south and stretches from the River Liffey at Lucan through Palmerstown, Clondalkin, south to Newcastle, Rathcoole, Saggart. It includes Tallaght West, South and Central and stretches east to Templeogue and Rathfarnham. (see map below).



- The population of the County is approximately 234,000.
- The county has five electoral areas - Clondalkin, Lucan, Tallaght Central, Tallaght South and Rathfarnham/Terenure.
- South Dublin County has one of the youngest populations of any local authority area with 41% of the population under 25 and where children and young people aged 14 and under make up 25% of the population (Census 2002)
- In 2000, the birth rate in South Dublin County, at 16.9 births per 1000 people, was the highest of the Dublin counties and second highest rate in the country.



- ▶ The number of households in South Dublin County increased by 19% between 1996 and 2002, while the population increased by 9.2%.
- ▶ In recent years, housing development in the County has occurred at an average rate of an additional 2,800 new dwellings per year.
- ▶ In 2002, 25% of the new residential units built in the County were apartments; and apartments represent 83% of current construction activity.
- ▶ Lands zoned for residential purposes in the 2004 -2010 County Development Plan will yield at least an additional 18,446 homes in South Dublin by 2010.
- ▶ Currently, average provision of playgrounds in South Dublin County stands at 1 playground per 26,000 residents.





Current Recreational Infrastructure

Sports Infrastructure:

There are many different sporting facilities in existence in the County, ranging from Community Centres with sports halls and gyms, to running tracks, to all-weather pitches etc.

At present South Dublin County Council provides the following recreational and amenity facilities:

- * 1600 hectares of parks and open spaces for active and passive recreation
- * 5 Regional Parks and 50 Neighbourhood Parks
- * 150 playing pitches for gaelic football, hurling and soccer catering for over 800 teams involving approximately 14,000 people.
- * Tennis facilities provided at 8 centres
- * 2 All weather athletic tracks under local club management
- * 15 All weather pitches, 11 at Astropark, Bancroft Park, Tallaght and 4 at Clondalkin Park, Clondalkin in conjunction with private sector
- * Ireland's only purpose built Baseball facility in Corkagh Park
- * All-weather/multi use facilities in Jobstown, Tallaght and Collinstown, Clondalkin

Current developments include the provision of two new public swimming pools in the county as well as upgrading of many of the existing facilities.

Playground Provision:

This section sets out the historical policy of equipped playground provision by the Parks & Landscape Services Department and recent initiatives undertaken in association with the Community & Housing Departments in URBAN and RAPID areas.

Parkland Provision:

In the 1970's and early 1980's, equipped children's play areas were provided primarily, in association with Local Authority Housing Developments. By the mid-1980's, these play areas were suffering from serious and persistent vandalism and were acting as congregation points in the housing areas for groups of youths engaged in anti-social behaviour.



There were many factors involved in the decline of these play areas including location and social deprivation. The end result was that these play areas were no longer safe for use by children. In 1986 following high levels of persistent complaints from the public and County Councillors, the decision was taken to remove all equipped play areas from the housing areas and commence a programme of major playground construction in the Regional Parks.

The Regional Parks were selected for several reasons:

- ▶ The Regional Parks were strategically located to serve large populations.
- ▶ They were generally secure locations i.e. they were closed and locked at night.
- ▶ The Regional Parks had a Park Ranger Service who could monitor activity in these areas, in particular, in the evenings and at weekends.
- ▶ The Park Depots were located in the Regional Parks which was important for routine inspection and maintenance.

The first playground was opened in Tymon Park in 1987 followed by Corkagh and Griffeen Valley in 1988. The playgrounds were constructed on a scale that had not been seen before in this country. Each playground was over 0.4 hectares in size. They were built in a rustic style featuring locally designed and constructed timber equipment. Loose fill safety surfacing was used for the first time and the playgrounds proved to be immensely popular with the public. The playgrounds were designed and operated as self regulated environments where children would be supervised directly by parents or other responsible adults, a policy that has proven to be successful.

The next major playground development was carried out in association with the development of the Camac Valley Tourist Camping and Caravan Park at Corkagh. The provision of a playground was seen as integral to the development and ultimate success of this tourist facility. The Park opened in 1996 and while the playground has been available for use by visitors staying at the Park, it is not available to the general public per se.

URBAN

The next significant playground development came in 2000 when the Jobstown Playground was designed and constructed by South Dublin County Council Parks & Landscape Services Department as a result of money made available through the EU URBAN Initiative. The maintenance of the playground boundaries, equipment and surface is the responsibility of South Dublin County Council, while the payment and training of the staff is undertaken by the Jobstown Community Development Project.

Given the nature of the area, and our experience with other playgrounds the importance of permanent supervision was critical to the success of the playground. Two part time supervisors have been recruited locally and they are responsible for enforcing the rules of the playground, carrying out daily safety checks on the equipment, and liaising with the Council and CDP on a regular basis. The wage cost is funded by the Community/Parks Department on an annual basis.



RAPID

In May 2004, the Department of Community, Gaeltacht and Rural Affairs announced the allocation of funding to Local Authorities for the provision of children's playgrounds in RAPID areas. South Dublin County Council has four RAPID areas – Jobstown, Fettercairn, Killinarden in West Tallaght and Quarryvale in Clondalkin - and made application to provide a new equipped playground, associated with the community centres for Fettercairn, Killinarden and Quarryvale. The application for Jobstown was for the extension of the existing playground to meet an identified need for play facilities for older children.

The Parks and Landscape Services Department supervised the design and construction of the playgrounds in 2005 and has assumed responsibility for maintenance of the equipment since the opening of the playgrounds to the public. The supervision of Killinarden, Fettercairn and Quarryvale playgrounds is carried out by Community Centre staff facilitated by the RAPID co-ordinators of the Community Department. Early indications suggest that this approach is working successfully.

Applications were made in 2005 to RAPID for further funding for new playgrounds at Kiltalown, Brookfield and Collinstown Park. Application was also made for additional trim trail type equipment for the Killinarden playground

In 2004, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government invited applications for grants from local authorities under a Playground Grant Scheme administered by the National Children's Office. South Dublin County Council was awarded a grant of €115,000 towards the development of the new playground on the Templeogue side of Tymon Park. This playground was opened in June 2005.

In 2005 applications were again invited from local authorities for grant assistance towards the purchase of playground equipment and again South Dublin County Council has been advised that a grant of €60,000 is available for Corkagh Park, Clondalkin.

South Dublin County Council currently provides 9 playgrounds for use by residents and visitors to the County located as follows:

Tymon Regional Park, Tallaght (2 playgrounds)

Corkagh Regional Park, Clondalkin

Griffen Valley Regional Park, Lucan

Jobstown Community Centre, West Tallaght

Fettercairn Community Centre, West Tallaght

Killinarden Community Centre, West Tallaght

Quarryvale Community Centre, North Clondalkin

Camac Valley Tourist Camping and Caravan Park, Naas Road, Clondalkin.



Setting the Context

National Government Policy

Access to play is seen as a basic right for all children. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, states: 'The child has the right to rest and to engage in leisure, play and recreational activities and participate in cultural and artistic activities'. In Ireland the focus of the state's activities in the area of children was primarily concerned with Childcare, there was no specific legislation with regard to children's play and no provision of funds for play facilities amongst Government Departments. The national children's office, however, set out to develop a national play policy. Prior to this the provision of play was left to the discretion of individual local authorities that may, under the local Government act 2001 section 67, provide maintain and operate parks, open spaces, playgrounds and play equipment. It was, however a matter for each local authority to determine the extent to which playgrounds and play areas should be provided and allocate resources accordingly.

The National Children's Strategy our children – their lives, published in November 2000 sets out an ambitious series of objectives to guide children's policy over the next ten years. It provides a vision for the future of Irish children while offering a means to listen to, to think about and to act more effectively for children.

The three national goals identified are:

1. Children will have a voice in matters, which affect them, and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.
2. Children's lives will be better understood; their lives will benefit from evaluation, research and information on their needs, rights and effectiveness of service.
3. Children will receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development.

The Government is also committed under objective d of the national children's strategy to ensure that children will have access to play, sport and recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood.

Research conducted by Webb in 2003 states that" in Ireland, with the exception of the national children's strategy, there has been no focus to date in any of the legislation or national plans and programmes on the specific recreational needs of children with disabilities. There is still no rights based legislation in Ireland providing for the right of inclusive access to public facilities including outdoor recreation". (*Public play provision for children with Disabilities, 2003*).



'Ready Steady Play! A National Play Policy' was published by the National Children's Office in March 2004. The principal aim of the National Play Policy is to improve the quality of children's lives through the provision of play opportunities. Key objectives for local authorities include:

- Maximise the range of play opportunities.
- Improve the quality & safety of playgrounds.
- Ensure all new & refurbished facilities are accessible to all.
- Prepare a Local Play Policy in consultation with children & other stakeholders.
- Designate an officer to implement a County Play Plan prepared by the County Development Board.
- Promote the use of creative landscaping
- Pursue the policy objectives & standards set out in 'A Parks Policy for Local Authorities' (1987) (to be reviewed by DOEHLG).
- Consult insurance companies on playground provision.
- Ensure conformity with relevant standards for play equipment, surfacing & inspection in accordance with the terms of the insurance.
- Explore funding opportunities under Planning & Development Act 2000 to fund capital cost of play areas.
- Examine opportunities for private provision
- Establish a pilot scheme of 'Home Zones' where the living environment predominates over traffic.
- Central to the National Play Policy is the preparation of a co-ordinated multi-agency play plan by City & County Councils & Development Boards by 2005. This must take account of the needs of children as they age. It is important that local planning authorities contribute significantly to the preparation of the plan & assist in its delivery.

The designation of an officer responsible for the promotion of and development of play & recreation activity is considered important in the implementation of the County Play Plan.



Aims and Objectives

Aims of the Policy:

- To promote the importance of play for children.
- To recognise and actively support all children having the right to play (as stated in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).
- To enable all children in local communities across South Dublin access to good quality play opportunities.
- To provide a framework by which play provision for children in the County can be developed and expanded.

Objectives of the Policy

Objective 1 — Facilitate and support provision of appropriate, accessible and safe playgrounds and play areas for young people in South Dublin County.

Action no 1 — Establish a Planning Framework for the provision of play facilities as part of new developments in South Dublin County.

Responsibility: South Dublin County Council

Timeframe: Within 6 months of publication of Play Policy

Action no 2 — Preparation of 5 year Parks Works Programme for developing and implementing playgrounds and play spaces within regional and neighbourhood parks.

Responsibility: South Dublin County Council.

Timeframe: Every five years



Objective 2 — Encourage the active involvement of communities and consultations with young people in the planning, design and development of playgrounds and play areas.

Action no 3 — Actively consult with young people in the locality of any planned play facility in existing residential areas.

Responsibility: Providers of any planned play facility.

Timeframe: At early concept stage of any planned play facility.

Action no 4 — Undertake regular review of aims and objectives of County Play policy.

Responsibility: South Dublin County Council and Comhairle na Nog.

Timeframe: Bi-annually.

Action no 5 — The voluntary, community and private sectors will be encouraged to engage with children in the development of play facilities and play policies.

Responsibility: The National Children's Office.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Objective 3 — Ensure that provision of playgrounds and play areas shall be based on the needs of the community and that the provision of any facilities shall serve the common good of the community.

Action no 6 — Carry out an assessment, to include disability access, of play facilities in the county, identifying the level, range and standard of public and community play facilities available to children of all ages, and advertise the availability of these facilities.

Responsibility: South Dublin County Development Board.

Timeframe: Within 6 months of publication of Play Policy.



Objective 4 — Outline a framework for the future roles and responsibilities for the local authorities, the community and other bodies in the development and management of public playgrounds and play areas.

Action no 7 — Develop a framework for the future roles and responsibilities for the local authority, the community and other bodies in the development and management of public playgrounds and play areas.

Responsibility: South Dublin County Council.

Timeframe: 12 months.

Objective 5. Support and enable local communities to maximize opportunities for play provision by providing guidance on location and access, equipment and safety, the landscape and amenities, maintenance and supervision.

Action no 8 — Provide guidance on location, access, equipment and safety, the landscape and amenities, maintenance and supervision.

Responsibility: South Dublin County Council.

Timeframe: In conjunction with Play Policy. *(See Appendix 1)*

Action no 9 — To investigate opportunities for creating home zones where the living environment predominates over traffic.

Responsibility: South Dublin County Council.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Objective 6 — Raise the awareness of play within the local authority, other relevant agencies and the wider community.

Action no 10 — Boards of Management of schools to include a statement about the value of play and enhanced opportunities for play as part of their overall school plan.

Responsibility: Department of Education and Science.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Action no 11 — Investigate the possibility of appointing Play Development Officers to promote play and play facilities within the County.

Responsibility: South Dublin County Council.

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Action no 12 — Seek the Appointment of a Designated Play Officer.

Responsibility: South Dublin County Council.

Timeframe: Ongoing.





Appendix I

Developing a Playground / Play area

Playgrounds / Play Areas should be designed and provided to meet the specific needs of the community. The local community should be consulted across the range of parents, carers and young people before making decisions on play.

Provision:

When a playground / Play area is being developed, the following factors should be considered:-

- ◆ Different Types of Play Facilities
- ◆ Location and Access
- ◆ Equipment and Safety
- ◆ Landscape
- ◆ Amenities
- ◆ Maintenance and Supervision

Different Types of Play Facilities:

Different aspects of play will require different types of provision to challenge children. A wide range of play opportunities should therefore be considered, and where viable, provided.

Location and Access:

The following should be considered when choosing an appropriate site:

- ▶ Should be in areas, which allow for passive or active supervision at all times (e.g. be observed by neighbouring houses, other buildings, or be close to a community centre and / or other public areas.
- ▶ Should where possible, be centrally located where there is public demand for playground areas.
- ▶ Should be in a well used area.
- ▶ Will be in an area with sufficient lighting.
- ▶ Should take advantage of sunlight, views and landscape features.



- ▶ Must be separated from hazards by low fencing or other suitable barriers.
- ▶ Will have suitable entry and exit points (*preferably two*).
- ▶ Will be adjacent to footpaths, or other walkways, which have reasonable access (*i.e. be manageable for wheelchair users and / or for two adults to walk with a child each in a pushchair*). A minimum width of 1.5 meters is recommended.
- ▶ Will allow adequate access for emergency and maintenance vehicles to the playground / play area.
- ▶ Should be mindful of the universal design concept and inclusive design principles.

Equipment and Safety

- ▶ All designs should give consideration to the different development needs and ability ranges of the differing age groups of young people. The needs of young people with additional needs should also be considered at this stage.
- ▶ There should be a clear separation of equipment in playgrounds for the differing age groups.
- ▶ All equipment selected must meet with current Irish Standard I.S.EN 1176 Parts 1-7 which provide guidance on installation, inspection, maintenance and operation of playground / play equipment.

The following factors should be considered during equipment selection:-

- Equipment warranty
- Maintenance requirements
- After sales service
- Availability of spare parts
- Age of user
- Play Function

Consideration, should be given to children and young people with disabilities and additional needs, for example, equipment such as activity panels that may be accessible to wheelchair users at ground level, wide slides, etc could be incorporated in the design.



- ▶ The surfacing of the play area must conform to Irish Standard I.S.EN 1177 which specifies requirements for impact absorbing surfacing to be used in children's playgrounds. Impact attenuating surfacing must be provided where necessary to reduce the incidence / severity of injury to children using the playground/ play area.
- ▶ The playground should be designed to incorporate features which allow for reasonable access for everyone and in particular access to the play structures.
- ▶ Sufficient lighting must be provided.

Landscape:

- ▶ Where possible, enough space should be reserved for expansion.
- ▶ Open space should be provided for free play purposes.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for children to experience seasonal changes and to learn to respect and protect a range of natural environments.

Seating:

Seating must be provided and well positioned, (*i.e. facing the play area*) within the play area. Seats should also be provided with backrests for elderly or carers or people with disabilities and benches should be designed to allow for disabled access.

Maintenance and Supervision:

General requirements in relation to maintenance and inspection are set out in Irish Standard I.S. EN 1176 Part 7. In order to reduce the likelihood of accidents, an appropriate inspection and maintenance schedule should be put in place for every playground. It is important that records of inspection and maintenance are kept in a safe place where they can be accessed as necessary.

Installed playground equipment must be maintained in good working order and be safe for use. Manufacturer's guidance on maintenance and inspection should be supplied with the equipment and the instructions should be followed.

Playgrounds require some level of adult supervision. This can vary from parents/guardians of the children using the playground to full time employed play workers. Adult supervision should ensure that fair play is maintained in the playground and that children do not use equipment unsuited to their age.

Appendix II

LIST OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Organizations

- County Childcare Committee
- Tallaght RAPID Area Implementation Team
- A joint submission on behalf of the following: Boden Park Residents Association, Whitecliff Residents Association, Moyville Estate Residents Association, Bolton Hall Action Group, Palmer & Pearse Brothers Park, Residents Association, Kingston Court Association & Boden Villas Residents Association.

Individuals

- David and Shuna Hutchinson Edgar.

Consultations

A consultation session was held with members of the South Dublin Comhairle na nÓg.

Summary of Submissions received on Consultation of Play Policy

1. County Childcare Committee

The County Childcare submission contained a number of comments rather than any submission, welcoming the creation of Play Spaces and the importance now being placed on play.

2. Tallaght RAPID Area Implementation Team– Submission

The key issues here relate to monitoring of play areas and problem solving. These and other similar issues will be dealt with in accordance with Action No. 7 of the Draft Policy which states that South Dublin County Council will "Develop a framework for the future role and responsibilities for the local authority, the Community and other bodies in the development and Management of Public Playgrounds and Play areas".



3. The Joint Submission –

On behalf of the 8 Resident Associations from the Ballyboden Area - makes much reference to the Ballyboden Village Plan which is a separate process to the Play Policy, and specific comments made in relation to the Draft Play Policy are as follows.

Playground ratio to population: specific guidelines for developers: provision of play facilities in apartment blocks developments of Home Zones: provision of play facilities seems to be only the concern of the Parks Department.

In relation to the Playground ratio, mentioned in the Draft Policy, the submission felt that this should be adjusted to reflect that the Camac Valley Caravan Park is not open to the general public and while this is strictly true it is available for use by visitors to the County of which there were 21,544 in 2005 of which 4,254 were children. Rewording of the Draft Policy suggested to read as follows;

"South Dublin County Council currently provides 9 playgrounds for use by residents and visitors to the County".

The submission also suggests that specific guidelines be drawn up by the Council, for developers indicating the type of playground/play facilities that are expected of them in any new developments / apartment blocks.

It is intended that the Planning Framework developed under Action No. 1 of the Policy will address the provision of guidelines for developers and will address the provision of guidelines for playgrounds and play facilities in new developments to facilitate greater distribution at local level.

The Development of Home Zones is encouraged under Action No. 9 of the Draft Policy and currently the development of a Home Zone is being actively encouraged within the Adamstown Development.

The submission also makes the point that provision of play facilities seems only to concern the Parks Department. The Draft Play Policy was drawn up by a Working Group comprised of representatives of the Community/Parks & Planning Departments and members of the Sports, Recreation, Community & Parks Strategic Policy Committee. The Planning Department are actively involved in this area and have been instrumental in facilitating the provision of equipped play areas by developers in new developments at Adamstown and Hunters Wood, Ballycullen in recent years.

4. The submission from David & Shauna Hutchinson Edgar —

relates to the expansion of Play facilities into new developments, particularly in the higher density type developments, provision of facilities for different age groups and provision of access to play facilities for children with special needs.

The first two points are catered for in the Draft Play Policy and in relation to the last point, all new playground proposals are proofed for disability access and a programme of upgrading older playgrounds commenced last year with the Griffeen Valley Park Playground in Lucan. Selected items of equipment are provided that are available for use by all children including those with various disabilities.

It should be noted that not all equipment provided is accessible by children with every type of disability. The intention is to provide the widest range of Play Challenge and Opportunity in an integrated way for children of varying abilities.









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