
Dublin City Play Strategy 2021 – 2025

Dublin City Play Strategy ‘Pollinating Play’ (2021 – 2025)

The new Dublin City Play Strategy; ‘Pollinating Play’ (2021 – 2025) is a key guiding document for Dublin City Council and its partners as a sound basis for fully implementing a comprehensive play strategy for the city and to realise the vision for Dublin as a ‘Child Friendly and Playful City’.

This strategy follows on from the Dublin City Play Plan (DCPP); ‘Play here, Play there, Play Everywhere’ (2012 – 2017) and will be implemented in support of the plan as a continued local authority response in promoting and supporting ‘play’ for children and young people. The Dublin City Play Strategy is underpinned by the UNCRC Article 31; *the child’s right to play*.

Defining Play

The strategy vision, mission, principles, policy statements and actions are informed by the definition of play set out within United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and General Comment 17 on Article 31; which defines play as:

“Children’s play is any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled and structured by children themselves; it takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise”.

Adopting the Principle of ‘Play Sufficiency’

Dublin City Council has adopted the principle of ‘Play Sufficiency’ as an example of best practice provided by 2010 Wales ‘Play Sufficiency Duty’; Based on recommendations included in UNCRC General Comment 17 on Article 31, Wales was the first country in the world to implement legislation regarding provision of sufficient play opportunities for children and young people. The principles of ‘play sufficiency’ were applied to the development of a comprehensive action plan for the Dublin City Play Strategy and will be further supported by the development of a contextual ‘play sufficiency assessment toolkit’ for Dublin.

A Strategy and action plan to future proof ‘play’ for Dublin’s Young Citizens

Dublin City Play Strategy includes an action plan that involves specific focus on adopting and implementing ‘play sufficiency’ as a key principle in assessing quality in play provision and environments. This presents a holistic approach to supporting play in terms of the overall health and well-being of children and young people as active citizens who can participate in their city and local communities through positive childhood experiences in which they can *play now, play more and play better!*

Strategy Vision, Mission & Principles

Vision

Dublin will be a child friendly and playful city where all children and young people can enjoy and fully exercise their right to play

Mission

We will adopt a citywide coordinated approach to developing high quality, accessible and inclusive play facilities and opportunities for everyday play experiences for all children and young people.

Principles

Play is essential to the social, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional development of children and young people and in particular their overall health and well-being. Children and young people have a right to be seen, to be heard and to play in public spaces in the city.

Adopt and implement 'play sufficiency' as a guiding principle for strategy actions that will support children and young people's natural creativity and imagination and their everyday freedom to enjoy play in all its forms.

Apply a play-led approach to the development of a citywide play infrastructure that will address opportunities for play within the natural and built environment. These are places and spaces identified by children and young people where they can experience freedom of choice, be spontaneous, explore their varied and circumstantial levels of independence and movement throughout their neighbourhoods but most of all direct and control the content and intent of their play.

Audit of current support for play and outline of rationale for further improvements is based on analysis of local needs and the wider community namely Dublin city. Children and young people are consulted in all matters concerning play in the city, in particular, this includes active research with children and young people with regard to their use of outdoor space. Universal design is key in supporting, promoting and providing non-discriminative opportunities for play. Cross Collaboration and partnership, working at national and local level is key to achieving our vision that Dublin will be a child-friendly and playful city.

Policy Statements

1. Develop and awareness of play and its value and importance in the everyday lives of children and young people
2. Create and effective city-wide play infrastructure through collaborative design that enhances and responds to children and young people's existing infrastructure.
3. Place a key focus on accessible and inclusive opportunities for play for all children and young people.
4. Work in partnership to support schools, early childhood and education settings to improve and increase child-led play experiences.
5. Support children and young people to fully exercise their right to play by providing ease of access to engage in cultural life and the arts.

Purpose & Scope

The scope of the new play strategy will embrace children and young people within the 0 – 18 age group and also be guided by the further extended age group identified in 'The National Children's' Strategy; 'Better Outcomes Brighter Futures '(2014) 0 – 24 age group

Context: Children's Play & Policy

- **1992:** Ireland's ratification of UNCRC
- **2000:** National Children's Strategy
- **2003 - 2008:** Ireland's first National Play Strategy 'Ready, Steady Play!' was launched in 2003
- **2012:** 'Your City Your Space' Dublin City Council Public Realm Strategy
- **2014:** Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) launched 'Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures' (BOBF) (2014 – 2020), a new policy framework for children and young people
- **Present;** The Dublin City Parks Strategy (2019 – 2022)

Aligning Strategy Progress with National Strategies – Aligning benefits of Play with 5 national outcomes for BOBF:

- Active and Healthy
- Achieving their full potential in all Areas of Health and Development
- Safe and Protected from Harm
- Economic security and opportunity
- Connected and Respected
-

Alignments and dual actions within with other relevant strategic documents

- The Dublin City Parks Strategy (2019 – 2022)
- Dublin City Tree Strategy 2016 – 2020
- The Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan 2015 – 2020
- The Heart of Dublin – Dublin City Centre Masterplan (2016) – Public Realm Strategy

Challenges in realising the Dublin City Play Strategy

Lack of recognition of the importance of play; including the voice of the child, equality of access, safe environments, risk, poor access to nature, perceptions of young people's use of public space, busy schedules, neglect of article 31, commercialisation of play, educational pressures.

Using the Play Strategy

The play strategy and action plan will be used as a guiding document for Dublin City Council and external agencies and organisations with to implement actions to improve children and young people's play experiences within the context of their specific service or setting such as:

- Organisations and individuals with a responsibility for children's play.
- Parents, carers, service providers,
- Decision makers, planners etc. can adopt the action plan included within the strategy as a guide for best practice in planning for play.

Developing the Strategy through community engagement

The consultation process to date has used a wide range of consultative methods. Parents/carers, children and young people gave their views by participating in the following:

- Approx. 600 completed online surveys 'Have your say about play',
- Pop-up play consultations in a number of the city's main parks
- Organisations/ youth workshops in recreation centres
- National Playday - large number of children participated in short interviews and playful and creative workshops
- Dublin City's Comhairle na nÓg -
 - completed the online survey,
 - participated in 'play strategy' workshops
 - Formed a sub-group to review the strategy draft.
- Ongoing; 'Children's views on COVID 19 Restrictions' – DCU report available on DCC administrative area.

Dublin City Play Strategy Action Plan 2021 – 2025

The proposed Play Sufficiency Assessment of Dublin City's play infrastructure will feed into the ongoing monitoring, review and evaluation of the overall implementation of the strategy action plan. The Strategic Action Plan includes comprehensive, practical actions and achievable timeline from 2021 – 2025.

Policy Statement 1: Develop and Awareness of play and its value and importance in the lives of children and young people.

Action	Measure
Awareness & Promotion: Provide information, toolkits and guides aimed at improving and increasing awareness of the importance of play in the lives of children and young people.	Publish a minimum of 3 x information booklet/s highlighting the importance of play
Implement the principle of 'Play Sufficiency' as a quality measure for monitoring and evaluation of play facilities and opportunities for play	System in place to ensure sufficient number and quality of play facilities alongside supporting and facilitating sufficient time, space and opportunities for child led informal play to happen.
Consultation: Continue to facilitate ongoing consultation through active research with communities and in particular children and young people to ensure that they are included in the design, planning and mapping of existing and new play facilities and opportunities for play in the public realm.	Number of consultations carried out each year
Events: Celebrate events that promote the concept, meaning and importance of play as a 'right' for all children and young people; National Playday Annual Event, World Health Day, International Children's Day and Play Seminars and Conferences	End of year report & record of events provided annually
Advocacy: Work partners and children and youth groups such as Comhairle na n'Og to develop and publish a 'Dublin City Play Manifesto'	Manifesto Completed Circulated and Displayed
Promoting Playwork Principles: Provide annual workshops/training for DCC staff and voluntary youth and community groups and others to adopt a play-led approach based on good practice in alignment with 'Playwork Principles' to support children's play under UNCRC Article 31; the child's right to play.	Number of workshops and training programmes provided annually
Irish Play Safety Statement: Support the development of an 'Irish Play Safety Statement' as a position statement to support the replacement of current 'risk assessments' with 'risk benefit assessments'.	Irish Play Safety Statement endorsed and published as position statement to support the element of risk in play.

Policy Statement 2: Create an Effective city-wide play infrastructure through collaborative design and planning with children and young people that enhances and responds to their existing infrastructure.

Action	Measure
<p>Quality Assessments: Develop a 'Dublin City Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit', which includes a set of criteria that aligns with best practice as set out in Wales Statutory Guidance for assessment and analysis to achieve sufficiency regarding play facilities and more informal opportunities for play.</p>	<p>Completed Play sufficiency assessment of planned annual playground upgrades.</p> <p>Completed Play sufficiency assessment of informal opportunities for play.</p>
<p>Play Sufficiency Awareness and Training: Facilitate interdepartmental & stakeholder awareness sessions on Play Sufficiency to support the completion of ongoing Play Sufficiency Assessments.</p>	<p>Increased interdepartmental awareness, understanding and support for actions that will secure play sufficiency.</p>
<p>Funding: Continue capital programme based on results of 'Play Sufficiency' audits and assessments, to enhance and enrich the quality standards of new play facilities and the ongoing annual upgrade programme.</p>	<p>Annual Programme based on completed Play Sufficiency Assessments of citywide play infrastructure</p>
<p>Addressing Play deficits: Updating GIS system in order to continue to identify play deficits within this system to prioritise development of play facilities, alongside acknowledging and supporting the right conditions for informal play to happen.</p>	<p>Fully equipped play facilities within 10 minutes walking distance from home and in areas with high population of children under 14 years. Recorded Local mapping sessions with children and young people to acknowledge and support informal play spaces and places</p>
<p>Destination Playgrounds: Identify existing playground locations that hold potential for development as destination playgrounds across Dublin city. e.g., north west, south central, south east and city centre</p>	<p>Number of new destination playgrounds developed.</p>
<p>Playground Development Framework: Revise Procurement Procedures regarding playground development that will avoid contractual constraints and facilitate scope for creativity and 'specific cases' where Dublin City Council can develop a wide variety of playground types for parks and public spaces with varying themes and bespoke features In addition to realistic budget for same.</p>	<p>System in place and operational</p>
<p>Maintenance & Repairs: Fully commission the use of electronic means for routine playground inspections.</p>	<p>System in place and operational</p>
<p>Addressing rapid urban development and climate change: Develop a Pilot project to consider opening school grounds for community access.</p>	<p>Increased community play spaces</p>
<p>Community Play: Work collaboratively and maintain strong links with DCC Area Offices & Community Development Officers and/or formalise 'Community Play Committees' or working groups to ensure that children & young people have a voice & are active participants in all project consultations and developments regarding play in streets & public space at local level.</p>	<p>5 x Community Play Committees for each Local Area</p>

Policy Statement 3: Place a key focus on accessible and inclusive opportunities for play for all children and young people	
Action	Measure
Inclusion: Develop a toolkit for inclusion and accessibility in partnership with Department of Children, Education, Disability, and Integration & Youth (DCEDIY).	Publish toolkit Publish on DCC website list of availability of accessible and inclusive play facilities
Improved and increased Play Opportunities for Older Children/Teenagers: Explore and address the issue of constraints to play and generally 'hanging out' for older children/teenagers and provide a positive response within children's existing infrastructure, planned upgrading and refurbishment of parks, green spaces, local area regeneration and public realm and arts and culture capital programmes.	Annual report on play for older children/teenagers that highlights positive responses within upgrading of existing and development of new play facilities, parks and shared public space.
Policy Statement 4: Work in partnership to support schools, early childhood and education settings to improve and increase child led play experiences.	
Action	Measure
Benefits of improved and increased opportunities for Play in Schools: Develop a 'Play in Schools' Toolkit/Guide in partnership with Department of Children, Education, Disability, and Integration & Youth (DCEDIY).	Publish toolkit as booklet & online resource in DCC Website
Policy Statement 5: support children and young people to enjoy and fully exercise their right to play by providing ease of access to engage in cultural life and the arts.	
Action	Measure
Art and Play: Identify opportunities to link with DCC Arts Office to ensure the inclusion of playful arts programmes and interactive art commissions and installations within the public realm and DCC Parks.	Increased number and diversity of children and young people engaging in arts activities and co-creating art installations for their city
Playful Galleries, libraries, Museums & Heritage Sites: Liaise with Hugh Lane Gallery & DCC Library Development to develop the potential for; Interventions, pilot projects and indoor and outdoor play resources at places of Art, Heritage and Culture.	Increased engagement by children and young people

Next Steps

Progress to date:

A report and final draft of the Dublin City Play Strategy 'Pollinating Play' 2021 – 2025 was presented at the May 2021 Arts, Culture, Leisure and Recreation Strategic Policy Committee (SPC). This resulted in agreement by the Strategic Policy Committee that the final draft of Dublin City Play Strategy is included on the agenda for 2021 June City Council meeting for adoption by the City Council.

June 2021: Subject to adoption by Dublin City Council, complete narrative and provide final document for publication.

July 2021: Launch of 'Pollinating Play' Dublin City Play Strategy 2021 – 2025, on National Playday (proposed dates July 4th or 8th 2021).

Recommendation:

I therefore recommend that the Dublin City Play Strategy 2021-2025 is adopted by the Council

Resolution:

That Dublin City Council notes the contents of Report No. 176/2021 and hereby approves the contents therein.

Richard Shakespeare

Assistant Chief Executive

Date 31st May 2021.